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**Peace mediation: The role of John 7:53–8:11 for
Possible conflict Management in Reformed Churches
in Northwest region of Cameroon.**

Presented by

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requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Plagiarism declaration

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DEDICATION

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List of Abbreviations

Ac Acts

Adv Haer Adversus Haereses

Amo Amos

BCE Before Common Era

CE Common Era

Chr Chronicles

Col Colossians

Cor Corinthians

Dan Daniel

DT Double tradition

Duet Deuteronomy

Eno Enoch

ESV English Standard Version

Ezk Ezekiel

FG Fourth Gospel

Grk Greek

Gen Genesis

Gos Pet Gospel of Peter

Hos Hosea

Isa Isaiah

Jer Jeremiah

Jn John

Job Job

Jub Jubilee

JW Jewish War

Lev Leviticus

L Lukan Source

Lk Luke

LXX Septuagint

M Matthean Source

Macc Maccabees

Matt Matthew

Mk Mark

MT Mosseric Text

NA 28 Nestle Aland 28

Neh Nehemiah

NIV New International Version

NT New Testament

Num Numbers

OT Old Testament

PN Passion Narrative

Q Quelle

RC Redaction Criticism

RSV Revised Standard Version

SP Synoptic Problem

SSC Social Scientific Criticism

TEV Today's English Version

TT Triple Tradition

v Verse

w Verses

Zec Zechariah

Chapter 1

Background to the study

1.1. General Introduction

The narrative of John 7:53–8:1-11, commonly known as the Pericope Adulterae, has long captivated scholars and theologians alike due to its rich textual history, theological implications, and cultural significance. This passage, which depicts the encounter between Jesus and the woman caught in adultery, holds a pivotal place within the Gospel of John and has been the subject of intense scrutiny, debate, and interpretation throughout centuries of New Testament scholarship. Early manuscripts such as Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus offer insights into variant readings and textual transmission, while patristic commentaries by Augustine and Ambrose offer early Christian interpretations of this text. Scholars such as (Hill 2015:2017) and Bart D. Ehrman (2006) provide excellent sources that contribute to these textual issues related to John 7:53–8:11.

This introductory chapter lays the groundwork for the study by covering the essential elements of a comprehensive research project. **Firstly, in (1.1)**, the focus is an overview of the study's context, highlighting its significance and relevance. **Secondly, in (1.2), relevant literature** is discussed in more detail, aiming to synthesise existing research, identify gaps, and establish the foundation for the current study. **Furthermore, the Problem Statement (1.3)** clearly articulates the specific issue the study aims to address, defining its scope and importance. **Section (1.4) gives the research question; it presents a precise query that guides the investigation.** (1.5) outlines the **objectives of the study and** the specific goals to be achieved and shows how it aligns with the research question. **In (1.6), the methodology** is discussed to describe the research design, as an analytical technique to be employed, ensuring a systematic and rigorous approach to study. Finally, **the conclusion (1.7)** summarises the key points of the introductory chapter, setting the stage for a detailed exploration of the research topic in the subsequent chapters.

1.2 Literature review

This literature review is divided into three sections. The first section examines the literature that addresses the social context of John 7:53–8:1-11, providing insights into the historical and cultural background of this biblical passage. The second section focuses on exegetical and critical interpretative concerns that pose challenges to the interpretation of this text. Thirdly, the focus is to offer an overview of the social construct of the Weh Community, highlighting the distinct social dynamics and cultural practices that characterise this group. Given the focus of this study on the Weh Community, this bifurcated approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of both the specific biblical context and the broader social framework within which the Weh Community operates.

1.2.1 A Brief Social Analysis of John 7:53–8:1-11

Scholars have approached the honour-shame framework from various critical perspectives, with some emphasising its patriarchal underpinnings and others exploring its broader sociocultural implications. Douglas (1966), in her seminal work on purity and pollution, argues that the concepts of honour and shame are intimately tied to notions of purity, with sexual offenses viewed as polluting acts that threaten social boundaries. Schüssler-Fiorenza (1983) critiques the gendered nature of these norms, noting that women were disproportionately burdened with upholding a community's honour, while men often escaped similar scrutiny. In consideration of the pericope adulterae, it could be assumed that the man has evaded the scene to safeguard his honour (Phillips, 2018:73). The honour of a man was a great attribute acquired in public or ascribed at birth, and that honour was meant to be safe from being questioned (Van Eck 2011:9). He critiques the first-century Mediterranean world, whereby ascribed honour conferred by a king or governor was equivalent to wealth inherited, while acquired honour was honour acquired via personal efforts and that compellingly ought to be preserved. The rich in first-century Israel preserved their honour in their riches and the poor could not maintain their dignity because they were even scarcely considered to be awarded honourable positions (Malina 1987:355; see also Rohrbaugh 1993:34–35). The honour of a man was ascribed or acquired as a result of his value in his community, and the acquisition of

wealth was perceived as limited good by peasants, thus giving them the urge to consider all wealthy persons as thieves with questionable status of honour. The honour of man was acquired or inherited from a background that was clean without wrangles. Persons with backgrounds of conflict were hardly awarded public honour and titles and that caused people to avoid conflicts. Honour and conflict play intermittent role in that a man who is honoured cannot be a man of war else his title of honour is invalid.

Argentino & Bonneau, in essays edited by Porter and Ong (2016:124), give insight into the valued opinion on the nature of conflict, stating that the ministry of Jesus was dealing with the social narrative of the people in the canonical Gospels. The authors add that the aspect of conflict is central to the Fourth Gospel. They further claim that “social conflict is an axiomatic element in the narrative of the Gospel of John” (in Porter & Ong, 2016:124). The argument is a huge one that considers the conflict of light versus darkness, the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, and the fact that illuminates it is his claim of salvation for mankind, which has become the climax of the Gospel. They also enhance the idea that conflict in the Fourth Gospel arises via the provocation of hostile attitudes toward Jesus and his disciples and that it is not always negative, for it serves to re-orient group focus. The difference here is that they examine conflict from a group’s social perspective of liberalism. They read conflict in terms of freedom of expression and group belonging, where everyone is free to be hostile. In such groups where social perspectives of liberalism is enhanced, you are bound either to belong, that is become a renegade and proselytize (evangelize, preach, persuade or cajole for followers), or become a heretic. Heretics will always defy group instructions and oppose everyone in a bid to fight for their space.

Bultmann (1971:312–313) skips the section of John 7:53–8: 1-11, mentioning nothing about the social conflict of the adulterous woman. He evades any discussion of the text, which is a significant statement that the section is unconsidered in the current version of the Bible, with no relevance to discuss conflict. Brown (1988:51) discusses the content of John 7:53–8:1-11 and recognises that it is not in its right position because it is a later addition not given at the same time as the rest of the canonical Gospels. The aspect of conflict evades his view, and he does not comment anything regarding the confrontation against Jesus apart from mentioning that they used the circumstance of the woman to

trap him, but he escaped it. Malina (2010:16) asserts that individualistic cultures are a recent phenomenon, appearing only from the 16th and 17th centuries onward, as recorded by history. The concept of dyadic personality (the culture of groups) was a common view in the first-century Mediterranean world, where every child was born into a group, and grew up and was socialised in the group to which their parents belonged. A child was the property of the paternal family by birth and had to grow up and live under kindred, inheriting patriarchal gender roles, as well as inherited group rights handed down as they grew and matured. This was especially true for all men in the group. Malina (1993:8–9) states that 'All human beings are entirely the same, entirely different, and somewhat the same and somewhat different at the same time'. The point here is that human beings are immersed in cultures that are particular to them and date back to their very origins. Furthermore, it also suggests that all human beings are subjective and social beings. Witherington (1995:366) does not treat the text as a source of conflict but as a source of morals in society, a defence against stereotyping and scapegoating unfairness against women. Secondly, he talks about leaders living responsibly as examples in society, and thirdly, about delivering justice in a balanced and merciful way.

Meanwhile, Lindars (1981:305) reads it as Jesus' reinvigoration of new life in the woman. Moreover, he thinks that it was incorporated into the book of John as an element of compassion to a sinner, which originally is not the intention of the narrator but has assumably become Jesus' main idea in the story. He concludes that the crux of the matter is Jesus' refusal to condemn the woman, which has become a major point in showing how Jesus shows compassion to the feminine sex of the first century and disperses the darkness woven in the woman's life. He analyses that condemnation (*Katakrinein*) which means to give a judicial sentence, but this is not what Jesus implements. As a result of Jesus' abstention from judicial punishment, the accusers disperse, for they realise that he understands Mosaic Law to which he conforms, causing them to believe in his teaching on the nature of God's kingdom. Lindars (1981:312) and Carson (1991:336) emphasise the mercy and compassion of Jesus to be the basic foundation of Jesus' action towards the woman (see also Davidson, 1962:881; Guthrie & Motyer, 1976:946).

O' Sullivan (2010:3) advances the idea that the Pharisees and the scribes first show their conception of authority but cannot execute their authoritative demand on the woman because the Romans did not give authority to anyone to execute by stoning. John proves that he understands the Jewish culture very well and even the judicial processes that are involved in such politically ramifying incidences (Witherington 1995:165). According to Witherington (1995:169), the stoning process was well managed by Jesus Christ through the providence of God, and he escaped the pits dug for him to fall into because God's hour for him had not yet come.

Secondly, the quick demand for Jesus to authorise the stoning of the woman was to force Jesus to contravene Roman law and oppose Roman authority. It portrays the cruel attitude of the Pharisees and scribes, who were men of authority belonging to what was functionally a men's cult (O' Sullivan 2010:4). To them authority was paramount: it was supreme and capable of condemning the sinner and not vice versa. It was not tempered with nor was it deviated from, and it gave them right to be watchdogs or judges over the sinner and be merciless to them. In conjunction with Boice (1976:318), who believes that it was marginalisation of this woman, and in this same vein William Barclay (n.d:<http://www.classic.studylight.org>), leans towards the same view that she was marginalised and dehumanised. To them, all that was important was preserving the authority vested in the Law of Moses. They certainly never had any concern to know her name or her opinion, as they merely sought to discredit, defame and destroy Jesus.

The text of John 8:1-11 in the Gospel of John is seen by many scholars as a spiritual and moral text due to Jesus' "spiritual union and unity in character and purpose with the Father (Jn 10:30)" (Witherington, 1995:169), consequently endorsing the opinion of Edwards (1955:133), who notes that there was a "tendency thirty or more years ago was to accept Clement's well-known description of the Fourth Gospel as the "spiritual" one..." until Prof Goguel showed us how historical the book was. Lincoln (2005:653) talks about the spiritual centrality of John's plot, which encompasses in-depth historical knowledge with a theological concept that sees truth in God's glory and God's identity. Even though he is sceptical about the historical embodiment of John, he sees truth in it while nevertheless not attributing the Gospel to John the son of Zebedee. But he does not negate the central truth that this text in John is enormously important in the ministry of

Jesus to the world. Hendriksen (1954:41) believes that the action of Jesus in releasing the woman uncondemned is a result of verse 12 that says “I am the light of world ...”, giving the impression that when it comes to spiritual matters of salvation, Jesus stands as the sole illuminator to the spirit of humankind, implying that he proclaims deliverance to the impure, sick, sinful, sad, and replaces these with gladness and peace (Es 4:14; Is 26:18; Acts 7:25).

But according to Staden (2015:3), the question is “how do we handle human relations with each other? because it boils down to the situation in which society shapes human morals (Witherington 1995:365), and how individuals create, maintain and shape society. This follows questions asked by thinkers in the likes of Georg Simmel, Max Weber, Emile Durkheim concerning how humans contribute in shaping others and the society. So also Hendriksen (1954:41) is concerned with the impact that Jesus creates in this woman’s life by declaring her to go and repent from sin because he who follows Jesus will not walk in darkness but will have light.

Following Christ means obedience, says Hendriksen (1954:42), implying compliance, devotion, and loyalty; otherwise, darkness will continue to reign in such a person’s life. For Staden (2015:11), this is a dramaturgic composition, and it is a piece of writing for peace, mercy and justice rather than the condemnatory tone of harshness in a battle of rotating power tussle among Jewish leaders, as well understood by John. Within the temple precinct, the Jewish leaders meet Jesus teaching that morning, and they demonstrate as much by the exigent demands of the Pharisees and scribes upon Jesus.

Jesus does just that which provokes dispersal without clashes. But Staden (2015:11) recognises that this “pericope was interpolated to bring new a perspective into reality”, in accordance with the suggestion of Chris Keith (2019) “the interpolation had an apologetic function countering accusations that the founder of this new religion was an uneducated, illiterate peasant not to be taken seriously.” This alone might be the reason for the inclusion of text which became the bravado call for showing mercy to the adulterous woman and allowing her reformation. Adeyemo (2006:1295) expresses the view that Jesus’ denial of condemnation resonates with his statement in John 3:17 that Jesus came to save the world and not to condemn it. Barret (1955:493) thinks also along

these same lines but adds that “And for that reason Jesus gives her new life.” Barret thinks that even if Jesus judges, his judgement is not false but true (Jn 5:14).

According to Culpepper (1995:630), it is a check on the moral standards of self-righteousness. It stands as a measuring stick to self-righteous judgments against anybody, ranging from the adulterous woman herself to any other adulterer. He further examines it from the standpoint of grace shown to the woman. So, he purports it is a demonstration of grace in the process of forgiving sinfulness. In Barrett’s (1995:630) words, “It is a story of Jesus’ grace and mercy, as a dominant thread of Christian interpretation has held since Augustine, but Jesus offers this particular grace in a very social and religious context.” Jesus brings this message of freedom to everyone standing there, be it the Pharisee, the Scribe, the Gentile or the adulterer herself, which is a challenge incorporating political, theological and moral dimensions. In conclusion, it can be deduced that Culpepper (1995:631) sees it as a means of Jesus’ restoration of the woman from her assumed sexual sin that turned her into a righteous person. Boice (1976:313) notes that Jesus does not condemn her because Jesus does not pronounce judgment on those who come to him in faith; rather, he saves them.

Morris (1987:298) thinks that Jesus’ declination to condemn her was an act of mercy. Furthermore, he says that because Jesus did not state that she is forgiven, it means she is still a sinner who needs repentance and that Jesus’ mercy was an open door for her to become saved. Lightfoot (1956:348) gives a summary of the text, adding that its inclusion was purposeful, and he says that “The readings in these verses vary considerably, but all teach the same lesson, namely, that in face of the Lord’s challenge none of the woman’s accusers could act.” Boice (1976:311) raises the tone of his argument, suggesting that Jesus preferred to continue his teaching on love and compassion and waive the laws of Moses very tactfully because if he did not, he would have fallen into their trap. For this reason, Jesus decides to create theology out of the situation by simply turning on his previous chapters of love and compassion. He argues that if Jesus said in Matthew 11:28 that “Come unto me, all ye who labour and are heavy laden”, it is because he moved around with sinners and publicans, teaching them to love. The major problem arises at this point of love because Jesus tends to love sinners at the expense of the law. How can one who says he is the Messiah loves sinners, eats with sinners and preach love to

sinners? This is heresy to them. This is a source of conflict in the making, handled with great wisdom by Jesus. The approach with the intention to trap Jesus is watered down by Jesus' silence and then his ignoring them by writing on the ground. Jesus then poses a challenge to them, saying that the one "who has not sinned should be the first to throw a stone at her", and this could be the reason why Boice (1976:313) states that Jesus instructs the woman to repent from sin for forgiveness to be effective. The fact that Jesus stands out exceptionally in forgiving this woman brilliantly agrees with the goal of his mission, so that his death on the Cross will reflect in his words, and his actions towards humankind are made meaningful. If he did not do so, his purpose on earth to give eternal life would be meaningless.

Gorman (2018:112) argues that "eternal life" refers to the life of the eschatological age, which begins in the present for those who have come to know God. The adulterous woman was given the opportunity in Jesus' symbolic gesture of forgiveness to know God and feel the love of God so that Jesus' mission could radiate from the cross. In effect, it turns out to be a missional commission over the woman (see Morgan 2018:112–121). Jesus did just that required act to release her from Jewish judicial processes. This act alone waves away the immense conflict that was evidently meant to arise after the adjudication trap set for Jesus.

Brodie (1991:158) interestingly concedes that this story of the adulterous woman is Christian, though added later. He sharply specifies that "it shows as Jesus overcoming the weight of a sinful past and weight of petty prestige games." For him, Jesus is the source of mercy who understands Jewish legalism against such defiance of Jewish religious law (see Witherington 1995:363). Ridderbos (1997:291) believes that Jesus silenced the curse of the law and re-established justice on the foundation of his grace. McFayden & Sarot (2001:79–80) share the same opinion, saying that it is not cheap grace. Rather, he talks of the unconditionality of divine grace as demonstrated on the cross.

Manus and Ukaga (2017:76) opine that this story provides us a pastoral implication through which to see Jesus' benevolence in his action and his honouring of women's rights (see O' Sullivan 2010:3). According to Manus and Ukaga (2017), Jesus is compassionate, merciful and plays a liberator's role to the woman endangered by her

accusers. She might be a sinner but not unpardonable, a woman in adultery but not infallible, and so she can be made righteous. Witherington (1995:363) shares such an opinion but adds that this text depicts Jesus' true character and that several traits in the text favour its authenticity as a text of the first century Mediterranean world. With that in mind, she must not be demonised and made evil. Rather, her pardoning is a means to unify the body of Christ and the Church and override decadent cultures, fanatic beliefs. What is interesting to note is that scholars have not really shown a desire to dwell on the theological implications of conflict on John 7:53–8:1-11 and to really explore and give theological insights regarding the *pericope adulterae* in commentaries, even though a few authors have published brief notes in some commentaries.

The Johannine text of John 7:53–8:1-11 definitely cannot be easily agreed to belong to John's Gospel, but some authors have pointed out that its authenticity suggests that it certainly can be traced within the Johannine traditional writings that lead up to the formation of the community (Witherington 1995:363). This section suggests to us the idea that the Johannine community existed amidst many squabbles with Jewish synagogue authorities. Therefore, such difficulties of existence and establishment by the community can also suggest the reason why the text could be missing and not easily fit into the canon (see Witherington 1995:362).

1.2.2 Critical exegetical issues on John 7:53–8:1-11

The passage of John 7:53–8:11 presents several critical exegetical issues, including questions about its authenticity, textual variations, and its placement within the Gospel of John. Scholars debate whether this passage was part of the original text, as it is absent from some of the earliest manuscripts. Additionally, the narrative's theological implications and its portrayal of Jesus' response to the woman caught in adultery invite further scholarly examination.

One of the most significant issues surrounding John 7:53–8:11 is its authenticity. This passage is absent from some of the earliest and most reliable manuscripts of the New Testament, including Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus, which dates back to the fourth century (Wallace, 2017:121). The absence of this passage in these early manuscripts has led many scholars to question whether it was part of the original text of

the Gospel of John. Also, the passage is not mentioned by early church fathers in their commentaries on the Gospel of John, which further casts doubt on its authenticity. For example, Origen and John Chrysostom, who wrote extensive commentaries on John, do not reference this passage (Dyson, 2018). This silence is significant because it suggests that the passage may not have been widely known or accepted in the early Christian community.

Another critical issue is the textual variations found in the manuscripts that do include John 7:53–8:11. These variations suggest that the passage may have been a later addition not original to the Gospel of John. For instance, some manuscripts place the passage after John 7:36, while others place it at the end of the Gospel, after John 21:25 (Wallace, 2017:121-122). This inconsistency in placement indicates that scribes may have inserted the passage at different points in the text, further questioning its originality. Moreover, the style and vocabulary of the passage differs from the rest of the Gospel of John. Scholars have noted that the language used in John 7:53–8:1-11 is more similar to that used in Synoptic Gospels, particularly the Gospel of Luke, than to the Johannine style (Dyson, 2018). This stylistic difference supports the theory that the passage may have been composed by a different author and later incorporated into the Gospel of John.

The theological implications of John 7:53–8:1-11 are also a point of contention. The passage depicts Jesus' response to the woman caught in adultery, emphasising themes of mercy and forgiveness. This portrayal aligns with the broader message of the New Testament but raises questions about its consistency with the rest of the Gospel of John. Some scholars argue that the passage's emphasis on forgiveness without explicit repentance is at odds with the Johannine emphasis on belief and obedience (Wallace, 2017:122). Furthermore, the passage's inclusion has implications for the doctrine of scriptural inerrancy. If John 7:53–8:1-11 was not part of the original text, its presence in modern Bibles challenges the notion that the Bible is free from error. This issue is particularly significant for evangelical scholars who uphold the doctrine of inerrancy (Wallace, 2017:121-122).

Understanding the historical context of John 7:53–8:1-11 is crucial for interpreting its meaning and significance. The passage is set during the Feast of Tabernacles, a

significant Jewish festival, and involves a confrontation between Jesus and the religious leaders. This context highlights the tension between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, a recurring theme in the Gospel of John (Dyson, 2018). The passage also reflects the social and legal customs of the time, particularly the practice of stoning for adultery. This historical backdrop provides insight into the gravity of the situation and the radical nature of Jesus' response. By refusing to condemn the woman, Jesus challenges the prevailing legalistic interpretation of the law and emphasises the importance of compassion and forgiveness (Dyson, 2018).

Mahlangu (2001:88–89) critiques honour as a price or value for something, respect reserved for someone, an office of honour, and a status of dignity where an individual is considered noble. This implies that honour conferred or acquired is qualified by others as worth not being lost. The fact that it was given to an individual should have been on the grounds of a clean sheet of behaviour that was ostensibly dignifying in the community of the people, thus making one an ambassador of the people. Scholars qualify that any honour that was bestowed upon anyone in first-century Mediterranean Israel, public or by birth, was equally acceptable. Honour acquired by such means is an indication of leniently conferred or dubiously acquired honour, and this could be called shameful (Mahlangu 2001:90). Shame was a bad name, which one would find tagged upon a family or individual because they were found guilty of a certain form of impure or unclean conduct. Impurity in the first century Mediterranean world is seen as an inseparable part of shame. Because shame has been aligned with an individual, his ancestry was also tagged as a family of shameful people. The critical nature of honour in this part of the world in the first century caused communities and rabbis to expel a family from participating in community and public events because of the humiliation they brought to the community and to the village (Mahlangu 2000:90–94).

Purity is equated to the qualification of an honourable title. Scholars have depicted that honour conferred to a name is a household name to be reckoned with and a name that has been exempted from public disgrace and shame (Mischke, 2010:5–6). Mischke (2010:16) highlights that purity is highly regarded as acquired. If it was acquired through the worth of some work done, it attracts recognition. Challenge and riposte was one method for the acquisition of honour, and of the man was defeated, the shame stigma

would come upon him. Purity is advanced to confer honour upon those who are found worthy of proper conduct. To conclude, honour, shame and purity are interwoven. Any honourable man in the first-century Mediterranean world is considered void of shame, honourable in society, and clean. He is deemed free of fraudulent and corrupt attitudes and free from public accusation, as was the case with any other public dignitary (Van Eck 2011:9–10). Corrupt persons were punished by being deprived of honourable status or stoned to death in the case of adultery.

Feminist scholars have pointed out that the honour-shame dynamic in Jewish society reinforced patriarchal control over women's bodies and sexuality. By placing the burden of communal honour on women, these norms effectively limited women's autonomy and subjected them to heightened surveillance and punishment. Fiorenza (1983) and Ilan (1995) argue that the focus on female sexual purity served to maintain male power and control, within both the family and the broader community. The story of the woman caught in adultery in John 8 illustrates this dynamic, with the woman's public humiliation contrasting sharply with the absence of the male offender.

Feminist critiques have been identified and likened to devoted disciples once they are recruited into a faction, as was the case with Theudas (Acts 5:36) (Phillips 2018:74). Malina (1996:161) critiques the rising migration of new recruits into groups or factions turned into antidotes for those who are firm in their critique for or against women. Critiquing the honour of women has become a regular phenomenon, as one can see in Phillips (2018:71), where he points out that the woman in the pericope adulterae was already found guilty (Jn 8:3) and is made to appear nude before the crowd in awful humiliation. The situation is an annunciation of an effective stripping of her honour in the place of shame and disgrace. The Pharisees and scribes are eminently assuming the role of accusers, even though they have an objective, but their objective is at the expense of the honour of the innocent woman.

Other scholars, such as Malina (1981) and Pitt-Rivers (1977), have focused on the role of honour and shame as mechanisms of social control. In their view, these concepts functioned to regulate behaviour and maintain social cohesion in a close-knit, collective society. By enforcing strict sexual norms and punishing offenders, the community was able to preserve its moral and spiritual integrity. Sexual offenses like adultery were seen

as threats not only to individual families but to the entire community, making public punishment a necessary means of preserving communal purity. The demand of the mob for the death penalty by stoning was accurately in line with religious laws specified in the Mishna, and Roman law also specified that a woman caught in adultery deserved execution. However, there was a limitation to the Jewish law in that Roman law clearly stated that Jews cannot carry out death penalties without the approval of the Roman governor (Philips 2018:74–75). The pitfall here is that social control in the case of the woman caught in adultery was meant for a specific reason: to trap Jesus. This communal control of social life inflicted shame on the woman. The woman's integrity was at the command of the mob until Jesus intervened to calm their demand, considering rather their own fallibility. Community control to curb social life ensured that the community experienced little or no conferring of shame upon any member of the community. It helped them protect family unity, resulting in little to no sexual cases, including rape, and community integrity was maintained (Malina, 1996:165–166). Because everyone who belonged to the community ought to conduct themselves according to the group norms. They were expected to bring honour and not shame to the group and group belonging meant that one was required to keep to the rules (Malina, 1996:176).

1.2.3 A Brief Social Analysis of the Weh Community

According to Geary (1985:186) and Nyamnjoh (2007:1), the Weh people settled in their current valley location in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, following the migrations forced by slave trader raids from northern Nigeria. They do have some practices that are biblical, as practised by first-century Mediterranean Jews, such as circumcision after eight days, strict adherence to the culture of avoiding cold-blooded animals, and raising and training their boys with the mentality of honouring the family name. At age six, the boy starts following the father to village events, such as burial ceremonies (*bih keh-ivheh*)¹, traditional dance ceremonies, and/or the enthronement ceremony of a new chief (as reported by Epah & Njang 2013:502). These two authors continue by highlighting that the boy is trained to go after the father to the raffia bush and learn how to do palm wine tapping, set traps, fish in the river, and fetch firewood for the warming of the house. The

¹ Bih keh-ivheh means the ceremonial ground where the deceased is laid in state.

boy is honoured by everyone who knows the family – especially the father – from which the boy hails. The girl, meanwhile, is trained to stay with the mother and learn household duties like going to the farm and doing sewing and knitting at home. She is generally trained to look after the house, do a little business at the front door, and fetch water for the family (Epah & Njang 2013). These cultural practices of the Weh people are almost identical to the ones depicted in the first century Mediterranean world.

The phenomenon of wife snatching in the Weh community is one relevant point for this research. Snatching is when a man challenges another man's authority by luring his wife away from him and getting married to her officially. This was a common practice in the 18th and 19th centuries in Weh, as alleged by Bern (2021), and it is explained that the reason for snatching was because the women were not given the space to do things as the men did. Furthermore, it was a manner of showing off by the capable and wealthy class in a bid to challenge the husband of the woman. It is actually believed by the notable Weh man that women are merely there to serve the man, and her place is in the kitchen, and she cannot be allowed to play as the boys do, which are similar practices to those of the first-century world (Epah & Njang 2013:504; see also Van Eck & Kok 2010:14). Rather, she should be in the kitchen with her mother. This implies that to snatch a woman is the norm, with no absolute reason to object to the action, but as mentioned above, women consent to elopement for various. However, because it was erroneously believed that a woman is merely the property of man and for that reason her place is to take care of children and take care of the kitchen, she is inferior to men (Van Eck & Kok 2010:13), which archetypically paints a similar picture to what used to be common practice in the first-century Mediterranean world. For this reason, many men did not send their girls to school, but the practice has changed in the late 20th and 21st centuries. Epah & Njang (2013:504) confirm this traditional viewpoint with various statements made by Luma (1983:247–248): 'you are only a woman', 'the place of the women is only on the bed, women are only fit for the bed', 'women are devils', 'women are like children, they lack intelligence', 'all women are flirts', 'women are cursed by God', 'women don't inherit from their fathers and husbands', 'all women are liars', and 'women are always wrong' (see Epah & Njang 2013). The act of wife snatching serves both as a denigration and humiliation of the man whose wife is lured away, as well as a source of pride and honour

for the man who managed to take the wife for himself. It is important to note that, within the Weh culture, men are allowed to marry more than one woman, as long as they can pay each woman's dowry. This also includes marrying the widow of your direct late brother or that of other family members. Wives are allowed to re-marry the brother of their late husbands, so long as the man is willing to take her as his wife. The result is that a man with means is defined or qualified as a wealthy and capable man who can marry up to ten wives. This tradition will be discussed at a later stage in this study.

The idea here is not that the Weh woman is seen to be a slave but that they have long been side-lined by the patriarchal nature of the community. The text of the adulterous woman describes this kind of phenomenon with the first-century women. Therefore, the Johannine text sheds more light on the context of the Weh community. Furthermore, this does not mean that there have not been any questions or objections from the community. Epah and Njang (2013:504) narrate how the Weh woman questions why she should be considered inferior, sidelined, and forced to withdraw from outdoor activities, made to feel incompetent and less important without rights to own property like men do.

The people of the community of Weh have a history of management of conflict similar to the model of Thomas Kilmann. The various traditional houses enforce and control the concept of competition among Weh indigenes—the *ndau Tse* endeavours to make indigenes avoid rivalry among themselves (Geh 2012:15–16). The villagers are encouraged to lay complaints before the relevant quarters so that rivalry which results in competition does not occur. Indigenes are encouraged to collaborate and to compromise their tough stances to challenge their opponents so that peace and order can reign in the village. The Weh traditional council follows these steps to manage conflicts: complain to the quarter leader, minimise, or avoid competition between rivals, and collaborate with the traditional council leaders. The indigenes are called upon to endeavour to compromise and reason with one another so that the township life can be harmonious, and people live in unity and peace governed under the traditional law and order system. The houses of governance ensure that everybody living in the township avoids confrontations, schisms, and squabbles among themselves. Rather, they prefer people to accommodate each other and show love to each other so that people can feel safe and unite to defend the community and her members. When it concerns the church,

her methods of management of conflict are prescribed in their constitutions and have steps to follow that are not necessarily the same as those of the traditional council. This calls for a comparison of the various methods.

The reason that this model is opted for is because it follows the same method that Weh leaders of time immemorial have opted to follow, and as has been mentioned above under the literature review, it has been overlooked by the church as a possible method for conflict management. They have generally opted for appeasement when conflict arises between villagers. Weh has been a peaceful home to many settlers from other villages and Nigerians operating businesses, among whom have been trouble-making settlers whose trouble has not gone unnoticed but have been managed successfully by the Weh Traditional (Geh, 2012). When it comes to interpersonal rivalries between local indigenes, the council has effectively dissuaded many indigenes to avoid fights. This has also been the same method used to handle the long-standing Weh and Wum border problem that has been politicised.

1.3. Problem Statement

The proposed research will examine ways in which the text of the woman caught in adultery, as found in John 7:53–8:11, has been and can be analysed to inform our understanding of the people on issues related to conflicts caused by elopement, adultery and related matters. Hence, the problem that this study seeks to address is as follows: in light of these cultural influences and practices amongst believers within reformed churches in the North-Western region of Cameroon, how can the text of John 7:53–8:1–11 play a role in informing their understanding of the background issues of the text and also enlighten their belief system to avoid the erroneous conviction that elders who commit adultery and practice wife snatching should be exempted from disciplinary sanctions. They are a people who indulge in adulterous extramarital affairs from their foundational history, which has been the basic route to wife snatching, consequently provoking the practice of adultery before elopement. As a result, members of churches' ruling councils who indulge in adultery also argue that they deserve forgiveness, as observed with Jesus, who pardoned the adulteress woman in John 7:53-8:1-11. These cultural influences cause severe conflicts from within and outside the church circles based on perverted immorality led by various forms of adultery resulting from the failure

to understand the attitude of Jesus towards women in a patriarchal community. To some extent, wife snatching grew out of such behaviour of promiscuity. To complicate the issue, some church members are beneficiaries and culprits of such practices, exemplified by a lack of solid family structures in their lives. Consequently, civic conflicts that lead to tribalism, sexism, patriarchalism, and other forms of injustice are rampant due to these cultural practices. Hence, it is the interest of this study to determine if John 7:53–8:1-11 can function as a limiting factor to the adulterous and wife-snatching conflict created by the cultural beliefs of this ethnic group pitting the Reformed churches against the community. Because many in the North-West region of Cameroon are still African Traditional Religious worshippers and also practice Christianity, it is difficult for them to understand that Jesus' attitude towards women was from the background of a male-dominated society where women deserved protection, which was a pure reflection of the patriarchal religious ethos and praxis in Jewish society (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1993b:140-143). Therefore, any unjust handling of women was not tolerated by Jesus, who showed compassion and mercy to the woman (Manus and Ukaga, 2017:75).

1.4. Research Question

Following the discussion in the literature review section, in the North-West region of Cameroon, societal conflicts is quite often the result of some cultural practices related to adultery, among a variety of other reasons. Practices such as wife snatching and other influential cultic practices, like *Ndau Ukum* and *Ndau Tseh*, are intense patriarchal men's cults. Note should be taken that elders of the traditional cults of the Weh community intermingle with the church elders, who form part of the village cults and are also part of Reformed church leadership. The sad reality is that in these societies, even the elders who are presumed to offer solutions to these issues do not have a clear understanding of the New Testament text of John 7:53-8:1-11. Their judgments are clouded by the conflicting values of the tradition of the village cults and those of the church. Hence, it is in the interest of this study to ask the following questions: ***is it possible that John 7:53–8:1-11 can offer insights for peace mediation and conflict resolution in a divided community? What sorts of insights can be drawn from this text to re-dress societal and religious conflicts in contemporary African ethnic groupings?*** The interest is to interpret this text to draw some insights into re-dressing the

problems and conflicts caused by adulterous cultural practices in Africa. In this present text, I find some resonating or rather interesting parallels between the first-century Mediterranean Johannine context and African societies, to some extent. This is by no means an irresponsible attempt to utilise this text, but rather a manner to elucidate principles imbued in the text to respond to social issues of life in today's world. I am drawn into the way the Johannine Jesus handles this societal issue in that context, from which I think we can learn from his example.

But the lack of application of Johannine Gospel in the mediation of conflict has been of less debate though a few of the debates have arisen that shed some light on the subject but to focus on the role of John 7:53-8:1-11 has not been done to such an extent that this work is considering to make it the centre of investigation. Therefore, any further arguments would likely deviate the focus of the investigation from the present centre of concern. Johannine studies have pointed to conflict situations in the text as we explained in the formation of the Johannine community but nevertheless does that give a comprehensive insight of the positive or negative role this text plays in the community of Weh people. Generally, Johannine studies have not very much attracted attention to conflict mediation as it should have even though many areas of the book of John's Gospel seeming portray some dissensions between Jesus and his followers. This study therefore should contribute to the body of knowledge of the Johannine studies demonstrating how important it is in the application of the text of John 7:53-8:1-11 and Johannine studies at large in the field of peace mediation studies. As such Johannine studies could contribute a lot in terms of peace mediation studies at local or international levels.

1.5. objectives of the study

Main Objective:

The main objective is to examine whether John 7:53–8:11 can provide valuable insights for mediating societal and religious conflicts in contemporary African ethnic communities, specifically about adulterous cultural practices in the North-West region of Cameroon.

Sub-Objectives:

1. To analyse the cultural practices associated with adultery, such as wife snatching and influential cultic traditions (e.g., NdaU Ukum and NdaU Tseh) within the Weh community, assessing their role in societal conflicts.
2. To investigate the intermingling roles of traditional cult elders and church leaders in the Weh community, and how this duality influences conflict-resolution practices in cases of adultery and other societal disputes.
3. To apply social-scientific criticism to understand the socio-religious, political, and cultural context of the community of John and identify parallels with the African cultural setting, especially in the North-West region of Cameroon.
4. To employ Thomas Kilmann's conflict management model as a secondary methodological framework to explore practical conflict resolution strategies derived from the approach of Jesus in John 7:53–8:11.
5. Interpret John 7:53–8:11 to elucidate principles applicable to the mediation of conflicts related to adulterous practices, offering constructive insights for peacebuilding within African communities.
6. To propose recommendations on integrating scriptural insights with culturally sensitive practices for church and community leaders in their conflict mediation roles in African settings.

1.6. Methodology of the study

Methodologically, this study seeks to employ a hybrid approach by joining social-scientific criticism with Kilmann's conflict management model. The researcher thinks that this resonates well with the objectives and the problem statement of the study. Again, a potential way to respond holistically to the questions raised by this study is to investigate the social, religious, political, and cultural life of the community of John, as well as outlining some connecting dots with the Weh social fabric. Hence, social-scientific methodology is deemed to be the primary methodology of this study, followed by the secondary optic of Thomas Kilmann's models of conflict management. These two optics seem to be a good blend to attend to the questions that this study is asking.

1.6.1. The Origins and explanations of Social Scientific Criticism

An exegetical technique called social-scientific criticism looks for hints about a text's original social and cultural context in the text's content and language, as well as in other antiquity-related information. This method arose from the use of form criticism developed by Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932). Horrell (1999:5) and Elliot (2011:3–4) narrate that this method grew from the 19th into the 20th century out of the zeal of some New Testament scholars who desired to analyse the early Christian cultures of the New Testament by applying social perspectives to the social questions of the New Testament.

Form criticism is interested in relating different textual materials to their *Sitz im Leben*, the social life setting of the texts. It was focused on reconstructing the earliest forms of text traditions to make use of in given social settings. As a result of this focus on social settings, Oscar Cullmann insisted in 1925 that a special branch be developed to use and interpret social matters. Adolf Deissmann (1866-1937) in 1911 and 1927 took time off to analyse the papyri's implication to the contribution and understanding of the social world of the New Testament, especially in the life of Paul's ministry. Other inspiring Germans included Friedrich Engels (1820–1895) and Karl Kautsky, who published a voluminous work on the origins of Christianity in 1908 before attracting the interest of the Chicago school to develop the desire to explore the social world of early Christianity. Big names such as Shirley Jackson Case and Shailer Matthews from the Chicago school came into the picture later on.

From 1960, there has been a great rise in the interest to explore the social world of early Christianity, which was sparked by the publication of a short book by Edwin Judge titled *“The Social Patterns of the Christian Groups in the First Century”*, and this rejuvenated interests in publications using this method. Martin Hengel published notable works on the subject in 1969 and 1973 (Horrell 1999:6). Meanwhile Elliot (2011:3) states that due to the valued work of Wayne Meeks on the sectarian perspective of John's Gospel (1972) and a later publication in which he treated Paul's mission as an urban phenomenon (1983), this gained a lot of consciousness in the New Testament world. Other authors also published their works, including Gerd Theissen (1978, 1982) on the social dynamics concerning the Jesus movement in Palestine and beyond; Fernando Belo (1974) on the debt system underlying the Gospel of Mark; John Gager's (1975) exposition of the

Revelation of John; my examination of First Peter as a product of a sectarian group within Israel with its focus on societal estrangement and group solidarity (Elliott 1981; 1990); and Bruce Malina's delineation of characteristic ancient Mediterranean perceptions, values and social strategies (Malina, 1981, 1986, Elliot 2011:2–3). These scholars established the foundation of this method's emergence and use for scholarly works of interest in the New Testament.

This kind of analysis is linked to form criticisms developed by Hermann Gunkel (1862–1932) and applied in New Testament studies by Martin Dibelius (1883–1947) and Rudolf Bultmann (1884–1976) (Horrell, 1999:4). According to the critique, since the culture in which these books were produced was significantly dissimilar from our own today, a modern interpretation cannot simply assert what the text means without first comprehending the social mores and presumptions of the author's time.

Social scientific criticism is a science that has become well known and used by academics in the last century. Horrell (1999:3) postulates that it is a discipline that has grown out of other disciplines, such as literary criticism, and social sciences and has a great interdisciplinary interwovenness with the humanities and social sciences. This discipline has demonstrated its links and dependence on historical criticism. This raises eyebrows and demands an understanding as to why it also seems to depend on historical-critical methods like the other biblical interpretative methods. The reason behind this is that the social sciences offer resources that rely on historical facts based on biblical texts analysed for a better comprehension of the social background of cultural communities (Horrell 1993), which are similar to texts of the first century Mediterranean world, to which the Johannine community could be seen to be much closer.

John Elliot defines social-scientific criticism as a discipline that analyses the social and cultural activities of a people based on biblical texts used to read theories, cultures, and the history of communities (Elliot, 1993:7, Elliot, 2011:2). Elliot (2011) also drives home the idea that the social sciences are relational and social, for they describe the *Sitz im Leben* in historical-critical terms. Thomas Kilmann's methods are based on understanding the history of the people and the cause of conflict which regularly results from the behaviour of a community towards another or a person towards the other before endeavouring to mediate (Kilmann, 2007:1).

According to Elliot (1993:7-8), socio-scientific criticism² is not a brand new or distinct analytical framework. The social-scientific approach is a branch of exegesis. By applying social-scientific analysis to texts and their geographical, historical, economic, social, political, and cultural settings, it enhances the other subfields of the historical-critical approach, namely, textual criticism, literary criticism, etc. The field of social sciences, particularly sociology and cultural anthropology, is used to answer the problems it poses to these two analytical subjects.

Social-scientific criticism of the New Testament is best understood as a development of historical criticism (Barton 1995). As such, it is part of the overall task of interpreting the New Testament texts in the context of the first-century Mediterranean world from where they came. However, whereas historical criticism traditionally focuses on questions of dating, authorship, language, genre, historical background, the history of the tradition, and the particularity of historical events narrated in the texts, social-scientific criticism asks questions of a different kind. It seeks to understand the typical social patterns and taken-for-granted cultural conditions most likely to have characterised the New Testament world” (Barton 1997:277).

Social-scientific criticism (SSC) of the Bible is that phase of the exegetical task that analyses the social and cultural dimensions of the text and its environmental context through the utilisation of the perspectives, theories, models, and research of the social sciences. As a component of the historical-critical method of exegesis, social-scientific

² It is at the centre of socio-historical to look at countless social, political and economic aspects concerning to the first-century world. Socio-historical should not be mistaken with socio-scientific, these are two distinct methods. While both socio-historical criticism and socio-scientific criticism seek to understand the social and historical context of cultural phenomena, socio-scientific criticism places more emphasis on the integration of scientific and social perspectives, while socio-historical criticism focuses primarily on the historical and cultural context (Meeks 1983:1-2, Elliot, 1989:2, Van Aarde 1992:437, van Eck 2001:593-596, Jerome and Neyrey 2010:178). These methods function hand in hand because social scientific method is a new way to see and conceptualize historical facts (Horrell 1999:15-16).

criticism investigates biblical texts as meaningful configurations of language intended to communicate between composers and audiences. In this process, it studies not only (1) the social aspects of the form and content of texts but also the conditioning factors and intended consequences of the communication process, (2) the correlation of the text's linguistic, literary, theological (ideological), and social dimensions and (3) how this textual communication illustrates both a reflection of a response to a specific social and cultural context. That is, this method is designed to serve as an effective vehicle of social interaction and an instrument of social, literary, and theological consequence (Elliott 1993:7).

Since the world of the twenty-first century is at the core of social and historical studies, a vast array of social, political and economic issues are examined using these methods in New Testament studies (Horrell 1999:4). Contrary to popular belief, social-historical research is not the same as social-scientific research. Even though the social-historical approach and social-scientific approach both aim to fully comprehend the social and historical context associated with cultural occurrences, the social-scientific approach emphasises the fusion of scientific and social perspectives more than the social-historical approach does. The former places a greater importance on the historical and cultural context (Barton 1997).

Elliot (1993:7) explains further that the portion of the exegetical process known as social-scientific criticism of the Bible examines the social and cultural aspects of the text as well as its geographical setting using the viewpoints, theories, stimulations and research of the social sciences. Biblical texts are examined as meaningful language formations designed to communicate among composers and audiences as part of the historical-critical approach of exegesis.

The characteristics of the rhetorical situation and real-world environment of these texts, as well as the elements influencing their reaction, have been made clear here via the use of a range of philosophy and analytical approaches. As a result, social scientists have examined how texts and civilisation as a whole are connected and how they differ from one another. Several of their studies are partly the outcome of cooperative research and publication, as demonstrated by the several publications of the Context Group. The social-scientific approach acknowledges the wide range of points of view, experiences

and social positions determining the choice of objects for analysis and the proposition utilised. In its analysis of these documents, it also draws on knowledge gleaned from research in archaeology and epigraphy. As a result, it may explain the way a given civilisation operated throughout a certain era in history.

In biblical scholarship, the social-scientific approach has been used to explain the characteristics of the rhetorical situation, the real-world context of canonical writings, and the factors influencing their response (insider-outsider conflict, issues of social formation, belonging, cohesion, and boundaries, sectarian perspectives and strategies, key cultural values, and theologies or ideologies related to particular interests). As a result, social scientists have examined how texts and culture are interrelated and how they differ from one another.

To shed a bit of light to this explanation, there is the distinction in the use of “emic” and “etic” information from indigenous sources. According to Elliot (2011:3), emic information comes from informants, who are totally indigenous people with information acquired from the frameworks of knowledge, experience, and rationalisations (emic sources for emphasis), while etic relates to the analytical perspective and categories of the modern knowledge.

According to Elliot (2011:3), emic sources apply to the biblical texts and all ancient sources; whilst the latter applies to contemporary readers and scholars. This implies that the exegete of the text is guided to avoid anachronism because the gaps in the sources separate the emic and etic sources. This pointer extrapolates the idea that the interpreter should consider plausibility structures that are credible to the cultural beliefs and concepts, and thus strike a balance with the text.

The second methodological system of analysis to be incorporated in this study is the method of Thomas Kilmann, which corroborates with the model Jesus used in the *pericope adulterae*. Kilmann’s conflict management model comprises five methods, namely competition, collaboration, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. It is perhaps important at this juncture to point out that by incorporating this method, the researcher is fully conscious of the fallacies of ethnocentrism and anachronism. Hence, it can be arguably stressed that the cultural values, customs, norms, and social

dynamics of the social world of Jesus and his first-century audience are considered acceptable but are unfamiliar to the 21st century readers (van Eck, 2017:165). Hence, in this study, social-scientific criticism is the primary research methodology. Thomas Kilmann's method is the secondary method that will be applied from a conflict resolution perspective. This perspective assumes that in this pericope Jesus is resolving conflict from two dimensions: Social conflict and as well as theological conflict.

Having read through the entire explanation of this chapter, the Kilmann's method is a social model that helps blend the scientific social system of critiquing texts into convergence with social biblical critical system of understanding texts as social corpuses of literature influencing human lives. Jesus in that text of John 7:53-8:1-11 does a tremendous work to draw the attention of the people to the social ills of life by asking if anyone has never sinned. He causes a potential catastrophe to become a social matter falling within the category of the teaching of forgiveness. Kilmann argues that avoidance is a better way to stop conflict, and Jesus also recommends that avoidance helps to escalate conflict. Kilmann's methods of collaborate and compromise speaks into the New Testament of forgiveness, mercy and compassion which are key concepts as demonstrated in this work.

1.6.2. Thomas Kilman explained

The Thomas Kilmann model of conflict mediation is designed in a such way that it is used to assess responses of individual's involved in conflict. It was developed in the early 1970s by Kenneth and Thomas Kilmann (TKI). It comprises of five models that are well described in 5.6.1 and 5.6.2. These models engage with the conflict management models applied by experts in the domain. They are five of them including competing, collaboration, compromising, accommodating, and avoidance (see sections 5.6.1 % 5.6.2).

1.7 Conclusion

This introductory chapter considered all the necessary components of any standard academic research issues. First, the motive and background of the study provides insight into what generated the interest for this research. Then, the literature review was

discussed, as well as the research question, problem statement, methodology and objectives of the study. This chapter serves as a background to the entire study and prepares the groundwork for the following chapters, which focus on unpacking the problem and concerns that interest the study.

Chapter 2

An Exegetical Reading of John 7:53–8:11

2.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to provide a comprehensive exegetical reading of John 7:53–8:11, a passage that has sparked considerable scholarly debate and interest. Before we delve into the analysis of the text, section (2.1) will firstly lead us into some few terms defined to enable the audience familiarized itself and comprehend the basis of the terms applied in the context of peace mediation. The analysis will begin with a brief overview of the contextual issues within the Gospel of John (2.2). The core of this chapter will be an in-depth exegesis of John 7:53–8:11 (2.3), which includes an exploration of its narrative location (2.3.1) and a detailed exegetical analysis (2.3.2). Finally, the study will conclude with a summary of the findings (2.4).

Definition of concepts

Definition of conflict resolution

Conflict resolution according to this work is the ability to use various parameters such as those used by Thomas conflict to bring a formal or informal conflict to stop or to a truce for a given period. During this period there is the exchange of political prisoners and delivery of food items and medical equipment if it is a dispute that is formally involving two warring factions. This process can be local or international, documented or not but it should lead to a peaceful solution to the dispute (see page 144). In other words, this work describes it from the local perspective of the community this work is investigating as escaping and avoidance of trouble and fights between neighbours and local indigenes.

Definition of Peace

Peace is the presence of tranquility or the absence of violence and or war which is used to destabilize a community or nation. It is where there is no disturbance or fighting between two people, communities, or nations that cohabit quietly with each other.

Definition of mediation

Mediation is the process whereby disputing parties or warring factions seek the expertise of a third party to assist them negotiate peace or truce or even a permanent solution to their crisis. The services of a mediator could be sought for the simple fact that the mediator helps them find a solution to the conflict and also leads the warring factions to discover the sustainable interests they intend achieve in the peace negotiations or from the conflict. The mediator is also called the negotiator who draws from the positions of both factions to establish a new position that serves as a new deal between the two parties.

Defining conflict management

Conflict management is the process of drawing two warring factions in a community and establishing peaceful relations between them. An example is a husband and wife having matrimonial crises that are resolved. A full discussion conflict management according to this study is done in chapter 5 (section 5.6).

2.2 An Overview of the Contextual Issues of John

Texts are a means of communication or are the ancient and modern models of communication between people in a community (Musyoka & Karanja 2014:196–197). Texts narrate the history of a people and give the literacy levels of a group of people against a cultural background. Biblical texts also speak of a people, and these texts are speaking to communities today, helping them find their paths to build substantive and subsistent communities. The following section discusses some significant aspects of the context of the Fourth Gospel. In John 8:1–11, it is noticeable that Jesus' handling of the conflict between the adulterous woman in John 7:53–8:11 is different from the way Jesus resolved many other conflicts. He declares forgiveness over her and charges her not to sin any further. Jesus ends up victorious in the conflict and frees the woman who is under threat of the death penalty (Culpepper 1995:628–629). In John 2:12–25, Jesus is

creating conflict by chasing out the merchants from the Temple precincts. In John 18:4–11, Jesus reprimands Peter firmly when he cuts off the ear of Malchus in a conflict situation that could escalate and reaches an appeasement deal for the Father’s purpose to be realised. In the case of the adulterous woman, he divinely and practically resolves the conflict, but not to the liking of the Pharisees and scribes. The fact is that every text has its context in which it appears or is placed. Van Eck (2010:24) says that “One always has to remember that each gospel has three different ‘worlds’ (the gospel’s ‘Trinity’!), namely a textual- (the text), referential- (the co-text) and contextual world (context).” What Van Eck observes is very significant for any responsible exegesis of any ancient or contemporary text.

The essence of a text is that it communicates a message between the reductionist (author of the text), message (text) and reader, who is the one who receives the text (contextual world). Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate the world that shaped the fourth Gospel. This exercise seeks to provide the basis of the following chapters: in other words, this is an attempt to provide a backbone for the entire study that will delve into the social world of the text and the social issues they struggled with as a community of early Christians.

The provenance of John's Gospel continues to be a rich field of scholarly inquiry, with recent studies providing nuanced perspectives on its dating, audience, and authorship. The dating of the Gospel is generally placed towards the end of the first century, around 90–100 CE. Thompson (2004:568) asserts that the widely accepted date range for the Gospel of John is AD 90–100. This is supported by several factors: the Gospel's advanced theology, which suggests a significant period needed to develop post-resurrection Christology; alignment with early church writers like Irenaeus and Eusebius, who indicated it was written after the Synoptic Gospels; and the influence of Mark's Gospel on John. Additionally, the absence of references to the destruction of Jerusalem implies a date well after AD 70, when societal focus on the event had waned. The use of the term "Sea of Tiberias" instead of "Sea of Galilee," common around AD 80-90, along with advanced ecclesiastical references, opposition to Docetism, and the portrayal of "the Jews" reflecting increasing Jewish-Christian tensions.

However, some scholars, like John A.T. Robinson, have argued for an earlier date, possibly before 70 CE. In his influential work "Redating the New Testament," He argues for a pre-70 CE³ date for the Gospel of John. Robinson's primary rationale is the absence of any explicit reference to the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, a significant event that would likely have been mentioned if the Gospel were written afterward. He also points to the present tense used in John 5:2, which describes the pool of Bethesda as still existing, suggesting it was written before the city's destruction (Wallace 1990:177–205). Robinson's argument challenges traditional dating by proposing that the Gospel was composed within the lifetime of eyewitnesses, thereby enhancing its historical reliability (Robinson, 277–278 see, also Stegall, 2009). This perspective, while not widely accepted, has gained some traction and respect among scholars for its thorough examination of internal textual evidence and historical context.

The audience of John's Gospel is believed to be a mixed community of Jewish and Gentile Christians, reflecting the Gospel's dual emphasis on Jewish traditions and broader Hellenistic thought. This is evident in the Gospel's unique blend of Jewish traditions and Hellenistic philosophical concepts. The Gospel frequently references Jewish festivals, customs, and scriptures, indicating a familiarity with Jewish traditions. At the same time, it employs language and ideas that resonate with a broader Hellenistic audience, such as the concept of the Logos (Word) in the prologue (John 1:1–18), which parallels Greek philosophical thought.

This dual emphasis suggests that the Gospel was intended to bridge the gap between Jewish and Gentile believers, fostering a unified Christian identity. The Johannine community, therefore, likely consisted of individuals from diverse backgrounds, navigating the complexities of integrating their varied cultural and religious heritages into a cohesive faith community. Recent Johannine scholarship, including the works of scholars like Richard Bauckham (1998) and Craig Blomberg (2007), has revisited the traditional views on authorship. While the consensus remains that the Gospel was likely written by a member of the Johannine community rather than John the Apostle himself, there is a growing appreciation for the complex editorial process that may have involved

³ See Keener 2003 and Keener 2014:245-247;. He talks lengthily about authorship and dating, including a broader discussion on arguments surrounding this argument.

multiple contributors over time. This perspective is supported by internal textual evidence and the broader historical context of early Christian writings.

The Gospel's theological depth and unique portrayal of Jesus have led scholars to explore its purpose and message in greater detail. Maurice Casey and Louis Ruprecht, for instance, have critically examined the historical reliability of John's Gospel, emphasising its distinct theological agenda and its divergence from the Synoptic Gospels. Despite these debates, the Gospel of John remains a cornerstone of New Testament studies, offering profound insights into the early Christian understanding of Jesus and his mission.

2.3. An Exegesis of John 7:53–8:11

The focus of this section is to examine the passage known as the *Pericope Adulterae*, or John 7:53–8:11. It will investigate the intricate authentication debate surrounding this "floating" passage to establish a foundation for further exegetical discussion. This exegetical exercise will attend to the historical-cultural and literary contexts of the passage, analyse its content through word and observation studies to uncover its possible original meaning, and offer suggestions for modern readers. The goal is to provide a historical-cultural and literary contextual basis for a more detailed analysis of the present text.

The mention of the Mount of Olives in the introductory sentence is significant. This location foreshadows Jesus' betrayal by Judas Iscariot at the same place, which is thematically linked to the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 18:2). In this brief yet profound passage, Jesus establishes His authority as a true teacher and scribe by bending down to write on the ground (John 8:6). This act symbolises His fulfilment of the Old Testament, or Mosaic law, as He stands in as the sacrificial substitute for the adulterous woman. Jesus writes on the ground a second time to signify the New Testament of grace that will come after His crucifixion and resurrection. What Jesus does for the adulterous woman in this passage, He will soon do for all who believe in Him. The woman represents all of humanity. John 7:53–8:11 serves as a condensed, parable-like account of Jesus' trial, crucifixion, and resurrection, as well as an exemplification of the reason for these events.

2.4.1 Narrative Location of John 7:53–8:11

In this section, the goal is to navigate the immediate context of John 7:53–8:11. The Gospel of John opens with a prologue (John 1:1–18) that introduces Jesus Christ as the divine Logos, or Word, who was with God from the beginning and came to dwell among humanity. This theological foundation sets the stage for the Johannine narrative, emphasising Jesus' identity and mission (Brown, Fitzmyer and Murphy, eds. 1990).

The initial chapters of John's Gospel focus on Jesus' ministry and interactions with various individuals and groups. In John 1:19–51, John the Baptist testifies about Jesus, declaring Him to be the Lamb of God. This declaration points to Jesus' sacrificial role in atoning for humanity's sins. As the narrative progresses, Jesus performs his first miracle at the wedding in Cana (John 2:1–11), turning water into wine. This event symbolises Jesus' transformative power and initiates His public ministry. Subsequently, in John 2:13–25, Jesus cleanses the temple, demonstrating His authority and zeal for true worship.

In John 3, Jesus has a significant conversation with Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews. This dialogue explores themes of spiritual rebirth and the necessity of faith in Jesus for salvation. Jesus' discourse culminates in the famous verse John 3:16, emphasising God's love and the purpose of Jesus' mission. The narrative continues with Jesus' ministry expanding and His teachings gaining attention. In John 4, Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman at the well, revealing Himself as the Messiah and offering living water, symbolising eternal life. This encounter challenges social norms and underscores Jesus' inclusive message of salvation.

In John 5, Jesus heals a paralysed man on the Sabbath, sparking controversy with the Jewish religious leaders. This event leads to a discourse where Jesus asserts His authority as the Son of God and the giver of life (Keener, 2003:735-738). By the time we reach John 7, Jesus is teaching openly in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. The increasing tension between Jesus and the religious authorities is evident as they seek to arrest Him (John 7:30–32). The stage is set for the dramatic encounter in John 7:53–8:11,

where a woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus, testing His stance on the Mosaic Law.

John 7:53–8:11, known as the Pericope Adulterae, is a controversial passage in the Gospel of John that recounts the story of a woman caught in adultery brought before Jesus. The narrative unfolds within the context of the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem, a significant Jewish festival. As Jesus teaches in the temple, religious leaders bring the woman to Him, testing His adherence to Mosaic Law, which prescribes stoning for adultery. In response, Jesus famously challenges the crowd, inviting the one without sin to cast the first stone. This prompts introspection among the accusers, who gradually disperse. Jesus, then, in a moment of grace and forgiveness, tells the woman to go and sin no more, illustrating His emphasis on mercy over judgment. This narrative symbolises Jesus' teachings on forgiveness and the human condition, emphasising redemption and the transformative power of compassion within a religious and legalistic setting. The immediate context of John 7:53–8:11 is crucial to understanding the story's significance. In John 7, Jesus is in Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles, teaching openly in the temple. This context sets the stage for the events that unfold in the subsequent passage.

John 7:53–8:1 describes how everyone went to their own homes after Jesus had finished teaching for the day. Early the next morning, Jesus returns to the temple and begins teaching again, drawing a crowd. It is in this setting that the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman caught in adultery, seeking to test Jesus and trap Him in a dilemma regarding Jewish law. The text reference in John 8:4–5 specifically states, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now, what do you say?" This question places Jesus in a challenging position, as the Mosaic Law indeed prescribed stoning for adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22–24). Jesus' response, "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7-NIV), redirects the focus from legalistic judgment to personal introspection and moral accountability. This interaction reveals Jesus' emphasis on mercy, forgiveness, and the deeper spiritual principles underlying the law. The immediate context, therefore, underscores the tension between legalism and grace,

highlighting Jesus' teachings on compassion⁴ and the transformative power of His message within the religious and societal norms of His time.

2.4.2 A Close consideration of John 7:53–8:11

The passage of John 7:53–8:11, commonly referred to as the *pericope adulterae*, occupies a contentious place in biblical scholarship due to its uncertain textual history. Modern Bible translations often annotate this passage with notes indicating its absence from the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. Additionally, its placement within the Gospel varies significantly across different traditions. While most manuscripts position it after John 7:52, others situate it at the end of John's Gospel or even within the Gospel of Luke (Cadbury, 1927; Hodges, 1979).

Henry Cadbury notes that the textual evidence for placing this passage in Luke is weak, as nearly all authorities that include it assign it to John, usually following John 7:52 (Cadbury, 1927). Zane Hodges affirms this, highlighting that variations in the placement of the passage are rare. Manuscripts that place the *pericope* outside John, such as after Luke 21:38, are exceptionally few and lack significant textual weight (Hodges, 1979). The dominance of its current position supports its inclusion as part of John's Gospel in most modern editions.

2.4.2.1. Manuscript Evidence

Quantitatively, the *pericope adulterae* appears in over 1,400 Greek manuscripts, whereas only 267 omit it, including some of the oldest and most significant manuscripts, such as Codex Sinaiticus and Codex Vaticanus (Bruce, 1981). While the omission in certain manuscripts is sometimes attributed to physical damage or missing pages, Hodges points out that assumptions of exclusion based on “missing leaves” should be approached cautiously (Hodges, 1979).

Jerome's Latin Vulgate (ca. 383 CE) includes the *pericope*, suggesting its presence in his textual sources, and Church Fathers like Augustine defend its authenticity (Augustine,

⁴ Stibbe (1994:63) poses a question on these same lines, arguing that the readers are left in limbo if the Gospel of John does not demonstrate a biography of Hellenistic work. It does also consist of a wider range of factors it addresses, such as inspirational stories. It goes beyond that and dives into narratives of mercy, compassion and grace.

De adulterinis coniugiis). Augustine speculated that the passage was omitted from some manuscripts due to concerns about its potential misuse, particularly the fear that it might be perceived as offering leniency toward adultery (Augustine, *ibid*). This theory underscores the possible interplay between societal mores and textual transmission.

2.4.2.2. Internal Contextual Arguments

Advocates for the inclusion of the *pericope* within John highlight its narrative coherence. For example, Gavin McGrath observes that John 8:20 refers to Jesus' teaching in the temple treasury, which would be disconnected from John 7:52 without the intervening events described in the *pericope adulterae* (McGrath, 2014). The sequence beginning with "Then spake Jesus again unto them" (John 8:12) fits more naturally following the *pericope*, which details Jesus' return to the temple and interaction with the Pharisees. Omitting the passage creates a jarring narrative gap, further supporting its canonical placement.

Johann Bengel's commentary reinforces this argument, noting that the deliberate removal of this passage by transcribers might reflect concerns about its public reading rather than doubts about its authenticity. Such marginalisation does not necessarily imply inauthenticity but could result from external pressures on early Christian communities (Bengel, *Gnomen*).

2.4.2.3. Canonical and Theological Considerations

The broader context of the *pericope adulterae*'s inclusion in the New Testament canon reflects its reception during the second and third centuries, coinciding with the rise of heretical movements that sought to revise traditional Christian texts (Duvall & Hays, 2012). The canonisation process, which affirmed this passage by the fourth century, highlights the early church's discernment of its value, despite lingering textual challenges. The Council of Trent (1545–1563) formalised the passage's canonical status by endorsing the Latin Vulgate as authoritative. However, the textual concerns persisted into modern times, keeping debates about its origin and authenticity alive (Bruce, 1981).

While the authenticity of John 7:53–8:11 remains debated, its enduring presence in manuscript traditions and ecclesiastical usage affirms its theological significance.

Scholars like Hodges and McGrath emphasise the internal consistency it brings to John's narrative, supporting its inclusion in the canon. Moreover, the societal implications of its content, particularly its portrayal of Jesus' mercy, continue to resonate with contemporary audiences, reflecting the passage's unique illustrative power and historical endurance.

2.4.3.4. Literary Context of John 7:53–8:11

The Pharisees erroneously conclude that Jesus is not a prophet, and the scene ends with everyone going "to his own house" (John 7:52–53). In contrast, Jesus retreats to the Mount of Olives, a location imbued with future significance in the narrative. This specific setting foreshadows critical events in Jesus' ministry—His betrayal by Judas Iscariot, His trial, and ultimately His crucifixion as the sacrificial Lamb. Similarly, the woman caught in adultery is betrayed and tried before the court, though unlike Jesus, she is spared execution. This parallel highlights Jesus as her substitute, taking her place in judgment and securing her pardon (Moloney, 2005; Brown, 1979). The reference to the Mount of Olives in the *Pericope Adulterae* connects these two moments, presenting an unparalleled act of divine love and mercy.

The challenge brought against Jesus in the temple court revolves around the Mosaic Law (Deut 22:22–24), where the Pharisees and scribes seek to trap Him in a legal and theological dilemma (John 8:6). Jesus, described as the Word made flesh and the true Author of the Law, possesses divine legal authority (John 1:14; 5:30; Matt 7:29; Heb 12:2). Twice, He writes on the ground, possibly signifying His authority as the divine Lawgiver (John 8:6, 8:8). Between these symbolic actions, Jesus "raises Himself up" (John 8:7) and delivers the perfect response, saving the woman from condemnation and death while pointing to Himself as the ultimate source of justice and mercy (Keener, 2003:737; Lincoln, 2005).

The subsequent discourse in John 8 reveals a mixed audience—some Pharisees who reject Jesus and others who begin to believe in Him (John 8:12–14, 8:31). The text frequently alludes to division: the timing of Jesus' teaching during the midway point of the festival, the separation of the accused woman from her male counterpart despite the Mosaic law requiring both parties to face judgment (Deut 22:22–24), and Jesus writing on

the ground not once but twice. This theme of division points to the choice every individual must make, either for or against Christ (Deut 30:19). Jesus' intervention in the woman's case places Him at the intersection of the Old Covenant's judgment and the New Covenant's mercy, embodying the Lamb who reconciles the two (Luke 12:51–52; Matt 12:22–28; Moloney, 2005).

2.4.3. Structural and Thematic Significance in John 7:53–8:11

Given that texts communicate messages to people their configuration by the author gives a peculiar meaning to the audience and every word has a specific meaning. The structure of the text and its themes give immense facts to decode from it. The text of John 7:53-8:11 is also communicating some important message to the reader and ensures that the reader identifies or decode its meaning. Therefore, the verse-by-verse breakdown is to enable readers to understand what the verses are pregnant as message. Below ensues the verse-by-verse analysis of the text.

A. Ἐπορεύθησαν ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ· ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν (7:53–8:1)

(Jesus separates himself from the crowd and prepares for teaching.)

B. Καὶ ὀρθροῦ ἦλθεν πάλιν εἰς τὸ ἱερόν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς ἤρχετο πρὸς αὐτόν (8:2)

(Jesus begins teaching; public setting established.)

C. Ἀναγαγόντες δὲ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι γυναῖκα ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ κατειλημμένην... (8:3–4)

(Accusation brought by scribes and Pharisees.)

D. Εἰς μέσον καὶ λέγουσιν... Ὁ νόμος Μωϋσῆς ἡμῖν ἐντείλατο τὰς τοιαύτας λιθάζειν... (8:5–6a)

(Focus on the Law and legal dilemma.)

E. Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς κάτω κύψας τῷ δακτύλῳ κατέγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν (8:6b)

** (Jesus writes on the ground in silence.) **

F. Ὁ ἀναμάρτητος ὑμῶν πρῶτος ἐπ' αὐτὴν βαλέτω λίθον (8:7)

(Turning point: Call to self-reflection and humility.)

E'. Καὶ πάλιν κατακύψας ἔγραφεν εἰς τὴν γῆν (8:8)

(Jesus writes on the ground again.)

D'. Καὶ ἦρξαντο ἐξέρχεσθαι εἰς καθ' εἷς ἀρξάμενοι ἀπὸ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων (8:9)

(Accusers depart; their authority undermined.)

C'. Καὶ κατελείφθη μόνος, καὶ ἡ γυνὴ ἐν μέσῳ οὔσα (8:9b)

(Focus returns to Jesus and the woman.)

B'. Γύναι, ποῦ εἶσιν; Οὐδεὶς σε κατέκρινεν; (8:10)

(Jesus addresses the woman directly; intimate interaction established.)

A'. Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε κατακρίνω· πορεύου· καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν μηκέτι ἀμάρτανε (8:11)

(Resolution: Grace and exhortation to moral transformation.)

2.4.4. Graphic Form or Structure of John 7:53–8:11

A. Jesus withdraws to the Mount of Olives (7:53–8:1)

B. Jesus teaches in the temple (8:2)

C. Woman accused and brought forward (8:3–4)

D. Legal dilemma presented to Jesus (8:5–6a)

E. Jesus writes on the ground (8:6b)

F. "Let the one without sin cast the first stone" (8:7)

E'. Jesus writes on the ground again (8:8)

D'. Accusers leave one by one (8:9)

C'. Focus on Jesus and the woman (8:9b)

B'. Jesus questions the woman (8:10)

A'. Jesus forgives and sends her away with a moral command (8:11)

2.4.5. Structure's Main Remarks

2.4.5.1. Focal Point (F)

The centre of the chiasm is Jesus' pivotal statement, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone." This serves as the turning point and encapsulates the moral and theological thrust of the passage. The statement in John 8:7, "Let the one among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone," forms the theological and rhetorical heart of the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11). This profound declaration reframes the accusatory confrontation between Jesus and the scribes and Pharisees, shifting the focus from the transgressions of the accused woman to the moral failings of her accusers. Scholars agree that this moment encapsulates key themes of Johannine theology, including grace, judgment, and introspective accountability.

Köstenberger (2004) identifies the chiastic structure of the passage, which centres on Jesus' pivotal statement, demonstrating how the narrative's escalating tension finds resolution in this redirection of the moral lens. This structural insight highlights Jesus' deliberate subversion of the accusatory process, a hallmark of His teaching throughout John's Gospel. Keener (2003) situates the incident within its historical and cultural context, noting that Mosaic Law (Deut. 22:22–24) prescribed stoning for adultery. However, Jesus transcends the literal application of the law, emphasising its deeper intent, thereby fulfilling His mission of prioritising mercy and repentance over punitive judgment.

Carson (1991) explores the theological implications, interpreting Jesus' response as a universal indictment of human sinfulness. This statement dismantles the self-righteousness of the accusers, redirecting their judgmental gaze inward. Carson connects this to the Johannine portrayal of divine grace, which ultimately culminates in Christ's redemptive work. Similarly, Morris (1995) focuses on the ethical dimensions of the episode, aligning it with the Gospel's broader themes of light exposing darkness (John 3:19–21). For Morris, Jesus' challenge discourages hypocritical judgment and invites a deeper understanding of personal culpability before God.

Brown (1966) interprets Jesus' authority in this moment as central to Johannine Christology. The statement positions Jesus as the ultimate arbiter of justice, reflecting His divine role in revealing the Father's will. O'Day (2015) expands on this, viewing the interplay of judgment and grace in the passage as a microcosm of the Gospel's overarching message. She argues that Jesus' invitation for the accusers to self-examine their sinfulness prefigures the Johannine emphasis on Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29), who offers forgiveness to all.

Moloney (1998) observes how Jesus' words create a narrative pause, a moment of silence and self-reflection that forces the accusers to confront their hypocrisy. This narrative technique underscores the weight of Jesus' statement and its capacity to dismantle the mob's collective judgment. Barrett (1978) traces intertextual echoes of prophetic critiques, such as Isaiah 1:11–17 and Amos 5:21–24, noting that Jesus positions Himself within the prophetic tradition, calling for authentic repentance rather than superficial piety.

Brant (2011) focuses on the sociopolitical ramifications of Jesus' words, emphasising how they destabilise the power dynamics of the moment. By holding the accusers morally accountable, Jesus not only subverts their authority but also empowers the marginalised, particularly the accused woman, reflecting the Gospel's commitment to social justice. Finally, Bauckham (2015:56-57) underscores the hermeneutical significance of the passage, suggesting that it serves as a guide for Christian ethics. He interprets Jesus' statement as a call to humility and self-awareness, principles that should shape interpersonal relationships and communal accountability in contemporary Christian practice.

2.4.5.2. Symmetry

The corresponding elements (e.g., Jesus' actions and his accusers' behaviour) mirror one another, enhancing the narrative's literary and thematic coherence. The symmetry within the narrative of John 7:53–8:11 contributes significantly to its literary and thematic coherence, with corresponding elements—such as Jesus' actions and the accusers' behaviour—serving as mirrored contrasts that deepen the passage's meaning. As Köstenberger (2004) notes, the chiasmic structure emphasises the central turning point,

where Jesus' response dismantles the accusers' scheme while simultaneously reframing the moral focus. Moloney (1998) highlights how Jesus' deliberate silence, as He writes on the ground, mirrors the silence that overtakes the accusers as they are convicted by their own conscience and retreat. This dynamic interplay between action and response creates a balanced narrative rhythm, reinforcing the theological message. Brant (2011) underscores how the symmetry amplifies the narrative tension, juxtaposing the aggressive, accusatory approach of the scribes and Pharisees with Jesus' composed and reflective demeanour. The thematic mirroring, as observed by Brown (1966), highlights the Gospel's emphasis on moral introspection and divine grace, as the accusers' hypocritical judgment stands in stark contrast to Jesus' merciful intervention. This symmetrical arrangement not only enhances the literary quality of the pericope but also underscores its central theological themes of justice, grace, and self-awareness.

2.4.5.3. Thematic Depth

The arrangement underscores themes of judgment, introspection, and transformative grace, encapsulating the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as a wise and compassionate arbiter of justice. This chiasmic structure shows how the narrative's form reinforces its theological message, blending literary elegance with profound ethical and spiritual insights. The chiasmic structure of John 7:53–8:11 underscores key themes of judgment, introspection, and transformative grace, reflecting the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as a wise and compassionate arbiter of justice. Köstenberger (2004) observes that the narrative's carefully balanced arrangement enhances its theological depth, with Jesus' central statement serving as both the structural and thematic pivot. According to Moloney (1998), the form of the narrative reinforces its message, with the actions of the accusers and the subsequent responses creating a symmetry that invites introspection and self-awareness. Carson (1991) further notes that the structure amplifies the ethical and spiritual dimensions of the passage, as Jesus' handling of the situation models both divine justice and grace. By blending literary elegance with theological substance, this chiasmic arrangement exemplifies how narrative form can illuminate profound ethical and spiritual truths, solidifying the Gospel's message of redemption and mercy.

2.4.5.4. Chiasmic Arrangement

The narrative follows a chiastic structure, with Jesus' central statement ("Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone") serving as the turning point. This arrangement places thematic emphasis on Jesus' message of self-reflection and humility, anchoring the passage's moral thrust in the central dialogue. The narrative of John 7:53–8:11 is organised in a chiastic structure, with Jesus' pivotal statement, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone," functioning as the central turning point. This arrangement, as Köstenberger (2004) explains, focuses attention on the theological and moral significance of Jesus' response, redirecting the narrative from accusation to self-reflection. Carson (1991) emphasises that this central dialogue anchors the passage's moral thrust, urging humility and introspection among the accusers and readers alike. The chiastic structure thus enhances the thematic coherence of the pericope, with the central statement serving as a literary and theological fulcrum that climaxes the principles of grace, repentance, and divine justice. By placing Jesus' words at the narrative's core, the passage invites deeper engagement with its ethical and spiritual insights, underscoring the transformative power of self-awareness and humility.

2.4.5.3. Interchange of Silence and Dialogue

Jesus' actions—his silence, writing on the ground, and minimal direct speech—contrast with the verbose accusation of the Pharisees. This interplay builds tension and ultimately shifts authority from the religious leaders to Jesus, who embodies divine judgment tempered with mercy. Jesus' actions—his silence, writing on the ground, and minimal direct speech—contrast sharply with the verbose accusations of the Pharisees, creating a dramatic tension that underscores the shift from human judgment to divine mercy. Bauckham (2015) interprets Jesus' silence as a profound narrative device, one that forces the accusers to fill the silence with their self-reflection, destabilising their authority. Additionally, Barclay (1975) suggests that Jesus' writing on the ground is a deliberate, enigmatic gesture, possibly symbolising the impermanence of human judgment compared to divine justice. According to Keener (2003), this act of writing shifts the focus from the accusers' demands for legalistic adjudication to a broader reflection on grace and sinfulness.

Carson (1991) emphasises that Jesus' minimal speech, particularly the statement "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone," disarms the Pharisees' rhetorical trap and re-centres the discussion on their own moral failings. This mirrors Barrett's (1978) view that Jesus' response reveals his authority as a judge who embodies divine wisdom and mercy, challenging the rigid legalism of his opponents. O'Day (2015) expands on this, noting that Jesus' composed demeanour contrasts the Pharisees' aggressive verbosity, illustrating the superiority of divine judgment, which prioritises redemption over condemnation.

Michaels (2010) adds that Jesus' silence and understated actions allow the narrative's moral and theological weight to build gradually, culminating in a moment where divine grace triumphs over human accusations. This interplay, as Morris (1995) notes, not only shifts the locus of authority from the Pharisees to Jesus but also invites the audience to recognise the hypocrisy inherent in human judgment. This perspective is shared by Witherington (1995), who observes that Jesus' actions exemplify the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as the light that exposes human darkness (John 1:5), compelling individuals to confront their sinfulness.

By contrasting silence and minimalism with verbosity, Jesus disrupts the established dynamics of power and judgment, illustrating the transformative nature of his mission. This dynamic, as Bauckham (2015) explains, resonates with the broader Johannine theme of grace that calls individuals to humility and introspection. Ultimately, Jesus' actions not only deconstruct the Pharisees' authority but also reveal a new paradigm of justice—one rooted in self-awareness and the liberating power of divine mercy.

2.4.5.4. Contrasts in Power Dynamics

The power dynamics shift progressively throughout the passage. Initially, the scribes and Pharisees hold the upper hand, seeking to trap Jesus. By the end, their authority is dismantled, and Jesus' solitary presence with the woman reaffirms his role as both a merciful judge and moral guide. The contrasts in power dynamics within John 7:53–8:11 underscore a progressive shift from human authority to divine justice, revealing the deeper theological and moral themes of the passage. At the outset, the scribes and Pharisees wield the power, presenting the woman caught in adultery as a test case to

entrap Jesus. As noted by Keener (2003:736-737), their initial dominance is rooted in their perceived control over the legal and moral framework, attempting to use the Mosaic Law to corner Jesus into either opposing Roman authority or undermining Jewish law. However, Jesus' response, characterised by silence and deliberate writing on the ground, begins to unravel their position.

According to Carson (1991), Jesus' refusal to engage directly with their accusations undermines their authority, as he redirects the focus from the woman's guilt to the accusers' sinfulness. This turning point, emphasized in Jesus' statement, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone," destabilizes the scribes and Pharisees, exposing their hypocrisy and dismantling their moral superiority. Brown (1966) observes that this shift reveals Jesus as the arbiter of divine justice, challenging the accusers to introspect rather than judge.

As the passage progresses, the accusers' one-by-one withdrawal, beginning with the eldest, signifies the complete erosion of their authority. Bauckham (2015) interprets this retreat as a recognition of their inability to meet the moral standard Jesus presents. By the end, the scene transitions to a private interaction between Jesus and the woman, where he neither condemns her nor condones her sin but directs her toward repentance and transformation. This moment, as Morris (1995) notes, highlights Jesus' dual role as a merciful judge and a moral guide, embodying the grace and truth central to Johannine theology.

Brant (2011) adds that the narrative's conclusion affirms Jesus' ultimate authority, as his solitary presence with the woman symbolises the triumph of divine justice over human judgment. The power dynamics, therefore, not only shift but are redefined, moving from a hierarchical system of accusation to an egalitarian recognition of universal sinfulness and the redemptive power of grace. This transition, as Barrett (1978) observes, encapsulates the Johannine portrayal of Jesus as the light that exposes the darkness and brings life to those who encounter him.

3. Greek Investigation Verse-by-Verse Commentary

John 7:53

"καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ" ("And each went to his own house") – This sets a scene of departure, contrasting with Jesus' subsequent solitude in the Mount of Olives. The term *ἐπορεύθη* (they went) indicates intentional action, marking a clear transition. The phrase "καὶ ἐπορεύθη ἕκαστος εἰς τὸν οἶκον αὐτοῦ" ("And each went to his own house") in John 7:53 serves as a pivotal narrative moment, marking the departure of the scribes and Pharisees after their failed attempt to trap Jesus. This departure contrasts sharply with Jesus' subsequent solitude in the Mount of Olives (John 8:1), emphasising his distinct mission and divine purpose. The verb *ἐπορεύθη* (they went) carries connotations of intentionality and decision-making, highlighting the voluntary nature of their departure. This transition not only emphasises the shift in power dynamics but also introduces a motif of solitude that is crucial to understanding the unfolding theological themes. The movement from public confrontation to private reflection underscores the contrast between human authority and divine wisdom. As Köstenberger (2004) notes, the departure of the Pharisees reflects a climactic turning point, symbolising their failure to engage with Jesus' divine authority.

Carson (1991) stresses that this moment reinforces the contrast between Jesus, who remains in the temple, and the Pharisees, who retreat to their homes, unable to comprehend the truth Jesus embodies. Keener (2003) suggests that their departure signifies the absence of true understanding or faith, while Brown (1966) remarks that it marks the end of a confrontation, with the Pharisees retreating symbolically from spiritual engagement. Morris (1995) interprets this movement as emphasising the divergence between the way of the world, represented by the Pharisees, and the way of Jesus, who remains in communion with the divine. Moloney (1998) adds that this shift from public dispute to solitude highlights the Johannine theme of rejection, where the Pharisees return to their homes, but Jesus continues his mission in isolation, prepared for further revelation. Barrett (1978) observes that this moment introduces a thematic shift, as the Pharisees return to their homes, while Jesus proceeds into places of spiritual significance, preparing for the next stage of his mission. Bauckham (2015) interprets this contrast as one between earthly authority, embodied by the Pharisees, and the heavenly

authority of Jesus, who remains in the divine sphere. Brant (2011) emphasises that the departure marks a symbolic disconnection between Jesus and his religious opponents, setting the stage for Jesus' continued work. Finally, Harris (2003) underscores the significance of this moment, interpreting the departure as a turning point that marks the Pharisees' defeat and Jesus' readiness to continue his divine mission. This thematic transition underscores the contrast between the failure of the Pharisees to grasp the truth and the ongoing divine authority and mission of Jesus.

John 8:1–2

"Ἰησοῦς δὲ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὸ ὄρος τῶν Ἐλαιῶν" ("But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives") – The phrase suggests Jesus' habitual retreat for prayer and contemplation, aligning with Synoptic themes where Jesus withdraws to pray (e.g., Luke 22:39). "πάλιν δὲ παρεγένετο εἰς τὸ ἱερόν" ("Again he appeared in the temple") – *παρεγένετο* (appeared, came) emphasises Jesus' presence and authority within the Temple, linking his teaching role to Jerusalem's religious centre. The verb *ἐπορεύθη* is an aorist passive form of *πορεύομαι*, commonly translated as "to go" or "to travel." In John 8:1, its use in the passive voice is notable. Morphologically, the passive voice in this context may imply not simply a physical movement but also a deeper theological significance—an implied direction or purpose that is divinely ordained. Scholars like David R. Macdonald (2012) have noted that the passive voice in the Johannine Gospel often highlights the activity or agency of God in Jesus' actions. The passive *ἐπορεύθη* might thus reflect Jesus' submission to the divine will or the guidance of the Father, especially given the Gospel's emphasis on Jesus' obedience to God's plan (John 5:19). This is especially relevant in light of Synoptic parallels, such as Luke 22:39, where Jesus withdraws to pray on the Mount of Olives—another instance of Jesus' solitude being framed as a divine command or necessity.

In contrast to the Synoptic Gospels, where the verbs for retreat are typically in the active voice (e.g., *ἀναχωρέω*), the passive in John might suggest a more reflective withdrawal. As explained by Craig Keener (2003:735), in John, Jesus is not only going to a place physically but also engaging in a spiritual journey that is marked by submission to the Father's will.

The verb *παρεγένετο* is a form of *παρεγίνομαι*, meaning “to come” or “to appear,” and it is in the aorist tense, indicative of a completed action. The choice of *παρεγένετο* instead of more common verbs for appearing, such as *φαίνω* or *ἔρχομαι*, emphasises an authoritative arrival rather than a simple coming or showing. Scholars like Raymond E. Brown (1966) have noted that *παρεγένετο* in John is often used to emphasise not just physical presence but the event-like nature of the arrival. It can signify a dramatic manifestation, signalling a shift in Jesus’ relationship with his audience, particularly in a key location like the temple.

The use of the aorist tense here also suggests finality, indicating that Jesus’ appearance in the temple is not a mere instance of physical relocation but a theological moment. As Joseph A. Fitzmyer (2008) suggests, *παρεγένετο* may also carry a connotation of fulfilment, emphasising Jesus’ role in bringing the divine presence to the temple in a way that disrupts the traditional understanding of the temple as the primary locus of the divine presence. By using *παρεγένετο*, the Gospel underscores that Jesus, as the incarnate Word, is the ultimate “arrival” of God’s presence, a theme explored throughout John’s Gospel (e.g., John 1:14).

From a broader morphological perspective, the use of the aorist tense for both verbs (*ἔπορεύθη* and *παρεγένετο*) aligns with John’s narrative technique, which often presents events in terms of completed actions, focusing on the theological significance of actions rather than their temporal development. As David L. Barr (2001) has pointed out, John’s Gospel tends to favour the aorist tense to signal theological truths rather than the ongoing progression of events, contrasting with the Synoptic Gospels’ more frequent use of the present or imperfect tenses to emphasise Jesus’ ongoing ministry.

The syntactical and morphological choices in John 8:1–2 also highlight a tension between movement and stability, as seen in the juxtaposition of Jesus’ retreat to the Mount of Olives and his return to the temple. This tension is reinforced by the verb choices: *ἔπορεύθη* emphasises Jesus’ solitary departure, while *παρεγένετο* underscores his authoritative return. These actions signal theological themes of solitude, prayer, and preparation in contrast to the public assertion of authority and teaching in the temple. As noted by Francis J. Moloney (1998), this contrast not only emphasises Jesus’ dynamic

role as teacher and judge but also reflects the broader Johannine tension between the private and public spheres of Jesus' ministry.

John 8:3–4

"ἡ γυνή...ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ κατελημμένη" ("the woman...caught in adultery") – The phrase *κατελημμένη* (caught) is a perfect participle, indicating a completed action with ongoing implications. The scribes and Pharisees bring her forth as an example, emphasising the gravity of her alleged sin. The phrase "ἡ γυνή...ἐπὶ μοιχείᾳ κατελημμένη" ("the woman...caught in adultery") features the term *κατελημμένη*, a perfect participle of *καταλαμβάνω* (to seize, catch, or take hold of). The morphological construction of this participle is significant, as the perfect tense conveys a completed action with enduring effects. This aspect reflects the woman's alleged state of being caught in the act of adultery, suggesting not just a past event but an ongoing stigma or consequence tied to her sin.

The use of the perfect participle *κατελημμένη* highlights the scribes and Pharisees' intent to underline the woman's culpability. By employing this tense, the text implies that her guilt is not merely a matter of accusation but a fact in their eyes, one with enduring implications for her identity and social standing. This is consistent with John's usage of the perfect tense to signify enduring truths or consequences, as noted by Köstenberger (2004).

Moreover, the passive voice of the participle shifts the focus from the woman's agency to the actions of others—likely those who caught her and now present her as a case study. This grammatical nuance aligns with the narrative's broader critique of the Pharisees' legalistic approach, where their focus on condemnation overshadows any concern for justice or repentance (Moloney, 1998).

John 8:6–7

These two verses of John 8:6–7 stress critical narrative and theological elements in the passage. In verse 6, the participle *πειράζοντες* (testing), present active and nominative masculine plural, conveys the continuous and deliberate nature of the scribes and Pharisees' efforts to entrap Jesus. This aligns with John's themes of opposition to Jesus,

as seen in other narratives (Köstenberger, 2004). The subjunctive verb *ἔχωσιν* (they might have), present active and third-person plural, indicates the intent of the *ἵνα* clause, suggesting a calculated strategy to obtain grounds for a formal accusation (*κατηγορίαν*). The term *κατηγορίαν* (accusation), accusative singular, further underscores the legal setting, reflecting the accusers' attempt to challenge Jesus' authority by contrasting Mosaic Law with his teaching (Moloney, 1998; Keener, 2003).

In verse 7, Jesus' response shifts the focus from the woman to her accusers. The adjective *ἀναμάρτητος* (without sin), nominative masculine singular, is rare in the New Testament, appearing only in this instance, thereby emphasising the unique ethical standard Jesus sets. As Carson (1991) notes, this term challenges not only major transgressions but broader notions of moral fault, exposing the accusers' hypocrisy. The emphatic placement of *πρῶτος* (first) underscores Jesus' demand for self-examination before judgment, while the aorist imperative *βαλέτω* (let throw), third-person singular, calls for decisive action within the conditional framework. This rhetorical structure reveals the impossibility of the accusers meeting Jesus' standard, thus deconstructing their claims to righteousness (Brown, 1966; Köstenberger, 2004). Finally, the prepositional phrase *ἐπ' αὐτήν* (upon her) shifts the tension of the narrative onto the woman, magnifying the dramatic weight of Jesus' words (Moloney, 1998). Collectively, these morphological insights underscore the interplay between law and grace, Jesus' authority, and the transformative power of self-reflection in the Johannine narrative.

John 8:9–11

The phrase "Ἰησοῦς...εἶπεν αὐτῇ, Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ σε κατακρίνω" ("Jesus said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you'") demonstrates a profound theological and morphological significance. The verb *κατακρίνω* (condemn), a compound of *κατά* (against) and *κρίνω* (judge), is an aorist active indicative, first-person singular, which denotes a definitive act of judgment. Its usage here underscores the finality and seriousness of condemnation, often linked to divine or eschatological judgment (Beasley-Murray, 1999). By negating this act (*οὐδὲ*—"neither"), Jesus aligns his response with Johannine themes of grace and redemption rather than legalistic retribution. This echoes earlier themes in the Gospel, such as in John 3:17, where Jesus is depicted as not coming into the world to condemn it but to save it (Ridderbos, 1997).

Furthermore, the phrase positions Jesus as a merciful arbiter, prioritising restoration over punishment. The direct object $\sigma\epsilon$ (you), accusative singular, highlights the personal nature of Jesus' mercy toward the woman, emphasising her individual dignity and worth, even in the face of public humiliation (Brown, 1966). The absence of condemnation does not negate the sin but shifts the focus to the transformative opportunity for repentance, a recurring motif in Johannine theology (Köstenberger, 2004). Thus, the morphological and thematic nuances of $\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\kappa\rho\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$ encapsulate the tension between justice and grace, illustrating the broader theological vision of the Fourth Gospel.

4. Themes and Theology

Judgment and Forgiveness:

Jesus' approach to the situation masterfully shifts the emphasis from punitive judgment to introspection and mercy. His directive, "Go, and sin no more" (v. 11), encapsulates a balance between grace and accountability. While Jesus does not condone the woman's sin, he also does not condemn her, illustrating a profound tension between justice and compassion. This dual emphasis aligns with the Johannine depiction of Jesus as the Light, whose purpose is to expose human flaws while extending the possibility of redemption (John 3:19–21). As Morris (1995:395) observes, Jesus' words reflect a refusal to enforce a strictly legalistic response, emphasising his redemptive mission. Similarly, Carson (1991:336) highlights how Jesus' response embodies a transformative vision of grace, inviting the sinner into a renewed ethical framework. Köstenberger (2004:255) notes that Jesus' command, "Go and sin no more," underscores personal responsibility while offering a path to restoration. This dual focus mirrors the broader theological motif in John's Gospel, wherein divine forgiveness is coupled with a call for moral renewal. By refraining from condemnation, Jesus exemplifies the integration of divine mercy and human ethical obligation.

The Law vs. Grace: The Tension between Mosaic Law and Jesus' Response

The narrative juxtaposes the Mosaic Law, which mandates stoning for adultery (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22–24), with Jesus' radical response, thereby illustrating a

transformative engagement with the Law. While the scribes and Pharisees invoke the legal framework to entrap Jesus, his actions and words shift the focus from strict legalism to a principle rooted in love and grace. Rudolf Bultmann (1971: 342) argues that Jesus' response reflects the fulfilment of the Law through love, reframing its application from rigid literalism to a dynamic, spirit-centred ethos. Similarly, Carson (1991:336) notes that Jesus does not nullify the Law but reveals its deeper intent, emphasising moral transformation over retributive justice. Scholars like Barrett (1978: 324) view this moment as emblematic of the Johannine theme of Jesus as the mediator of divine grace, embodying the Law's ultimate purpose. This interplay between Law and grace underscores a theological paradigm shift, where mercy and introspection take precedence over punitive judgment, aligning with broader themes in John's Gospel.

5 Concluding Remarks

The pericope of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53–8:11) embodies profound theological and ethical dimensions, illustrating a transformative engagement with Mosaic Law and human sinfulness. Through its nuanced chiasmic structure and evocative language, the narrative reveals a Jesus who mediates between divine justice and mercy. His actions and words challenge legalistic interpretations of the Law, redirecting focus toward introspection, compassion, and moral responsibility. Scholars highlight how this passage encapsulates John's themes of grace, redemption, and the fulfilment of the Law through love. Ultimately, this pericope transcends its historical and cultural context, offering enduring insights into the balance of judgment and forgiveness, and the redemptive light of Christ that seeks not to condemn but to restore humanity.

The Kilmann method is also a perfect fit into this critical dimension for the fact that it believes in negotiation of differences which is demonstrated in the verse by verse analysis above. Warring factions need mediation and negotiation rather than condemn one another and delay the process until it becomes dire.

For this study, this analysis serves as a crucial backdrop for the upcoming discussion in the next chapters, where the social-scientific study will proceed as a primary focus. This approach will further unpack the socio-cultural dynamics, power structures, and

communal implications of the narrative, allowing a deeper exploration of its ethical and theological resonance in both its historical context and contemporary applications.

Chapter 3

Social Scientific Analysis of John 7:53–8:1-11

3.1. Introduction

The previous chapter explored insights from scholarly works through a social-scientific lens, focusing on its application in the fourth Gospel. The chapter provided an overview of how social sciences have been applied to the fourth Gospel in general, with particular attention to the *pericope adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11). This discussion highlighted how social-scientific methods have been employed to analyse the social and cultural dimensions of the text. The goal was to navigate whether there are some contributions from the socio-scientific approach in the fourth Gospel. More specifically, whether any African scholars have utilised a socio-scientific approach in John, who has focused on the African context to relate the text to the social dynamics of African societies. The chapter has shown that most scholarly works on social-scientific methodology still come from the West and that observation necessitates the relevance of this study. This study attempts to focus on this text as it seems to relate to one of the social setting. This study attempts to focus on this text, as it seems to relate to the social setting of one of the African societies in West Africa, Cameroon. more specifically the Weh people. As the researcher of this work, I see many connections between the first-century contexts and the African context. That on its own gives me a sense that many of our African problems, if not all, can be addressed through balanced and sensitive ways as we engage in conversations between the text of scripture and the African people. We will further attempt to explain the values or modes and models depicted in John 7:53–8:11 by scholars from a social scientific lens.

3.2. The first-century world cultural value systems and John's Gospel.

Talking about the contextual world of John, we mean those to whom the gospel was first addressed; that is, the first audience to whom John addresses the Gospel. This gospel, like the others, was composed orally first (orally performed) at a different time and place, addressing different first-hand hearers with different situations, problems, and questions. This is called the contextual world according to what van Eck has argued (van Eck 2018:24). The question of orally dictating it is also addressed by Burrows (1930:96) as an important subject, unless it is assumed that Aramaic was irrelevant for use as a redactional tool of the New Testament in preference of Hebrew. Although, it was Greek that was the preferred language of use by authors. Even though Borgen (2014:81) acknowledges the syncretism and Gnosticism of the era, he does not rule out that Greek culture came to be the socially accepted way of life in Israel because "Judaism in Antiquity belonged to the Hellenistic world" (Borgen 2014:81). The reason is on the grounds that since Hellenism ruled the Jewish state and the Hellenistic culture was imposed as the social way of life for anyone who lived in the State, every citizen should live according to the social ways of the Greeks.

However, being a group-oriented community, they were still socially stratified in religious and social culture. Judaism divided the community, as exposed by the Pharisee-led conflict in John 7:53–8:11. Those who bring the woman to Jesus are just two groups out of the many groups that existed giving the impression that they were not people without squabbles. Their social life as can be deduced from Johannine writings is dictated by Hellenistic background knowledge and features as asserted by Borgen (2014:81–82), (see also Brown, 1966, 1LVI) as a non-coherent community of people. They were disunited in many ways. Jesus' states in John 13:16 that "A servant is not greater than him who sent him" and suggests that he serves as an agent who is sent but resisted by the people because of their Judaic cultural beliefs. This statement reflects the Graeco-Roman normal diplomatic and conventional world model of creating awareness of fear of authorities.

The Graeco-Roman world influenced Judaism enormously, which led to the use of Greek and Roman laws to fragment the unity of the Jews. Generally, historians included moral narratives of history to interpret events for their readers, as did Polybius, who says that historical narratives are the most effective behavioural (Keener 2003:14–15). If we assume that John writes from a community operating from a cultural background that is deeply rooted in Judaic origins with a rich history, one can accept the explanation that social life was not individualistic (Malina, 200:68). It is also possible to agree that adulterous cases were minimal in practice because the social niche was governed by was strict laws on social interaction between men and women (Bradley, 2003:4) in solitary locations, for such a setting could easily lead to seduction (Bradley, 2003:30); thus this is a rare case brought to Jesus, who handles it tactfully well (Malina, 2003:92).

Social life was the core way of life as we read from the narrative of John 7:53–8:11. The community is the body that leads the woman to Jesus in the temple that early morning shortly after he returns from the Mount of Olives. The question to ask is this: why was it the community of Pharisaic elites and scribes leading the woman to Christ? If it were the community’s social way of life to live as a group, one or two persons would have run to report to the community leader the action of the lady. John writes from a world that is embedded in cultural and patriarchal values controlling the entirety of Israelite and Palestinian lifestyles (Borgen, 2014:82), and so he has a clue of the community’s ways of life. In the first century, individualism was not the primary way of life (Malina, 2000:68), and that was a major determining factor in the community’s accusing the woman and taking her for adjudication. Rather, it was a social and collective lifestyle that was prioritised that solidified human social relations among the Jewish people. In other words, it was a collectivistic, group-oriented life in which people in the Ancient Near East socially considered themselves as persons with similar cultural behaviours.

John suggests in John 10:16

Greek	English
καὶ ἄλλα πρόβατα ἔχω ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τῆς αὐτῆς ταύτης· κάκεινα δεῖ με ἀγαγεῖν, καὶ	And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they

τῆς φωνῆς μου ἀκούσουσιν, καὶ γενήσεται μία ποίμνη, εἷς ποιμὴν.	shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, <i>and</i> one shepherd. (KJV)
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This implies that Jesus, being aware of the communal life of his people, endeavours to combat individualism and discrimination by opting for inclusion of the Gentiles, referred to in the above verse as other sheep that he must bring into the fold. He resorts to creating one Christian fold (Borgen, 2014:92–93), with the woman caught in adultery just serving as one of the sheep. Rather, he creates an awareness of imperfection in every one of them to show them that the destabilisation of both believing Jews and Gentiles is not entertained for the sake of the broad picture of his ministry.

What Jesus states above is an evaluated behavioural pattern where honour is acquired according to Jewish group dynamics (Malina, 1996:153; van Eck and Kok, 2010:12; Malina, 1993:65), namely via obedience to the law. Every aspect of social life, whether in the inner circles of the family or outdoor, was regulated by some kind of law, and each person was identified through that family name as either obedient or delinquent (Malina, 1996:118).

Social life was important and was played out in public between families. That is why people had their names attached to a family's name or town's name. This way of life was a social norm that called for scrutiny of whichever family members interacted with or had any friendly relations. Such was the case with Jesus, who was called Jesus of Nazareth, and also Saul of Tarsus and Simon the Tanner. This shows that not only the family name was important, but the tribe's names were also important – Lion of the tribe of Judah, for example (Rev 5:5). For this reason, Jewish priests had to prove by blood that they were of the Levite family before they could become a priest. Looking at Luke 3:23–28 (Mt 1:1–17), Jesus' family tree is rolled out because to the authors want prove that Jesus is the promised Messiah descended from the Davidic line. A name from a particular family reminded the authorities that this was a person from either a peaceful or troublesome family. They seemingly were a people who loved peace, but that was not entirely true because they still permitted people to challenge and riposte to reign among them. In the

case of the woman caught in adultery, nobody cared to find out what her family descent was but decided to ask for her to be lynched.

The Johannine community descended from such a social practice. The *pericope adulterae* was influenced by the kind of social life that was prohibited amongst them with clear Judaic laws. The question to raise is this: who was responsible for creating the act and what was the foundation? However, early Judaism was divided and very diverse in a variety of matters (Keener, 2003:710), and so the crowd leading the woman to Jesus does not seem to have a good knowledge of the basics of Jewish law, which would have given them solid arguments to stand against Jesus.

A collective group decision was taken by the group of Pharisees and scribes to lead the woman to Jesus in the temple, probably based on the laws governing communal life. Even when they agree to lead the woman to the temple, it is very feasible that they all are defiant of Jewish laws, because earlier on in John 7:45–52, the very elites of the Jews despise and reject Jesus. One could argue that the very Jewish elites were not all members of the Judaic group that was against Jesus. Some of them could evidently be members of Jesus' Christian movement because Jesus' focus would have been directed at the elites and not the Pharisees and opponents of his ministry (Keener, 2003:731; Thomaskutty, 2019:80). Everyone's identity was within the community of people to which they belonged, and they defended it with all they could, even with their lives. According to van Eck and Kok (2010:12), since the group largely determines an individual's values and behaviour, group members ought to know the values and rules of the group and their specific roles within the community, and defend each other's family names (Malina, 1996:153). Gamson (1992:53) describes the action of someone surrendering their individual life to that of the community as a mesh between self and society. For this reason, synagogue authorities could not allow John to break up the elite group strata between the lower and upper strata that differentiated the life of Judaism to create another antagonistic faction for the reason of preserving their uniqueness (Thomaskutty, 2019:80).

John's world was one where every stranger was received with suspicion. They were outsiders and were dealt with cautiously. Such examples include Greeks calling outsiders *barbaroi* (because they made nonsensical bar-bar sounds) and the Pharisees

calling disobedient Jews the people of the land. The suspicion contributes to the disapproval of individualism in preference of collectivism.

3.3. Cultural practices, customary marriages, and Women in the First-Century World.

According to the Fourth Gospel, women are given tremendous importance by Jesus. Thomasskutty (2019:80) asserts that the Fourth Gospel developed feminist concerns against the Graeco-Roman and Jewish culture, where women had no privileges or rights in their men's world. The Gospel reports very salient moments in which Jesus had important encounters with women. But does he treat them the same way the Jewish culture expects a man to treat a woman? Talking about first-century feminine cultures, women were not given any rights because patriarchy was their way of life. Social life was based on customary Jewish culture and Hellenism, and that alone divided the people between traditionalists and Hellenisers (Matthews, 1991:221). However, the female was always restricted to home duties with little or no outdoor activities. These restrictions benefitted mostly elites who were members of the Pharisaic group ruling the cities and powerful cults of Israel. Horsely (1992:151–152) suggests that many of the Roman and Greek cities were controlled by such political barons who benefitted from their firm laws against women, whom one can safely discern to be kept under a lower stratum just to eliminate any possible demands for the same rights and opportunities as men. Besides, their powerful cults, such as the emperor's cult, were places where strong social stratification was mapped out for implementation in the lower social spheres (Horsley 1992). Socialising in the newly constructed Greek cities was solely reserved for men, as narrated by Matthews (1991:221). Rabichev (1996:52) describes it as cultural anthropology encompassed in the general definition of anthropology as a discipline studying human origins, social organisation, and customs. The cultural practices ranged from marital rites, burial rites, and the right to inheritance, to religious practices and herding practices.

3.3.1. Marital rites

Though John 7:53–8:1-11 does not exactly give us the historical circumstances of the redaction of the text, one can conclude that the mob that apparently apprehended this woman failed to probe into her marriage life. The prognosis in the text of John inspires the notion that marriage was a social institution upon which was placed very enormous importance, and which relied on the origin and continuation of kinship lineages. The first-century tradition was that marriage was one family going into another family via proper arrangements by the two families, which has survived until the present, when marriages have been one family joining another family so that their son can have a wife. This is exogamy as practiced by the Romans (DeSilva 2000:195). If this woman was claimed to be guilty of an adulterous affair, they should have probed into which family she was married. In the first-century Mediterranean context, marriage was entirely arranged by men, and the mothers were informed about the arrangements because the socio-cultural context viewed women negatively (Thomaskutty 2019:80), even though they were consulted before the start of the arrangements about the prospective bride and groom (Grubbs 1989:79). Stol (2016:62) states that marriage was arranged at an early age of 14–18 years for the persons to get married. He says that the Greek and Roman documents describe the culture of marriage as being a common phenomenal practice around the Mediterranean Sea and in the Ancient Near East.

During the reign of Constantine, Roman marriages were protected because abduction marriages were rampant (Grubbs 1989:59). With the rise of such abductions of women, Constantine released an edict to firmly condemn such acts and protect families. Families accepted such abductions as a new social norm in society until Constantine issued a strong edict against the practice (Grubbs 1989). As noted above, community social activities in New Testament times in the rural communities were built around “family ties and seasonal religious festivals” because most activities were hosted in families, according to Matthews (1991:225) and van Eck and Kok (2010:12). Van Eck (2007:8) says that “marriage was embedded in the social institution of the family”, and according to Matthews (1991:225), older traditions were conserved because of the retention of older cultural lifestyles (older traditions) and values by the elderly peasantry

community. They settled in small numbers, which were more closely linked to Old Testament times, in order to foster group affiliations.

Some of the important marriage ceremonies were usually celebrated with a wedding feast after the solemnisation was over. During such events, the groomsmen (Jn 3:29) was expected to lead the bride into the wedding hall, and the bridesmaids accompanied the bride into the hall after careful planning (Loven, 2010:3–4). The events man, commonly called the Master of Ceremony, was allocated to direct the event, and an events manager was also appointed to oversee the refreshments and the parcelling out of wine (Jn 2:7–10). Current trends in modern social lifestyles show that special wedding wear is designed for the wedding families, and it is usually required for the event and facilitated admission into the feast centre.

The culture of the people around marriage was that the fathers of the bride and groom had to sign the contract for the marriage, and the bride became the wife to the man. The practice of endogamy (marriage within the group) was the vulgar way they did marriages according to the instructions of Nehemiah's policy, which discouraged inter-marriage between non-Jews and Jews, which presented the possibility of threatening the political independence of Judah. The advice of Nehemiah was aimed at protecting Jewish culture. Grubbs (1989:60) expatiates that the edict of Constantine was to protect women. The edict which condemns anyone who abducts a woman stated that even if the woman conceded to the marriage as a means for her protection, the abductor and the father of the woman are not exempted from being punished, because the ancestors were not involved in the official handing over of the woman.

The father in the first-century Mediterranean world was a central pillar in any family negotiations. Grubbs (1989:63) explains that a father's presence was essential during arrangements for the dowry payment, and a marriage that was properly planned brought a substantial dowry to the husband, who also was expected to have agreed to the contract, specifically that he will not take his property from his wife in any case, and if he does, he is to seek his wife's consent (Bradley, 2003:18).

According to historical narratives advanced by van Eck and Kok (2010:14), the father was the head of the family and was tasked with the role of representing the family in public

events. He was the major figure in the family. Every other person who held authority over the marriage was consulted only after the father had given his verdict over the bridegroom. This kind of authority of a father was replicated in the Roman world. In the Roman world, children were still the father's child, even after getting married, implying that there was no total independence from the father's control, for the father had absolute control (*patria potestas*) over his children as long as he was alive. Land sales would not be done, land purchases, bequeathing a will and even getting married could not be done without seeking the father's consent (Grubbs, 1989:62–63).

The *patria potestas* gave the father an enlarged territory, in which the father had the power to give his verdict of who was to be his child. Once the verdict was final, the child would be left on a dump outside the city until death or brought in to live under his roof. He could also sell his children as slaves or order them to be put to death if they disobeyed his orders, and nobody had any right to object. The Jews did not have such a broad scope for the role of the father over his children, but the father was also a major figure, the undisputed ruler of the family, to whom his children owed enormous respect.

The Jewish father of the first-century Mediterranean world was well known for his role as the provider of bread and clothing, and he was the defender of the family name, who also educated his children and was their representative in cultic public events, such as taking his sons to outdoor religious events. All these varied responsibilities constituted social responsibilities or social norms which further dichotomised into birth-human relationships, which are completely based upon the experiences of birth and the birth cycle expanding from the time of birth, growth maturity and death. This builds up what is known as kinship. Lóven (2010:1–2) enhances the argument that the right to marriage was the marker of one's social and legal status in the Graeco-Roman world, only practiced by citizens of the state, and only the wealthy could get married. The poor in society had to lobby hard for them to have recognised state marriages. The argument here is that if the bride price was not easily afforded and marriages were only recognised by the Graeco-Roman State, that was not an attempt to expose people to frivolous acts of adultery and prostitution on grounds that they could not afford to be married. This was further complicated by sexual laws of purity that controlled the act. This could be the reason that this woman caught in adultery was involved in the act with a man who was

probably married while she was single or married too. Marriages were a vital stage in the passage of a young man and a young woman into a state of adulthood. This was a social status held among adults who were married, and this was the right to have legitimate children under the law of the state (Loven, 2010).

The passage of John 7:53–8:11 provides a profound window into the intricate social, religious, and ethical complexities of the first-century Mediterranean world. At its core, this narrative encapsulates a multitude of themes, ranging from gender roles and patriarchal authority to legal structures, ethical teachings, and societal attitudes towards sin and judgment.

If the first-century world was this organised as explained above, what would one explain as the reason for the disproportionate accusation of the woman? Firstly, within the context of social norms and group life, the story unveils a society deeply entrenched in patriarchal values and high moral expectations, particularly concerning marriage and sexual purity. Jesus in the text shows some reservation from any rash reaction to the accusers of the women because he is aware of the faith women have developed in his ministry. Thus, the *Sitz-im Leben* that calls for the attack on this lone woman awakens Jesus' desire to defend her. One can conclude that Johannine writings favour the place of women's presence in the social sphere, as would be the examples of Mary and Martha, who become close to Jesus' ministry and carve out a space for themselves in the social space of Jesus until Jesus takes time to go resuscitate their brother to life in John 11 (Thomaskutty, 2019:93).

Women in the Jewish milieu were often subject to heightened scrutiny and harsh judgment regarding their virtue and adherence to societal norms. The absence of the man involved in the adultery case is striking, underscoring the patriarchal controlling nature of men in judgment and penal laws, where women were disproportionately targeted and exposed to public censure compared to men. This reflects a societal bias that placed a heavier burden of moral responsibility on women while often excusing or minimising the transgressions of men. Thomaskutty (2019) is of the opinion that Jesus advocates for women's representation around him in various levels, and the life of Jesus was an essential indicator of the openness of women as far as their status was concerned in a Jewish setting.

Second, the narrative unfolds against the backdrop of religious and legal structures. The involvement of the scribes and Pharisees, who were religious authorities, in bringing the woman to Jesus serves multiple purposes. On the one hand, it portrays the interplay between religious and legal frameworks in addressing moral infractions. The scribes and Pharisees' intentions of presenting the woman to Jesus not only seek judgment but also test his adherence to religious laws and teachings, but they fail to probe from which family she comes, since a family name determined where a person was from and if they were recalcitrant in the community. On the other hand, they failed to serve notice to her family and to her husband's family, where she should have first and foremost been adjudicated of her act of adultery before being taken to Jesus for public adjudication. This interaction underscores the complexity of navigating religious doctrines and legal interpretations within a society where spirituality and governance are often intertwined.

Third, the concept of patriarchal authority and family dynamics play a significant role in understanding the nuances of the narrative. The absence of the woman's father or male guardian during this ordeal is noteworthy, as it highlights the patriarchal control over women's lives, especially in matters related to marriage and sexual purity. The argument that Malina (1993:142) enhances is that most marriage strategies developed by early Christian first-century Mediterranean communities practiced then and now are just defensive methods of Old-Testament Israel, which erroneously is considered to be the Bible because it contains Israel's Sacred Scripture. Marriages in the first-century Mediterranean world were not conducted as per biblical norms but according to the community laws, and that did not give them much protection, rights, and opportunities. The reason for male domination and separation of women is that the culture of the first-century Mediterranean world was embedded in the fundamental concepts of honour, shame, and disgrace (Thomaskutty 2010:80). Thomaskutty (2019) still argues that people held a negative impression of women. Bradley (2003:45–46) suggests that this narrative was misleading because scholarly evidence has surfaced that portrays women as being given central roles, high esteem and many other roles, and were protected, especially in the Ancient Near East. The societal laws that placed women under the authority and protection of male figures reinforced traditional gender hierarchies and power structures prevalent in that era and further submerged the feminine sex under masculine rule.

Furthermore, the concept of *patria potestas*, which denotes the paternal authority to make decisions regarding children's lives, including matters of marriage and family honour, adds depth to the discussion on familial responsibilities and control.

Fourth, the ethical teachings embedded within the narrative offer profound insights into Jesus' approach to morality, forgiveness, and compassion (Horsley 1997:155). Jesus' response to the accusatory crowd—"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her"—challenges the rigid legalism and judgmental attitudes prevalent among the religious leaders and society at large. His emphasis on introspection, mercy, and the acknowledgment of one's own imperfections before casting judgment underscores a transformative ethical paradigm that prioritises empathy and understanding over condemnation.

Finally, the story serves as a microcosm of broader societal attitudes towards sin, forgiveness, and the nature of justice. Bultmann (1971:355) suggests that these virtues brought by Jesus demand that the first-century Mediterranean world forget traditional practices cultured by societies. It confronts the dichotomy between legalistic interpretations of morality and the compassionate ethos advocated by Jesus, who has come not to stay but to correct Jewish myths before departing, says Bultmann (1971:355). The narrative invites contemplation on themes such as repentance, redemption, and the capacity for individuals to evolve beyond their past mistakes. Moreover, it raises questions about the role of societal norms and religious teachings in shaping individual behaviour and collective moral consciousness. So, this Pericope Adulterae in John 7:53–8:11 transcends mere historical recounting; it encapsulates a rich complexity of social, religious, and ethical discourses that continue to resonate in contemporary discussions on morality, patriarchal dynamics, legal injustice, and spiritual teachings. It also conveys the idea that the social analogy of the text against this woman could be communicating just the negative connotations held against women, as argued by Thomaskutty (2019).

3.3.2. Kinship

Reading the text of John 7:53–8:11 gives us a hint that lineage analyses are involved, but the kinship exploration into the families is not well exploited. If it was well explored, the woman would have been linked to her kindred and that of her husband to discern if it was a recurrent attitude or a first-time act. Kinship was a very important subject in the Hellenistic and Roman reign in the first-century Mediterranean world. In the text, the people identify Moses (Jn 8:5) as their kin when they request stoning, basing their argument on the fact that Moses commanded them to do so in the Mosaic law. This implies that they claim reputation by kinship of Moses, who was claimed to be their lineage (DeSilva 2000:181). Kinship brought honour to families (Desilva 2000:184), and Jesus is believed to foster Kinship by accepting those who believed in him as his lineage (DeSilva 2000). Why do they not identify the woman's lineage to ascertain their argument as a constant behaviour or not? The Hellenists and the Romans placed emphasis on the character of a sibling rather than the bloodline relationship (DeSilva 2000:214). In a bid to understand what the concept of kinship is, the following paragraphs will define the idea for a better understanding of how the text connects this study to kinship.

Kinship is defined according to each field, following the interpretation of the experts in that field. Anthropologists define it as “the web of social relationships that form an important part of the lives of all humans in all societies, although its exact meanings even within this discipline are often debated” (Malina 1993:7–8; 117;).

Following the definition from sociologists, it is “how individuals are related to one another by blood, marriage or adoption” (Malina 1993:121).

Itao and Kaneko (2020:2378) give a simple definition of how kinships, lineages and clans are formed:

In human society, a family and kinship are formed by marriage and descent. In indigenous societies, families sharing a common ancestor are called a lineage. Lineages form a socially related group, called a clan, in which common culture is shared. Social relationships with others, such as cooperation, rivalry, or marriage, are mostly determined by the clans the parties belong to.

Itao & Kaneko (2020:237)

According to Malina (1981:94), kinship is “rooted in the social perception that human relationships are (and) can be established among persons by their being born of certain parents or by the union of two or (more) human beings. That union of two people is called marriage and that is related to kinship thereby making marriage a subset of kinship norms.”. Van Eck (2007a:84) agrees with Malina (1981:94–95) that kinship norms are greatly intertwined with marriage bonds, from which human relationships originate because kinship norms symbolise human biological interactions, which run through the father and mother’s lineage or generally from the ancestral lineage, through which the parents who constitute the procreation line by virtue of being married become the line of reference. Generally, kinship norms are rooted in human relations, which are entertained in various family settings as the origin of their existence. DeSilva (2000:218) purports that this is the kind of social relations that led to the constitution of the New Testament Church, from which has emanated the New Testament idea of kinship that shares brotherhood and sisterhood values.

Van Eck (2007a:12) further explains that kinship relations are enhanced and portrayed according to the family names by which every male is identified and from which comes the family status and honour. Meanwhile, from the perspectives enhanced by Malina (1981:96), kinship norms are either are exogamous or endogamous, depending on the cultural norms of the community. It is very important to note the preference in the first-century Mediterranean world evolving around endogamy – a choice in which the community is closed and made to remain within family members, and this kind of society generally remains small.

Malina (1993:95) further explains that the social areas covering the potential procreation of children can be divided into four categories, namely the selection of marriage partners or wives, the marriage or sexual bond between one man and many women or vice versa, the immediate married family of husband and wife and their children, and lastly the extended kinship relationship beyond the immediate family that includes brothers, sisters, and the broader kinship bond. This reflects a complication in the human judicial

nature of marriage in which kinship is bound to be an integral institution but is grounded by the commercial norms of society in which women have become commodities. Furthermore, they remain strangers in some kinships and communities, given the way they are handled, such as the woman purported to have been in adulterous relations. According to Malina (1993:119), kinship norms deal with the selection of marriage partners and also with marriage durations between husband and wife, the conjugal family bond, inclusive of parents, brothers and sisters – that is the children of the enlarged family. Malina (1993:126) mentions emphatically that such relations are complicated and that is because of the interwoven nature of the norms of kinship.

According to the concept of kinship, the Jew preferred to accept endogamy than exogamy, which was preferred by the Romans (DeSilva 2000:195). Endogamy was some basic form to the establishment of a closed kinship community between family and within close relations rather than going to an external family that was not well known. The idea was to strengthen family bonds because they did not want to break the family bond (DeSilva 2000:214).

Endogamy holds a kind of resemblance to the idea that John expresses in his preference to keep the Johannine community closed from the public, with nobody breaching the rules to step out and join another community which does not profess Christ. This community is supposed to reflect one that is open only to members who constitute the Johannine family. This seemingly was the type of lifestyle that kinship relationships demonstrated. Character was considered in any kin before bloodline relations were considered. DeSilva (2000:214) explains that any family member who strayed away from the family precepts of living and from religious values could be preferably renounced publicly as an outcast and that was more acceptable by the public. Such action was to preserve the family solidarity and keep the public honour of the family.

The Johannine community could encourage endogamy, but concerning the woman caught in adultery, her treatment is viewed by the elders as one who has broken the laws of this nature; meanwhile, Jesus treats her as one who comes from an exogamous community because he protects her very well, with the view that she should not be vilified for her condemnable action, which is frowned upon in her community. As such, she should be forgiven and set free from it with a warning. This is typical in exogamous

communities, where adultery is pardoned by elders with a warning. Even if there is a child in the adulterous relationship, it is agreed to be the husband's child even with imported genes from the adulterous man.

Kinship studies explain that a family is constituted by marriage and of two persons descending from two different families. The *pericope adulterae* narrative suggests that the woman was married and the man also married, which was against Jewish cultural practices. They originate from different families that form different family lineages.

Within the same family, marriages are prohibited because they constitute incest, but different communities or villages can intermarry. According to the report of Itao and Kaneko (2020:2378), the marriage process is liable to work only between two different villages or communities. They report that two persons from the same family or village getting married is similar to committing incest in terms of taboo (see also Malina 1981:95–96). The reason these two authors advance is that marriage is more often considered to be cultural rather than genetic in origin. Prohibiting marriages within the same family is as reasonably comprehended as the prohibition of siblings from incest.

3.3.3 Honour and Shame

Honour and shame are core anthropological values in the Mediterranean world that researchers have discovered to have strong prominence among Jewish communities (Rabichev 1996:52). The discussion in this section leads us to examine the values of honour and shame in marital rites, birth rites, burial rites, and herding practices in the lives of the people of the Ancient Near East, into which the Johannine community was born. DeSilva (2000:184) notes that kinship brought honour to families, so John was probably looking at sensitising the Jewish socio-cultural lifestyle to be realigned with the honour of Jesus the Messiah. It is understood that the concept of believing in the Messiah was not an easy one to easily align with, as they not only failed to recognise Jesus but also vilified the author of the Fourth Gospel and his idea of Jesus being the Messiah. Being bold and brave to preach Jesus to the synagogue leaders caused him to languish in shame and disgrace. John might have felt that it was relevant to teach them why they

should honour Christ (Neyvrey 1998:2–3), to whom they listened in the Synagogue and towns and villages of Israel and were amazed by his teachings His call in John 8 for anyone to stone her first if they are sinless is a call for them to see that repentance is an honourable move towards the honour of God, who is a father. He seeks God’s honour as we would seek the honour our father on earth and every one of those who will believe through them so that they may come to know and honour the Father who has sent him (DeSilva 2000:185).

The author of the Fourth Gospel makes efforts to show that the rejection of Jesus’ crucifixion is a shameful and disgraceful way of death, but it is one ascribed with honour from God because God raised him back to life after three days of crucifixion. But what John’s articulation contains is the exaltation of Jesus to the point of uncommon glory as the messianic prophet who is glorified by the throne he is supposed to sit on, at the right hand of God, which nullifies the purpose of shameful crucifixion intended to humiliate. But the question that stands is this: can one truly attest that the honour that was attributed to Jesus was appropriately accorded to the one who is expected to be the Mosaic Prophet-Messiah (Martyn 2003:111)?

Following the idea of Mattill (1997:297–298), it is clear that he suggests that John is initiating a value that is rejected – that is, the Johannine Christology in the new form of Jewish-Christian beliefs that calls for this community to acquaint itself with the future conflicts that will appear before them, though they were already in conflict with temple authorities who reject Jesus as the messiah amidst all his signs (Martyn 2003:108). Nevertheless, Johannine Jewish Christianity seemingly gains grounds after their expulsion from the synagogue by establishing for themselves a gospel – a *genre* that is similar to the existing gospel that teaches the people to honour the Christ whom they have rejected (Hartin 1985:40). It also teaches and gives account of the Jewish Christian Johannine movement to its opponents, which was composed by converted Judaic followers and the followers of John the Baptist, as well as John’s followers, in a bid to educate Jewish non-converts about their beliefs in Jesus Christ the Messiah (Mattill 1997:298).

Johannine Jewish Christianity reflects on the eschatological side of John and presents the idea in the gospel indirectly in the text of John 7:53–8:11. This gospel lives in

expectation of the *parousia* as the essence of salvation (Mattill 1997:299). This is a core value in John's Gospel, and he also tries to unveil the value of Jesus in comparison with that of John the Baptist, who is considered as the Messiah in place of Jesus. The view is that Jesus is the Messiah and saviour whose crucifixion is the announcement of his glory on earth as the Son of Man (Mattill 1997), and the *parousia* will announce his appearance as a futuristic glorification that will bring honour to him and to future converts, as can be noted in what Jesus himself proclaims in John 5:23 *ἵνα πάντες τιμῶσι τὸν υἱὸν καθὼς τιμῶσι τὸν πατέρα. ὁ μὴ τιμῶν τὸν υἱὸν οὐ τιμᾷ τὸν πατέρα τὸν πέμψαντα αὐτόν*. At his return, Jesus is expected to take his place of highest honour, for he will speak not only as the Son of Man but also as the Son of God and God himself.

Mattill (1997:299) argues that the *parousia* is futuristic, which introduces us to John 5:25–27:

²⁵ Ἀμὴν ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι ἔρχεται ὥρα καὶ νῦν ἐστὶν ὅτε οἱ νεκροὶ ἰσχύουσιν τῆς φωνῆς τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ οἱ ἀκούσαντες ζήσουσιν. ²⁶ ὥσπερ γὰρ ὁ πατήρ ἔχει ζωὴν ἐν ἑαυτῷ, οὕτως ἰσχύει καὶ τῷ υἱῷ ἔδωκεν ζωὴν ἔχειν ἐν ἑαυτῷ. ²⁷ καὶ ἐξουσίαν ἔδωκεν ἑαυτῷ κρίσιν ποιεῖν, ὅτι υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ἐστίν.

The idea that Jesus commands honour as the Son of God is the idea that Johannine Jewish Christianity is attempting to show the Jewish leaders. Because he is the Son of God, he has the honour bestowed upon him to judge the world (Jn 5:27). This is the idea that John the evangelist holds to be very important, as it is Jesus' opportunity to demonstrate his greater glory and honour to the shameful disgrace of those who behave outrageously, like the suspected adulterous woman and those who reject his recognition as the Son of God. Honour was understood as the way a person sees himself and the way society regards him. In other words, it is a man's value in the eyes of other people in society (Rabichev 1996:52).

'It is his estimation of his worth, his claim to pride' (Pitt-Rivers, 1977:1; see also Malina and Neyrey, 1991a:25). Du Boulay (1976:405) states that honour is a sense which has reality if the rest of the community grants it that reality. To honour a person is to acknowledge publicly that his or her actions conform with social oughts (Malina, 1981:28; DeSilva, 2000:185–186). Jesus' honour was contested on grounds of his

underestimated worth of the rejected Mosaic Prophet-Messiah as argued by Martyn (2003:111).

Honour was an undisputable asset that a person could command in the Near Eastern culture. A man without honour would likely be considered an empty vessel. He could not command anyone's respect – the community did not view him as belonging, and such a person could be addressed disrespectfully in public during public events. Honour was preserved against a name such that it would not be disgraced (Bruce J. Malina, 1998:113). A modern-day example to consider is the Japanese culture, which has somewhat uncommon practices regarding borrowing money. They borrow and pay back the next year, and lenders do not mind extending the loans without asking for any surety or collateral because they know that their culture does not allow anyone to borrow and not pay back. Usually, they do so because they know it is non-negotiable to pay back, and if it failed, the person owing the debt was badly positioned to have their reputation tarnished. The borrower will always say to the lender “I agree to be publicly laughed at if I fail to repay this sum” (Benedict 1947:15). So the borrower of the money is compelled to return the money, and if he does not pay it back, he could commit ritual ⁵suicide just

⁵ Japanese culture allows ritual suicide in a bid to demonstrate dissatisfaction in failure over something regarded as important to the suicide committer. For example, Yukio Mishima (1925–1970) committed suicide for leading an unsuccessful rebellion against adoption of the Japanese modern constitution. Others have committed suicide for failing to pronounce the name of the emperor correctly when reading an Imperial Rescript on Education or failed to rescue the emperor's portrait in a school fire. Stories of honour and shame still continue to play a role outside the Western world, portraying the ideal relevance of the subject matter. A man can be pardoned with a very minor prison sentence for murder or mutilation because they acted to cleanse the family name from shame and keep its honour. A Jordanian boy tied his sister, a seventeen-year-old Kifaya Husayn, on a chair and slashed her throat for the shame of rape brought to the family. After doing so, he ran into the street waving the bloody knife and shouting out loud “I have killed my sister to cleanse our honour”. In another key illustration of how honour and shame can affect mindsets, in 1871, the USA marines invaded Kanghai Do, an island off

for him to clear his name and protect the honour of his family. These sagas underscore pragmatically the importance of keeping your honour and staying away from shameful acts of life because it disrupts social norms, as one can notice for instance in the riots caused by the woman caught in adultery. Honour and shame are very practicable in the North of Africa and right to the Far East, such as with the Bedouins of Egypt and the peasants of Lebanon (Rabichev 1996:52). This is contrary to the guilt-conscience-based culture believed by the Western world to be an internal self-evaluation guided by the individual's conscience. It operates on punishment and forgiveness to restore the moral failure of a human being. This means that shame cultures rely on external sanctions for good behaviour, which in essence is self-respect, while guilt cultures rely on internal sanctions for good behaviour which is judged by your conscience (Moxnes 1993:20–21).

DeSilva (2000:22) states that “the culture of the first-century world were founded on social values of honour and dishonour”. He continues to argue with Seneca's thoughts: “that which is honourable is held dear for no reason other than because it is honourable (*De Ben 4.16.2*)” (DeSilva 2000:22). According to Seneca, honour is fundamental to his contemporaries and is also a founding root to acquire a recognised social status. Isocrates often advised young people that honour and pleasure were a great good, but pleasure without honour was bad. He placed the value of honour above human safety. But first-century people held honour and safety in high esteem. It was normal for a public speaker to place honour and security at the helm of everything to convince the audience he aimed at. For example:

Quintilian a teacher of rhetoric from the late first century CE, holds up the “honourable” as the fundamental factor in persuading people to adopt or avoid a course of action (*Institutes 3.8.1*); from Aristotle to Quintilian, successful orators were the ones who

the coast of North Korea and were victorious, capturing 100 Korean soldiers. Briefly after taking off to head home with them, the Americans were shocked by the reactions of the soldiers who suddenly began jumping into the sea and cutting their throats. Meanwhile the rest of the soldiers began begging the US marines to kill them rather than taking back to Korea alive. For these soldiers, the shame and dishonour accompanying their defeat is worse than death (Becktol 1947:13–14).

could demonstrate that the course of action they advocated led to the greatest honour (DeSilva 2000:22).

Jesus addresses his audience accordingly in John 8:48–49 in accordance with the excerpt above as being in dishonour of his personality and for daring to accuse him of possessing a demon.

Greek	English
48 [αc]Ἀπεκρίθησαν οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ εἶπαν αὐτῷ· Οὐ καλῶς λέγομεν ἡμεῖς ὅτι Σαμαρίτης εἶ σὺ καὶ δαιμόνιον ἔχεις; 49 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· Ἐγὼ δαιμόνιον οὐκ ἔχω, ἀλλὰ τιμῶ τὸν πατέρα μου, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀτιμάζετέ με.	48 The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” 49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honour my Father, and you dishonour me. 50 Yet I do not seek my glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge (NIV).

To Jesus, honour is a fundamental aspect of the first-century man which is being violated against his right and personality, but he seeks the honour of his father. Therefore, honour was reciprocated and ⁶fundamental to Jesus as it is with the conviction of Quintilian who upholds honour as a virtue (see DeSilva 2000).

In the first century, honour was meant to control sets of cultural aspects, including behavioural patterns, sexual activity, community belonging, how to speak in the community, and how to dress (DeSilva 2000:185). There were other proper attitudes required for respect and homage, alongside control by oneself and by those who were in charge of society. Honour and shame are core values for family, vocation, politics, and religion.

Honour was one of the items that was key in maintaining an individual’s status in the community to which he belonged. According to Malina (1991:27), honour can be

⁶ DeSilva (2000) analyses the notion of honour as fundamental and as a pragmatic lifestyle in the first century. Honour and dishonour played a very important part in moral instruction. And we hear Isocrates using words like “it is disgraceful” and “it is noble” to advise Demonicus (*Ad Dem*) against using the words “it is right” or “wrong”, “profitable” or “unprofitable”, as sanctions for behaviour in order to avoid engaging in acts of dishonour.

understood as a social attribute of proper behaviour earned by overcoming tempting values of power and sexual status, which constitutes the religious intersection point. Properly defined, it could be said that honour is the someone's worth in the eyes others, which is what that person's value is in the eyes of his or her social group (Malina 1981:27). According to Mischke (2010:5), honour is the worth or value of a person both in their own eyes and in the eyes of their community. The critical item is the public nature of respect and reputation (Nevrey 1998:15).

As Neyrey (1998:15) continues to explain, "It would not be an understatement to say that 'honour' as reputation and 'good name' were endemic to the ancient world; hence, we hear [scholars] and anthropologists calling it a 'pivotal value' of the Mediterranean world, both ancient and modern"

This implies that the individual's worth is revealed to him according to the way his community considers and values him, that is, acknowledging the worth of honour that he commands from the community to which he belongs. Now, the understanding of honour is rooted in the lines of power because for anyone to control the other, it is dependent on where one stands in the status ladder of the group to which one belongs. This suggests that one can effectively influence society via power roles once their status commands respect; for example, the father commands respect and obedience from the family because of his paternal role of father, which is imbued with power. In the first-century Mediterranean world, a father's status depended on the way his children behaved. If a girl child disrespected the father and was caught eloping with a young man unmarried to her, it meant that her father's honour was hanging on a balance due to his community's potential rejection of his social standing – his honour (Grubbs 1998:62). Van Eck and Kok (2010:15) clarify that a girl's greatest asset is her sexual purity, and she could only marry a good husband if she was a virgin, and that brought honour to the family.

A man's honour was more important than that of a woman. The family one was born into also gave them important lineage recognition; for instance, the tribe Levi of Benjamin was an important tribe and anyone born into it was honoured (Malina 1981:29; see also Van Eck and Kok 2010:15–16). Malina (1981:29) states that "honour, then is a claim to worth and social acknowledgement of that worth." For a person groomed in such a society, there is always a dialectic of watching and thinking continually back and forth with regard

to what the societal norms are and how the person is supposed to reproduce those norms in a given demeanour. This puts such a person under constant pressure to attain honourable standards because such a person has to retrospect himself regarding his behaviour regularly, analysing how it is acknowledged in society as meaningful and valuable. He is constantly evaluating his actions in terms of the honour-and-shame yardstick of his society. If all of this is done correctly, a person with good behavioural standards expects society to grant him the honour of society's reputation. That means that the person has laboured hard enough to make his actions conform to the standards of the society, and these actions are what call for the honourable accreditation tagged over his name as a man of respect and is treated as such.

But in the first century, a person was interested in his honour being preserved. Honour ratings were so important that a family's name could easily be run down because the name was tarnished by disrespectful acts. Since they identified families and their importance by their names, a man was honoured just by the name he bore. So, a man's rating and honour in the community in which he lived relied on the way he carried and conducted himself in public. This could probably suggest that Jesus is aware of this and resorts to first protecting the adulterous woman, such that her own family name and honour could be preserved.

Anyone who was in a position of power was honoured, with some probably being respected and granted honour because of the power they had. Honour was not given to anybody in any way other than being hard-earned, but public officials had power by virtue of the political office in communities (DeSilva 2000:85). Such honour, acquired or ascribed, followed the genealogy of a person (Malina 1981:29), confirming the fact that honour was not just given but was also ascribed following the family line (Itao and Kaneko 2020:2379). Some others were granted honour by being around the circles of power and the ruling class, and were recognised with inclusion into the honourable class. Others obtained it through God-given favour, and the king of the community could also confer it on a person.

For others, it was acquired through a challenge and riposte battle initiated by the challenger. The respondent's reaction was what determined the tune for the dance to begin. The challenge was in some way an intrusion into the social space of the other, and

his reaction was a loud statement that the real contest was about to begin. Such a challenge was meant to gain space in the respondent's social space or dislodge him completely, either temporally or permanently. In such cases, there was total resistance in a bid by the receiver of the message to prevent his public personality from being dishonoured. He was entitled to defend his public personality, and the ensuing battle was a battle between equals (Malina 1981:29–30).

The verdict was always passed by the public after judging from the receiver's response and behaviour to the challenger. The receiver's response and reaction were very significant, as both silence and worded responses were considered to be responses to the challenge (Malina 1981:33). His silence meant rejection of the challenge, underrating of the challenger as a minor to him or showing disdain, scorn, or contempt. In such a case, if he was inferior to the challenger, the challenger was meant to take steps to obliterate the insulting response with a much harder challenge in a bid to dishonour the receiver, and this would carry on until the receiver decided to give up and keep his silence or deny responding, thereby conceding the challenge and accepting being dishonoured. This was a loss of reputation by the receiver, and such was the case in situations where the receiver decided not to engage the challenger. DeSilva (2000:75) describes a Christian's way of response to a challenger as one that would always reflect a positive attitude to onlookers. Malina says that if the challenger lost his reputation in the public, he would not likely be allowed to speak in public events and would not be allowed to attend certain public functions, which ranged from gift-giving, invitations to dinner, public debates over issues of law, buying and selling, arranging marriages, arranging cooperative ventures for farming, business, fishing, et cetera (Malina 1981:32–33). This kind of cultural behaviour is termed an agonistic culture by anthropologists.

The negative implications tarnished your honour by blood and family name, honour by blood characterised by drawing from the family bloodline. But within each family, there could be trust in each other. However, everybody outside was considered untrustworthy and "dishonourable, guilty, if you will, until proved otherwise" (Malina 1981:33; see also van Eck and Kok 2010:18). Distrust ran across members of the same village, town, or clan until tested and verified before one was validated as an honourable man. Men from other families were potential enemies, while foreigners from other villages were enemies with

certainty, and their arrivals always ended up with each probing the other. Van Eck and Kok hold that societies were always divided into we – members of a group – and they – members outside the group. Members were first loyal to the group to which they belonged, even to their detriment, and outsiders were given no chance. But most important is the idea that their personality and self-image were shaped by their membership in a group.

Family names were pointers and attractions to exclusion, opposition, and distancing by others against your honour and shame. Family name and its honour were of central concern, giving meaning and purpose to the existence of every family of the village, town or clan. This was of great significance because it excluded family members due to their dishonourable status in society from doing business or associating with others (Malina 1981:33–34). Family respect was very important, stemming from the dignity of keeping the name honourable, and upheld by all family members. Family members were expected to defend their family name, for it acted as a pass with which to interact and do business with the outside world.

In the case of Jesus, it could generally observe that his family name would have never been endorsed as honourable for the mere fact that he is a carpenter's son, and for him to claim to be the Messiah and Son of God is already enough reason to reject and banish him. He is treated as a carpenter's son, with the result that Nathanael questions if anything good can come from Nazareth (Jn 1:46). He is then further rejected from being the Son of God by the synagogue leaders, denting any chances of his being honoured. His honour is questioned throughout his ministry, which the evangelist states clearly to the Judaic Christians and the Baptist's followers, so that they can understand that Jesus' glory is non-negotiable but designated by heaven. He says in John 12:34 that "the hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified", as preparatory grounds for his exit from the universe, but a future return will elevate him higher, and his honour (Jn 8:48–49) will be the shame of all his antagonists (Mattill 1977:300). For Jesus to make these statements, it is because he understands the place of honour and shame in the Jewish community, and the kind of honour he could command as the Son of God is not easily accepted because honour was gained primarily through stated channels, for which he had been vilified and denied because of his claims to Messiahship and Sonship of God.

Just before we engage in our next point of discussion, a note should be made that John is ascribing honour to Jesus Christ throughout his Gospel, which itself is honoured, for he is a noble and honoured man. John believes that Jesus should be honoured, respected and believed.

The depiction of honour and shame in this passage serves as a lens through which we can explore societal expectations, moral judgments, and the ethical teachings of Jesus within a framework deeply rooted in honour-shame dynamics. To understand the portrayal of honour and shame in this passage, it is crucial to delve into the historical and cultural context of the time. In the Mediterranean world of the first century, honour and shame were not merely abstract concepts but foundational principles that governed social interactions, moral codes, and individual identities. Honour, often associated with reputation, integrity, and adherence to societal norms, was a prized attribute that individuals sought to uphold. Conversely, shame, linked to disgrace, humiliation, and social ostracism, was a powerful deterrent against behaviours deemed deviant or dishonourable.

The dynamics of honour and shame in the *Pericope Adulterae* (John 7:53–8:11) are vividly portrayed through the actions of the characters and the societal responses embedded within the narrative. The scribes and Pharisees, who bring the woman caught in adultery before Jesus, aim not only to seek judgment but also to place Jesus in a moral and legal dilemma. Their actions are rooted in the societal norms that prioritise sexual purity and the preservation of moral order, which are integral to maintaining honour within the community (Malina & Rohrbaugh 1998:160–163).

In Mediterranean societies, honour and shame functioned as primary social values that governed behaviour and established social hierarchies (Neyrey 1998:27–29). The public accusation of the woman represents a challenge to her honour and her household's honour, which would have brought significant shame upon her family. This is consistent with the cultural expectations of first-century Mediterranean life, where sexual misconduct was seen as a violation not just of personal morality but of communal honour (DeSilva, 2000:101–105).

The scribes and Pharisees' motive to entrap Jesus is further understood in terms of their desire to maintain their own honour by upholding the law, while simultaneously testing Jesus' fidelity to Jewish legal traditions (Pilch, 1991:45–48). Their actions are indicative of the broader social tension between competing groups vying for public honour. As Osiek and Balch (1997:137–139) note, the concept of purity, especially in relation to sexuality, was deeply tied to maintaining the honour of households and the community.

Moreover, Jesus' response to the accusers—challenging those without sin to cast the first stone—highlights an alternative understanding of honour. By reframing the situation, Jesus undermines the conventional honour system, exposing the hypocrisy of the accusers and shifting the focus from legalistic purity to personal integrity (Carter 2006: 81–83). This tactic not only defuses the situation but also re-establishes the woman's dignity in the face of public shame.

The entire scene, as Esler (1994: 92–94) discusses, illustrates the complex interplay of social values, where honour, shame, and the community's moral order are negotiated in a public forum. The pericope thus reflects a broader social-scientific concern with how individuals and groups maintained or contested honour in first-century Mediterranean societies.

Furthermore, Jesus' act of writing on the ground, often interpreted as a symbolic gesture of grace and forgiveness, challenges the punitive nature of shame-based judgments. His refusal to succumb to the public shaming and disgrace of the woman reflects a radical redefinition of honour, formed from the ideas of compassion, forgiveness, and the recognition of inherent human dignity (DeSilva 2000:75–77). The culmination of the narrative, with Jesus offering the woman forgiveness and a directive to go and sin no more, underscores a paradigm shift in understanding honour and shame. Rather than perpetuating cycles of shame and exclusion, Jesus extends a path to restoration and redemption based on principles of household honour.

From a theological perspective, the depiction of honour and shame in John 7:53–8:11 invites a nuanced exploration of cultural dynamics, the group ethos of honour, and the transformative potential of personal response to communal events to maintain individual public integrity in honour of group norms (DeSilva 2000:77). Neyvrey

(1996:116) analyses the Fourth Gospel but not the specific text of the *pericope adulterae* and specifies that honour in the Fourth Gospel is within the broader social context of honour-shame cultures, examining how societal norms, religious beliefs, and individual agency intersect to shape notions of honour, shame, and moral responsibility. Moreover, the passage serves as a case study for understanding the ethical dimensions of confronting societal judgments, challenging systemic injustices, and embodying principles of grace and integrity in interpersonal interactions, which are an ethos that Jesus is advancing against the pervasive tribulations that he and others face.

3.4.2 Patron-Client Relationships

Patronage is the power of one person to rule over subjects. A patron functioned as a boss or patron of the community. Clients, on the other hand, related to their patrons on the basis of servant-to-master relationships. The master-and-servant relationship bond was limited, and even when they were like friends for simplicity's sake, the master's place was still very sensitive and jealously preserved, for the servant was always inferior (Desilva 2004:130).

Desilva (2004:130) weighs in that generally the honour due for senior statesmen was often relinquished or traded in honour of his public office or his wealth is not irrelevant and unnoticed but he humbles himself before Jesus because Jesus' office is much more honourable than his (Desilva 2000:136). Generally, patronage was an office of honour acquired via position, wealth, and lineage.

Patrons are not absent in any culture, given that patriarchal communities where men still rule over women and children still exist. They are patrons because they still hold decision-making power in all situations: they hold decision-making power over land, perform all ritual acts in their communities, and only allow women to plough the land for farming, after which it is returned to the men for further control (Cheghe 2012:38). Women train and educate their girl children on sex education, and the father of the child will take credit for her success (Cheghe 2012:40). Every community has a chief patron to whose authority everyone submits to.

Patrons defended each other as friends of the same class. Desilva (2004:132) highlights an example of patrons who broker for one another in cases where they owe others money. They are birds of feathers flocking together, as this study will qualify. Paul can be considered to be brokering and defending Onesimus before his friend Philemon, whom he asks to welcome Onesimus as he would do to him (Phlm 17). In patronage was imbedded a very profound stratification of society, where the nobility and the landowners were completely distinct from the common people, who ploughed the land, and the linking point between the patron and the client was the patron-client relationship. Patrons had clients enrolled under them as their clients, and this relationship was permissible to be passed on to generations as an inheritance by members of the client's family. This was used as some sort of requirement to keep clients loyal in the service of the patron (Mbamalu 2013:2). Patronage still exists intensely, where patrons use money in the presence of notables to sway people into their followership, offering gifts and invitations to dinner, and in return they receive help with lawsuits and votes to occupy political posts.

In the text of John 7:53–8:11, Jesus is portrayed as a benevolent teacher and healer. Throughout the Gospels, embodies elements of a patron or benefactor. In the context of patronage, a patron was someone of higher social standing who provided support, protection, and often material benefits to clients or followers. Jesus' patronage character comes across visibly when he offers teachings, healing, and spiritual guidance that attracts followers, creating a sense of loyalty and dependence akin to a patron-client relationship (Mbamalu 2013:3). This dynamic is evident in the *Pericope Adulterae*, where Jesus plays the role of patron and adjudicator in the case of the woman caught in adultery, mediating her protection and freedom.

On the other hand, the religious leaders, represented by the scribes and Pharisees, function as power brokers within the Jewish community. They wield both spiritual and social authority, acting as intermediaries between the people and religious institutions. In the narrative, the religious leaders bring the woman caught in adultery before Jesus, not merely seeking judgment but also testing his teachings and authority. This reflects a dynamic where religious elites assert their control and influence over moral and legal matters, positioning themselves as arbiters of societal norms and guardians of religious

purity and acting as patrons of their society (Neyvrey 1996:110). Their actions can be seen as a demonstration of their role as patrons within the religious and social hierarchy of the time. Furthermore, John the evangelist was not impressed with the negative evaluation of Jesus by the synagogue leaders, and his subsequent rejection demonstrates the patron-client division leading to the expulsion of the Christian Jews by the non-Christian Jews, who opted to choose to honour Jesus rather than their patrons (DeSilva 2004:352; see also DeSilva 2000:29).

The woman caught in adultery occupies the role of a vulnerable client within this patron-client framework. She is caught in a moral transgression and exposed to potential shame, punishment, and social ostracism. In ancient societies structured around honour and shame, individuals like the woman in this narrative often lacked the social and legal protections afforded to more privileged members of society. However, Jesus' intervention disrupts this power dynamic because he also acts as one of the patrons (Neyvrey 1996:110). By challenging the accusers and offering forgiveness, he extends a form of patronage that transcends societal judgments and offers a path to redemption for the vulnerable client.

The theme of patron-client dynamics extends beyond the specific characters in the narrative to encompass broader societal structures and ethical considerations. Patronage systems were deeply embedded in ancient Mediterranean societies, shaping social interactions, economic exchanges, and even religious affiliations. The relationships between patrons and clients were characterised by notions of reciprocity, loyalty, and mutual obligations. Patrons provided protection, support, and opportunities for advancement, while clients offered loyalty, service, and sometimes material contributions in return.

In the context of the *Pericope Adulterae*, the dynamics of patron-client relationships intersect with themes of power, authority, and moral responsibility. Jesus' role as a benevolent patron challenges traditional power structures and social hierarchies by offering mercy and forgiveness to the vulnerable client, thereby subverting societal expectations and redefining notions of honour and shame. His actions reflect a transformative approach to ethical teachings, emphasising compassion, justice, and the inherent dignity of every individual, regardless of social status or past transgressions.

From this perspective, John 7:53–8:11 explores how social hierarchies, power dynamics, and ethical considerations intersect in narratives and teachings attributed to Jesus. The depiction of patron-client dynamics adds depth to our understanding of social relationships, moral teachings, and the complexities of authority and compassion in ancient societies (see Neyvrey 1996:110–113).

3.4.3 Purity Codes

Purity codes will follow in the paragraphs below to highlight the relevance of the codes to the lives of the Jewish community. Purity in the first-century Mediterranean world was a social virtue that determined admission into many places. Purity, according to this study, can be defined as the ability to stay free of sin and undefiled. The characteristic traits of purity were engulfed in acts of holiness, cleanliness, pureness, without blemish, righteousness and other such things (Desilva 2004:112). Purity codes dictated how the Hebrew people were expected to live in holiness according to the codes described in the book of Leviticus. John also mentions some of them, and Rogan (2021:18) argues that the codes were not homogenous in the way such impurities contracted in daily living and the impurity caused by particularly treacherous sins were differentiated from each other. Desilva (2004:112) thinks that these codes are rendered obsolete by the works of Jesus, which are a legacy rendering the relevance of purity codes absurd.

Purity currently requires an acceptance of the authority and power of Christ over human lives. To the name of Jesus, there is the authority that John is trying to highlight to his readers, as he wishes for them to understand the honour that Jesus deserves as the Son of God (Jn 3:16). John does not relegate the fact that people have to live holy lives and be faithful, but he embarks on accepting Jesus so that one can be saved and have life in abundance (Jn 10:10), which is rejected by the Jews (Jn 3:17–19). Shame was on the part of anyone who was defiant of such codes, and it was a community rejection, such as with the man with leprosy in the pool of Siloam in John 9.

So, In John 7:53–8:11, the resonance with purity codes, prevalent in the first-century Mediterranean world, is palpable through the lens of moral transgressions, societal expectations, and the ethical teachings of Jesus. Purity codes, deeply ingrained in

ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman societies, delineated boundaries between purity and impurity, defining acceptable behaviours, rituals, and social interactions within religious and cultural frameworks. The narrative of the Woman Caught in Adultery encapsulates themes of purity and impurity, and provides insights into the complexities of moral judgment, forgiveness, and the transformative power of ethical teachings.

Manus and Ukaga, (2017:56–85) note that central to the narrative is the woman caught in adultery, whose actions violate prevailing purity codes and societal norms related to sexual conduct and marital fidelity. Adultery was considered a grave moral transgression, not only in Jewish law but also in the broader Mediterranean cultural context, where honour and shame were deeply intertwined with notions of purity and impurity. The woman's predicament reflects the societal emphasis on maintaining purity and avoiding actions deemed impure or dishonourable, especially concerning matters of sexuality and family honour.

The religious leaders, represented by the scribes and Pharisees, serve as enforcers of purity codes within the community. Their actions in bringing the woman before Jesus for judgment exemplify the role of moral guardians tasked with upholding religious and social purity standards. The narrative unfolds as a test of Jesus' adherence to purity codes and his ethical teachings regarding forgiveness, compassion, and the transformative power of grace.

Jesus' response to the situation challenges conventional understandings of purity and impurity. Instead of condemning the woman or engaging in legalistic judgments, Jesus redirects the focus from external actions to internal intentions and moral accountability. His statement, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her," underscores a deeper understanding of purity that transcends ritual observances and external appearances. Jesus' teachings emphasise inner purity of heart, integrity, and the recognition of shared human fallibility, highlighting a transformative vision of ethical purity rooted in compassion and forgiveness (Beutler 2017:87).

The act of forgiveness and the directive to "go and sin no more" symbolise a pathway to spiritual renewal and moral purity. Jesus offers not just absolution from past transgressions but also a call to ethical transformation, inviting the woman to embrace

a life aligned with moral virtues and ethical principles. This narrative arc resonates with the aspirational aspects of purity codes, which sought not only to delineate boundaries but also to guide individuals towards moral excellence and spiritual growth. Furthermore, the interaction between Jesus and the accusers reflects tensions between legalistic interpretations of purity and the compassionate ethos advocated by Jesus. The scribes and Pharisees, focused on upholding external purity standards, confront Jesus with a moral dilemma rooted in purity codes. However, Jesus' response challenges the rigid application of purity laws, emphasising mercy, understanding, and the recognition of shared humanity over strict adherence to legalistic frameworks.

3.4.4. Trust and Truth for Honour in Society

The worth of trust was an enormous human-relations feature in the first-century world. Given that the first-century Mediterranean world was a people-oriented world in which character was tested, individuals were respected according to their honesty. John is revealing to them an important human-relations idea – trust in Christ, which unfortunately was rejected on claims that Jesus claims to be the Son of God meanwhile he is the Son of Man. Trust is directly proportional to character because it is earned only after a test of character. “Character consists of outward features, hence a person can be known by external features alone” (Malina & Bruce 1996:158; see also van Eck and Kok 2010:75–77).

The character is sustained by acts of truth (*aletheia*) that enact trust from those in the group. John carefully presents truths selected to illuminate the Judaic firm belief in the Old Testament, so that the disbelieving Jews may resonate with one of the items John describes perfectly well – the concept of light (Jn 1:4–5, 8:12). To John, truth is what he saw in Jesus as the light that he has written prompted partly by the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 as cogently argued by Körstenberger (Mburu 2010:37). John assembles what his material – “cohesive whole” according to (Mburu 2010:37) with the clear intention to convince his audience that Jesus is the light of the world and the Son of God.

To further illustrate this premise, Mburu compares the Hebrew word *amat* to *aletheia*; the word *amat* is understood to signify “stability, reliability, durability, permanence,

faithfulness or truth. True and False does not only involve external values but also includes both negative and positive moral values” (Mburu 2010:37–38). The comparison is also labelled “accurate and inaccurate” when used with the prepositions (εν, επι, κατά), and it is also classified as “real and unreal” (Mburu 2010:37), and according to her there is a lack of common consensus among scholars on the interpretation of the word *aletheia*, which according to the Greek interpretation is the reality of truth reliable in intellectually categorised reality. Truth was discerned from an individual’s conduct, personal character and utterances. Therefore, truth was measured through “your general behaviour, how you did your work, what you said, and what you did in public” (Van Eck 2010:75). In the *Didache*, it is stated there that “a stranger who calls himself a fellow-Christian and a preacher is a false prophet if he stays with you for longer than three days” (Van Eck and Kok 2010:37). This implies that the guest was asked how long would they live with their hosts, and if that time elapsed, it was breach of trust and truth.

Trust and truth were demonstrated by being good to neighbours. Rabihev (1996:52) states that the concepts of honour and shame were reliant on the principles of honesty, loyalty, integrity, and other moral qualities. This had largely to do with gender and also with the person’s position in society, and each man or woman’s honour was largely justified by his or her conduct in society (see also Pitt-Rivers 1977:20; Malina and Nevrey 1991a:41).

Furthermore, academics classify abnormal character as the inability to measure up to the social and cultural expectations or stereotypes that constitute the identity of such persons (see Malina and Nevrey 1996:158). The first-century person only trusted family members, and not all family members were worthy of trust because integrity was considered much higher than even themselves, as measured by that family member’s character.

John narrates the words of Jesus, who in John 8 challenged the character of Jewish elders who clamour for the woman to be stoned according to Mosaic Law. He tells them to be the first to cast a stone at the woman caught in adultery if they have not sinned. This means that he would have well mastered the customs and traditions of the Judaic

Christians in general before making such a public statement. However, since character was what commanded trust and trust was directly proportional to honesty, character opened the way for intertwined social interaction between those who trusted themselves. Jesus is within his rights to raise an alarm to the people not to taint the character of an unknown woman via their Jewish laws.

A man was never a singular entity; as per the descriptions of DeSilva (2000; see also Malina 1996:156) that the first-century community always lived as a group and connected to at least one social unit – kinship. Below is an excerpt that states just the same kind of description:

A first-century man firstly perceived himself as a distinctive whole set in relation to another set whole within a given social and natural background; every individual is perceived as embedded in some other, in a sequence of embeddedness, so to say (Malina 1993b:in Malina and Neyrey).

Malina and Neyrey (1996:159) say: “All people in a family (generation) and a distinctive polis or region (geography) are presumed to have the same experiences and very similar qualities”, thereby admitting what the extract above is asserting, that every individual is embedded into the other within a given social and natural background. A man could only be trusted according to his loyalty to the group to which he belonged (Malina and Neyrey 1996:158). Thus, John intends to instil into the Johannine Jewish Christian that a holistic belief in Jesus Christ as their Messiah and prophet is not just a probability but is feasible, for he is truly their Saviour and Messiah (Mattill 1977:298). This does not sit well with the authorities, who also fail to comprehend John’s message but tend to translate it as insubordination and allegiance to a fictitious man calling himself the Saviour, and they attempt to downplay any association to Jesus as the Saviour (DeSilva 2018:98).

Building from the kinship where individual trust began, Jesus’ genealogy primarily functioned to identify him as embedded in a Jewish family, clan, and tradition of Israel. It does not exempt him from being a mere human being before claiming to be the Son of God. Amidst Jesus’ frequent claims of being the Son of God is his human-nature existence, which stems from a family upon which the family name ought to be venerated.

But in his case, his claim is not valid because nobody can trust him and his claims of God's sonship without a lineage name being traced or linked to him (Malina and Neyvrey 1996:159). After all, one's father's father was a relevant linkage to identify an individual in ancient Jewish cultures. So how would John be trusted when people could not even trust Jesus?

But within each family, there could be trust among the members. However, every stranger from outside the group was considered untrustworthy and most evidently "dishonourable, guilty, if you will, until proven otherwise" (Malina 1981:33; see also Van Eck and Kok 2010:18). Family distrust was like a seed planted across members of same village, town or clan until they properly tested and verified an individual before that individual was completely validated as an honourable man. Men from other families were imminent enemies and dangerous, while foreigners from other villages were enemies to watch closely. They all distrusted themselves and always ended up with each probing the other. Van Eck and Kok (2010) hold that societies were always divided into we (members of a group) and they (members outside the group). A member was first loyal to the group to which they belonged before they declared their loyalty to anyone else, even to their detriment, and outsiders were given no chance. But most important is the idea that their personality and self-image were shaped by their membership in a group.

By their commission by Christ, Jesus' disciples gained honour by belonging to a prestigious group called the disciples of the Son of God. This group adhered to values prized within the early church, showing how their reputation and integrity had been enhanced in the entire community of faith (DeSilva 2018:99). These men in the service of God were first seen to be disapproved men who accepted the opportunity to follow a man without a home and who claims to be the Son of God, and they have now become revered and honoured by their resilience and faith. They gradually gained trust from people in their service to the community, and their life values have now become damage-control values in society.

The section below argues that the Roman appearance was a continuation of the Hellenistic destructive plan to reduce to shame of the religious culture of the Jews and show how superior their culture was, especially as a civilised community of people. It led to the near wipeout of honour for Judaism and the newly formed Johannine community,

and probably humiliated them. This depicts the political scene under which the Johannine community was formed to be a violent one.

The gospel times cannot be distinguished from the Greco-Roman world. Hellenism was part of the Jewish Republic from an early date, after which the Romans conquered and took control of the political affairs of the Jewish nation. Carter (2012:1) says that “The Roman Empire provides the ever-present political, economic, societal, and religious framework and context for the New Testament's claims, language, structures, personnel, and scenes”. This might be true, but this does not exempt the fact that the New Testament was configured within the ruling period of the Hellenists, who were architects for the existence of this section of the Bible. The gospel times were heavily influenced by the Greeks and the Romans, who ruled the Jewish state in succession.

But the Roman period was marred by violence that is impossible to disregard. First-century people were not peaceful but relatively violent, especially when it came to religious violence (Punt 2012:1–4). The first-century social world was largely impacted by Roman imperial control, and violence during this time cannot be underestimated and evaded. Violence pervaded every centimetre of the lives of the first-century Mediterranean world, shattering and dismantling communities in Palestine, which were homogeneously well settled and emanated from the Greek polis traditions. Punt explains further that the Romans were good tacticians of divide and rule, appointing according to Roman standards local representatives to rule with iron fists in honour of Rome. The punitive measures were meant to bring shame to the individuals and often consisted of crucifixion (Punt 2012:4–5). The appointment of governors from Rome was designed to acquire all the honour required and to possibly dismantle the group-oriented nature of the first-century Mediterranean society, which was a threat to their successful campaign.

But what should not evade us is the fact that the Romans were patrons to the Hebrew people, and Desilva (2004:132) notes that within patronage friends are indebted to friends or clients to the patrons, as it was with Pliny to Trajan and Romanus Voconius to

Pliny for brokering on each other's behalf. So Roman honour was preliminary in the Roman colonisation of Jerusalem.

Mburu states that at the time of the composition of the New Testament, there was already a strong Hellenistic influence on Judaism in Palestine and Alexandria. The author stresses that it was only possible because Judaism was engulfed and surrounded by the Hellenistic language and culture which was designed to build the honour of the Greek culture to the detriment and shame of the Jewish religion that they had reduced to near invalidity (Mburu 2010:141). The Greeks, under the instructions of Alexander the Great, were bound to execute the strategic plan to Hellenise the world, and the Jewish state could not be exempted from this plan of action in order to bring honour to the Greek ruler who was bent on seeing the world Hellenised in his honour (Matthews 1991:193–194). The scholars sent to the conquered areas were given instructions to institute Greek as the official language, while they in turn were to learn the indigenous languages of the people to strike a balance in politics and religion so that political stability could be established and Greek culture honoured. Shame was unacceptable to the Greeks, which is congruent with the argument that Hellenism was intended to expand the first-century world in honour of their culture and King Alexander the Great.

Thomassen (2009:3) suggests that the Greek language was a very contributive force to the establishment of the biblical canon ($\kappa\alpha\nu\omega\nu$). Though being a Semitic word in origin, it signifies a variety of meanings ranging from “the weaver’s ‘rod’ and the mason’s or carpenter’s ‘ruddled line, rule, ruler” (Thomassen 2009:3). In the Roman period, the meaning was different, with the word referring mostly to “art, music, law, and ethics, mostly in senses such as ‘rule, standard, norm, law, guideline, model” (Thomassen 2009:3). These were tailored words to honour the rule of the Romans, who were determined to destroy any obstruction to Roman success and honour in ruling Jerusalem.

This suggests that the New Testament was effectively shaped by the Greek and Roman languages. According to Thomassen (2009:3–4), the term Christian Canon took effect in the fourth century based on scriptural backing, given that the word Christian had been in use for a while and was used as a word for “rule, norm, rule of faith (*κανων τηζ πιστεωζ*) to contribute to the process of the canon’s formation. According to Thomassen (2009:4), the biblical canon has always had a position in the antiquity of the Greco-Roman culture and demonstrates a historical blend with the Homeric epics. The Homeric epics show some good historical characteristics that correlate with those of the Christian biblical canon which all lead to the framework of honouring the Greek and Roman achievements in the first century Israel.

During gospel times, life in urban areas is depicted to be reliant a lot more on village settings, from where most persons come from to settle in towns (Desilva 2000:134). Such people were considered outsiders, called “allogenic”, like the Jews of Alexandria who had no proper group honour because they were considered outsiders (Punt 2012:4). Jesus himself frequently visited villages such as Caesarea Philippi, Capernaum, and Galilee. John narrates that the gospel indicates the coming of the son of man, and his own did not receive him (Jn 1:11). In these times, the Greeks were long settled in an agrarian community where the villages supplied the cities with food supplies that were mostly consumed by the rich. The Romans were more agrarian than the Greeks (Carter 2006:47). Though the Greeks were more of academics, business, construction, and linguistics, they also influenced the construction of canon tremendously with their Greek language.

Carter (2006:45) highlights that rural and urban areas were all deeply embedded in socio-political structures, where power was centred, which in turn affected the rural areas in terms of economics, politics, and religion. This was where the Greek and Roman political elite, soldiers, and economic affairs were based, and from the cities, orders were disseminated into rural areas for governance and control. One cannot over-emphasise the influence of Roman and the Greek political activities upon the mindsets of the Jewish

people for the introduction of Greek and Roman belief systems, which, in the eyes of some contemporary Jews, polluted Judaism (see Mburu 2010:154). Pratt (1907:451) confirms that according to traditional views, the apostle John was a resident of the Greek cities of Asia Minor. He was in daily contact with Greek residents, and he wrote when Greek dominance in Asia Minor was getting to the climax. Pratt continues to explain that:

According to traditional view the apostle John was, for about twenty-five a resident of the Greek cities of Asia Minor. He was in daily contact with Greek influences. He wrote his gospel in an atmosphere with Greek conceptions of life. He made use of the Greek language in expressing his thoughts. He must have known much concerning Greek customs and ideas.

(Pratt 1907:450).

The argument further enhanced is that the author of the Book of John knew a bit more of other Greek literature that influenced his writing. The book of John “originated in Asia Minor in an atmosphere overcharged with Greek speculative thought and reflects an early effort to adapt Christianity to new conditions”, according to Pratt (1907:448), implying that there should have been some input into the redaction of the Fourth Gospel from a Hellenistic perspective. The Greeks were honourable people who loved their culture, and for them to develop interest showed that they wanted to spread their venerated culture so that it could be honoured and sold to the public.

In effect, John is exposed to the works of Greek intellectuals like Sophocles and Aeschylus. Pratt (1907) weighs into the similarity between the art of John in the New Testament writing and that of other Greek writings and concludes that the influence of eclecticism appears in Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, and the author of the Fourth Gospel seemingly adopted the same manner of expressing the truth, which would captivate the minds and hearts of his followers in the Greek world (see Pratt 1907:455).

The Romans were agrarian colonial masters on whom John does not place much emphasis. For John, emphasis on the life and ministry of Jesus is relevant to his audience, to whom he presents Jesus differently from in the Synoptic Gospels. But not undermining the role of the Greco-Romans, we see their handiwork at the beginning of Jn 1:1, which is described, according to DeSilva (2004:415), as a blend of the ideas of Philo of Alexandria and Stoicism, which is an influence from Greek and Roman roots. The blend of the word *logos* is similar to the Greek and Roman philosophical thought, which Stoicism beautifully blends with the Jewish notion of creator and sustainer of creation.

The Kilmann's method gives room for warring factions to accommodate, compromise and learn to collaborate in trust with each other. In such a manner negotiations will be faster. Jewish communities were communities of trust and honour and truth. Anyone who can accommodate, compromise, trust and be truthful to the opposing faction will be simply applying the Kilmann's method in search of peace.

3.6. Conclusion

The discussions we have navigated in this chapter are a description of social perspectives that the text of John 7:53–8:11 is covering. The first-century Mediterranean context is exposed in the narrative in the way the characters demonstrate their opinions. They align themselves to the law and use it to alienate the woman disregarding their marital cultural practices. They also do not seem to consider the importance of the kinship perspectives associated to the misconduct of the woman, and they proceed to call for her lynching. They dishonoured Christ and acted as patrons to him, attempting to make him their client. The dishonour and disgrace showed to the woman was a form of outrageous misconduct from leaders who should be trusted as her kin and patrons, whom she should honour, but their actions can be described as dubious. This makes their quest to gain Jesus Christ as another patron to disqualify their aim for adjudication. Though the main ambition was to target Christ and trap into legal error, it turned out to be a failure to the advantage of the woman.

Chapter 4

A Comparative Analysis of John's Social Context and the Weh Community

4.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a comparative analysis of the social context of the Johannine community and the Weh community, emphasizing their shared experiences of identity formation, marginalization, and resilience within contested socio-religious environments. The Johannine community, emerging in the late first century, grappled with tensions stemming from its separation from the synagogue and the surrounding Greco-Roman world, navigating its identity through theological innovation and communal solidarity. Similarly, the Weh community, rooted in African cultural traditions, contends with historical and contemporary forces of marginalization, negotiating its survival through oral traditions, collective memory, and adaptive practices.

By juxtaposing these two communities, the chapter anticipates shedding light on parallels in their responses to external pressures, their use of narrative and symbolic frameworks for self-definition, and their theological engagements with power, belonging, and exclusion. This comparative approach aims to provide insights into how communities in distinct historical and cultural contexts construct meaning and identity, demonstrating the universality of human resilience and the contextual nature of communal theology.

4.2. Purity Codes of Honour and Shame

The purity codes we are discussing here are connected specifically to the traditional lifestyle in Weh and how they influence the classification of patriarchal integrity. They have been discussed in detail in chapter three.

Purity in the ancient Mediterranean East was meant to describe aspects such as holiness, cleanliness, impurity, sanctity, defiled etcetera. DeSilva (2007:83) describes

these first Old Testament ritualistic practices conducted in Israel at the time of Jesus as merely external religious acts washed away or made obsolete by the works and teachings of Jesus Christ. The need for purity nowadays in the Weh community is enhanced by the churches but is irrelevant to the narrative of religious practice because nobody obeys the laws. Though not applied, they still help to regulate some faithful lives. Jewish codes were what defined the sanity of the Jewish men of the community who could command the value of honour in the group to which they identified. Codes such as those already listed above were an energetic contributive force to the Jewish man's societal influence. From observation by this author, purity codes were used to chastise witches and wizards and banish them from the community. The codes were used in cultic houses like Ndaulsem to reprimand persons who carried witchcraft powers not to practice them anywhere near members of the house or on anyone who was a member (Bern 2021).

Desilva (2007:84) The Weh society has also defined its codes that contribute to being awarded the title of *muhkebih* (compound head) and *wuu ukum*. They trace you back to your father's roots and see how noble he was and to which of the cultic societies he was belonging to. They trace if he was a practitioner of witchcraft, waywardness, whimsical and cunning and of double standards. Once they ascertain the character of your father and his belonging to groups, you who are about to be initiated have already achieved sixty percent of access into the cult.

The purity codes describe how the society of Weh deals with the values of honour and shame about vices such as the ones listed above vis-à-vis the norms accepted by the ancient fons as guiding rules.

4.2.1. The honour of dowry payment and marriage celebration in

Weh

According to informal discussions about the subject in December 2021, Bern (2021) states that the Weh man has as tradition the formal procedure to begin the betrothal rites. Bern (2021) says that a young lady who has found a suitor informs her parents about her suitor who wants to have her hand in marriage. The parents would then officially

accept him if the lady had agreed to marry him. But before accepting him, they will call her on camera and inquire if she is in love with the boy and is willing to marry him, and if she agrees, they will permit her to go ahead and receive the vital items of officially asking for a lady's hand in marriage. She will later return to inform the boy of her parent's decision to accept him and he goes ahead to give her washing powder or a bar of soap and skin lotion as the expression of his intention to marry her. The girl will collect it and present it to her parents who will then receive it as an acknowledgment of the gift from the boy as their son-in-law to be.

Once the boy is known they will allow him to visit the girl's parents now and then for acquaintance and relationship building. He would regularly begin to fetch wood and bring to the family and bring some little goodies like meat, cooking oil, and maybe kerosene as that was used in lanterns when electricity was not yet connected to the village. These little acts of goodwill present him with a lot of credibility as a good son-in-law. Immediately his family has been presented to the girl's family, they will be further directed to the eldest mother of the family who will do the negotiations. But if they reject the soap and skin lotion after probing the family of the boy, they will return the soap and the skin lotion.

In a situation where they find no complications in the boy's background, he is instructed to come along with his parents to present himself officially. He will then decide to make it ceremonious by adding his uncles and friends with some items including a container of raffia wine also known as palm wine (locally called *pami*), a hot drink and some crates of beer. Food might be prepared and taken along to add to that which the bride's family will present as it was in the case of the author of this study.

Before they receive the food, the uncles will ask the in-laws to articulate the intention of their visit. During this time their intention must be well expressed clearly to the family as to which lady their son courting. Mistakes in such cases are sanctioned with a penalty or fine which colours the event. The family will in some instances present a variety of girls in the family with veiled faces for you to select that which is your own. Where you make a mistake, you are fined with some kind of token again to add to the fun of the ceremony. The family will later confirm the reception of your washing powder, soap and skin lotion they received and then also officially let you know that they agreed that you proceed with

the dowry process. They then proceed with the eating and feasting. After that, they further direct the man to the various mothers the groom has to meet and present items to them. The reason why the groom is directed to other mothers is because dowry payment in Weh is done on the mother's side. The mothers receive dowry and they are those who give you and tell you what you have to do. No lists are given but the groom understands the standard items that must be presented in the dowry payment and he will assemble them and take them along. Where something is short, they will request it to be brought.

One clear thing Bern (2021) emphasizes is the fact that there used to be a lot of order in the betrothal process but nowadays there is a lot of disorder because many people do not maintain the tradition as was the case before. The Weh culture allows the groom to present himself to the mother's side and pay the dowry to the mother of the girl and then later comes to meet the father and give him a few items such as a blanket, hot drink and some money and they then fellowship together sharing some food and drinks before dispersing. This is an important item in the whole betrothal process. Some families even prepare food more than expected as if it was the case of a proper wedding. The betrothal rites nowadays in Weh have been very much modernised to the extent that the bride and groom's families make the introductory phase of the marriage a fanfare. They even sew outfits, hire cars, hire kitchen service providers and invite a cross-section of friends. Some do this in a grandiose way in a bid to announce their exit from celibacy and make the court and church weddings low-key events.

The Weh man textually will behave like the Jew who would recommend his friend's daughter to his son and vice versa. The Jews networked as friends and only those who were in good standing were recommended to their friends depending on the case at hand – it could be a transit visitor, a business deal or a daughter getting married to his friend's son (see Eck & Kok 2010:35-36). Belonging to the group was very important and if you served the group's interest the group in turn served you according to the narration of Eck & Kok (2010:44). The setup is very patriarchal and does not implicate unfaithful men as such but they act against any man who commits adultery. The men will often constitute a council to assess the damage caused they will fine the man much more than fine the woman would receive.

4.2.2 The honour and shame of wife snatching.

In Hebrew biblical texts, Judges 21:21 gives an allusion to the snatching of wives from Shiloh by the Benjamites illustrating the fact that wife snatching was something done slightly in a different way compared to the Weh man's manner of snatching. Judges 21:20-21 says "So they instructed the Benjamites, saying, "Go and hide in the vineyards and watch. When the young women of Shiloh come out to join in the dancing, rush from the vineyards and each of you seize one of them to be your wife. Then return to the land of Benjamin".

The website <https://christianity.starkexchange.com> alludes to how a woman could be snatched as per the write-up of Nancy Missler. This is a comparative description of the similar practices Jewish culture experienced that is not void of other cultures in Africa even though it might not be an exact fit into our text of John 7:53-8:1-11 but it contains features of wife snatching that is of our interest. It draws anyone's attention to the fact it was an age long practice that cannot be said to pertain to only a given group of social community. It acknowledges that a bride could be whisked away by her groom on an early return from an event or a trip as was the case with the parable of the Ten Virgins (Mtt 25:1-13). On another website, <http://www.khouse.org/articles/2011/987> the same information is displayed stating these words "All Jewish brides were said to be "stolen, caught up, or snatched up by surprise".

Meanwhile, in Weh as Buh (2022) insinuates, wife snatching was first noticed around the 18th century. Furthermore, it is a rare activity nowadays compared to the 18th and early 19th centuries even though it is still being carried out by some families who firmly adhere to it. According to his explanations, some activities such as prenuptial dating (secret dating between married people) transpires between the woman and the man for some considerable time before leading to the snatching of the woman.

Bern (2021) recounts that the man is expected to convince the woman and when she accepts, it is then she is asked to move out. Activities to lure the woman range from gifts to services offered to the woman. These gifts in those days ranged from meat, oil, firewood and a loin cloth. Services could be intervening where the woman needed intervention, assistance in times of grieving and death and protecting her where and

when necessary. In the beginning, they could also meet in the raffia bush and engage in a discussion which leads to a fruitful agreement. Such illicit relations could continue for a few months to over a year and during this time the lady could secretly cook food and regularly offer to the man as a normal friend. After they agree to get married they maintain the illegal relationship discretely. The woman could also cook food during the annual festival celebrations and go offer the man privately in the bush or elsewhere so that there would not be suspicion. But when they agree to become husband and wife, the woman gets herself ready, and as Bern (2021) narrates she takes her belongings and walks away from the man's house during nightfall and takes up abode in her new husband's home. When she has moved out the man will invite a traditional dance called 'ndong' to announce the snatching of the woman from her husband. It is in the early morning that it is announced that she was snatched from her husband and is now the new wife of the new snatcher. This depends, if she came in late in the evening because some other persons would announce it the same evening and feasting would be overnight.

He explains that there are no laid rules governing such relationships. They happen by chance according to the agreement between the man and woman involved. Moreover, it was practiced illegally and so there was no regulation of such relationships as there would be for marriage. Wife snatching was an activity that was not done through the parents of the woman but through the woman, and the parents were only informed after the snatching had happened and most probably during the feasting event the next morning. Sometimes it was their son-in-law who came to inform them that their daughter was no more in his house and had been snatched by another man.

Buh (2022) and Bern (2021) further elucidate that no sanctions are spelt out over the woman, the former husband and the new husband but what most cultures do is that they demand the refund of the first son-in-law's dowry so that their relationship could be legitimized. In a case where the man does not do so, the children he would have with the woman would still be counted as those of the former husband. He says nowadays it is not easily practiced because of a lot of witchcraft practices. But what some men do is that when a woman has been abandoned by her husband in her father's compound, a man could develop interest and start an affair with her and later snatch her from there but he will ensure that the dowry of the former husband is refunded so that they could

live in peace. If the man does not obey the repayment of the dowry, children from there would be out of wedlock until he repays the dowry. Most refunds are requested when the woman has not yet had children for the man but if she had given birth to children, a refund is no more asked –rather the man goes to pay another dowry to the parents of the woman.

However, the practice of wife snatching is uncommon now compared to the early 19th century. It has almost been wiped out because many people refute polygamy. This practice ended because many people also rejected the cultural practice of having many children and the pride of having many children and many wives.

When it concerns the male sex in Weh, there is no given sanction to the man who snatches another man's wife. The man is even allowed to have children out of wedlock even though they are married. The Weh tradition does not entertain adultery and has sanctions on a man who sleeps with another woman except it is a married woman. In the case of adultery, it is referred to the quarter heads to adjudicate upon and then give a verdict. The man is fined to pay a certain token to call him to order.

4.3. Cultural Practices and Other Forms of Practices

4.3.1. The shame of a promiscuous wife.

A cheating wife or husband's case according to Bern (2021) is dealt with through the local culture institutions beginning from the co-spouses and notables of the family and then to the quarter head in case attempts to resolve have proven abortive. The co-spouses who assemble to arbitrate the suspicion or accusation or even if the culprit was caught red-handed are the ones to suggest a punitive measure and proceed to punish the woman in front of other young girls in a bid to begin discouraging the girls from indulging in adultery. The notables within the family handling the man's case also suggest a punishment for the man which is usually heavy than that of the woman. When these hierarchical bodies are unsuccessful the feminine notable group *Kefap* which is equivalent to the masculine sect of *ukum* will refer the case to *ndau tse*. But when the co-spouses succeed in calling you to order and you cooperate, they will fine you to pay a certain token of food items and they will then caution the man to pardon you for you have

upheld their reproach. In other families like that of the author as per information gathered for the sake of this work, the adulterous woman is sanctioned by tying a stone on her neck so that it weighs her down and prompts her to quickly speak the truth for the co-spouses to know how to adjudicate on the matter.

The man is also sanctioned severely by the notables in the family. They gather and probe the male and decide what can be done. If he is guilty, it is because there is a belief that you could challenge the honour of this man and take the woman away than commit adultery with another man's wife. The fine of the man is always very heavy to match the serious crime he has committed. The fines always would include wine and other crops. Weh culture discourages men very much from indulging in adultery because the notables think that it is a man who makes a move towards the woman. However, the sanctions vary from family to family because the co-spouses establish the kind of punishment to meted out (Bern 2022, Buh 2022). Briefly, the Weh tradition generally prefers that a man gets married rather than practice promiscuity randomly. This is sharply opposite to what Jannine Utell believes –which is that adultery strengthens marriage and leads to reconciliation (Levin 2012:207). Levin elucidates that:

Adultery becomes a site not for passion nor a rejection of the constraints of marriage, but a means by which members of a couple forgive and redeem each other . . . the revolt of love is not to be found in the adulterous pair Tristan and Isolde but in the reconciliation of the married couple (2012:143–144, 149; 207).

This kind of thought to the Weh man is an assassination of character because the Weh man believes deeply in marriage without adultery – that is to say that Weh people believe in clean marriages and this kind of thought resonates with the character of marriage in France in the mid-19th century where Marie Quatrelires was convicted of adultery and then ordered by the court judge to be beaten with sticks for three Fridays just for the reason that she was an adulterer (McDougall 2014:491). The Weh people also have such a tradition where if a woman is promiscuous in her matrimonial life repeatedly, after several warnings they will decide to shame you in public by composing a melody against your negative character that is toxic to other women so that you will not repeat such a thing.

In general Bern (2021) and Buh (2022) attest to the fact that adultery in Weh was not common in the 18th and 19th centuries but nowadays it has become very common. Arbitrations for cases like these have been recorded in many instances of late in the entire community. In Weh adultery was considered a sacrilege when a woman has been given away in marriage and betrothal rites have been performed and she continues to maintain an affair outside her marriage.

Given that conflict in marriage has arisen because of the decline in human values, this has made the matter worse due to the normalization of the concept as part of married life (Islami 2017:70). The Weh man sees conflict in marriage also as part of the normal game in a relationship. But Weh culture may differ just because it is very patriarchal (Nyamnjoh 2013:502-503). According to Nyamnjoh, the following excerpt describes what the Weh man thinks about the Weh woman:

“you are only a woman”, “The place of the women is only on the bed”, “Women are only fit for the bed”, “Women are devils”, “Women are like children”, they lack intelligence”, “all

women are flirts”, “Women are cursed by God”: “Women don’t inherit from their fathers and husbands”, “all women are liars”, “women are always wrong”,

(Luma, 1983: 247-248 in Nyamnjoh 2013:503).

The excerpt describes vividly how the woman in Weh is viewed and treated by the dominant male society. Moxnes (2003:21) states that in the Eastern Mediterranean culture men held dominant positions in public, and a male opinion or perspective also dominated the public discourse on honour and shame. Males had to fight to defend their masculinity by defending the chastity of women under his dominance and protection. A Weh man also must fight to defend his masculinity and keep the women under him protected before he is seen to be a real man born and bred in Weh. But in public space, it is only the men who have danced *ukum* who have a contribution to societal matters. Briefly, the man in Weh always dominates public discourse and even reprimands women to quit the compound for it is only men who can consume or eat certain foods such as

the chicken killed to entertain the notables during the adjudication of the death council matters in which they probe the reasons of death of a person.

This confirms the patriarchal dominant nature of the male in Weh (Nyamnjoh 2013:503) but these views are currently under review because many men have developed another mentality (Bern 2022) and have come to see women as real partners rather than slaves. The conflict between couples has generated a lot of attention that confirms that the Weh man has long considered the woman to be a second-class citizen and such an impression can cause a negative impression on the child when she grows into a mature woman (Nyamnjoh 2013:4). This alone causes the Weh man to regularly conflict with the woman but for the fact that women are trained to be excessively submissive wherein they avoid matrimonial clashes with their husbands.

Resolving such conflicts requires a composed mind by elders who are very well versed in the Weh traditional methods of marital conflicts. Islami (2017:70) refers to stability as a method in marriage for couples to deal with the conflict existing between them but that mostly relies on the elders in the Weh culture. The Weh woman behaves similarly to that of other African women dependent on their husbands for their livelihoods (Nyamnjoh 2013:504). African women have demonstrated known patterns of behaviour in their marriage homes. They abandon matrimonial homes when the husband becomes negligent. The woman often abandons the marriage and takes her few belongings and sometimes her children for a temporary stay in her father's house or to a close relative of the husband who serves as a father figure or spiritual father to both the man and the woman.

When she abandons her home, her husband would have to renegotiate for her return. Usually, the husband would carry some wine in the evening hours, and take along his father, family head, or a respected family member and friend to go and negotiate for her return. She often leaves the marriage when skirmishes of either type ranging from quarrelling with her husband, co-spouse and her husband do not intervene, flogging by the man or negligence of the family by the man and repeated abuse cases from the man. In case of negligence, the man must have failed to provide necessities such as cooking oil, soap for washing, and some others like flirting with other women in the community. The negotiations would then centre around her reasons for leaving the home and her

possible return. The elder instructs the man to go fix his marriage in most cases and make the woman comfortable.

General observations and opinions suggest that:

When the conflicts are suppressed by the spouses, the same unconsciously and in an uncontrolled manner disrupt the marital relations and affect the appearance of psychosomatic disorders and diseases among spouses. But if conflicts are retained for a long time in the married life of partners, they ruin the marriage and that marriage slowly or suddenly disappears (Islami 2017:71).

This opinion is typically a reflection of the Weh cultural practices where we see a woman leaving the marriage because so many things have piled up after she has suppressed it for a long time. After some time, it explodes and she decides to find a safe abode somewhere else until family elders assemble to hear her case and give directives.

4.3.2. The cleansing process after wife snatching

Bern (2021) recounts that it used to be a happy moment of celebration in the late 18th and early 19th centuries when he grew up and met and listened to his parents narrate the practice of wife snatching and showing him who were renowned wife snatchers in the village. Their reaction was one of jubilation and excitement to join in the celebration of the man but it was also a sad moment because the man who lost his wife was mocked regularly with words such as ‘You cannot keep a woman, you cannot marry because other men prey in your house, you are not a real man’. Buh (2022) also explains that a man whose wife was snatched was not denied by the notables, they stood with him to demand a payback of his dowry paid over the woman’s head. The negative reaction was that of shock and dismay that he has been challenged and in the challenge he lost his wife.

The notables of the quarter where the wife was snatched to celebrate with the chief celebrant but there is no restriction to whosoever wants to celebrate with the new couple. The notables present in the event indirectly bring blessings upon the marriage

because their libations poured and decrees and intercessions to God are tremendously an act of enactment of the marriage.

4.3.3. Honour in the patriarchy of the Weh notable

Men in Weh are all group-oriented. They mostly identify themselves as members of a group where they are given traditional titles. Such titles are in turn handed down to their children when they die. Desilva states that honour is first attributed to people by birth or acquired (Desilva 2000:27) and in Weh the father before dying starts introducing you to the group so that his first son will continue to carry on with the honour of the father after he has passed on. Betrothal is a rite for the women but the men still have the overriding negotiations because they are those who pour the blessings and libations over the child. Even though it is a patriarchal community some men do not drive the opinion that a woman is sold and is made to be the man's property. Bern (2021) denies that betrothal rites in Weh are meant to sell female children. Rather, the men are simply affirming the honour for the male sex because the values of honour are imbued in the male who is like the face of the community.

Given the consciousness of group orientation in the Weh community, the man is defending his integrity as a man among his friends and the traditional groups he belongs to by ensuring that the women remain in the position of no greater voice and influence. Such a notion of selling women as wives dehumanises the Weh woman (Tem 2019:121) and makes her a commercial entity of shame. She is sold for money and her place is removed from the father's house because she is considered never to return. Meanwhile, if she was betrothed and considered to still be a member of the family and her place maintained, when she returns from her husband's family she would still be respected and would not be disrespected by her peers and immediate brothers and sisters. She will also be well treated by her in-laws as she is a person with a family that values and honours her. The male patriarchal nature of the Near Eastern Mediterranean man was one of power and domination (Pilch & Malina 1993:11-12) is a replica in a Weh man's culture because men in Weh feel that as head of the family gender socialisation is patrilineal in Weh where the male children are taught to know that they are the ones who

decide over matters while female emancipation is still underdeveloped in Weh (Nyamnjoh 2017:502-503). As the women were under the authority of the man in Ancient Israel that is how the woman is in Weh culture. The Jewish culture did not allow women to find themselves in public spaces where certain rituals were performed, the Weh culture also does not allow women to see what the men are doing. The Weh woman's place is the kitchen and the farm which is a typical replica of the Jewish concept that a woman's place was to take care of the house and children and do her knitting and very inferior to the men and Seneca even wrote that the man was to rule and the woman should be silent (Nyamnjoh 2013:503; Eck & Kobus 2010:13-14).

If we define patriarchy as the father's rule (Meyers 2022), it will not be wrong to say that the Weh man rules his family but most often the learned ones co-lead with their wives who take up some important roles both indoors and in public. But the man's rule is felt in the house and in village gatherings where the man is the face of the family. If they see him they know the family was represented but in cases where he delegated his wife to represent him it is also considered to be his legitimate representation but she would not be allowed to address the people, sit among the notables and share in the drinking and feasting reserved for men only.

Though Meyers disputes the fact that women in Hebrew culture were limited to the kitchen and other home responsibilities such as managing the home economics, taking up some public roles like Deborah –the judge and prophet (1 Sam 4-5), Abigail (1 Sam 25) who single-handedly decides to rescue her husband and keep his honour from David's hands of destruction, the Shunnamite woman (2 Kgs 4:8-37; 8:1-6) who invites the prophet into her house autonomously are examples of the public and private role of women. Generally, the view has stood that the Jewish woman was not always given space as a man would have in deciding issues in the village square and other important responsibilities regarding society (see van Eck & Kok 2010:13-14).

Patriarchy in Weh does not often engender violence in the Weh culture. There is a high level of dignity for the Weh woman from the Weh men. A good percentage of men deplore the aspect of violence against women in the Weh culture. Some aspects of patriarchal dominance expose the weaknesses of the Weh man's culture such as only men tap wine, own land, and make decisions in the village even the *kefap* has a decision to make it must

first go to them for approval and sometimes to *ndau tse* for approval. This piece of work concurs with the idea enhanced by Ademiluka (2021) who quotes Igbelina-Igbokwe (2013) as saying:

[*Patriarchy*] was originally used to describe the position of the father as a household head but it has progressively been used to refer to the systemic organisation of male supremacy and female subordination ... [*It*] is a system of social stratification and differentiation based on sex which provides material advantages to males while simultaneously placing severe constraints on the roles and activities of females; with various taboos to ensure conformity with specified gender roles.

In Weh, the notable shows his authority and pride as a true son of the soil by imposing his supremacy over other Weh men and women by shaking another fellow notable with the left hand. At the same time, he uses it to socially stratify the culture and systematically exclude women based on gender. To the notable man of Weh, classical stratification exists according to the family an individual descends from. The notable Weh man sees the common Weh man who is not initiated as a man only after he is initiated into the *ukum* cult. To this cult, a woman cannot belong or sit down where such notables are drinking and talk with them. Notable Weh men on the other hand are allowed to belong to the female cult of *kefap* and even eat and drink with the female notables by being a male notable. Therefore, this concludes this section by emphasizing that the Weh culture is used in many ways to socially stratify, disadvantage and deprive the Weh community keep the powerful men in control and make the common uninitiated man and the feminine community in general under the control of the man. This is similar to the Xhosa and Zulu cultures of South Africa where women are seen as objects of childbearing and sexual entertainment but the difference is that the Weh man has a bit of reverence and consideration for the woman and her rights.

4.3.4. Shaming and naming of a woman caught in adultery?

When a woman is caught in adultery she is named and shamed by her co-spouses in the enlarged family. The reason is that they want to shame your actions and send a message to other women to refrain from such denigrating acts. If she does not correct her

mistakes to live a trustworthy life and abdicate from adulterous acts in marriage, she could also be named and shamed by the entire ward in a singing parade of the ward and presented to the entire community. Bern (2021) says that formerly when it was still a small village the lady used to be paraded across the village and even presented to the paramount ruler (the fon) of the community and all the quarter heads. The author of this study remembers one incident where an aunt was paraded throughout the village around 1988 for simply holding back her mother to refrain from engaging in village activities she did not want her to attend. It was branded against her that she physically assaulted her born mother and she was punished accordingly. These facts detail to us the social organisation of life in the community and how they deal with shameful acts of adultery.

4.3.5. The Honour of a Man After Wife Snatching

Bern (2021) and Buh (2022) share the olden practices of restoring the honour of a man who snatched a wife. The olden practice was that a traditional dance known as '*ndong Usu*' would be invited to dance all night, drinking and eating in celebration of the newly acquired wife you snatched. Your honour was made to rise above the usual one by endorsing you as a brave man in the village. They share the fact one man had all his three wives snatched from other men as far as in other villages. This act alone gave you honour amongst men because you were able to lure women to fall for you either because of your handsomeness or wealth. These were acts that made a wife snatcher to become popular. Nowadays, all that is done is to refund the dowry and keep the woman and some men do not even want to recollect their dowry. The honour of such a man is not as high as it was before the 21st century.

4.4 Fundamentals of Christianity and Weh traditional cults

Christianity came into Weh through the Basel Mission missionaries. Cheghe (2012:94) insinuates that it came to complement the already social and cultural structure that existed in the tradition of the people. The first denomination to arrive was the Catholic

Mission in 1922 under Fon Ndze Bih Ndum who served under the German military and was coronated as Fon in 1921 under the influence of the Fon of Kung called Chief Ngwat. Ndze Bih became a tactician who played along with the Germans in establishing justice over those who poisoned Fon Mbuh Zou Nchung with the back of a tree called *gou nto* (sasswood poison of the palace) for suspected witchcraft. It was because of his German military service that honour was bestowed on Ndze Bih as the appropriate choice of the people so that he could liaise with the Germans and bring to his control the social strata of Weh.

Fon Mou Sei Ndoos was also suspected to be an accomplice with those who mixed the *gou nto* to poison other people in what was against what was called the Sasswood ordeal which was prohibited by the Germans from being used by anybody in a bid to control the shame brought to the fondom. This ordeal was prohibited because it was used to kill people in an alleged control of witchcraft suspects. Instead of controlling the witchcraft, it brought shame to the people and honour to the fon who would claim that the victim was the witchcraft practitioner. Once his tactics were exposed, it was alleged that once this concoction was mixed he would mix a poisonous substance into the concoction and its consumers never survived. Mou Sei Ndoos will then appropriate the person's compound and other properties to himself in a bid to enrich himself. The heads of the large patrilineages in agreement with the egalitarian principles practiced in the fondom applied the same strategies used by Mou Sei Ndoos to denounce him to the Germans and he was also killed in 1919 when he returned to Weh just after the outbreak of the 1914-1918 World War I. The act of denunciation of Fon Mou Sei Ndoos was a drive to regain the lost honour of the family heads who were considered accomplices to the fon. They decided to wipe the shame of the accusation.

After the war broke out the social challenge was how to repair the social order that existed. This caused Mbuh Mou Sei Ndoos's trial was kept on suspension and after the war, he hesitated to return to Weh but decided to test the waters. Immediately he set his feet onto Weh soil he was immediately killed. It is for this reason that Ndze Bih Ndum decided to retribute his death by killing the perpetrators of the act. He did so by calling for the intervention of the German soldiers from Bamenda who were probably unaware of what happened before he was arrested in 1914. The model followed by Ndze Bih Ndum

was adapted from the beckoning of the fon of Kung, chief Ngwat who asked the Germans to torture the Zoa and Bello people for ransacking crops in his village in an attempted attack on his fondom (Geary 1985:187-188).

Geary (1985) continues to enlighten on the fact that in 1932, the Basel missionaries settled in Weh under the tutorship of the late Rev Wilhem Schneider who arrived long after the First World War and founded the Presbyterian Basel Mission Station four years after the Roman Catholic Church had settled. Schneider led the Presbyterian Church and played a monumental in shaping the social space of honour and shame in Weh. Most allegations of adultery were handled by him and he built a huge honour for himself before and during his retirement. He remains the only one with the best photos of what the Weh Palace used to look like in those years before the remodelling by Fon Simon Ngha Nji took place.

4.4.1. Fundamentals of initiation into male social cults of *Djitisem* and *Ukum*

Geh (1997:28) explains that initiation is done in stages. It is all about gaining honour and the title of *wuu ukum* (Man of *Ukum*) which is a big title in the village because they are those who run the social space of traditional affairs. The first stage is for the candidate to present himself and declare his intention to join the cult. He is then guided through what is supposed to be done as the first step to be initiated. You are requested to present a few items that will cause the cult to assemble to eat and drink as a social group. Since it is not a once-off thing, they will ask the candidate a long list of items which are just meant to make you give them food and drinks to enjoy. When all of these items are presented, they will announce your intention to the village on a weekday and then present you to the village in traditional attire to parade the village in a dancing ceremony to show off your belonging to the club of honour. Becoming a member is joining an honourable group that prides itself in the village as notables in the Weh society (Cheghe 2012:87). The honour is seen in the way you dress traditionally with a traditional handbag worn on the left hand and as such you can join the senior members of the cult anywhere and celebrate with them.

Other honourable facts according to what Cheghe (2012:87-88) narrates belonging to *ukum* gives you the honour to associate yourself with king makers and can proudly receive wine poured into your cup from the king's traditional cup rather than drinking with your palms poured from the king's cup. Such a member is recognized as a true and honourable son of the Weh society with authority and power to adjudicate community matters. Such people with accrued honour can become members of the noble's house *ndau tse* under the instructions of the fon depending on the esteem and respect you have commanded over the years. Due to the high price tag of becoming a member, those who afford to dance the traditional dance of *djitisem* and *ukum* are respected and as such considered wealthy and honourable people of the society. Once you become a member you have announced goodbye to shame because your integrity can never be rubbished anyhow by anyone in the community.

4.4.2 Fundamentals of initiation into the female social cult of

Kefap

The rites to join this women's group are obtained from the payments given to a *nah-tum* (Queen Mother) of the quarter in which the woman belongs and aspires to be a member. This is the most powerful of the feminine female associations in Weh (Geary 1979:69). The woman who aspires to join the kefab dance begins paying her dues sometimes two to three years before the final initiation period arrives. Membership dues are unusually high and take even a longer period than the three years mentioned earlier. The dues paid are in food items such as maize, cocoyams, beans, *egusi* (pumpkin seeds), chicken, meat and palm wine. Their husbands usually contribute. Before she becomes a member, she must have been born a child (Geary 1979) and that proves that she is fertile.

4.5. Social interaction in the community -

4.5.1 Market Day Events

According to Cheghe (2012:97), Weh has been full of social life that has seen a few written documents from the generation before the 20th century but as of the 21st century, the literate sons and daughters have begun documenting a lot of her culture from oral tradition. Social life in Weh is an ongoing activity because of the effective commencement of the week on the market day (*Tsu-ubikewen*) where the community gather around the market with farm products to sell to acquire income for basic household needs (Cheghe 2012:37). They assemble sell and do shopping and other activities. The drinking spots influx is high on this same day. Social life is at its peak because traders from neighbouring villages join to drink a bottle and associate with old friends in Weh before leaving. In these spots, women befriend other men and unmarried women as well and married women also hook up with men they have extramarital affairs with or those who are free women try their luck and pick whoever is available and approach them.

4.5.2. Traditional Sunday (*Tsu-inah*)

The next day is the traditional Sunday (*tsu-inah*) where people rest and attend funeral celebrations, associations like stokvels, traditional cults like *Kweifor* (*kwifon* in other villages in the North West Region), *ndau Tseh* and the traditional council meetings that hold in the week. Life becomes interesting and busy for those who are partakers in events during these days.

4.5.3. Naming of Newborn Babies and their Celebrations

In Weh, birth ceremonies are social gatherings where a newborn baby is celebrated by the immediate neighbours of the family. It is a moment of singing and dancing and eating and drinking. Child births venerate the father and mother and exclude them from the stigma of barrenness. Anyone who is barren is viewed as an unproductive man and cannot be allowed to do certain traditional things and join traditional cults such as those described above. Honour in the village is attributed to people who give birth to twins and

they call them '*bai Ngongbah*' (father of twins) and '*nai ngongbah*' (mother of twins). It signifies the special blessings awarded by God to the couple that distinguishes them from everyone (Cheghe 2012:81).

Cultural practices are the traditional beliefs that influence the development of the personality of an individual (Santrock, 1995). In Conjunction to the explanation of Nymanjoh (2007:504) gives insights into the practices in Weh where gender differentiation is in high gear but during birth celebrations, the woman is given a heroine treatment and her children are named with honour. The shame of being a woman is not a stigma anymore especially when a woman is the mother of twins and the naming ceremony is organised to give you the befitting honour of being able to bear children (Cheghe 2012:81). The cluster of families celebrating takes cow pea beans and mixes it in palm oil and make a porridge of ripe plantains in palm oil and share to people. They will also make some other foodstuffs to eat in the celebration and bless the newborn child. After the traditional naming ceremony in which traditional and cultural rites are performed, and maybe the child is run through a cleansing exercise of the insinuation that the child is diabolical, they will also arrange for the naming of the child in a baptismal ceremony officiated by a minister of the denomination to which they belong. The diabolism referred to in this case is when the child is given prophetic gifts and sees and prophecies and, in some cases, does not sleep and complains of seeing people or objects around the house. They will invite a herbalist to cleanse the child.

4.6. Concluding Remarks

This comparative analysis reveals significant parallels between the Johannine community and the Weh community in how they construct and sustain identity within their socio-cultural and historical frameworks. Both communities demonstrate that identity is not merely an individual pursuit but deeply rooted in relational belonging and communal recognition.

In the Johannine context, the emphasis on mutual love, solidarity, and a shared theological framework provided the community with a sense of purpose and belonging

amidst external opposition. Similarly, in the Weh community, identity and peace of mind are forged through active participation in social groups, where mutual assistance and shared responsibilities affirm individual worth within the collective. The acquisition of titles and honours in Weh society reflects a communal ethic, where recognition by others is both a marker of maturity and a means of securing one's place within the societal fabric.

Both communities underscore the devastating consequences of exclusion—be it from the synagogue or the societal events of Weh. Yet, they also reveal the redemptive possibilities of inclusion, where belonging and honour restore dignity and purpose. This study affirms that communal frameworks, whether spiritual or cultural, are vital for navigating identity and mitigating the social and existential shame of exclusion. It further invites reflection on how the dynamics of belonging, honour, and communal responsibility transcend historical and cultural boundaries, offering insights into human resilience and the pursuit of meaning.

CHAPTER 5

Conflict Analysis in John 7:53-8:1-11

5.1. Introduction

As has been discussed in the previous chapters, this chapter will analyse John 7:53-8:1-11 from the perspective of conflict, communal or societal conflict, and theological conflict between Jesus and the elites of the day. Jesus' discussion with them draws them into figuring out where they cause upheaval in the social stratum to enlighten them to understand that it does not operate only by the virtue of law but by God's implementation of grace, mercy, compassion, and forgiveness from human sinfulness. It opens our understanding to impress the concept of conflict not from any anachronistic or ethnocentric views but from the open social understanding of the text as it is written. Readers cannot completely evade the idea that the text is describing something that is causing conflict and giving conflicting views in first-century society.

As we read through the work, we will discern that the Jesus address resonates with Thomas Kilmann's models of peace and conflict management. Jesus' methods of responding to conflict also resonate with Kilmann's model and both speak to a community with its remote models of conflict management. Conflict is what the text is communicating but reading the text a face value and the message it communicates is of interest to this study. This work orientates itself towards rediscovering the aspects of conflict in the text and applying them to the community in question introduced to us by this work. That is what this chapter intends to navigate and excavate which methods Jesus used to address the conflict his opponents presented to him in a bid to challenge his authority.

We will rather concentrate on the social scientific analysis of the conflict models described in the text of John 7:53-8:1-11 which are a useful blend to enable us to propagate guidelines that could be useful to solve conflict among the Weh people of the Northwest region of Cameroon which will be drawn from the first century methods used by Jesus. This chapter will introduce us to the first-century concepts of conflict and the

key players who entertained conflict issues and addressed them. At the same time the chapter aims at examining the opponents of Jesus in the text (Pharisees, scribes) and the other groups that opposed him for the mere reason that this Johannine text mentions the two groups which were role players in opposing Jesus in the first century thereby generating conflict.

Furthermore, the Sanhedrin would have been a significant body in determining the solution to the conflict but has not been mentioned and this draws attention to this study to examine the kind of contribution or role this very important council would have played. Towards the end of the chapter will be discussed issues of communal and societal conflict, theological conflict and general issues of conflict resonate with the text of John 7:53-8:1-11.

5.2. Conflict and its impact in the first-century Mediterranean world

Conflict was a raging aspect of contempt in the first-century Mediterranean world. This section shall examine a brief introduction to the Bar Kokhba revolt and some examples of conflict of adultery as an indication that conflict and conflict of adultery was not a new thing in the Mediterranean world. Lumingkewas (2022:90-91) holds that conflict of adultery is generally caused by factors such as financial mismanagement, aggression from husbands, pressure from in-laws, no procreation of children, and little or no communication. Tem (2019:60-83) discusses issues ranging from cultural to social that cause conflict in marriage and community.

The Bar Kokhba revolt led by Simon Bar Kokhba against the Roman Empire ran from 132 CE to 136 CE. This happened in the Christian era after Jesus' crucifixion pitching the Jews against the Romans in a fierce battle that saw many Roman finest military minds and products erased by the Jews. Even though the Jews were woefully defeated and Simon Bar Kokhba himself killed around 135 at Betar by Roman troops dispatched from Europe. Van Eck (1999:78) mentions that the best military officials such as Iulius Severus transferred from Britain to Judea as a sign of emergency by the Roman Emperor was not a haphazard move, but a well-calculated one not done arbitrarily or capriciously. This emphasises the existence of conflict even before now with the Davidic wars against the

Philistines, the Moabites, and the Assyrians just to name a few being very popular conflicts. David's conflict with Uriah after an adulterous lust over Bathsheba is also one of the virulent cases to remember that brought David's records into black books because it drew the attention of God's prophet - Nathan, who came to intervene and remind David of his mistake and conflict he has introduced himself to (2 Sam 11:1-12:9).

Putrawan, Tanasyah *et al* (2022:2) argue that David is the dominant figure here and the woman falls under the most powerful man who cannot be a match so the potential fight is swept under the carpet and the recitation of the story in the recitation of this particular section is not done in public readings of the Torah for the figure in the story is a big one. Putrawan & Tanasyah *et al* (2022) cites Walter Brueggemann as not exaggerating when he refers to David as the dominant figure in the Jewish narrative and as a fact, Bathsheba, after realising her influential position gained from the unfortunate adulterous case, uses it to support her son to get to the helm of the throne at the expense of the other sons (Koenig 2018:2). It is further argued that the fear of offending the King and escalating the already smelly conflict if it is mentioned that Uriah was plotted to be assassinated by David.

According to the Mosaic Law, David ought to have been stoned as it is prescribed in the Ten Commandments and the many other rules according to the prescriptions of the Halakah which describes the application of the Jewish religious laws (Ukuekpeyetan-Agbikimi, 2014:97) but because of David's towering status in Jewish the political landscape (van Eck 1998:78-79), he was spared. Had this adulterous case of David happened in the days of Jesus would he be requested a stoning? This seemingly looks like it would be evaded because of his dominant influence in Jewish society. Looking into the adulterous case of the woman in John 8 there are similarities to the case of David because the woman is accused and judged in the presence of the crowd while she is silent and utters no word. But what changes the rhythm of the dirge is the fact that Jesus does not allow the factions merely generated to consume him, he becomes the defence attorney for women (*avocat defenseur des femmes in French*) to the woman as prophet Nathan becomes the lawyer of Bathseba before David. The crux of the matter is that this case is disputed in the ancient world as per the argument of Knust and Wasserman (2019:48-49). Borg (1998:43) explains that such conflicts were continually "spawned and sustained" by differences in factions which are aimed at shaping things following their

desires. Such matrixed factions included those who emerged from Palestine and in this case, the Zealots, were the conflict-hatching ones. Borg (1998) continues to argue that since these were Gentile-oriented groups their main objective was conflict-generating though not neglecting the fact there were also other powerful Jewish conflict-generating groups. This same argument is advanced by Weber (1966:214-215) who further substantiates that the opponents of Jesus were obedient to the Jewish culture and tradition. However, his argument does not go uncriticized. Burnhope (2016:8) argues that Weber distorts Judaic religion in his presentation and reads the prevalent conflict between Jesus and his opponents as a base of ethnic racism.

This implication is that since the conflict was nothing new in a Jewish context, the composition, copying, and handing down of the Gospels could also be politicised in as much as issues concerning the temple were involved. Therefore, religious matters of such magnitude had far-reaching effects with the monumental attraction being the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE for the mere reason that everyone saw the life and history of Israel centred in the Temple (Burnhope 2016:12). The conflict after Jesus's time saw Palestine taken over and placed under Roman rule as a Roman colony for over two hundred years (Borg 1998:44-45) and as Pilate centralised power there was no comprehensive plan to accommodate Jesus and rather generated questions about his ministry thereby generating conflict between Jesus and the people (Carter 2006:30-31). But because it was nothing new resistance was already pruned to the pressure from leaders such as Herod the Great whom they detested in Palestine and not just Palestine alone but the entire Jewish nation. The conflict was so rampant that it caused the leaders to fall out of favour with the citizens because of over-taxation, pressure, suppression, and forceful worship of pagan deities as well as using tax money to build Greek halls and pagan temples for manmade deities.

According to Borg (1998:52-53), Jewish resistance to Rome was long awaited because the conflict had built up for too long. Burnhope (2016:12) argues that when people became exhausted by the long wait for the application of praxis in a manner pleasing to God, they felt pushed to rebel and that provoked traditional Jews and Pharisees in particular to begin conflicting with Jesus Christ. The events during the first emperor Herod the Great were chaotic years and his annexation of Jerusalem in 63 B.C.E a great show of power according to Carter (2006:33) led to frequent civil strives against Herod

for the reduction of Jewish autonomy and the association of and his association with the Gentiles for Romanising national policy in Israel. Borg endorses that conflict in the East had some negative impact on the religious, social, and political culture of the Jewish state (Borg 1998:52-55). Carter also recognises that because of the great power kings and the elite exercised over subjects, it had a negative impact though it enriched them and gave them a high status (Carter 2006).

5.3. key players and their roles in conflict management in the first century

Major players in conflict management involve the warring factions. Rummel (1981) states that the social contract which is the structural basis upon which peace is constructed is what is key in bringing peace and order to communities and organisations because this contract overlaps in other ways. A social contract is what balances the mutual interests of parties, capabilities and wills and can successfully balance power. Second, powers that constitute balance might not necessarily be authoritative or coercive but powers based on intellectual aptitude and exchange powers based on love and persuasion as well as promises of a better collaboration.

The fact that Jesus shows interest in the case of the woman caught in adultery though not by desire, he becomes a key player in the saga which by implication of love and compassion finds himself pulled into the accusation. The role he plays in writing silently raises high expectations (Rummel:1981) on the audience watching to hear him say something that will reduce the woman to a sinful disobedient character or set her free against the law of Moses. But Jesus plays a role that is key in determining the fate of the woman and that of the other key players, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees. The woman herself becomes a key figure in the saga and gives Christ the duty to declare compassion upon her even when her partner in crime is unknown and nobody can decipher where he is. Philips (2019:73) acknowledges that the woman's sexual partner might even have been killed though he ends up speculating that the man might have entered a deal with the crowd to release him which is a veracity that is undisputable and at the same time disputable.

It is also possible to conclude that the Romans were also key players in the whole accusation because they wanted loyalty from the people but the people instead turned and revolted against them (Borg 1998:67) and Borg further states that loyalty to the three major institutions in Israel – “the Law, Temple and loving-kindness” (Borg 1998:67) that regulated daily life was every Israelite required to be loyal. In one such instance of demand for loyalty in the electoral voting campaign, Kalu (2010:66) reports that the one-time governor of Zamfara State in Nigeria Ahmed Sani Yerima Bakura used an electoral campaign promise of instituting Sharia law if he was voted into office. He promised to use Sharia law to correct the political stalemate, decline in moral ethics, and political stalemate in which Nigeria found herself. This was just after the brutal military Muslim General Sani Abacha who was a ruthless military General was ousted. The same Sharia law was used to settle adulterous cases (Kalu 2010:71-73) but in one such case the law was challenged with state law and the minister of justice stepped in to nullify any stoning pronounced on any woman accused of adultery. The declaration generated conflict between the Northern Nigerians who are Muslims and the Southerners who are Christians.

What stands out here is that key players must exist in the arbitration of conflicts, and these should be persons who can use wisdom appropriately for adjudication of whether minor or major conflicts. Jesus was one key arbitrator in the conflict of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11, the Pharisees and the Sadducees were, and the crowd was another set of key witnesses to the incident.

5.4. Opposing groups in Jesus’ days were major role players in the conflict of the first century.

Asikainen (2018:46) concludes that in the Synoptic Gospels, all the Jewish groups unite against Jesus: Pharisees, chief priests, Herodians, elders, Sadducees and scribes which were the groups that played a major role in antagonising Jesus and his ministry. However, according to Matthews (1991:255) four most influential philosophies he singled out were the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the Zealots. Given they were all community based they drew strong support from the wealthy community families.

The trap set for Jesus is a direct rejection of who he is amongst the Jews. John proves this in the Old Testament quotations he refers to in his writing (Kostenberger, 2007:871; 873). He shows his audience that the elite of the day that approach him in John 8 is a foreshadowing of the accusations that he will be accused of before the crucifixion happens. The Pharisees were compelled to reciprocate to the Romans given that they benefitted from them (Van Eck 2013:6).

5.4.1. Pharisees

The Pharisees were the main Jewish group that led the opposition against Jesus. They descended from the Hasmonean's period of rebellion; they enjoyed a lot of community support than any other religious faction that existed. Matthews (1991:255-256) suggests that this originated from their more lenient stance on punitive measures on criminals or those generally found guilty of breaking the law, belief in the resurrection teachings for the dead and their belief in the teachings of Jesus of eternal punishment for the wicked. This belief seems to emanate from the resurrection of Lazarus (Jn 11:24) from the grave by Jesus which places a huge demand on the authorities to press for the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus (Kostenberger 2007:927-928).

They were a group of people who believed intensely in oral law handed down by oral tradition from Moses and other fathers of Judaism. They also were very pious in the observance of sacred traditional ritual events such as washing of hands. Kostenberger (2018:905) asserts that the Fourth Evangelist is describing events where Pharisees are in vehement opposition to Jesus and reasons that it can partially be attributed to the Jewish national belief that the Messiah will arrive and purge and reconstitute the holiness of the temple and restore the expected Jewish national deliverance last experienced during the times of Judas Maccabeus who rededicated the temple after its desecration by Antiochus Epiphanes IV. Asikainen (2018:47) addresses the matter with a description of the Pharisees as the 'retainer class' that was not close to the hegemonic elite but was a strong force of local leaders to reckon with and they were the group that benefitted from their collaboration with Rome and the Roman officials to crucify Christ. The Johannine text (Jn 7:53-8:1-11) raises the concern that these leaders were not transparent with

clean hands. Germano (2018:3) explains that this group rose to prominence in the second century but cannot be dated exactly when this happened though it existed under the Hasidim. It is noticed in the text of John 8:1-11 that they were an active group highly integrated into the religious affairs of the Jewish society.

The Pharisees also held rigidly to the letter of the Law, seeing the Scriptures as inspired as well as infallible and that is why they quickly asked Jesus' opinion about the stoning of the woman caught in adultery. Their main concern was not the reverence for the inspired text of scripture; rather their elevation of oral tradition to an equal place of authority with the Law. They were not "theologically correct,"⁷ because their theology was not derived from the text but rather their interpretations of the text. Much of the Pharisee's theology is correct in its idea though incorrect in how those ideas were applied. Their view that only God could forgive sins and thus Jesus was a blasphemer was based upon their theologically correct notion that only God could forgive sins combined with their theologically incorrect notion that Jesus was not from God. Their most dogmatic stance that Jesus was not from God occurs in Matthew 12:22-32 when the Pharisees go so far as to ascribe the miracles of the Son of God as coming forth from Satan (see Grabbe 1995:37-38).

They differed sharply from the Sadducees in their belief in fate and destiny factors that influence human beings. Both groups accepted the firmness of oral traditional laws and the unswerving place of the Torah for interpreting the law.

5.4.2. Sadducees

The Sadducees formed part of the elite group as demonstrated by history. They were the group considered the Pentateuch authoritative and were close to the hegemony alongside the Pharisees (Asikainen 2018:47-47) and generally supported strict and harsher punitive laws spelt out in the Pentateuch than all the other groups. Matthews (1991:255) asserts that they sat in the Sanhedrin and generally supported policies presented for implementation by the Romans. Matthews (1991) states that their common conviction to support the Romans was to prevent conflict from further ravaging the entire Hebrew nation (Jn 11:49-50). They were in connivance with the Pharisees to oppose Jesus and benefit from the Roman officials and the Roman government. They

played the role of client to the Romans who were the patrons. They formed what Asikainen (2018) calls hegemonic masculinities to oppose Jesus thus contributing to the validating Jesus' authority over the Jews. Even though they used elite hegemonic relations to validate their opposition, it was all transient compared to the massive authority Jesus commanded (Hombana 2024:4) because their alleged involvement with the Roman government was for fame and control. Grabbe (1995:45) calls them a prominent wealthy class among their sympathizers.

Sadducees were such people who were rude (Grabbe 1995:38) to aliens and were boorish to themselves. They were those who were also associated with the high priest and were constituent members of the important council of the Sanhedrin. They are said to be lawyers who assisted in arresting the apostles (Acts 5:17-39). They did not agree with the idea of the resurrection of the dead.

5.4.3. Scribes

This group was a combination of the Pharisees because what holds for the Pharisees holds for them because they were a group with strong links with the Pharisees (Wellhausen, 2001:35). They were a strong group without strong political influence but worked together with the hegemonic Romans. They are presented by John as a group that seemingly bought the Roman ideals in antagonism of the Jewish institutional rules (Asikainen 2018:47). The Fourth Gospel seems to present to us how their conflict-oriented nature towards Jesus in obedience to the Romans failed in the face of their audience and themselves. According to Wellhausen (2001), this group also was connected to the Sanhedrin constituting the third group member of the Sanhedrin. This group was made up of professionals in Hebrew law and Hebrew scripture. Their job was to copy sacred documents and write legal documents for the Sanhedrin and high priests. It can be concluded that their presence in the Sanhedrin also fuelled the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus and could be qualified as incinerators of conflict generation against Jesus. Other groups just to mention passively were the Essenes and the Herodians who also were strong participants in opposing Jesus.

According to John these groups of Pharisees and scribes were those who came to fuel the stoning of the woman and by so doing generated conflict between Jesus and the

Romans to whom they were faithful and obedient in reciprocation of benefits. What John is reporting to us is that they were strict adherents to the law which Jesus came to abolish when he enacted the concept and philosophy of forgiveness over the woman.

5.4.4. The Sanhedrin and its influence in conflicts in Graeco-Roman Israel

The Sanhedrin according to Wellhausen (2001:35) was a political council with adjudication powers (see also Matthews 1991:258). This high and very significant council had the authority to adjudicate and pass the verdict on all matters ranging from religious to politics as we notice in John 18 (12-15; 28-29; Matthew 26:57-75; Luke 22:54-71). Wellhausen (2001) considers that John always mentions the Pharisees and the scribes in his attempt to present them as those who belong to the Sanhedrin and are the same groups that cause the elongation of conflicts among the Jews because of the connection to this council. He generates his argument from the introduction of Gamaliel into this council and as a Pharisee, he comes with extensive experience of law as a teacher of law explaining the reasoning that he is there to serve as a legal guide to the council on such cases as that expressed in John 7:53-8:1-11 which involve the population. Grabbe (2008:3) asserts that if this council existed it was a very powerful council with varied composition membership and Matthews (1991:258) highlights that it was constituted by 71 members chaired by the high priest and after reorganization in the New Testament times by the Hasmoneans, the Pharisees and Sadducees were roped into it as members.

The abdication from reference to this council by John 8 is an indication that they probably were involved in the plot for the arrest in John 18 and for the crucifixion in John 19. Grabbe (2008:7) asserts that this “council of elders had an important role in leadership of the community” at the time of Jesus. Grabbe (2008) further describes the authority vested in the high priest in this council which tells us why Jesus was led to Caiaphas after his arrest. Initially, in John 8, Jesus is sought by the crowd to intervene, and the council is silent over this case that ought to be handled carefully by the elders.

The argument proceeds further on the basis that after Herod the Great took power Matthews (1991:58) narrates that he killed all the members after accusing them of

murder. Only one surviving member was placed under trial for murder and reappointed new members he would readily control thereby enhancing the conviction that those who brought the woman to Jesus were under the control of Herod the Great who appointed them and were probably seeking an advantage in which to lay blame on Jesus and eliminate him from any obstruction of the political plan by the Romans.

If this council had the powers as purported, it equally had the priority to adjudicate the case of the adulterous woman, but it did not. What happened? This council questioned Peter on what powers had he to preach in the temple in Acts 4:1-22 proving that they had the authority to do so but failed to do so because they saw the confirmed miracle they performed and preferred to warn them not to preach in the name of Jesus anymore. After warning them they released them but the case of the woman in adultery was not attended to by the council not even to listen to. However, as Kostenberger (2007:927-928) asserts the answer lies in the fact that the Pharisees and other community members believed in Jesus as a prophet and teacher from God as confirmed by Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-3) and so they could not proceed in pursuing their accusation on the woman given the way Jesus tactfully handled it (see also Asikainen 2018).

5.4.5. Communal (societal) conflict

Communal (societal) conflict according to Matthews (1991:255) was meant to be curbed according to the philosophical belief of the Sadducees to align with the Roman policies so that conflict could be reduced but the Romans crafted this from the Roman authoritarian conviction to divide and rule which made them appoint vassals who could align and implement their policies.

Wahlde, (1995:1) observes that the performance of signs (miracles) by Jesus attracts his followers and this generates polarity between him and his followers against the authorities thereby opening cracks for community discrepancies and conflict to arise. The authorities growing fear of Jesus and the mob he continues to mobilise through his signs causes concern to the authorities who embark on a silent plot to quell his activities. This call to slow him down is channelled by the Romans via the Sanhedrin. The communal conflict does not begin just at crucifixion but dates to his early years of

ministry before the formation of the Johannine community where the Johannine community that is probably based in Palestine at the time and particularly in Judea given the gospel's focus in this area (Wahlde 1995:2) has established its roots.

The conflict in the community of the first century grows when Jesus becomes famous through his ministry of signs and very abstract teachings that deviate from the routine Judaic laws to which the Pharisees and scribes are partisan by holding unto strict oral laws for discipline of defaulters (Matthews 1991:256). The harsh tone used to address Jesus by the Pharisees and scribes bring to the fore the contention that has already existed between him and the a few community members who are allegiant to the Sanhedrin than those who have submitted their obedience to Christ (Wahlde 1995:3). This harshness is addressed by Rensberger (2006:288) as a beleaguered people working to break down the community's witness to the mission of Jesus to bring God's love to the world. Now because of the divisions in Jewish tradition that are still dominant over the Johannine tradition, there is hardly any way this community can rise without facing the oppression of synagogue authorities. Wahlde (1995:3) says that because the Johannine community was still very Jewish in composition and character, they could not sail through freely in theological thoughts without being oppressed. The idea is that Jesus' opposition in John 7:53-8:1-11 was because its theology was still a new introduction to the community of Judaic believers that struggled to freely accept and believe, thus setting the conflict of choice amongst the followers of the groups and Jesus and his followers as well (see also Matthews 1991:254-258 Rensberger 2006:288-289). John brings to us a completely different theology as we will see in the following paragraphs to usher us into a terrain of new digression from Judaism.

Lastly, the communal conflict in John 8 was meant to use the adulterous woman to draw Jesus into it so that the ambitions of the member groups of the Sanhedrin would easily execute their intended elimination plan against Jesus and emerge victorious to the benefit of their Roman masters to whom they were vassals. Their possible root to do this was to integrate the Jewish legal system (Dorff 1978:1331-1333) which was a powerful driving tool to rely upon to manipulate the community using the Pharisees and Sadducees who were ardent adherents to oral law and disqualify anyone who shifted away from it.

5.4.6. Theological conflict

Describe from the perspective of grace, compassion, mercy, and forgiveness.

Theological conflict in the case of John 7:53-8:1-11 emanates from the stance Jesus adopts to grant the woman mercy. The point does not sit well with the Pharisaic leaders, and they disperse. Their dispersal meant that they lost to Jesus who was much more powerful than them.

The divisions were not amongst the Jewish leaders who brought the women but were inherent in the Johannine community because of disagreements on the interpretation of the Johannine tradition. These differences paralysed the Johannine community, and two major factors caused the emergence of the crisis. The camp stood firm on Christological beliefs and the side that believed in pneumatology and soteriology.

The crisis centred around issues of Christology, pneumatology, and soteriology. My view on this is that Judaism was a functionality of the legal embodiment of oral traditions and the Pentateuch. Due to this legal interpretation, some felt that the doctrine of Jesus was a precedent for a continuous Christian followership while others might have preferred the old Jewish traditional and religious litigation system of beliefs to be maintained. Wahlde (1995:3-4) believes that the permanent validity of Jesus' words that are irreplaceable by the Spirit of God.

To argue for the validity of the words of Jesus, the consideration of the concept of sin is a large factor which when compared with the love Jesus demonstrates is an illustration of the infallibility of the word of Jesus. Jesus was an embodiment of the love of God. His task to free the community of human beings from their penitent acts was rendered questionable by the very same elders and chief priests. The act of penitence was meant to purge the community marred by sinful acts of adultery and other unclean acts. According to Zaidi, (2017:201), power-dominant ethics instigated a certain kind of control over the women by powerful men in society who ruled with iron fists. It hardly acknowledges the place of the woman reducing her chances of legitimate forgiveness as a human being even though the transient principles of life after death have become governed by social structural dynamics that no longer consider anyone fit for forgiveness.

Wahlde (1995:4) weighs into this and opines that it was this reason that Jesus came and instituted the Last Supper as a sign of love and established the concept of forgiveness. Jesus was the one to bring together the lost sheep like the woman in John 7:53-8:1-11. Rensberger (2006:285-288) lenthily discusses the love of God in Jesus Christ as a source of compassion, mercy and grace for the believers who follow Jesus as the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (Keener 2003:452). Keener (2003) attests to some reported cases of execution by community members in collusion with Roman officials just because of suspected adulterous relations and since the law exiged witnesses they had witnesses who attested in their favour. The ministry of Jesus is embodied in the models he used in solving the conflict of the adulterous woman in John 8. A few of his methods of conflict management in the first-century communities are discussed below.

5.5. Jesus' methods of conflict management via the lens of John 8:1-11.

According to what the text conveys to its readers Jesus receives the complaints channelled to him and does not shy away from giving them a solution. He listens to them and writes on the ground and then rises and writes again. After that, he confronts them and speaks out. Below are methods Jesus has demonstrated as analysed by scholars that are similar to the way he handles the one of John 8.

- 5.5.1. **FACE-TO-FACE TALK:** Jesus had a face-to-face talk with the Pharisees who brought the woman. He listened to them present their case and requested him to order the stoning of the woman following the Mosaic Law (Jn 8:3-5). Phillips (2018:72) says that Jesus' command is one of the best face-to-face reprimands. LumingKewas, (2022:98) supports firmly that Jesus confronted people who became arrogant to him (Jn 18:18-25).
- 5.5.2. **SILENCE:** Jesus opted to keep silent in cases where he did not see reason to argue with his audience. He stood firm and kept silent when he was forced to answer if they should go ahead to stone the woman. Rather Jesus bent down and wrote on the floor (vs 6). When they

insisted on hearing Jesus' verdict, Jesus continuously kept silent (Culpepper 1995:628). In John 8:8-9 Jesus writes on the floor just to avoid giving any response that could implicate him. He was quiet because he understood what they were after. They planned to trap him and implicate the Roman officials. For this reason, he abdicated from saying anything to answer their demands of stoning the woman.

- 5.5.3. **GROUP APPROACH:** Asikainen (2018:47) says that Jesus would not be intimidated to face the group and the group that opposed him in John 8:1-11 was an all-hegemonic group of males such as he did in John 18:1-14. John 6:1-14 where Jesus feeds the five thousand is not different from the group he faces in John 8. He confronts the group with his disciples.
- 5.5.4. **AVOIDANCE:** Lumingkewas (2022:98) states that avoidance is an approach Jesus decided to adopt this method whenever he faced threats in his ministry. He will just move away from them. In John 8:8-11 he avoids responding to the Pharisees and scribes and the crowd and even abstains from reproaching the woman publicly until they all leave before he tells the woman not to repeat the same sin.
- 5.5.5. **DIRECT TALK:** Jesus' confrontation of the Jews in John 2:13-25 is one of his methods to solve problems. He did not mediate here, nor did he interrogate, nor did he negotiate for the money changers to quit. Rather he attacked them directly and began overturning their trading table. He also does the same in John 8:7 where asks them to own up if any one of them has not sinned. They all disperse because they have no other strong argument to give Jesus.
- 5.5.6. **PEACE:** Jesus decided to adopt the route of peace by using scripture. Lumingkewas (2022:101) suggests that Jesus used this to make peace rather than create confrontations. In John 8, Jesus does everything to make sure that there is no escalation of confrontations in light of the demand to apply Mosaic law and stone the woman.
- 5.5.7. **REHABILITATION:** Jesus rehabilitates the woman when he declares compassion upon her to go and sin no more. This restoration phase

assures us that Jesus allowed her to live and change her ways of life rather than falling back to her old habits.

According to the observation from this work, the models Jesus used in John's Gospel to mediate community conflict are in resonance with the proposed methods of Thomas Kilmann. The following methods below give us insights into the way Thomas perceives conflict management.

5.6. Thomas Kilmann's methods of conflict

5.6.1. Defining the Concept of Conflict Management using Thomas Kilmann's (TKI) models.

Thomas Kilmann (1978:59) defines conflict as "a condition of objective incompatibility between values or goals as the behaviour of deliberately interfering with another's goal achievement and emotionally in terms of hostility". However, Thomas Kilmann still believes that this definition is not standard and can be coined in a variety of ways depending on the circumstances of the conflict.

According to Hackston's (2023) analysis, the Kilmann model is meant to guide us on how to deal with conflict depending on how assertive we are in life. This implies that people who desire to satisfy themselves first are considered assertive and are guided by this model. On the other hand, anyone who opts to satisfy others first is considered cooperative thereby paying attention to satisfying others. Furthermore, Hackston (2023) states that Thomas Kilmann's model is divided into five different models following Thomas Kilmann (2007:2-3). These models are in phases comprising competition, collaboration, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

Below will follow a description of each of these models and at the end of the chapter an extended model will be further discussed.

Conflict is common disagreement, discord, or schisms between persons, groups, communities, and even nations. It is marked by squabbles, antagonism, and hostility. It is the situation whereby one man stands up in fierce rivalry against another opposing each other in a bid to attain results completely different from those of the opponent.

Following the definition of Katie Shonk (2019) that it is a dispute between two members of a group or organization, it becomes more and more clear that it is a fight, an argument that requires at least two persons to be at loggerheads with each other. Ome, (2013:5512) says that “conflict is a ubiquitous phenomenon.” This means that it is universal and inherent. Families in discord for centuries, countries at war for centuries, individuals in no speaking terms for decades, etcetera. But what should be clarified is that definitions of conflict cannot be static because circumstances, situations, and contexts differ from each other. One conflict might not be the same as the other and so such a definition would need to be contextual to that conflict.

Conflict resolution is a galvanized effort to stop conflict from continuing. Kilmann proposes the five models above but Rene Girard (2013:32) endorses it from the perspective of mimetic rivalry that originates from the imitation of a model that has grown to become a rival to an existing model. It is this factor of interpersonal competition of becoming models that has caused most violence among human beings according to Girard (2013). He refutes that it is not an instinctual phenomenon that causes this to happen among humans but a mimesis of competition for humans can overcome conflict and violence. Jeong (2009:3) argues that it is an “Adversarial social action” with two or more persons involved in the expression of differences exclusive of hostilities. Jeong (2009:3-4) critiques communities in Africa and Europe that have successfully overcome conflicts ranging from a water crisis in Central Africa that caused an inter-community crisis, a socio-economic crisis, and a cultural diversity crisis in South Africa that caused antagonism between communities. Succinctly communities and even nations today are easily described as notorious because of the conflicts they have traversed; such examples include, DR Congo, Somalia, Kenya's political crisis, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Sudan which has caused devastating destruction of human relations. Much has been said about various ways in which scholars have defined conflict in chapter five.

This study, therefore, takes on the same view as Girard that it is a model of Judaism that finds itself in a threatened position by the rising concept of Christology and cannot accommodate the Christian views Jesus is teaching. Jesus teaches them about the sonship of God, he is the bread of life and that God cannot be accessed except through him and that annoys the elders and high priest to call for his lynching proving that the rivalry in this Johannine text is alive and functional.

5.6.2. Description of Thomas Kilmann model

Continuing from the idea of rivalry, Kilmann notes the fact that disagreements arise and parties in conflict do not agree with each other and that requires a model to attain peaceful relations. Jesus is equally unrivalled in John (8:6). According to Thomas-Kilmann (2007:7), conflict can be solved using two keys –assertiveness and cooperativeness. Assertiveness is the extent to which a person tries to satisfy his or her concerns in life meanwhile cooperativeness is the extent to which an individual tries to satisfy others' concerns in life. These are the two methods used in describing conflict resolution models of competition, collaboration, compromising, avoidance, and accommodation.

A report by Trainer (2010:2-3) endeavours to elucidate with tabulations showing how the five models work. They are visibly explicit but require a thorough coherent comprehension of each before one can understand the flow of meaning from one after the other. From the first to the last, there is a profile that indicates how it is useful in various kinds of conflicts. Below is a brief explanation of each model.

5.6.2.1. COMPETING: It is the power-oriented model where there is no cooperation but more assertiveness (Trainer 2010:3). It is the kind of model that is individualistic otherwise called me and myself. It does not give room for sharing or receiving any contribution. The individual pursues what is beneficial to himself or herself and nothing else concerns the person about what happens to others. Their goals are all that matters and for this reason, they can use any means of power to win his or her position and achieve their objectives. Trainer (2010) says Competing might mean standing up for your rights, defending a position you believe is correct, or simply trying to win.”

5.6.2.2. COLLABORATION: This is a complex model that encompasses competition and collaboration. The two models express themselves better as assertiveness and cooperativeness. Collaborating involves two persons working together and assembling their ideas to dig into an issue, a crisis, or a quadratic equation to look for a solution. This kind of model does not allow anyone to be egocentric by concentrating on themselves alone. Two persons applying this model make them work as partners. Collaborating might just enable partners to work a way out to compete for resources or projects using

their intelligence and know how to unravel a solution to critical interpersonal conditions (Trainer 2010:3). This also depends on the joint objectives agreed upon by such partners leading us into what is known as the descriptive theory in conflict management where theorists have hypothesized on conflict of interest, personal styles, reactions to threats and cognitive distortions as the reasons behind most conflicts because it denies people the opportunity to collaborate and de-escalate the conflict (Kilman & Thomas, 1978:60).

5.6.2.3. COMPROMISING: has been described as the model that many opponents in conflict do not want to settle for. But whenever it happens, it is for a solution that satisfies both parties. This model is intermediate in assertiveness and cooperativeness. Whenever parties agree to collaborate, they find an expedient and mutual cooperativeness that falls between competing and collaborating. It makes all attempts to address the problem, but it does tackle it with profundity. It means “splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a quick middle-ground position” (Trainer 2010:3). At least it does not completely evade or avoid the problem.

5.6.2.4. AVOIDING: The problem is the model that does not even have any attempt to find a solution to the problem. It is unassertive and uncollaborative. The problem might continue to exist if the parties benefit from the conflict, they see no reason to solve it. It might mean sidestepping the issue diplomatically, postponing it for another time or completely stepping back from the matter that might be a threat to the situation. Avoidance does not allow one to digest the three meta-models of experiencing and perceiving the conflict to accept it, and even if it has been accepted there is no opportunity to delve into a second opportunity, to diagnose the provenance or sources of the conflict and then lastly agreeing to intervene and tackle it (Thomas & Kilman 1978:60).

5.6.2.5. ACCOMMODATING is the model where there is no level of assertiveness and cooperativeness. This model is bound to accept everyone and share ideas, opinions, and strategies in a bid to find a solution. It is the opposite of competing where everyone wants a bit of the cake without caring for the other but accommodating helps everyone to find his or her feet in solution building. (Trainer 2010:3) Every individual involved drops his or her interests and prioritizes the interests of the other. In other words, the individuals sacrifice for the other and become selfless and generous towards the opponents and

willing to obey the other's orders when they would have preferred not to do so and accept each other's points of view. They virtually subdue their structural behavioural patterns of egocentric attitudes of self-interest, beliefs, norms and standards, skills, and intolerance that characterize human behaviour of want (Thomas & Kilmann 1978:60).

5.7. The first-century values Jesus exhibits in his conflict-solving model of John 8:1-11 -forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and grace.

The first-century world was used to living in groups and living according to the laws of the Torah. The first century endeavoured to obey the law so that they could preserve their integrity and honour and avoid shame. He honours the woman, forgives her and sends her away with instructions not to sin anymore. The value of forgiveness stands out as the honourable thing he did. He did not just only forgive but advised the woman not to continue in the same vein to maintain her honour in society. Honour and shame are two principal values the Jews did not take lightly in their communities. Pilch & Malina (1993:95-96) refers to them as core values of the Mediterranean world. Honour is the claim to worth that is acknowledged publicly as your identity. To have honour is to have public acknowledgement as a person with integrity or relevance. Malina & Neyvrey (1996:176) expound that the Mediterranean world cannot be understood if the social sanctions used to evaluate an individual's compliance with society are not considered. And the sanctions largely include shame and honour which are values that cut across cultural societies and are used in measuring "core native values of praise and blame" in anthropological terms (Malina & Neyvrey 1996).

John is concretely and specifically attempting to imbue these concepts of honour and shame in the minds of the temple leaders who fail to honour the Johannine Christological message to which the Gospel of John bears witness to the historical development (Phillips, 2019:40) of the Johannine community and the message of Christ. Jesus is resoundingly conveying to the Pharisees, Sadducees, and the Temple leaders that he is not ready to entertain any conflict between them and himself. Neither is he willing to be drawn into the conflict, hence he writes silently on the floor without asking too many questions (O'Sullivan 1998:60). John wants to make them see value in the new Christology they are bringing without generating any conflict. Malina (1993:28) asks the

question when she draws a line between someone and herself, does that mean the person can never draw closer to her without fear of conflict? He further explains that such boundary markers constitute buffer zones of anxiety and conflict. This conflict is read by John from afar and decides to carve out his community which forms the Johannine community so that they could learn to implement and obey the values in honour of the personhood of Christ as well as interpersonal respect of the values of honour and shame which were core Jewish values.

John does not want to see his master Jesus to whom he was a disciple be denied and his sonship to God (Lk 1:35, Lk 22:70) placed under scrutiny. That is the reason for which he conveys that Jesus must be honoured and believed in. Since honour was a value that was defended in the Mediterranean world (Pilch & Malina., 1993:96) John also feels that it is justice to defend the honour of Christ who also defends the course of the adulterous woman. From John's understanding of the Mediterranean world and culture, group members first have to be supported and outsiders do not count (Eck & Kok 2010:18) and he does not feel that rejecting the woman as well as Jesus is ideal. Considering this practice Jesus decides to advocate for the woman caught in adultery (Jn 8:1-11) and she ends up being freed. These values conclude the Johannine position of Jesus being an honourable teacher who does not deserve the treatment he is being given by his people.

5.8. a. Functions of conflict and definition of conflict in this study

Conflict has its functions within human society and not all conflict is bad. Social interaction is never void of conflict and wherever there are people there will be conflict (Dreyer 2000:222). Through conflict, changes are brought into a community. Coser (1956:80) says that conflict re-establishes unity and cohesion. Wherever there have been threats to life, long-suffering and abandonment, and mass killings because of conflict, undermining of peaceful efforts is seen as betrayal. Whenever social life has been interrupted and people have been displaced and begin missing home, there is always a need for reunification with family members, with home, and with social activities that

have been part of the life of that person from birth (Cosser 1956). Cosser (1956:151-157) further explains that conflict functions in awakening people to set up boundaries and restrain from activities that hurt their emotions, abstain from groups, and embark on those things that give meaning to them and enhance their progress in life. Succinctly, conflict stimulates people or groups to draw up and implement new rules, norms, and values that enable them to participate more actively or abstain from public life.

Darendhorf (1958:178, 1959:208) agrees that conflict is a creative force of change force of change in society. Dreyer (2000:222) suggests that conflict forces people to change and develop means to survive in tough environments where the powerful make life uneasy for the weak. This implies that conflict stimulates people to become vigilant and alert to changes in a system and then quickly adjust new values of identity choosing what to do and when to do it (Vledder 1997:114).

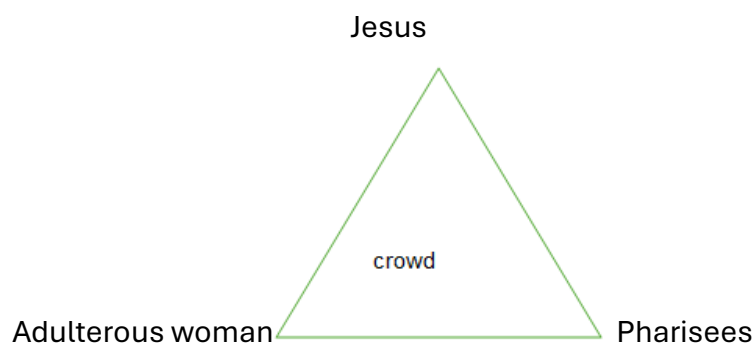
In conclusion, the fact that conflict exists is an eye opener to draw people to understand that conflict does not only bring cohesion alone, but it enables people to understand how to choose words to use to address colleagues or opponents. Change comes when people begin to see how to mend the differences and agree on a way forward.

5.8.b. Definition of conflict in this study

Conflict according to the view of this study, is not static. It is defined as dynamic. Dynamic conflict is a phenomenon where one actor reacts to what the other is doing leading to further escalations endangering every aspect that involves the conflict and nobody takes responsibility for the effects. This is exactly what happens to the woman caught in adultery in John 8 where nobody steps forth to take responsibility. They all point to the Mosaic Law as their point of departure to punish the woman. Briefly, it becomes hard to decipher which party is responsible for what happens as noted by Wallenstein, (2002:34). Following the analysis of (Gould, 2014:780-781) who notes that working dynamics may change at any time and may relatively cause a company to cease to exist and workers go unemployed -all caused by the conflict or clashing objectives of disgruntled officials and what ensues is poor implementation of policies by employees. It means that conflict can said to be relative and can be seen as a moving force that

upgrades itself as situations on the ground change. As events unfold, it takes another turn; either by getting worse with escalation of absolute violence, fighting or physical aggression that will call for inventive de-escalation techniques to be applied (Thomas & Kilmann 1978:60).

This section of the bible (Jn 7:53-8:1-11) informs us about the conflict that already exists to be a triangular conflict between the woman caught in adultery, Jesus of Nazareth and the Jewish teachers of the law and the Pharisees that takes place in the temple courts.



Triangular representation of the conflict of the woman caught in adultery

The accusation levied against her is that

λέγουσιν αὐτῷ, Διδάσκαλε, αὕτη ἡ γυνὴ κατελήφθη ἑπαυτοφώρῳ μοιχευομένη ἐν δὲ τῷ νόμῳ Μωσῆς ἡμῖν ἐνετείλατο τὰς τοιαύτας λιθοβολεῖσθαι· σὺ οὖν τί λέγεις (Jn 8:4-5).

The kind of adultery described here is the kind that is caught red-handed compared to the description given by Camus and Cosman (2006) where no glitch is unveiled by the actor of the adulterous act. The act is not a violent one but it leads to conflict that generates violence against women (O'Sullivan, 2015:8) because some aspects of subjugate behavioural patterns exhibited by certain male figures against women among which include bias, dictatorial habits and reduces the woman to a non-person (Toensing 2003:159).

It can nevertheless be underestimated that conflict in the first-century world was non-existent. This conflict in John 8 exhibits how vulnerable the woman was to first-century men and given that men were people with authority as argued by O'Sullivan (2003:8), they

were against the cultural practices of the time and were powerless to change anything. O'Sullivan further argues that this adulterous woman in John 8 was just like any other woman nowadays who can be exposed to the conflict that can cause gender violence against her. The kind of society they lived in did not allow the men to be ridiculed as such and that could be the reason the man is not even mentioned in the text (Kinukawa 1995:90) portraying clearly that women were a society ruled under a strong hegemonic rule in the first century world. The Bar Kokhba revolt is one such example of the revolution that began after the man Bar Kokhba revolted against the Roman imperial rule which began in AD 132 two years after Hadrian the emperor journeyed to Egypt through the same province where the riot began (van Eck 1999:76).

5.9. Applied Parameters in Resolving Conflict?

Parameters applied by the ruling class of elites or authorities in command to resolve conflict in the ancient Mediterranean world were resistance to a conflict or riots waged upon them by the people. Resistance by the Romans, Greeks, Assyrians, and Egyptians from the war waged upon them by the Jews was the relevant step taken so that they could subdue the opponents. Rummel (1981) suggests that when conflict is such, pitching tough parties against the opponent must be clarified. He believes that since conflict itself is an ongoing communication process, parties logged at war are required to balance the process by integrating goals, reducing antagonism and high intensity of expectations but making sure their goals become realised. Kalu (2010:153) suggests that when conflict is generated, it must be solved but when the church steps in as one of the community's leading institutions of social life and peace mediation, she is labelled inefficient and sometimes scientists and commentators misrepresent the church's nature and make wrong demands from the church. This implies that the church has been judged as inefficient in the management of conflicts. Kalu (2010:158) is raising awareness of the idea that Africans have become wise enough to recognise that Africa has an identity and her conflicts cannot drown her and have begun looking for solutions to establish peace. This resonates with the idea Rummel (1981) sends across that conflict situations need clarification to the warring parties.

As Africans were becoming aware of how to manage their own using their African parameters as well as the church, so was the first-century Mediterranean world. The first-century Mediterranean world solved their conflicts through the many religious laws they established to help them. Adultery was forbidden and Paul emphasises in Romans 13:9 that “For the commandments say, “You shall not commit adultery, you shall” And in Hebrews 13:4 Paul also mentions there that “Let marriage be held in among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.” The mosaic law served to deter people from venturing into adultery and stoning was the recommendation. Queen-Sutherland (2016:505) suggests that divorce was the punitive measure for adultery and functioned as a legal, social, and economic institution. The above author also enlightens on the portrayal in Lamentations 1 of Jerusalem being a prostitute that must be stripped naked which is evident in Isaiah 47:3; Jer 13:22 Ezekiel 16:37 and Nahum 3:5 as stated prescriptive parameters to handle conflict of adultery. Reading into the various measures of handling conflict. A lot of the Jewish practices are very identical or similar to many cultural practices of the community in question and serve as relevant tools to say that most African communities have emulated Jewish cultures.

5.10. Writing on the ground -magic or strategy?

What is stated is unknown. Jesus bends down to write what nobody has ever been able to say what he wrote and scholars have been debating the meaning of his bending to write twice. It is viewed as a strategy to deter the accusers of the woman and to react against the order to stone her (Deans 2014:407). Deans further explains that the way Jesus writes is not normal. He writes silently and rises to declare some words the first time and bends down a second time but this time he does not make any utterance thereby raising the anxiety and attention of the audience of Jesus. The writing is not magical, and it is also invisible to anyone and it is also silent thereby producing a strategic statement that causes them to begin dispersing one after another. The writings Jesus jots on the field have become enormous attractions of interest both from scholars and ministers who focus on this section whenever they preach (Deans 2014:412). The jots drew the attention of those whom Jesus had to address and as Deans argues these writings

subvert enormous authority and “averts brutal mob violence” (2014:412). Such a strategy calmed a conflict that would have seen Jesus himself trapped and pulled into the stoning for blasphemy against the law of the prophet Moses. O’Sullivan (2015:8) argues that the silence of Jesus is in response to the religious hegemony that silenced women from expressing their feminine feelings. That was the strategic move Jesus applied to silence their riot and the preeminent plan to eliminate him from their midst. The story is not only reporting something of the past but sends a message of the suffering women who have been silenced and kept in one corner in adulterous homes where the men are promiscuous, and the woman can virtually say nothing because the man is extra powerful. This study aligns with the idea of O’Sullivan (2015) above but adds to its stance that a means to keep the audience in suspense. Furthermore, Jesus intends to allow them to navigate their thoughts before he gives his verdict which is more divine than humane.

5.11. Comparative intersection points of the models

The models of mediation used by Jesus in the gospel of the text of John 7:53-8:1-11 comprise silence, avoidance, group approach, peace, and rehabilitation response. When Jesus is pursued very intensely to state his opinion publicly regarding the adulterous act of the woman he decides to abdicate from any implicating response.

He opted to avoid their questions and wrote on the ground. Even when he chooses to avoid their questions, he is still forced to express his opinion in a direct proportional response to the question of stoning, but he still decides to remain silent. When his time to respond comes he states clearly for anyone who is sinless to throw the first stone. Thomas Kilmann advises that avoiding the problem does not help, rather, it serves a proper purpose to engage the problem because avoiding is sidestepping the issue. He says that parties often avoid the problem, and it keeps dragging and lingering at our doorsteps. It only serves to further delay it.

Jesus also practised a group approach when he was confronted by the Pharisees and the scribes. His abdication strategy was a means to make them speak and he listened. If anyone understood the strategy that would be because he gathered information about the woman and then used it to question them. The strategy to avoid responding to them catalysed accommodating them and then collaborating with them without

compromising any ethos because he used it to interrogate them (Jn 8:7) to throw a stone at her if they have not sinned. The reason for Jesus to implement the avoidance principle which clears away competition was to ensure that the woman is rehabilitated and given her peace that she still has an opportunity to be restored. In a nutshell, there is an enormous point of resonance between these models which Jesus uses in the text of John 7:53-8:1-11 and those prescribed by Thomas Kilmann.

5.12. Concluding Remarks

These models are also resonating with the various models of Jesus and Thomas Kilmann the Weh community has engaged with their subjects who present problems to the community or church leaders, using similar models. The difference is that they have never documented them for use but have applied them over the centuries. When Jesus uses them in Johannine texts, it communicates to the Weh community to see value in the models of Jesus that serves to enlighten them that the text of John 7:53-8:1-11 is a model for them navigate and restructure and reshape their oral and primitive methods to serve the community better than it was before.

John 7:53-8:1-11 serves to validate the resonance between the methods of Jesus in managing conflict in a social sphere of communities engulfed by community and social conflicts. It also transmits a message that Jesus disregards ethnocentric political combinations and focuses on the saving mission of his ministry rather than accepting to wage wars with his opponents.

Chapter 6

Findings and Recommendations

6.1. Introduction

This chapter is the concluding chapter on the research on peace mediation and the role of John 7:53-8:1-11 in managing conflict in the North-West Region of Cameroon. It communicates its findings and suggestions for further exploration in the research world. The study was aimed at investigating the cultural practices of adultery and wife snatching amongst the people of Weh in Menchum Division of the North-West province of Cameroon. Wife snatching is also known as wife kidnapping (Evans-Grubbs, 1989:59-60). These two aspects have caused conflict amongst the indigenes of the Weh community. Still, because it is an ancient practice that began in the late 17th and 18th centuries when Weh people settled in the current location, it has been difficult to eradicate it.

The concept of adultery and wife snatching has also crept into the church, where conflicts have arisen because the same Christians belong to a community and also believe in African Traditional Worship. As such, their contribution to the community is flagged by mixed theories. They find themselves in church circles expressing cultural beliefs and *vice versa* because they are locals who have grown up believing that both concepts can coexist. They cannot also be blamed because they grew and met practices and beliefs that made them understand that one can serve God and still believe in the African Traditional culture and be saved because culture is culture and nothing is terrible in practicing it. This was the inherent problem this research was trying to solve so that there could be a comprehensive approach to belonging to the church and traditional cultural circles.

The research question was interested in whether the text John 7:53-8:11 can serve as an information source standing as a limiting factor in the management of adultery and wife snatching conflict in Weh communities and Reformed Churches in the North-West region of Cameroon who are at the same time, African Traditional Religious worshippers? How do potent cults like the *Ndau Ukum* and the *Ndau Tseh*, cults that rule and that believe the masculine sex to be superior to the feminine sex, influence these conflicts

and/or assist in solving them? In answering this question, it must also be kept in mind that not only the traditional cults of the Weh community are at play here, but many of the elders who form part of the village cults also form part of the Reformed church leadership.

6.2. Overview of the research

Chapter one is the proposal detailing the research question, aim, problem, and methodology. This chapter maps the path the rest of the study will follow.

In Chapter Two, we examined the background issues of the Fourth Gospel. The goal was to set the stage for the entire study. Hence, this project examined the provenance of the Gospel of John, which is considered a later interpolation when compared with the synoptic Gospels. Included in the work was a treatment of the authorship, dating, genre and composition of the text of John as well as the narrative location of John 7:53-8:1-11.

Chapter three was the application of a socio-scientific approach focusing on some modes or models of the first-century social and cultural values which are embedded in the text of our concern (i.e., John 7:53-8:1-11) as well as how these social values resonate with the Weh communities of North West of Cameroon. The chapter discusses marriage, marital rites, kinship honour, and shame as side effects of adultery and wife snatching on the community of Weh. Patronage and shame were discussed in a bid to point out how the Weh community is ruled by patrons who have a tight fist on community affairs, and women are under the total control of patriarchal men. The chapter also examined trust in the first-century Mediterranean world. Briefly summarising, it endeavoured to examine John's first-century Mediterranean world amidst low levels of literacy and the governing values of that century. The socio-political, socio-economic, socio-cultural, and socio-religious factors probably inform the social backgrounds of every community.

Chapter four was an introduction to the social construct of the Weh Community. A geographical landscape was also introduced to locate the community. The introduction elaborated on an overview of social conflicts, and power dynamics were explained as catalysts for conflict in Weh. Land invasion and forms of cultural practices were

introduced, and traditional cults, as well as traditional governance issues, were discussed.

This chapter attempts to comprehensively describe the Weh people to locate the township in a bid to construct the social lifestyle of the people. Weh is a community on the English-speaking side of Cameroon that falls in the Menchum Division, which is one of the largest and borders Nigeria. In this chapter, this study will refer to the Weh people as a township. This chapter is interested in studying the social narrative, which comprises the village's social life and administrative setup, cultural activities, and traditional lifestyle.

They are a people with a sizeable population and a landlocked people who are classified under a second-class fondom or chieftaincy. Classifying them as a village is embarking on reducing the progressive developments in the community, thus setting the setting for the people never to rise beyond the recognition of a town. Considering the definitions and classification of village settings, it is a small town. These people from English-speaking Cameroon are also called the grass fielders because the savannah grass fields dominate them and are commonly called the grass fielders. We shall base our study on a few articles and two books published by illustrious sons of the community. We shall also consider a few interviews conducted with a few nobles from the community.

This chapter examined specifically how conflicts are managed in the Weh community. It narrated how the Weh people operate their traditional courts and how they handle matrimonial matters of cheating and negligence of matrimonial homes. This dwelt on how discipline is meted out to the women and the men. It also looked into how the court systems operate in conflict management and what they are required to do before the court sits to adjudicate your case. It then did a comparative study between the operation of the church in the township and how they interact in their adjudication processes of cheating and negligence of marriage homes. Furthermore, we shall also examine how they organize and structure the community of people how they do their birth celebrations and how they do funeral celebrations.

In Chapter five there was a discussion on what conflict is and how conflict can be resolved through the lenses of shame and honour. Conflict resolution in general is applied to understand various reasons why conflict must be resolved. Resolving conflict is not just to gain peace or a truce but to give humanity honour and remove the shame

that is tagged with war and its effects. This chapter will help us to get to grips with the conflict and conflict types and see how they contribute to the construct of shame and honour in society.

Every literate human being has a clue about what conflict is but might just be unable to know the category of the conflict and discern how to solve it, especially those who grew up in homes where domestic violence was orchestrated between the father and mother. It could be altercations, anger, aggressive violence or even physical abuse on one or both partners. Anyone in a situation of conflict faces the concept of rejection, gossip against him/her, backbiting and even verbal altercations with their opponents. Consequently, that person will confess and confirm that such conflicting times do not give anybody a comfortable pleasure in office or society when people place you in a shameful position. But for those who orchestrate the conflict and make the discourse a victory for them, it is an honourable position of victory against your opponents in the squabble. Victory can only be temporal in such cases except the fight is resolved for both sides to be in harmony and accept to live with one another.

Where conflict emanates from fights the violence against each other might be severe. Where it breeds anger that can cause regrettable effects on the antagonistic forces. Parkinson (2012:124-125), explains that in coercive violence where physical violence is the root cause of conflict existing between intimate relationships such as the wife being battered by the husband, that can breed excessive anger and may cause divorce in future if not resolved on time. Such women report cases ranging from physical assault, verbal abuse, intimidation, social control, isolation, and emotional abuse. This form of coercive control is intimate terrorism as it is argued (Parkinson 2012) and the resulting outcome is shame on the woman who cannot in many cases face her peers because she is ashamed of the situation she finds herself in. From an observational perspective, this author notes that conflict is what none can escape from because it has become a social challenge that knocks at our doors without any notification. But people have adopted to live and contend with and only try to contain it when it arises. Rather, it is what people should confront to resolve rather than abdicate from it. It hurts many and destabilises social settlements, and established families, breakdown companies and destabilises the social niche. It is a cause of divide and discontinuity of family love and care.

Chapter six was a discussion of the conflict will be done and the application of the John 8 conflict methods by Jesus in consideration of a possible extension of the five models to six. The findings of the Weh methods of conflict resolution will be discussed. Jesus' methods of conflict mediation during his time and ministry cannot be compared to Thomas-Kilmann's (TKI) models of conflict management but both models are relevant in this study to analyse conflict in the Weh models of conflict resolution. Further down the lane, the work will attempt an observation into the methods of Jesus' management of conflicts in the first-century Mediterranean world within the church and in the secular world.

6.3. Summary of the study

The consciousness of existence and awareness of adultery and wife snatching in the Weh community

To ensure that the conflict of adultery in John 8:1-11 is not turned into feminine abuse, there is every reason to read the social narrative in the Cameroonian context of adultery and wife snatching as a social dilemma. The social scientific method applies to it as a peg in a square hole. The issue of wife adultery and wife snatching is recurrent in Weh and that has proven to have some similarities with the Jewish first-century Mediterranean world.

The problem we set out to research was to examine how the text of the pericope adulterae could inform as a limiting factor to the problem of adultery and wife snatching in the Weh community. This problem which has affected the church and the community required examining the consequences of the beliefs of the community in their interpretation of the text and applying it to the conflicts of adultery in the Weh community like the rest of the North Western Region of Cameroon practice the belief in African Traditional Religion and Culture (see Chapter 1: page 10).

The conundrum here is that most of the elders who believe and practice the African Traditional Religion and Culture also double as full members of the Orthodox Reformed Churches i.e., the Presbyterians, Baptists, Anglican and Roman Catholic Churches (Lang 2014:414). The fact that powerful cults like *Ndau Tse* and *Ndau Ukum* rule the village as patriarchal institutions of rulership, to which they belong makes it hard for clear

decisions to be made in favour of the church or favour of the African Religious Traditional believers because they intersect.

Given that the community is aware of the existence of this dilemma of adultery and wife snatching, they do not have the tools to resolve this matter. They also are not aware of the concrete and profound effects it has on the community. The fact that it has set precedence to follow, people blindly follow it as tradition and turn against the will of God in their traditional practices. The Bible does not recommend adultery and wife snatching but as a practice in the first-century Mediterranean world, it has been a similar practice in the Weh community. The story of Boaz and Naomi is a fitting example in the Old Testament where a woman was snatched under the influence of the woman herself.

Snatching a wife was a famous act in Weh but it is no longer the case because the youths have discovered the effects of such a practice given their exposure to education and some have been converted to Christianity and are affected by the biblical teachings. This does not mean that the practice has died completely because there are still the very die-hard traditional practitioners who still snatch wives from others but on a much lower note. The community still believes in the existence of this practice and also knows that some of the indigenes do not shy away from practising it.

6.3.1. The Acknowledgment of the Problem and its Consequences

As per the community indigenes, the practice of adultery and snatching of a woman is a problem that young men and women have to deal with. The older generation has reduced the practice of snatching women because the practice was according to their understanding of the lifestyle back then in the 18th and 19th centuries. But because things have evolved, the adherence to such a notion is downplayed by many and criticised as an unimportant adventure to undertake.

The current generation is plagued with recurrent practices of adultery where young men and women go after married women and that causes some kind of commotion and squabbles between community indigenes who react to those who threaten the stability of their marriages because they make their wives fall away from committing to the very marriages they have laboured for to establish solid foundations. This kind of community

life creates community conflict among group members (Radford, Majolo, & Aureli, 2016:1).

The Weh community has laws that are used to sanction committers of adultery, but respective families also have their own family rules enacted by the spouses of the family. This proves how far they acknowledge the existence of the problem of adultery and wife snatching. Wife snatching rules do not exist as such because it is practiced on grounds of secrecy and to some extent after flirting with the woman for some time. Their disciplinary measures are quite different from those of the first-century Roman world such as those applied by Constantine which also recommended the punishment of the girl who was involved in adulterous acts and not the man alone who snatched her (Evans-Grubbs, 1989:59).

Weh people over the years have preserved their culture and have done so without any proper investigations of the effective detrimental consequences that adultery and wife snatching bears upon the indigenes and younger generations. There was a lot of ignorance that circulated in the community given that they were very lowly educated but once Fon Simon Ngha Nji became parliamentarian there was an upsurge in educational level and the early twentieth-century awareness of the problem began spreading and few elites understood it. The acknowledgement of the existing problem was also a result of the younger generation becoming exposed to literacy. Many boys at the age of six were no longer accompanying their fathers to funerals and raffia bushes (Epah & Njang 2013:502) but were allowed to go to school and study. Parents also saw the significant benefits of educating a child when children were able to read letters to their fathers written to them by their senior brothers residing out of the village. Most community members do acknowledge that the problem was bigger than imagined because of the inability to correct the tradition that was handed down to children who grew up seeing what their parents did and considered it a legitimate traditional practice.

6.3.2. The Attempt of Conquest of the Problem.

The traditional leaders of Weh and the church have conflicted and have recorded problems between Christians and African Traditional Worshippers and even with the Muslims but have been making constant attempts to resolve the conflicts and bring peace among them so that they can live peacefully. The Bible says in John 14:27 that:

27 εἰρήνην ἀφήμι ὑμῖν, εἰρήνην τὴν ἐμὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν· οὐ καθὼς ὁ κόσμος δίδωσιν ἐγὼ δίδωμι ὑμῖν. μὴ ταρασσέσθω ὑμῶν ἡ καρδία μηδὲ δειλιάτω.

This draws us to conclude on one of the first findings from the Weh people and the North West Region as a whole, which is that they are a group of people that for long have been using some methods used nowadays for resolution of conflict in a bid to make peace return in cases of discord. For example, Jesus used the method of listening and responding, advising and guiding people which is what the Weh people in particular have used for ages. The leaders call for a village assembly to listen to the problems of the community and then take the matter in for adjudication before returning to give their verdict. This method and others have been relevant in the building of peace between the church and the community. The church as well has also been useful and strategic in using scriptures to mediate any crisis they have encountered such as stating that adultery is not allowed and so elders and Christians must be free from practicing it. Anyone who is caught doing so is suspended.

The crux of the matter here is that by the 17th century and the 18th century, the Weh community had been solving their matters by themselves but for rare cases of obstinance that required the German military to intervene and correct the incidence in the early 19th century some years after the arrival of the Basel Missionaries. Weh people have conquered the problem of conflict among themselves by trying all means to make her indigenes live peacefully. In short, the Weh people have been resolving conflict on their own and using their undocumented ways before the government methods could be made applicable in the form of laws. For example, the mothers of the family of the author of this work will use a stone to tie on the neck of an adulterer who is unwilling to cooperate and give them the facts about her adulterous acts. When the stone weighs her down and she finds it unbearable to continue, she will begin to reveal her actions and her senior co-spouses will then untie the stone so that she can continue to tell them her story.

The community has quarter leaders every quarter who are useful to mediate in crises whenever they arise and whenever they are unsuccessful, they refer to another higher person for adjudication to continue. It ends up on the corridors of the Fon and his council of leaders in *Ndau Tse* where they give their verdict and this verdict is final and anyone who is dissatisfied can then take it to the civil court of law.

Amongst Weh people, there is every desire to enjoy peaceful marriage lives. Adultery is illegal in the traditional worship system and the case of the woman caught in adultery has been an illuminating example amongst community members who desire to see marriages free from adultery. Men and women are celebrated when they get married given traditional gifts and blessings. Libations are poured, ululations are made, singing and dancing are done and incantations of wellbeing are said. This paints a picture of the kind of community where people make efforts to live in peace and solve problems amicably.

6.3.3. The Historical Attempts to Resolve Conflict, i.e., Fixing and Crossing the Bridges.

Historically, it shows that attempts to solve conflicts existed before the structural organization of the Weh fondom. The Weh fondom existed without major structures of leadership before there was the establishment of *Ndau Tse* and *Ndau Ukum*. Others include the Weh Traditional Council, the various quarter heads who dealt with conflicts and if successful, it will remain within the ranks of the quarter head and his notables. The Fon of Weh thought it wise to establish new courts and cults such as *Ndau Kefap*, *Fehmbwi* for women and for the men it was *Kweifor*, *Ndau Kezeh*, *Ndau Ibam* (Geary 1979:51-52).

The Weh community is patriarchal and most of such decisions regarding the peaceful maintenance of the community are taken by the men who are in the men's cult also known as *Ndau Tse* (council of elders). On the other hand, women are given no right to

operate where men of such cults are deliberating the matters of the village except when they are invited and such invitations are brief.

Conflicts and divisions among the Weh people have seen mediation efforts undertaken by an elite of the village Mr George Geh who has also recorded accounts of efforts he made to mediate the crisis. Geh (2012:5-6) narrates efforts he made to mediate the crisis of the Weh Cultural and Development Association in a bid to prevent it from falling. The bridges are fixed for the crossing to be made ready for people to cross and recover from the effects of the conflicts they traverse. Weh community engages with the church to settle their differences so that they peacefully cohabit without any obstacles.

Weh people endeavour to rehabilitate those who are found guilty of some form of disobedience to traditional institutions. The rehabilitation process is the fixing phase where people who are caught practising adultery and other vices such as witchcraft are called to order by the council of elders (*Ndau Tse*) where they are advised and warned but when they fail to abide, they are recalled and warned again. But recurrent practices are met with fierce reprimand and the victim is ordered to leave the village and to only return when they have stopped the practice. Some are ordered to return only after a given number of years. The persons involved in the fixing process to quell conflict are the quarter heads (Geary 1979:54).

6.3.4. The Relevance and Significance of John 7:53-8:11 in Conflict Management in Weh and the Churches and the Community

The scholarly debate on Johannine relevance in the management of conflict has been something that has recently gained grounds. According to some scholars, The text of the woman caught in adultery is one text that shows the patriarchal nature of the Weh man. The behaviour of the Pharisees and the scribes depicts a picture of how the Weh man will behave in such circumstances. Most of the time we hear Christians defend themselves using this text with arguments that the woman who committed adultery was pardoned by Jesus. They also feel that they can go free with such immoral behaviour. The elders of the church also involve themselves in adulterous affairs and hold a conviction that Jesus pardoned the woman caught in adultery.

The church has become the custodian of scripture and her stance to see things work out well in the community makes it difficult because Christians and non-Christians hold a different notion about the text. Therefore, there is a miscommunication about the text, misconception about the text and misinterpretation of the text by Christians who think adultery is pardonable by God so we can indulge in it and go free if not caught.

The text unveils to the Weh man a place where God pardons those who have sinned even when patriarchs accuse and punish the accused without evidence or with evidence. Patriarchs in the Weh community undermine the voice of the woman just like it was in the first-century Mediterranean world of Jesus. They always do not give the woman space to address the gatherings, have a say in cases of adultery and snatching and be free to do things on their own. Femininity has always been a relegated affair into the background by the elite men who hold firm to the affairs of the village. Women have never been allowed to own land, speak in certain gatherings, or belong to some cults. To note is that all the main cults ruling the village are men-dominated.

The fact that Jesus was able to contain the crowd and the elders gave him control of things and that vindicated the woman from stoning. Women in the church in Weh are also given some respect and are as well defended by the elite ruling class and are not vilified as such just because they are women. Rather they are respected once they become members of the female cult *kefap*. It is just different in the sense that they find themselves in a patriarchal system of leadership.

The text is important in that it helps decode to the community the disdain for adultery and wife snatching. Those elders who have once been involved in such extra-marital affairs have questioned why the church has to suspend them while Jesus pardoned the woman caught in adultery without even caring to know if the man was present or not. That means that they are arguing that the church has a role to also pardon such persons who commit adultery rather than suspend them from the sacrament of Holy Communion which is meant to cleanse and not for the privileged. The text has found some significant meaning in its interpretation by the village community, especially by the notables who belong to the church and also practice African Traditional Religion.

Jesus solved his conflict using various methods that were appropriate to the situations he met. For example, he used face-to-face mediation in John 8:1-11. In this same chapter, he confronts the woman on a one-to-one dismissal with stern instructions not

to sin anymore. He also used a group approach and such was the case in John 18:1-14 when those who came to arrest him appeared and he addressed them. He also used avoidance in this same text because he did not want to engage them when they insisted that he tell them if they should stone the woman. He kept quiet and since quietude was some sign of disengagement in the Jewish culture it was his technique to snub them and then solve the problem. He also used direct attacks to control circumstances that were threatening or poorly managed.

The Weh people and the North Westerners of Cameroon have been using these methods unknown to them that they were useful methods used by Christ to solve matters within Jewish communities. The Weh people in particular have never written down these methods but used them as exactly as they are (see chapters IV & V of this thesis). This implies that the first-century Mediterranean cultures have some similarities with the Weh people and the people of the grass field - the North west Region of Cameroon.

Jesus was therefore also speaking and addressing issues affecting the Hebrew people which was what would later apply to the Weh Christian community and the Traditional African Worshippers as well.

6.3.5. Findings about Conflict Management in the Weh

Community.

Regarding the findings, it should be a commendable fact that the Weh who settled in the current location they live in, were organised in their way of culture. Their methods of conflict mediation were those similar to of the first-century Mediterranean world. Even though undocumented the description in chapters four and five gives us an impression that they are not just people who mediated conflict haphazardly. The undocumented nature of their methods is what was handed down orally and that has still been successfully practised to date.

Second, the Weh woman is unfortunately in a society that is similarly ruled by the patriarchal society of the first-century Mediterranean world where women have no chance of ownership of property. Even when willed to them by their fathers, it is ceased by uncles who claim that women do not own land and property in Weh. They argue that women are meant to be married and should not be in control of things men are called to

control. But the big question to research further here is why they do not cease properties and land that was bequeathed to widows by their late husbands but can cease that which is bequeathed by a father to her daughter.

Third, wife snatching was practiced on a very regular basis in Weh village seemingly also a practice in the first-century Mediterranean world. Women were snatched in Weh after a date for some time or when they courted each other secretly even if they had no conjugal relations. But once they decided to elope the wife, it became a well-planned secret thing until the news was broken to the village and husband of the woman that his wife had eloped with him.

Last but not least, the text of the woman caught in adultery can be concluded to serve as a limiting factor to the Weh church in general which feels that it exonerates them from any act of adultery, they indulge in. The fact here is that between the 17th and 19th centuries, communities were tied to cultural beliefs where knowledge and literacy levels were very near zero percent. Hosea states in Hosea 4:6 that “my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children.” The Weh people and the North Western Region of Cameroon were equally affected by lack of knowledge and the Presbyterian Church which came later was also affected but they rescued the situation by spearheading educational training in Anglophone Cameroon yet they were affected by low capacity pastoral training since many were uneducated. This made them resort to training catechists whom they used to spread the word. Today the same Church is sadly caught in some of these conflicts.

Their questions seem to mean that any conflict of adultery that surfaces in the village amongst Christians must be pardoned without any sanctions. Wife snatching was unfortunately an antique practice that was not well understood to involve some form of adultery in the form of wife theft because until a woman’s dowry was paid to the parents she was not your wife until the correct thing was done. This belief in Weh is very paramount in marriage. Therefore, the text limits the understanding of the Weh people and the Christian community as well from abandoning the ancient practices of wife snatching.

Last, there needs to be proper rehabilitation of conflict survivors and others who have been disciplined as a result of some kind of rebellion or evil. The Thomas Kilmann

methods have been extended with a sixth point which is rehabilitation. Jesus rehabilitated the woman caught in adultery through the word he spoke to her not to sin anymore. It means that she had been sinning and possibly discerned to be an adulterer and the only way was to fix her mind not to repeat it. Rehabilitation is very important and as Weh people do, they warn witches and wizards before banishing from the village for a given period and some are told not to return if they have not given up the practice.

6.4. Contribution to the Study

Although some scholars regard John 7:53-8:1-11 as a text no where near conflict mediation, but it has been found relevant to this study. Raymond Brown (1988:51) discusses the content of John 7:53-8:1-11 as a text not in its authentic position. He states that it does not deserve to feature in the canonical books. He evades the conflict that is addressed by Jesus in the text and prefers to shun away from any comments on the text.

Subsequent scholars like Malina (2010:16) discusses the social aspects of honour and culture that carry the vibrance of a community and weighs into the social disturbance that upsets a community's balance in terms of gender roles.

Witherington Ben III (1995:366) considers the conflict behind the text as a moral one that cannot be handled as civil conflict. He also considers it as a Johannine text that speaks about gender balance and exoneration of women from being scapegoats to men. Another important consideration is the aspect of justice and equity amongst communities that is addressed by the text.

Lindars Barnabas (1981:305) weighs into the text as a reinvigoration of the woman from the conflicting aspects of gender directed against women by men which is handled by Jesus using compassion, mercy, and God's grace. To him these factors are the main drivers behind the resolution of the conflict between the woman and the community of Jews that bring her to Jesus.

O' Sullivan (2010:4) sees the actions of the Jewish leaders as cruelty demonstrated to create social imbalance and marginalisation over Jesus who was already under immense pressure to succumb to their demands and make errors in the presence of the temple police and then escalate the conflict.

This study deems it relevant that the johannine corpus of literature and especially this text is very capable text useful in peace mediation studies. The contribution of the text is also far embodied in the ways of Jesus' mediation in the text.

In the context of the Weh people and the Reformed Churches in the North West of Cameroon below are the contributions this study perceives as contributions Johannine literature brings into play to better the community's life.

(a) Social conflicts amongst the Weh People have existed for a very long time since the settlement of the Weh community in Menchum Division. Social life has been faced with social life squabbles inter-personal as well as inter-family. This study therefore seeks to provide social cohesion among people who have encountered long-term differences for a very long time since their existence in the community of Weh.

(b) Cultural norms and practices that need serious transformation - to address issues of gender imbalances and the need for radical eradication of Patriarchal tendencies and immoralities produced by these Patriarchal values. The cultural forms and methods of conflict management unfortunately have never also been documented to serve as a source of reference.

(c) Methodologically no one has ever utilized the hybrid approaches of Social scientific method and conflict management models used in this study to address the issues of social cohesion in Weh. There is a New Testament study that has been done to address these social conflicts amongst the Weh communities. Nobody has ever done such a study in this regard to examine the way wife adultery and wife snatching contribute to causing special conflicts in Weh.

The recommendations here are that the Weh community should:

1. Define conflict according to the definition on page 230 that resonates with this investigation.
2. Extend the five models of Thomas Kilmann to six.
3. Integrate the woman into ownership of property and land.
4. The elite ruling council of elders should not see a woman as feminine being meant for marriage only but as one who can also decide to be independent and make a life on her own and even succeed their parents.
5. The Weh traditional cults should not exclude women from important decision-making because they too can have a contribution on behalf of the women in the village.
6. They should ban wife snatching because it promotes adultery.
7. The Weh people should do proper rehabilitation of those who are disciplined as a result of witchcraft practices.

6.5. Concluding Remarks

In this research work, there have been efforts made to raise awareness of the social issues plaguing the Weh community and suggestions on how these can be approached. Social cohesion and conflict are a reality we all come across at one point in life and communities have failed to address these kinds of issues because nobody has ever taken the time to study them and challenge the community to solve them. Johannine literature has persistently been of little or no application in the conflict mediation sector in the conflicts of the Weh people and in the North West Region of Cameroon. At some level, there have been low literacy levels that contribute to the challenges of research into such areas of study. This has been one of the serious issues facing Weh people even though their literacy levels are high few venture into biblical studies where such matters can be addressed.

APPENDIX

A1. Geographical Location

The Weh people are a dynamic people with a pure cultural lifestyle. Weh is located in the Menchum Division of the North West Region of Cameroon. It is located about four miles or 10 km from Wum Central, which is the divisional headquarters from where the senior divisional officer operates. This officer is a civil administrator trained and operating from the French style of civil administration since the English side of Cameroon was a British trustee and operates with a common law system.

Weh is bordered in the West by Wum town, in the East it is bordered by Kuk, Kumfutu, and Mekaf, in the South it is bordered by Esu. It is a small farmer-oriented clan made up of five different clans (wards) altogether settled as one community. The five villages are Azoh, Kefum, Keghe, Owert, and Usu. Attached to these quarters are sub-quarters; to Azoh is attached Kelang, to Keghe is attached Ntsaange, to Kefum is attached Bheukeulang which has now been made the sixth quarter. To Uwert is attached Kemvenn, and to and to Usu I is attached Usu II. The clan is ruled by quarter heads

nominated by the family and presented to the quarter and then to the entire community before being enthroned by the King (*Fon*) of the community.

Weh has a populace of over 13.000 inhabitants who speak a local nguni language called ‘*kewi*’ translated into English as Weh. It is a community of peace-loving people who love community social activities. Social activities are done as a group because they believe in group identity. They settle in residences called compounds built with a range of one to five houses comprising a main house for the family head and others for his wife or wives and children and other relatives he accommodates and raises as his family. The houses are mostly one or two bedrooms and a sitting room for the man and a kitchen and a bedroom for the woman. They prioritize enlarged family groups and so most compounds have many family members who may not necessarily be his direct children or wives.

A2. A Brief Description of the Weh Palace

The palace is situated in the centre of the community in a quarter or ward named Owert. Geary (1985:183) describes it as bordered by a hill on the south side where stands the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and in the North by a little brook flowing down into the “*alerh*” -*rafia bush*⁷. According to the narrative of Geary (1985:184-185), the palace was established in the current location long before the arrival and opening of a German military post in Weh in 1913. This German military post was the first in the Fungom region that was the largest chieftaincy or fondom in the area at the time in 1913. At the same time, they named the whole subdivision after this fondom –Fungom subdivision. At the same point where the palace was located was the junction where the three roads leading to the “Aghem federation-Wum” (Geary 1985:183), Kuk, and Esu converged. It was only after the ring road was constructed in the early 1950s that the junction was moved a few kilometres away from there to the current point where the market is around Weh's three corners. The Weh market was opened around the same

⁷ This is the bush from where palm wine is tapped. Such bushes are owned by families and used to tap palm wine that is used for celebrations and entertainment of families since alcohol was inexistent by then. All village celebrations use this locally tapped wine for reception and entertainment of guests. It can also ferment and become very alcoholic and drunken immensely.

time the Germans established their military post in the Fungom region. The Weh palace at the time was the largest compound in Weh comprising 14 houses – though in effect they were rooms, the people called it houses because they were single thatched structures raised to host the former chief's wives and children and that of the chief Bame Kom Ndzang and his wives and children. Second in largeness to the Weh palace was the compound of the ward head of Azoh–Deghe Nlem (Geary 1985:184) with 9 houses.

The Weh palace has undergone a transformation in the last hundred years beginning from the reign of fon Nji II who served as minister in the former West Cameroon government and when East and West Cameroon federated in 1972, he became a parliamentarian (*député* in French). He built his modern living quarters next to the council of elders (*ndau tseh*) though some say the current *ndau tseh* stands where there was the very first palace and others hold that it was 200 metres west of the current location. After settling here the first inhabited structures were inhabited by Mou Nyiah and the Ndze Ikah who were the first kings in the early 19th century according to the accounts of Geary (1985:185). The Junkun people were the ones who raided in search of slaves are a people settled in the upper Benue River in Nigeria and are believed to be descendants of the *Kororofa* people from one of the most powerful Sudanic kingdoms during the late European Middle Ages.

A3. Historical Origin of Weh

They are a group of people who originally migrated from the Northern Parts of Cameroon falling into the group of people known as the Tikars. The Tikar (also known as Tikari) people according to Nyamnjoh (2007:1), are a who people migrated from North Eastern Cameroon as recorded by anthropologists, archaeologists, historians, and oral traditional accounts. These people migrated from North Eastern Cameroon around Adamawa Province and the Lake Chad regions. By the 18th and 19th centuries, these people were chased from the North to the South by the Fulani slave trade crusades from Northern Nigeria. Nyamnjoh (2007) also suggests that it was probably ongoing before the Fulani invasion propagated the mass migrations to their current locations they currently occupy which constitute the Western Grassfields (Bamenda Plateau), Eastern

Grassfields (Foumban), and the Tikar plain of Bankim (Upper Mbam) (Nyamnjoh 2007:1-2) (see also Mbuagbaw, Brain & Palmer, 1987:26; Mbaku 2005:10-12).

According to Geh (1997:6-7), the Weh community was part of this Tikari group that migrated from Bang Ndzu, close to the Bamoun dynasty in the boundaries of North-Eastern Cameroon and the Western Region of Cameroon and then first settled in the Western Province at the time before being forced to move far North West by tribal wars and Fulani raids from Northern Nigeria in search of slaves. They moved up and settled in Santa a highway town in the North West leading to the Western French city of Bafoussam. While the wars were still raging on they decided to move further from Santa and settled provisionally in Babanki Tu Ngoh, still in the North West after a while, they moved and settled in a place called Bafut and inhabited it for a while and then migrated further North West and settled in the current site under the leadership of a warrior known as Fentoh between 1715 and 1750.

The question here to answer is what happened with those they met already in the places they settled in provisionally? Nyamnjoh (2007:2) says that upon migration into new areas of habitation, they met others settled and this occasioned population displacements and this followed suit with others who arrived after them (Chilver 1966; Chilver and Kaberry 1968; Warnier 1985; Nyamnjoh 1985; Nkwi 1987; Nyamndi 1988; Fardon 1988; Fowler & Zeitlyn 1996; Yenshu 2001 in Nyamnjoh 2007:2). What is striking here is that the movements were in waves orchestrated and led by princes of Kings which Nyamnjoh calls “Princes of Rifum –*fons*” (2007:2) who were zealous in setting up their dynasties (see Nkwi & Warnier 1982:16; Nkwi 1987:15-28), as claimed by Nyamnjoh (2007) and Cheghe (2012:8). Fons is a common term in the North West Region of Cameroon used in referring to local chiefs. Henceforth we will use the term fondom concerning Chief palaces from where the rulership of the people is directed.

It is captured by Cameroon history authors that the Tikari people were moved from the North of Cameroon because of “internal troubles plus the desire for new lands led to the splitting up of Tikar groups into small bands (Cheghe 2012:8), which left Kimi, drifted further west and south-west” (Nyamnjoh 2007:2). From historical facts presented by the History of Cameroon authors the Tikars left the Upper Mbam areas of the North and drifted downwards towards the West under the leadership of the sons of the main chief

who was called Fon. Among those who moved from there and settled in the North West Region of Cameroon also commonly called the Grassfield region include: “Nso, Kom, Bum, Bafut, Oku, Mbiame, Wiya, Tang, War, Mbot, Mbem, Fungom, Weh, Mmen, Bamunka, Babungo, Bamessi, Bamessing, Bambalang, Bamali, Bafanji, Baba (Papiakum), Bangola, Big Babanki, Babanki Tungo, Nkwen, Bambili and Bambui” as per the list provided by Mbuagbaw et al 1987:30 in Nyamnjoh 2007:2). Among the last group to move from there under the main chief himself was the group that settled to form the fondom or kingdom of Bum meanwhile the very last to arrive and settle around Bamenda Central in Mezam Division were the Bafut, Kom, Nsaw and Esu people.

The Weh community formed part of the Tikar group that migrated and settled in Wum South and then was surrounded by other small villages such as Esu, Kuk, Kumfutu and Zoa which were made tributaries of the fondom from their inter-tribal wars. The other villages bordering Weh are Esu in the East and Wum in the South. It is a ring-road suburb leading to Kuk, Kumfutu, Bafmeng, Nyos, Bum and Zoa and Nigeria. It is largely a rural area developed into a community mainly inhabited by peasant farmers and small-scale traders.

A4. Chieftaincy (fondom) and historicity

The Weh fondom is called in the Weh language *toh* and the chief or fon is called *bahtum* or *ba'tum* according to the German Geary (1985:184). In the palace are the houses constructed by the time of Germans in 1931 and roofed with thatched grass in which lived fon Philip Bame Kom Ndzang. The palace *toh* (to') according to Geary (1985:184) also doubles as the largest compound in the village which was modernised by fon Nji II after he took over in 1977. In his fourteen years of rulership, he made enormous modern changes to the palaces which were once vibrant given the number of occupants who lived there because he took absolute care of them all. After he died in 1993, the disintegration of the palace began with his wives relocating to the former two-story stone building he lived in when he was in politics. Other occupants had to find abodes that were suitable for them as well as wives of former fons. According to Geary (1985:184), the houses (*te-Ndau*) constitute a *kebi* (compound) inhabited by the father, husband,

compound head (*muu kebi*) or *muhkebi*. Most of the compounds were maintained according to their sizes but others had dilapidated because of lack of maintenance since the compounds were not all residing in these compounds but in their houses. It is accounted by Geary (1997:184) that the Weh palace has tremendously been renewed. According to historical facts presented

“Their chiefships followed after a period of unrest brought about by raiding Chamba groups who intruded from the Jukun area. These so-called "Genyi" devastated the region and ravaged many settlements. Most inhabitants of the Weh area sought refuge in other chiefdoms and returned to Weh only when the raids had ceased.⁶ Weh thus only consolidated in the second half of the nineteenth century” (Geary 1985:185).

a). FON FENTOH: Weh community is ruled by a chief we call Fon. The first Fon of Weh was known as Fentoh who led them from Upper Bankim to settle in the current site (Geh 1997:6). He is the man who organised the Weh Fondom after settling in the Menchum Division of the North West Region. This man held onto power for quite a long time until his death and was succeeded by his son Ndze (Nji) who also consolidated the family’s grip on the throne. The fons of Weh are the paramount rulers of the clan.

b). FON NDZE FENTOH: He was the son of the first fon Fentoh. He succeeded his father Fentoh. Ndze (Nji) Fentoh was on the throne about the late 17th century but his departure is unrecorded his efforts of consolidating the present site of occupation were tremendously noted and appreciated.

c). FON MOU NYIAH: After the passing away of Ndze his family brother Mou Nyiah succeeded the throne and ruled from 1840-1870 and was a good Fon with little shady deals just like the King of Judah – King Rehoboam. He was a man who kept a clean sheet in his monarchy without reproach. This Fon Mou Nyiah was succeeded when he passed away by someone called Ansei-Bung whose reign is characterised by fear generated from his wickedness.

d). ANSEI-BUNG: He was very wicked to the extent that he was executed publicly by setting him ablaze and he was burnt to ashes. But it is said that his spirit escaped via a bird most probably that of a hawk (Geh 1997:7). It is believed that he was very wicked and

was tyrannic to the extent that the Weh people decided to burn him to ashes and during the burning process he escaped through a hawk.

e). FON NDZE IKAH: His eldest son Ndze-Ikah was enthroned as his father's successor. Given his high greed for things from the cultic house *Ndau-Tseh* against the wishes of the Weh people, he was exiled and died out of the village around 1885 according to a British historian's report (Geh 1997:7). He developed extraordinary cordial relations with the neighbouring village of Aghem and caused his relations with the Weh community to be distrusted and that caused him a lot of personality weaknesses with his subjects. Geh (1997) also reports that he died a poor chief and was brought back to Weh to be laid to rest but was not buried in the tomb site reserved for fons only. This fon was in constant loggerheads with the elders of the largest patrilineages causing him to be banished and he relocated to Ngo-Aghem bush (Geary 1985:185).

f). FON MBUH ZOU NCHUNG (1885-1906): The next chief in rank was Mbuh Zou Nchung, who was the immediate younger brother to Ndze Ika and did not last long in power because of ill health he died in 1906 though loved by his people. The only issue he had was the inter-tribal schism he recorded with the neighbouring village of Kuk (Geh 1997:7-8). From general observations, he was the man whose name reigned and who established a strong name for the fondom. The fon's compound was known and is currently known as *wa'a* Mbuh – which means the children of Mbuh.

g). MOU SEI NDOH DJUH (1906-1919): After the reign of Mbuh Zou Nchung, his arrogant son Mou Sei-Ndoh Djuh, succeeded him and immediately introduced the formal order of greeting the fon with bowing and clapping of hands before the fon. This was around 1906 and that has been maintained in the Weh tradition to date. He was a man who lusted after women and to this effect, he committed a grave error in assassinating a fellow villager just to snatch his wife and marry her but this landed him in hot soup for this did not end well with the Weh people. After realising his error he fled the village for a neighbouring village East of the Weh –Kuk village. One good day the Weh people lured him to return after planning his assassination thoroughly in the background. Immediately he returned, he was welcomed and then attacked and beaten to death by his subjects at the village market square just around the residential area of Pa Samson Kpwe just next to Pa Chapia Njong Tem. He ruled between 1906 and 1919 (Geh 1997:8). This man's soul is believed

to have escaped his body via a hawk that flew away from the incineration and left his body burned to ashes. Witnesses say that they saw a physical fly out of his body before his body burnt down to ashes.

h). FON NDZE BIH NDUM (1921-1949) (FON NJI I): Another prolific fon is Ndze Bih Ndum who was another younger brother to Mbuh Zou Nchung and immediate younger brother to Mou Sei Ndoh Djuh. He was enthroned two years later in 1921 according to Geh (1997:8) Geh (1997) recounts that he was also very lust into women and was enthroned two years after his brother was beaten to death. He was prolific because he was loved by the Weh people after he refused to side with the evil act of his brother to assassinate a man and snatch his wife. He also vehemently denied revenge for his brother's assassination. It was also in his reign that the Germans arrived with the Basel Mission and settled in what is now called Wum --up Station next to Lake Wum and in the same year, the Cameroon government created the Weh local or Weh native court. As mentioned above he was a womaniser, he was sung in a dirge that he does not let any fly or insect without molesting. The lyrics in Weh are as follows: "*Kpwi ken dzeh dzeh keh dung keh-ni keh ti; kpwi ken wai inguim, dung keh ni keh ti*" (Geh 1997:9). Because he was inclined to other women out of the village especially women from Wum –Aghem village, other ensuing Fons and princes have followed suit to marry women from other villages. His high propensity for sexual intercourse caused him to fall prey to beautiful women.

Under him was the Basel Mission in Weh set up in 1933 and as a result of the arrival of the missionaries, he was convinced to educate his children which was agreed and to this effect, all his male children were educated excluding the girls. Among his very successful sons were Simon Ngha Nji and Solomon Meh Nji, Stephen Kpwe Nji and Godfred Kum Nji. In 1949 he passed away. He was a man with a heart for development which was also pursued by his sons Bame Kom, Simon Ngha Nji and Solomon Meh Nji.

i). FON PHILIP BAME KOM NDZANG (1950-1976): Enthroned in 1950, he ruled until 1976 when he passed away on the 28th of April 1976 in the Bamenda General Hospital. He was another man who pursued the development of the Weh palace and built some 14 thatch houses for himself and his wives, the wives of late Fons, his children and palace attendants. It was during his reign the village pursued the development of the Weh water project which was continued and completed to its current state by Simon Ngha Nji. The

latter who succeeded Bame Kom constructed a two-story stone house and inhabited it before later building a house in 1984 in the palace to move into. This project lifted the village to be one of the best in water provision in the province to date. During this time the Roman Catholic Mission School flourished and became renowned alongside the Presbyterian Mission School. Though not schooled he schooled his children but unfortunately died when the village was yet to completely see the desired development that was dreamed of (Geh 1997:9-10). His educated sons include Nazarius Kpwe Bame who was fon between 1997-2016 and Victor Bame. But Nazarius stood out as the only most schooled person amongst his children probably because he was the eldest.

j). 10. FON SIMON NGHANGI (FON NJI II): He was commonly called Ngha Nchu. He was the elderly son of fon Ndze Bih Ndum and by instruction of fon Bame Kom, he succeeded him after a hard struggle to convince him to return to the village to take up the fon's throne. Reluctantly, he accepted and returned in 1977 to be finally enthroned on November 23rd 1977 (Geh 1997:10). According to Geh (1997), for the fact that he was a political figure and a parliamentarian since 1959, he did not relent in his political office until 1990 when the political dynamics changed hands with the opposition claimed victory over the ruling party which he represented. He initially began with the Kamerun National Democratic party (KNDP) when Cameroon was still a two-state country (West and East Cameroon). Geh (1997:10) says that after the reunification process changed national dynamics, and moved from KNDP to the Cameroon National Union (CNU) he was maintained as the parliamentarian of the division and continued in 1984 as the current ruling Cameroon People's Democratic People Movement (CPDM) until 1990 when his party lost to the Social Democratic Front (SDF). But he remained a member of the CPDM until his death on the 29th of August 1990.

Before joining politics, he was a court clerk in the nearby town of Aghem (Wum) where he found a wife – Margret Bih Tem NJi who became the queen (Nah Tum) of the village. This fon played a lot in the exposure of Weh village and improved upon the construction of the Weh palace which was initially in little thatched houses under Philip Bame Kom. He constructed brick houses and roofed them with corrugated zinc sheets. He died leaving behind 27 children all of whom are well educated. Upon the throne now is his son who trained in education. It was during the reign of this fon that Weh became a community

due to rapid development and establishment of schools and institutions of administration.

k). FON SOLOMON MEH NJI (FON NJI III): Fon Solomon Meh Nji was the half-brother to fon Simon Ngha Nji enthroned on January 18th, 1991. He was one of the highly educated fons in the entire family and fondom. Born in 1934 and studied at the Basel Mission College now known as Cameroon Protestant College (CPC) Bali. He is the holder of a Diploma in Public Administration obtained from the London School of Economics. He worked as a senior civil administrator with the West Cameroon government until when English Cameroon decided to join French Cameroon to form a unity state says Geh (1997:11). He was an effective administrator admired by many but was inefficient in managing village issues as claimed by locals. Married to a wife hailing from Kom, an agronomist holder of a Master's degree in agronomy but he was unfortunate to lose the wife before mounting the throne. With his first wife Feukwin Agatha from Boyo Division, he had a single daughter trained as a medic. Upon enthronisation, he got married to another wife Florence Nsen with whom they had three kids and Agnes Ikah who regrettably is late.

l). FON NAZARIUS KPWE BAME (1991-2016): Local sources say that he was envious of not dying without being a fon. In 1991 he was enthroned as fon and ruled until 2016. During his 15yrs tenure the villagers have reportedly observed and lamented about evil tendencies he was regularly accused of. Such as witchcraft, double standards, and disobeying village notables until he went as far as jailing all his sub-chiefs. He is deemed and tipped to be one of the wicked fons who ever ruled Weh according to the village narratives propagated before and after his death. Furthermore, reports have surfaced that he was unwilling to relinquish the throne to no other person but to his first son residing in America which is what this author has heard from a few notables of Weh.

The table below is a summary of the time and years each fon ruled the fondom. As of now weh has been ruled by 12 fons since its settlement in the valley where they occupy right now and the table below is adapted from an unpublished document by Pa Fuh Buh (2021) in conjunction with Geh (1997:7-10).

Figure 5.1. SUMMARY OF FONNS AND THEIR YEARS ON THE THRONE

Position	Name of fon	Year of Coronation	Year of Departure	Nature of Departure	Number of years on the throne
1.	Fentoh	1715	unrecorded	Death	unknown
2.	Ndzeze Fentoh	Probably Late 17 th centuries	unrecorded	Death	unknown
3.	Mou Nyiah	About 1840	About 1863-1870	Death	About 30
4.	Ansei-Bung	ca. 1870	unrecorded	Burnt to ashes	unknown
5.	Ndze-Ika	ca. 1863-1870	Ca. 1870-1885	Died in exile	About 27years
6.	Mbuh Zou Nchung	1886	1906	death	20years
7.	Mou Sei Ndoh Djuh	1906	1919	Burnt to ashes	13years
8.	Ndze Bih Ndum	1921	1949	Death	28years
9.	Philip Bame Kom Ndzang	1950	1976	death	26years
10.	Simon Ngha Nji	1977	1990	death	14years
11.	Solomon Mueghe Nji III	1990	2001	death	12years
12.	Nji Wuning Ache IV	2019-	Till date		

The current location of the Weh Palace has varied accounts but the information given by the late chief Formou of Uwert quarter to Geary (1976:99 in Geary 1985:185) says that most Weh nobles recount that the first palace according to information collected in 1983 was located at 200 metres near the little brook flowing westwards to the palace. But from the first information collected in 1970, it says that it was once located at the current place where ndau tse is standing. Chief Formou further explains (Geary 1985:185-186)

that there was an arrangement with *wa'a* Bame Saanghe to move away from where they settled in the current location of the Weh palace further up to the hill south of the palace. Bame Saanghe accorded to resettle because he was the friend of the fon Mbu Zou Chu and he had always been the head of the original Weh people who never moved from anywhere to settle in the current valley. *Wa'a* Bame Saanghe were the ultimate heritage holders of the Uwert quarters whose brother Ning Saanghe was quarter head and holder of the *Sohwu* Bame Saanghe received from the fon Mbu Zou Chu as compensation for his allegiance and accordance to resettle. Subsequently, he was also given the *Kweifo* which the fon also wanted to own but because he was designated the general overseer of the community and holder of the community *sohwu*, he was denied the privilege by the Weh people. Meaning that the group from Tikari met them in Weh and so his patrilineage was a senior and older one. The reason for his movement was due to Mbu Zou Chu's intention to enlarge the palace (See Geary 1985:186)

A5 Power dynamics and the traditional courts- Zerh kebi

Zerh kebi here refers to family head successors. Following interviews conducted with Bern (2021), Buh (2022) and Ning (2022), these persons state clearly that the first place issues of conflict are referred to in Weh is the Zerh Kebi (family head). These are persons by family agreements entrusted with tasks to succeed and manage families by inheriting the right bestowed upon them by the entire family. At some point, they are expected to take residence in the family compound and direct the affairs of the family from there. These are the first potential governors placed under the quarter head (*tsoh*) who is the governor of the quarter. Every matter that requires mediation and every problem that is conflicting between members of the family is brought to him first before it can ever be referred to the quarter head for resolution. According to the community cultural setup *zerh kebi* is instrumental in looking for preliminary solutions to matters of conflict within the family and until it is beyond him then can he refer the matter to the *batum-ukholi* (ward leader).

A6. BAHTUM-UKHOLI (WARD HEAD)

Bahtum-ukholi is a ward leader who must have been among the first settlers of that quarter or by unanimity is appointed by character and humility to head the ward. These persons are supposed to attend to issues referred to them by zeeh kebi. The *bahtum-ukoli* works in conjunction with the quarter head and reports to him. The persons who occupy the position of *bahtum-ukholi* are not initiated by any ritual performed. This is also an important branch of governance because the father of the author of this work used to be one and constantly sat to adjudicate cases and some of these cases ended up being referred to the quarter head or the traditional council.

A.6.1. TETSOH (QUARTER HEADS)

These are quarter heads who work very closely with the fon. They are like governors as purported by Buh (2022). To become one you qualify after dancing Djitsem and *ukum*. Younger persons can qualify but must have been selected by the quarter inhabitants and presented to the fon as the potential tsoh of that quarter.

A7 NDAU COUNCIL (TRADITIONAL COUNCIL)

The various traditional houses in Weh include *ndaou Tseh, Kegni, Asang, Kedzong, Ibami, Kezung, Ifah, Isem, Ukum, kefap, feh-mgbwi* etc. The traditional courts of Weh include the *ndaou council* and *ndaou tseh*. The *Ndaou Council* is the first local court to report a matter after trying in vain to sort the matter at the local quarter heads. The quarter heads will then refer you to the *ndaou council* from where the matter will be listened to and then adjourned for a hearing date before judgement will be passed. The quarter heads are tasked with the maintenance of law and order in their respective jurisdictions and are only allowed to send a case to the *Ndaou Council* if it is found unsolvable by the quarter head and his advisors (Geh 1997:17).

This court deals with all matters of the community submitted to it and handled by appointed members who have demonstrated a well-known commitment and devotion to community issues. They are also ruled by those who know educational matters and justice. It is also a council where anybody who has a sound education in legal or no legal

expertise can be appointed as a sitting member but the members are required to have a good sense of justice. These members are the ones who will adjudicate community issues and decide which case can be referred to the most powerful arm of governance *ndau Tseh*.

A8. *Ndau Tseh* (senate)

This court is constituted mostly of the elderly and senior resident family heads of the community. Under this house are other houses such as *ndau Ibami*, *ndau keze*, *ndau asang*, *ndau ukum* (Buh 2021). Geh (1997:16) qualifies this sacred house as that of the British Commons meanwhile in an interview with Bern (2021) he reveals that it is almost like a Senate which is the same idea enhanced by a blue print of the Weh Traditional Society comprising of some agreed rules and regulations. Buh (2021) calls it an administrative arm of the community because it stands alone but is placed under the fon. It deals with queries and cases sent to them by the Weh traditional council members appointed to handle conflict in the community. This house, as he says, does not perform any initiation rites but is well structured to ensure balance in representation by admitting a member from each extended traditional family which usually consists of family members spread over a few generations dating from great-grandparents down to immediate family members. Other members might not necessarily reside in the community but compellingly have to attend their deliberations especially very demanding ones when there are complicated cases to resolve. It is chaired by the fon himself and it is believed to be the most powerful sect as well comprised by various other sub-cults presided by certain family heads upon which was conferred the right to do so at the very beginning of their settlement in that fertile valley called Weh. In this valley is an airstrip that is seemingly been usurped for the construction of houses for inhabitation as per the report of Ning (2022).

Ndau Tseh is the highest ruling body of the community. This court is the custodian of the native laws and customs of the Weh people. Membership is by inheritance and only pure breeds of Weh are qualified for admission into this house. That notwithstanding some members who inherit take over the family seats that are allocated to particular families.

These seats must have been held by ancestral fathers of every family initiated into this sacred house which consists of very secret powers. When they die their children or grandchildren who become members after their initiation automatically sit on the chairs. Meanwhile, after their death, the seat remains vacant and nobody sits on it each time they have their meetings according to a recorded interview with Bern (2021). Members do not access the house with shoes and every new member who comes into the house from a given family once represented in the house sits on the seat of the family allocated to his ancestral fathers. The house does not allow the use of the English language in any way for it is forbidden.

The court is a sacred house and non-members are not allowed access and only Weh indigenes are allowed to be members. The members of the house meet regularly in a traditional house and they access the house bare footed. This house is very powerful and it is the only house to declare somebody undesired in the community and order the expulsion of the wanton individual especially persons declared as dangerous to the community. The house dispatches a messenger called 'Tum Tse' to announce the injunction order to the person to be declared undesirable.

The house performs some sensitive roles such as handling internal and external conflicts and according to Buh (2022), this house has a role to protect and defend the community.

A9. Fundamentals of male cultic houses -catalysts for Conflict

A9.1. *Ndau isem.*

This is the phase where every commoner starts to be initiated before being given the right to be initiated into *ukum* dance (Bern 2021, Buh 2022, Ning 2022). The two local sources consulted who are also Christians, note that the right *ukum* dance is given by the initiation to *ndau Isem* and emphatically compare it to the phase of doctrine and baptism before confirmation and admission to the rite of holy communion. When the notables have received food and eaten and drank, they declare the candidate for initiation as

qualified to dance *ukum* and become notable. They all know the steps you have to traverse to get to that stage where a candidate is fit to dance *ukum* and they will announce when the ceremony of initiation will be performed.

To be a member of this house aspirants must have “fathered a child and as soon as the wife gives birth for the first time, he will start with the payments to the owner” (Geary 1979:58). This implies that he must have given birth to at least one child. The initiation begins with the payment of the listed items comprising of the following as listed by Geh (1997:21):

1. *Bang-uwang*: which serves as appetizers to announce your intentions - four chickens, thirteen jugs of raffia wine and four bags of salt.
2. *Sih-ketu*: traditional grains (Traditional grains) which comprise four chickens and thirteen jugs of raffia palm wine.
3. *Bue-u-Jih*: translated as part of a goat comprising four chickens and thirteen jugs of raffia palm wine.
4. *Ngou-eh-the Nzie*: (egussi pudding) - four chickens and thirteen jugs of raffia palm wine.
5. *Tsoh -isem*: priced payments for initiation - two chickens and thirteen jugs of raffia palm wine.
6. *Tem-fu-Eku*: preparing traditional beans for entertainment – thirteen jugs of raffia palm wine.
7. *Zoh-neghe-ghei*: Entertaining in-laws: comprises of a big pig and a good number of sizeable salted and smoked meat.
8. *Kam-ukum*: notification and announcing your intentions to be initiated into the *ukum* dance comprises four chickens and thirteen jugs of wine.
9. *Nyoh-keh-ndeng*: which is cow peas smoked and the payment comprises four chickens and thirteen jugs of raffia palm wine.
10. *Itemue*: Initiation into the *ukum* dance but the announcement and payment are done only seven days after the candidate has been initiated into the *djitisem* dance.

Initiation rites are only given to those who own the traditional cup (*sou okum*) which is an altar in itself. The initiation is done on an annual basis and falls every November and

December each year. The reason for this is that there is enough food since it falls just after harvests have been done (see Geary 1979:59). The aspirants usually are advanced in age and quite mature enough to stand the bravery required in the process. Geary (1979) argues that due to economic obligations arising from marriage, men are not expected to join the dance group at a young age. However, young men in their late twenties and early thirties still join because of support from their relatives who help in providing the requirements to pay usually known as *tang isem*. However, statistics from the village show that most of the new members join when they are in their forties (Geary 1979). Geary states “The owner and the members of *djitisem* benefit from the raphia whine and the chickens provided by the future member” (1979:59) as well as the mother-in-law of the aspirant who is given a goat, raffia palm wine and a chicken because her daughter has enabled the man to become a father and to gain the rite of initiation into *djitisem*. The mother-in-law, as was the case with the grandmother of the author of this work also must support the son-in-law with food items such as cocoyams, egusi (climbing pumpkin seeds) and veggies (see Geary 1979).

Immediately after the initiation ceremony of the first of two days, the new initiate provides food the second day for the chief priest who does the initiation and his members to provide him with the fattening herbs to drink and keep himself fresh. These leaves in essence are immunization herbs meant to boost the immune system and prevent one from falling sick. Initiated members do not give anyone who is not a member to have a voice where they are. Other fellow males are ruled upon patriarchally with firmness causing some skirmishes in the way others view the initiation. They translate it as a source of conflict because of differences in their views and treatment of fellow males in the community.

A9.2. NdaU Ukum

NdaU Ukum is a house where men are initiated to make them community nobles. According to Buh (2021), this house is a secret house for males only. A man can only be initiated after having given birth to a male child. The age limit runs from 18 years and above. But most often initiates are mostly mature and beyond 35 years. But a person who

has not yet had a child but is willing to be initiated has to be a minimum of 50 years of age (Geh 1997:20). Buh (2021) holds that all Weh men who are title holders become title holders only after their initiation into ndau Ukum. He gives distinctive clarity on one who has just been initiated into *Djitisem* as a no-noble in Weh. He further adds that one can be initiated into *Djitisem* through the lesser of the cults called *Kezung*. But such a person can only sit around the corner of nobles and decide on important community matters if he has been initiated into *Ukum*. Such a person is classified as a lesser noble in society until he dances the *ukum* and then is given the title of a noble man in the community. He places the *Djitisem* as an Ordinary level certificate while the *ukum* is the higher one matched to the Advanced level certificate. In such a case where a person without the notable title finds himself where the community notables are present, he cannot make any suggestions where anyone called *moo ukuum* –that is an initiated person into *ukum* is taking decisions. He can only suggest through another *moo ukuum* or speak freely when the notables allow everyone to speak.

For one to become a full member, there must have been initiation rites performed by a high priest called the *mou sohwi* –this is a cup made out of the horn of an animal and has special powers attached to it by the elders of the community and then placed under the custody of the high priest. What is also interesting is that this serves like an altar though Bern (2021) disputes this fact but recognizes that it is an altar that is mobile of no effect and harm like an altar that is setup for public use like that of the church. However, it is generally agreed and believed that this altar is only effectively handed over to a new custodian after a human being is sacrificed in the spirit realm to serve as a cleansing exercise and displacement of the former custodian for the new custodian to be accepted and recognised. Other observations hold that a human sacrifice through the performance of witchcraft is a sign of courage and bravery to be able to stand against other evil forces when under such attack. He is the one who connects the living to the dead and has the right to pour wine on the floor as a sign of respect and invocation of the dead to witness the ceremony and to also authorise the event to go on successfully. Such persons who hold the title of high priest are very few in the community. It is an inherited thing handed down to family members once the former priest is deceased.

The equivalence of the female cult is called kefap. In an interview with Bern (2021) Buh (2022), Njuh (2022) and Ning (2022) these interviewees all confirm that this cult is one of the most powerful and is placed directly under ndau Tseh which is also under the supervision and directorate of the fon in collaboration with the nobles. *Ndau ukum* qualifies a Weh noble to participate in community decision forums and advance suggestions but without initiation, such a person cannot be allowed to speak. It is also this house that qualifies a Weh man to assist in the death council that is tasked with ascertaining the reasons for the deceased in any family. They gather on the second day and question the family to explain why their family died. Failure to do so calls for Ndau Tseh to intervene and probe further and if no reasons are advanced the family is implicated and some persons are exiled.

A10. Excerpts of initiation rites into *ukum*

According to Geh (1997:20), the high priest and associates during the initiation ritual assemble in a compound in which the high priest is the owner of the traditional cleansing cup called the sohwi. The chief priest is the highest authority who reports directly to *ndau tseh*. All other initiated persons fall under him and they are called men of *ndau ukum*. They sit in order of seniority of initiation into the house. They gather and the new initiates provide wine which they drink. Amongst these items are chickens (*mvo-te-ukum*) which they will slaughter and eat after initiating the new candidates. While they prepare themselves, they leave the house and go behind the house in an exercise termed 'going to the bush'. While there they perform some unrevealed rituals and then return to the house. When they return nobody among them is talking until they enter the house and settle down. The chief priest and other senior house members proceed with the initiation rites whereby they invoke the 'traditional snake' (*mba'am*) according to Geh (1997:24) otherwise called python. Before the invocation is done the candidates are called into the house and then they do the invocation and ask each of them to pick up the python and the candidate is expected to summon courage and catch the python and lift it. But before they summon the courage, they are given some herbs to drink that give them courage. Immediately that is done, the python is invoked and they are commanded to pick it up any of the candidates picks it turn by turn and at that point, the chief priest and the other

members are heard exclaiming with a shout of jubilation showing that they are real men who are brave to face frightful situations. The catching of the snake is saluted in unison by everyone in the house which is followed by candidates jumping out of the house one after another in a case where there is more than one candidate initiated. The jumping out is to show that you were victoriously initiated and you are now a man. When the man jumps out the wife is expected to catch him before he lands on the ground but usually he is always caught after landing. The wife is expected to have been faithful all her life in her matrimonial life to him and cases of unfaithful women have resulted in such women being affected healthwise and they die consequently.

Geh (1997:25) continues to clarify that an elderly woman who is a member of the feminine cult of *kefap* usually advises the wife of the new candidate on how she should catch the man. Meanwhile, the new candidate runs off to be the first among others from the entire community to present himself to the *fon* for endorsement. They go to the *fon* and he pours them wine in their hands to drink as a sign of honour and completion of the process of initiation. This process used to be accompanied by heavy gunshots as observed during the initiation of the father of the author of this work – Pa Chapia Njong Tem but the gunshots have been relegated as part of the government’s policy on gun control since the year 2000. The candidates after the completion of initiation during *Djitisem* also run to the *fon*’s palace who sits in waiting to bless them with wine in the same way he does during the *ukum*. It is worth saying that every village constituting the six sub-villages of the community initiates its candidates in their high priest’s compound who must be the owner of the traditional cup – *sohwu*.

A man who is made notable in Weh has the privilege of showing his cup for the *fon* to pour wine into it the cup the *fon* uses to officiate solemn village rituals –which means the *fon* can pour wine from his drinking cup into the notable’s cup since nobody is allowed to drink from the *fon*’s cup. Such a person can now sit among the notables of the village during important occasions when they decide on significant burning issues of the community. Such a person can associate and mingle among king-makers during the season when a new king has to be enthroned. He can now also associate with funeral councils constituted purposely to discern the cause of death of a villager. This council

probes the family of the death person to explain why the person had to die especially if the person is suspiciously killed by witches and wizards (Weh Traditional Council: 2007).

A11. *Ndau kegni*

The blessing of seeds in the community is dependent upon this house. When this house meets they meet for blessing seeds for the planting season ahead (Bern 2021, Buh 2022, Njuh 2022). Their duties are enlarged to blessing the soil and ensuring that the gods enable the entire Weh land to be fertile, and ensure that the crops are not destroyed by wild animals, insects and birds. They also are involved in invoking the gods of the winds to stand up against any wanton foreign or local forces of evil that present themselves as damaging winds upon the crops. They fight against such winds that come to push down maize and other crops. Generally, it is believed that evil winds from witches invade farms each year to push crops to ground level and as such provoke low yields for the year and subsequently famine is inflicted upon the community.

A12. NYI-KE-KEM

According to the history of the village (Weh traditional Council: 2007), this is the higher level of rituals performed by the same house *ndau kegni* which are meant to protect farms and their crops. The protection emanates from the fact that witches and wizards bewitch crops and the land from producing. The house has as a duty the assurance of high produce from farms. The high priest of the house does not eat the produce at its early stage until the respective villages making up the community have started harvests in full fledge and it is seen to be satisfactory harvests for the year. They ensure that yields are low so that the community suffers from hunger the ensuing year. This is due to pure wickedness exercised in a show-off of spiritual powers by witches and wizards.

As compared to the above-mentioned *kegni*, these rituals can be performed at any time of the year due to the grievous nature of the events. Mostly, it is performed to cleanse the community from accidents and abnormal deaths such as cases of drowning, suicide, brutal killings by butchering or stabbing with a knife and/or mass poisoning of the

community. This is translated as a curse within the community settings and so deserves a cleansing exercise. The cleansing from general observation is done in a river where the chief priest of the community is called upon to do some libations and sacrifice into the river before people go into the stream to bathe themselves and release the alleged ill luck that usually accompanies such diabolical deaths.

But the Weh observe their traditional holidays rigorously. They make sure nobody goes to the farm on holidays and rites such as this one and it is done mostly on days such as ‘country Sunday’ – a day reserved in the week for everyone to stay home and rest apart from Sundays. Persons who are caught going to work in their farms on such days are punished severely with fines.

A.13.Ndau asang

According to interviews conducted with (Bern 2021, Buh, 2022), this house specialises in blessing seeds for planting. Buh (2022) explains that all their members have a special calling in the house to assemble and make incantations over the seeds coupled with ululations of blessings upon the seeds to be planted in the community. Bern (2022) states that it is also concerned with the fertility of the feminine wombs. They both say that for one to be initiated into the house, he must have been initiated into the *ukum* and has become *wuu ukuum* which means that you the person have been made notable by dancing the village traditional dance of *Djitisem* and *Ukum*. He clarifies that unless you have danced the *ukum*, you cannot be a member because some persons only dance the *Djitisem* and do not dance the *ukum* and so they are not made notables unless they dance the *ukum*. This house is considered sacred and is a powerful secret cult of which not everybody is allowed to be a member. It is presided by the chief priest under the auspices of the fon (*Bahtum*) who is the highest ruling authority in the community. As mentioned, *ndau asang* is a sacred cult that is entirely involved with the gods of harvest and their rituals are a secret thing understood by the members themselves. This house appeases the gods; in effect, they protect fertility and harvests to be good such that famine and starvation can be avoided.

This house plays a role in protecting seeds meant to be planted each year from being attacked and also protects crops from being destroyed by evil forces. They mediate with the gods of fertility so that harvests should be excellent and thus enable the community never to experience famine. The high priest and its members access the house pour libations and make incantations in communication with the gods of the land to ensure that the harvest is good and should be at its maximum. What is strange is that the high priest of this house does not consume any of the produce from the farms at the beginning of harvest until proven satisfactorily that the harvests were good and without witchcraft pollution. This house is located in the compound of the late Pa Jacob Cheghe Mom at Keghe quarters. *Ndau asang* is similar to *ndau kegni* in a few ways; first, they both mediate for good crop yields and soil fertility from the gods of the land and second, they meet to prevent harm to harvests in the year and third combat evil forces of witchcraft from harming produce. The houses below are located in individual family compounds which are run by them and could be claimed to be their own thing though serving the entire community.

A14. Ndau kedzong

According to Bern (2021) and Buh (2022), this house is a junior house to the house of *Djitisem* and unless you have been initiated into this dance can you then be made qualified to dance *Djitisem* and then proceed to dance *ukum*. This house as asserts Bern (2021) is one that is assigned by the community authorities to a given family to be custodians over. Buh (2021) asserts that this house is handled by the *muu Sohwu* – a noble who is handed the custodian role of a traditional cup which is used in pouring libations and making incantations. And so when the time to pour libations and introduce members to be initiated into the *Djitisem* and *ukum*, the nobles are convened via by the chief priest and they meet under the auspices of *ndau tse* which is the supervisory arm of the functions of any other house in Weh community.

A15. *Ndau ibami*

This is a very secret cult with rituals known only to the members already initiated. This house is one equated to the Senate because only notable men of honour belong to it. It is also a place to socialize eat and drink. As it was in the first-century world where only men of noble character were allowed to occupy certain places in public spaces, it is the same thing with this house (Pilch & Malina 1993:151). Cheghe (2012:21) clarifies that it is a powerful house whose space is not ordinary. It is a house that appears during the deaths of its members and everybody is expected to leave the premise where the deceased is laid in state and only the mortal remains of the deceased person and members of the cult stay behind they perform their rituals and leave. When they leave, the mourners can then return. He says that its main duty is to communicate with ancestors in the and of death in the spiritual realm of the Weh community. It's also useful in that they are those who predict the future of the community. Joining this cult is an honourable thing because it attracts honour and qualifies you to be a man who recognises the values of honour and shame. Since every family owns a seat in the *ndau ibami*, it is allowed for one family member to join. But if more than one presents himself, they should come from families whose ancestors were extraordinarily outstanding in serving the village before becoming a community and they were given the honour of joining the club.

According to Bern (2021) and Buh (2022) most of such houses are social spaces one can compare to the church. The honourable nature of the house does not allow it to make known her rituals to the public and they do everything secretly except in the presence of its members. Nobody is also allowed to see the rituals performed over the death member or even have a glimpse of their rituals without being a member. All of these restrictions are meant to attract the public to pay membership rites so that there can be food and drinks continually. According to an unpublished document known as the “Blue print of the Weh Traditional council” (2007), it is also a house that was opened after *ndau Mbar*⁸. The document states that the function is to see to it that barrenness is estranged in

⁸ See description below.

women, birth processes are effectively safe, and harvests are in conjunction with *ndaу asang* are fruitful to their maximum. This house also prevents accidents and meets only for two weeks and can then close down for the year. It opens and operates for two weeks and operates once a week during the two weeks. It is closed again for the entire year except when emergency cases arise.

A16. Ndaу Kezung

This house is one of the houses whose roles are very secretive as well and very important in the initiation process into *Djitisem*. Everyone who dances the *Djitisem* and *ukum* must have been initiated into this house. It is situated at Pa Teghe Mbong Ejuh – Dungali’s compound who was a man of high social standing. Following information from Buh (2022) it is a pre-initiation house before the dancing of *Djitisem* and owned by an individual as stated above. It is more of a secret house where they gather to have a privilege to eat among the notables and anyone who is not initiated has the right to join them. So in brief it is just reduced to depriving non-notables of enjoying the food and drinks brought by new candidates. What needs to be noted is that such highly honourable people attract women to themselves and can easily snatch a woman from someone because of the honour upon him.

A17. Ndaу kezule

A man who produced a lot of palm wine in the village was an honourable and wealthy man according to village ratings in the 20th century. Their honour was easily luring women to them because they were assured of having palm wine at any time they desired. The sales of the wine also gave them man enough money and a man of reverence. Since satisfaction of human wants takes priority any woman will desire to be satisfied whenever they are in need (Pilch & Malina 1993:153). According to Ateghe (2022), this house is meant to prepare concoctions or herbs to distribute to raffia bush owners who do not have a good harvest of raffia wine and this is also acquired in a social gathering where they eat and drink and the owner distributes the wild garden eggs. That means that

the wine-dropping yields have dwindled and little palm wine is collected every morning. The herbs will be grounded and then distributed to solicitors who want to increase yields in the raffia bushes. The raffia bush owners are required to go harvest wild garden eggs if the owner has given them the right to harvest it on their own and crush them and position the concoction in a central place in the raffia bush whereby blowing winds will transport the odour of the concoction the raffia stems and cause them to mature quickly and begin producing enormous palm wine for consumption. It is a house not meant for the administration of village affairs but one owned by a family. The owner must also be a man of responsible behaviour and good standing in the community who usually prepares the concoctions after incantations have been uttered.

A18. *Ndau mbar*

This house is meant to intercede, mediate and bless the village with good harvests of crops, successful hunting of fauna, ensure war tactics are well implemented and ensure victory at war. They are also specialized in dispelling foreign attacks. All members in this house are expected to be warriors and we know that warriors are people who have done incredible things in hunting, village wrestling and probably at inter-tribal wars. The point here is that the emergence of such events is a social arena for the flow of social activities in any community through which people obtain their honour and fight to discard shame (Luraghi 2006:21). This house opens after the dancing of *Djitisem* for its ritual performances and to initiate new members. It can be opened at any time of the year given the emergency at the time (Weh Traditional Council: 2007). From general observation by this author, during the death of a member, they send their priest with a spear in hand and a fresh herb in the mouth crossed from left to right into the compound where the deceased is laid in state. The chief priest shoots the spear into the roof or the wall of the house in a display of the accurate timing skills of shooting at war or hunting.

A18. *Ndau ifah*

This house according to Geh (1997:17) states that this house is opened up only to honour someone who has come through a bloody situation such as killing at the *warfront* or might have faced a fatal accident. From these two events, the memory of seeing blood causes him to have fright or trauma and so the person will be initiated. First, the initiation is a sign of honour and the removal of the shame that comes through fear and reactions such as loss of memory and temporal madness which are shameful effects in anyone's life. What is done is that a hot pot of concoction is cooked and given to the person implicated to drink directly from the hot pot. Those who fought and survived wars between Weh and Kuk from 1890-1906 and Weh and Aghem (Wum- 1900-1902) were all initiated as a sign of honour and a sign of cleansing. The members of this house will also decorate the initiates with a red feather on the traditional cap as a sign of honour and bravery which is its equivalence to the state's medal decorations. The red feather is likened to a state medal awarded to recognise your loyal service to the country. Such wars are declared by the community's administrative arm – *ndau tseh*.

A19. Ndaufefap

This cult is meant to initiate women into the feminine equivalence of the men's cult *ndau ukum*. They initiate women after they have been accepted and presented to the fon by the elderly women of the quarter to which the woman has to be initiated. The initiated member is then presented to the village in a solemn initiation ceremony done in the open air in the compound head of the family into which the woman is married. The author of this work observed his mother's initiation ceremony in 1986 some thirty-six years ago. They meet and decide on salient issues regarding the women of the community and then present suggestions to the fon for implementation (Buh 2022, Bern 2021, & Ning 2022).

A20. Ndaufehmbwi

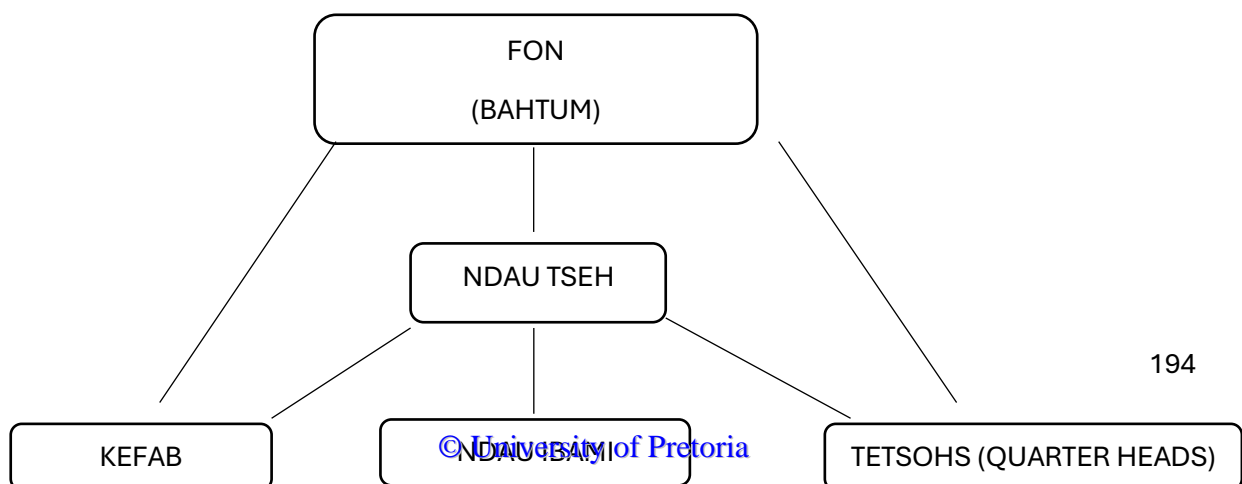
This cult is merely described as one concerned with the death of females in the village. Their role is to accompany the dead to the land of the death in their singing and dancing in the compound where the deceased is laid in state. Singing and dancing are believed to

be leading the soul of the departed soul to meet the ancestors in the land of death (Buh 2022, Bern 2021). Buh (2022) continues to enlighten that this group which is meant for women only, is the cult through which the announcement of a deceased female is made in the community. Anyone female who dies and who was a member can only be declared dead by this group even if the person died in hospital –this group has the orders to announce it to the entire community. It is this same group that signals when the corpse is being laid in state through their singing and dancing in the compound. This is what makes other communities come to view and pay their last respects to the deceased.

A20. Ndau kezeh

This is a gentlemen’s club where its members attract honour and respect from villagers for the duties they are assigned (Cheghe 2012:21). This house serves to bless the village with peace and tranquillity, protect from evil forces, protection of the village from enemies and also intercede for the general good health of the villagers from the gods of the land and its ancestors. But as an honourable house, its main duty is to plead with the gods for the return of rains at the appropriate time for planting to commence during planting season. The duty of this calibre is officiated by a chief priest and a queen who intercede on behalf of the people to the gods in a bid to solicit their intervention (Weh Traditional Council, 2007). Cheghe (2012) explains that it is virtually the ‘house of gods’ located at Keghe's quarters. Members of this group are twelve in number and have been that steady number since the 80s expected to be honourable members; people who have responsible integrity and whose parents were very honest men and women without any form of evil powers and witchcraft. Its other function is for pest control and the well-being of new babies in the community.

Fig 5.2 ORGANIGRAM OF THE WEH ADMINISTRATIVE FONDOM



SOURCE: FUH CHRISTOPHER BUH (2022)

The organigramme above presents to us the social niche of the Weh noble society.

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