Dissertation

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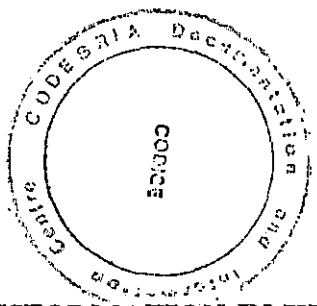
University of Nairobi

Women and socio-economic transformation in Kenya, 1850-1963: a case study of the abogusii

1996



WOMEN AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN KENYA, 1850 - 1963:

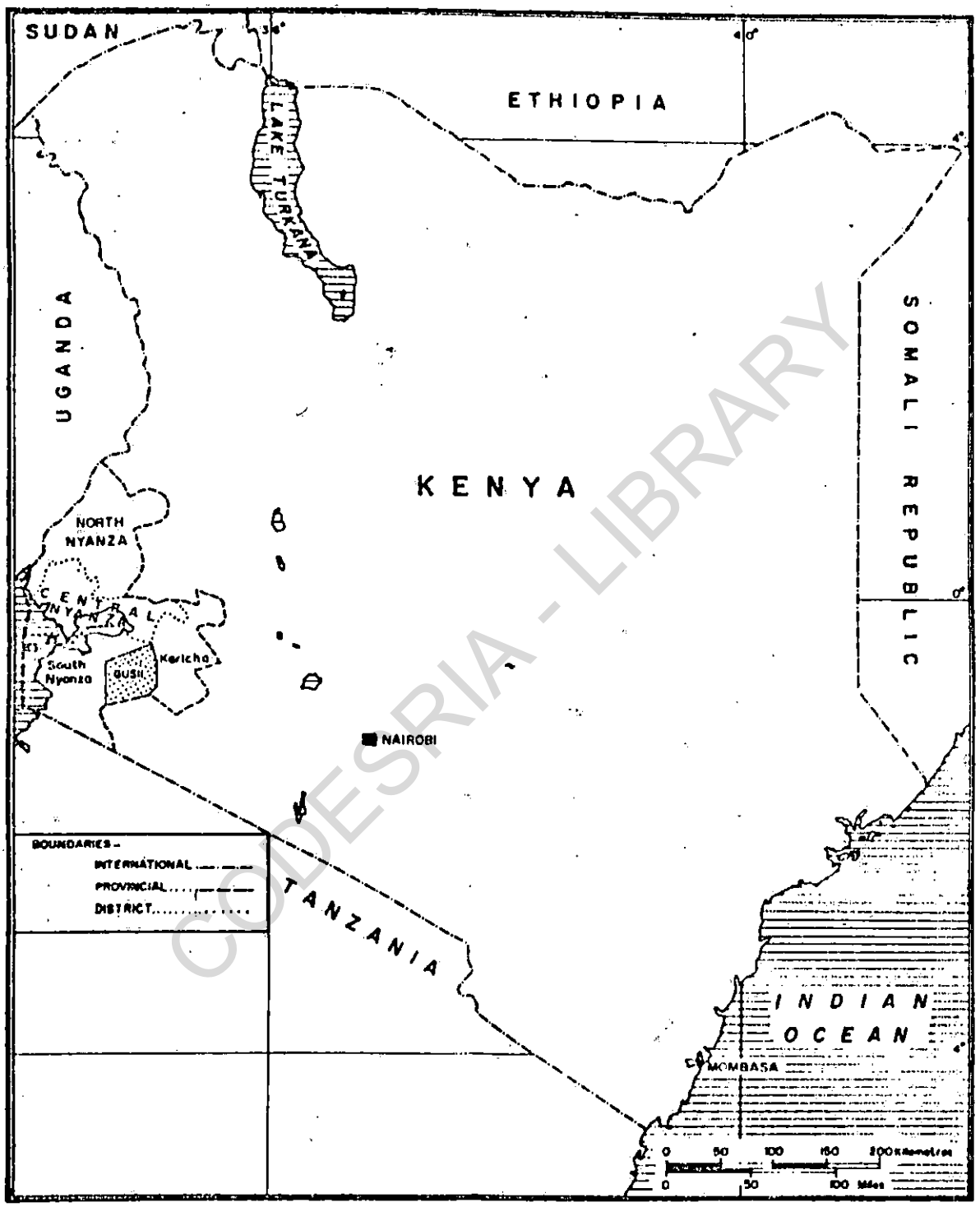
A CASE STUDY OF THE ABAGUSII

BY

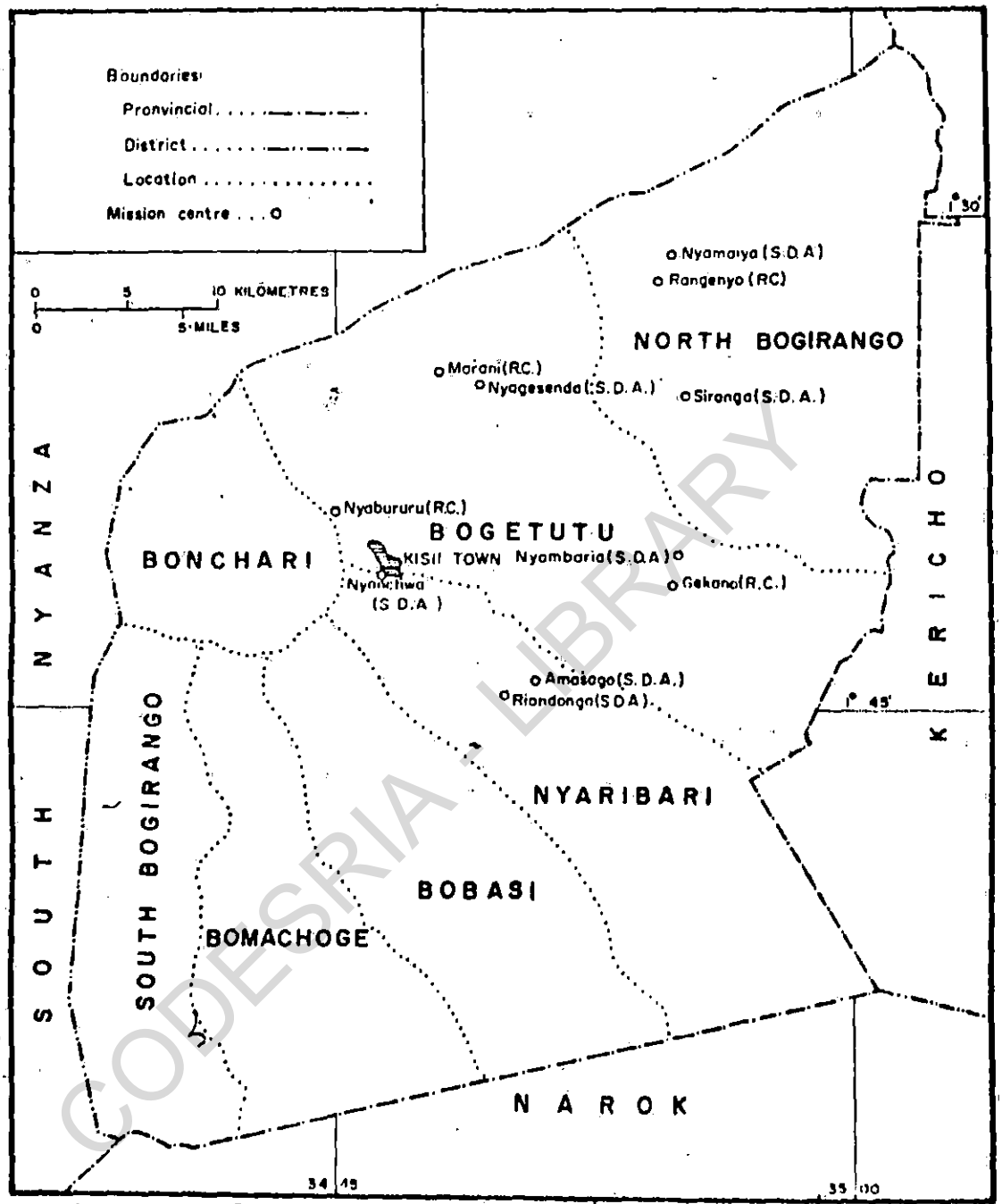
CHARLES JOMO OTOIGO CHOTI

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of Nairobi

1996



MAP 1 : GUSII IN KENYA



MAP 2 : GUSII.

DECLARATION

This is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University

Signed .....

CHARLES JOMO OTOIGO CHOTI

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our knowledge as University supervisors.

Signed.....

DR. M.A. ACHOLA

Signed.....

DR. S. WALJI

Dedicated to my dear wife, Truphena Moraa Otoigo, beloved mother, Eunice Ogake Choti, and humble brother cum-guardian, 'Omwalimu' Obiri Nyaṁamba Choti.

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ABSTRACT

This M.A. Thesis is a study based on Gusii women and socio-economic transformation between 1850 and 1963. It analyses the integration of pre-colonial Gusii women's socio-economic roles with the colonial socio-economy. The establishment of a colonial economy and political order generally had the effect of destabilizing the position of women both socially and economically. Major sources of change included the individualization of land ownership in men's names, and the recruitment of male labour to the settler economy, cash crop production and formal education. While colonial land reforms denied women their traditional access to and control of land, institutionalization of wage migration for male adults had the general effect of considerably increasing women's workload.

The imposition of the hut tax and abolition of cattle villages (ebisarate) by the colonial administration compelled Gusii men to seek wage labour outside their homes so as to raise money for tax payment. By 1940s a large number of Gusii men were out on migrant labour, leaving their wives with increased agricultural and household tasks.

Inspite of their labour, colonial policies tended to marginalise women not only in cash crop production but also in formal education. Gusii women were, however, presented with new socio-economic opportunities and openings in terms of increased marketing and legal institutions for the advancement of their interests and sexuality rights. Marriage patterns were relatively loosened from the tight grip of traditions and elders.

Though the colonial impact on gender relations, in many ways, tended to weaken the social and economic position of Gusii women, it nevertheless presented them with potential opportunities for the enhancement of their roles, status and participation in societal progress.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Introduction

The second half of the twentieth century has seen a growing interest among scholars in the role played by women in socio-economic development. This study undertakes a critical survey on women and socio-economic transformations in Gusii society from 1850 - 1963. The study is an attempt to highlight the changing roles, social status and position of women in the Gusii society in the context of successive socio-economic developments.

The pre-colonial period, 1850 - 1907, is included in the study to give a background for the analysis of socio-economic transformations during the colonial era. The aim of this study is also to describe the socio-economic transformations of the pre-colonial period. The study ends with the demise of the colonial rule in Kenya in 1963. Effective colonial rule was imposed in Gusiiland in 1907 when the administrative station was transferred from Karungu in Luoland to Kisii.

In the context of this study, the term "social" implies inter-personal relations among members of society. These include attributes such as social structure, culture, customs and beliefs, institutions such as marriage, family, initiation rites and education. The term "economy" means productive activities such as the growing and processing of both food and cash crops, the keeping of livestock, trade and, industrial production. "Socio-economic" in this study therefore implies the relationships between members of the community, its cultural and material possessions and its productive forces. Socio-

economic transformations, therefore, mean successive changes that took place in the social and economic spheres over a period of time.

All over the world women work and play leading roles in the growing of food, making of goods and rendering of services. Yet, according to Harriet Bradley (1989), Maria Mies (1988), Ann Oakley (1981) and Marja -Liisa Swantz (1985), to mention a few, women's work is habitually viewed by society as less important than the work performed by men. However, with the emergence of feminist movement and gender studies, women's problems have been increasingly seen as gender-based, meaning that the most pressing problems women face are caused by societal attitudes, beliefs and traditions rather than biology. Gender thus refers to the social meaning of being `a man' or `a woman'. Gender is constructed by society. Gender roles are therefore a societal division of labour and roles based on traditional beliefs and myths.

In pre-colonial Gusii society, women had access to and use of land through their husbands. Women had usufructuary rights of the land because they cultivated it (Omwoyo, 1990). Inheritance of rights of the land, though common, was not a significant concept since land was abundant. However, this position was altered by the imposition of colonial laws on land inheritance and ownership. For instance, the introduction of land titles in 1954 gave legal rights of land ownership to individual men. The colonial social, economic and political organisation was structured along patriarchal lines as was the case in Britain. The nature and impact of such alien land laws are examined in the light of their impact on the Gusii women.

1.2 The Study Area

The study has taken one community of Kenya, the Abagusii as its unit of study. The Bantu-speaking Gusii inhabit an area of some 832 square miles in southwestern Kenya. Presently, they occupy Kisii and Nyamira districts in Nyanza Province. According to Gusii tradition, the Abagusii and other peoples like the Kikuyu, Akamba and Bukusu originated in a place called "Misiri". This area does not seem to be the Biblical Egypt but a location just to the North of Mt. Elgon (William Ochieng, 1974). Gusiiland, situated at cool, 500 to 7000 foot elevations above sea level, consists mainly of long, gently sloping hills and a smaller number of steep ridges and escarpments. Running between the green hills are swampy streams and rivers, fed by more than 80 inches of rainfall annually (Robert and Barbara Le Vine, 1966).

The Gusii people recognize a common ancestor, Mogusii, who is thought of as the founder of the society and the person after whom it was named. Mogusii is said to have had several wives, who gave him seven sons. The names of these sons were; Mogetutu, Mogirango (there were two of these as they were twins), Mobasi, Machoge, Nyaribari and Monchari (Nyarango, 1994).

Following centuries of migrations, the Abagusii settled in the present Gusii highlands (hereafter referred to as Gusiiland) by the mid of the nineteenth century. Today, they are surrounded by non-Bantu groups. The Luo, a Nilotic speaking people occupy the western and northwestern frontier. To the south and southeast are the Maasai, and to the east and northeast are the Kipsigis, both Nilotic groups.

Gusiiland is one of the most agriculturally productive areas in the country. Besides the production of food crops such as finger millet (wimbi), millet (intama), maize and bananas, the Abagusii also grow cash crops such as coffee, tea and pyrethrum. This study intends to show that Gusii women were at the centre of these economic activities. Since the pre-colonial period Gusii women have been closely associated with food gathering and cultivation as well as its preparation and cooking for family members as men hunted and looked after livestock.

The study plans to trace the development in the Gusii women's social and economic roles in the pre-colonial and colonial periods.

1.3 Statement of the Problem/aim of the Study

The basic objective of this study is to investigate and examine the socio-economic transformations inspired by colonial policies and their impact on the social and economic roles of Gusii women. The study shows how the trade and cash crops-oriented colonial economy placed a heavy burden on women. As most men left their homes for wage labour in European plantations, factories and public works, women's agricultural and domestic workload increased.

Pre-colonial Gusii women participated in socio-economic production on the basis of sexual division of labour. Women worked majorly in gathering and subsistence production as men hunted and looked after livestock. As food providers, carers and nurturers of other members of the family, women enjoyed social status and recognition in the homestead. They also had access to and use of basic resources such as land, though men had supervisory rights over it

as heads of families. Land was basically a communal property and no individual member had rights over its disposal. It is the concern of this study to examine the impact of colonial economic structure on Gusii women in relation to their pre-colonial rights of access to and use of basic resources.

However, the complementarity of economic activities during the pre-colonial period did not rule out existence of inequality between the sexes. Women were generally treated as inferior and subordinate to men in terms of political leadership and decision-making power. Women's sexuality and not men's was firmly controlled by societal norms and customary law. Sexual inequalities, however, became more pronounced during the colonial period as Gusii men were pushed towards the money economy and public sphere and women remained largely in the domestic sector.

Colonial education and missionary activities certainly were major agents of socio-economic transformation in Gusiiland. The colonial school system provided another socializing agent, apart from the family, for children. Mission churches preached monogamy as an ideal form of marriage and emphasized on women being housekeepers who should seek to be good wives and mothers. All these had implications on Gusii women and the family. This study attempts to explore the consequences of colonial education and missionaries on Gusii women and the family. The Gusii family was the basic unit of production and socialization of its members.

1.4 Research Premises/hypotheses

i) That the largely subsistence pre-colonial economy of the Abagusii was characterised by a complementary division of labour between men and women. The value of

women's work was appreciated though they did not occupy particularly prestigious positions in terms of political leadership and decision-making power.

ii) That the position of women in the patriarchal Gusii society further eroded with the introduction of colonialism. Changes in the socio-economic trends during the colonial era created a dramatic shift in the structure of the traditional division of labour between women and men. As most men opted for migratory labour, women essentially retained their traditional roles and added extra ones, initially reserved for men.

iii) The colonial era opened increased opportunities for Gusii women in terms of formal markets and trading centres. Though women's labour was crucial in men-dominated cash crop production, they found petty trade and marketing activities more rewarding because they were assured of an independent income. The income generated out of trading and marketing activities was managed by women as opposed to the one got from cash crop production. Men had greater say in the management of the latter.

iv) That technological innovations in the 20th century led to the increased workload for women as they lightened that of men.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

Development research on women in the recent years has made African women increasingly visible (Silberschmidt, 1991). A 'stereotype' picture is that women's socio-economic conditions have deteriorated and women have become victims of poverty. The traditional

division of labour has collapsed. Men seem increasingly to have withdrawn from earlier activities and obligations towards the household as more women become the sole suporters of their families. Based on this, women have often been viwed as 'losers' in the development process, whereas, men are seen as gaining from this process by increased access to improved technology, wage employment and cash.

In view of the foregoing, it has become increasingly clear that women and their situation can not be studied in isolation. Recent research has therefore moved its focus from that of women to that of gender (Silberschmidt, 1991). The latter means the social relations between men and women that are shaped partly by the societal structures, institutions and ideologies and partly by the actions and practices of people in their daily lives.

A preferable approach for this study would therefore be one that views men and women as equally integral to the functioning of the society. The beliefs and activities of both men and women and their interrelationships have to be taken into account if any true understanding of any cultural custom is to be achieved. As Sheila Rowbotham (1973) puts it:

> Within ... channels of the new feminist history there are the implicit assumptions that women's history will be done by women and be about women. I think that these assumptions are disorienting and can actually restrict the radical assumptions of a feminist approach ... There is a chance, if we interpret feminist history in this way, that we pursue an abstract category called "women" through history and isolate women from social relations in the family and at work.

To understand the status and position of women in history and society, it is necessary to focus the research on the position of women within the household, in the social production and reproduction, and the ideological definition of women's roles in the society. This is because women's activities in society are pervasive.

In analysing the history of Gusii women and socio-economic transformation between 1850-1963, the above approach has been adapted. The understanding is that Gusii women are active agents in historical processes. Their activities and roles are considered complementary to those of men.

Simi Afonja's argument is also relevant to our study. In her "Historical Evolution in the Sexual Division of Labour in Nigeria" in Kleinberg (1988), Afonja observes that nascent capitalist economies in Africa differ in their socio-economic formations because capitalism has only incompletely penetrated the previous system. Capitalism now coexists with aspects of the pre-capitalist African economies.

According to Afonja, there is no neat path, for women, from "peasant" to "wage-labourer". Therefore, in discussing the sexual division of labour it is pertinent to bear in mind the persistence of elements of an old form of economic organisation, for the household typically retains forms of pre-capitalist relations.

Afonja argues that economic changes in women's roles do not necessarily affect how they are seen in their societies. Considerable hangovers from previous ways of regarding them can exist even when developments in the economy make such hangovers inappropriate. This

persistent "mismatch" of perceptions is not purely a mistake, for it can reflect the continuing influence of religious or political ways of organising the pre-capitalist economy.

Afonja's argument can be related to the theory of articulation. The latter's basic argument is that when the capitalist mode of production is introduced, it does not immediately and automatically replace the non-capitalist mode(s). However, unlike Afonja who does not tell us about the ultimate fate of the "hangovers" from the previous pre-capitalist economy, the students of articulation theory predict the eventual dominance of the capitalist mode of production as the non-capitalist mode(s) of production "decay" and disappear. Nevertheless, to the latter's advocates, the capitalist mode of production has yet to eliminate entirely non-capitalist mode(s) of production in the "Third World". However, sustained campaigns for the empowerment of women through increased opportunities in education, employment and decision-making processes seems to augur well for women's future position in society.

In analysing the study on Gusii women and socio-economic transformation between 1850 and 1963, the above approaches, Afonja's and the articulation theory, are adapted.

1.6 Justification of the Study

Many works on women have been done on the continental, regional and even national levels where generalisations are acceptable. This study narrows down the unit of focus to the Gusii community and approaches the subject historically to verify the validity of some of the generalisations made at broader levels. Though the study ends at independence (1963) it is hoped that the base has been laid upon which study of post-independence developments may be done.

The study contributes original material to the longstanding debates over the changing status of African women in general and Gusii women in particular, in the 20th century.

This study is meant to be a contribution to the question of gender inequality. The study recognizes and appreciates the role women have and continue to play in economic development. This historical knowledge will be useful to those women and men struggling for gender equality in society.

This historical study will help the relevant specialists and developmental agents (project coordinators, economists, agriculturalists, educationists, social workers, women, researchers and other interested parties) to seek and identify their respective target groups as may be appropriate to their aspirations. The study will assist women in asserting themselves in their respective societies by increasing their knowledge about their roles and status.

1.7 Research Methodology

Both primary and secondary sources were used in obtaining relevant data for this study. The primary sources included information collected from oral interviews and archival records. Secondary sources comprised published books and articles, theses, dissertations and journals.

Archival research was conducted at the Kenya National Archives, Nairobi. The main documents perused at the Archives included Provincial (Nyanza) and District (South Kavirondo or South Nyanza after 1948) Annual and Quarterly Reports. Those documents relating to the integration of the Gusii traditional economy to the colonial capitalist economy

were read. However, specific documents relating to women roles in socio-economic production were lacking. This therefore necessitated going to Gusiiland for field interviews.

Field interviews were conducted on the basis of prepared questionnaires. The interviews were however, not entirely based on questionnaires. Other questions could arise in the course of the interview and these were many. A total of 80 respondents were interviewed in various parts of Gusiiland. The area, covering Kisii and Nyamira Districts, was large and required research assistants.

My former classmates at university and secondary school, now secondary school teachers all over Gusiiland came in handy in this exercise. After a brief training and rehearsing of questionnaires, the research assistants were able to conduct the interviews without difficulties. The respondents were chosen on the basis of age. The average age was approximately sixty as the aim was to get people who lived and experienced the colonial situation. A total of 51 female and 29 male respondents were interviewed. Though the study was based on women, men were also interviewed to countercheck the information gathered from women informants. The aim was to obtain balanced data. The selection of informants was to a greater extent random though factors such as active memory, one's reputation on past knowledge and articulation were considered.

Respondents from all shades of life including ex-teachers, ex-chiefs, traders, respected elders, farmers and ordinary people were interviewed. Many of them were articulate and tended to recall the past with ease. Some, especially elderly women could be shy and disinterested. Such cases called for great patience and tolerance on the part of the interviewer. Most

informants gained their composure and confidence as the interview progressed, probably after realizing that they knew a lot about the past than they first thought.

Before starting interviewing respondents, the interviewer first did self-introduction and explained the purpose of the interview. This was easily done because researchers were taken to every respondent by a person from the same village who is known to the respondents. Researchers tried hard to avoid appearing strangers or intruders to the respondents.

Respondents were interviewed on areas they were conversant with. For instance, women who used to be active in open marketing activities, were interviewed on matters related to trade such as merchandise and transport system. The questionnaires had inquiries on social organisation, division of labour and economic production from the pre-colonial to the colonial period.

The interviews were conducted in Ekegusii and tape recorded and later translated and transcribed in English. Interviewers could also note down the answers on the questionnaires which had reserved space for that. They were fill-in questionnaires. The field research was conducted from June, 1995 to August, 1995.

1.8 Literature Review

Much scholarly attention has been focused, especially in the second half of the twentieth century, on women. Most of the literature has been written and produced by historians, social anthropologists, sociologists and feminists on women's roles in various aspects of life. For

instance, anthropologists such as Ortner (1974) and Zilhaman (1981) and historians Boserup 1970) and Mullings (1976) have written and attempted to explain the origins of sexual division of labour, among other socio-economic aspects, in various societies all over the world. Historians have analysed the modes of production in different historical periods and the roles played by women in these systems of production.

This section attempts to present a historical analysis of various scholarly works on women. The literature to be reviewed is complex and diverse. It is therefore felt that the best way of handling it is in terms of themes namely; division of labour, modes of production, family and social organization in relation to women's socio-economic roles.

1.8.1 Sexual Division of Labour

All societies, European or non-european, display some kind of sexual division of labour with women either limited to a narrower range of occupations than men, or carrying out tasks more firmly centred on the home. But specific patterns of the division of labour are extremely variable, by country, region, even by community, so that it is hard for the historian to reach general conclusions about sex-roles. Thus, studies based on particular communities tend to produce valid conclusions.

One area which has attracted considerable speculation is the origin of the sexual division of labour. S. Coontz and P. Henderson, in their edited book, Women's Work, Men's Work: The Origins of Gender and Class (1986), admit that "the search for origins of the division of labour will never be definitively settled"[1] In a wide survey of the sexual division of labour

recorded in 185 societies, G. Murdock and C. Provost (1973), show that hunting large animals, fishing, smelting ores, metalwork, mining and quarrying and lumberwork are almost everywhere male tasks, while dairy production, cooking, carrying water, gathering vegetables were commonly performed by women.[2]

S. Ortner (1974) has argued that all societies are sexually differentiated. She rejects all attempts to identify a sexually egalitarian society. She argues further that the work done by women, socially necessary as it may be, is universally devalued: "the secondary status of women in society is one of the true universals, a pan cultural fact"[3] In this she is supported by S. Coontz and P. Henderson (1986) who contend that the importance of women's responsibility is hidden and their productive labour downgraded.

Some writers, however, have claimed the existence of egalitarian societies. Leibowitz (1986) and Zihlman (1981), both argue, on the basis of fossil evidence, primate behaviour and knowledge of existing hunting and gathering tribes, that in early hominid societies the sexual division of labour is likely to have been minimal, as group members worked jointly to find food. Leibowitz argues that the major task division would have been on the basis of age, as young individuals learned the tricks of survival from adults. She speculates that only when groups began to exchange any surplus food between groups did any specialization develop.[4]

E. Boserup (1970) and L. Mullings (1976) identifies a division of labour in pre-colonial societies where men and women had equal access to the means of production. Boserup describes this division of labour as a 'horizontal' one, where women helped men and vice-versa. While Boserup sees the formation of work hierarchies as the product of urbanization

and economic growth, Mullings sees it as a result of the advent of private property and the emergence of classes during the colonial period.[5] The two works are relevant to this study on Gusii women which seeks to understand the nature of the sexual division of labour among the Gusii up to 1963.

Sexual division of labour is prevalent in all human societies. McGrew (1981) postulates that the sexual division of labour is built into all human societies because of sexual dimorphism: the different physical forms of the two sexes.[6] Others, like Tiger and Fox (1971), put more stress on physique and aggression, portraying hunting as the primal activity and the driving force behind human evolution. They see the bonding of males in hunting and warfare as the basis of universal male domination.[7]

Sociologists consider genetic and biological difference as the cause of the asymmetrical division of labour. In the words of one of the discipline's founders:

> In hunter-gatherer societies, men hunt and women stay at home. This strong bias persists in most agricultural and industrial societies and, on that ground alone, appears to have genetic origin ..... My own guess is that the genetic bias is intense enough to cause a substantial division of labour in the most free and most egalitarian societies ....[8]

For others the key factor is the symbolization of women as closer to nature and the identification of men with culture which they see as nearly universal. Rosaldo (1974) considers the domestic orientation of women in the sexual division of labour as arising from

the demands of pregnancy, childbearing and childrearing.[9] The restrictions these place on women are frequently cited as a major determinant of their limited economic activity. It is also worth noting that women's reproductive roles are not measured in terms of economic value. This denies women's work the value and status that is supposed to accrue from their work.

Some scholars argue for the possibility of a society where men and women perform different tasks but are seen as making a contribution of equal value. Rohrlich-Leavitt (1975), for example, observes that in some African societies sexual roles are sharply segregated but are also socially evaluated as complementary.[10] In such societies women as well as men make decisions and the former are not constrained by their reproductive functions.

Marxists regard male power as economically rather than culturally rooted (F. Engels, 1985). Thus materialist explanation of the 'the origins of gender and class', taking primitive equality as a starting point and arguing that economic development, of one sort or another, led to dominance and sexual differentiation.[11] The unequal sexual division of labour emerges gradually along with the development of settled societies which are patrilocal. The growth of competitive exchange between lineage groups organised on a patrilocal basis led to men controlling the labour of women in order to procure surplus goods for exchange.

Although these Marxist accounts avoid some of the universalism of the theories previously discussed they fail to provide a totally convincing account of how exactly sexual inequality originated. There is some ambiguity as to whether sexual inequality is simply synonymous with the sexual division of labour.

There has been considerable recent debate on whether devision of labour by gender is the cause or consequence of female subordination (Kelly, 1981; Safa and Leacock, 1981; Afonja, 1981). Efforts to locate the origins of female subordination among Gusii women (or Kenyan women in general) should be based on an adequate understanding of the socio-cultural values which are linked to partriachal structures of gender relations, the colonial history of labour commodisation, and the extension of the market influence into the household economy.

The relationship between division of labour and women's secondary status can not be seen as merely causal but also as dialectical (Were, 1990). Women are largely confined to the household and informal labour market where they perform less specialised, low-wage and often particularistic tasks. And in the words of Elliot (1977), "because they fall on the lower side of the `productivity' `gap' they suffer inequality".[12] Their significant roles in home management and vital contributions to subsistence production are often not even reflected in the country's GNP statistics. However:

> it can not be said that women's labour is intrinsically inferior to that of men or that it is universally judged to be so. What confers a differential value upon gender-specific labour is the socially sanctioned rewards bestowed on or denied to groups of men and women (Kelly, 1981)[13].

According to Were (1990), most of the roles assigned to women are defined and legitimized by a system of cultural values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes.[14] For example, the persistence of male supremacist attitudes against participation in `women's work' has tended to perpetuate patriarchal oppresion of women by men. Men tend to occupy higher status positions which

confer more power, authority and prestige. Such unequal distribution of rewards generates differential power in gender relationships even among the Gusii.

The sexual division of labour is basically concerned with the historical relationship between 'Men's' jobs and 'Women's' jobs (Game and Pringle, 1984). There is nothing static or fixed about the sexual division of labour. Any major change in work organization is likely to affect sexual division of labour. Shorter (1976) observes that the introduction of the 'free' market of industrial capitalism maximised women's choices and opportunities and broke down patriarchy.[15]

Ivy Pinchbeck (1981) provides a classic account of the exploitation of women and children in the early mills and factories. Nevertheless, she argues that in the long term capitalism did benefit women.[16] The very fact of the restriction of work opportunities for middle class women led to the growth of the emancipationist movement and hence the opening up of higher education and professional careers to women. Working class women too benefitted in the long term, as rising standards and wages offered them the chance of well-paid jobs and escape from patriarchal and parental control.

D'onofrio-Flores (1982), A. Mazrui (1990) and H. Bradley (1989) assert that the development of capitalist agriculture pushed women into monotonous low-status jobs. In a world structured round the needs and priorities of men, employers were happy to use women as a source of cheap labour. Moreover, capitalism and industrialism took from women the traditional female skills; brewing, medicine, spinning and weaving which had been learnt in the home and formed a means of gaining social standing and respect in the community.

In describing the impact of capitalist technology on women, Bradley observed:

> Men usually have a tendency of claiming as theirs any new skill created by technological advance. It may well be that arguments based on biological differences are employed after the masculinisation of a task, to provide rationalisation for the barring of women.[17]

These works on the division of labour are crucial to this study as the division of labour among the Gusii forms a major component of the study.

1.8.2 Women and Modes of Production

Lewenhak (1980) argues that in human history there has not been unchanging situations of work functions on sex lines. In the earliest kinds of societies, Lewenhak observes, the principle of existence was do-it yourself. With survival as the first aim, every child, girl or boy, was trained to be self-sufficient, to live off a given territory. Lewenhak contends further that when the climate changed and food supplies at the existing level fluctuated, people evolved technologies and demarcations of work between men and women. There evolved a social organization that best enabled them to live in the given circumstances. According to Lewenhak, what was "women's Work" at one stage of history might be "Men's Work" at the next stage.[18] This is a useful observation because the same situation seem to have happened among the Gusii due to successive socio-economic transformations.

Leacock (1981) challenges the 'anthropological truisms' about women's subordinate roles. She attacks the fact that Western theorists' stereotypes of femaleness as passiveness and subordination and maleness as action and dominance crept into research on third world, and dominated the research scene. Leacock provides ample cross-cultural examples of women with both authority and power in pre-colonial societies. Her basic arguement is that during colonialism former egalitarian social forms have been transformed into heirarchical ones. 'For some cultures there is full documentation of the autonomous and public roles women played before their land rights were abrogated, their economic contribution and independence undercut .....'[19] This study is quite relevant to the one on Gusii women as they too underwent colonial experience.

M. Mies (1988) argues, on the basis of gender, that maleness and femaleness are not biological givens but rather the result of a long historical process. Gender is a social or cultural construct by society of what constitutes a woman or a man in terms of the society's beliefs, customs, attitudes, norms and values. Thus Mies contends that in each historical epoch maleness and femaleness are differently defined. This definition depends on the principle mode of production in these epochs. For instance, under the capitalist conditions women are usually defined as housewives and men as breadwinners.[20]

In her analysis of the traditional economy of Zimbabwe, A. K. H. Weinrich (1979) explains that the pre-capitalist modes of production of the people of Zimbabwe fall under the classification of communal or "lineage mode of production".[21] Here the household is both the unit of production and consumption. In this mode of production, women were valued for their labour power. Weinrich sees men's need for plenty of labour as met through the practice

of polygamy.

W. Rodney (1972) observes that the colonial mode of production undermined the position of women in society by reinforcing the exploitative tendencies of pre-existing social forms. He argues that colonialists promoted anti-feminist attitudes and regarded women's labour as surplus value within capitalist units of production. Thus labour costs were minimized as the rate of surplus value increased.[22] Mullings (1976) sees the advent of private property and the emergence of classes especially during the colonial period as leading to asymmetrical and unequal relations between the sexes. This indicates that the existence of asymmetrical relations in the pre-colonial societies provided the basis for the development of inequality under changed conditions as it happened even among the Abagusii.

R. M. Maxon (1990) postulates that the arrival of the British colonial rule altered the traditional patterns of agriculture in Kenya. This eventually took Kenyan households into the world capitalist system and brought a form of capitalist agriculture. The Swynnerton plan of 1954 saw the introduction of land reforms on the basis of registration and certification in individual men's names as opposed to the traditional communal ownership of land. The growth of cash crops such as coffee, tea and pyrethrum were encouraged and extension services increased. All these changes had considerable impact on Kenyan women in general and Gusii women in particular.[23]

In his book, A Pre-Colonial History of The Abagusii of Western Kenya C.A.D. 1500-1914 (1974), W. R. Ochieng states that the Abagusii adjusted accordingly to different environmental conditions. For instance, the Abagusii shifted from livestock-keeping to crop

production as their primary economic activity due to fatal animal epidemics and raids from their neighbouring Maasai and Kipsigis during the former's settlement period on the Gusii highlands in early 19th century. The shift to crop production was also as a result of the prevalent fertile soils of the highlands.[24] Prior to this shift Gusii women were active in gathering as men hunted and looked after livestock. Gusii women remained dominant in subsistence agriculture even after the arrival of colonial rule which had far reaching impact on women and their socio-economic roles.

The works in this section will help in understanding the changing modes of production among the Gusii and their implication on women's roles and status.

1.8.3 The Family and Household

H. O'Connell identifies the family as the location where young children learn to become social beings capable of operating effectively in the wider society.[25] She argues that women and grandparents, in particular grandmothers are the main socializing agents. Within the family children usually learn the system of values and cultural norms that apply to each sex. She observes further that gendered identity is also developed within the family and that the socialization of girls is radically different from that of boys.

Among the Gusii, family is composed of a married man with his wife or wives and children, who may be accommodated in several houses. A household consists of a wife with her unmarried daughters and uninitiated sons, while the husband is free to rotate around the houses of his wives.[26] The initiated and unmarried sons stayed in cattle villages where they

looked after the animals and conducted raids in neighbouring communities.

A homestead consisted of a number of houses, Chinyomba, which were linked to one another through their head i.e. the husband. Within the household each individual knew and performed his/her role relative to sex and age. For example the initiated boys looked after cattle, the girls helped their mothers with cooking, fetching firewood and looking after the children. The man as the head of the family was the main decision maker on matters concerning the entire social and economic well-being of the house.

A. Imam, R. Pittin and H. Omole (1985) see the family unit as the arena where, from childhood, role prejudices and conditioning begin, leading to the acceptance of a society that allows the exploitation of women. They argue that women sublimate themselves in family life because other avenues of social success are often closed to them by ideology, customary law and tradition.[27]

I. Dankelman and J. Davidson (1988) regard women as the backbone of the family economy. They contend that women produce food crops, provide water, gather firewood and perform most of the other work which sustains the family. Though the authors identify a certain division of labour in the agricultural sector, women are generally responsible for sowing, weeding, crop maintenance and harvesting.[28]

Family relationships and work arrangements, capitalist development and social definitions of masculinity and femininity are all intertwined. This confirms the view that "the gender divisions of social production in capitalism can not be understood without reference to the

organization of the household and the ideology of familialism" - (Barret, 1980).[29]

Focusing on the relations between women and men the way in which they manifest themselves within the household, in kinship relations and in the society, Rosaldo (1980); Ortner and Whitehead 1981), conclude that gender relations are asymmetric and hierarchical power relations. They see some form of asymmetry favouring men present in all cultures.

According to Stichter (1984), Oboler (1987), Talle (1988), Kandiyoti (1988), Silberschimidt (1989) and others, while women on the one hand, are faced with reduced access to both material and social resources, and subjected to a large number of oppressing mechanisms, legitimised by patriarchal structures, women are far from being passive individuals. On the contrary, they are reflecting and active agents of social change.

Almost invariably women are excluded from decision-making processes because as Lewis (1984) has pointed out, African women are invisible and are only "seen as farmers' wives, as houseworkers rather than as farmers themselves".

In their analytical appraisal of Boserup's work on the roles of women in economic development, Beneria and Sen (1981) have quoted Boserup as having argued that: the introduction of modern technology and cash crops benefitted men rather than women by creating a productivity gap between them. Women were relegated to the subsistence sector of food production using traditional method of cultivation.[30]

However, in view of the foregoing, it appears that almost all the available literature on women tends to demonstrate the inequalities that exist between men and women. The inequality in gender relations exists because gender roles are unequally distributed and differentially rewarded. Once the structure of inequality is institutionalized it reinforces gender role differentiation.

The literature review has also shown that changes in the structure of the division of labour, which are themselves product of changes in the larger social and economic system, generally seem to have undermined the position of women. Such changes have not enhanced their status and autonomy but have accentuated female subordination, dependency and vulnerability.

Since most of the above literature are based on regional, national and continental levels, the one based on one ethnic group, the Gusii, and its unique enviroment and culture becomes necessary. The Gusii constitute one of the more than 40 ethnic groups in Kenya who also underwent similar colonial experience. Studies such as this one should therefore be undertaken among these groups for scholarly comparison.

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CHAPTER TWO

2.0 GUSII WOMEN AND THE PRE-COLONIAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC STRUCTURES, C. 1850-1907

2.1 Introduction

For a proper understanding of Socio-economic transformation during the colonial era and its impact on Gusii women, it is essential to understand the position of women in the pre-colonial socio-economic structure. The structure of the economy and various socio-political aspects such as land tenure system and division of labour, were deeply rooted in custom and tradition. The social system also set values and norms of expected behaviour and role relationships for every individual.

This chapter is divided into three broad sections that include historical background, social and economic structures. The first section of the chapter gives a brief history of the Gusii people by tracing their original home, their migratory movements to their present home and their interaction with their neighbours. The second section deals with the Gusii social processes such as birth, circumcision, education, marriage, death and religion. These social issues are handled in a manner that reflects the position and roles of Gusii women in the social system. Finally the economic structure is dealt with in terms of land tenure, agriculture, animal husbandry, gathering and hunting, fishing, traditional industries, trade and division of labour. The role and status of Gusii women in this economic structure is discussed.

2.2 The Historical Background

The Abagusii are a Bantu-speaking people found in the South Western part of Kenya. They occupy Kisii and Nyamira districts in Nyanza Province. Gusiiland has abundant and reliable rainfall throughout the year. The Gusii therefore occupy one of the most fertile and agriculturally productive areas in the country. It is also well served by several permanent rivers and streams which drain the area into Lake Victoria. Its main rivers include Gucha, Sondu and Mogonga.

Before their arrival in their present country, the Abagusii, who are believed to be related to the Kuria, Abalogoli, Abasuba, Kikuyu, Meru and Akamba, originated from a place called Misri.[1] This place is thought to lie in the northern region of Mount Elgon. The Gusii are said to have moved across Mount Elgon. They briefly settled there and called the place Masaba.[2]

From Mount Elgon (Masaba), the ancestors of the Abagusii, Kuria, Abasuba and Abalogoli moved southwards and by the beginning of the sixteenth century they had arrived on the eastern shores of Lake Victoria. At the Kavirondo gulf, some people went across the Lake in Makeshift boats while others went round it on foot. The gulf (Ekemunto) gave rise to the Gusii female name, Kemunto. Others were named Moraa, referring to the giant trees round the gulf called Meraa.[3]

Settling at Kano, near Kisumu, the Gusii met a lot of hostility from the Luo tribesmen who did not want anybody to compete with them in exploiting the lake. This forced the Gusii to move northeast, towards the present day Kericho. They settled at a place they came to name

Kabianga. But this settlement was short-lived. Bad climate and raids from the Kipsigis led to mass loss of Gusii cattle. The elders declared, "let us move, for we have failed to prosper". Hence the name Kabianga, literally meaning 'since we have failed to prosper'.[4]

Moving southwards to Sotik, a few groups infiltrated the present Gusii highlands as the majority moved on to the Trans-Mara Triangle, settling at Nyangararo around 1820. However, hostility from the Masai led to their eventual movement into the present Gusii highlands where they were fully settled by 1850.

The indigenous vegetation in the area can be classified as wooded and bushed grassland with scattered or grouped trees. However, it must be noted here that most of the natural vegetation has been replaced by crops and exotic trees. Planting of eucalyptus trees on river banks is a common feature though it is threatening to reduce the flow and volume of the rivers.

Most Kisii soils are fertile. A large part of Gusiiland is covered with volcanic and dark red friable clay soils which are deep and rich in organic matters. A sizeable area is also covered with red-to-brown friable clays with black clays in the plains. The rest of the area is covered with outcrops of rock and other soils which have been subjected to geological and recent increased erosion.[5]

Due to its agricultural potential Gusiiland has the capacity for both food and cash crops production. Livestock can also be raised in the area. The main traditional food crops which were grown before the colonial era and are still grown include finger-millet (wimbi), millet (mtama), bananas, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and various vegetables. The cash crops grown

during the colonial period included coffee, pyrethrum, tea and sugarcane. The growing of maize as a food crop was introduced in the beginning of the twentieth century. The animals kept by the Abagusii include cattle, goats, sheep and poultry.

Other economic activities undertaken by the community included hunting, gathering, trading and, to some extent, fishing. Local industrialization such as in iron-workings, weaving, and pottery also took place.

2.3 Social Structure

The social organization of a people concerns itself with their general way of life as it is depicted from the day-to-day interpersonal interaction of its members. It basically entails the community's traditions. However, some traditions may be covert and hence are only exhibited in situational circumstances. Overt traditions keep on appearing and reappearing with the daily activities of the members of a community. Also, traditions of a community include the virtues and taboos of a society. A proper analysis of the Gusii social order calls for a chronological presentation of the social processes that one undergoes from birth through marriage to death.

The ability to participate in the process of procreation was an esteemed natural endowment among the Gusii. Children were seen as the ultimate expression of being or self-fulfilment.[6] Through children parents saw their life complete as children ensured uninterrupted continuity of their-existence.

Infertility was therefore considered a curse among the Gusii. Those who were affected were considered a disgrace and great efforts were made to seek a remedy. Barrenness was seen as a misfortune caused by ancestral spirits, ebirecha, who were responsible for punishing any member of the society who violated the rules that governed the community. For instance, infertility could be caused if seclusion fire was allowed to die off before the seclusion period for initiates was over. This called for proper sacrifices to the ancestral spirits before the victims could regain their fertility. Other potential causes of infertility included witchcraft and curses. The Gusii did not attribute barrenness to a natural cause.[7]

A barren woman however had the option of 'marrying' sarrogate wife of her own who would create a lineage for her. The barren woman appointed a mate for her'wife' but remained the custodian of the children that were born by that arrangement[8]. The children inherited the property meant for the custodian. If it was the husband who was sterile, the woman was 'officially', but 'quietly', allowed to indulge in an extra-marital affair especially with the husband's brother or first cousin. The children born through this arrangement belonged to the infertile man and his lineage. They enjoyed the privileges and rights as heirs and legitimate children to both the mother and sterile husband.

A pregnant woman in the pre-colonial Gusii society received considerate treatment. The husband tried as much as possible not to annoy her. She was usually exempted from heavy tasks such as toiling in the fields day long. An expectant mother was not allowed to feed on some foods or local beer because they were considered detrimental to the growth of the baby in the womb. They were also prohibited from getting near the grave during funerals.[9] The Abagusii feared that nearing the grave was exposing the unborn baby to sorrow. It was also

meant to protect the expectant mother against overwhelming emotions that normally accompany mourning for the dead.

Mid-wives played a very important role in times of birth. These were experienced women in the society most of whom were past menopause. The community recognised them as specialists. There were few cases of complications that they could not manage. Some complications called for the presence of the husband. He was, however, barred from being physically present in the labour room. Sometimes when the expectant mother was too exhausted to push, the husband could be called upon to increase her pushing power by adding air into her lungs.[10] He blocked her nostrils and blew into her mouth with the intention of augmenting the action of her own intra-abdominal pressure.

When a baby was born the womenfolk at the scene burst into ululations. Usually a baby boy received louder and more prolonged ululations compared to a baby girl. This was mainly because the traditional Gusii community valued boys more than girls. This bias in favour of boys could be explained through a Gusii proverb that Ensinyo amonagokwanwa n'abamura etabwati.[11] This can be translated 'when people talk ill of a certain village it is bacause it does not have boys'. Boys were generally regarded as protectors of society against external aggression.

A woman who had just given birth was not allowed to go out of her house for at least two weeks. During this period she was fed on highly nutritious foods to help her regain her health and also produce more milk for the baby.

The mid-wives' duty did not end at delivery. They periodically reviewed the baby's progress, ensuring its normal growth and development. For example, they were responsible for ensuring that the teeth came out in time and in the correct order. They were specialists in the treatment of children's ailments.[12]

The pre-colonial Gusii society recognised informal education as a means of socializing children into the society's way of life. All adult members of society had the obligation of assigning duty to the child, correcting and even punishing them whenever it was necessary. As they grew up, children were taught to know the names of their family members, ancestors and clans. They were required to know their close relatives, understand their family lineages and know how to relate to their cousins, uncles, aunts, grandparents and so on.

Various institutions worked at moulding the life of the individual through formal, informal and unconscious training. These institutions included the family, peers and the community at large. Up to the age of six years the child was educated mainly by the family, especially the mother. The mother gave the child the fundamentals of language, correct manners, and the general behaviour expected of children in Gusii society. At the age of three or four, the child entered the world of other children and grandparents. Through lullabies, stories, myths, legends and songs, the grandparents instructed children and taught them the community's history, religious beliefs and laws. The child was also taught how to greet various groups of people. They were also taught how to handle household items such as fire, furniture, knives and food.[13]

The entire Gusii indigenous education acquired from infancy to marriage stage was put into practice throughout life. It was tested, refined and perfected after marriage. To the Abagusii, an elderly person was to be relied on in matters of wisdom and objective judgement. The Gusii saying that monto monene ndiogo (an adult person is 'medicine")[14] helps to emphasize the point that elderly people are knowledgeable and can be relied upon in terms of giving advice and guidance. Adult persons accumulated the knowledge and experience they acquired in their life-long education. In a word, a Gusii elderly person was "a moving and talking library".[15]

In pre-colonial Gusii society, boys and girls were initiated into adulthood in a process beginning with circumcision and clitoridectomy. All male and female children were legible for initiation between the ages of 11 and 16 years.[16] Initiation period was characterised by intense instruction to the initiates. They were educated on issues pertaining to marriage, patriotism, customs, traditions and the society's esteemed values like bravery and generosity.

Circumcision of Gusii children was a communal and public ceremony that parents always looked forward to. It moved parents, especially those initiating their first born child, to a higher status in the community.[17] Villagers were informed of the impending ceremony which was accompanied by dancing and merry-making. Initiates from the same village were circumcised and secluded together. Traditional beer, Busaa, was a common drink at this time. Cows, goats and chicken were among the animals slaughtered and consumed during this occasion.

Circumcision was performed by a specialised surgeon, Omosari. There was a man spceialised in male circumscision. There was an equivalent female clitoridectomy specialist, usually an old and experienced woman. The specialist in circumcision was at the interface between surgery as a practical skill and spiritualism. He/she fulfilled the requirments of the religious deity of the tribe, as well as carrying out the actual surgical procedure.[18]

The actual cutting of the foreskin was done under a special tree for the boys. The initiates were teased with spear points placed above their faces. They were threatened against crying during the cutting of the foreskin. Those who cried were despised, considered 'women' and a shame to the parents. Boys were supposed to be courageous and enduring even in the face of severe pain.

There were special and educative songs for the circumcision occasion. The singing and dancing was performed by groups surrounding the initiates as they returned home from the surgeon. There were two separate special songs for male and female initiates respectively. The songs were full of praises and instructions aimed at the initiates. However, the men sung the most obscene songs that could ever be sung in public. Most were about sexuality and warfare.

A village that had both male and female initiates, had the males entering their hut before females.[19] This explained the social value attached to boys as permanent members of the homestead compared to girls who were expected to leave their homes at marriage.

The seclusion period lasted for a month or a month and some days. Besides being fed well, the initiates were taught all that pertains to being Omogusii. Tribal education was concentrated in the seclusion period.

After circumcision marriage followed as an important social process among the Gusii. Marriage was compulsory. Celibacy was unheard of. If an unmarried woman died, she was buried outside her parent's homestead. It was feared she might attract the wrath of the ancestral spirits. An unmarried man was buried outside his house but one of his bed legs was thrown into his grave. This practice was popularly known as okorutwa omware.[20] This showed that the deceased was a worthless man and therefore an outcast.

Marriages were organised by parents and close relatives of the concerned parties. Usually, it was a relative or close friend of the man's family who looked for the girl (bride) who was supposed to come from 'a respectable family'. Once a suitable girl was identified, the family of the marrying man went into negotiation with the girl's family over the payment of dowry. Dowry was paid in terms of several cattle and goats. However, the number of animals paid to the girl's parents depended on the ability of the man's family, and the virtues of the girl.

Transfer of bridewealth constituted the key for women to get access to land. Through bridewealth the wife gained managerial and user rights to her husband's land, the right of maintenance for herself and her children as well as the right for her sons to become legal heirs to the land allocated to her. The husband gained rights in his wife as a domestic worker and bearer and nurturer of children. As he became the 'owner' of his wife, he also became the 'owner: of the children he fathered. The payment of dowry therefore legitimized

husbandhood as well as fatherhood.

After paying bridewealth, the groom, accompanied by a group of young men, went for the bride. The arrival of the wedding procession at the groom's home was received with jubilation and ululations from his family and clan members. The bride was usually escorted to her marital home by a group of girls. The occasion was marked by dancing and merry-making and feasting.

For the newly married couple, the first night was important as they looked forward to "knowing each other". The man was to establish whether his wife was a virgin or not. The woman was also set to establish whether her husband was "sexually able". Their families and relatives were also interested in knowing the "findings" of this first encounter for this was the essence of marriage.[21]

If found to be a virgin, the girl earned her father one more bull as part of the bride price. This was a sign of appreciation and respect to her parents for bringing up a morally upright girl.

A day after the wedding ceremony, the bride's sisters, cousins and sisters-inlaw turned up at her new home, carrying ugali cooked out of wimbi flour, along with roasted goat meat. The newly married man tasted it first before the rest of the family members and villagers. The mission of these "ugali team" was to find out what had transpired between their married sister and her husband in their first night.[22] The bride's parents and family members were entitled to this knowledge since the success of marriage supposedly lay there.

Death was the last social process one underwent in society after birth, circumcision and marriage. There is a Gusii saying that Amakweri n'amakoro (death is old). Death was seen as an inevitable eventuality. The Gusii respected the dead and often offered sacrifices to them. They believed that a person who died at an advanced age joined the ancestral spirits in the underworld from where he or she 'determined' events on earth[23] The Gusii tended to attribute death to ancestral powers or God, Engoro. Death was also attributed to witchcraft.

Religion played a very crucial role in the life of the Gusii. At the wider level all the Abagusii believed that God, Engoro, their creator and protector, resided by the sun. But at the family level, people worshipped their ancestors and ancestral spirits to a greater extent. This worship was based on a strong belief in the continuity of human life after death. The deceased were thus regarded as guardian angels of the living, particularly their family members. They were supposed to safeguard their welfare and protect them against the evil actions and intentions of their enemies.

2.4 The Pre-colonial Gusii Household

A traditional Gusii household constituted of a man, his wife and children. A polygamous man thus belonged to several households. Households were therefore places where the various aspects of gender relations found expression through the relationship between wife and husband, parents with children and so on.

The pre-colonial Gusii household functioned as a unit of economic production and social control.[24] The more wives a man married, the more land could be cultivated on his behalf,

the more daughters he would get whose marriages would give him cattle as brideprice, and the more sons he would get to herd the cattle and to defend the homestead from outside attack. Polygamy, then, was a cardinal feature of the homestead. The head of the household had at least two, ideally four and occasionally more wives.

Each wife of the polygamous man had her own house with its own yard. The husband allocated fields to her which she was responsible for cultivating. She had her own granary where she stored her produce.[25]

A Gusii woman throughout her life was always dependent on a man not only to allocate her land to till but also for general protection. During her life cycle, she depended first on her father, then on her husband and finally on her sons. Women were necessarily deliverers of men into the world, and sometimes custodians, as widows, of the property meant for their sons.

Women were the food producers and from that point of view, women and their work seem to have been surrounded by respect. Men were certainly dependent on women to grow their fields and to supply them, as well as the rest of the family, with food.

Besides producing and cooking food, women were also responsible for general domestic services such as the procuring of firewood and water, for tending and training young children and nursing the sick and elderly, for helping to keep good relations with neighbours and kin[26] Most of the labour activities were carried out on a cooperative basis, in the sense that men would go out hunting, cattle keeping and to war in groups, and women would work together

in groups when carrying out agricultual activities.

The male head of the household was its decision-maker and controller of wealth which was reckoned in terms of cattle, land and labour, including that of women. He was the only one who could officiate at sacrifieces to the ancestral spirits, whose goodwill controlled the health and fertility of the whole family. In addition, men also had the unchallenged monopolistic control of political and legal relations and institutions. Some old women, however, had significant influence as diviners. They interpreted ancestor-sent omens and prescribed remedies for disease and sterility. Some other women were feared as witches.[27]

Women were expected to obey their husbands, be deferential to them and consult their husbands before taking any significant action. They were also expected to respond quickly to the husband's demands and to be hospitable to his guests. Wife-beating was a common and socially accepted practice.[28]

However, women were allowed to proclaim their opinions on minor issues and family matters. Husbands would sometimes refrain from exercising their authority unnecessarily. For instance, they could not pay attention to their wives until they felt that the wife needed correction.[29]

The power and prestige assigned to a woman differed according to her age and the position she occupied in the family, since the Gusii society was potentially polygamous. A new wife, for example, occupied the lowest status and power position within her husband's household until she started giving birth.[30] Elderly women enjoyed a higher social status and respect than

young and middle-aged women.

It was easy, for instance, to notice the powerful presence of the mother-in-law vis a vis that of her daughter-inlaw in a Gusii homestead. The mother-in-law was generally both active and powerful. Her power derived from both her age and closeness to her adult son. Nevertheless, the daughter-in-law had her own sources of power which derived from her active sexuality and procreative functions. She too, therefore, could be close to her husband and worry her mother-in-law. Thus, there was always tension present between the mother and her dauthters-in-law.

Mothers usually had significant powers and control over their children, including adults, especially in the large polygamous Gusii families. In such situations most men were more of figureheads as women were the real managers of the households. It was common, for instance, to find homes in pre-colonial Gusiiland being referred to by the mother's name. The same applied to the portions of land allocated to mothers. Children in some cases, identified themselves with their mothers who in most cases could turn their children against the father.[31] However, the father's cursing prowess over children scared off the latter from abusing and ridiculing their father.

A man was supposed refer to his wife in a respectful manner. There was a distinct disrespectful implication if one called a lady a woman, Omokungu as opposed to omosubati, a lady, or omorugi, literally meaning, the one who prepares meals. A woman could also be respectfully called 'daughter of so and so' referring to her clan or father.[32]

In general, social esteem for women, among the Gusii, blossomed later in life. Thus, "only as the woman gets older, in her role as a mother of a married son with a family, can she begin to feel a sense of power, which she exercises on behalf of her son".[33]

When husbands mistreated their wives and failed to meet their obligations, the latter had certain sanctions available. These included withdrawal of labour, refusal of conjugal rights and failure to make food. The ultimate sanction was for the woman to return to her parental home and wait for her husband to follow her up with an 'apology'. Her parents could demand a goat from him as some kind of a fine.[34]

The effect of these sanctions can be questioned given the fact that polygamy was the norm and men could turn to other wives. What is important to note, however, is that these sanctions were fully acknowledged by the society. Men were obliged to keep their households intact lest they were considered incompetent and failures.

Divorce was almost non-existent in pre-colonial Gusii society. Besides beating as a male sanction against women who failed to fulfil their obligations, men opted to take another wife. Women were, in most cases, reluctant to leave their husbands as this meant leaving their children in the custody of the husband or co-wife. The co-wives were notoriously known for maltreatment of another woman's children.

Women were expected to be sexually faithful to their husbands. It was only widows of childbearing age who were allowed, on principle, to take up a brother or cousin of the dead husband for procreation purposes. The widow however, had the right to choose the man who

was to be the 'warmer of her house' from among men of the neighbourhood.[35] The children born out of this arrangment belonged to the deceased man's lineage.

Adultery was a serious offence. For example, if a man committed adultery then the mistress must never see fresh blood from his wife. If the mistress saw the blood or stepped on it or came across it in any way the wife would bleed to death.[36] This impact of adultery was called amasangia.

However, adultery as an offence was much more serious when committed by a woman than a man. She was supposed to be faithful to her husband whereas men had greater latitude in their sexual activities. Female adultery was said to be a factor affecting pregnancy as women would either have difficulties in conceiving or were faced with continuous miscarriages. If a woman committed adultery after she had borne a number of children, it was believed that her children would begin to die. They would all die eventually, unless she confessed and went through a cleansing ceremony, the amasangia.[37]

In view of the foregoing, there seems to be litte doubt that male superiority and dominance was accepted and respected in pre-colonial Gusii society. Nevertheless, what is important to note is that while men, on the one hand, were in control of women, men were also dependent on women for their personal wealth (wives, children, cattle and land), as well as for respect, honour and esteem from others. Also, through marriage, men were able to establish peaceful relations with potential enemies from other clans.

2.5 Land Tenure System

In the pre-colonial Gusii society, land was communally owned and formed the focus of social relations. Land belonged to the clan. The clan controlled its allocation and disposal.[38] No one therefore could claim any parcel of land as his or her personal property. However, individual members of the community could have exclusive rights over portions allocated to them but such rights were restricted to the rights of access to and use of land.

During the period of migration and settlement on the Highlands, each clan of the Gusii occupied a ridge or a succession of adjacent ridges.[39] This came to be regarded as clan land, and it was allocated to members on the basis of need. Boundaries were set up separating the land controlled by the various Gusii clans. The clan land was subdivided into portions of family land. Thus, the question of who controlled which piece of land in Gusii ended at the family level.

In the Gusii customary tenure, the individual family members had the right of access to and use of the family land but not the right of allocation and disposal. An individual in the Gusii community could not be separated from his lineage especially when referring to proprietary rights pertaining to land. The individual and his property belonged to his family, enyomba.[40]

A Gusii polygamous man was obligated to subdivide his piece of land according to the number of wives he had. Gusii tradition demanded that the first or senior wife had to get a bigger portion of the land than the rest.[41] This was so because in most cases men married additional wives using the bridewealth obtained from the marriages of the daughters of the

first wife. In a way, additional wives were treated as children of the senior wife. In most cases their pieces of land were of the same size as those of the sons of the senior wife. However, first wives were generally entitled to the largest share of land even if additional wives were married using bridewealth from other sources other than the first wife's daughter.[42]

In subdividing the family land among his wives, the head of the family had the right of keeping a portion of the land for personal use. This reserved land was called emonga.[43] Emonga was to act as a reservoir for food production for the owner's use in cases of famine, deliberate denial of food by his wives or in situations where his wives' granaries were exhausted. Usually, emonga was given to the youngest wife besides her land, to cultivate on behalf of the husband because the latter spent most of his time in her house. Some men managed their Emonga using all their wives' labour and that of the children. At the husband's death, emonga was subdivided among all his wives.[44]

The Gusii ethnic group was believed to be made up of seven main clans, believed to be named after Mogusii's seven sons:

1. Bassi
2. Machoge
3. South Mugirango
4. Nyaribari
5. Kitutu
6. Wanjare
7. North Mugirango

(see map)

During the acquisition of their present land in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the seven clans competed for space in the fertile forested highlands. These areas were, according to oral traditions, uninhabited except by wild animals.[45] As large families settled together in certain localities they soon realised the threat from internal and external attacks. From the outside there was hostility from the neighbouring Luo, Kipsigis and Maasai who, like Abagusii, were engaged in territorial expansion.[46] It was therefore unsafe for individual Gusii families to stay far apart from each other. They had to settle together in large villages for protection against external enemies. There were also internal squabbles and scrambling between different clans over disputed lands. This necessitated the need for togetherness and collectiveness at clan levels for protection purposes.

The deeply forested land inhabited by wild game needed clearing for settlement and cultivation. This was an uphill task for an individual to undertake. The only solution was the collective responsibility of large groups of families, staying and working together. Thus, people of one lineage undertook communally the responsibility for clearing and cultivating. Other factors believed to have influenced communalism in land ownership included common problems such as epidemics, famine, domestic disputes, warfare and adventure.[47]

Gusii land tenure systems recognized the fact that certain sections of land were required for communal use. This implies that certain portions of land were left unclaimed or unapportioned for purely communal purposes. These were grazing fields, forests and their products, grasslands for house-thatching grass and swampy areas which were sources of the whitish clay soil used in smearing houses. People who lived in one village grazed their animals together for purposes of security. There were also public watering points in the rivers

and streams for communal use.[48]

Gusii society is basically patrilineal and exogamous since inheritance of land was from father to son through the mother. Thus, inheritance of property was purely defined along male lines of descent.[49]

Women's right of inheritance was further undermined by the system whereby women would also be inherited as part of the property of a deceased man. A report from a committee which investigated the system of land tenure in Western Kenya in the 1930s noted that:

> A woman does not own land. A girl who is married can not come back to claim any clan land. When a man dies his wife is inherited together with her cultivation, by the heir. If the heir is a son, he inherits his father's property and provides for his mother.[50]

Thus, according to Gusii tradition and custom daughters never inherited any property at their parents' clan. A woman's right to property or land was realised through marriage.[51] She had automatic access to her husband's land. When the husband died, the wife remained the trustee of his land that came to be inherited by her sons. If the sons were minors at the time of her widowhood, she could hold property in trust for them but had herself to be inherited by a close relative of the husband, in most cases a brother or cousin. The latter, however, did not inherit the property of the deceased. Property went to the deceased's sons, including those born out of the new relationship between the widow and the man who inherited her. An aged woman without son(s) was allowed by tradition to marry a surrogate wife of her own and chose a mate for her. The woman 'husband' remained the custodian of the children born out

of this arrangement.[52]

From the discussion above, certain observations can be made as related to Gusii land tenure and the position of women. First, a Gusii landholder under the customary tenure was less than a free holder. Women had inalienable access to and use of land through marriage. Sons inherited land from their fathers through mothers on the understanding that the sons would get wives with whom they would work on the land.

2.6 Agriculture

The Gusii came to take up agriculture as one of their primary economic activity when they settled in the Gusii highlands. Initially, they were keen cattle-keepers, an occupation which was regarded as prestigious.[53] The number of cattle a man owned was a measure of his riches and also determined his social status in society. A part from providing milk, meat, ghee, butter and blood, cattle were also used to pay bridewealth.

There were two major reasons that made the Gusii take up food crop production. First, settlement in the thick tsetse fly infested highlands resulted in drastic reduction of Gusii livestock. Secondly, the fertile volcanic soils of the Kisii highlands proved suitable for crop production. However, it should be noted that the growing of food crops was an activity largely left for women and initiated girls since it was regarded as less prestigious than cattle herding. Despite the challenges that confronted cattle-keeping, Gusii men devoted their time to cattle.[54]

The main crops grown by the Abagusii throughout the nineteenth century, in the Kisii

highland settlements, included finger-millet (wimbi), millet (mtama), beans, cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas and pumpkins. The growing of maize was introduced in the early twentieth century. But, it was more difficult to grind into flour; the absence of a water or power mill to grind the grain made it unpopular. Maize was therefore planted at the edges of the farms or sparsely interplanted with beans or wimbi. Maize was usually roasted and eaten. Wimbi was the main food crop and was used in making the traditional staple dish and in brewing the local beer, amarwa. Wimbi was also popular because it ripened a month or so faster than other crops. It was usually planted at the beginning of the long rainy season of March to June.

The sowing of wimbi required the land to be thoroughly prepared as the soil was broken into fine pulverized particles. Weeding of the crop was done by hand and was slow and tedious as it required one to kneel or squat. The use of communal or traditional working groups helped to speed up the work. Harvesting was done by cutting off the ears using a knife made of iron. The ears were carried home in a basket called ekebari. The ears were then spread on a circular mat called Orwambo or on a cowhide to dry. Threshing was done manually using a special rough stone or ekige, a mat-like structure made of slightly thicker sticks than those of mats, to facilitate its roughness. After threshing, sorting and winnowing, the grain was stored in either a pot or omonyoncho, a locally made conical container. Grinding of the grain was done using a laid down flat and smooth stone, orogena, on whose surface the grain was ground using a smaller hand-pressed and smooth-surfaced stone called ensio. It is worth mentioning that the involving processes of grain drying, threshing, sorting, winnowing, storing, grinding and cooking were women's and girls' work.[55]

Millet (mtama) was equally a popular crop grown by the Abagusii. It was easy to grow compared to wimbi. It could be planted in the same field with wimbi. Its grain was usually mixed and ground together with wimbi.

Beans were grown both for their seed and leaves. Both were popular edibles for the Abagusii.

Cassava was planted using the cuttings and was more popular in lower rainfall areas. This was due to its tolerance of drought conditions. It was thus regarded as an insurance crop in case of insufficient rainfall and failure of other crops. Sweet potatoes and pumpkins were also grown as insurance crops though they were not drought resistant.

The pre-colonial Gusii did not use fertilizers in growing crops as the land was already fertile. They practised shifting cultivation, continuously breaking into virgin lands while the previously used land was allowed to regain some fertility by reversing temporarily into bush. However, around the homestead where sheep, goats and cattle were kept, animal and household refuse could be used as manure, particularly on a vegetable garden.

Planting of crops was done once a year. This was just at the beginning of the long rainy seasons of March to June. However, the relatively higher temperatures of the low altitude areas supported the growing of crops twice a year. The low temperatures in high altitude areas tended to lengthen the growing season; thus in these low altitudinal zones crops were grown only once a year.

The first planting season, corresponding with the long rainy season of March to June, was called ekeremano or omaiko. The crops that were planted in the second season of October were called endagera ya omwobo. The name was derived from the name of a tree called omwobo which flowers during this time of the year.[56]

The peak labour demands of the agricultural cycle took place during these two rainy seasons. These were/are busy times of the women of Gusii. These were the periods when the distinctive work roles of men and women were explicitly evident. The table below shows some of the agricultural activities carried out within the agricultural cycle as by 1930.

Table 1

Agricultural Cycle and Work Patterns before 1907

MONTH	WEATHER	ACTIVITY	CROP
January February	Hot/Dry	Bush-clearing Burning of bush Ground-breaking	-
March April May June	Long rains	Sowing (March-April) Weeding (May-June)	Maize, Finger-millet(Wimbi), Millet (Mtama)
July August	Occasional rain	Cultivation of "insurance crops"	Sweet potatoes, Pumpkins
September October	Long rains	Harvesting the grain	Maize, "wimbi", mtama
November December	Hot and dry	- social activities e.g initiation ceremonies, weddings -House building, visits, repairing agricultural tools, trading, hunting etc.	-

Source: Oral interviews.[57]

It can be observed from the above table that January-February was the time for bush clearing and burning and ground-breaking. These activities were concentrated on those fields which were allowed to lie fallow and probably used as grazing land. Once the undergrowth was cut down using machetes (pangas), the ground-breaking was accomplished either with a hoe, which was traditional and was made by Gusii ironsmiths[58]. Ground-breaking was mostly done by women. Men dominated in bush clearing.

March-April was the time for sowing and planting of finger-millet (wimbi), millet (mtama) and maize. This activity was mostly done by women, assisted by children. Men could however come in and help especially when the planting covered large fields. The sowing of finger-millet was the most labour demanding as it called for finely pulverized soils which were carefully weeded. The latter task was painstakingly performed by striking large clumps of earth with a hoe and shaking out the weeds and vines.[59] When the whole field was soft and finely prepared, the finger-millet seed was broadcast on it.

The weeding of crops was done towards the end of the long rains, in the months of May and June. It was women's activity though informants confirmed that men used to participate in the weeding of finger-millet.[60] Weeding for maize, which was planted in rows, was a simple task for someone equipped with a hoe. The case was however different with finger-millet. It required a person to kneel down or squat and pluck each weed by hand. It was a slow and tiresome job.

There was not much work in the months of July and August. However, as men relaxed and paid attention to their herds of cattle, women tapped the 'blessings' of the occasional rains of July and August by tending to their vegetable gardens within the homestead. Vegetables such as chinsaga, amanogu and risosa were grown. Some like risosa grew as wild plants.

"Insurance" crops such as sweet potatoes and pumpkins were planted during the period of July and August. "Insurance" crops were meant to come in handy incase there was a poor grain yield[61]. Bananas also fell in this category and were often in full supply throughout the year. However, bananas were only considered suitable for snacks, and informants explained that

they were not considered "food". Gusii children for example never acknowledged having eaten if the meal they consumed constituted only bananas.[62]

Some women also planted small fields of beans and peas to provide a supplementary food supply, for these could mature during the short rains of September and October. Solitary handicraft activities, such as basketmaking could also be carried out at this time.

The harvesting period in the months of November and December was a season of plenty as granaries were filled with foodstuffs. The period was conveniently characterised by social activities such as initiation ceremonies, marriage ceremonies, social visits and other social 'excuses', which provided opportunities for the consumption of large quantities of food and beer.[63]

The festivities of the season aside, Gusii women had first to contend with the demanding tasks of harvested food crops through the processes of drying, threshing, sorting, winnowing and storing[64]. The helping hand of men stopped after harvesting.

As the year neared its end and the New Year approached, marking completion of the agricultural cycle, Gusii men could be seen building or mending fences to keep a way livestock from the fields and repairing agricultural implements in preparation for bush clearing and ground-breaking.[65] Thus the cycle could begin once more.

2.7 Women in Agriculture, before 1907

Gusii women did more work in food production than men. When the planting season approached, starting from February, men cleared the fields and women tilled the soil in readiness for planting. Most of our field informants confirmed that men helped women in the fields, but concentrated on clearing the ground and burning the bushes. These activities were seen as requiring greater strength and skill. But they were also less time-consuming and less reecurrent. Planting was left to women and children.[66]

Women took very little break after a day's work in the field which usually ran from morning to evening. In most cases, Gusii women had vegetable gardens within their homesteads. These gardens, locally known as ebiticha (plural), egeticha (singular), were not regarded as productively important enough to warrant communal or family labour. Only women with the assistance of their daughters attended to them, and mostly in the evenings after major work in the agricultural field. However, men who spent most of their evenings drinking traditional beer could also use their 'free' time in making and repairing agricultural tools.[67]

Weeding was mostly the work of women and children, though men could also assist. Polygamous men made efforts to fulfil their labour roles such as clearing bushes for cultivation for each of their wives. Senior wives with grown up sons, however, had such tasks performed by their sons as the husband helped the junior wives. Thus a polygamous man's contribution in agricultural labour to each wife's farm was minimal. In fact, men often used the labour of their wives and children to work on their own special pieces of land, emonga, set aside for their own private food production as a security in case of food shortage.[68]

There were times when women were confronted with more agricultural and even non-agricultural tasks than they could shoulder as individuals. Gusii women therefore formed communal or co-operative working groups. The groups aimed at easing the workload during labour peak periods such as weeding and harvesting seasons. Egesangio was one such communal group in which women of a neighbourhood voluntarily co-operated and worked for each other in turns. There were no remunerations though food could be served after work. When the group worked in the morning, it was referred to as egesangio and the evening session ekebasano.[69]

The other co-operative group was risaga. This group worked for one of the members who in turn entertained them with food and beer.[70]

Men could also form the communal groups to accomplish nonroutine tasks which could not be done by one person or those tasks that required to be done quickly. One could summon either of the groups to help in tasks such as bush clearing, building a house, fencing, among others. Women used the groups largely in agricultural tasks such as cultivation and planting of crops, weeding and harvesting.

Risaga was the most popularly used group. A woman, for example, wanting to harvest her wimbi, prepared food and beer. She then chose a suitable day of harvest. The prospective participants were informed of the same and the work was eventually accomplished. This was followed by a lot of merry-making as food and drinks were served in abundance. Food was always available during such harvesting periods. Men were usually invited to such occassions. The entertainment could last the whole evening and in most cases it was men who

left last. Women had to leave in time to go and attend to the children and other domestic chores. Men could even make a follow up the following day to finish and "clean up" the beer pots.[71]

The concept of communal work was widespread in Gusii society. Work was understood as a social activity. It was performed and utilized in promoting social relationships and kinship solidarity. Group members were usually drawn from within their kinship group.[72]

2.8 Storage

Harvested foodstuffs were stored in granaries. Among the Abagusii food storage and preservation were closely related. Food storage and management of the stored foodstuff was the work of women. A man could have his own granary where he stored his agricultural produce. The man's stored food could come in handy during times of hunger in his family. He could also sell it to meet personal needs such as beer and traditional tobacco and exchange for accumulation of livestock.[73]

Cereal produce such as wimbi and mtama grains were removed from their husks and stored in pots or emenyoncho (plural), omonyoncho (singular). The same happened to beans which were stored in pots or bags. The removing of grains from their husks through the involving processes of sorting, threshing and winnowing was purely the work of women and girls.[74]

Bananas, pumpkins, sweet potatoes and cassava did not need storage. Only those which were ready for consumption and sale were harvested. Bananas for instance could be cooked or put

in a pot, covered by leaves and kept for a week or so to ripen before they could be eaten or sold.

Granaries, locally called ebiage (plural), ekiage (singular), were built within the homestead. Each wife had a granary near her house for storing the grain from the fields allocated to her. Husbands had limited rights of disposal over the stored grain in their wives' granaries.[75] However, the building of granaries was the responsibility of men and boys. Their building materials included trees and grass. There were two types of thatching grass. One was known as ekenyoru, found on hill tops and was thin and fine. The other was esasati, found at swampy areas and along river banks. It had broad leaves. Ekenyoru was more popularly used because of its neatness and capacity to last longer than esasati.

2.9 Livestock Keeping

The domesticated animals which were reared by Abagusii included cattle, goats, sheep and poultry.[76] Donkeys were introduced in the second half of nineteenth century by the coastal Arab and Somali traders. Besides land, cattle were the most valued property among the Abagusii. They provided essential products including foodstuffs such as meal, milk, butter, ghee and blood which were highly valued. Their skins and hides were also used in making beds, cloths, shields and sandals.[77]

Livestock and agricultural produce in general also had a religious importance. Religious rituals required sacrifice of either poultry, cattle, sheep or goat. Goats and poultry were commonly offered as sacrifices to the Gusii ancestral spirits or god, Enkoro, during times of

illness, drought or various kinds of misfortunes. However, cattle were also important because they were used in marriages.[78]

Livestock keeping was a demanding activity that required tight security against raids, especially from the cattle-loving Kipsigis and Maasai. Infact, the pre-colonial Gusii security network was based on the protection of their cattle. Men also ensured that the animals were kept in good health by availing veterinary services in terms of traditional herbs and minerals

Cattle belonged to men as heads of families. Herding was entirely the work of men and boys. Some men and young boys stayed in cattle villages called ebisarate (plural), gesarate (singular) with their livestock. They milked the cows and sent the milk to their homes as they consumed some. Young men, operating from their cattle villages, conducted raids and captured cattle from neighbouring tribes. This was one way through which young men raised cattle for bride wealth in their marriages. The younger boys looked after goats, sheep and calves. Generally, Gusii men of the pre-colonial period, concentrated on livestock husbandry.[79]

Livestock was usually acquired either through bride wealth, raids on neighbouring communities, purchase on the basis of barter trade, or through loaning (ogosagarigwa) by relatives and friends.[80] The loaning system operated on the understanding that one was given a cow to look after by a relative or friend. On returning the cow to the owner, the loanee retained one of the cow's calves as his. Bride wealth payments was, however, the major way of acquiring cattle.

2.10 Women and Livestock Keeping

Gusii women were not passive participants in the livestock industry. At marriage they earned cattle and goats for their families in the form of bride wealth paid by their prospective husbands. In pre-colonial Gusii, cattle were socially valued and were a sign of wealth to the owners. Therefore, by earning cattle for their families through bride wealth, women bestowed upon their families all the attributes that go with cattle ownership. This and the fact that marriages established cordial relations between clans formed good sources of prestige and status to the girl child in the household.

Women processed milk to produce butter and ghee which were highly useful in the leather industry and also for eating. They were also involved in the maintenance of livestock, particularly, sheep, goats and poultry. However, women were not allowed to eat poultry and poultry products. The reason given for this was that the chicken is too small, a mere bird, that could not be eaten by women.[81] However, the irony of the issue was that chicken remained a popular meal for both young and adult Gusii men.

2.11 Gathering

In general, the Abagusii gathered forest products for several uses. They could be made into relishes served together with ugali (obokima). They could also be used for firewood, as materials for house building and furniture making and also as medicine. Wild fruits were also popular food especially among children. Some of these fruits included, chinkenene, chinsobosobo, obosangora, chinkomoni and chinyangateti. Roots and herbs were also gathered mostly for medicinal purposes.[82] Gathering of vegetables was the work of women.[83]

2.12 Hunting

Hunting of wild animals was traditionally a male activity. It was not considered a primary economic activity of the Gusii. It used to be undertaken seasonally, mostly after harvesting when most people were relatively free from the field tasks. Hunting was conducted as a sport, an adventure and a supplementary food supply. The activity was dominated by young men armed with swords, spears and clubs. It was well organised and coordinated under the guidance of an old man. The hunting team was usually accompanied by specially trained dogs.[84]

The various types of wild animals hunted included, buffalos (ching'era), antelopes (chingabi), rabbits (ebisusu) and elephants (chinchogu), among others. They were hunted for meat, skins, and ivory in the case of elephants. Various birds were also hunted. They were either trapped or killed with sling shots.[85] Bigger birds like chinkware and chinkanga were trapped by men. They were cooked and eaten by men and children, not by women. Therefore, it was men who cooked the birds.

2.13 Fishing

Since the Abagusii did not live near any lake, fishing was therefore not a common activity among them. However, those who settled along the major rivers of the community occasionally fished. Such rivers include Gucha, Mogonga, Koroba and Nyangweta. Fishing was usually done by young men and, to some extent, women.[86] It was normally done in the afternoon after the midday meal. Among the various species of fish which were caught were mudfish (chinkonye) and tilapia (ebikoro).

Fishing was usually carried out during the dry seasons for example between the months of November and February when the water volume was low. The fishers used hooks (chindobio) and baskets (ebionga) in fishing.

Fish were also caught using a traditional medicine. The medicine was prepared from various indigenous wild plants. The medicine had a bitter or sour taste. When ready , the medicine was poured into the river. The fishing team then moved a few kilometres down stream. On drinking the "treated" water, the fish became drugged and unconscious and floated onto the water surface. Using a basket or any open container, the fishers easily collected the floating fish. This method of fishing was used largely by women.[87]

2.14 Traditional Industries

The pre-colonial Gusii society had people involved in various manufacturing skills. There were people specialised in the making of hoes and iron implements such as spears, knives and arrows. Industrial centres were spread all over Gusiiland. For instance, the Nyangoko iron-works, in the Sironga valley of North Mugirango, specialised in the manufacture of ornaments such as earings, legrings (ebitinge) and armrings (omootoro).[88] There were other iron-working sites in central Bassi, South Mugirango and Machoge.

Iron implements were used locally and others exported. The Luo provided a ready market. Not that Luo did not themselves work on iron. According to Ochieng (1974), the Luo used to leave the art to a few families who thus could not produce enough iron implements for the entire Luo community.[89] Iron smithing in Gusiiland was the exclusive job of men. Most of them grew rich out of this trade which fetched them a lot of cows and goats.

Gusii women excelled in basket-making and pottery. They produced various types of baskets. These included bowls, ebiee, (plural), ekee (singular) and small bowls, ebimunu (plural), ekemunu (singular). The two were used for serving food and beer. The bowls were made out of dry wimbi grass. However, the making of big basket containers such as ebitonga (plural) egetonga (singular), chinteru (plural) oroteru (singular) and emenyoncho (plural) omonyoncho (singular), was the work of men. These baskets were made from a particular type of grass known as ekerundu (singular), ebirundu (plural). Egetonga and omonyoncho were used in storing grain. Oroteru was used for winnowing wimbi and mtama.[90]

Women made pots from a particular type of clay soil which was obtained from swampy areas and along river beds. There were various sizes and shapes of pots. Pots were used for fetching water, storing food and cooking. Pots were also bought from the Luo who seemed to have had superior specialists in the art of pottery. Pots were also used for the brewing of local beer.[91]

2.15 Pre-colonial Trade

The Gusii produced more food than their pastoral Maasai, Luo and Kipsigis neighbours.[92] The Luo were the Gusii's major trading partner. From the Gusii, the Luo bought wimbi, mtama, ironware (spears, arrows, knives and hoes) and soapstone dust for decorations. To the Gusii, the Luo sold cattle, goats, sheep, cattle salt (ebara), hides, milk, ghee, fish, pots, drums, baskets, and sisal ropes (chingori) for tying livestock.[93] There was a high demand of cattle among the Gusii since, on their arrival at the Kisii highlands, they had lost most of their livestock to epidemics and raids from the Maasai and Kipsigis.

Trade between the Luo and the Abagusii was so important that not even occasional hostilities and tensions could ruin it. During such periods of instability, women and children could venture unmolested deep into Luoland and vice versa. Traditional war conventions did not allow attacks on women and children even during actual wars.[94]

Trade between the Gusii and other neighbours, Maasai and Kipsigis was less active. The relations between the Gusii and the two communities, Maasai and Kipsigis, had started off badly during the former's settlement period on the highlands. The Maasai and Kipsigis constantly raided the Gusii and took away their livestock and this tended to ruin chances of trade between them. Therefore, there existed what can be termed as low keyed trade between the Gusii and their neighbouring Maasai and Kipsigis. The Gusii mainly sold ironware and wimbi to them in exchange for milk. Trading activities usually took place at certain points along the borders.

The Gusii pre-colonial trade was dominated by women. The fact that war conventions assured them security against attacks boosted their participation in trade. Women mainly handled agricultural produce and pottery in this trade. Thus the trade was associated with the women's responsibilities. As Gusii women were in charge of preparing and providing food to the family members including children, lack of food in the homestead meant pain and frustration to the mother[95].

2.16 Division of Labour

The division of labour in pre-colonial Gusii society was based on 'sex and age'. It set adult males apart from women and children along lines which contributed to their status and

dignity. There was a very clear division of labour which was manifested in two seperate hiearachies, where the male hierachy (sons, husbands elders) was superior to the female hierachy (daughters, wives and older women).

Gusii women performed the routine household duties such as grinding wimbi and mtama, cooking, collecting firewood, fetching water, taking care of the children, maintaining the house, gathering vegetables and giving advice and guidance to young children of both sexes on various issues of life. They also plastered houses using clay soil.[96]

Mature but unmarried girls (abaiseke), helped their mothers with duties around the home and also with agricultural work. The uninitiated young girls looked after their small brothers and sisters. They also helped their mothers with some of the household chores such as clearing the house and fetching firewood and water.[97]

The following table shows tasks and their performers in pre-colonial Gusii Society:-

Table 2:

TASKS AND THEIR PERFORMERS IN PRE-COLONIAL GUSII SOCIETY

TASK	**PERFORMER**
(a) Subsistence tasks	
Bush-clearing for cultivation	M
Tilling the land	FM
Sowing of wimbi and mtama	F

Planting vegetables	F
Weeding	FM
Erecting scarecrows	M
Harvesting	B
Looking after animals	MF
Milking cows	M
Making ropes	M
Fencing	M
Cutting sticks for fencing	M

(b) Search for food

Hunting	M
Fishing in the river	MF
Gathering Mushrooms	FM
Gathering edible fruits and plants	FM
Gathering edible insects e.g. locusts	FM
Trapping birds	M

(c) Domestic household chores

Cooking	F
Brewing of beer	F
Keeping floors clean	F
Collecting firewood	F
Cutting wood from the forest	MF

Tending household fire	F
Splitting wood	MF
Making iron implements	M
Fetching water	F
Weaving cloth	FM
Slaughtering animals	M
Feeding the child	F
Taking care of sick child	F
Babysitting	F
Counselling children	B

(d) House-building tasks

Gathering thatching grass	M
Roof thatching	M
Gathering vines for binding	M
Preparing wood for building	M
Preparing the ground for building	M
Hauling the material to building site	M
Mud-smearing and plastering	F
Cooking for the builders	F

Note:

B	=	task performed equally by females and males
F	=	task performed by female only
M	=	task performed by male only
FM	=	task performed usually by women
MF	=	task performed usually by men

Sources: Adapted from Oakley (1981).[98]

As appears above, female tasks were connected with much more routine than those of males. The division of labour was characterised by seperateness and seperate spheres; only men could make ropes, or work wih iron, only women could cook, tend the household fire, or brew beer, among other tasks. In hut-building, men put up the framework, women did the plastering and decoration.

2.17 Conclusion

The pre-colonial Gusii society was run on patriarchal power and man was the major actor in terms of decision-making and leadership. Gusii women occupied a relatively inferior position in society though they enjoyed some socio-economic autonomy. Once married, the woman was entitled to her field, granary and house. The division of labour on the basis of age and sex ensured that, at least, each member of the household performed his/her roles for the well being of the family. Although women dominated in the subsistence production, it would be incorrect to impute exploitation in this relation of production. The division of labour was complementary. The capitalist tendencies and its mercantile relations were generally absent

within the Gusii self-subsisting unit of production. The household was the basic unit of socio-economic production.

The Gusii pre-colonial society's major goal was to produce and reproduce the material conditions of existence and community members respectively. Any goods produced or items of trade were regarded as important for their use value rather than capital formation. The women's social roles in reproduction in its wide sense of procreation, caring for children, looking after the elderly and the infirm earned them social esteem and respect in society.

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CHAPTER THREE

3.0 WOMEN AND CHANGES IN THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD TO C.1919

3.1 Introduction

Responsibilities normally associated with women could be roughly categorized as reproductive; child-bearing, child-caring and child-rearing; caring for other family members, for example the ill, the disabled and the elderly; household domestic work including food growing, buying and preparation. Side by side with all this women did productive work: agriculture, and earning an income in a full range of trades and professions.[1] In pre-colonial society, the family was the unit of both reproduction and economic production. This occasioned the existence of a firm division of labour by sex and age within the family, but prevented there being a division between the world of the family and the world of commodity production.[2] Women's productive role was crucial because it was a necessary part of domestic production as a whole.[3]

The imposition of colonial rule in Gusiiland by 1907 fundamentally altered the pre-colonial socio-economic structures. It not only disrupted crucial pre-colonial mechanisms of control over persons but also inaugurated a period of flux that lasted until the Great Depression of 1929. The colonial administration encouraged trade based on the cash economy and urged the Gusii to grow new crops that included export crops. The state oriented such efforts entirely toward men, excluding women from access to agricultural extension services and credit.[4] Men were also urged to go for wage labour outside their villages as women became more bound to the home.

This chapter analyses various colonial socio-economic policies on areas such as land tenure, agriculture, trade and education, and how all these affected Gusii women's position, status and roles in society. By roles we refer to the manifold activities carried out by an individual. Status refers to the value and meaning given to these activities by the wider society.[5] However, status should be construed as a dynamic concept, with the implication of change over time.

In detailing and analysing these aspects of Gusii women's lives, an attempt is made to do so with consistent reference to the overall context of gender relations. Thus we examine issues affecting women in relation to the experience of their male counterparts. This is because any analysis of the situation of women which ignores men is likely to distort the reality..

3.2 Women and Changes in Land Tenure System, 1907-1919

The colonial government in its initial policies on land in Kenya made use of the Indian Land Acquisition Act of 1894. Through the Act the colonial administration was able to acquire land by force for railway construction and for public purposes such as government houses and offices. European settlers obtained land that was expropriated from indigenous Kenyans by the Protectorate authorities through the concept of `Crown Lands'. The East Africa Lands Order-in-Council in 1901 defined Crown Lands as:

> All public lands within the East Africa Protectorate which are subject to the control of His Majesty by virtue of any treaty, convention or Agreement or His Majesty's Protectorate and all lands which have been or may hereafter be acquired by His Majesty under the 'Lands Acquisition Act, 1894' or otherwise howsoever.[6]

The above ordinance was redefined and extended in 1913 to include:

> all lands occupied by the 'native' tribes of the protectorate and all lands reserved for the use of any members of any 'native' tribes.[7]

Section 17 of the Ordinance went further to add that:

> all land .... concerning which no claim or claims for a certificate of ownership shall have been made .... shall be deemed to be crown land.

As far as Africans were concerned these were meaningless and irrelevant assertions. Those who lost their land were not even aware of the existence of these Crown Land Laws. However, they gradually lost their land to the white settlers through enactment of a series of land ordinances. The 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance provided for the lease of land to foreigners on the basis of a ninety-nine (99) years lease. The 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance extended the leasing period to nine hundred and ninety-nine (999) years.[8]

Gusiiland was a special area, far from the centre, richly fertile, but at the same time difficult to cultivate with its hilly terrain.[9] There were no settlers occupying the Gusii highlands. The only white settlers were in a "buffer zone" between Kisii and Kericho. There was also a small coffee plantation near Kisii town owned by a European.[10]

However, the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 which declared all African "unoccupied" land as Crown Land affected the buffer zone. After 1907, the latter was given to the Sotik settlers for tea growing and came to be known as the Sotik settlement area.

However, by 1910 land was still in abundnance. The rights of the individual over land extended over that area which he could effectively till within a period of about three years, while those of the village and clan were governed by the proportion of population to the space available.[11]

In 1911, in the face of the increasing number of land disputes, the colonial government transferred the responsibility for solving land disputes from the local council of elders to the newly formed Native Courts which, additionally, were charged with the responsibility of solving other minor social and civil cases.

3.3 Women and Early Colonial Agriculture

The British foreign office, then in charge of the Kenya Protectorate, allowed settler agricultural production in Kenya in order to make both the Protectorate and the railway to generate funds. The foreign office had been disturbed by the high costs incurred in running and maintaining the protectorate and railway respectively. The protectorate therefore had to be made self-sufficient financially and cease depending on the foreign office. The railway had to pay back the costs for its construction and continued maintenance. It was for these reasons that the policy of settler agricultural production was formulated and launched in Kenya at the beginning of colonial rule. Among other things, it aimed at attracting private investment for development and investment in the protectorate.

However, in the early period of colonial rule the indigenous crops still dominated as the new crops were being experimented with and gradually established. Overtime the Gusii were

influenced by colonial policies to start growing crops for sale over and above the level of pre-colonial production. They were gradually introduced into the money economy and found themselves producing both for subsistence and sale.[12] Consequently, the pre-colonial practice of selling the surplus was supersed by conscious production of surplus for sale, and the emergence of a Gusii peasantry was gradually taking place. As early as 1908, it was recorded by the colonial administration that as agriculturists the Gusii people were very industrious and excellent cultivators.[13] Finger millet (wimbi), was reported as dominating as the main commodity of exchange with the Luo who were said to "look upon the Gusii as a reserve store for food" and to "annually dispose of many thousands of sheep and goats for grain".[14] The administration, however, favoured the production of maize as opposed to wimbi. They considered wimbi "a poor and unsatisfactory crop".[15].

The cultivation of white maize variety in Gusii land predated colonial rule. However, the yellow flint variety was introduced by the colonial establishment in 1910. Both maize and wimbi became the dominant crops grown for subsistence purposes as well as commercial interests. The growing of maize was emphasized because it was easier and cheaper to grow in comparison to indigenous crops like mtama and wimbi. Maize was also regarded as a good agent for the penetration of capitalism in the rural areas because it was a more saleable crop. In the words of Bowles, "maize was introduced in order to assist a change in the mode of production in Kenya as a whole to a capitalist mode".[16]

Colonial officials regarded capitalism as progress and hence saw the cultivation of maize as progressive. The crop had ready market both in Kenya and Europe. Many other crops such as rice, wheat, groundnuts, beans and oats were experimented with on Gusii soil. Beans of

all kinds did very well. Wheat also did well but its major problem was lack of market.

In spite of all these experiments wimbi, maize and intama remained Gusiiland's most important agricultural exports. Through their cultivation the Gusii were gradually incorporated into the colonial capitalist system. The control of the market, the determination of crop prices and the transportation of produce were all controlled by merchant capital dominated by the Indian shopkeeper.[17]

In the years between 1907 and 1919, the colonial government was thus concerned with economic development through agricultural production and trade. The government also aimed at improving communication networks and integrating new crops and agricultural implements into the Gusii economy. By 1909, the ox-drawn plough had been introduced in Gusiiland as well as the European hoe (jembe).[18]

In 1913 an agricultural school was inaugurated at Kisii with an Agricultural Instructor whose name is simply given as Mr. Wiley, in charge.[19] Large areas of land in the vicinity of the school were ploughed and planted with maize and trees under an afforestation scheme which had been launched in 1909. The Gusii were invited to view the work in progress and learn the new technology of ploughing.

Though Gusiiland was not quite favourable for ploughs due to its hilly nature, the colonial administration made a determined effort to train the local people on how to use the new technology in agricultural production. Some 30 bullocks, borrowed from chiefs and headmen, were placed at the Kisii Agricultural School for training and demonstrative purposes.[20]

Besides the ox-plough and jembe, the colonial government also availed machetes or pangas and axes to the Gusii as agricultural implements. The implements were considered more effective and efficient and were expected to replace the traditional ones such as weeding sticks, hoes and swords. However, the latter, particularly the traditional hoe remained in use throughout the period under study.[21]

By 1914 around 1,500 European hoes had been sold to farmers in South Kavirondo District.[22] This showed that quite a large number of local people, constituting the Gusii, Luo and Kuria, were not only attracted to the European hoes but also could afford to purchase them.

The introduction of the imported hoe and ox-plough in Gusiiland inevitably had an impact on the role of women in agriculture. The jembe, which was an improvement on the Gusii traditional hoe, was affordable to the peasants. Its use therefore became relatively more widespread than the more costly plough. In fact, the new iron items such as the hoes, axes and pangas were relatively cheaper than those locally produced.[23] Although at first the Gusii were unwilling to spend their money on the hoes, they eventually gave in to administrative pressure and started purchasing the items. By 1917 there were 12 ploughs in the district, with an additional 34 worth Rs 6,300 brought the following year by Indian and European traders.[24]

3.4 Animal Husbandry

Livestock keeping was one sector of the Gusii economy that was most affected by the imposition of colonial rule. In September 1905, a British patrol was sent on a punitive expedition against the Gusii who were alleged to have frequently stolen Luo cattle. The Gusii

lost a total of 400 head of catttle to this expedition. As a result of ambushing the patrol and killing a sergeant, the Gusii lost another 400 head of cattle.[25].

Colonial administration wanted to transform the Gusii economy by depleting livestock in order to force them to enter the money economy. They thus turned to the destruction of cattle villages, ebisarate, where young men stayed to graze and guard the animals against external cattle raiders. The administration disliked these cattle bomas and regarded the young men as war-like and offenders against the British.

The imposition of a hut tax in 1907, whereby all the huts in the boma were counted and ordered to be paid for, was a blow to the ebisarate. Lack of money, coupled with conscription into forced labour in default of payment, forced the Gusii to pull down the huts in the bomas and, eventually, all the cattle villages were dismantled. In this regard, in 1909, the then District Commissioner wrote:

> In my report of last year, I mentioned that I considered it important that the cattle villages should be broken up and the young men who inhabit them forced to return to their parents' villages until married. This has to a great extent come about automatically through my having them counted for hut tax and informing the natives that every hut in a cattle village must pay.[26]

After the abolition of cattle villages, Gusii men moved their animals to their respective homes, closer to women. What happened according to the recollections of an old Gusii man was the following:

> There came a time when the ebisarate had to disappear for good. This period was a very bad one for the people because with the disappearance of the cattle villages they feared there would be no life for the Gusii people any more in the future. They felt like that because they used almost exclusively things that were produced by their cattle. For marriage they needed cows, they used their skins as clothes, their horns as containers, their milk and meat as food. The decline of the ebisarate came with the coming of the white man, who did not like the existence of groups of warriors, who might form the nuclei for rebellious armies.[27]

The abolition of cattle villages had instant impact on gender roles. The burden of milking cows, previously carried by men at cattle villages, now fell on women. This meant increased workload on Gusii women. It also became the responsibility of women to clean the cattle bomas or kraal.

3.5 Wage Labour

The earliest involvement of the Gusii in supplying labour was in 1908 when they had to offer communal labour on public works. But the numbers involved were small. The need to raise money for the payment of taxes was meant to coerce reluctant Gusii men into wage labour.

In June 1909, some 50 Gusii men were employed in making easy gradient roads. However, even the few enlisted, it was noted, "proved rather troublesome about turning out to work and if left to themselves commence work at about 9 am and leave at mid-day".[28]

Gusii men were not readily willing to be engaged in manual labour. At this time, the Gusii only wanted to raise money for taxes and once this limited objective was met through the sale of agricultural produce, manual labour, particularly away from home, did not appeal to the majority of young men.[29] Thus, in the pre-war period, Gusii labour outside the district, including porterage had to be extracted by force. The 300 Gusii enlisted to work for a contractor at Sultan Hamud in 1910 must be viewed from this perspective of forced labour, given the high rate of desertion (100 before leaving Gusiiland).[30]

Those who were seized forcibly worked with the Sotik farmers, in the Maasai Reserve, in Muhoroni, Kisumu and so on.

3.6 The First World War (1914-1918)

By 1911, with the completion of the roads, the missionaries and Asian traders moved into Kisii. The running of the British administration in Kisii was then interupted by the war when the Germans, wanting to capture the strategic Uganda Railway,
advanced into Kisii. As the British repulsed the Germans from Kisii, the Gusii people staged anti-British campaigns with the aim of driving them out of their land.

The Gusii adopted the cult of Mumbo from the Luo and used it effectively to continue their struggle against the British.[31] Mumboism rejected European customs and advocated a return to the old prophets and old ways. According to the teachings of the Mumbo cult, the whiteman was destined to go and the Africans would be left alone. In addition to this, Sakagwa, the renowned Gusii prophet had promised that one day the whiteman would go.

The Gusii thus embraced the prophecy of Sakagwa and Mumboism in their revolt against the British. However, their stance prompted British punitive expeditions. As a result a total of 3,000 head of cattle were seized and many Gusii men were captured and dispatched to work outside the district.[32]

However, the Germans, from Northern Tanzania kept up a series of small raids along the boundary with South Kavidondo. But when the border locations passed back to the British administration in 1916, South Kavirondo's direct contact with the war came to an end.

The effects of the World War on the Gusii society were fundamental. Other than being sent for 'outside work' for their rebellious conduct, more workers were needed in the war against the Germans as carrier corps. Between 1914 and 1916, 21,684 men were sent out of the district to work within a period of 18 months, an average of 1,215 men per month for 18 consecutive months.[33]

The table below shows the numbers involved in the war in relation to other types of labour.

Table 3: Labour Recruitment during World War I.

Year	Carrier corps labour	Other labour	Total
1914/15	8,915	5,055	13,972
1915/16	6,822	1,070	7,892
1916/17	9,558	1,658	11,216
1917/18	8,758	1,052	9,810

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/2 South Kavirondo District Annual Reports 1913-1923

A total of 42,890 men were recruited for labour between 1914 and 1918 from the district. Most of them were recruited through coercion. Young men were rounded up during sport meeetings. Others were taken from their huts at night. The chiefs and headmen used all manner of force and tricks to avail the required labour under strict orders from the District Commissioner.

3.7 The Impact of the War on Gusii Women

The absence of men from various Gusii homesteads meant loss of male labour. The sexual division of labour patterns were upset to some extent as men were recruited. This led to the relative decrease of land under cultivation not only at household levels but also at community level. The roots of the Gusii's severest famine of 1918-1919 could be traced to the war.

Gusii women were overburdened by both agricultural and domestic activities. The sudden raids and rounding up of men at night for the war service caused fear and dispondency among women and children.

As food producers and providers to family members, Gusii women faced their most trying moments as a result of the war. There was general decline of trade, and it almost came to a stand still during the famine period. Agricultural produce fetched less money than in the pre-war years. The price of cattle equally dropped. But the prices of imported goods rose steadily and, to make matters worse, taxes were raised during the war. The purchasing power of the Gusii fell and, as a result, 75% of the Indian shops closed down. Trade in foodstuffs ceased almost entirely. Only a few Gusii could afford to pay 4 rupees for a blanket which before the

war cost less than 1 rupee.[34]

3.8 The Famine, 1918 - 1919

Famine or lack of food normally affect all members of society indiscriminately. But, it is an undeniable fact that women, as seekers for and providers of food suffer most during times of famine. Children, the elderly, the infirm and men in general turn their `begging eyes' towards their mothers or wives for food whenever they are hungry. It is therefore women who suffer much pain and frustration during periods of famine.

The 1918/19 famine in Gusiiland, though thought to have been caused by drought, is also believed to have been caused by the war. Tired of the war, the followers of the Mumbo cult turned to prophecy. According to Ogot and Ochieng (1972), "the year 1917 is traditionally remembered by the Gusii as the `year of prophets,".[35].

Many Mumbo prophets rose and told their credulous compatriots to keep their hoes indoors and simply wait for <u>wimbi</u> to come by itself and fill their empty pots. The days of the whiteman, they prophesied, were just numbered and that they would disappear a long with taxes and other `burdensome jobs'.

The Gusii were thus promised food and advised to ignore cultivation. With cropless fields, empty granaries and rainless days, the Gusii suffered the worst famine ever witnessed in the history of the society.

The British reacted by arresting the three leading personalities of Mumboism; a Mr. Ogwora, his wife and Ndigiti. The three were deported to Kismayu. On learning that their cult was blamed for the famine, many of its members lost hope and abandoned the movement.

How did the famine come about when Gusii women are traditionally reputed in the art of food storage and preservation? What happened to the food grown from men's portions of land, emonga?

Besides drought and Mumboism, the famine was as a result of the effects of colonial capitalism.[36] It illustrates how the Gusii pre-capitalist economy had been systematically destroyed. Gusii granaries that stored food for a hungry day dissappeared with the monetization of the economy. The surplus food that had been stored as security against famine was now sold to obtain tax money. The conscription of able-bodied men for the war and other labour services meant less food production. The storage of maize, the colonial favoured food crop, was shortlived compared to wimbi.

The year immediately after the war (1919) was a year of misfortune. Weakened by the famine, the Gusii became increasingly vulnerable to the influenza epidemic that swept through the area, claiming the death of some 5,000 natives.[37] The same year saw the emergence of a terrible and strange disease that attacked the private parts of people. Apparently the disease was brought by the returning porters and carrier corps. The disease had a terrible impact on the unsuspecting and innocent Gusii women whose reproductive prowess was threatened. In the words of the medical officer of Kisumu' "... now with the conclusion of hostilities many thousands of porters have carried the infection into districts previously healthy".[38]

3.9 Trade and Transportation

As in the pre-colonial period, Gusii women were active and dominant in the open market trade during the colonial period. Women, seen as inseparable from the family became not only food producers but also buyers of food for family consumption.[39] Though men also contributed to the maintenance of the family, women still remained central as carers and nurturers of the family members.

In a bid to promote trade and marketing, the colonial government made efforts to develop an effective transport system in Gusiiland. Before the introduction of wheeled carts, waggons, bicycles, motor vehicles, tarmacked and murram roads and tracks, the Gusii relied on porterage as their primary means of transport.[40] Gusii women customarily carried, and still carry, loads such as bundles of firewood, containers full of water and agricultural produce on their heads.

Grown up children, especially girls, helped their mothers in carrying goods whenever they were available. Gusii men rarely featured in this mode of transport.[41] They could however be involved in the carrying of building materials, particularly the heaviest posts that could not be carried by women and children.

The use of donkeys for transporting goods is a recent innovation in Gusiiland. They were introduced by the Somali and Arab traders during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[42] The Somali and Arab traders used to come with their loaded donkeys and bartered their beads and clothes for hides, skins, ghee and butter in Gusii villages.

Gusiiland was well served by foot paths that meandered and criss-crossed the Gusii highlands and valleys to various destinations. Roads, just like the Kenya Uganda railway, were built by the colonial government so as to facilitate the appropriation of raw materials from the interior parts of East Africa. They were also meant to provide access to all parts of East Africa for imports that came from Europe. Rodney has correctly argued that the colonial government did not establish the transport system to enable Africans to interact and visit each other, or to boost the internal trade among African communities.[43]

Almost all colonial roads in Kenya, therefore, were feeder roads to the railway that led to the coast from where the raw materials were shipped to Europe. The Kenya Uganda railway reached Kisumu in 1901 and had as its major objective the linking of East Africa with the international economy.

It was not a coincidence therefore that the first colonial roads in Gusiiland were built between Kisii station and Homa Bay and Kendu Bay respectively. The two centres of Kendu Bay and Homa Bay, at that time, were the nearest transport outlets from Gusiiland. Both were situated on the shores of Lake Victoria and were linked by motor boats to Kisumu, where the railway station was placed. Goods from Kisii were thus transported to the ports of Homa Bay and Kendu Bay and then on water to Kisumu. By 1916 there was a propulation of 239 non-Gusii residents in Kisii township who purchased a variety of goods from the Gusii.[44] Such goods included hides, skins, ghee and butter.

By 1916 Kisii township had become a major trading centre - with a non-Gusii population of 239.[45] The following table shows the population of non-Gusiis at Kisii township by 1916.

Table 4: Non-native Population at Kisii Township (1916)

KISII TOWNSHIP	MALES	FEMALES	CHILDREN
Europeans	5	-	-
Goans	2	-	-
Indians	8	4	5
Nubians	24	47	50
Swahilis	20	16	11
Somalis	2	1	2
Arabs	2	-	-
Other natives	26	10	4
Total	89	78	72

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/2, 1913-1923

Though porterage still remained a principal mode of transport among the Gusii, new transport agents in the form of bullock carts and waggons were introduced. Their use was initially confined around Kisii township and used largely by non-Kisii traders and colonial administrators. The latter also hired the Gusii as porters. Those porters engaged in a long period of time were usually paid between RS.3 and RS.5 per month with food. Those hired for a single journey were paid two cents a mile without food.[46]

Many foot paths were cleared and rivers bridged. For instance, a fine bridge over the Kuja river was constructed around 1920 with wattle poles. Bicycles were also imported into Gusiiland in 1914. About 40 bicycles were sold in that year, mainly to sons of the chiefs and

headmen.[47] The rapidly improving roads in the region made the use of bicycles possible. Bicycle usage was also meant to awaken greater interest in the upkeep of roads throughout the district. Among the roads constructed around this period, was one leading from Kisii to Gelegele on the Gusii-Maasai border. The road was meant to serve the new and growing trade with the Maasai Reserve.[48]

The following table shows the type of transport systems which were available in South Kavirondo District by 1919.

Table 5: Transport Systems in South Kavirondo District (1919)

TRANSPORT SYSTEM	OWNER	STATIONS OF OPERATION
1 Wagon	Mr. G. Gethin	Kisii-Homa Bay
1 Wagon	Captain Le Breton	Kisii-Kendu Bay
22 two-wheeled carts	Indian Traders	
1 two-wheeled cart with 6 oxen	Government	Kisii-Kendu Bay
1 mule and 2 half-bred catalonian donkeys	Government	General Safaris for government officers
Human porterage	Anybody	General journeys

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/2, 1913-1919

Table 6: Rates of Transport, (1919)

TYPE OF TRANSPORT SYSTEM	RATES
Wagon transport	Sh.2 per ton per mile
Human transport	Cents 90 per load from Kendu Bay to Kisii, and Homa Bay to Kisii
Human transport	Cents 30 per load per day

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/2, 1913-1919.

Of the new modes of transport introduced to the Gusii, women welcomed the use of donkeys. Most Gusii homesteads owned donkeys primarily for transport purposes. They carried harvested grain from fields and trading goods to and from markets and trading centres. Women also used donkeys in ferrying the whitish clay soil home for the smearing of houses. Donkeys were generally associated with carrying heavy loads among the Gusii.[49]

3.10 Women and Early Colonial Education, upto 1919

In the early decades of colonial rule, education among the Gusii was not a priority. The colonial government was more concerned with general economic progress of the colony. Education was left to missionaries until the 1930s.[50] The missions that undertook the burden of school education in Gusiiland included the Roman Catholic Church and the Seventh Day Adventist Church. Both missions established mission stations at Nyabururu (1911) and Nyanchwa (1913) respectively.

Missionary activities generally challenged African socio-economic and political life. Their primary aim was to evangelize and win Africans for Christ and of 'civilizing' them. Literary education was secondary. This fact was clearly illustrated by Pastor Baker of Wire Hill Mission in Luoland in 1912, who reported that:

> for furthering of the same, we couple the educational and industrial lines. The educational so far the native may be fitted to help in evangelizing his people (sic). The industrial because we believe the "gospel of work" going hand in hand with the "Gospel of Salvation".[51]

The pupils were taught the basic principles of Christianity, as well as rudiments of writing, reading and arithmetic. Missionaries felt that knowing how to read, write and to do sums in arithmetic was part and parcel not only of their evangelizing task, but also of their civilizing mission. Hence education went hand in hand with religion with effect that in due course every aspect of Gusii life was considerably affected.

The Catholic Mission at Nyabururu was the first centre of European education in Gusiiland. From the centre, missionaries travelled across the rural, assisted by chiefs and headmen, as they propagated their religion and sought for pupils. By 29th June, 1912, there were 14 male regular attendants at Nyabururu school, besides those tutored during the safaris.[52].

The question of Gusii girls' education was not addressed at this stage. By June 1912, the first five Gusii boys at Nyabururu were baptised, thus becoming the first christians in Gusiiland. Their names are given as Saboke Ongori, Otero Mairura, Kitembe Nyamosi, Ochumi Nyamosi

and Otieno Ositu.[53]

By 1913 there was not a single Gusii girl attending Nyabururu school. The following table shows pupils attending Nyabururu Roman Catholic Mission by 1913.

Table 7 Pupils by Sex and Ethnic Group attending Nyabururu R.C. Mission in 1913

Ethnic Group	Sex		Total number of pupils
	Female	Male	
Abagusii		26	26
Abatende		25	25
Abagwassi		5	5
Joluo	2	7	9
Total	2	63	65

Source: Fr. J.A. Wall, writing to R.W. Hemsted, D.C., Kisii in DC/KSI/3/2/, 1912.

This sort of progress was halted by the negative attitude of the Abagusii towards missionary work and the outbreak of the First World War (1914). However before the war there were indications that the Nyabururu venture was proving to be a failure. Attendance at the school declined to such a low ebb that by March 1914 there were only 2 Abagusii pupils left there.[54]

The S.D.A. Nyanchwa Mission was hardly making any progress. Betweeen 1914 and 1919 Nyanchwa was unoccupied and no educational progress went on there until after the end of world war one. The battle between Germans and British forces in September 1914 in Gusiiland had forced the white missionaries to flee to the Friends Mission at Kaimosi and Kisumu for refuge.[55]

The general plight of missionaries was tersely underlined by Fr. Wall when he wrote in his diary:

> I can not say that the Kisii are keen on reading as I have had considerable difficulty in getting chiefs and elders to see the utility of their sons and boys being educated. [56]

Thus Gusii girls' education was ignored.

The Gusii called the school egekobo, obosisa, oboraboku, all meaning poverty. They also called it Obwenyenyi, meaning idleness. Those boys who decided to attend mission schools were not enthusiastically welcomed home after school.[57]

The educational effects of the missions was not very noticeable among Gusii women in general because they were discriminated against by the educational system. It was only the male village school teachers and their male pupils who were generally exposed to missionary education. Gusii women only came to be affected as wives of these educated men who usually worked in mission stations and colonial offices as clerks, teachers and catechists.

3.11 Conclusion

The colonial political, social and economic structures were bound to affect women as the foundations of the traditional Gusii culture and socio-economic environment were being shaken and altered. The colonial administration relied on male chiefs in the collection of taxes and maintenance of peace. They recruited only men for wage labour. Women were also excluded from formal education. This marked the beginning of the changes in the sexual division of labour whereby for years, women were to be left doing most of the agricultural work.

The abolition of cattle villages, the imposition of taxation and migratory labour had profound impact on Gusii women's roles in both production and reproduction spheres. Women's role within the household was given new emphasis with increased workload as men were being oriented towards wage labour and the cash economy in general.

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CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 WOMEN AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATIONS, 1920-1945

4.1 Introduction

The years between 1920 and 1945 witnessed significant socio-economic changes in Gusiiland that were bound to affect women in one way or the other. Already by 1920 the new colonial institutions of wage labour, taxation and education had been established. The expansion of agriculture and the penetration of capitalism in the area were steadily pursued in this period. However, further penetration of capitalism was slowed by the two world depressions of the early twenties and early thirties.

The impact of the 1929-1933 world economic depression was the realization within the colonial officialdom of the need to increase the income earning capacity of Africans.[1] Thus the African production of cash crops became a priority of the colonial office.

This period also saw increased interest and involvement of the colonial administration in the education of Africans. Prior to 1920, education was left to mission churches.

The period between 1920 and 1945 was thus characterised by significant changes and increased colonial efforts in the promotion of agriculture, trade, education, transportation and other socio-economic institutions. Land tenure system, legal rights, inheritance and property rights, marriage and family arrangements were all affected profoundly by the vigorous

colonial policies of this period. This chapter aims at a critical examination of these effects in relation to the Gusii Women's roles, status and position in society.

4.2 The Years Before the Great Depression of 1929-1932

4.2.1 Land

In the 1920s the Gusii spread further into the areas bordering Maasailand and Kipsigisland. This resulted to an increase in border conflicts and cattle raidings. Consequently, the Gusii were moved from the Kipsigis border. This led to creation of a buffer zone in the Sotik area which was taken up by the White settlers for the growing of tea.

Though the indigenous system of land tenure had not changed to allow the permanent occupation of part of the clan land by anyone not originally vested with cultivation rights, locations were demanding to have their boundaries definitely fixed by 1928.[2] Due to population increase members of various villages began paying much attention to land. Land disputes and cases started becoming common. According to the administrations land cases formed the bulk of Gusii litigation.[3] This made the administration to brand the Gusii as a "people loving litigation".[4] The land cases were actually a reflection of the fundamental socio-economic changes which later led to land enclosures and sales. Land was thus beginning to acquire market value.

4.2.2 Women and Crop Production

Crop production in Gusiiland recovered from the drought of 1918-1919 though its development was hampered by lack of support from the government. According to van Zwanenberg, colonial policy during this time was aimed at the curtailment of the economic development of African production in order that settler production be stimulated.[5] This policy was evident in Gusiiland as there was no permanent agricultural officer. In the period 1921-1933, an agricultural officer was stationed in the district for only two years.[6] Crop experimentations were thus carried out under the directives of the D.C of the time, who were hardly experts in agricultural matters.

However, inspite of the many experiements in new crops such as wheat, onions, cabbages and tomatoes, the Gusii still relied on wimbi, maize and mtama as the main exportable and locally consumed food crops. Wheat's suitability was hampered by low prices and lack of market, and only a small quantity (20 tons in 1924) was produced for Gethin's milling factory.[7]

Though Gusii women still dominated agricultural production, no effort was made by the colonial officers to enhance their agricultural skills and knowledge. Women were, in most cases, excluded from the many attempts made to promote commodity production through instruction on agricultural matters, mainly carried out by means of barazas, demonstration plots, and seed bulking shambas. For instance, on one occasion in 1921 a group of chiefs and headmen visited the government farm at Kibos for educational purposes.[8] These were all men since there were no women chiefs and headmen in Gusii society.

In excluding women from agricultural training, the government not only undermined agricultural production but also downplayed the central role Gusii women were playing in crop production. Women and their productive work was consequently made invisible.

4.2.3 Women and the Labour Question

There is no doubt that the institution of wage labour had profound impact on Gusii women and the household in general.During the years 1920-1933, labour conditions underwent drastic change. Some writers have shown that the household in Nyanza province, whose members had started showing reliance on migrant labour, were further developed to become labour exporting households.[9] In the early years of this period most Gusii men were forced to work inside and outside the district.

Various methods were employed in luring people into labour missions. Most of the forced labour was ordered out by the chiefs and headmen under instruction from the D.C. The recruiting methods included armed raids and other ploys as holding women hostage in returning camps until they were substituted by their male relatives.[10] Some private recruiters could often misrepresent themselves as government agents as chiefs took the DC's requests to provide labour as an order, to forcibly seize parties of young men and dispatch them as virtual prisoners to Kisumu.

The following table shows the number of people recruited for labour between 1919 and 1929.

Table: 8 Labour Recruitment in South Nyanza District

Year	Outside the District	Inside the District	On their own accord (DCS' Estimate
1919/20	234	322	5,000
1920/21	3,148	141	3,000
1922*	6,837	187	1,000
1923	5,421	105	3,000
1924	2,397	550	10,000
1925	1,294	112	10,000
1926	4,010	3	N.A
1927	8,494	6	8,500
1928	6,710	-	6,000
1929	7,910	-	NA

Source:KNA/DC/KSI/1/1-3 Various years

* The end of financial year was changed from 31st March to 31st December and so 1922 had 21 months.

As shown in the above table, the number of people "registering" for work kept increasing steadily. The table shows only those registered in Kisii thus not representing the actual number of those who went out to work. The majority of workers recruited in this district were registerd in Kisumu or Kericho, and large numbers of the Gusii especially went out to work

in neighborung districts of their own accord and were not registred at all. The DC's estimates for this category are also shown in the table.

Employment outside the reserve increasingly became a major means through which a large number of Gusii men raised money for tax. The transition from Gusii resistance to labour recruitment in the colonial economy to their active seeking of wage employment outside the home district has been well explained by sharon Stichter (1982). She observes that immediately after the first world war the Gusii still showed a "marked declination" to be harnessed to the labour market.[11] The war and the immediate post-war years saw the spread of the cult of Mumbo as a last phase of resistance to colonial rule, taxation and wage labour. But by the 1922 depression, with the reduction of the produce, trade and continued taxation pressure, the Gusii started going out to work in large numbers.[12] They went to the Magadi soda works which by 1925 were drawing most of its labour force from Kisii. The trend of outward labour migration continued into the late 1920s, when the nearby Kericho tea estates became an important new source of employment.

Tea growing requires a lot of labour all the year round. Therefore, for adequate supply of labour to the Kericho tea estates, a European officer was stationed in Kisii to recruit and forward labour to the estates. By 1928 the African Highland produce (AHP) company boasted that "10,000 boys could be obtained from Kisii whenever required".[13]

From the foregoing discussion it can be noted that the pattern of labour migration that developed in colonial Gusiiland largely involved men. Silberschmidt associates this situation with men's marginal role in agriculture.[14] Agricultural activities were shouldered by women.

The latter's workload thus increased with the increased absence of men.

It is also clear at this point that Gusii households became major labour reservoirs. By 1930, Kisii was recorded as having the largest number of migrant workers for the whole of Kenya.[15] In her study carried out in the mid-1970s, Levine estimates that 40% of the men in her area were absent at any one time, with the migrants working in the growing towns and ports, as well as on the railroad and on the plantations.[16]

However, a contract system was coordinated between the labour supply areas and the labour recipient in order to maintain a circular movement that prevented the build-up of a permanent labour force in either the towns or on the plantations. This ensured control of the workers in the cheapest way possible, where part of their security and part of their subsistence remained in their own home areas.[17]

Thus, the costs of household production, including retirement or social security, education, health, and the rearing of the next-generation of workers, were borne by the economy of the African 'reserves' which supported the worker's wife (wives), his children and himself in sickness, old age or on leave. In this way the precapitalist economy became an appendage to the economy of estate agriculture, subsidising its low wages.[18]

Household relations of production were also modified in varying ways - either in the direction of capitalist exchange or the intensified exploitation of "traditional" obligations in the service of the labour market. Young men's family obligations such as hut-building and cultivation were weakened, and hired labour was sometimes substituted.[19] While obligations to parents

and extended kin were loosened, those to elders, chiefs and the estates were first intensified. Wive's obligations to the husband were likewise intensified, as they were pressed to take over more work on family land-holdings.[20]

Women whose husbands went out for migrant labour took over the management of the household as heads and decision makers. Though checked by tradition and living brothers of the migrant husband, these women were relatively 'free' and 'independent' in handling family matters. They, however, kept constant consultations with either their husbands or in-laws.

4.2.4 Education

During this period education was still in the hands of Mission Churches. After the First World war, the attitude of the Gusii towards Christian enterprise is reported to have changed so considerably that the D.C. noted:

> During the last few months however a noticeable change has come over them, one result being that many of them have suddenly expressed a wish to learn reading and writing. Their wish is being acceded to and it is hoped that good results may be obtained in due course.[21]

This claim is also noted in the Nyabururu Diary in which it is stated that during the "latter half of 1918 things got more settled in Kisii country and some showed anxiety to have Nyabururu Mission reopened. As Father Scheffer was in charge he got those anxious to 'read'

and receive baptism to go to Asumbi"[22] This change of attitude among the Gusii towards mission education saw a marked increase of pupils attending schools. In 1920 Nyanchwa, the only S.D.A. school in Gusiiland had 20 pupils. In comparison Nyabururu and 12 other Roman Catholic schools in Gusii locations had a total attendance of 150 pupils.[23]

The number of pupils kept on increasing steadily in the 1920s as shown in the tables below:

Table: 9 Schools, Enrolment and Catechists Under Nyabururu Roman Catholic Mission, 1922

Location	No of Schools/Churches			No. of Catechists			No. of Attendants
	1920	1921	1922	1920	1921	1922	1-8-1922
Bobasi	1	2	2	1	2	2	12
Bogetutu	6	8	3	6	8	3	31
Bogusero	1	1	0	1	1	0	0
Nyaribari	1	1	3	1	1	3	29
Bonchari	4	4	2	4	4	2	4
North Bogirango	3	6	6	3	6	6	40
Bomachoge	2	1	0	2	1	0	0
South Bogirango	1	1	6	1	1	6	121
Total	19	24	22	19	24	22	237

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/20-22

Table: 10 Schools and Enrolment Under Nyanchwa S.D.A Mission, 1920-1929

Year	No. Of Schools	Students
1920	1	20
1921	1	55
1922	11	183
1923	13	600
1924	20	1131
1925	19	1019
1926	27	1597
1927	40	2222
1928	81	3000
1929	90	3155

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/21-29

The Gusii's new interest in education was a result of increased efforts and campaigns by the Church Missions and government officials. The Chiefs and village headmen were urged to stress the importance of formal education to their people. However, Gusii girls were excluded from formal education and this marked the beginning of the changes in the sexual division of labour. Women were home-centred as men's new status was now beginning to be based on education, jobs and labour migration.

4.2.5 Women in Trade and Marketing

Trade and marketing activities in Gusiiland were relatively dominated by women. They were more active in open-marketing trade which was based on the exchange of foodstuffs and other domestic-oriented products. Therefore, the socio-economic changes of this period were bound to affect women in one way or the other. For instance, the promotion of agricultural production by the colonial government led to increased trade due to the availability of surplus produce. The Gusii were encouraged to grow maize, groundnuts and wheat.

However, the 1919 famine and the 1921 depression had severe effects on trade. 75% of the shops closed temporarily and prices of imported items soared.[24] Agricultural produce, especially simsim and wheat had a limited market and prices were low. In 1922 trade improved greatly and approximately 10,000 bags of maize were exported. There was also fair improvement in the production of simsim, beans and groundnuts. In the following year, trade flourished and the value of exports totalled £56,000. This period of prosperity, according to informants, enabled most Gusii households to live a relatively comfortable life. They could afford to purchase European goods such as blankets, utensils such as sufurias; cloths, jembes, among other things.[25]

The rain failure of 1924 caused a slight drop in trade. Total exports amounted to Sh. 1,118,518.00 compared to the 1923 value of Sh. 1,149,949.00. While the value of exports rose to Shs. 1,244,427.53 in 1926, it was reduced to Sh. 1,068,183.95 in 1927 due to yet another rain failure. [26] 1930 and 1931 were disastrous years. Trade suffered from the ravages of locusts and the severe depression. Prices of produce fell heavily with the result that the

purchasing power of local people was greatly reduced. Exports in agricultural produce declined. In 1931 21,211 bags of maize were imported due to famine. However there was an improvement in the following year and the Gusii exported 300 tons of maize, 100 tons of maize flour, 300 tons of wimbi, 250 tons of beans and 60 tons of Irish potatoes.[27]

There appeared to be some form of capital accumulation on the part of some Gusii who were able to open small shops and industry hitherto entirely in Indian or European hands. Such people included the market-oriented peasantry who produced agricultural surplus and accumulated capital.

These capitalists accumulated wealth in different forms. For instance, by 1927, there was a total of five posho mills owned by the local people in Gusiiland; one in Kitutu, two in Nyaribari and two in North Mugirango.[28] Other individuals owned dukas in trading centres and markets. Others invested in the dairy industry for the manufacture of ghee.

4.3.0 The Years of Recovery (1933-1945)

The year 1933 was certainly an important transitional year in the history of Gusiiland. The years of the great depression began to ease around this period. Agricultural produce once again flourished and all crops produced found ready market. However, the major impact of the 1929-1932 world economic crisis was the realization within the colonial officialdom of the need to increase and diversify the income earning capacity and opportunities respectively for Africans.[29] This could ensure uninterrupted payment of taxes and thus the boosting of the

colony's revenues. This became a major governmental and imperial concern as from 1933 onwards.

4.3.1 Crop Production

Eager to boost agricultural production, the government in 1933 posted an agricultural officer to Gusiiland and inaugurated an agricultural school at Kisii. The same year also saw the appointment of a produce inspector in trading centres. His responsibility was to assess the suitability of a crop for sale. A local native council farm was started at Kisii to grow almost all crops for demonstrative purposes. Such crops included maize, linseed, coffee, canadian wonder beans, marrow fat peas, irish potatoes and guavas. Improved seeds of various crops were distributed throughout the district by the local native council. In addition, 700 orange seedlings were issued.[30] In 1936 the first agricultural show was held in Kisii.

In this period the production of maize showed a general increase while that of wimbi seemed to have declined (see table below). The rise in the price of maize early in 1937 proved a great incentive to the Gusii peasants who produced four times as much as in the previous year, with a corresponding value of over five times.[31] This appears to have been the reason for the neglect and drop in the production of wimbi that year.

Table 11 Production of Maize and Wimbi (in Tons)

Year	Wimbi	Maize
1933	603	n.a
1934	884	n.a
1935	n.a	777
1936	631	772
1937	351	2378
1938	n.a	1260

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/4 1933-1938

In 1934 Africans living in areas away from settler farms were allowed to grow coffee for experimental purposes, notably Kisii, Embu and Meru areas.[32] In Gusiiland, 64 beds of coffee seedlings were availed for planting. Initially, the Gusii were reluctant to grow the cash crop. Most Gusii were convinced that the government would confiscate their plots if they planted coffee. Consequently, as Barnes (1976) shows, a positive response to the introduction of coffee was forthcoming from only a handful of cultivators, mostly chiefs, headmen and early educated members of the society. By 1936, a total of only 50 acres owned by 25 growers had been planted in the Gusii highlands, with Chief Musa Nyandusi of Nyaribari having more than 8 acres alone.

By 1937 the attitude of most of the Gusii peasants had changed in favour of coffee growing and, writing in the same year, the agricultural officer remarked "..... it is no longer a question of persuading people to plant, but of selecting the most suitable applicants and

allowing them to plant small areas only.[33]

The introduction of coffee as a cash crop in Gusiiland played a role in the changing patterns of accumulation and status. For most of the colonial period, most Africans in Kenya were forbidden to grow high-valued export crops, like coffee, tea and pyrethrum, for fear that competition would lower returns to white settlers and inhibit the availability of cheap labour.[34] It is therefore interesting to note that when the high-valued crop, coffee, was allowed to be grown by the Abagusii, it was 'owned and managed' by men. Though women provided labour in the production of coffee, they were more visible in the growing and management of food crops.

4.3.2 Migrant Labour

During this period Gusiiland acted as a major labour reservoir. Silberschmidt (1991) observed that "despite conflicting accounts of the extent and length of male migration, there is a general consensus that migration reached its peak in the period between 1930 and 1960."[35] Initially, colonial policies governing wages, housing and migration ensured the workers had no means of staying longer in towns than their labour contracts allowed. There were no long term contracts as they could be hired and fired at will.

However, as time went by, migration became more and more long-term. According to Hay (1984), some men migrated over periods of 15-20 years. These men often lived on 'survival' wages with limited possibilities to tend to their own "consumption needs" and certainly with little surplus for their dependents in the rural areas.[36]

Gusiiland and in fact the whole of Western Kenya was by 1940 a society of women, children and old men.[37] These women were faced with tremendous burdens in the transition toward an increasingly commercialized agriculture. Many more women joined them in the following years and the notion of female heads of households emerged. These were women who were the sole supporters of the needs of the household.

Among the Gusii, there were some young men who went out to work and never returned home to marry. There were also some married men who went as migrant labourers and, neglectful of their wives and children, stayed for many years before returning home. Such people were collectively called abanyamwaka (singular, Omonyamwaka).[38]

There were also the squatters "...a number of Gusii left the reserve in 1934 as squatters on farms in the Sotik."[39] The tea plantation companies, though with a large capital outlay, encouraged squatter labour as a means of stabilizing their labour supply, and by 1933 ".... it was the settled policy of the tea companies to try and create a squatter population."[40]

As a result of migrant labour and squatting, the pre-colonial type of households which functioned as units of economic expansion and social control became increasingly weakened in the process of social transformation. LeVine (1979) correctly noted that money, sex and children were increasingly becoming the sole areas of joint interest between husband and wife.[41] At the same time, it became common for migrant workers to have girl friends in towns or, as noted by White (1990), prostitutes were put at their disposal.[42]

Although migrant labour disrupted the traditional way of life, it offered many possibilities for accumulation both in the short run as well as long term. Some female informants to this study underlined the financial benefits to their households in terms of monthly remittances from their migrant husbands. Bonareri Orera noted that the earnings of her husband, Mzee Orera Mwembi, were utilized in not only meeting basic needs of life but also in educating their children.[43] The old man, also an informant to this study, is a proud father of several sons, majority of whom are civil servants. His small piece of land was quite inadequate to support his two wives and the more than 20 children. The family hails from Nyacheki division of Bobasi, Kisii.

There were also other benefits that were in the form of training and education that some migrants managed to obtain. This gave them a firm footing on a higher level of the employment sector ladder, thus altering the status of the household permanently. Through this system many men managed not only to save and send some cash back home, but to acquire new skills and obtain access to training and education. These opportunities would not have presented themselves had the migrant stayed on his shamba in Kisii. Many affluent men in Gusiiland today worked either in the army, on the railway, or in ports.[44]

4.3.3 Transformation of Customary Law

In British colonial Africa, the principles of indirect rule required that colonial officials administered through local chiefs. They used the chiefs and elders to reach the rest of the people and even in interpreting certain traditions and customs that the colonists did not comprehend.[45] Such colonial chiefs in Gusiiland included Mathayo Ratemo of Bobasi, Asa

Onyiego of Bomachoge and Musa Nyandusi of Nyaribari. Colonial officials also sought to handle conflicts through the application of customary law, with justice meted out through "native" courts.

Driven by their patriarchal interest, both the colonists and Gusii men were keen on establishing control over women. It is reported that the control of women was a sensitive issue throughout the colonial era as the changing economy opened new opportunities and created a demand for women's productive and reproductive labour. This situation was demonstrated when elders forced the colonial officials to reinstate adultery as a criminal offence after Gusii women took advantage of a brief decriminalization in 1932 and took new lovers.[46]

The disruption of customary law and traditional way of life was also demonstrated by the increased rate of sexually related offences. In late 1937, the District Commissioner (DC) for Gusiiland, noted with concern an alarming increase in the number of rape cases brought before the African tribunals and British appeals court. He met with older Gusii men to discuss the 'customary law' regarding rape, and ordered a revision in the tribunals' handling of such cases. In November he called a public meeting; the DC, Chiefs and elders spoke to the thousands of young men assembled, and a 'customary oath' was taken to preclude further rapes.[47]

It appears that by 1930s Gusii women had began making use of the legal system in defence and promotion of their sexuality rights. This trend apparently did not go down well with men. Thus, in a bid to control women, elders started 'misinterpreting' customary law to

colonial officials so as to suit men's whims. A kind of "tradition and wishful thinking" customary law was created through male elders as they responded to what they perceived as their loosened control over women. It became common to hear men referring, with nostalgia, to a mythical golden age when 'women were women', obedient and subservient to men.[48]

4.3.4 Trade and Marketing

This period witnessed increased agricultural production as a result of the use of improved agricultural implements. In 1933 alone 15,000 English hoes and many thousands of pangas were sold by traders. Trade in livestock also increased as the prices of cattle rose steadily. Several cattle and goats were sold outside the district, and many more sold in local markets. As many as 3,000 head of cattle could be seen on market days in Sondu and Nyangusu markets, among other trading centres.[49]

The Native Produce Marketing Ordinance of 1935 provided for the establishment of fixed markets in place and in time. The ordinance regulated trade and marketing activities under the supervision of the District Commissioner.[50]

This period saw enhanced prosperity among the Gusii. The money earned through the sale of agricultural produce and livestock and from wage labour was invested in various ways. Some opened small dukas which were springing up throughout the 'reserve'. Besides, it was reported in 1935 that the Gusii had "... a mania for stone watermills which they now manufacture on their own".[51] Chief Musa Nyandusi had a wheat flour mill.

By 1936 there were, in Kisii alone, a total of 47 bicycles, 17 sewing machines, 56 ploughs and numerous hoes and pangas. Brick and iron roofed premises were being erected in trading centres, and a number of new lorries were seen on the roads.[52]

A number of our field informants seemed to agree that Gusii women dominated in the open markets because they were the major producers of the grain and other agricultural items of trade.[53] Kongstad and Monsted agreed with this argument when they observed that while men dominated in running shops at trading centres, women actually reigned in open markets business.[54] Market places became centres for social activities where women assembled whenever they were not on their agricultural fields.

Gusii women were mostly involved in the trade of grains, bananas, cassava, potatoes, groundnuts, onions, ghee, pumpkins and vegetables. They had a thorough knowledge of their markets concerning market days and availability of certain trade good since each market specialized on certain commodities.[55] For instance, it was not possible to find all items of trade at a particular single market. Items sold at various open markets depended largely on what crops were grown at their respective geographical regions. However, certain trading goods could find their way to distant markets through middle-men in search of higher profits.[56]

The fact that each market and trading centre had its own official market day for trade somehow widened marketing opportunities for Gusii women. It was possible for one to attend, at least, more than one market or trading centre in a week. This was made even more convenient by the fact that adjacent markets, in most cases, never functioned on the same day.

Most of the items were bartered and traded at various markets and trading centres throughout Gusiiland involved their actual producers. It was not a surprise, therefore, that Gusii women dominated open marketing. They were the producers of grain that featured as one of the major items of trade. The Gusii open-air markets were organised and patterned according to the various items of trade. People who sold the same goods were grouped together at a specific point. For example, men and their livestock had a separate and spacious open area for their trade that was characterised by the "running battles" with their uncooperative and impatient animals. For this reason, they had to be kept at a safe distance from the peacefully bargaining women. The women site was usually the most heavily crowded and busy. Shrewd traders turned up early in the day and bought the goods they wanted, only to wait and resell them later in the day at higher prices. Some bought goods and took them to their homes to resell later in other markets with higher demands of the same, thus making good profits.

Out of these trade transactions, Gusii women were able to accumulate profits which in turn were used to meet family expenses such as school fees, clothing and food. Some Women bought livestock, particularly goats using the income obtained from trade. Some contributed towards putting up iron-sheet (mabati) roofed houses. Besides economic gains, marketing activities also presented Gusii women with what has been termed "a social breathing space", away from the male dominated homes and unending kitchen chores.[57] At markets, women socialized with their kin and friends. Every woman knew on which part of the market to meet her relatives and friends. The arrangement of the market place according to trading items facilitated socialization among women. Almost every woman knew the produce her relatives and friends brought to the market for sale. Greetings were exchanged and others sent to those left at home. Messages were exchanged and sent to those concerned through

market goers.

4.3.5 The War years (1939-1945)

The Second World War, just like the first world war, had far-reaching effects on Gusii society. Its outbreak caused panic among the Gusii. Many Gusii ran away into the bush to hide, and those outside the district started streaming back home, apparently fearing being conscripted into the war as carrier corps.[58] In an attempt to explain this fear, the then D.C. remarked:

> It appears that in the last war the young men were caught and sent wholesale to carrier corps, where overwork, undernourishment and disease killed a large proportion of them, and they now greatly dread a possible repetition of this experience.[59]

This fear, however, did not last long as nearly all returned to their jobs while others were forcibly recruited into the war army.

The district was affected by the war in many ways. First, conscription of manpower started through force and propaganda. In 1940 conscription for the East African Military Labour Service (EAMLS) started, followed in 1941 by "assisted recruiting" for essential civil undertakings.[60] This put a strain on the labour resources of the district as the workload and responsibilities on Gusii women continued to increase.

While a total of 98,000 Kenyans participated in the second world war, Gordon (1946) puts the final contribution of the Gusii at 10,000 askaris and a slightly greater number of compulsory civil labour.[61]

The other effect of the war was loss of cattle. Elderly informants who witnessed the war complained bitterly about their animals being taken away at very low prices. This practice of taking away Gusii cattle, coupled with expanded agricultural production was in keeping with the wider colonial policy of producing enough food for the war effort. As Bowles (1979) notes, such extension of acreage for tribute production was liable to cause soil erosion.[62]

The intensification of agricultural production was great. By 1943 approximately half of the export of cereal crop was maize; wimbi constituted one eighth; while ntama, groundnuts, simsim and potatoes made up the bulk of the rest. Coffee growing expanded very slowly to 177 acres in 1945.[63]

The most profound effect of the war was that a great deal of wealth poured into Gusiiland, affecting a large portion of the population. By 1945, a great deal of money had entered the district through family remittances, gratuities and profitable farming.

The prosperity of the war, perhaps coupled with the greater consciousness of the outside world, induced demand for more educational facilities. Before the war, most of the schools in the district were run by missionaries, and only Kisii Government African School offered non-denominational education. Due to increased demand, the Local Native Council decided

in 1944 to built non-denominational schools. There was likewise a rapid increase of candidates for the common entrance examination from 65 in 1942 to 202 in 1944.[64]

4.5 Conclusion

The Gusii economy was steadily integrated into the global capitalist economy. Global socio-economic conditions such as wars and economic depressions were felt in Gusiiland as part of the World Community. As the cash economy was taking root in Gusiiland, migrant labour and trading activities intensified. More and more Gusii women found themselves heading households as men moved to plantations, public works places and war related activities as wage earners.

The introduction of cash crops for example coffee in 1934 and other local but exportable crops such as maize and Wimbi increased women's agricultural workload. General prosperity and expansion of capitalism saw the establishment of dukas, posho mills and marketing centres in Gusiiland as from the 1920s. Posho mills helped in easing women's workload as less time was spent in flour milling than in the past when they ground grain using hands.

Though girls were marginalised in education, this period saw increased efforts and campaigns by the Church and colonial Government in favour of their education.

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CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 WOMEN AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN 1946 AND 1963

5.1 General Overview

The years after the second world war were marked by fundamental political and socio-economic events in Africa in general and Kenya in particular. The spirit of nationalism grew as African not only demanded more political say in their countries but also more educational facilities. The effects of the war also occasioned the need for agricultural reorganization. Generally, the socio-economic developments of this period had profound effects on African women and their roles in society.

In Kenya, the colonial administration's process of agricultural reorganization led to the launching of the Swynnerton Plan of 1954. The plan provided for land consolidation and growing of cash crops by Africans. Increased Cash crop production led to further social and gender differentiation in th colony, including Gusiiland.

5.2 Before the Swynerton Plan (1954)

5.2.1 Land Tenure

During this period the population in Gusiiland was increasing rapidly. Though information on total population is lacking, the District Commissioner noted in 1947 that Machoge location

- one of the most heavily populated areas - had an average of 500 people to the square mile.[1] It was therefore necessary that the Gusii had to adopt a more intensive form of agriculture.

The colonial policy on land in the whole Kenya Colony was now geared towards privatisation of land ownership. In Gusiiland, individuals began enclosing or fencing the land in their possession. By 1953, this enclosure system was taking place at an ever increasing pace.[2]

The privatisation of land ownership contributed to internal differentiation among the Gusii peasantry. Ivanov observes at the continental level that those with big land holdings could provide for themselves, while those with small holdings received a yearly gross income lower than that necessary for subsistence.[3] The latter represented the "village poor" who were continually compelled to seek work in other households or else migrate to cities in search of work. Zeleza notes that "Internal differentiation within the peasantry eventually led to pauperization of some peasants who became a rural proletariat or drifted to towns."[4] This process was exacerbated by the Swynnerton Plan which aimed to create a landless class to provide labour to the landed wealthier peasants.

One effect of land shortages in Gusiiland in the 1940s and 1950s was that men left home for paid work in cash crop plantations and public sector.

5.2.2 Crop Production

The adoption of colonial methods of cultivation in terms of technology and extension services led to increased commodity production in Gusiiland. Another cash crop, pyrethrum, was

introduced in 1948 and began to be grown along with coffee.

Coffee was worth a value of only £1,488 in 1947, but its production expanded rapidly, and by 1954, there were 3,197 coffee growers producing 113 tons worth about £35,680 (sh.713,612/82).[5] The first pyrethrum plots were established in Rigoma area of Kitutu locaiton. It soon proved a popular crop because of its high profitability and the fact that it could be planted in small units that were amenable to the intensive Gusii farming system.[6] By 1954 its production had reached 7,870lbs from 80 acres earning the producers sh.14,953.00.[7]

Maize began to be grown in large quantities due to the good prices offered for the crop. In 1950, the district produced the biggest export maize crop for export in its history, amounting to 500,191 bags or 44,412 tons out of which maize accounted for 442,942 bags or 39,547 tons.[8] Other crops grown during this period included wimbi, beans, mtama, potatoes and wheat.

When cash crops were introduced, women, in addition to their traditional responsibilities in the production of food crops, also became involved in the producion of cash crops.[9] Since they were also actively involved in reproductive activities as well as looking after children and other dependents, women's traditional life patterns were deeply affected.

5.2.3 Labour

Recruitment of labour continued in this period, mainly for the Kericho tea plantations. The

recruitment of juvenile labour began to take place in this period. In an effort to regularize the situation regarding juvenile labour, a labour officer was posted to Kisii in 1946 for the "purpose of enquiring into and establishing the organization required for issuing certificates to juveniles going out of the district into employment so as to tighten and control those going out without parental consent"[10] However, when the certificate was introduced in 1950 there was a sharp drop to only 8% in the flow of juvenile labour to Kericho and Sotik.[11] Consequently, it was decided to do away with the certificate and to institute a modified system, which did not require prior parental consent, although recruiters had to report to chiefs with the juveniles recruited.[12]

The juveniles constituted usually young boys who were lured to cash crop plantations by being given small cash and sweets. The system was instituted inspite of protests in the African District Council and Local Legislative Council.

As already mentioned, one result of the commercialization of African agriculture was the emergence of pauperized peasants. These had to work for the 'rich' peasants as seasonal or permanent labour in order to meet their basic necessities. In such a situation, to quote Ivanov (1979), "Traditional Communal relations disintegrate and produce rudimentary forms of hired labour in which corresponding communal work is paid with money."[13] This became a feature of Gusiiland where the communal groups that traditionally used to provide labour were being replaced by hired labour.

The colonial labour system made men and young boys more mobile and women more confined to the household sphere.

5.2.4 Education

A conspicuous feature of colonial education during this period in Gusiiland was the negligigle number of female pupils/students in schools. While boys were allowed to attend school, many parents were generally unwilling to do the same to their daughters. As most of the teachers in these schools were men, parents simply declined to 'hand over' their 'morally protected' girls to these male teachers whose moral conduct was not known to the parents.[14]

Other factors that worked against girls' education included the agriculturally and domestically overburdened mothers who needed their daughter's assistance. There was also the belief that mothers were the best teachers of young and growing girls. The traditional practice of polygyny also meant that girls were in high demand for marriage. Gusii girls earned dowry in terms of cattle and goats for their families and therefore many fathers could not see the logic behind educating girls who, after all, were on transit to their marital homes.[15] Most girls thus married at the age of around 16 to 18 years. Colonial education was therefore not a priority to them.

The widely held belief that it was a waste of money to educate a girl who would leave home on marraiage and not contribute to the maintenance of her natal home also undermined girls' education. The prohibitive cost of formal education by 1947 with an average fee of 2 shillings and six pence a year in the unaided schools and 5 shillings in the aided schools, also worked against girls' education.[16] Parents were continuously forced to choose which children to educate. The tendency was overwhelmingly in favour of male children.

The following table shows full figures of shchool attendance in Nyanza province by 1947.

Table 12 School Attendance in Nyanza Province (1947)

PRIMARY STANDARD	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
BOYS	43,673	18,873	12,521	7,314	6,090	1,714
GIRLS	16,279	7,841	3,705	1,749	815	224
SECONDARY FORMS	1	2	3	4	5	6
BOYS	682	532	60	71	-	-
GIRLS	86	40	-	-	-	-

Note: Nyanza province constituted of the Gusii, Luo and Kuria.

As we can observe from the above table, the figures show a low attendance of girls compared to boys. Girls' school attandance in Nyanza province declined as they ascended from one class to another. Unlike boys who, though few in numbers, made it up to the fourth form, not a single girl had gone beyond second form by 1947.

The figures on the above table show that a majority of girls received early primary education before dropping out of school. Fees charged in nearly all schools were increased as the child passed up through standards and forms. By 1940s and 50s the fees charges were considered prohibitively costly to parents. However, the major reason that hindered girls' education in Gusiiland was the overwhelmingly negative attitude that the community attached towards girls' education.

The apparent apathy towards female education among the Gusii became a worrying trend to the colonial government. In his annual report of 1952, the then South Nyanza District Commissioner tried to explain the reasons behind the high rate of drop-out of girls from school.[17] To him many girls went to school just to get baptised at a mission station. Others were driven away from school by the sheer neglect by male teachers. Customarily, Gusii men were not encouraged to cultivate close or intimate interaction with girls.

However, the colonial government officials, through chiefs and with the help of mission churches, continued to urge Gusii parents to take their girls' education seriously. They made great efforts through propaganda, articles and barazas, in favour of female education.[18]

5.3.0 The Years After the Swynnerton Plan (1954) Upto 1963

5.3.1 Land Tenure

The concept of communal ownership in Gusii land tenure was altered by the British colonial land policy. The Swynnerton Plan of 1954 had the greatest and most fundamental impact on the African communal ownership of land.[19] The plan was drawn up by R.J.M. Swynnerton, the then Assistant Director of Agriculture. It recommended the abolition of traditional systems of land tenure. It also aimed at the promotion of agriculture through land reform in the shape of land consolidation programmes and the registration of individual titles. The plan also provided for increased extension services, processing and marketing services, and the provision of some credit to African farmers. It encouraged the increase of output of cash crops among African farmers, notably coffee, pyrethrum and tea. The seeds were availed to

thousands of farmers in 1950s and cooperatives urged for their marketing.

In Gusiiland, the enclosure of personal and private land continued steadily during this period. It was felt that there was not much land fragmentation and so land registration and the issuance of land titles on the enclosed land holdings were delayed until after independence.[20]

5.3.2 Crop production

1954 was another watershed of commodity production expansion in Gusiiland. Crop production underwent drastic changes after the Swynnerton Plan. Maize and Wimbi were relegated to the position of mere food crops, and their place taken by the more valuable cash crops: coffee, pyrethrum and tea. Tea was introduced in Gusiiland in 1957. The decline of maize and wimbi in the period after 1955 was exacerbated by the fall in their prices as shown in the table below.

Table: 13 Maize and Wimbi Yields, Price and Value (1955-1961

Food Crop	Yield per acre (bags)		Price per bag (sh)		Value per acre (sh)	
	1955	1961	1955	1961	1955	1961
Maize	6	9	25.80	22.30	154.80	200.70
Wimbi	4	4	30.50	27.75	122.00	91.00

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/17,23, 1955, 1961

As shown in the table above, the price of maize dropped from sh. 25.80 a bag in 1955 to sh. 22.30 in 1961, while that of wimbi dropped from sh. 30.50 to sh. 27.75 over the same period.

Although the price of wimbi was increased to sh. 39.05 in late 1961 to induce farmers to sell their crop, very little was available.[21]

The production of cash crops, especially coffee and pyrethrum, became more significant in the 1950s. Prior to this period, introduction to the cash economy in Gusiiland had been through sale of labour and irregular sales of cereals and livestock.[22]

The following table shows estimates of areas cultivated and average yields by 1955 in South Nyanza District.

Table: 14 Acreages and Average Yields of Cash Crops in Soth Nyanza District by 1955

Cash Crops	No. of Growers	Total Area Cultivated (Acres)	Average Yields
Coffee	4,584	2,178	1,707
Pyrethrum	463	101	101
Tea	-	-	-

Source: KNA DC/KSI/5/3, South Nyanza Gazette, 1943-1955

The first coffee factory was built in Gusiiland at Mogunga in 1952. By mid-1950 the bulk of the crop in South Nyanza district came from the Gusii highlands. Out of 31 coffee societies in South Nyanza in 1960, 26 were in Gusiiland.[23] The Gusii peasants took advantage of the removal of the maximum acreage limitation on coffee, and its total production rose to 4,400 acres grown by 1,900 farmers, earning them over £300,000 in 1961.[24] By 1963, the crop was being grown by 36,140 farmers with corresponding increase

in acreage and income.[25]

The production of coffee brought social and economic stratification among the Gusii households. Not all Gusii households were able to meet the requirements of producing improved quality coffee. It was only the rich peasants who were able to effect the nstructions of the agricultural field staff. The latter trained farmers in the details of culture, pruning, nursery work, planting bench terracing and disease control.

The production of pyrethrum increased steadily and by 1963, the Gusii earned 11.3% of the national pyrethrum returns.[26] Tea, the third major crop, was first planted at Mokomoni and later at Magombo in East Kitutu location. However, Kisii remained relatively low in relation to total tea production in Kenya. In 1961 only 0.04% of the nation's production came from Gusiiland. By 1963 it had increased to 0.13%.[27]

The introduction and subsequent growth of cash crops in Gusiiland undoubtedly altered production and labour processes involved in food crop production. Households that expanded their acreage of cach crops were forced to change their traditional labour patterns.

By the 1950s when Robert and Barbara LeVine carried out their study in Kisii, women were reported to be doing almost all the cultivaiton - from breaking ground with hoes to harvesting. They milked the cows. They also kept an eye on the herding which was done by preadolescent boys who had replaced young men in this job.[28] Women were also involved in the production of cash crops as labourers.

While Gusii women still managed the production of food crops and the provision of food to family members, men became increasingly dominant in the management of cash crop production and the control of its income. All the colonial agricultural field officers were men who, customarily, targetted male members of the hoursehold.[29] Thus men were the first recipients of education on modern agricultural techniques and technology. Cash derived from sale of coffee, pyrethrum and tea was usually collected by men.

Most male informants of this study indicated that men's sources of income included cattle, wage labour and cash crops. The areas of their financial responsibilities were clearly defined as school fees, school funds, uniforms, books, tools and seeds and other inputs in the production of cash crops.[30] Most men also clothed their family members. Men also bought prestigeous family items such as radios, lamps and comfortable furniture. The provision of food for the family continued to be the obligation of women, though men sometimes contributed money for food as their wives could not manage on their own.

Naturally different men's financial contributions to the household varied considerably. In most cases the income of the majority was not regular. Therefore, more often than not it was women who were reliable providers of the households. Many female informants claimed that they received little or no contributions from their husbands.[31]

Gusii men socialized a lot with other men. This mainly meant drinking local beer which included busaa and chang'aa. Some spent large amounts of money in drinking. There were those who spent virtually all they earned on beer and then came home drunk and took their wives' savings by force.[32]

5.3.3. Labour

During this period there was a marked decrease in the flow of labour from Gusiiland. Those who moved out of the district worked in Sotik and Kericho tea plantations. Locally, the main employers included the government and cooperative societies. The Kisii Farmers Cooperative Union (KFCU) had 26 coffee primary societies, while Masaba Farmers Cooperative Union (MFCU) had 24 pyrethrum primary societies.

The decline of migrant labour in Gusiiland was due to a number of factors. First, there was the realization that reserves had great potential in the generation of wealth. Secondly, the Swynnerton Plan opened the way for expanded commodity production. Thirdly, the civil service opened new opportunities for the educated people. Lastly, the enclosing and privatisation of land, coupled with extension services, credit and loaning system attracted Gusii men towards settling down as farmers. For instance in 1956 the South Nyanza Joint Board approved a total of £6,950 as loans issued to 26 shopkeepers and farmers.[33]

The emergence of a rural capitalist class contributed to the destruction of the migrant labour system as the poor peasants regularly engaged in wage labour in the farms of local rich peasants. The latter and several other young men however, continued going to Kericho and Sotik tea plantations as wage labourers.

Young men who went for wage labour earned money that replaced agricultural income and purchased items that they desired such as the radio, cloths among others. Some, particularly those from poor families, were able to raise dowry on their own for marriage. Thus, their

lessened dependence on the patriarchal land and livestock eroded the control of elders over the young men.[34]

The institution of marriage became flexible during the colonial period. Elders gradually lost control over marriage arrangements as youngsters eloped with no previous bridewealth negotiations. Oibi Seme, an informant of this study, and many others got their wives through elopement.[35] These 'unions' were however legalised later with the concerned men paying bridewealth. Traditional marital stability among the Gusii was closely linked to the fact that custody over children were vested in the husband who had paid bridewealth.

5.3.4 Marketing and Transportation

By 1950s, Gusiiland was well served and connected by a network of murram roads, linking various emerging market and trading centres. All of this led to the growing of the administrative and commercial centre of Kisii township. The colonial government's efforts to promote both trade and cash crop production in Gusiiland led to the government's increased interest in constructing as many roads as possible so as to open up the interior of Gusiiland to the outside world.

The following table shows some of the major and minor road systems and their mileages, in Gusiiland by 1955.

Table 15:

Road Network in Gusiiland (1955)

ROADSMILES

ROADS	MILES
Sondu to Ikonge	10.4
Chemosieto	1.1
Kisii to Nyangusu	24.8
Kisii to Ekerubo	16.0
Kisii to Keroka	17.0

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/2, 1913 - 1923
KNA DC/KSI/5/3, 1943 - 1955

The improved road and track transport systems opened up the interior of Gusiiland to colonial administrative officers and traders at Kisii station. The roads linked trading centres and markets. Others passed through rich agricultural areas. Some roads led to mission stations and schools such as Kamagambo, Nyabururu, Sengera and Itierio.[36]

The donkey continued to be used for transportation purposes by Gusii women, especially in their open marketing activities.[37] Almost all our female informants confirmed the ownership of a donkey at least in their respective life times. One of them, Martha Nyarangi, aged 86, talked with a lot of nostalgia about her own donkey which she gave the name Toto and owned in the 1950s and 1960s.[38] She used her donkey to carry fermented and fried maize flour to distant and nearby markets and trading centres such as Igare, Mogonga and Nyangusu for sale. Nyarangi hails from Nyangusu sub-location in Bassi Borabu, about 2 kilometres from Nyangusu Market. Igare and Mogonga are about 20 and 15 Kilometres respectively

from her home.

This period experienced the rise and development of market centres. An arrangement was created whereby markets and trading centres had specific market-days during the week. This ensured that women attended effectively to all their social and economic obligations. Hundreds of people congregated at the market centres to barter and buy produce and other items.

Marketing activities were conducted within one day, from morning to evening. Ideally, women were supposed to return to their homes before darkness so as to attend to their other obligations of preparing food for their families.[39] Women were not encouraged to come home at very late hours, for example after 8 p.m. Gusii custom demanded that wives should be at home before husbands. However, husbands, grown up children or relatives could go looking for their wives, mothers or female relatives who failed to turn up in time.[40]

It was the responsibility of the marketing officer with the help of his inspector to decide when the produce was in a condition to be marketed. This largely depended on the produce's dryness and fineness of the produce particularly for coffee, pyrethrum, maize and wimbi. Unsuitable and undergrade produce was turned away by inspectors. The officers also declared the dates on which each market would be opened for buying any particular type of produce[41]

The following table shows some of the names of township, trading centres and markets in Gusiiland by 1955.

Table 16:

List of some of the Townships, Trading Centres and Markets by Location (1955)

MARKET CENTRES	LOCATION	MARKET DAYS	MILES (FROM KISII TOWNSHIP)
Kisii Township	Kitutu	Everyday	-
Ogembo	Machoge	Sunday	18
Nyangusu	Bassi	Tuesday	30
Bunyunyu	North Mugirango	Wednesday	16
Keroka	Nyaribari	Sunday	17
Riana	Wanjare	Wednesday	10
Igare	Bassi	Wednesday	15
Nyamache	Bassi	Sunday	23
Nyacheki	Bassi	Sunday	35
Kenyenya	Machoge	Wednesday	24
Magenche	Machoge	Sunday	32
Mogonga	Machoge	Sunday	22

MARKETS	LOCATION	MARKET DAYS	MILES (FROM KISII TOWNSHIP)
Riosiri	South Mugirango	Sunday	19
Nyamarambe	South Mugirango	Friday	22
Mochorwa	South Mugirango	Wednesday	28
Keumbu	Nyaribari	Thursday	8
Gesusu	Nyaribari	Tuesday	28
Masimba	Nyaribari	Sunday	24
Marani	Kitutu	Wednesday	11
Tombe	Kitutu	Thursday	9
Manga	Kitutu	Monday	9
Nyambunwa	Wanjare	Sunday	6
Matongo	Wanjare	Wednesday	9
Motonto	Wanjare	Sunday	10
Kebirigo	North Mugirango	Thursday	22
Ikonge	North Mugirango	Friday	33
Bundu	North Mugirango	Friday	19

Source: KNA DC/KS1/5/3. South Nyanza Gazetter, 1943 - 1955

5.3.5 Education

By 1956, there were three types of schools attended by girls in Gusiiland. These included day mixed schools, girls' boarding schools and primary top schools. The primary top school, Itierio, established by the Swedish Lutheran Mission at Wanjare, was outstanding and provided a high standard of academic education to girls.[42]

The following table shows major post primary institutions of learning in Gusiiland by 1955.

Table 17: Major Post Primary Institutions in Gusiiland by 1955

TYPE	NAME OF SCHOOL	SPONSOR	LOCATION
Secondary:	Government African School, Kisii	Colonial Government	Kisii
Intermediate	Kereri	District Education Board	Nyaribari
"	Gionseri	District Education Board	Bassi
"	Nyabururu	Roman Catholic Church	Kitutu
"	Amasago	Roman Catholic Church	Nyaribari
"	Itibo	Pentecostal Assemblies of God	Kitutu
"	Itiero	Swedish Lutheran Mission	Wanjare
"	Nyanchwa	Seventh Day Adventist	Nyaribari
"	Sengera	Seventh Day Adventist	Kitutu
"	Gesusu	Seventh Day Adventist	Nyaribari
"	Magena	Seventh Day Adventist	Machoge
"	Motagara	Seventh Day Adventist	North Mugirango

Source: KNA DC/KSI/5/3 South Nyanza Gazetter, 1943-1955.

According to one female informant, Milcah Nyambeki Nyaanga, a retired secondary school headmistress and among the first few Gusii women graduates, Luo girls usually outnumbered Gusii girls in Nyanza province schools.[43] Giving the example of Itierio Boarding which she joined in 1959 for her upper primary education, Nyambeki observed that there were about 5 Gusii girls while the majority were Luos and a few Luhya. She affirmed that Gusii parents had a low opinion towards girls' education.

The nature of colonial education offered to girls in all schools had a practical bias. Skills such as needlework, sisal work, knitting and other crafts were emphasized. Colonial education also tended to guide girls toward professions such as nursing, midwifery and teaching.[44] These were regarded as domestically oriented professions where women `naturally' dominated.

The performance of girls in government examinations was below average. For instance, in the 1958 Kenya African Primary Education (KAPE), only 34 girls passed out of 104 who sat in South Nyanza District.[45] It is most probable that lack of educated women as role models, general apathy and laxity among girls and teachers retarded their educational performance.

The demand for and interest in girls' education began to gain momentum by 1960. Gusii parents had realized that the higher the education their daughters acquired, the higher the dowry likely to be paid by the prospective husbands.[46] The colonial government and church missions intensified their campaigns in favour of female education. A study of the following table on the council expenditure in 1960 on the main services, reveals the government's effort in the promotion of education in the district.

Table 18:

South Nyanza Council's Expenditure on the main Services in the District (1960).

SERVICES	EXPENDITURE	% OF WHOLE
Education	217,000	44
Public Health	97,000	20
Roads and Bridges	60,000	12
Agricultural Services	18,000	4
Water Supplies	15,000	3
Community Development	11,000	2
Administration	30,000	6
Other Expenditure	45,000	9
	493,000	100%

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/22 South Nyanza District Annual Report 1960.

As shown in the table above, education took 44% of the total council expenditure on the main services in the district. This underlines the importance and level of commitment the colonial government attached to the education of Africans.

The following table shows school attendance statistics for only the Gusii in 1961.

Table 19: School Attendance for only Gusii Children (1961)

SCHOOLS	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL
Aided Primary	25,640	9,065	34,705
Aided Intermediate	6,209	727	6,936
Aided Total	31,849	9,792	41,641
Unaided Primary	3,627	1,803	5,351
Unaided Intermediate	577	309	886
Unaided Total	4,204	2,112	6,237

Source: KNA DC/KSI/1/22 South Nyanza District Annual Report 1961.

5.3.6. Conclusion

This period saw the transformation of land into a legal property as per the Swynnerton plan of 1954. The privatisation of land ownership was in favour of men. Women were thus marginalised in terms of land ownership and general management.

The introduction of pyrethrum and tea in Gusiiland during this period led to the intensification of cash crop production. Men were more conspicuous in commercial agriculture compared to women dominated subsistence production.

Migrant labour was at its peak in the 1940s and 1950s. However, by early 1960s it showed a declining trend. This was due to the increased economic openings in terms of commercial agriculture and trading activities, boosted by the availability of extension services, loans and

credit facilities from the government. The establishment of formal markets and trading centres throughout Gusiiland enhanced Gusii women's income generating opportunities.

Gusii girls' education gained momentum as a result of increased campaigns by the government and church missions. The parents were also beginning to develop notable interest in the education of their daughters. Girls were taught skills in homescience besides learning reading, writing and doing some arithmetic.

Though the general socio-economic activities of this period were for the welfare of the members of society, it is instructive to note that men were more conspicuous in commercial agriculture. Therefore, the position of Gusii women deteriorated with the introduction of cash crops and the cash economy in general.

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CHAPTER SIX

6.0 SELECTED BIOGRAPHIES

This chapter presents case studies of Gusii women who lived and participated in the colonial socio-economic system. It is an illustration of their personal experiences as young girls and married women.

It is hoped that the selected biographies of four ordinary Gusii women would show the life and participation of women in the colonial socio-economic establishments. The choosing of these women as case studies was not based on any special consideration. They are among the 51 female informants of this study. They are Paustina Kwamboka Chweya, Peris Kimaiga, Rael Ondieki and Kiboi Nyang'arisa.

6.1 Paustina Masese Kwamboka Chweya

Paustina Kwamboka was born in 1907. Her mother, Bochaberi Nyaituga, was the eighth wife of Mzee Muma Nyabaga's 12 wives. The father belonged to Botabori clan of Kitutu location. Her mother had only one other child apart from Kwamboka.

Kwamboka grew up in her father's homestead. Her mother had her own house, granary and piece of land for cultivation.

The parents were actively involved in food crop production and livestock keeping. They grew subsistence crops such as wimbi, mtama, potatoes, maize and beans. The animals kept included cattle, goats, sheep, poultry and donkeys.

As a young girl Kwamboka helped her mother in household chores such as food preparations, collection of firewood, fetching water and in crop cultivation. She together with her step sisters and brothers worked on their father's piece of land, emonga.

Kwamboka did not attend colonial schooling. She says her parents did not see the need of her going to school. Further more, the schools were situated too far away from home.

After undergoing initiation rites in the early 1920s, Kwamboka got married in 1925 to Samuel Chweya of Bomatara clan in Kitutu. She recalls her husband having gone to Mombasa soon after marriage, for wage labour. He worked with East African Railways at sh. 3.00 per month.

Kwamboka hardly received any cash remittances from her husband. She received some cotton sheets and a blanket from him. He could however use his monthly income to purchase a goat or a cow. The cost of a goat ranged between sh. 2.00 to 3.00 whilst that of a cow was sh. 8.00 to 11.00

Kwamboka was hardworking. She brew local beer (busaa) for commercial purposes. One pot of busaa sold at sh. 3.00 to 5.00. She also participated in open-air marketing. In the 1930s and 1940s, she used to buy maize which she later sold to Indian traders at Oyugis at

sh. 3.00 per kilogramme. She obtained pots from Luos in exchange of wimbi. She also sold poultry. An egg fetched five cent and chicken sh. 1.00 to 1.50.

Kwamboka used her income to provide for her children and to accumulate property. For instance she bought several goats and a cow in the early 1940s. The latter was jointly owned with her husband. The animals were often used as bride wealth in their sons' marriages.

In late 1940s Kwamboka's first daughter, Selina Kemunto, got married. She fetched 15 head of cattle and 10 goats as dowry. There was no grown up son to use the animals in marriage. Kwamboka however urged her husband to use the animals in marring a second wife.

Chweya, however, was reluctant to marry another wife. He instead wanted to sell the animals and purchase an ox-plough then costing about sh.50.00. Kwamboka would not hear of this. She insisted on her husband taking a second wife so that her daughter's dowry would not 'go to waste'. Kwamboka herself came from a polygamous family and so believed it was desirable to have a large family. She had bore only five children. She therefore hoped to enlarge the family through a second marriage. She also wanted a helping hand in crop cultivation and other productive and reproductive tasks.

Kwamboka was eager to educate her children in the colonial schools. However, her two daughters, Kemunto and Marcella, dropped out of school at standards 4 and 5 respectively, in favour of marriage. Kemunto, through the influence of her husband, managed to become an agricultural officer, like her husband. Her three sons pursued their studies upto secondary level. The first two, Omoke and Makori, became teachers and the youngest, Araka, got

employed as a clerk in the D.C.'s office.

It was through Kemunto's efforts and influence that her parents started growing coffee in the 1950s. The former provided seedlings and the necessary techniques for coffee production. At first the crop fetched 10 cents per kilogramme. Kwamboka recalled having once earned sh. 15.00 a month. The coffee earnings enabled them to build an iron-sheet house, the first of the kind in their area, Nyamataro.

Her husband, who had settled down as a butcher as early as 1930s became the first to own a motor vehicle, in their area.

6.2 Peris Ondieki Kimaiga

Peris Ondieki was born in 1921 to Ombasa Ocharo and Elizabeth Kerubo of Bokinami clan in Bobasi location. Her parents were, like most Gusii households, cultivators of wimbi, maize, mtama, beans, bananas and potatoes. They also kept cattle, goats, sheep and poultry.

Her father, Ombasa, had five wives. Peris' mother was the fourth wife. She grew up and was educated and socialized according to Gusii traditions and customs. She helped her mother in food crop production and household tasks. She, along with her brothers and sisters, also worked on their father's portion of land.

Peris did not receive formal education because her parents were not interested in educating their daughters. This was demonstrated by the fact that almost all her brothers attained at

least some formal education.

After initiation in 1938, Peris was married to Joseph Kimaiga of Bosansa clan in early 1940s. He paid her parents 14 head of cattle and 15 goats as dowry. While she tilled their land for subsistence production, her husband worked as a colonial policeman to Chief Mathayo Ratemo of Bobasi.

As a wife of a policeman, Peris argues that she led a relatively easy life compared to her counterparts in the neighbourhood who depended largely on their fields for a livelihood. Though her husband's salary was meagre, around sh. 5.00 a month, Peris observes that the family gained a lot in terms of exposure, new ideas and experiences that he obtained as a colonial police officer.

Their keen interest in educating both their daughters and sons was their response to the colonial government's concern and campaigns for girls' education in the 1940s and 1950s. Kimaiga and his wife, Peris, sent all their children to school. One of her three daughters, Mokeira, became a primary school teacher.

Although Peris was not active in trade and marketing, she admits having been successful in farming. Theirs was among the few households that owned an ox-plough as in the early as 1950s. Besides food crops, they were by 1963 active growers of coffee and pyrethrum as cash crops.

Though not able to recall the exact monthly earnings, Peris argues that theirs was a relatively

affluent family as was demonstrated by the large herd of cattle and cash crops farms they owned.

Kimaiga, against common practice, never married another wife though Peris urged him to marry a second wife and even went ahead to identify a potential bride. This behaviour surprised many of his relatives and male colleagues in the neighbourhood. Perhaps, as Chief Mathayo's policeman, Kimaiga had witnessed disapprovingly the many problems associated with large families since the chief had at least 9 wives.

6.3 Rael Bosire Ondieki

Born around 1910, Rael was among the first few Gusii girls who obtained colonial education. Her parents embraced Christianity and were active followers of the teachings of Seventh Day Adventist Church. Rael was thus among a group of 8 girls who lived and were educated at Gionseri S.D.A. Mission Centre in the 1920s. She later joined Nyanchwa Mission, near Kisii town for further schooling.

Rael's father was a colonial policeman and was stationed at Kericho. This meant that he was easily accessible to colonial influences and concerns. This exposure, coupled with Christianity, explains his keen interest in educating both daughters and sons. His Christian background also explains why he never thought of marrying a second wife.

Rael would have pursued her education further had it not been that there was some propaganda in the village to the effect that educated girls would never marry. The

propaganda originated from the villagers themselves. Consequently, she withdrew from school and got married in 1930. The Gusii society still attached great importance to the institution of marriage as the ultimate goal for self-fulfilment.

Her husband, Ondieki Sanaya, was a teacher but resigned in the 1940s and went to work at Kericho tea plantations as a nyapara (somebody in charge of a group of plantation workers). Ondieki did not let his wife know how much he earned and Rael confirms that women were not supposed to know the amount their husbands earned as salaries.

The money Ondieki earned was used in paying school fees, buying school uniforms and cattle. Ondieki also purchased household basics such as blankets, utensils and furniture. Rael supplemented the family income by participating in active trade. She owned a donkey which she used in transporting fermented and fried unga (chinkara) that was used for brewing beer. She made the chinkara herself from maize which she bought, ground and fermented for this purpose. Her favourite marketing centres included Keigamere, presently known as Igare, and Nyangusu. The latter is situated on the Gusii-Maasai border.

A small basket (egetonga) of chinkara was sold at sh. 2.50. The bigger one could fetch sh. 4.00 to 5.00. Rael also bought and sold maize. For instance, she could buy maize from an interior market like Igare and sell the same at a profit to the Maasai at Nyangusu.

Rael was a shrewd and enterprising woman. She boasts of having made her own money with which she bought goats and also helped her husband in paying school fees, particularly in the 1950s. Having gone to school, she valued education and sent all her children to school. She

perceived education as a means of acquiring status in society both in terms of employment and knowledge.

Rael, her elderly sons and their respective families are strict Seventh Day Adventist adherents. Two of her children, Meroka and Onyinkwa are church elders of Nyamache and Nyantira S.D.A. Churches respectively.

6.4 Sabina Kiboi Nyang'arisa

Born around mid 1910s, Kiboi's life history is dramatic and sad. She lost her husband 3 days after marriage. Her second husband died when her children were very young. Since then she has kept to herself and tried to bring up children as a single mother.

Kiboi's humble background was characterised by a series of calamities. Her father, Nyakwana Osugo, married Kiboi's mother, an orphan from the neighbouring Bogesaka clan, after the death of his first wife in around 1912.

In mid 1920s Kiboi was withdrawn from Nyabururu Catholic Mission centre by his father following a family tragedy. Twelve boys from the Osugo family, on hunting expedition in Maasailand, were murdered by Maasai morans. The spot where the incident took place bears the name Riosugo (after Osugo) todate. Kiboi was recalled back home from the mission to look after cattle in the absence of boys in the family.

Kiboi also used to accompany her father to marketing errands. Her mother was not actively

involved in trade but remained at home to look after livestock and tend food crops. She therefore sent Kiboi to Riosiri market to sell wimbi and purchase household items such as salt (ebara) from Luoland.

In mid 1930s Kiboi married Amba Akama of neighbouring Bogichoncho clan. After three days of marriage, Amba was arrested and jailed for one year due to his failure to surrender part of his game meat to Chief Oirere of Bobasi. Kiboi went back to her parents and never saw her husband alive again because he died reportedly of police injuries immediately after his release.

In line with Gusii customs, Kiboi was returned to her marital home to bury her husband. She was inherited Mr. Kiboba, her late husband's cousin. Though Kiboba was unmarried, he was technically allowed to inherit his cousin's wife because he had no wealth to raise dowry for marriage. It was hoped he could raise wealth and establish his own family. But this never happened and Kiboba simply got 'lost' in his 'marriage' to Kiboi. Customarily, Kiboba remained unmarried since his living with Kiboi was only meant for the perpetuation of his late cousin's lineage.

Kiboi had six children with Kiboba; three boys and three girls. Customarily, all these children belonged to the late Amba Akama and his lineage. This meant that Kiboba had no offsprings. When he died in the early 1950s, he was not buried next to Kiboi's house as he was not her husband. Kiboba was buried next to his hut and condemned as a senior bachelor. He was not named after children because technically he had no offsprings.

Kiboi relied on subsistence production and marketing in providing for her children. She cultivated wimbi, maize, mtama, bananas, pumpkins and potatoes. She also sold unga to maasais at Nyangusu market. The money she obtained was used in buying livestock and paying school fees for her children. She kept goats, cattle and poultry.

She only sent her sons to school. She says that many factors were behind her failure to educate her daughters. They ranged from lack of money to negative attitude towards girls' education. Kiboi also needed her daughters' labour in food crop cultivation and household tasks.

6.5 Conclusion

The foregoing biographies are interesting and informative. All the women except Rael Ondieki were born in polygamous families. Rael's parents belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist Church which was fiercely opposed to polygamy. This shows that the Church's influence and teachings against certain cultural practices and customs of the Gusii was taking effect.

It is also noted that all the case studies, though selected randomly, incidentally constitute monogamous homes. None of them had a co-wife. Though the insistence of Kwamboka and Peris on their husbands taking second marriages showed the pervasiveness of the practice in the society, the refusal of the latter revealed that attitudes were beginning to change, albeit gradually.

All the women were actively involved in trade, agricultural production and domestic tasks. None was involved in formal employment. But their husbands had formal jobs.

The women were also interested in educating their children in the colonial schools. Though the education of girls was not priotised, the girls however had the chance of attaining atleast some formal education.

CHAPTER SEVEN

7.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to analyse the socio-economic transformations and how they affected Gusii women between 1850-1963. The pre-colonial period was included in the study to give a background of analysis for socio-economic change during the colonial era. The integration of pre-colonial Gusii women's socio-economic roles with the colonial socio-economy was used as the theoretical framework. Our study has shown that socio-economic transformation was a continuous process both during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. The study has also shown that these transformations affected Gusii women in terms of their roles, status and participation in economic and domestic productions.

Socio-economic transformation in Gusiiland did not begin with the introduction of colonialism but rather a process that occurred even during the pre-colonial period. For instance, on their arrival on the fertile Gusii highlands in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Gusii abandoned livestock-keeping as their major economic occupation in favour of crop production. The change was due to the loss of their livestock to diseases prevalent in the tsetsefly-infested highlands and raids from Maasais and Kipsigis. The rich and fertile volcanic soils of the new environment also influenced the adoption of crop production. Livestock-keeping, however, continued to be practised alongside crop cultivation.

Prior to this transformation, Gusii women used to be active in food gathering as men hunted and looked after livestock. Women were traditionally associated with food seeking, preparations and cooking for family members. Therefore, when the Gusii adopted food crop production in the 19th century in their new environment, women "naturally" found themselves at the centre of agricultural production. In this case, their `food gathering' intensified but this time it also took the form of cultivation of fields.

The Gusii community was patrilineal and its members trace their ancestry to one patriarch, Mogusii. Family property was passed on through the male line. The various lineages or clans in the community generally held the land, the basic means of production, collectively as groups. In other words, the members of each lineage held the land in common, and it was allocated to members of the lineage on the basis of need. Access to land was therefore determined by membership in the patrilineage.

Within the Gusii family or household, land was usually controlled by the male head of the house, who allocated portions of land to other adult males within the family. They then gave plots to their wives to farm, because although women did not control the land, they were responsible for doing much of the farm work, and were responsible for feeding themselves, their children and husbands, from products of their own subsistence activities.

The pre-colonial sexual division of labour was complementary. Gusii women nevertheless suffered from exploitation in two ways: they had limited rights in land, and in their own children. In the event of divorce, though rare in pre-colonial Gusii, a woman had no legal right over her children, because the bridewealth paid by the husband's family ensured the

latter full legal rights over the children.

The various Gusii clans/lineages were administered by a committee of elders. This social-political patriarchal kinship structure left out women in terms of leadership roles and decision-making power on social and political issues. However, Gusii women were entitled to certain rights and powers in society. A barren woman, for instance, had an inalienable right of 'marrying' a woman who would bear her children to inherit her property and perpetuate her own lineage. Motherhood, elderhood or seniority in age and accumulated knowledge and experience earned women social status and recognition in society.

The colonial socio-economic structure presented a fundamental transformation in Gusiiland that had far reaching implications on women and Gusii society in general. With little or vague understanding of Gusii customary law and traditions, colonial officials tended to enact policies that disrupted social and economic organization of the Gusii. Men were pressurized to enter the wage labour force through taxation and abolition of cattle villages by 1912. However, male migration reached it peak in the period between 1930 and 1960.

As a result of male migration, more and more demands were placed on women who were left behind. Men were also forced to leave certain powers of decision-making to women. Women thus came to take up tasks previously carried out by men. For instance, they milked the cows, formally a masculine prerogative.

Marriage patterns were affected by the disappearance of cattle camps, the introduction of wage labour and the increasing pressure on land. The payment of bridewealth, which used

to be paid in cattle was affected to some extent. While in the pre-colonial period the bride would only take up residence with her husband when bridewealth had been transferred, it became increasingly common that the bride moved in with her husband before the payment. Thus, the meaning of bridewealth as well as the negotiations became increasingly watered down.

Wage labour provided young men with new opportunities of earning income. They were thus able to raise their own money with which they would purchase consumer goods and also pay bridewealth. Their lessened dependence on the patriarchal land and livestock eroded the control of elders over their homesteads. The elders' and generally societal control over marriage was weakened.

Loosened marriage arrangements led to weakened male control over women, while at the same time women's access to husband's land became relatively insecure. It was from this period that 'roaming' wives became a common phenomenon in Gusiiland.

In British colonial Africa, under the principles of Indirect Rule, colonial officials administered through local chiefs. They used the chiefs and elders to reach the rest of the people and even in interpreting certain traditions and customs that the colonists did not comprehend. The colonial officials also sought to handle conflicts through the application of customary law, with justice meted out through "native" courts.

The availability of "native courts" afforded Gusii women the opportunity of promoting their

interests and sexuality rights. Though male elders tended to ally with colonial officials to control women, the changing economy opened new opportunities and created a demand for women's productive and reproductive labour. The absence of some men due to migratory labour presented their wives with opportunities for exercising decision-making powers and general management of the household.

The introduction of cash crops such as coffee, tea and pyrethrum as from 1930s, led to increased workload for Gusii women in agricultural production. Whereas their participation was limited to the supply of labour force alone, the ownership of cash crop farms and consequently the income was largely in the hands of men. Women however enjoyed great control of the proceeds of food crop farming. The latter was not only tedious but also less profitable compared to cash crop production.

Nevertheless, women's workload increased with the introduction of cash crops. The study also observed that even technological improvement such as the introduction of ox-ploughs tended to favour men. The one invention that seemed to promote women's participation in production in terms of saving time was the posho mills that were introduced in the 1920s. But, even this one proved less beneficial since it required payment of money. Gusii women therefore had to work harder to generate the cash needed for posho milling.

The colonial era opened increased opportunities for Gusii women in terms of formal trading and marketing centres and roads for transportation of produce. As Gusii men were associated more with cash crops and the running of shops, women reigned in open market activities.

Though women's labour was crucial in cash crop production, they found petty trade and marketing activities more rewarding since they were assured of the control of the income. Furthermore, some women, taking advantage of the openings of the colonial era through education and courts moved to towns to seek wage employment. But, since the image of the independent woman carried with it the connotation of semi-prostitution, it was not an easy task for such a woman to establish a position of respectability.

This study has shown that Gusii women have been central in the socio-economic life of the Gusii. It has also shown that socio-economic transformation is a continuous process that brings new challenges to women in their production and reproduction roles. The study has also shown the capacity of Gusii women in adapting to new environments and initiatives. It is the thesis of this study that it is at the point of change to a money/colonial economy and large-scale marketing that the women lose their influence in the family economy and in the society.

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FEMALE

NAME	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
Alexina mogere	98	Machoge	18-8-95
Alexina Mong'ina	96	Machoge	20-8-95
Ann Nyangweso	76	South Mugirango	17-8-95
Banchiri Kiyondi	77	Machoge	13-8-95
Bikeri Rael Oichoe	94	Bassi	17-7-95
Bitengo Ombacho	78	Nyaribari	19-8-95
Bonareri Sibia Orera	75	Bassi	10-7-95
Bosibori Nyamweya	81	North Mugirango	2-8-95
Clesencia Magoma	85	Wanjare	25-8-95
Elizabeth Oseko	65	Bassi	29-8-95
Getenga Manasi Oino	65	Machoge	19-8-95
Kemunto Omanga	96	Machoge	24-8-95
Kemunto Mautia	84	Bassi	25-7-95
Kemunto Makombi	49	Bassi	15-7-95
Kemunto Masese	65	Bassi	8-7-95
Kanisa Orera	66	Bassi	10-7-95
Kerubo Obwori	70	South Mugirango	20-8-95
Kerubo Mayaka	101	Bassi	19-8-95
Lucy Kerubo	61	Machoge	5-7-95
Magoma Oganda	56	Bassi	4-7-95

Maria Nyambura Sebe	89	Bassi	17-8-95
Mariam Kenyaga Ombongi	86	Machoge	9-8-95
Martha Nyarangi Nyambane	88	Bassi	20-8-95
Martha Nyarangi	86	Machoge	13-8-95
Mary Nyangw'ara	66	Bassi	8-7-95
Mary Mong'ina Ontere	72	Bassi	9-7-95
Mary Onsarigo	55	Bassi	20-7-95
Milcah Nyaanga	51	Machoge	9-8-96
Mocheche Nyaundi	78	Bassi	23-8-95
Mocheche Karani	81	Bassi	2-8-95
Mong'ina Ontoche	84	Bassi	20-8-95
Mong'ina Ontere	75	Bassi	9-7-95
Moraa Sibia Chweya	55	Bassi	7-7-95
Moraa Mayaka	95	Bassi	25-8-95
Nyairabu Samoita	71	Bassi	2-7-95
Nyanchama Nyangw'ara	46	Bassi	11-7-95
Nyanchoka Oruru	76	Bassi	23-8-95
Nyatichi Oichoe	88	Bassi	17-7-95
Paustina Masese Chweya	90	Kitutu	29-3-97
Peris Ondieki Kimaiga	76	Bassi	30-3-97
Rael Bosire Ondieki	87	Bassi	1-4-97
Rosa Nyansarora	76	South Mugirango	16-8-95
Sabina Kiboi Nyang'arisa	87	Bassi	5-4-97
Sabina Nyanduko	77	Bassi	15-8-95

Sabina Nyaringo	47	Bassi	22-8-95
Sarange Penina Obwoge	70	Bassi	28-7-95
Saringi Nyorera	84	Machoge	24-8-95
Selina Nyambuche	65	Machoge	21-8-95
Teresa Mosigisi	82	Bassi	15-8-95
Teresia Nyareri	101	Wanjare	18-8-95
Truphena Birongo	93	Bassi	24-8-95

MALE

NAME	AGE	LOCATION	DATE
Achochi Ayubu	58	Bassi	22-6-95
Andrew Chweya	68	Machoge	24-6-95
Ayienda Ariera	83	Bassi	6-7-95
Charles Nyauma	84	Wanjare	18-7-95
Charles Oreri	78	Nyaribari	20-7-95
Francis Ondabu	71	Bassi	8-7-95
Henry Nyaende	50	Bassi	11-7-95
John Ontiri	55	Machoge	25-6-95
Jones Ogato	74	Kitutu	27-7-95
Joshua Motuka	64	Kitutu	3-8-95
Mageto Makuru	60	Bassi	8-7-95
Mararo Bongera	63	Bassi	4-7-95
Masero Nyambega	83	Bassi	18-8-95
Miencha Gesicho	60	Bassi	21-6-95
Motiso Keana	87	Bassi	18-8-95
Nyakoe Chweya	65	Machoge	24-6-95
Oibi Seme	59	Bassi	21-6-95
Oirere Mochorwa	42	Bassi	5-7-95
Ontita Ngw'ono	80	Bassi	17-8-95
Onwong'a Samoita	48	Bassi	27-6-95
Orera Mwembi	78	Bassi	10-7-95
Patroba Obeto	69	Kitutu	25-7-95

Paul Maaga	67	Machoge	25-6-95
Sebastian Gwako	71	Bassi	9-7-95
Sokoro Nyaega	81	Kitutu	27-7-95
Tinega Orora	60	Machoge	24-6-95
William Omwange	69	Kitutu	28-7-95
Williamson Mayaka	72	Bassi	19-8-95
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