WOMEN AND FAMINE IN COLONIAL KENYA’S KITUI WEST REGION, 1895 – 1963

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C50/21371/2010

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MAY, 2021
DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree award in any other university or for any other award.

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C50/21371/2010

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This thesis has been submitted with our approval as university supervisors

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents, Rtd, WOI Summerlee Mitau and Phoebe Muthui, my husband Benard Kibet Korir and sons Ethan Kiptoo and Kellan Muthui Kiprop. It is also dedicated to all lovers of history.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CUP</td>
<td>Cambridge University Press</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>District Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.C.F</td>
<td>East Coast Fever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EAEP</td>
<td>East African Educational Publishers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EALB</td>
<td>East African Literature Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>EAPH</td>
<td>East Africa Publishing House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IBEA</td>
<td>Imperial British East Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KANU</td>
<td>Kenya African National Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KAR</td>
<td>Kings African Rifles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KNA</td>
<td>Kenya National Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>KNBS</td>
<td>Kenya National Bureau of Statistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>KTI</td>
<td>Kitui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L.N.C</td>
<td>Local Native Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ltd</td>
<td>Limited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O.I</td>
<td>Oral Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SHS</td>
<td>Shillings</td>
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<td>WB</td>
<td>World Bank</td>
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### DEFINITION OF TERMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Articulation</td>
<td>The relationship between the reproductions of capitalist economy to the productions of productive units organized according to pre–capitalists relations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitalist mode of production</td>
<td>One characterized by the separation of means of production from the producers and exploitation of such means for the purpose of capital accumulation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Refers to the mode of life, systems, traditions and beliefs that characterizes a society or a social group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td>The relation of plants and animals to their environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Famine</td>
<td>The most severe state of nutrition deprivation in which the amount of food available is insufficient to sustain life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>It is the socially constructed meaning of sexual differences between men and women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode of production</td>
<td>A combination of social relations and forces of production structured by the dominance of the relation of production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchy</td>
<td>The rule of men over women which points to the dominant patterns of relationships which structure domestic work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poll tax</td>
<td>Tax levied in every adult without reference to their income or resources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Pre-capitalist mode of production - The type of production based on kinship relations of ownership and relies on the traditional methods of production.

Ukambani - the term is used to describe the geographical area occupied by the Kamba people in Machakos, Makueni and Kitui regions of modern Kenya.
GLOSSARY (Kamba names)

Anake - a name given to the Kamba warriors

Andu aowe - medicine men

Atumia - the elders

Atumia ma nzama - council of elders

Ikuu - calabash

Katumbi - a three legged stool

Kilumi - the spirit dance of old women

Kyengo - new grazing land

Mathembo - shrines

Mayua - Kamba name for famines

Mivia - gates

Muo - iron hoe

Muthokoi - Kamba staple food mixture of grains and maize without husks

Mutui - village elder

Mwethya - working groups made up of women from different households in the village

Ngai - God

Nyenze - twisted threads for basket making

Nyumba - house

Uvanga - special weeding equipment for women
ABSTRACT

The problematic of famines is not new to African communities; African communities have overtime, experienced frequent famines with varying degrees of coping mechanisms. The long history of pre-colonial and colonial communities in Kenya cannot therefore be adequately re-constructed without reference to the serious problem of famines. Famines have a disruptive impact on individuals and communities. The current study interrogates women and famines in Kenya’s Kitui West region, between 1895-1963. It analyses specific famines and assesses their effects on women in the region under review. It also outlines the varying coping mechanisms women employed to deal with famines. The study employs a combined theoretical framework of Feminist Marxism and articulation of the modes of production. From the Marxist Feminist approach, the study, argues that many societies tend to suffer profound gender inequalities because of the cultural marginalization of women. Such societies, including the Kamba people of Kenya, women have been socially constructed to be inferior to men. Consequently, all the good things of such societies are reserved for men while all the bad and painful experiences are secured for women. Yet from the point of view of the articulation of modes of production theory, the study explores the economic and social distortions which occurred when the colonial capitalism was imposed on pre-capitalist modes of production. This study assumes that the Kamba cultural practices assigned the task of food production to women. It assumes that the colonial political economy in Kitui West region had key pillars within the capitalist modes of production. It also assumes that the colonial policies dismantled and re-articulated pre-capitalist modes of production, which created famines in the region, and in turn gave rise to diverse coping mechanisms during the colonial rule. Methodologically, the study employed the purposive sampling technique which was used to draw the informants on the basis that they were believed to be knowledgeable on the history of Kamba women, famines and colonialism. The primary data was verified against secondary information that is readily available in local libraries like the Kenyatta University Post Modern Library. Lastly, data was analyzed through the translation of oral information. The study concludes that the pre-colonial gender roles of the Kitui West women played a significant role in enabling women deal with the severities of famines.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Famine is the most severe state of nutritional deprivation where the amount of food available and being consumed by a household is insufficient to sustain life (Muzaale, 1980:33). Famine and hunger are sometimes used interchangeably, but hunger would be defined as the absolute lack of food sometimes caused by natural calamities and fighting (Ibid).

Scholars like Rau (1991:28) hold the opinion that famine has been a challenge in most African countries in their past and present history. Several countries in Africa have experienced famine since the pre-colonial era through colonial era to date. The Sahel region of western and northern Africa, for example, witnessed severe famine in the early 1630s while Ethiopia is said to have witnessed great famines in the 1880’s and 1890’s. The 1890’s were noted periods of natural catastrophes for most African countries which extended the disasters into the twentieth century and since then no single year has passed without an occurrence of famine in Africa (Iliffe, 1979; Iliffe, 1987:157).

Even though there were periods of famine throughout the centuries, Africans had knowledge and skills to maintain reasonable food security (Rau, 1991:192). There existed organizational systems that reflected the gender division of labor and the different spheres of activity for men and women. These activities including fetching water, collecting firewood, cooking, taking care of children and washing utensils and clothes, were culturally seen to be in the domain of women (Kabira, 1993:20).
In pre-colonial African societies, women were socialized to play a significant role of food production. Women relied on family as a basic source of labor for their efficient subsistence production. Women’s production was aided by the use of simple tools such as iron hoes (Nzioki 1982:12; Bale, 1994; Gordon, 1996; Musalia, 2010:53). The Kitui West Kamba’s were not an exception to such principles governing the social construction of women which required women to produce adequate food for the family consumption and storage in case of famines.

In the pastoral and nomadic societies such as the Maasai of East Africa and Fulani of West Africa, women milked the cows and produced butter (Henn; 1984:3). Women activities thus portray how they were placed to play a central role in mitigating famines by ensuring enough food supply. In this regard, women also constructed granaries for storage of harvested food that was a safeguard for future famines (Freund, 1984). The surplus was then sold in the local markets hence the development of local trade (Brett; 1973).

With the coming of Europeans in Kenya who later settled in the Kenyan highlands. Consequently, the settlers spread their domination to the rest of the country. The British colonial government established operational bases in different parts of Kenya.

The penetration of colonial capitalism was accompanied by various economic policies, which acted as the key pillars of colonial capitalist mode of production. These policies included migrant labor, taxation, land alienation and cash crop production. With such an approach, the Europeans adequately exploited the colony’s economic resources, which supported the pre-capitalist economy. The mentioned
principles fundamentally interfered with the pre-capitalist modes of production either destroying them or modifying some of them to fit the European’s (Freund, 1984:136). Such policies had a profound impact on societal gender roles and relations since men and women had to conform to new dynamics of colonialism in the social and economic realm. For example, the pre-capitalist distinct gender roles were destroyed when men moved to urban centers for employment, women became responsible over duties preserved for men in the pre-capitalist society (Stitcher, 1985; Ndeda, 2002).

When Kenya became a British colony in 1920, the pre-capitalist modes of production like communalism and feudalism operating among most African societies were re-articulated and others dismantled completely. The destruction of some pre-capitalist modes of production such as abandoning root crop farming exposed the environment to destructive agents like locusts and led to widespread and prolonged drought, which resulted to famines in the colonial, times (Nayenga, 1979).

Communities experienced various famines in colonial Kenya, each community attaching a suitable name to a certain famine depending on the people bewildered by famine. This experience is similar to that of Kitui West Kamba who gave different names to distinct famines (Jackson, 1972:27). The impact of these famines on the population demanded that Africans come up with survival strategies, which would minimize the effects of these famines (Rodney, 1972:236).

The current study investigates the cultural and social construction of Kitui West women to fit certain tasks. Through critical analysis of different colonial policies, the study seeks to examine their impacts on the gender roles and relations. The study
contextualizes the place of Kitui West women in coping with famines in the changing trend of colonialism.

1.2 Literature review

There are various studies that have focus on famines in Africa. For instance, Rau (1991) notes that Ethiopia and the Sahelian regions experienced famines as early as the Sixteenth to the late Nineteenth Century. Rau further explains that erratic weather, Rinderpest and drought induced the famines of 1888-1892 in Ethiopia. He gives the case of Timbuktu where half the population was lost while in Ethiopia one third of the total population was decimated. Moreover, there was widespread starvation. Rau’s work is important in showing that famine is not a new phenomenon in Africa. The focus of this study is on general causes of famine including the theme of diseases and drought. The current study seeks to show specific causes of famines in colonial Kitui West.

Apeldoorn (1981) observes that famines in Nigeria cannot be separated from drought, which is considered a major cause. The effect of this was crop failures, which resulted to the famines of 1913 in Kano, Katsina, Sokoto, Borno, Hausaland and Niger regions. The author argues that there were large number of deaths of people and animals. The government gave relief food though it was inadequate. Apeldoorn’s work co-relates that with the present study which examines how the relief food issued by the colonial government created dependency in Kitui West region.

Referring to the situation in Senegal during the 1880’s, Iliffe (1987) points out that the jihad wars caused famines. He also argues that in countries such as Chad and
Burundi, violence resulted to destructions, which accelerated famines, hunger and poverty. Unlike Iliffe’s study that does not point out whether women put any measures in place to deal with the situations, the current study seeks to show how Kitui West women responded to famines in colonial Kitui West region.

Robert (1987) acknowledges the occurrence of famines in Africa and points out that the internal and external factors that cause famines are not isolated. He notes that internal factors attributed to famines included poverty, continued maintenance of colonial economic structures by Africans and increased dependency on food import. He further outlines the external factors to include the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the Western capitalist countries. Robert’s study is significant as it explains the causes of famines and therefore illuminates the current study with regard to internal and external causes of famines in colonial Kitui West.

Pre-colonial famines were mostly caused by prolonged droughts and rainfall failures. The belief and norms of a given community enhanced effective running of the social and economic sector. It is the significant role of culture that enhanced a productive society through the division of labor alongside gender lines. In the African societies, food production was primarily the role of women.

Bale (1994:54) asserts that, 70% of food in West Africa was produced by women during the pre-colonial period through the exploitation of available agricultural land. Parpart (1989) concurs with Bale’s ideas and thus argues that, in most developing countries women were the principle producers of food and undertook agricultural maintenance chores with men providing little assistance to them. Women joined several labor sharing groups at critical times of growing seasons to make work easier. However, gender complementarily prevailed in African cultures with women
performing more intense agricultural activities while men intervened on issues that needed masculine energy like felling trees (Gordon, 1996).

In addition Hay and Sticher (1984) reinforce Parpart’s, Gordon’s and Bale’s argument when they imply that in African agricultural societies, women acquired status through farming. Therefore in such societies women carried out more farming tasks inclusive of harvesting and marketing. On the other hand, women in nomadic societies milked and produced butter. These authors affirm that women’s gender role was centered on agricultural production. The current study interrogate how food production, as women’s responsibility in Kitui West, placed women in a strategic position to mitigate the effects of famine and how this same position in production was transformed during the colonial period.

Besides division of labor, patriarchy as a structure existed within the African cultural systems. Patriarchy defines the norms, behaviors, acceptable values in a certain society and sustains gendered ownership of property and division of labor (Masheti, 1994). Abena (1991) agrees with Masheti’s concepts on the patriarchal system and argues inheritance of property was done in regard to the customary law of a given tribe. In addition, World Bank (2007) shows that under the customary law, most married women lacked the control over their husband’s property. These three sources provide insights to the study on the components of culture such as patriarchy among the African societies. Therefore, the present study explores how such cultural norms and behaviors were gendered and how the cultural socialization of Kitui West women played a vital role in mitigating famines.
Mbiti (1969) observes that in the patriarchal pre-capitalist Kamba, women had powers to exploit the available resources without ownership. Generally, only sons would inherit their father’s property. In addition, Muthiani (1973) points out that under the Kamba patriarchal and matrilineal society, the father was the head of the family and the family was like the government while women acted as senior secretaries. He further notes that, the sons were like secretaries who enjoyed full portfolios while the rest of the children were junior secretaries without portfolios.

The studies of Mbiti and Muthiani give valuable information on the position of pre-colonial Kamba woman and her ability to access resources. This study analyzes the pre-colonial position of the Kitui West woman and how her position in the society was transformed under colonialism.

With the introduction of colonialism, much of the social and economic gender roles like the position of women in the households and decisions on what would be planted for subsistence production were transformed away from their traditional responsibilities. Colonialism affected the African woman in various ways. Walker (1990) observes that there was tremendous transition from the pre-capitalist to the capitalist position of the woman which resulted to reorganization of gender roles that brought forth new social and economic orders. That way, women found themselves having new experiences.

Paul (1993) observes that with migrancy labor women dominated the domestic economy. They were overburdened with both women and men responsibilities but struggled to meet their agricultural needs despite inadequate income. With the absence of men, women became head of households and could make independent
decisions. Walker’s and Paul’s works provide insights to this study in expounding how gender roles and relations can change over time.

There were various causes of famines in East Africa. Kjekshus (1977) explains that man-made factors caused famine in Tanganyika during the German rule (1890’s-1919). These factors included German policies of pacification and labor recruitment policy. Such policies greatly affected the economic status of the Tanganyika people and the production of their food stuff reduced. In the period between 1893 and 1895 there was food shortage. Nayenga (1979) resonates with Kjekshus when he observes that in Uganda and particularly parts of Busoga, the famines were experienced from 1891 to 1911, which were caused by the economic pressure exerted by European rule. Nayenga’s and Kjekshus’s studies give light on the current study which explores the consequences of economic colonial policies on Kitui West women’s production.

Besides the Kamba, other Kenyan communities including the Kipsigis, Idhakho, Isukha, Aembu, Kisii and Taita experienced famines. Omwoyo (2000) argues that, food security among the Kipsigis was determined by the methods of food production and storage. He analyses the agricultural changes among the Kipsigis especially those relating to land ownership. Therefore, the current study explores the manner in which land ownership was vital in women’s food production in Kitui West region.

Merrit (1975) observes that the famine in Taita region between 1898 and 1899 resulted to massive migrations of the Taita people to Kilimanjaro and Shambaa areas. He further accounts that famine was apolitical issue that prevented political
centralization in Taita society. Nevertheless, the current study seeks to examine
general results of famines.

Muchanga (1998) mentions the famine of 1898 to 1899 in Isukha and Idakho areas
when there was a prolonged drought and spread of epidemics. He indicates that the
famine of *demesi* in 1906-1907 was associated with the change of agricultural
practices in production. He notes that during this famine people travelled across
borders to search for food. Therefore the present study explores the similarities of
the situation in Kitui West and the experiences witnessed elsewhere.

Mwaniki (1974) observes that, among the Aembu, only severe famines were
remembered ignoring the less serious ones. He notes that famines were caused by
lack of rain and war especially the famine of *kithioro* that occurred in 1917-1918
during the First World War. He explains that people actively engaged in collection
of berries and trade activities during the famine. The focus of the present study is on
the general causes, rainfall included and different coping mechanisms employed by
Kitui West women during the colonial famines.

Matheka (1992) explains on the political economy of famine through the analysis of
the ecology and history of Machakos District during the colonial period. He notes
that the destruction of Machakos ecology during the colonial period undermined the
indigenous economic activities among the Akamba of Machakos leading to food
shortages which resulted to severe colonial famines. The current study explores the
political economy in colonial Kitui West and its impact on the pre-capitalist modes
of production.
O’Leary (1984) explores the economic and social change in semi-arid Kitui. He mentions several changes in Kitui Kamba from pre-colonial to colonial period. In the current study, the purpose is to relate these economic and social changes to the experiences of women in colonial Kitui West.

Kioko (2011) gives a general history of the Akamba of Kitui citing their migration and settlement. He mentions a pre-colonial famine of 1880-1885 called ndata (star). In addition, he mentions a few famines in Kitui and Machakos. Kioko’s study is of valuable use to the current study although the present study deals with the colonial famines in Kitui west region in details showing how women responded to such famines.

Further, Jackson (1972) gives an analysis of the historical study of the oral traditions of the Akamba on how they attach names on several events. He mentions various famines in Kitui, giving meaning to them and establishing the years, they occurred. Although Jackson’s study uses linguistic approach, it brings forth an understanding on the significance of names given to colonial famines. Therefore, the current historical study seeks to enquire the basis on which Kitui West people attached names to various colonial famines.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Historically, famine has been a major challenge to the people living in various parts of Kitui and Kitui West region is no exception to this reality. There are several studies on famine in Kitui but they majorly focus on ecological and economic aspects such as drought and unreliable rainfall. These studies ignore the cultural
perspectives such as traditional division of labor even when this culture shapes the way of life of a particular community.

On that account, it is important to incorporate the cultural component. Consequently, this focuses on women who are socially constructed to suit certain tasks. The study interrogates the key pillars of capitalist mode of production demonstrating how they transformed and modified the pre-capitalist mode of production as well as their impact on gender roles and relations in colonial Kitui West region.

Besides, the study assesses how colonial policies undermined the ability of Kitui West women to deal with famines in the colonial era. Finally, the current study demonstrates how Kitui West women employed different coping mechanisms with the changing trends of famines in Kitui West from 1895 to 1963.

1.4 Objectives of the study

1. Analyze the role of women in the socio-political and economic organization of pre-colonial Kitui West Kamba.
2. Discuss the colonial political economy up to 1920 and its effects on Kitui West women.
3. To analyze the extent to which colonialism affected women’s ability in dealing with famine and women’s response to the changing trends of famines in Kitui West region from 1920-1963.

1.5 Research questions

1. How did the socio-political and economic organization of pre-colonial Kitui West place women in a strategic position where they could mitigate famines?
2. What are the main features of colonial political economy up to 1920 and what impact did they have on Kitui West women?

3. To what extent did colonialism undermine women’s ability to deal with famines and how women responded to changing trends of famines in Kitui West from 1920 to 1963?

1.6 Research premises

1. The socio-political and economic organization of pre-colonial Kitui West significantly influenced social construction of women’s roles to suit certain gender roles.

2. The colonial political economy in Kitui West had key pillars of colonial capitalist modes of production.

3. The colonial policies dismantled and re-articulated pre-capitalist modes of production among Kitui West women creating famines in colonial era, which gave rise to diverse coping mechanisms.

1.7 Justification and Significance of the Study

Famine in Ukambani has often been studied from different perspectives such as ecological and economic aspects, which include harsh ecology, drought and rainfall failure. The works of Jackson, 1972; O’Leary, 1984; Ambler, 1988; Matheka, 1992 and Kioko, 2011 ascertain this. This study has taken into account the cultural aspects by interrogating the socialization of the gender roles. It focuses on women as a single entity and how cultural gender norms placed women in a vital position of food production as a way of mitigating famines. Simone de Beauvoir in her book *The Second Sex urges that*, all people are either born male or female but become men.
and women through social construction (Beauvoir, 1949). Therefore, the study analyzes the social construction of pre-colonial Kitui West women. It also interrogates the impact of colonialism on gender roles, relations and women’s subsistence production in pre-capitalist Kitui West region. The study explores various strategies employed by Kitui West women to cope with the severities of colonial famines.

The study covers the period between 1895 and 1963. The year 1895 is significant in Kenyan history since it is the year Kenya became a British protectorate. What followed was the establishment of Kenya colony in 1920, a period when Kenya started operating as a British colony until 1963, a year that marked the end of British rule in Kenya. Therefore, this study covers Kitui West under colonial rule making it a suitable period for examining famines during the colonial era.

The study aims at examining partriarchy that existed in Kitui West before the advent of colonialism. The study purports at showing how under colonialism, women roles in the society transformed as well as the transition of the African communities from the pre-colonial to colonial era. Consequently, the traditional gender roles changed making women to take up most of the men’s responsibilities both socially and economically. This marked significant changes in women’s way of life. The practices have been maintained to the present, where the African woman is multi-tasking as bread winner and mother despite the economic hardships (Kanogo, 2005). Therefore, it is important to study the genesis of such a shift. Lastly, the study contributes to the ongoing women studies in Africa because it analyzes the
experience of women in the changing trends of colonial famines and thereby placing them as the centre of interest of the study.

1.8 Scope and limitation

The study covers Kitui West region in Kitui County. The area of study is in accordance to the boundaries during the colonial period, which was part of the initial Kitui District. This region had three large divisions namely; Mutonguni, Matinyani and Yatta. Two divisions were selected, Mutonguni and Yatta, currently Mutonguni and Kauwi Wards respectively. Matinyani division (currently Matinyani Ward) was excluded due to its favorable surroundings suitable for agriculture due to higher amounts of rainfall experienced in the area and presence of natural streams.

The region of the study was chosen due to the availability of extensive land for farming and grazing. Land plays a key role to production and a determinant to food security as far as Kitui West people are concerned. Therefore, the study analyses the significant role of women in food production in pre-colonial Kitui West through the maximum exploitation of the available land. In addition, the land in Kitui West region enhanced the European large scale agriculture, a feature that lays the foundation for explaining the transformation of women’s production from pre-capitalist to capitalist production.

There was a challenge in getting some pre-colonial and colonial information since a number of informants targeted passed on before the end of the study but through collective interrogation of the available oral tradition and archival data, the researcher was in a position to prevail the problem.
1.9 Theoretical Framework

Africa is a continent, which has experienced persistent crisis with the deteriorating economy. The continent has historically registered a stagnated or declined economy. The Modernization theory has been used by various scholars to study Africa’s situation. The theory, whose proponents are Walter Rostow, W.A Lewis and Talcott Parsons, dominated the social sciences in the West since 1950’s. The theorists of modernization emphasize on modernity, which is characterized by industrialization and urbanization. They adopt the view that the developing countries relied on traditional techniques in production and that their economy is non-progressive. According to them, for a developing country to be classified as modern, it should integrate its economy into the international markets, with modern technology. In addition, the recognition of the international financial organizations such as World Bank for financial assistance is viewed as a significant progress towards development (Rostow, 1960).

The theory gave rise to serious criticism from dependency theorists such as Raul Prebisch and Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Andre Gunder Frank hold the notion that the developing countries need the help from the West in order to develop. The theory brought about the question of development in Africa even after adopting Western patterns of modernity. Most African countries relied on Western aid for development which in the actual sense benefited the West rather that the African countries. Colonial capitalism imposed modernity on the African societies but instead of achieving high-level development this modernity caused distortions and new challenges as was the case in Kitui We. Colonialism was seen as modernizing
agent which increased dependency in the periphery (Nyang’oro, 1989; Matunhu, 2011).

Dependency theorists from Latin America argue that the issue of the developing countries cannot be articulated in reference to the international systems bearing in mind that different developing countries have had different levels of development (Frank, 1978). Dependency theorists hold the premise that the penetration of peripheral societies in Africa through financial and technological assistance has created disparity in terms of economic development between periphery and the centre, which is characterized, by developed countries (Rodney, 1972).

Theorists of dependency emphasize that the colonial exploitation of African raw materials and labor changed Africa’s social and economic structures. They focus their attention on the West, blaming it for having caused a culture of dependency on developed countries. They also hold the notion that colonialism and heavy reliance of the developing countries to the developed ones have contributed to underdevelopment in the developing nations (Leys, 1975). Moreover, the dependency theory has been criticized for its view that the developing countries primarily depend on the centre for financial and technological assistance for development of trade. The theory overvalues the ability of the international systems in the control of development in the developing countries.

Nevertheless, there is need to study Africa by contextualizing the continent to its environment and past experiences. Historical, social and ecological factors have played a major role in culmination of the food crisis in Africa. The issue of famine
is transitive especially with the move of Africa from a pre-capitalist to capitalist relations of production (Frank, 1978). Therefore, the current study diverts scholarly attention from dependency and modernization theories to a concept of articulation of modes of production, which examines the correlation between capitalist mode of production and the African pre-capitalist modes of production. The study uses this concept of articulation of modes of production in order to examine the process of transformation of Kitui West from a pre-capitalist to colonial capitalism in relation to food production.

The concept of modes of production and their articulation emerged as a critique of dependency and modernization theories. The mode of articulation recognizes the contribution of Africans to the current situation rather than putting the blame on western world. Articulation means the relationship that exists between the reproduction of capitalist economy and the production of the productive units organized according to pre-capitalist relations (Hyden, 1980). In the case of Kitui West, some pre-capitalist modes of production such as monopoly on subsistence production and the use of simple tools were destroyed while others survived within the capitalist system such as labor but in different social formation. For instance, the capitalist mode of production emphasized on a system of production where labor itself became a commodity for sale in the market. This led to commercial relationship between peasant society and capitalists.

The African society enjoyed a degree of autonomy with their pre-capitalist mode of production that in most cases was feudal, peasant or pastoral and which operated under the customary and religious apparatuses. The pre-capitalist mode of
production was characterized by division of labor among men and women as well as single commodity production in small production units (Hindness & Hirst 1975).

It was after the penetration of capitalism modes of production in Africa that the indigenous practices on production lost their autonomy. Some African societies became a source for accumulation of wealth by the Europeans and were no longer independent. Therefore they sustained expanded reproduction for the benefit of the Europeans (Crummey; 1981).

Africans were exploited and most of their pre-capitalist activities modified to fit to the capitalist mode of production. The reshaping of various African economic aspects had a great effect on food production. The colonial policies did not favor adequate subsistence production but cash crop production. Ignoring food crop growing made famines inevitable in most Kenyan communities. The concept of modes of production has criticisms, such as linking different modes of production together hence the lack of a base to reproduce it. However, it proves useful in demonstrating the effects of colonial economic policies on indigenous African production (Frank, 1978; Freund, 1984:128).

The study also adopts Marxist feminism whose proponents are Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels which rose in the nineteenth century. Marxist feminism heavily borrows its ideas from Marxist theory of class struggle and capitalists modes of production and incorporates ideas of feminism that the societies prioritizes men and treat men and women unequal. Marxist feminism holds the view that women were
oppressed in capitalism and class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx & Engels 1848).

Engels (1884) observes that gender oppression is reproduced culturally through institutions that promote inequality by privileging men at the expense of women. He further explains that gender division made women to remain in the private domain while men deal with the public sphere.

The theory got critiques, for instance; Lise Vogel points out that Marxist feminism failed to address the issue of women oppression through patriarchy by not interrogating the position of women (Vogel, 1983). In addition, Wright Erik Olin notes that lack of addressing female oppression under patriarchy exposed Marxist feminists to critique who takes note that there are other non-class discriminations (Olin, 1985). Elisabeth Armstrong on the other hand criticizes Marxist feminists by entirely depending on Marx’s analyses of capitalism and showing that it’s the only form of exploitation that mould women’s lives (Armstrong, 2020).

These critiques are not justified because Engels observes that the social system of a family tends to give prominence to men. Therefore, the study uses the Marxist feminism paradigm to show the place of women in Kitui West region. As a tool of analysis, the paradigm incorporates the study of both men and women by examining the priorities and the position of men and women in the society. The ideas of Engel on gender inequality can be demonstrated in the institution of patriarchy which existed in most African communities. Such foundations create a system of inequality between men and women in terms of property ownership, inheritance and access to
resources. This gender inequality produced a social gap and power between men and women in a society (Davis, 1991; Dewan et al, 2016). These ideas provide an understanding of the patriarchal system among pre-colonial Kitui West Kamba and how it brought about women’s oppression while men got both social and economic fortunes within the society. By addressing such underlying issue, the study empowers women by eliminating one form of discrimination.

The study focuses on the gender roles of African men and women through socialization. Through such social construction, women gained the identity as key workers in the agricultural production, which defined the woman’s socio-economic life (Hansen, 1992:6; Rowbotham, 1992:12). Therefore, Hansen’s and Rowbotham’s views provide an understanding on how Kitui West women through cultural socialization were obligated to play a significant role in providing food for the family and ensuring adequate production for mitigating famines.

The social relations between men and women lie on the socio-cultural values and norms of a given society which cannot be studied without involving the environment since it’s a construct of economic, cultural and religious values in the society (Sow, 1997: 255; Beasley, 2005:225). The study cross-examines how Kitui West women related to the environment through the cultural division of labor along gender lines as well as how the surrounding enabled the women in the pre-capitalist Kitui West to attend to their religious responsibilities such as offering sacrifices for rains.

Colonial capitalism was developed out of the family unit which Engels examines. The spirit of capitalism was promoted in the pre-capitalist societies among family
people through dominating elements within the structures of the society. Therefore, European colonialism in Africa reinforced the exploitation that existed in the family. The family exploitation formed domination between capitalists and the colonial new subjects. As much as some men were privileged, they were beneath the Europeans and both African men and women were classified as racially inferior. Capitalist modes of production and the introduction of oppressive labor laws resulted to the class struggle between those who control the means of production and those who sell their labor power for wages. Colonialism did not only bring the oppression but also transformed the pre-capitalist gender roles and introduced new practices that shaped both the social and economic realm effecting pre-colonial social relations between men and women (Walker, 1990:7; Mama, 1997: 66-67). Federici (2009) affirms that Europeans systematically disrupted women farming which guaranteed economic liberty from men when compelled to provide labor in cash crop production, which changed relations between men and women. Followers of Marxist feminism like Angela Davis point out that those women tasks were repetitive and exhausting. She observes that under colonialism, women’s work increased and became difficult and took up the responsibility to produce for their families despite the expansion of female labor (Davis, 1981). Such ideas aid to demonstrate the transition of Kitui West economy from pre-capitalist to capitalist and its impact on cultural gender roles and relations on women.

A social construction and creation of society, varies from society to society and can change over time. A given society shapes the different duties attributed to the males and females (Momsen, 1991:40). Such social practices are historical, changeable and subjected to transformation in periodic moments of crisis (Connell, 2002).
Therefore, historical analysis helps in understanding the position and experiences of Kitui West women in subsistence production under colonialism and interrogates different strategies employed by women to deal with famines in colonial period depending on the severity and changing trends of those famines.

The study combines the Marxist feminism and Articulation of Modes of production framework because they are relevant in understanding the dynamics in social and economic sphere of Kitui West women. It helps understand how capitalists preserved, exploited and modified the pre-capitalist women production as security for famines. Finally, a varied understanding is provided on the effects of capitalist production on gender roles and relations in Kitui West region.

1.10 Research methodology

This section explains a detailed methodological framework employed by the study. It contains research design, site of the study, sampling techniques and sample size, data collection procedures, data analysis, data management and ethical considerations.

1.10.1 Research Design

This study adopted a historical approach design based on qualitative procedures. This design was selected since the study involves a historical analysis which helped the study elaborate on women and famine in colonial, Kenya’s Kitui West region from 1895 to 1963. It incorporated the use of primary and secondary sources. The Primary sources included oral interview and archival information for Kitui District while the secondary sources relied on agricultural annual reports. Oral information
provided first-hand information on colonial events since some of the informants were alive.

1.10.2 Site of the Study

This study was carried out in Kitui West region, which lies in the West of Kitui County. The county shares its border with seven other counties: Machakos and Makueni counties to the West, Tana River County to the East and South-East, Taita Taveta County to the South, Embu to the North-West and Tharaka-Nithi and Meru counties to the North. It is located between latitudes 0°10’ and 3°0’ south and longitudes 37°50’ and 39°0’ east (County Government of Kitui, n.d.).

The Kitui West Region during the period of study was in Kitui District. The geographical area under study was known as Yatta and Mutonguni Divisions as the names of these areas have changed to Kauwi and Mutonguni wards respectively. The same area bordered Mwingi North to the North and Kitui Central to the East (see figure 1.2).

Kitui West region is semi-arid and it experiences short rains between May and June while the long rains fall in September and October. Rainfall ranges from 500 mm to 1050 mm per annum in different parts of the county. Temperatures range from a minimum of 14 °C to a maximum of 34 °C. The region is generally hot and dry (Kioko, 2011).
The environment plays a big role as far as this study is concerned since it is the major determinant of what is to be grown where and when. The region is known for mixed agriculture which involves growing of crops and rearing of animals which is facilitated by vast arable land. Due to vulnerability of the environment and the large Yatta plateau, vegetation cannot be sustained for a long period in case of prolonged famines (Ibid).
Figure 1.1: Map showing Kitui County

Source: KNBS 2014 (Cited in County Government of Kitui, n.d.)
Figure 1.2: Map showing the study area

Source: KNBS (2012)

1.10.3 Sampling Techniques’ and Sample Size

The study employed the purposive sampling technique. This being a historical study the informants selected were known to be knowledgeable on pre-colonial, colonial history as well as colonial famines in Kitui West. Age was a factor in so doing, the
elderly of between 70 and 90 years and local elders were prioritized since they were judged for their forthcoming information about the study. This was achieved through the help of area chiefs who identified the preferred informants.

Out of the 50 informants, ten were aged 80-90 years, three of whom were ex-soldiers who served in the Kings African Rifles in the colonial administration. The other seven in this age bracket witnessed the events of colonial famines. Ten informants were aged 70-79; among them were two local elders who partly had experiences of colonial famines. Some other thirty were chosen ranging from 60 to 69 years of age who were believed to have acquired relevant information about the study through oral tradition. The data might have some inadequacies because what happened before 1895 or even in the 1920’s was received from people who were born in the 1940’s who are now 80 years and give what their parents told them, as a result there could be room for distortion. Nevertheless, the researcher dealt with the distortions by posing similar questions to different respondents and similarities in responses ascertained that the information was true. Although the study is focused on women, both men and women were interviewed because incorporating both genders in the current study is one of the components of Marxism feminism approach.

1.10.4 Data Collection

This study obtained information from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data was collected through oral interviews and this served as a major field research instrument. The approach catered for both illiterate and literate informants. However, there also existed primary data in archives and administrative records. During the interviews, Kamba language was used. Secondary data was also collected
from various libraries such as Kenyatta University Post-Modern Library, Macmillan and the Kenya National Archives.

Archival data was obtained from agricultural annual reports of Kitui District. Only specific data on the study region was used. More secondary data was also derived from books, journals, unpublished theses and maps. The secondary data enriched the primary data; in both sources, the primary and secondary data yielded qualitative data.

1.10.5 Data Analysis

The responses to the interviews were analyzed by sieving and only adopting what was relevant to the study. There was also the questioning of the reliability and validity of secondary data in search for historical truth. Corroboration of the primary and secondary data was done in order to enable the researcher present facts of the study at hand. The findings and conclusions have been presented according to the research questions.

1.10.6 Data Management and Ethical Consideration

The researcher interviewed the respondents and allowed for open ended responses creating room for great interaction between the researcher and study participants for clarity. Plagiarism was avoided by acknowledging and citing relevant sources used.
CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN IN THE SOCIO-POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC ORGANISATION OF PRE-COLONIAL KITUI WEST KAMBA

2.0 Introduction

This chapter highlights various myths of the origin of Kitui West Kamba and how they migrated from their dispersal points to their present homeland in Kitui West. The objective of this study was to describe Kitui West women in socio-political and economic organization of pre-colonial Kitui West Kamba. The Marxist feminist approach was used to analyze the gender relations that existed between men and women in pre-colonial Kitui West region through different structures within the family unit.

The chapter describes the main features of the pre-capitalist modes of production at play on the eve of colonialism in Kitui West. The chapter demonstrates how pre-colonial Kitui West women were socialized to undertake certain tasks that enabled them to mitigate famine through the social structures which were gendered. This study is based on the premises that, socio-political and economic organization of Kitui West Kamba significantly influenced the social construction of women to suit certain gender roles.

2.1 Origin and settlement of the Kitui West Kamba

The Kamba are a Bantu speaking group found in Kenya. They speak a language called kikamba. One Kamba is referred to as mu-kamba while two or more are called akamba (Hobley, 1971:3). They live in Lower Eastern region of Kenya and distributed in different counties such as Kitui, Makueni and Machakos. Kitui region
lies in the South West of Maasai land, North West of Kikuyu, North of Tharaka, Embu, East of Taita Taveta, South of Makueni and West of Machakos (Kioko 2011).

Most of the oral traditions point out that the original homeland of Bantus of Kenya is at the Congo Basin. Their dispersal point was in Shungwaya where different Bantu groups spread to various areas. The dispersal point for highland Bantus and the Kamba was Mt. Kilimanjaro where the Kamba dispersed to *Kiima kya Kyeu* in 1400-1600 due to their semi-nomadic life leaving behind some relatives (Andrew, 1994:113).

Oral tradition indicates that the Kamba moved from Kiima Kya Kyeu to the North of Chyulu hills where they were exposed to constant attacks from the Maasai. As a result, moved to Kibwezi a place experiencing seasonal droughts. Kibwezi had however, poor soils that were not good for cultivation. In the seventeenth century the Kamba moved to Nzaui rock and slowly settled at Mbooni where soils were fertile at Mbooni, women enhanced the community’s food stock by growing cassava, millet and sorghum which were a security for future famines. Later the Kamba, dispersed to other areas and reached Kitui in 1715 (Lindblom, 1920; Kisovi, 1992; Andrew, 1994).

As a result of permanent settlement, population pressure emerged which forced some pastoral and agricultural remnants to move across river Athi to Kitui in search of grazing and cultivation fields. The Kamba who had left parts of Makueni to Kitui were referred to as *athaisu* (Kioko, 2011:1). Lindblom (1920:14) explains that the term *athaisu* means people whose Kikamba is not pure. From a linguistic
perspective, there exists Machakos, Mwingi and Kitui dialects. According to an oral
correspondence by Ngunia Mutyauvyu, there is a distinct difference between the
Machakos and Kitui dialect. For example, the word road was referred to as *nzia* for
Kitui West Kamba and Mwingi while people from machakos called it *nthia*. In other
cases, Mwingi accent was different from Kitui West like the word eating was
referred to as *kuya* while Mwingi people would call it *kungy'a* (Mutyauvyu O.I. 27th
October 2018).

From oral tradition, there also existed a myth, which explains that long time ago a
man and woman gave birth to three sons who were called Mukwavi, Mukikuyu and
Mukamba. Given that the Maasai and Kamba have linguistic and cultural
differences, the two came from the same mother. The sons grew up, got married and
each had a home and children who spoke different languages. When their father died
Mukamba inherited food from the field. Mukamba and Mukikuyu conspired against
Mukwavi in order to seize the cattle Mukwavi had inherited from the father. There
was a bloody fight amongst the three and as a result Mukamba and Mukikuyu
succeeded in taking away much of Mukwavi cattle where each of them went separate
ways. Therefore, the myth explains the origin of the Kamba as well as their
neighbours Agikuyu (Mugikuyu) and Maasai (Mukwavi) (Ochieng’, 1984:71;
Mwove O.I.:04th December 2018). The Kitui West Kamba had a children’s play
which gave an insights in relations amongst the o Mukamba, Mukikuyu and
Mukwavi. This was the play;

**Child 1: Mukamba ii, Mukikuyu ii x2**

*Mukwavi tyusu*
The translation is; the child was alerting the Agikuyu and Kamba to be aware of their enemy the Kwavi Maasai and therefore they should run for their lives as they were afraid of being raided. This was evidence that the Agikuyu and Kamba were great friends while the Mukwavi was the enemy. As they played they were in two groups, one group consisted of Mukamba and Mukikuyu while the other group had the Mukwavi. When playing, the children drew a line to show boundaries between the Mukwavi and the two acquaintances. After the warning that the Mukwavi was around, the two associates would run for their lives while the Mukwavi would be running after them. If the Mukwavi captured someone before crossing the line they joined Mukwavi’s side. The game went on and on and the children enjoyed running away, others wanted to capture more people as possible while others were delighted by the fact that they were not caught (Kiswa O.I.: 7th October 2018).

The above myth portrays the good relationship created between the Kikuyu and Kamba which was later reflected when famines occurred in Kamba land where the women had to respond to the cultural gender norm in the society of obtaining food from neighbors as a way of mitigating famine (Mbivya O.I.: 24th September 2018).

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, the Kamba had occupied Ulu, Machakos, Makueni, Mwingi, Kibwezi and Kitui among many other areas (Kioko 2011:1). Those who settled in Kitui West had crossed the Yatta plateau and Athi River and finally settled there after they found extensive land for settlement, grazing and cultivation. The environment was suitable for hunting and gathering. The Kitui West Kamba hunted nzia (impala) and large game like elephants and gathered ndula (berries) and matoo (mascadine) which supplemented
people’s diet (Luki O.I.:13th October 2018). The settlement of Kamba to Kitui laid foundations for cassava growing, a crop that flourished in Mbooni. Cassava became a new venture for women in pre-capitalist Kitui, which acted as a guarantee of food supply even during famines regardless of the harsh Kitui ecology (Ndeti, 1972:18). Majority of Kitui West women preferred cassava because it thrived well in Kitui West environment and it being a root crop was not endangered by human, animals or birds (Ngui O.I.:27th September 2018). The mode of production here was communalism characterized by hunting, gathering and subsistence farming.

2.2 Socio-political and economic organization of the Kitui West Kamba before 1895.

The per-capitalist Kamba were traditionally a decentralized community with the clan being the smallest political unit that comprised of related families who claimed a common ancestry. The clans had totem names, which had their origin from the wild animals that inhabited the area. These include names like mbaa Nzau (bull), Mbiti (hyena), Nguli (monkey), Munyambo (lion), Nzoka (snake) and Nzou (elephant). The Kitui West Kamba believed that if a woman had a still birth she was to source an animal name for her next newborn baby thereby diverting from the norm of naming children after ancestors. In so doing the woman reduced the risk of losing her baby (Lindblom, 1920:115; Munro, 1975:14; Kitulu O.I.:25th August 2018).

Shorter (1974:119) points out that each clan was divided into mivia, which were further divided into nyumba. In the pre-capitalist Kitui West Kamba, the man was the head of the household, the breadwinner who had the duty to provide security and financial stability of the family. The family was further divided into nuclear units
known as the homestead *musyi*. Each clan had its council of elders, war leaders and a place of worship. Members of the same clan resided at the same place but spread over the large area creating the *motui* headed by a *mutui* (Kyalaani O.I.:19th September 2018).

Many *motui* formed a village. A village in most cases was determined by the presence of a physical feature like a stream, river or a small hill. People from a certain village participated in different activities such as defending the community and forming various working groups (O’leary, 1984:26). Subsistence pre-capitalist mode of production existed in Kitui West region thus working groups were formed by women from different villages who helped one another in food production as a way of mitigating famine. Due to division of labor it was the cultural obligation of women to work in farms while men hunted (Thengi O.I.:18th September 2018).

In the pre-capitalist Kitui West the male elders were culturally and traditionally regarded as being knowledgeable in law constituted the council which was headed by *atumia ma nzama* (council of elders) and *atumia ma ithembo* (senior elders). The council of elders acted as court of appeal and ensured law and order was maintained in the whole community while the other elders acted as the custodian of the sacred places. Most of these pre-colonial elders in Mutonguni and Yatta were Ndaingo, Maasai and Komu whose responsibility was tax collection during the colonial period (Kiswa O.I.:24th September 2018). Traditionally, it was the old men and women who acted as custodians of the traditions because they were believed to be knowledgeable on the community’s practices (Ndeti, 1972:104; Shorter, 1974:119; Ndoomi O.I.:17th October 2018).
The pre-capitalist Kitui West Kamba had the largest territorial group above the clan called *kivalo* headed by *atumia ma kivalo* (full elders) who participated in delivering judgments. Each territorial group produced *anake* (junior elders) who acted as warriors by defending the community against external attacks. Such groups were also of great importance during famines since it helped in raiding women from the neighboring communities in exchange for food (Munro, 1975:15). Engels observes that the family structure promoted inequality between men and women. Under circumstances when women were plundered they lost human value as were treated as commodities for substitute. In Kitui West it was well defined that the society exempted women from decision making and the running of the affairs of the community a notion that undermined women to inferiority.

The Kamba believed in the existence of a supernatural being and used different names to refer to their God. They called him *Ngai* or *Mulungu* to mean one Supreme Being, *Ngai Mumbi* (God the creator), a powerful God whose power is manifest in creation, *Ngai Mwatuangi* which means God who split the fingers, toes, eyes and mouth of created beings (Francis, 2000:184). The Kitui West Kamba prayed to God through the *aimu* (ancestral spirits) who were appeased with sacrifices and offerings. The rituals took place at the *mathembo* presided over by ritual experts *atumia ma mathembo* (senior elders) including *andu aowe* (Hobley, 1967:58; Ndone O.I.:25th September 2018).

This cult of sacrifice consisted entirely of food and it was believed that the spirits needed material nourishment (Lindblom, 1920: 216). These sacrifices were made frequently in times of difficulties because they believed that for such misfortunes to
occur people had tempered with the spirits. During famines, one of the calamities, the spirits had to intervene and more sacrifices were made for the rains (Kavilu O.I.:28th October 2018).

The Kamba regarded rains as a great blessing and whenever rains poured people rejoiced. If the rains delayed this meant the season was to have inadequate harvests. In this case, there was a serious puzzle, which called for sacrifice (Mbiti, 1969:179). Rain failure was a sign that Mulungu was angry with the people. It was believed that famines were caused by God’s anger that stopped rain from falling. Therefore, the people through the medicine men consulted their God for good rains, which was followed by women offering sacrifices (Hobley, 1967:75; Ndeti, 1972:181; Wambo O.I.:29th September 2018).

The world of spirits, gods and sacrifices is a major feature of pre-capitalist mode of production. Somba (1979:25) observes that the Kamba offered sacrifices and prayers for the rains. The offering consisted of milk, honey, beer, millet and pigeon peas. Two women were given this food to take to the sacred place and a male goat was killed whose blood was mixed with beer. Culturally, old women approximately 75 years of age and above offered sacrifices owing to the fact that at their age they were considered pure. Second, women being farmers were responsible for presenting what they intended to cultivate for blessings (Kitheka O.I.:25th September 2018; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3).

All the sacrifices were laid in a line facing the morning sun. Then the elders were left saying the prayers. Somba (1979:25) states the specific prayer;
Ngai twikwetea liu

Twivoya mbua na liu

Translation: God we bring you food.

We pray for rain and food.

Hobley, (1967:54) notes that, the elders could also pray thus;

‘Mulungu kyauya ni kiu.

twenda mbua na ngo’mbwe

na mbui kusyaa na

Aka masyae,

Ngai tumisyu muimu andu mati kakwe’.

Translation: God this is food,

We need rain and cows,

And goats parturating,

And women to procreate,

God take away epidemics,

People may not die.

Various villages went to the shrines carrying plenty of food for sacrifice. It was the gender responsibility of old women to participate in kilumi (a spirit dance). As the ceremony progressed, the evil spirits loomed around till a woman was possessed. It was a cultural belief that the gods communicated to the Kitui West Kamba through women because they were traditionally socialized as religious leaders. Therefore when it was time to pass the message to the people, women had to be possessed. Thus, if a woman was possessed by the spirits, the rains poured which set the grounds ready for cultivation as a way of fulfilling their gendered role of food production (Mutyaavvu O.I.: 27th October 2018; Thuvi O.I.: 19th September 2018).
The Kitui West Kamba had a strong belief on cosmology especially the movement of heavenly bodies such as stars and the moon. Symbolism was a feature of pre-capitalist modes of production. This made them keen observers of the sky because there was a belief that these movements affected rainfall patterns and in most cases were associated with crop failures that led to outbreaks of famines. The comets were a sign of bad omens and in some cases it was a sign of death of either the people or livestock and signified impending famine (Hobley, 1971:55).

In the pre-colonial period there was a prophetess in Yatta location by the name Lukwama who was gifted in sky observation and prophesied any movement of stars and its sign. In some cases the stars were a sign of distress such as famine and disease. For example in 1887 in Kitui West, there was the famine of *ndata* (star) after the observation of stars by Lukwama. On the other hand, if the moon appeared to have a ring, the farmers could prepare for a bumper harvest (Lindblom, 1920:335; Ndeti, 1972:182-183; Musee O.I.:05th October 2018).

There also existed social grades among the Kitui West Kamba. For instance, *kana* (child), little boy *kavisi* (little boy who is not circumcised), *kelitu* (little girl), *kiveti* (married woman), *mwanake* (unmarried young man who was a warrior), *nthele* (Middle aged man who is married with children) and *mutumia* (an elderly man) who took part in discussing matters of peace and communal operations (Munro, 1975:15; Kileta O.I.:29th September 2018). The most significant grade was the graduation from a *mwanake* to *nthele*. Arising from the minutes of the Local Native Council of Kitui in 1933; this was the definition of a *mwanake*: ‘Any male of Kitui considered
to be of age by the *atumia ma nzama* ready to marry, who was not to partake of intoxicating liquor*’ (KNA/KTI/LNC/33/7/3/3).

According to the laws and customs of the Kamba of Kitui, at puberty *mwanake* could marry and get children. Marriage among Kitui West Kamba was Polygamous since a man could marry as many wives as possible provided he didn’t marry from his clan and could cater for their needs and those of their children (Middleton, 1972). In some circumstances, the first wife encouraged her husband to take more wives if she was barren. The presence of many wives had an economic impact in the sense that wives provided labor force for food production which was essential in enhancing a self-sustaining family even during famines (Nzekethi O.I.:14th October 2018).

Marriage was incomplete without dowry negotiations and payment although the amount was dictated by the cultural norms which varied from society to another. It is such payments that raised the social status of most women (Khamisi, 2011:20). Among the Kamba of Kitui West, bride wealth was popularly known as *ngasya*. It was payable in the form of livestock which included goats and cows as a measure of wealth. The payment of cows and goats was not fixed to a certain number of livestock but was dependent on the financial status of the suitor. For example, some suitors paid an average of 30 to 50 goats for 3 cows, while others paid a ration of 30 goats for a cow (Muthiani, 1973:32-33; Kitching, 1980:204; Wambo O.I.:29th September 2018). A suitor was only allowed to get a woman for marriage if he was ready to pay a reasonable proportion of the bride wealth while the rest was settled through installments based on the agreements by the bride and grooms families (Middleton, 1972).
Sometimes, if the suitor was a rich man he could pay 100 goats which was equivalent to 2 cows. Anytime the bride wealth was paid, a bull was part of the payments in honor of the girl’s mother. The bull was a symbol of easing the pain the mother underwent bringing the girl up (Muthiani, 1973:32). These dowry payments were significant in the perception that when there were outbreaks of famines, women were free to acquire assistance in the form of food from their lineage because good relations exist in both families unlike a situation where no dowry payment was done the married women were by all means forbidden from turning to their family for any help (Ndundi O.I.:06th November 2018).

The Marxist Feminist theory explores the oppression of women in the patriarchal societies and families. In Kitui West, it is evident that while women suffered marginalization men dominated society. The man was the head of the household, the village elder, the council of elders and head of territorial groups. All these men, in one way or the other made decisions and judgements at different levels. In addition, as discussed above, men paid dowry to the girl’s family; this indicated that women had become part of the property owned by men and they had to abide by the resolutions made by men. Besides, the Kitui West community being a polygamous society empowered men to marry more than one wife unlike the women who would not be married by more than one man. Those who don’t agree with this argument say, polygamy saves women from being prostitutes and prevents them from sleeping with too many invisible men.

Kitui West pre-capitalist mode of production greatly relied on the availability of adequate land and labor. Therefore, land was maximally exploited through honey
production, hunting, grazing and cultivation (King’aly’a 0.I.:20th September 2018). Culturally, due to gender division of labor, women acted as producers and therefore all food for family consumption was through their subsistence production (Bullock, 1994:39).

The indigenous crops characterized the pre-capitalist mode of production. These include finger millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, arrow roots, pigeon peas, guavas, and pumpkins (Lindblom, 1920:505). Farming was characterized by the use of simple implements such as iron hoes that looked like a pointed stick called muo which facilitated women to make holes, plant and cover the grains with their foot. When weeding, women used uvanga (a broad-bladed, one edged tool) (Kaseka O.I.:09th November 2018). Other times, women used the broadcasting method to sow which involved the scattering the seeds all over the field without following a certain pattern (Nzioki 1982:12).

In the pre-colonial Kitui West, shifting method a feature of pre-capitalist mode of production. It was popular among farmers due to the availability of arable land. This method allowed women to use fields for various seasons. When the soils became poor and infertile, women could then shift their farming to a different field. These lands were owned by the family though far from home (Muthiani, 1973:65; Mulwa O.I.:15th October 2018).

As a result of the above method, a group of men would move their livestock from the village to this new region called kyengo which was a commonage land used for grazing. Kyengo was far from the homestead and in a different locality. It was land
claimed by the heads of the family but was at the disposal of all family members. The land was large such that it could settle even a family of ten sons. The daughters were not entitled to any form of property ownership hence excluded. In addition, it was believed that when daughters are married off they shall settle in their husbands land. An informant recount that his current resident was part of his father’s kyengo. He and his six brothers were sub-divided the piece of land which was used for both grazing and cultivation (Solomon O.I.:20\textsuperscript{th} September 2018). It is in the kyengo where men set up temporary housing structure that provided shelter and security from trespassers making it easier to graze for a period of two months, before the fields were opened up for farming. Due to the division of labor along gender lines, women embarked on farming on the newly acquired fields (Ndundu O.I.:21\textsuperscript{st} September 2018).

Women and children made journeys to and from the kyengo during cultivation seasons. To ensure much work was done for the day, women would wake up as early as 4am to walk to kyengo since it was very far from home. Cultivating took place till 5pm when they would start their voyage back home. Such journeys were inevitable since the house at the kyengo was meant for the head of the family and culturally a man did not share his house with children (Kitulu O.I.:02\textsuperscript{nd} October 2018).

Pre-capitalist Kitui West economy was also characterized by basic industries. Such industry and art relied on the local available resources. Culturally women specialized in basketry and pottery. The baskets were made from sisal reeds which were processed, left to dry, then separated into small threads and twisted to make nyenze.
The twisted threads were dyed into different colors for purposes of decoration. Other baskets were decorated with a leather strip and were commonly used by women to carry items during the long distance trade. An aspect of communalism was evident as women could accompany each other in search of sisal and even help one another in designing the baskets. Beside trade, it was a requirement for Kitui West women to carry baskets whenever they went shopping at the markets. Some women did basketry for leisure (Nzioki, 1982:24; Mwove O.I.:04th November 2018).

Women also made pots from readily available black and red clay. They molded the clay to produce desirable shapes, left to dry in the sun and finally put in the kiln for hardening. These pots were used for cooking Kambas staple food *muthokoi*; a mixture of grains and maize without husks. These pots were meant to enhance subsistence farming as they stored grains and drinking water. For instance, with the absence of refrigerators in the pre-colonial Kitui West, the stored water was cold enough to quench thirst on hot weather (Hobley, 1971:29; Mulwa O.I.:15th October 2018).

Women also produced calabash known as *ikuu* from gourds which were either big or small in size. One could intersect a calabash into two halves, and one half was referred to as *nzele*. The *nzele* had different functions; the big sized ones were used by women for winnowing grains. The small ones also known as *kasele* were used for serving porridge and local liquor. Notably, the *nzele* had power relations around it. For instance, there was a specific *nzele* for serving the head of the family while the rest were shared by women and children. It was from such share-out that the Kitui West Kamba came up with the proverb *kasele katunivasw’a ni*
kunengelanilw’a meaning a kasele reddens because of sharing (Nzekethi O.I.:14th October 2018).

On the other hand men specialized on wood carving and stools. They had different shapes for each age grade. For example, the three legged stools were known katumbi which was used by men. Sometimes these stools had a string string, which enabled men carry them on their shoulders wherever they went hunting or herding. This made it possible for men to sit when they got tired while on the fields (Wambo O.I.:18th August 2018). Iron working produced items such as arrows, bows and swords, which facilitated the hunting of large game like elephants. The Kamba of Kitui West poisoned the arrows with ivai which was strong enough to make an elephant drop (Muthiani, 1973:69; Wambo O.I.:18th August 2018).

Women also traded foodstuffs, which they produced alongside items they made from the local industries. The engagement in trade was not to make huge profits but to build up subsistence strength, which was the motivating factor. Trade emerged in Ukambani as an alternative way of survival following famines when the rains failed because the available food was insufficient to feed the growing population. This led to growth of markets which were known as king’ang’a (Muthiani, 1973:72; Andrew, 1994:114).

Different markets specialized in certain items, which were exchanged on barter trade basis. For example, people from Masii, Kiima Kimwe and Iveti bought beans, finger millet, sorghum and maize at Kaani market in Machakos. There were two famous markets in Kitui West namely Matinyani and Kavati (present day Kabati). The two markets specialized in sorghum and finger millet crops that were culturally
considered as staple crops in women’s production (Nzioki, 1982:30; Solomon O.I.:20th September 2018).

Apart from local trade, the larger Kamba population extended their trading areas to neighboring communities such as Agikuyu, Maasai, Embu and Mbeere. Traders could exchange both agricultural and pastoral commodities. The Kitui West Kamba acquired millet flour and beans from the Agikuyu and in exchange for cooking pots, baskets and gourds. Much of the trading pursuits were left under the control of women who were regarded peaceful. The Kamba and Mijikenda were actively involved in the trade and acted as middle men between the coastal communities. The Kamba became famous long distance traders and dominated the business processes by penetrating the interior, buying, transporting and exporting goods (Muthiani, 1973:72; Shorter, 1974:122; Ndoomi O.I.:17th October 2018). The Kitui West Kamba participated in the exchange of ivory in the long distance trade. In the mid nineteenth century, ivory trade flourished because of the elephant hunting technique which promoted their long distance trade. Moreover, this hunting acted as food supplement in times of famine when food was scarce. Pre-capitalist Kitui West kamba could hunt large game on the Yatta plateau, which supplemented women production. Besides ivory, the Kitui West Kamba exchanged animal skins, hides and products from their basic industries like cooking pots, baskets, gourds and iron tools. Trade being a great important economic activity was organized in a way that most exchange was done during the periods of famine (Munro, 1975:20; Ndulu O.I.:21st September 2018). The long distance trade began to decline due to competition from Swahili and Arab traders who replaced the Kamba as middlemen. In addition, their trader routes were attacked by the Oromo (Vanzwanenberg 1975:169).
2.3 Social–cultural constructions of Kitui West women in the pre-colonial period

In most African societies, division of labor was based on gender lines. There were different women and men roles dictated by the cultural practices of a particular community. The gender lines were a creation of culture stereotypes and beliefs (Hay & Sticher, 1984:3; Bullock, 1994:1).

Through the Marxist feminist practice, we can explain how Kitui West women were socialized to undertake particular obligations within their cultural setting. Among the pre-colonial Kamba of Kitui West, there was traditional division of labor on gender basis. This scheme isolated different responsibilities for men and women. The gender-based roles were further reinforced by the patriarchal society in which the males have a dominant role in the control of property and political power. In patriarchy, the descent of the family was regarded in the male lineage unlike in the matriarchy where the descent was considered along female lines (Masheti, 1994).

The traditional patriarchal structure in the pre-colonial African communities was manifested on property ownership and inheritance (Davis, 1991). Wickins (1981:47) observes that in some African societies, the elders had rights over the land use and its disposal. The land tenure system was culturally determined and its allocation was gendered. Mbiti (1969:78) notes that among the Kamba, land had an economic and social importance. It met the subsistence needs of a family, which acted as a channel for survival during famines. Culturally, land was a measure of wealth and if an individual did not have any piece of land, he was regarded as poor.
Communal land ownership was a feature of pre-capitalist mode of production, Kabira (1993:15) notes that land was a community property and individuals were entitled to use without ownership. She observes that among the Mbeere, land was the most important property but culturally women lacked ownership and inheritance rights. Among the Kamba, all the property belonged to the community and most valuable property was land which was communally owned. Family property was under the care of a male head and the property became inheritable to sons only (Ndeti, 1972:74). Hobley (1967:279) notes that among the African communities women were never allowed to own livestock though they had power to use milk for the children. Concerning the Agikuyu women, Louis Leakey observes: ‘In the ordinary course of any event it is true that a Kikuyu woman did not inherit or own property’ (Leakey, 1977:11).

Among the Kamba, women did not inherit land or acquire any property. A female informant Nzeli Mitau recalls that at a young age she could take the animals for grazing since the father was a rich man with vast arable land and a total of 50 goats and 100 cows. Looking after these animals became routine until she was big enough to join in food production chain. Being the only daughter, she hoped someday the father would reward her effort by giving her a small piece of land or even a calf. She notes that at one point her father gave her a pregnant cow, which was handed over to her brother when it gave birth. The rest of the siblings benefited from his enormous wealth except her, an indicator that no woman was eligible for any property (Mitau O.I.:18th September 2018). It is clear that Kitui West community discriminated women over men even at a tender age. This is something women had
to get used to as it is the kind of life they would live especially in a society where women were less valuable.

The cultural explanation to the prohibition of Kitui West women from property ownership was that their gender role was primarily to concentrate on food production. This was achieved through the management of the household farm. Hence, women only exploited the husband’s lands but were not entitled to any land rights. This fact placed women in a strategic position to mitigate the effects of famines (Mbiti, 1969:78). Marxist feminists argue that women are exploited through the ownership and inheritance of property which is rooted in the patriarchal society. For the case of Kitui West the ownership of property created a hierarchical order that placed women at the lower end of the social ladder.

In the African communities, men took up jobs that required physical energy such as felling down trees, building and constructing houses and granaries and hunting which became their specialization (Muthiani, 1973:9). The African woman was responsible for both productive and reproduction tasks (Momsen, 1991:50; Rau, 1991:91). Among the nomadic societies such as the Fulani, a woman was expected to milk cows and produce butter while among the Rendile, women milked cows, treated the sick livestock, looked after children, and processed dairy production while men built houses, dams and fabricate wood products (Hay & Stitcher, 1984:3, 56; Kabira, 1993:22).

In such agricultural communities such as the Kamba, women specialized on reproductive work besides performing domestic chores that included cooking,
fetching water, collecting firewood and taking care of children (Mvula, 1997:21). A woman became a home maker since she it was her duty to undertake the household burden not excluding sewing and cut grass for thatching houses (Catherine, 1968:121-122). Culturally, agricultural work was primarily a woman’s role. Women ensured food security through their efforts in food production which characterized most African societies (Mvula, 1997:27). Wolff (1974) notes that, whatever productive effort was observed to be a special responsibility of women. Musalia (2010:1) observes that, about 70-80% of Sub Saharan Africa’s food was attributed to women.

Women have often been referred to as producers, reproducers, consumers and managers of the environment. These attributes have been reflected in the collection of water, firewood and farming. Women’s close interaction with the environment has made it possible for most men and children to rely on women for their feeding (Rau, 1991:91; Rodda, 1991:7; Momsen, 2010:111). In Kitui West, Sowing began on the onset of rains to allow seeds to germinate fully and establish itself for growth and survival for longer periods. Crops were grown in different seasons depending on maturation timelines. For instance maize, pigeon peas, finger millet and sorghum were planted during the long rains while sweet potatoes, arrow roots, guavas and pumpkins were favorable for the short rains. In pre-colonial Kitui West the long rains came between March and May. The short rains were experienced in the months of October through December (Ndeti, 1972:13; Nguli O.I.:20th October 2018).

The family unit acted as a basic source of labor. Much of women’s production relied on household labor, mostly from women and children. Particularly, children had a
great impact towards economic development of a society in providing domestic and farm labor (Hay & Sticther, 1984:1; Musalia, 2010:52). In Kitui West, much of farm labor was left in the hands of women since food production was culturally women’s responsibility. The working hours were from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. After which, women would divert their attention towards domestic chores such as cooking, fetching water and firewood. An informant recalls that although she was a youth and mature enough to participate in *wathi* (social dances) that began from 5pm, she did not participate in such events because much of her time was taken up by her duties in food production (Nguli O.I.:20th October 2018).

On the other hand, under-utilization of male labor led to labor shortage and overburdening women making them delay in attending the fields which was associated with insufficient harvest that resulted to famines (Kasau O.I.:21st September 2018). Mvula (1997:24) notes that girls were subjected to domestic work while the women worked in the fields. Mvula observes that ‘As early as six, girls became responsible for young siblings and performed domestic work like drawing water and fetching firewood.’

Through oral tradition, an informant recalls what she was told by her mother, that in the pre-colonial era all household members went out to the fields for sowing before the occasional rains, which were experienced. It was the expectation of the society for every woman in each household to mobilize the family members for cultivation. However, there were lazy women who never showed any concern and therefore a song was sung to ridicule them (Ngui O.I.: 27th September 2018). Kavata Ngui sings the following song:
Kaveti kaanu mbua ni mbingi,
ndwose kamuti,Kamulo,
kavelu wendete mundane ,
kaveti kaanu mbua ni mbingi.

kaveti kaanu walea kuima,
witwika Kamulandalandi,
wivoyaa tuvembe, tuvoso,
Kaveti kaanu mbua ni mbingi.

Translation: lazy woman the rain is adequate,
Get digging stick, hoe,
Seeds go to the farm,
Lazy woman the rain is adequate.

Lazy woman the rain is adequate,
You will be a beggar,
Borrowing maize, beans,
Lazy woman the rain is adequate.

Songs were a component of culture and a feature of pre-capitalist mode of production. Therefore the above song acted as a wakeup call for the women to pick up their farm tools and seeds after adequate rains fell. Such songs were composed by women since they were well conversant with the theme intended. From the above song, it is evident that through the gender division of work it was women’s duty to set foot on the farm once the rains poured. The song demonstrates how some Kitui West women ridiculed the lazy among themselves. Such songs warned the lazy women to take up their agricultural responsibilities on the onset of rains or else they
become economically dependent on other women once famine struck the community. There was societal impact for the lazy women for they lost much attraction from husbands. Kitui West society bothered less if a man was sluggish but if a woman never took up the agricultural responsibilities as per societal expectations, she had no place in such society.

Kabira (1993:31) observes that women’s responsibilities were sometimes overwhelming. To reduce the workload, small women groups were formed with communities to enhance labor capacity for agricultural work. These work groups were not appreciated by societies which perceived such as groups of poor women. The working groups provided food for subsistence and this formed a feature of the pre-capitalist mode of production. Mwendwa (O.I.:20th October 2018) observes that women could sometimes get help from relatives or friends through the work groups’ mwethya and kitati. Mwethya was made up of many women from different households in the village who took turns to go to each other’s field. On the other hand kitati comprised of few friends. The informant recalls this mwethya song:

Solo: Ii mwethya ii,
All: ii wa nguu na mbia,
Solo: Syakomana ,
All: sikekya kituli!
Solo: Uaii mbuu,
All: uuuuuu!
Solo: Sililai ,
Solo:    alililiiiiii!

Translation:    solo:       yes working group,
                All:         a group of tortoise and rats,
                Solo:       when they meet,
All:          they swing their backs,
Solo:        scream,
All:           uuuuui!
Solo:         ululate,
All:            alililiiiiii!

This song was meant to bring different women work groups together. Such groups comprised of different women from various households engaging in agricultural activities. The mention of tortoise and rats meant such groups never discriminated women, thus women from any household were accommodated. The screams and ululations symbolized happiness and unity among the women groups. Women believed if they merry while working in the farms, they could have a bumper harvest. From the song it is evident that women worked as a group and indeed at the end of the day it was more productive as opposed to an individual.

Lindblom (1920:30) notes that attending to fields was a core duty for a woman at critical times of child bearing, and even in the advanced stages of her pregnancy, she could go to farm. He explains that the period of her rest was determined by circumstances. If she had daughters who could work in the field then she had few days to rest in the hut. If not she could resume her responsibilities the same day after delivery.

Weeding of cereals planted by women was done on different times depending on the type of crop in season. For instance the Kitui West women could weed sorghum after a month. This was necessary in order for the sown crops not to face competition for water and nutrients. The speed of weeding was determined by the size of field a
farmer had put under cultivation as well as the availability of labor either from family or from friends (Muli O.I.:27\textsuperscript{th} September 2018).

Ndeti (1972:181) observes that weeding period was very crucial. He further explains that; ‘No dances are allowed at this time because people are devoted to the economic activities’ of caring for plants and watching over livestock lest they destroy crops’. The subsistence food production relied on free labor, which constituted the pre-capitalist mode of production. Upon ripening, women and children guarded millet and maize corns, which were vulnerable to birds and animal attack. Women could guard the fields against wild boars, squirrels, baboons and porcupines. Young boys and girls chased the birds away through throwing stones, shouting and use of slings (Lindblom, 1920:504; Mbiti, 1966:7).

Harvesting was culturally a women’s responsibility. To achieve this, they mobilized relatives and neighbors who could work in turn from one family’s fields to others. The activity started from dawn to dusk throughout the harvesting period (Mbiti, 1966:7; Rau 1991:25; Toulmin, 1992:83). Among the pre-colonial Kamba of Kitui West, appropriate songs accompanied harvesting. For instance, when harvesting millet the following song was sung;

\begin{verbatim}
 kavuli vula mwee witu ,
kavuli vula mwee witu
nitia nekalila kivalo,
ngivulavula mwee witu.
\end{verbatim}

Translation: Thresher thresh our millet,

Thresher thresh our millet,
Will sit in a circle,

Threshing our millet.

The above song calls upon whoever was threshing to thresh the millet harder. The first line of the song is repeated to emphasize that the day’s task is threshing millet so let women be ready. This particular song was sung when threshing millet particularly after a harvest. Women sat in a circle to prevent the threshed millet to disperse which caused a lot of wastage. Sitting in a circle had a traditional interpretation based on religious beliefs that the ability of Kitui West women to contain the millet together at the centre signified that the rains would continue to pour in the region since they did not let the millet outside the circle. Letting millet to be dispersed outside the circle meant that the blessing of rain and harvest has been left to escape to other regions (Mbivya O.I.:20th September 2018). In addition men were romantically attracted to women who were hard working and contributed towards activities of food production. This was attributed to fact that a woman would team up with the rest of women in the food production process. Such gesture represented an ideal family, thus making them favorable candidates for marriages.

The song demonstrates the involvement of songs during harvesting which was a symbol of unity against famine among women work groups. The singing lasted as long as the activity took place. After harvesting women reapers could each bring home a basket of whatever was harvested as payment. It was important to ensure that the baskets were of same capacity for equality (Mbivya O.I.:20th September 2018).
Threshing and winnowing were tasks culturally preserved for women. Women in a row did maize threshing by the use of a stick of six feet in length and a diameter of an inch and a half (Muthiani, 1973:66). Two women would therefore sift together to make a heap of grains. They used calabashes cut at the diameter to make what was known as nzele. Older women who never engaged in other farm activities mostly did winnowing. The task was suitable in a moderate wind to avoid the wasteful dropping of grains to the ground (Lindblom, 1920:505; Muthiani, 1973:66). See appendix II (page 167) showing Kamba women threshing and winnowing beans after harvest.

After this exercise, the grains were ready for storage in granaries, which were built upon ripening of crops. Besides, there were also other storage facilities such as the big urns, which were called iinga (singular-kiinga). Men culturally did the making the kiinga because it needed a lot of energy to tighten the sisal, a skill that was passed from generation to generation. Such storages were built at the homestead to enhance security (Ndeti, 1972:181; Kasau O.I.:21st September 2018).

Kiinga could store about 360kgs of grains in which storage could at least be used for two planting seasons. Many iinga were stored in the granaries and packed to the brim depending on the kind of harvest for the year. Therefore, in case of a prolonged drought season or a threatening famine the stored food was always ready for consumption. The granaries could be made in the same way the basket is built. Once it reached the desired height, it was placed on a scaffold with a short distance from the ground (Nzioki, 1982:25; Kileta O.I.:29th September 2018). From the above analysis, the agricultural responsibilities became repetitious for women from season to season making the woman’s labor load longer and harder. Gender inequality
exhibited itself in Kitui West region when women often undertook more duties than men, making women more disadvantaged. The fact that these women were overwhelmed with duties made them remain in the private domain as men dominated the public sphere.

2.4 Summary and Conclusion

It was the objective of this chapter to highlight the origin of the Kamba, the socio-political and economic organization of Kitui West Kamba before 1895 and explore how such organizations affected the woman’s life in the social, economic and political sphere. The chapter reveals that, the pre-capitalist socio-cultural practices of the Kitui West Kamba were socially constructed. The study found out that the prosperity of Kitui West economy could entirely be attributed to women who guaranteed economic independence.

Kitui West women played a significant role of maintaining food security with or without famines thus enhancing an economically sustainable and stable community. Marxist feminist approach brought out how political and social institutions in Kitui West oppressed women. In chapter three, we interrogate the key pillars of colonial capitalist modes of production and their effects on gender roles and relations.
CHAPTER THREE

COLONIAL POLITICAL ECONOMY IN KITUI WEST REGION FROM 1895-1920

3.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we examine the colonial political economy of the Kitui West region by interrogating the problematic of power in the context of access, use and distribution of resources. Uppermost in this interrogation is a conscious effort to analyze the imposition of colonial rule, land alienation, taxation, labour and military service.

The concept of articulation of the modes of production helps to expound the extent to which the pre-capitalist modes of production in Kitui West were undermined by the introduction of capitalist modes of production. This chapter demonstrates how the key pillars of colonial capitalism affected gender roles and relations in Kitui West region.

3.1 Imposition of colonial rule in Ukambani

Kenya was declared a British protectorate in 1895 with the aim of protecting the route to Uganda whose strategic position was the source of Nile. The main concern of the British in the period between 1895 and 1901 was to establish an effective administration. The building of the Kenya-Uganda railway facilitated the penetration of the British to the interior of Kenya. This encouraged the influx of more Europeans who introduced western culture and different dynamics of capitalism (Njoroge, 1963:27).
The colonial government turned Kenya into a Whiteman’s country and when it was fully annexed, it was declared a crown colony in 1920. The colonial period was the era of major alternative in the dynamics of the old society. There was the introduction of western technology, colonial capitalism and the integration of the colonial economy into the world economic system (Vanzwanenberg, 1975).

By 1880, the Kamba region was dependant on subsistence production to satisfy people’s domestic needs. Large market was not a critical feature of the economy. However, the entry of European colonizers in Kitui changed production structure and, in the early twentieth century, a number of European settlers established mixed farms and plantation ranches in the area (Njoroge, 1963:115). In Kitui West specifically, the Europeans established sisal plantations and B2 Yatta ranches as shall be discussed further in chapter four. In this way, the region was incooperated into large-scale production that became w a dominant feature of the Kenyan’s agricultural sector (Eliot, 1972:5).

The Imperial British East African Company under William MacKinnon set up different stations in various of Kenya for effective administration and total control. These were Fort hall (Murang’a), Kakamega in Western Kenya and Ukambani (Matheka, 1992). Under British colonialism, the Kamba region divided into Kitui and Machakos districts. Each district was further divided into divisions, locations and sub-locations. In 1892 the Imperial British East African Company under William MacKinnon opened up a station in Kitui and Machakos became the chief inland station of the company (Mbiti, 1966:18). The invasion of the Kamba by the British, witnessed the decline of long distance trade since the company wanted to
build the railway as a way of establishing effective administration (Hilsop, 1961:47; Njoroge, 1963:27; Shorter, 1974:120).

The coming of Europeans in the Kamba region was expected since Syokimau the Kamba medicine woman and a seer had prophesied. The first white man noted to have come to Ukambani was a missionary, Dr. Ludwig Krapf in 1849. Around 1892 John Ainsworth, a British administrator settled in Machakos with the aid of chief Masaku and later in Kitui with the help of chief Kivoi. He replaced Mr. Leith a British administer who had been driven away by the Kamba warriors when he directed the cutting of *ithembo* a sacred tree. The Kamba interpreted the action as disrespect to the Kamba traditions. John Ainsworth rose to be a key figure for British rule in Ukambani after making peace with the Kamba who had lost trust in Europeans during Mr. Leith’s time (Mbiti, 1966:18; Nzioki, 1982:32; Ochieng’, 1985:91; Kioko, 2011:16).

After peaceful reconciliation of the Europeans and the Kamba, the colonial government sent out some administrators to pacify the Kamba. Charles Dundas points out that, he had been sent to Mumoni in 1908 to deal with the elephant poaching and later moved to Kitui town as an administrator. This is the description Dundas gave about Kitui; ‘The district of Kitui was hot and the rains often failed then followed grim drought and famine’ (Dundas, 1955:15).

It was during Dunda’s era in Kitui that the colonial government increased the number of Europeans in the area from one to three. Later, when Hobley was sent to Kitui by the provincial commissioner for a government inspection he opted to stay.
With the presence of Ainsworth the district commissioner, Dundas and Hobley enhanced European control in Kitui. Consequently, the three bonded with the people and studied the customs of Kitui people. Later on each of these administrators wrote a book. Dundas wrote *African Crossroads* (1955), Hobley wrote *The Bantu Beliefs and Magic* (1967) and Ainsworth wrote *Pioneer Kenya Administrator* (1955) (Ibid :26).

Ainsworth’s administration in Ukambani coincided with the period when Kitui experienced increased epidemics and famines. First, it was the swarms of locust in 1897-1898, then followed the famine in 1898-1899. This period witnessed widespread environmental destruction that affected East, Central and Southern Africa. In the 1980’s there were series of catastrophes among the Kamba, Maasai and Agikuyu. There was also the outbreak of famine attributed to drought and locust invasion in East and Central Africa. The wide spread phenomenon was also witnessed in Gambia and South Africa and diseases like cattle plague as far as Congo Basin (Tignor ,1976:11; Kjekshus, 1977:126; Iliffe, 1987:156).

Ainsworth explains that in 1955, food was brought from other districts such as Nairobi to Kitui, Machakos and Kibwezi which was distributed to all the existing divisions. In addition, the outbreak of rinderpest caused a lot of trouble for people’s survival during famines. For example, many livestock succumbed to the disease threatening people’s survival during famines (Ainsworth, 1955:47).
3.2 Key pillars of colonial economy and its impact on Kitui West women 1895-1920

3.2.1 Land alienation 1895-1920

In Kenya, the period between 1895 and the 1920s marked the evolution of settler agriculture, an epoch witnessed by massive land alienation. Sir Charles Eliot was the second commissioner of the East Africa protectorate and was in support of European immigration to the Kenyan protectorate (Zeleza, 1989: 40). The colonial government encouraged the settlement of Europeans in the highlands through passing of the 1915 Crown’s Land Ordinance and land regulations (Maxon 1989: 67).

The pre-colonial boundaries of some locations such as Katutu and Kathiani in Mutonguni division were altered for effective land alienation. For example, residents of a given location grazed and cultivated within the location except families who had *kyengo* as discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, with the change of boundaries some residents of a certain locations were relocated into new divisions. This however, caused a new challenge in regard to cultivation and grazing in the Yatta plains (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1911; Kiswa O.I.: 7th October 2018).

Accordingly, heads of families could live in one location while their economic activities took place in a different location. The splitting of families threatened the pre-capitalist family unity. As the frequency of interaction between Kitui West men and women reduced straining their gender relations. In addition, people were congested in different locations and much of the land used for cultivation was used to create room for building houses which implied that the portion of land left for cultivation was smaller denying women the opportunity to produce enough for famines (Mutyaivu O.I.: 27th October 2018).
The onset of colonial rule signified loss of land to most Kenyan communities. For instance, the Maasai lost the largest area of their grazing land while among the Agikuyu it was most disastrous because much of their land turned into agricultural European farms. In Ukambani the Europeans alienated both cultivation and grazing lands which include Simba-Emali, Makindu, Yatta and Kiboko areas (KNA/DOA/Vol 1/1920).

The loss of land to the Europeans brought about hostility between the Africans and whites since it was mainly for British benefits. The basic land law under which the Kamba, Agikuyu and Maasai land was alienated was the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1920; which permitted sale of land to Europeans. The land was even purchased by the government at a cost of 1,200 rupees an equivalent of 811.104 Ksh (Tignor, 1976:30). The quantity of land in Kitui West alienated by 1915 was 5,016 Kitui reserve (KNA/DC /KTI/1/1/1:1916).

The pre-capitalist modes of production were altered by the introduction of capitalist production. In the pre-capitalist Kitui West Kamba, land acted as a fundamental element that constituted the social construction of the Kitui West woman in the sense that women decided how, when and the purpose in which they utilized the land. For instance, women were conversant with various seasons hence they knew when to plant, weed and harvest. They also knew which crops to alternate with when practicing crop rotation and when to do shifting cultivation. Women’s monopoly on food production assured the society of economic stability with adequate supply of food (Hay & Stichter, 1984:12; Nzekethi O.I.:14th October 2018).
Women were the main pillar of the subsistence economy. But once Europeans began acquiring and privatizing land for commercial purposes the pre-capitalist subsistence economy began to crumble. As a result, food reserves began to exhaust. Besides, women had to re-define their social roles within the evolving colonial capitalist economy. Women lost economic power to the British after they began losing their influence on food production.

### 3.2.2 Taxation 1895-1920

The imposition of taxation on Africans was a way of accumulating revenue for the colonial government. This government income was useful in catering for the expenses incurred while running the Kenyan protectorate and the construction of the Kenya – Uganda railway. The colonial government introduced two forms of taxes namely; poll and hut tax. The hut tax law was passed in 1897 though it was not effected until 1902. This kind of taxation was payable by the owner of each dwelling. Poll tax is a tax levied on every adult without reference to their income or resources (Ochieng’, 1992; Ewout, 2010). Taxation became the way of life of the Kamba since 1898(KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1)

At the onset of colonialism, taxation in Kitui West was payable in form of livestock. The Kamba were bitter because circumstances forced them to sell their stock to pay taxes (Hobley 1967: 315). The imposition of poll and hut tax drove the Kitui Kamba to sell their livestock in order to meet their monetary obligation (Simuyu 1974:97). Gupta (1973:66) observes that the Kamba of Kitui sold sheep, goats or their by-products so that they can settle their tax indebtedness. The sale of livestock to settle tax dues slowed down women’s agricultural responsibilities because the oxen that
pulled the ploughs became fewer thus delaying women’s production process (Ngindu O.I.:21st September 2018).

The burden of paying tax among Africans became unbearable with the introduction of poll tax. The purpose of this taxation was to draw cheap labour from subsistence peasantry by forcing them to sell their labour (Brautigam et al. 2008). Poll tax became liable to all persons over 16 years, payable in the form of rupee from 1903. The pressure of taxation influenced the Kitui West Kamba towards the capitalist monetarization a change from the non-monetary pre-capitalist economy (KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1).

The colonial government intended to collect taxes from an increasing number of Africans though the period between 1903 and 1910 was witnessed by small number of Africans paying taxes. Therefore, the government adjusted the 1903 and 1910 ordinance governed by the principle of paying taxes in form of specific amount of labor on public works (Wolff, 1974: 101). Adults who could not pay both hut tax and poll tax were forced to offer labor on European farms. This was mandatory and therefore who failed to obey were whipped or arrested into forced labor. Consequently, the new colonial administration its taxation regime to acquire free African labor which serviced subsistence modes of production to wage labor which was a major pillar of colonial capitalism.
Table 3.1: Number of labourers recruited outside Kitui district (excluding carrier corps)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO. OF LABOUR RECRUITS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915 - 1916</td>
<td>1423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916 - 1917</td>
<td>1728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917 - 1918</td>
<td>312</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1: 1918

From the above table it is evident that the number of labour recruits from the public increased year by year apart from 1917-1918 owing to the fact that that period witnessed a higher number of men being recruited in the carrier corps. Majority of the recruits were porters employed by the Indians to carry loads between Machakos and Kitui. Those who worked in the district were paid sh.5 per month. Casual laborers were paid 20 cents a day for transporting loads to Machakos and back. In 1915, 473 anake were porters during the last quarter of the year. According to the censuses of 1914-1915 the number of anake was 7677 as regards to 8627 in 1913-1914 censuses, some became married men and estimate of 15-20% were working outside the their village (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1915).

In 1912, a native authority ordinance was enacted to recognize the power of colonial chiefs who were a creation of the colonial administration (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1912). The chiefs were given power to recruit labor for various purposes such as working under construction and road maintenance. Africans were paid 2 rupees equivalent to Ksh.1 that was later increased to 3 rupees equivalent to Ksh.2 in 1910 and a maximum of 5 rupees equivalent to Ksh.3 in 1915. So
traditionally, political structure lost legitimacy as people transferred their loyalty to colonial functionaries. In terms of enforcement of taxation of tax compliance traditional chiefs and clan leaders were often replaced by colonial chiefs. So the power to enforce colonial laws was exercised through chiefs appointed by commissioners. The chief for Yatta division was Kalungu wa Kathanzu who was paid 100 rupees equivalent to sh.67 and 59 cents while Mutonguni division was under Musau wa Kisesia who was paid 120 rupee equivalent to sh.81 and 11 cents an amount higher compared to his counterpart since his area was slightly larger (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1915). The table below shows the amount of taxes collected from between 1901 and 1918.
Table 3.2: Comparative figure of tax collected in Kitui district from 1901-1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AMOUNT IN SHILLINGS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901-1902</td>
<td>1,501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1902-1903</td>
<td>16,073</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1903-1904</td>
<td>23,618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904-1905</td>
<td>50,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905-1906</td>
<td>46,436</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906-1907</td>
<td>71,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1907-1908</td>
<td>71,811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1908-1909</td>
<td>71,826</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1909-1910</td>
<td>88,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910-1911</td>
<td>102,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911-1912</td>
<td>109,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912-1913</td>
<td>114,075</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913-1914</td>
<td>119,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914-1915</td>
<td>120,081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915-1916</td>
<td>121,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916-1917</td>
<td>120,903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917-1918</td>
<td>197,593</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1918

Taxation being a capitalist mode of production itself was a form of exploitation. Taxation in Kitui West region increased year by year as a result, residents were coerced to provide what was termed as cheap labor in order to pay taxes which
benefited the colonialists at the expense of the poor. Further, some Africans were favored by the system of taxation. For instance the chiefs and headmen were relieved from paying taxes because they aided the Europeans undermine fellow Africans.

The chiefs and headmen were exempted from taxation; they were recognized and besides, the colonial government gave them metal arm badges for identification and status different from the other ordinary people in Kitui West (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1916).

To ensure that the legislation on taxation was more effective, the responsibility of tax collection was put under the chiefs and headmen which was done in a brutal manner and defaulters dealt with (Leys (1925:285; Hobley, 1967:314) A tax defaulter was treated as a criminal, for example; if an individual failed to pay any form of tax he was subjected to a punishment of taking away his property. In most cases it involved the seizing of livestock. All this was between the tax payers and tax collectors (Brautigam et al. 2008). In Kitui West the chiefs responsible for tax collection were Illeli Musau from Mutonguni division and Munyasia Ngao Yatta division (Kitui District gazette, 1931).

Besides, when Kitui West men evaded paying their taxes, their wives could be arrested and detained until men cleared their taxation dues. These incidents brought women’s food production to a standstill because, in their absence, no one attended to the fields till they returned. Furthermore, such behaviors worsened couples relationships. For instance, some couples would split over frequent arrest of married women as a way of forcing their money to pay taxes. Consequently, women and
children returned to their maternal homes leaving subsistence production unattended (Mwendwa O.I.:04th November 2018; Wolff, 1974:117). Women had to pay for men’s responsibilities by being arrested when men declined paying taxes. From Marxist feminism ideas of inequality in Kitui West society women remained a subordinate group. Colonial administration and Christianity reinforced the marginalization of women.

By 1918 the introduction of market oriented society had transformed much of the economic and social units. The monetary system overturned the lives of Africans and was dependant on cash. Freund notes that; ‘A man’s productive and reproduction capacity depended on marriage, marriage depended on bride wealth which had to be paid in cash (Freund, 1982:128). In the pre-capitalist Kitui West, bride wealth was payable inform of livestock. It remained an important feature in Kitui West Kamba even with the money economy and wage employment. Under colonialism, though Bride wealth was not necessarily payable inform of livestock and became a question of trade and the highest bidder was likely to be the suitor who finds favor with the prospective father in law. There was a fixed amount for goats and cows (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1; Muthiani, 1973:32; Ndoomi O.I.:17th October 2018).

Tax was payable in cash and most men and women sought for wage employment in order to pay for taxes. There were circumstances where some employers of labor had agreed that tax be deducted from the wages and salaries. After which they were issued with receipts on behalf of the government appointed tax collectors.
3.2.3 Labor 1895-1920

Labor was among the remarkable features of the process of imposing dominance of settlers agriculture. After massive land alienation, the colonial government enforced measures which enhanced adequate labor supply in white settler plantations and other sectors (Zeleza, 1989:2). The Europeans were willing to exploit African labor from the pseudo scientific stereotype. Therefore, this assumption made Europeans offer pseudo scientific stereotype lower wages to the African race (Rodney, 1972:150).

The period between 1903 and 1918 was characterized by labor laws demanding Africans to adhere to the laid labor regulations. In 1903 Africans started engaging into labor markets in search for tax money. In addition, the Masters and Servants Ordinance of 1906 ensured all men provided labor on Europeans’ farms (Tignor 1976:189; Muchanga, 1998:190).

The wage labor forced men to leave their farms and seek employment while women remained in the villages. As a result, most Kitui West men left the villages leaving fewer men who worked together with women and children for peasant production. Marx and Engels (1848) observe that wage labor was among the characteristics of capitalism. In Kitui West region, this was a trying moment for the Africans because the African population had been transformed into a wage labor force and military labour (Kiswa O.I.:07th October 2018). Even though colonial capitalism had been imposed on Kitui West, it existed side by side with the pre-capitalist economy of the region. This can be explained through the articulation of the modes of production.
By 1907 there was a view that some European employers had been abusing African laborers on the recruiting pattern used forcing them to work in their farms. During Winston Churchill’s visit in Kenya, a British prime minister during second world war and a parliamentary legislature of great distinction he made the following remarks; “Officials have to avoid possible shocking scandals in the labor situation that might embarrass London” (Wolff, 1974:102).

The colonial government through Native Authority Ordinance of 1912 granted African chiefs powers to recruit laborers as a way of easing the conflict between the settlers and Africans over recruitment issues. Chiefs guaranteed the government adequate of labor (Leys, 1925:290). The Governor, Sir Edward Northey strengthened the chief’s powers by emphasizing that they were to use all possible means to recruit able bodied male into colonial labor patterns (Maxon, 1989:73).

There was witnessed migrant labor force of men from Kitui West to Thika district where men offered labor in the European plantations. The movement of men outside the district led to separation between wives and husbands thus exposing the traditional family life to sexual anomaly and destabilized marriages (Leys, 1925:290; Muli O.I.: 27th September 2018).

The First World War d the peasantry agriculture African labors due to mobilization of men in the military. The young men were being recruited in the army in large numbers because the Kamba were considered a war community (Shiroya, 1985:4).

In addition, Kitui West young warrior anake, had a history of defending the community against attacks. The pre-colonial raids equipped the warriors with skills raising their demand in military service. Hunting elephants with weapons like
swords, spears and bows which were manufactured within the community was an added advantage to the *anake* (Mbilo O.I.: 11th October 2018).

In May 1915, the government, through the military labor bureau, demanded for the recruitment of 175 men. Within a month, it asked for another 100 in February 1916. By June, 500 extra men had joined the service and by the end of the year Kitui district had 3,204 of its men in the military (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1: 1915).

Table 3.3: Kitui Population census 1915-1916.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Men</th>
<th>20,804</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>31,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anake</td>
<td>7,420</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huts</td>
<td>31,728</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/Annual report 1916

Table 3.4: Kitui carrier corps census 1915-1918

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NUMBER OF CARRIER CORPS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1915 – 1916</td>
<td>3,062</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916 – 1917</td>
<td>3,470</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917 – 1918</td>
<td>3,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>10,417</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1: 1918

The 1915-1916 population censuses indicate that men were lesser than women by more than 10,000. The absence of men in villages as they were recruited for military labor is confirmed by the 1915-1918 carrier corps census showing increasing
number of men recruited from year to year. Not forgetting the fact that men already moved outside the district for labor in which some were, porters, on railway. Others as boys for Europeans, cycles and motor car attendants (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1915). As a result, the villages were left with more women than men, had an impact on the family leadership and households were headed by women unlike in the pre-capitalist Kitui West Kamba society where the man was the head of the family. The Marxist feminism holds the notion that gender roles and relations can change over time (Momsen, 1991:4). Therefore, Kitui West Kamba had an experience of such where the pre-capitalist gender roles transformed influencing the position of a woman under colonialism. For instance, Kitui West women gained power as decision makers and played key role in nurturing the families, a role that was culturally preserved for men in the pre-colonial Kitui West (Kaseka O.I.: 09th November 2018).

It became evident several men had died in war while others returned with serious physical disabilities. Some of the returnees were weak and could hardly take up the sexual and family responsibilities. Others returned with diseases as dysentery and meningitis. Most of them did not get the required attention from Kitui district hospital. They opted to get treatment from the mission hospital in Muthale, Mutonguni division since the district hospital was under medical jurisdiction of Fort Hall (Murang’a) administrative base and no medical officer had been in the hospital. In this case, most of them lost lives because they did not get access to proper medication (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1918).

The colonial government ran short of the soldiers due to deaths. For instance up to 1917, 569 deaths had been reported in Kitui district (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1917).
Therefore, there was need for more recruits which resulted to the mobilization of more male into the carrier corps. It became hard for women to come in to terms with the situation because they had lost their loved ones. In addition more men had been drafted into the service. Consequently, the women had to take up the challenge of their new status as widowers and raise the orphaned children single handedly (Zeleza, 1989:509; Kitheka O.I.:13th October 2018).

People thought they could recover quickly from the misfortunes of war. Unfortunately, 1918 was a year of a bad drought, leading to a famine called *yua ya muminukilyo wa kau wa mbee* meaning the famine at the end of World War 1. The period was even worse with the return of ex-soldiers, who, besides meningitis they also brought along smallpox (Ochieng’, 1978:27; Were, 1972:241).

The drought of 1918 greatly affected the Kitui West Kamba who depended on livestock for nourishment. The drought had been triggered by rain failures and rinderpest that swept most livestock which resulted to immense loss. It was after World War 1 and Women had to stand in for men who were either weak or disabled. Therefore, women extended their journeys to Mbeere to source for food. The pre-capitalist African communities valued brotherhood and peace but under colonial rule things became different. These expeditions were no longer peaceful. Colonialism bred a population where violence and force prevailed as Europeans dealt with issues of labor recruitment and taxation. The society was slowly transforming to such vices. Consequently, the Kamba engaged into battles with the Mbeere in which they confiscated Mbeere’s livestock and took their foodstuff forcefully. Women obtained
some food stuffs like beans, cassava and maize though not plenty as it was expected (Mwaniki, 1973:29; Muli O.I.:27th September).

In the pre-capitalist Kitui West, if the residents went borrowing food, they could carry as much as they could without having anything in exchange. This time the donkeys were rare and only a few people could afford so human porterage. The exercise became frequent such that the Agikuyu attributed some of their famines to have been caused by the regular borrowing of the Kamba in times of famines. Colonialism altered the pre-colonial copying mechanisms to famine as fights became common and this hampered successful obtaining of food. (Muriuki, 1974:106, Musee O.I.:21th September 2018).

After a few months of fighting with the Mbeere the Kambas withdrew from the strife after several Kamba women lost lives. Mwaniki (1973) explains that a fighter shouted “do not kill me, I am a woman”. It was revealed that Kamba women disguised themselves as men (Ibid, 1973:31). Unfortunately, the Kamba West women who disguised themselves during famine fights became war captives in alien land. If their kinsmen did not look for them, women became laborers and others married to the Mbeere. Children bore out of this union, were Mbeere and Kamba names. This explains why the Kamba of Kitui West share names such as Mwaniki, Maina and Maingi with the Embu and Mbeere. Under circumstances where women were not willing to be married to Mbeere men had to endure the pain of being a prisoner in a foreign land amid famine (Mwaniki, 1973:31; Mwanzia O.I.:26th September).
3.2.4 Destruction of indigenous modes of production and agriculture 1895-1920

The integration of indigenous modes of production into the capitalist production systems altered traditional indigenous modes of production among Africans in Kenya. The capitalist mode of production was speeded by land alienation, forced labor, taxation and forced cash crop cultivation. This had an immense impact on Africa indigenous modes of production (Maxon, 1989: 63). Under the pre-capitalist modes of production in Kitui West, labor was free and went into subsistence production. Not a commodity but under capitalism labor was exchanged with wages. In turn, portion of the wages went to which was an incentive for labor. By 1915, averages of 4,294 laborers were in employment outside the reserve. This saw the abandoning of subsistence labor for paid labor creating labor shortage for women’s production (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1915; Mwikya O.I.:18th September 2018).

Apart from labor for subsistence production, other forms of labor emerged with the penetration of capitalist modes of production. Marxist feminism points that gender practices are subjected to transformation. For the case of Kitui West women, pre-capitalist subsistence and small-scale production conformed to the changes that had been brought about by capitalism. Subsistence labor existed side by side with wage labor. Wage labor for European capitalist system and subsistence labor for African households. For instance, the days a laborer is not providing labor for Europeans, stays in the village and joins other clansmen to provide free labor to enhance food production for subsistence a mix of pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production.
On the other hand food crop growing existed alongside cash crop farming. The colonialists introduced a number of cash crops among the Kitui West Kamba. Simsim seeds were distributed by the government for planting though it was not known whether it will prove successful. Rubber was planted whose results were unknown because of the series of dry years. They also ventured into vegetable and fruit farming; for example, they started planting mangos and onions. 75 hectares was also set aside under tobacco (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1913; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1915). In such situations the women had to balance their commitment in the subsistence and large scale production. Second, the colonialists used Kitui West Kamba as experiments whereby they tried out their crops on residents’ farms using African labor. Consequently, the subsistence was slowly by slowly compromised, destroying food sustainability thus exposing the society to food shortages during future famines (Thengi O.I.: 18th September 2018).

The cash crop economy propelled the Kitui West Kamba productive system in the main highway of international capitalism. The period during the war coincided with a decline in Kitui West production due to the fact that the 1917 rains failed and the absence of men in the area. Between 1918 and 1919, the famine committee reported that the Kitui Kamba bought 1,905 tons of rice, 7,335 tons of grains and 53 tons of maize from other district an indication that there was food scarcity (Simiyu, 1974:121). There was a fall of prices of imports and exports in the first years of world war one. For instance, bee wax exported shown a difference of Rs 56,295 which was a very serious loss to the Kitui West Kamba who relied on honey and wax (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1916).
The Pre-capitalist method of subsistence production farming such as broadcasting system was replaced by the introduction of mechanization like the iron plough. The plough made work easier since it could facilitate the cultivation of a larger area compared to the use of human labor (Kitheka O.I.:03rd November 2018). Although the ox-driven plough liberated women from the painful effects of using a jembe, it had its shortcomings. For example, it meant incurring an expense of purchasing and maintenance of the oxen, which pulled the plough. In most cases, women could not afford the cost and so during the cultivation season, they could be patient enough to wait for those who owned the oxen to finish tilling their lands. After this then they could lend the oxen to the needy women and the result was that women who lacked animal power delayed the cultivation exercise and were unable to plant at the onsets of the rains in case the rains were short. In such conditions, effective women production was hindered exposing the community to food shortages during famines (Katoloki O.I.:17th October 2018).

In 1911 Kitui district had a number of foreigners who consisted of the 18 missionaries and British officials (6 male, 5 female and 7 children). At that time there were no traders in the district (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1911). By 1914, the population of Kitui West region was diverse. It consisted of the residents, Europeans, Arabs, Swahili and Goans who engaged in trade and lived in the trading centers and others in Kitui town (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1914). By 1917 the foreign population was 348(252 men, 38 women and 58 children) (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1917). The settlement of Arab traders in Kitui West was to enhance adequate control of the market. They established dukas at Mutonguni and Migwani which were owned by the Swahilis and Asians but financed by the Indians. The pre-capitalist markets were
dominated by locally produced goods. Under capitalism, the markets became heterogeneous where both local and foreign goods found their way in the African markets. Foreign goods included, such as clothes, sugar and salt, which attracted most residents. The Indian shops were bigger with variety of goods compared to the African shops, which were smaller and sold locally acquired goods (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1913).

The presence of imports in the region had an impact on women’s production. For instance, the importation of sugar increased alcohol production, káluvu and drinking. Previously, alcohol was produced using seasonal raw material honey and sorghum. Brewing and drinking of local liquor continued throughout the year, an activity that attracted most men. This meant that the felling of trees and clearing of bushes in preparation of cultivation grounds was left to women (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1917). The availability of rich merchants competed with the small African entrepreneurs who only relied on women produce such as beans and millet. Marx and Engels (1848) point out that those competitive markets were a component of capitalism. In colonial Kitui West there was stiff competition between Africans and Arab traders which was a great obstacle to long distance trade which had flourished under the peasantry production that was based on subsistence items. The trade acted as an alternative way of survival during famines (Kang’we O.I.:14th October 2018).

The long distance trade was integrated into international standards of trade which was dominated by foreign goods such as cotton, glass, beads and copper. The Kamba and Mijikenda who acted as middle men in the pre-capitalist long distance trade were replaced by the Arabs and Swahili’s in the modified trade predominated by
cheaply manufactured import goods (O’leary, 1984:24). The Swahilis penetrated to the interior of East Africa and acquired trade items like ivory and slaves which had ready and wider markets in Europe and Asia (Hobley, 1967:70).

Under capitalism, the long distance trade was modified on the bases of market, which was not limited to a given geographical area but was recognized internationally. Secondly, the exchange incorporated imports, besides locally produced items and was done on currency basis contrary to pre-capitalist barter trade dominated by locally available goods. Such commerce undermined craft industry, which was monopolized by women (Hobley, 1967:70; Luki O.I.:13th October 2018).

Finally, in the capitalist mode of production, the Europeans had monopoly over the control of resources such as game. The Arabs and Swahili replaced the pre-capitalist role of the Kamba as middlemen and acquired ivory from game animals. For example, Yatta plateau was rich with elephants and other animals like dik dik. These supplemented diet and were at the disposal of the Kitui West Kamba in the pre-capitalist period. The Europeans interfered with the independence of Kitui West inhabitants by denying them access to such areas. The games ordinances were passed barring the residents from killing game even owing to the famine and conviction befell those who were found to access the barred areas (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2: 1920).

**3.2.5 Education 1895-1920**

Between 1895 and 1909 less European education activities took place. It is only until 1910 when the first school was built teaching arithmetic and literacy. Initially, the Kamba did not embrace the missionary education, which emphasized Christian
values. Christian education was viewed as a threat to Kamba customs and traditions, which the residents resented. For example, Christianity was against customs like polygamy and advocated for monogamy. Being a polygamous society, the Kamba of Kitui West relied on family labor for women’s agricultural production. Therefore adopting some of the religious doctrines brought about by Christianity was a blow to society because the traditional labor protocols were dismantled. Consequently, the earliest German missionaries did not succeed in converting the Kamba into Christianity and thus were deported. Therefore this explains why there were few converts because at the onset the Kamba did not want the interference of their customs by western religion (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1911; Kasau O.I.:21st September 2018).

It was after 1914 that the Kamba realized the need for education after the Kamba soldiers exchanged ideas during the war with people who had welcomed western education and Christianity (O’leary, 1984:36). By 1918, 10,417 men had been recruited in the war making it a large number of war veterans. Therefore, the returning soldiers enhanced the expansion of western education. Later with the establishment of mission schools there was hope for the provision of industrial and technical work to the Kitui West Kamba (KNA/DC /KTI/1/1/1:1914; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1918).

The African inland mission (A.I.M) was making its attempt to introduce Christianity and formal education because the two were twin factors because it is in the churches where classes began. It was a dangerous move for missionaries to introduce their Christian values to a superstitious Kamba society. Thus, missionaries
received a lot of resistance which according to the Europeans the African traditional practices was a drawback to the district (KNA/DC/KTI/I/1/I:1917).

Western education made Africans to look inferior and powerless in front of the Europeans. It undermined African values as grown up men were described as ‘boys’. This socialization was deliberately crafted to render Africans inferior and powerless while at the same time empowering Europeans to seize and utilize African resources without challenge. This condemned Africans to a life of poverty.

The period between 1910 and 1920 saw gradual penetration of Christian missionaries’ influence among the Kitui West Kamba. The spread of western religion and education undermined women’s role in African traditional religion and in the social realm. For instance, Kitui West women were spiritual leaders who interpreted God’s message to the people. Women also performed sacrifices to appease the ancestors and made special prayers in case of an outbreak of a calamity like performing rituals for rains to fall. Thus with the introduction of Christianity, volunteers were converted and some men were later trained as preachers and priests. In so doing, men took up a significant role in interpreting God’s message and performing prayers, a role formerly regarded to be women’s (Mutuauyvu O.I.:27th October 2018).

In addition, Kitui West women were considered to be the custodian of the traditions within the traditional set up and provided informal education to girls on the responsibilities, morals, values and expectations of the society. The girls were taught chores like cooking, cleaning, taking care of children and fetching water skills that were passed from generation to generation. The women also educated girls on the
significant role of a woman in food production and whenever women went to the farms girls accompanied them. Through such, girls learned how to multi-task and learn the place of a woman in the social sphere (Kileta O.I.:29\textsuperscript{th} September 2018).

The spread of western education and religion absorbed Kitui West residents into formal education. From Marxist feminism paradigm, gender inequality was evident when only male converts could be trained as catechists. Their role was to offer formal religious education on values of Christianity, a training that was provided to both girls and boys in the society. In such a setup, women were discriminated and therefore not allowed to teach catechism. Favouritism for men under Christian missionaries continued to exist and women’s religious responsibilities in Kitui West were taken up by men undermining women’s role in religious involvement (Mwendwa O.I.:04\textsuperscript{th} November 2018).

3.3 Summary and Conclusion

The objective of this chapter was to describe the coming of Europeans in Kenya and the imposition of colonial rule in Ukambani. The colonial administration enforced key pillars of colonial economy interfered with the way of life both socially and economically in Kitui West. Even though colonial capitalism had been imposed on Kitui West people, it existed side by side within the pre-capitalist economy of the region, which is explained through the articulation of modes of production. The chapter has demonstrated how the Europeans enhanced adequate economic exploitation in the region in order to promote colonial economy.
We can therefore conclude that the colonial political economy transformed the traditional social and economic realm of Kitui West woman. The woman had to conform to the changing trends of colonialism which was different from the pre-colonial socio-cultural construction of the woman and Christianity reinforced the marginalization of women. Chapter four examines how Kitui West women responded to famine under colonialism from 1920-1963.
CHAPTER FOUR

KITUI WEST WOMEN, FAMINE AND COLONIALISM FROM 1920-1963

4.0 Introduction

In chapter three we discussed the impact of colonial political economy on gender roles and relations in Kitui West region from 1895-1920. This chapter examines further transformation of the Kitui West pre-capitalist modes of production at a time when colonialism was fully established in Kitui West region. This chapter demonstrates how colonial policies undermined women’s ability to produce adequate food for consumption compared to the pre-capitalist Kitui West.

The chapter examines how those pre-capitalist modes of production that survived colonialism were modified to fit capitalist modes of production in Kitui West region. It assesses how capitalist modes of production affected the entire mixed economy of Kitui West. This chapter is based on the premises that colonial policies re-articulated pre-capitalist modes of production among Kitui West women creating famines in colonial era. This chapter analyzes various colonial famines and strategies employed by women in order to cope with them in the face of the new reality of colonialism.

4.1 Land alienation 1920-1963

To guarantee effective occupation of the white highlands by the settlers the colonial government established a land settlement advisory committee where the government contributed a sum of $1000 towards the land expenditure. The alienated land was under Crown Land Ordinance of 1920 in the colony (KNA/DOA/31/12/1922). In 1922, the governor Sir Edward Northey passed an ordinance that allowed the Europeans to buy land for settlement in the colony. By 1922, settlers like Lord
Delamere had acquired 100,000 acres of arable land in Kenya while Lord Francis Scott had purchased 350,000 acres (Leys, 1925:148; Rodney, 1972:151).

In the mid 1920s, African reserves were created with the main aim of creating room for European farming. Apart from accommodating Africans who had lost large traits of productive land, the reserves were also sources of labor supply to the settler farm (Tignor 1976: 15). The conditions in the Kitui reserves were not favorable. Cattle dug, garbage and human faeces in the vicinity of the huts attracted clouds of flies and created an insanitary conditions and insufficient ventilation (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/1:1937). First, the land was infertile, secondly, there were outbreaks of diseases and increasingly became populated. In October 1924 an outbreak was reported of measles in Kitui reserve and the highest number affected being women and children. It was noted that the disease was caused by the consumption of human faeces by cattle and the fact that the cattle were consumed (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1924).

Pneumonia and tuberculosis was a serious acute disease for people living in Kitui reserve due to the factors present in the reserve that developed and spread these diseases (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1:1937). A test examination of stools was carried out shown that 59% were positive for helminthes (intestinal worms) of which 55.3% were taenia (tapeworm) and 2.1% hook worm (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1937).
Table 4.1: Population in Kitui reserve

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>NO. OF PEOPLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>145,435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>153,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>170,300</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1937).

From the above table the population in the Kitui reserves increased at a higher rate due to the restricted movement of people in and out of reserves. Besides being moved into the Kitui reserves in 1925, the Kitui West Kamba were not allowed to graze and cultivate in the Yatta B2, a 22,000 ha land. If anyone wished to graze their animals on such land it had to be at a fee because the Europeans had already declared it Crown Land. The senior commissioner Mr. Traill did not propose to allow the land to be inhabited by the residents. Consequently, the colonial chiefs were given the mandate to regulate the use of the land (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1925).

For instance, a colonial chief by the name Ikiikii ensured that Africans paid 2-3 rupees in order to graze or cultivate on such land. The predicament was unfavorable because the Kitui West Kamba men and women had already been impoverished by taxation so raising 2-3 rupees meant Africans digging deep into their pockets. Land alienation and controlled access to land took away from women their most important factor in food production so the women’s submissiveness to men increased (Mbilo O.I.: 11th October 2018).
In the 1930s, the Kitui Local Native Council in collaboration with the colonial government agreed to set aside land near a place called Ndolo’s Corner to be used for European agriculture. To such effect, the colonial government alienated 10 hectares of land to establish a seed farm and approximately 27 acres for cultivation of cereal crops and an extra 500 was isolated for growing grevillea trees and approximately 50 hectares was also alienated for sisal plantation (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1930). The alienated land in the area was gazetted as crown land during the colonial period and up to date, such tract of land is still underutilized (Kavilu O.I.:06th November 2018).

In the late 1930’s, the colonial government directed the planting of hybrid maize and latter cotton. This denied the people of Kitui West from doing any planting unauthorized by the colonial government in the fertile lands. Consequently, Cotton was planted on a 6,900 acres land at Kwa Nzuki and near Ndolo’s Corner. When all cotton was plucked it was transported to a 5 acre land which had been set aside for Abdulali Jiwayi and Company as a ginnery plot for processing. Cotton did not do well in Kitui West because of unreliable rainfall (KNA/DC/ KTI/1/1/3:1939; Kiswa O.I.:07th October 2018).

In most cases, land alienation was based on its proximity to a natural resource. For instance, the Yatta B2 land in Kitui West was located along Tiva River which demarcated the Yatta and Machakos reserve. Land which was in the pre-capitalist setup supported subsistence needs of the people was after the imposition of colonial rule, converted into large scale production of cash crops. Consequently, and commercial capitalism replaced subsistence farming that safeguarded famines.
Labor on these plantations was unlike in the pre-capitalist, performed by men (Nyenze O.I.:20th October 2018).

In the 1950’s through to the 1960’s, the B2 Yatta scheme had brought about conflicts between the colonial government and the Kamba graziers therefore by-laws were passed to allow prosecution for any trespassers in the land. The graziers who had not paid the grazing fee were taken to the African courts and fined (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/12:1955).

The British forbade the residents from accessing the grazing land without making payments arguing that the land belonged to the state. An informant Mitau Nzine recalls how some rich men like Muthami, Musee, Kulu and Mulwa seized the land. In response, the colonial government through colonial chief Nzwii, arrested the four and took them to a court at Migwani. The accused were to pay 300 rupees or a 3 month’s jail term. The land issue did not only bring trouble between the government and the inhabitants of Kitui West region but also resulted to increased powers of the chief to that of a land distributor (Nzine O.I.:22th October 2018).

The by-laws did not cease the graziers from trespassing; therefore the District livestock officer submitted a proposal to increase the grazing fee from sh.2 to sh.10. This was unacceptable to the herders. The modern capitalism thrives on technology, profit and predicable monetary systems and privatization of the means of production like land and wage labor. This is what colonial capitalism installed. Any violations were met with punishments. These pillars were never there in the pre-capitalist setup of the Kitui West Kamba. So while these pillars were applicable in European
controlled areas in Kitui West, reserve pre-capitalist modes of production still flourished.

The colonial government proposed to change the ranch to a cooperative ranching scheme in the view that the grazers would identify themselves with the financial progress and control of the ranch. This was an attempt by the colonial government to exploit the natives. The Yatta B2 cooperative ranch was the most successful one in Kitui West after unsuccessful attempts to establish other four ranches (Were, 1970:70).

The colonialists brought in the Sahiwal cattle breed to Yatta B2 ranch to start breeding which paved way for ranching. They started with 6,000 adult stocks and about 3,000 calves. After a while, part of the land was rented by the European farmers from Machakos for ranching purposes. Later the Ayrshire breed was introduced in Yatta ranch which was crossed with the Sahiwal breed. The pre-capitalist modes of production relied on the indigenous animals that had many purposes like source of food, used for transport and bride wealth payment. The introduction of exotic cattle breeds in the capitalist modes of production undermined economic and social practices of the Kamba of Kitui West. For instance the mixed economy became unstable as people avoided keeping large herds of cattle since colonialists had alienated their grazing lands. Second, bride wealth was affected as cattle owners became fewer. This meant the suitor should dig deep to his pocket to acquire available cattle in order to settle the payment without delay (KNA/DC/KTI/11/1/19:1952).
The ideas of Engels (1884) on oppression within the family was duplicated under colonialism where by some indigenous people like colonial chiefs got favours from colonialists and as a result they accumulated a lot of wealth. For example Chief Ileli Musau of Mutonguni division owned hybrid animals despite their high maintenance cost. In addition discrimination manifested itself when the colonialists allowed the chiefs to graze their exotic animals in Yatta ranch where other residents from Kitui West had been prohibited (KNA/ DC /KTI/1/1/12:1963).

Marx and Engels (1848) recognize private ownership of property and individualism as elements of capitalism. The penetration of privatization of property in Kitui West region resulted in the changes of pre-capitalist communal land ownership to individual possession. This led to fragmentation of land resulting to frequent land cases in the Migwani and Kitui courts (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/12:1955). Because of capitalist modes of production, the courts became the suitable solutions to land disputes. Especially when pressure developed upon the fragmentation of land into scattered plots. Therefore, pre-capitalist customary law existed side by side with the capitalist ways of conflict resolution. With the division of land Kitui West women still performed their gender role of food production. Though this meant women had to move from one plot to another which consumed a lot of time. The distance between different fields resulted to neglect of some land for agriculture, which limited amount of production to secure famines (Hobley, 1971:83; Ndulu O.I.:21st September 2018).

The Yatta B2 scheme began to collapse due to continued unlicensed inroads of cattle from neighboring locations and Machakos grazers. The water pumps that had been
installed in the early 1950’s along the border had been destroyed by vandals (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/19:1952).

4.2 Taxation 1920-1963

After 1920, men and women were liable to tax in Kitui District. These included individuals who had attained the age of 18 years and women whose personal income exceeded £60 per annum under the graduate personal tax. With the large number of population paying taxes the responsibility was too overwhelming for headmen. Therefore the government ensured that tax could be paid at District, Location or Chief’s Office in the colony after which tax receipts were issued on behalf of the government (KNA/DC/KTI/3/25/73:1921). The following table illustrates the increasing amounts of taxes:
Table 4.2: Hut tax collection from Kitui district from 1920-1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>AMOUNT sh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>438,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>567,646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>152,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>667,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>604,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>536,088</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>584,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>503,808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>510,170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>117,096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>558,596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>607,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>342,880</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>572,403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>476,540</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>194,887</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>487,198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>457,699</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1

The taxes vary depending on the availability of taxable people at the moment. Some figures tend to be highly variable. In some years, taxation was high since this was an inclusive of the previous year’s arrears like the year 1923. Taxation was also affected by famine and great depression especially in 1929 and 1935 taxation dropped significantly (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1929).
Taxation drove many able bodied men to work in towns in order to acquire money for settling taxes. At times the taxation burden was too heavy for tax payers in cases where extra tax was needed. In 1929, the Native council introduced extra tax of sh.2 per head to cater .this was levied in order to cater for the construction of the new Kitui hospital which caused bitterness among the people (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1929). The absence of men population in search for tax meant that Kitui West women engaged in excessive share of agricultural production. Therefore, women had to balance between subsistence and cash crop production. The capitalist modes of production consumed a lot of time that was preserved for subsistence farming in the pre-capitalist modes of production.

An income tax ordinance was passed in 1936 making tax payable on the 1st January in each year and not later than 30th April in the year. Failure to pay taxes within the stipulated period attracted a penalty (Official gazette, 1936). The tax payer was liable to a penalty of 50% of the amount of tax in default. Consequently, a large number of men refused to pay taxes, an impression that if the situation is not dealt with the behavior would continue for future years. Therefore, the colonial government through the department of labor put men to work on roads where their wages were deducted for taxation (KNA/DC /KTI/1/1/12:1955).

Tignor (1976:333) observes that tax system caused discontentment among the Kamba of Kitui district making people to match to the District Commissioner’s office to launch complains against taxation, which was in vain. Simiyu (1974:127) argues that the unemployed Kitui Kamba were among those that expressed their distress to the District Commissioner Wyn Harris. Kitui West women were among
the people who went to the commissioner’s office because as peasants they were unable to pay taxes. Resistance on taxation was as a pressure of poll and hut tax, which was perceived as a way of the colonial government making the residents poor (KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1)

In 1955 the colonial government owing to famines, which had affected Kitui West region, introduced a system of tax exemption for a number of huts and villages. Besides, the Local Native Council had undergone difficulties coercing Kitui West residents to pay taxes. Unfortunately, the young men evaded taxes for that year and in the following year having the impression that this system would continue upto 1956, which was not the case. In 1956, there was an increase in number of tax defaulters recorded so the collectors had to come up with necessary measures. For the months of April, May and June the total number in detainee camps fluctuated from 300 to 500. In the same year, in November and December the number rose from 200 to 710 (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/12:1955). Consequently, more court cases concerning taxation were addressed in 1956 as it is evident in the table below;

Table 4.3: Table showing the number of cases heard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>CIVIL</th>
<th>CRIMINAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>1595</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>1427</td>
<td>735</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>1023</td>
<td>1267 (714 hut &amp; poll tax cases)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/12:1955)
The taxation of the 1960’s were low compared to previous years and Kitui West people believed that since independence was around the corner it would bring about a tax free state (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/18:1961).

4.3 Labor 1920-1963

Zeleza (1989:36) observes that in the African communities, Labor power itself became a commodity meaning that the production had become separated from the means of production and became a proletariat. African laborers had to fulfill certain demands. For example, one had to acquire a kipande as a result of a Native Registration Ordinance of 1915 which was implemented in 1920. African workers were required to carry certification of identification as a means of tracking down individuals who broke contracts of employment. These actions gave the Europeans control over the African population (Brett, 1973:174). Kitching (1980:242) observes that; ‘It was an offence for any African male to be away from home without a kipande and to be employed without kipande which was not signed”. All African males over the age of 16 years were required by the Pass Laws to acquire the identity document which was also a work record. For the Kitui West labourers, they could not get in and out of the Kitui reserve without an identification document (Simiyu, 1974). Alongside wage, labor from 1920’s onwards given a ‘kipande’ which was an identification: Giving their bio-data and tax details was a form of slavery.

In the 1920’s there were large numbers of labor recruits from Kikuyu, Maasai, Machakos and Kitui reserves. The recruits worked outside their respective districts of origin and served on several European farms in many parts of Kenya including
the Kitui region. 300 workers recruited for the Uasin-Gishu railway construction (KNA/ DOA/ 31/12: 1923). Furthermore, in 1924 Kamba men from Kitui West were also recruited to work in coffee plantations in Thika. In May 1925, 500 men left the reserve to work on the Uganda railway construction. The working conditions were unfavorable. This resulted to frequent strikes and desertions for those who were not contended with the terms of the contract. For instance, Uasin-Gishu railway workers were under painful contract where after the end month only half salary was paid on the spot while the balance was sent to the District commissioner of their respective districts which was paid on return of the laborers to the district. The governments arrested the deserters and were presented for trial at Kitui court. To the hence the men approached the Native affairs department of labor and asked the inspector to pardon them on forced labor but this was in vain (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1924; KNA/ DC/KTI/1/1/2:1925).

Table 4.4: Total number of employment of Kitui Kamba in 1930

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Monthly Average per head sh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>19.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indoor workers</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>26.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled works men</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>40.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled labour</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>16.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government employees</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>31.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway&amp;habours</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>31.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>15.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td>1404</td>
<td>21.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1
Table 4.5: Total civil employment of Kitui Kamba in 1936

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of employment</th>
<th>Number employed</th>
<th>Monthly Average paid</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Central province</td>
<td>2,528</td>
<td>12.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyanza province</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>16.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rift valley province</td>
<td>333</td>
<td>14.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coast province</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>15.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other districts</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>19.90</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1

From the tables above it is evident that majority of workers provided unskilled labour with low wages. The number of employees who left for other provinces were 4,294 in 1936 an increase of 57.3% from 1930. The Kitui West residents were angered by the continued oppression through the colonial policies which ensured men offered compulsory labor.

Food shortages and famines compelled people to work for famine relief. In 1934 nearly 2,000 people were on famine relief labour. The terms were 15 days of work for 130 kilograms of maize. All applicants for famine relief had to produce a certificate from their heads men to the effect that they had no food, no stock or other means of obtaining food. By the end of the year 1,350 people had been absorbed for this exercise. The only women who would apply for such were those who headed the families (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1934).
Table 4.6: Native population of Kitui District 1921-1927

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>WOMEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>27,816</td>
<td>29,337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>28,555</td>
<td>30,247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>29,864</td>
<td>30,933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>30,833</td>
<td>31,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>32,347</td>
<td>36,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>33,501</td>
<td>36,388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>35,361</td>
<td>37,863</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC /KT/1/1/2:1927.

The above figures indicate women population outnumbered that of men for seven consecutive years owing to the large number of men leaving the district for compulsory forced labor. This resulted to competition for labor between the pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production and slowly migrant labor penetrated in Kitui West region.

Migrant labor resulted to people working outside their home districts with the development of market economy which brought a new social division of labor that allocated to women a major role within the subsistence activities (Bukh, 1979:1). Wood (1968) observes that in South, Central, East and West Africa migrant labor disrupted the traditional setup which had huge impact on the rural economy. This movement of men to the urban centers led to the alterations in some social practices. The involvement of men in the capitalist modes of production like labor migrancy posed problems for women. For example, personal care for children and elderly was
disrupted as women took the greater burden of social responsibilities. Consequently, women’s economic productivity became low.

Migrant laborers did not receive an adequate pay to cater for the cost of living for their family since money was needed for survival and tax settlement. They also experienced poor sanitation and hygiene in their residential areas. Considering the low wages paid to Africans, women had to learn how to make a living and in fact, some women engaged in cash crop production alongside food production (Wood, 1968; Kabira, 1993:31). In some cases men left the villages and were never seen, which became tasking for the colonial government intervening on cases dealing with lost husbands (Ochieng’, 2002:135).

Men, who did not join labor migrancy, were absorbed in the cotton, sisal and tobacco industries in the district alongside women. The residents of Kitui West picked cotton at a European farm at Kwa Nzuki. The exercise was done under the supervision of a colonial chief called Nzambu Kimama. After picking, was ferried to Kitui town for processing at ginneries. After processing it was marketed by the Cotton Lint and Seed Marketing Board (Ndulu O.I.:21st September 2018). The cost of living and tax payment was dependent on the future of the cotton industry and perhaps the success of the projected tobacco industry (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1:1937).

There was a large scale manufacture of burnt breaks for the government buildings. The government encouraged Kitui West Kamba to respond to the programme as a way of improving what they referred to as unhealthy habitants to more hygienic type on structure. Colonialism destroyed the pre-capitalist natural environments which
favored hunting and gathering during famines as more trees were cut down to burn bricks (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1937).

Kitui West young girls, boys, married men and women were recruited in construction of Katutu, Kataa and Komu dam. Laborers were drawn from villages within Kwa-vonza, Katutu and Kakeani area. Dam construction was done on the supervision of the agricultural officers and of colonial soldiers like Mutemi Ngima and Nzoka Kangw’e. The construction took a period of one year characterized by hard work and brutality. The working conditions were unfavorable and people worked under whips and scorching sun (KNA/DC/VQ1/1/1:1939; Thengi O.I.:18th September 2018).

Importantly, the study acknowledges Engels idea that women carried a heavy burden of work to show how Kitui West women worked as part of women labor. Capitalist modes of production led to increased psychological problems of women. She had to cope with situations amidst physical absence of men. Besides, under capitalist modes of production women were recruited for public works different from the pre-capitalist modes of production where women did not perform masculine works. Therefore, women engaged in public works and subsistence production. The Europeans did not treat the Africans with dignity as they viewed them as lesser beings that are easily exploited.

In the early 1930’s the headmen recruited the able bodied men to offer labor in efforts needed to reduce soil erosion and in the European farms within Kitui west region. The Kitui Local Native Council on June 18th-19th 1936 demanded various
headsmen in the location to consider the villages’ population and move stock crush from densely to sparsely populated areas. The split of such villages was a measure of preventing overgrazing (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1:1937).

In the mid 1930’s there was need for more labor recruitment to maintain colonial infrastructure. Men constructed colonial administration offices at Nakuru while others constructed banks, posters and the Kinangop dam where they were overworked under little pay of about 10 rupees per month. The Kitui to Garissa road was also repaired for effective movement of troops to the Northern frontier in preparation for the Second World War. Besides roads, there was the making of a concrete bridge at the Kalundu River on the road to Kitui Town (KNA/VQI/16/14:1939-1945; Kangw’e O.I.:14th September 2018). On behalf of the colonial government, the chiefs were empowered to recruit workers on roads, bridges, dams, administrative centers and the military (Zeleza 1989: 50).

The famine of *mavindi* (bones) in 1935 corresponded with a period when men were recruited outside the district for public works. This famine is attributed to the rinderpest and East Coast Fever witnessed in the region in late 1920’s. These animal diseases wiped most livestock and bones and skulls of dead animals were all over. During the famine, most men had joined labor migrancy and recruitment for colonial development was at its peak. As a result, women with the assistance of children could collect these bones as a coping mechanism to the famine. Colonialism had already introduced the money economy so women would then sell them at several points such as, Mulutu, Tulia, Miwani and Kakeani. All the bones could then be
assembled at a central place for transportation to Thika as raw materials for plates and cups in Arabian owned manufacturing industries (Thuvi O.I.:15th October 2018).

In addition, women raiding took place. The Kamba men raided Mbeere and Agikuyu women and vice versa in exchange for food. The Kikuyu raided Kamba women in revenge for their captured wives upon which they offered labor as they awaited for their families to take them home. In most cases, some opted to stay since life was bearable in Kikuyu land. Colonialism frustrated the efforts of the Kitui West Kamba by arresting those who raided other communities in the name of practicing the rule of rule as a basis of protecting private property (KNA/DC/KTI/6/2/1). An informant explains that her mother was raided during the famine of mavindi. The mother was 20 years when she came to Kambaland. She had been raided by a man known as Nguli whom she ended up marrying. This kind of interaction in the pre-colonial period among the Agikuyu and Kamba explains why both communities share names (Mitau O.I.:18th September 2018).

The outbreak of the Second World War saw the recruitment of able-bodied men into K.A.R. Most men recruited in the military ranks were the Kamba. The British relied on the Kamba young men for their intelligence, bravery and honesty besides having proved to be highly effective fighters (Wolff, 1974:109). Many able bodied men were captured by the chiefs upon the District commissioner’s orders and were forced to join the army. In Mutonguni and Yatta division there were famous colonial chiefs namely; Mwisa Nota and Ileli Kalungu. These two recruited warriors at an established police camp at Kavuata in Mutonguni division. Some young men recruited included, Muthengi Mwaniki, Matu Nzoma, Muthengi and Nduuti (Ndone
The recruits were immediately issued with army uniforms and taught some shooting tactics until they perfected. Afterwards, they were ferried to Yatta National Youth Service station and others to Kiganjo for further training (Nguni O.I.: 06th October 2018).

Momsen (1991; 22) notes that, migrant labor greatly affected African economy with the absence of men in the rural areas resulting to shortage of labor in the African farms. This meant increased workload for women. Women became heads of households a shift from men’s dominance to a pattern of absent taxpaying men with the responsibility towards the state rather than the family. Women asserted their authority in the family and became decision makers on household. Capitalist mode of production existed alongside pre-capitalist modes of production. Whereby, women and men engaged in food and cash crop production. Therefore, women had little time to concentrate on subsistence production for adequate food supply to secure colonial famines (Stichter, 1985:62; Walker, 1990:19; Arnfred, 2004:236)

Soil conservation programmes became a feature of the Kamba between the late 1940’s through 1950’s. Such labor resulted to the development of market economy which brought a new social division of labor that allocated to women a major role within the subsistence activities (Bukh, 1979:1). The colonial government had instructed all family members to be allowed to work on dams and roads as a way of famine relief (KNA/DC /KTI/1/1/9:1952). More labor work was required for new prisons and police houses. The construction of Machakos- Kitui road was completed.
as well as the construction of a new bridge at Mwita Syano that boardered Yatta, Kitui and Machakos reserves (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/11: 1954). There were food shortages due to a prolonged drought of 1959 which witnessed dried up of millet, something that was rare (Muatha O.I.: 19th October 2018). An informant recounts that, during the famine of 1960, he was constructing bridges at Kakamega and some parts of Nzoia. He got reports from the wife on the floods that hindered cultivation on their farm. Nzoma, (O.I.: 13th October 2018) goes forth to state that,

*Kiveti kyakwa kyandavisye yulu wa yua ya kavisi, natumie musaala kwa kiveti kyakwa athoie syana ili syakwa ila syai kathini na mwithi*

Translation: "My wife informed me of the widespread famine of 1960. Immediately I got my salary, I send it to my wife to buy food for the two children, Kathini and Mwithi”

It is during this period that saw even the migration of women to towns in search of jobs. They engaged in selling vegetables and food stuffs to the Europeans and migrant workers. On the other hand there was increasing demand for educated women to seek employment outside and within the district. They got employed as teachers, messengers and clerks in the hope that they would have a chance of better life (O’leary, 1984:44; Kabira, 1993:31).

Kitui West women sought wage employment in the towns. Women moved away from their homesteads to look for greener pastures due to the hardships they had encountered especially providing for their families under circumstances of famines.
It is clear that women engaging in occupations contributed to their participation in the public space and could now compete with men in the same platform. These women rented houses near their work place where they lived independently (Kitheka, O.I.:13th October 2018).

According to a government report of 1962, men were recruited all over the country to repair roads and bridges which had been destroyed and swept by the floods. This kind of work was commonly referred to as relief works. Labor migrancy affected the stability of many marriages; first, in some cases women moved to seek wage employment. Second, most women who went into towns engaged themselves in immorality especially with the rise of anti-social practices like prostitution in the urban centers. Such practices compromised the morality of the African marriage institution (Walker, 1990:20). In Kitui West region divorces became the habit as and 70% of these cases were claims for return dowry as a result of return of dowry (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/19:1962).

The involvement of women in the compulsory labor force in soil conservation through terracing meant that women’s farms had to wait unattended due to the communal work (Kitulu O.I.:02nd October 2018). Women were opposed to such projects since it displaced women from the pre-capitalist modes of production to capitalism as this displacement created famines as women did not have the ability to produce enough food so the little that was available was shared among family members and in many cases it was inadequate.
4.4 Destruction of indigenous mode of production and agriculture 1920-1963

The period between 1920 and 1935 was characterized by a series of catastrophes, which was a big blow for farmers. Agriculture was greatly affected the by caterpillars that appeared in large numbers in November 1920 which damaged very young crops as well as the grazing lands. On livestock, Kitui District became the chief source of meat supply to Nairobi and Fort Hall. For example, 4,042 sheep and 27,028 cattle left the Districts for slaughter. In 1921 cattle diseases broke resulting to massive mortality. Despite these hardships the remaining cattle, sheep and goats could be exported to neighboring districts for payment of tax (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1920; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1921).

Europeans commercialized and controlled the livestock sector. Under the capitalist modes of production livestock were sold out without any concern. In the pre-capitalist modes of production livestock was sold when the people were desperately in need like in times of famines.

Table 4.7: Animal exports in Kitui district 1920 and 1921

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value sh.</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value sh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hides&amp;frasilas</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>10,210</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skins</td>
<td>1690</td>
<td>33,770</td>
<td>1100</td>
<td>11,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beewax</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>3,600</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghee</td>
<td>2633</td>
<td>5,060</td>
<td>1448</td>
<td>27,560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle@ sh.40</td>
<td>5563</td>
<td>222,520</td>
<td>4543</td>
<td>18,731</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheep&amp;goats@sh.5</td>
<td>40220</td>
<td>201,100</td>
<td>110481</td>
<td>552,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grand total</td>
<td></td>
<td>522,260</td>
<td></td>
<td>600,437</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1922
From the above table, the rate at which livestock left the district threatened the pre-capitalist Kitui West Kamba who relied on the mixed economy. The stable economic system acted as safeguards for famines. Hence the livestock disposal threatened survival during famines. In 1923, 5,895 cattle and 58,638 sheep and goat were exported to Meru and Murang’a during the year almost entirely in order to entirely to obtain tax money (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1923). The year 1924 was a very disastrous year for farmers with an extremely short period of long rains from April. The crops were poor; others were destroyed by caterpillar which appeared in large numbers. The caterpillars did a good deal of damage to the young crops and the grazing lands. By the end of the year it was not easy to obtain food and food shortages threatened to be acute. Consequently the prices of food stuffs were high (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1927).

The same year, there was a wide spread famine known as kakuti (extreme hunger). There was extreme food scarcity in the land. During this period, some Europeans sold some foodstuffs to the Africans. A currency was on circulation and the Akamba used king’otole and ndululu, 10 and 5 cents respectively. Women had the responsibility of procuring food from the Europeans who had established a Horland Missionary Camp at Muthale where flour was in plenty, a pound going at 2 shillings (Mwanza O.I.:26th September 2018). On the other hand, food was also bought from the rich colonial chiefs who had accumulated wealth as a result of the capitalist modes of production. Due to their loyalty, the chiefs were able to enjoy privileges like maintaining large number of livestock and stored enough after every harvest (Mulwa O.I.:15th October 2018). Under colonialism food produced was no longer stored for safeguarding future famines at it was in the pre-capitalist society but sold
off to Europeans and the rich. The food stuff Europeans bought from Africans was resold to residents during this famine had been purchased from them at a lower price and was sold at an enhanced price. This implies that the colonialists possessed adequate capital and their desire for profit created a platform for recurrent famines.

During the *kakuti* famine, money economy was operational to a point of influencing the traditional way of dowry payment. As much as the value of sheep, cattle and goat mattered, it was proposed to the elders and the Native council that the marriages should be registered in terms of shillings (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1925). In addition it is during this famine that people were extremely hit by the famine and their marriages affected. For instance, if a whole bride price could not be paid up, the father in law would pass his daughter to a second and wealthier bridegroom. Any portion of the price paid by the first husband was repaid to him but any children who had been born became the property of the man who has paid up the whole price (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1)

The situation extended for a period of three years resulting to a prolonged drought of 1926-1927. In response to the threatening drought, the Native Council Famine Account gave 300 bags of maize imported for sale to natives at an expensive rate (KNA/KTI/1/1/3:1927). A stock inspector in Machakos and Kitui reported that in 1927, there was tremendous fall of hides’ price and value attributed to the drought. This affected the demand for hides which had become one of the major exports in the district (KNA/DOA/12/31:1927). See the table below;
Table 4.8: Fall of hide prices 1926-1927

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1927</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRICE</td>
<td>$51,631</td>
<td>$47,834</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VALUE</td>
<td>$180,423</td>
<td>$163,096</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DOA/12/31:1927

O’Leary (1984:35) observes that besides fall of hide’s price, the prices of livestock, ghee, skin, and honey were also low. A lot of animals died and this was a great loss to the pastoralists which affected the overall demand of cattle. The world prices greatly affected the livestock overseas market and the local economy became increasingly dependent on the national economy (Ochieng’, 2002:71). Kitui West region relied on a mixed economy therefore, the loss in the livestock industry threatened the survival of the community during famines because women depended on livestock for food (Solomon O.I.:20th September 2018).

The exceptional drought of 1927 resulted to a biting famine of 1928. This is a famine that occurred between 1928 and 1929. The names attached to this famine meant that it was a great famine (Ngui O.I.:10th November, 2018). The famine was serious forcing the Kitui West Kamba not to raise money for taxation as people were starving. Famine campaign started but it was not a success and women were forced to obtain food from Embu (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1928). Lack of food hampered trade and in certain areas they failed to obtain cash crops the year that followed (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1929).

In the 1930’s Kitui West region suffered the fall of commodity prices. The affected items include stocks, hides, skins, ghee and bee wax. The depression brought trade
to almost a standstill especially with low prices obtained for stock and agricultural activities. For example, prices of sh.4 and sh.5 per frasila for hides, sh.12, and sh.14 for mature stock have meant that very little money has been in circulation. Beewax had been flourishing source of income to Kitui West residents but it disappeared during the depression. (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1930; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1932).

By 1930s, the colonial government had introduced a number of cash crops to be grown in the alienated lands in Kenya. These included tea, coffee and pyrethrum, which were profitable to Europeans. Some of the cash crops introduced by the settlers included coffee, cotton, wheat, sisal and flax. Coffee, tea and sisal became the major cash crops in Kenya (Ochieng’, 1985:121).

The capitalist modes of production interfered with the pre-capitalist modes of production, which were based on the indigenous crops. Europeans brought in cash crops production, which was strange to the residents in terms of seasons, climate and favorable soils. The cash crops grown in Kitui West included cotton which was planted in Kitui West for the first time in 1934, sisal, coffee, tobacco, ground nut, simsim and sugarcane dominated the agricultural sector. As a result, companies and processing plants grew in the region. For example, the British American Tobacco Company established a branch in Kitui that marketed tobacco while the ginnery was build for cotton processing (Muthui O.I.:21st September 2018; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1934). The growth of cash crop supported settler’s agriculture at the expense of peasant farming. Commercial capitalist farming existed side by side with subsistence farming. This marked a huge change in how Kitui West women traditionally coped with famines. For example, food crops were stored for
consumption during famines. Capitalist modes of production was dominated by non-food production which were not edible.

The colonial government went to an extent of forcing Kitui West residents to grow cotton. These cotton orders were obeyed and cultivation of cotton was done on empty stomach amidst famine. 25 tons of imported cottonseeds and 16 tons of cotton ginned locally was issued. One case was reported that a woman in the absence of her husband mixed the seed with maize and cooked and ate with her children (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1935).

Talbott (1992:71) notes that the growing of these non-food crops changed the traditional recognition of food crops as sources of nutrition. This integrated the African economy into the world’s economic system replacing Africa’s subsistence agriculture with large-scale production. These changes greatly undermined subsistence production of food crops since much effort was diverted to cash crop production for export in large scale, which consequently undermined women’s ability to deal with famines (Eliot, 1972:7; Vanzwanenberg, 1975).

Rain failures and famine threats compelled the colonial government to post an Agricultural officer permanently in the area until the threats were no more. In 1932, the district was in quarantine for rinderpest attack on livestock. If livestock left the reserve, for sale through exports was done on permits. The widespread rinderpest resulted to great animal loss leading to a drop in the livestock industry. The epidemic affected Kitui West region, which largely depended on livestock economy for survival during famines (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1932).
The Kitui ginnery commenced working in September 1935 though in the 1950’s Cotton failed due to adverse climatic conditions, which brought premature boll opening and shedding. When the company was operational, the Europeans bought cotton from the Africans. Such bags cost shs. 6-8 but the intermediaries took an advantage of the illiterate Kamba men and women packed the bags at shs. 3 or shs. 4. They knew nothing about weights and considered only volume and in such circumstances, the farmers were manipulated despite the worsening situations by famines becoming a recurrent feature of Kitui West (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1935).

Exploitation and profit making are hallmarks of capitalism. Under subsistence modes of production, this was not the case. In some cases, the colonial government assigned able-bodied taxpayers to uproot burn old plants and cultivate plots of cotton. It was more painful when those people who had left the district owing to mavindi famine found plants from their plants uprooted. The introduction of cotton shattered the pre-capitalist method so of land use. Guided and regularized fragmentations under colonialism was upheld which led to social disorganization (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1).

The last blow on Kitui West Kamba livestock economy was the destocking policy introduced in late 1930’s. The destocking policy was introduced before the Kamba of Kitui West. They had barely come to terms with the massive loss of their livestock during the mavindi famine and animal due to animal diseases (Kitheka O.I.:03rd November 2018). The problem of overstocking caused a lot of unrest between the Kamba and the colonial government. There was a pressing need for more land to graze but most of the land was utilized in the hands of the Europeans. An excessive
livestock population was believed to destroy vegetation and soil in the Kamba reserves (Tignor, 1976:9).

The destocking policy facilitated the establishment of a meat plant by the colonial government through forcefully pushing the Kamba to sell their livestock to the factory. The Liebig’s canning factory was based at Athi River. It was opened in 1937 and later in 1952 was privatized by government and became Kenya Meat Commission. The company seized the Kamba livestock and sold them to the meat plant at lower prices. For instance, cattle were sold at sh.5 and a chicken at sh.2. The government introduced auctioning as a way of preventing the collapse the plant (Were, 1970:73; Nzioki, 1982:34; O’leary, 1984:46). Auctioning was regularly held at Mutonguni, Kitui, Mwingi, Kisasi, and Mutomo markets (Mitau O.I.:18th September 2018).

The Africans resented the strategies used by Europeans to dispose their livestock. This threatened the wealth of the Kamba which had been accumulated wealth in the pre-capitalist period through livestock production was now transferred to Europeans in the capitalist mode of production which jeopardized survival during famines. This provoked the formation of the Ukamba Members Association (U.M.A) led by Samuel Muindi Mbingu as chairman. The association mobilized Kamba men and women who matched to Nairobi in protest on policies to destock demanding to see the Governor, Robert Brooke Popham. Over 5,000 People took part in the peaceful demonstration assembling at Kariokor market for 3 weeks demanding the Governor to address them. In response, the Governor sent his representative to deal with the
crowd promising the return of all seized livestock, a promise that was fulfilled in 1938. (Newman, 1974:11). Nzioki, 1982:35).

The European forcefully subjected the Kitui West Kamba to sell their livestock. This deprived them wealth accumulated under the pre-capitalist modes of production. Under capitalist modes of production, Africans resources were transferred to the Europeans cheaply. In the pre-capitalist Kitui West, the more cattle the man could obtain the more wives he could buy and the more sons he will raise to ensure continuity of his lineage. There is a Kamba saying that says *kana kationeka ni mundu ataumitye ng’ombe* meaning; a man cannot have children without cattle or children are born by means of cattle (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1). At the end of the whole exercise the Kamba had suffered a great loss of both their livestock and wealth. Livestock under the pre-capitalist modes of provided manure, meat milk, and labor and paid bride price. Under capitalist mode of production, it was sold for commercial purpose. Livestock acted as an alternative source of food in times of famines. Commercialization of the livestock industry interfered with the pre-capitalist ways of survival during famines as well as the social practices of Kitui West Kamba.

In 1939, at the outbreak of the Second World War there was a lot of anxiety and concerns. The residents did not know the turn of events, which saw the evacuation of patients from Kitui hospital (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1939). The years between 1940 and 1942 were favorable, plentiful and the granaries were full. Monetary system and foreign goods had penetrated in Kitui West region. The colonial capitalism corrupted the pre-capitalist mindsets of people and began the tendency of commercialization everything else. As a result, Africans quickly forgot the hardships of famine and
began selling off their foodstuffs at a profit to the Arab traders. This meant that the granaries were left empty. Compared to the pre-capitalist times when after harvest, the storage facilities had food in case of any eventuality. This compromised the traditional coping mechanisms to famines. However, the chiefs and rich people were wise enough to store such food in granaries of which they could consume and sell to the needy during famines (Kyalaani O.I.: 19th September 2018).

Despite the previous year being favorable, there was a hazardous locust invasion 1944 in Kitui West, which had spread from Somalia. This resulted to the outbreak of *ngie* (locust) locust of 1944, residents was desperate to an extent of capturing the locust and physically beating up the swarms using long wooden sticks. This exercise was tedious and was only limited to the young and energetic. In most cases, women took up this as their responsibility during the entire period of locust invasion. Unfortunately, the whole operation was not fruitful since a vast Kitui West region had been infested (Kang’we O.I.: 12th October 2018).

During this famine, women were pawned in exchange for food alongside dowry payment. The fathers sold their daughters for early marriages to old and rich suitors. Among the Kamba of Kitui West the bride wealth was and is not payable in lump sum, perhaps one could spread the payment installment over years. In so doing, the girl’s family was guaranteed of receiving a token even in times of famines (Kulu O.I: 2nd September 2018).

Marrying off the girls at tender age without adhering to the above-described procedures resulted to a number of effects. For example, after the end of the famine the newly married women could choose to stay or look for a younger suitor. If she
abandoned her home, the bride wealth was to be returned in installments. In case the woman bore a child and got married to another suitor, the playmates could ridicule the child that the man who raises him or her is not her father (Solomon O.I:10th September 2018).

The locusts cleared trees, grass and any kind of vegetation resulting to bare ground, which threatened food security. Farmers had planted sorghum and cowpeas but all the farms were grazed and this left women in tears after witnessing the great loss that had been caused by the invasion. The 1944 locust menace was unusual, the rains did not endanger their life in fact there was more breeding (Muthei O.I.:07th November 2018).

The damage caused was immeasurable and the government responded by employing trained locust officers to deal with the situation. The exercise proved difficult and an officer confessed that; “It was too late since the locust had grazed everything and the land was left bare”. The government ordered the bombing of maggots to end the locust threat but it was in vain (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/11:1954; Muthui O.I.:21st August 2018).

These locusts destroyed miatu (beehives). These were suspended from the trees as hollow cylinders of wood for human security. Therefore, Kamba of Kitui West had to extract honey and bee wax from the beehives that survived before it was too late. With time honey extraction declined due to famines and the locust invasion that razed most of the vegetation making bees to abandon their habitats in search of water (Hobley, 1971:33).
As a result, famine extended for over for two years due to prolonged drought of 1943 and the locust menace. In the Traditional pre-capitalist modes of production, people turned to the African spiritualism to seek answers. In Kitui West Christianity existed side by side with African traditional religion as not all people had converted to Christianity. Consequently, women sought for the intervention of a prophetess. A well-known medicine woman by the name Lukwama rescued the people from the dangers of locust. Lukwama could catch a locust, throw it in the air and command it to flee far away using the following words;

*umbukai nathii mwalomele thatha,*

Translation : flee and abandon the area to Thatha hills.

Immediately, the locust ‘obeyed’ the commands and disappeared (Muli O.I.:27th September 2018).

The locust menace made it had for the Kitui West residents to deal with *ngi’e* famine because the colonial government allowed continuous cultivation of cash crops which altered the coping mechanisms during famines unlike in the pre-capitalist where root crops were planted such that if locust invaded they could destroy what was on the ground surface and not underneath the ground.

After 1945, the Kitui District Commissioner observed that there was need to come up with agricultural annual programmes for the district. To ensure that the programme was followed to the latter, he issued a letter to all chiefs in Kitui district. Among the issues brought up were the self-help groups. The DC’s view was;
‘Elders should organize small groups of 10-16 people to work in groups called *mwethya*. It is the only way by which we can uplift the living standards of the district’ (KNA/PC/EST/1/77).

Despite the government’s efforts to improve agriculture during the Second World War, its aftermath threatened the decline of African agricultural production in Kitui West. For instance, green gram sold at sh.60 per bag from sh.50, onions sold at sh.25 from sh.20. The exports were limited during the year which include, ½ ton of onions, 62 tons of mangoes, 1 ton of lemons, 4 tons of oranges (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1945). After the Second World War there was an increased demand of goods that were not obtained in time of war. In 1946; approximated 65,920 bags of meal and 9,789 crates of potatoes were sold to the divisions at a full trade price which was as high as sh.30 (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1946; Ndone O.I.: 11th October 2018). For a cash crop like tobacco cash returns to the growers were gradual after 1945. See the table below;

**Table 4.9: Comparative figures for tobacco output from 1946-1949**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1st crop</th>
<th>2nd crop</th>
<th>Cash return to growers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>261,433lbs</td>
<td>282,756lbs</td>
<td>$800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>359,338lbs</td>
<td>282,250lbs</td>
<td>$1,122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>361,674lbs</td>
<td>361,648lbs</td>
<td>$1,824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>503,895lbs</td>
<td>454,911lbs</td>
<td>$2,228</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>484,108lbs</td>
<td>546,057lbs</td>
<td>$2,605</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/6:1949

An informant recalls some soldiers like Suvu, Nduta Sali and Ndeme Mutuli lost lives during the Second World War. The families of the three never traced their
remains since they were buried at the war site (Mwikya O.I.:19\textsuperscript{th} September 2018). In some situations, women became the heads of their family and were responsible for the upbringing of the orphans. Other women went ahead to start second families in which for some the marriages did not last for so long. If a woman ran away from her husband after her marriage, the second husband was supposed to refund to her first husband the amount of the marriage price. If he does not do this, any children who were born in previous marriage were the legal property of the first husband since children were considered to be great assets (KNA/DC/KTI/5/1/1). Above all, the absence of men meant that they no longer engaged in wage labor where they could raise money to buy food during the famine. Consequently, women had to juggle between wage labor and food production, as a result African production declined leading to colonial famines (Katoloki O.I.:17\textsuperscript{th} October 2018).

The economy of various parts of Kitui district, Kitui West included was greatly affected by the 1944 famine whose effects spilled to 1945 and became a major cause of the 1946-1947 famine known as mutuluki (red wheat). The name was derived from the red wheat supplied to the famine stricken areas. The women went to queue for wheat distributed from Tulia, today’s Mutonguni. Sometime the relief food delayed after a day’s long wait which made women go home empty handed and were to return when communicated to through chiefs’ barazas (Nzine O.I.:22\textsuperscript{th} October 2018).

Women and children suffered from malnutrition. Children were weak and skinny. Their mothers’ too hungry, malnuritioned and could not produce enough nutritious milk for their infants (Mwanzia O.I.:26\textsuperscript{th} September 2018). According to a report by
R. Wilson, a medical officer attached at Kitui hospital pointed out that there was high mortality of animals. Therefore, the consumption of meat rose and sporadic butcheries sprang up as Kitui West residents took dozens of animals for slaughter due to the effects famine in fear of deaths. During this period, a lot of starvation and malnutrition was witnessed among women and children. They showed ribs and protruding bellies. The effects of famine on a certain population depended on the nutritional condition before a famine as well as the length of such famine. In Kitui West women’s nutritional value was greatly affected by the series of famines experienced in the region (KNA/PC/KTI/6/14:1945).

According to Wilson’s report, the corn maize, this was yellow in colour. It was brought at the Kitui commissioner’s office as free aid from United States government through the government of Kenya. Chiefs from every location collected the maize for distribution in their various areas. Kitui West residents referred the yellow maize as *katokelele*. Women cooked such maize without an addition of any other cereal. In Kitui West, malnutrition was a major feature of this famine; and then there were patients who had swollen legs and abdomen, others had poor energy levels and frequent cold as described by the health practitioners at the hospital. It became a concern of the government such that after the famine of 1946-1947, the famine relief by UNICEF ensured they supplied tinned dried milk for feeding children and mothers as a supplementary to protein deficiency (KNA/PC/EST/6/14:1947; Kiswa O.I.:07th October 2018)

Malnutrition paved a way for outbreak of diseases on the account that, the body was unable to produce quantitative enzymes and the required anti-bodies for body
defense. Lack of a well-balanced diet resulted to deaths. For instance 2 deaths were reported, a child and a woman (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1950).

The malnutrition resulted to outbreak of Kala-azar in Kitui reserve that largely affected women and children. The medical officer, N.R., Fendal, described the symptoms as gradual swelling of the abdomen, protuberant abdomen, and liver enlargement. Surprisingly the patient was very active despite the fever (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/7:1949-1950). A malnutrition programme was initiated in order to give extra protein and vitamin supplements to the mentioned areas. This was aimed at dealing with the long-term malnutrition problem, which medical personnel viewed as a problem of famine (KNA/PC/EST/6/14:1954).

Colonialism introduced proteins and vitamins as supplements for dealing with malnutrition which were expensive for residents to acquire. On the other hand, in the pre-capitalist Kitui West, an individual was put on a diet of indigenous foods like sorghum, millet and milk which were drawn from their mixed economy which was destroyed by capitalism through oppressive legislations. The famine was a burden to Kitui West mothers, who had to withstand their malnourished infants having large abdomens while others suffered from kwashiorkor (KNA/PC/EST/6/13:1955; Kasau O.I.:21st September 2018).

The prolonged drought in 1950 resulted to the famine of makonge (sisal). The name was derived from the coping mechanism employed in this particular famine. The residents of Kitui West could remove the outer cover of the sisal exposing the fibers, which could then be processed to produce fine fibers. Sisal became so valuable that
the fiber from the sisal edges were exportable. The fiber was selling at 90ct per alb, was in demand especially at Thika industries, and could be used as spinning threads, in making sisal sacks and mats. This activity involved both men and women and after the sales women could use such money to purchase food for their families. (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/7:1949-1950; Ndundu O.I.:21st September 2018; Ndoomi O.I.:17th October 2018).

The desire to purchase these sisal, led to the establishment of sisal markets in Kitui West. For instance, the community sold these fibers to two businessmen namely Vonza Ngoo from Yatta division and Mwikya Muundya from Katutu village in Mutonguni division. They sold the sisal at a profit to British brokers namely Kiilu Ng’uuta and Kyatha Nzau who were situated at Tiva and Kabati markets. All the fibers could then be brought to a common place then ferried to Thika (Nyenze O.I.:20th October 2018).

The agricultural sector was deteriorating in 1950’s for example; livestock industry was greatly affected by the outbreak of trypanosomiasis, foot and mouth diseases, E. C. F and anthrax, which caused deaths of a number of cattle resulting to the fall in exports of hides and skins which affected trade on stock. The livestock officers estimated 15,000 livestock either died or were slaughtered because of drought (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/11:1954).this situation resulted to the famine ndawa (hides) of 1955. The name is associated with the coping mechanism. Women could soak the hides in hot water for softening then cut them in large pieces and pack .Barter trade method was used to exchange them for food to the Mbeere (Kilele O.I.:21st October 2018). Some of these famines were referred to as minor famines because they lasted
a year and the effects on the population were not intense while the major famines lasted for more than a year having severe impact on the larger population (Musee O.I.:24th September 2018).

During the *ndawa* famine, the starving families were allowed to work on dams and roads. The weaker members were given lighter work such as pulling the branches into line for hedging. On the other hand, old people incapable of work would be admitted to dispensaries as impatient suffering from famine. The school children would be given free maize meal if their parents contributed to 1 oxen or 5 goats a week to supplement school diet (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1950). Colonialists took advantage of the vulnerable to famines and subjected them to offer labour at their weakest state reciprocally for food. Consequently, the Kitui West residents survived this famine selling labour till the famine period elapsed.

The foregoing misfortunes in the agricultural sector were a big blow for subsistence production. The people who depended on livestock for survival were in a state of hopelessness. There was an increase in number of men and women engaging in brewing. According to reports given by the African courts, among the persons that had been convicted for drunkenness and manslaughters, four were women. Such engagements of women limited their commitment and ability to deal with colonial famines. Furthermore, tobacco in Kitui West was not doing well since the state of emergency disrupted the inter-district exchanges (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/12:1955; Kulu O.I.:22nd September 2018).
In 1959 there was a prolonged drought that resulted in the drying up of millet causing food shortages. Before Kitui West residents could bear the state, heavy rains started in mid 1960’s until 1961. Consequently, all the vegetation was swept due to floods resulting in great loss in the agricultural sector. The effects of the floods led to *ndeke* (aeroplane) famine in 1961. The name attached to this famine indicates the response by the government to offer assistance to the affected areas in Kitui. (Ngindu O.I.21st September 2018).

It was the first time an airplane landed in Kitui. Relief food was airlifted from Nairobi to an airstrip at Ithookwe near Kitui town. Food relief is a feature of capitalism. Traditionally, society engaged in methods to have sufficient food during times of drought and other natural calamities. Capitalism made people feel inadequate and dependent. The food distribution exercise was hectic and tiring. Chiefs from various parts of the district received the donation upon which were distributed to their areas of jurisdiction. Kitui West women spend days and nights patiently. Giving up was a great risk which meant returning home without food not assured if such donation could be available soon (Luki O.I.:31st October 2018). See appendix IV page 169 that shows some of the districts that received relief food in 1961. It also shows the instructions given to various District Commissioners by the Executive officer on food shortages on maize sack disposal (Governmental report, 1962).

During the famine there was increased crime rate characterized by more cases of theft being handled in Migwani and Mutonguni courts (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/17:1960). The famine was bad and women could steal food from neighbors to feed their
children. Once caught in the act, one was beaten up in public and such treatment affected her relations with the rest of the community. If a woman became known for her stealing habits, she could be avoided and as a result; her character could affect her social life to an extent of not getting married and was treated as an outcast (Kitulu O.I.:02\textsuperscript{nd} October 2018).

Kitui West women also went to get food from the Agikuyu where they had to work for a period of time and in return get food. It took a longer period because the visit coincided with an event when the Agikuyu were preparing to receive their hero Jomo Kenyatta home. Activities went to a standstill making it impossible for Kitui West women to acquire food at that moment. On the material day the gatherings were out in the streets singing nationalist songs accompanied with dances and ululations. This historical event among the Agikuyu disrupted efforts of women to acquire food. Therefore, they had to be patient till the celebrations ended and things went normal with women spending more time than expected (Wambo O.I.:18\textsuperscript{th} September 2018).

1961 was a disastrous year for Kitui West farmers with heavy rains being witnessed in mid-October. It was a historic year for the residents, characterized by flooding occurring in most areas that left the ground bare and dislocated bridges. In 1962, normal rains were experienced in Kitui West and the lands were ready for cultivation while the grass was adequate for the livestock enabling them to recover after the famine; see appendix III page 168 (KNA/DC/KTI /I/1/18:1961). People were relieved when the British army and the Royal air forces airlifted famine relief maize to the inaccessible areas of the district. Despite the drought, famine and flood conditions of previous years, the weather in 1962 followed a normal pattern. Cattle
owners had a reason to celebrate with well-spaced showers and reduced cattle disease (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/19: 1962).

Farmers adapted new farming skills whereby the self-groups engaged in activities such as digging, bench terracing to conservation of soil and water (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/19:1962). In addition, the colonial government emphasized on planting drought resistance crops that existed in the pre-capitalist agriculture such as millet which previously acted as the traditional food crop in Kitui West region (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/20:1963).

4.5 Education 1920-1963

Between 1920 and 1921 with the influence of missionary activities, the African Inland Mission in Mulango under the charge of Mr. E. Holland campaigned for women education. By 1921, three government schools provided missionary education to the people. The schools were located at Kitui town, Mui and Mutha. Within the indigenous people, some individuals got opportunities to access education while others did not. Fairly rich Africans could afford to pay for their children (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1921).

A large number of boys and girls of headmen, elders and chiefs attended school nearly all of them between 9 and 12 years of age. The chiefs used their privileged position to educate their children for free. The other categories of children were headmasters’ sons and daughters whose fees were subsidized because of the managerial positions held by their fathers (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1927).

As a result of Western education, the colonial government ceased Kamba ngai dancers claiming the songs incited the residents against the colonial government.
Colonial capitalism interfered with the pre-capitalist social practices. For instance the colonial government banned circumcision ceremonies which Kitui West residents had problem obeying them. An order given under the Native Authority Ordinance made the singing of nzaiko songs illegal (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1925). Traditionally, songs and dances were used to communicate god’s message to the people through women even in times of calamities like famines. The ban of traditional songs was a way of undermining the rich culture where songs played key roles in religion and social well-being of the people. Therefore, the government arrested and detained anyone who participated in such dances. It should be noted that, by 1923 there was an increased number of prisoners due to a high number of dance convicts. Kitui West residents resisted let go of their dances which forced the colonial government to stop the dances in the view that these affected labour supply on European farms. On the contrary Kitui West Kamba viewed dances as their life and that; they could defy anything to have them (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1923; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1926).

It was until January in 1927, with the approval of the senior commissioner two dances per location, per month were allowed. This restriction came as a result of the colonial government implying that they were inducing people to be more industrious (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1927). The colonial government punished old women who were said to hold the believe that cotton planting and uprooting of plants which was a taboo was the reason why the rains stopped and frequent famines were experienced. Colonialists considered this as provocation of resistance from the residents. To avoid such incidents, these women were ferried with a lorry to the cotton plantations to work as a way of silencing them (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1934).
With the establishment of more mission schools more women and children attended schools. The school in Mutonguni has 400 boys and 50 girls attending elementary school (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1927). By 1932, the mission schools introduced technical skills such as sewing and the attendance of women and girls improved with time (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1932; Kitulu O.I.: 25th September 2018).

The more women and children attended mission schools in increasing numbers, the more the farms were neglected due to inadequate supply of labor from women and children who constantly helped their mothers in food production. This pushed women to abandon their pre-colonial primary responsibility of food production, threatening food shortages during famines. Between 1933, 1934 and 1935 the average daily attendance at four schools was as follows.

Table 4.9.1: daily attendance for schools in 1933, 1934 and 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>1933</th>
<th>1934</th>
<th>1935</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kitui</td>
<td>135.29</td>
<td>159.23</td>
<td>172.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutonguni</td>
<td>65.77</td>
<td>68.82</td>
<td>64.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migwani</td>
<td>38.39</td>
<td>70.49</td>
<td>74.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nzui</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>43.34</td>
<td>39.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1934; KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2:1935

Up to 1938 there were several government schools in Kitui, Kanziko, Migwani, and Mui while the mission schools were at Mulango, Tiva, Matinyani, Mutonguni and an Asiatic school in Kitui Township (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/3:1939; Solomon O.I.: 20th September 2018).
These schools granted technical based courses like needlework, cookery and other feminine activities, which became a permanent feature of women’s life. There was advice from the government for chiefs and location councils to send more women and girls from their areas to school (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/11:1954; KNA/DC /KTI/1/1/12:1955). In Kitui West the school at Mutonguni under the sponsorship of African Inland Mission offered grants to women to acquire technical skills. These skills gave women an opportunity to earn a living (Kyalaani O.I.:19th September 2018).

The school at Mulango supported female education in the district which resulted to formation of Maendeleo ya Wanawake Movement. The movement attracted membership from different parts of the district, not excluding Kitui West region. In the movement women participated in dances under the supervision of Mrs. Meadows and Hickson; the founders of the movement in Kitui West. The movement gained tremendous fame by winning the 1956 drama trophy at the colony’s drama festivals (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/14:1957)

The 1960 famine had depressing effects on the movement’s activities and the contribution of members remained low in some cases making the movement to cease existing. This was evidence on how the effects of food shortages were severe on the domestic lives of its members (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/17:1960). Despite the mentioned challenges, the Maendeleo movement received national recognition with the celebrations of Kenya’s independence, which marked the End of British rule, and distinguished visitors came to Kitui. These included Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, Oginga Odinga, and Tom Mboya. Besides touring the ginnery and the East African Tobacco
Company, the dignitaries watched Kamba women display their dancing which marked a start of women’s participation in the political arena (KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/20:1963).

The creation of more schools from 1938 was to provide technical skills to women but in the actual sense it provided an avenue for women to escape forced labor which had been made communal and compulsory. The participation of women, in (Maendeleo ya Wanawake) activities, consumed much time of an African traditional woman whose basic role was food production. In so doing less time was dedicated towards production and this explains why to some extend women had to withdraw from such movements due to their inability to deal with famines (Ngindu O.I.:21st September 2018

4.6 Summary and conclusion

It was the objective of this chapter to highlight the imposition of colonial policies from 1920 to 1963 a period when Kenya operated as a British colony. We have discussed that, the colonial policies set in place disrupted the pre-capitalist modes of production of Kitui West. The mentioned policies consumed much of Africans’ wealth and labor upon which the pre-capitalist peasant production heavily relied on. The collaboration of the Local Native Council and the colonial government saw the implementation of laws and policies that exploited Kitui West resources which created an impetus for colonial famines in Kitui West.
Colonialism frustrated African peasant production; with the changes of the patterns of pre-capitalist food production women were at a receiving end and therefore were unable to produce enough which resulted to food shortages hence the outbreaks of colonial famines in Kitui West region. Women and children were a vulnerable group during famines. Pre-capitalists copying mechanisms to famine in Kitui West were altered under colonialism. Therefore, women had to employ strategies to conform to the new trends of colonial famines in the region.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents a summary and conclusion of the study on women and famine in colonial, Kenya’s Kitui West region, 1895-1963. The study was based on three premises: it proposed that, the social -political and economic organization of pre-colonial Kitui West significantly influenced social construction of women’s roles to suit certain gender roles. Second, the colonial political economy in Kitui West had key pillars of colonial capitalist modes of production. Lastly, the colonial policies dismantled and re-articulated pre-capitalist modes of production among Kitui West women creating famines in colonial era, which gave rise to diverse coping mechanisms. The findings proved the assumptions, therefore the research premises has been achieved. Findings were summarized according to the objectives of the study in correspondence to the research questions.

5.1 Summary

The study interrogated the pre-colonial economic organization of Kitui West Kamba which was significant in explaining how Kitui West men and women assumed various roles in the society. This was done by analyzing how socio-political and economic organization of Kitui West Kamba shaped the cultural norms and practices in the society. Gender roles were socially constructed for both men and women and the division of labor based on gender lines. As a result, Kitui West men and women acquired different responsibilities.
The study showed how Kitui West division of labor was based on gender. Kitui West women took up responsibilities that were confined in the private domain while men’s obligations dominated the public space. Within the private sphere, Kitui West women were food producers, gatherers, took care of children, attended to other domestic chores while men constructed houses, herded and participated in hunting activities. The pre-capitalist modes of production was characterized by small scale farming, subsistence production, food crops specialization, use of traditional farm equipments, symbolism, communal land ownership, world of spirits, songs, sacrifices and shifting cultivation which relied on family labor which was free and voluntary.

The women’s economic roles were intertwined with the religious duty where they offered sacrifices and prayers for rains in order to have a bumper harvest. Kitui West Women being keen observers of the sky predicted rain patterns or any impending calamity which helped them plan for their agricultural calendar. The role of women in religion took a turn after the introduction of Christianity by missionaries where men were at the front line to offer teachings on values and doctrines of Christianity. The study has examined how Kitui West women were dedicated towards food production and their engagements in the basic industry. The fact that food production became the Kitui West women’s primarily task it assured the society of enough food for consumption and be secure in times of famines. If situations worsened, they engaged in long distance trade which served as an alternative during famines.

The Marxist feminism paradigm helped to examine the extent to which Kitui West society promoted gender inequality within their structures. The study analyzed how
patriarchal systems in Kitui west treated men and women differently and this was a form of oppression in the pre-capitalist institution of patriarchy. The study showed how Kitui West women were denied power, ownership of property and inheritance and how generally systems within patriarchy shaped the entire women’s way of life.

The study demonstrated how colonialists established key pillars of colonial economy like land alienation, taxation, labor and education between 1895-1920 and how these pillars transformed the economic and social gender roles and relations of Kitui West women. These colonial structures were institutionalized in order to lay foundation for the colonial economy. The Kitui West residents were pushed to the Kitui reserves, which were unproductive. New boundaries separated most families, which threatened the gender relations that existed.

The colonial government imposed taxation in Kitui West which at first was payable through livestock which impoverished them and later residents offered their labor to pay taxes. The colonial government put able-bodied men on public works like road construction either in or outside the district. By 1918, Kitui West inhabitants sought wage employment in order to settle their taxes in monies with the introduction of monetary system. The colonial chiefs were given the task of tax collection and were exempted from paying tax. In case an individual evaded tax, their property was confiscated. Kitui West tax payers were dissatisfied with how taxes was collected as well as the financial burden that came with taxation so they began to rebel. The colonial government went silence over issue, which left the Kitui West people with no option but to continue paying taxes despite the hardness.
The colonial government put forth measures to ensure adequate labor supply in the European farms through various ordinances like the Masters and Servant Ordinance of 1906 that pushed the men to offer labor. The colonial government had replaced the traditional chiefs and clan men with colonial chiefs who were used to recruit forced labor through the Native Authority Ordinance of 1912. After this Kitui West witnessed men leaving. Men were also recruited for military labor, which saw carrier corps leave Kitui district often especially during the First World War. The year between 1915 to 1918 women were more than men by 10,000 and in some cases men never returned home as some lost their lives in the course of war. The absence of men in Kitui West villages resulted to transformation of gender roles whereby women took up the responsibilities conserved for men, became heads of households and others became widowers and had to raise their children single handedly.

The capitalist modes of production altered the traditional pre-capitalist ways of production in Kitui West. People abandoned subsistence labor for paid labor, new crops like cotton and tobacco penetrated into Kitui West peasantry farming. Production was subsistence and small-scale production, which was replaced by colonial economy, characterized by large-scale farming and commercialization pre-capitalist modes of production like labour. These new practices in Kitui West agricultural sector compromised the traditional food production, which enhanced food security in the region.

After 1918, Kitui West region suffered a setback in the agricultural sector as there were rain failures in 1917, the residents bought food stuffs like rice, maize and grains outside Kitui district. Misfortunes continued striking Kitui West region leading to
the rise of the cost of imports and exports. By 1920, the imports dominated the long
distance trade that was initially based on locally produced outputs. The involvement
of the Swahili’s and Arabs in the trade replaced the Kamba middlemen who could
move to the interior to acquire goods. There was also monopoly of resources by the
Europeans where residents were denied access.

In Kitui West region the colonial economic policies were fully implemented in the
period between 1920 and 1963. Laws and regulations were put in place in order to
enhance more exploitation on Africans; the Crown Land Ordinance of 1921
permitted the alienation of more land for European settler agriculture. Consequently,
22,000 ha were alienated from the plains of Yatta plateau which was an area
surrounded by natural streams. This was B2 Yatta, which later became a ranch. This
denied Kitui West ordinary residents grazing and cultivation rights unless at a fee
but allowed the chiefs to use the land at no cost. This issue brought constant conflicts
between the indigenous people and the colonial government until the 1960’s.

In the 1930’s more land was alienated in Kitui West for European plantations. For
example, 6,900 ha were set aside for cotton plantation and approximately 50 ha for
sisal plantation among others. The condition in the reserves continued to deteriorate
as there was increased population and outbreak of diseases which majorly affected
women and children. In the 1950’s the Kitui West people started losing communal
land due to the penetration of private ownership and land fragmentation, which
disrupted the pre-capitalist monopoly of women over land. These factors of land
alienation and ownership left limited land for cultivation and this denied Kitui West
women maximum utilization of land thus broadening chances of food deficiency, which threatened food security during colonial famines.

The colonial government through taxation continued to drain resources from Kitui West people by introducing tougher measures on tax collection and coming up with legislation upon which the Africans had to abide to. After 1920, men and women were eligible to pay taxes and an income tax was authorized under graduate personal tax. Failure to meet the financial obligation, one was fined or put into forced labor. Taxation revenue in Kitui West region increased year by year an indication that more people paid taxes and that wage labor and migrancy was at a high rate.

The desire to settle tax money pushed Kitui West residents to seek wage employment in and outside Kitui district. According to the 1921-1927 Kitui District Population Census the number of women in the district outnumbered that of men. The 1930 saw many men and women in Kitui West region absorbed in the cash crop plantations of tobacco, cotton and sisal in the district. Besides cash crop, more labor force was recruited in the construction of dams, bridges and roads within and outside the district. In the 1940’s and 1950’s men and women engaged in soil conservation activities, which dominated Kitui West region. The absence of men from the villages and engagements of the population in activities outside peasantry production increased women’s burden in agricultural activities undermining Kitui West women subsistence output.

The period between 1920 and 1963 was disastrous for the agricultural sector in Kitui West. In 1920’s tax collection still claimed Kitui West Kamba livestock and a
number of livestock left the district was high. The livestock industry was also hit by a cattle disease causing mortality and a final blow with the introduction of destocking policy that demanded Kitui West women to dispose their livestock due to the soil erosion in the Kitui reserve. This was a great loss to the Kitui West people who relied on livestock economy. There was rain failure in 1924, which led to poor harvests and widespread shortages of food in Kitui West. A fall of animal prices and by-products between 1926 and 1930’s was experienced amid the great depression in the 1928, which brought a standstill in the agricultural sector. The region experienced frequent rain failure and famines, which necessitated the Native Local Council to spend money on famine relief programmes.

The period between 1940 and 1942 restored hope to the Kitui West Kamba as there was plenty of food. However, this did not last as locust menace hit the region in 1944 that razed the lands and left people devastated. There was no food harvested and granaries were empty despite plentiful harvest in the previous two years since the residents had sold their foodstuffs to the Arab traders. The effects of locust spilled over to the late 1945 causing the 1946-1947 famine.

In the 1950’s agriculture deteriorated in Kitui West region as there were series of animal diseases, prolonged droughts and cash crop failure. The rains were unevenly distributed in 1960 as to the extent of millet drying and before the residents came into terms with the reality, the 1961 rains resulted to floods sweeping away vegetation which was followed by a normal pattern of rainfall and Kitui West farmers had a reason to celebrate. In 1963, the farmers began to adopt farming methods that could enhance food security.
5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that Kitui West socio-political and economic organization played a vital role in shaping gender roles in the society. The gender roles and relations in Kitui West were a construction off the society. The division of labor among Kitui West people was based on gender lines. The division of labor among Kitui West encouraged gender inequality as women took up more responsibilities that were confined in the private domain while men’s obligations were fewer and dominated the public space. Within the private sphere, Kitui West women were placed at a significant position as food producers and this became their primary role in the community. Often Kitui West men associated themselves with women’s achievements of feeding the families even though they participated dismally, something that promoted the marginalization of women. The Kitui West women enhanced a sustainable pre-capitalist society and attained economic independence from men.

In fact, the pre-capitalist livelihood of Kitui West people depended on women’s subsistence production, which safeguarded the community for future famines. Women were the main pillar of the subsistence economy but once the Europeans began acquiring and privatizing land for commercial purposes the pre-capitalist subsistence economy began to crumble and women had to redefine their social roles within colonial capitalist economy. The mixed economy was the backbone of agriculture, which defined the stable Kitui West economy. The religious role of pre-capitalist Kitui women was tied to food production but changes under colonialism affected the religious responsibilities of women in the pre-capitalist traditional religion establishing new structure within Christianity.
The study concludes that Kitui West was a patriarchal system, which privileged men and looked down upon women. Within the patriarchal system, Kitui West women were denied power in the political system, property ownership rights and inheritance, which brought disparity between men and women. The institution of patriarchy and family structure in pre-capitalist Kitui West were the set up that created the oppression of women. This denied women a voice to be heard since they never made decisions and had no access to property and any form of power within the community. Such setup left the Kitui West woman disadvantaged creating unequal opportunities and power for men and women.

The penetration of colonialism in Kitui West region changed the pre-capitalist modes of productions and dictated new gender roles and relations. Colonialists established various capitalist pillars, which defined their activities in Kitui West region. The study observed that the colonial structures deprived Kitui West peasant’s agricultural resources, which supported their pre-capitalist modes of production. Throughout the colonial rule in Kitui West, the colonialist’s treated the resident’s dishonorable and victimized them because they were Africans and saw them as an inferior race.

The colonial capitalists started to establish monopoly over resources in order to promote settlers agriculture, which consequently undermined the pre-capitalist means of production in Kitui West region. The dynamics of capitalist mode of production undermined pre-capitalist women’s knowledge on agricultural production which was spearheaded by seed selection, knowledge on food crops and
soil conditions unlike in pre-colonial Kitui West, community heavily relied on women’s sufficient production of food crops for consumption purposes.

The land in pre-colonial Kitui West was communal but under capitalism the land was privatized, which lead to various effects. First, families were separated as new boundaries were drawn in the reserves that threatened the gender relations and family bond that existed. Secondly, pushing Kitui West population to infertile and unproductive Kitui reserve exposed the residents to hardships like over population, overgrazing, human and animal diseases, which became part of their living. This led to environmental degradation that increased the vulnerability to drought, which eventually resulted to colonial famines. Thirdly, Kitui West women were left with limited fertile lands for their subsistence production, which hindered them from producing enough for the community as vast lands accommodated shifting cultivation, which was one of the features of pre-capitalist production.

The imposition of heavy taxation on the Kitui West people transformed men and women into criminals, slaves and miserable people. The whole issue of taxation was itself dehumanizing as it was collected with a lot of brutality, in cases where eligible taxpayer evaded taxation for any reason could be detained and sometimes militia dealt with them. The fact that Kitui West residents were forced into public works in order to pay taxes is a prove that colonialism enslaved Kitui West people into a labor force that depended on settler’s money economy as labour was modified through wages or them to be able to meet tax payment.
In so doing, the colonial economy deprived the free labor that pre-capitalist peasant production relied on. The venture of men in wage employment, migrant and military labor created room for exodus of able-bodied men from the villages. Ultimately, women took up responsibilities culturally preserved for a man, which was overburdening the overloaded Kitui West women in the rural areas. Therefore, traditional peasantry production in Kitui West was neglected which laid grounds for outbreaks of colonial famines. Circumstances changed for Kitui West women with new trends of colonialism, which saw men being away from families for a longer period than anticipated. This affected marriages and cases of divorces were filled and women had to adjust with the new social and economic situations.

Though colonial capitalism had been imposed on Kitui West, it existed side by side with pre-capitalist economy of the region. This has been explained through the articulation of the modes of production. When the Europeans introduced agricultural practices in Kitui West to fit the capitalist modes of production by promoting settler agriculture they created a dependency syndrome in this way; first, Kitui West women had to depend on the cultivation of cash crops such as cotton, coffee and sisal whose prices were determined by the international markets. Secondly, these cash crops were non-food crops and could never be preserved for consumption in times of famines. Lastly, a cash crop like coffee failed due to poor soils and inadequate rainfall, which Kitui West ecology did not offer.

The concentration on such crops weakened peasant production, which was founded on food crops. This transformation resulted to food shortages hence occurrences of colonial famines in Kitui West region. The destocking policy was a big blow to Kitui
West society as the animals were disposed in large numbers and at a low price. This did not only cripple Kitui West economy which relied on animal husbandry whenever there were crop failures in the region but also destabilized marriages as the question of bride price arose. The people were left ravaged since they had nothing to hold on to during famines. This made the poor (Kitui West residents) to contribute to the accumulation of wealth to the Europeans.

The study concludes that the shift of pre-capitalist to capitalist mode of production in Kitui West under colonialism represented an alteration of the traditional African rural economy and food security. This undermined Kitui West women’s ability to produce enough for consumption and surplus for purposes of trade. As a result, women responses to food inadequacies were restrained which set grounds for recurrent colonial famines in Kitui West.

Kitui West under colonialism witnessed outbreaks of animal and human diseases, locust invasion, crop failures, drought, floods and famines. It was a trying moment for Kitui West people as it proved tough to recover from the menace that claimed the livestock and crop production. Consequently, famine became a recurrent phenomenon in Kitui West. The study realized that the colonial famines in Kitui West were remembered due to the adverse effects on the population. Kandagor (2010:63) observes that, these famines resulted to low animal and crop production which interrupted the economy growth of the area. The government’s attempt to introduce agricultural and soil conservation programmes like soil erosion control, introduction of drought resistance crops and crop rotation as a way of famine preventive measures came late when the damage had already been done and it was
not possible to reverse the situation since famine had become perennial in Kitui West region. Colonialism undermined the pre-capitalist copying mechanisms to famines so women had to come up with different strategies colonial famines had become a reality

In Kitui West region, the most affected population by famine is the vulnerable population that comprise of women and the children. Famines had disproportionate effect on men and women. On Marxist feminism looking at gender oppression, the study reveals the suppressed voice of women in the private sphere where Kitui West women were the ones who brought food during famines instead of men. The study brings out the voice of Kitui West women in dealing with famines and celebrates them in beating all odds to ensure their families.

The colonial famines in Kitui West widened the gap between the rich and the poor creating a class society where the poor begged from the rich colonial chiefs who had accumulated wealth under colonialism. Furthermore, the usual relief aid donated to the Kitui West Kamba created an economy of begging that contributed to the weakness of community development hence widespread poverty (Wilson, 2001:107). The frequent colonial famines in Kitui West disrupted the production system in the area. Consequently, this undermined the efforts of Kitui West women in establishing a sustainable society that could overcome severities of these famines.

5.3 Recommendation of the study

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher suggests further study on the following fields:
(a) The role of women in the social, economic and political sphere in the post-colonial Kitui County.

(b) The contribution of the Kenyan government in mitigating famines in post-independence Kitui County.

(c) The labor patterns and its impacts on food production in post-colonial Kitui
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KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2- Kitui District Annual Report 1921
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KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2- Kitui District Annual Report 1923
KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2- Kitui District Annual Report 1924.
KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2 -Kitui District Annual Report 1925
KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2 -Kitui District Annual Report 1926
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KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2 -Kitui District Annual Report 1928
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KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2 -Kitui District Annual Report 1930
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KNA/DC/KTI/1/1/2 -Kitui District Annual Report 1935
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(b) LIST OF ORAL INFORMANTS

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<th>Division</th>
<th>Date of interview</th>
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<td>Mutonguni</td>
<td>22/10/2018</td>
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<tr>
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<td>62</td>
<td>Yatta</td>
<td>20/09/2018</td>
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<td>---</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Love luki</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Yatta</td>
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<td>Yatta</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Mutonguni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Muthui ndone</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Yatta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mbata kyalaani</td>
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<td>Mutonguni</td>
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<tr>
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(c) SECONDARY DATA


The Official Gazette of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya XXVIII No. 49, Nairobi, October 3, 1936.


APPENDICES

Appendix I: An Interview guide

Personal details
a) Name________________
b) Sex_______________
c) Division___________
d) Location___________
e) Sub location________
f) Age_______________

Pre-colonial period

A. Food production in pre-colonial Kitui West region

1. What were the traditional roles assigned to a woman and man during the pre-colonial period?

Woman______________________________

Man_________________________________

2. How was land acquired in pre-colonial Kitui West? _________________

3. Who owned land? ________________________________________________

4. How many acres did one own? ____________________________________

5. How was labor organized? _________________________________________

6. What forms of communal labor existed in Kamba land? _____________

7. How did women participate in food production? ______________________

8. Who owned the production? ______________________________________

9. What role did women play in harvesting, controlling and storing food production? ________________________________________________
10. Who inherited property in pre-colonial Kitui West?

Women_______________________________________

Men____________________________________________

**Colonial period**

Kindly respond by ticking (√) in the spaces provided.

1. **Land ownership**

(i) Who owned land during the colonial period?

(a) Africans Yes ☐ No. ☐

(b) Europeans Yes ☐ No. ☐

(ii) If Europeans, in what ways did they acquire the land?

(a) Through purchase Yes ☐ No. ☐

(b) Through alienation Yes ☐ No. ☐

(iii) (a) If it was through purchase, how much did an acre cost?

............................................................................................

(b) If it was through alienation, how many acres did the settlers take?

............................................................................................

Did the land ownership lead to low women production?

Yes ☐ No. ☐
Cash crop production

(i) Was there cash crops production in Kitui west region?

Yes: ☐

No: ☐

(ii) If yes, mention the cash crops:

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

(iii) Were the cash crops suitable for Kitui ecology?

Yes: ☐

No: ☐

Give a reason for your response

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

(iv) Did the change from food crop to cash crop production result to food shortages?

Yes: ☐

No: ☐
If yes, explain:

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

(v) (a) Were the cash crops infected by pest and diseases?

Yes:  

No:  

(b) If yes, specify the disease as well as the suitable cure:

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

(c) If yes, did the diseases affect the yields? Were they

Low  

Normal  

(d) Did the spread of diseases result to famines?

Yes:  

No:  
2. **Colonial labor patterns**

*(Tick appropriately)*

(i) Who provided labor in Europeans farms?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(ii) Who supervised labor?

(a) Africans Yes: [ ] No: [ ]

(b) Europeans Yes: [ ] No: [ ]

(iii) Which of the following methods did Europeans use in order to control labor?

Tick only those used.

- Kipande system [x]
- Migrant labor [x]
- Taxation [x]
- Squater system [x]
- Africans denied to grow cash crops. [x]

(iv) Were the laborers’ enumerated in any way?

Yes: [ ]

No: [ ]
If yes, how and was it often?

............................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................

(v) What was the minimum wage?

............................................................................................................................

(vi) Were there maximum working hours during the colonial period?

Yes: 

No: 

If yes, how many hours for a day?

.................................................................


(i) Were there famines in Kitui West?

Yes: 

No: 

(ii) If yes, did you give names to these famines?

Yes: 

No: 
(iii) If yes, mention names given to the famines during the colonial periods.

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

(iv) (a) Did these names have any meaning?

Yes: □

No: □

(b) If yes, were the meanings associated with any events in Kitui West?

Yes: □

No: □

(c) If yes, what were some of the occurrences?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
…………………………………………………………………………………………

(v) What were the effects of the colonial Kitui West famine on women?

…………………………………………………………………………………………
(vi) What were the causes of these famines? (tick appropriately)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAUSES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Drought</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of rains</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor soils</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor farming methods</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Outbreak of wars</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Spread of diseases</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Economic exploitation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by colonialists</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Alienation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destocking Policy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(vii) Did the famine lead to food scarcity?

Yes: [ ]

No: [ ]

If yes, a part from food scarcity, what were other effects of these famines

Economic:

(i) ....................................................

(ii) ....................................................

(iii) ....................................................
4. Measures taken by colonial Kitui West Women to deal with famines. (Tick appropriately)

(i) Did the famines have any effects on Kitui West Women?

Yes: □

No: □

(b) If yes, in what ways?

........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................
........................................................................................................................................

(ii) Did women employ any coping mechanisms towards these famines?

Yes: □

No: □
(b) If yes, what were some of these strategies?

........................................................................................................................................

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(iii)  (a) Did men play any role towards famine alleviation?

Yes: 

No: 


(b) If yes, How?

........................................................................................................................................
Appendix II: Kamba Women threshing and winnowing beans

Kamba Women threshing and winnowing beans after good harvest
Appendix III: Health Stock in Wakamba and Maasai pastures after 1962 famine
Appendix IV: Famine relief circular of August 1961

Subject: AA/9/2/10/Vol.1/234

Office of the Chief Secretary,
T.O. ex 30050,
RANIBOWI,

To:

District Commissioner, Machakos.
District Commissioner, Kitui.
District Commissioner, Njande.
District Officer, Kigung.
District Commissioner, Turkana.
District Commissioner, Kienhu (3).
District Commissioner, Fort Hall.
District Commissioner, Nyari.
District Commissioner, Kiserwa.
District Commissioner, Embu.
District Commissioner, Kienye.
District Commissioner, Kilifi (2).
District Commissioner, Lamu.
District Commissioner, Samburu.
District Commissioner, Taringa.
District Commissioner, Elgyo Marakwet.
Nairobi Extra Provincial District.

Famine Relief Maize Sacks —
American gift (J.C.A.2 1/2 lbs).

These bags when empty should not be returned or sold,
but should be disposed of free to recipients of their
contents.

(John Sinclair-Lockhart)
Executive Officer, (Food Shortage)
for SADAG, 1961.

Copy to:
The Provincial Commissioners: Central Province, Nyari.
Northern Province, Kibole.
Southern Province, Nairobi.
East Province, Mombasa.
 Rift Valley Province, Nakuru.
Appendix V: Approval of Research Proposal

KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

FROM: Dean, Graduate School
TO: Muthui Dorcas Kisangi
      C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Department

DATE: 29th June, 2018
REF: CS0/21371/2010

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

We acknowledge receipt of your revised Research Proposal as per our recommendations raised by the Graduate School Board 25th April, 2014 entitled “Women and Famine in Colonial Kenya’s Kitui West Region, 1899-1961”.

You may now proceed with your Data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation.

As you embark on your data collection, please note that you will be required to submit to Graduate School completed Supervision Tracking Forms per semester. The form has been developed to replace the Progress Report Forms. The Supervision Tracking forms are available at the University’s Website under Graduate School webpage downloads.

Thank you.

JULIA GITU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

CC. Chairman, History, Archaeology & Political Studies Department

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Edward Kisiangani
   C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Department
   Kenyatta University

2. Dr. Edith Miguda
   C/o History, Archaeology & Political Studies Department
   Kenyatta University

Jo/own
Appendix VI: Research Authorization from Graduate School

KENYATTU UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke
Website: www.ku.ac.ke

P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Tel. 8710901 Ext. 57530

Our Ref: C50/21371/2010
DATE: 29th June, 2018

Director General,
National Commission for Science, Technology
& Innovation
P.O. Box 30623-00100,
NAIROBI

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION FOR MUTHUI DORCAS KISUNGI – REG. NO. C50/21371/2010

I write to introduce Ms. Muthui Dorcas Kisungi who is a Postgraduate Student of this University. She is registered for M.A degree programme in the Department of History, Archaeology & Political Studies.


Any assistance given will be highly appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

MRS. LUCY N. MBAABU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL
Appendix VII: Research Permit

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MISS. DORCAS KISUNGI MUTHUI
of KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, 0-90200
KITUI, has been permitted to conduct
research in KITUI COUNTY
on the topic: WOMEN AND FAMINE IN
COLONIAL KENYA'S KITUI WEST
REGION, 1895-1963.

for the period ending:
14th September, 2019

Aplicant’s
Signature

Permit No: NACOSTI/P/18/37442/24306
Date of Issue: 15th September, 2018
Fees Received: Ksh 1000

Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

THE SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND
INNOVATION ACT, 2013
The Grant of Research Licenses is guided by the Science,
Technology and Innovation (Research Licensing) Regulations, 2014.

CONDITIONS
1. The License is valid for the proposed research, location and
   specified period.
2. The License and any rights thereunder are non-transferable.
3. The Licensee shall inform the County Governor before
   commencement of the research.
4. Excavation, filming and collection of specimens are subject to
   further necessary clearance from relevant Government Agencies.
5. The License does not give authority to transfer research materials.
6. NACOSTI may monitor and evaluate the licensed research project.
7. The Licensee shall submit one hard copy and upload a soft copy
   of their final report within one year of completion of the research.
8. NACOSTI reserves the right to modify the conditions of the
   License including cancellation without prior notice.

National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
P.O. Box 30623 - 00100, Nairobi, Kenya
TEL: 020 400 7000, 0713 788787, 0735 484245
Email: dg@nacostil.go.ke, registry@nacostil.go.ke
Website: www.nacostil.go.ke

REPUBLIC OF KENYA
NACOSTI
National Commission for Science,
Technology and Innovation
RESEARCH LICENSE
Serial No. A 20683
CONDITIONS: see back page
Appendix VIII: Research Authorization from NACOSTI

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Ref: No: NACOSTI/P/18/37442/24306

Date: 15th September, 2018

Dorcas Kisungi Muthui
Kenyatta University
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI.

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on “Women and famine in colonial Kenya's Kitui West Region, 1895-1963” I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Kitui County for the period ending 14th September, 2019.

You are advised to report to the County Commissioner and the County Director of Education, Kitui County before embarking on the research project.

Kindly note that, as an applicant who has been licensed under the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 to conduct research in Kenya, you shall deposit a copy of the final research report to the Commission within one year of completion. The soft copy of the same should be submitted through the Online Research Information System.

BONIFACE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CEO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Kitui County.

The County Director of Education
Kitui County.