

This study focuses on the theme of resource accessibility, use and control in relationship to land ownership, crop cultivation and livestock production among the Wanga between 1860 and 1945. The organization and use of labour in agricultural production is also analysed.

The study contends that the Wanga had an efficient, self-sustaining and dynamic agricultural system prior to the advent and establishment of colonial rule and its attendant institutions. It is demonstrated that the Wanga had a well-organized land tenure system based on effective customary land law under the administration of a powerful hierarchical patrilineal system.

It is contended that the establishment of colonial rule engendered new social-economic trends that culminated in the partial distortion of the Wanga pre-colonial agriculture and labour organizations. The colonial demands for wage, migrant and forced labour lead to the withdrawal of productive labour from the Wanga households, thereby making the Wanga vulnerable to food shortages.

The study also demonstrates that the introduction of new marketable crops, especially maize and rice, and the impositions of taxes on the Wanga led to the distortion of famine prevention strategies. This also led to a partial disintegration of household labour and nutritional patterns that led to the increasing over-dependence on maize as food crop.

It is also argued that the new livestock regulations imposed by the colonial government and the compulsory requisition of stock from Wanga, partly distorted the livestock industry. These changes lead to adjustment within the households to co-exist with the new socio-economic and political system. Thus, the colonial capitalist system led to the peasantisation and partial proletarianisation of the Wanga producers while capitalist accumulation by a few individuals in crop production and commerce engendered further socio-economic differentiation among the peasantry. These features were evident by 1945.