THE COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION OF GUSII AGRICULTURE

BY

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A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS, HISTORY DEPARTMENT, KENYATTA UNIVERSITY

MARCH, 1990

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The colonial transformation of
DECLARATION

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

OMWOYO, S.M.

This Thesis has been submitted for Examination with my knowledge as University Supervisor.

DR. K. MOSONIK arap KORIR
DEDICATION

To My father, the late John E. Moenga
My mother, Esther Moenga
My wife, Pauline Moraa
My sons Dennis Moenga and Steve Masaki.
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I am greatly indebted to many people and institutions that have been helpful in the realisation of this thesis. I would like to thank Kenyatta University and its Department of History for admitting me to the post-graduate programme and offering me a scholarship.

Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. K. Mosonik arap Korir for his untiring effort in reading through many drafts of this work and offering valuable suggestions and criticisms. This work, in a way, is my form of thanks to him for his co-operation, encouragement and guidance that he constantly gave me throughout the period of research and writing this thesis. I would also like to thank all members of staff of the Department of History and the Faculty of Arts as a whole for their varied assistance. They provided a stimulating and challenging academic environment, and this work is the result of numerous consultations with them over a wide range of issues presented herein. Special thanks to Prof. H.A. Mwanzi, now Chairman of the Department of History without whose help and support this thesis could not have been completed.
My two colleagues, Agnes Odinga and Danson Esese, shared with me numerous ideas, books and materials pertaining to our studies. Together we cultivated the inspiration, determination and purpose of forging ahead. Their encouragement and help to me was invaluable. My thanks also go to the staff of the Kenya National Archives. I received valuable assistance from the staff of Moi Library of Kenyatta University, where most of this thesis was written, and of the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library of the University of Nairobi.

It is not possible to mention all those people who helped me out in the field during data collection. I am deeply indebted to my informants who selflessly gave their time for often unscheduled interviews (see the list on pp. 213-216). Many of my friends, most of them university undergraduates, helped in administering the questionnaires; Mr. Orina Matwere was of great help in this. Mr. Jasper Nyakoe Mongare gave me the comfort I greatly needed out in the field. Mr. Arisa Omwansa of Kisii District Documentation Centre provided me with useful information, including about informants. Mr. H. Nyabuga Nyambaka greatly assisted me during the compilation of this thesis. I would also like to
thank Mrs. B.A. Othieno for meticulously typing the manuscript and making all the corrections.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents for their efforts in bringing me up a responsible man and inculcating in me the value of being scholarly. Special thanks to my wife Pauline Moraa and our sons Dennis Moenga and Steve Masaki, who accorded me conducive family comfort and the encouragement and purpose of working hard. To them all this thesis is dedicated.
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<thead>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>D.C.</td>
<td>District Commissioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.A.L.B.</td>
<td>East Africa Literature Bureau</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.A.P.H.</td>
<td>East African Publishing House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.F.C.U.</td>
<td>Kisii Farmers Cooperative Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K.L.B.</td>
<td>Kenya Literature Bureau</td>
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<tr>
<td>K.N.A.</td>
<td>Kenya National Archives</td>
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<td>KSI</td>
<td>Kisii</td>
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<td>L.N.C.</td>
<td>Local Native Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>M.F.C.U.</td>
<td>Masaba Farmers Cooperative Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>O.I.</td>
<td>Oral Interview</td>
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<td>O.U.P.</td>
<td>Oxford University Press</td>
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<tr>
<td>P.C.</td>
<td>Provincial Commissioner</td>
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FIG. 1: STUDY AREA

KISII DISTRICT

LOCATIONS and SUB-LOCATIONS

FIG 2: GUSII MIGRATIONS FROM KANO TO GUSII HIGHLANDS c.1760 - 1

Adapted from Ochieng (1974:84)
ABSTRACT

THE COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION OF GUSII AGRICULTURE

This study focuses on the organisation and transformation of agriculture among the Gusii of western Kenya in the colonial period. A background chapter examines the dynamism and innovativeness of Gusii indigenous agriculture on the eve of colonial rule, showing its diversity, efficiency, productiveness and self-reliance. It is argued that Gusii agricultural organisation was sound and rational and based on the Gusii people's knowledge of their own environment.

Colonial penetration modified, marginalised and subordinated Gusii land's indigenous agriculture. The Gusii were peasantised and their role as commodity producers enhanced. Part of the Gusii population was proletarianised as migrant workers and later as a rural semi-proletariat in the district. However, it is argued, indigenous agricultural organisation did not cease completely; it kept readjusting, was articulated and co-existed with the colonial capitalist sector.

The dependency theoretical formulations are evident in the case of Gusii land. Gusii households
suffered from insufficient labour, resulting in food shortages. Extensive cultivation of maize for export led to soil degradation and erosion. And the introduction of cash crops severely affected food production.

It is argued here that while colonial capitalism provided new opportunities for some Gusii to accumulate wealth and expand agricultural output, it also pauperised part of the population. In addition, the new mode of production hindered and in some cases ruined some indigenous patterns of agriculture.

During World War II, agricultural production was intensified to produce enough food for war purposes. But in the post-war period, emphasis shifted to the production of cash crops, and little attention was paid to the subsistence/food needs of the Abagusii. So, for example, maize, hitherto a major food crop produced by the Gusii, had to be imported in 1961 to avert a potentially dangerous food shortage situation. By independence, therefore, Gusii agriculture had been fundamentally transformed and integrated into the Kenyan colonial economy as a part of the world capitalist system.
CHAPTER ONE

1:0. INTRODUCTION

In the last decade or so, much concern has been focused on Africa's poor agricultural performance and its declining food production per capita [World Bank, 1983; Adedeji, 1985; Zeleza, 1986]. This poor performance has been a culmination of processes and changes imposed on Africa's agriculture by colonial capitalism and the consequent international division of labour within which Africa's role was to supply the western capitalist world with cheap agricultural raw materials. The integration of Africa's economy into the world capitalist system sparked off a process that gradually modified, destroyed, marginalised or subordinated the continent's agriculture. The changes wrought by colonial capitalism cannot, however, be conceptualised as having been uniform for the whole of Africa. Some areas were more important in agricultural production or mineral extraction, while others were labour reservoirs.

This study assumes that agricultural systems are regionally specific and their analysis requires systematic local examination. It
therefore takes Kisii District\(^1\) as its focus unit. It aims at tracing Gusiiiland's agricultural history from the eve of colonial rule to independence, highlighting the major changes that took place, and their impact on the Gusii people. It will highlight the dynamism and productiveness of pre-colonial Gusii agriculture and show how this was transformed by colonial capitalism. The imposition of taxes and mobilization of labour forced the Gusii into producing for a foreign market and offering their labour for wages. Responding to the opportunities offered by the new system, the Gusii society became more stratified and differentiated - with some people accumulating wealth, while others were pauperised and turned into rural proletarians.

1:1. Area of Study
Gusiiland was, until 1961, part of the large South Nyanza district in western Kenya. Even so, in this study, it has been referred to as a district for the whole colonial period.

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1 The research for this study was finished by March 1989. Kisii district was formally sub-divided into two - i.e. Nyamira and Kisii districts - in July 1989. The Kisii district referred to in this study is the pre-division one, while Nyamira division, the sample area, is the new Nyamira district.
Kisii district has a high population growth rate (estimated at 3.63%) and density (exceeding 304 persons per square kilometre) [Morgan, 1973: 133], a high rainfall (1500-2000 mm) and fertile soils, a predominantly rural population and basically agricultural economy. In the words of Uchendu [1975:11]:

"The high altitude (2000 m) of Gusiiiland, the presence of good soils, an adequate rainfall which is well distributed, accessible surface water and the high potential which the district commands for the production of subtropical and temperate high value cash crops are scarce resources which command a special premium in Kenya."

The district was a major exporter of maize from the early colonial period; later, it also became a major producer of other cash crops. Besides, it bordered the Sotik settlement area and the Kericho tea plantations, and was therefore targeted for the recruitment of labour for tea production.

1:2. Statement of the Problem

The objective of this study is to investigate the changes in Gusiiiland's agriculture during the colonial period and the impact of these changes on the Gusii community. The study aims, first, at examining the type of agricultural economy
found in Gusiland on the eve of colonial rule. Land ownership and usage will be examined in relation to methods of food production and measures taken to curb food shortages.

Secondly, the study will examine the changes wrought by colonialism, the effects of these changes on the Gusii economy and how the two types of economy were articulated. An assessment will be made of the Gusii reaction to colonial agricultural economy and the success or otherwise of this response.

Lastly, the study will analyse the nature of its relationship - in terms of co-existence, rivalry or complementarity - to the colonial capitalist economy.

1:3. Review of Related Literature

Much scholarly attention has been focused on Africa's and Kenya's economic history. At these levels many generalisations are defensible given the wide scope of the study in terms of peoples and systems. However, some of the generalisations may need to be modified in the context of local and specific conditions at the micro-level of study. This review proposes to test some such generalisations in the context of Gusii agriculture.

Tempany [1958] contends that pre-colonial African agriculture consisted mainly of 'primitive'
forms of shifting cultivation. And, according to Jones [1984], Africa's agricultural systems were 'backward' and static and manifested very slow change qualities. "Despite the rapid evolution since then," asserts Jones [1984:4], "the traditional agricultural systems of 1900 were remarkably similar to those produced today."

On the other hand, Hopkins [1973:35] has shown that there existed various types of agricultural systems, and "no less than seven headings are needed in West Africa." He argues that the indigenous economy experienced major historical changes, and that the agricultural history of the pre-colonial period is a story of innovation rather than of stagnation. In the same vein, Zeleza [1986:155] asserts: "It is certainly a crude distortion to subsume the wide range of agricultural systems in pre-colonial Africa under the rubric of 'shifting cultivation.'

A lot of work has been produced on colonial capitalism in Kenya: examples are, Fearn [1961], Brett [1973], Langdon [1975], Leys [1975, 1985], Kitching [1980], and Swainson [1980a, 1980b]. Most of these authors have tackled the subject from the view-point of the dependency and articulation of modes of production theories. However, their
generalisations are only acceptable at the national level and, even for those studies done on one part of the country, the conclusions needed to be tested at lower district levels or in other districts.

Van Zwanenberg and King [1975] carried out a comparative economic study of Kenya and Uganda in the period 1900-1970. They contend that Kenya's faster development was due to a flow of capital that she encouraged, and that Kenya developed predominantly through settler production and plantation export crops. They conclude that only Europeans accumulated during the colonial period. In all, van Zwanenberg and King deny the accumulation of wealth by indigenous Africans.

However, Kitching [1980], Swainson [1980b] and Cowen [1982] have shown that Africans did accumulate during the colonial period. Swainson [1980b] traces the emergence and rise in Kenya of a national African bourgeoisie; this is the class that Kitching [1980] calls the "petite-bourgeoisie". Cowen [1982] established that before the colonization of East Africa the relations of production existing in what in now Central Province determined the formation of a class of accumulators of land and livestock - the principal means of production - through migration
into new land, raiding and long distance trade. This social stratum of the agrarian rich was transformed into a class of accumulators and later joined by wage income people whose base was education. According to Leys [1985], this indigenous class of capitalists was heavily concentrated in the largest ethnic group—Kikuyu—comprising, with closely related neighbouring peoples, about 25 per cent of the total population of the country. What happened with the other 75 per cent of the Kenyan population is, however, the major flaw of all these works.

Fearn [1961] examined the economic development of Nyanza in the period 1903-1953. He found that economic development rested entirely on European and Asian efforts and argued that indigenous enterprise was non-existent due to the customary system of land tenure. His study portrays the Africans’ passivity in the process of economic change.

In his article "The Rise and Decline of the Kenya Peasantry, 1888-1922", E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo [1974] traces the African peasant from a rich and prosperous independent farmer with a surplus of food to exchange to one impoverished and relegated to the backwaters in the economic structure of the colonial system. He contends that both the peasantisation of
the African farmer and the proletarianization of African labour were basically a colonial creation for the benefit of the settler economy. To him, the logic of capitalist exploitation upset the rural economic equilibrium and therefore created both the rural and urban proletariat. However, his work is too general and only spells out a framework along which more study can be done; it hardly offers an exhaustive study on the peasantization and proletarianization of Africans. Besides, he does not see any group of African accumulators in the process of peasantization, nor does he give an account of African resistance to this process. Worse still, he freezes the history of the peasantry in the 1920s and does not show what happened to it thereafter.

Njonjo [1981] has also argued that Kenyan farmers were proletarianized rather than reproduced as peasants, and that most of them are no longer living in self-sufficient households, but have become workers with patches of land. He also finds that proletarianization of a majority of farmers has been paralleled by the rise of a landed bourgeoisie, especially in the Rift Valley. His arguments need to be tested in other districts to establish their national applicability.
A number of works exist on Gusiiland's agriculture, but none by an economic historian. Ochieng' [1974a], who has reconstructed the pre-colonial history of the Gusii, shows the dynamism of agricultural change among the pre-colonial Gusii. He contends that the Gusii turned from pastoralism in the Kano plains to cultivation in the Gusii highlands in the course of their migration. However, his work is not basically on agriculture nor is it economic in focus. Besides, it ends at the imposition of colonial rule and, therefore, does not show how the pre-colonial agricultural systems were transformed by colonial capitalism. Similarly, although he says that drought was a major cause of food shortages among the Gusii, he does not give a detailed account of measures taken to curb food shortages and ways of supplementing the meagre diet during famines.

In the work already cited, van Zwanenberg and King show specifically how the Gusii economy was eventually deformed after initial favourable conditions. After noting that the Gusii were producing crops for sale well before 1914, they continue:

"The Gusii even transported their crops to Homa Bay via the lake to Kisumu (sic) in order to find market for them. The efforts of the Gusii however dwindled during the
Although it is evident that colonial capitalism modified and subordinated the initial favourable response of the Gusii towards it, van Zwanenberg and King fall short of showing the measures and mechanisms used in this subordination process.

Barnes [1976] examined the introduction of coffee in Kenya using Gusii as a case study. According to her, the initiative to grow coffee and subsequent impetus to organize the industry on a cooperative basis were motivated by Europeans; she assumes that the Gusii were passive in adopting economic change.

Garst [1972] empirically examined the spatial diffusion of five crops (coffee, pyrethrum, tea, passion fruits, hybrid maize) and grade cattle in Kisii district. He showed that person-to-person communication as exemplified by personal field information was the major moving factor behind the spatial process of these innovations. As a geographer, he concentrated on the manner in which the innovations spread across the land and the combination of forces that facilitated, retarded and modified the spread of the innovations. But he left out the impact of the innovations on the socio-economic structure of the Gusii community.
In her examination of Nyansongo, a Gusii community, Levine [1966:34] says that "... many of the first coffee growers were either chiefs or government officials of some sort. In order to maintain their wealth they proved to be the first in the area to take up cash crop farming." He then suggests, without further analysis however, that there was a class of capitalist accumulators whose origins she does not specify.

Rajwani [1971] examined the early trade contacts between the Indians and the Gusii which, according to her, started when colonial administrators assisting the Indians had entered Gusiiiland to sell various imported goods. Rajwani portrays the Gusii as passive participants in the process of economic change, and does not show the socio-economic effects of the new imported goods.

Uchendu and Anthony [1975] examined the factors influencing agricultural change in Kisii district with a view to establishing some general rules for fostering agricultural innovations. They found that those innovations with good returns and fitting into their farming systems tend to be most successful among the Gusii farmers. The two authors singled out pyrethrum and passion fruits as such innovations.
However, they omitted a historian in their research team, which they described as consisting of an anthropologist, two economists and a tropical agriculturalist. Secondly, their research was concentrated on East Kitutu and the Wanjare locations. Finally, they did not undertake an economic appraisal of Gusii marketing systems.

From the above review of literature, it is evident that a lot still needs to be done on the agricultural history of Gusiland. This study may therefore be seen as an effort to fill a major gap in the academic study of the Gusii.

1:4. Research Premises

This study assumes that agricultural systems are regionally specific and their analysis requires systematic local studies. It is assumed here that the Gusii pre-colonial agricultural economy was dynamic, diverse, efficient, productive and largely self-sustaining before the imposition of colonial rule, though famines were not uncommon, especially during droughts.

Secondly, the study assumes that the colonial agricultural capitalist economy peasantized the Gusii farmers and proletarianized part of the district’s population, and the Gusii resistance to these
processes was doomed to failure given the need to acquire tax money.

Thirdly, the study assumes that in the process of articulation, colonial agricultural economy modified, marginalised and subordinated Gusiiiland's pre-capitalist agricultural economy through such devices as mobilization of labour, taxation, and so on.

Lastly, it is believed that modern methods of agricultural production (e.g. use of improved seeds, tools, soil conservation methods, planting in lines, pure stands, etc.) were stressed during the colonial period to the advantage of the colonialists and the disadvantage of the Gusii.

1:5 Chronological Limits

This study mainly concentrates on the colonial transformation of Gusiiiland's agriculture. However, in order to understand these changes, the prevailing economic conditions in pre-colonial Gusiiiland are analysed in chapter two. Gusiiiland effectively came under colonial rule with the 1907 'punitive' expedition. The imposition of colonial rule led to the introduction of new crops and adversely affected the indigenous Gusii agricultural organization.
The colonial period, the main focus of the study, is covered in three chapters. Chapter three covers the early colonial period to just after World War I. The years before the war were largely devoted to colonial agricultural experiments to determine suitable crops of economic value. This period witnessed the rise of the anti-colonial movement known as Mumboism. Because it was ideologically anti-colonial, its activists agitated against crop cultivation, leading to food shortage. The food shortage situation was compounded by the disruption of the war, which was partly fought in Gusiiland, men being conscripted and animals seized. All this, together with the drought of 1917-18, culminated in the famine of 1919.

Chapter four covers the inter-war period and the years of World War II. Up to 1933 agricultural changes were slow due to two world economic depressions, rain failures, locust invasions and lack of agricultural personnel. After 1933 production was enhanced. The study extends into the war years by way of contrasting with World War I for, during the Second World War, production was increased to supply food for colonial troops. The increased production thus realised was dubbed the "harvests of
wars", but conscription and seizure of animals meant that these were really "harvests" for the colonialists rather than the Abagusii.

Chapter five covers the post-war period to independence. Realising that economic conditions in the 'reserves' were deteriorating, the colonialists set out from 1946 to reorganize African agriculture with the Ten-Year Plan. The first section of this chapter covers the planning period before 1954. The second section examines the changes after the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 which was a culmination of a gradual process of agricultural reorganization of African areas. The Swynnerton Plan, which came to permit Africans to grow cash crops, led to neglect of, and decline in, food production. In 1961, maize had to be imported into the Kisii district to avert a threatened food shortage.

1:6. Theoretical Framework

In analysing Africa's economic history various theories have been advanced. These are the modernization, dependency and articulation of modes of production theories.

Basically, the modernization theory assumes that the underdeveloped countries can only be transformed
in the image of the developed countries of the Western world. According to this theory, African societies were underdeveloped before the onset of colonialism, and the latter initiated the process of economic development.

The second basic assumption is that while the modernization of the underdeveloped countries has been stimulated and supported by the developed countries, it has been impeded by a variety of obstacles and conditions within each of the underdeveloped countries. Among such obstacles, those repeatedly singled out include "traditionalism", scarcity of capital, a low level of technological development, rapid population growth, lack of social integration, political instability, inappropriate government policies, and so on [Harris, 1975:3]. Thus, it is largely argued, the continued underdevelopment of African countries is the result of their internal economic, political and cultural deficiencies - what P.T. Zeleza [1986:153] calls factors of "internal damnation".

Proponents of underdevelopment theory have refuted the conventional wisdom of modernization theory on the grounds that the latter is hopelessly ethnocentric and based on a unilinear conception of
development which has no historic foundation. They assert that underdevelopment is not an original condition and that neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped countries resembles in any important respect the past of the now developed countries. "The now developed countries were never underdeveloped though they may have been undeveloped." [Frank, 1969:40]

The dependency theory attributes the underdevelopment of the "Third World" countries to their incorporation into the international capitalist system as dependent satellites. Underdevelopment is the result of their subordinate role in that system and the contribution they have made and continue to make to the development of the advanced capitalist societies. The contribution consists of cheap labour, raw materials or investible surplus. Thus, the capitalist system has totally and uniformly changed Africa's economy into its structurally underdeveloped state of today, and this state is consolidated by the development and the structure of the world capitalist system. The net result has been a diffusion of the much needed surplus for development from the underdeveloped to the developed countries. Thus the development of underdeveloped
countries will not occur as the result of the diffusion of institutions and values; rather, their development can now occur only independently of most of these relations of diffusion [Frank, 1969:61].

In spite of the predominance of the capitalist mode of production, there exist some elements of the non-capitalist mode(s) of production in peripheral societies which continue to be reproduced. As Leys [1985] remarks, the debate about dependence and underdevelopment cannot occur at the periphery (the "Third World") or that it is eventually bound to occur. What it demonstrates, rather, is the need to study and theorize the conditions under which some peripheral countries have, and others have not, experienced significant measures of growth. This awareness has given rise to the theory of articulation of modes of production.

This theory is historico-materialistic and is advanced by students of the "Third World" who are dissatisfied with both the modernization and dependency theories. They point out that the dependency theory dwells on trade at the expense of production itself and therefore disregards classes which emerge from the production process, the ensuing class struggle, and the complex and
countradictory effects of these struggles on social formations of the so-called peripheral capitalist societies [Zeleza, 1985: 143]. The main argument of this 'school' is that when the capitalist mode of production is introduced it does not immediately and automatically replace the non-capitalist mode(s) of production but, rather, reinforces them. When the capitalist mode of production has been gradually established, it begins to modify, destroy, marginalise and eventually subordinate the non-capitalist mode(s) of production by utilising them. Pre-capitalist mode(s) of production may continue to exist, although subordinated to capital through a process of "preservation"/"destruction" or "dissolution"/"conservation", by which they are articulated in their diverse relations with capital particularly through unequal exchange relations [Goodman, 1981: 60].

According to Leys [1985], what produces underdevelopment is not the transfer of surplus appropriated by metropolitan capital from the periphery, significant though this may be. Rather, such a transfer should be seen as an effect of structures at the periphery which militate against the productive investment there of the surplus labour
to be appropriated but prevent the realization of relative surplus value. In other words, the development of underdevelopment is rooted in the structure of production based on the extension of absolute surplus labour, which determines a sharp disjuncture between the requirements for the development of the productive forces (productivity of labour) and the structure of profitability of the economy as a whole.

In essence, the argument states that under certain conditions, articulation is structured to maintain pre-capitalist modes of production which act as reservoirs of cheap labour for the capitalist sectors of the economy [Goodman, 1981:62]. With seasonal or migrant labour, for example, part of the long-term cost of production is borne by the pre-capitalist sector or domestic community and the wages paid can be correspondingly lower. According to Zeleza [1985:143], the concept of articulation of modes of production therefore goes further than dependency theory to explain specific forms that accumulation, the labour process and class struggle have taken in different regions of the "Third World".

Since articulation is a process by which the capitalist mode of production establishes dominance
over the non-capitalist mode(s), the theory of articulation has been applied extensively in analysing Africa's economic history during the colonial period. It is in line with this theory, and in conjunction with the dependency theory, that Gusiiland's agricultural history will be analysed. And it is because of the weaknesses of modernization theory - as demonstrated partly in the critique by proponents of the underdevelopment and dependency theory - that the former has been found inapplicable and therefore not used in this study.

1:7. Justification of the Study

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

Kisii district manifests various unique features to justify the study. In the first instance, no such study has been undertaken by an economic historian. The few general works, though useful contributions,
have shortcomings as regards the subject. The ecological conditions in the district are conducive to the growth of a number of food and cash crops. In the pre-colonial and colonial periods, Gusiiiland produced food even for the neighbouring peoples. The introduction of cash crops in the colonial period was set to bring about major agricultural changes. An examination of these changes in Kisii district may therefore prove representative for other highland areas of Kenya which underwent somewhat similar agricultural changes.

It is hoped that this historical study will help the relevant specialists (economists, agriculturalists, and others) to seek answers to questions about the future of Gusii agriculture within a time perspective. Such questions may include the possibility of food shortage in the district in the future, and the implications of land fragmentation in the district.

1:8. Methodology

The research for this study was carried out between November 1988 and March 1989. The study is based on both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources included information gathered from oral interviews, archival records, official
publications of the colonial period, together with accounts provided by contemporaries such as early foreign travellers, missionaries and colonial administrators.

Archival records proved useful data for the colonial period. These included annual reports, agricultural reports, South Nyanza gazettes, publications and newspapers. Most of this material is available at the Kenya National Archives, and some at the Kisii Information and Documentation Centre.

However, the material could not be entirely relied upon, for most of it is ridden with prejudice and bias, and is "developmentalist" in nature. Consequently, the information so gathered was corroborated with other data, especially findings from oral research.

Information gathered from oral interviews covered the whole period of the study, but proved more valuable for the pre-colonial and early colonial periods. This is because for these periods, oral information, although it could not be quantified, proved almost the sole body of sources; for the later periods, archival materials and secondary data became more useful than oral information. For example, while informants admitted that the Gusii engaged in
migrant labour outside the district, only archival material and secondary data would give figures for the workers involved.

Group interviews were conducted during the preliminary stage and proved rather unreliable. Informants would compete to outdo one another in giving detailed information even at the risk of exaggeration. Transcribing was also difficult, especially when handling more than one informant. Consequently, I resorted to individual interviews which I found easier to arrange. With the use of a tape-recorder, the exercise proceeded smoothly and much faster.

Some problems encountered in the field included the suspicion of some informants and their reluctance to give information on some issues, especially land. However, by using contacts and persons they knew, informants became friendly and ready to talk.

Of course informants are human beings with emotions, prejudices and other problems, so they sometimes gave biased information to suit their interest. Consequently, I had to verify the oral evidence with more than five informants and, sometimes, oral information had to be corroborated with written sources as much as was possible.
Library materials in the form of publications, journals and newspapers constituted some sources that were examined. They were found in major libraries, mainly the Moi Library of Kenyatta University and the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library of the University of Nairobi. In addition, use was made of the libraries of the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and Institute of African Studies (IAS) of the University of Nairobi. These materials covered all the periods of the research.

Other than the limitations specific to data, the problems encountered in the field included shortage of time and money. The research was begun several months behind schedule for reasons beyond my control, and the urgency to finish this work on time therefore created need for more money which, unfortunately, was not forthcoming.
CHAPTER TWO

2:0. GUSII SOCIETY AND ECONOMY ON THE EVE OF COLONIAL RULE

2:1. The Settlement of the Gusii Highlands and Gusii Socio-political Organization

Ochieng’s [1974a] account of Gusii migration shows that the Gusii were settled at Kano plains between c.1760-1800 [see figure 2]. Due to persistent Luo attacks, the Gusii started moving out of the plains into the highlands¹. Their first stop was at Gososia, near Ngoinyo Hill in North Mugirango. Here, due to close proximity to the Luo, they still suffered from attack, and further migration was necessary.

From Gososia, a small group consisting of the Osiango and Sigisa migrated into the thickly wooded highlands and established their first settlement in the vicinity of Nyamira. They were later joined by Abarangi, Abakeboye, Abasamaro, Abanyameuru and Mwanyamoronge. These were the first groups to settle in the Gusii highlands in the now North Mugirango area.

¹ W.R. Ochieng’s book, A Pre-colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya from c.AD 1500-1914 (Nairobi, EALB), is the most detailed account available of the colonization of Gusii highlands by the Gusii.
The majority of the Gusii moved from Gososia to Kabianga around the close of the 18th century. Due to unfavourable soils and the climatic conditions and attacks from the Maasai and Kipsigis, they moved south to Sotik. A few groups infiltrated the highlands, but the majority moved on to the Trans-Mara Triangle settling at Nyangararo around 1820. From here, after unstable and hostile relations with the Isiria Maasai characterized by cattle raids on both sides, the Gusii were scattered during the battle of River Migori. They moved into the highlands, while some took refuge among the Kuria, and others among the Luo of Kabwoch near the Nyagoe forest. Throughout the rest of the century, when the majority of them were already in the highlands, they started gradually spreading out within the whole territory to be joined by the group that had taken refuge among the Luo in Kabwoch.

In the years just preceding colonial rule, the Gusii did not possess any centralized government system, and to hold together the various segments of the society they depended to a large extent on values deriving from their religious ideas and beliefs.

In his discussion of the political organization of the "Bantu of North Kavirondo", Wagner [1949]
argued that before one could meaningfully discuss a people's political organization one must first determine whether the society can be looked at as constituting a single political unit or a multiplicity of political units. According to Fortes [1940:200-201], a political unit means "that which constitutes a group of people which submits persistently and in an organized manner to leadership for the purposes of maintaining itself as a unit".

Most scholars who have studied Gusii society have observed that it did not constitute one political unit [Mayer, 1949, 1950; Levine 1966, 1962; Garst, 1972; Ochieng', 1974a, 1974b; Barnes, 1976; Uchendu, 1975; etc]. It was a collection of many political units, based on exogamous patrilineal clans or clan groupings, each of which often consisted of a large clan with a number of small clans or sub-clans or families, usually occupying a distinct territory over a ridge or a succession of adjacent ridges. At no one time, Ochieng' [1974b:193] observes, did the entire Gusii society politically fall under one "tribal" leadership. In other words, there was no ethnic authority which overruled clan authority either in dealings with neighbouring ethnic groups or in the management of internal affairs. The clan, then, was the most effective political unit.
Even so, the Gusii clans were conscious of having originally come from a common ancestor, and they were connected by bonds of intermarriage and by common beliefs and practices in such a way that they considered themselves a unit in contrast to surrounding groups with whom they did not maintain such bonds. At the head of each political unit was a 'chief' locally called Omogambi or Omoruoti. This was usually an elder who by publicly accepted right played the leading publicly sanctioned socio-religious and political roles in the political unit. However, he had to make decisions with the consent and support of the elders, who jointly formed an "elders' council" locally called etureti. In the event of two political units being involved, a joint elders' council had to be constituted; alternatively, elders from a neutral clan were requested to arbitrate. The etureti only met when there was need to solve social, political and religious issues; otherwise, the elders and chiefs led private lives.

Chiefs were regarded as living representatives of the original lineage founders and were believed to be men who were divinely sanctioned to lead clans in communal sacrifices and social activities. They would be the first to cultivate, the first to sow, to
taste crops and the first to harvest [Ochieng' 1974a:196]. Since it was difficult to separate the ceremonial and religious activities from the political, the clan chief also found himself automatically the political head of the clan.

Besides the chief, there were other notable leaders, locally called abatangani (singular, omotangani). Ochieng' [1974a:196] has defined these leaders as persons who by force of example, talent, or qualities of leadership, played a directing role, wielded commanding influence, or had a following in any sphere of activity or thought. They included prophets (for example, Sakawa), elders, seers and rain-makers.

The Gusii homestead was an internally self-governing unit, with the head of the homestead settling all disputes that did not need outside intervention. However, the head's authority was not limitless; he was also accountable to the ancestral spirits and to his immediate lineage relatives in his conduct and actions within the homestead. Conflicts between members of different homesteads were taken to the elders' council headed by the chief.
The religion\(^2\) of the Gusii people consisted mainly of an ancestor cult which co-existed with Gusii conceptions of one Supreme Being, known as Engoro (Ochieng' 1973:63). It was Engoro, so the Gusii believed, who created the universe, the earth and forces operative in it. He governed the destiny of man, sending him rain or storm, well-being or famine, health or disease, peace or war [Ochieng' 1974:184-185].

The Gusii explain God’s continued operation or involvement in the physical world to have been executed through His agents, the ancestor spirits (ebirecha), who also shared in Engoro’s supernatural and mysterious essence [Ochieng’ 1975:63].

The ancestor spirits had great influence in Gusii social and economic life. In the event of a calamity or disease, a seer or diviner (omoragori) could be consulted on the wishes of the ancestors, who more often than not were believed to be behind the calamity. However, they were not worshipped [Levine, 1966:60].

While the ancestor spirits were the living supernatural link between Engoro and man, the sun was regarded as a mysterious physical agency through which God manifested Himself in a variety of ways. The sun was associated with God's benevolence and at times vengeance, depending on a number of factors [Ochieng', 1975:66]. For example, depending on the "behaviour" of the sun, man could receive ample rainfall for good harvest and pasture or, alternatively, drought, famine and disease. In the latter case, sacrifices and other religious ceremonies had to be carried out. The sun thus had great significance for the Gusii people: it was a mysterious creation through which man could gaze on God and ask for blessing, forgiveness or help [Levine, 1966:57]. In fact, the sun stood for Engoro, and the two were used interchangeably. In the words of G.A.S. North-Cote, "God among the ancient Kisii people seems to have slid on the scales of meaning between sun and ancestor worship." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1908]

The most striking aspect of the Gusii religious system was its lack of shrines. Individuals had direct access to God through prayer. Sacrifices were made by the head of the homestead. If it was harvesting time, or the start of a new year,
thanksgiving ceremonies were carried out communally, led by the chief of every clan. These could be held in any convenient place within the clan territory and they were accompanied with beer-drinking and feasting [Ochieng' 1975:69].

2:2. Gusii Economy on the Eve of Colonial Rule

2:2:1. Land Tenure

The Gusii social universe was made up of an ever increasing population size and expanding affinalities, ranging from the nuclear or polygynous family to the entire Gusii ethnic unit. The homestead of a single patriarch - that is a man, his wife or wives, and their sons living in a cluster of houses on their own land - is conceived in this study as an autonomous unit of production and consumption as well as defence and internal governance. The residents of the homestead or household also constituted a largely autonomous unit of economic production [Levine, 1979:5].

Nature presented the Gusii with an abundant and vast land resource as the major means of production, and the land tenure system in Gusiiiland must be understood against this background of abundant land. The main pre-occupation was to clear the highlands to
create more pastureland for the decreasing livestock. According to Ochieng' [1974a:178], the Gusii gradually turned from being pastoralists to become cultivators due to the forested nature of the highlands and the scarcity of pastures.

After about 1820, the Gusii started spreading out, a household or clan occupying a ridge which was usually cleared for cultivation. Such land consequently belonged to the head of the household, on the understanding that it also belonged to the clan and the entire Gusii people. Land tenure in Gusii land was based on the principle that an individual had inheritable rights over his arable land, and a household could share grazing grounds and salt licks with other households.

It was common for a household to occupy a ridge, cultivate part of it, and declare the rest of the ridge its grazing ground (called amarisio), a practice which was a source of constant conflict over livestock due to trespassing. It is also noteworthy that there were neither landlords nor landless people. Even during wars with the Kipsigis, Maasai and Luo, the displaced Gusii communities were free to occupy any empty land and clear it for cultivation, and it automatically became theirs. Other than the
incidence of inter-ethnic and civil wars, nobody lost his land forcibly. On many occasions people freely migrated from one ridge to another in search of fertile arable land and pasture. Even in the event of land disputes between neighbours, it was common for the offender to be fined a cow or goat, but never was his land taken away [Kibegwa, O.I 1989; Masira, O.I, 1989; Kaosa, O.I. 1989]

All the land in the household principally belonged to the father. Women acquired usufructuary rights of the land because they cultivated it. Inheritance of rights in land, though common, was not a significant concept since land was abundant. Cattle, goats and bridewealth payments were more cherishable assets than land, and land inheritance became popular much later due to its increasing scarcity [Kaosa, Matara, O.I, 1989].

The usufructuary rights in a man's land were divided between the houses of different wives, with the eldest wife taking a larger portion than the second wife, and the youngest receiving the least [Bosibori, O.I 1989]. In the event of the man's death, only the male children inherited legal rights over the fields cultivated by their mother. In
essence, the Gusii land law was based on the principle of individual sons having a legal claim over "fields cultivated by their mother but owned by their father" [Uchendu, 1975:27]. Hence, while the head of the homestead retained title to the land, each wife maintained her own land [Machuma, O.I 1989; Maeri, O.I, 1988].

By the close of the last century, the father had the right to allocate land for various types of use, for example cultivation, grazing and hunting. In his absence or death, the elder son took responsibility of running the mother's fields, unless the mother was young enough to be remarried to her brother-in-law. Rights in arable land were protected by the fact of actual residence and continued use [Ngare, O.I. 1989].

Boundaries were established according to laid down rules and on a mutual basis, depending on how large an area one had cleared. In the case of individual homestead patches of arable land, there was no need to establish boundaries, except amongst the wives' households, in which case the man followed the aforementioned practice. However, in patches cleared by pooled labour (e.g. endemero - see page 41) the land was shared equally among the participants if they all had put in the same man-
hours of work. It was, however, uncommon for participants to receive proportionate plots on man hours given because, as one informant explained, the motto was to pool the labour together for the benefit of all participants [Maeri, O.I. 1988].

Plots or fields of land were separated from one another by use of fences from such common trees of the platranthus species as omotagara, omoroka and omotobo and/or stones were used, especially between ridges [Mongare O.I. 1988, Matwere A; O.I. 1989].

Disputes over land were not uncommon. By far the most common was the extension of one's plot into another's without due regard to boundaries. Disputes also arose over grazing lands, especially along the boundary with other ethnic groups - notably the Kipsigis and Maasai. Disputes over the subdivision of land amongst wives, on the one hand, and brothers, on the other, did not present many problems for there were well laid-out customary procedures governing such issues.

The elders' council played the major role of settling land disputes and any other social misunderstandings and conflicts. Offenders were usually fined in the form of livestock payment, but
were not penalised by way of loss of land [Matwere, H., O.I. 1988; Kinyanjui, Omanwa, O.I. 1989].

Land was acquired in a number of ways, but principally through kinship ties and obligations. As already noted, inheritance of land was not a significant aspect. Young married men were never content to inherit their mother's plots; they went further afield and cleared virgin land for this was one way of acquiring animals for bridewealth, and so on. Members of a homestead could move from one "congested" ridge/village and clear and inhabit another ridge and, by so doing, become the 'first occupier'. The head of such a homestead could invite his relatives to join him, who would acquire the land through invitation. This was quite common not only for the sake of security but also for the purpose of pooling their labour for bigger tasks. Besides all this, it should be noted that in pre-capitalist Gusii society land was never purchased or sold in any form, nor did people acquire land through false claim on other people's land [Nyarunda, O.I. 1989].

Along the Gusii-Kipsigis boundary, during the battle of Saosao in 1891, the Kipsigis were beaten back and their land acquired by the Gusii through conquest. Although, as will be seen later, the
battle was caused by cattle thefts, the result so weakened the Kipsigis that some of their land fell under Gusii occupation.  

Imperialist scholars such as Wrigley [1965] and Ruthenberg [1971] generalise all pre-capitalist African land tenure systems as having been communally owned, denoting a so-called backward or primitive form of land tenure. But, according to Hopkins [1973:38], it is misleading to assume that such land ownership was ‘backward’ and ‘primitive’. Besides, it is important to note that methods of acquiring, holding and disposing of land differed not only spatially, but through time. Therefore, to ascertain whether land in pre-capitalist Gusiiiland was communally owned, the following three questions need to be addressed. First, who allocated and disposed of land? Secondly, who had access to land? Thirdly, who had the right to the use of the land?  

Ownership is the foundation on which all other rights in property stand. It comprises the power of use (and abuse), and the disposal of what is owned. All the Gusii men had rights in the use of the land. However, they did not have the right to dispose of

3 According to Nyauma [O.I. 1989], the area around Ikonge was acquired from the Kipsigis during this period.
it: the clan elders could allocate the use of land at the clan level, but fathers had this responsibility at the household or homestead level. All Gusii men had access to land within their clan. In other words, all Gusii land was a territorial birthright for the use of the Gusii, although restrictions were instituted at the clan level. In fact, land ownership reflected and was influenced by the political organization of the Gusii. Land belonged to all the Gusii because of their traditions of common origin, historical lineage ties and various other bonds.

At the same time, each clan had its own territorially designated land to protect against other clans, sometimes resulting in bitter intra-ethnic wars. A man from one clan could not settle on another clan's land unless invited by a relative by marriage or other affinal bonds. At the clan level, each household had its own land to which the household members alone had the right of use. At the homestead level, women maintained the land while the homestead head had overall right of allocation and subdivision.

This means that while at the ethnic group level land theoretically belonged to everybody, at the clan and homestead levels each had his own plot of land...
with rights of inheritance and use. In other words, land tenure in Gusiiiland was not totally communal. Even the grasslands which were considered to be communal could be alienated for personal use in form of amarisio (already explained on page 34). Hence, households frequently made use of common land and individual holdings simultaneously. Hopkins' [1973:38] assertion that usufructuary rights were more crucial and that these were clearly delineated and could be inherited is applicable to Gusiiiland.

Land was the fundamental resource for crop cultivation and animal husbandry. The arable land was basically divided into three main parts. First was land on which a family homestead was located and on which 'subsistence' farming was carried out by the wife or wives. This land portion was called enyombwa. Second was the land where the head of the household cultivated crops for his private use or as security in case of food shortage. This was known as embonga. Last was land reclaimed by cutting down the bush and cultivated by many members of the clan on an individual and equal share basis. This land was called endomero. The rest of the land except amarisio remained communal and belonged to the clan [Nyamwaro, Moruabe, Moriasí, O.I. 1989].
2:2:2. **Hunting and Gathering**

The hunting and gathering system of appropriation of subsistence from nature is, according to Abdul Sherriff [1985:4], universal and was practiced as late as the nineteenth century in Kenya. Under this system, little energy and time is invested in the production of food. The Gusii supplemented their cultivation by hunting and gathering. Among the foods gathered, usually by women, was an assorted number of fruits - notably chinkorogonywa, chinkenene, obosangora, chinsobosobo, chinyangateti, omoubu and chinkomoni, as they are known locally. Wild vegetables included spider flower (gynandropsis gynandra- locally known as chinsaga), night shade (Solanum nigrum - locally known as rinagu), East African spinach (amaranthus hybridus - locally known as ototo) and others locally known as enderema and risa [Nyakundi, Nyamongo, 0.I. 1989].

Hunting, mainly done by the young energetic men and boys, was mainly for antelopes, deers, rabbits antbears, rhinoceros, warthogs, lions, elephants and buffaloes. There were well laid down rules of sharing the captured game among the hunters. Most animals were hunted for meat, making hunting one of the means of food appropriation. The buffalo was
hunted for its skin which was highly valued for making shields and for sale to the neighbouring Luo. Lion’s and the leopard’s skins were used for ceremonial purposes.

The Gusii entered into specific relations when hunting. They formed hunting groups or bands. The spoils of the hunt were distributed immediately after the hunt.

Various birds were trapped or killed with sling shots. They were usually trapped by young boys, though bigger birds like chinkware and chinkanga were trapped by men. These birds included ensentwa, enyamunchera, riruma, richore, egetinginye and rikorobo. However, it should be noted that the food that was hunted and gathered comprised only a small proportion of the Gusii diet [Nyamwaro, Omenge, O.I. 1989].

2:2:3. Crop Production

In the years preceding colonial rule agriculture was the main pre-occupation among the Gusii. Kiriama [1986:196] observes that the Gusii were mixed farmers who emphasized the cultivation of grains and supplemented their diet with limited livestock products. The two most important crops in Gusiiiland were wimbi (fingermillet or eleusine) and mtama
(sorghum). These formed the main staples, with wimbi the more important crop. Gusii women used wimbi to cook obokima (ugali), the starchy staple of the Gusii. They ground wimbi into flour on a large grinding stone (orogena) with a smaller stone which fitted the hand (enso), then poured the flower into the pot of boiling water, stirring until the whole mass became thick and firm. Wimbi was also used for brewing beer, essential for the proper entertainment of older men.

Pumpkins (emiongo) appear to have been the only fruit grown, with their leaves being used as a vegetable. Sweet potatoes (amanyabwori) were the main tuber crop followed by cassava. The indigenous Gusii maize (to which I will turn in a while) was low yielding and multi-coloured. It was mainly grown at the edge of wimbi farms [Maeri, O.I. 1988].

Vegetables grown included those already mentioned, night shade (rinagu), spider flower (chinsaga) and East African spinach (ototo). Others known by the local names are: enderema, risosa, (pumpkin leaves), emboga, omotere, riisa, ekeroti, etibatiba, rinyamo, enyonyo, riboroche, ekenyaposio, rikongiro, ogoto kwe embeba, engekondo, and egasare [Onchoke, Omenge, Nyairo, Onyancha, O.I. 1989].
The indigenous vegetables were eaten for a number of reasons. Some were regarded as having medicinal value. For example, *chinsaga* was recommended for women when pregnant and after giving birth and also for boys immediately after circumcision. Other vegetables were eaten during a prolonged dry season or during famines. This was because such vegetables were drought resistant and were the only type that could survive. They included *riisa*, *egekondo*, *enderema*, *egesusure* and *rikongiro*. Studies on the nutritional value of some of these indigenous vegetables show them to be comparable or even superior to exotic vegetables in some mineral nutrients as shown in Tables 1 and 2 below.

Maize was introduced to Gusii land, and its later widespread cultivation originated from an external and not an internal demand. But Bowles' [1979:199] assertion that in Gussiland "maize cultivation was introduced by colonial officials beginning in 1919" is not only inaccurate but contradicts his own explanation of the introduction of maize to East Africa.

Maize was domesticated in the semi-tropical uplands of Central and North America. It is possible that it was introduced to East Africa by the
Table 1: Caroten and Calcium of Some Leaf Vegetables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Carotene mg¹</th>
<th>Calcium mg¹</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Ototo</td>
<td>7680</td>
<td>480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous* 'chinsaga'</td>
<td>8737</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>'Rinagu'</td>
<td>8813</td>
<td>291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kale</td>
<td>7312</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabbage</td>
<td>1156</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exotic** Lettuce</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss chard</td>
<td>6125</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinarch</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ from 100g fresh weight edible portion
* source: Gomez [1981, 1982]

Portuguese. From coastal settlements, it seems to have spread along trading routes. It was common in Tanganyika and had reached Buganda in the mid-nineteenth century, for it was observed by Europeans who followed established trade routes. According to Miracle [1966:99], it was much less common in Central Kenya, for example among the Kikuyu, before the
Table 2: Protein Content of Certain Leaf Vegetables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Protein %</th>
<th>% Contribution to RDA^1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinsaga</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinagu</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ototo</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cowpeas leaf</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin leaf</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Contribution to Recommended Daily Allowances (RDA = 65g Protein) for children (1-11 years old) from 100g dry weight leaf.

Source: Imbamba [1973]

colonial period. It was cultivated in the southeastern area of the country and around the shores of Lake Victoria; these were on or near trade routes. In Kowe in present-day Kisumu district, maize was planted in small amounts to ripen during periods of famine. The maize was eaten off the cob, either boiled or roasted. Lugard's visit in 1890 testifies to this [Hay, 1976:96]. It seems a reasonable deduction, therefore, that maize must have diffused to Gusiiiland from the Lake region to the west. This
is corroborated by the Gusii who claim that their indigenous maize came from Luoland [Nyauma, Ondieki (Mrs.), Sobu, O.I. 1989].

Intercropping, which Zeleza [1986:174] calls the "heart of African agriculture", appears to have been the rule in Gusiland. Wimbi was mainly intercropped with sorghum and maize. Vegetables could be grown with all these crops, though women had a small plot for vegetables near the homestead called egeticha. Occasionally, sweet potatoes appear to have been grown in pure stands, though sometimes intercropped with sorghum.

Intercropping or multiple cropping as a manner of crop production suited the needs of the Gusii and their fragile environment. The deep soils, if left bare, would be washed away by the heavy torrents of the region. Constant cover of the ground by some crops preserved the soil by preventing soil erosion. Soil fertility was maintained through multiple cropping. Adequate food security and self-reliance were ensured by the cultivation of a variety of crops. Besides, intercropping maximized on labour which was scarcer than land [Levine, 1979:5] a point we shall return to later.

The crops in the field belonged to the owners; family crops belonged to the wife; the father owned
crops from his *embonga* field; and individuals owned crops at the *endemero* fields. The harvested crop was put to a number of uses. Other than being stored for consumption as food, it was exchanged for goods and services. Occasionally, it was used for dowry in payment of bride price, or for use in marriage celebrations. Also, it was given to those suffering from food shortage elsewhere. *wimbi* was widely used in beer brewing, and it commanded a premium price in exchange activities with the Luo.

The preparation of land for cultivation was a joint undertaking between men and women. Once a piece of land was identified for cultivation, often by the use of certain plants and grasses as indicators of soil fertility, it was mainly cleared by men and then burnt. The owner of the land, usually the husband, could then subdivide it among his wives who commenced the digging. Digging was in two stages—the first being just tilling or breaking the ground; and the second, pulverization, involving the collection of all vegetative matter which was then heaped in moulds called *amatuta*. According to Kirama [1966:197], this form of heaping the vegetable matter in moulds must have started with the Apanyamatuta clan who earned their name from such cultivation. Be that as it may, the practice was
widespread among all the Gusii. The moulds were burnt, and wimbi was sown. Weeding was mainly done by women, though one informant claimed that old men used to help in this [Machani, O.I. 1989].

The Gusii agricultural calendar slightly varied between the lowlands (chache) and the highlands (masaba). Generally, clearing started in January and continued up to March for the late farmers or laggards. Digging or cultivating started in late January and continued through March. Planting (mainly of wimbi and sorghum) started in April, with the onset of the long rains, and continued through June for the laggards. Early planters started weeding in May with laggards closing in August. Harvesting started in August and ended in October. October and part of November and December (esagati yo gosieka omwaka) was a resting period when hoes (egesiria or esururu) were untied from their handles and kept in preparation for a new agricultural calendar year [Machani, O.I. 1989].

The first harvest of sorghum was done around October; the first ratoon harvest in March of the following year; the last harvest in October, before a new crop of sorghum was planted in the following March. In other words, one crop of sorghum took two years, giving a maximum of three harvests. Beans
were planted in October and November with the onset of the short rains, and harvested in February and March. Sweet potatoes were planted in May [Onchoke, 1989; Ondieki, D. O.I. 1989].

The agricultural calendar has a strong bearing on the traditional naming of the months of the year, testifying to the importance of agriculture among the Gusii. Suffice it to say that months were named after notable agricultural events like planting, droughts, months of food shortage and harvesting. Riguwata the fourth month of the year, is so named after the germinating seed cracking out of the soil. Amaumuntia, the fifth month of the year, and a few months before harvest, was so named after the occurrence of food shortages in that month, especially in the households of the "lazy". (Amaumuntia akoumuntia chinombya chia aboro would literally mean when the scourge of hunger lingers in the households of the lazy) Ebwagi and Engoromomi, June and July respectively, are traditionally months of food shortage when people relied on animal milk. The Gusii saying - engombe yaito ebiare Ebwagi na 'Ngoromomi ka' abanchwa baregana - means "may our cow deliver in June and July when friendly households turn to enmity." This is enough evidence of the trying times during these two months.
A piece of land could be cultivated for two to four years before being abandoned and a new one prepared. The plot could revert to bush and take up to ten years before it was cultivated again. In the event of declining soil fertility and yields, people either cleared a nearby bushland, or cleared bushland in the next ridge. Settlements appear to have been permanent except when there was large-scale migration due to insecurity and intra-ethnic wars. Otherwise, the spread of the Gusii in the Gusii highlands early this century was the gradual extension of farmlands. Settlements were only moved when farmlands were too far from homesteads. Alternatively, new busnes were colonised by the young men who wanted to acquire farmlands of their own.

The often generalised contention that pre-capitalist African societies carried out shifting cultivation did not apply to the Gusii at the close of the last century. Proponents of this view see the African as a useless farmer, too lazy or ignorant to conserve the soil through fertilization and the prevention of erosion. Wrigley [1968:254] best exemplifies this notion when he states that:

"Indigenous (agricultural) practices, varying in detail, conformed to the general pattern known
as shifting cultivation. Land was tilled until its yields began to diminish. It was then abandoned to the slow regenerative agencies of nature and new fields were taken out of the surrounding waste. No attempt was made by systematic rotation of crops or the application of manure, to maintain the soil."

This concept of African shifting cultivation has been refuted by other scholars. Hopkins [1973] identified several types of cultivation grouped under the rubric of shifting cultivation. Zeleza [1986:157] writes that for centuries most of the settlements were fixed and the chief methods of cultivation were rotational bush fallow, rotational planted fallow, mixed farming and 'permanent' farming. Boserup [1965] shows how methods of cultivation changed with increasing population pressure to provide more food. These are:

1. Forest fallow cultivation (long fallow periods);
2. Bush fallow cultivation (medium fallow periods);
3. Short fallow cultivation (short fallow periods);
4. Annual cropping (perhaps with seasonal fallow);
5. Multiple cropping (two or more successive crops each year).

The Gusii case tends to lie between the second and third stages which we may compositely term as
rotational fallow. It appears that because there was abundant land among the pre-colonial Gusii, they tended to leave fields fallow for relatively longer periods.

In any case this system of rotational bush fallow had evolved and was suited to the needs of the people and their fragile tropical environment and helped them to cope with food shortages and crop failures. This form of cultivation helped in maintaining soil fertility, checking soil erosion and, above all, ensured high yields. Besides, there was little change in the eco-system as the cultivated lands reverted to vegetation.

The flexibility of the system allowed movement to another plot if adverse environmental or ecological circumstances occurred in the form of pest damage, weeds or unanticipated poor soil performance. By having plots in different micro-environmental and micro-ecological areas, farmers had the chance of spreading risks.

Wimbi was stored in round granaries, made of intertwined long thin sticks (well-aerated) placed about a foot from the ground and supported by stones. The granary was amply suited for keeping grain even up to ten years. Later harvests could be stored together with the earlier year's harvest, taking the
lowest layer without fear of the grain being spoilt. This long storage changed the wimbi colour to dark but its taste was preferred to the other grains, especially for the preparation of porridge and ugali. For immediate consumption, however, some grain was threshed and stored in pots, baskets and emenyoncho - a big round basket like wimbi storage device with a narrow mouth/opening, smeared with cowdung, and kept on the ceiling of houses.

The Gusii demonstrated great mastery of agricultural information and practices. For planting purposes, they selected the best wimbi heads that could give high yields. They dried and threshed them, and stored the grain in omonyoncho. This grain was designated as special seeds (emousuro) and stored on the ceiling of the house. This was considered to be a warm area free of any insects or pests.

Except for immediate consumption or exchange purposes, sorghum heads were never threshed. The heads were often cut off and packed in the inner part of the lower roof of both houses and granaries. Equally, pest infestation and attack by animals were minimal in such places.
The storage of maize was exactly the same as for sorghum. As in the Luo Kowe community, it had very limited use and was grown in small amounts. It was eaten off the cob, either boiled or roasted [Hay, 1976:96]. Sweet potatoes, on the other hand, presented no storage problem as they were dug up only when required for immediate cooking.

Protection of crops from bowling insects and animals, both in the farm and in the granary, appears to have been negligible. No form of medicinal plants or ash were used against them. Rats, on the other hand, were not much of a menace and, as one informant put it, there was abundant food both inside and outside the granary so that the damage to stored food was negligible [Ondonga, O.I. 1989]. The basis for continued food supplies lay in the manner of storage and continued cultivation of surplus food.

2:2:4. Famines and Food Shortages

Famines, although not uncommon, were infrequent in Gusiland. It appears that food shortages affected individual households more than all the Gusii. According to Uonheng’ [1974b:16], the years between 1885 and 1892 saw a series of bitter famines. One of the severest famines, Nyamakongiro, occurred
at this time and one informant dates it to around 1891 [Unchoke, O.I. 1989]. This period of disasters does not appear to have been unique to the Gusii, but was widespread in the East African region. Mwanzi [1977:84] dates the period in the case of the Kipsigis to 1890. Similar disasters have been reported among the pastoralist Maasai [Jacobs, 1966: 96-99], and Kjekshus [1977:126-142] reports about the great rinderpest of 1890's in many parts of Tanganyika.

According to Mwanzi [1977:130], between 1889 and 1892 a cattle disease which the Gusii refer to as Ungonga (sic) swept the Luo, Gusii and Kipsigis countries killing thousands of cattle. One informant saw this disease as having been the cause of the 1891 famine [Unchoke, O.I. 1989]. According to him, a bull brought from Luoland transmitted a serious disease locally called Unkonga which killed so many animals that payment of bride wealth dropped from

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4 Also provided in the informant's manuscript entitled "Ukata Omochakano Bw'Abagusi Na Mogikoyo Omwado - A History of the Kisii", File Reference UCN/HU-RPA A/2/3.
between about ten to fourteen head of cattle to just one cow. Some people even gave goats as dowry. Apparently, due to drought and deaths of many animals the Gusii started using amakongiro, a local drought-resistant creeping weed, as a relish and a supplement to milk. They also turned to the Luo for help and, as Ochieng' [1974b: 66-67] states:

"... although there were no bumper harvests in Luoland during this period, the traditions of Gusii of Wanjare and South Mugirango would indicate that many Gusii families survived due to grain, milk and potatoes from Luoland. Many Gusii mothers who had made friends with the Luo during their trade in Luoland are said to have sent their babies to live with the Luo friends. Some of these facts are not readily yielded, due to very understandable ethnic pride, but patient enquiry often leads one to very interesting revelations."

We will return to this statement shortly. Meanwhile, it should be noted that besides this famine, other more localised famines, though not well dated, are remembered: the hunger of oyimi and maruora [Machani, O.I. 1989]. It appears that the causes of these famines were diverse: rainfall failure or drought, hailstones, intra and inter-ethnic wars, and so on [Unchagwa, Ondari, Unyancha, Sodu, O.I. 1989].

The consequences of the famines were manifold. Underfeeding and starvation led to poor health and a number of deaths, and the Gusii word for famine,
egeku, literally means many deaths. Also, people moved from the affected areas to the highlands in the hope of getting food. Livestock was depleted as most households relied solely on cattle as food or exchanged them with those who had some grain reserves.

Among the Gusii, there were ways of predicting famine, and there were seers who could foretell impending disasters - chief among them was the famous prophet Sakawa. In the event of a crisis, only men were informed, but if the cause of the famine was drought, women had the role of making rain. Not having been informed earlier about the suspected cause of the famine, the women's prayer and representation before the supreme God Engoro were supposed to be genuine.

The women's role derived from their being the household custodians of food. To ward off famine, they could visit a rainmaker - omonyibi - with gifts of food (usually goat meat or mutton). In the course of feasting they would tell the rainmaker about their problems and the suffering of children; the latter in turn could promise them rain. Tradition has it that often it would rain the same evening and the women reached home wet [Machani, U.I. 1989].
The second function performed by women in inducing rain was ceremonial. After a long period of drought women could dress in traditional costume (chingobo) on an appointed day and go to a central place to perform a rain making ceremony called ribina. Tradition also has it that often after this ceremony it would rain; that is why some people in Gusiiland hardly ever believe that rain failure was the cause of any major famine\(^5\), and point to locust invasion or wars. In the event of its not raining after these two functions, a seer (omoragori) was consulted as to why Engoro had abandoned His people. His advice was then followed.

The Gusii took a number of other measures to curb food shortages. When there was a locust invasion, more sweet potatoes were planted since the tubers could not be affected; for the same reason, a lot of pumpkins were planted. Besides, the locusts themselves were killed and eaten as a relish to supplement the meagre food resources, especially vegetables.

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5 One informant [uncncke, 0.1.1989] see page 57, strongly denied that the famine of Nyamakongiro was caused by rain failure, and asserted that amakongiro were eaten to supplement milk due to animal deaths.
Another measure taken was to produce so much grain that some was stored for a hungry day. It should be noted here that every wife had her own granary the contents of which she used in feeding her household, and she disposed of her surplus without much interference from the husband. On the other hand, as already mentioned, there used to be a field for the husband, the harvest of which was stored separately in a granary called 'embonga y'omogaka'. This literally means the father's bank or security. The produce in the man's granary was never used except in periods of food shortage. In the event of the man's death, the produce was shared among the wives. As will be noted later, when there was no food shortage the man exchanged his produce for livestock or for his sons' bridewealth.

It appears that the Gusii did not receive food from their neighbours except in times of ecological disaster. The exception to this was milk which was acquired from the Luo as part of the perennial exchange between the two communities.

The Gusii proudly claim that they, unlike the Luo, Maasai or Kipsigis, never sold or pawned their children to neighbouring ethnic groups in exchange for food. This is a contention that Ochieng' [1974b:66-67] has tried to refute. He asserts, as
already noted, that the Gusii do not give such information due to 'ethnic pride'. According to our oral sources, however, most of the Gusii community is said to have been unaware of such transactions.

In Gusiiiland there are some people with Luo, Maasai or Kipsigis ancestry; Kiriana's [1986] origin as an individual and that of his Abanyamatuta clan are but one example of such mixed blood. The number of Gusii lineages in other ethnic groups, however, are few with the exception of the Kipsigis. This would suggest that there was a limited relationship with the Kipsigis, and the exchange of children during the famines was similarly limited.

H.A. Mwanzi expresses the same view as regards the scale of child exchange from Gusiiiland to Kipsigis. While acknowledging that the Kipsigis sold children to Gusii in exchange for millet, he continues:

"Occasionally the Gusii did the same but it seems that the practice was carried out more by the former than the latter" [Mwanzi, 1977:85].

Within Gusiiiland, food shortages were common in individual households with unenterprising members. This description was used to denote not a permanent state, but one caused occasionally by a number of
reasons including disease. In this case, also, a number of measures were taken to acquire food.

First, such affected households sold their animals for wimbi to those who had a surplus. A heifer could sell for a whole granary of wimbi, while a goat could fetch 2 or 3 baskets of the same depending on the size of both the goat and the basket.

Secondly, the affected family could beg for food. Begging among the Gusii was common and socially accepted. When the Luo found the Gusii in the Kisumu area struck by famine and pestilence, they called them Ja-kisumo meaning, people who live by begging. Esumo, the Gusii word for begging, was and is more used to denote a donation but without scorn, however.

Thirdly, if the affected household had an eligible marriageable daughter they requested bride price in form of wimbi calculated at the exchange rate of heifers. This was only possible if the other party was not equally affected by food shortage.

Fourthly, the affected family could be given a long term loan in food equivalent to a heifer and payable when a particular girl in the family got married and dowry was paid. The daughter did not go over changed homes to the donors family nor was she
made to marry early. Equally, the affected family could be given a heifer to exchange for *wimbi* elsewhere, payable when the same girl got married [Machani, O.I., 1989].

Lastly, all members of a household could move from a hunger-stricken area to join relatives who would give them food and a piece of land to cultivate. In such circumstances, they sometimes ended up staying there permanently on their own will.

The affected families sometimes received a lot of help from those with surplus food. Other than giving donations, the latter could exchange food for animals from the affected homes, or give food loans in form of *wimbi* or livestock.

While it is therefore evident that the pre-colonial Gusii experienced food shortages due to weather as well as warfare and other forms of social disruption, it is also evident that, as Zeleza (1986:159) puts it in a wider context, there existed a variety of social mechanisms and ecological reserves to reduce the impact of food shortages in any one family. The organisation of the extended homestead, both as a production and consumption unit, reduced the vulnerability of individuals and component nuclear family units. Patterns of redistributive and reciprocal gifts between households in turn reinforced
the society’s ability to withstand a crisis of food shortage.

Social insurance against food shortages also extended to the level of food storage and consumption. Elaborate techniques of storage permitted grain to be stored for relatively long periods. Allan [1965:36] recognized the presence of a 'normal surplus' in pre-colonial economies and saw the traditional beer party as an indication of this surplus.

2:2:5. Animal Husbandry

Animal husbandry was one of the most lucrative enterprises in pre-colonial Gusii land. Since land was abundant, cattle used to be the main inheritable asset. All the cattle, sheep and goats belonged to the man as the head of the homestead. However, some animals, especially heifers, were associated with individual households of wives. While the head of the homestead retained overall claim of ownership to the land and cattle, each wife maintained her own allocation of land and cattle [Garst, 1972:98]. In the event of the father's death, the sons inherited cattle associated with their mother; however, for women themselves, rights in cattle were limited to milking, which was either done in turns (if the cows were fewer) or each household having its own cows.
Cattle were the main source of prestige and power, and numbers were cherished since they indicated a man's wealth. It appears that individual rights were only recognised on arable land, though some people had their own family grazing grounds called amarisio. Communal grazing lands, mainly found on the hill tops (ebigoro) and in marshlands (ebirubo), were defended politically by the Gusii elders and militarily by young initiated men who lived in the cattle villages called ebisarate (singular: egesarate). All animals were grazed or herded by the young men and kept at ebisarate to guard against cattle thefts. Women were only allowed into ebisarate to deliver food and collect milk.

The Gusii built a system of fortified villages called orwaki or chindwanga as a way of protecting themselves and their livestock from enemies. This institution seems to have started during the Gusii settlement of Kabianga and Belgut - which Ochieng' dates to the period between 1780 to 1800. They dug trenches round the villages - an idea borrowed from the Luo, as implied by the Luo word bur given to this system of trenches (Ochieng' 1974a:102).

Dismayed at their own failure to keep the Maasai and Kipsigis out of their villages at night, the Gusii evolved another system, the Orwaki, which
consisted of forts built within an enclosure and protected on the outside by trenches and surrounded by tall and stout walls of stone and mud on top of which were strewn heavy acacia thorns [Ochieng' 1974a:102]. The use of this system was intensified after the Saosao battle with the Kipsigis.

Kipsigis attacks were still of great concern long after the Gusii settled in the highlands. In various meetings, the leaders resolved to put aside their differences and face the enemy as one force in order to "... make our homes and children safe from the evil and treacherous Kipsigis ... and their murdering activities" [Ochieng' 1974:129]. After the disaster of 1889-1892, when cattle disease decimated Kipsigis herds, the latter organised raiding expeditions to Gusii and Luoland. One such raid took place in 1890 [Mwanzi, 1977:85] or 1891 [Ochieng', 1974a:130]. Gusii traditions do mention the raid as having been one of the causes of the famine of Nyamakongiro. The raiders, who consisted of men and boys, successfully marched from North Mugirango and ended at Manga, destroying many Gusii villages and capturing a great quantity of food and

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6 This has been covered elsewhere in this text, see p 57-58; for more details refer to Mwanzi [1977:84]
livestock. Through Manga, they proceeded to Luoland. While they were in Luoland, all Gusii clans mobilised themselves to ambush them on their way back. The ambush was set at river Charachani. Aided by the Luo who were chasing and hurrying the Kipsigis raiders from Kabondo, the Gusii killed the Kipsigis to a man. The Gusii, who had never in their history achieved such victory over their enemies, were extremely elated. They named the bloody battle the battle of Saosao. According to Mokamba, et al [1974:229] the name Saosao originated from the place where the battle was fought. It took place at the river Saosao, which is now more commonly known by the Gusii as river Charachani. The Kipsigis people called it the battle of Mogori (Mokamba, et al, 1974:229).

The defeat of the Kipsigis had a great impact on the settlement patterns of Kitutu and North Mugirango. According to Ochieng' [1974a], it meant that the people of Masaba (meaning highlands to the east) could now expand south-eastwards across rivers Kuja and Sondu. The North Mugirango people moved towards Ikonge, while in Kitutu a more vigorous expansion took place across river Kuja to the area of present day Rigoma.
Even after so decisively defeating the Kipsigis the Gusii, who were spread out to formerly uninhabited areas, feared retaliation from the former. Consequently, they sought to protect themselves by building stone forts in the northern part of their territory.

The foregoing is a discussion of the manner in which the Gusii sought to protect the livestock they already possessed from the external raiders. As regards the active acquisition of such animals, this was done in several ways. Sons could inherit livestock from their fathers, and whenever a son was ready to marry his father often gave him a reward in form of a cow called engombe ya geita which literally means the gate's cow. This symbolised that the son had walked out of the father’s homestead to become independent [Sobu, Moruabe, O.I., 1989].

The young men who had no animals to inherit had to work on commonly cleared but singly cultivated grounds called endemero. From these plots they could acquire produce to exchange, which could eventually earn him even a whole herd of cattle [Onyancha, O.I., 1989].

Raiding enemies, locally called ogokuruma, was another major way of acquiring livestock, and was not strictly regarded as theft. However, some
individuals engaged in proper stealing of animals, both from outside and inside Gusiland. Manwari Omanwa and Atoko of the Abanyamatuta clan, who lived in the second half of the last century and the first quarter of this, were among such remembered thieves [Nyauma, O.I. 1989].

As already noted, people with surplus produce could exchange it for livestock. Two to three baskets of wimbi could be exchanged for sheep and goats. Cattle were however the most important asset for, besides being used to pay dowry, they were also used to pay fines and settle disputes and of course as a source of milk for consumption. They were the "liquid cash" in which a person's wealth and power were counted. For all these reasons, the acquisition of cattle was considered most important. Thus quite often, a man would seek to exchange any sheep and goats he may possess for the cattle at the rate of three for a bull and four or five for a cow.

As with land, disputes did occur over livestock and they were also resolved through elders' councils. The disputes mainly revolved around witchcraft, failure to perform such communal duties as grazing of animals in turns or guarding cattle at ebisarate (cattle bomas) and locking them in the same place.
Women used to quarrel over milking rights or over good milk-producing animals. But by far the most common of livestock disputes was over trespass on cultivated fields and destruction of food crops. If such an incident occurred at night or when raining the offender was not fined; but if the offence happened in broad daylight or owing to intentional neglect, the offender was fined a goat irrespective of the damage done. However, the aim was to reconcile the parties and promote social understanding rather than to compensate the offended party since, in so far as those concerned were usually neighbours, the offence could occur either way [Machani, O.I., 1989; Sobu, O.I., 1989].

The Gusii kept the indigenous Zebu cattle which were adapted to the local conditions and resistant to many of the diseases. They knew the diseases which infected cattle, and some of these were treated by herbalists who had usually acquired such knowledge, from their fathers. The medicinal plants used to treat animal diseases included riisa, ribuko, omogaka, and rikanda (tree bark). Some of the diseases known were enyagesusuka or obosenseri (Anaplasmosis), esiniabi (foot and mouth disease), egesogora (black leg), obere (rinderpest), entira
(anthrax), ekebera and egetungunyi (English names unknown).

The types of medicine used by the Gusii varied in form and source. Ekebera and enyagesusuka were treated with cobweb found on trees near rivers. The cobweb was burnt and the animal made to sniff it. In some cases, herbs or tree-barks were used. The treatment of egetungunyi involved taboos - a pregnant woman not being allowed to look at the sick animals. The treatment of obere showed that the Gusii used a form of immunization similar to that used in modern medicine: the sick animal was bled and blood allowed to settle; it was then decanted and the serum was fed to healthy animals.


Labour organization was based on the homestead unit, meaning the man, his wives and children, and any other people residing with them. Except for group labour, village or clan labour was not predominant, as will be seen in a while. As in so many parts of Kenya:

"labour was scarcer than land, for cultivation had to be maintained and enlarged while membership in regular warrior groups competed for the time and energy of young adult men." [Wright, 1979:184; also see Low 1986:16; and Hyden, 1986:17].
Gusii labour organization, therefore should be viewed from the perspective of scarcity of labour for both on-and off-farm activities.

Division of labour was influenced by societal norms that predetermined different tasks for various ages and sex. Hunting, for example, was for the young energetic boys and men. The clearing of fields was the work of the men. Herding of livestock was done specifically by initiated young men, though near the homestead boys and girls could herd a few calves and goats. Women were entrusted with cooking, cultivation, weeding, fetching water, looking for vegetables and a host of other domestic chores. They were helped with cultivation by their children. The building and thatching of houses was done by men, while women mudded the floors and plastered the walls [Omenge, Machani, Ngare, Matwere, Onchagwa, O.I., 1989].

This allocation of labour tasks was, however, fluid. It was not rigidly done along sex and age lines, and there were overlaps in accordance with the physical strenousness of the particular task. In the words of Barnes [1976:78]:

the designated roles for men in agriculture were not rigidly maintained; when necessary they might perform or assist in activities normally ascribed to women. Men would especially
undertake more tasks on their own plots (emonga) which they cultivated for personal profit."

Furthermore, young men who went hunting could, whether successful or not, collect vegetables like rinagu and chinsaga, and fruits which were highly valued. At the cattle villages the young men collected their own firewood. Cultivation was equally done by both sexes and, according to one informant, old men sometimes assisted the women in weeding [Machani, O.I. 1989].

There were other forms of cooperative labour starting from the family unit itself to the entire village or clan. Within the homestead, there existed intra-household labour exchange. While it was common for each wife to cultivate the field with the help of her own children, wives of one husband could join hands to cultivate one another’s fields in turns; this form of group labour was called ekebosano.

Among the inter-household forms of group labour the most common were egesangio and risaga. Egesangio was a voluntary routine working party of women or young girls who helped one another in morning tasks, such as weeding, on a strictly rotational basis. When they exchanged labour in the afternoon, it was called ekebosano or ekiamarogoba. This working party was seasonally formed and was subject to dissolution.
after the need for its formation was over [Ondonga, Matwere (Mrs.) O.I., 1989].

**Risaga**, on the other hand, was the pooling together of labour from specific households within a village or clan to help with tasks that required colossal labour input, including clearing, cultivation or harvesting. According to Mayer [1950:6], it was a semi-permanent group territorially based and, like other Gusii institutions, lacked formal authority or leadership.

A person needing work to be done notified members of the group who would arrange to provide their concerted labour (Barnes, 1976:78). After completing their task, they would be rewarded with a beer party, although the amount of beer given was not related to the size of the task performed nor the hours spent working. A wealthy household might call work groups more frequently than others since it could afford to provide the necessary rewards, but the right existed equally for the poorer homesteads. At times, only the women were called to work, but their husbands would come to enjoy the beer.

**Ekerisio** was a cooperative herding arrangement in which livestock was pooled for herding. It was
common mainly in the cattle villages where young men took turns in herding and guarding animals in the boma.

The Gusii could also come together to undertake a venture of common good to all the participants. For example, a type of group farm called endemero was initially jointly reclaimed from the bush by a group of cultivators who did the clearing and preparation of land together. They would then share out the fields and work on their strips individually. According to Uchendu [1974:28], this system helped a young man whose parents were short of land to earn income by investing his labour; many a young man thus acquired livestock for payment of bridewealth.

Among the Gusii, then, there was no direct payment for labour contributed in many domestic activities. Labour was mainly compensated for in kind, for it was held that to pay for it meant that one had not been helped. However, a few specialised types of labour were actually paid for: the blacksmiths, for example, could be requested to make an anklet for a newly married maid and paid for as in normal exchange. Also, the Gusii used a kind of intertwined wooden door called ekiige which was bought from specialist craftsmen. Finally, thatching
of houses almost amounted to paid labour: this was a specialised job for which the thatcher was entertained with a lot of food and paid a goat or two at the completion of the task.

2:2:7. **Trade and Exchange**

Pre-colonial Gusii society was not a self sufficient entity. There was an ever increasing need to exchange surplus goods for those needed but not produced. What was produced was not only intended for domestic consumption; it also formed the basis of exchange within the community and with neighbours. Young men acquired animals through the sale of crops, and a complex pattern of trade and exchange developed around food availability. It is therefore inaccurate to term societies such as the Gusii one as having been subsistent: as Hopkins [1973:5] notes generally, "... exchange and subsistence activities were ... integrated".

It appears that before colonialism, there was a group of people among the Gusii who specialised in production for exchange, though, strictly speaking, they combined this with cultivation for domestic consumption. Levine [1979:5] calls them "part-time specialists" who engaged in iron-making, hide preparation, medicinal treatment and so on.
Black-smiths combined their trade with agriculture. One informant remarked that the blacksmiths who relied on their trade full-time often suffered from food shortages [Mongare, O.I., 1988]. As Sherriff [1985:8] generalizes about Kenya: "the smiths ... were not full-time craftsmen but depended to some extent also on their own cultivation or cattle."

The origins of iron smelting among the Gusii has not been precisely established; suffice it to say that iron-making in this part of Africa dates back to the period of the Iron-Age, and was historically associated with the Bantu linguistic family to which the Gusii belong.

It seems that knowledge of iron smelting was confined to some clans (e.g. Abagirango and Abagetutu) and families, and usually it was hereditary. For example, while the Abagirango were generally recognized as good blacksmiths and iron smelters, only a few people among them had that knowledge, notable among whom was Kibegwa of Siamani and Onyancha of Bogichora, who both lived in the second half of the last century. Both were from Sironga, an area well known for iron-smelting in the pre-colonial period [Mongare, O.I; 1988].
According to one informant [Mongare, O.I;1988], the iron smelters were not necessarily blacksmiths. For example, Kibegwa had a device called *enyongo* for smelting iron from the red iron-rich soil which was washed and dried. These essential tasks included cutting and ferrying firewood, digging and transporting the iron-rich soil, often from far areas. The material had to be washed severally to remove impurities and then dried. Then the iron smelter would arrange the firewood and the soil in *enyongo*, light the fire, and fan it with a special device for several hours. The fanning device, known as *omouto*, had a pipe directed to the fire at *enyongo*. At the other end of the pipe, a soft skin was tied to a long stick which had to be lifted and lowered constantly. Lifting of the bulging skin meant creating more space for air accumulation, while lowering meant pushing out the air through the pipe to fan the fire. After obtaining the iron, it was then taken to the blacksmith for the making of iron implements, including hoes, pangas, arrow heads, axes, anklets and bracelets.

All iron smelting tasks were labour intensive and tedious, and those involved had to be fed. Consequently, it is claimed that the iron smelters
were not engaged full-time [Mongare, O.I: 1988]. Occasionally, they could loan a person their enyongo and offer their expertise for a reward, usually a cow. But the interested person had to meet all labour and food requirements in order to get the iron.

The items made by the blacksmiths were exchanged not only internally, but also with the neighbours. One small hoe was exchanged for two goats, while a big one fetched even two cows in Luoland; one spear was exchanged for two goats in the same place. The iron smelters and blacksmiths were among the richest people in Gusiland.

The Gusii and the Luo depended on each other economically for a number of reasons [see Ochieng', 1974b: 61-62]. The Luo lived in a drier country which favoured extensive pastoralism, while the Gusii highlands were wet and fertile and suitable for extensive cultivation. Although the Luo were also cultivators, very often their country was hit by drought and prolonged famines: during these periods they heavily depended on the Gusii for grains such as fingermillet. The Gusii proudly refer to their country as the granary of the Luo, a claim which the neighbouring Luo do not deny.
Other items of trade which the Gusii exported to Luo land in the nineteenth century included razors, arrow heads, soapstone for decorations, leopard skins for ceremonial dressing, baboon skin for Luo magicians and doctors, and so on.

For all these items the Gusii got livestock which they needed because, by the time they settled in the highlands, they had lost most of their cattle due to unfavourable climatic conditions and Kipsigis and Maasai raids. Besides, their wet and hilly country did not favour extensive pastoralism. Yet for their dowry and the purchase of items like hoes, arrow-heads, knives and spears, the Gusii had to pay in cattle or goats. Hence they always insisted that most of their commodities be exchanged with livestock.

The Gusii also relied on the Luo for salt licks (called ebara), hides, fish, pots, drums, baskets, beautifully decorated head-dresses of different types, poison, and so on [Ochieng' 1974b:62; Omenge, Onchoke, Machani, O.I; 1989].

From the Maasai the Gusii acquired the 'coveted' large Maasai spears and arrowheads; in exchange, the Gusii gave the Maasai fingermillet and, paradoxically, cattle which the Maasai required. It
appears that the Gusii acted as middlemen, getting cattle from the Luo and selling them to the Maasai, but this was limited to the need of various items and was not a way of making profit.

The Gusii sold finger millet to the Kipsigis [Mwanzi, 1977:85] and in return received cattle, milk and vegetables. However, trade with the Kipsigis was very limited, and it tended to be confined to periods of famines when peace was usually made to facilitate exchange.

One notable feature of pre-colonial Gusii land was the absence of trading centres. In his analysis of markets in Bunyoro-Kitara, Uzoigwe [1976:25] gives three characteristics of a market. First, it must have a defined physical site, either enclosed or open, where buyers and sellers meet to transact business face to face. Second, such a gathering must be authorized by those who hold political power within the polity. Third, the periodicity of such gathering must be pre-determined. He advances two major hypotheses relating to the rise of market institutions. The first is that markets arise naturally among communities in response to the needs of economic exchange. The second is that markets can only arise as a result of external stimuli, especially long-distance trade [Uzoigwe 1976:26].
In line with the first hypothesis, Wright [1979:184], although not referring to Uzoigwe, shows that the Luo and Gusii shared much and "... between 1870 and 1900, they fixed markets where all groups exchanged the products of different environments." Ochieng' [1976a:104] uses the second hypothesis to prove the existence of trading markets in Gusii land. He asserts that although no Europeans had visited the Gusii people in the 19th Century, they had been visited occasionally by Arab and Swahili adventurers and traders a few years before the arrival of the British. The latter penetrated the highlands and had set up a trading centre at Nyaura in Nyaribari, where local people exchanged ivory and hides for beads and wires which the traders brought with them. However, such visits seem to have been very rare, and traditions connected with them are not widespread among the Gusii.

Lacking a centralized political system, and having recently settled on the highlands, the Gusii had not evolved easily recognisable market institutions, though trade and exchange existed. Even if we regard a small and authorized gathering of hawkers and vendors as constituting a market, the site and periodicity conditions have to be satisfied.
Gusii women and children could travel with their trade items to Luo villages and vice versa [Ochieng' 1974a:215]. This trade continued without interruption in situations of war or peace and it was a taboo both among the Gusii and the Luo to assault women of either side in any manner. Likewise, it was considered wrong to assault any visitor approaching a homestead in broad daylight. Hence, trade continued even during periods of hostility. But other than in such periods of hostility, when women engaged in trade more than men, there was no group of people specialised in trade and exchange of items; whoever was in need of some article looked for it [Mongare O.I; 1988].
CHAPTER THREE

3:0. AGRICULTURAL CHANGE IN THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD TO c. 1919

3:1. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL RULE

By the Anglo-German Treaty of 1890, the respective 'spheres of influence' of Britain and Germany in East Africa were defined. A boundary was drawn which skirted the northern slopes of Kilimanjaro and ran thence in a straight line to a point where the first parallel of south latitude intersected the eastern shore of Lake Victoria. It only remained for the two scrambling powers to convert this 'influence' into practical power.

From the beginning, relations between the two powers were unfriendly. As regards the area of our study, for instance, the British accused the Germans of interfering in 'native' politics beyond the boundaries defined. As Northcote was to write later: "there was scarcely a community within fifty miles" of the border which had not felt the hard hand of German punitive expedition" (see Gordon, 1946:33). One such area cited by the British was Kadem in South Kavirondo where the Germans nominated a chief.

It was with the intention of protecting these areas and establishing effective rule there that in August 1903, the British sent Boughton-Knight to
Karungu on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria with the designation of Acting District Commissioner. It was also patently of prime importance to confirm the paper boundary of 1890 on the ground. This was accomplished when in 1904 H.M. Horne, who had become District Commissioner (D.C.) on the death of Boughton-Knight, made a survey of the Anglo-German border (Gordon, 1946:34).

The Gusii reaction to the landing at Karungu was a mixed one. For the smaller and weaker clans, for example, Ombati's Muksero clan and Nyamu's Majoge clan, favourable opportunities appear to have been recognised. In 1904, according to Ochieng' [1974a:225], the bigger Kitutu clan attacked Muksero, who they accused of interfering with their (Kitutu's) trade with the Luo. The Muksero clan was scattered, and Ombati lost no time in appealing to the British for assistance against the Kitutu. Nyamu of Majoge is also said to have visited Karungu in 1904 because of what Ochieng' [1974a:225] calls "civil strife" within his clan.

The rest of the Gusii clans did not see the need of soliciting the British help since they were secure and "independent" anyway. It is even claimed that they intensified cattle raids deep into the territory of the Luo, a people supposedly protected by the
British. To actually prove their claim of protecting the Luo, the latter set out to subdue the Gusii. Accordingly, in September 1905, a patrol under Captian Jenkins, with Northcote as political officer, entered Gusii country with the objective of securing 400 heads of cattle as "compensation" for the Luo losses. Another 400 head of cattle were taken in reprisal for the death of a sergeant (Gordon 1946:34). For some time after this episode there was no trouble until 1907 when the British decided to open a permanent station in Gusii country for the residence of Northcote as Assistant D.C. The present-day Kisii town arose from this station.

In the same year, the Gusii had started to pay taxes and although they looked quiescent, were resentful of the colonial order. This was particularly the case among the Kitutu who had suffered in the 1905 "punitive expedition". The resentment was further flamed by Moraa, a Gusii prophetess who promised that the death of the Assistant D.C. would bring eternal freedom. The embittered men found a hero in Otenyo, who hurled a spear at, and wounded, Northcote during the latter's safari in Kitutu. Retribution was speedy and drastic. Within twelve days a force under Colonel Mackay arrived on the scene. This time over 7,000
head of cattle were seized and the Gusii counted about 200 dead (Gordon, 1946:35). Nyasani terms the "punitive expedition" a senseless and unwanton destruction of life and property (Nyasani, 1984:6-8) and gives a higher figure of 10,000 head of cattle and an equal number of sheep and goats.

In July of the same year the advantage of Kisii as a station was recognised, and the headquarters of the district were moved there from Karungu, with Northcote as the D.C. The Gusii watched the events helplessly and whatever resentment and little fighting energy was left was eventually drained in the 1914 "small resistance", as will be seen later. The inevitable had occurred: the Gusii were a subject people of the British and no longer independent.

3:2. Agriculture: The Experimental Years

The penetration of colonial capitalism threw the Gusii pre-colonial economy into disequilibrium. With the monetization of the rural area, the Gusii found themselves subject to an economy over which they had little control. The farmers started producing surplus for sale in order to pay taxes, but the prices of the produce were determined by the colonialists. Gradually the Gusii farmers or cultivators were transformed into peasants and commodity producers.
According to Anyang' Nyongo [1981b:23], peasant societies have certain features in common. First, the majority of peasants are rural dwellers; secondly, they produce surplus which, through various mechanisms, is transferred to dominant classes in a particular social formation; thirdly, peasant producers of surplus have little control over the utilization of this surplus; and, finally, many peasant societies tend to depend on non-peasants for goods and services for which they often pay dearly. The provision of these goods and services is quite often a mechanism for ferreting surplus out of peasant societies [see Wolf, 1966:4].

In this connexion, Atieno-Odhiambo [1974:94] made the observation that the peasantry as a social category in Kenya is a product of the colonial situation. In the Gusii case, the creation of the peasantry was set in motion with the implantation of the colonial system. The salient point to be made here is that the Gusii suffered increasing loss of control over the disposal of surplus to the Europeans and Indians.

3:2:1. **Land**

Apparently, no land alienation took place in Gusiland except for a small coffee plantation
near Kisii town owned by a European by 1931. However, the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 had declared all African "unoccupied" land as Crown Land. This affected the 'buffer zone' that existed between the Gusii and Kipsigis and, after 1907, it was given to the Sotik settlers for tea growing and came to be known as the Sotik Settlement Area.

By 1914, not much change had taken place in terms of land utilization in GusiiLand. There was still plenty of land, especially in the highlands which were continually being occupied. The boundaries of the "native reserve" created by the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 almost corresponded to the present ones of Kisii District, except for the addition in 1961 of 18,000 acres of land until then under the Sotik settlers. Initially, the creation of the "native reserve" does not seem to have caused any overall pressure on land and even up to the 1920's and 1930s the Gusii were still spreading towards the highlands [Uchendu, 1975:47]. The rights of the individual over land extended over that area which he could effectively till within a period of about three years, while those of the village and clan were governed by the proportion of population to the space available [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1].
Whilst the British recognized that land disputes were common, they changed the procedure for settling them in the case of a few crowded villages. The D.C. reported in 1909 that the tillable area available, as opposed to the total area, was somewhat "limited" and there were occasional quarrels over the right to cultivate [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1]. Some villages were crowded and tillable land limited due to the unwillingness of some members to move out of the village, either because of their inability to clear more land or fear to move into new areas where they could not guarantee their own security. In 1911, in the face of the increasing number of land disputes, the government transferred the responsibility for solving land disputes from the local council of elders to the newly formed Native Courts which, additionally, were charged with the responsibility of solving other minor social and civil cases.

3:2:2. **Crop Production**

In this early period the indigenous crops still dominated and the new crops introduced had not yet become firmly established. Overall, the Gusii were forced by colonial conditions to start growing crops for sale over and above the level of pre-colonial production. They were gradually introduced into the
money economy and found themselves producing for subsistence and, increasingly, for sale (see Ochieng' 1974b:86). Consequently, the precolonial practice of selling the surplus was superseded by conscious production of surplus for sale, and the emergence of a Gusii peasantry was gradually taking place.

By 1908, the Gusii were being praised by the administration as extremely industrious and excellent cultivators [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1]. Wimbi still constituted the main commodity of exchange with the Luo who were said to "look upon the Gusii as a reserve store for food" and to "annually dispose of many thousands of sheep and goats for grain" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1]. The administration, however, intended to discredit such indigenous crops as wimbi and encourage the Gusii to grow exportable crops, particularly maize. According to Wolff [1974:71], one of the imperial goals in the protectorate included "producing those commodities whose availability for import into Britain would lessen or remove what British businessmen and authorities deemed a dangerous dependence on foreign sources of supply". Wimbi was no such a commodity, and there was an element of administrative propaganda against the crop as is conveyed by the Kisii D.C. who in 1908
asserted that wimbi was "a poor and unsatisfactory crop" which it was hoped to replace with "a good class of maize" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1].

It has already been shown that maize cultivation in Gusiiland predated colonial rule. The exotic yellow flint variety which was introduced in 1910 seems to have replaced what the Gusii regarded as their indigenous maize. Unlike some other Kenyan peoples\(^1\), the Gusii readily accepted the exotic maize introduced by the colonialists; this apparent receptivity probably resulted from the fact that the Gusii already had their own indigenous variety and were able at an early period to appreciate that the new maize had a higher yield than their own crop [Mongare, O.I. 1988]. Of course, there was an element of administrative encouragement to grow maize and feed the settlers' workers. Anyhow, from this early period, maize and wimbi became the dominant crops grown for subsistence purposes and as sources of cash income.

It should be noted that the cultivation of both crops in Gusiiland was now becoming more extensive than in previous years. This was due to the

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\(^1\) Various African communities resisted the introduction of maize, for the Kikuyu see F.M., Muchoki [1988:134], and for the Pokot see Bowles [1979:200].
realization that there was a ready market for their produce. Formerly the Gusii relied on the prospect of shortages among the Luo (which seem to have been a yearly occurrence) for the sale of their surplus food; by this time, however, this did not seem to relieve the Gusii of their surplus to any great extent. In 1911, it was noted, the Gusii were less rich in livestock, but relied more on cultivation and produced excellent crops of grain [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1]. Though figures for export in this period are not available, the whole district of South Kavirondo (comprising of Kisii, Luo and Kuria locations) exported 15.5 tons of wimbi and 55 tons of maize in 1913-14 [KNA/DC/KSI/I/1].

What, then, was the rationale of emphasizing maize production at the expense of wimbi? First, there was need for planters and settlers in the colony to feed their workers. Secondly, maize was easier and cheaper to grow since, despite its low nutritive value in comparison to indigenous crops like sorghum and millet, it provided a greater quantity of food and the necessary energy that was ideal for the vast numbers of workers. Through its provision the workers could feel more satisfied and well fed, so that they did their work with
cheerfulness and vivacity [Bowles, 1979:198-202]. Maize was a tool for the penetration of capitalism in the rural areas because it was a more saleable crop. In the words of B.D. Bowles: "Maize was introduced in order to assist a change in the mode of production in Kenya as a whole to a capitalist mode" [Bowles, 1979:202].

Colonial officials regarded capitalism as progress and hence saw the cultivation of maize as progressive. The African peasants were in fact forced to grow this crop due to its available market and, in Gusii and, it was grown largely for export (Ibid). The impressive figures for maize production therefore show the incorporation of the Gusii peasants into the capitalist system and their exploitation through the mechanism of unequal exchange. The effect of extensive cultivation of maize will be analysed later.

The Gusii case confirms Wolff's [1974] contention that "the immediate goal of finding exportables to relieve the British treasury of the financial burden imposed by the protectorate in its early years prompted several different choices on just what to produce" [1974:71]. Efforts were made to find exportables other than maize from Gusii and,
and the government officials carried out some isolated experiments. So as to induce the Gusii to grow crops like groundnuts, linseed, simsim, beans, wheat, rice and oats, seeds were at first distributed freely. However, as soon as their economic value had been appreciated by the Gusii they were sold [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1].

In 1908, the administration started conducting experiments with mountain rice, wheat and oats. A year later mountain rice and oats were declared a failure, but experimentation with the other crops was continued. The greatest difficulty was to discover which plants would suit each particular area as there was variation in rainfall, temperature and general climatic conditions.

Groundnuts were planted in 1908 and by 1910 they were thought to be doing quite well [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1910]. They were to be found in the lowlands, but the principal growers remained the Luo.

Beans of all kinds did extremely well, and were planted any time from April onwards. In 1909, "the Gusii grew large quantities of beans, but they were almost unsaleable and fetched less than a rupee a load "[KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909].

Wheat had first been experimented with in 1908, and it soon became an established fact that it could
thrive in Gusiiland. Its major problem, however, was market. When the internal market was exhausted, it fetched less than one rupee a load, and this price was not sufficiently remunerative to make it worthwhile for the Gusii to produce it mainly for export. Early in 1914, however, the growing of wheat by the Gusii in preference to linseed was encouraged because Gethin, an Anglo-Irish entrepreneur and trader in the district, had started an engine-driven flour mill in Kisii Township. Several tons of wheat were sold to Gethin by the Gusii in February of the same year, and it was hoped that production would be largely increased in the future. As the DC put it:

"...there seems no reason why Uganda and German ports should not be supplied with Kisii grown flour since Mr. Gethin will be able to supply it at about half the Nairobi price."

[KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1914]

The Kitutu area had been earmarked for linseed production and, to encourage its growth, free seeds were distributed. There was another experimental plot at the Kisii station, and by the end of 1911 a certain amount was taken in for sale at the station [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1911]. Production was still in its infancy by 1913, although it was projected to increase; however, by 1914, linseed production was abandoned in favour of wheat due to the former's poor price [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1914].
Indian shopkeepers had settled in Kisii immediately the township was established in 1907. They bought agricultural produce and distributed or sold it back to the Gusii as seeds on behalf of the government. This included simsim, already in production by 1909 and mainly grown in South Mugirango. By 1912, Gusii peasants on the border of Luoland had started growing the crop and large quantities of it were being sold. In all, 965 tons of simsim was produced in the district in 1914 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1914]. Irish potatoes, introduced earlier in 1910, suffered from a disease killing the stacks before the tubes could mature and was consequently abandoned.

In spite of all these experimental crops, it should be noted that wimbi, maize and sorghum remained Gusiiiland’s most important agricultural exports. Through their cultivation the Gusii were gradually incorporated into the colonial capitalist system. The control of the market, the determination of crop prices and the transportation of produce were all controlled by merchant capital dominated by the Indian shopkeepers. Gusii labour was exploited through the cultivation of the crops which fetched low prices, and the Gusii had to expand acreage with
the consequent ecological degradation (about which more later).

An agricultural school was inaugurated at Kisii at the beginning of 1914 with Wiley, the Agricultural Instructor, in charge. Some 30 bullocks were borrowed from chiefs and headmen, and most of these were trained to plough. Large areas of land in the vicinity of the school were ploughed and planted with maize and trees under an afforestation scheme which had been launched in 1909. Although the Gusii were invited to view the work in progress and some pupils were employed for a time [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909], they did not take to the idea easily and the D.C. noted in 1909:

"...the inveterate and unreasoning prejudice on the part of the natives to make use of their oxen in this way militated against the success of the avowed object of the Agricultural School." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909]

This, and many other ways of teaching the Gusii improved agricultural methods, were aimed at making them good commodity producers. Very soon the D.C. was able to report:

"...there were forty bullock carts which were regularly making the journey to Homa-Bay, groaning under the loads of maize, simsim and groundnuts from African gardens." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/8]
Livestock herding was one sector of the Gusii economy that was most immediately affected by the imposition of colonial rule. In September 1905 a British patrol was sent on a punitive expedition against the Gusii who were alleged to have frequently stolen Luo cattle, and a total of 400 head of cattle were confiscated. After the Gusii ambushed the patrol and killed a sergeant, the patrol retaliated by taking 400 more head of cattle [Gordon, 1946:34].

Surprisingly enough expeditions were also sent to areas which had supposedly signed "peace treaties" with the British. For example, in 1904, E.F. Webster - later Assistant D.C. at Karungu - visited North Mugirango area and made a "peace treaty" with 'chief' Ndubi of the area [Ochieng, 1974a:225]. The Gusii called such a treaty enchabo because it entailed the alternative licking of one another's blood, signalling mutual co-existence. Yet, during the 1908 revolt, an expedition was unleashed upon North Mugirango purely aimed at collecting cattle, an event that one informant clearly recalled [Omenge, O.I. 1989].

The objectives of such expeditions are easy to tell. Politically, the colonialists wanted to assert
the 'rule of law'. Militarily, they wanted to show their prowess. But above all, they aimed at disrupting the Gusii economy by depleting livestock in order to force them to enter the money economy. The Gusii had to offer their labour for the return of their captured cattle or in order to be able to buy more cattle. Yet the D.C. hypocritically wrote about the situation thus:

"the loss of their stock cannot be held to affect them seriously, as they in no way rely upon them as a means of livelihood, as do the Lumbwa (Kipsigis) and Maasai and to a general extent the Kavirondo (Luo). Probably not more than 20% of the Kitutu stock was captured altogether." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909]

The British also turned to destroying the cattle bomas - ebisarate - where young men stayed to graze and guard animals against enemies. The young men were regarded as the worst offenders against the British, treasonable and war-like [Gordon, 1946:35-36]. The blow to the ebisarate came with the imposition of hut tax in 1907, when all the huts in the boma were counted and had to be paid for. Scarcity of money, coupled with conscription into forced labour in default of payment, forced the Gusii to pull down the huts in the bomas and, eventually, all the village bomas were dismantled. In this regard, in 1909, the D.C. wrote:
"In my report of last year, I mentioned that I considered it important that the cattle villages should be broken up and the young men who inhabit them forced to return to their parents' villages until married. This has to a great extent come about automatically through my having them counted for hut tax and informing the natives that every hut in a cattle village must pay." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909]

By 1911, the D.C. was able to report that "the Kisii Kisarati(sic) or cattle villages are now a thing of the past" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1911].

The Gusii sold some of their animals in order to get money to pay taxes. Basically, the money with which they paid tax was acquired through sale of agricultural produce and animals, and-as we shall see later-by engaging in labour outside and inside the district. The selling of animals, the chief source of Gusii wealth and power, it was hoped, would encourage the latter to engage in wage labour. By 1909 there was a large trade in cattle, with many hundreds having been sold by the Gusii in order to acquire rupees for the payment of tax [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909].

Cattle were also used in paying fines and settling disputes and they were confiscated from homes of tax defaulters and labour deserters as a form of punishment [Machani, O.I., 1989]. Similarly, they were taken for 'crimes' committed individually or collectively. For example, a collective
punishment on the Mwangichana clan of Kitutu was sanctioned by the authority in 1912 and a fine of ten head of cattle collected because of alleged stock theft [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1912].

A serious disease, gastro-enteritis, broke out in December 1909, and a quarantine was imposed that was to last to September 1910. Brandt of the Veterinary Department thought the disease may have spread from Kipsigis; however, some Gusii attributed its origin to cattle which were supposed to have come from the German territory [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1909]. Several thousand head of cattle died of the disease and owners of large herds in some instances reported a loss of over fifty per cent. Other serious diseases like East Coast fever (E.C.F.) and rinderpest were also reported before 1914 - less frequently, it is true, but with an equally large death toll in livestock.

The Gusii were often accused of cattle theft. In his report for the quarter ending 30th September 1910, the D.C. wrote that "there was a recrudescence of cattle theft by the Kisii..." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1910]. Similar accusations were made in 1912, the Kitutu being the culprits and the Luo the victims [Ibid. 1912]. In these instances
collective punishment was recommended as neither the thieves were discovered nor the stolen cattle recovered. Whether these thefts actually took place it is hard to know, but that livestock was a target for punishing all manner of alleged offences against the colonial order is already evident.

A number of Gusii invested their savings in cattle and a number accumulated wealth in form of livestock. Virtually all Gusii chiefs were reputed as having large herds of cattle and were associated with wealth and fame [Kibegwa, O.I. 1989]. It was common for some individuals to give their chief a cow or goat so that he would not enlist them for labour outside the district [van Zwanenberg, 1975:124], and to avoid the payment of hut tax. Some chiefs would pretend to be carrying out an order of the colonial administration, and confiscate animals and later turn them to their own use. Chief Agwata of West Mugirango and chief Ndubi of North Mugirango, though not extreme cases, are but two examples [Machani, O.I; 1989]. The practice was widespread enough to come to the notice of the D.C. R.W. Hemsted, who observed in 1908:

"...some chiefs were levying fines in the name of the Government but without reference thereto and with the object of enriching themselves only."

[KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1908]
Forced Labour

The contribution of the Gusii to the colonial labour market must be viewed in the context of the wider settler colonial economy. The Kenyan settlers were inadequately supplied with finance capital and wage labour and the colonial government, which was dominated by the imperial policy of self-sufficiency, was unable to provide more than a rudimentary infrastructure. Colonial capital accumulation was therefore based on the appropriation of surplus created by the cheap and lowly paid African labour [van Zwanenberg, 1975:xvi-xix].

There is no doubt that labour migration served to impoverish the rural community. African peasants were not totally dispossessed of land, and migrant worker’s families continued to feed themselves and often the migrant relatives, who were paid little wages, thus reducing the socially necessary wage in the capitalist accumulation. The withdrawal of migrant workers’ labour from domestic production was compensated for by the self-exploitation of their relatives who stayed at home [see Berry, 1984:77; Berg, 1965]. With no major exportable crops in their district, the Gusii were forced to rely increasingly on migrant labour for paying taxes, and
Gusiiland, like the rest of South Kavirondo district, soon found itself faced with the labour problem. The introduction of a cash economy led not only to the break-up of extended kinship groups, but to the decline of the forms of collective activity discussed in the last chapter (see pp 74-76 above). As with other African communities in Kenya, the Gusii were forced by the need to earn tax money and by colonial laws to offer their labour. Gusiiland was one of the labour exporting areas of the Nyanza region. The increasingly low wages that were paid necessitated the migrant workers' maintaining constant relations with the rural home.

As already noted, the earliest involvement of the Gusii in supplying labour was in 1908 when they had to offer communal labour on public works. But the numbers involved were small. In June 1909, some 50 Gusii men were employed in making easy gradient roads. However, even the few who enlisted, it was noted, "proved rather troublesome about turning out to work, and if left to themselves commence work at about 9 a.m. and leave at mid-day" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1908]. The Gusii also proved intractable as regards supplying porters and other labour outside the district.
It was thought that only a few Gusii "volunteered" to work before the war because of "a series of prosperous seasons, the increasing of wealth of the people owing to the production and sale of products and the 'high' prices obtainable for livestock" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1913]. At this time the Gusii only wanted to raise money for taxes and, once this limited objective was met through the sale of livestock and agricultural produce, manual labour, particularly away from their own country, did not attract the majority of the young men. By the beginning of the First World War, the Gusii had apparently not felt the need to undertake any task that took them out of their home area.

It is being argued here, then, that in the pre-war period, Gusii labour outside the district, including porterage, was extracted by force. The 300 Gusii enlisted to work for a contractor at Sultan Hamud in 1910 must be viewed from this perspective of forced labour, given the high rate of desertion (100 before leaving Gusiiland) [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1910].

Forced labour in Gusiiland, as in the rest of Kenya, was widespread before the First World War,

2 For an account of forced labour recruitment in Kenya as a whole see van Zwanenberg, 1975:126-166.
with the chiefs being central figures. In 1913, Gethin reported on forced labour in Kisii that:

"Labour was forced out by the chiefs for the new farms and government departments .... Chiefs were frequently handed out cases of whisky and brandy for so many recruits produced. On arrival at Kisii they were placed in a hut under strong guard and in the morning those who had not escaped were tied together and sent to Kisumu by road." [van Zwanenberg, 1975:111]

Having been thus inhumanly recruited, the future workers faced more mistreatment and they were often in a starving condition. The chiefs resorted to undesirable methods in maintaining the labour supply: they took sheep and goats from people who had refused to be commandeered for work; they could accept to be bribed with an animal by those who sought exemption from work, and so on.

Gusii fear of working outside the home area was not without cause - the perceived poor conditions of work being the main deterrent. For example, it was reported in 1913 that "eleven natives out of 80 or 90 from North Mugirango (Location No. 30) engaged by a fibre company, died and ... this will effectively deter the Kisii from going to work at distant places" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1913].

Those who were seized forcibly worked with the Sotik farmers; others in the Maasai Reserve, Muhoroni, Kisumu and so on. Very few, if any, people
volunteered for such work. The contention that most workers were recruited by force is supported by the D.C's assertion in 1913 that "very few actual volunteers" engaged to work in the Sotik farms where, in the view of the administration, "wages paid were fair" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1913].

April, May and June were probably the best months for the labour recruiters to look for men in this region. By this time the heavy work in the field had been done, and it was thought that the poor would be in want of money for paying hut tax. Most of the registered workers were employed to do domestic work and some as touts engaged by the local traders to go out into the district to seek customers.

In this early period, the Gusii, like other communities in Kenya, employed a number of tactics to resist or evade paying taxes and being taken out for work. They went into hiding until the tax collectors left the village. Some used the tax receipts of those who had paid since the tax collectors did not know each one of them. Sometimes, they bribed the hut counters to have their names omitted from the register. And they could use children's names, and later apply for exemption for being under age [cf. van Zwanenberg, 1975: chapter five].
3:2:5. Trade and Exchange

With the coming of colonialism came the Indian and Goan traders who mainly represented merchant capital. Most notable in opening interior enterprises was Allidina Visram, who had built up an extensive East Africa-wide business network at the beginning of this century. Visram's firm invested extensively in plots of land in almost every town or township in Kenya and Uganda, and his duka-based enterprises extended to Kisii. By 1908, there were two Indian shops in Kisii doing a large trade in such items as hoes, axes, iron ware, and clothes, and these they bartered for Gusii produce [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1908]. The number of shops kept increasing, and by 1911 flourishing Indian bazaars had been established [Mangat, 1969:77-78]. In 1914, the D.C. reported five Indian shops in North Mugirango alone [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1914]. Trade in Kisii was thus practically in the hands of the Indians and, with the exception of the firm of Max Klein and Co. and Gethin, Europeans were entirely unrepresented.

The farm produce was bought at very low rates while the Gusii bought the imported goods expensively. The result was the extended cultivation
of produce for exchange with the highly priced goods. This unequal exchange ensured the inferior position of the Gusii in the trading system.

Initially there were some complaints from the Indian shopkeepers about the Gusii having little desire to utilize their savings in buying imported goods. Except for the purchase of well known articles such as iron-ware, beads, hoes, knives, and a certain amount of American cloth and blankets, the greater part of any money earned was allegedly hoarded for the purchase of livestock. However, by 1913, a very considerable impetus was given to trade by permitting Indian traders to accompany officers on safari with trade goods, which the Gusii were encouraged to buy [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1913]. The objective of this was twofold: to create demand on the part of the Gusii and thereby induce them to invest their money in imported goods instead of cattle and goats, and to supply them with new agricultural implements. This system, coupled with the policy of starting trading centres, indeed stimulated agricultural production and trade. In 1912, the D.C., Dobbs, remarked that "the Kisii are already far ahead of the Kavirondo (Luo) in the use of cash and understand and
appreciate the central coinage" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1912].

The new iron items like, hoes, axes and pangas were relatively cheaper than those locally produced (see Ochieng' 1974b:62). There was a strong campaign to sell hoes to the Gusii because it was believed that the hoes manufactured in Birmingham and sold at Rs 1/50 each enabled deeper tillage of the soil. At first the Gusii refused to spend their money on the hoes but, pressed with the need to produce surplus crops for sale, they appear to have soon realised the value of the new implements and started purchasing them. As already noted, these cost less than the ones locally produced. This was the beginning of a slow and gradual elimination of the Gusii indigenous hoe as both a tilling implement and a trading item. It was also the start of the elimination of Gusii iron-making technology.

Hides and skins became important articles of trade, though the Gusii used goat skin as cloth and sold none in the initial period. The trade in hides and skin boomed in the 1909-10 period during the out-break of gasteriod-enteritis, and in 1912 during the outbreak of rinderpest. However, because the Luo had more livestock than the Gusii they supplied more hides and skins than the latter [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1].
Ghee, though predominantly produced in Luoland, was also produced in Kisii. The Gusii started manufacturing and selling ghee by mid-1911 at the rate of 200 lbs a day. "The traders inform me that it is by far the best in the country and superior to that coming from Machakos," reported the D.C. Dobbs [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1911]. However, the volume of ghee production never surpassed that of Luoland.

Ploughs were being imported by 1913, initially for demonstration by Wiley at the Kisii Agricultural Scheme farm. Thirty head of cattle were brought in by the chiefs to be trained. This number was, however, not considered satisfactory, and the administration thought the chiefs and elders to be very averse to lending their cattle for this purpose [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1913]. Arrangements were made, mainly through 'barazas', to make the Gusii realise that it was to their advantage to have their sons taught ploughing (Ibid).

Bicycles were first imported in 1914 and about 40 of these were sold, mainly to Tribal Retainers and sons of the chiefs and headmen. The use of bicycles was made possible by the rapidly improving roads [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1/1914].
3:3. The First World War and the Famine of 1919

With the declaration of war in August 1914 the D.C. put into effect a scheme for the security of the district by commencing patrols along the Anglo-German border. Early in September a German force entered British territory in the neighbourhood of Isebania. Caught unawares, the D.C. and his police withdrew, and the Germans entered the station at dawn on the 11th without any resistance.

With reinforcements, the British returned to rescue the station. After an exchange of fire lasting the whole day, neither side made any appreciable progress, and at dusk, unknown to the other, each withdrew [Gordon, 1946:41]. The following day, 13th September, the British force, which had taken up a defensive position a few miles north of Kisii, waited for the expected German advance. When this did not occur, it re-entered the town on the 14th September after being reinforced.

During the previous day when the town was unoccupied by either force, the Gusii had a chance to revolt, and they ransacked all government buildings, offices and homes. Nor was this all: the missions at Nyabururu, Nyanchwa and Asumbi, and the trading centres at Riana and Rangwe had suffered the same fate [Gordon, 1946:41].
What was behind this revolt? By this period the Gusii had already developed anti-British feelings as manifested in the cult of Mumbo. Ogot and Ochieng' [1972:149-171] have shown that the Gusii adopted the cult of Mumbo from the Luo and used it effectively to continue their struggle against the British up to about 1954. They have also shown that Wipper's [1977] interpretation of Mumboism as "nativistic, in that it rejected European customs and advocated a return to the old prophets and old ways" only obscures the nature of the cult. The militancy and incipient nationalism of the Mumbo cult was more important than the cultural and religious aspect.

According to the teachings of the Mumbo cult, the white man was destined to go and the African would be left alone. In addition to this, Sakawa, the renowned Gusii prophet, had prophesied that one day the whiteman would go back to his country.

The Gusii had embraced the prophecy of Sakawa and Mumboism and were relieved when, watching from the surrounding hills, they saw the forces withdraw to the north and south. They felt assured that the prophecy was fulfilled, and that the Europeans had gone forever. Their works, their offices and the missions must therefore be cast out; they were plundered, ransacked and burnt [Gordon, 1946:42].
For this the Gusii faced a punitive expedition in which 3,000 head of cattle were seized and many Gusii despatched to work outside the district. Thus came to an end the "small resistance" of 1914 [Ibid]. But the anti-British movement persisted and, although the movement supposedly died out in 1933, it lasted up to 1954 when it was proscribed by the government [Ogot and Ochieng', 1974:169].

Until 1916, when General Von Lettow-Vorbeck was driven from Northern Tanganyika, the Germans kept up a series of small raids along the boundary with South Kavirondo. In the same year, when the border locations passed back to the British administration, South Kavirondo's direct contact with the war may be said to have ended.

The effects of the war on the Gusii were manifold. Other than being sent for 'outside work' for their rebellious conduct, more workers were needed in the war against the Germans as Carrier Corps (CC). In the two years 1914-1916, 21,864 men were sent out to work within a period of 18 months—an average of 1,215 men per month for 18 consecutive months [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1916]. (See Table 3 below for the numbers involved in the war in relation to other types of labour.) In all, a total of 42,990 people
were recruited for labour between 1914 and 1918 from the district. Of course, it was not possible to mobilize all that labour without coercion. Consequently, the district witnessed the worst form of forced conscription never before known. Youths were rounded up during sports meetings which were now frequent; others were taken from their huts at night. The chiefs and headmen used all manner of force to produce the required labour under strict orders from the D.C.

The effects of such large numbers of able-bodied men being uprooted from their homes were soon evident. After suffering in the war, they returned to face the famine and pestilences of 1918-19. The war years were ones of gloom and despair, partly

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**TABLE: 3 Labour Recruitment during World War I**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Carrier Corps Labour (CC)</th>
<th>Other labour</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1914/15</td>
<td>8,915</td>
<td>5,055</td>
<td>13,972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915/16</td>
<td>6,822</td>
<td>1,070</td>
<td>7,892</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916/17</td>
<td>9,558</td>
<td>1,658</td>
<td>11,216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917/18</td>
<td>8,758</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>9,810</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source, KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, 1914-18.
because of the general upset of markets and partly due to the shortage of able-bodied labour. The land under cultivation decreased. Simsim production came to nought due to the closing of the markets in 1914-15 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1915], and wheat was not produced owing to the disturbed state of affairs among the Gusii [Ibid].

There was need for the Gusii to grow maize, but the result of the distribution of a ton of seed for planting was disappointing. Although the effort was to encourage the planting of at least 1/4 acre for every hut [Gordon, 1946:43] the dearth of labour rendered the scheme impracticable. Banana plants, onions and chillies were also freely distributed for experimental purposes, but drought brought such experiments to an end.

As a result of the war, trade was upset and restricted, and owing to the famine it was almost at a stand still during the 1918/19 year. Export figures for the three ports all show a decrease; Karungu dropped from 207 tons in 1913/14 to only 53 tons the following year; Homa Bay dropped from 1400 tons to only 456 tons; and Kendu Bay from 650 tons to 456 tons [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2].

The Gusii were impoverished, poor and hungry and agricultural produce fetched less money than in the
pre-war years. The price of cattle equally dropped. The prices of imported goods rose steadily and, to make matters worse, taxes were raised during the war. Because Gusii purchasing power fell, 75\% of the Indian shops had to close down temporarily. Trade in foodstuffs ceased almost entirely. Only a few Gusii could afford to pay 4 rupees for a blanket which before the war had cost less than 1 rupee [Gordon, 1946:43]. The sale of bicycles, which had been stepped up in 1915, dropped drastically.

Not much information is available about livestock in the annual reports of this period. However, it is evident that a large number of animals were confiscated on various pretexts. Many informants attested to the fact that a lot of cattle were lost during the war. As already noted, 3,000 head of cattle were seized as punishment during the 1914 revolt. In 1916/17 year alone the D.C. Hemmant estimated that 5,200 head of cattle and 1200 sheep and goats were sold out of the district [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1917]. No figures are available for those sold within the district, yet there was a number of soldiers and Carrier Corps in the district to be fed mainly on local beef. Equally, there were frequent outbreaks of rinderpest. The drought that
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>1912/13</th>
<th>1913/14</th>
<th>1914/15</th>
<th>1915/16</th>
<th>1916/17</th>
<th>1917/18</th>
<th>1919/20</th>
<th>1920/21</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanjare</td>
<td>9117</td>
<td>9660</td>
<td>10374</td>
<td>10800</td>
<td>18460</td>
<td>18365</td>
<td>21870</td>
<td>33728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyaribari</td>
<td>4833</td>
<td>5016</td>
<td>5697</td>
<td>6072</td>
<td>10075</td>
<td>10315</td>
<td>12370</td>
<td>20560</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muksero</td>
<td>2223</td>
<td>2634</td>
<td>2793</td>
<td>2997</td>
<td>5045</td>
<td>5070</td>
<td>5935</td>
<td>9096</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Mugirango</td>
<td>6762</td>
<td>6945</td>
<td>7674</td>
<td>7884</td>
<td>14050</td>
<td>14265</td>
<td>15970</td>
<td>26208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Mugirango</td>
<td>9270</td>
<td>11502</td>
<td>12393</td>
<td>13689</td>
<td>24085</td>
<td>24690</td>
<td>28005</td>
<td>46408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitutu</td>
<td>21720</td>
<td>22941</td>
<td>24669</td>
<td>26961</td>
<td>4535</td>
<td>45635</td>
<td>53670</td>
<td>83664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Majoge</td>
<td>6135</td>
<td>6459</td>
<td>7173</td>
<td>7800</td>
<td>1378</td>
<td>13930</td>
<td>16090</td>
<td>26160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bassi</td>
<td>4872</td>
<td>5085</td>
<td>5715</td>
<td>6636</td>
<td>11095</td>
<td>10745</td>
<td>13005</td>
<td>21136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>64935</td>
<td>70242</td>
<td>76488</td>
<td>82839</td>
<td>14193</td>
<td>143015</td>
<td>166915</td>
<td>266950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1-2, 1912-1921
followed almost depleted livestock both as a source of food and in exchange for food.

The number of animals sold during the war shows the amount of pressure put on the Gusii by taxes. Hut tax figures show a steady increase before, during and after the war (see Table 4 below). Both hut and poll tax, which stood at 3 rupees before the war, were hiked to 5 rupees in 1915 - an increase of 66.6%. In view of the fact that the markets for cash crops were interrupted at this time, the obvious inference is that money for paying taxes was acquired through the sale of livestock and from labour earnings.

In spite of all these problems, however, a few experiments were carried out on banana plants, onions, chillies and Irish potatoes. There was a large increase of chillies and onion production in 1915/16, and this may be explained by the necessity of finding the Rs 2/= additional tax required and low prices prevailing for agricultural produce [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1916]. The purchase of cloth and other articles of European make was increasing by 1917, only to be hampered by the following year's famine. Resistance to the training of oxen for the plough seems to have gradually waned, and by 1917
there were 12 ploughs in the district, with an additional 34 worth Rs 6,300/= brought the following year [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1918].

Famine and pestilence followed hard on the heels of the war. The 1918/19 famine, locally known as the famine of Kengere - apparently after the many towering church bells in the area, and possibly due to the missions' role in distributing famine relief-needs some mention. It has already been indicated that drought, or rain failure, was the cause of the famine. But there was a strong and active participation in its precipitation by the Mumboites who were tired of the problems of the war and wanted to arouse general resentment against the British. According to Ogot and Ochieng' [1972:169], "the year 1917 is traditionally remembered by the Gusii as the 'year of prophets'".

A great many Mumbo prophets rose to tell their credulous compatriots to keep their hoes indoors since wimbi could come by itself and fill their pots. The days of the European were said to be numbered, and taxes and other "burdensome jobs" could disappear with them.

They promised people food and told them not to cultivate. With no crops in the field, no food in
the granary, and the failure of rainfall, the Gusii suffered the worst famine remembered to date. According to one informant, the Mumboites were to blame:

"By 1917, there were 'Mumboites' like Obino, Intware, Nyakundi and Ogwora and his wife. They said that... food and cows without horns (Nyamogumo) will come from the river/lake. 'Leave your hoes, put them in the house and wimbi will come.' We did as the 'Mumboites' said. Where then is the food? Ho! By the time we started cultivating in 1918 ... famine was sweeping across the country. Those Mumboites are the ones who deceived people that food would come." [Onchoke, O.I., 1989]

In 1918, the British moved to check the influence of the Mumboites. Ogwora, his wife, and Ndigi - the three leading personalitis of the movement - were arrested and deported to Kismayu [Ogot and Ochieng' 1972:169]. Since the famine and pestilence were blamed on Mumboism, there was a sharp decline in the membership of the cult. Most people adopted "Sakawaism" in its place. Sakawa, as already noted, had fore-told the coming and the eventual voluntary departure of the whiteman. He warned against the use of force in driving the Europeans out. Most Gusii people came to believe that the repercussions of the 1908 and 1914 revolts were a punishment from Sakawa for their use of force. Hence
they took up "Sakawaism" and waited for his prophecy to come true.

Other than the drought and "Mumboism", the 1918/19 famine was a result of the effects of colonial capitalism. It illustrates how the Gusii pre-capitalist economy had been systematically destroyed. Gusii granaries that stored food for a hungry day disappeared with the monetization of the economy. The surplus food that had been stored as security against famine was now being sold to acquire tax money. The conscription of labour meant less food production. Maize could not be stored as long as wimbi, and yet it had virtually replaced wimbi as the staple food crop. The need for money essentially destroyed the Gusii pre-capitalist agricultural economy to the detriment of the Gusii. In other words, the 1918/19 famine is testimony of the extent to which colonial capitalism had underdeveloped the Gusii economy, destroying the various social and economic mechanisms as well as ecological reserves (including forests) formerly existing to reduce the impact of food shortages. Although the major factor contributing to the famine was the drought, it was also facilitated by the appearance of the 'Mumboites'. It may further be argued that the
underlying reason for its severity was colonial capitalism insofar as the Mumbo cult's emergence had been prompted by the need to resist and reverse the colonial order.

The adverse consequences of the colonial system went further. Having been hit hard by the famine, the Gusii became more prone to the influenza epidemic that swept through the reserve, "disorganising everything and causing the death of some five thousand natives" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1919]. The same year, 1919, is remembered among the Gusii as the year of a strange disease which ate the private parts of people (or the year of amaikainse). Apparently the disease was brought by the returning porters and Carrier Corps. In the words of the Medical Officer of Kisumu: "...now with the conclusion of hostilities many thousands of porters have carried the infection into districts previously healthy." (see van Zwanenberg, 1974:109)
CHAPTER FOUR

4:0. AGRICULTURAL CHANGE IN THE PERIOD c.1920-1945

4:1. General Overview

Before 1920, Gusii agriculture had expanded more as a consequence of Gusii initiative and response to the money market than as a result of outright government support. Further penetration of capitalism in the area was slowed by the two world depressions of the early twenties and early thirties, and the closing of markets and the scourge of locusts and drought which swept the district in 1930 and 1931. This aside, and despite half-hearted governmental support, there was an expansion of commodity production. For example, it was not until 1932 that a veterinary officer was posted to the district. Even then his effectiveness was limited, given the large size of the district.

During the depression of the early thirties, the government faced the challenge of restructuring African agriculture to supplement the badly affected settler production and increase state revenue [see Kanogo, 1986:1]. The posting of veterinary and agricultural officers to the district in the 1930s must therefore be seen from the perspective of the
government's increased intervention in expanding commodity production.

Before 1932, migrant labour outside the reserve, which a large number of adult males and boys had come to rely upon for the earning of money for their taxes, was unobtainable. Taxes were hardly paid and their collection became the full-time job of the administration [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3]. This uneventful period lasted up to 1932, after which the economy of the district slowly started to recover. During the war years commodity production so increased as to be termed "harvests of war" by the D.C. and expert on Gusii affairs, P.M. Gordon [1946:54].

4:2. The Years Before the Great Depression
4:2:1. Land

During the 1920s the Gusii spread further into the areas on the borders of Maasai and Kipsigis. This led to an increase in the incidence of border conflicts and cattle thefts. Consequently, a number of them were moved back from the Kipsigis border, and a buffer zone created in the Sotik area which was increasingly taken up by the white settlers for the planting of tea. This colonial policy of creating a buffer zone was in fact merely a rationalization for the alienation of the highlands for white settlement.
Owing to the steady increase in population, the land question was gradually assuming great importance. Though the indigenous system of land tenure had not changed to accommodate the permanent occupation of part of the clan land by anyone not originally vested with cultivation rights, locations were demanding to have their boundaries definitely fixed by 1928 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/20]. While in the highlands people could easily spread away from more populated villages, in the densely populated villages of the lowlands this was not possible. It was in these villages that land disputes and cases started increasing. According to the administration, land cases formed the bulk of Gusii litigation [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3]-a fact that made the administration brand the Gusii as a "people loving litigation" [Ibid]. The land cases were, in fact, the reflection of fundamental socio-economic changes later leading to land enclosures and sales. In other words, land had started acquiring market value.

4:2:2. **Crop Production**

Crop production recovered favourably from the drought of 1918/19, but its development was hampered by a number of factors. First, was the half-hearted
support from the government. According to van Zwanenberg, colonial policy during this time was aimed at the curtailment of the economic development of African production in order that settler production be stimulated [van Zwanenberg, 1972:223]. This policy was evident in Gusiiland as there was lack of a permanent agricultural officer. In the period of twelve years-1921-1933-an officer was stationed in the district for only two years. Experiments, therefore, largely depended on the particular ideas of the D.C. of the time, and the latter were often not experts in agricultural matters. Thus, wheat, Rhode Island cockerels, onions, cabbage and tomatoes were in turn taken up, experimented with, propagandised and dropped. The removal of the agricultural officer without a replacement in 1925 attests to the neglect of African farming by the colonial authority.

Unfortunately, weather conditions during this period also hampered the expansion of commodity production. In 1924 there was a partial failure of the long rains [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3], and the situation worsened in 1927 when, due to rain failure, many crops were almost completely ruined in some of the locations [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/1927]. As regards the food
crops the situation became so alarming that their export was prohibited. It appears that there were more frequent rain failures in the low lying areas of Kisii and in Luoland. These areas thus provided a ready market for the food crops grown in the Gusii Highlands, hence promoting the prosperity of the inhabitants of the latter, and causing regional differentiation between the lowlands and highlands.

Locust infestation in 1928 and 1931 led to food shortage and necessitated a change from grains to such root crops as sweet potatoes and cassava. The situation was made worse by the presence of a large number of Gusii who were streaming back into the district after losing or being unable to obtain work outside the district. Before this, these workers had spent sometime outside the district, and remitted a considerable sum of money for purchase of commodities within the district [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/1931].

In spite of the many experiments, Gusiiiland still relied on wimbi and maize as the main exportable crops, though most quantities were consumed locally during periods of famine and food shortage. Wheat could have been another suitable crop, but its production was hampered by low prices and lack of market, and only a small quantity (20
tons in 1924) was produced for Gethin's milling factory [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/1924].

The world depressions of the early 1920s and the early 1930s had a negative impact on the agricultural development of the district as the prices of imported produce dropped. During the depression of the early 1930s, there was a general reduction in the production of cash and food crops. Wage employment was not only scarce but wages paid were too low [Van Zwanenberg, 1972:219].

In spite of all these problems, the Gusii peasants had endeavoured to expand their production in the pre-depression years. There was expansion of commodity production and some effort was made by the colonial administration to encourage this - the attempt to improve maize seeds by starting a seed bulking farm near Kisii township being part of this effort. The result was poor, however, as the local farmers planted the newly introduced "hickory king maize" with local ones, allowing cross-pollination and the consequent deterioration in quality and production [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3].

Other attempts made to enhance commodity production included instruction on agricultural matters mainly carried out by means of barazas,
demonstration plots, and seed bulking shambas. On one occasion in 1921 a group of chiefs and headmen visited the government farm at Kibos for educational purposes [KNA/DC/1/2/1921].

4:2:3. Animal Husbandry

For the twelve years until 1932 no veterinary officers were posted to the district. Stock diseases were the main cause of cattle mortality, with the tsetse fly taking the higher toll especially in the lowlands. Quarantines were as common as the animal diseases, their aim being to control the diseases before they spread to settler stock [van Zwanenberg 1972:216]. One such quarantine was imposed in 1921-22 to control an outbreak of pleuropneumonia [KNA/DC/KSI/2/1922]. During these years, however, trade in livestock continued, some cattle being sold to traders in Kisumu and others exchanged with the neighbouring communities.

One aspect of the livestock industry which received some attention from the colonial officials was ghee production. The ghee industry, "hitherto run haphazardly and unhygienically", was placed on "a sound footing" through the medium of Kamba instructors who toured the district [Gordon,
Likewise, two model LNC dairies were set up in 1927 at Kisii township and Kitutu, and the Gusii started producing ghee locally. The dairies produced a total of 1,646 lbs of ghee and 2,044 lbs of butter, with ghee sales amounting to an estimated £10,000 a year by 1932 [KNA/DC/1/2/1932].

4:2:4. The Labour Question

Labour conditions underwent drastic change during these years. Many writers have shown that the household in Nyanza Province, whose inhabitants had started showing reliance on migrant labour, were further developed to become labour exporting households [Zeleza, 1987:23; van Zwanenberg, 1975; Stichter, 1982; etc]. In the early years of this period, most Gusii men were forced to work inside and outside the district.

Forced labour had been institutionalised for the whole colony by the Northey circular of October 1919. According to the circular, the administration was "enjoined to exert every possible lawful influence" to "encourage" the Africans to work outside their districts [Clayton and Savage, 1974:112; van Zwanenberg, 1976:164]. There was a strong reaction from the Colonial Office, and though the circular was modified by Lord Milner's 1920 Despatch, the duty of
the D.C., his officers, chiefs, headmen and private recruiters remained much the same [see Zeleza, 1987:7].

The practice of involving women and children in communal labour in Kenya had been enshrined in the 1912 Native Authority Ordinance which, in effect, amounted to forced labour for government purposes within the reserves. In spite of opposition from Africans and their sympathizers the practice became more widespread in the 1920s and early 1930s, especially whenever the spectre of labour shortage reared its dreaded head [Zeleza, 1987:6].

It was not until 1933 that the ordinance on the Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children was passed, specifically designed to curb the worst effects of forced female and child labour. However, as will be seen later, child labour did not cease in Kenya in general and Gusiiiland in particular. Osoro [1977:6] and arap Korir [1976:53] have documented widespread use of juvenile labour in the Kericho tea estates - mainly from Gusiiiland.

The methods used to lure people into labour varied. Most of the forced labour was ordered out by the chiefs and headmen under instruction from the D.C. The recruiting methods ranged from armed raids
to such devious ploys as holding women hostage in recruiting camps until they were substituted by their male relatives [Stichter, 1982:37-38]. Private recruiters often misrepresented themselves as government agents, and chiefs would take the D.C.'s 'requests' to provide labour as an order to forcibly seize parties of young men and despatch them as virtual prisoners to Kisumu.

The number of people "registering" for work kept increasing steadily as shown in Table 5 below. This table shows only those registered in Kisii - which does not represent the actual numbers of those who went out to work because the great majority of workers recruited in this district were registered in Kisumu or Kericho, and large numbers - of the Gusii especially - went out to work in neighbouring districts of their own accord and were not registered at all. The D.C.'s estimates for this category are also shown in the table.

Employment outside the reserve was now the only means a large number of people relied for the earning of money for tax. The transition from Gusii resistance to recruitment as labour in the colonial economy to their active seeking of wage employment outside the home district has been well explained by
Sharon Stichter. She contends that immediately after the war the Gusii still showed a "marked declination" to be harnessed to the labour market. The First World War and the immediate post-war years saw the spread of the cult of Mumbo as a last phase of

Table 5: **Labour Recruitment in South Nyanza District**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Outside the District</th>
<th>Inside the District</th>
<th>On their own accord. D.C.'s Estimates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1919/20</td>
<td>234</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920/21</td>
<td>3,148</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>6,837</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>5,421</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>2,397</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>1,294</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>4,010</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>8,494</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>&gt;8,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>6,710</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>7,910</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

1 The end of the financial year was changed from 31st March to 31st December and, so, 1922 had 21 months.
resistance to colonial rule, taxes and wage labour. But by the 1922 depression, with the reduction of the produce trade and continued tax and coercive pressure, the Gusii started going out to work in large numbers" [Stichter, 1982:58]. They went to the Magadi soda works which by 1925 were getting most of its labour from Kisii. The trend of outward labour migration continued into the late 1920s, when the nearby Kericho tea estates became an important new source of employment.

Tea is the most labour intensive of all crops grown, requiring very large numbers of workers all the year round; hence its success or failure rested upon the availability of an adequate labour supply. For this reason, the tea plantation companies employed a European officer stationed in Kisii, charged with the recruitment and forwarding of labour to the tea estates. arap Korir [1976, 1978] and Osoro [1977] confirm that the Gusii provided much of this needed labour in the Sotik and Kericho tea estates, some of it being juvenile labour.

As early as 1928 the African Highland Produce (AHP) Company could boast that "10,000 boys could be obtained from Kisii whenever required"

---

2 Detailed accounts of labour recruitment and retention in the tea estates have been provided by arap Korir [1976, 1978] and Osoro [1977].
[arap Korir, 1976:52]. This was the time when AHP was extending plantations near Kericho and drawing largely on the Kisii reserve for labour. The company apparently wanted to project a positive relationship to the recruits, and it wished for its emblem to be regarded with fairness and consideration [van Zwanenberg, 1975]. But arap Korir [1974] has shown that working conditions in the tea estates were far from being considerate and fair. Besides, the recruiting agents used chiefs, who in most cases resorted to force to extract labour. The future workers were bundled into vehicles and transported to Kericho and Sotik. It is these workers, many of them children at the time, who remember their recruitment to tea estates as being punctuated with force and mistreatment. Essentially, however, the number of people going out to work outside the district, forcibly or not, generally kept rising; and though only 1,294 were registered in 1925 the D.C's estimate of those going out of their own accord was more than 10,000. The point is that by this time Gusii households had developed into labour exporters.

The Gusii households, being units of production, consumption, and reproduction, were thus being
altered due to capitalism. Under the migrant labour system, men were drawn out or forced off the land, leaving behind their women to maintain production. The costs of reproducing, maintaining and sustaining the cheap labour force were therefore borne by this 'pre-capitalist' sector [Stichter 1982; Zeleza, 1987; Wolff, 1972]. As the tasks and roles performed by men were changed the workers' families remained at home, shouldering most of the burden of land cultivation. Besides, the women and children left behind suffered the inconveniences of forced labour in communal undertakings.

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

"the precapitalist mode of production was thus to be preserved, though not in its original form, but in a perverted form, as a reservoir of labour for the capitalist mode of production." [see arap Korir, 1976:49]
Household relations of production were also modified in varying ways - either in the direction of capitalist exchange or the intensified exploitation of "traditional" obligations in the service of the labour market. Young men’s family obligations such as hut-building and cultivation were weakened; and hired labour was sometimes substituted. While obligations to parents and extended kin were loosened, those to elders, chiefs and the estate were first intensified. Wives' obligations to the husband were likewise intensified, as they were pressed to take over more work on family land-holdings [Stichter, 1982:28].

That aside, migrant labour in Gusiiiland was checked during the depression of the early 1930s. The turning point was 1930, when there was a drop in the number of workers over the previous year - with 6,399 workers registered for work, compared to 7,910 in 1929. The figure further dropped to 1,236 workers in 1931 and was practically nil in 1932 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3]. The problem this time was not shortage of labour but the inability of the settlers to take more labour owing to the hard times brought on by the onset of the depression. As the D.C. noted in 1931: "in the past years the demand for Kisii
labour has been in excess of the supply but the position has been reversed during the year under review." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/1931] According to his estimates, the number of Gusii in employment outside the reserve had fallen from about 10,000 to 5,000.

Much of the uncontracted labour did not go to waste however; it turned into commodity production. In Kitutu and North Mugirango, for example, elders selected communal shambas to assist such laid-off workers raise crops [KNA/DC/1/3/1932]; in this manner the Gusii peasants were entrenching their position as commodity producers.

4:2:5. **Trade and Exchange Activities**

As a consequence of the famine of 1919 and the 1921 depression, trade was severely affected. 75% of the shops closed temporarily in 1919, prices of imported items soared, and by 1921 the Indian traders were near total insolvency [KNA/DC/KSI/1/1-2]. Agricultural produce, especially simsim and wheat, had a limited market and prices were low. Due to the hardships that affected the whole colony, hut tax, which had been increased to Rs8 in 1920, had to be lowered to Rs6 or Sh. 12 in 1922 [Gordon, 1946:46].
However, all this signified only a short break in the commoditization of Gusiiland. In 1922 trade improved greatly and approximately 10,000 bags of maize were exported, with fair improvements in the production of simsim, beans and groundnuts. In the following year, trade flourished and the value of exports totalled £56,000: in fact, over fifteen times as the quantity of groundnuts and nearly four times as much simsim were exported in the year as in 1919/20 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/2/1923]. However, prices were still low with groundnuts fetching in 1923 half the prices of 1919/20, and simsim about a third less as in 1919/20 [Ibid].

The rain failure of 1924 caused only a slight drop in trade, and total exports amounted to Sh. 1,118,518.00 compared to the 1923 value of Sh. 1,149,949.00. While the value of exports rose to Sh. 1,244,427.53 in 1926, it was reduced to Sh.1,068,183.95 in 1927 due to yet another rain failure [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3].

During 1930 and 1931, trade suffered from the ravages of locusts and the severe depression. Prices of produce fell heavily with the result that the purchasing power of local people was greatly decreased. Exports in agricultural produce dwindled,
and in 1931 21,211 bags of maize were imported due to famine, especially into the low-lying Kisii locations. However, the Gusii peasants recorded improvements the following year and exported 300 tons of maize, 100 tons of maize flour, 300 tons of wimbi, 250 tons of beans and pulses and 60 tons of Irish potatoes [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/1932].

Capital accumulation on the part of some Gusii enabled them to start small trade and industry, hitherto entirely in Indian or European hands. Such people included the market-oriented peasantry who produced agricultural surplus and accumulated capital, some workers, and such colonial functionaries as chiefs and headmen.

The above group of early capitalists accumulated wealth in different forms. By 1927, there was a total of five posho mills owned by the local people—one in Kitutu, two in Nyaribari and two in North Mugirango [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3]. The posho mills appear to have been in a fairly prosperous condition, earning the owners a lot of money. Also, large numbers of individuals owned dukas in the trading centres and market, while a few had even purchased lorries.
The dairy in Kisii township undoubtedly interested a number of local people in the manufacture and production of ghee. Several inquires were made by the Gusii as to the price of equipping and starting dairies, and one or two people went for instruction [KNA/DC/KSI/1/3]. The cost of starting such a dairy was however later found to be too high and the commercial production of ghee did not take off.

4:3. The Years of Recovery (1933-1939)

4:3:1. Crop Production

In 1933, an agricultural officer was posted to Gusiiiland and an agricultural school inaugurated at Kisii. The same year, a produce inspector was appointed in trading centres; his responsibility was to assess the suitability of a crop for sale, and without his ticket a farmer could not sell his crop. An LNC farm was also started at Kisii to grow almost all crops for bulking, including maize, linseed, coffee, Canadian wonder beans, marrow fat peas, Irish potatoes and guavas. Experiments with coffee, linseed, Canadian wonder beans and peas were revived on a large scale and local people persuaded to
undertake their cultivation. Improved seeds of various crops were distributed throughout the district by the LNC. In addition, 700 orange seedlings grown from Zanzibar orange seed were issued [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4]. In 1936, an agricultural show was held.

All these efforts were geared towards enhancing the role of Gusii peasants in commodity production. As Kanogo [1986:10] observes: "the increased government participation in the expansion of peasant production in the post-depression period was based on the entrepreneurial production already set in motion by peasants". The role of the agricultural officer, in this respect, was to "increase productivity" and "in the production of a surplus" to be expropriated by the colonial state [see Bowles, 1979:207].

In this period, the production of maize showed a general increase while that of wimbi seems to have declined (see Table 6). The rise in the price of maize early in 1937 proved a great incentive to the Gusii peasants who produced four times as much as in the previous year, with a corresponding value of over five times. This appears to have been the reason for the neglect and drop in the production of wimbi that year. On the 1938 maize figure, it was estimated
Table 6: Production of Maize and Wimbi (in tons)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wimbi</th>
<th>Maize</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>603</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>777</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>631</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>2378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


that real surplus of maize grown was about 5,000 tons which could have given the producers a total return of about £11,000 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4/1938].

For a long time Kenyan Africans had been barred from producing coffee by the colonial administration. It was claimed that Africans could not master the technical knowledge required in producing such a lucrative crop and, allegedly, there was fear of plant disease and inadequate quality control [see Garst, 1972:125]. For districts near settler farms it was said that the poorly kept African plants would infect settler coffee. The actual reason for all this was of course the fear that Africans would
become self-sufficient and decline to offer their labour on settler farms.

In 1934, Africans living in areas away from settler farms were allowed to grow coffee for experimental purposes, notably in Kisii, Embu and Meru areas [Kanogo, 1986:13]. In Gusii land, 64 beds of coffee seedlings were availed for planting.

In the initial period, the crop proved unpopular. First, the period of care before yields were obtained was too long. Secondly, the colonial administration permitted that coffee be grown on a cooperative basis only in the hope of controlling quality and diseases. However, without personal commitment, farmers tended their plots irregularly. At times the distance to the plots was a hindering factor. In fact, such farms had to be maintained under threat of prosecution. And for this reason, even when it was realised that individual plots near the farmers' homes could achieve more success, most Gusii were convinced that the government would confiscate their plots if they planted coffee. Consequently, as Barnes [1976] shows, a positive response to the introduction of coffee was forthcoming from only a small number of cultivators.
The chiefs and a significant number of the early educated members of the society were among the first growers. They were motivated by a combination of reasons, including the expectation of earning a greater cash income. By 1936, a total of only 50 acres owned by 25 growers had been planted in the Gusii highlands, with chief Musa Nyandusi of Nyaribari having more than 8 acres alone. But by 1937 the attitude of the peasants had positively changed in favour of coffee growing and, writing in 1937, the agricultural officer remarked: "... it is no longer a question of persuading people to plant, but of selecting the most suitable applicants and allowing them to plant small areas only."

In the same year the total acreage under the crop increased to 78; and in December the first parchment coffee, all coming from chief Musa's farm in Nyaribari, was despatched to Nairobi for grading and sale. The reports on this parcel were most encouraging, being classed as borderline for the London Market. There was even more demand for the local peasants to be allowed to grow the crop. By the end of 1938, 160 peasants were growing coffee under 90.80 acres [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4/1938]. However, a
maximum acreage had been imposed and most peasants had less than one acre. This was intended to prevent the peasants from becoming self-sufficient in order that they would continue to avail themselves for wage labour on settler plantations. It was also because of acreage limitation that, although it was in the lowlands (chache) that coffee was predominantly grown, there was little regional differentiation between this area and the highlands (masaba).

4:3:2. Animal Husbandry

Despite the posting of a veterinary officer to the district in 1934, no efforts were made in improving and developing Gusii knowledge about animal husbandry. The officer's effectiveness was limited because of the huge size of the district, and because his attention was concentrated on Luoland which had more animals.

Most dairies established during this period were located in Luoland. In 1935, 275 dairies were in operation producing 268 tons of ghee for export valued at Sh. 14,264.00. Practically all this ghee came from Luoland. The number of dairies increased to 560 in 1937 (with Kisii having only two separators.
at Nyaribari), and in the following year the separators were declared saturated in Luoland and no more licences were intended for issue. The fall in ghee production in Gusiiiland seems to have resulted from the neglect of the veterinary personnel and the beneficial crop production. Besides, the Gusii stock were fewer and could not meet domestic consumption as well as effectively and regularly supply separators with milk for ghee production.

Vaccination and inoculation against the most prevalent diseases in the area - pleuro-pneumonia, rinderpest, rabies, trypanosomiasis, foot and mouth disease - were of course carried out mainly to prevent the diseases from spreading to European-owned stock. As van Zwanenberg [1972:216] notes generally about Kenya:

"In order to control the movement of African stock, African Reserves were put in quarantine whenever there was an outbreak of any of the many local diseases .... Consequently most African Reserves were in quarantine every year for one kind of disease or another, and so it became impossible to organise and develop an African cattle or stock industry."

4:3:3. Labour

Labour outside the district slowly became available to the relief of the Gusii who so earned their tax money. An ever increasing number of them
indentured for work (as shown in Table 7) topping 3,250 in 1938 from only 65 in 1932. Most of these workers went to the Kericho and Sotik tea plantations, hence causing a serious shortage of labour especially with the Public Works Department [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4]. As a result, women and children had to be forced to work on such projects.

Table 7: Labour Recruitment 1933-1938

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>No. of workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1934</td>
<td>920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>1099</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>3140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>2399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>3250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, 1933-38

Then there were the squatters. "... A number of Kisii left the reserve in 1934 as squatters on farms in the Sotik." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4/1934] The tea plantation companies, though with a large capital outlay, encouraged squatter labour as a means of stabilizing their labour supply, and by 1933 "... it
was the settled policy of the tea companies to try and create a squatter population" [arap Korir, 1976:50]. Such workers were given a small plot, usually near their residence, for subsistence production. Among the Gusii, there were a few people who went out to work and "never returned home to marry"; such people were called abanyamwaka (singular, omonyamwaka) [Machani, 0.I., 1989]. Apparently these were the people who had been encouraged to settle in the tea plantations as squatters. Kanogo [1987:27] also attests to the presence of Kisii squatters in the Nakuru and Naivasha areas.

What drove the Gusii into squatting and how many people were involved are issues yet to be researched. Whether they were motivated more by the pull-factor of economic gain in settler farms than push-factors in the Kisii reserve is not quite clear. According to some informants, the Gusii squatters were not forced out of their reserve by land shortage nor were the numbers involved so great. They assert that even when land was subdivided in their absence, their share was set aside until after so long a period (more than a generation) that they were presumed dead [Onchoke, Ngare, O.I; 1989].
4:3:4. **Trade and Exchange**

Commodity production was intensified by the availability of improved agricultural implements, and trade in agricultural produce was ever on the increase. In 1933 alone 15,000 English hoes and many thousands of pangas were sold by traders. However, the use of right-angled hoes and ploughs was inappropriate for the tropical environment as they loosened the top soil leading to widespread soil erosion and ecological degradation. According to Bowles [1979:208], the use of these implements led to deep ploughing, a method suited for improving soil aeration in temperate areas, and the extension of cultivated land beyond what the peasant could effectively protect.

Trade in livestock also increased as the prices of cattle rose steadily. A number of cattle and goats was sold outside the district, and many more sold in local markets. As many as 3,000 head of cattle could be seen on market days in Sondu and Nyangusu markets, while smaller centres were no less active [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4]. An increasing number of Gusii were turning to stock trade, thus joining the few Arabs and Somalis who had settled in the district as early as 1908 and had all along dominated trade in
cattle. Trading activities usually provided an avenue for capital investment and the further accumulation of wealth.

From the money earned through the sale of agricultural produce and livestock and from wage labour, a group of wealthy people was emerging. They used their accumulated wealth in various ways. Some of them invested in small dukas which were springing up throughout the 'reserve'. Besides, it was reported in 1935 that the Gusii had "... a mania for stone watermills which they now manufacture entirely on their own" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4/1935]. Chief Musa Nyandusi had a wheat flour mill. By 1936 there were, in Kisii alone, a total of 47 bicycles, 17 sewing machines, 56 ploughs and numerous hoes and pangas. Brick and iron roofed premises were being erected in trading centres, and a number of new lorries on the road. Among the rich were the chiefs who, according to Ondieki, were not only innovators who laid the foundation for the phenomenal economic transformation of Gusii society but were in the forefront in accumulating wealth. "Nyandusi was at one time credited with the dubious honour of being the second richest individual in Gusii, second only to the Indian magnate Ibrahim Kassam." [Ondieki, 1975:6]
The War Years

The outbreak of the war caused panic among the Gusii. Many Gusii ran away into the bush to hide [Ondonga, O.I; 1989], and those outside the district started streaming back home, apparently fearing being conscripted into the war as carrier corps. In attempting to explain this fear, the D.C. wrote:

"It appears that in the last war the young men were caught and sent wholesale to carrier corps, where overwork, undernourishment and disease killed a large proportion of them, and they now greatly dread a possible repetition of this experience." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/4/1938]

This fear of the war quickly subsided, however, and nearly all returned to their jobs.

The district was affected by the war in many ways. First, conscription of manpower started, and it appears that both force and propaganda were used. Since the Gusii had learned the futility of hiding (see chapter three), they had no option than to register for work. Zeleza [1989b:147] has shown that those who joined the war fell prey to rumours that military service would exempt them from paying taxes. Rumours (most probably started by the colonial administration) had it, too, that those who did not join the army voluntarily but waited to be
Conscripted were always sent to the frontline where fighting was fiercest.

In 1940 conscription for the East African Military Labour Service (EAMLS) started, followed in 1941 by "assisted recruiting" for essential civil undertakings [Gordon, 1946:56]. These put a strain on the labour resources of the district, and the chiefs and the district administration had to use force in the recruitment. Shiroya [1985] lists a number of methods used in the recruitment into the army which must apply to Gusiiland. Some of his respondents recalled that they were seized by their chiefs on the orders of the D.C. and told to join the army. Others recalled that they were at labour recruiting centres when they were "ordered to get into the lorry so that they may be taken to the place of work" - only to find themselves at a military training depot. The administration also tricked the young men into the station ostensibly to cut grass, only to register them for the army [Shiroya, 1985:1-2]. While a total of 98,000 Kenyans participated in the Second World War, Gordon [1946:56] puts the final contribution of the Kisii district at ten thousand askaris and a slightly greater number of compulsory civil labour.
Another effect of the war was loss of cattle. Most informants over sixty years who witnessed the war complained bitterly about their animals being taken away at very low prices. Without using force, the district annual quota during the war could not have been met since prices paid by Livestock Control were too low. In fact, in the year following the declaration of war, complaints about this requisitioning were vociferous and at the end of the year the district had failed to produce the number of cattle ordered [Gordon, 1946:56].

Agricultural production, however, kept expanding to keep with the wider colonial policy of producing enough food for the war effort (Brown, 1966). As Bowles [1979:97] notes, such extension of acreage for tribute production was liable to cause soil erosion. Indeed, this was the situation in Gusiiland and soil conservation measures were advocated and carried out even after the war. The role of the agricultural officer in the conservation of the soil cannot therefore be viewed as a way of improving agriculture in the area, but as an attempt to avert an agrarian crisis caused by the colonial need for surplus production of food.
The policy of agricultural intensification was so successful in Gusiiiland that even in 1943, when there was failure of the short rains for the second year in succession, the district fared well with only a minor drop of 14,000 bags of maize for export [KNA/DC/KSI/1/5/1943]. This was at a time when other 'reserves' did not have enough food, and a commission had to be appointed to "inquire into the serious food shortages in the country" [Daily Nation, March 26, 1943].

Approximately half of the export of cereal crop was maize; wimbi constituted one eighth; while mtama, groundnuts, simsim and potatoes made up the bulk of the rest. Coffee growing expanded very slowly to 177 acres in 1945 and the greater interest was in Arabica coffee.

Planting was delayed in 1945 owing to the late rains and consequently the produce was brought in late, giving a lower figure than for the previous year and a higher one for 1946 (see Table 8, and Table 10 p. 170).

The revival of potatoes as a cash crop came about as a result of the big influx of Kikuyu settling in the Gusii highlands during this period.
Table 8: **Comparative table of exported produce**

*(including local sales in bags)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1941</th>
<th>1942</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1945</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>69,000</td>
<td>87,550</td>
<td>105,427</td>
<td>77,509</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimbi</td>
<td>26,000</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>9,266</td>
<td>8,412</td>
<td>21,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>7,000</td>
<td>10,000</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>349</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>5,742</td>
<td>5,743</td>
<td>4,528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mtama</td>
<td>18,000</td>
<td>19,411</td>
<td>34,651</td>
<td>28,215</td>
<td>2,338</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1,300</td>
<td>1,675</td>
<td>1,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee (value)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£500</td>
<td>£1,500</td>
<td>£1,100</td>
<td>£1,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/4-8 Various years.

The D.C., reporting on the presence of Kikuyu among the Gusii, noted:

"A Sunday border market in Nyaribari (Kisii) is like a scene from Kiambu, or more accurately all the ingredients of Kikuyu settlement in highland country are there - donkeys loaded with sacks of potatoes ..."[KNA/DC/KSI/1/5/1943, stress mine]

Apparently, this group of Kikuyu migrants were responsible for the increase of potato production, which rose from 434 bags in 1942 to 1,488 bags in 1946.

Government intervention in African agriculture included the supply of limited veterinary extension services [Kanogo, 1989:119]. These were provided in Gusiioland throughout the war, but limited to
vaccinations and inoculations. The figures for vaccinations and inoculations for 1943-45 are shown in Table 9 below. Major diseases included pleuro-pneumonia and rinderpest, and a quarantine had been imposed in 1942.

It should be noted, however, that despite the provision of the services no major efforts were put into improving Gusii stock. The numerous vaccinations and inoculations, for which the Gusii were forced to pay, were too expensive. The result was that the Gusii refused to vaccinate and inoculate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Treatment</th>
<th>1943</th>
<th>1944</th>
<th>1945</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pleuropneumonia</td>
<td>41,012</td>
<td>129,238</td>
<td>166,940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rinderpest</td>
<td>119,604</td>
<td>83,250</td>
<td>135,394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackquarter</td>
<td>4,645</td>
<td>16,013</td>
<td>57,634</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trypanosomiasis</td>
<td>528</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>2,955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthrax</td>
<td>7,783</td>
<td>11,067</td>
<td>9,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Castrations</td>
<td>11,534</td>
<td>10,744</td>
<td>6,733</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/5-7, 1943-45.
licences was carefully controlled to only a quarter of the total applicants. Some who had banded together into trading and transport companies with the object of competing with Indian middlemen had little success. Tinga trading company formed in 1942 was one such ill-fated company, and it was to be revived only in the mid-1950s. A large number of licences for bus services and produce lorries was granted to Africans by the Traffic Licencing Board at the end of 1945 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/7].

During the war years, the call for manpower for military and civil conscription had also the effect of forcing people to leave the district under contract. In 1941 alone, 2,000 people from the district signed contracts; and many youths also went to the Sotik farms to avoid military service (Gordon, 1946:55).

By 1945, however, so much money had entered the district from family remittances, gratuities, livestock control sales and from profitable farming, and so few opportunities arose for spending, that the labour supply nearly dried up. As a result of this there was a great deal of illegal and forcible recruiting of juveniles for labour outside the district, especially in the tea estates. As arap Korir [1976:52-53] writes, the Kericho tea plantation
employers rationalized the use of juvenile labour on the ground that "the dexterity and co-ordination of hands and eyes comes more easily to juveniles than an adult and he is therefore more easily trained as a plucker". Juvenile labour continued to be in demand in the plantation for a long time and many of my old respondents (e.g. Ondonga, Kaosa, Matara, O.I. 1989; and Mongare and Maeri, O.I. 1988) testified that they were forced to enlist for labour outside the district as juveniles. As already mentioned, the tea estates had a recruiting officer in Kisii, and a red lorry is remembered to have been going round Gusiiiland regularly collecting workers, mostly juveniles. Given the force and trickery used in enlisting the young boys, most of them hated the sight of this vehicle which they commonly referred to as "Bwana Simba’s lorry", apparently after the European recruiting officer in Kisii, himself nicknamed "Bwana Simba" (that is, "Mr. Lion").

The prosperity of the war, perhaps coupled with the greater consciousness of the outside world, induced demand for more educational facilities. Before the war, most of the schools in the district were run by missionaries, and only Kisii Government African School offered non-denominational education.
In the face of increased demand, the L.N.C. made a decision in 1944 to build non-denominational schools. There was likewise a rapid increase of candidates for the Common Entrance Examination from 65 in 1942 to 202 in 1944 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/6].

The war ended with the streaming back of the war veterans. According to Shiroya [1985] the average askari returned home with better general education and skills than his non-veteran counterpart. Though most of them opted to seek wage employment, those who undertook farming were equally successful due to their openness and receptivity to new ideas. However, as Shiroya [1985:145-148] further attests, their contribution in political, economic and social spheres of their society was on an individual basis because the prevailing political situation in Kenya did not allow them to form any organization.
CHAPTER FIVE

5:0. DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE END OF WORLD WAR II TO INDEPENDENCE

5:1. General Overview

During the Second World War, as we have seen, agricultural production in Kenya as a whole was spurred by the British government policy of meeting the heavy demand for food to feed the troops both outside and inside East Africa. Consequently, agricultural lands suffered chiefly from soil erosion, degradation and exhaustion. Post-war agricultural policy was partly a reaction to this situation in the African countryside, and included measures aimed at soil conservation.

After the war, the colonial administration started a gradual process of agricultural reorganization of African areas, culminating in the Swynnerton Plan of 1954. The plan allowed African peasants to grow cash crops and engage in small-holder farming. Cash crop production led to further social differentiation and stratification in the colony, including Gusiiiland.
5:2. Before the Swynnerton Plan

5:2:1. Land Tenure

During this time, the Gusii population was undoubtedly increasing and Gusiiiland becoming densely populated. Though information on total population is lacking, the D.C. noted in 1947 that Majoge location—one of the most heavily populated areas—had an average of 500 people to a square mile [KNA/DC/KSI/19]. It was therefore imperative that the Gusii went in for an intensive type of agriculture.

In Kenya as a whole, the colonial land policy was now geared towards private land ownership, a process that started in Central Province. In Gusiiiland, individuals began enclosing or fencing the land in their possession and, by 1953, enclosure was taking place at an ever increasing pace—so much so that it was quite impossible to have planned enclosures with roads of access and cattle tracks left between holdings [KNA/DC/KSI/1/15]. In enclosing their land holdings, the Gusii had the common habit of securing a strip of land running from up the hill down into the valley. While this layout

1 See Sorrenson [1967]
gave each holder access to water, it was considered by the administration as a main constraint to ploughing across the narrow strips [KNA/DC/KSI/1/14].

The privatization of land ownership contributed to internal differentiation among the Gusii peasantry. As Ivanov [1979:61] notes at the continental level, those with big lands could provide for themselves, while those with small lands received a yearly gross income lower than that necessary for subsistence. The latter represented the "village poor" who were continually compelled to seek work in other households or else migrate to cities in search of work. In Zeleza's [1989a:59] words: "Internal differentiation within the peasantry eventually led to pauperization of some peasants who became a rural proletariat or drifted to towns". This process was exacerbated by the Swynnerton Plan which aimed to create a landless class to provide labour to the landed rich peasants.

5:2:2. Crop Production

Commodity production and the adoption of modern and intensive methods of cultivation deepened rural class differentiation, and it was the rich peasants and not the poor ones who were more likely to
purchase the necessary inputs for increased agricultural production. The crops grown by the Gusii peasants during the period included coffee and pyrethrum. Coffee was worth a value of only £1,488 in 1947 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/9]; but its production expanded rapidly, and by 1954, there were 3,197 coffee growers producing 113 tons worth about £35,680.64 (sh. 713,612/82) [KNA/DC/KSI/1/16] [see Table 11]. In 1955 there were already 68 coffee nurseries able to provide sufficient seedlings to plant nearly 1,000 acres [KNA/DC/KSI/1/17].

Pyrethrum was introduced in the district in 1952 and the first few commercial plots were established in Rigoma area of Kitutu location. It soon proved a popular crop because of its high profitability and the ease of establishing a new plot. Also, it could be planted in small units that were amenable to the intensive Gusii farming system [Uchendu, 1969:137]. By 1954 its production had reached 7,870 lbs from 80 acres earning the producers Sh. 14,953.00 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/16], and its production had already surpassed the allotted quota.

Following what was a record harvest in 1950, the district produced the biggest crop for export in its history, amounting to 500,191 bags or 44,412 tons out
of which maize accounted for 442,924 bags or 39,547 tons [KNA/DC/KSI/1/12]. The extensive cultivation of maize as a major export crop was getting established; this gave rise to monoculture in Gusiland — a development resulting from colonialist capitalist relations of production. In the words of Walter Rodney [1972:257]:

"There was nothing 'natural' about monoculture. It was a consequence of imperialist requirements and machinations .... Monoculture was a characteristic of regions falling under imperialist domination."

Maize monoculture prevailed in individual plots due to the good prices offered for the crop and retarded progress in crop diversification. As the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner noted:

"... with ever increasing maize prices, maize monoculture dominates ... in parts of South Nyanza .... Production is in fact imbalanced; crop products far outweigh animal products; and of crop products maize by far outweighs everything else." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/24/1949] [see table 10]

Such extensive maize cultivation led to widespread soil erosion. This is because, as Bowles [1979] has clearly shown, its big vegetative growth takes a larger amount of fertility out of the soil than do other cereals. Its shallow root growth means that while it is in the soil, it gives no protection
Table 10: Crop Production 1946-1954 (in bags)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>123,614</td>
<td>168,492</td>
<td>70,559</td>
<td>133,556</td>
<td>442,924</td>
<td>215,563</td>
<td>213,353</td>
<td>378,347</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimbi</td>
<td>43,989</td>
<td>38,297</td>
<td>11,287</td>
<td>10,803</td>
<td>21,362</td>
<td>3,792</td>
<td>16,952</td>
<td>14,136</td>
<td>49,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>602</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>1,488</td>
<td>347</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mtama</td>
<td>18,876</td>
<td>14,405</td>
<td>5,410</td>
<td>5,310</td>
<td>9,064</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wheat</td>
<td>2,013</td>
<td>2,460</td>
<td>658</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 11: Cash Crop Production 1953-54

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1953</th>
<th></th>
<th>1954</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>Growers</td>
<td>Value</td>
<td>Produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Parchment</td>
<td>57 tons</td>
<td>3,197</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>60 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee Mbuni</td>
<td>25 tons</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>63 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wattle bark</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>86.6 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pyrethrum</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7,870 lbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/15-16, 1953-54
against water erosion, and the heavy tilling of the soil required before planting in the dry season increases the likelihood of wind erosion. Multiple and deep ploughing, as is practised in temperate zones, would simply destroy the soil structure and leave little other than the subsoil for the plant to grow in. Furthermore, the pure stands of maize preferred by agricultural officers exposed the soil to erosion. The prohibition of burning by the same officers was perceived by the Gusii as denying the soil its fertility, and the latter went on to burn illegally - thereby causing further problems because the burning was not properly organised and timed.

The colonial administration, however, blamed soil erosion on "poor land use" on the part of the Africans, and it advocated soil conservation measures colonywide. In the Gusii highlands trash lines and terraces were recommended due to the steep terrain, and John Kebaso [later a Legislative Council (Legco) member] was employed as a propagandist [KNA/DC/KSI/1/8/1946].

By 1947, there had been a steady improvement in the quality and size of trashlines, and they had become a noticeable feature of the landscape. As a further measure of protecting the soil, it was agreed
in 1949 that all future planting of wattle trees would be in strips, the space between the rows varying with the degree of slope [KNA/DC/KSI/1/8/1949]. Consequently, by 1954, as shown in Table 11, production of wattle bark had become a profitable enterprise in the Gusii highlands. It was also decided to have a cut-off trench running the length of the area to be cultivated. However, this called for more labour and, since the Gusii were not willing to offer communal labour, the idea seems to have stalled.

The Agricultural Betterment Scheme (ABS) was started in 1947 colonywide with the objective of improving agriculture on a district basis through, inter alia, the use of manure and fertilizers. In all South Nyanza 130 acres were put under the scheme in that year, with an average input of 15 tons per acre of manure obtained from cattle bomas ["Kraal" manure] [KNA/DC/KSI/1/9/1947]. The scheme provided for the purchase of implements for subsidized re-sale and labour to assist Group and other "good" farmers. In addition, it aimed at improving livestock and poultry, starting tree nurseries, supplying seeds and encouraging bush clearing.
The ABS executed many of its objectives with success. However, it was the 'rich' peasants who were more likely to benefit from ABS projects, given that they had enough capital and land and were more receptive to modern methods of cultivation.

The agricultural shows also provided a valuable stimulus to improved farming, one being held in each of the agricultural divisions in 1952. A major achievement for the local farmers came in October 1953 when Kiomooncha society won the first prize for parchment coffee at the Royal Nairobi Show [KNA/DC/KSI/1/14/1957].

Group farming was started in 1948, the professed aim being to pool together the resources of peasants in a common farm or plot so as to effectively teach them better methods of farming. Preliminary propaganda was disseminated at barazas and by pamphlets and the local newspaper "Sauti ya Bomani". John Kebaso visited and lectured in three of the locations. Also, parties of farmers were sent to Bukura to see the farm layout [KNA/DC/KSI/1/11/1949]. In 1949 a Group farm was started in Gesusuu on a twenty-five acre piece of land and tractor ploughed for the members; by the end of the year it had been strip planted. However, Group farming gradually died
out due to its apparent unpopularity - the local farmers preferring individual farming.

5:2:3. Animal Husbandry

Inoculation and vaccinations against the major cattle disease mentioned in chapter four continued, although the outbreak of these diseases was now irregular and was usually controlled at the initial stages. For example in 1948, the veterinary officer [KNA/DC/KSI/1/10] reported that the farmers' interest in rinderpest inoculations was decreasing due to the non-appearance of the disease. Only notable during this period was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease sufficiently severe to cause deaths, reported from the locations bordering Sotik in August of 1950. The disease was contained and the quarantine restrictions were soon withdrawn [KNA/DC/KSI/1/11]. Otherwise, other diseases were sporadic and never reached epidemic proportions.

In 1949, information began to be spread about the dipping of cattle, and in 1954 it was introduced; Gamatox sprays and pumps were similarly introduced to prevent the incidence of tick borne disease. To enhance good animal husbandry among the Gusii, the government started making merit awards to be used
mainly in animal husbandry. They included spray pumps, poultry arc and cattle lick, and they were usually presented at the Kisii show so as to obtain the maximum propaganda value. In 1953 alone such awards were valued at £1,034.

There was a general feeling on the part of the administration that livestock was degenerating owing to inbreeding and overstocking. It is true that the extensive cultivation of maize and other crops had reduced the proportion of grasslands and farmlands. And, by this time, outward population expansion was not possible due to established 'reserve' boundaries. This led to an increase in the density of animals per unit area. A livestock census completed at the beginning of 1950 gave the figure of a million cattle in South Nyanza. The figures revealed that, on average, Kisii locations were carrying one beast to an acre of pasture which, however, did not render Kisii grossly overstocked (other locations in South Nyanza had one beast to two or three acres) [KNA/DC/KSI/1/12].

Even so, the colonial administration attempted to reduce Gusii stock through the sale of animals. As will be seen, no market existed for the Gusii stock; that is why the exercise was carried out
without much force, and culling was not extensively enforced. This was unlike the case of Ukambani where, according to Newman [1974], the underlying reason for forced destocking were the needs of the Liebig's factory.

Five auction markets had been set up in South Nyanza district in 1950 to aid in reducing the area's stock, but they proved an expensive failure. This was due to a number of reasons. First, there were too few outlets for the cattle in the province: Uganda, which would have been a ready market, could not buy animals as the area was covered by the monopoly of the Meat Commission; Tanganyika, on the other hand, offered low prices. Secondly, the Gusii and Luo themselves resisted by not offering animals for sale. Thirdly, the administration failed to get a big number of stock-traders to attend auctions. And, lastly, local butchers preferred buying animals from Tarian and Kilgoris in Maasailand, where prices were lower; in 1950, the first year of active destocking, some 4,000 animals were brought into Kisii district in this way [KNA/DC/KSI/1/12]. So the destocking policy failed and the auction yards were closed. The few animals that left the district were sold through the Sondu and the Central Nyanza sales
market at Ahero, while some were normally exchanged along the borders.

5:2:4. **Labour**

Although the unavailability of statistics makes unclear the numbers involved, recruitment continued in these years, mainly for the Kericho tea plantations. It was in an effort to regularize the situation regarding juvenile labour that a Labour Officer was posted to Kisii in 1946 for the "purpose of enquiring into and establishing the organization required for issuing certificates to juveniles going out of the district into employment so as to tighten and control those going out without parental consent" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/11]. When the certificate was introduced in 1950, however, there was a sharp drop to only 8% in the flow of juvenile labour to Kericho and Sotik [KNA/DC/KSI/1/12]. Consequently, it was decided to do away with the certificate and to institute a modified system, which did not require prior parental consent, although recruiters had to report to chiefs with the juveniles recruited [KNA/DC/KSI/1/13]. The system was instituted in spite of storms of protest in the African District Council and LNC, the African members of which
apparently wanted juvenile labour completely stopped. The parents themselves complained of the moral decadence prevalent among children in the tea plantations [see arap Korir, 1976:64]. It is evident from all this that the administration was not really interested in stopping juvenile labour; rather, it sought to institute a method designed to encourage the engagement of juveniles along well-defined and organized channels. And so, by as late as 1958, it was being reported: "the time has not yet reached, and neither can it be foreseen for quite a number of years when the juvenile can be dispensed with without detriment to the industry" [in arap Korir, 1976:53].

It has already been noted that one result of the commercialisation of African agriculture was the emergence of pauperized peasants; these had to work for the 'rich' peasants as seasonal or permanent labour in order to meet their minimal vital requirements. In such a situation, to quote Ivanov [1979:139], "traditional communal relations disintegrate and produce rudimentary forms of hired labour in which corresponding communal work is paid with money". This became a feature of Gusiiiland, where poor peasants could work for other households but were no longer able to invite members of the
community to work for them. The poor peasant had to rely on his own family if he was unable to provide cash to purchase sufficient labour, while a reasonably rich man could get a medium sized farm quickly cultivated, planted and often extended.

5:2:5. **Trade and Exchange**

The purchase of maize and other agricultural produce from the peasants was the work of licensed African primary buyers but, as late as 1953, the transportation was still practically controlled by Indian merchants. Since the African buyers had too limited capital to carry them through a season, any hold-up in marketing caused a financial loss they could not afford. In such circumstances, the majority of them soon ran short of money and had to borrow from secondary traders or wholesalers, mostly Indian merchants, who dictated terms of borrowing [KNA/DC/KSI/1/15].

Maize buying was also hampered by the shortage of storage space and gunny bags resulting from the increased production of all types of cereals. The marketing system at this time ensured the same price for grain at every point in the district, however remote the point may be from the railhead [see Bowles, 1979].
Cooperative marketing, especially of coffee, evolved during this period. The Kisii Coffee Growers' Cooperative was started in 1947, and it grew to become a Union [Kisii Farmers Cooperative Union] in 1950, with primary societies based on the various pulping stations. In the same year a lorry was acquired and stores built to enable the Union to market members' maize and other produce. The Union flourished, despite the misappropriation of funds and the financial losses that occurred for two years after its formation. In 1954 an Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies was appointed to play a major role in the supervision and actual management of the Union.

5:3. The Development of Small-holder Farming, c. 1955-1963

5:3:1. Land Tenure

According to Sorrenson [1967], enclosures in Kikuyuland started earliest due to increased commercialization of agriculture; and land consolidation and registration coincided with the emergency period when it could be carried out with ease. In Gusiiiland, the enclosure of personal and private land continued steadily during this period;
since it was felt that there was not much fragmentation, land consolidation was not effected. And, unlike in Kikuyu country, land registration and the issuance of land titles on the enclosed land holdings were delayed—to be effected only after independence.

The Gusii divided and structured their plots according to the farm layouts prescribed by the Department of Agriculture, and by 1958 forty planned plots covering 720 acres existed [KNA/DC/KSI/1/20]. It was however found out that the follow-up was very poor in the majority of cases and therefore the rate of establishing more farm layouts was reduced. The initial failure of this project reflected the administration's misguided view of increasing the area's productivity. Only a few rich peasants managed to develop their land into the model planned small-holdings.

5:3:2. Crop Production

Crop production underwent drastic changes after the Swynnerton Plan, and the Gusii peasants took advantage of the plan to expand commodity production. Consequently, maize and wimbi were relegated to the position of mere food crops, and their place taken by
Table 12: Maize and Wimbi Yields, Price and Value

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food Crop</th>
<th>Yield per acre (bags)</th>
<th>Price per bag (sh)</th>
<th>Value per acre (sh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>25/80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wimbi</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30/50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

The decline of maize and wimbi in the period after 1955 was exacerbated by the fall in their prices as shown in Table 12. The price of maize dropped from Sh. 25.80 a bag in 1955 to Sh. 22.30 in 1961, while that of wimbi dropped from Sh. 35.50 to Sh. 22.75 over the same period [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23].

In 1955 there was a rumour that Maize and Produce Control, the sole buyer of maize, was going to close down. On that basis small acreages of maize were planted in the Gusii highlands. In that year only 311,322 bags worth Sh. 9,165,568.00 of maize

2 The 1961 price of wimbi was later in the same year increased to sh. 39.05 to induce farmers to sell their crop, but very little was available.
were sold to the Control, being 66,000 bags less than the previous year's figure. As shown in Appendix I, the production of maize kept fluctuating and in 1961 hit the bottom low of 58,477 bags worth only £65,202 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23]. Thus Gusiland, which had been producing a quarter of the colony's surplus maize, had to import about 5,000 bags in 1961 to avert food shortage [KNA/DC/KSI/23/1961].

Wimbi suffered the same fate: from 77,694 bags worth Sh. 3,488,460.00 in 1955, the production dropped to 19,510 bags the following year and, though there was a slight recovery, only 180 bags worth only £205 were offered for sale in 1961. Finally, with yields stagnating at 4 bags per acre, wimbi, which for long had been an export crop, was in 1961 categorised with wheat, groundnuts and sorghum among the minor crops in the district [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23/1961].

The first coffee factory in Gusiland was built at Mogunga in 1952. By the mid-1950s the bulk of the crop in South Nyanza district came from the Gusii highlands, though some parts of upper Kuria and Luoland were in production. Out of 31 coffee societies in South Nyanza in 1960, 26 were in Gusiland [KNA/DC/KSI/1/22].
The Gusii peasants took advantage of the removal of the maximum acreage limitation on coffee, and its total production rose from 282 tons worth £110,000 covering 2,165 acres and grown by 5,763 farmers in 1956 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/18], to 4,400 acres grown by a 19,000 farmers earning them over £300,000 in 1961 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23]. By 1963, the crop was being grown by 36,140 farmers with corresponding increases in acreage and income [Kisii District Annual Report, 1963].

The production of coffee deepened social and economic stratification among the Gusii peasantry. In the quest for improved quality, all agricultural field staff working in the coffee zone were trained in the details of culture, pruning, nursery work, planting, bench terracing and disease control. But it was only the rich peasants who were able to effect the instructions of the agricultural field staff.

Most of the poor peasants experienced a number of problems, including poor cultural conditions, inadequate pruning and spraying, and lack of mulching. Diseases, the plucking of small, under-ripe and yellow cherry, and poor drying procedures combined to lower the quality of coffee to a bottom low in 1961 of 46.8% in 'A' and 'AA' grades and only
1.2% in 1st-3rd class [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23]. So in spite of increased production, prices were low and in 1958, the poor peasants who had more coffee than they could efficiently manage "agreed to decrease their acreage to reasonable size." [KNA/DC/KSI/1/20]

In 1955, the production of pyrethrum trebled over the previous year's to 24,317 lbs, and for the remaining years before independence the authorities were at pains to control its expansion. In 1956 the crop covered 160 acres with 793 growers and a production of 28.5 tons worth £4,800. By 1961, in spite of efforts at limiting expansion, the crop covered about 18,000 acres grown by 25,000 farmers, totalling a production of 1,598 tons worth £601,839 [see Appendix I].

However, due to poor cultural standards the pyrethrum content started to decline from 1.36% in 1958 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/20]. Even so, the crop was still popular and the newly founded Masaba Farmers Cooperative Union - MFCU - [formerly Masaba Farmers’ Cooperative Society] and its 12 primary societies were on a sound business and financial footing in 1959.

It was not until 1961 that "the reduction in the price of pyrethrum in excess of quota, and the fact
that maize had to be sold back to Kisii" had some effect in controlling expansion of pyrethrum [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23]. In that year, the Board paid the full price for all production within the quota and full price of Ksh. 5.83 per kg. for the first one-third of the overproduction, but only Ksh. 2.20 per kg. for the remainder [Garst, 1972:140]. In response to this financial penalty for overproduction many farmers uprooted their pyrethrum.

In 1962 a system of individual production quotas was introduced in which every producer was allocated a specific poundage of dried flowers and was warned he could receive lower payments per pound for over-or under-production [Garst, 1972:142]. This system guaranteed stable prices for the allowed quota and was aimed at forcing the Gusii peasants to produce an exact amount of pyrethrum. Rather than face financial penalty, the peasants sold the allowed quota while retaining the excess produce. Even so, at independence the Gusii earned 11.3% of the national pyrethrum returns [Garst 1972:128].

Tea, the third major cash crop, was first introduced into Gusiiiland in 1957. It was first planted at Mokomoni and later at Magombo in East Kitutu location, a few kilometres from the eastern
border of the district. The area closest to the tea estates in the settlement area [later to become Borabu location] was selected because it was ecologically suitable and many Gusii there had previous work experience in the tea estates. At first a "Tea line" was established within which farmers were allowed to grow tea. This line was annually extended outward, and by independence covered most of the area where tea is now grown [Garst, 1972:163].

In 1957 there were 16 acres under tea, the figure increasing to 50 acres the following year. By 1959, 4,898 lbs of green leaf tea were being produced, almost trebling to 12,980 lbs a year later. Acreage almost trebled again by 1961, with all planting stumps produced locally and a specialist Tea officer sent to the district. Even so, Kisii district was relatively unimportant in relation to total tea production in Kenya. In 1961 only 0.04% of the nation's production came from the district, and in 1963 it had increased to 0.13% [Garst 1972:128]. Meanwhile, tea leafs were delivered to the Sotik Highlands Tea Factory for processing; it was not until 1965 that the first tea factory was built in Kisii district.
Passion fruits were introduced in the Gusii highlands in the final years of colonial rule. Only 6 acres were in production in 1960, and these increased to 40.87% in 1961 among 105 growers between Mosobeti and Keroka in Kitutu location. The fruits were delivered to Lanyon's factory at Sotik for extraction, and its production increased rapidly, posing competition to earlier established crops. At a price of 15 cents per lb., it was considered the best priced cash crop in the district in 1961 [KNA/DC/KSI/1/23]. And, contrary to the suggestion of the Agricultural Officer that the crop needed to be financed on a big scale [Ibid], it slowly established itself as a small-holder crop.

5:3:3. Animal Husbandry

As late as 1955, the Veterinary Officer was of the opinion that the standard of animal husbandry among the Gusii was "extremely low" and that "tick control in the district was so low" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/17/1955]. The issuance of what was called immune improved bulls from the Livestock Breeding Centre at Kisii, planned for 1955, was deferred to 1956. Even then, only "three-quarter bred sahiwal bulls" were sold to selected small-
holders [KNA/DC/KSI/1/18], possibly the rich peasants who could follow and effect the laid down regulations.

A few rich peasants were able to clear their fields, fence them and clean up the land. They were also able to singly buy spraying pumps for hand-spraying of cattle. The 'poor' peasants, on the other hand, formed groups to buy pumps for use among members [KNA/DC/KSI/1/18].

Animal husbandry, however, lagged behind crop production. Summing up the agricultural situation, the Agricultural Officer noted in 1960:

"The general picture in the Kisii area shows enclosed farms with a small acreage of cash crops reasonably well maintained, a declining acreage of maize, and resting land carrying couch and bush stocked with unimproved animals. Farms with improved grass are few and far between."

Just before independence, the Veterinary Department embarked on a project of introducing grade cattle. Towards the end of 1961 six grade cows were placed on two African farms in Kisii [Kisii District Annual Report, 1961:17]. The Veterinary Officer immediately reported an increase in the people interested in grade cows, indication enough that this was undoubtedly the correct stock policy
for the Gusii highlands. By the end of 1962, there were 68 farmers registered to keep grade cattle, and they altogether owned 89 cows [Kisii District Annual Report, 1962:14].

All this was achieved despite the Gusii County Council By-laws which required one to have the following before being registered to keep grade cows: (a) a stock-proof perimeter fencing surrounding two acres of paddocked grazing land planted to either Kikuyu or star grass; (b) one-quarter acre of fodder crops; (c) an adequate watering point; (d) a milking shed; (e) a calf pen; (f) a spray pump; (g) regular spraying of local cattle for six months previous to adoption, and the removal of all ticks; (h) attendance at a Farmer Training Centre Course [Kisii District Annual Report 1963:13].

It cannot be overemphasized that it was the rich peasants who were more likely to meet such conditions. Some of these rich peasants were also in civil employment, and they used their cash savings to invest in animal husbandry. This emerging class of petty bourgeoisie and rural capitalists could afford to employ the labour of poor peasants, further deepening the process of rural class differentiation.
5:3:4. **Wage Employment**

Gusii labour still continued to flow out of the district, especially to the Kericho and Sotik tea plantations. But the numbers involved were gradually decreasing as will be seen soon. Within the district the main employers, apart from the government, were the cooperative societies. The Kisii Farmers Cooperative Union (KFCU) had 26 coffee primary societies, while Masaba Farmers Cooperative Union (MFCU) has 24 pyrethrum primary societies.

In the last decade of colonial rule some major trends, previously not significant though present, were taking place in the district's labour history: this trend was, to put it in Ivanov's [1979:145] words, the "destruction of the migrant labour system and formation of a hard-core native proletariat".

We have already seen how the forced labour of the 1910s and 1920s gradually changed into the migrant labour of the 1930 and 1940s. Due to a number of factors, the migrant labour system was gradually superseded and a rural proletariat formed. First, there was the realisation that reserves had to produce wealth for their bursting population [see Leys, 1975]. Secondly, the Swynnerton Plan opened
the way for expanded commodity production. Thirdly employment in the civil service provided wide openings for the educated people. Lastly, the enclosure and privatization of land, started in the 1930s and at its height in the 1950s, gave varied opportunities for wealth accumulation. All these factors led to the differentiation of the peasantry into 'rich', 'middle' and 'poor' categories.

The rich peasants owned enough land, engaged in commercial agriculture and may be had a salaried job in the civil service. They had the capital to adopt modern methods of farming and, in the words of Ivanov [1979:145], they were "capitalist entrepreneurial wealthy peasants" who were able to employ the poor peasants as wage workers. The emergence of a rural capitalist class contributed to the destruction of the migrant labour system as the poor peasants regularly engaged in wage labour in the farms of local rich peasants. Studies of this process at the Kenya level are abundant; what we have done in our work is to show that Gusiiland was no exception.

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4 See, for example, Swainson [1976], Kaplisky [1980], Leys [1977], Cowen [1982] and Fearn [1961].
5:3:5. **Marketing**

The marketing of agricultural produce suffered a great deal from the inadequacy of transport facilities. Roads were in poor condition and largely impassable during the wet season. Furthermore transportation still remained a virtual Asian monopoly, and although licences were granted to several petty-bourgeois Gusii during this period the latter never became a significant factor because they could not effectively compete with the Asians. Asian transporters blackmailed the Gusii traders by refusing to carry maize to the lake ports from distant markets unless the latter purchased shop goods from them [KNA/DC/KSI/1/18].

The increasing wealth of the Gusii peasants and petty-bourgeoisie stimulated an interest in trading plots in African markets. Ivanov's [1979:145] qualifier that "wealthy peasants by no means always became capitalist entrepreneurs in the strict sense of the word" fully applies to the Gusii; indeed, some Gusii entrepreneurs invested in shop business, but their shops made very little profit and "on average not more than three shops in each African trading centre were affording a reasonable living to their owners" [KNA/DC/KSI/1/18/1956].
profitability of these shops was due to a number of reasons - ranging from low consumer demand, to the high cost of transport of trade goods to the markets. Besides, there was a limited range of retail goods offered for sale. Because of low profitability, up to half of the shops in most trading centres operated spasmodically - usually in the afternoons, after the owners having worked in their own shambas in the morning [KNA/DC/KSI/1/20/1958]. Even so, the demand for shops continued, and on the advice of the Provincial Commissioner, the D.C. placed a ban on the granting of additional plots for retail business from 1958 to 1960. This continued to be the situation until independence.
CONCLUSION

The foregoing chapters have been an attempt at a historical analysis of the changes that took place in Gusii agriculture from pre-colonial times to independence, the main focus being the colonial period. We have applied the method of dialectical and historical materialism and some concepts of dependency theory in our examination of the Gusii pre-colonial system of production and in the analysis of the Gusii encounter with the colonial capitalist mode of production.

In our analysis of the pre-capitalist mode of production in Gusiland, we took note of various ways of land ownership and usage and showed that both individual and communal land ownership existed. Our analysis of economic activity in pre-colonial Gusiland demonstrates the element of self-sufficiency in the area's economy. The study further demonstrates the dynamism, diversity and productivity of Gusii indigenous agriculture in both crop and animal production. It shows that there was a number of social mechanisms and ecological reserves to reduce the impact of food shortages or famines which occasionally affected the area. In addition to
these, there existed forms of intra - and inter-ethnic trade and exchange activities.

Labour in this society was organized to satisfy the various social needs. It was socially harnessed, and directed at production of commodities with use value by exploiting the means of production in the form of nature and the raw materials deriving therefrom.

The capitalist mode of production was introduced to the area through the instrumentality of colonial rule. The articulation of the colonial capitalist mode of production with the indigenous Gusii economy led to the transformation of the latter and its incorporation into a peripheral/colonial capitalist economy. In this configuration, agricultural change was effected in a number of ways.

New crops were introduced and the Gusii encouraged to be commodity producers - a process intensified with the imposition of taxes. This incorporated the Gusii peasantry into the capitalist world where appropriation of their produce was monopolized by the colonial regime aided by the Indian merchants. Colonial officials, though not entrepreneurs, ensured that production was carried out and that a surplus of commodities was made
available for sale. The Europeans and the Indian merchants manipulated knowledge they possessed of profits to be made in distant or foreign markets, which the Gusii peasants lacked access to. Indirectly or through subtle means, they appropriated African surplus accumulated through petty commodity production among the peasants.

With their entrenchment in commodity production, we have argued, the Gusii were continually peasantised and lost control over the pricing of the products of their labour. Since the international capitalist division of labour relegated the colonised to the lowest ranks in the production process, the Gusii started producing cheap raw materials and became consumers of imported goods through a system of unequal exchange in which they were further exploited.

Among the major changes that took place in crop production in colonial Gusiiiland was the replacement of wimbi by maize as the staple food. Maize production was enhanced by a ready settler market, and Gusiiiland became a major exporter of maize. However, as demonstrated in this study, the introduction of more valuable cash crops - viz: pyrethrum, tea, and coffee - so adversely affected
maize production that it had to be imported into the district in 1961 to avert a food shortage.

We have also tried to give evidence as to how the early period of colonial rule in Gusiiland was characterised by pure appropriation of livestock in the form of booty during the so-called pacification campaigns. The pre-colonial institutions related to stock raising were destroyed, and cattle were used in settling all manner of alleged offences against colonial 'Law and Order'. The colonial administration neglected the development of an African stock industry in Gusiiland, and the routine inoculations and vaccinations were mostly aimed at preventing the spread of diseases to settler stock. The upgrading of Gusii zebu stock with the Sahiwal bulls was half-hearted and proved unsuccessful, although the introduction of grade animals provided some hope.

As we have demonstrated, labour power in pre-colonial Gusiiland was applied in the creation of use value for societal well-being. But labour power was alienated in the colonial period for the generation of surplus and the Gusii forced into labour in the interests of colonial capitalism. We have shown how labour was extracted, initially by
force, from the area. We have also shown the manner in which forced labour gradually developed into migrant labour; how a stable wage labour force emerged from the ruins of the migrant labour system; and how the Gusii came to constitute part of the Kenyan rural and urban proletariat. In all, we have demonstrated how the Gusii were proletarianized and transformed into a labour force producing exchange value for the colonial state and private capital.

Another theme developed in this study is that of social differentiation. The process of articulation of colonial capitalism with the indigenous Gusii economy and the dynamic mechanism of social change accruing from this process led to the deepening stratification and differentiation of the local population. The chiefs and others in civil employment formed the early group of wealth accumulators. They were later joined by the educated elite, the 'rich' peasants and some rural wage workers.

This group of the rural rich accumulated wealth in various forms: shops, plots, vehicles, posho mills, good houses, bicycles, and so on. They also proved successful in farming since, with enough capital, they could easily employ more labour and
adopt modern methods of farming. At the other end were the pauperised peasants who relied on wage labour for subsistence - initially as migrant workers and, later, as rural workers within Gusiiiland itself. In other words, education, civil employment, enterprising farming, cash crop production and the enclosure of private land deepened the process of social differentiation among the Gusii.

Finally, we have attempted to show how the imposition of taxes affected the Gusii. They responded by selling their animals; later, they had to engage in wage labour and, more importantly, expand commodity production to earn enough cash for taxes. Coupled with the need to buy imported goods, and aided by the use of imported hoes, extensive cultivation became widespread, resulting in the soil erosion and degradation of the 1940s. The 1950s witnessed the further evolution of small-holder farming in Gusiiiland. The introduction of cash crops was consolidated by the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 and it led to the further colonialist appropriation of the peasants' produce.

By the coming of independence in 1963, therefore, Gusii agriculture had been radically transformed from its pre-colonial state to become an integral part of
the international capitalist economy—albeit mediated through the mechanism of colonial production and exchange.
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(c) Published Material


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1. Bosibori, Jane Omare [Mrs.]; 75 years; interviewed on 6th January 1989 at Nyameuru Sub-location, Keera Location.

2. Kaosa, Orina; 60 years; interviewed on 17th January 1989 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.
3. Kibegwa, Moturi, 70 years; interviewed on 7th January 1989 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

4. Kinyanjui, Elijah N.; 30 years; interviewed on 14th January 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

5. Machani, Naftal; 50 years; interviewed on 2nd January 1989 at Isoge Sub-location, Borabu Location.

6. Machuma, Ezra Omari; 40 years; interviewed on 15th January 1989 at Siamani Sub-location, East Mugirango Location.

7. Maeri, Anderea Kemite; 60 years; interviewed on 20th December 1988 at Bonyamatuta Sub-location, Gucha Location.

8. Masira, Guto; 60 years; interviewed on 19th February 1989 at Siamani Sub-location, East Mugirango Location.

9. Matara, Stephen; 45 years; interviewed on 3rd February 1989 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

10. Matwere, Abigael Kemuma [Mrs.]; 60 years; interviewed on 26th January 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo location.

11. Matwere, Helena [Mrs.]; 50 years; interviewed on 28th December 1988 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

12. Mongare, Ismael; 90 years; interviewed on 29th December 1988 at Isoge Sub-location, Borabu Location.

13. Moriasi, Peter; 60 years; interviewed on 12th March 1989 at Bokurati Sub-location, Ekerenyo Location.

14. Moruabe, David O.; 65 years; interviewed on 27th December 1988 at Mokomoni Sub-location, Kiabonyoru Location.

15. Ngare, Philip Kaosa; 50 years; interviewed on 20th January 1989 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.
16. Nyairo, Robert; 80 years; interviewed on 22nd January 1989 at Bonyaiguba Sub-location, West Mugirango Location.

17. Nyakundi, Philemona [Mrs.]; 35 years; interviewed on 10th February 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location Ekerubo Location.

18. Nyamongo, Y. Nyambesa; 80 years; interviewed on 21st February 1989 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

19. Nyamwaro, Musa; 50 years; interviewed on 30th January 1989 at East Bosamaro Sub-location, West Mugirango location.

20. Nyarunda, Oera; 65 years; interviewed on 24th January 1989 at Mongorisi Sub-location, Guch Location.

21. Nyauma, Kemicha; 80 years; interviewed on 4th February 1989 at Siamani Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

22. Omache, Chris; 35 years; interviewed on 13th January 1989 at Charachani Sub-location, Keera Location.

23. Omanwa, Zakaria K.; 55 years; interviewed on 6th February 1989 at Ikobe Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

24. Omenge, Kemunto [Mrs.]; 105 years; interviewed on 4th March 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

25. Onchagwa, Mokambi; 70 years; interviewed on 16th February 1989 at Bomabacho Sub-location Chache Location.

26. Onchoke, Abel Nyakundi; 90 years; interviewed on 10th March 1989 at Kioge Sub-location, Nyaribari Chache Location.

27. Ondari, Vitalis; 45 years; interviewed on 5th February 1989 at Bokiambori Sub-location, West Mugirango Location.

28. Ondieki, D. Onyancha; 55 years; interviewed on 31st January 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.
29. Ondieki, Marube [Mrs.]; 60 years; interviewed on 14th February 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

30. Ondonga, Peterson M.; 75 years; interviewed on 4th January 1989 at Isoge Sub-location, Borabu Location.

31. Onyancha, Peter W.; 45 years; interviewed on 12th February 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

32. Oriosa, S. Abuga; 40 years; interviewed on 7th February, 1989 at Bogichora Sub-location, Ekerubo Location.

33. Sobu, Orina; 55 years; interviewed on 24th January 1989 at Bosamaro Sub-location, West Mugirango Location.
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<td>£245,180</td>
<td>£601,839</td>
<td>£245,713</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of growers</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>4,500</td>
<td>11,500</td>
<td>16,000</td>
<td>25,00</td>
<td>20,423</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TEA</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4,898</td>
<td>12,980</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(lbs) Acreage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16 acres</td>
<td>50 acres</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>£115</td>
<td>£1,255</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of growers</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>2,372</td>
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APPENDIX II

SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONNAIRE

The following is an unstructured version of the questionnaire administered to peasant farmers.

General Information

1. Name ____________________  Sex  __________
   Clan  _________________  Sub-Location _________
   Age  _________________  Marital Status _______
   Amount of land owned ______________________________________

   How the land was acquired (first occupier, inherited, or bought). __________________________
   Number of different pieces of land owned _______
   Types of crops grown ______________________________
   Number and types of animals kept ___________________
   Number of dependants ______________________________

PRE-COLONIAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

2. What forms of land ownership existed on the eve of colonial conquest? How did people acquire land? Were there any landlords or a group of landless people?

3. How did the Gusii allocate land for various types of use e.g. cultivation, grazing and hunting? Who
had the right to allocate the land? How were a person's right to land protected? What disputes arose over land and how were they solved?

4. What crops did the Gusii grow or gather from nature? How was the agricultural calendar? How was agricultural produce stored and how was it appropriated? Did the Gusii households always have enough to eat? If not, how did they supplement their crops? What was their main food?

5. Are there any remembered famines among the Gusii? If so, what were their causes? What measures did the Gusii take to curb food shortages during drought, locust invasion and periods of famines? Was there a way of predicting such calamities? What were the consequences of the remembered famines?

6. Which animals did the Gusii domesticate, and which ones did they hunt? How did the individuals acquire animals or increase their herds? How were the animals grazed and protected from enemies? What form of conflicts arose over livestock and how were they resolved?

7. How was labour organised? Were there specific jobs for categories of people? Was there any paid labour? If so, how was it paid?
8. Did the Gusii have any form of exchange? If so, with whom, and in what commodities? What was the medium of exchange? Were there trading centres? Was there a group of people specialising in trade? If so, why? If not, why not?

**COLONIAL AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY**

9. What economic and agricultural changes did the colonialists bring? How did they affect Gusii land ownership and usage? How did land alienation affect the Gusii? Were the alienated lands settled by the Gusii before the coming of the colonialists?

10. How did the introduction of new crops affect Gusii agriculture? How did the introduction of cash crops and grade cattle affect food production? Which Gusii indigenous crops still existed by independence?

11. How did the Gusii sell their crops or farm produce? How fair were the transactions to the Gusii peasants? Did the Gusii take any initiative to produce more food to sell to the colonial officials? If so, what were the colonial government's effort to boost trade in food crops?
12. Did the Europeans establish agricultural farms in Gusiiland? If so, what farming activities were they engaged in? How did their farming activities elsewhere in the colony affect Gusii agriculture?

13. Were there efforts made by the colonial government to increase food production among the Gusii? What were its efforts to increase cash production? What were the effects of the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 on Gusii agricultural production?

14. How did colonialism affect Gusii labour organisation, animal husbandry and exchange activities? How were individual roles in the society affected?

15. Were there any imported Asian and European goods among the Gusii? If so, name them. What were their effect on Gusii technology, industry, trade and agricultural production?

16. How did the introduction of taxes and 'kipande' affect the Gusii? How did the Gusii respond to the introduction of taxes and compulsory labour regulation? How did the Gusii pay their taxes,
offer their labour, and maintain agricultural production at the same time?

17. What were the objectives of 'Mumboism' as an anti-colonial movement? How was it organised, and what were its operations? How far was it successful? What led to its demise, and when?

18. How did the First and Second World Wars affect Gusii agricultural production?

19. In what way would you say the Gusii benefited from colonial rule? What was its bad effects as far as the Gusii agricultural economy was concerned?

20. Was there a group of people or individuals who accumulated wealth and land during the colonial period? If so, what was the economic and social status of these people or individuals before the coming of the Europeans?
APPENDIX III

GLOSSARY

Effort has been made to translate and explain all Gusii and other non-English words used in this thesis the first time they appear in the text. The following are some of those widely used:

**Amakongiro** - a local drought-resistant creeping weed.

**Amanyabwori** - Sweet potatoes.

**Amarisio** - grazing grounds, often for personal use.

**Amatuta** - heaped moulds of vegetative matter in the arable fields.

**Amaumuntia** - May.

**Bur (Luo)** - trenches dug round a village.

**Ching’obo** - indigenous costumes used by women.

**Chinsaga** - spider flower (*gynandropis gynandra*).

**Ebara** - Salt lick.

**Ebigoro** - hill tops.

**Ebirecha** - ancestor spirits.

**Ebirubo** - marshlands.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ebisarate</td>
<td>cattle villages (singular-egesarate).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ebwagi</td>
<td>June.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egeku</td>
<td>a period of many deaths (usually coincides with famines).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egesangio</td>
<td>Voluntary routine working party of women or young girls to help one another in morning tasks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egesiria</td>
<td>small hoe.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egeticha</td>
<td>small plot for vegetables near the homestead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekebosano</td>
<td>a working party among wives of a homestead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekerisio</td>
<td>cooperative herding of animals on a rotational basis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ekiige</td>
<td>Intertwined wooden door.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embonga</td>
<td>the husband's separate arable land.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embusuro</td>
<td>specially designated seeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emiongo</td>
<td>pumpkins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emonga</td>
<td>a separate granary for the husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endemero</td>
<td>arable land cleared by pooled labour but individually cultivated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engombe</td>
<td>cow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engoro - Supreme Being or God.
Engoromomi - July.
Ensio - small grinding stone.
Entira - anthrax.
Enyamumbo - the Mumbo religious cult that was anti-European.
Enyomba - land portion near the homestead used for subsistence farming (also literally means 'house').
Enyongo - a device for iron smelting.
Esagati - December.
Esururu - hoe.
Etureti - elders' council.
Ja-Kisumo (Luo) - a people who live by begging.
Mtama - sorghum.
Nyamakongiro - the famine of c. 1891.
Obere - rinderpest.
Obokima - Ugali.
Ogokuruma - cattle raiding.
Omobgambi or Omoruoeti - 'chief'.
Omonyamwaka - one who disappears from home for a very long time (plural: abanyamwaka).
Omonyibi - a rainmaker.
Omonyoncho - a big round basket with a narrow opening used for storing wimbi.
Omoragori - seer or diviner.
Omotangani - leader (plural: abatangani).
Omouto - a device for fanning fire.
Onkonga - a cattle disease.
Ototo - East African Spinach (amaranthus hybridus).
Orogena - large grinding stone.
Orwaki - fortified villages (also called Chindwanga).
Ribina - a rainmaking ceremony.
Rinagu - night shade (solunum nigrum).
Risaga - pooling together of labour to help in tasks that were labour demanding.
Risosa - pumpkin leaves.
Riwata - April.
Wimbi - fingermillet or eleusine.