GENDER RELATIONS AND FOOD CROP PRODUCTION: A CASE OF KIAMBU
DISTRICT KENYA, 1920-1985

BY

MARTHA WANGARI MUSALIA
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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and to the best of my knowledge has not been submitted for a degree in any University

SIGNATURE ____________________________ DATE____________________
MUSALIA MARTHA WANGARI

This thesis has been submitted with our approval as University Supervisors

SIGNATURE ____________________________ DATE____________________
PROF. ERIC MASINDE ASEKA
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICAL STUDIES

SIGNATURE ____________________________ DATE____________________
DR. MILDRED JALANG’O NDEDA (MRS)
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND POLITICAL STUDIES
DEDICATION

To our sons Bwuzu Musalia and Gikenye Musalia for their love and encouragement and in memory of my late father, Johnstone Gikenye Waititu.
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GLOSSARY

Mucii (pl. micii)  Family group
Thingira  Man’s hut
Nyumba  Wife’s dwelling hut
Ikumbi  Granary
Mihiriga  Clans
Mwana wa Mumbi  Child of Mumbi
Mbari  Sub-clan
Itura  Big location
Mwaki  Small region
Muramati  Custodian
Mathamaki  Ruler
Riika (pl. Mariika)  Age-set
Kiama  Council of Elders
Metumi  Murang’a
Kabete  Kiambu
Gakii  Nyeri
Rui rwa Aaka  Women’s River
Mwathi  Ruler of Land
Mwene  Owner of Land
Mugunda wa muiritu  Unmarried girl’s land
Uremi  Disobedience
Gitong’a  A rich person
Kahiu ka mengere  Men’s cultivating knife
Munyago  Men’s digging stick
Muhugu  brachylaena hutchensis
Mutamaiyu  olea europea ssp. africana
Gutugatu  Clearing bush
Gucimba  Hoeing
Kuhukuria  Harrowing
Miro  Harrowing sticks
Miaka (sing. Mwaka)  Years
Itugi cia marigu  Props for banana
Kiondo (pl. ciondo)  Kikuyu basket
ABSTRACT

This study examined gender relations and on food crop production in Kiambu District between 1920 and 1985. The socioeconomic relations between females and males that are characterized often by differential assignments to labour tasks, control over decision-making and differential access to and control over resources has changed over time. These relations of production have been influenced by the socio-political and economic transformation that has taken place over the period of study. The study employed gender analysis to analyse the alteration of gender relations and food crop production since if focuses on the systems which determines gender roles/ responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making and not on the individual women and men. Gender analysis was significant in the identification and understanding of the inequalities, challenges and responses of Kiambu women and men in their endeavour to produce food during the period of study. The study was done in three locations, namely, Limuru, Kiganjo and Komothai of Kiambu District, using both primary and secondary data. A total of 56 informants both men and women of varying ages were interviewed. The study established that changes in land tenure, labour provision as well as promotion of cash crops had affected production of food crops. The alienation of Kikuyu land and later consolidation and registration on an individual basis were major in affecting people’s access to productive land. This was, however, gendered with women being the most affected because of the existence patriarchal system which undermined women’s ownership rights. Gender division labour had also changed over the years and was particularly enhanced by migrant labour system. Change in both land and labour organization affected the decision-making process on the type of food crops that were grown in the district. There was shift from the dependence on indigenous crops like millet, sorghum, cassava, yams, and traditional maize to more market-oriented horticultural crops like Irish potatoes, carrots, kale, spinach, cauliflower, and cabbage among others. In effect, the district was producing less staple food crops by mid-1980s than it did by the beginning of the 20th century. But women continued to dominate in food crop production. Nevertheless, the study noted that though women continued to provide most labour, they did not remain passive victims of patriarchal control but they engaged productive activities for instance, food-related trades to make of their own money.
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

At a period when African’s population and Kenya’s in particular is rising, there is need to produce enough food to meet its growing demand since most people continue to rely on domestic production to meet their subsistence needs. But this is only possible if there is an understanding of the roles that individuals play and factors that affects their contribution in food production. Consequently, a gendered analysis in food crop production is necessary for its proper situation. It is documented that about 70 to 80 percent of household food production in sub-Saharan African is attributed to women (Quisumbing, 1995: 13). But men too have their share in this production. It is, therefore, important to recognize the gendered nature of roles and responsibilities which determine the division of labour, decision-making, appropriation of resources and indeed access to resources, information, knowledge and technology, as they affect food crop production. This is crucial since the country has experienced great transformations especially as result of colonialism, which have affected gender relations of production. Men and women have been differentially affected and this has subsequently influenced their participation in food crop production.

Apart from understanding the roles of men and women in food crop production, it is essential to identify and understand the inequalities, challenges and responses of both men and women farmers. In particular, it helps to understand the prevalence of the type of food crops grown and whether they help in averting food shortages. Food sufficiency is the only means through which Kenya and other African countries in general will eradicate abject poverty. For this reason, it is imperative for policy formulators to know how both men and women have been negatively affected or aided in the production of food crops in an effort to avert the ever-
increasing problem. The use of a gender perspective is important in analyzing food crop production. The failure to take gender as a category of analysis has meant that neither has Africa’s agricultural history nor gender relations been captured notwithstanding the great transformation that has taken place in the continent.

1.2 Location of Study

Kiambu District is in Central Province of Kenya and is mostly inhabited by the Kikuyu who are agriculturists. It is the nearest Kikuyu District to Nairobi, Kenya’s Capital City. The present study follows the boundaries as they were in 1985 before Thika District was hived off. Compared with other districts in Central Province, Kiambu is often regarded as having the highest potential for overall resource use as well as general economic development (Development Plan 1974-1978). Land in Kiambu can be divided into three: high, medium and low potential. The high potential land occupies above 350,370 acres covering about 55% total land in the district, medium potential covers 146,518 while low potential covers 140,148 acres (Alila, 1993:26). Majority of the population is concentrated in the high potential land though a substantial part of this land is under large-scale agriculture. According to the 1984-1988 Development Plan, agriculture and related productive activities engaged about 70% of the labour force in the district (Ibid: 27). This makes a study in agriculture important in Kiambu District.

To the south, the district borders Nairobi and Kajiado, to the west Nakuru, to the northwest is Nyandarua, to the north Murang’a and to the east is Machakos. The northern part of the district follows natural boundaries formed by the Chania and Thika rivers while the southern boundaries start from Kilimambogo Hills through the Athi, Nairobi and Gatharaini rivers.
The topography of Kiambu varies. Highly dissected valleys running from the northwest to the southeast dominate it. This influences the land use pattern and even the transportation routes. The altitude ranges from 1,400 meters rising to 2,400 above sea level. The Aberdare Range constitutes the highest part of the district while around Juja is the lowest. In the upper, high altitude areas, streams run parallel to the mountain ranges and the soils are well-drained. In lower areas, land is generally flat which poses the problem of impeded drainage, especially where black cotton soils predominate.

The district has two distinct rainfall seasons influenced by altitude. The long rains fall between March and May while the short rains are between October and November. Average rainfall is 500 mm in lower areas around Thika Division and increases gradually to 1500 mm in the upper regions of the district. Like the rains, the altitudes also influence the average temperatures. The coolest months are June/July and November/December while the hottest are January/March and August/September. The district’s climate favours a diversified agricultural production. The rainfall pattern enables the District to have two planting seasons for food crops. Kiambu District, therefore, presents a favourable area of studying changes in gender relations of production.
Figure 1: Location of Kiambu District in Central Province.
Figure 2: The location of the Study Area in Kiambu District.
Figure: 3 Map of some of the Geographical features in Kiambu District.
1.3 Statement of the Problem

Gender analysis is important in understanding historical changes in agriculture generally and the food sub-sector specifically. However, most African agricultural studies have been done from physical point of view. This study, takes a historical gendered approach to examine gender relations of production and the effect on food crop production between 1920 and 1985 in Kiambu District. The socioeconomic relations between females and males that are characterized often by differential assignment of labour tasks, control over decision-making and differential access to and control over the allocation of resources have changed over time in Kenya. Besides, availability of a ready market influenced decisions on the types of crops to grow. As a result, the proximity of Kiambu District to Nairobi city in regard to its effect on gender relations of production is central to the study.

The study was guided by the following questions:

1. What factors led to the transformation of land tenure in Kiambu District and what were the implications for gender relations and food crop production during the colonial period?
2. How did division of labour influence gender relations and the type of food crops grown in the District during the colonial period?
3. What effect did the proximity of Kiambu District to Nairobi City have on gender relations of production in Kiambu District?
4. What was the effect of economic development on gender relations of production in Kiambu District in the postcolonial period?

1.4 Research Objectives

The study endeavoured to achieve the following objectives:

1. Determine factors that transformed land tenure during the colonial period and
examine their effect on gender relations of production in Kiambu District.

2. Analyze division of labour and its influence on gender relations and food crop production in Kiambu District during the colonial period.

3. Examine the effect of the proximity of Kiambu District to Nairobi City on gender relations and food crop production.

4. Examine the effects of economic developments in post-colonial period on gender relations and food crop production to 1985.

1.5 Research Premises

This study was premised on the following assumptions.

1. The economic exploitation of Kenya by the colonial government led to the transformation of land tenure, which consequently altered gender relations of food production.

2. Outward migration from Kiambu District undermined pre-existing labour supply systems and, therefore, altered gender relations of food production.

3. The proximity of Kiambu District to the City of Nairobi significantly altered gender relations of food production in the District.


1.6 Literature Review

The sub-sections of this literature review examine studies conducted in other countries in Africa that have dealt with gender relations and which contribute to the study. It also reviews works conducted in Kenya and specifically Kiambu District. Staudt (1987) links Africa's food crisis to lack of attention to African women whom she regards as the main food producers.
Though she agrees with the World Bank (Staudt, 1987:37) that the government's agricultural policy may have caused food crisis, Staudt maintains that understanding women's labour is very important especially in the face of the socio-political and economic policies introduced during the colonial period. She observes that male out-migration in particular places heavy burden on women's labour, because it may negatively impact on the production of sufficient food crops like millets that require a lot of labour.

Staudt, therefore, acknowledges that agriculture has its historicity of change and gender relations of production. Using a gendered approach to study agriculture, she focuses on the implications of labour differentiation, incentives and struggles over resources for agricultural development. She argues that, while many factors are attributed to the decline in food production in Africa, it is impossible to understand food crisis without understanding the demands on women agricultural labour and women’s stake in securing some return for that labour. She continues to argue that male out-migration places more work on the rural women without a corresponding remuneration. As a result of heavy economic demands on the women, they try to protect and secure their own property and income interests within the household. The varied interests within the household make the idea of “joint utility functions,” in a homogenous “decision-making unit” known to many economists as household inapplicable (Staudt 1984). The separate interests within the household consequently, have greater impact on agricultural production, as well as receptivity to new innovations.

Staudt (1984) continues to argue that in most cases, women accept innovations that are rewarding to them. She notes that political establishments affect the social and economic organization of any society because politics enables people to mobilize a base of support, use material wealth, and contribute their voices in authoritative decision-making. How an
individual gets access to the productive resources affects production. Staudt (1984) goes on to state that political arrangements favour men at the expense of women even though they are the majority of the food producers. Staudt’s arguments are enriching to this present study. The impact of political arrangements on the individual accessibility to productive resources and the effect on gender relations is examined.

On the Akan of Ghana, Grier (1992), states that women labour was used both in colonial and independent period to transform Ghana into a cash crop producing state. She further argues that pre-capitalist gender relations did not change with the introduction of capitalism, but increased interests of certain groups of African men. The assertion here is that there is a complex historical linkage between capitalism, patriarchy and the state, which needs to be understood. This argument on the linkage between is relevant to the study of Kiambu especially in relation to the attempt by Kiambu men to control women’s movement during the colonial period. The Kikuyu men under the patronage of Jomo Kenyatta (Berman, 1992) tried to control their women’s movement in an effort to safeguard their labour. The Kikuyu male elders made every effort to enforce the system of patriarchy in the face of colonialism that threatened male power and position in the society.

Carney and Watts, (1991) work on rice growing among the Mandinka of Senegambia traced subtle and accumulative change in the domestic household relations. The expansion of rice growing by the government caused intra- household struggles over access to and control over land and labour. Due to high demand for rice as the staple food, women were forced to put more labour into its production. Stress was further put on labour with the introduction of groundnut as a man’s cash crop since it made men neglect the growth of millet and sorghum, crops they previously grew to complement their subsistence in their households. The
introduction of groundnuts as a cash crop, therefore, transformed gender division of labour from task to crop-specific gender roles. The authors further argue that any state programme aimed at increasing rice production among the Mandinka ignited struggles over access to and control over household resources.

Carney and Watts, therefore, maintain that gender-based struggles over property labour and conditions of work were significant in the debate over agricultural intensification. Over the years, such struggles not only in Ghana but also in all colonial Africa, shaped, and continue to shape, the character and the trajectory of agrarian change itself. The study of the Mandika shows that there was a correlation between gender relations and food crop production. Accordingly, changes in food crop production impacted on gender relations and at the same time, the changes in gender relations continue to affect food crop production. Carney and Watts (1991), further assert that household relations, especially conjugal, are affected by outside factors. For example, the organization of household around patriarchal power derives support from the state both through the bureaucratic demands of the state organization and through the devolution of power to men by state-run development schemes.

Borrowing from the authors, this study examines how external factors influenced relations of production within the household. The issue of Kikuyu patriarchal power as it colluded with European patriarchy is discussed. The colonial government was biased against African women because it had a pre-conceived idea of what an African woman was supposed to do, because they were guided by the Victorian ideology that relegated women into the domestic domain. It is this preconceived idea of the place of women that made colonial authorities ignore African women's role in active economic production. Further, the colonial government also wanted women to continue to engage in domestic production to subsidize or cater for the rural
reproduction of male labourers.

Bryceson's (1980) study in Tanzania discusses the dynamic interaction between peasant food production and commodity production under conditions of increasing penetration of capital. The author asserts that increased commodity production had a direct link to the serious food shortage and even famines experienced in colonial Tanzania. The paper traces some of the most significant changes that took place in peasant subsistence production and consumption during the study period. Decline of food production was, therefore, a consequence of colonial policies that were aimed at restructuring African economies, to boost to colonial economy. The study of Kiambu examines the impact of commodity production on food production to ascertain whether there was any similarity with Tanzania owing to the fact that Britain was the colonial power in both regions.

Bryson (1981) asserts that though African women are the major food producers, they have been excluded from land ownership in the post-colonial period. The author argues that ignoring women's land rights only worsens the food situation. Consequently, a historical investigation on individual access to land is imperative for proper understanding of one's ability in food production. Gellen (1994) shares the same sentiments and sees this problem to be rooted in history and the oppression is "reinforced by discriminatory ideological and systematic practices inherent in development policies" (Gellen, 1994:5). It, therefore, calls for an examination of land policies both in colonial and post-colonial periods to ascertain their influence on gender relations and food crop production.

Bulow (1992) examines changes in gender relations among the Kipsigis of Kenya and argues that both men and women have different cultural ideas about gender, and this subsequently
transforms production relations. The author maintains that to understand how gender relations are transformed and how production relations are influenced, there is need to understand the pre-colonial setting. She asserts that complementarily and reciprocity between men and women that existed among the pre-colonial Kipsigis society has been replaced by women’s structural economic dependence on men the latter's fear that women may ‘try to be bigger than men’ (1992:523). Bulow presents gender as an important category that helped structure production relations among the Kipsigis in the pre-colonial period. For instance, in pre-colonial Kipsigis society, the gender division of labour made men and women mutually dependent regarding the exchange of products like labour and other services. However, colonialism brought change in the gender division of labour and hence production relations with regard to the introduction of maize as a cash crop. Women not only lost male labour inputs, but as the main producers of food crops, they no longer worked as autonomous producers but rather as unremunerated family labourers on their husband’s farms.

Bulow’s work is of significance to this study because it examines of the changing gender relations and how production relations were affected among the Kipsigis. The present study examines the impact of commodities beginning with maize, beans, and potatoes among others in the first three decades of colonial rule and later on coffee and tea on gender division of labour in Kiambu District.

The effect of inedible cash crops and labour on food crop production in Western Kenya is examined by Olenja (1991) and Nasimiyu (1985). Olenja argues that availability of labour is the single most crucial factor in household production. But Samia’s incorporation into the wider world economy disrupted the society’s division of labour. This was accelerated by male out-migration and children’s formal education since they denied the household the traditional
labour force. This meant that women took up the tasks of producing subsistence for their households and also commodities for exchange. The women have to look for strategies to alleviate their constraints. The strategies included hiring labour, which the author thinks, is more of a motivation than a real solution. The over-reliance on cotton in Samia has had adverse effects on a large section of Samia community especially with regard to food production. As food providers, the women are most affected because of diminishing land on which to grow food crops. Though this work is anthropological, it is relevant to the present study because it investigates changes in division of labour and the impact of cotton production on food crop production. The question as to whether growth of inedible cash crops like coffee and tea caused food shortage in Kiambu as it did in Samia. Nasimiyu's study on the role women in agriculture in Bungoma District from 1902 to 1960 establishes that women continued to perform their traditional agricultural chores and at the same time participated in the new colonial system of production. The study raises three themes and their impact on women’s agricultural production: agricultural innovations, introduction of cash crops, and land tenure system. She concludes that any changes brought on Bungoma's agriculture only intensified the exploitation of women’s labour. Nasimiyu concentrates on pre-colonial and colonial Kenya dealing specifically on women. The work ends on the eve of independence and does not, therefore, examine agriculture since 1963.

The theme of labour is taken up by Jalang’o-Ndeda's (1991). The study is on the impact of male migration on rural women in Siaya District from 1895-1963. It indicates the changing gender relations in the division of labour as a result of the various colonial policies. She argues that colonial economic policy, which favoured the settlers, interfered with division of labour in Siaya District. The study ends at independence and concludes that women’s labour was most stretched by the colonial policies. The current study uses the above findings to establish if
there are any similarities or divergences between Siaya and Kiambu, and goes a step further to examine post-colonial period. While the above scholars concentrate on changing division of labour, the present study investigated other aspects that influenced food production other than labour.

The studies by Mackenzie (1986; 1990; 1998) concentrate on gender, land and agriculture in Murang’a District. In her first study she notes that recent locally initiated changes in Murang'a District in Central Kenya were a direct response to the socio-economic structural change arising from policies initiated during the colonial era and pursued by the independent government with its “national development strategy”(1986:378-379). Her argument is that women and men respond to changes differently because they are differently socially located. The study is quite relevant to the present study bearing in mind that Murang’a District is within the neighbourhoods of Kiambu and is inhabited by the Kikuyu. Moreover, Mackenzie shows that there is regional variation in relation to how people respond to structural changes. Mackenzie (1990) studied gender and land rights in Murang'a district. The author asserts that land and gender are dynamic observing that there are struggles as individuals who are differentially located in relation to class and gender try to access land. Consequently, access to and control over land has had great implications on control over the produce.

Therefore, land becomes a source of tension within households, which was intensified by the introduction of inedible crops. Another theme that the author gives attention is the women's labour since men not only demanded the growth of food crops but also cash crops. It is, therefore, a necessary prerequisite to understand the nature of the dynamics and contradictions of the rural agricultural situation. In her (1998) work, Mackenzie examines agriculture in Murang’a District and pays attention to what she calls the politicization of soil conservation as
a means of isolating Kikuyu agriculture from the wider political economy. The author further argues that changes that occurred in agriculture were not only class based but also gendered. The study is important essentially because it is based on a district neighbouring, Kiambu District, a factor that encouraged interaction between the two districts.

Like Mackenzie, Davison (1988) argues that gender relations to land in Africa have been modified over time by internal conquest and power struggles and by major intrusions from abroad. Studying land registration in Mutira and Chwele divisions in Central and Western Provinces respectively, Davison asserts that the implementation of the Swynnerton Plan from the mid-1950s affected food production and caused tension in gender relations especially at the family level. This was so because land registration negatively impacted on food crop production, which was a woman’s sphere. The author looks at the household as the unit of production specifically addressing land policies and how they affected women’s usufruct rights. She maintains that women’s rights to land have been compromised over time by land policies that tend to favour men. Changes in the land tenure system influenced mechanism of decision-making in terms of the amount of land to be put under food crop cultivation. Davison argues that the less the land an individual had, the more was devoted to food crops and the bigger the land one had, the less was devoted to food crop production.

In the Sessional Paper No. 4 of 1981, the Kenya government acknowledged that the country was facing serious food shortages after experiencing famine in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite the fact that domestic production was viewed as the best way forward, specific policy was not formulated on how to approach the main food producers-women. Moreover, the government did not concede to the fact that both men and women contributed differently in food production. The government also continued to give more focus to grains especially wheat.
and maize ignoring other food crops. It can be argued that this policy was tantamount to a continuation of the colonial policy. It will be noted that the colonial government was keen on expanding maize production both for export and subsistence while ignoring traditional food crops since they did not have a market value that could boost the colonial economy. It was only after spells of food shortage that Africans were encouraged to grow drought resistant crops like cassava.

Kitching (1980) studies class and economic change in Kenya with particular attention to Central and Nyanza provinces. He argues that both ownership of land and access to off-farm income caused differentiation. He concludes that increased women’s agricultural labour was significant in the agricultural expansion in Kikuyuland. Kitching's work is significant to the current study for he examines the impact of colonial economic policies on what was Central Kenya.

While a number of studies have addressed Kikuyu agriculture, none has specifically dealt on food crop production and the changing gender relations in Kiambu District. Tignor (1976) is perhaps the only study that comes closer to what this study examines. He discusses transformations of Kikuyu agriculture in colonial Kenya. He looks at the changes in major agricultural aspects: labour relations, types of crops grown, commercialization and marketing, and soil exhaustion and erosion. Though he did not investigate gender relations of production specifically, the study indicates that there were changes in relations of production. He, for example, demonstrates that there was change in work routine in the Kikuyu reserves as more men migrated in search of wage employment. Tignor also shows how Kikuyu farmers responded to structural changes introduced by the colonial political economy. In particular, Kikuyu altered the types of food crop they previously grew in an effort to meet the market
demands. His work is important to the present study for it gives important information on Kikuyu agriculture in the colonial period. The present study gives a detailed examination of Kikuyu agriculture with particular attention to gender relations of production both in the colonial and post-colonial period zeroing on Kiambu District.

Throup (1987) examines the economic and social origins of Mau Mau paying particular attention to Kikuyu agriculture after the Second World War. The author argues that problems associated with agriculture especially land ownership and deteriorating soil fertility contributed significantly to the outbreak of Mau Mau. The work gives this study a background on the situation of Kikuyu agriculture mostly on factors preceding the transformation of land tenure, which appreciably affected gender relations of production. Throup did not give gender relations considerable attention. It is, however, the contention of this study that policies introduced during the war and in fact the whole of colonial period had differential impact on men and women not only in Kiambu District but also in other parts of colonial Africa.

Kanogo (1992) demonstrates Kikuyu women's understanding of their environment in an effort to meet their day-to-day subsistence needs. She argues that the colonial policies marginalized women especially with the alienation of land. Kanogo found that women have over time lost rights to land access. She does not, however, show how this has altered gender relations in food crop production or what has been the response of women. Abbot (1974) in her study of the socio-cultural and economic change of Kikuyu community in Kagongo in Nyeri District in the 1950s found that household relations had been affected. She concentrates on the effects of cash crops on women but omits the issue of gender relations in food production. The extent to which inedible cash crops interfered with food production is necessary not only in Kiambu but in the rest of the country.
Muchoki (1988), on the other hand, studied the organization and development of Kikuyu agriculture in Kiambu between 1880 and 1920. He investigates the internal dynamics and innovative changes that characterized Kikuyu agriculture in that period. He analyses how the Kikuyu agricultural system functioned in order to understand how it was transformed during the period under study. Muchoki’s study is valuable to the present one in that it deals with the issue of pre-colonial agriculture in Kiambu. It, however, does not deal with gender relations of production that the present study targets. Muchoki’s study ends in 1920 when Kenya became a British colony. It is certain that great historical change in gender relations of production was experienced with the entrenchment of colonial economy especially between 1920 and 1963.

The literature so far reviewed shows that there are gaps to be filled in agriculture and gender relations. There is need to examine how gender relations have been altered and what effect this has had on food crop production. In particular, what changes have occurred in regard to food crop types and what effect has this had on food security? An examination of gender relations and food crop production is an important aspect in the agricultural history because previous historical studies have not taken gender as an important analytical category. Despite the fact that this is a localized study and, therefore, does not adequately represent the rest of the country, its findings combined with other case studies, will help build a more or less complete picture of the Kenya's agricultural history. The study is also important in the general gender studies bearing in mind that they are not well grounded in Kenya's academia.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the study

The study covers the period between 1920 and 1985. However, for the sake of laying a base for the study, a detailed discussion before 1920 is provided. The time scope was ample in examining gender relations of production. The study ends in mid-1980s, a period slightly over two decades after Kenya's political independence. The years between 1963 and 1985 gave an
ample timeframe within which investigation how the post-colonial political and economic policies transformed gender relations. The year 1985 was viewed as an appropriate time to end the study noting that from the mid-1980s, the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPS) mandated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were initiated. The SAPS demanded the withdrawal of government's subsidy to farmers. The period under Structural Adjustment was viewed, therefore, to form a different historical epoch in Kenya's agriculture and gender history.

The study primarily concentrated on African agriculture and only secondarily examined settler agriculture as it impacted on African gender relations of production. A study of both African and European agriculture could have given more details on Kenya's agricultural history. Such studies have been carried out elsewhere (Lipscomb, 1972; Maxon, 1992; Kenyanchui, 1992; Talbott, 1992). Another limitation is that the study focused on African food crop production and only examined inedible cash crops like tea and coffee as they affected food-crop production. In addition, only the City of Nairobi was examined as an urban centre having influence on gender relations of production. The study also concentrated on government policies on land and labour and only slightly examined government policy on agricultural marketing.

1.8 Rationale and Significance of the Study
Agriculture is the mainstay of Kenya's economy. Hence, production of sufficient and quality food will continue to be crucial since Kenya still depends on her production to feed her growing population. Further, securing sufficient food for her population will be the first step in eradicating poverty both for the rural and urban poor it targets to achieve its vision 2030. Moreover, one of the millennium goals is to eradicate poverty and hunger.
But rural poverty and problems of inadequate food production cannot be addressed without explicit emphasis on the small-scale peasant sector, which holds Kenya's highest population. It is a fact that factors affecting food security are not only natural but also social. The individual access to the means of production particularly land greatly influences production. Consequently, a gendered approach to the historical study on food crop production remains paramount. This is because there is differentiation between men and women in accessing and controlling key productive resources like land, capital, labour, credit, information, fertilizers, tools and seeds (Staudt, 1976).

Despite the acknowledgment of the need to take gender as an important analytical category, scholarship on gender history is scanty not only in relation to the whole continent but also regionally. The present study is, therefore, important in that it examines food crop production from a gender perspective. The important role played by ordinary Kenyans in the transformation of their communities is important to document. Nevertheless, this can be done if relations between and among gender groups are unbound.

Gender relations cannot be generalized. The gender roles and their outcome are regional and specific, and so are the forms of change in gender when any change is introduced. Since gender relations are the distinctive social relations between men and women and that these relations are not static, then a historical investigation is most appropriate in understanding these relations. Zeleza (1997: 92) argues that capitalist penetration shaped the production process and the organization of space not only in Kiambu but the whole of Kenya; therefore, the exact components forming any society have a historical specificity. In view of the fact that economic change is most important in transforming social relations, it is imperative to
understand how productive units and the allocation of the labour between men and women has been changed over the years and what effect this has had on food crop production. It is, therefore, essential to locate the gender relations of production of Kiambu District within the historical processes of Kenya.

Studies carried out in Kiambu that may be closer to gender history have mostly focused on women (Presley 1992, Abbott 1974). Women cannot be synonymous to gender. None of the works have given emphasis on how gender groups relate to each other in food crop production. This study, therefore, fills a gap in Kiambu gender agricultural history.

The choice of Kiambu was out of its unique history as far as food crop production is concerned. Kiambu has over the years been engaged in local trade, which is mostly a consequence of its agriculture endowment. The Swahili-European traders acknowledged the importance of Kiambu as a granary for their caravans. Moreover, European explorers and agents of the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC) had contacts with Kiambu Kikuyu earlier than with the rest of Kikuyu districts of Murang'a and Nyeri. It was in Kiambu that European settlers were first settled. Consequently, Kiambu was the first to suffer from land alienation when the British government finally took the Protectorate from the IBEAC in 1895. The study argues, therefore, that gender relations of production were directly impacted by this early land alienation. Furthermore, the proximity of Nairobi to Kiambu made it easier for Kikuyu migrants to move to the city and, therefore, disrupt gender division of labour, which accordingly affected food production. Noting its unique position in both colonial and independent Kenya in relation to agriculture, Kiambu was the most appropriate district to examine gender relations and food production.
1.9 Theoretical Framework

In order to explain gender relations and food crop production in Kiambu District, this study used gender analysis. The use of gender analysis began in the 1990s after scholars realized the importance of taking gender as an important analytical category. Previously, the question of women had been studied from the various feminism perspectives. However, the feminism perspectives concentrated on women without incorporating men yet they needed to understand the disadvantaged position of women in society. Consequently, gender analysis is the most appropriate perspective in analyzing the disadvantaged position of women. Gender analysis or gendered analysis incorporates various aspects that are unique to the context in an effort to unravel gender relations. Since gender is a social construction, the focus is not on the individual women and men but on the system, which determines gender roles/ responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making potentials (Boyd, 2003).

Theoretically, the focus on gender as an analytical category was impelled by the recognition that “women” are not an undifferentiated group. Moreover, the approach acknowledges that women and men as social groups are differentiated in terms of rights and opportunities in society. The focus of analysis of this perspective is, therefore, the social relations of gender rather than “men” or “women” as isolated categories (Ayesha, 1997:19-20). By doing so, the analysis acknowledges that gender relation is a concept, which refers to a particular form of social relations. It refers to the hierarchical relations of power between men and women that tend to disadvantage women (Reeves and Baden, 2000: 18). Hence, the core of gender analysis is the relationship of gender groups rather than absolute categories of men or women.

It is important to note that gender is not complete by itself but occurs in conjunction with other systems of social and economic relationships. Therefore, proper understanding of gender relations can well be captured if analyzed in terms of their interrelations with other systems of
stratification and vice versa. In fact, Knopp (1992) argues that gender like other social
categories such as class, race and ethnicity that are related to power are deeply implicated in
the constitution of each other as social relations. Reeves and Baden (2000:18) continue to
argue that gender relations constitute and are constituted by a range of institutions, such as the
family, legal system or the market. They are a resource, which is drawn on daily to reinforce
or redefine the rules, norms and practices, which govern social institutions. Since historically
women have been excluded from many institutional spheres, or their participation
circumscribed, and they often have less bargaining power to affect change in these institutions.
Gender analysis maintains that for a proper understanding of gender relations, there is need to
examine how gender intersects with other social forces. Consequently, any analysis which
persists in seeing only one form of relationship or viewing gender, race, or class as separate
layers is clearly less than adequate as a theoretical understanding for transforming oppressive
realities since they are simultaneous relations, which affect each other (Ayesha 1997:21).

Another component of gender analysis is its recognition of the role social systems play in the
formation of gender relations. The interaction of social and economic relationships, ideology
and, politics greatly impact on gender relations. In Africa, social systems and ideology have
influenced the social organization of the societies. In pre-independence period, the systems of
patriarchy and matriarchy not only influenced the socio-political but also economic
organization. These systems influenced individual's access to power and productive resources.
In particular patriarchal gender relations that demonstrated the concentration of power on men
was widespread in pre-colonial Africa. Patriarchy has, however, been transformed over time
and space contrary to the assertion of radical feminists that patriarchy is uniform.

In colonial Africa, African and European forms of patriarchy intermingled to form a new
system of patriarchy. The most outstanding aspect introduced by European patriarchy was the separation of private and public domains assigned to women and men respectively. This compartmentalization of life was aimed at making the ideology of capitalism work in Africa. Colonialism and capitalism became sources of women's oppression especially in economic production. However, African women employed their own agency and initiative against any measure that was oppressive (Presley, 1992) and hence transformed gender relations.

Without esteeming one social force against the others, gender analysis is able to show how gender relations are formed by the interaction of diverse social forces. Once gender analysis is applied in an African situation, particularities as well as commonalities of African experiences are examined and, as a result, the historical specificity of the area is put in place. This is because the interweaving of class, gender and imperial relations has produced quite distinct histories, traditions and cultures. The African people experienced colonialism differently, whether they were incorporated as agricultural commodity producers or migrant labourers, all these changes brought shifts in gender division of labour.

Since gender systems are institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, culture and traditions, this study picked the economic system and particularly agriculture to account for the nature of gender system in Kiambu District. The perspective is suitable in analyzing the whole period under study. The `patriarchal system practiced by the Kikuyu in the nineteenth century organized all relations whether in social, political or even economic. The patriarchal system organized socio-political power, which influenced individual’s ownership and access to productive resources. For instance, marriage among the Kikuyu was polygynous and residential pattern was patrilocal. Moreover, bride price was given to the woman’s family. This kind of organization impacted on husband-wife
relationship. A married Kikuyu woman was meant to provide both productive and reproductive labour to the husband’s lineage. It was through a woman and her children’s labour that a Kikuyu man was able to accumulate wealth. Therefore, the more wives and children a man had, the more wealth he could accumulate. This was the case in the late nineteenth century when individuals like Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu and Karuri wa Gakure accumulated wealth through the Swahili-European caravan trade (Robertson, 1997:35). Though Kikuyu women could trade in foodstuffs, which they grew, they did not have absolute autonomy of the proceeds.

Inheritance is another aspect that demonstrates the dominance of patriarchal system among the Kikuyu. Women could not inherit land, but always held it in custody for their sons. Therefore, patriarchy was an aspect of gendered power relations, which discriminated the Kikuyu woman though she was the very person who contributed immensely to the economic development of the Kikuyu community. Due to patriarchy, Kikuyu women remained producers who would not have absolute ownership of productive resources especially land. But the imposition of colonialism transformed patriarchy among the Kikuyu giving the women leeway to have minimum control over their labour.

The British introduced their form of patriarchy, which worked in collusion with Kikuyu patriarchy. The use of indirect rule in Kenya and other British colonies made it necessary for the British to maintain, even if in a distorted form, pre-colonial political structure. Like in Zimbabwe (Schmidt, 1992), the British in Kenya used colonial chiefs and elders to maintain peace in the rural areas. In almost all cases, African colonial chiefs were men who were able to use their position to accumulate wealth.
The British were able to collude with African patriarchs in controlling both women and young men. As indicated in chapter four, Kikuyu patriarchs led by Jomo Kenyatta, were keen in controlling the physical mobility of their womenfolk. However, the colonial political economy did not always make it possible for the government to support the idea of controlling physical mobility of Africans. As indicated earlier, the establishment of indirect rule created new institutions that were not previously there.

On the side of the government, there was a gradual control of women in trade when they criminalized their trade in *njahi* bean. Both the Kikuyu patriarchs and the government were keen in channeling women’s labour in what they regarded productive from their own perspective. It should be noted here that it was always not possible for African men and the colonial government to agree on the issue of women. Whereas on many occasions African politicians complained about the issue of forced labour on women, they were also reluctant to have their women move to towns. The women took advantage of the changing terrain to create new spaces for themselves (Kanogo, 2005). For instance, despite the criminalization of their trade, women continued to trade in Nairobi while others completely left the rural areas in an attempt to escape patriarchal control (Robertson, 1997; Presley, 1992; White, 1990).

To examine gender relations in both colonial and post-colonial period, the state has to be problematized in relation to gender. First and foremost, the state wields power to establish institutions that shape gender relations in society. In colonial the period, the state formulated economic policies that had differential effects on various categories of men and women and, therefore, had implications on gender relations. In Kiambu District, both land and labour policies significantly transformed gender relations. The newly introduced individual land tenure system destroyed women's access and young men's rights of land inheritance. Land
consolidation reduced landholding that could be put under cultivation. This in turn affected the sector of food crop production greatly altering gender relations of production. The independent government did not deviate from the colonial policy on agricultural production. It continued to give attention to exportable products, for instance coffee and tea in the case of Kiambu District. But with continual scarcity of land, Kikuyu of Kiambu moved into horticulture. All these agricultural developments impacted on gender relations. The gender analysis is thus taken as the most appropriate theoretical perspective in this study.

1.10 Methodology

The research is based on historiographical, historical explanation and their related qualitative procedures. The study analyzed both primary and secondary data. Primary sources included archival and oral interviews. The Kenya National Archives in Nairobi was the main archive that was consulted. Various documents including district annual reports, agricultural reports, handing over reports for both colonial and post-colonial periods were analyzed. These documents provided historical data on land tenure and land policies, labour policies, taxation, agricultural policies, trade and traders. The post-independence development plans, sessional papers and statistical abstracts were another source of primary data. These were important in highlighting the official position regarding agriculture in general and also giving valuable data on the types of crops grown in Kiambu District. Data from the archives were rich but not always regular. They were, therefore, complemented and corroborated with data derived from oral interviews and secondary data.

To get oral data, interviews were conducted with the help of a questionnaire guide that was divided into various sub-themes on gender relations of production during the period of study. Apart from oral interviews, case studies were done for three informants who were between 75
and 105 years of age. This was done to capture the voices of the informants on the changing gender relations of production over the period of study. This age bracket was chosen because persons within this age bracket had lived throughout the period of study and had, therefore, witnessed most of the transformation that had taken place. The limit to 105 years was necessary because beyond this age coherence is usually a problem.

The collection of oral data involved the use of various sampling procedures. In sampling the area of study, purposive sampling was used. Three divisions, Gatundu, Githunguri and Limuru of Kiambu district were purposively sampled. The three divisions are located in the highland zone where rainfall is high, and soils are fertile and well drained. These divisions are, therefore, agricultural endowed. Random sampling was then used to pick one location from each of the three divisions - creating a sample of three locations. This was done by writing all the names of the locations of the three divisions on pieces of paper. Then one was randomly picked from each division. The three locations sampled were Limuru, Komothai, and Kiganjo in Limuru, Githunguri and Gatundu divisions respectively.

Since this work is historical, the age bracket of oral informants was taken into account. Informants were both women and men between the ages of 21 to 104 years. The researcher was also interested with people who were engaged in food crop production and related farm-produce businesses. Persons under 21 years were not interviewed because most of them are still school-goers and, therefore, put little time in farming and have insufficient information on the changes that have taken place in gender relations. Persons beyond 105 would not have been interviewed if they were there because of lack of coherence due to advanced age. A total of 21, 16 and 16 informants were interviewed from Komothai, Limuru and Kiganjo locations respectively. Another 3 informants had been spoken to before the commencement of the study.
but whose information was included in this study because of its relevance. A total of 56 informants were interviewed by the end of the study. The researcher settled at the number interviewed after the respondents began being repetitive, which was an indication that they did not have any new information to offer.

The researcher identified the respondents by using contact persons, two of whom were introduced to her and one she knew. Once the contact persons introduced the researcher to respondents, those interviewed in turn recommend others. Thus, the researcher was able to get respondents through the "snow-balling" technique. The use of contact persons became crucial because the researcher noted that people were not willing to talk on issues of land to strangers.

A total of 30 women and 26 men were interviewed. In the case of Limuru location, getting informants was not easy. The researcher was forced to get informants in both Limuru market and Ngara Fig Tree market (Nairobi). This led to interviewing respondents out of the study locale, which was not initially intended. However, the general response of these informants was that their entry into raw food trade was as a result of the small or no land at all to sustain them. Trade was the only means through which they managed to eke a living. This applied to both gender groups. A significant number of women traded on particular days while on other days they took care of their farms. According to female informants, most men found it more profitable to leave the wives doing farming while they engaged in off-farm employment.

To conduct the oral interviews, the researcher was assisted by two research assistants. The researcher used pens, pencils and notebooks to take down information. In the interview, the researcher would interject with a question for clarification or even asking more probing questions. At the end of each day, the researcher organized the data collected according to
theme and period. The use of tape-recorder was avoided, since informants were uncomfortable especially with regard to issues of land ownership and access. In fact, informants were reluctant to indicate the acreage of their land. During the oral interviews direct observation was done to determine the crops planted on the land and the gender of workers in the field. This ascertained some of the issues raised especially with regard to the dwindling number of men involved in crop production.

Secondary data was the other category of evidence used in this study. This included published accounts by early foreign travellers, missionaries and colonial administrators. The work of Leakey (1937) provided a great account of the Southern Kikuyu before 1903. Other sources of secondary data were journal articles, books theses, seminar and conference papers, magazines and newspapers. These secondary data were gathered from various libraries. Moi Library (Kenyatta University), Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library, Institute of Development Studies, Institute of African Studies, and Kabete Campus of Agriculture and Veterinary Sciences, all of the University of Nairobi. The British Institute in Eastern Africa (IBEA) in Nairobi and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (Codesria), Dakar, Senegal were also valuable libraries.

The secondary data gave various interpretation scholars have given agriculture and food production not only in Kenya but also Africa. While most works examined agriculture in general, a number of works examined the importance of gender in agriculture in general with little attention of food crop. The secondary data was used to corroborate the primary data. This helped to fill the gap on gender relations of production that the study intended to fill.
1.11 Data Analysis

At the end of the research, a lot of information was gathered from the oral interviews, archival, and library research. The information was analyzed qualitatively. In addition, some basic simple descriptive analyses were done to show the percentages in age distribution of the informants.

To come up with a valid, reliable and accurate piece of historical work, all the data were classified according to their content, and the specific historical timeframe within which events and developments took place. This was important because historical inquiry requires the establishment of the historical specificity of social phenomena in terms of its constituent elements and of the relations between these elements over time. Since gender studies are contemporary, corroborating information with the past was necessary to retain the historical significance and, therefore, historicize gender.

1.12 Challenges Experienced During the Fieldwork

Numerous challenges were faced during fieldwork. For instance, most informants were not willing to disclose the size of their land because of the inbuilt fear particularly for those who participated in the Mau Mau war who recalled the effect of the consolidation and registration of land in the mid-1950s. In fact, there was mistrust between the Mau Mau supporters and the former homeguards. The tension was expressed in the doubts of two former Mau Mau participants whether the former homeguards that they intended to introduce the researcher to who would give valid information.

One other challenge was the paucity of men in the rural areas. This was more pronounced in Limuru location than in either Kiganjo or Komothai. The explanation given, as earlier stated was that most of the men, particularly the young men had moved to town to conduct trade or
engaged in employment because of lack of or small size of land. It is also likely that the proximity of Limuru to Nairobi encourages Limuru residents to move to the city with ease than in the other locations. To overcome this problem, the researcher was made to conduct the interviews out of the research locale in markets where these traders are. This was not initially envisaged.

Despite the challenges, adequate information and co-operation was achieved from the respondents. The use of locally respected research assistants helped assuage informants of fears about how the information was going to be used and this made it easy to obtain useful information.

1.13 Structure of Thesis

The study has been divided into eight chapters. The first chapter encompasses the background to the study; the statement of the problem; research objectives; research premises; research locale; scope and limitations and significance of the study. The methodology adopted is also discussed in this chapter as well as the theoretical framework used in the study.

In chapter two Kiambu District in relation to the wider Kikuyuland before 1920 is examined. Specifically socio-political and economic organization of the Kikuyu is explained to form a baseline for understanding the gender relations of production before foreign intrusion.

In chapter three the relations of the Kikuyu with the early foreigners who contributed directly to changes in the gender relations of production are considered. This chapter explains the factors that set in motion the transformation in gender relations of production in Kiambu before the establishment of the Kenya colony in 1920.

Gender relations of production during the inter-war period are examined in chapter four.
Government's policies in regard to land and labour are investigated as they related to production in the district. The impact of the First World War on gender relations of production and change in terms of crop type are also examined.

The fifth chapter discussed gender relations of production during the Second World War up to the outbreak of the Mau Mau war in 1952. The effect of the war and particularly the heavy demand placed on African labour, which directly affected gender labour relations are discussed.

In chapter six, gender relations during the Mau Mau war up to 1963 when Kenya became independent is analyzed. The impact of Mau Mau on production in Central Kenya and Kiambu specifically is examined. Moreover, the political tension in the country gave the colonial authorities an opportune time to consolidate and register land under individual ownership. The chapter examines the consequences of individual land registration on gender relations of production.

In chapter seven, the agricultural policy advanced by the African government is examined and how it influenced gender relations of production. The chapter examines the transformation of gender relations of production as Kiambu Kikuyu responded to changing economic circumstances.

Chapter eight concludes the study by giving a summary and analysis the findings. It argues that gender relations of production in Kiambu district changed over time as producers coped with changes in the socio-political and economic structure in the country. In the next chapter, gender relations in pre-colonial Kikuyuland are examined giving a basis of understanding changing gender relations of production in both colonial and post-colonial period.
CHAPTER TWO

GENDER RELATIONS AND FOOD CROP PRODUCTION IN PRE-COLONIAL KIKUYULAND

2.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses gender relations among the Kikuyu and food crop production on the eve of British imperial intrusion and shows that gender relations of production were determined by social-political organization of the Kikuyu, which was patriarchal in organisation. As an agricultural community, the Kikuyu held land as the most vital economic resource.

2.2 Settlement of Kikuyu in Kiambu

The origins and movements of Kenyan communities have been a continuous debate among scholars. Some scholars have tried to link the Kikuyu with the Shungwaya dispersion (Lambert) while others have opposed that assertion (Muriuki, 1974). Muriuki (1974:49) argues that Kikuyu proper have no traditions of ever migrating from Shungwaya. He demonstrates that by the 15th century, the Kikuyu together with the Cuka, Mbeere, Embu, Ndía and the Gicugu had migrated from Tigania and Igembe in Meru. At Ithanga and Mbeere regions, the communities had consolidated themselves before the Kikuyu moved to the famous Mukurwe wa Gathanga in present-day Murang’a District where they continued to evolve to be a distinct group (Ibid: 62). It is here that the Kikuyu are thought to have taken agriculture as a way of life probably because of the climatic suitability. By the first half of the eighteenth century, population in Murang’a had outstripped land availability according to the land use pattern of the time, forcing some sections to migrate.

At their dispersal point in Murang’a, the Kikuyu moved either to the north, to present day Nyeri or south, to Kiambu. The movement began in the late eighteenth century during the Mathathì generation but it was slow and gradual. By the first half of the 19th century, the
movement expanded to reach south of River Chania and by around 1860, they had reached *Rui rua Aaka*, which means, women's river (Muriuki, 1974: 72; Leakey, 1977:50-51). According to an informant (Njuguna, O.I., 2005), the river was called “women’s river” because women used to bathe in it. Today, the river is called Ruaka. Around 1887 when the first European entered southern Kikuyu, the Kikuyu had reached the edge of Maasai country near Ngong (Leakey, 1977: 51).

In Kiambu, the Kikuyu came into contact with the Dorobo with whom individual pioneers and small groups had to deal with directly. This is where most of Kiambu land was "bought" from the Dorobo (Athi) apart from regions of Gatundu division. There are arguments that the Kikuyu forced the Dorobo out of their lands. Muriuki (1974:70-71) and Leakey (1977:90-106) maintain that the Kikuyu did not drive away the Dorobo but negotiated for the land. Kiramba (O.I. 2005) who claims Dorobo ancestry maintains that not all the Dorobo "sold” land to the Kikuyu. He asserts that there was exchange of goats for land between some of the Kikuyu and the Dorobo. The amount of land the Kikuyu migrants in Kiambu got differed from one individual or sub-clan to another. For example, Magugu of Igi sub-clan got the lion’s share of land in Komothai area. Some respondents reported that the sub-clan of Waweru wa Magugu (Waweru son of Magugu) has huge tracts of land to this day (Wanjiru, Muthoni, O.I. 2005). It is most probable that the Magugu family was big before movement such that they were able to bring more land under use. They may also have used force to acquire the land. By the time of consolidation and registration, Waweru wa Magugu was a colonial chief, and it is, also possible that he seized advantage of the situation to accumulate land during the mid-1950s, a reason that can explain the ownership of huge tracts of land in independent Kenya.

In Kiambu District, apart from Gatundu area, each Kikuyu family entered into negotiation with a Dorobo family that owned land. In fact, negotiations, which led to land “buying” were
only made after close and firm ties, had been established between the two parties (Muriuki: 1974:70). The negotiations, which were preceded by a ceremony referred to as “mutual adoption”, were detailed and seriously executed by both sides. Leakey argues that there were factors, which prohibited the Kikuyu from forcibly occupying the Dorobo’s land. Most importantly, land among the Kikuyu was sacredly held in the belief that the departed souls resided there. Therefore, to avoid annoying the departed souls, proper procedure had to be followed to acquire land in someone else’s possession irrespective of ethnic background. It was also, argued that any Kikuyu family, which did not follow the procedure, would not expect help from kinsmen if they got into problems. The ceremony of mutual adoption was, hence important in that it bound the parties concerned to good conduct since it provided mutual safeguard and guarantee of good faith (Leakey 1977:90). The ceremony of mutual adoption automatically made the Dorobo members of the mbari (sub-clan) that had adopted them. There were, however, instances where unscrupulous individuals from either side betrayed each other. Muriuki asserts that Gatonye Munene and Waiyaki Hinga maltreated their Dorobo friends. There were also unscrupulous Dorobo who entered into negotiation with more than one Kikuyu family thereby causing misunderstanding (Muriuki, 1974:71).

In the southwest movement, the traditional small family group settlements were not effective because of the presence of the fierce Maasai community, which necessitated more comprehensive defense. The responsibility was taken over by the mbari, which possessed a substantial number of warriors to help in the occupation of the area beyond river Ruaka. By the 1880s, the Kikuyu of Kiambu were settling in the area between the Karura and Nairobi rivers, and also the Muguga region (Muriuki 1974:72). Kikuyu migration towards Nairobi area continued slowly but by the time Lugard established his fort at Dagoretti in 1890, they had not gone beyond Nairobi River (Ibid: 73). Consequently, the Kikuyu were among the first Kenya Africans to encounter Europeans in Nairobi and its environs. It should be pointed out that
migration was always a male initiative. The responsibility of providing land to their families, the main means of production made men take lead in searching for land. The women as the main source of agricultural labour were supposed to be provided with land on which they were required to till to produce foodstuffs for their respective households.

2.3 The Socio-Political and Religious Organization of the Kikuyu in Pre-colonial Period

Gender, age and seniority defined the roles, rights and responsibilities within the household and in the wider Kikuyu society. The Kikuyu were a patriarchal community despite a traditional claim that they were once matriarchal. The men, therefore, headed the socio-political and religious institutions. The Kikuyu lived in dispersed homesteads. Each household (Mucii) consisted of the man's hut (thingira), the wife's hut (nyumba) and one or more grain stores (ikumbi-sing Makumbi-plural). The general term for the family was also nyumba. In a polygynous family, children born of the same father could call themselves by the name of their father, and therefore belonged to their father's family. Children of a specific wife would call themselves by the name of their mother, meaning that they belonged to her family. The family, (nyumba) was the basic socio-political unit and was supposed to be economically self-sufficient (Sorrenson, 1967:4). On the household level, a man was the outright head of his family, which may have been made of his wife or wives and their children. At the community level, the sub-clan (mbari) was the major socio-political institution. By the end of 17th century, mbari as a socio-political institution seems to have been well-established in Murang'a, the original area of dispersion. Male elders formed the Mbari council, which coordinated mbari affairs (Leakey, 1977:880; Muriuki, 1974:116). Both Muriuki and Leakey agree that Kikuyu warriors could sometimes attend the mbari council meetings.

However, while Muriuki (1974:116) asserts that warriors participated in the discussions, Leakey (1977:741) argues that warriors attended the council meetings as onlookers and
audience. He maintains that by attending, warriors were meant to learn the techniques of debate and acquire the knowledge of Kikuyu law and customs. Since respect for age and seniority was very crucial in the social relations among the Kikuyu, it is doubtful if warriors could actively participate in the discussions as Muriuki claims. Young men had to be contented with being junior to the senior men until they married and had their own families.

The mbari council chose a titular head, Muramati (custodian or guardian). He was not lord over the others but was meant to regulate the day-to-day affairs of the sub-clan. The muramati, for example, was the spokesman for the sub-clan in intra-mbari affairs. He also administered the mbari land but had no right to dispose it without the consent of the sub-clan's council members (Muriuki, 1974: 116).

The status of women was quite different from that of men. While with age men would become completely independent, women remained dependent on male guardians either as daughters or wives. However, age and seniority helped women to have some limited power. A first wife in a polygynous family exercised authority over her co-wives especially by influencing the husband. In fact, a hard-working first wife needed to be consulted if another wife was to be married (Njeri Waititu, 1997). In other instances, she could encourage the husband to marry and would even pick a girl for him (Leakey, 1997: 794). The main aim of getting co-wives was to help in the provision of the much-needed agricultural labour. But despite her privileged position, the first wife was answerable to the male head either a husband or the first son of the widow.

Apart from the family, (nyumba), clan (muhiriga) was also an important institution of socio-political organization. It was through the clan that one was provided with a sense of belonging.
to the wider Kikuyu community. The Kikuyu have nine clans, which are all given female names according to the legendry story of the nine Gikuyu daughters. For instance, there was the clan of *Muumbui*. This was the clan named after Gikuyu's daughter Wambui. The corporate clan for all Kikuyu was *Mumbi*, after Gikuyu's wife. One described himself or herself as *mwana wa Mumbi* or *wa mbari ya Mumbi* (the child of *Mumbi* or descendant of *Mumbi*). The application of the corporate clan name was just used for unity and solidarity and was never used to manage the day-to-day affairs of the clan (Muriuki 1974: 115). Below the clan was the sub-clan or *mbari*. The sub-clan was made of members who traced their descent from one male. This meant that, in one clan, there would be several sub-clans. For instance, individuals from the named clan, *Muumbui* would belong to several sub-clans (*mbari*). One would say he is a *Muumbui wa mbari ya marigu* (she is of *Muumbui* clan of the sub-clan of bananas). Due to population increase and dispersal, by around 17th century, the sub-clan (*mbari*), was the community’s binding factor. The leadership of the clans and sub-clans was the preserve of men although all clans were named after women.

Politically, power among the Kikuyu was not concentrated in individuals but was diffused within age set (*riika*). The political, judicial and religious functions were performed by an age set. An age set was established after undergoing the rite of circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls, which was a prerequisite to attaining full adulthood. However, the age set took political responsibilities of the territory after thirty years on assuming the status of senior age set. Their predecessors moved to the status of elders in the governing council (Leakey, 1977:5-6). Before assuming senior status, they had to pass through junior cadre, which performed the work of the military. They also acted as executive officers to the elders being entrusted with such activities as policing duties in the markets and during festivals.

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1 This was gathered during a private discussion between the researcher and her paternal grandmother who was the first wife in a polygamous family. Njeri claimed that she advised and helped her husband to marry her co-wives.
There was no gender equality in the political structure, which discounts Muriuki’s (1974:110) assertion that the community was egalitarian. Despite undergoing initiation ceremony, which acted as an entrance to political authority, girls did not qualify to join the council of elders, which was the supreme political institution among the Kikuyu. Women were usually not publicly consulted on corporate political decisions and were, therefore, not admitted as members of the Kikuyu governing councils, the *kiama* (plural *ciama*), in the villages, the district and the entire Kikuyu territory. Judicial authority was also bestowed on these councils (Presley, 1992:23). Age and associated ceremonies ensured political progression for men. At the lowest level was the junior members’ council (*kiama kia kamatimu*). Members of this council performed physical tasks like soldiers, couriers and sergeant-at-arms during meetings. They are also thought to have overseen women clearing and preparing the council meeting place. This put junior men in higher positions over women even though the women would have been older than them and, therefore, discounts the claim of egalitarianism by Muriuki (1974:110).

Although they were shut off from the governing council, women were allowed to have their own assembly, "*kiama kia atumia* " (council of women) (Presley, 1992:27). Women’s councils were traditionally not admitted to interfere with the men’s council (*kiama kia athuri*) on matters of warfare, territorial expansion or the maintenance and regulation of the judicial system. Issues relating to resources especially land was not directly in the domain of women. Women were contented as long as they were allowed access to land. Despite this, women joined the public limelight in that they prepared female initiation, which was of public concern. Another way women used to make their presence felt in the public sphere was use of ridicule against men. Through proverbs and songs sung during work parties, women could
shame men who mistreated their spouses especially the batterers. It is argued here, therefore, that Kikuyu women were not entirely confined to the private sphere as some European feminists suggest.

Like political structure, religion influenced gender relations among the Kikuyu. They believed in one God (Ngai) who resided on Mount Kenya (Kirinyaga). The names and attributes of Kikuyu God indicate that He was a man. For instance, Ngai (God) was viewed as the distributor (muugai) just as a Kikuyu man distributed resources to his dependents. All public ceremonies remained the domain of men. In fact, men religiously conducted almost all Kikuyu ceremonies from birth to planting.

Other than believing in the existence of one God, the Kikuyu also recognized ancestral spirits who were believed to reside in the land (Leakey, 1977:16). Through family and public worship that was characterized by pouring out libation and the propitiation of the ancestors, the Kikuyu became attached to their land. The pouring out of libation connected the living and the dead who were thought to have ensured the wellbeing of the society in general and the specific family in particular (Muriuki 1974:75). It was imperative for all family members to participate in the ceremony unless one was out for an important mission like defense in the case of warriors. So far, it has been shown that patriarchal system organized the Kiambu Kikuyu socially and politically. It is shown in the next section how patriarchy influenced economic organization, which revolved around land and its proceeds.

2.4 The Economic Organisation of the Kikuyu in Pre-colonial Period

Land was a major means of production among the Kikuyu. As an agricultural people, land was an important source of livelihood for them. It was not only wealth but also a source of wealth. A man who owned land was referred to as mwene (owner) and was highly respected (Ngone,
A landowner attracted even non-


$mbari$ members who came to seek land as $ahoi$ (tenant-at-will). The importance of land made every Kikuyu man crave to be a landowner. The land was, however, scattered across the ridge so that the farmers could take advantage of various soils textures and to avoid any climatic calamities (Njeri, O.I. 2000).

Land tenure system among the Kikuyu evolved as the community expanded territorially. By the late 19th century, different land tenure systems had been established in the various Kikuyu regions. As a crucial source of livelihood, its accessibility influenced relations of production between people whether among women, men and between women and men.

The process of acquisition essentially governed land tenure. Initial pioneering of land either through cultivation or hunting formed the major basis of ownership. The $mbari$, (sub-clans), in Murang'a and Nyeri, made this pioneering ownership of land more pronounced compared to Kiambu except in some parts of Gatundu. In most parts of Kiambu, the presence of the Dorobo who Muriuki (1974) designates as the Athi, made the Kikuyu pioneers devise a different method of acquiring land. Having established friendship with the Dorobo, they either "exchanged" or were given land in situations where they adopted the Dorobo. The negotiator became the $mwene$, (owner) of the parcel of land. Shortly, he was followed by relatives or tenants-at-will who helped to clear the land. In return, they received the rights of cultivation (Muriuki 1974: 78-79).

The process of acquisition in Kiambu gives credence to the argument that individual land tenure existed among majority of Kiambu Kikuyu. Mackenzie (1998:26) argues that the mode of acquisition created "differences in the balance between $mbari$ and the individual rights with respect to land tenure". The existence of individual ownership could be explained from two perspectives. First, the fact that individuals acquired land through “exchange” made individual ownership stronger than where small pioneer family members acquired land. Second, the
Kikuyu were expanding at a time when the Europeans were penetrating Kikuyuland. Consequently, their expansion was halted, which may have had a negative effect on Kiambu Kikuyu social brotherhood. This may have made individual ownership in Kiambu stronger than in other Kikuyu districts. The fact that land was alienated for White settlers (Sorrenson, 1968) at a time Kiambu Kikuyu were still trying to expand, may have made individuals keep off any non-\textit{mbari} persons.

As briefly indicated above, another way land was accessed was by one becoming a client to a large landowner, thereby attaining the right of non-permanent use. The patron-client relationship could either be through marriage or non-marriage relations. The patron-client relations among the Kikuyu supports the argument advanced earlier that the community was socially stratified even before the colonial period. The landowners (\textit{ene}) were a class of people that was respected because of owning property and the fact that they were able to accommodate several clients on their land. One such client was a \textit{Muthoni} (in-law). This was an affinal relationship in which a father-in-law gave a landless son-in-law the use of land. By allowing his son-in-law to cultivate, the man was indirectly making land accessible to his daughter. Another relationship that was affinal was that of \textit{muciarwo}. The term \textit{muciarwo} indicated one who had been born (\textit{guciarwo}). It meant that the client had been "born" in the sub-clan (Muriuki, 1974; Leakey, 1977; Mackenzie, 1998). The client in this type of relationship was initially a stranger, but was later adopted by the landowner, and given a wife from the hosting \textit{mbari}. He was then permitted to occupy a certain portion of land. The two-affinal relationships described above shows that women were given in marriage, but they were not involved when it came to entering into land negotiations.

The major non-affinal relation was that of \textit{muhoi}, (tenant-at-will). The term \textit{muhoi} literary means one who begs. \textit{Muhoi} was given temporary cultivation rights on the basis of friendship
without payment. He was, however, required to give annual tribute of beer or first fruits to the host. At a later date, when the friendship had become stable, a *muhoi* would request to acquire resident-tenant status. A *muthami* (resident tenant), was another non-affinal patron/client relationship. This was a situation where a man moved with all his family members and settled at a *mwene’s* (landowner's) land. The *muthami* had both the cultivation and residential rights unlike a *muhoi* (Burugo, O.I. 2005). The price that a *muthami* paid was to slaughter a ram or an ewe, called, *mburi ya ndarua* (a ram for a sleeping mat) at the boundary of the landowner before he was allowed in (Leakey, 1977:115). The above discussed patron/client relations continue to affirm the fact that Kikuyu women were completely discriminated in land matters. Women would not make important decisions like giving out or acquiring land, which was a male's prerogative. It was only through associating with male guardians that women were assured of accessing land.

The patron-client relations were dynamic. A hard working client would with time manage to get enough resources especially goats and sheep that enabled him acquire his own land and have his own clients. Such a client moved to the class of landowners and, therefore, earned societal respect. It should be noted that a man would only manage to accumulate wealth as a result of hard work of his dependents- wives and children. This affirms the importance of Kikuyu women in the provision of labour and creation of wealth in pre-colonial period.

Apart from ownership and patron/client relations, land was also acquired by transfer or by force, as blood money in lieu of livestock if a particular *mbari* was unable or unwilling to pay a fine. But in the event that the fine was paid in full, the land was redeemed (Muriuki, 1974: 74). The Kikuyu land tenure system was, therefore, complex and dynamic. There was always, therefore, re-negotiation of land relations. The movement of the Kikuyu from Murang’a to Kiambu and Nyeri was necessitated by the need to renegotiate these land relations. Migration
was intended to resolve inherent tensions over the control of land and, therefore, creating new land relations.

Land became *mbari*'s (sub-clan) once the sons of the pioneers became mature. They came to regard such land as ancestral land, and developed a great attachment to it for economic and religious purposes. This land became *mbari*-owned on two accounts. First, the offspring of the pioneer owner (*mwene*) had a right over it since it was property of their great-parent. Second, it was on this particular land that they conducted ceremonies to revere their ancestors (Leakey, 1977:109-110). Therefore, individual ownership was overshadowed once the sons attained adulthood. However, a grown-up son who wished to own land was not hindered from migrating from his father's land. But the attachment to his “ancestral” land remained.

The *mbari* system of land tenure was governed by certain principles meant to protect all members corporately and individually. *Mbari* members had a right to use any part of the land as long as no other member had staked prior interests. Moreover, land could be “given” out only with the approval of the members specifically the council members. Any “sale” to non-*mbari* members was only allowed if no *mbari*-member was willing to buy. However, such sales were redeemable (Muriuki, 1974).

The discussion on land tenure this far indicates the gendered nature of these relations. A man, as the family head had the final word on the family resources. He apportioned his land to his wife/wives. The wives were supposed to use the land to provide for their specific families. A Kikuyu woman was, therefore, not supposed to own land. At the death of the landowner, the first son became the custodian for the whole family. Nevertheless, there were special circumstances where a woman owned land. If a deceased landowner passed it to his wife, *mbari* members could respect his wish. It is probable that the gradual inheritance of land by
women began in the 20th century because of diminishing land, which may have made men want to protect the land rights of young children. With weakening mbari social cohesion, the mother was the most appropriate person to protect the interests of the children.

If the husband had died without a son, a widow would get a man, who acted as a husband. Such a man was referred to as mwenda ruhiu (literal translation, one who sold his knife). Such a man fathered children for the widow and had, therefore, no legal rights over them. The children bore the name of the deceased husband (Njuguna O.I. 2005; Mackenzie, 1998). This argument was given weight by a woman informant in Nyandarua District, who claimed that she had established a relation with another man after the death of her husband and children born from that relationship bore the name of her late husband (Muthoni Machari, 1990). In such a case, the bereaved woman became the landowner. The institution of woman-to-woman marriage also enabled Kikuyu women to own land at least until she got a male heir. This kind of marriage was prevalent amongst post-menopausal women whose husbands had died without leaving any sons or close relatives, brothers or half brothers to inherit the property and perpetuate the family name. The widow proposed to a girl and then chose one of her late husband's age-mates to ceremoniously consummate the marriage on her behalf. After this, the bride was allowed to choose a man who became the physical husband (Wanyoike, 2002:16).

A woman’s relations in the tenurial arrangement were diverse: as a wife, she had usufruct rights to land and as head of her nyumba (dwelling hut), she was the medium through whom land passed from one generation to another (Mackenzie, 1998:31-32). But such land never became her property.

An unmarried girl was entitled to a piece of land, mugunda wa muiritu (A girl’s land) in her
mother’s land. Use rights to such land were, however, dependent on the needs of the lineage men. Once her brothers married, their wives’ need for land was first satisfied. In the long run, the married girl would be given a gift to “redeem” the land for the brothers’ wives. Once married, a girl was considered to belong to the husband’s *mbari* more than she did to her paternal relations though she continued to be a member of her father’s *mbari* (Nyambura, O.I. 2000).

Sons acquired their land through the mother. They had equal rights to land cultivated by their mother. She was, thus, the custodian of her sons’ land. On marriage, sons got a portion of their mother’s land for their wives. A mother ceased to have any say on such piece of land once it passed to the daughter-in-law. If the portion was not sufficient, more land was acquired by clearing the father-in-law’s bush land.

Like in most of Africa, therefore, use rights were usually contingent on individual’s membership to a social group and or their allegiance to traditional authorities (Berry, 1993:105). It was on this understanding that an individual’s security of tenure was safeguarded. However, relation to land was not equitably gendered because it was influenced by power distribution among the Kikuyu. As the holders of power and, therefore, society’s decision-makers, men influenced individual’s relation to land. A woman’s relation to a man either in birth or marriage influenced her access to land. As a married person, her security to land was ensured as long as she remained in the matrimonial residence. It was, however, unfortunate for a woman to be divorced. Once she was back to her paternal relatives, she would not be given her own piece of land but was required to cultivate together with her mother (Nyambura, Ngone, O.I. 2000). Women had to be contented with being granted usufructuary rights by men before a significant number of them began to acquire personal land.

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2 The discussion with Muthoni was not part of this work but it proved beneficial in understanding the changing
in the late 1950s. Moreover, even when she had a fortune from her trade, she could not purchase land. Acquisition of land or any other property by a woman, especially a married one, was viewed as a threat to the husband’s authority and position in the family among the older generation (Njeguna, O.I. 2005).

Sons were equally protected. The father had a duty and responsibility to give his sons land upon marriage. Sons, unlike the girls, were privileged to inherit land that their mothers’ cultivated. However, inheriting a piece of land did not hinder a son from acquiring his own land. Grandsons were in turn entitled to cultivate land assigned to their mothers. But as the sub-clan expanded, portions of land inherited by sons reduced. Within two or three generations, the cultivated land would be “tiny strips of all shapes and scattered all over the ridges” (Muriuki, 1974:76).

Tenants also enjoyed security of tenure. It was only in very unavoidable circumstance that a tenant was evicted. Leakey (1977:120) outlines the circumstances under which, a resident-tenant, tenant at-will, and a relation-in-law would be evicted. The Kikuyu encouraged generosity among their family members. Consequently, a welcomed tenant who was stingy was not hosted for a long period. Having been welcomed, tenants were required to reciprocate by maintaining acceptable behaviour to the host and the neighbours. It was not always possible to maintain acceptable conduct and thus there were times that tenants were found wanting by the host. A tenant who portrayed uremi (disobedience) could be easily evicted. A disturber of peace or user of insulting language to the landowner was not tolerated. A person suspected to witchcraft was feared being in the midst of any family. Such a person would not continue to be hosted.

position of the Kikuyu women.
Land tenure was not static as anthropological writings of Leakey (1977) and Kenyatta (1938) put it. Land tenure was part of a complex and elastic set of rights under constant renegotiation and reconstruction by individuals in the struggle for land rights. If the landowner or member of the *mbari* wanted to make use of the land, the client had to be notified. Therefore, the relationship between *mwene* and the *ndungata*, or *muciarwo*, a *muthoni* and *muhoi* and the practice of the redeemable sale of land, could be the grounds for negotiation if significant control over the land vis-à-vis the *mbari* (Njuguna, O.I., 2005; Mackenzie, 1998:29) was to be maintained.

To avoid unreasonable eviction of tenants by the landowners, land laws were followed. The tenant had unrestricted rights to cultivate the given area. He also had rights to graze at the given field. At the death of the tenant, a new agreement with his children was deemed necessary. If the landowner wished to evict a tenant for whatever reason, the latter’s cultivated portion of land had to lie fallow until it was bushy again before the landowner would make use of it. Thus, it ensured that the landowner did not benefit from his ex-tenant’s labour and, therefore, discouraged unscrupulous landowners using free labour (Mackenzie, 1998:29).

The security of tenure discussed above was ideal. As indicated earlier, the authority in the *mbari* would change with the death of the original owner. It is natural that though the custodian (*muramati*) was required by the social obligations to safeguard the interests of the *mbari* members, he would not always observe the expectation expected of him. Stresses and strains amongst the *mbari* members in regard to access to land could force some to migrate to avoid confrontation. Therefore, security of tenure was safely safeguarded as long as the interests of the most influential individuals were in place. This was evident at the end of the 1920s when the *ahoi’s* (singular *muhoi*) tenurial rights began to be re-examined (Sorrenson, 1968). In an effort to consolidate their limited land, landowners began to selfishly hold land.
for themselves. This will be tackled in detail in a later chapter. It suffices to indicate here that land rights were contested and/or renegotiated in the course of changing patterns of settlement and authority structures within the sub-clan. The individuals’ security of land tenure was linked to the overall security of social and political life.

2.5 Gender, Division of Labour and Decision –Making

Having examined the land tenure and security, a further analysis of land use, decision-making and division of labour is appropriate. Traditionally, economic chores were gendered among the Kikuyu (Tignor, 1976:289). Both men and women had different obligations, which influenced decision-making and division of labour (Wanjiku, O.I, 2001).

Kikuyu agricultural activities were influenced both by the soil texture and the rainy seasons. The Kikuyu took advantage of the different soil types to grow a variety of food crops that satisfied their subsistence needs throughout the year, except in periods of natural calamities like drought or floods. Before the Europeans introduced the lunar months, the Kikuyu year was determined by the two-rain seasons. In one English calendar year, the Kikuyu had two years, (*miaka*). The first was *njahi* (lablab bean) season or the long rains season. The second season was the *mwere* (bulrush millet) season for short rains.

That food crop production was an important economic activity for the Kikuyu long before colonial rule is evidenced by the fact, before 1887, the Kikuyu supplied large quantities of foodstuffs to the Arab and Swahili trade caravans from the coast (Leakey, 1977:53). By the time the British arrived in Kikuyuland in the last decade of the 19th century, the Kikuyu had established a habit of growing surplus foodstuffs for exchange (Robertson, 1997; Clark, 1980) with the Dorobo acting as intermediaries between the coast caravans and the source of food in the heart of Kikuyuland. By the turn of the twentieth century, southern Kikuyu had built up
trade and commerce to supply caravans with food supplies. The foodstuffs produced and sold to the caravans included sugarcane, millet, maize, njahi (lablab bean) and bananas. These crops were gender-specific. 24% of women informants of the ages 80-105 indicated that the growth of the various food crops by the community ensured that there was limited food shortage.

Though Kikuyu kept livestock, their primary economic activity was agriculture and animal products especially meat was rarely consumed apart from during important ceremonial functions. The Kikuyu had a carbohydrate and vegetarian diet mostly of millet, beans, bananas and sweet potatoes as their staple food and a variety of green vegetables (Edith, O.I. 2005; Taylor, 1976).

The family provided the core of the agricultural labour though work parties could be used when work was pressing. As the head of her own hut, a woman directed her children to work on her assigned portion of land. A man worked on his piece of land but at times he asked his dependents to give a hand. This was more of a command than a request. The wives would not disregard the authority of the man. As noted earlier, agricultural chores were gendered but flexibility was accommodated. There were interchanges occasioned by different circumstances. Men cleared (gutuguta) all virgin land, brushwood and undergrowth vegetation using a knife (kahiu ka mengere). They were also required to hoe (gucimba) fallow land because it was considered harder than even the virgin land. To hoe they used a big digging stick, munyago, which was made from specific hard wood like muhugu or mutamaiyu (Burugo O.I. 2005; Leakey 1977:169-170).

After the men had hoed the ground, women followed immediately to do the harrowing (kuhukuria). However, a man had first to apportion the land he had cleared to his wife/wives
before the harrowing was done. It was the duty and responsibility of a man to ensure that each of his wives had sufficient land on which to grow foodstuffs for her children. To safeguard against total loss of harvest, the cultivated land was scattered over the ridge. Each woman had to harrow her portion in preparation for planting. Women used small digging sticks called miro to harrow the fields while bending from the hips. Men did not bend but squatted as they did any harrowing. It was rare for men to harrow though there was no taboo in doing so.

Colonial policy in the 20th century significantly impacted on these social processes. First land alienation reduced virgin land that men were meant to clear. Second, the introduction of the imported iron-hoe made it possible to clear bigger portions of land within a short time. These changes released both males and females for other colonial ventures subsequently altering gender relations.

Given that food crop production among the Kikuyu was gendered, women were responsible for seasonal crops (irio cia kimera) while men grew perennial crops (irio cia menja). However, division of crop production along gender was not rigid. Due to this gender delineation, some crops were identified with either female or male cultivators. Women cultivated legumes; pigeon peas, green grams, kidney bean, maize, sorghum and millets (Njeri, O.I. 2005). Sugarcane, bananas, yams, cassava, gourds, tobacco and sweet potatoes were planted and cared for by men. Kikuyu food was enriched by a variety of green leaves like togotia, terere, kigerema, thabai, (sticking-nettle) and leaves of lablab bean and cowpea (Leakey: 1977:173).

From the list of the crops grown by the Kikuyu, women handled annual /seasonal crops (Leakey, 1977:75-76). Due to their role as family food providers, they had to plant particular crops that constituted a major diet for the Kikuyu. The bean crop that was planted served not only as a woman’s food but also as a commodity of trade (Robertson 1997: 38). The njahi;
(lablab) considered to be of Asian origin (Ibid: 40) was most important to Kikuyu women who planted it only at the beginning of the long rains (mbura ya njahi). This bean was valued for its ceremonial significance, which was linked with Ngai’s (God's) second dwelling place, kia-njahi (Mountain of Njahi). It is said that a special variety of wild njahi bean, known either as njahi cia Ngai or njahi cia ngoma (the njahi beans of God or of the departed souls) grew around this mountain (Leakey, 1977:1078). Their association with the long rains, (mbura ya njahi- njahi rains) which were the most important rains, illustrates the significance of njahi beans (Robertson, 1997:40). Njahi beans were invaluable as fertility enhancer because of their nutritional value. Women ate njahi during all-important transitional stages in their reproductive lives.

Before clitoridectomy was performed, girls ate njahi and equally during pregnancy and after childbirth, women ate njahi as a priority food (Ibid: 40-41; Njeri, O.I. 2005). To date, mothers and mothers- in- law who adhere to traditions ensure that their daughters feed on njahi after childbirth. On significant occasions such as marriage negotiations and other ceremonies it was mandatory to serve “Kikuyu food” referring to njahi. The persistent use of njahi in ceremonies as well as in normal occasions indicates the significance of njahi as a woman’s crop. Given women's role as preservers of traditions this explains Kikuyu women's resistance to attempts by the colonial government to push them out of trade (Robertson, 1997).

Women also planted other legumes, pigeon peas (njugu), cowpeas (thoroko), green -grams (ngina) and kidney beans (mboco). Being a slow growing crop, pigeon peas were planted during the short rains but were harvested after the next long rains. Its harvesting was done at the same time with njahi. Cowpeas were planted during the long rains but at harvest, the stalls were left to regenerate during the short rains since its leaves were used as a vegetable. Kidney beans were often inter-cropped with, for instance, maize and since they matured fast, they
were handy during periods of shortage, just before maize was harvested. These beans were planted during both short and long rain seasons (Leakey: 1977: 182).

Millet was an important food crop, and formed the main diet of the Kikuyu. There were a variety of millets but they were all grown and cared for by women. Though there was no taboo, men rarely handled Bulrush millet (mwere). Bulrush millet was planted in the lower areas of Kikuyuland during the short rains and dried immediately on the set of the dry season. It was never inter-cropped but maize could be planted on the side of the field. Both foxtail (mukombi) and finger millets (ugimbi) were planted during short rains through the broadcasting method. For one to get a good harvest of foxtail and finger millets, she had to have ample land as dictated by the method of planting.

By the beginning of nineteenth century, maize was an important staple food among the Kikuyu. Unlike the small grains that are credited to the Ethiopian and Eastern African highlands, maize was introduced to Africa. The Portuguese are credited to have introduced maize to the coastal settlements in the sixteenth century and its spread to the interior seems to have followed the trading routes. Posnansky (1975:223) indicates that by 1862 cassava and maize were present in Uganda suggesting that the coast traders introduced them. Since Kiambu had trade contact with the coast as early as 1700, it is suggested here that maize was being grown in Kiambu before the arrival of Europeans. However, the presence of different maize varieties: nyamukuru, njera, and nyamuthaka indicate the adaptation of maize to the environment (Ngone, Kimemia, O.I. 2000, 2005). The varieties were small cobbled and quick maturing. Due to its fast growth and the fact that maize was grown twice a year, Kikuyu were in most times self-sufficient in maize unless there was severe drought. As indicated above, maize was a woman’s crop but it was not a taboo for a man to help out especially in case a wife had health problems.
As indicated previously, Kikuyu men actively participated in agricultural production. While women cared for annual crops, men were responsible for perennial crops. Unlike women's crops, men's crops demanded less labour input. Once planted. These crops included sugarcane, cassava, arrowroots, yam and bananas. None of the crops was indigenous to Kikuyuland but were all introduced. Sugarcane (*kigwa*) was planted near streams and swamps. Availability of enough water near streams and swamps enabled the growth of sugarcane all year round. Sugarcane was important in that it was used in beer preparation mostly for rituals and ceremonies. The fact that men performed the rituals would explain why sugarcane was a man's crop.

Banana was also a man’s crop. There were several varieties, *njuuru, muraru, mutahato, mutika, muthiriri, munjuu, mbiri*, and *gatumia (nyoro)*. The various banana varieties also indicate some form of adaptation to the environment. It is indicated that though banana was introduced into the East African region, it has the highest number of varieties in the world. By the time this field study was done, there were only two of the varieties - *mararu* and *nyoro* that were being mentioned by informants. Respondents claimed that there was crossbreeding with recent varieties that produced faster growing banana which was however not good tasting like earlier varieties Wanjiru Njoroge, O.I. 2005).

To maintain the banana, men had to prop them with special props called “*itugi cia marigu*” (Njuguna, O.I. 2005). Moreover, they cut dry leaves and bark, which was put around the base of the banana. These wastes formed organic manure for the banana plant. Little work was, therefore, required for bananas.

Sweet potatoes were among the most important perennial crops among the Kikuyu. It had more than one use. The potato tubers served as food while the vines provided fodder for the
stall-fed sheep and goats. In most cases, stall-fed animals were fattened for a specific ritual using the sweet potato vines. The sweet potatoes would also be exchanged for goats (Muchoki 1988: 72) and was, therefore, an important means of accumulating wealth.

But most importantly, the value of sweet potatoes and other perennial crops such as arrowroots, cassava and yams was their ability to resist drought and they therefore acted as convenient fall back in times of drought. Caring of these crops was very minimal in terms of weeding. In chapter four, it is noted that in the late 1920s, the production of these crops, especially cassava began to slowly decline.

In his study, Leakey (1977) listed 49 varieties of crops that the Kikuyu regarded as their principal sources of food as tabulated below:
### Table 2.1: Principal Sources of Food among the Kikuyu

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kikuyu Name</th>
<th>English-Botanical Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mbembe</strong></td>
<td>Maize or Indian Corn-Zea mays: Varieties Nyamukuu, Njeru, Nyamuthaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mwere</strong></td>
<td>Bulrush millet-Pennisetum tyhoide. Variety: Taller called Muraya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mukombi</strong></td>
<td>Foxtail millet-Setaria italic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nduma</strong></td>
<td>Edible Arum-Colacasia esculenta. Varieties: Ndiru thangari ya mwanake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kigwa</strong></td>
<td>Sugar-cane Saccharum offiararum. Varieties Nyamunjeru, Njamucura, Myamubuci</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Irigu</strong></td>
<td>Banana-Musa. Varieties-Muraru, Muthato, Mutika, Muthiriri, Munjuu, Mbiri, Gatumia (Nyoro).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mugwi</strong></td>
<td>Cassava-Manihot esculenta</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Muhia</strong></td>
<td>Indian Millet-Sorghum. Varieties-Muthaka, Nyamweru, Muruge- this was eaten raw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ngwaci</strong></td>
<td>Sweetpotato-Ipomoea batatas. Varieties-Mundoro, Nyakiburi, Nyagikenye, Nyamuiru, Nyacaagatha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Njahi</strong></td>
<td>Lablab bean-Lablab purpurneus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gikwa</strong></td>
<td>Yam-dioscorea. Varieties-Mucara, Muchoho, Ngoriri, Nwa-njiru, Muremaagendi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Njugu</strong></td>
<td>Pigeon or bush-pea-cajanus Cajanus cajan. Varieties-Nyagikoro, Nyamuiru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thoroko</strong></td>
<td>Cow-pea-Vigna unguiculata. Varieties, Nyagikoro, Gacuri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nginao</strong></td>
<td>Green-gram-Vigna radiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thuu</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mboco</strong></td>
<td>Kidney bean-Phaseolus vulgaris. Variety-Nyamweru</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Other than land, labour was the other crucial means of production that the Kikuyu had to access to make their agricultural activity a reality. The ability of farmers to access and control labour as a key productive resource was inextricably intertwined with diverse and multiple experiences of individuals as wives, co-wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, daughters-in-laws and widows and in general as men and women. Since much of the food production depended on family labour, it is important to understand the multiple constraints and opportunities that
women and men faced in different personal circumstances and within gendered power relations at the family level. Carney and Watts (1990:217) discussing rice growing in the Senegambia state the existence of power structures within the household. The organisation of the Kikuyu family rotated around patriarchy where power was vested in the male gender. Consequently, senior men possessed rights to determine ownership, access to and control over resources within household social structures. Unlike the young men who over time could become senior elders, women remained dependents on the male guardians.

As mentioned in chapter one, upon marriage, a woman’s labour was transferred from her relations to the matrimonial relations. The men in the matrimonial family personified by the husband had the right to appropriate a woman’s labour. Both male and female respondents indicated that women’s labour belonged to the husband. A female respondent described it “as part of husband’s possession” (Nyambura, O.I.: 2000).

Despite the fact that the patriarchal system was generally oppressive to Kikuyu women, age and marital status enabled women to influence their husbands. Both age and marital status improved a woman’s position in the family power structure. For example, a senior active co-wife enjoyed privilege compared to her juniors. This was due to the fact that the husband received help from the parents to pay for bride-wealth. But for the subsequent wives, however, the man raised the bride-wealth, and had to depend on the first wife's agricultural labour. Owing to the important role the first played in raising the bride-wealth, it was necessary for the husband to notify or request her before getting another wife. As a result, the first wife exercised some amount of authority in this aspect. As far as her labour was concerned, it remained the possession of the husband essentially because of the bride-wealth. The primary duty of the woman was to provide labour to her matrimonial home, directly and indirectly,
through her offspring. The importance of a woman's labour was also exemplified among the Luyia, who viewed a woman as one who had gone to “cook for her husband”.

So far, it has been shown that Kikuyu men controlled women’s agricultural labour, which was very crucial for man’s prosperity. However, all family members provided labour, which was gender-specific. For instance, the first weeding (kurinura), which was considered important, was done by everyone. Women did the subsequent weeding for seasonal crops. Weeding for the seasonal crops was labour-intensive especially for all varieties of millets since they had to be weeded four to five times before harvest. Moreover, bulrush millet needed protection from birds two months prior to harvesting far more than other millets (Fisher 1954:271-272). While the women and the children did the scaring during the day, men had to remain in the field at night to ward off wild animals, like pigs, porcupines and small ducks (Mackenzie, 1998: 38).

From the above discussion, it appears the Kikuyu had gender-specific roles in agricultural production. This was, however, not static since there was no taboo in helping during times of labour shortage. There was nothing wrong for men for instance, to plant maize or millet, which were women's crops. Planting women crops was always cumbersome for men because they disliked bending waist downward like women. As a result they preferred planting crops as that they squatted. While women would dig out sweet potatoes and arrowroots, they could not do the same for yams. Technical skills and strength to avoid destroying the crop was necessary. The digging out of yams was male-specific work.

Agricultural decision was the responsibility of either the man or woman depending on the land one was working on. Moreover, gender specialization in food crop production was dictated by the traditional norms of what the role and responsibility of man or woman was in the family. Once her husband assigned her a portion of land, it was upon her to decide what to plant. A
man was equally responsible in planting his crops in his portion. Cassava and yams grown by
men were usually dug out during famines. A man's agricultural contribution was very vital in
cushioning his family from possible starvation. However, most times Kikuyu produced a
surplus that they exchanged with their Kikuyu neighbours or even with other ethnic groups
particularly the Akamba and Maasai. In the following section, pre-colonial trade is discussed.

2.6 Pre-colonial Trade in Kikuyuland

The Kiambu Kikuyu engaged in trade long before 1895 and had well-established internal and
external foodstuffs. Like other communities in Kenya, the environmental variations made it
necessary to rely on other people to meet household requirements. For instance, the Kikuyu of
Mukuruini and Othaya traded iron implements and baskets for foodstuffs with those of
Mathira and Southern Tetu. Those in Kiambu traded more with the less agriculturally
favoured neighbours especially the Akamba and the Maasai. This inter-regional trade was
nonetheless irregular and was significant during famines or other ecological disasters (Presley,
1992:20). At other times, exchange took place because they produced a surplus.

Compared with the men, women participated in both internal and external trade by the mere
fact that they were more involved in agricultural activities. Gender was important in
establishing links, which were trans-ethnic among the Maasai, Dorobo, Kikuyu and the
Akamba. Though internal trade was more frequent, extensive and involved and affected larger
populations, long distance trade was also important. Kiambu Kikuyu women frequently
went for expeditions into Ukambani and Maasai land to pursue a lucrative trade in selling dried
banana flour, njahi, maize, sorghum, green bananas, sugarcane, chewing tobacco, honey and
earthen cooking pots (Robertson, 1997: 27). It was rightly taken that carrying loads to the
market was a woman's role. As Muchoki (1988:150) put it: “It is unthinkable for a man to take
maize or bananas or anything else to the market for sale”. Before the late 19th century, therefore, Kikuyu men had participated in trade merely as facilitators and not actual traders because of traditions. Presley (1992:22) asserts that men could wait for women's trade caravans at specific points to welcome them and helps to carry the trade goods the last leg of the journey.

The contact with the Akamba had made the Kikuyu participate in the caravan trade as foodstuff suppliers. Kikuyu cultivation may have expanded as early as the 1860s in response to the demands of the caravan traders (Lonsdale, 1989: 17). From around 1860s with the penetration of the Swahili-Arabs caravans the Kikuyu, especially of southern Kiambu, had become frequent suppliers to these caravans. By the 1880s, European-led caravans reached Kikuyuland (Robertson, 1997:32). This phenomenon was not just confined among the Kikuyu (Ndege, 1990:122-126).

The last one and half decades of the nineteenth century witnessed transformation in the social structure of the caravan trade. This transformation was a result of several factors. In the first instance, there was increasingly conquest of the Kikuyu by the British, which caused a lot of insecurity since more people especially girls were kidnapped. Second, there were natural disasters and epidemics that hit the Kikuyu in the 1890s that only helped to weaken them against the adversaries. Despite these setbacks, the caravan trade was becoming more profitable during the same period. As a result of insecurity, the number of women in trade began to decline. But at a time when European demands for produce was raising. Consequently, women were sidelined from the caravan trade as especially the young men took up the role of porters (Robertson, 1997). By the beginning of the 20th century, therefore, Kikuyu women had been pushed to the production sphere with constant restraint from
engaging in trade.

It is important to understand who controlled agricultural surplus in order to shed light on gender relations of food crop production. It is argued here that the amount of control over the surplus either encouraged or discouraged women from producing a surplus. Some authors have argued that pre-colonial Kenyan women producers had complete control over the types of crops they planted, how they produced them, and the products of their labour (Fisher, 1950, Nasimiyu 1985). Muchoki (1988:84) argues that Kikuyu men took no interest in harvested crops and it was the women who decided what was to be consumed at home and what to give out either to relatives or those in need. The women also judged whether any exchange was possible after ensuring there was enough food for the families. Fisher (1950: 248) writing on the Kikuyu states that men were not even allowed to peer into women’s granaries. She maintains that once land was allocated to a woman, she was free to decide what to grow on it (Fisher, 1950:212). While the decision of crop choice and the subsequent tending of it were left to the woman, the appropriation of the profits from surplus remained a site of struggle.

Muchoki (1988:49) on the other hand, thinks that Fisher’s conclusion on woman’s “complete control” was far from true, because the wife had to accept her husband’s request to sell some of her surplus. It appears that men were concerned with the surplus if it was not much. According to Leakey, (1977:280-281) when surplus was abundant, a wife could be asked not to interfere with such grain because it could be sold to purchase a goat or sheep. Robertson (1997) argues that women did not have complete autonomy over the products of their labour because they were in a patrilocal residence which played a critical role in determining the level of women’s autonomy (Robertson, 1997: 67). The fact that the woman was the newcomer in the matrimonial home, she had insignificant autonomy over her labour especially
because bride-wealth had been paid. The rights of women to dispose off the surplus and control the profits constituted, therefore, a critical element in pre-colonial power relations. A woman informant in her late nineties indicated that though women traded, the husbands had the right to make use of those proceeds (Njeri, O.I., 1997). Discussing the proceeds of trade, Presley (1992:22-23) asserts that on arrival from her journey, a woman handed over the trade goods to her husband or the eldest son if she was a widow. Though the goods belonged to her, she was acknowledging the authority of the husband over her. This ritual of handing over the goods can well be explained within the confines of patriarchal system, which governed the Kikuyu social relations.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, Kikuyu gender relations have been analyzed. It has been shown that their socio-political and economic organisation was influenced by the patriarchal system. The gender relations in pre-colonial Kiambu seem to have favoured Kikuyu senior men who controlled the socio-political institutions, which directly influenced the economic organisation. Consequently, Kiambu women were locked out of key decision-making institutions that influenced the community's affairs despite them playing a significant role in production.

The importance of Kikuyu women's labour is demonstrated by the kind of crops they grew. All the female crops were annual and formed the main diet for the community. It was, therefore, the women's labour that sustained the community. Apart from sustaining the community, it was the women's labour that enriched the Kikuyu men. It was found that men like Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu who participated in the caravan trade in the late 19th and early 20th centuries had 49 wives who formed core labour that enabled him to produce for trade.
Ownership of and access to land was first and foremost influenced by land tenure system. In Kiambu unlike the other Kikuyu districts, individual ownership seems to have been practiced before the arrival of the British. The arrival of the Europeans only helped to entrench a process that was already there. Ownership and access to the means of production was important in influencing the ability of each gender group in production of food crops. Since females would only access land through a male guardian, they had to be either married or remain in their father's homestead, which was not always acceptable in society. Since they would not own land, women were not able to accumulate any wealth they could lay claim on. This was despite the fact that Kikuyu women actively participated in pre-colonial trade.

It has been noted also that there was gender discrimination in inheritance especially of land. Kikuyu women were never supposed to inherit land from either their paternal or matrimonial relatives. A Kikuyu woman was perceived to "live" not for herself but for her children since she acted as the custodian in safeguarding the land. Gender relations of production in Kiambu were, therefore, in favour of men. The penetration of imperial agents in the late nineteenth century did not change the situation of the Kikuyu women. Due to the prejudiced attitude European men had towards their women, African women's position was even more compromised from the late nineteenth century. In the following chapter, the early presence of European in Kiambu and the transformation it brought in gender relations in the district are examined.
CHAPTER THREE
EARLY EUROPEANS AND THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL RULE IN KIAMBU TO 1920

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines gender relations before formal establishment of colonial rule in 1920. The period witnessed the arrival of the British imperialists led by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC), which had been given a charter by the British government. Though the company did not manage to establish a strong administration, it paved way for the British colonial government. Through military expeditions, in southern Kikuyu land, the company was able to bring the Kikuyu into accepting imperial rule. Moreover, it managed to expose the economic potential of the area.

The imperial British East Africa Company began the most significant undertaking that changed the history of the region. It alienated African land in Dagoretti and Fort Smith where company forts were established. Once white settlers were settled initially in southern Kiambu, provision of cheap African labour became the next important task for the colonial office. So by the turn of the century, various methods were used to procure African labour. This was made easier by the introduction of taxes that were meant to force Africans into wage labour. Therefore, land, labour, and tax policies were all aimed at making the settlement of European settlers a success.

Though the colonial office paid little or no attention to Kikuyu agriculture, the Kiambu Kikuyu easily accepted new crops that were beginning to penetrate the interior and put more land under food crops to meet the growing demands especially in the burgeoning town of Nairobi. The Irish potato was the main crop that was quickly taken by the Kiambu Kikuyu especially in Limuru area. The high yielding Hickory King white-maize was also making inroads before
1920. By the turn of the twentieth century, great transformation was taking place in the socio-economic organization of Kiambu as a result of the new political dispensation.

### 3.2 Kiambu and Early Europeans

After the conclusion of partition in 1890, the British took the step of effectively occupying her sphere of influence. Nevertheless the British government wanted to avoid investing large capital in the region and, therefore, placed the sphere under a chartered company, the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC). Agents of the company were the first colonizing agents that came into contact with the Kikuyu in southern Kikuyuland. This contact, which was to bring great transformation among the Kikuyu of Kiambu, would not be avoided because of the centrality of Kiambu on the caravan route, used by both the Swahili merchants and IBEAC company agents as they penetrated the interior.

Like in the rest of the colony, the occupation of Central Kenya highlands was punctuated by violent episodes. The IBEA Company took the first steps in occupying the region by establishing fortified stations from where military expeditions against resisting peoples were dispatched. Captain Fredrick Lugard opened the first fort in Kiambu in 1890 at Dagoretti with the help of Waiyaki wa Hinga. Studies indicate that Waiyaki was in fact not a Kikuyu but a Maasai who had sought refuge among the Kikuyu because of natural calamities that had hit the Maasai. His participation in the caravan trade had enabled him to become prominent in the 19th century. It is likely that Waiyaki had undergone some adoption process to be recognized as a Kikuyu. Relations between Lugard and the Dagoretti Kikuyu, however, became sour after the Kikuyu burnt down the fort forcing Lugard to close it in 1891. The company built another fort, Fort Smith from where they launched expeditions against the Kikuyu for destroying Dagoretti fort (Tignor, 1976:18-19). In 1893, Waiyaki attacked the British at Fort Smith
leading to his arrest. Francis Hall, an agent of IBEAC, completed brings Kiambu District under company. His work was, however, made easier by the fact that there were individual Kikuyu who desired to continue doing trade with both the Swahili and incoming European caravan traders. In southern Kikuyuland, Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu and Kioi became important British allies in destroying dissenting groups. In 1893, Hall punished the Guru Guru for attacking Kinyanjui. Between 1901 and 1902, further expeditions were carried against Kikuyu of Kiambu after they attacked a Swahili caravan and for obstructing the government (Ibid).

Although the Kikuyu of Kiambu did not suffer a lot of human loss, because they deserted their villages before military invasion, they lost property as villages were burnt and property looted by the military. In fact, foodstuffs forcibly taken from the Kikuyu also fed the IBEAC expeditions against the community. It was imperative for Kikuyu country to be brought under the British because of its importance in food provision to the European caravans in view of the fact that there was no other source of supply in the interior until the caravan reached Mumias (Sorrenson, 1968: 14). The Company agents who became important officials after the colonial office government took over the Protectorate were astonished by the extensive and intensive cultivation in Kikuyuland. Francis Hall was amazed by the extensive cultivation as the following statement indicates: “Every available piece of ground is under cultivation, and the district may be described as one vast garden” (McGregor, 1968:41). Similarly, Fredrick Lugard was also impressed by the intense Kikuyu cultivation in Dagoretti in 1890. He remarked, “the cultivation in Kikuyu is prodigiously extensive, indeed the whole country may be said to be under tillage” (Ibid).

Both men and women’s food crops were sold in the Swahili-European caravan trade with
several consequences. The profitability of the caravan trade in Kiambu as previously indicated resulted in expansion of cultivated land in the last decades of the 19th century. The caravan trade was also responsible for transforming socio-economic structure among the Kikuyu. It affected gender division of labour between men and women. For instance, there was an increased demand for women's labour in agricultural production as more land was brought under cultivation to feed the increasing number of European caravans. More importantly, a process of social differentiation was established by the profits of the caravan trade with certain males taking advantage of it to accumulate property (Rogers, 1979: 255-269). By putting more land under cultivation, males like Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu produced more for the caravans. Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu is said to have had 49 wives who were definitely a reliable labour force (Robertson, 1997:35). Moreover, such men not only produced from their land but also acted as middlemen by purchasing from other growers and trading it off. By 1895, such men were well established (Muchoki, 1988: 113). Some of them were later appointed as colonial chiefs, a factor that helped to better their socio-economic and political status in the society.

It is doubtful if females were able to take advantage of the caravan trade to accumulate wealth, in a time of insecurity caused by company expeditions. In chapter two, it has been indicated that Kiambu Kikuyu traded with their neighbours mostly the Akamba and Maasai. Such trade was carried out even in the midst of conflict between the Maasai and Kikuyu since traders were mostly excluded from such confrontations. This relative calm declined in the late 19th century as the Swahili-Arab traders and European expeditions resorted to various forms of violence like raids, kidnapping or even rape. This in turn heightened insecurity in Kiambu and Kikuyuland in general. In the 1890s, therefore, escalating violence hindered women's large-scale trade and as a result young men took up women's previous role as porters (Robertson, 1997:76). This new role was attractive to young men since they would make money to pay
bride-wealth without necessarily depending on their male elders (Ibid.). The caravan trade did not only, therefore, disrupt the relations between males and females but also that among males as the young men accumulated wealth, which released them from patriarchal control, because they did not need elders’ support in bride-wealth. However, it was not until 1920s and 1930s that patriarchal control became increasingly challenged as society became progressively more restructured by the colonial economy.

The increased production of crops and interaction with foreigners in the late nineteenth century radically disrupted the social cohesion of the Kikuyu society. As observed in chapter two, the Kikuyu land tenure system ensured that all people irrespective of gender or social status accessed productive land. But this aspect of social responsibility began to dwindle with the increased production for the caravan traders. To achieve maximum profit, landowners put more land under cultivation, thus leading to shortage of land especially for livestock keepers who needed extensive land for grazing. It is this commercial farming during the late 19th century that encouraged individual landholding causing strains between the landowners and the ahoi (Kershaw, 1972:303). This strain was exacerbated in the twentieth century as white settlers moved to the protectorate. Through the land policy began by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEA) and became institutionalized by the colonial government, land was alienated in Kiambu extensively altering gender relations.

In 1894, the British Foreign Office took the administration of the territory after the (IBEAC) was unable to efficiently administer it. On 1 July 1895, the territory was declared the East Africa Protectorate and placed under the Foreign Office. In the same year, the Uganda railway was commissioned with the aim of connecting Uganda with the Indian Ocean since it was the prime target for Britain since 1862 with the discovery of the source of River Nile (Dilley,
By the turn of the twentieth century, the perception of the Protectorate changed.

### 3.3 Land, Labour and Tax Policies to 1920

The lack of interest in the East Africa Protectorate changed with the completion of the Uganda railway in 1901. The railway had removed the hazardous problem of transportation and enabled the extension of the foreign office's administration to the interior. In 1899, the railhead reached Nairobi outpost and before long, entered Kikuyu country, effectively exposing the value of the highlands as a possible home for white settlement. The laying of the railway line through Kikuyuland and the transfer of the protectorate’s headquarters from Machakos to Nairobi in 1899 marked the beginning of great transformation in gender relations of production amongst the Kikuyu. The passing of the railway line through southern Kikuyuland and not Maasailand was deliberately done by the Fredrick Lugard, the overseer of the construction as echoed by his word:

> There would not be found, even for the garrison, except such as the Kikuyu might bring, for the Maasai do not grow a single blade of corn and exist entirely on their flocks and herds. I, therefore, decided to build at the southern extremity of the Kikuyu... within the borders of the rich and fertile food-producing country (Lugard, 1893:323).

The railway line had not only made transportation easy but also exposed the rich country of the Kikuyu. Subsequently, European settlers began to settle along the railway line. Moreover, discharged railway line Asian employees found the area along the railway suitable for business and went ahead to set up business premises there. African traders, visitors and workers were also attracted by the new town. From the twentieth century, Nairobi gradually expanded both in geographical size and population to become a cosmopolitan urban centre. In 1903, it became a township and five years later, in 1908, it was declared the capital of the British East Africa or Kenya In 1919, at the conclusion of the First World War, it was upgraded to a municipality (Gugler, 1970:2). The administrative growth of Nairobi
significantly attracted people of different backgrounds who created demand for foodstuffs, which Kiambu District among others tried to meet.

By 1901, therefore, the official agreement was that the protectorate had to maintain itself through development. The method and agent of development was, however, a tricky issue. Initially, the idea of Asian migrants as protectorate agents for development had been floated. It had also been suggested that Jews would be settled. But after much discussion and canvassing among British industrialists, the Asian idea was abandoned in favour of European settlers (Dilley, 1966). The Jewish settlement was equally opposed by the Planters’ and Farmers’ Association in the protectorate who favoured European settlement (Bennett, 1963:12). Settler estate production in Kenya was also favoured as result of specific combination of economic, political and geographical factors. By the 20th century, the Foreign Office was concerned with the amount of grant-in-aid sent to Kenya for administration and punitive expeditions. They were also concerned about how the railway would pay and maintain itself.

Britain was, therefore, faced with the problem of how to develop local export production to make "both the Protectorate and railway pay" (Zeleza, 1989:39). European immigration was thus encouraged from the premises that they would produce for export. European settlement received much weight in 1901 when Charles Eliot took over from Hardinge as commissioner. Eliot opposed Indian settlement recommending that Indians be confined to the lowlands while the highlands were to be reserved for the Europeans. He argued, “Believing as I do that East African highlands are for most part a white man's country... I doubt the expediency of settling large bodies of Indians in the...” (Sorrenson, 1968: 36). With such support from the commissioner, the deal had been sealed; European settlers were to be settled in Kenya.
The settlement of white settlers in Kenya became a significant factor in Kenya's history such that from early 20th century until after the Second World War, colonial political, social and economic policies were all geared towards actualizing European settlement in Kenya. The fact that most European migrants concentrated on agriculture, all agricultural policies enacted favoured settler agriculture and these greatly impacted on gender relations of production not only in Kiambu but also in the rest of the colony.

By the beginning of the 20th century, white settlement had been accepted as the best option for the protectorate's development. Settling white settlers was, however, not easy and government's full support was required. Regulations had to be put in place on how to acquire first and foremost land and later labour. Policies enacted on land, labour and tax were all aimed at supporting settler agriculture, which in turn transformed the economic structure of the Africans gradually but steadily altering gender relations of production. The changes introduced in land tenure, labour or even taxation were experienced differently between ethnic groups, social classes, and even across gender groups.

The first method aimed at forcing out Africans from their economic production was land alienation so that African labour would be released for settler production. Previous Kikuyu intensive land use and shifting-cultivation would not be compatible with settler agriculture. As a result, the Kikuyu had to be disengaged from their kind of agricultural production. This could only be done if land occupied and cultivated by the Kiambu Kikuyu was alienated for settlers. Every necessary step was, therefore, taken to have Africans out of their economic productions. The Imperial British East African Company enacted the first land law in 1884. The occupant/settler was given a certificate of occupation of 21 years lease (McGregor, 1968: 44). This law remained in force until 1897 when the lease was increased to 99 years. Since
the process of acquiring land in the last decade of the 19th century was not officially directed, most land alienated in Kiambu was through individual settler negotiation with Africans, which was not always understood by the latter. Where the land was “unoccupied”, settlers went ahead and alienated Kikuyu land. In southern Kiambu, which was almost unoccupied as a result of natural calamities; famine and smallpox experienced in the 1890s, land was alienated without regard (Wrigley, 1965:212; Dilley 1966:249). The occupation of such "unoccupied" land was officially supported as Commissioner Eliot’s comment shows: “…But in the last famine (1899), large plantations were abandoned, and subsequently the owners instead of attempting to repair the damage done to their land, went to other districts” (McGregor, 1968:62). In Kiambu District, therefore, several blocks of land were alienated to fit both the government and settlers’ desires. Around Kikuyu Station, about 7.5 square miles, between Kabete and Kiambu, 23 square miles, around Kamiti, 7.75 square miles and between Ngwa and Chania River, 17 square miles. More land was alienated north of Chania River, 15.5 square miles. In Limuru, a block of 77 square miles compared to only 1 square mile Crown land around Saba Saba to create a reserve.

In Nyeri a block of 6.75 square miles was alienated. Any other piece of land alienated was reserved for missions (Tignor, 1976:27). Land alienation in Kikuyu took place between 1903 and 1907 and most of it was in Kiambu District. Once owners were paid the occupiers rights, they lost all claim to the land and could be moved at the will of the settler concerned. Whereas many could be removed, others were encouraged to stay to provide labour to the new occupant. Land alienation, therefore, created an instantaneous African squatter population in Kiambu District. In fact, before the First World War, most of these Kikuyu remained in the estates as squatter labourers.
A study carried out by Kanogo (1987:11) indicates that there was a wave of Kikuyu movement to the White Highlands in search of land as far back as the early 1910s. Most of the squatters who moved to the Rift Valley were large stockowners that needed more land for their livestock. Land alienation thus displaced the Kikuyu and also denied them the means of production. It was this dynamism of land policy that solidified social classes into landless and landed classes in Kiambu beginning with southern Kiambu. The first victims of the early land alienation were the tenants-at-will (*ahoi*) who found their social status lowered (Dilley, 1966: 249).

Apart from government initiative in alienating land, settlers were also particularly keen in urging the government to delimit land occupied by Africans so that the "surplus" population would flow to settler areas as labourers. Settlers' demands were articulated by the Colonist Association formed in 1902, which became very vocal with the arrival of settlers from South Africa at the beginning of 1905. Major alienations in Kikuyuland occurred between 1903 and 1907 in southern Kikuyu (Kiambu District). It was the frontier, which they were expanding in the 19th century but from which many families retreated as a result of the disease and famine of the last decade of the century.

It is possible that settlers' pressure made the Land Commission to suggest the creation of African reserves as early as 1905 to limit their expansion (Dilley, 1966:215) and by 1908, this insistence was continuing as indicated in the following statement:

> the land set aside for Natives Reserves should be limited to the present requirements of the natives...the existence of unnecessary extensive reserves is directly antagonistic to an adequate labour supply (Wolff, 1974:98-99).

The settlers' desire for both land and labour acted as push factors for the government to pass
acts alienating more African land.

The enactment of East Africa (Lands) Order in Council, 1901 discouraged individual settler from negotiating with the Africans for land. All land in the protectorate was placed under His Majesty the King. The implication of the order was that Africans ceased to own their land and the government took the right to alienate land for settlers. In 1902, the Crown Land Ordinance was enacted which, stated

…in all dealings with the Crown land regard shall be given for the rights and requirements of natives, and in particular the commissioner shall not sell or lease any land in the actual occupation of natives (Sorrenson, 1967:18).

This was just but a statement for in 1903 with more settlers having arrived especially from South Africa, Africans’ interests became a second priority in outright favour of the settlers.

The settlers' appetite for land was further satisfied with the enactment of the 1915 Crown Land Ordinance. The ordinance declared all Africans' land, Crown Land and, therefore, disinherited Africans making them tenants-at-will in their former land. This meant that they lost all legal rights to their land. The ordinance empowered the governor to alienate African land if it was not "beneficially" occupied (Dilley, 1966:252). Besides, it increased the lease period from 99 to 999 years. Moreover, the ordinance recognized the existence of African reserves but did not demarcate them and, therefore, left room for further alienation. It was not until 1926 that African reserves were demarcated protecting them from further alienation (Sorrenson, 1968; Dilley, 1966:249). By the close of the First World War, ex-soldiers were encouraged to settle in the Soldier Settlement Scheme. This was however, outside Kikuyuland.
The most negative impact of the 1915 ordinance on the Africans was the complete segregation of the highlands for Europeans only (Sorrenson, 1967). Africans had no more land for expansion as they had previously done in times of population pressure. They had to do with limited land, work for the settler or even move to the upcoming urban centres like Nairobi.

The transformation in the late 19th century influenced Kiambu Kikuyu. In particular, commercial production for the caravan trade and later land alienation, directly influenced Kikuyu land tenure system. With no more new land to occupy, landowning *mbari* (sub-clan) became possessive and the generosity that formerly ensured a sense of accountability in the community gradually lost significance (Muchoki, 1988:127). A phenomenon of individualism that had not been encouraged among the Kikuyu just like in other African communities took root in the early years of the twentieth century, and by 1950s, became almost an accepted norm. Land alienation had important impact on gender relations of production. Most importantly, the amount of arable land dedicated to food crop production was considerably reduced. Since most cultivable land in Kiambu was put under annual crops, women lost extensively to settler land alienation.

In progressive years, the amount of land allotted to brides by their husbands reduced since there was no more land for expansion. Loss of land had significant effect on gender relations of labour. More males were pushed out of Kiambu to seek wage labour (Stitcher 1982), while women began to take responsibility for domestic production with little or no male help (Presley, 1992:43). As mentioned earlier, the tenants-at-will (*ahoi*) were the first casualties of land alienation. Given that they did not have traditional legal claim to the land, the landowners easily pushed them out as white settlers took more land. The weight of colonial impact was too much for such traditional rights of *ahoi* to be considered. Having acquired land, the next
step for settlers was to procure constant and sufficient labour to develop their land.

In the first decades of colonial rule, adequate labour was necessary especially because both the state and the settlers were undercapitalized. Moreover, labour was needed to lay the foundation of the colonial economy: rail lines and roads had to be built, dams and bridges constructed, administrative centres erected and settler farms established. Forced labour was not considered as evil even by missionaries who thought that Africans needed to inculcate a steady and disciplined "work ethic" as a precondition for their advancement (Zeleza, 1989: 50). Acquisition of African labour created stiff competition for labour between the African cultivators and White settlers.

In his last annual report, Charles Eliot had indicated that settlers and natives needed agricultural labour at the same time and that natives had little incentives to leave their land to work for settlers (Bennett, 1963:24). Despite the Africans' unwillingness to work for settlers, policies were put in place to enable the Europeans procure cheap African labour thus disrupting gender division of labour. European settlement interfered with gender relations of production as men and women began doing chores that were previously assigned to specific gender group. Settler plantations around Kiambu and the proximity of Nairobi had double impact on gender relations of production. On one hand, settler plantations and Nairobi town served as receivers of the created "surplus labour" as a result of land alienation. On the other hand, they created a ready market for crops grown in Kiambu District. Due to market availability, therefore, Kiambu Kikuyu continued to satisfy the demand despite a gradual withdrawal of male labour from the district. The stretching of women’s labour slowly impacted on the types of crops grown, which became noticeable by the mid-1920s with Kikuyu growing less-labour demanding crops like maize and potatoes.
Migrant labour became an important aspect of colonial economy from early twentieth century. However, in the early years of colonial rule, Africans never took migrant labour as the first option since they continued to produce independently without government interference. But the continuation of Africans' independent production would have meant that settlers could not get sufficient labour supply and therefore bringing settler estates to their knees. Thus, legal measures were taken from the earliest period to ensure adequate flow of African labour even though colonial wages remained miserably low.

Historical evidence from colonial Africa indicates that the colonial state and the foreign office always colluded with capital in providing the legal framework within which labour could be recruited and maintained in adequate numbers and at low cost to the employer (Anderson, 2000: 459). Just as they put pressure during land alienation, the white settlers were behind most labour laws enacted and because the government was the biggest employer, rarely were settlers' demands objected. For instance, as early as 1906, a draft of Master and Servant Ordinance that was presented to the government by the settler was accepted largely unaltered. Government officials supported the ordinance “in order to obtain reasonable services from the natives who are unused to the benefits and obligations of continuous labour” (Ibid: 462). Despite enacting the 1906 ordinance, African labour was not forthcoming as anticipated. This promoted the putting in use of the 1908 Communal Labour Law aimed at raising labour for government projects like building infrastructure such as roads, waterways, bridges and railways. The same was often used to force Africans to work for private individuals (Presley, 1992: 44).

Before 1920, many Kikuyu from Kiambu District had moved to the Rift Valley as squatters.
These squatters moved due to three main reasons: landlessness, desire to avoid military service with the Carrier Corps and a need to escape from the despotic rule of the chiefs and their agents (Furedi, 1976:181). The landless were in three categories, those who had lost land to European land alienation, the *ahoi* (tenants-at-will) who were forced off the land by the Kikuyu landowners and people (particularly those who lived in densely populated areas like Dagoretti) who while not completely without land, could not support their families on the small holdings that they inherited from their parents. An assessment carried out by the Naivasha District commissioners showed that the 62.5% of the squatters from Kikuyuland came from Kiambu and Dagoretti areas where most of the land had been alienated. The desire to escape conscription to the Carrier Corps was another reason: "I came to the Rift Valley in 1915 with my father. We had heard bad stories about the Carrier Corps. We left because my father refused to fight…many Kikuyu left for that reason". (Ibid: 182).

From the early years of the protectorate, African men moved to the coastal town of Mombasa as wage laborers. Most of these came from upcountry. In the early years of the twentieth century the migrants were attracted to the town by the high wages. While in the highlands one would obtain Rs. 3 to 5, at the coast he could make something between Rs.7 and 10 and sometimes more. Most of them came from Ukambani and Kikuyu land. Governor Girouard pointed out in 1910 "The men are coming mainly from Wakikuyu, who without any recruiting, start off on their own initiative and walk 300 miles to the coast to seek work" (Jan Mohamed, 1976:163). By 1912, the Luo and Luhia (Kavirondo) and the Akikuyu dominated the labour composition in Mombasa. But by 1925, the Luo and the Luhia were dominating in Mombasa. There were 1,941 Kavirondo labourers compared to 1,185 Kikuyu labourers in Mombasa according to the Native Affairs Department Annual Report, (1925:81). A breakdown of the Kikuyu labourers from the three Kikuyu districts further gives a clear picture of the number of
labourers from each region. From Kiambu, they were 32, Fort Hall, 105 and Nyeri 1,048 (Ibid: 165). The figures reveal that Kiambu Kikuyu were moving in very few numbers to Mombasa. The fact that Nyeri Kikuyu moved shows that there was more attraction for them than those nearer to Nairobi.

By the first decade of the twentieth century, therefore, Africans were moving to wage labour voluntarily. The amount of labour in the wage market was however, not sufficiently providing for the settlers and the government labour needs. Consequently, coercion to extract African labour for government projects was inevitable. Using Native Authority Laws of 1910 and 1912, the government appointed headmen who were required to compel Africans to suspend their domestic production to work on assigned government projects. This corvee labour on government projects was required from all able-bodied males and females for six days out in every three months. In effect, this was forced labour for government purposes in the reserves. Failure to participate attracted a fine of thirty shillings or one month's imprisonment (Presley, 1992:44). The Village Headman Ordinance (1902) authorized government appointed officials to recruit labour for public work deemed to be in the interest of the village. Despite this, labour remained scarce. Settlers' evidence before a Native Land Commission in 1913 maintained that the labour crisis could be settled through increase of African taxes and reducing the "native" land. They further advocated the use of corporal punishment on Africans (Ibid: 42). The commission resolved that government officials could "encourage" Africans to go for wage labour (Tignor, 1976:164).

Given that white settlers would not manage intensive capital farming, and were also not prepared to do manual work, they expected the government to supply them with adequate and quality African labour. Ainsworth reminded the government that Whites would not work in a
country inhabited by the “black race” (Mungeam, 1966:133). Though the British had outlawed slavery, Ainsworth did find it inappropriate to use Africans in the development of the colony. Scholars have argued that the British had outlawed slavery only after it had industrialized (Rodney, 1972). By the 20th century, Kenya still lacked in industries and, therefore, the “black race” had to work just like they had done in Britain and other developed lands.

The option left for the government was to enact laws that would compel or even force Africans to work for the settlers. In 1908, during the tenure of Sir James Hayes Sadler, a labour Inquiry Board under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Bowring was instituted. It urged the government to be more aggressive in ensuring that Africans moved out of their homes for wage labour. The committee was further of the opinion that:

… the land set aside for Native Reserves should be limited to the present requirements of the; the committee being of the opinion that the existence of unnecessarily extensive reserves is directly antagonistic to an adequate labour supply (McGregor, 1968: 90-91).

According to the statement, the committee was of the opinion that alienation of more African land would force them to seek wage labour. To force the Kikuyu work for settlers, the colonial office and the settlers made every effort to deny them the right to grow high valued crops like tea and coffee. Without these crops, the Kikuyu had either to grow foodstuffs for sale or seek wage labour. The introduction of foreign consumer products like cigarettes, liquor and clothes was a further push factor for the Kiambu Kikuyu to seek an avenue to cash. The idea of “kaffir” farming was also discouraged in Kiambu because it restricted the flow of labour to settler farms as the labourers tended to give priority to their farms (Sorrenson 1968:185). But despite these restrictions, Kiambu continued to grow food crops in response to market opportunities availed by Nairobi and the settler farms in southern Kiambu.
Scarcity of labour problem saw the formation of the 1912 Labour Commission, which was mandated to find ways and means of inducing the natives to "come out and work" (Dilley, 1966:221). The commission outlined various reasons for the poor labour supply. Among the reasons given was that "some tribes were rich out of land, stock and trade profits" (Ibid) making it unnecessary to go for wage labour. The "tribes" the commission would have referred to at this point were the Kikuyu, and Akamba among whom white settlements had been established and settlers were finding it difficult to get constant and sufficient labour. It is not certain to what extent the settlers' suggestion to the Labour Commission influenced its recommendation. The commission recommended the registration of all male "natives" of sixteen years of age. It was not until 1919 with the conclusion of the war that the recommendation was implemented and its effects experienced by Africans. The implementation gave birth to the infamous *Kipande* system that was detested by Africans from 1920, and was notable in altering gender labour relations in colonial Kenya.

The First World War, 1914-1918 greatly impacted on labour not only in Kiambu but also in the rest of the protectorate. The war caused a crisis in labour demand because its several projects needed huge amounts of labour force. Labour was needed, for example, to complete the infrastructure development started in the pre-war years. It was also required in plantations of coffee, tea, maize and sisal all directed to the war. Third, the war required Africans men both as carrier corps and real combatants. Consequently, thousands of able-bodied men were conscripted either forcefully or “voluntarily” for the British in the East African campaign. But Kiambu Kikuyu disliked conscription as expressed by a Kiambu woman, "when they were captured by force, we were left weeping, mourning" (Hodges, 1999:33). The withdrawal of able-bodied males meant that agricultural labour both in African and settler farms fell on women, old men and children. Those left behind were not willing to work for the setters as the
following statement by a settler who was complaining for lack of labour illustrates: “I feel most strongly that the world would not be rendered poorer by the elimination of those members of society… who would rather starve than work” (Clayton & Savage 1974:87).

The labour situation in the post-war period was even worse. European settlement was expanded in the post-war period with the settling of white ex-soldiers in the protectorate. Subsequently, there was heightened demanded for African labour. Like in the early years of settlement, the government was sympathetic to the settlers. In 1919, Governor Sir Edward Northeу issued a circular dated 23rd October to government officials to “encourage” Africans to go for work. The district officers were asked to do “what they can to induce an augmentation of the supply of labour” for farms “by every possible lawful influence….” Chiefs and elders were also to "encourage" labourers since they had to be “repeatedly reminded that it is part of their duty to advise and encourage all unemployed young men to go out and work on plantations” (Ibid: 112). By using officials and the machinery at disposal, the colonial authorities were determined to get males out of the reserves (Maxon; 1980: 73).

Compulsory labour was targeted for specific services. These included public service and private contractors working with the state, which under the circumstances could mean anybody (Zeleza, 1989: 51). Consequently, the Northeу labour circular was implemented without informing the colonial office and it remained in force until 1921 when the secretary of State Winston Churchill discontinued it. In a dispatch commanding government officials to desist from recruiting labourers, Churchill instructed that, “government officials will in future take no part in recruiting labour for private employment” (Sorrenson 1967:117). But despite this command, the use of force in recruiting continued (Presley, 1992). Consistent and efficient labour supply remained a thorny issue.
Having failed to maintain a consistent labour supply, the government made the next attempt by passing the Registration of Natives Ordinance in 1920. The introduction of *kipande* represented an attempt to systematize the labour control system. This is because once a worker was registered he could not be deregistered. The *kipande* was designed as an instrument to be used to keep track of labour supply. It facilitated the enforcement of labour contracts in that it enabled penal sanctions to be returned to their former employers. Tracing of runaways employees was possible because local chiefs helped in tracing such deserters. The *kipande* also restricted workers' freedom to leave their workplace and change employers. Finally, the *kipande* system led to standardization of low wages because it made it virtually impossible for a worker to bargain with a new employer for a wage that was higher and unrelated to his former wage as recorded on his *kipande* (Zeleza, 1989: 52). Resident labour or squatter labour was another system of labour in colonial Kenya. Because the Africans were managing to make payments in cash, in 1918, the Resident Native Ordinance required that future payments be made in labour and not cash. The earliest cases of squatters were original inhabitants of the alienated land and those who lost access to land in the reserves, for example the *ahoi*. During this period, there was increased growth in urban wage labour employment due to push factors rather than pull factors. The wages were low and living conditions were also miserable. Men migrated as they left their women to subsidize the colonial capital accumulation.

The colonial labour system completely restructured Africans' gender relations of production. In fact, the colonial labour system was burdensome to everyone. This explains why not only men but also women resisted colonial labour laws when an opportunity arose (Presley, 1987). Moreover, resistance was not confined to Kiambu but spread out to other regions in the colony. The colonial government was, however, determined to force Africans to fully participate in the development of the colonial economy. Imposition of taxes was the third
method used apart from land alienation and labour laws to disengage Africans from their economic production. Taxation served two purposes: it encouraged wage employment and stimulated peasant commodity production but it also delimited peasant accumulation (Zeleza, 1989: 50). Taxes were introduced in 1901 but it was not until 1910 that they were paid in money rather than kind. By 1902, the Hut tax had been introduced to areas that were under proper administration (Dilley, 1966:239). It was later extended to other regions as colonial administration was established. It was, however, only after the war that they began to be increased sharply and to be collected efficiently (Tignor, 1976:8).

The hut tax was nevertheless limiting in the collection of revenue because only married men were required to pay as owners of dwellings. To rectify this status in tax collection, a poll tax was introduced in 1903. It was payable by all male adults of over sixteen years. The tax targeted young men who had not yet married and were, therefore, not taxable under the hut tax. As most population pyramids in a developing country show, young people must have been more (Musalia, 1992). Moreover, taking the fact that southern Kikuyu population had been reduced in the late 19th century, the early 20th century's population was probably that of young adults. The introduction of the poll tax coincided with the increased settler population in 1903, an indication of the desperate position the government was in trying to raise labour for the settlers (Sorrenson, 1968).

The rate of tax increase and not taxation was the major issue for Africans. If the rates remained low, it would have been possible to raise it from their production. However, rates continued to be raised and more taxpayers enlisted as the government sustained pacification of Africans. By 1905, the tax rate was three rupees in Kikuyuland and Ukambani. These two African regions were first to be taxed because of their closeness to European settlements to
ensure that Africans were forced to seek wage labour on settler farms. By 1913, it was officially acknowledged that taxation was the best way to force Africans to wage labour “we consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased for the native, and… it is on this that the supply of labour and the price of labour depend” (Wolff, 1987: 98; Clayton & Savage, 1974:41). Having been made mandatory, tax became a sure way of forcing Africans into wage labour. Using land, labour and tax policies the government was able to restructure Kiambu Kikuyu economic organization subsequently transforming gender relations of production. The Kiambu Kikuyu were not just passive in the midst of these changes. They reacted to the changes in an attempt to fit in the new socio-political and economic. The responses to these changes were gendered in that females and males responded differently and, therefore, affected gender relations of production in Kiambu District. It suffices to say here that Kikuyu agriculture went through significant change between 1890s and 1920 when Kenya became a colony.

3.4 Socio-Economic Changes in Kiambu to 1920

Settler agriculture in the years before 1920 was pampered by the state for its survival. Through the Department of Agriculture, settlers were provided with extension services, equipment, seeds, seedlings and stud animals. It was through the state for instance that settlers were encouraged and financed to grow coffee, which became an important cash crop in Kenya. African producers were denied the right to grow coffee with the excuse that they would cause disease. Despite this the protectorate was run by African peasant production before 1920. The settler weakness made it possible and necessary for peasant production to continue, and indeed, expand in some areas in the period leading to, during, and immediately after the First World War. But 1920, the settler estate sector had emerged as an important pillar of Kenya's
economy by virtue of the enormous resources allocated to it (Zeleza, 1989:42).

Agricultural changes in Kiambu District took place in the midst of settler estate production. It has been noted that most of the land alienated in Kikuyu land was in Kiambu District. Consequently, settler plantations in Kiambu mostly of coffee and tea directly influenced Kiambu Kikuyu production. Settler agriculture is however, outside the confines of this study. It should be noted that colonial policies that were often passed in favour of the settlers impacted on the gender relations of production in Kiambu and the rest of the protectorate.

Between the late 1890s to 1920, Kikuyu food crop production went through significant transformation especially in terms of division of labour and types of crops grown. The changes were more as a response to the markets availed by the Swahili-European caravans of the late 19th century, the growth of Nairobi town and the settler farms around the Kikuyu reserves. From the 1890s, Kiambu Kikuyu not only increased land under cultivation but also diversified the types of crops grown. For instance, increased demand for maize by the caravans resulted to increase in its production. Miracle (1974) indicates that a new maize variety, which was high yielding, the Hickory King-white maize reached some Kikuyu even before the colonial administration issued the seed. Moreover, the Rose Coco bean was also another crop grown by Africans long before the government encouraged African production. By 1893, the English potatoes (Irish potatoes) had been introduced among the Kikuyu having spread from Fort Smith. It is thought that Europeans who settled at the Fort grew potatoes and it is from these farms that potato growing diffused through Africans who worked for the Europeans (Miracle, 1974:23). Peasant production in the three Kikuyu districts was encouraged by growing markets for food crops on settler farms and in colonial towns. In particular, the swelling population of Nairobi during the First World War led to increased demand for peasant
production. The proximity of Kiambu to Nairobi made African producers benefit compared to those in far removed areas like Embu and Meru.

By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, land shortage in Kikuyu reserve was being experienced because of land alienation and commodity production. This affected pre-colonial tenancy relationships. The ahoi the most affected had to seek wage employment. There was also private accumulation of land that negatively affected the young men. Educated elites for example teachers, preacher, clerks, court interpreters were able to buy land using their incomes. By the beginnings of the 1920s there was an embryonic class formation in rural Kenya. These changes generated changes in all social relationships- as kinship and family patterns and obligations were reshaped by shifts in land tenurial arrangements and the changes in the organization and division of labour that were taking place.

By the turn of the twentieth century, commercial production had taken root in Kiambu district and the availability of markets in Nairobi and the settler only helped to expand production (Zeleza, 1989:46). By 1900, English potatoes had spread to Limuru area, which became one of the highest potatoes producing area in colonial Kenya. The increase of land under potato cultivation was even more evident between 1902 and 1905, within five years of the establishment of the railhead at Nairobi (Kitching, 1980:29). By early 1910s, food trade from Kiambu was very significant to the Protectorate's economy. One Indian shop exported from Limuru twenty tons of maize in one month (KNA/DC/KBU/1/4, 1912-1913: 4). Between 1905 and 1918, there was an increase of beans and maize grown in Kiambu (Zeleza, 1989:46). The Kiambu District Officer acknowledged the increased growth of foodstuff trade by 1912. He noted,

It is impossible to gauge with any degree of accuracy the trade of this district owing to the fact that almost all the saleable products
from Kikuyu go to Nairobi, which is outside this district (Kitching, 1980:29).

In the following year, 1913, the district officer continued to note that there was “more food planted” for sale in Nairobi and that “here and there poultry are being kept”, also for the same market (Ibid). In 1915, it was reported that the natives of Kiambu were enjoying wealth because of the Nairobi market. Kiambu women were not only working in the farms, but were also porters between the bazaars and railway stations (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2/, 1914-1915:1). The presence of women traders in Nairobi demonstrates that despite them being pushed out of trade in the late 19th century by insecurity that prevailed in Kikuyuland, they were still persistent.

Increased food crop production was necessitated by the ready market availed by the First World War. During the war, there was increased population in Nairobi especially because of the army’s presence. As early as 1903, Nairobi’s population was estimated at 8,000 and by 1906 when the first census was taken, it had rose to 13,514 out of which 9,000 were Africans. By the break of the war in 1914, the population had increased tremendously. Kiambu's proximity to Nairobi was an added advantage. Traders would travel to Nairobi in the morning and go back in the evening (Wahu Kenyatta, O.I.: 1993-1994). Potatoes grown in the district were quickly consumed in Nairobi during this period, as noted by Muchoki (1988:138) "Potatoes form an important part of the food of the White and Asiatic inhabitants and are also coming into favour with the natives". Other crops that were gaining popularity because of a ready market were onions, carrots and a variety of vegetables. Trading between Kiambu and Nairobi was aided by reliable transportation. The Uganda railway line had stations at Kabete, Limuru, Muguga and Uplands near the escarpment, which were on the edge of the Kikuyu reserve making transportation affordable (Kitching, 1980).
These agricultural changes were taking place in the midst of great alteration in work routines. The conscription of males for the war efforts and migration into wage employment within the protectorate had critical impact on gender relations of production. Domestic labour reorganization was necessary to take care of the absent male labour. Women largely shouldered the district's food crop production during the war years. Kiambu District Commissioner ascertained that women and children were undertaking traditional male tasks (KNA, AR/273, KBU 1915-1916, 9:1).

In Dagoretti sub-district, the effects of male conscription had a negative impact on food production to some extent. The officials argued “these functions fall to the lot of the women and children more than in the past”. One consequence was that “women had less time to keep the shambas (farms) clean so that food supply necessarily suffers to a certain extent” (KNA, AR/275; KBU/10; Dagoretti AR/1916-1917:1). The shambas that women could not comfortably tend were those that had labour-intensive crops such as sorghum. The crop either rotted on the stalk or sprouted before it could be harvested (Presley, 1992:49). Millet and sorghum shortage would mean famine being the major staple foods.

The conscription of males for the war efforts had a lasting impact on colonial attitude towards female labour. Previously, the government had never viewed women as a reliable source of wage labour. But the absence or shortage of male labour drastically changed this perception and females and juveniles began to be used in coffee farms. From 1917 to 1920, the government began to earnestly "encourage" females and juveniles to engage in wage labour. This became even more necessary in 1917, when more African males were conscripted to fill the diminishing ranks of the carrier corps (Zeleza, 1989:50), thus draining males who were
still in the reserves. The Northey Circular of 1919 mentioned earlier was particularly used to get females into wage labour (Dilley, 1966:234). By 1920, women and children were heavily engaged in coffee picking as reported by the Kiambu District Commissioner:

A very heavy coffee crop has been picked mostly by the women and children...The whole situation had been somewhat altered by the Circular 1 in which we are instructed to obtain labour for private and public enterprises through chiefs and headmen (Presley, 1992: 50).

The use of women not only to pick coffee for the settlers but also road-building caused serious tensions between the Kikuyu and the colonial government from the 1920s. Like men, women faced violence not only from the settlers, but also from the labour recruiters. The violent treatments made them resist colonial oppression through labour protests of various kinds from as early as 1912 (Presley, 1992). Colonial perception that African women were passive or only acted out of male initiative was misplaced as was later to be demonstrated by Mau Mau uprising (Kanogo, 1987). In West Africa, the case of Women War against the colonial installed warrants chiefs further demonstrates women's agency in colonial Africa (Vidrovitch, 1997:160-161).

Despite the absence of statistics, there are indications that labour mobility was high among the Kikuyu. Owing to the demands to pay taxes and other financial obligations created by the new socio-economic situation, more males left the reserves in search of employment. The result was a breakdown of the traditional division of labour between the men and the women. Muchoki clearly indicates that women shouldered men’s agricultural responsibilities of heavy work like, clearing the bush, planting and harvesting men’s crops, as well as providing food for their families (Muchoki, 1988:145). From 1912-1913, southern Kikuyuland (Kiambu) women were carrying a heavier farm work as they tried to produce a surplus. There were five acres of land “to each woman, three acres of which may be said to be in use and two in
The colonial government never took any keen interest in African agriculture before or during the First World War. Neither was it keen on the quality or the quantity of African produce since it was not viewed to be of any profit to the colony. As a result, Africans did not receive any agricultural advice or capital from agricultural department. However, before the close of the war, economic problems facing Kenya reversed government’s attitude towards African production. But while all interested parties agreed on making African labour possessed economic value, they differed on where that labour was particularly needed: either in the African reserves or European farms. John Ainsworth, the advisor on Native Affairs in the War Council was of the opinion that there was need to compel Africans to put maximum effort in production in their own farms. The non-official member with the support of settler representative, Dalemere, opposed his bill introduced in 1918 to compel Africans to cultivate their land. Ainsworth’s bill was thrown out only to be replaced by the Northey labour Circular of 1919 that ensured constant flow of African labour to European farms.

It was not until 1923 that instructors were sent to African reserves on a regular basis (Tignor: 1976:292). Although lacking government support, agricultural production in Kiambu was not strangled. Their response to market opportunities in settler plantations and Nairobi town made the Kiambu Kikuyu reorganize not only in the types of crops they grew but also gender division of labour to cope with the new challenges.

African production expanded during this period despite lack of support from the state authorities. However, as peasant production expanded, there was also rural class formation. There was a regional difference in peasant production, which was influenced by several
factors. One was the potential of cash-crop production and proximity to settler-occupied areas and colonial towns. It was also influenced by the pre-colonial social formations.

3.5 Conclusion

From the above discussion, it has been noted that Kiambu had experienced significant changes long before 1920. These changes were first initiated by the Swahili and Arab caravans and later by the European caravans. By the close of 1910s, gender relations amongst Kikuyu of Kiambu had gone through tremendous transformation. As they responded to forces within and without, their gender division of labour was disrupted. Men were removed further away from household food crop production leaving women and children to shoulder the bulk of the responsibilities. As a response to the new market demands, the Kikuyu of Kiambu adopted new crops that had a ready market especially in Nairobi. In the absence of male labour, women had to gradually increase both qualitative and quantitative labour to meet the new demands.

On land issue, Kikuyu land tenure, was challenged by the new political economy. Due to commercial farming as a result of demands from both the Swahili and European caravans at the end of the nineteenth century, a basis of individualism was created in Kiambu. As the Europeans occupied land blocking any further expansion and landowners continued to put more land under cultivation, land value rose tremendously. Subsequently, some people were pushed out of land. Such individuals were the first to join wage labour either within the African areas or the towns. Others migrated to the Rift Valley as squatters in European farms. The changes in ownership of and access to land directly affected Kikuyu agricultural production along gender. Women would only access land through a male guardian meant that with land alienation, women from such families became completely dispossessed. Their situation was made worse because rarely did Kikuyu women move to towns in the early years.
of colonial rule.

In first decade of the 20th century, the colonial government did not have specific policy on African agriculture. Consequently, any improvement either in terms of increase of land cultivated or technology was out of African initiative, which was market-driven. The colonial state’s interests were more inclined to settler production because of the perception that only settler production would improve the economy and also because by the end of the First World War, settlers’ voice in colonial Kenya had became dominant due to their significant position in the Legislative Council.

By the time Kenya became a colony in 1920, significant changes had taken place within Kiambu and Kikuyu land in general. The socio-political and economic policies introduced by the colonial government tremendously influenced gender relations of production in Kiambu district. The next chapter examines the policies introduced after the First World War in relation to the gender relations of production.
CHAPTER FOUR
GENDER RELATIONS AND FOOD CROP PRODUCTION IN KIAMBU IN THE
INTER-WAR YEARS, 1920-1939

4.1 Introduction

The war aftermath had a devastating impact on the African population. The situation was made even worse by the 1918-1919 epidemic and drought, which caused famine forcing the government to import food. The famine situation was further worsened by the influenza epidemic, which ravaged many Africans. This situation did not augur well for African agriculture.

In this chapter, gender relations of production in the inter-war period are discussed mainly in relation to economic and political policies passed during the period. In 1920, Kenya was declared a British colony. This in effect placed policy and administrative affairs of the colony in the office of the Secretary of State for Colonies in Britain. The change from protectorate to colony status was meant to curtail agitation for self-rule by Europeans in Kenya. By denying settlers self-rule, Kenya’s political future had been rerouted from that of other colonies like Southern Rhodesia. The declaration of Devonshire White Paper in 1923 settled Kenya's political destiny for it gave the colonial office exclusive rights to act as the trustee for the Africans. But though Africans' interests were meant to be paramount, the colonial office continued to pass policies highly influenced by the minority White settlers in the colony. Within the colony, the administrative structure was altered with the establishment of three chief organs of government: the Governor, the Executive Council and the Legislative Council. As His Majesty the King’s representative, the Governor was required to "protect the natives". But none of the governors was courageous to stand this challenge as many remained under the whims of the settlers. Consequently, policies passed in the colony before the end of the Second
World War were all beneficial to the settlers. The politico-economic policies influenced gender relations of production of Kiambu Kikuyu.

4.2 Kiambu Agricultural Production in the Post-war Period

Post-war reconstruction was greatly influenced by the interests of European settlers. Hence, African agriculture was improved as long as it did not negatively impact on settler agriculture. In fact, the colonial government did not have any specific programme tailored for African agriculture. In the process of improving European agriculture, the government interfered with African production relations. Therefore, Kiambu gender relations in food crop production can only be studied within the broader political economy that was laid after the war.

The dual policy, which began in 1923, was the main economic development policy after the war. In 1923, Governor Sir Robert Corydon described the policy as “complementary development of non-native and native production” (Berman, 1990:200). The governor's conference in 1926, argued that,

….steady progress cannot be secured in rural areas unless every able-bodied native who shows no tendency to work is given to understand that the Government expects him to do a reasonable amount of work. Either in production in his own Reserve or in labour for wages outside of it…. (Lipscomb, 1972:66).

A further clause stated that:

the policy of the Government in this connection is a dual policy, namely, both economic development by natives in the Reserves and general development of the country as a whole: and that steady cooperation in both is expected of the native population (Ibid.).

Whereas the dual policy indicated the role Africans were supposed to fulfill, it did not address the role of Europeans in the development of the colony. In theory, therefore, the policy required the complementary development of the African as well as European economies (Sorrenson,
1967:41). But in practice, the dual policy seemed to mean that any policy that benefited Africans had to be carried out insofar as it did not interfere with Europeans' interests (Talbott, 1990:23).

As expressed by the governor, the policy had a two-tier function. First, African producers were to be encouraged to produce large quantities of foodstuffs that would have a marketable surplus. Second, African men were to be encouraged to seek wage employment outside their reserves. Thus, for economic revival to be sustained, every African man was required to participate in whichever way that was beneficial to him. But this change of attitude towards African agriculture after the depression was only aimed at cushioning white settler farming since it had suffered during the economic depression of the early 1920s (Talbolt, 1992:83). This is demonstrated by the fact that Africans living near settler estates were denied the right to grow coffee, the most lucrative crop in the colony fearing to lose African labour (Tignor, 1976:293; Talbolt, 1990: 41-42). Therefore, the dual policy was only practicable as long as Africans did not antagonize the settle agriculture.

The Economic and Financial Committee appointed under Bowring to establish modalities of implementing the dual policy recommended the encouragement of Africans in producing a surplus in the Reserves for export. African surplus production was directed towards the internal market to feed the African labour force on estates principally on coffee and sisal plantations (Berman, 1992:118). The provision of African agricultural education was also recommended to improve African production. But despite these recommendations towards improving African agricultural production, African able-bodied men were still being encouraged to move out of the reserves in search of wage employment. Evidently, from the terms of the dual policy, African labour was a target for the colonial government if any meaningful development was to
be achieved in the colony. This impacted on gender division of labour since the government was first and foremost interested in withdrawing male labour from the reserves. The withdrawal of men from the reserve affected agricultural division of labour because traditionally as earlier observed both Kikuyu men and women participated even if not equally in food crop production.

Between 1920 and 1922, annual reports of the Native Affairs Department and the Agricultural Department highlighted the concern the government had on African agriculture. The reports recorded in 1920-1921 stated:

> it is regretted that hitherto so little has been done to develop African agriculture potentialities. An analysis of the estimates of the Department of Agriculture would appear to show that the heavy expenditure of that Department is mainly devoted to helping the European farmer and to research work from which no doubt the native will, in some distant future, benefit (Tignor, 1976:294).

This official attitude towards African agriculture was no different from that of the war period. For the first time, however, the Agricultural Department made recommendations to have European agricultural supervisors oversee agriculture in the African reserves. The responsibility of the field officers was to encourage Africans to grow edible exportable crops. Among the crops Africans were encouraged to grow were maize and beans. The encouragement to grow maize coincided with Nairobi’s dependence on Kiambu Kikuyu produce in the 1920s. By 1923 attempts were made to stop local movement of maize in other directions and also hawking so that Nairobi’s needs would be satisfied (Robertson, 1997). The importance of Kiambu as the granary of Nairobi was common knowledge to the authorities.

Africans were also given limited agricultural training in 1920 -1923 and in the early 1930s. The training was, however, not smooth because the government did not provide enough finances
and the training facilities for the purpose (Talbolt, 1990). Scott Agricultural Laboratories established in 1922 in Kabete was the first agricultural school in the colony. Its location in southern Kiambu may have impacted on agricultural production in Kiambu and Central Province generally. In 1923, the first agricultural supervisor was stationed at the laboratories (Tignor, 1976:294). The second school was the Bukura Agricultural School, which was opened in North Kavirondo in 1923 (Lipscomb, 1972:68). It is worth noting that these schools were located in African reserves that were not only densely populated but also promising in commodity production. Moreover, "tribes" from these areas were given priority so that upon completion they could return to their people as instructors (Lipscomb, 1972:69). Selection of trainees in the early years of the century was both gender and class biased. Every effort was made to "secure sons of Headmen and chiefs" (Ibid).

The bias against African women was generally in British Africa, because the British viewed women from a European perspective. In particular, the British were influenced by the Victorian idea of an "ideal" woman as one confined at home with little or no participation in production (Walker, 1990). This perception blinded the administrators to the fact that Kikuyu women actively engaged in production. By admitting male trainers in the schools, the administrators had ignored African gender division of labour.

A further factor that limited the chances of women and girls from joining the schools was the requirement of some limited amount of formal education, which women did not have. By 1928, eight Africans had completed a three-year course at the Scott Agricultural Laboratories and since it was not mandatory to remain in the field of agriculture, the graduates joined other professions like teaching, clerical and driving. This was especially for Scott Agricultural Laboratory trainees because Nairobi’s proximity gave the graduates an added advantage.
(Lipscomb, 1972:69). From the Bukura School, of the four that completed their training in the early 1920s, only one became an agricultural instructor while the others moved into other fields (KNA/ Annual Report, 1926: 299-308). The above analysis of the agricultural schools clearly shows that the early trainees did not sufficiently benefit African food producers. Women continued to bear the burden of food production with little or limited modern agricultural knowledge.

The agricultural training offered to Africans in the period 1920-1923 was geared towards reviving the economy as recommended by the Economic and Finance committee. To help in achieving this, agricultural instructors were sent to various African regions. The three Kikuyu districts, Nyeri, Kiambu and Murang’a received 49 Nyanza received 17, while Coast and Ukambani had each two (Lipscomb, 1972:68). Given the numbers of instructors sent to each region, it can be concluded that areas that were perceived to have capacity for higher production received more instructors compared to low producing regions like Ukambani. The figures further demonstrate that Kikuyuland received more instructors than any other reserve. This is because Kikuyuland, and specially Kiambu, contributed significantly to the colonial economy at least in the early years of colonial rule when infrastructural network was still rudimentary in the colony.

It should be noted that while all the Kikuyu districts expanded in commodity production, Kiambu dominated in all crops in the 1920s especially because producers were motivated by the good prices foodstuffs fetched after the 1923 economic recession. The issuance of improved and large quantities of flat white Congo maize seed and the Canadian Wonder beans both targeted for export influenced production in Kiambu. The Bowring committee had recommended maize growing by Africans. Therefore, government's initial intervention in
African agriculture included the supply of better seeds; the maintenance of demonstration plots and limited veterinary services (Kanogo, 1989: 119). Maize growing was important because it served a dual purpose, as a commodity product and also as subsistence. Africans also favoured maize growing because unlike millet and sorghum, it required less labour input and was, therefore, a convenient crop in the face of diminishing male labour. This resulted in increased maize production. The colonial authorities also favoured maize because it released both men and women from tying-chores and, as a result, enabled them to work in European farms. This would possibly mean that maize took up land previously used for other crops like millet and sorghum. As more labour became disengaged from traditional agricultural chores, production of labour intensive crops like millets was gradually done away with or completely removed from farms forcing many to rely on the market to satisfy household provision (Wambui, O.I. 2005).

Production for the market was also motivated by the increased prices of commodities from 1922. This increase motivated producers from Kiambu and Limuru to bring their commodities to Nairobi since the prices were better than in the local markets. The price of potatoes was particularly doubled by 1929 (White, 1990:54). Renewed efforts to expand production during depression period generated new tensions in Kikuyu society between the gender groups. The fall in the world prices of exports such as maize, coffee, and sisal, caused panic not only in the government, but also among the settler community. The failure of settler agriculture to withstand the depression demonstrated its vulnerability. Settlers were unable to remit required revenue to the government while Africans continued to be taxed. By controlling both production and marketing through the Native Produce Ordinance, 1935, the government claimed that it wanted to expand and improve the quality of African agriculture through inspection and grading of produce and the licensing of traders (Talbott, 1990).
The Kikuyu reserve benefited from the good road and railway connections that linked it to areas that had high demand for agricultural products. Though these transport networks were meant to serve the settlers, Kikuyu took advantage of the rail-line to supply agricultural products to areas like the Rift Valley where many African labourers were residing and also Nairobi (Tignor 1976: 295).

4.3 Kikuyu land Problem and Gender Relations in the interwar Period

In the inter-war period, ownership of and access to land in Kiambu District was of critical concern. As observed earlier, colonial land policy had been formulated by early 1920s. In Kiambu district, the establishment of settler plantations in southern region had checked the movement of the Kikuyu making it impossible for them to own land in Nairobi. The alienation of Kikuyu land in the Nairobi-Limuru area left many Kikuyu as tenants in their own land. This alienation of land had caused dissatisfaction and became the root of political consciousness among the Kikuyu. As early as 1921, the Young Kikuyu Association and later the Kikuyu Central Association were demanding the return of their “stolen land” (Sorrenson, 1967:20-23).

However, Kiambu's land problem was not only as a result of alienation but also because of the expansion of cultivated land and population (Tignor, 1976). By 1920s, commercial agriculture had become an important part of Kikuyu economy. The increasing scarcity of land due to alienation and expansion of cultivable land made the issue of ownership an important aspect in Kiambu economic organization forcing a redefinition of land tenure system. As noted in chapter two, Kikuyu land tenure had evolved from individual to communal ownership by the mbari, (sub-clan). This communal ownership was being challenged as individual members began to demand land title deeds that could ensure that the settlers or other mbari and non-mbari members did not take their land.
Problems surrounding land led to the establishment of the 1929 Kikuyu Land Tenure Committee to investigate the land issue. The committee, chaired by the Chief Native Commissioner, G.V. Maxwell was at a loss for it could not ascertain the extent to which Europeans had influenced Kikuyu land tenure. According to the committee’s assessment of Kiambu District, there were intense changes “but a step from accepting full individual ownership” (Sorrenson, 1967:30). Despite agitation for individual titles, the colonial government did not give in because it feared that social unrest could erupt in the reserves if Kikuyu land tenure was disrupted. But this refusal to grant individual titles did not last for long because by the 1930s, the *mbari* system in Kiambu was disintegrating with the *muramati*’s (custodian’s) power of distributing land being increasingly questionable. Furthermore, outright sales were gradually taking place unlike previously when landowners would redeem it (Muriuki, 1974). Due to this outright sale, an uneven re-distribution of land was taking place in Kiambu District with wealthy men buying land from the poor, the debtors and the tenants (Sorrenson, 1967:40). The disintegration of the *mbari* institution meant that land rights of the vulnerable especially the *ahoi* were disregarded. Wives of such people were even in worse position because it became difficult for them to produce food for their families.

By early 1930s, the land crisis had become severe leading to the establishment of the Kenya Land Commission of 1932 headed by Morris Carter. The commission was mandated to estimate African land requirements, and recommend, if necessary, the extension of African reserves. It was also required to investigate how far settler holdings had encroached on African land (Kanogo, 1989:128; Sorrenson, 1967:22). The commission received submissions from individuals, clans and associations especially political ones. It is unfortunate, however, that the commission did not solve the African land problem. In dealing with the issue, the commission devised methods through which they were to base the compensation. They divided the land
claims into two categories: those based on historical rights and those based on present and future needs (Breen’s 1976: 83). This categorization of land effectively blocked any claims by individuals or families. Furthermore, the commission refuted the claims that African agriculture had deteriorated because of land alienation. The commission argued that poor African agricultural and animal husbandry practices and the population increases encouraged by the colonial rule were responsible for the poor production (Ibid:86). The only solution to the Kikuyu land problem was the adoption of improved agricultural practices and new system of tenured (Ibid: 106). It interesting to note that whereas the commission was against individual land claims, it admitted that Kiambu Kikuyu needed to have individual titles because “it is ready flourishing form of individual land tenure” (Ibid:107). The Carter Commission did not solve the African land problem. It was of course not possible bearing in mind the fact that the settlers’ interests were always a priority of the government. To ease congestion in Kikuyuland, Lari and Kerita settlements schemes near the top of the Kikuyu escarpment were established. Even then, the establishment of Lari scheme did not solve the problem because the land belonged to another sub-clan (Berman, 1992:396). By the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, Kikuyu land problem had not been solved with Kiambu District continuing to receive the worst pressure.

Land problem was worse in the inter-war years due to population pressure. Over the years, Kikuyu population had gradually risen despite facing natural calamities in the late 19th century and casualties in the First World War. Population increase in the 1930s coincided with the years of great agricultural output. The 1948 population census indicated increased densities in Kikuyuland with Kiambu and Murang’a having 420 and 411 persons per square mile respectively (Kitching, 1980). The restriction of squatters in the white highlands had increased the land problem in the reserves especially for the Kikuyu. Before the restriction, individuals
who had insufficient land or none at all in the reserves had moved to the settled areas as squatters (Kanogo, 1987).

By 1930s, land ownership had become a major means of categorizing people. The amount of land one had determined how one was involved in the colonial economy. Those with above average holdings opted to cultivate rather than being engaged wage employment. Individuals in this category were mainly chiefs who had used their position to accumulate wealth and an emerging group of western educated Africans (Robertson, 1997). Therefore, individuals who made profit from commercial production or off-farm income were the ones keen on pushing for individual title deeds (Berman, 1992:245). The medium and small holders continued to alternate between producing for the market and selling their labour. Those with insufficient holding to support a family were forced into the labour market nearly as full-time workers and often became more or less permanent residents to the growing urban centres. Though statistics are not available, the number of men who became permanent migrants from Kiambu must have been higher than that of women. But there were a certain number of women who moved to Nairobi initially as traders but from the late 1930s, some became residents as a way of escaping rural hardships. The youth who were interviewed stated that their engagement in foodstuff trade was due to lack of land because their parents had no land (Nyaga, O.I. 2005). A number of these young men traded at the Fig Tree open market in Ngara, Nairobi.

Scarcity of land directly influenced the urban labour force. By the late 1930s, there was marked expansion of the urban labour force, which had subsequently raised Nairobi’s population. Between 1923 and 1932, Nairobi’s population doubled from 12,500 to 26,265. By the break of the war in 1939, it stood at 50,000 (Stichter, 1982:109). By late 1940s, African urban workforce though ethnically differentiated, had increased into significant proportions. Statistics
indicate that in 1947, coastal Africans dominated in Mombasa, comprising 33 percent of the African workforce while the “Kavirondo” formed 20 percent while the Kikuyu were only 12 percent.

Whereas Kikuyu were least in Mombasa during the same period, they dominated in Nairobi with 55 percent while the Kavirondo accounted for about 30 per cent (Stichter, 1982:110). The proximity of Nairobi to Kikuyuland made it the preferred destination for most Kikuyu migrants. The closeness of Nairobi to Kiambu was an advantage in that it allowed frequent visits to their (shambas) farms. Stichter (1982) argues that the different patterns of town ward migration from both Kikuyuland and Kavirondo were influenced by the differences in land-holding arrangements. She asserts that unlike the Kikuyu, the Luo and Luyia of Nyanza were always certain of retaining their pieces of land even if they migrated in distant areas and even for longer periods. This was not the same in Kikuyuland where increased disintegration of the mbari institution, made it necessary for Kikuyu men, the recognized land owners to make frequent visits to home just in case it was construed that they had forfeited the land.

The new socio-economic arrangement put the Kikuyu customary land tenure into conflict. Individuals and families who had previously depended on the kinship generosity were the first to experience the effects of restrictions on territorial expansion as indicated in the previous chapter. Restrictions placed on expansion made it difficult to have new lands making landowners shy off from honouring traditions used for centuries to hold the community intact. Moreover, with the introduction of commodity production, the landowning mbari (sub-clans) were by early 1920s unwilling to share the land they possessed with the ahoi (tenants-at will). As the mbari began putting more land under cultivation, the result was a reduction of chances of the ahoi accessing land as was during the previous decade.
4.4 Transformation of Gender Division of labour and Food crop Production

After the war, settlers required supply of cheap labour to take advantage of the post-war boom. Regulations were passed to prevent idleness (White, 1990:52). The system of labour registration (kipande) ensured that men did not just leave their employment. Coercion was also used to have Africans work for settlers. This made wage employment in Nairobi attractive for most African men in the 1920s. The demand for unskilled labour in Nairobi rose sharply from 1926 when the Municipal entered into a construction boom. Despite the fact that wages were low compared to the living expenses, they were, however, much better than those given in agricultural labour. For instance, a domestic servant would earn three times.

In the post-war period, labour supply was problematic. A number of factors account for the low labour turnout in the early 1920s. After demobilisation, settlers expanded acreage under crop production far more than the labour available. The flow of African labourers was low due to war casualties, diseases and malnutrition among the African survivors. Moreover, the global influenza and the great famine of 1918 had also killed many people in the reserves (Mackenzie, 1998:126; Bennett, 1963:43). Thus, the reserves were not able to provide labour not only to settler farms but also to state projects. But while natural disasters and the war may have interfered with the flow of African labour, other factors could have equally contributed. In the neighbouring district of Murang'a, the District Commissioner thought that labour shortage was not just out of the problems that faced Africans but also due to Africans' ability to weigh the economic benefits of any venture they engaged in. The D.C. argued that acute labour shortage was likely to become worse: "because natives are becoming increasingly aware that their own labour employed on their own land and the comfort of their own homes is more profitable and congenial than in the outside market" (Mackenzie, 1998: 127). It is suggested that the Kiambu
Kikuyu were equally reluctant to work for the settlers whenever they were in a position to raise their cash independently.

Labour policy in the inter-war period was not any different from the previous decade. The government made concerted efforts to ensure constant flow of Africans to settler plantations. Since it was perceived as the colony's economic "backbone", settler agriculture had to be protected after the war to prevent it from eminent collapse. The measures taken had far-reaching consequences on gender relations of production in Kiambu. In total disregard of African production relations, legislations were used to “entice” African men from the reserves to seek wage employment. Between 1919 and 1925, a number of labour legislations were passed which formed the fundamental labour framework in the inter-war years (Tignor, 1976:152). Soon after the war, the 1915 Native Registration Ordinance introduced by Ainsworth into the Legislative Council was revived. Subsequently, the 1919-1920 Native Registration Ordinance was enacted ensuring that African men of fifteen years and over were issued with registration certificate (kipande) (Clayton & Savage, 1974: 83) for easier control of their movements and, therefore, guarantee constant and docile labour supply. The restrictions of movement made African men remain on employment and any attempt to desert attracted severe punishment (Ibid: 131-134; Berman, 1990:146-147). The control of African male labourers thus made the administration's work more comfortable since it was easy to track down deserters (Tignor, 1976:159). Accordingly, African men were forced to stay for longer periods away from their families. The absence of men meant a reduction or total withdrawal of their agricultural labour input, which would explain why Kiambu Kikuyu began changing the types of crops they previously grew. For instance, yam growing in Kiambu gradually declined and eventually disappeared. According to a woman informant, the consumption of yam declined in the inter-war years, due to scarcity of men to dig it out because unlike cassava and
sweet potatoes, yam vines go deep into the earth and, therefore, require not only physical strength but also expertise to avoid destroying the plant (Wambui, O.I., 2005). The absence of men to carry out these gender-specific tasks directly impacted on the growth and consumption of yam in Kiambu District.

The Edward Northey’s labour circular of 1919-1920 and the Native Authority Amendment Ordinance of February 1920 were the most severe in coercing African labour in the early 1920s (Presley, 1992). The two had originated from the Native Labour Commission of 1912-1913. The Commission had recommended administrators to be more involved in impressing people "the desire of the government that their young men should go out and should keep the fact always before them" (Tignor, 1976:164). The government, therefore, stepped up its efforts in ensuring the flow of labour by using colonial administrators both African and non-African in the reserves.

Compulsion was used to get African men and later women out of the reserves. Empowered by the Native Authority Ordinance of 1920, chiefs and their assistants were able to implement the Labour circular of 1919-1920 (Zwanenberg, 1975). The law allowed them to get “compulsory labour” that would work for up to sixty days annually. However, anyone who had worked voluntarily for three months was exempted from the compulsory labour.

The concession of voluntary work was essentially meant to entice Africans to work for the settlers rather than be forced to work anywhere else without making a choice. Hence, in the 1920s, there emerged a migrant labour category composed predominantly of single men from high production areas specifically from Kikuyu districts and Nyanza. This migration gradually affected the labour composition in African reserves especially those neighbouring
settler areas and upcoming urban areas. A survey carried out in 1925 by Kiambu's District Commissioner, H.W. Gray found that in 10 out of 22 locations in the district, 40 per cent of all adult males were at work. Twenty-one per cent were resting, having returned from employment and 33 per cent were men of working age. Thus, of those of the right age and physically fit, Gray found close to 90 per cent had worked or were working at any given time (Tignor, 1976:175). It is obvious from these percentages that Kiambu males were drifting from agricultural production on their own farms to become migrant labourers as colonial economy became entrenched in Kenya.

As indicated above, the inter-war years witnessed a gradual and steady flow of men out of Kiambu District. This was the general trend in the colony as African wage labourers on European farms doubled between 1920 and 1928. In 1923 for example, an estimated 75 per cent of men between 15-40 years were engaged in some form of paid labour during the year excluding pastoral peoples and those medically unfit (Tignor, 1976:152). After the economic depression, the wages had risen encouraging African migrant laborers to search for employment. Stichter (1982:83) notes that by 1923, wages had steadily risen and that by mid-1920s, Africans were beginning to move far from their "homelands".

The majority of the migrants were, however, from the three labour producing ethnic groups, the Luo, Luhia and Kikuyu who went as far as Mombasa where they outnumbered the Swahili and Hadramis. Thus, by the late 1920s, African male labour migrants moved out of their domestic production due to economic necessity, what Stichter (Ibid, 83) calls "dull compulsion of economic relations" rather than outright coercion. With such a high percentage of able-bodied men outside the reserves, women automatically shouldered domestic production and, therefore, being forced to reduce or abandon labour-intensive crops like millets in an effort to deal with
the declining male agricultural assistance.

The geographical location of Kiambu directly influenced the gender labour relations. Its proximity to Nairobi, made the district the first to experience a significant flow of men migrants to both Nairobi and settler plantations. By 1928, 43% of adult male population in Kiambu compared to 41.7% from Murang’a was engaged in the labour market. The desire to move to Nairobi was the perception that higher wages were paid in and near Nairobi than in the outlying districts (Mackenzie, 1998:126). With such male percentages out of domestic production, reorganization of gender labour relations was unavoidable.

Northey’s labour circulars did not just target men. Women and children were also viewed as important labour sources. The circular stated the need to encourage women and children living near farms to seek employment: "Where farms are situated in the vicinity of a native area, women and children should be encouraged to go out for such labour as they can perform" (Clayton & Savage 1974:112; Berman 1990:145).

Kikuyu women and children went out of the villages and returned at night having worked on coffee farms the whole day. They were especially needed in coffee picking which was a tedious activity. The Labour Circular 1, managed to get women and children to work for settlers as is indicated in the handing over report by a Kiambu DC:

A very heavy coffee crop has been picked mostly by the women and children...the whole situation has been somewhat altered by Labour Circular 1 in which we are instructed to obtain labour for private and public enterprises through chiefs and headmen (Presley, 1992:50, as quoted in KNA. KBU/13/HOR 1918-1920:4)

The use of administrators did not make the situation any better for women. The headmen and recruiters harassed women as they coerced them into wage labour. Some chiefs may have been
pushed to use force since district commissioners kept records indicating a chiefs’ helpfulness in recruiting labour (Tignor, 1976: 167). There are of course those who took advantage of the situation to have some women work for them (Edith, O.I.: 2005). Due to the confusion that surrounded labour recruitment, some women were not only physically tortured, but also sexually assaulted. In fact, the mishandling of Kikuyu women particularly angered the East African Association (EAA) of Harry Thuku. While giving evidence to a government commission investigating African complaints in 1921, the EAA claimed that Kikuyu women were not only sexually abused but also impregnated (Presley, 1992:54).

Apart from the East Africa Association, other associations founded in the early 1920s were also against the repressive economic policies of the colonial government. The Kikuyu Young Association, the Kikuyu Association and the Young Kavirondo Association all agitated against low wages, forced labour, land alienation and the kipande system (Zeleza, 1989:183; Bennett, 1963:45). The Kikuyu Association as early as June 1921 was grieved and alarmed about the issue of recruiting girls for public projects. The association asserted that:

> Up to March the last practice was prevalent under government order emanating from Administrator H. Q. of the Kyambu (Kiambu) District. A tribal retainer would be sent to such and such a chief or headman to say that so many girls were required for such and such a plantation and if the girls were not found the chief was placed under restraint (Zwanenberg, 1975:126 as quoted in RD. ASAPS. Mss Brit. Emp, S22, G141).

Physical torture was not exclusive for women. Men were also tortured (Njuguna, Mbugua, O.I. 2005). In 1920, one European farmer, a captain Hawkins was reported to have intermittently flogged one man for three days until he died and supervised the flogging of a pregnant woman who later miscarried (Clayton & Savage, 1974:118). In reacting to such complaints, the colonial government enacted the Native Women’s Protection Act (1923) (Presley, 1992) or the Female Workers’ Protection Rules of 1923 (Zwanenberg, 1975:148). Nevertheless, force
disguised as "encouragement" for communal projects enabled the use of compulsory African labour. It was not until 1933 that The Ordinance on Employment of Women, Young Persons and Children was passed to protect women and children. The ordinance, like many others before, was difficult to enforce because there was no political will on the part of the colonial government due to the pressure exerted by settlers.

Although force was used to push Kikuyu women out of rural economic production, cash needs equally became significant pull factors beginning in early 1920s. In 1923, the Kiambu District officer estimated that on a monthly average, 3,098 women and 2,947 juvenile worked on the estates (Presley, 1992:57). This figure continued to rise as more and more women sought wage labour to meet cash requirements, which the colonial political economy had imposed on them. The introductions of direct women’s taxation under Ordinance 40 of 1934, made women engage in wage labour to get the required tax.

The introduction of women's direct taxation in the mid-1930s was not accidental, for it coincided with a shortage of female labour in coffee estates just like the hut and poll taxes had coincided with the establishment of white settlements. Kiambu women were required to work on these estates as seasonal coffee pickers (Wamaitha, O.I.: 2005; Presley, 1992:47). The most unfortunate thing is that the work calendar of coffee picking coincided with the period of high labour demand on Kikuyu farms. This consequently strained labour and, therefore transformed production relations in the district. The women had not only to pick coffee but also continue with their domestic agricultural production with little or no assistance from men. This alteration of gender relations of production continued to transform food production in Kiambu District.

Arguably, the increasing men’s engagement in migrant wage labour meant that food crop
production was gradually taken over by women and children from the 1920s onwards. Furthermore, women’s involvement on European farms as wage labourers meant that any increased African production was squarely qualitative and quantitative increase of women's labour input in agricultural production (Kitching, 1980: 121-128, Mackenzie, 1998:127). As women intensified their labour, the wage given to men was continually kept low making it difficult to accumulate any capital that would financially enable one to seek an alternative livelihood (Mackenzie, 1998:127).

African production was made even unappealing because government’s stated agricultural policy for Africans in the 1920s did not translate into action. Though Governor Sir Robert Corydon was under pressure to develop African agriculture, he only managed to invest in extension services and promote maize as a cash crop. There was, therefore, very little government impact on African production in the 1920s. But despite the little attention given to Africans, there were impressionistic indications that African production increased during the decade.

According to Kitching (1980:33-39), there was an increase of acreage of land under cultivation not only in Kiambu, but also in Murang’a and Nyeri districts between 1920 and 1930. The increased acreage of land under cultivation was indirectly evidenced by the out-migration especially of ahoi and large livestock keepers in these areas who found it difficult to get expansive land for rearing their stocks. With no more land for expansion, as a result of land alienation and an increase in population (Lipscomb, 1972:61), more disadvantaged people were forced to find alternatives. The only alternatives for the Kikuyu were either the urban centres or the Rift Valley where they could become squatters in settler farms. This second alternative was most attractive to men who had big families and large livestock.
The socio-economic policies had direct impact on crop production. With land shortage becoming an issue, the purpose of any crop grown was very important from the 1920s. The decade marked a gradual but significant trend towards satisfying the internal market, which Africans had taken over by the end of the First World War. The settled areas and Nairobi Municipality were big and ready markets for African produce by the end of the war. Nairobi in particular offered Kiambu an extensive market for dried staples and fresh produce. Availability of market and the buoyant prices for all food crops after 1923 encouraged production at the end of the first economic recession.

The good infrastructure network and Kiambu’s proximity to Nairobi were incentives to producers and helped to stimulate a market economy much earlier than in Murang’a and Nyeri (Maxon, 1989: 114). Both maize and beans apart from being consumed by the producers also sustained exchange within and between African districts. Besides, potatoes, beans, millets and bananas continued to be grown during the inter-war period. With the high rates of male out-migration, increase in maize and bean production relied heavily on women labour.

Maize growing in Kiambu expanded in the 1920s in the lower zones of Muguga. The increased African production in the 1920s was not considered a threat to the European growers. By 1930s European maize growers began to pressurize the government to intervene in controlling African production and marketing because they thought that African maize was “flooding” the domestic market, thus depressing their profit margin (Talbolt, 1990).

The introduction of exchange value to food crops was bound to generate gender conflicts that were previously minimal within the Kikuyu community. With cash value attached to production at a time when land was becoming scarce, gender re-negotiations on labour use and
control of the use of produce must have taken place. Women’s labour continued to be tapped for African production though the state never openly acknowledged that the reserves were maintained by women labour and continued to assume that African men still maintained their families. McGregor-Ross (1968:450) clearly demonstrates the state’s continual assumption that the African man maintained his family: “The native is to be allowed to do the impossible-feed himself and all his dependants, produce crops for export, and the same time keep all the European estates going to the satisfaction of their owners. The idea is nonsense.”

Food crop production in the reserves was, therefore, gradually being taken over by women. Though a substantial number of men remained in the reserve, their actual participation in production was minimal while their involvement in trade rose. The Agricultural Supervisor of the Henry Scott Agricultural Laboratories, Lyne Watt, acknowledged that women were overworked (DOA AR 1925:171). In the neighbouring district of Fort Hall, the Medical Officer, Procter R.A.W. acknowledged as early as 1926, that women were overworked while their men did little:

“Among the eating shops are tea shops where the exhausted male may recover from the arduous toil of watching the women do the work, and may discuss the news of the day” (Mackenzie 1998:132).

The situation in Kiambu District was not different from that of Murang’a. As indicated earlier, there were more men migrants from Kiambu than the other Kikuyu districts. The transport network of Kiambu was better than either Murang’a or Nyeri and this would have “encouraged” more movement even if it was on a daily basis consequently, leaving women, old men and children to tend the food crops.

It is the decline of male labour input that necessitated the growing of less time-labour crop like
maize in place of millet and sorghum. Despite adopting fast growing-crops, women continued to grow a substantial amount of millet in the 1920s to the late 1930s. Mackenzie (1998:133) asserts that women continued to grow millet though on a small scale because of their knowledge of the dietary importance of the crop. Moreover, their ability to exert greater control over its proceeds than on maize since women still took part in the local market may have encouraged them to grow the crop (Edith, O.I. 2005). *Njahi* was the other crop women continued to grow during the inter-war years. This could be probably because land to grow the bean was still available or the importance of the crop. Mackenzie (1998) agrees with Robertson (1997) on the importance of *njahi* to the Kikuyu women. Being a woman's crop like millet and the fact that it was not regarded as a commercial commodity, gave Kikuyu women leeway to control its proceeds in the local market.

By the close of the 1920s, Kiambu District had faced many challenges regarding labour. The colonial government had passed various legislations ensuring maximum labour flow. We have noted that the government favoured settler agriculture (Kanogo, 1989:112). Despite half-hearted government concern for peasant production, Africans were propelled by complex internal dynamics, which ensured increased production before 1930. In Kikuyuland, there was agricultural diversification and production for the market by the end of the First World War. In the 1920s, there was expansion of cultivated land though with varying capacities within the districts- Kiambu leading, followed by Murang'a and Nyeri. For the three districts, potatoes, beans, millets and bananas constituted the more common crops that yielded a marketable surplus (Kanogo, 1989:115).

The world depression of the later 1920s reduced prices of both food and inedible crops negatively impacting production in the colony. Though African maize production was not
affected as much as that of the settlers, Africans were considerably affected by unemployment that accompanied the depression. Between 1929 and 1932, about 40,000 Africans lost their jobs. For those who remained, their wages were reduced from 14 shillings to 8 shillings a month (Kanogo, 1989: 116). The fact that African production seemed to have withstood depression woes made the government find it expedient to boost and encourage greater African production.

As indicated earlier, women had dominated in food crop trade especially between the Kikuyu and their immediate neighbours, the Maasai. But this trend had progressively changed with the caravan trade in the last decade of the 19th century as their “security” became an issue, but more importantly, when the trade became more profitable encouraging more men to participate. Women’s role as food producers had given them fundamental authority in the disposal of their produce and had continued to hold this though on a declining trend up to the late 1930s. By producing and selling millet and njahi beans, women could effectively resist both Kikuyu male and administration controls.

By the close of the 1920s, there was a marked differentiation in African participation in the trade. More men had taken up trade initially as porters and later as traders (Robertson, 1997: 68-72). During the interwar period, more people both men and women engaged in trade especially because of the ready market and also due to the increasing loss of land through alienation. The 1920s witnessed an increase in trade involving both Kikuyu men and women as this trade went without any administration restrictions, since the trade played a vital role in provisioning Nairobi and also commodities for exports. However, most of the Nairobi trade fell on Kikuyu men than women (Ibid: 71-79).
From the mid-1920s and increasingly from the 1930s, more Kikuyu men got engaged in trade through the formation of co-operative companies. Gender reconstruction in terms of who engaged in trade was clearly being established. It should be noted here that Kiambu women like men sought ways in which they would continue with their traditional economic activities of trade despite restrictions put up both by the government and the Kikuyu patriarchs. We shall shortly discuss how the Kikuyu men led by Kenyatta campaigned to restrict the movement of “their” women fearing that their community would be “wiped out” (Berman, 1992:386-387).

4.5 Agricultural Marketing in the 1930s and its Effects on Gender Relations

The 1929 economic depression negatively affected the colonial economy. Both African and European producers suffered from the declined prices of African commodities especially of sesame, beans, hides, skins, ghee, coffee and maize. The capital-intensive settler agriculture was greatly affected by the depression. By 1931 for instance, maize price fell by 50 percent of its value in 1929. This was a drop from about 11.10 to 5.06 in 1929. By 1933, the maize price stood at Kshs.3.30. (Kanogo, 1989: 116). Though market instability reduced African prices of sesame, beans, hides, skin, and maize, which largely commanded the internal market, they were not severely affected for they had from the mid-1920s, expanded the area under cultivation (Ibid: 112). Kitching, (1980:59) indicates that marketed output for maize had increased in all Kikuyu districts and also in Central Nyanza. This had further been encouraged by the fact that livestock-keepers provided a ready market due to animal disease between 1928 and 1934.

The decline of world prices affected African producers and government’s revenue since both African and settler producers were not able to remit revenue to the government. This affected
the administration, which by the end of the 1920s was receiving about 30% of its revenue from settler export production. In the absence of this revenue, the only other source of revenue for the government remained African taxes. Instead of the government withdrawing taxation, Africans continued to be highly taxed despite the fact that their wages were substantially reduced (Kanogo, 1989).

The diversification in terms of varieties and techniques enabled Kiambu people to market more crops. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was a gradual shift to horticulture in Kiambu District necessitated by two factors. One, by 1930s, Indians and Europeans residing in Nairobi provided a ready market for the vegetables grown in Kiambu. Other than vegetables, the Kiambu Kikuyu also grew other fast-growing crops like new varieties of beans such as, Rose Coco to the extent that by 1930s, Kiambu District was said to have been relying on south Nyeri for its maize supplies (Robertson; 1997b: 80). The second factor that may have forced Kiambu to take up horticulture production was land shortage. By 1930s, there was less land if any for expansion in Kiambu. Therefore, with the diminishing land base, it is probable that maize growing had become uneconomical since its maturity period is longer than the horticultural crops (Mbugua O.I.; 2005). For this reason, there was need to practice more intensive agriculture. Intensification of agricultural production meant more work for women and less for men since clearing work previously assigned to men had eased over the years, due to over-cultivation of the same parcels of land and the fact that there was no more virgin land to clear.

From the ongoing discussion, it is certain that Kiambu people were quick to accept new crop varieties and farming methods. They positively adopted the Rose Coco and Canadian wonder beans. Horticulture was replacing wattle bark, which men had taken from the 1920s (Kitching,
1980). The closure of wattle factories in Limuru and Kikuyu between 1930 and 1932 may also explain the decline of wattle growing. The fact that the price of wattle had been raised to 60 shillings in 1931 shows the Kikuyu were not keen in growing it. Instead, they increased the acreage for food crops production (DC/KBU/1/24 1931:13). In the higher regions of Limuru, Tigoni and Uplands in Limuru and Lari divisions, the acreage under Irish potatoes, of new varieties, Kerr’ Pink and Doon Star expanded tremendously (DC/KB/ 25 1931:14). By 1930s, Kiambu District was dominating in potato production (Kitching 1980:67-68; DC/1/24 1931:30; Kamau O.I. 2005). Consequently, the overproduction of potatoes depressed their price as shown in Table 4.1 below

### Table 4.1: Prices of Food Crops per 60 Pounds in 1931.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Sh</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Sh.Per 60lbs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>6.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigeon Peas</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>5.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wattle</td>
<td>32.00</td>
<td></td>
<td>60.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source KNA/ DC/KBU/1/24 1931:11

From the above table, a few conclusions may be arrived at. The price of potatoes was lowest, an indication that its production was more than the market would accommodate. The prices of beans, pigeon peas and vegetables were relatively high. This would mean either that production was low compared to the demand or there was a high consumption of these
foodstuffs, thus increasing their demand. The production of wattle was low resulting to the low prices. The price of millet seems to have remained relatively high, an indication of its high demand at a time when its production was on a downward trend.

High potato production encouraged African traders to enter into potato trade. While most producers sold directly to the consumers at Limuru Township, others sold to Mr. Gibson and Company, the buying agent (DC/KBU/1/25 1932:8; Talbott, 1990:83). Vegetable trade from the district was also very important in the inter-war years. One trader at Wangige market supplied ships in Mombasa. The District Agricultural Officer acknowledged the importance of Kiambu trade in 1936. He stated, "it is apparent (sic) that this reserve is the market garden of Kenya, vegetables are sent to all parts, as far as Uganda and Tanganyika. And we are now extending the industry to the more backward locations in the North” (Kiambu Agriculture AR 1939:8; KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1937; Dept of Agriculture 1942:4).

There was a renewed effort to expand production during the depression years. The pressure put into production brought gender conflict as individuals searched for ways of survival during the depression period. From the 1930s onward gender struggles were evident in trade as more wealthy individuals supplied the ready market especially in the urban centres. However, more men than women joined trade because they had the capital (Robertson, 1997). But most of these men traders were middlemen since they bought commodities from producers and later sold to consumers.

From available information, the three Kikuyu districts continued in the 1930s to respond to market demands. Despite the difficulty in establishing the extent of the response, an investigation carried out by S. H. Fazan in 1932, for the Kenya Land Commission showed that
the Kikuyu farmers exported commodities valued at almost 200,000 pounds. The table 4.2 below shows the breakdown of the crops exported mostly by African producers to European settled areas and to a small extent the amount that went to overseas markets.

Table 4.2 Agricultural Exports from the Three Kikuyu Districts, 1932

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>Value in (Pounds)</th>
<th>Quantity (Tones)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>101,489</td>
<td>36,905</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>25,267</td>
<td>6,563</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Potatoes</td>
<td>21,940</td>
<td>9,973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweet Potatoes</td>
<td>9,398</td>
<td>5,080</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millet</td>
<td>4,510</td>
<td>820</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yams</td>
<td>2,666</td>
<td>1,441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>3,763</td>
<td>4,181</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wattle</td>
<td>15,780</td>
<td>9,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>13,700</td>
<td>548,000 bunches</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The exports shown in table 4.2 are from the three Kikuyu districts. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge how much was produced in Kiambu District. However, maize production remained high and it is possible that most of it was produced in Murang'a and Nyeri districts. The table also shows a high quantity of European potatoes, beans and wattle. The wattle bark was the major Kikuyu overseas export, while maize remained the principal commercial food crop.
Before the late 1930s, Kikuyu maize continued to be sold to European farmers as the staple food for the labourers. Other than Kikuyu districts, Nyanza was equally important in the supply of maize to settler farms.

From the mid-1930s to the outbreak of the Second World War, the amount and rainfall distribution affected agricultural production, especially of grains in Kiambu District. For instance, in 1936, there was excessive rainfall during the short rains, which destroyed the bean crop (KNA/DC/KBU/1/28; 1937). The Irish potatoes and sweet potatoes became the main food crops consumed that year of hardship. As indicated in the district annual report, food crops, in the order of importance showed that millets, root crops like yam, cassava and arrowroots were decreasing in consumption (ibid). A decrease in their consumption would imply that there was a low-level production.

Table 4.3 shows the production of some food crops

**Table 4.3: Production of selected crops, 1936-1938**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>1936</th>
<th>1937</th>
<th>1938</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes- Bags</td>
<td>40,000</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans-Bags</td>
<td>1,101</td>
<td>1,528</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pea-Bags</td>
<td>495</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dry wattle</td>
<td>3,697</td>
<td>3,595</td>
<td>4,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Wattle</td>
<td>2,279</td>
<td>1,954</td>
<td>556</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable Sold at Municipal Market</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>2,000</td>
<td>2,065</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA/ DC/KBU/1/2: 1938

Table 4.3 shows a decrease in the production of both potatoes and beans in 1937. This could be attributed to the heavy short rains in 1936, which destroyed the crops. The situation improved in 1938 on the eve of the Second World War with potatoes production impressively increased. In 1939, production fell as a result of rain failure. There was food scarcity, which
led to increase of food prices (KNA/DC/KBU/1/30; 1939). Dry wattle was still an important crop though its production was on the decline. One respondent stated that Indians had taught the Kikuyu other uses of wattle such as burning wattle to produce charcoal. The Kikuyu were, not therefore, selling dry wattle because they would use it for other purposes especially charcoal (Mbugua O.I. 2005).

As commercial agriculture became an important economic endeavour, farmers began to give more attention to marketing in an effort to secure higher profits since middlemen were taking up most benefit. To countercheck this unbalanced terms of trade, about 100 Kiambu producers formed the Kikuyu Native Producers Co-operative Society with the assistance of the Kiambu Local Native Council in 1939. A similar cooperative had been formed in Murang’a District (Talbolt, 1990:82). In 1932, a Vegetable Growers’ Association was formed to assist in better marketing of native grown vegetables (KNA/DC/KBU/1/25 1932:8). There is, however, no information on the gender composition of these societies. But going by the prevailing urge of Kikuyu men to control women’s social and economic movement, it is unlikely that women were allowed membership in the co-operative.

The co-operative movement not only suffered from the hardships of depression, but also could not thrive in an economic arrangement that was meant to promote settler agriculture. Around 1932 and 1933, the African co-operative societies were disbanded for "failure to meet the expenses of a registered society" (Tignor 1976: 299; Talbolt, 1990:83). The reason for disbanding was most likely the fear of an expanded African economy that could threaten the status quo in the colony hence the authorities’ action. As already noted, the government would not give Africans an upper hand in the colonial economy. While the state bailed settlers out of the depression hardships, it failed to do the same for Africans. However, the
disbandment of the co-operative movement did not discourage Kiambu producers because, the association of producers hired Mr. Gibson and Company based in Nairobi as the purchasing agent for major export commodities at buying centres. Moreover, the Kiambu Local Native Council established buying stations within the reserves where producers took their produce to buyers.

In effect, the Local Native Council (LNC) tried to make marketing easier for the producers. The establishing of buying centres could also reduce Asians' monopoly in marketing. Being better capitalized compared to Africans, Asians used their better-serviced lorries not only to control most of the transport but also wholesale trade. Their lorries enabled them to traverse African reserves, the white highlands and townships for the food crops among other things (Maxon, 1989:122). The improvement of road network especially the completion of the Thika-Nyeri railway line in 1926 increased trade in Kiambu and the rest of Kikuyuland (Stitcher, 1982: 80). But the Asian dominance began to wane in the 1930s as the government in cooperation with the Local Native Councils started to reduce their influence in the reserves.

In the 1930s, the government continued with its determination to protect settler agriculture by introducing marketing regulations that were exceedingly controversial. These regulations became the standardized marketing procedures both in colonial and post-colonial Kenya until mid-1980s with the introduction of liberalization. In 1935, the Native Produce and Marketing Act, which sought to control marketing of African produce, especially maize, was introduced (Kanogo, 1989:123). Traders were required to meet certain requirements before the Control Board could buy their maize. First, the maize had to be graded before it was sold. Second, licensed individuals were allowed to buy maize at designated centers. This requirement was made even stiffer because the governor had excessive powers in that he could confer license
on a single buyer and declare that certain products could only be sold at central marketplaces (Tignor, 1976: 301). The requirements of maize marketing introduced by the Native Produce and Marketing Act blocked many Africans from the market. Maize, which did not meet the set standards was condemned unsaleable and was therefore, bought at low prices (Kitching, 1980: 60-61). The regulations did not manage to keep Africans under control as most evaded the control board. Kitching (1980) does not think that the maize regulations had any significant effect on African production and consumption. In 1940, there was a report about increased middlemen. The report noted a chain of five people dealing with the produce from the producer to the consumer. The arrival of the Union troops during the Second World War had only improved the market. The market, especially for vegetables, fruits, charcoal and firewood was improved. Therefore, more and more Kiambu Kikuyu took advantage of the war to intensively participate especially in vegetable trade.

Both Indian and African traders severely opposed the ordinance because they viewed it as an opportunity for European firms to penetrate African reserves for foodstuffs hence limiting African trade activities. Many of the Africans who were opposed to the new market regulations were members of Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). Members of KCA were mostly men who had either acquired Western education and had, therefore, accumulated certain amount of wealth or were engaged in the commodity trade. The new marketing regulations especially the idea of getting trading licenses was not appealing to them since the governor had the discretion on who to license. It is not certain if Kiambu men were fighting for free trade inclusive of women. The status quo maintained by the KCA was not conducive for Kiambu women to participate in matters of trade. Presley (1992:117-121) indicates that women were initially frustrated by KCA because they denied them membership. It was only after they formed the Mumbi Central Association (MCA) that men realised the need to have
gender renegotiations and allowed women to join KCA. Despite joining KCA, it is doubtful whether women had any significant clout that could enable them to trade without hindrance from their own men.

4.6 Agricultural Production and Control of Kikuyu Women

Victorian thought on the question of women guided gender relations in the British colonies. In the nineteenth century, there were two opposing thoughts in regard to women. On the one hand, were those who advocated for the division of life into two spheres: private and public, and assigned women and men to each respectively (Callaway, 1987:32). On the other hand, there were those who advocated for women's equality. Imperial ideas towards women were, however, strongly aligned with the first argument (Ibid). The European men occupied an elevated position than women, who were perceived only as helpers of the "working man". Colonial officers projected the gender representations of their own society on their perception of African gender relations. This shaped the new social, economic and political order that accompanied colonialism. Due to this prejudice, colonial officials dealt with African male chiefs and bureaucratic officials assuming women to be dependants.

The situation was made worse by the racial differences. The ethnocentric attitude of Europeans created a negative perception towards African women. Consequently, African women were blamed for all society's evil. This gender and racial prejudice made Europeans heap all evils of society ranging from adultery, venereal diseases, and divorce on African women. Moreover, the description of African women as; "indolent", "lazy", "slothful", "immoral", "frivolous", "savage" and "uncivilized" (Schmidt, 1992: 99) clearly demonstrated the low opinion the Europeans had for African women. It was this perception and the need to use African women's labour that made colonial administration not only in Kenya (Kiruthu,
1997) but also in colonies like Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) and Ghana, (Schmidt, 1992) collude with African men to control the physical mobility of African women.

The increasing commercialization of food crops in Kiambu and other Kikuyu districts had interfered with gender relations in great proportions by the 1930s. As already noted, at the close of the nineteenth century, wealthy Kikuyu men had become more involved in the caravan trade and, therefore, forced landowners to put more land under cultivation to meet the increased demands of the Swahili and European caravans. Over time, women were gradually pushed out of trade that had been their domain and were subsequently forced to put more labour in food crop production. Even though Kikuyu women were never completely pushed out of trade, from the late 1920s, their movement was an important issue among men who regarded themselves as “custodians” of the community. These “custodians” reacted to the colonial structure, which seemed to have interfered with the “traditions” of the Kikuyu. The issue of African mobility in colonial Kenya like in other African colonies can only be understood from the premise that colonial economic policies and political relations inside African households were gendered. Due to the importance of African labour in colonial economy, physical mobility was a disturbing issue in the relationship between the colonizers and the colonized across colonial Africa (Barnes, 1992:586).

In Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), for example, women’s physical mobility was a contentious issue. As early as 1914, chiefs and elders of Rusape and Umtali towns launched a complaint to the local government official arguing “our fathers have asked, we have asked, and you do not help us in the only thing that is vital to our tribe and our family” (Ibid: 591). African men wanted their women’s movement controlled which put the government into a conflicting situation. On one hand, it was important to maintain cordial relationship with the rural male
elders mostly chiefs who helped to maintain law and order through indirect rule. Moreover, to maintain rural production, it was crucial to retain women in the rural areas to provide the necessary labour. This could benefit both African patriarchs and the colonial government. For the progress of the colonial economy, tranquility, in the rural areas was of the essence.

The case of mining companies in Central Africa demonstrated the awkward position the colonial state was in when dealing with the mobility of African women. Mining company owners were of the opinion that the presence of women in the mining areas made men more productive irrespective of whether they were wives or mistresses. They were, therefore, against the control policy.

The purpose behind restricting the physical mobility whether of men or women in any colony was first and foremost aimed at controlling African labour. Labour control and management were very important for any economy. With colonial establishment, labour relations were transformed and it became an area of contestation. Women’s labour was particularly contested for it was not only needed in domestic production, but for commercial production and wage labour in settlers’ farms (Ndeda 1991; Nasimiyu, 1985). Kikuyu women’s labour became an issue of contention both by the Kikuyu patriarchs and the colonial government. By exerting force on the Africans, the colonial government ensured that cheap African labour was in constant flow both for the government public projects and for European settlers. With a high-undercapitalized population of white settlers, the need to control African labour flow was paramount. This restriction was gendered. The colonial government tried to maintain some degree of order in the rural areas and at the same time extract labour from the reserves. As already observed, the registration of Natives Ordinance of 1915 became operational in 1919-1920 helping the government to control African men. The registration did not restrict
women’s physical mobility, thus providing them with open opportunities to move wherever one opted. Kikuyu patriarchs could not accept the free movement of their women, which they perceived could have negative impact on the “tribe”.

In the previous chapter, it was noted that chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu used the labour of his many wives to produce foodstuffs for the caravan traders. It could be deduced from this that the profit from commercial production was the main aim behind the controlling of Kiambu women by the men. Women’s agricultural labour had to be maximized. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, there was gender conflict on agricultural produce and trade. Since food crops had acquired a commercial value, they became a terrain of contestation. This was not the same for men’s crops, with the exception of sugarcane and bananas. To control women's participation in trade, men began to advocate for the division of fields into trade and food crops, men and women. According to Kenyatta and other KCA members, the trade crops were meant for the men who were allowed by the community to carry out trade. Kiambu's LNC's ban on women’s trade was highly approved by Kenyatta (Berman, 1992:388). It is certain that Kikuyu patriarchs did not want a situation where women could have a strong economic voice as a result of their engagement in trade.

The distinction advocated by Kenyatta with regard to crops was not realistic since food crops were the same as the trade crops. Moreover, it was women’s labour that produced crops that Kenyatta regarded as “male”. The crops had become “male’s” only because they had acquired an exchange value. The attitude portrayed by Kikuyu men in the inter-war years was similar to that of the late 19th century when men began to take major participation in the caravan trade because of its profitability (Robertson, 1997). But despite the efforts made to control the women, the adventurous ones travelled to Nairobi daily and sold potatoes, sugarcane and
bananas to African "houseboys" who made weekly orders (Wahu Kenyatta, O.I.: 1994; Robertson, 1997:83). From the list of trade items indicated, it seems women were gradually handling men's crops, for instance, bananas and sugarcane. What is not certain, however, is whether women grew these crops themselves. Since men were against women trading, it is unlikely that women got these crops from men. Robertson indicates that more women got involved in the Nairobi trade during the inter-war period as an escape from patriarchal control, landlessness, or to supplement insufficient rural incomes.

Like in most African communities, women's labour was generally acknowledged as a source of community's wealth. Their produce brought prosperity to Kikuyuland and it was necessary, therefore, to maintain that labour in the rural areas. It was for this reason that the Kikuyu political power represented by KCA fought very hard to retain women on the farms as men engaged in trade and wage labour. In the absence of men on the farms, it was the women's responsibility to make wealth. The call by Kenyatta who was Muigwithania's editor to the Kikuyu to "Stir up the soil you may find precious things" (Berman, 1992: nd, 419) was certainly directed to Kikuyu women: providers of labour.

As the colonial government put restrictions on African population, the Kikuyu men also tried to control their women. The justification of the restriction was hinged on protecting the community's posterity. Kikuyu males asserted that women's engagement in trade led them to prostitution and hence the destruction of the Kikuyu society. Jomo Kenyatta and Joseph Kangethe both members of KCA argued that women in the past (meaning before colonialism) were controlled and not “dropped” like millet stalks by the roadside (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992:386). Kikuyu women were, for that reason, not to be allowed to trade in Nairobi where they would not be under “tribal” control and would easily engage in unacceptable
relationships. Kikuyu men were particularly perturbed by the idea of their women getting married to other “tribes” which could result in the disappearance of Kikuyu people (Ibid). As much as it is true that the “tribe” would be diluted, the main concern was the ownership of the children. Children sired by other ethnic groups could automatically join the lineages of their fathers and would subsequently provide labour to their fathers’ clans and, therefore, take wealth out of Kikuyuland.

In the inter-war period, gender relations in trade were appreciably altered. It has been observed that Kikuyu women had engaged in pre-colonial trade (Robertson, 1997a). It was not until the colonial economy had completely been entrenched in Kiambu that Kikuyu men found it necessary to restrict women’s movement. In fact, in pre-colonial Kiambu, men were supposed to offer women protection as they crisscrossed trade routes (Robertson, 1997b). But by the mid-1920s, male traders began making female traders’ lives unbearable by waylaying them and forcing them to sell their produce at prices below market value (Wahu Kenyatta, O.I.; 1994, Robertson, 1997a: 81). Restriction of women's movement was a display of the threat that Kikuyu men were feeling as a result of the new socio-political and economic order.

Women were, however, undeterred by the restriction. Trade journeys were made in the wee hours of the morning. But their trade unlike that of the men depended on luck. “On lucky days, we managed to walk unnoticed and we could sell our foodstuffs to "houseboys" employed in European and Asian homes. But in certain days they were not so lucky since they would be forced to sell their produce to men who waylaid them (Wahu Kenyatta, O.I: 1994).

For security purposes, the women moved in groups as noted by Robertson, (1997b; 84) “Every day vast numbers of Kikuyu women and girls walked into Nairobi from outlying districts and to sell potatoes, sugarcane and bananas. Most of these commodities are sold to the houseboys.
of Nairobi, many of whom make the arrangements for a regular supply of such food”. Not all men were completely opposed to women’s trade. Njuguna (O.I. 2005) stated that his mother traded at Thika with the husband’s approval. In fact, Njuguna helped his mother carry his sibling on his back, from Gatundu while the mother carried her load to Thika Township for sale. It is not clear whether Njuguna’s father allowed his wife to trade because Thika was near or because he had control over the proceeds. But what is clear is that colonial experiences were gendered.

Ethnic views expressed by the Kikuyu Newsletter, Muigwithania (Conciliator) worked to inject some Kikuyu nationalism during the post-depression period, which went a long way in stimulating crop production. At a time when there was disagreement between the Kikuyu and the missionaries over female circumcision controversy, Kikuyu patriarchs led by Jomo Kenyatta called on the Kikuyu to intensify domestic crop production (meaning Kikuyu reserve). They argued that domestic production was the only sure way of “freeing” Kikuyu from "white enslavement". Kenyatta also called Kikuyu migrants to go back to their land and work rather than continue labouring for settlers and hence enriching them instead of their own people. For the Kikuyu community to have and protect the riches, the Kikuyu women had to remain at home for it was the duty of the wife to protect the land by making sure that it was continuously under cultivation (Berman & Lonsdale, 1992; 380-382).

Under customary land tenure, land continued to be recognized as belonging to the individual as long as it was under use. Whereas, Kenyatta and his likes advocated for the enrichment of the Kikuyu community using the prevailing economic factors, they wanted women to remain in a "static" Kikuyu patriarchal control yet the society was being influenced by external factors introduced by colonialism. In the next chapters, we will show how some Kiambu women
managed to avoid patriarchal control by moving to Nairobi as residents, while others continued to grow food crops whose production and disposal they still controlled.

4.7 Conclusion

The inter-war period witnessed many economic, political and social challenges that greatly impacted on gender relations of production. Government intervention in African agriculture swayed from time to time as they tried to fit it within colonial economy. It was within this political and economic structure that made Kiambu’s food crop production change in line with the new economic needs. The district’s proximity to Nairobi, settler coffee plantations and introduction of new crop varieties made it increasingly easy for Kiambu Kikuyu to turn to commercial agriculture.

The growth of Nairobi offered a ready market for Kiambu's foodstuffs especially horticultural crops. This increased trade from Kiambu but it was gendered. Kikuyu patriarchs led by Kenyatta tried to restrict women trade, especially that of Nairobi. But women's continual participation in trade only showed that they could no longer be confined to what the patriarchs regarded as ideal for the survival of the "tribe".

Women’s agricultural labour was intensified by increased commercial agriculture and expansion of settler coffee estates during the inter-war period. On one hand, women were required to provide labour to the settlers especially in coffee picking. On the other hand, they were required to produce for their own domestic consumption. By the end of the 1930s therefore, Kiambu women were shouldering most of the agricultural work. But in order to cushion themselves from the diminishing labour pool, women planted crops that were of high monetary value but required less labour. This meant that traditional crops like millet and yams
were replaced with white maize and Irish potatoes respectively.

Increased commercial production brought the issued of land ownership to the fore. The need to produce enough for the market gradually destroyed Kikuyu tenurial land, which created classes of the landed and the landless. Women producers especially from poor families were most affected since they were not able to meet their daily family food requirements.

By the end of the 1930s, Kiambu had experienced tremendous changes as a result of colonial rule. The *mbari* (sub-clan) as a unifying institution among the Kikuyu had steadily lost significance, as people embraced individualistic attitude in regard to acquiring economic prosperity. In such a scenario, they lacked a strong traditional mechanism of regulating gender relations. The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 only helped to transform these relations further. This is the subject of the next chapter.
CHAPTER FIVE

RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION DURING AND AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939-1952

5.1 Introduction

Gender relations of production during and after the World War II (1939-1952) are analyzed in this chapter. African production was reorganized not only to provide agricultural produce but also manpower in the construction of infrastructure and in the war. Wartime production directly transformed gender relations because of the re-organisation of land tenure system and labour relations. Market expansion as a result of increased population in Nairobi encouraged Kiambu Kikuyu to produce more foodstuffs. The consequence of this was increased inclination towards individual land tenure system. Labour relations in Kiambu District were also re-organized by the war. As the majority of African men joined the war and other wage employment, women were left maintaining and sustaining rural production.

At the end of the war, African reserves had experienced socio-economic problems, which made the government attempt a reconstruction of African agriculture. Communal farming and landownership, which were perceived as the best ways of reconstructing African areas failed. Reconstruction was also tried among African communities through improving African women's welfare initially undertaken by the East African Women's League, before the government joined in.

5.2 Food Crop Production and Labour Relations during the War

From the onset, the war put pressure on both land and labour in the African areas. Incidentally, high productive regions were targeted for recruitment for the war and other essential duties. Measures were taken to legalize labour acquisition. Through the Emergence Power (Defense)
Acts passed by the British government at the break of the war, the government was given broad powers of requisition, control of movements and censorship (Zeleza, 1989: 147). In particular, the 1940 Defense (Native Personnel) Regulations gave the governor power to order Provincial Commissioners to produce quotas of workers for the military and essential services. Essential services were defined by the state and therefore, private contractors working for the state benefited from recruited African labour (Zeleza, 1992:175). To recruit African labourers, both for the military and essential services, all sorts of methods were used.

Apart from the use of force, African men were cheated that they were being taken to work only to find themselves in military camps. Moreover, others were taken out of school, while some employers gave a number of their workers (Ibid, 176). They are those who, however, joined because they were enticed with misleading information. For instance, it was rumored that those who joined the military could be exempted from paying taxes. Africans were also recruited for other works considered important: construction and extension of airfields, roads, harbors and military camps. By 1941, about 98,000 Kenyans were serving in the military in one capacity or another (Shiroya, 1985).

The production of foodstuffs during the war was extremely imperative because the colony was required to be self-sufficient and also help Great Britain. The war brought great labour reorganization in African households. Women took nearly all the agricultural production since most men were conscripted for war while others migrated to urban centres in search of wage labour. Ndeda (1993) notes that Luo men from Nyanza ran away from home to avoid conscription. The effect of male migrant labour was also felt in other parts of colonial Africa like Mozambique where Mozambican women were required to grow both cotton and subsistence crops (Isaacman, 1996). Overall, Kenya African men migrated to Nairobi and
Mombasa in large numbers during the Second World War (Stichter, 1982). In the absence of able-bodied males, agricultural production automatically fell on women, children and other men left in the rural areas.

The expanded production during the war in the settler areas put high demand on African labour. However, African labour was not forthcoming because the high prices for African produce made them stay away from settler farms. The Government was, therefore, under intense settler pressure through various settler unions, for instance Nanyuki Farmers, K.F.A. (Nakuru) and the East African Chamber of Mines, to conscript African labour for them. One settler from Limuru summed up all what the settlers required: “what the farms want at times like these is a good, honest and plentiful supply of labour and a well-staffed Police Force- not gallons of ink and yards of paper. It is only work that counts” (Clayton & Savage, 1974: 239). Through the Defense (Native Personnel) Regulations, the Provincial Commissioner was enabled to conscript labour of "fit men" for military and other essential services (Ibid: 231). Through the Defense (African Labour for Essential Undertakings) Regulations, which were passed by the Secretary of State without significant modifications, Africans were easily conscripted to work for settlers. The regulations worked just for a while because in February 1943, conscription was stopped because the food shortage in the reserves was being attributed to the withdrawal of manpower from African areas. The effect of withdrawal of agricultural labour from the reserves was experienced throughout the yester years.

On the whole, the outbreak of the war had significant consequences on food production in the whole of the colony. Most importantly, there was a general expansion of commodity production as a result of the good prices during the war and also because government called for increased production to meet the war demands (White, 1990:152). Both settler and African
producers took the challenge to increase production. The rise of export prices was particularly advantageous to settlers (Presley, 1992: 58). African production also expanded though this differed between regions and individuals (Zeleza, 1989:151). For instance, the proximity of Kikuyu districts to Nairobi and more notably Kiambu, enabled producers meet the increased demand for all types of foodstuffs to feed the military personnel in Nairobi (Kitching, 1980: 108). In Nyanza Province, regional variation was also evident between north and central Nyanza. While North Nyanza occupied mainly by the Luyia expanded the production (Omwoyo, 1992:157-158), there was decline in market output in Central Nyanza as a result of the absence of men given that a substantial number was working outside their homes (Kitching, 1980:130-135).

The need to satisfy the war needs and cope with the economy that was increasingly involving cash, made Kiambu Kikuyu abandoned food crops meant for subsistence in favour of the marketable crops. This meant that households began to gradually turn to the market to satisfy their subsistence supplies (Robertson, 1997:105). From the late 1930s and progressively in the 1940s, production in Kiambu became more inclined to satisfying market requirements than in meeting the subsistence needs of the producers. Subsequently, any production was targeted for the market. This negatively impacted on the idea of “separate” gardens of women and men that had characterized Kikuyu agriculture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In fact, some informants did not seem to remember the existence of “separate” gardens, ascertaining that by the 1930s, this phenomenon had ceased among the Kikuyu (Wanjiru; Njeri O.I. 2005).

The gradual decline of ‘separate’ gardens may have resulted from land scarcity, which necessitated households’ landholdings to be treated as single productive unit, under the
authority of the household head. The creation of a single productive unit altered the process of accessing the means of production and, therefore, forcing a re-negotiation of gender relations in both labour and disposal of the produce. But since men continued to head the household under a patriarchal system, their social status was not in anyway jeopardized (Kitching, 1980:112). It has been indicated earlier that Kikuyu patriarchs favoured the separation of trade and food crop fields to be assigned to men and women respectively. Moreover, they made efforts to curtail women's trade and consequently pushed women into providing the much-needed labour. In fact, women’s labour was needed to produce high-valued crops for the market, which made it necessary to bring more land under marketable crops. As it has been indicated earlier, growing of marketable crops made many household heads begin relying on the market to meet their families' subsistence needs than had previously been the case.

Archival information point out that Kiambu Kikuyu sold firewood and charcoal in Nairobi and in turn bought maize and rice from outside the district (KNA/ DC/KBU/1/33: 1942:2-3). The district's effort to satisfy the Nairobi market is indicated by the 1941 annual report which stated that, “wattle growing has extended far beyond its reasonable limits” and in the following year, report indicated that “increased production of food, especially vegetables has been enormous… that the Kikuyu have made a good deal out of the black market there is no doubt” (Kitching 1980:114). By 1943, Kiambu was wholly committed to growing vegetables for export to Nairobi to the extent that vegetable exports for 1943 and 1944 exceeded all other exports. Despite the production, the vegetables were not eaten locally to any significant extent prompting the district commissioner to urge the Local Native Council to ask local growers to replace growing export vegetables with food crops (Robertson, 1997:112).

From the late 1930s onwards, Kiambu Kikuyu producers were conscious of the type and value
of crops they grew. Horticultural-crops were gradually replacing cereals. Furthermore, crops of high monetary value and, not labour-intensive were preferred as a consequence of the diminishing labour pool in the reserves. Therefore, during and after the war, there was increased production of vegetables like cauliflower, cabbage, carrot, beetroot, spinach, and Irish potatoes, which all fetched high prices and required less labour time (KNA, BV/6/257, 1949: 53). The vegetable list clearly shows that traditional Kikuyu green vegetables mentioned in chapter two were not among those grown for sale in the 1940s. This suggests that the acreage under traditional vegetables may have either declined to give room to the marketable new vegetables varieties or their growth had been stopped altogether.

Reduction in the growth of traditional green vegetables had significant impact on the Kikuyu diet. A study carried on Nyeri District showed that the Kikuyu diet had deteriorated over the years. The study noted that indigenous green vegetables were steadily diminishing as more intensive cultivation took place. The study further indicated that, “European vegetables are being planted more and more in certain areas but unfortunately in most areas, they are looked on only as a cash crop”. The Nyeri Kikuyu were found to be deficient of vitamins A, B2, C and calcium, phosphorous and iron minerals (Taylor, 1974:85). The lowering of these vitamins was attributed to the lack of green vegetables in the diet. The diet situation in Kiambu could not have been any better than it was in Nyeri due to the fact that there was more commercialization of production in Kiambu than was in Nyeri.

Commercialization of production not only affected indigenous vegetables but also drought-resistant traditional food crops like cassava and yams. The prolonged maturity period and the labour input discouraged Kikuyu women from growing these crops. Furthermore, these crops did not have a ready market. This was another factor that curtailed their high production
(Edith, O.I.; 2005). The decrease in the production of traditional food crops was blamed on the increasing tendency towards individualism. The colonial officials argued that “greed” for high-valued crops for instance maize and wattle had pushed the nutritious crops out of Kikuyu farms. Maize, though a soil exhausting crop, was valued more than millet because of its export value. Another factor was that it did not require a lot of labour in weeding or even keeping away birds as millet did (Tignor, 1976: 304-305). In the neighbouring Murang’a District, maize production began to rise since the 1920s due to agricultural department's efforts in issuing producers with flat white maize seeds such as Hickory King, which was high yielding (Mackenzie, 1998:128-129). It is probable that maize growing in Kiambu was lower compared to Murang’a and Nyeri since Kiambu was now concentrating on horticulture due to land scarcity and the demand for new food crop varieties in the Municipality of Nairobi.

The war made the government intervene in African production through encouragement and distribution of cereal seeds. This intervention was made necessary by the failure of the maize harvest in 1942, which caused famine. Africans had to rely on cassava, hence the name of the famine, ng’aragu ya mianga (cassava famine). One informant from Kiganjo remembered the famine vividly. “Between 1942 and 1943 we experienced famine, cassava famine (ng’aragu ya mianga). We were just eating cassava flour that is why it was called cassava famine. The government was giving us with cassava flour” (Mbugua, O.I. 2005). The famine made the government to begin focusing on the agricultural problems in the reserves (Throup, 1988: 66). In spite of the recognition of agricultural problems in African areas, the government did not take specific measures to solve them. On the contrary, measures taken were essentially directed towards European producers.

In 1942, the Increased Production of Crops Ordinance was passed. The ordinance guaranteed
European producers a minimum price for “scheduled crops”, a minimum return per acre, and “free grants” for bringing new land into production. The scheduled crops included wheat, maize, rye, flax, oats, rice, rubber, barley, potatoes, pyrethrum, and vegetable seeds (KNA/DOA/AR, 1942:1). Though initially African crops were not guaranteed minimum prices, this did not deter Africans from producing.

In fact, Africans’ high maize production posed stiff competition for settlers forcing the government to introduce the Maize and Produce Control in May 1942 to control maize prices. Ideally, the prices for both settlers and Africans were supposed to be the same at the Control Board, but in reality, the latter received less for the same quantity (Kitching, 1980: 109). The price differential forced African producers to sell their produce in what the government called “black market” because it offered better prices than the Control Board.

Central Province and particularly Kiambu sold their maize in the black market. During the drought of 1942-1943, the Kikuyu are said to have diverted their produce from the official channels to the more profitable "black market" in Nairobi and Ukambani. It was not easy for the administrators to control the "black market" because trade was carried out in the traditional trade routes that linked Kikuyuland with areas like Ukambani, Nanyuki, Rumuruti and Thompson’s Falls (Nyahururu) (Throup, 1988:65). These diversions made it difficult for the administration to keep track of what was being produced in Kikuyu districts. Available statistics show that the government was not able to ascertain what was being produced in Kikuyu districts because of the farmer’s evasion of the Control Board. The fact that statistics were less available for Kiambu than for Murang’a and Nyeri districts clearly demonstrates the fact that the proximity of Nairobi gave the Kiambu Kikuyu the opportunity to utilize the free market with less government control (Kitching, 1980: 109-110).
Despite efforts made by producers, production during the war period suffered from setbacks especially during the 1942-43 drought. However, settlers and African producers experienced the drought effects differently as their explanations point out. Settlers argued that they were not encouraged to produce maize. They complained that lack of farm machinery and spare parts also hindered them from growing large quantity of maize (Zeleza, 1989:150). Africans emphasized that reserves had been drained of their manpower as a result of military conscription and urban migration such that foodstuff production was left to the old men and the womenfolk (Ibid). Stichter (1982) agrees with the assertion that the withdrawal of African males from reserves greatly reduced the Africans production capability. Africans further asserted that the low maize prices offered for African maize discouraged its growth and it was, therefore, not possible to produce a surplus. In addition, they maintained that increased cash crop production was done at the expense of food crops. The Chief Native Commissioner was of the opinion that the withdrawal of too many men from the reserves was a major contributor to the poor production. Both Central and Nyanza provinces were worst hit, being the largest suppliers of migrant labour (Ndeda, 1993; Kitching, 1980). For example, the percentage of men away from home in Nyanza and Kikuyuland was 50 and 55 per cent respectively.

In 1942, the District Commissioner of Fort Hall (Murang'a), J. H. Clive complained that: in considering the labour supply there is a tendency to overlook the labour requirements within the reserves (Clayton & Savage, 1974: 243). The 1944 Kiambu District annual report indicated that the number of able-bodied men from the district serving in the military had been underestimated and consequently, the “farmer” was experiencing problems in getting regular labour from the district (KNA/ DC/KBU/1/35: 1944). The "farmer" referred here is the European settler since they continued to depend on African labour during the war. In the absence of men, settlers had, therefore, to depend on Kikuyu women to provide the necessary
labour especially in coffee picking.

In Nyanza, Owen argued in 1944 that women would not take part in the war because of the workload they were carrying:

Women in the reserves are not able to do what is generally counted as war work, because owing to the absence of so many men from this reserve, the fieldwork and the upkeep of Kraals, and even the care of cattle, increasingly devolves upon the woman. All millet which this reserve has produced, not to speak of other food such as eggs and chicken, etc could never have been attained the bulk it has with the hard work of thousands of women and girls (L. O. Owens letter to D.C. October 13, 1942, KNA as quoted in Ndeda, 1991:191).

Despite official acknowledgement of the negative impact the withdrawal of male labour had on rural production, nothing was ever done to rectify the situation. In fact, the situation became worse as more individuals both men and women moved out of the reserves for wage employment and formal education (Robertson, 1997b; Stichter, 1982). It is no wonder that African production continued to be outdone by settler agriculture, which not only had cheap labour at its disposal but also government friendly policies. Therefore, the food shortage experienced in the early 1940s was both as a result of the war demands and the cumulative effects of discriminatory agricultural policies (Zeleza, 1989: 150). The continued negligence of African producers especially in the high producing areas of Central and Nyanza was exposed by the 1942-1943 famine.

The scarcity of labour had negative impact on food production. Between 1942 and 1945, there was insufficiency of food, which made the period acquire the name "panya kuu" or time of the rats (when rats were eaten) (Clayton & Savage 1974: 242). To solve the food crisis, in 1943, the Kiambu Local Native Council, which was male-dominated purchased relief food for Ndeiya area, that was most affected by food insufficiency in the district
(KNA/DC/KBU/1/34:1943). The council also agreed that the chiefs were to issue compulsory directives to Kikuyu families to grow at least a half an acre of sweet potatoes and cassava, (KNA/ DC/KBU/ LNC, 1938-1943:4). The directive to grow the mentioned crops was definitely directed to the women who were the main producers. It is, however, not certain how far this directive was implemented due to the fact that individual's consideration on what and how to grow was more important than that of the Local Native Council.

In Kiambu District, the famine necessitated the gathering of people in barazas (public meetings) to advice people on the need to grow more food crops. Such a meeting was on 19th November 1943 where Chief Josiah gave a public talk. He advised the people not only to grow drought resistance crops but also void selling their produce. He further asked them not to rely only on flour but also consume other foods like fruits and vegetables (KNA/D.A.O./KBU/1/63, 1939-1953:151-153). It is worth noting that the famine the gendered nature of food consumption in the district. The District Medical Officer was concerned about the consumption habits of the residents. He noted that despite the production of European vegetables like carrots and cabbages in the district, the producers particularly the women and children were not consuming them even with threatening famine. He pointed out that while Kikuyu men were consuming the vegetables in the African eating places in the urban centres and markets in the rural areas, women and children had not changed their diet. He therefore advocated for cooking demonstrations to teach Kikuyu women how to cook and use the vegetables (KNA/ D.A.O./KBU/1/63, 1939-1953:111). The famine not only exposed the poor eating habits of the Kikuyu but it also forced more women to move mostly to Nairobi to escape from the difficulties in the rural areas and take advantage of the war situation (Robertson, 1997b; White, 1990).
The war had in particular changed gender labour relations. It had placed importance in cash forcing Africans either to produce commodities for sale or join wage labour. During the war, the duration of labour contracts began to change. In the 1920s and early 1930s, employment periods had varied from one month to two years but in the 1940s, substantial number of African males worked as wage labourers to meet their livelihood without the intentions of going back to the reserves. This was made possible by the availability of employment opportunities. The large military presence and general increase of Nairobi’s population had put significant demand on African domestic laborers: cooks and cleaning staff. By 1939, the population of Indians in Nairobi was 17,700 while that of Europeans stood at 6,500 and by 1941, it had rose to 8,000. The general African population rose from 41,000 in 1939 to 70,000 in 1941 (White, 1990, 147).

The military and the non-African civilians in Nairobi required African domestic servants. This in essence created a competition between them and Kenya Europeans and Indians and thus raising wages for domestic service. Since the wage given at the military camps and Nairobi were better, most Africans moved to towns in the hope of getting a domestic job. The number of domestic workers in Kenya in 1941 was 22,054 and rose to about 30,000 by the end of the war (Ibid: 148). Domestic service was preferred because of both the payment and the fact that it was possible for one to advance in cooking or kitchen service if he got a good employer who could train him. It was possible for one to save and begin his business.

While men easily got domestic jobs during the war period, this did not apply to women. In 1944, it was conservatively estimated that over five thousand households employed servants in Nairobi. However, the total number of women employed in non-agricultural wage in the whole colony was only 2, 218. This figure included casual and regular employees. These
figures also included non-African women employed as *ayahs* (house-helps). It should be noted that the number of African women working, as *ayahs* was small since Europeans were not keen on employing African women to bring up white children because they feared that their children would be indoctrinated into inferior culture.

The establishment of industries from the 1940s also encouraged the growth of Nairobi's population. Prior to Second World War, British investors and financiers were not interested in developing industries in Kenya (Zwanenberg and King, 1975). After 1940, this attitude changed as a result of the war. In 1940-1941, the Kenya Industrial Management Board was set up in Nairobi. The mandate of the board was to encourage the local manufacture of some good formerly imported from Britain in order to avoid the risks of shipping. The East African Industries Limited eventually acquired the Board's the equipment and other facilities (Kiruthu, 2006). The British Government and the Multinational-Manufacturing Company, Unilver, financed the East African Industries.

Given that movement was restricted during the war, African laborers were forced to remain in their workstations for longer periods than was the case previously (KNA/CS/1/2/21, 1952). Male absenteeism in the reserves meant that the bulk of the agricultural labour fell on the women. By the early 1950s, both Kiambu and Murang'a women were doing “men’s work”. It was also reported that men were having a negative attitude towards agriculture as a result of formal education (Mbugua, O.I. 2005). The outbreak of Mau Mau also had a negative impact on labour in central Kenya. Labour shortage was also experienced in other parts of the country like Nyanza and Western (Humphrey, 1947; Hay, 1976; Wills, 1967).

The withdrawal of males from Kiambu caused labour shortage for settler’s coffee plantations.
It is indicated that settlers in Kiambu suffered from labour shortage in 1941 and 1947 when women went on go-slow in coffee picking. In 1951, women from Gatundu threatened to down their tools but financial constraints forced them to work when plans were mooted to bring labourers from Meru (Presley, 1992:71-75). The fact that they resumed work even though their grievances were not addressed indicates the importance of money in the livelihood of these women. To sustain their families during the war, they had either to work as wage labourers or increase production of food crops appreciably (Mackenzie, 1998:145). Having been denied the right to grow inedible cash crops like coffee, pyrethrum and tea, Africans continued to produce food crops that were meant to supplement the war efforts but under changing gender relations (KNA/BV/1/31: 1943-44).

The war brought great social and economic changes that eventually affected both the social relations in African households and the rural economy. Rural-urban migration steeped due to rural hardships. Although more men migrated to urban centres in search of employment, women too took part in this mobility but in a smaller number compared to men. The importance of women’s labour during the war is evident by the control of their movement. Women from Kiambu were prohibited to move to Nairobi to sell their produce since it was considered the “work of men”. It was argued that many women had no right to be in Nairobi (KNA/PC/Central/2/1/13: 1944-1950). The Nyeri Native Council was also against female movement to urban centres. In March 1939, in a meeting presided over by the DC, a recommendation was made to amend the pass law in order to control the entry of native girls to towns. The meeting approved that a girl could travel to town only if the relevant people had duly endorsed her pass (Kiruthu, 1997:205). Controlling women’s movement was not just to prevent them from selling their produce. The real reason was the domestic struggle that was shifting from mere prevention of women’s mobility to the control their labour and production
Controlling women was viewed necessary because a good number of these women were not going back to the rural homes. A significant number of them were engaging in prostitution, which was rampant in Nairobi because of the presence of the military (White, 1990:147). But this concerned Kikuyu patriarchs because these women were not only contravening societal’s norms but they were also rebelling against the patriarchal authority.

5.3 Agricultural Trade during the War Years

The Second World War presented various openings for Africans to move from the rural areas. On one hand, the war created employment opportunities that encouraged both men and women to move to the urban centres especially Nairobi. On the other hand, the increased population due to the influx of military labour provided a ready market for African foodstuffs. However, in the course of the war, to the late 1950s, African trade was put under tight control especially because of the control of movement to and from Nairobi from 1940 to 1958 (Robertson, 1997b: 102). Under the war conditions therefore, Africans lost trade autonomy but managed to develop adaptability and further capacity to evade the controls. Furthermore, the trading partners also changed with few women taking up trade on more permanent base than before. Men equally took up trade that was not necessarily directly related to agricultural production.

Trading by Kikuyu women during the war was occasioned by several factors. By the 1940s, the Kikuyu had gone through great transformation as a society affecting the social cohesion both at the family and society level. Colonialism had presented Kikuyu women with an opportunity to resist patriarchal controls that were oppressive to them. Subsequently the war enabled a number of Kiambu women move to Nairobi to run away from unwanted marriages and abusive husbands. By moving to Nairobi, the women also escaped the rural areas because
of increased forced labour as a result of the war regulations. Moreover, landlessness and augmented burden of rural labour obligations due to male migration from agriculture and the low level of plantation wages pushed women into trade (Robertson, 1997b: 105). While some women traded because they were landless, there are those who engaged in trade because they wanted to make money of their own. Previously, we noted that women did not have complete autonomy over the proceeds of their trade. However, it seems that towards the end of the 1940s and early 1950s, the proportion of Kikuyu women in Nairobi's population rose sharply as they traded to have extra money free from the husband's control. This number was equally added by those who had were engaging in prostitution to earn a living.

To ensure that there was sufficient provision for the military, the government put produce movement controls for Nairobi traders. The World War II and the emergency conditions thus affected Kiambu’s dried staple trade later in the 1950s. Persistent food shortage caused bans on the export of maize and beans from Kiambu in 1942, 1943 and 1945. Price control placed on these staples made most of the produce to be sold in illegal markets instead of the control boards despite stringent laws punishing infractions. For instance, the 1943 Defence (Controlled Produce) and 1944 Defence (Control of Maize) Regulations imposed a fine of up to £500 or two years of imprisonment on anyone who contravened the regulations. These tough rules did however not deter traders. In an effort to escape control, large quantities of maize from Kiambu were transported at night to Ukambani, which was facing famine. The assistant agricultural officer complained in 1947 "the urban population was living entirely on Kiambu maize and buying but little rations as they like. It is a traffic that is impossible to stop owing to our network of road" (Throup, 1988: 66). Everyday Kikuyu women carried their loads into African locations of Nairobi where they fetched higher prices than if sold to the government. Kiambu women moved their commodities of njahi, sweet potatoes, and arrowroots and fruits among others from door-to-door in African areas.
Apart from foodstuffs, African traders mostly men who were capitalized sold charcoal. In August 1945, an estimated 700 to 1,000 bags of charcoal a day were transported into the capital (Ibid). So both men and women participated in the illegal trade, which was also referred to as "black market" by the authorities. Nairobi Africans depended on the "black market" for their supplies and, throughout the war; African traders thrived, accumulating funds to invest in new shops or lorries. Robertson (1997b: 104) indicates that Kikuyu men established restaurants, dwelt in chicken and egg business during the war. Most times such business ventures were undertaken through cooperatives or partnerships. By engaging in restaurants, African men were taking up gender roles that were previously preserved for females.

Not all traders traded illegally because the government issued licenses to some. In an effort to control physical movement of Africans, the government issued licenses to particular individuals to trade especially in Nairobi. However, there was discrimination along gender in the issuance of the trade licenses. The government issued licenses to men who were relatively capitalized than women. The discrimination against women traders in the issuance of trade licenses did not dissuade them from trading as we have already observed. Some of them took up trade as a profession. Such traders were therefore, not necessarily producers of commodities they sold but bought from others and then took to the market. In effect, this meant that professional traders unlike part-time traders left farming as the primary source of livelihood and thus created differentiation among women traders.

Although most African traders in Nairobi were not licensed, they served the war efforts at a time when it was difficult to get food commodities. Indeed, the General Purposes Committee
of the Municipal Council was called upon to address the question of hawking of eggs and potatoes in the town's commercial area. In 1942, the committee acknowledged the difficulty of obtaining potatoes for use at the Service Club and other canteens especially for military requirement (KNA/JW/2/18/ 1942:33). To resolve this problem, trading points were erected in town where licensed traders would trade.

Commodities traded by men and women differed. Women continued to concentrate on small-scale retail trade most likely because they were undercapitalized. By 1951, Kiambu women sold dried staples, sweet potatoes, arrowroots fruits, and sugarcane while men sold tobacco products, calabashes, and ropes. There were also commodities that were sold by gender group—green peas, yams, cabbages and potatoes. Men were also involved in shops that stocked imported goods—household necessities for instance sugar and soap.

By the late 1940s and early 1950s, Kiambu Kikuyu had extensively diversified their sources of livelihood. Due to the diminishing resources in the rural areas and presence of opportunities in Nairobi, both men and women got more involved in trade selling commodities that they had not necessarily produced. Competition for trade opportunities continued to be manifested between and among gender groups. In the first instance, the Kikuyu male elders continued to make efforts to control women's movement to urban centres. During and after the war, both the Kiambu LNC and the British officials agreed upon the desirability of keeping women from going to Nairobi during and after the World War II. The Kenya African Traders and Farmers Association requested the government to get chiefs to stop "native women from selling things in towns," except in markets. The African men who were capitalized and licensed were also opposed to men hawkers in Nairobi whom they viewed as threat to their businesses. It is, therefore, certain that trade competition were along gender and class.
5.4 The Land Issue Before the break of the Mau Mau War

Production during the war years and after brought the land issue in Kikuyuland to fore. Land alienation, commercial production and population growth were the main factors behind land problems in African reserves since the 1920s. By the close of the 1930s, land scarcity among the Kikuyu and particularly those of Kiambu was an issue of great concern. After the demarcation of African reserves in 1926, there was no more land for expansion (Sorrenson, 1968). Africans had to do with the available land in the designated reserves. The situation was worse in Kikuyuland especially Kiambu District, where commercial farming, had been entrenched by the late 1930s. Landowners had put most of their land under cultivation and, therefore, interfered with the principal of universal access to land, hence causing landlessness.

From the late 1930s onwards, the principal of universal access to land would not be upheld because the sub-clan (*mbari*), the major social institution that controlled social relations was steadily losing significance in the face of individualism. In some instances, *mbari* elders and *aramati* (custodians) were assuming power in land negotiation by virtue of their position in the sub-clan, thus denying sons of junior wives and the descendants of *ahoi* (tenants-at -will) and *ndungata* (servant) security offered in traditional land tenure (Mburu, O.I. 2005; Tignor, 1976: 78). There were instances when young *mbari* members who had both money and a Western education challenged the *muramati* (custodian). Such young persons were able to assume the role of *muramati* but to their own advantage.

The third factor that caused land problem in Kiambu and Kikuyuland generally was population growth. With a growing population and no more frontiers to expand, people who occupied land under various traditional rights other than ownership found their position more
and more precarious especially if it was based simply on friendship as in the case of *ahoi*, (Leo, 1984:55). The concept of friendship as the traditional basis of tenancy was being strained and in turn was provoking a fierce struggle over land rights. The relationship between the *ahoi* and landowner was now being commuted into cash rent. Consequently, conflicts between alleged *ahoi* and landowners were common (Sorrenson, 1967:78). Population growth reduced cultivable land in the whole of Kikuyu land from the 1940s (Sorrenson, 1967: 74) and more so in Kiambu District. Kitching (1980: 120) indicates that Kiambu’s population was growing at a rate of 8.7% per annum. This was double that of Murang’a at 4.4% and almost treble that of Nyeri at 3.0%.

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below show the effect of population increase on the acreage in Kiambu and Murang’a.

### Table: 5.1: Available and Cultivable Acreage of Households in Kiambu, 1931 and 1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Density (p.s.m)</th>
<th>No. of households</th>
<th>Available acreage per household</th>
<th>Cultivable acreage per household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>104,028</td>
<td>258.8</td>
<td>21,976</td>
<td>11.59</td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>258,085</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>54,504</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>3.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase or decrease</td>
<td>+148%</td>
<td>+148%</td>
<td>+148%</td>
<td>-59.7%</td>
<td>-59.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Table: 5.2 Available and Cultivable Acreage of household in Fort Hall (Murang’a) 1931 and 1948

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Density (p.s.m)</th>
<th>No. of household</th>
<th>Available acreage per household</th>
<th>Cultivable acreage per household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>171,852</td>
<td>291.9</td>
<td>32,671</td>
<td>11.42</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>303,646</td>
<td>515.8</td>
<td>67,723</td>
<td>6.46</td>
<td>5.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase or decrease</td>
<td>+77%</td>
<td>+77</td>
<td>+77</td>
<td>-43.4%</td>
<td>-43.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tables 5.1 and 5.2 clearly show the population of Kiambu District had increased comparatively faster than that of Fort Hall (Murang’a) by the late 1940s. The 1948 population census indicates that Kiambu District had the highest African population density per square mile in the whole of Central Province (Colony, 1955:10). This population increase was attributed to natural increase and the in-migration especially from Murang’a and Nyeri. It is suggested here that the movement to Kiambu was due to its attractive position in relation to Nairobi, the main urban centre that would offer wage labour to Kikuyu men. The increased population consequently reduced the cultivable acreage per household over the years. The reduction in cultivable land could explain the shift from low-yielding low-value cereals, like sorghum and millets, to fruits and vegetables that dominated Kiambu District from the late 1930s.

The reduction of cultivable land differed from one household to another. There were also differences between sub-clans. By 1940s, wealthy Kikuyu men were buying land ignoring the system of land redemption and, therefore, creating a class of landless people (Edith, OI. 2005). The District Commissioner acknowledged the purchase of land in 1941 when he reported that sales that had taken place during the previous ten or fifteen years had amounted to "hundreds possibly even thousands of acres" (Leo, 1984:55). A class of landed Kikuyu was increasingly becoming visible.

In 1945, an African Tribunal noted:

> it is regrettable that chiefs and other influential men, including members of the Tribunals, are taking advantage of the present uncertainty to acquire large areas of land (and are) seeking to advance their position to become feudal landlords (Sorrenson, 1967: 78).

During the same period, Kiambu annual report continued to note, “a large landless class is
growing up in this district…” (Sorrenson, 1967). As noted earlier, only individuals who had access to state power within the Local Native Councils, Tribunal members, Chiefs and those with Western education were able to manipulate the prevailing situation not only in Kiambu but also in the rest of Kikuyuland to their benefit. By mid-1940s, there were a significant number of better-off individuals who had managed to expand their acreage. Traditional criteria of access were gradually transformed or bent to favour the rich who bought land at the expense of the poor (KNA/DC/KBU/1/32; 1942:4). The fact that women would not be chiefs, or tribunal members and rarely got Western education put them at a disadvantaged position in regard to acquiring land.

The unavailability of sufficient land in the 1940s was one major factor that made both men and women search for wage labour within and outside the district. By 1948, for instance, 40 per cent of the adult male population was working for wages either within or outside the district (Kitching, 1980:119; Stichter, 1982). A further number moved to Nairobi for wage labour or engaged in foodstuff trade especially because the war had increased Nairobi’s labour requirements. This had, therefore, attracted many Africans to move to Nairobi at the onset of the war. In 1939, the African population in Nairobi was estimated at 41,000 and in 1941 it stood at 70,000 and in 1944 it was 66,500 (White, 1990:147). The slight drop of African population in 1944 may be have been caused by a drop in employment opportunities for Africans. The population of non-Africans was equally high pushing the need for domestic servants higher than before the war. Although African men continued to dominate in domestic service, few African women began to penetrate this sector. Most of the women who moved to Nairobi were running away from poor rural conditions due to low pay, as was the case in the coffee plantations or they did not have land from where they could grow food crops (Ibid: 156).
Bitter disputes as a result of land cases formed the base of the conflict that caused unrest in the Kikuyu reserve during the post-war period. The shifting land relations in the 1940s disadvantaged the female gender, mostly from the poor families. Women were disadvantaged in that they could not negotiate to buy land since it was not considered “womanly” for a female to buy land. Kikuyu women, like the rest of African women continued to access land through their male guardians. As a result, if a man did not own land, his female dependants had to survive in whichever way was available to them. This would explain why increasing number of Kikuyu women moved to Nairobi in the 1940s (Robertson, 1997; White, 1990).

The diminishing land base made ownership of land and not access the major determinant factor whether an individual would produce food crops or not. Previously as long as one accessed land, the issue of ownership was not critical. Landless men always had a chance of accumulating wealth in terms of goats and in turn land while still living as tenants. They could, therefore, over time change their status from tenants to landowners. As indicated earlier, expansion was constrained due to land alienation and commercial production and, hence, the principal of universal access was interfered with making individual title paramount.

As early as 1930s, the Kikuyu Local Native Councils, which were generally composed of men of higher status in the community, gave positive recommendation for the registration of land titles. This recommendation may have been influenced by commercialization of production since it had raised land value considerably, making landowners want to protect their land from any encroachment. Throup (1987:140) indicates that the cost of an acre of land had risen from 100 goats in 1939 to 1,000 in 1952. Due to the high price charged per acre, only rich men who had accumulated capital through trade, or wage income were able to accumulate land at the
expense of the less fortunate. Thus, land became a social stratifying factor in Kiambu District (Throup, 1988).

Conflict over land was evident in the land cases handled by the Tribunal Court in the 1940s and early 1950s, which took long before any conclusion was arrived at. Court cases were further prolonged because many persons did not accept a defeat verdict. This is evidenced by the many appeals made (Mackenzie, 1998:175). The high fee charged in the African courts is a further confirmation of how important land ownership was in Kikuyuland during the period. Indeed, the revenue raised by the courts kept on escalating. In 1949, for instance, a total of £13,000 was raised compared to £24,000 in 1951 (Sorrenson, 1967:79-80). The use of the courts was becoming necessary because the integrity of the *mbari* as a social and territorial unit was under threat due to several factors that threatened its social cohesion.

The colonial government failed to relate Kikuyu land problem to the colonial political economy and continued to blame the community for the problem. In 1951, in the midst of the growing political tension, the Provincial Commissioner of Central Province was blaming landlessness to the high fertility of the Kikuyu. The land problem among the Kikuyu and northern Kamba was blamed on the fertility of the two “tribes”. The number of landless men was far higher among the Kikuyu of Kiambu and Fort Hall (Maloba, 1989). While it is true that the population had outstripped available land, the Provincial Commissioner failed to acknowledge the effect of land alienation in the district, which had blocked possible expansion. For the colonial authorities, availing land to the Kikuyu was not the solution to landlessness that was pushing the region into total anarchy.

The growing land agitation had significant impact on gender relations of production. By the
late 1940s, the Kikuyu still thought that a woman was supposed to be given land by her matrimonial male relatives. An informant in his early nineties argued that a woman who could try to acquire land was regarded, as a "man" because she had personally acquired her own property (Njuguna, O.I.: 2005). Kikuyu rural women did not acquire land in the 1940s. However, White (1990) indicates that women who moved to Nairobi managed to acquire property of their own, especially houses in Pumwani. These women engaged in a variety of income ventures for instance domestic service, prostitution and even hawking foodstuffs. While some continued to keep contacts with the rural relatives, others began their own lineages.

There were a number of men who were rendered landless either because they sold off their small pieces of land to the rich or they were ahoi. Such groups of people were reduced to wage labourers or moved out of the rural to urban centres in such of employment. From the late 1940s, an increasing number of landless Kikuyu moved to Nairobi and continued to depend on the agricultural production of the rural population. By about 1947, 55 per cent of the legal workforce in Nairobi was Kikuyu men while the "Kavirondo" accounted for about 30 per cent (Stichter, 1982: 110). This number may have been even high noting that there were always individuals who were illegally in Nairobi.

White (1990: 153) indicates that there were men and women who were residing in Mathare and Eastleigh illegally and most times they purchased their food from black market in Ruaraka from hawkers who came from Kiambu and Thika. At the end of the war in 1945 social relations in Kiambu District had been transformed significantly as a result of economic policies implemented during the war.
5.5 Post-War Reconstruction and Community Development

The Second World War had significant impact on Africans and their environment. Their involvement both directly and indirectly in the war efforts affected all aspects of their lives. As we have shown, Africans were encouraged to put maximum use of their land during the 1930s depression to offset the declining returns from settler sector and provide for the war efforts despite the soil erosion problem that was looming (Throup, 1988:65). The soil erosion problem had been as result of a growing congestion of population, over-grazing, and over-cultivation without allowing the necessary periods of fallow in the 1930s. Erosion was further increased by the continued planting of maize, a notoriously "hungry" crop which, exhausted nitrogen from soils. In the late thirties, the government established a Soil Conservation Service, which began a campaign of contour terracing (Sorrenson, 1967:42). Given that contour-terracing cut across the traditional pattern of Kikuyu landholding, running in narrow strips from the top to bottom of ridges, it had to be done communally.

Increased production during the war directly exacerbated the soil erosion problem in the reserves. After the war, the government stepped in to prevent further soil destruction arguing that through ignorance, incompetence and greed, African peasant had "mined" the land and destroyed it (Mackenzie, 1998:277). To do this, the government attempted to restore the authority of the indigenous land authorities, which it hoped could check the "land-miners" and protect the interests of the larger community. The administrative and agricultural officers assumed that by organizing a massive programme of bench terracing through communal work soil erosion would be checked.

The government, therefore, embarked on a planned and long-term assistance for African agriculture. The Worthington Plan was drawn to run for a period of ten years from 1946. It
had an eleven million pounds fund of which half was to be used by the African Land Development Programme that targeted African agriculture especially the restoration of soil fertility for specific reasons. It was necessary to restore soil fertility to avoid a recurrence of food shortage as had been experienced during the war. The government also aimed at encouraging Africans to produce not only to meet their subsistence needs but also have surplus for export, which could help Britain in the reconstruction efforts at home.

Bench terracing was taken as the major way of reducing soil erosion in the African areas. Being a communal undertaking, both men and women were required to devote two mornings a week to the task. The work had no pay and absentees were liable to fines. The chiefs and headmen were required to meet a specific target of workers hence they could have used force to meet their goal. This programme disrupted day-to-day agricultural activities. The effects of terracing were severely felt by persons who had small land, as most of it was lost in the course of terracing. The whole exercise was backbreaking especially for women who were majority in the exercise in the absence of the men. To avoid enlistment, women used all sorts of excuses. One women informant in her early 100s explained how she would pretend that she was insane whenever the recruiting agents came around. She would smear herself with cow dung and feign being dumb (Njeri, O.I. 2005). It is not certain how this helped her manage to escape the scrutiny of the headmen. Men who remained in the reserves too resisted the terracing project. Njenga remembered how men would pretend that they were blind only to be forced to walk over a steeping region and those who were scared of falling definitely opened their eyes (Njenga, O.I. 2005).

Murang’a women amplified the greatest resistance to soil erosion conservation in Kikuyuland in the post-war period. The over-stretching of their agricultural labour must have irritated
them to the extent of taking up arms against the authorities. The Murang'a women's revolt of 1947 resulted in the halting of the communal terracing (Sorrenson, 1967:75). European perception of women blinded them from acknowledging women's agency in the Murang'a women's revolt just as they had done to the Aba Women's War in Nigeria in the late 1920s. The resistance spearheaded by the women was an indication that they were able to rise against oppressive government policies.

While African women were rising against colonial administration, there was a group colonizer of who were advocating for the right of African women. In 1945, Olga Watkins writing in the East African Standard complained of the poor situation of the African women (East African Standard, 23 February, 1945). The European women through the East African Women's League, which was founded in 1917, for the advancement of women was against what they termed as negligence of African women (Wipper, 1975: 99). It is certain that without any specific welfare policy in African reserves, the socio-economic wellbeing of most rural Africans had deteriorated. This was even worse for women who were majority in rural production since many African men were increasingly moving into wage labour. Despite the poor status of African women, the question that arises is why did European women begin to have an interest in African women's affairs at this particular time in colonial history? The role of European women in imperial agenda has elicited debate among historians (Strobel, 1998). Though they were considered inferior within a race that perceived themselves superior, they were significant in shaping social relations in the colonies. European women played different roles in the Empire. On the one hand, they advanced the interests of the colonizers by keeping the distance with the colonized while on the other hand they tried to ameliorate worst effects of imperialism.
European women in Kenya had not been involved significantly in public matters until the 1940s. This turn of events was triggered by circumstances in Britain between the late 1930s and the conclusion of the war. As the war came to an end, it was obvious that the Empire was disintegrating and the colonized peoples would not continue to be treated as before. In Britain, two important changes occurred within the British Colonial Service, which significantly altered the social relations in the colony. First, the colonial mission shifted to an emphasis on trusteeship and development. The colonized peoples had to be guided into development that would enable them to actively participate in governance. Second, after agitation by British feminists, the colonial office in 1938 dropped its ban on admitting women. From the late 1940s, therefore, the Colonial Service significantly increased its recruitment of women as education and social welfare officers. It is likely that both the ideological change and the presence of female officers spurred the efforts of European women in the colonies to help African women (Strobel, 1998).

Social welfare in Kenya began before the conclusion of the war. In 1944, a committee had been constituted to develop a five-year development and welfare programme designed to improve the standard of living of Africans. This change of events may have been necessitated by government's declaration of mass education for Africans. It was hoped that adult education would improve the health and living standards of African people. Additionally, education would improve Africans' economic wellbeing and develop the political institutions in preparation for self-governing (Ndeda, 1992:237). We have noted that the Worthington Plan of 1946 was meant to tackle agricultural immediate problems like soil erosion. In social welfare, which was changed to be community development by the 1950s, training covered economic and social aspects for betterment of life. Agriculturally, communities were required to acquire better methods of soil conservation, more efficient farming method and better
livestock care. For proper health, teaching was done on better sanitation and water supply, proper measures of hygiene, and infant and maternity welfare (ARC (MAA) 2/5/168 1, 1949-51).

This social welfare knowledge was disseminated through African women clubs or women institutes, which accidentally began in the late 1940s. In 1946, African ex-service men had been enrolled at the Jeanes School for a social welfare course. Their wives, who accompanied their husbands, were trained on domestic subjects. To maintain the networking among themselves and the Jeanes School, these women formed women clubs in their rural areas (Wipper, 1975/76: 195). Thus, it was from these ex-service Jeanes trainees' wives that women clubs were formed. By the late 1940s the women clubs were scattered in most of the colony (Ndeda, 1992:239). European women volunteers taught African women various skills like spinning, weaving, sewing and knitting at a fee of one shilling annually. Women were also attending a Mrs. Aubrey's "Home makers" club where they were taught cooking (KNA/GH/7/24; 1929-1952).

By early 1950s, the importance of women institutions was acknowledged by the colonial administration. This was mostly because the leadership of the East African Women's League, under its President, Ely Wilson was indicating their worth to Governor Sir Philip Mitchell, at a time of political tension among Africans. In December 1950, the League wrote to the Governor signifying the work it was doing among African women. In spite of it indicating that its primary aim was to improve the welfare of women and children of all races, it was not of the opinion of enlisting women of other races in to the East African Women's League. The League's administration hoped to organize other races and direct them to the League's goal of improving the welfare of women and children. They also advocated the formation of a
federation of all women organizations to counter the negative propaganda that was taking place among the coloured races (Ibid). From the foregoing, there is all indication to show that the East African Women's League was inclined to keep the social distance between the colonizers and colonized. However, the work began by the European women gave a base from which African women were allowed more space in the colony's affairs by the administration.

In 1950 when the Jeanes School was placed under the Department of Community Development with Nancy Shepherd as the Assistant Commissioner, more African women were enrolled. Those enrolled had to have attended a three-months training course at a District Home-craft Training centre and proven leadership qualities in the field (KNA/AB/2/26: 1956-1958). Once trained, they were sent to their rural homes as trainers. By 1951, the various women clubs formed the Maendeleo ya Wanawake (Women in Progress). The federation became handy during the Emergency period of the 1950s. Formation of women clubs gave birth to the women movement in Kenya.

5.6 Conclusion
The Second World War brought far-reaching changes in African areas, causing significant impact on gender relations of production. The war needs both in military personnel and foodstuffs reorganized Kiambu gender labour relations. Through policies and regulations, the government directly interfered with gender relations in the colony and in Kiambu District specifically.

Women did most of the African production during the war since men had been conscripted for the war. Women’ agricultural labour was so crucial such that Kiambu African men colluded with Kiambu Local Native Council and the Kenya African Traders and Farmers Association to
control the movement of women especially those who traded so that they would remain the active production.

Despite these restrictions, the war provided opportunities for both men and women to trade in Nairobi. Therefore, these opportunities and the increasing socio-economic problems in the district, more Kikuyu participated in the trade resulting to the emergence of a category of professional traders. Kiambu women, however, found it cumbersome to participate in Nairobi trade because of government movement restrictions and opposition of African men. Despite the restrictions women persevered and found ways of adapting to the situation. Women also increasing joined prostitution as an alternative way of making their own money.

The production during the war increased the value of land in Kikuyuland but mostly in Kiambu District. Commercialization of production especially of horticultural crops mostly cabbages, carrots, spinach and Irish potatoes changed the tenurial relations even within households. For instance, the idea of “separate” gardens was discarded. Gradually women lost parcels of land they had formerly grown food crops as more land was put under high-valued crops that were not necessary consumed by the household members.

By the close of the 1940s the land question was further complicated as the government reluctantly began to support individuals who had state patronage to accumulate land. The aspect of individualized land ownership begun to gradually become institutionalized with specific members of the society, the chiefs, tribunal elders and the Western educated capitalizing on the situation to accumulate large parcels of land at the expense of others. Kiambu women would not accumulate land since they did not occupy any position that gave them government patronage. But they became important targets of social welfare activities.
introduced by the government to reconstruct African areas. In the 1950s, women clubs were turned to be important avenues through which the government suppressed the Mau Mau war.
CHAPTER SIX
DECOLONIZATION AND GENDER RELATIONS IN KIAMBU
1952-1963

6.1 Introduction
This chapter examines decolonisation and gender relations in Kiambu District (1952-1963) between the outbreak of the Mau Mau War and the eve of independence period. By early 1950s, the socio-political and economic dissatisfaction mostly amongst Kikuyu in Rift Valley and in Kikuyuland led to the outbreak of Mau Mau which greatly destabilized gender relations in the colony. To counteract the events surrounding the rebellion, the government introduced profound changes especially in land tenure system, with the implementation of the Swynnerton Plan of 1954, which had both immediate and long-term effects on gender relations of production.

The 1950s also witnessed the development of the Kenya Women's Movement. With the outbreak of the Mau Mau War, the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Progress for Women) became a handy instrument for the government both to contain and rehabilitate the dissatisfied persons. Both the Commissioner for Community Development and Rehabilitation, T.G. Askwith and the Kiambu District Commissioner acknowledged the important role played by the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* in destroying Mau Mau as we shall shortly demonstrate. African women were encouraged to engage in various activities that were meant to show that Mau Mau was destructive to community's development. From 1950s therefore, the Women's Movement became an important institution in advocating government's policy though it may not have been beneficial to the African women.

6.2 The Villagization and Suppression of Mau Mau
Great effort was taken to suppress Mau Mau especially in Central Province and Nairobi. To
check criminal elements in Nairobi, “undeserving” Kikuyu were rounded-up in 1952 through the "Operation Jack Scott" and the 1954 "Operation Anvil". Of the 30,000 rounded up, 16,538 were detained while 2,416 dependants were returned to the reserves (Zeleza, 1992:183). In 1953, Kikuyu resident labourers in the Rift Valley were repatriated swelling the population in the reserves. Kiambu District received a total of 37,000 returnees while Murang’a and Nyeri each got 20,000. Such a population would have been a good source of agricultural labour in the reserves. But by the mid-1950s such a population would not have been accommodated because of land scarcity. The returnees to Kiambu were disgruntled elements according to the official description “they were mostly bitter landless and penniless persons who joined the passive wing but owing to their poverty, it was difficult to take retaliatory action and many had to be employed in paid gangs” (Clayton & Savage, 1974:353). The returned labour did not better the situation in Kiambu, but it rather heightened the political temperatures.

Measures were also taken to destroy any support the militant group had or could receive from the rural population. In June 1954, the small War Council headed by Governor Sir Evelyn Baring mandated the establishment of villages throughout Kikuyuland for closer regulation in the suppression of the Mau Mau movement (Elkins, 2005:234; Clayton & Savage 1974: 347-348). Central Province, the hotbed of the Mau Mau, threatened the governance of the colony as indicated in a secret letter written to the then Acting governor:

Special action is required in the Central Province…to bring maximum pressure to bear on the terrorists by the establishment to bear of yet closer and firmer administration and to plan the form of administration having regard to the social, economic and political aspects (CS/1/14/25, 1953-1954:16).

The villages established were, therefore, aimed at enhancing security in Kikuyu areas. A village consisted of a population of between 2,000 and 3,000 persons (Ibid: 18). Elkins (2005: 234) gives much higher figures than the official one, arguing that by 1955, about 1,050, 899
persons had been removed from their scattered homes and confined to 804 villages with a total of 230,000 huts. Between 1954 and 1955, more than 80,000 Kikuyu households involving more than 300,000 men, women and children in Kiambu District were affected by villagization programme. Residents were settled in plots of 80 by 100 square feet (CS/1/14/25, 1953-1954:18).

This size as given by the officials seems to contradict how informants described the villages. According to them, the houses were built in straight lines such that if all the windows were opened, one could see through all the houses (Njuguna, Njeri, Njenga O.I. 2005). This would imply that the huts were closely built. In some cases, several families were crowded in one hut making the living conditions miserable (Wambui; Edith, O.I. 2005). In most cases, women built the huts since the majority of men had either been detained or were in the forest or in wage employment (O.I. Mburu 2005). About 31% of the informants both men and women aged between 80-105 years indicated that building huts in the villages was very stressful because of the speed with which they had to do it. The type of houses that were built evidenced discrimination between the loyalists and the Mau Mau supporters. While the suspects built round huts, loyalists built square houses (Robertson, 1997:116). Moreover, the homeguards were allowed to build their houses in a separate region, referred to as the homeguard post.

From the guard posts, the homeguards were required to oversee the movement of villagers to ensure that they did not associate with the forest fighters. The authorities believed that a major way to contain the war was to cut links between the militants in the forest and the villages, which were the source of food. Patrols were, therefore, conducted in the reserves to disconnect the food links between the villages and the forests (CS/1/ 14/ 25, 1953-1954:16). This social
policy aimed at containing the movement, significantly interfered with food production. Movement within and out of the villages was tightly controlled. Presley (1992:162) argues that the Kikuyu were in a 'semi-imprisoned' state. Elkins (2005:234) argues that other than the difference in terminology, the villagers were in detention camps. Informants recalled that very deep trenches were dug all around the villages to create barriers. Moreover, the trenches were filled with spikes to prevent movement around the villages. An informant, who worked in Naivasha had this to say of the villages. “Those living in the concentration villages had a difficult time to care of their farms. Women built houses in those villages. They also did communal work, for instance, digging trenches around the villages. The imposition of a curfew limited working hours. Food was never enough” (Mburu, O.I. 2005). Further, the entrance to the village was only one (Kimemia, O.I. 2005) and was guarded 24 hours by the homeguards all around and from a watchtower (Elkins 2005: 234).

The government recognized the importance of villagization programme, as Governor Sir Evelyn Baring statement to the Legislative Assembly in 1955 indicates:

> It has been possible in areas to arrange a system of movement control by villagers going to work on the *shambas* or herding their cattle, do so under escort from the Tribal Police or the Watch and Ward Units. It is the establishment of this system, which in many areas has broken the physical contact with the gangs. The individual gangsters must often have hidden in a hole in a sisal hedge and have slipped out for a few minutes to tell a woman working in her field that food must be left at a certain place at a certain time or else there would be trouble. In this way the fear of the terrorist was maintained. Now, there can be no absolute certainty but it appears probable that the new system has in most areas broken that physical contact and dissipated that fear (KCP. Legislative Council Debates, October 18, 1955, 4 as quoted in Presley, 1992:162).

Certainly, there was a lot of fear in the villages. Villagers were not only afraid of the Mau Mau but also the security details of the Tribal Police, the Watch or Ward units. The villagization programme did not only affect the villagers’ movement but also the acreage they
would cultivate, which must have significantly affected the food crop output. Each family was recommended to have a plot roughly a quarter-acre (CS/1/14/25, 1953-1954:15), which was not sufficient to produce food for a family. Comparing the size of the plot they had to cultivate with what they had previously cultivated, it is certain that food production went down. Most Kikuyu experienced malnutrition and near famine in the villages save for some areas that had bananas to cushion them as we have noted earlier in Kiganjo.

Hunger was the worst problem that what was killing most of the people. They (meaning colonial government) were starving us on purpose, hoping we would give in. The little time we were allowed to go to the shamba was too short to allow for any meaningful food gathering. Also the area we were allowed to cultivate was too small, because the largest areas had been declared Special Areas and were off limits so the allowed areas had been over-harvested, but that was what we had (Muriithi, O. I. 1999 as quoted in Elkins, 2005:259).

Commenting on the situation of Mau Mau, Njuguna had this to say

But things were different during the Mau Mau period. We were put in villages to prevent us from helping in the war and allow land consolidation to take place. There was no enough time to grow food crops. But there were plenty of bananas. God had mercy on us because the Mzungu wanted us to die of hunger. We lived under curfew and most men had been detained or imprisoned. Women did the farm work under the watch of the homeguards who also raped our women. The white soldiers also raped our women and girls. Most of the coloured “chotara” children were born as a result of these rapes (Njuguna, O.I. 2005)

With limited acreage and time to cultivate, production of food crops in Kiambu plummeted during the Mau Mau. Women who were the majority in the villages had to be escorted to their fields by the homeguards. All persons were required to be back to the villages by four in the evening each day. Lack of freedom of movement must have had significant impact on production as farmers cultivated under great fear of harassment either physical or sexual by the homeguards whom the government had entrusted with the maintenance of law and order in the villages (Elkins, 2005: 259; Presley, 1992: 163). Kikuyu homeguards and white security personnel also sexually abused the villagers (Edith, O.I. 2005). Male informants claimed that
children were even born as a result of rapes. Children born of the white men acquired colour that earned them a derogatory name “nusu nusu or chotara”, meaning half-caste (Elkins, 2005:269-270). Such children were, however, accepted in the understanding that it was not the woman’s fault (Njuguna, O.I. 2005). But in some cases, they became a source of family conflicts. The arrogance and power of the homeguards is evidenced by a claim that two women were forced into marriage to loyalists in Kiambu, with no bride-prize given or parental consent sought. Women were not only at the mercy of the loyalist, but also the Mau Mau militants. These militants carried considerable sexual harassment against women. A woman, who traded in vegetables and fruits in the 1950s said, “I could see that the Mau Mau harassed the beautiful girls who were older than myself” (Wanjiru, O.I.: 2005).

Despite the food shortages in the villages, the authorities refused to acknowledge the problem. The comments of Kikuyu acting Provincial Commissioner indicate how the authorities lightly took the food shortage issue:

In most cases the parents have adequate food supplies, but do not make them available to their children. The intelligent Kikuyu are adept at leaving government to feed their children and are also fully aware of the propaganda value of apparent malnutrition among the young (KNA, OP/EST/1/627/1 Memorandum from A.C.C. Swann to Havelock, “Malnutrition” 7 July 1955 as quoted in Elkins, 2005:260).

It beats logic how a Kikuyu mother or any other for that matter could delegate her responsibility to a government that was harassing them. The food shortage resulted in a famine between 1955 and 1956. In November 1955, forty-five people in Kiambu are said to have died of starvation-related deaths (Ibid).

Not all people experienced the food shortage. In particular, the loyalists did not experience the famine because they had not been hurriedly moved to their posts. They had therefore not lost
any of their property or food as the suspected Mau Mau supporters. Moreover, relief given by the Red Cross was first directed to loyalists despite the fact that the Medical Department had accentuated the “alarming number of deaths occurring amongst children in the “punitive villages” and the “political considerations” that were blocking the Red Cross relief efforts (Ibid).

Life in the villages was made even worse because chiefs and other people in authority used the emergency regulations to settle old disagreements. The case between Wainaina, a night watchman at the Agricultural Departmental headquarters, and chief Rueben of Gikambura demonstrated the animosity that arose during this period. Wainaina complained that chief Rueben had ordered the cutting down of his trees in the pretext that his *shamba* (piece of land) was an oathing ground. Wainaina's wife was also arrested. According to the secretary of African Affairs, the whole issue was out of *fitina* (malicious allegations) by chief Rueben (KNA/CS/1/14/25, 1953-1954:16). Such kind of disagreements created animosity and witch-hunting in Kiambu and the rest of Central Province in the 1950s. The increased uncertainty, insecurity and suspicion amongst the people contributed to decline in food production. Furthermore, the curfew imposed caused food scarcity because women had few hours available for them in which to fetch water, gather firewood and cultivate their fields. Informants in Gatundu argued that God favoured them because bananas grew despite being unattended and this helped to maintain life in the villages (Wambui, Njeri, Mukami, O.I.: 2005). Generally, life in the villages was cruel to women who had not only to feed their children but also protect themselves from physical and sexual harassment from both the Mau Mau militants and the loyalists.

6.3 Gender, Land and Food Production

The security in Central Province between 1952-1960 affected food crop production and
interfered with social relations in the Province. The insecurity was experienced along gender and ethnicity. As indicated, the Mau Mau and the loyalists harassed Kikuyu women. Women were, however, not passive victims. Like men, women took and administered oath, a complete change in gender roles necessitated by the growth of nationalism. A substantial number of Kiambu women also joined men in the forest for active combat (Presley, 1992), while a majority were left behind maintaining and sustaining life in the villages through their production.

Accessing cultivation land was not easy due to the political tension. Outright buying of land by wealthy Kikuyu had complicated the question of land by 1950s (Throup, 1988:140). Wealthy Kikuyu men and politicians in political parties like Kenya African Union who were more conservative in their agitation for freedom compared to the Mau Mau adherents bought land. The outright purchase of land only helped to advance the process of class formation and ignited internal class conflict over land in the reserves (Berman, 1990:275). In 1950s, outright land purchase was an accepted norm because commercial production had already been entrenched. The land owning *mbari* (sub-clan) increasingly saw little need to allow dependants to use their land when far greater gains could be made through commercial farming (Anderson, 2005:122). By early 1950s, the government had abandoned the idea of communal ownership and farming and advocated individual titles as the best solution to African agriculture. In effect, the government supported the wealthy landowners who wanted individual land title deeds. The creation of landed and landless class among the Kikuyu became the main cause of Mau Mau War. About 85% of the informants aged between 40 to 105 years were in agreement that the main cause of Mau Mau war was the land problem that the Kikuyu were facing and the failure of the government to give an amicable solution.
The political tension caused by the Mau Mau War presented the last push needed by the authorities to alter land tenure system in Kenya. The social differentiation and class conflict among the Kikuyu prevented the formation of a united movement against the government. On the one hand, since majority of the landless had nothing to lose, they supported change through violent means. On the other hand, the landed and educated were in favor of a constitutional means to political change even cooption in the governance of the country. It was this class conflict, which made it easier for the colonial government to suppress the Mau Mau War and implement the land tenure changes in the 1950s (Sorrenson, 1967:237).

Throup (1987:140) argues that there was a correlation between agricultural development programmes initiated in the post- World War 11 and the Mau Mau War. He asserts that in locations where African chiefs pushed for terracing, Mau Mau seemed to have gained more support in the early 1950s. It was then that the government began the programme because it took advantage of the emergency regulations to implement the land reforms.

In 1952, Governor Sir Evelyn Baring declared a State of Emergency in the colony (Maloba, 1989). Under emergency measures, the government acquired wide powers that enabled it to carry out physical brutal war against Mau Mau supporters alongside economic reforms, which were meant to erode local support for Mau Mau. The major economic reform was the Land Consolidation Programme conceived by Swynnerton, the assistant director of agriculture who had previously been instrumental in encouraging peasant agriculture in Tanganyika (Mackenzie, 1998:168). The Swynnerton Plan, or "A Plan to intensify the development of African agricultural policy in Kenya", published in 1954 gave comprehensive change of African agriculture from what the government termed a “circle of subsistence or near subsistence agriculture” (Lipscomb & Cone 1972: 26). The Plan completely changed the
agricultural geography of Kikuyuland. It was an absolute turnaround of government’s policy on African agriculture, with the aim of making Africans increases their productivity.

Unlike the 1946 Worthington Plan, which had recommended a reversal to traditional land tenure, the Swynnerton Plan recommended individual tenure of land in agricultural areas. It also recommended the growth of cash crops by the landowners, which were hitherto preserved for white farmers.

Land consolidation, registration and enclosure, began in earnest among the Kikuyu. Access to land was now governed by a codified law that favoured men who were "highly placed" in society at the expense of the “poor or bad farmers” as they were referred to by Swynnerton (Elkins, 2005:127). The class distinction already emerging among the rural Africans was formally endorsed by the agricultural policy enacted in the 1950s. The Swynnerton policy on land became the benchmark for all future land policies. Traditional institutions, for example, the family and the clan were sidelined completely in settling land disputes with courts taking the final arbitration in land matters.

Consolidation and registration was favoured by wealthy Kiambu men and objected to by the poorer Kikuyu. But since most of the poor participated in the Mau Mau activities, they were detained or imprisoned while the rest were contained in the villages leaving the government with little opposition if any to implement the Swynnerton Plan. The dictatorial powers of the State of Emergency allowed Swynnerton to alter government’s policy on African land. He maintained that the government’s policy on land was to be reversed to enable the, energetic or rich Africans acquire more land and bad or poor farmers get less to create a landed and landless class. Swynnerton further asserted that was a normal step in the revolution of a
country (Ibid: 127). With such authoritative determination, land consolidation, enclosure and registration began in Kikuyuland, the hotbed of Mau Mau resulting into an “agrarian revolution” (Smith, 1976: 125).

From 1955, the colonial administration endorsed land consolidation. This change of view came from two sources: the administration and the Department of Agriculture. The administration realized that it could use consolidation to reward the loyalists against the Mau Mau insurgents (Harbeson, 1973: 33). The District Commissioner in Fort Hall wrote that it was "important to seize the opportunity of rewarding loyalists by giving them larger and better holdings if we are to keep them on our side" (Sorrensons, 1967 as quoted in Harbeson, 1973: 33). Another one hoped that the land consolidation scheme would change the face of Kikuyuland and bring into being a middle class of Kikuyu farmers who would be too busy on their land to worry about political agitation. By producing a landless class, the plan hoped that such persons could work for the landed class. Therefore, the Swynnerton Plan hoped to replace the traditional institutions of social regulation and cohesion, and replace them with more specific economic relationships to provide at least a partial substitute. Another thing that consolidation did was to allow the Kikuyu get credit for agricultural improvement having been allowed to grow cash crops in 1951.

The emergency regulations assisted the process of consolidation and registration such that in 1958, it was completed in Kiambu. The emergency time was an opportune period to carry out the exercise in the absence of "elements" that were considered to be against the Swynnerton Plan. Striking “while the iron was hot” was a notion spoken in emergency regulations as echoed in the words of Lloyd, an official in the colonial government (Sorrenson 1967: 237). Large landowners supported consolidation as the final validation of their titles (Ibid: 243). In
fact, these people were keen on having consolidation long before emergency as is exemplified by chiefs Magugu in Kiambu, Ignatius in Fort Hall, Muhoya and Eliud in Nyeri. These chiefs had taken the initiative of experimenting in their own districts (Sorrenson, 1967). The Swynnerton Plan set precedent for post-colonial land tenure policy that legitimized differential access to land and paved way for economic disparities among the Kenya peasantry (Davison, 1988:164).

Consolidation and registration legalized a European ideology of exclusive rights in Kenya and gave prevalence to household heads who were mostly men. Kikuyu women's usufruct rights previously safeguarded in Kikuyuland tenure system were marginalized by the new policy. Women were also disadvantaged because land was to be used as collateral in the acquisition of agricultural credit. Since few women, if any, got individual land titles, they could, therefore, not secure credit for agricultural improvements. There were, however, incidences where women got land, but these were widows whose husbands had died during the emergency period and their cases were clearly known to the local authorities (Njuguna, O.I. 2005). The Swynnerton Plan had, as a result, legally established classes of landed and landless persons in Kiambu, which effectively interfered with gender relations of production.

Consolidation enabled the Kikuyu to grow cash crops like coffee, tea, and pyrethrum. The production of these crops stretched the women's labour further. Women's labour was needed in coffee picking, which was done at the same time as the peak of Kikuyu agricultural season and also grow food crop. (Wamaitha, O.I. 2005). Cash crops were grown on land that food crops could have been grown. Women informants claimed that they were not able to grow all the types of food crop they would have wished to produce because land was not sufficient (Edith, O.I. 2005). Male informants, however, disagreed with the women's claim arguing that
valued-cash crops did not occupy land reserved for food crops because land on which cash crops were grown had never been under food crops in the first place as it was mostly forested or steep (Mbugua; Mburu: O.I. 2005).

Although the men's assertion could be true, the population may not have been big to warrant the need to clear-forested areas. In fact, countrywide population figures indicated a rapid expansion between mid-1940s to early 1960s. In 1945 the population was estimated at 4.8 millions, in 1955 there were about 6.3 millions and in 1963, the total was 8.5 million (McWilliams, 1976:277). The increase was disproportional among African groups with the Kikuyu being the majority. Consolidation and registration of land, therefore, led to a significant portion of the population being displaced and, therefore, affecting food crop production (Ibid).

The effects of Swynnerton Plan were also felt in other agricultural areas in the country. Nasimiyu, writing the history of Bukusu women in agriculture, criticized the Swynnerton Plan for not understanding the significance of indigenous land practices that were based on principles of obligation and responsibility. These principles guaranteed women access to land and control over certain crops that enabled the Bukusu community to produce sufficient food to sustain itself. Nasimiyu found that changes in land tenure had severely impacted on Bukusu women’s ability to produce food. She asserts that:

Since the production of cash and subsistence crops were directly linked to access to land, women were confronted with the whole range of handicaps in fulfilling their role as producers. Lack of control over land and all that goes with it became a major cause of women’s economic dependence. Without land, women were reduced to a state of dependency with no security and only provision of labour (Nasimiyu, 1985:59).

Luo women were equally affected by the individual land registration. The registration
“effected a hardening of men’s land rights into absolute legal ownership, to the exclusion of women and children” (Davison, 1988:166). Despite being in Kenya for over fifty years, the British still held a Victorian idea of a woman being dependent on a man and, therefore, went ahead to encourage individual land registration and favoured male household heads.

Land consolidation affected men also. The most affected perhaps were the young generation that had previously looked upon their father for land. One informant perceived his sons were “squatters” on his land as recently as 2005. He did not feel obliged to sub-divide his land to the sons in spite of them being jobless and still at home (Mbugua, O.I. 2005). What the informant failed to say was whether before his death he could divide the land or not. Such uncertainties caused inter-family feuds.

Registration of land also engineered intra-family conflicts as brothers disagreed especially in situations where a family had both loyalists and Mau Mau supporters. Informants claimed that there were some land cases that were, at the time of this study, still pending having been carried over from emergency period (Mburu, Njuguna, O.I. 2005). Conflicts were also witnessed between spouses. Mackenzie (1998), studying agriculture in Murang’a, argues that there was a struggle among men and between women and men with gender and class being the significant axes in the battle to secure land rights. It was not only gender that influenced an individual’s access to land, but also class. Though women had less chances of owning land because of their gender, there were also men, who because of their social class, got small parcels of land or none at all. Informants indicated that detained men lost all or part of their land to adjudication committee members who were mostly loyalists (Burugo, Mukami, O.I. 2005). This interview brought to life bitter memories as the losers pointed out individuals who accumulated land because of their privileged positions.
The alteration of access to the means of production significantly impacted on the growth of food crops in the district. It has been noted previously that Kikuyu maintained several parcels of land in different ecological zones to guarantee a harvest of diverse crops. This was for the purpose of cushioning the family against food shortage or actual famine. Consolidation automatically denied farmers access to different soils and, therefore, reduced the variety of food crops an individual could grow. While the Swynnerton Plan outlined plan for growing cash-valued crops, it had none for food crops. They were specific procedures of advancing agricultural credit to cash-crop growers and an elaborated marketing of the same. Since men were the owners of land, they received the credit to improve the cash crops. However, women did the actual work on the farms (Edith, O.I. 2005).

Despite lack of official interest in food crops, Kiambu Kikuyu continued to produce food crops. Maize, beans, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, peas, carrots, cabbages and fruits continued to be grown in the district in the 1950s. Limuru division continued to dominate in horticultural crops mostly peas, carrots and Irish potatoes. Bananas did particularly well during emergency period. According to informants from Kiganjo location of Gatundu Division, production of bananas during the emergency period was not out of calculated efforts by the farmers. Njuguna assert that banana growth was “divine providence to the Kikuyu since the British wanted all of us to die of hunger during the Emergency” (Njuguna, O.I. 2005). Maize did not do well compared to vegetables and fruits though it had become the staple food among the Kikuyu. By the mid-1950s, the district was producing less of its maize requirement such that it needed to buy about 100,000 bags to sustain its population (Robertson, 1997b: 117). The amount of land available dictated what a family would grow. Davison (1988:167) argues that there was a distinction between landholders depending on the amount of available land they had for cultivation. Those with less land grew food crops while those with more land
grew cash-value crops.

Food crops production was directly affected by the amount of land men were willing to assign to women for food crops. Where competition was stiff between cash-value and food crops, women began to depend increasingly upon cash to buy food they could no longer grow (Ibid: 168). Personal observation from the areas under study, particularly Gatundu and Githunguri showed that more land was dedicated to coffee though the crop was not well paying. On the eve of independence, the land tenure system had effectively altered relations of production having created landed and landless classes mostly in the Kikuyu districts and particularly in Kiambu, which was more populous than either Murang’a or Nyeri.

6.4 Agricultural Labour and Trade

The Mau Mau and the emergency regulations that followed negatively impacted on agricultural labour and trade in Kiambu District. To suppress the movement, forced communal labour was re-introduced in Kikuyu districts. Forced labour was first used in building of huts in the emergency. Since most men were incarcerated, mostly women did the work of cutting wood, thatching and plastering walls. Women were forced to dig trenches of ten feet deep and fifteen feet wide around the villages to make movement in and out of the villages cumbersome (Elkins, 2005:241; Clayton & Savage, 1974:353; Mukami, O.I. 2005).

Forced communal terracing was also re-introduced during emergency period. Terracing had been suspended indefinitely in the late 1940s because of African opposition. But under emergency regulations, the authorities were able to coerce people to terrace. Though terracing was done only two days in a week, it was very demanding and this affected agricultural labour supply in the 1950s. “We used to work from morning until those who worked for settlers came
to relieve us” (Mukami, O.I. 2005). Terracing was so demanding such that it was stopped in Nyeri for a certain period in 1957 to enable the people to plant the maximum possible food crop. The temporary stoppage was said to have “paid handsome dividends” (Elkins, 2005: 355).

The emergency control measures interfered with the gender division of labour in Kikuyu districts. A substantial number of both men and women were either put into detention or imprisoned, though the number of men was higher than that of women. The withdrawal of men from active agricultural production pressurized women to double their labour. Food production was negatively affected as indicated previously that villages were in constant need of food.

Labour problems during emergency were not equally experienced. The loyalists took advantage of state patronage to use “Mau Mau suspects and supporters to do their work”. Loyalists’ wives and associates used “suspected Mau Mau” women to work for them (Njuguna, O.L: 2005). The emergency shifted the wage-earning function to women in many families. Though women had previously worked as wage labourers, the duration and number of those opting for wage labour increased during this period. In 1956, the Kiambu District Commissioner, Pen Will reported that 27,000 women were working on European farms. The logical conclusion is that such women were not able to give full attention to their own food crop farms.

The period also witnessed significant changes in the composition and organizations of the labour force (Zeleza, 1992:183). A substantial number of men and women moved to manufacturing industries began during the war period to meet war needs. In 1953 at the height
of Mau Mau, the Kenya Canners in Thika replaced its men workers with women. In 1955, the East African Bag and Cordage began employing women in considerable numbers. The number of African women entering wage employment between 1953 and 1963 was 62.4% compared to 19.2% for men though their wages were always kept low (Zeleza, 1992:189). This directly interfered with agricultural labour. By 1956 for instance, there was a significant drop in agricultural share of wage labour in the country. In 1948, agricultural labour was 46.1% while by 1956 it was 39.4%. The proximity of Kiambu to Nairobi must have significantly encouraged more people to work in the industries.

Industrialization was accompanied by urbanization especially of Nairobi and Mombasa consequently increasing the population the population of the two towns. By 1962 for instance, Nairobi’s population was estimated at 266,794, an increase from 118,976 in 1948 (Kenya, 1964:9-10). Increase of urban population meant withdrawal of major agricultural labour force from the reserves and also encouraged Kikuyu from Kiambu to engage in trade at least after the emergency regulations.

The state of emergency directly affected African trade. Under emergency regulations, Nairobi trade was brought under the control of the state. This was necessary because Kikuyu traders in Nairobi were perceived to be the financiers of Mau Mau. Consequently, Nairobi Municipality put up its own shops and allocated them to loyalists. Besides, the legal African markets in Kariokor and Shauri Moyo were also brought under government control. By allocating market stall to loyalists, the authorities reduced the number of both men and women Kikuyu traders in Nairobi. Kikuyu traders in Nairobi were further reduced through emergency arrests, detention and repatriations.
Trade restrictions were gendered. Given that women could not be issued with passes easily, trading in Nairobi for them was difficult. Furthermore, women could not remain in Nairobi once the spouses were repatriated or incarcerated. Also anyone who needed a pass had to denounce Mau Mau in the presence of the loyal chiefs. During the emergency period, therefore, women traders faced many obstacles, like curfews and confinement in the emergency villages. Most women were subsequently forced out of trade by these impediments. Despite restrictions, some women continued to undertake illicit trade, which was a risky venture.

Under emergency regulations men loyalists dominated legal trade in Nairobi. It was possible because trade licenses were discriminatively issued to them. For instance, in 1958, there about 4000 certificate-holding loyalists, who were mostly chiefs, headmen, teachers and government employees, categories which either excluded women completely or included very few indeed (Robertson, 1997b).

The relaxation of the emergency regulations by end of 1950s encouraged many traders to move to Nairobi. By 1958, traders were flooding the Mincing Lane Market (wakulima Market). The increased traders led to a drop in (uncontrolled) prices due to competition. The Kiambu Marketing Officer noted that Kiambu had a privileged position as far as vegetables and fruit trade was concerned during this period:

Vegetable traders are complaining of difficulty in disposing of produce at reasonable prices in Mincing Lane. Having the complete monopoly during Emergency, I feel Kiambu traders must now accept a spirit of competition from other districts and capture this market, as they should be able to do instead of sitting back and complaining bitterly (Agri 4/4/365 Kiambu Agricultural AR 1953 B1. DAO/KBU1/1/148 Safari Reports Marketing Officer Kiambu to Agriculture Officer Kiambu 21 June, 27Sept, 15 Nov. 1958, Jan. 1959 as quoted in Robertson, 1997b: 117-118).
The relaxation of emergency regulations encouraged both men and women especially those without other means of livelihood to reside in Nairobi. Most engaged in hawking though it was restricted. Therefore, Nairobi market served both the legal and illegal traders not only from Kiambu District but the rest of Kenya.

6.5 *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Women for Progress) and Rehabilitation during the Emergency Period

The Mau Mau War disrupted life in Kikuyu districts through rounding up people into villages, detention camps and prison. The incarcerated, both men and women, were regarded as a security risk and they were not to be allowed into their villages without undergoing rehabilitation. Equally, those in the emergence villages were considered candidates of rehabilitation because they had lost confidence in the government. The government wanted to rekindle people's enthusiasm to support progressive innovations.

The Department of Community Development was the main point of contact between the Kikuyu and the government. In the villages, the women and children were the targets of rehabilitation because the majority of men were either imprisoned, detained, in the forest, living in town or were homeguards (Presley, 1992:165).

The other important aim of the Community Development Officer was to improve the villages and the homes through the village Betterment Programme by teaching the value of clean homes and protection against flies and fly-borne diseases. Mothers were taught child-care in the clubs and this relieved the burden on the clinics (AB/2/26/1954:55). The *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* clubs were the main channels through which the community department reached the rural women. The clubs were particularly important because membership rose during emergency since they determined an individual’s survival and starvation under the
In 1954, there were 45 women clubs in Kiambu District with a membership of 5,050. Central Province and Nairobi where Mau Mau was concentrated had a half of the country’s women clubs indicating the crucial position of the membership (Presley, 1992: 166). These women clubs had a variety of programmes that made them attractive to the people. They ran day nurseries, made and supervised the distribution of soup and milk to hungry children and cared for children whose parents were missing or dead. The women clubs were particularly important during the 1955/1956 famine in Kiambu District. Their number rose to 107 with 34,500 fully paid members and additional 11, 5000 non-members who also benefited (Ibid: 165). Even if the Central Provincial Commissioner perceived the importance of the clubs, he was wary of anti-government elements and he, therefore, asked for their control (AB/2/26/1954: 9).

Women's development was furthered by women's home-craft centre at the Jeanes School at Kabete. During a speech day in 1954, the Principal indicated that the objective of the school was community development, which was "Better Living for the whole community" according to the colonial office (OP/1/77; 1950-59:106). Training at the Jeanes School was gendered. The men’s section had a school farm and farming courses, citizenship, hygiene school (a branch of the Medical Training School), East Africa School of Co-operation, Community Development, and Language School. The women home-craft school under Miss Hollinshead taught needlework, cookery, laundry and childcare. Once the trainees finished the course, they were required to help with the women's clubs in the rural areas.

The provincial administration was agreeable that Mau Mau could be subdued by conducting
community development with particular emphasis on women. The government viewed that by denying the women movement support it would easily lose strength and, consequently die off or surrender. To achieve community development, five departments were involved. Agriculture was required to oversee terracing, teaching of soil conservation measures, encourage farmyard manuring, composting, and emphasis on cash crops, fodder plots and homestead grazing. The health department was supposed to teach on clearing homesteads, removal of stock from dwelling-house, clearing and renovating interiors, plastering and whitewashing the walls, installation of windows, building latrines, elimination of rat infestation and protection of water supplies.

The women’s movement under the umbrella of Mandeleo ya Wanawake, therefore, became an important government instrument in rehabilitating Mau Mau adherents and supporters into the community. Women released from detention and prisons were required to go through a rehabilitation programme, which included full employment on development work. They were taught good agricultural methods of soil conservation, more efficient farming methods, and better care of livestock. They were also encouraged to confess and denounce Mau Mau.

Recreation was also an important part of the programme where persons were taught recreation activities like netball, football, hockey and volleyball. Re-education was done through films, broadcasts and plays, which brought out lessons on hygiene and soil conservation. After going through the programme, women confessed and denounced Mau Mau in large numbers and subsequently, they were then released (AB/2/4; 1954-1956:42).

It was not easy to convince the Kikuyu to discard Mau Mau, as a result propaganda was used in the camps and prisons to show the Kikuyu the evils of the movement. The propaganda, for
instance, indicated that the Mau Mau were contravening Kikuyu customs and were also bringing misery compared to other areas that were enjoying prosperity. In 1954, for instance, an announcement was made to Kikuyu women to be wary of the Mau Mau who were causing disturbances that were affecting the education of Kikuyu children: The Announcement read, *Kuri Andu-anja othe Agikuyu Kaba Thayu: Ndungihota guthomithia ciana ciaku cukuru ingikorou icinitwo. Teithiriria na ciiko kurua na wikaniri wa guoya na uhuthiri hinya* (To all Kikuyu women it is better to have peace: You cannot educate your children if they are burnt. Assist in actions to fight against the instilling of fear and use of force) (KNA/AHC/9/98: 1954). With such propaganda and instilling of fear, the government effectively used the women clubs to fight the Mau Mau and its supporters. By late 1950s, the women clubs had spread among most people in the country.

The *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* was an official initiative with an official target. Consequently, women were not always comfortable with the organization. Subsequently, traditional Kikuyu women groups continued to play a significant role in the development of gender consciousness. Women self-help groups were addressed the socio-economic challenges faced by women. There are of course women who completely left the rural areas and began lives in the urban centres absolutely free from patriarchal control.

### 6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has established that Mau Mau created an enabling environment for the government to implement the Swynnerton Plan, which institutionalized individual land tenure system. The land tenure system affected both men and women but mostly the latter, from poor families. The Sywnnerton Plan eroded women’s usufruct rights that had previously been safeguarded in the Kikuyu land tenure system. Though maize and beans continued to be
grown as the staple crops, there was more inclination towards horticultural crops. But generally food production was low because of the fear associated with the Mau Mau.

In mid-1950s, cash crop growing in Kiambu began with the removal of restrictions on African growers. The growth of inedible cash crops brought competition for land with food crops because of inclination to grow the profitable cash crops. Men were particularly keen in growing cash crops.

By the end of 1950s, there was a marked decline in agricultural labour in the district. This was first as a result of the Mau Mau activities. Second, the people and especially men were being pushed out of the district as a result of declining agricultural production and the fact that there were employment opportunities in the emerging manufacturing sector in the urban areas. Women too were employed in the factories especially in the absence of men during the mid-1950s because there were few men on the ground. Moreover, the economic stress that women were encountering forced them to take up jobs in the factories. The movement to both men and women into manufacturing sector negatively affected provision of agricultural labour.

Despite these changes, on the eve of independence, agriculture remained the main economic mainstay for Kiambu District. But there was diversification because those with sizeable land acreage opted to put large areas under either coffee or tea. Horticulture industry was equally taking a significant share of land in the district. The shift to inedible cash crops and horticulture solidified gender class differences, because these enterprises required not only capital, but also land and, therefore, disqualified individuals who did not have access to these facilities. This chapter has also analyzed the rehabilitative intentions and consequences of the officially sponsored organization, Maendeleo Ya Wanawake.
CHAPTER SEVEN
GENDER RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION IN KIAMBU, 1963-1985

7.1 Introduction
This chapter examines gender relations of production between 1963 and 1985. 1963 marked the attainment of Kenya's political independence while 1985 marked the conclusion of the United Nations Women's Decade. Despite the clarion call at independence to fight poverty, ignorance and disease, Kenya's economy continued to be determined by major Western industrial nations, especially Britain which made it difficult for the country to meet the expectations most Kenyans. For instance, though the government recognized agriculture as the mainstay of the country's economy, no major changes were undertaken to transform the relations of production. More importantly, food crop production continued to receive insignificant attention from the government.

In the 1970s, as a result of combination of factors, Kenya like most Sub-Saharan Africa experienced food shortage that promoted the government to formulate a food policy outlined in the Sessional Paper no 4 of 1981. But even then, it failed to provide structures by which land as the most basic resource for food and agricultural production could be accessed by majority of the producers. The rich who rarely put land into use continued to own huge pieces while the poor majority, men and women persistently struggled to produce food.

In Kiambu District, maize and beans remained the staple foods, though their output declined as producers turned to horticulture. Horticultural crops: Irish potatoes, carrots, cabbages and kale occupied substantial acreage in Limuru and Lari divisions with Nairobi as the major market for these commodities. The decline of cultivation land over the years made Kiambu Kikuyu find alternative means of meeting their livelihoods. While business and wage
employment were important for both genders, women also utilized women groups to solve their social and economic problems.

Women-initiated groups in the 1960s through the spirit of self-help (Harambee) as basic strategies to cope collectively with the problems and opportunities of social and economic change in the country. In the 1980s, Kiambu district had the largest number of women groups with about 40-50% of all adult women belonging to a women group.

7.2 Gender and Land in Kiambu, 1963 to 1985

It has been established that land was a crucial resource in both pre-colonial and colonial Kenya. The events of the Mau Mau further brought to the fore the importance Africans attached to land. Land reform became, therefore, an integral feature of the decolonisation process in Kenya. It was also necessary to have reforms because settlers had been gripped by fear because of the impending change of political power especially with the passing of the first Lancaster House Conference in 1960, which assured Africans majority rule. For these reasons, a solution had to be sought to satisfy Africans' thirst for land and also calm the settlers' fears. The solution arrived at was land transfer, which allowed settlers to sell their land to Africans through an arranged procedure of land settlement schemes. The procedure of land transfer effected the contribution of both men and women in food crop production. It should be noted that the independent government was utterly gender-blind in the land transfer process. This no surprise because the new government was headed by men most of whom had objected to economic advancement of women (KNA/PC/Central/2/1/13: 1944-1950).

The land transfer changed from one form to another being influenced by the political temperatures. In 1960, a small settlement project, which provided for the settlement of
"yeomen" farmers who were to be allocated farms scattered widely throughout the European settled areas, was planned (Carey, 1975:151). The proposal never took off, as independence neared and the needs of the country changed and the government also realized that the scheme was insufficient to impact on landlessness amongst Africans (Ibid). Consequently, early in 1961, another settlement project that had both "yeomen" and "peasant" farms, which were acceptable to European settlers, was conceived. The "yeomen" farmers were to be settled among the European settlers on undeveloped land, and it was hoped that they could get assistance and the advice necessary for development from the White settlers. The "peasant" farms were located on the periphery of the European area and could, not pose any problem to settler farming (Carey, 1975:152). Therefore, the essential aim of this project was to satisfy African land hunger but still maintain the European settler economy.

The "yeomen" farms were large, designed to allow each farmer a net income of 250 pounds per annum or more, whilst the "peasant" farms were designed to allow a net income of around 100 pounds per annum (Arkadie, 1966:10). The two types of schemes were nevertheless selective in that the prospective settlers had to have a certain amount of capital to qualify. The "yeomen" settlers were required to have a working capital of 10,000 shillings while the "peasant" settlers were to have 1,000 shillings working capital. Furthermore, both settlers were to prove their farming ability (Leo, 1989: 74-76). The financial restrictions placed on these schemes blocked many Africans from benefiting since most were both landless and unemployed or had very poor pay that could not enable them to accumulate such kind of capital. The situation was even worse for women who were mostly rural subsistence producers (Kimemia, O.I.2005). The programme was a failure since it targeted a selected group of prosperous people, while it ignored large numbers of the landless poor.
By the mid-1961, the government had realized that the "yeomen" and the "peasant" schemes fell short of the expectations of most Africans especially because of the stringent requirements (Carey, 1975:11). In addition, the project lacked finances because it entirely relied on loan. Consequently, the purchase programme was suspended in 1961 until 1963 when it was incorporated into the One Million Acre Scheme (Arkadie, 1966:11).

In 1962, when the Second Constitutional Conference was held, all indications had it that the land issue was central to both political and economic prosperity of Kenya. Foreign investments had declined, because investors feared losing their property with the advent of majority rule. In addition, the reluctance of the White settlers to further invest in their farms created massive unemployment making the land pressure much greater and thus creating political instability (Nottidge, 1967:1). For instance, there was a trade deficit of 3.5 million sterling pounds in the first six months of 1960, contrasted with the previous year, which had registered a trade surplus of 5.3 million sterling pounds (Bogonko, 1980:260).

The draining away of capital, skilled manpower and the general standstill of the economy, raised questions about the future prosperity of Kenya. To avert economic crisis, the British government agreed to finance a massive settlement programme, the One Million Acre Scheme, which provided for a five-year period, from July 1962. The British government provided one third of the cost of the purchase of land to meet the pre-settlement cost while it gave two-thirds as loan to the Kenya government to be repaid by African settlers (Carey, 1975:155). The scheme targeted over 30,000 families on land formerly occupied by the White settlers.

Unlike the earlier schemes, the One Million-Acre Scheme included both the landless people
and more prosperous settlers. The initial goal of the Million-Acre Scheme was to defuse the rural unrest particularly among the Kikuyu peasantry, with a hope to stabilizing the new government by weakening rural unrest primarily among the Kikuyu. There was fear that the Land Freedom Army would encourage its followers to invade European land upon independence. The land settlement schemes were thus government's major method of "letting steam out of the boiling kettle" (Wasserman, 1973:136).

The new schemes were established in the former White highlands. The resettlement was influenced by political tension and ethnic suspicions among Kenyan peoples than anything else. Land schemes were ethnically located with respective settlers getting schemes adjacent to their reserves or "spheres of influence" (Ibid: 137). Since the Kikuyu did not have any land to expand within their reserves, their land was extended to the newly created district of Nyandarua, which bordered Kikuyu reserve to the west.

The settlement schemes did not solve landlessness, because by 1964 there were thousands of landless people in the new district (Ibid: 143). Other schemes were introduced after independence, for instance Harambee schemes, which were later dropped. Apart from the department of Settlement, other agents were also involved in settlement. The Provincial Administration instituted a series of settlements for landless people called Jet Schemes (Ibid: 179).

In the African reserves, there was less resettlement essentially because there was insignificant land to settle landless people. Instead, the government concentrated on consolidation and registration in the reserves. As indicated previously, by 1958, consolidation and registration had been completed in Kiambu District. But there were a number of land settlement schemes
established in Kiambu. The Ndeiya and Karai schemes established in the 1930s were
demarcated during the implementation of the Swynnerton plan in 1958 (KNA/BV/3/619/312).
Other schemes that were laid out before independence period were Sigona settlement, started
in 1963. The scheme consisted of 58 plots of 15 acres each.

Muguga Jet Settlement Scheme was started in 1963 consisting of 703 five-acre plots. The
scheme resembled the Sigona Scheme in terms of economic base where dairy production and
pyrethrum were the main economic ventures. The other scheme was the Lari Jet Scheme
consisting of 500 four to six acres plots on which farmers produced pyrethrum, potatoes,
maize, beans and vegetables (KNA/MA/12/136, 1978). The Lari Jet Scheme was the most
advanced in that it had piped water through Harambee efforts. The other scheme in Kiambu
was Ngoliba Development Scheme started in 1966 consisting of 163 five-acre plots.

Land settlement schemes helped to advance the land reforms initiated by Sywnnerton in the
mid-1950s of registering individual titles. By the mid-1980s, registration had been achieved a
hundred percent in Central Province. Consequently, any land transactions in Kiambu after
registration involved outright purchase or transfer of former White settlers’ estates to
individuals or groups of individuals who purchased land from an outgoing settler. Despite the
fact that registration increased production, it on the other hand caused landlessness. It
encouraged land sales by individuals mostly men without the redress of the traditional
institution that safeguarded the rights of the individual especially the women and the poor.
Due to the weakness of traditional institutions, women and young men suffered because their
rights were no longer safeguarded. The result was that more people especially the younger
generation moved to urban centres (Ominde, 1968) or worked as farm labourers to supplement
their food production (Muigai, O.I., 2005). Individual titling negatively affected family
relations because it gave the landowner the right to determine the land use without consent of family members. Others disposed land in total disregard of the family members. It was not until 1980s that a Presidential Decree was passed that required family members' consent before any sale of land could be allowed (Mwai & Muronji, 2000:201). But men were able to invoke traditional laws especially that of inheritance to block women from owning land despite the fact that the Law of Succession entitled them.

Formal registration denied majority women access to land, which was traditionally guaranteed through customary channels. The situation of women and the poor was made worse by severely restricting their financial and social ability to gain land through government or the market. Consequently, the ideology of exclusive rights over land set forth by the European settlers and advanced by the independent government gave "precedence to individual ownership invested in male heads of households and in turn marginalized the usufruct rights of women formerly guaranteed under lineage tenure" (Davison, 1988b: 165). Shipton's study of the Luo of Nyanza indicates that after the reform programme had been completed, only 7% of the registered land parcels had women as joint or exclusive owners. He argues "registration has effected a hardening on men's land rights into absolute legal ownership, to the exclusion of women and children" (Shipton, 1988:119). Apart from investing ownership in male heads and thus marginalizing usufruct rights of women formally guaranteed under customary tenure, women were also not able to have collateral to secure credit for agricultural development since few held land in their names. In any case, land tenure reform put emphasis on export production owned by males. Since the production of cash and subsistence crops are directly linked to the access of land, women were confronted with a whole range of handicaps in fulfilling their roles as food producers.
Land registration made women especially widows very vulnerable because land was generally registered in the husband's name and upon the death of the husband they were not considered heirs. This even affected communities like the Taita whose widows had strong traditional rights to "sell, pawn, or lend parcels on behalf of minor heirs" (Fleuret, 1988:140). After registration, their rights to act on the behalf of their guardians were limited, because the land was registered in the husband's name. Though among the Kikuyu widows continued to use land, which was eventually inherited by their sons, recent increases in land sales, have made women question their security, as it is common for sons to sell their land without their mother's permission (Wamaitha, O.I., 2005).

While a majority of women were sidelined in land ownership and access due to reforms, there are a few who benefited through the institution of freehold tenure. Wealthier women responded to tenure insecurity by purchasing land that was clearly in their names and they could use and transfer as they wished. Those with limited capital grouped to pull their resources to enable them to purchase land (Edith, O. I. 2005). Davison (1988b: 172) found that women groups of Mutira in Kirinyaga "were working with local authorities to purchase land for members food cultivation". Some widows also obtained titles in their own names that could be left to whomever they wished and, therefore, protected them from husband's relatives. This afforded women a chance to own a secure tenure. But these are isolated cases and the overall position of women in terms of rights to land is precarious (Owen, 1995; Shipton, 1988). In cases where women participated in buying land together with their husbands, such land was registered under the husband's name giving him legal ownership (Ibid).

Women have also used statutory law to press for their claims. Haugarud (1989) argues that it
was not uncommon for a wife to prohibit the sale of a piece of land by her husband by placing a complaint with the land registrar's office, who might then prohibit the land sale. She notes that about 2.5% of the 1,117 titles registered in the Embu coffee and cotton areas had such restrictions placed on them. Wanjama (1995) reported that even the Kenyan government finally recognized the impact of land registration on women's rights to land and in 1990, issued an administrative directive to ameliorate the discrimination against women land acquisition, inheritance and rights over land alienation. The directive limited the ability of men to sell land without the consent of their wives and children, and allowed the first child to represent the others and allowed female children to have a say in stopping land sales. The functionality of such directives is questionable in a society in which the role of female children in family property is most times objected.

Land reform carried out in independent Kenya divided producers into two main categories. There were those who owned small acreage who were majority and came to be referred to as small-scale farmers and then the large-scale farmers who owned huge lands. African large-farm owners had bought land from outgoing settlers using credit. The division influenced government's agricultural policy. In an effort to have sufficient foreign exchange, the government concentrated on inedible export cash crops: tea, coffee, pyrethrum, and sisal. In addition, credit, research and extension services were directed to these crops more than to food crops. Food crop production remained an initiative of the producer.

7.3 Gender, Agricultural Production and Marketing in Kiambu District 1963-1985

Land reforms significantly affected production in Kenya immediately after independence. There was increased production from the small farms from the mid-1950s to the 1970s. The independent government continued to take agriculture as the main economic stay for the
country. There was a marked increase in small farms. For instance, production from small farms increased from 18% of the marketed production in 1954 to more than 50% by the mid-1970s. Until 1977, there was an annual increase of 17.4% (Maxon, 1992:284). This increase was as a result of expansion of cultivated land, which rose by 20% between 1960s and the 1970s (Alila, 1993: 41).

Apart from increased land under cultivation, there were other incentives, which helped improve production. The growth of cash crops by Africans helped to raise production as Africans were encouraged to grow the crops to ensure a flow of foreign exchange. Foreign exchange became the major driving force that guided the agricultural sector in independent Kenya (Alila, 1993:41).

The provision of extension services by the agricultural officers also helped to augment production as Africans’ knowledge on cash crop growing was enhanced by agricultural extension education. Improved marketing co-operatives and transportation networks especially in the high potential areas equally motivated rural production (Maxon, 1992: 285). African producers were encouraged to form cooperative societies to market their produce in bulk through the statutory marketing boarders. Kenya Planters Coffee Union (KPCU), the Kenya Tea Development Authority (KTDA) and Pyrethrum Board of Kenya (PBK) handled the main cash crops, coffee, tea and pyrethrum respectively (Kiambu Annual Report, 1969:7; KNA/MG/11/48/, 1969:7). It is important to note that cooperative membership was given to owners of land parcels. Consequently, most cooperative members were men.

Though most of the cash crops were produced by large-scale, small-scale farmers also took the challenge enthusiastically (KNA/MG/11/48, 1969:9; Mburu, O.I. 2005). As has been noted
elsewhere, "progressive" farmers and loyalists were initially given the privilege to grow the crops. For example, in Kiambu, Chief Koinange was among the first African to grow coffee while former Mau Mau and their supporters began to grow coffee only after independence (Njuguna O. I. 2005). It was this kind of discrimination that caused rural differentiation (Maxon, 1995: 116).

The enthusiastic attention given to the export sector was not extended to food production and its marketing. Individual producers were left to make key decisions that affected both production and marketing. In Kiambu District, producers took steps that dramatically but gradually changed the food sector. With limited government intervention, producers took improved means of production by adopting new inputs and high yielding seeds especially maize. As a staple crop, maize continued to be grown despite the declining soil fertility and fluctuating weather. To offset its low yields, hybrid seeds were adopted and areas that were underutilized or not utilized were brought under cultivation to maximize production (Kliest, 1985:21). Generally, maize production in Kiambu went down after independence.

Market demands continued to influence production after independence. In the place of maize, other crops, fruit, vegetables, potatoes, pulses, eggs and poultry took over. Dairy farming which had been allowed though under restrictions in 1955 took significant proportion of the land as farmers put it under fodder especially Napier grass (Heyer, 1975: 157). Table 7.1 below shows maize output in 1970.
Table 7.1: Yields and Values by Divisions (all maize types)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Area/Hectares</th>
<th>Total yields bag of 90Kg</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gatundu</td>
<td>4575</td>
<td>73,200</td>
<td>91,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Githunguri</td>
<td>2512</td>
<td>40,192</td>
<td>50,240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kikuyu</td>
<td>2023</td>
<td>32,368</td>
<td>40,460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kiamba</td>
<td>1509</td>
<td>24,144</td>
<td>30,180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limuru</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>32,000</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thika</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>5,536</td>
<td>6,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12965</td>
<td>207,440</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 7.1 shows that with the exception of Thika division, the rest of Kiambu District continued to grow maize by 1970s (Development Plan, 1970-1974). But is worth noting that the total land an individual farmer owned influenced the size put under maize cultivation. Majority of farmers with large parcels of land of more than six acres grew more inedible cash crops compared with those with smaller land (Wamaitha, O.I. 2005). This was especially so in the 1960s and early 1970s since the world prices for coffee and tea were good (Wanjiru; Mbugua, O.I. 2005).

In 1973, agricultural production and the country's economy in general suffered a major setback as a result of the global oil crisis (Leys, 1979:297). The average incomes of peasant farmers decreased causing levels of poverty to rise. Inflation was occasioned by the escalating farm inputs without corresponding prices in farm produce. There was also reduction in government subsidy on a number of consumer goods, including machinery, fuel and chemicals (KNA/MG/11/58, 1973: 10). All these economic burdens put constraints on farmers’ production ability. Kitching (1980) argues that the presence or absence of off-farm wage was one factor that caused rural differentiation among peasant producers. With a depressed economy and poor weather, farmers were encouraged to grow katumani maize seed, a variety
that took short time to mature, in order to combat maize shortage. By 1978, only 40% of Kiambu farmers had taken up hybrid maize seeds. The cost of seeds was the major discouraging factor. But still a significant number of producers continued to resist the adoption of hybrid maize seed because of the high inputs that were involved in both seeds and fertilizers. The unreliable rainfall further discouraged farmers from discarding their traditional maize (KNA/MG/11/66, 1978:37). It could be argued that women continued to hold to the traditional varieties since they were the main food cultivators. The fact that they had the responsibility of feeding their families forced them to keep different varieties of seeds.

The problem of maize growing in the mid-1970s was stretched further by the fact that maize farmers could not get credit through the co-operative societies since credit was meant for export cash crops. Insufficient labour especially in coffee peak season also discouraged maize growing. Since women continued to produce the bulk of food crop, their production labour hours had to be stretched. The situation was even worse in households that did not have off-farm capital to engage hired labour (Njeri, O. I. 2005). According to Nasimiyu (1985), women in Bongoma who had capital hired farm wage labourers. In Bibirioni of Limuru division, one informant relied on hired women not only to pick her tea but also weed for her carrots (Njeri Mburu, O.I. 2005). Thus, it is the level of capital availability among producers that created both gender and class distinctions within Kiambu District.

As result of the food shortages experienced in the country in late 1970s and early 1980, in 981, the government came up with Food Policy paper which clearly outlined the objectives improving food production (Kenya, 1981:1). The major objective was to increase production to meet the ever increasing demand for food for an expanding population. The government acknowledged that it was only through domestic production could the country’s food
requirements be met and foreign capital be realized. It is unfortunate to note that the government’s attention was on three main crops, namely maize, wheat and rice. Furthermore, apart from advocating for increased production, the policy paper was utterly gender-blind. The government failed to recognize the fact that women and men played different roles in food production. In addition, the policy paper did not pay attention to the effect of gender differential access to land on the production of food crops.

The encouragement of food production was only on paper and individual producers had to take initiative to meet their needs. In the 1980s, hectares under hybrid maize in Kiambu District increased. In 1981, there were about 21,000 compared to 19,000 hectares in 1980 (KNA/MG/11/75, 1981:22). By 1982, 65% of Kiambu maize growers had adopted the new maize variety (KNA/MG/11/76, 1982:23), while by 1983 the adoption level was at 75% (KNA/MG/11/79, 1983:21). The adoption of hybrid maize seeds could have been necessitated by a number of factors. The 1979-1980, food shortage in the country would have motivated farmers to plant more maize to avoid the recurrence. Though Kiambu was not severely affected except for the drier parts of Thika and Ndeiya, which received relief food, the rest of the district had to buy food from the markets. It was, therefore, prudent that maize growers shifted to hybrid seeds that could give good yields to cushion the family in case of any eventuality. According to the district agricultural crop officer, the high level of acidity in the soil had affected fertility such that only certified seeds could produce any substantial produce. (Gitahi, O.I. 2005). The crop officer argued that poor crop husbandry was the major problem in agricultural production in the district.

Another factor that necessitated the adoption of hybrid maize in the 1980s was the reduction in the available resource base especially with the dwindling of land because of sub-division. The
land consolidation and registration policy disregarded African inheritance systems. The assumption was that the landless could take up wage labour without putting claim on land. But evidence indicates that land inheritance remained significant among Africans. From the late 1960s onwards, land parcels that were meant for single households began to be sub-divided among the number of sons in a household. By mid-1970s, reduction of land acreage per household due to sub-division was already noticeable in Kiambu (Mbugua, Mburu, O.I. 2005).

Apart from adopting the hybrid maize, Kiambu farmers also learnt how to control maize pest and diseases that reduce yields. However, a producer's financial ability determined the use of pesticides such as DDT. The fact that cooperatives societies did not advance credit for food crops meant that financially incapable producers did without the pesticides and, therefore, had low produce. Despite the low production of maize, some farmers sold at the local market while others sold green maize in Nairobi for roasting (KNA/MG/11/66, 1977:4).

Beans remained the major source of protein in Kiambu District. But by the 1960s, traditional Kikuyu beans had become almost non-existent both in the farms and in the diet. The only Kikuyu bean that continued to be grown was the cowpea, grown in Thika and Ndeiya. The njahi bean, though still an important meal in Kikuyu ceremonies especially weddings, was not grown. A woman informant of about 91 years would not remember ever seeing njahi growing in Gatundu, even after much probing (Njeri, O.I. 2005). This may be an indication that the Kiambu Kikuyu stopped growing njahi probably in 1930s.

In the place of njahi, new bean varieties like Rose coco, Canadian Wonder and White Harriot introduced in the late 1920s and early 1930s continued to be grown. In the 1970s, the Mexican 142 variety was introduced (KNA/MG/11/58, 1973:25). Despite the fact that Kiambu had
maintained a dominant position in beans production during most of colonial period, by the late 1960s the district was no longer growing beans for market. Like maize, beans faced land competition from coffee, tea and pyrethrum. The pressure on land was evidenced by the fact that while agricultural officers wanted beans on pure-stands, the farmers inter-cropped to maximize output on the limited land. As a whole, bean production in Kiambu from 1963 to 1985 was low forcing the prices to go up. Since bean was the only source of protein to majority of Kiambu Kikuyu, lack of it meant that the population suffered from protein-deficiency related diseases.

Irish potatoes introduced in Kiambu in the late 1920s continued to be an important food crop in independent period. In particular, potatoes continued to be grown in Limuru and Lari divisions. But the yields were low compared to colonial period because of over-cultivation and the fact that land had reduced over the years (Mburu O.I. 2005). The main problem in independent period was lack of certified seeds. Most of the potato seeds imported from Meru and South Kinangop were not doing well in Kiambu District (KNA/MG/11/50, 1976:13). Gatundu farmers complained that the seed variety from Meru was too poor to grow in the division and lamented that they had to rely on the market to satisfy their potato requirements (Mbugua O.I. 2005).

Potato growing like other horticultural crops needed capital investment, especially in combating diseases like blight and bacteria wilt. But some farmers lacked adequate finances to buy spraying pump, and chemicals for instance, Dithane M45, to control blight, and this reduced potato production. In some instances, this caused food shortage because potatoes formed part of the Kikuyu diet. The problem of food shortage was complicated further where there was no off-farm income. (KNA/MG/11/69,1978:16). Nairobi continued to be the major
market for Kiambu Irish potatoes at the city markets: *Wakulima*, (Farmers), Wangige, Westlands, City Park Hawkers market in Parklands area, Fig Tree market at Ngara and in the numerous fish and chips (French fries) eating outlets in Nairobi (Mburu O.I. 2005, Robertson, 1997).

To offset the declining production of maize, beans and potatoes, Kiambu producers put emphasize on quick growing horticultural crops, like cabbages, cauliflower, tomatoes, carrots, lettuce, onions, cucumbers, which were mostly grown in the high areas of the district; Kikuyu, Limuru, Lari and Githunguri divisions. (MG/11/48, 1969:12). Growing of short-term horticultural crops was a sign of intensification of land use. Table 7.2 shows horticultural crops grown in Kiambu in 1973
### Table 7.2 Amount of each Crop Grown, 1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vegetable Crop</th>
<th>Area of Hectare</th>
<th>Total yield in Metric tons</th>
<th>Estimated Value K.ΣC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cabbages</td>
<td>1428.13</td>
<td>28,562.5</td>
<td>1,071,112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cauliflowers</td>
<td>510.19</td>
<td>2295.9</td>
<td>114,800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrots</td>
<td>149.64</td>
<td>2995.9</td>
<td>74,825</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lettuce</td>
<td>38.26</td>
<td>383.6</td>
<td>191,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onions</td>
<td>41.66</td>
<td>833.2</td>
<td>41,650</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>453.19</td>
<td>9063.8</td>
<td>4531,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garden Peas</td>
<td>350.05</td>
<td>2450.35</td>
<td>122,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leeks</td>
<td>102.87</td>
<td>1543.05</td>
<td>77,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spinach</td>
<td>65.31</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Beans</td>
<td>37.86</td>
<td>170.37</td>
<td>17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strawberries</td>
<td>408</td>
<td>64000 punnets</td>
<td>640</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cut-Flowers</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6500,000 bundles</td>
<td>650,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the above table, cabbage, cauliflower and tomatoes appear to have been dominant vegetables in the early 1970s. While both cabbages and tomatoes had a wide market in various urban centres, cauliflower and small quantities of celery, artichokes, asparagus, broccoli, and brussels were mostly sold to Asians and other non-Africans especially in Nairobi (Nyaga, O.I. 2005).

By the mid-1970s, horticulture farming had gained momentum as vegetables got wider market in Nairobi. The availability of market promoted expansion of acreage under cabbage, carrots, tomatoes, garden peas and onions (KNA/ MG/11/62, 1974:30). In 1977, another crop kale (*sukumawiki*) was introduced in Kiambu District. Kale gained popularity because its price was affordable to most consumers both in local and Nairobi markets. The hectarage under kale increased from 550 in 1977 to 873 in 1978 as farmers tried to maximize on the available land.

Tomatoes were grown in all the divisions but only half of the growers used spraying pumps to control both diseases and pests, and therefore, most got low yields. Carrot growing was also strenuous because of the capital required. Farmers needed capital and skills to use Afalon to

Although green peas were produced in large quantities in Limuru during the colonial period, its production dropped over the years. Informants from Limuru argued that production was affected both by poor weather and reduction in the overall land acreage households owned. Furthermore, farmers preferred to grow cabbages or kale instead of green peas as the best way of avoiding the challenges they were encountering (Mburu, Nyambura, O.I. 2005). Table 7.3 gives carrots acreage in Kiambu District in the 1980s.

Table: 7.3 Carrots acreage in Kiambu in the 1980s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area/hectares</th>
<th>Yields (Tons)</th>
<th>Value’000 (Ksh)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>288</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>645</td>
<td>12,900</td>
<td>11,610,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1,375</td>
<td>12,375</td>
<td>24,750,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>1,416</td>
<td>11,260</td>
<td>19,705,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>26,250</td>
<td>26,250,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: KNA, Kiambu District Annual Report, 1985: 38

The acreage of carrots in table 7.3 indicates a steady increase in carrot acreage in the district in the 1980s though it differed both from one division to another and from one farmer to another. The production also shows some fluctuation, which may be attributed to both poor weather and increased farm inputs. In particular, the drought of 1983 could have contributed to the low production as indicated.

Despite lack of consolidated statistics for leeks, there was a marked increase in their production between 1981 and 1982. The acreage under leeks increased from 12 hectares in 1981 to 42 hectares in 1982. This was as a consequence of high demand in Nairobi hotels for samosas and vegetable soups (KNA/MG/11/75, 1981:27). The types of onions grown were
white creole onions in Lari and Limuru and red creole in Thika (Ibid: 27).

The continual acceptance of new crop varieties is evidenced by the adoption of a new cabbage variety, the Copenhagen, which attracted good prices. The new variety was introduced in Kiambu around 1983. Producers replaced the drumhead variety with Copenhagen (Ibid). The Copenhagen variety is small but compact when fully grown and, therefore, occupies smaller surface area than the drumhead variety. Cabbage had ready market in the city of Nairobi; schools, colleges, and to hotels, while a significant amount was sold in Thika, Nakuru, Machakos, Kisumu and in far off areas as Mombasa (Nyambura, O.I. 2005).

Table 7.4: Cabbage acreage in the 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area/Hectares</th>
<th>Yield (Tons)</th>
<th>Value (Ksh’000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>2359</td>
<td>42,464</td>
<td>63,693,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>2047</td>
<td>21546</td>
<td>75,541,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>2340</td>
<td>24570</td>
<td>8,614,335</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 7.5: Cauliflower Production 1982-1985

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area/Hectares</th>
<th>Yields (Tons)</th>
<th>Value (Ksh ‘000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>25,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>31,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4000</td>
<td>32,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>4300</td>
<td>35,000,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Though the cauliflower seeds are expensive especially the popular Danish Giant variety (KNA/MG/11/75, 1981:25), able producers continued to produce vegetable in the 1980s.
### Table 7.6: Kale Hectarage in 1980s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area/ Hectare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1982</td>
<td>2,740</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>2260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>25000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the 1980s, kale had become the major vegetable grown especially in Limuru and Lari not only because of market availability but also because of its resistance to drought. Besides, it is harvested continuously with only short durations between harvests (KNA/MG/11/79, 1983:26). From 1984, hectarage under kale increased compared to that of cabbages. But between 1983 and 1984 production was low as, result of poor weather, which raised the prices.

Another change that took place in Kiambu agriculture was the adoption of various fruits. The climate was suitable for several fruit crops. The growth of fruit crops was solely encouraged for commercial purpose but has affected the Kiambu Kikuyu diet. Pineapple was the first fruit to be introduced in the district mostly in Gatundu and Githunguri divisions. As indicated earlier, production of any crop was determined by the availability of good market. By 1970s, pineapple farmers were losing interest in the crop due to the market instability. This was even bad for Githunguri and Gatundu farmers who had taken loans to grow the fruit in the late 1960s since they were unable to repay. The establishment of Del Monte Kenya Limited in 1973 further discouraged farmers from growing pineapples because small quantities would not give them good profit margins since they had to compete with the highly mechanized and properly organized multinational company (KNA/MG/11/58, 1973:30). But Gatundu division continued to produce limited pineapples that are mostly sold in Githurai market at the outcasts of Nairobi.
Passion was the other fruit grown in Kiambu District in independent Kenya, having been introduced in the early 1970s. Seedlings acquired from Thika Horticultural Research Centre were first planted in Chania, Ndarugu and Kiganjo locations of Gatundu Division. The produce was sold to the Kenya Fruit Processors at Thika (KNA/MG/11/58, 1973:28), high production was hampered by lack of trellising wire and posts. This forced farmers to improvise local posts and barbed wire to support the vines though it was an inefficient way of growing the fruit (KNA/MG/11/69, 1978:7).

Macadamia nuts were also introduced in Gatundu division. The seedlings were sold through the co-operative societies. By 1969, Githunguri and Gatundu divisions had planted 30.3 hectares and 49.7 respectively of macadamia (KNA/MG/11/48, 1969:54). Macadamia were sold to the Bob Harries Company until the company closed down in the mid-1970s (KNA/MG/11/58, 1973:22). From 1976, the macadamia nuts were sold to the Kenya Nut Company, which collected the nuts at the coffee cooperative societies (KNA/MG/11/66, 1976:40).

Other fruits grown in Kiambu District were plums, pears, peaches, citrus and apples. Plums were sold to Trufoods in Nairobi, Kenya Orchards in Machakos and at local markets (Mburu, O.I. 2005). Marketing of plums posed a problem because there was no ready market. However, a good amount was sold to Trufood in Nairobi, groceries stores in Westlands in Nairobi, at local markets and to other towns like Nakuru, Kisumu and Eldoret. Agricultural officers argued that plum industry could expand if a factory contracted the farmers as tobacco farmers were contracted by British-American tobacco (MG/11/66, 1976:4).

Pears were grown in Limuru because it has the ideal temperate climate. The pears were sold in
the local markets and to traders who resold the fruits at *Wakulima* (Farmers) market in Nairobi and to supermarkets (Nyambura, O.I. 2005).

Table: 7.7 Fruits Grown in Kiambu District, 1973

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Area/Hectare</th>
<th>Amount in Metric tons</th>
<th>Value of fruits in production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passion</td>
<td>272.64</td>
<td>41011.8</td>
<td>12303.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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The production of root crops in the district went through tremendous transformation since the 1930s. We have noted that lack of market for these crops discouraged farmers from growing them. The last blow to their production was the consolidation and registration of land. This effectively reduced the available land for these crops. For instance, only individuals whose land extended to the riverbanks and streams could grow arrowroots (Wamaitha, O.I.2005). Thus, consolidation denied the Kikuyu the privilege of having different soil varieties to grow different crops.

The growing of yams and to some extent cassava was affected by men out-migration. The growing and digging of yams was a man’s responsibility. But because majority of Kiambu men had migrated for wage labour, women could not handle yam production (Njeri, O.I. 2005). Yams were scattered in Gatundu, Githunguri and Kiambaa while cassava was concentrated in Thika and lower parts of Gatundu Divisions (KNA/MG/11/58, 1973:25). In
1974, it was noted that famine crops, yams and cassava had declined due to the preference given to marketable crops. By 1985, root crops were still grown but in little quantities mostly for subsistence while small quantities were sold in local markets.

Table: 7.8 Hectarage of Cassava and Colossia in Mid-1970s

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Both production and marketing discussed in this section were gendered. With most men having entered wage labour, substantial agricultural labour continued to be shouldered by women. This was particularly so for maize and beans, the staple crops. Women continued to grow these crops on portions assigned to them by the farm owner, who was mostly the husband or father. Women also worked on horticultural crops as well as export cash crops.

Men on the other hand worked on horticultural and export cash crops. It seemed that men only provided labour on crops that had a marketable value. But generally, there was insignificant change in the provision of agricultural labour in independent Kenya. Kiambu women like in the rest of the country continued to provide most of the agricultural labour.

As far as trading was concerned, there was significant transformation in gender participation. Over the years, the number of women and men who took trading as full-time employment increased. This meant that the traders used less time or none at all in farming. But compared to men, the number of women in farming remained high. A study carried out by Robertson (1997b) indicates that though women had increased their trade hours, men were still spending more time in trade than women. Landlessness was a major factor that pushed both men and
women into trade on a full time basis.

7.4 Women Groups and the United Nations Decade for Women to 1985

After independence, women groups proliferated and developed new functions. Women groups initiated in the early 1960s as part and parcel of (Harambee) self-help movement. According to Stamp (1971: 33), women groups were the basic strategies employed by women to cope collectively with the problems and opportunities of social and economic change. Women argued that their organizations were aimed at taking care of the problems that men rarely assisted with for instance, purchasing water tanks or a cow for milking (Kabira, 1993:42).

Kiambu District women groups have been involved in various activities, both income generating and welfare activities. For instance, the Thika Township women group began in 1971 as a dance group later engaged in hired communal cultivation at a fee of (Ksh 5) five Kenyan shillings. Through this endeavour, they managed to raise about seventy thousand shillings and bought the Ngoi-Ngwa coffee farm in 1977.

The Nyakinyua Mabati women group (Women Elders’ Roofing group) was the most popular in Kiambu District and the rest of Central Province. The Nyakinyua women groups began soon after independence because they wanted to benefit for their struggle for independence. The founders were widows of Mau Mau veterans but they later recruited women who were actively participated in Mau Mau. The initial project was to improve the dwellings of its members by buying corrugated iron-sheets for roofing their houses. Through merry-go-round, they bought members buy iron-sheets. This not only enabled them to have better houses but also enabled them to harvest rain-water. Apart from improving their homes, the Nyakinyua women groups also contributed money to buy land in Mai Mahiu in the Rift Valley Province but they have not yet acquired the title deed to the land because of a court case.
The women groups were the main avenues through which Kiambu women improved their status in society because the government did not pay particular attention to women needs. Even after the 1972 International Labour Organisation (ILO) report on Employment, Income and Equality of 1972 indicated that women were discriminated, the government response showed its ignorance on the gender question. It maintained that women were not discriminated because they had been employed in the armed forces, police, and prisons as well as in the private sector (Kenya, 1973:640). Having taken such a position, the Kenya Government maintained that Kenyan women were not discriminated and, therefore, did not need to struggle for rights they already enjoyed.

The declaration of the United Nations International Women's Decade was important for women world-wide. The United Nations Economic Council was mandated to study the effects of development policies on African women. The study undertaken in West Africa demonstrated that women continued to contribute significantly on the continent’s economic development under very strenuous situation. In Kenya, the decade did not really change government policy on the gender question. Despite joining the post-1975 bandwagon of integrating women in "development", the position of the government on the question of women did not fundamentally change since there was no specific ways in which this was done. For instance, the national development plans and other major policy documents like the National Food Policy were completely oblivious of the fact that women and men played different roles in the national political economy (Nzomo, 1989:9). In agriculture for instance, these development documents continued to refer to rural “producers”, “agriculturalists”, “farmers” and “peasants” and therefore, taking men and women as a homogeneous category. As far as food production was concerned, the government continued to disregard the important
role women play as producers. The proliferation of women groups not only in Kiambu District but also in most parts of the country was a result of government’s failure to appreciate the gender question in national development. Women have as a result relied heavily on women groups to meet their social and economic needs. The social interaction derived from group membership gives women a chance to break their individual isolation and confinement in their respective homes and family related activities (Ibid: 12). Women informants indicated that women groups had helped them to increase in knowledge in several fields. By joining a women group, you know about other people and how they deal with their situation (Wamaitha, O.I. 2005). By joining a women group a woman’s awareness and consciousness of the world beyond her domestic environment was enhanced. Though Kenyan women have tried to engage in income generating group projects, majority of those in the rural areas are yet to attain economic empowerment in the form of economic ownership and control over the means of and fruits of production.

7.5 Conclusion
Agricultural production in Kenya from early 1960s to mid-1985 has witnessed period of increase and decrease. From independence to early 1970s, the country experienced a rapid growth in agriculture because of favourable conditions. The favourable weather to the early 1970s was the most important fact because Kenya’s agriculture continues to be dependent on rain-water. Furthermore, allowing and supporting small-scale producers to grow export cash crops also helped to increase production. There was increased food crop production as the independent government sought to help the rural producers through agricultural education and field agricultural services. But compared to the inedible export crops, food crops received minimum government attention.
Agricultural production took a downward trend from 1973 due to the world oil crisis. The government was not able to support farmers as it had in the early years of independence. But producers continued to produce to meet market demands. Despite continual production of staple food crops, production in the district was more inclined to meeting market demands than subsistence. Horticultural crops remained the main marketable crops in Kiambu District not only because they are quick growing but also because they have good returns. Export cash crops especially coffee and tea became the most important crops in Kiambu District. Farmers who had big lands preferred to grow these crops. The preference reduced the overall acreage of land under food crops in the district.

Gender division of labour did not fundamentally change in Kiambu District between 1963 and 1985. Kiambu women continued to shoulder the bulk of agricultural labour in the absence of most men. They continued to provide labour for maize and bean the staple crops in the district. But there were a significant number of men who engaged in both horticulture and export cash crops because they were the most lucrative. Generally, agriculture remained a domain of women. But there were women who took up trade as a full-time job either because they did not have land or the land was too small to provide any reasonable livelihood. By the mid-1985, Kiambu District agriculture had gone through significant transformation as residents tried to cope with changes brought by the new political economy of the independent government and the structural Adjustment Programmes initiated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.
CHAPTER EIGHT
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Summary of Major Findings

The analysis established that gender relations in the district have significantly been transformed since pre-colonial period. This subsequently altered food crop production in the district. The transformation was essentially linked to the socio-political and economic organisation in which the Kikuyu of Kiambu have been under since the pre-colonial period. In pre-colonial period, the process of accessing crucial resources, basically land and labour, was based on patriarchal structure and social definitions, which conditioned gender relations of production in the district. Whereas Kikuyu men had rights of ownership to land, women had rights of use only by associating with an individual male. Despite patriarchal system, during pre-colonial period, the Kikuyu ensured that all persons irrespective of gender accessed land for cultivation through the established social institutions. Therefore, land tenure system in pre-colonial Kiambu was in such a way that production was possible for all people.

From the second half of the 19th century, gradual change in land tenure began to take place as result of increased production of foodstuffs to feed the Arab-Swahili and later European trade caravans. The availability of a market presented by these foreigners encouraged the Kiambu Kikuyu to increase their production especially of maize. Irish potatoes had also been introduced by the end of the 19th century by the European missions. It is this increased commercialization of food crops that gave roots to individual land tenure system in Kiambu District even before the imposition of colonial rule.

The imposition of colonial rule in the late 19th century considerably transformed land tenure
system in Kiambu District. Since the goal of the colonial government was to economically exploit the colony, it put structures that disengaged Africans from their domestic production and forced them to work for the advancement of the colonial economy. In particular, the colonial government enacted laws that facilitated alienation of African land. Through the Crown Lands Ordinances (1901) and that of (1902) and of 1915 that stated that Africans were tenants at will of the British Crown, Africans’ land was alienated. The occupants were completely disinherited of their means of production. African land was further limited by the creation of African reserves in 1926. The alienation of land in Kiambu only helped to further develop individual land tenure system because land-owning sub-clans refused to share their land with those whose land had been alienated. It is no wonder that from the 1940s, land in Kiambu and Kikuyuland in general had become an issue. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the power of social institutions for instance the clan was diluted especially in land matters once the colonial government took over the administration of the colony. Consequently, it was not always possible for individuals to recourse to the clan for positive mediation in land affairs. The alienation of land significantly affected women’s ability to produce food crops, which were essentially in their domain- sustaining and nurturing the family.

The introduction of the Swynnerton Plan in 1954 was the most drastic measure that the colonial government took as far as land tenure system was concerned. The plan institutionalized individual land ownership in Kenya and created gender-bias in land ownership. The study noted that land was registered under household head who was usually a man. Though the Swynnerton Plan did not prohibit women from owning land, social and economic restrictions made it almost impossible for them to own land. Hence, without direct ownership or right to farmland women’s role in food crop production was interfered with.
The independent government did not significantly change the relations of production in Kiambu and the rest of the country. The study identified fundamental continuities in colonial and post-colonial in regard to land tenure and agricultural production. The independent government continued with land consolidation and registration which encouraged individual land ownership. This altered gender relations because one did not need to be a member of a social group for men or be associated to a male for women to own or access land. Monetarization of relationships became the guiding principle in land relations. Furthermore, the advocacy on cash crops to meet the much needed foreign currency made the independent government give insufficient attention to food crops other than maize, wheat and rice. In continuing with community development initiated by the colonial government in the 1950s, the independent government under Jomo Kenyatta started self-help movement to facilitate the people in “pulling” resources for economic development. It is through this agenda that most of the women self-help groups in Kiambu were started in the 1960s. The women self-help groups were meant to satisfy gender-specific needs mostly in the social and economic realm.

Adequate provision of labour was identified as imperative in Kiambu Kikuyu agricultural production. In pre-colonial Kiambu, patriarchy guaranteed Kikuyu men the control of women, young men and children’s labour. Through controlling the labour, senior men were able to accumulate wealth. Despite the fact that men owned and controlled labour, they also participated in agricultural production though on a limited scale compared to women. Gender division of labour was demonstrated in the growth of various food crops in Kiambu. The food crops were gender-specific with women tending annual crops while men cultivated perennial crops. The division of crops was determined mostly by the social responsibility associated to each gender group. For instance, crops grown by women were essentially consumed on a daily basis while those cultivated by men was for famine period. Household labour was, therefore,
important in the sustainance of the family. But it has been noted gender division of labour was flexible depending on the circumstance.

The establishment of colonial rule hence colonial economy interfered with labour organization among the Kiambu Kikuyu. The need to build the colony’s infrastructure and also provide labour for the settlers made the administration force Africans out of their domestic production. In the early years of colonial rule, force was used to have Africans out of their domestic production. But as Africans became more entrenched into the colonial economy, less force was used to have them in wage employment. There were, however, important labour regulations that significantly altered gender relations and subsequently food crop production.

The Edward Northey Circulars (1919) and the Registration of Natives Ordinance (1920) were the most important in transforming labour relations in colonial Kiambu. After enactment of the Registration of Natives Ordinance, the colonial government reduced the use of force until 1939 with the outbreak of the Second World War when conscription for actual military effort and for production of essential commodities was done. The colonial labour regulations were gender-specific. For instance, the Edward Northey circulars were very categorical that African men were to be “encouraged” to seek wage employment away from their homes while women and children were to work within their home areas. The Registration of Native Ordinance further demonstrated the gendered nature of colonialism. Registration of Natives mostly targeted men since they were the ones regarded as “workers” because of the influence of patriarchal nature of the European society while women were viewed as “helpers”. As such, the government’s view was that women would seek employment within their home areas.

Apart from changes in land tenure and labour organization affecting gender relations and hence food crop production in Kiambu District, taxation also interfered with household
organization. Taxation initially targeted men but from 1934 women were also directly taxed. Like land alienation, taxation also forced Africans to join wage employment which negatively affected crop production because it was not always possible to have adequate labour provision especially during agricultural peak periods.

The study also ascertained that the proximity of Kiambu District to the City of Nairobi transformed gender relations and food crop production in the district. In the first place, Nairobi presented Kiambu Kikuyu with a ready market for their agricultural produce. The study noted that crops grown in the district were directly influenced by the Nairobi market. For instance, the adoption of horticultural crops was essentially to meet the needs of consumers since most producers rarely consumed most of the vegetables they grew. Nairobi also negatively influenced gender relations in the district. During the early period of colonial rule, there emerged strained gender relations as senior Kikuyu men felt that the movement of Kikuyu women to Nairobi was “destroying” the community. It is the need to “protect” the community that senior men like Jomo Kenyatta and Joseph Kange’the were against the physical mobility of Kikuyu women. Nairobi city, therefore, affected social relations in Kiambu District.

Since colonial Kenya was an agricultural economy, the colonial government was keen on developing this sector. However, much attention was given to settler agriculture because it was viewed as the backbone of the economy. Any agricultural attention given to African agriculture was gendered. In particular, agricultural education given at the Scott Laboratories in Kabete and the Bukura Agricultural Centre only targeted men. This is understandable in view of the fact that the colonial patriarchal system confined women in the “private domain” while men occupied the “public domain”. The colonialists tried to impose their own society
on the Kikuyu. However, Kikuyu women continued to dominate in food crop production despite lack of attention from the government. This trend has continued in post-colonial Kenya. As indicated, the independent government stressed the growth of cash crops that would bring foreign currency to the country. Like the colonial government, the independent Kenya government did not incorporate gender into its development agenda until 1975. It is only after the United Nations Women’s Decade that gender issues began to appear in the development plans though actual implementation of the same needs to be critically analysed.

8.2 Conclusion
The study validated the assumption that economic exploitation first by senior African men and later the colonial government transformed land tenure system in Kiambu District, which subsequently altered gender relations of food production. The outmigration of both men and women from the district undermined the pre-existing labour supply system, and therefore, changed the gender division of labour in food production. The establishment of the city of Nairobi close to Kiambu District equally altered gender relations of food production in the district. The conclusion of the study is that changes land and labour organization contributed in transforming gender relations of production in Kiambu District. The alienation of Kiambu Kikuyu land weakened the social institutions particularly the clan that had previously ensured that individuals accessed land. Despite the Kikuyu being patriarchal, there had been mechanism that guaranteed women the use rights. This was, however, weakened by the introduction of individual land tenure system which favoured men. But equally important is to note that the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 gave a window of opportunity to women to own land in their on right without associating with male kin. However, economic constrains have worked against women in achieving this crucial means of production.
The colonial land and labour system restructured Kikuyu gender relations of production. Most of those whose land was alienated were forced into wage labour and, therefore, began to rely on the market to meet their subsistence needs. In addition, the imposition of tax first on men and later on women disengaged more people from their production. Taxation of women forced many Kiambu women to work as wage labourers in coffee plantations in the district. This strained provision of household labour as they tried to balance domestic production and wage labour, which was becoming imperative in the new political economy. The change in land tenure system and the dwindling of agricultural labour explains the changes in types of food crops grown in Kiambu District over the period of this study.

The establishment of Nairobi city in the late 19th century and its subsequent expansion equally affected gender relations of production. The proximity of Kiambu District to the Nairobi city presented to Kiambu people diverse opportunities. Agriculturally, the district had a ready market for its food crops. The effect of Nairobi on Kiambu's food crop production is evidenced by the adoption of various marketable food crops. The study found out that types food crops grown in Kiambu District were not only influenced by the available cultivatable land, labour supply but also marketability of the produce. For instance, the English potatoes, the Rose Coco bean and Hickory king white maize, were all grown in Kiambu in the early years of the 20th century. Over the years, the district took up horticultural crops like carrots, cabbages, cauliflower, spinach, leeks and kale (sukumawiki) in response to the expanding market in Nairobi.

The city also offered opportunity for rural-urban migration. More men moved to Nairobi than women. The extensive out-migration of adult men had a significant effect on gender relations within the household. One of the major consequences was the expansion of women’s
economic and social responsibilities. But, although women acquired men’s roles, they did not acquire the authority and power that previously went along with these roles. The out-migration of men also increased women’s labour burdens on the farm. The over-burdening of women affected the types of food crops grown in the district. In the first place, the production of male-specific crops declined since women would not cope with the work load or they did not have the skills to tend crops like yams. Further, labour-intensive crops like millet and sorghum were also reduced or done away with as women’s labour became strained.

Kiambu women were, however, not passive victims of African patriarchy and colonialism. A significant number of them also moved to Nairobi either on a daily basis to do business or to permanently settle. Some women completely broke ranks with the societal expectations by engaging in prostitution as a source of livelihood. Their movement was not always approved by African senior men since it was viewed as rebellion against patriarchal authority. The enactment of various laws by the Local Native Council to prohibit the movement of African women to towns attests to the fact that African men were against the socio-economic freedom of the women. The failure of the independent government to put women into the mainstream development agenda made them turn to women self-help groups to meet their gender-specific socio-economic needs.

In conclusion gender relations in Kiambu District have been transformed by several factors initiated by the socio-political and economic environment in the district and by the dynamism of the people of Kiambu. Consequently, the study concludes that gender has been an important analytical social category in understanding social relations in food crop production in Kiambu District during the period of study since it operates on the social, political, economic and cultural levels.
8.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, it is recommended that for the production of sufficient food, it is imperative to examine the interaction of land tenure and labour provision. In particular, it is important to consider gender aspects in land and labour access. This is because of the gendered nature of land and labour relations that affect food crop production. Specially, co-ownership of land between spouses needs to be more rigorously pursued to ensure that both partners have security not only of the property but also of the product of their labour. With the dwindling drought resistant crops and their low consumption by the young people, the study recommends that ways of preserving horticultural food crops for future use to avert famine be established.
### BIBLIOGRAPHY

**PRIMARY SOURCES**

1. Oral Sources

**List of Informants**

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APPENDIX 1

Question Guideline

PART A

Name-----------------------------
Age-----------------------------Marital status
Division---------------------------
Location-------------------------
Estimated land acreage----------
How land was acquired (first occupier, inherited or bought)
Total land under food crops--------
Types of food crops----------------
Land under inedible cash crops-------

PART B

ACCESS TO LAND IN PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

1. Did both Kikuyu men and women have a right to access land before 1895?

2. Did both have a right to use land without any hindrances?

3. If both women and men had right of access and use, how were those rights protected?

4. Who was the custodian of the individual’s land rights?

5. In case of violation of these rights, how was justice established?

6. Which was the main food crop among the Kikuyu of Kiambu?

7. Were there reasons that would make an individual not have land on which to grow food crops?

8. If there was, which gender was most affected and why?

9. If there were people who had no right of access to and use of land, how did such individuals procure their foodstuffs?

COLONIAL PERIOD UP TO AROUND 1939

1. Did the White man take any land from your parents/ close relatives or friends?

2. How did the taking of African land affect the growing of variety and quantity of food crops in Kiambu?
3. What effects did land alienation (taking away of African land) have on the rights of access and use between men and women in Kiambu?

4. Were there food crops that certain homes stopped to grow altogether or reduced the quantity? Name them.

5. What happened to the household food provision once these food crops were not grown?

6. Who grew these food crops? Note if the respondent says it was the women; ask what role the men played in the provision of household food.

DECISION-MAKING TO AROUND 1939

1. Between men and women, who decided what particular piece(s) of land(s), was to be cultivated in a particular planting season?

2. Who decided the seeds for particular crop to be planted?

3. What influenced/ or influences the decision on the type of crops to be grown?

4. If the respondents say the wife/ or wives, ask whether they would make the decision without consulting the husband/ or male relative at all.

5. Were there special cases that a woman would make the decision of what to grow without the husband having no interest at all?

6. Who had authority over all the food crops that were harvested during a certain season?

7. The Kikuyu are said to have had separate pieces of land between the women and men, did the women control such produce without the men interfering?

8. Does this freedom to make decisions in terms of what to grow and how to dispose the produce the same in all households or are there variations?

9. If there are differences, what causes them?

FOOD SECURITY TO AROUND 1945

1. In your growing up, did you experience any serious food shortage close to a famine?

2. Around what period did you experience the food shortage?

3. If it was a famine, what was the name given to it? And why was the particular name given?
4. Can you recall the causes of the famine as given by the Africans and the colonial government?

5. What measures did the colonial government take to curb the famine?

6. What measures did Kiambu Native Council take to help famine victims in the district?

7. During the particular famine, what food crops were mostly eaten and why?

8. Do you still use the same food in times of shortage? If not, why? And what is the alternative?

9. Can you explain the cause of the famine?

10. Do you think there was any relationship between poor/low food crop production and the particular famine? (Try to get the ratio of women to men in food crop production at the time of famine)

**DIVISION OF LABOUR TO AROUND 1939**

1. How was agricultural labour divided between the men and women?

2. Who owned (controlled) the family labour? Did the woman have say on her labour time?

3. Did the women have exclusive right over their labour? Did they decide what agricultural work to do without consulting their husbands/or male relatives at all?

4. If yes, in what kind of works?

5. If no, which kind of work would they do dependently?

6. Did the husband and wife cultivate together?

7. If yes, what/which crops would they cultivate together?

8. If no, which crops were grown separately and why?

9. Was there a job meant for men or women that the opposite gender would not perform under whatever circumstance?

10. If there was, does this remain the same? What effect has this had on food crop production?

11. Were there self-help agricultural groups (meant to help members to cultivate) among the Kikuyu of Kiambu?

12. If so, were they gender-biased? Which gender was particularly interested in these groups and why?

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DIVISION OF LABOUR FROM AROUND 1939

If the respondent was mature during the World War Two, ask the following questions.

1. Do you remember what was happening during the Second World War?
2. Where were you living at the time?
3. How did the World War disrupt the family organization in terms of division of labour?
4. Did food crop production go up/or down during this period?
5. Which crops were particularly grown and why?
6. Who among the men and the women did more work to grow the food crops during the war period and why?

EMERGENCE PERIOD: TO 1964

1. Where were you during Emergency period?
2. Did your and you stay one of the villages established by the colonial government during this period? Which one?
3. In your opinion, how was Kiambu district like in terms of food crop production?
4. During the Period of Emergency, the colonial government came up with a plan that advocated for the consolidation and registration of land within the country, starting with Kiambu. What impacts did this plan have on the growth of food crops in the District?
5. What were the effects of villagisation on food crop production?
6. Can you explain how the Mau Mau rebellion interfered with food crop production?

INDEPENDENCE PERIOD FROM 1964-1985

1. In your opinion how has been the food production in Kiambu since 1964?
2. What kind of food crops has dominated Kiambu since independence?
3. What foods do Kiambu people mostly eat these days?
4. Do they in anyway supplement their foods from outside the farms and why?
5. Do all households always have enough to eat? If not what role do men and women play to supplement the food supply?
6. What is the percentage of acreage in your location under food crops?
7. What is the percentage of women and men doing food crop farming in the district? Who are more and why?

8. Do trade the produce these days without consulting a male? To what kind of markets do they sell their produce?

9. Do farmers grow certain food crops for the sole purpose of selling? Which ones?

10. Can you explain what has affected food crop production either positively or negatively since independence to about 1985?

11. What has been the role of
   a) Women in food crop production: Is it correct to say that women grow all the family food? What is the view of women on men’s contribution towards family food production?
      - Was the idea of uprooting coffee found in Kiambu as was in Maragua? If it was, which gender took the initiative and why?
      - How did the women in Kiambu respond to the poor coffee prices and the industry’s mismanagement in the 1980s?
      - Did the women intercrop coffee/ tea? What crops did they plant and why?
      - To what extent did the men support the women?
   
   b) The role of men:
      - What percentage of men directly involved in food crop production in since independence? note direct involvement means the person literally doing farm work.
      - The percentage of indirect involvement- either by paying for farm labour or buying other farms outside their traditional area?
   
   c) The state: In which ways has the government encouraged or discouraged the growth of food crops in Kiambu district?
What would you say has been the effects of women’s rights movement in the production and supply within the households? (when women have the right to have land under their own names or even get formal employment- how does this affect the balance of power within the household?) Ask both men and women.