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**CHANGE AND CONTINUITY IN LAND TENURE SYSTEM AND GENDER
RELATIONS IN NYERI COUNTY, KENYA (1895-2013)**

GRACE MWANGI

C50/CE/24078/2013

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF LAW, ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN HISTORY OF
KENYATTA UNIVERSITY.**

NOVEMBER 2024

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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for examination in any other university.

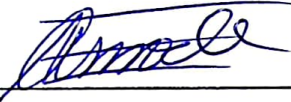
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Supervisors

We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the student and has been submitted with our approval as the university supervisors.

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ABSTRACT

In many human societies, rights to ownership of land, control and use determine the bargaining power of women in the society and the household, as well as determining their economic condition. Control of land and its efficient use are determined by the availability of land resources and existing social and institutional structures. This study examines changes in land tenure systems and gender relations in Mukurweini, Nyeri County, between 1895 and 2013. Land alienation among the Kikuyu, the subsequent consolidation of land and the individual registration greatly impacted the land tenure systems among men and women. The women were greatly affected due to the existing patriarchal system that undermined/dictated the right of women to land ownership. Being a historical study, this thesis highlights how the patriarchal land control of land in pre-colonial Kikuyu land determined the immensity of land access and use by the women and investigates land policies initiated by the colonial government in respect to ownership, access and control of land by Kikuyu women. It interrogates land policies in Kenya between 1963 and 2013 and their impact on Mukurweini women's access to and ownership of land. The study further examines the ramifications struggle for and institutionalization of the new constitutional order in Kenya between 1992 and 2013. The study is based on the assumption that the pre-colonial patriarchal land tenure system heavily determined the limited land access, use and control by the women of Mukurweini and that, the colonial land policies introduced in Kenya only served to perpetuate the existing patriarchal control of land among the Kikuyu. These policies were continued under the Kenyatta regime which remained basically patriarchal in regard to access, control and ownership of land by women. The third premise argues that the Moi regime initiated significant changes in respect to women and land matters, which in turn became a springboard for the thorough reforms realized in the new constitutional order in Kenya. Gender analysis was used as a tool of analysis to explain the land tenure system and gender relations in Mukurweini. The study adopted the historical design as well as the descriptive research design. The instruments of data collection included questionnaires, interviews, and materials from secondary sources and government records which include archival documents from the Kenya National Archives. It is argued that the establishment of colonial rule engendered new socio- economic trends that culminated in the partial abandonment of the Kikuyu pre-colonial land tenure system. This thesis concludes that the socio- economic relations between females and males in terms of access to and control over land as a resource has changed over time and decision making has also been influenced by the metamorphosis within the period of study.