

**TRANSFORMATION IN ABAGUSII WOMEN'S INFORMAL ECONOMY IN
NYAMIRA COUNTY, KENYA. C. AD.1900-1963.**

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**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
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DECLARATION

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University/Institution for consideration of any certification. This thesis has been completed by referenced sources duly acknowledged. Where text, data (including spoken words), graphics, pictures or tables have been borrowed from other sources, including the internet, these are specifically accredited and references cited using current APA system and in accordance with anti-plagiarism regulations.

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DEDICATION

This work is a special dedication to my father Timothy Ayuka Nduko, Mum Pauline Kwamboka Masita and my brothers Dickson Chweya and George Nduko and all Gusii Women.

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MAP OF KENYA. THE STUDY AREA IS SHOWN IN BLACK (NYAMIRA COUNTY).



FIGURE 1.1: MAP OF KENYA. THE STUDY AREA IS SHOWN IN BLACK (NYAMIRA COUNTY).

MAP OF NYAMIRA COUNTY SHOWING STUDY SITES

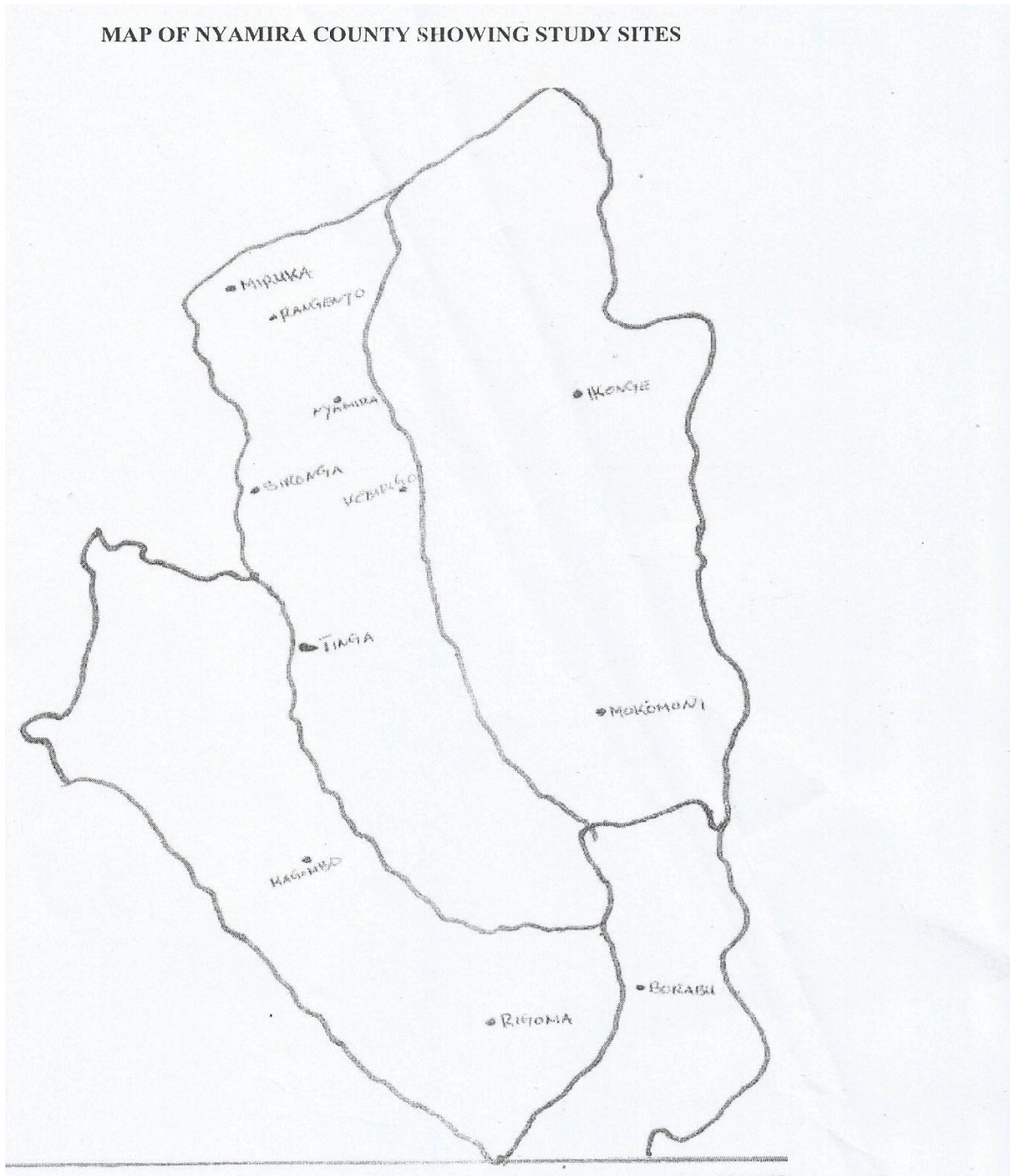


Figure 1.2: MAP OF NYAMIRA COUNTY SHOWING STUDY SITES.

GLOSSARY

<i>Amachambe:</i>	Mats that were made of reeds that were used for drying grain
<i>Amaguta:</i>	Animal fat
<i>Amarwa:</i>	Gusii native beer
<i>Chimbuche:</i>	Grey hair
<i>Chinkore:</i>	Gusii wooden straws that were used by men when drinking beer.
<i>Ebirandi/ Amakuri:</i>	Gourds used for storing milk
<i>Ebisangio:</i>	Women's work parties
<i>Ebisarate:</i>	The cattle camps
<i>Ebiteni:</i>	A seat made of three wooden legs that men could sit on in the sitting room
<i>Ebitinge:</i>	Leg rings that were made in pre-colonial Gusii that were put on by married women.
<i>Egechuri:</i>	Roof top of a hut
<i>egesangio:</i>	A joint rotating work party of women among the Abagusii that enabled them to assist each other in the farm work.
<i>Ekee:</i>	A basket that was used to serve <i>ugali</i> especially in traditional Gusii marriage ceremonies.

<i>Ekige:</i>	A kind of basket that was made by men using long sticks and could be smeared with cow dung by women. It could be used as a door or to grind finger millet to flour.
<i>Emonga:</i>	This was a small plot owned by a Gusii man that was used to supplement a wife's empty granary, or to trade for cattle or other goods.
<i>Endobo:</i>	A spear that was used to cut leg rings (<i>ebitinge</i>)
<i>Esarangenyi:</i>	A special type of knife that was used to cut meat
<i>Esuguta:</i>	A special type of blade grass that was got from the top of the mountain
<i>Omoigwa:</i>	Nephew
<i>Omoko:</i>	Son-in-law or brother-in-law
<i>Omonyoncho:</i>	A big basket that was used for storing finger millet.
<i>Omootoro:</i>	Arms rings that were made in pre-colonial Gusii land.
<i>Omoragori:</i>	A seer or diviner

<i>Omosegi:</i>	An older girl who had been circumcised who was assigned to take care of a circumcised girl during the seclusion period.
<i>Ribina:</i>	Rain making ceremony
<i>Ribiria:</i>	Soil that had been heated to form iron.
<i>Risaga:</i>	A joint working men party that was used during the pre-colonial labour to provide labour in farms among the Gusii.
<i>Semo:</i>	Men who married from the same house
<i>Tatabiara:</i>	Father-in-law

DEFINITION OF TERMS.

- Black Market:** A market that is not controlled by the government.
- Colonial capitalism:** This was an exploitative mode of production that involved alienation of African land, introduction of high taxes and forced labour to the Africans with an aim of benefiting the Europeans during the colonial period.
- Dual economy:** Refers to co-existence of two modes of production namely the pre-capitalist mode of production and the colonial capitalist mode of production.
- Economic surplus:** Refers to what is produced over and above what the household can consume. Thus, whatever is produced in excess of household requirements is disposed through trade.
- Formal sector:** This is that part of an economy that is taxed and monitored by the government.
- Indigenous Economy:** This refers to the past economic activities that the Gusii women of Nyamira engaged in before the colonial period.
- Informal sector/ Economy:** This refers to the sector that is not controlled in any way. People do things as they will.
- Patriarchy:** A system of social structures, and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.

- Pre-Capitalist:** This refers to the indigenous economic organisation of the Gusii people.
- Transformation:** Changes that took place over time. From the Pre-Colonial to the Colonial period
- Victorian ideology:** This was a perception by the Europeans in the 19th C that women were physically and intellectually a weaker sex and were therefore subordinate to men in all ways. It led to male dominance in the social, economic and political affairs.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.

LNC- Local Native Council

NACOST- National Council of Science and Technology

WWI- The First World War.

WWII- Second World War.

ABSTRACT

Historical studies have been blamed for silencing women. While women play a leading role in the informal sector today, studies on colonial women in the informal economy are lacking. In an attempt to address the problematic of marginalization and silencing women in studies on the colonial economy, this study (i) examined the participation of women in precolonial economy of the Abagusii of Nyamira County (ii) interrogated the extent to which colonialism transformed women's economic engagement in Nyamira and (iii) examined the participation of women in the informal economy in Nyamira County. In pursuing these objectives, the study was guided primarily by the theory of articulation of modes of production. According to this theory, the introduction of colonial rule and, subsequently, dependant capitalism in Kenya led to the co-existence of precolonial modes of production and capitalist modes of production. Women came to play a leading role in the pre-capitalist mode of production as they were not targeted for supply of labour in European capitalist ventures. A historical research design was adopted for this study. Data which informed this study was obtained from three main sources. Primary data was obtained from Kenya National Archives and from oral interviews. Secondary data was mainly accessed from public and private university libraries as well as from research institutions such as the British Institute in Eastern Africa. Both purposive sampling and snowballing sampling techniques were adopted in the recruitment of informants. Old men and women were purposively targeted in this study and those who were initially recruited were asked to suggest names and contact details of other potential informants whom they knew. The study observed key ethical issues whereby informants were recruited voluntarily upon signing an informed consent form. They were asked to keep their identity anonymous if they so wished. The study commenced after a research approval was obtained from the National Council for Science and Technology. A qualitative document and content analysis was employed at arriving to the findings presented in this study. The study established that Abagusii women played a significant role in the pre-colonial economy in Nyamira County. This they did either as women or alongside men. Also, the study established that the colonial government introduced policies and laws which transformed the economic role of women in Abagusii society in Nyamira County. These policies included introduction of tax as a measure to trigger male migrant labour. Due to low wages paid to male migrant labourers, most households had to increase farm production in order to sell surplus production. Women's surplus production increased after the Second World War due to improved methods of production, adoption of agricultural knowledge by Africans which was delivered by agricultural extension officers, and expansion of urban centres, among others. As a result, women were able to participate in informal sector on a large scale since they had enough farm produce to offer for trade. The study concludes by stating that women's participation in the informal economy is not a post-colonial phenomenon. Women participated in the informal economy during the colonial period except that their voices had been muted by failure of historical studies to dedicate attention on the subject. The study recommends that women's own initiative to participate in the informal sector needs to be built upon by development experts and policy technocrats with a view to creating a conducive environment for their continued participation in the same.

CHAPTER ONE:

1.1 Background to the Study

Even though the informal sector existed in the pre-colonial period (Sparks and Barnett 2010), its significance in African economies seems to have been “discovered” in recent years, especially in the post-Cold War era, owing to its potential, earlier on ignored, to create employment and wealth (Bangasser 2000). The post-cold war reform agenda focused on creating a suitable legal and institutional environment for the market, where most people could not fit (Nyamu-Musembi, 2006). This led many Africans into the informal sector. The significance of the informal sector lies in its ability to employ many people (African Union 2008; World Bank 2009; Haan 2000) and its contribution Gross National Income (Verick 2008, Schneider 2002). About 93 percent of new jobs created in sub-Saharan Africa during the 1990s were in the informal sector (Chen 2001). Indeed, informal sector employment in Uganda and Kenya now exceeds employment in the formal sector and nearly 90 percent of the labour force in Ghana comes from the informal sector (African Union 2008).

The colonisation of Kenya, alienation of African land, introduction of wage labour, high taxation, the giving of artisanal education to Africans by the Europeans and the lack of employment forced Africans to the informal economy (Kiruthu, 2006). In contrast to western women, far few colonised women had access to opportunities for wage labour jobs in factories ((Narayan 2005).

One of the factors that made most women to move to the informal economy was the introduction of hut tax and wage labour (Francis, 1995; Leys, 1975; Zwanenberg, 1975). While women previously had kinship based customary use rights to land,

colonial legal policies such as the Swynnerton Plan of 1955 led to privatization of land and the issuing of title deeds to men by the colonial government. This plan sanctioned large tracts of land for cash crop production while sharply reducing land available for subsistence production, a sector dominated by women. This resulted in the erosion of women's customary rights and further limited their access to land (Smith, 2000). In addition, women contributed to the growing of the cash crops, by their labour, but since the title of the land was under the male kin, it meant that they controlled the cash generated by cash crops (Shadle, 2006).

The need for cash drove women to grow surplus food crops or a specific cash crop on the side, to be marketed to garner cash for the households' needs- a situation that also increased demands on their labour. While some women were wage labourers on cash crop growing plantations, they were often hired as part of 'family teams' which meant they were paid less than men, and even had their wages delivered into the hands of the men who were their 'heads of households'. Other women engaged themselves in selling agricultural produce, marketing food, brewing beer, making hand crafts, sewing clothes and becoming sex workers (Shadle 2006; Omari 1989).

In colonial Nyeri, for example, prostitution was one of the few avenues open to African women in towns to earn cash. This was because domestic service was mainly monopolised by African men, office jobs by European and Asian and small scale trading by Asian petty traders (Macharia, 1997). Among the Gusii, the women of Nyamira South Sub County were at times employed in the rich men's farms while others established vegetable gardens and were often selling them in the market in order to get money for domestic requirements and school fees for their children (Omwoyo, 2008). Other activities included processing and preparing food and engaging in trade and marketing (Oino *et al.*, 2014: 116).

In spite of its significance, the informal sector in many African countries has over the years operated in the shadows of the formal economy (Ihrig, J. and Moe, K.S. 2004; Schneider, F. and R. Klingrnair 2004; Schneider 2007). Historical studies of this sector have also been scanty in the sense that they have failed to include the colonial period. Since women are the majority participants in this sector (Hensman, 1997), failure to study informal sector in the colonial period has also meant that women have been relegated in historical studies of the sector. Failure to undertake studies on the role of informal sector in African economies in the colonial period, and more importantly the role of women in this sector, has created a gap in existing literature. Women in Kenya have been known, historically, to have contributed to house hold economies in meaningful ways among the Kikuyu, Luo and Gusii (Jomo, 1978; Ayot, 1987; Omwoyo1997).

Little scholarly focus has been paid on the transformation of the informal economy during the colonial period of the women of Nyamira County. This study therefore seeks to fill this gap by doing a comprehensive study on the transformation of Gusii women's informal economy in Nyamira County during the colonial period. The study will attempt to do this by first examining the involvement of women of Nyamira County in the traditional economy. It will also interrogate how colonialism transformed women's economic engagement in the colonial in Nyamira South Sub County. It will conclude by examining how women in Nyamira South Sub County fared between 1945 and 1963.

1.2 Statement of the Problem.

Colonialism was about exploitation and labour is the source of all exploitation. When focusing on demand and supply of labour during the period of colonization, historians have correctly stated that male migrant labour was the most exploited because of low

wages. These wages could not enable male migrant labourers to pay taxes and still afford to sustain their rural families. Thus, historical colonial studies have correctly concluded that women had to subsidize European capital by working hard on household farms in order to compliment the meagre salaries which they labouring husbands and other male relatives earned from offering cheap labour to Europeans farmers/entrepreneurs and the colonial government. While women's economic role in the colonial economy and, more specifically accumulation of European capital has been well recognized and appreciated, none of the studies has critically and comprehensively interrogated the participation of women in the colonial informal economy in Nyamira County. Yet, it is from such places as Nyamira County that most men were drawn as labourers during the colonial era. Post-colonial studies have laid emphasis on the role of women in the expanding informal economy and, by doing so, have erroneously portrayed the role of women in the informal economy as a post-colonial phenomenon. This study deviates from the norm and makes an attempt at documenting the role of women in the colonial informal economy with a particular focus on Nyamira County.

1.3 Objectives of the Study.

This study was based on the following objectives;

1. To examine the participation of women in the pre-colonial economy of the Abagusii of Nyamira County by 1900.
2. To interrogate the extent to which colonialism transformed women's economic engagement in Nyamira County between 1900 and 1945.
3. To assess the participation of women in the informal economy in Nyamira County in the period 1945-1963.

1.4 Research Questions.

This study was based on the following research questions;

1. What was the role of women in the indigenous economy of the Abagusii of Nyamira County before 1900?
2. How did colonialism inform participation of women in the informal economy in Nyamira County between 1900 and 1945?
3. How and to what extent did women participate in informal economic activities in Nyamira County between 1945 and 1963?

1.5 Research Premises

The study was premised on the following research assumptions;

1. Women participation in the provision of labour in the traditional economy of Nyamira South Sub County complimented that of men.
2. Colonialism led to transformed social economic roles of the women of Nyamira South Sub County.
3. With men's engagement in World Wars women turned in greater numbers to the informal sector to sustain their families.

1.6 Justification and Significance of the Study.

There has been a gap in literature on the role that women played in the informal sector during the colonial period. This has tended to create an impression that the informal sector is a post-colonial creation. This gap in literature has added weight to the general impression that women played an insignificant role in shaping Kenyan history. This study is, therefore, intended to fill the gap on the role of Gusii women in the informal sector.

Many studies on the informal sector tend to be confined in urban areas and this creates an erroneous impression that informal sector is an urban phenomenon. This study generates new knowledge about informal sector in a largely rural setting. Furthermore, women constitute over half of the population performing major economic and social functions within and outside the domestic spheres. By documenting the role of women in the informal sector in colonial Gusiiland, this study opens new avenues for further research on women in other parts of the country. Such information serves to document and preserve useful information regarding not only women but the history of Kenya as a whole. Indeed, during the study, the researcher found out that many old women who are custodians of colonial information are dying at an alarming rate. So, unless such information is documented, Kenya and Kenyans are missing out on important information.

Furthermore, the study is useful for policy makers, researchers, and Non-Governmental Organizations working towards empowering women economically as they are able to learn from and build on the strengths and weaknesses of women's own initiatives, during the colonial period, in helping themselves economically. Information provided by this study is testimony that women are not passive actors who swing to the dictates of their male counterparts. This is attested to by the manner in which women took up positions left vacant by male migrant labourers and how they transformed and sustained their respective households economically.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study.

In terms of geographical scope, this study was confined to Nyamira South sub-county because of the significant role which it played in the colonial economy. It was a source of much of the migrant labour which was then demanded by European capitalism and this must have left many households under the charge of women

(Silberschmidt, 1999). Thus, the study sought to interrogate the role of Gusii women in Gusii economy during this moment in history.

In addition, Nyamira South Sub-county borders Luo Land which had a different economic structure. The climate and soil types of Luo Land could not support subsistence farming as it did in Gusiiland. Likewise, the climate and soil types of Gusiiland were not suited to animal rearing as was the case in Luoland (Ocheing', 1974). Thus, this study wanted to interrogate how geographical and occupational differentiation between the Luo and the Gusii could have created in its wake economic relations by way of trade exchanges.

In terms of human activity, the study was confined to the informal sector because this is the sector in which women played a major role. In addition, Nyamira sub-county has numerous market centres and a good road network which links up trading centres both within and without the sub-county. The area, thus, became well suited in the study of informal economies which dwell largely on trade centres and networks.

In terms of time, this study begins in 1900, three years before the Gusii people came into contact with the colonial administration following the establishment of a government station at Karungu in 1903 (Onduru, 2009; Kupe, 1965; Maxon, 1989). The year 1900 is important for this study because it marked colonial penetration in Gusiiland.

Furthermore, according to the records, the colonial government administrative stations were established in Gusiiland by 1907 (Nyakundi, M 2015). This was meant to trigger a steady supply of labour as demanded by European capitalism. Indeed, without settlement of white farmers in Gusiiland, Gusiiland remained to play the role of a chief supplier of migrant labour (Silberschmidt, 1999). It was important to begin

the study at this time in order to interrogate the impact of male migrant labourers on women's role in the local political economy.

That notwithstanding, the study stopped at 1963 because this marked the end of colonial political establishment in Gusiiland. This is important because studies on the informal sector in Kenya tend to dwell much on the post-colonial period and this has created an erroneous impression that informal sector is a recent "discovery" and phenomenon (Bassanger, 2000).

All notwithstanding, the study was limited in that it did not cover all old men and women of Nyamira South Sub County. This was because some of them had hearing impairment. This study therefore relied on those that could be able to hear and answer questions. There were instances where some of the women informants were either sick or unable to speak due to their old age.

1.8 Review of Literature.

This literature review is organised at three levels namely; the organisation of the pre-colonial traditional economy of Gusii women, the effect of colonial policies on women in colonial Kenya and women in the informal economy in colonial Kenya.

1.8.1 Organization of the Precolonial Economy of Gusii Women.

Organisation of labour among Kenyan ethnic communities was gender based in the pre-colonial period (Jomo 1938; Muchoki 1988; Muchanga, 1998; Olang, 1972; Were, and Derek, 1968; Curtin, *et al.*, 1978:114; Sitati, 2009; Oboler, 1985; Lemoosa, 1998; Ayot, 1979 and 1987; Mwaniki, 1973 and 1974; Kivuto 1972). The Gusii women essentially cultivated finger miller, yams, sorghum, millet, beans, pumpkins, and a variety of vegetables and fruits. The daily tasks of planting, weeding and harvesting fell primarily on women. The women worked together in *egesangio* a joint

rotating work party where they assisted each other in the farm work (Shadle, B L 2006: 9). They also gathered fruits, firewood, vegetables and medicinal plants. The men could assist their wives in clearing bushes (Omwoyo, 2008: 160). Other women conducted female circumcision ceremonies and some took roles as diviners or dispensers of specialised or ritual medicines (Shadle, 2006: 11).

In pre-colonial Gusiiland, both men and women were responsible for iron smithing (Silberschmidt, M 1999). The Gusii men traded iron items for cows and could become very rich (Ochieng, 1974: 213). The men could also herd cattle and build huts. Only men could make ropes and only women could cook and brew beer. Men owned land, property and cattle. Inheritance was always on the male line. As a result, boys were looked upon as the future fathers or heads of the extended family, whereas, girls were expected to leave the family and join another. Women then, were essential to the lineage process as the instruments of procreation. These studies which describe gender roles in pre-colonial period will provide the basis upon which a comparison will be made concerning the transformation of the economic roles of Gusi women in pre-colonial and colonial period.

1.8.2 Women and the colonial Economy.

Colonialism had a profound impact on land ownership, access and use in Kenya. By 1934, European settlers, who represented less than a quarter of one percent of the population at that time, controlled about a third of the arable land in the country. Land alienation affected every ethnic community (Wakhungu, *et al.*, 2008). The Swynnerton plan of 1954 led to the registration of land under the majority male head household at the expense of women. This undermined the land rights of women and rendered them liable to landlessness should the owner decide to transfer land (Syagga, 2010). Whereas this study is about the negative impact of land registration on women,

our study shall examine how land registration under the male kin led to the evolution of informal economy among women in colonial Kenya.

Apart from its impact on land ownership by African men and women, colonialism also had an impact on labour. Africans were expected to render their labour to Europeans either for free or in exchange for low wages. Introduction of hut tax and employment of force were the tactics which the colonial government employed to extract African, mostly male, labor leaving women behind to attend to household farms (Mwanunobi, 1974; Ndeda, 1991; Ndalilah 2012). Ndeda gives a detailed explanation of the impact of male labour migration on rural women without focusing on the informal sector in Gusiiland. This study shall specifically examine the transformation of women's labour to informal labour in Nyamira sub-county as a result of colonialism.

Taxation contributed to food shortage because people had to either give cereals or sell cereals to get money for taxation. Women had to turn out to clear land where no close male kin was available or where compulsory labour demands were disrupting the effective operation of the work party system (Muchanga, 1998: 121-133). Muchanga explains how colonialism affected the social economic roles of the Luhya people but does not explain how it led to the evolution of the informal economy among women.

Colonial education policies impacted negatively on African women. Ochieng' (2002) explains how colonial education relegated the women to domestic duties and excluded them from well-paying jobs. He however, does not say much about how this led to the evolution of the informal economy.

1.8.3 Women in the Informal Economy in Colonial Kenya.

Studies provide scanty information about women involvement in the informal sector. Hay (1976) has noted the involvement of women in buying and selling bananas. Since Gusiiland is known for banana growing, this study will delve deeper into examining the involvement of Gusii women in the banana business. Another arena of women involvement in the informal sector is prostitution (Robertson, 1995; Wills, 1993). The women also used to engage themselves in beer brewing as an alternative source of income. In Mombasa the women were also able to accumulate wealth as a result of prostitution. In the Waziba and Haya Unions, the women could be able to regularly pay their dues as compared to their male counterparts (Lonsdale, 2010). Kanogo (2005) has noted the involvement of women in prostitution in Nairobi and Karatina. Whereas Kanogo's study is on women and prostitution in Nairobi and Karatina, our study shall focus on the women of Nyamira County. Meghji *et al.* (1985) gives a generalised view of the participation of women in peasant production in some parts of colonial Africa. Our study shall specifically focus on women in the informal economy in Nyamira County. Whereas Kanogo's study (1987) on informal economic activities among the Kikuyu is not based on any gender, our study intends to examine women and informal economic activities in Nyamira County.

Whereas Henn's study (1984) provides a general description participation of women in wage labour and selling food in various parts of East Africa, our study intends to look at the informal activities done by the Gusii women of Nyamira County. Whereas Parpart's study (1986) shows how women in Mombasa engaged in prostitution, this study will examine whether the women of Nyamira County also engaged in prostitution. Ngesa (1996) examined how the construction of the railway attracted many women to Nairobi. The study reveals that a number of women left home to

look for work at the Nairobi Railway camp, where they did odd jobs such as sweeping, washing clothes and cleaning the houses of Europeans managing the camps. Some women could sell vegetables and beans to camp residents while others sold traditional beer to Africans living in Pangani. Other women foraged firewood from the surrounding bushes and sold it to neighbouring village residents because charcoal and paraffin were unaffordable to the majority of the Africans. Whereas this study was done in Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, our study shall be done at Nyamira County, a rural area.

A study by Stichter (1972) shows that although the Africans during the colonial period participated in a number of informal economic activities, Women were mainly used as children nurses. Except for children nurses she does not show the duties that were done by women in the informal sector. Our study therefore intends to show the role of women in the informal economic activities. Ndeda's study (1991) has shown how women made handcrafts made for home consumption while others were made for exchange purposes. Falling food production forced women to spend increasing amounts of time in off farm economic activities, particularly trading and handicrafts production (Francis, 1995). Whereas this study was done on the Luo, a neighbouring community, it did not capture transformation of Gusii women's informal economy during the colonial period.

The introduction of cash crops also saw women begin to offer farm labour. These have been observed in Kiambu and Machakos (Tignor, 1976). Tignor, explains how the women during the colonial era started selling their labour to earn a living. However, Tignor's study does not give a detailed study of how colonialism led to the evolution of informal economy. The men that lived as squatters in European farms, their wives and children could be used to provide labour in European farms (Overton,

1988; Mackenzie & Fiona, 1990). These studies mention casual labour as one of the informal economic activities done by women to earn a living, our study intends to find out more other informal economic activities that were done by women that were as a result of colonialism.

In Kiambu, every day, women carried their loads of vegetables and charcoal into the African locations of Nairobi where they fetched higher prices than if sold to the government (Anderson & Throup, 1985). Whereas this study was done on the Agikuyu community who had a close proximity to Nairobi, the capital city, our study shall be done in Nyamira County that is not that close to the capital city of Kenya.

The colonial government opted to raise the social economic position of rural women by training them to become better house wives and mothers. The curriculum for the training included; cooking, cleaning the household goods, needle work and agriculture. This training enabled the women to be employed as trainers in the women's clubs and institutes. Others got an opportunity to work as European domestic servants within the emerging colonial towns while others were able to secure jobs in the Asian hotels and entertainment places (Okuro, 2010). This study explains how colonial education encouraged women to enter the informal economy. This study intends to show other colonial features that encouraged the women to enter the informal economy.

Colonial policies, by taking away land and introducing taxation, forced to Africans into non indigenous specialisation like tailoring, carpentry, bicycle repair, building construction as well as other artisanal jobs such as domestic labour, traditional craftsmen makers of stools, ornaments, pots and basketry. Other artisans worked in the stone quarries as stone cutters and dressers (Kiruthu, 2006). Whereas this study is

about informal economy in the city of Nairobi, our study shall examine women and informal economy in the rural area.

This study intends to examine the transformation of the women's economic activities of Nyamira South Sub County during the colonial period. It will assess the extent to which colonial policies marginalized the women of Nyamira South Sub County and conclude by showing how the women of Nyamira South Sub County tried to empower themselves.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by articulation of modes of production theory. The 1884 treaty that saw the scramble and partition of Africa saw Kenya become a British colony. Accompanying this was the introduction of colonial capitalism which culminated into processes and changes that among them was the internationalization of division of labour which relegated Africa to the role of supplier of cheap agricultural raw materials to the Western capitalist world. The introduction of western capitalism did not, however, phase out the pre-capitalist modes of production. Instead, the result was the imposition of capitalist modes of production on pre-capitalist modes of production.

This co-existence of various economies has come to be known as the articulation of modes of production. In addition to this was the co-existence of cash and subsistence economies as well as what has come to be known as the formal "modern" and informal sector of the economy. This theory is advanced by African scholars who are dissatisfied with both the modernisation and dependency theories (Omwoyo, 1990).

The articulation of modes of production theory can help us understand the role of women in the informal sector as it sheds light on the division of labour at the local, national and international level while enunciating the exploitative relationship that

underpins the relationship, on the one hand between Africa and the west, pre-capitalist and capitalist economies as well as the relationship between men and women in either pre-capitalist and capitalist (formal and informal) economies.

The articulation of modes of production theory essentially emphasizes the diversification of the economy. The main argument in this theory is that, when the capitalist mode of production is introduced, it does not automatically and immediately replace the pre-capitalist modes of production but, rather, reinforces them. With time, the capitalist mode of production gradually asserts itself over the pre-capitalist mode of production, and the two modes of production are then locked in a complex and sometimes contradictory struggle. Gradually, the capitalist mode of production modifies, marginalises, or subordinates the pre-capitalist mode of production, but by utilising it rather than casting it aside.

Colonialism led to the introduction of a cash economy in Gusiiland. Farming was not to be done just for subsistence but also for cash. Cash crop farming became a preserve of male farmers, while female farmers were relegated to subsistence farming. Ongoing research into high-yielding varieties of cash crops, along with the use of pesticides and fertilisers, benefited the male farmers most, thus entrenching their dominant role in 'modern' agriculture, often using female labour for the benefit of men. The men utilised the women in providing labour on their farms but they kept the proceeds. Where labour migrancy occurred, usually to the neighbouring areas such as tea estates in Kericho and other fields, female farmers were further burdened, as they had to take up roles formerly performed by men.

The pre-capitalist mode of production is not completely eliminated but keeps on reproducing itself diversely in relation to the capitalist mode of production. Goodman

and Redcliff (1981). Thus observe that pre-capitalist modes of production may have continued to exist, though subordinated to the capitalist system, through a process of 'preservation and destruction' or 'dissolution and conservation', by which they were articulated in their diverse relations with capitalist system, particularly through unequal exchange relations.

Articulation is therefore a double-edged concept where certain sectors of the pre-capitalist economy were integrated into the capitalist economy and other sectors were not integrated for some time, with a view to achieve certain economic goals. This explains why men readily embraced the new agricultural technologies, including the introduction of cash crop farming, and thus belonged to the 'modern' sector while relegating women to the backwaters of the economic realm in the name of the pre-capitalist sector, also called the subsistence sector.

Just as the capitalist mode of production preserved the pre-capitalist sector in order to utilise and exploit it, so did men in relation to women. Through patriarchal relations, men kept women in the pre-capitalist sector so as to use and exploit them. Men grew cash crops, while women grew subsistence crops, but even then men utilised women's labour in all their endeavours.

Thus, the theory of articulation of modes of production can aptly be applied to explain why women's participation in agricultural production has been hampered and thwarted to meet men's capitalist objectives. However, women were not passive recipients of the changes affecting them. Nor did they all respond in the same way or get affected uniformly. To appreciate such variations.

Feminist Theory

This is the extension of feminism into theoretical, fictional or philosophical discourse with the aim of understanding gender inequality.

It is made up of different theories, which include; Radical feminist which is based on the idea that the main cause of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures, liberal feminism, which is based on the belief that individuals should use their abilities and the democratic process to help women and men become more equal in the eyes of the law, in society and in the work place among other theories.

According to the black feminists, the feminist theory that can best explain the position of the African women in the society is the Socialist feminist theory, Jagger (1988:11).

In analyzing the impact of colonial capitalism to Gusii women, the socialist feminism theory therefore

will be used. This theory is advocated by Alison Jaggar. According to this theory, capitalism

strengthens and supports sexist status quo because men are the ones who have power and money.

Those men are more willing to share their power and money with other men, which means that women are continually given fewer opportunities and resources. This keeps women under the control of men. The colonization process was done by European men.

After their colonization of Kenya, they enacted policies that tended to favour men in the colonial capitalism than women. The people for example that were used in the

the

provision of labour were men, when land registration was done; it was registered under

the male kin. The colonization of the Gusii therefore, pushed the men to the formal economy

and women to the informal sector because women were given fewer opportunities

ities and resources to enable them to participate in the colonial capitalist mode of production (Jagger, 1988).

The Gusi of women of Nyamira engaged themselves in economic activities that could enable them empower themselves economically. Among the activities that they engaged themselves in were selling beer, selling vegetables, providing casual labor among other activities.

These two theories complimented each other. The articulation of modes of production theory explained how the traditional economic practises survived despite being marginalised during the colonial period. The Socialist Feminist theory on the other hand explained why women were excluded from the formal colonial economic practices and the factors that forced the women to join the informal sector. Wage labour and cash crop growing

1.10 Research Methodology

This chapter includes the methodology that was used in the study. It contains research designs, locale of the study, target population, sampling design, research instruments, piloting, validity and reliability of the instruments, data collection procedures, logistical and ethical considerations and data analysis.

1.10.1 Research Locale

This study was carried out in Nyamira County as shown on the Kenyan map (see Figure 3). Nyamira County is located in the former Nyanza Province, it borders the following counties; Bomet to the East, Narok to the South, Kisii to the West, Homa Bay to the North, and Kericho to the North East. The temperatures range from a

mean annual minimum of 10.1 °C to a mean maximum of 28.7 °C, with rainfall amounts of between 600mm and 2,300mm per annum.

1.10.2 Research Design

The descriptive and historical research designs were used. The descriptive design involved collecting information by interviewing a sample of individuals. This design was found to be ideal because it enabled an in-depth study of the social economic activities of the Gusii in order to establish the impact of colonial policies on the women's social economic activities. This study adopted the historical method which focused on the use of primary and secondary sources in obtaining data for the research. The historical method was also important in chronologising events. The primary sources were found in the National archives of Kenya and Gusii district archives and one on one and phone interviews were done on Key informants in the county. From these sources primary data was obtained. Secondary data was collected from books, thesis, dissertations and journal articles. These were obtained from online source and various libraries including Kenyatta University Library, Kenya Public Library, Kisii University Library, among others. .

1.10.3 Sampling techniques and Sample Size

The informants were selected through simple talk of snowballing and purposive techniques of both probability and non-probability sampling designs. Some of the key informants directed the researcher to other knowledgeable informants. The informants were made up of women and men knowledgeable on the development of the formal and informal economy in Nyamira South Sub County in the colonial era of 70 and 110 years of age.

A total of 200 informants were sampled out of the targeted population of men and women living in Nyamira County within the period under investigation. The informants were drawn from the administrators, African business men and women, farmers, church leaders and residents of the particular area of study.

1.10.4 Research Instruments

The Interview schedule was used to collect data because it provided intensive information that could not be found by use of the questionnaire and also because the expected informants did not know how to read and write. The interview schedule covered open- ended questions regarding colonisation, women and informal economy during the colonial period. Field note books were used in storing captured data. The researcher trained two research assistants who were used in administering the questions.

1.10.5 Data Collection Processes and Procedures

After approval of the research proposal by the supervisor the researcher sought for permission from the graduate school in writing which enabled her to seek a permit from the National Council of Science and Technology (NACOST) through the institute of research of the Kenyatta University before proceeding to the field. Upon acquisition of the permit the researcher sought further permission from the County Commissioner, Sub County Commissioner, Assistant County Commissioner and area chiefs before commencing the research. Primary data was obtained from the informants at Nyamira County who were able to witness the development of the informal economy during the colonial era.

Interview schedules were prepared for use during oral interviews. Informants were allowed to talk freely, and interrupted with probes here and there for further

clarification. The documents in the Kenya National Archive comprised of the second component of primary data. Relevant data was obtained from the annual reports, labour reports, intelligence reports and handing over reports of the various administrators in charge of Kisii district. Record rooms at the county government also provided the third component of primary data. The information provided the historical data on the developments and government policies on the informal enterprises especially during the colonial period. Secondary sources included books, videotapes, journals, theses and dissertations, seminars and conference papers as well as the internet. These data accessed at Kenyatta University post-modern library, libraries of other Kenyan universities and the British Institute at Kileleshwa. Research assistants were used in collecting the relevant data for this study.

1.10.6 Data Analysis

In this study, a qualitative approach was used to analyse the research Findings. The recorded data was transcribed and that which was in vernacular translated to English. All the data obtained from the various sources was categorised according to the sources, the sector concerned and the historical period in question and analysed in respect to research objectives. In addition, the secondary data obtained from various sources was subjected to historical criticism in order to verify their validity. Data from the various sources was then corroborated, by comparing it with other sources of information. Where the oral data conflicted from one informant to another, the archival and secondary sources were referred to, and vice versa. In addition, the researcher posed the same question to several informants for further clarification. In this way, the researcher was able to acquire data that was reliable.

1.10.7 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained research authorization from Kenyatta University (Appendix III) and the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology (See Appendix IV) and Nyamira County Government. These authorizations facilitated the researcher to carry out research work in Kenya, Nyamira County and other relevant institutions.

The researcher further obtained informed consent from all informants who participated in the research. Participation was on a voluntary basis. Informants were informed about the research before being asked to participate. Those who had questions were allowed to ask and clarification was provided. Informants who did not want their names disclosed were assured of confidentiality.

CHAPTER TWO:
PRE-COLONIAL POLITICAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC ORGANISATION
OF ABAGUSII IN NYAMIRA COUNTY BEFORE 1900.

2.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the political and socio-economic organization of the Abagusii before 1900. In particular, the chapter examines the role of Gusii women in Gusii society before proper establishment of colonial administration. The chapter begins by examining the origin, migration and settlement of the Abagusii in their present location of Nyamira County.

2.1 Origin, Migration and settlement of the Gusii.

The Abagusii, who form the subject matter of this study live in the cool and fertile South Western section of Kenya Highlands. They inhabited this place before the advent of colonial rule. By the time of the establishment of the colonial rule in Kenya, the Gusii had migrated and settled in their present locality of Gusii highlands. Silberschmidt (1999) observes that the British colonizers changed the name of Gusiiland to Kisii in 1907. The term Gusii is derived from the word Mogusii, the person that the Gusii people claim as their ancestor (Wipper, 1977).

Their language places them within the large family of the Bantu- speaking majority of sub-equatorial Africa, although their entry into their present territory, which today is surrounded by people of unrelated Nilotic family isolated them from other West Kenya Bantu- Speakers (Levine, 1979).

We learn from historical traditions of the Gusii that long time ago the group lived in a country called *Misri*. The Gusii today do not know precisely the geographical location

of this country. They remember however, that in *Misri* they lived under a wealthy and powerful ruler known as Kintu. This Kintu is sometimes said to be the original ancestor of the Gusii, the Maragol, the Kikuyu, the Embu, the Meru, the Kuria and the Kamba. The Gusii claim that they are related to these clusters and that they all lived in *Misri* at one time, as a single family (Ochieng, 1975).

About the year A. D. 1400 the Gusii and their relatives migrated from the mythical *Misri*, in a Southern direction, and settled at the foot of Mt Elgon. Their reason for leaving *Misri* is explained as due to certain calamities. They complain in their traditions that *Misri* was a bad country, which was 'full' of diseases, famines and endless droughts. When they left *Misri* for example, 'it had not rained for years', and both people and their domestic animals had died in large numbers from the effects of the pro-longed drought (Ibid).

At the Mt Elgon area, there were plenty of wild animals which the Gusii people hunted and plenty of fruits and vegetables which they collected for food. This led to increase in population. As a result of this increase, people began to quarrel over grazing and hunting rights. This inevitably led to dispersal. They migrated Southwards under the leadership of Osogo. They followed the valley of River Nzoia, until they reached the North- Eastern shores of Lake Victoria. In the next few years they wandered eastwards along the Lake, until they arrived at Ramogi Hills in Nyanza. It was here that they built their first homes in Western Kenya. Their arrival at Ramogi seems to have taken place between the years A. D. 1490 and 1520 (Omwoyo 1990).

Two generations later, the Gusii cluster was dislodged by the first wave of Luo immigration into West Kenya under the leadership of Ramogi. Led by Mogusii- the

eponymous founder of present day Gusii community- the Gusii and their relatives migrated to Kisumu where they established a settlement which appears to have extended up to Chemilil in the East and Gendia in Karachuonyo location in the West. It was at Kisumu that a section of them which later became the Maragoli broke off. The Gusii group entered their present day Gusii Highlands by way of Gososia in North Mugirango, the Maasai district of Trans- Mara, and the Kabwoch Location in the Homa Bay District (Ibid).

The Gusii can be divided into four main groups namely: Abasweta, Abagirango, Ababassi and Abanchari (Were and Nyamweya 1986). Ogonda and Ochieng' (1992:8) content that:

Waves of agricultural bantu-speaking, some from the direction of Uganda in the interlacustrine area north of Lake Victoria and others from north-eastern Tanzania, had been pouring into Kenya since the Early Iron Age. The Ugandan stream into Kenya would eventually coalesce into the peoples we today call the Luhya, Gusii, Kuria and Abasuba.

Upon settlement in their present location, the Gusii found themselves surrounded by three main ethnic communities namely the Luo, Maasai and Kalenjin. From the time of settlement in their present territory to the time of the arrival of the British, the Maasai, Kipsigis and the Luo were the major threats to the survival of the Abagusii (Ibid). Not only did these external enemies attack the Abagusii in the heartland, but cattle raiding from Gusii was a lucrative business for these groups. One of the most famous battles was that between the Kipsigis and virtually all the Abagusii in 1892.

Ochieng's (1974) account of the Gusii migration shows that the Gusii were settled at Kano plains between c. 1760- 1800. Due to persistent Luo attacks, the Gusii started moving out of the plains into the highlands. Their first stop was at Gososia, near

Ngoinyo Hill in North Mugirango in Nyamira County. Here, due to close proximity to the Luo, they still suffered from attack, and further migration was necessary.

From Gososia, a small group consisting of the Osiango and Sigisa migrated into the thickly wooded highlands and established their first settlement in the vicinity of Nyamira County. They were later joined by Abarangi, Abakeboye, Abasamaro, Abanyameuru and Mwanyamoronge. These were the first groups to settle in the Gusii highlands in the now North Mugirango area in Nyamira County. The majority of the Gusii moved from Gososia to Kabianga around the close of the 18th C but, due to unfavourable soils and the climatic conditions and attacks from the Maasai and Kipsigis, they moved southwards to Sotik. A few groups infiltrated the highlands, but the majority moved on to the Transmara Triangle settling at Nyamararo around 1820. From here, after unstable and hostile relations with the Maasai which was characterised by cattle raids on both sides, the Gusii were scattered during the battle of River Migori. They moved into the highlands, while some took refuge among the Kuria, and others among the Luo of Kabwoch near Nyagoe forest. Throughout the rest of the century, when the majority of them were already in the highlands, they started gradually spreading out within the whole territory to be joined by another group that had taken refuge among the Luo in Kabwoch (Omwoyo, 1990).

2.2 Political Organisation of the Gusii up to 1900.

Most scholars who have studied the Gusii society have observed that the Gusii did not possess any centralised government system. (Mayer, 1949, 1950; Levine, 1966. 1962; Ochieng', 1974, Choti, 2013, Mokebo, 2015). They had a collection of many political units, based on exogamous patrilineal clans or clan groupings, each of which often consisted of a large clans with a number of small clans or sub- clans or families, usually occupying a distinct territory over a ridge or a succession of adjacent ridges.

Among the Gusii there was no ethnic authority which overruled clan authority either in dealings with neighbouring ethnic groups or in the management of internal affairs. The clan then was the most effective political unit.

Even so, the Gusii clans were conscious of having originally come from a common ancestor, and they were connected by bonds of intermarriage and common beliefs and practices in such a way that they considered themselves a unit in contrast to surrounding groups with whom they did not maintain such bonds. At the head of each political unit was a 'chief' locally called *Omogambi* or *Omotureti*. This was usually an elder who publicly sanctioned socio- religious and political roles in the political unit. However, he had to make decisions with the consent and support of the elders, who jointly formed an 'elders' council' locally called *etureti*. In the event of two political units being involved, a joint elders' council had to be constituted; alternatively, elders from a neutral clan were requested to arbitrate. The *etureti* only met when there was need to solve social, political and religious issues; otherwise, the elders and chiefs led private lives (Ibid).

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

Besides the chief, there were other notable leaders, locally called *abatangani* (singular. *Omotangani*). Ochieng' (1974) has defined these leaders as persons who by force of example, talent, or qualities of leadership, played a directing role, wielded

commanding influence, or had a following in any sphere of activity or thought. They included prophets (for example, Sakawa), elders, seers and rain-makers. The Gusii homestead was an internally self-governing unit, with the head of the homestead settling all disputes that did not need outside intervention. However, the head's authority was not limitless; he was also accountable to the ancestral spirits and to his immediate lineage relatives in his conduct and actions within the homestead. Conflicts between members of different homesteads were taken to the elders' council headed by the chief (Silberschmidt, 1999).

The religion of the Gusii people consisted mainly of an ancestor cult which co-existed with Gusii conceptions of one Supreme Being, known as *Engoro* (Ochieng' 1973: 63). It was *Engoro*, so the Gusii believed, who created the universe, the earth and forces operative in it. He governed the destiny of man, sending him rain or storm, well-being or famine, health or disease, peace or war (Ochieng' 1974).

The Gusii explain God's continued operation or involvement in the physical world to have been executed through his agents, the ancestor spirits (*ebirecha*), who also shared in *Engoro's* supernatural and mysterious essence (Ochieng' 1975: 63). The ancestor spirits had great influence in Gusii social and economic life. In the event of a calamity or disease, a seer or diviner (*omoragori*) could be consulted on the wishes of the ancestors, who often than not were believed to be behind the calamity. However, they were not worshipped (LeVine, 1966).

While the ancestor spirits were the living supernatural link between *Engoro* and man, the sun was regarded as a mysterious physical agency through which God manifested Himself in a variety of ways. The sun was associated with God's benevolence and at times vengeance, depending on a number of factors (Ochieng', 1975). For example,

depending on the 'behaviour' of the sun, man could receive ample rainfall for good harvest and pasture or, alternatively, drought, famine and diseases. In the latter case, sacrifices and other religious ceremonies had to be carried out. The sun, thus, had great significance for the Gusii people as it was a mysterious creation through which man could gaze on God and ask for blessing, forgiveness or help (LeVine, 1956: 57). In fact, the sun stood for *Engoro*, and the two were used interchangeably. In the words of G. A. S. Northcote, 'God among the ancient Kisii people seems to have slid on the scales of meaning between sun and ancestor worship.'

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

Silberschmidt (1999) observes that Gusii men were administratively responsible for the family's interests. They administered family land and cattle. They did this by apportioning land for the various women of the homestead to cultivate cattle for the males to marry with and the settling of disputes and lawsuits. In this regard, LeVine (1966) observes that;

... the homestead head was formerly the absolute ruler of this group and owner of all its property, with sole power to resolve all its internal difficulties, including intra-familial homicide. The internal allocation of livestock and land was entirely in his hands, and he was also the principal performer of sacrifice to the ancestors.... There were generally accepted customs concerning allocation of property within the domestic group but if the homestead head chose to disregard them, no one within or outside the homestead could challenge his authority and the matter would wait until his death for the adjudication of other elders. He had the power of putting a curse on his adult sons, which would kill them or drive them mad unless rescinded after a public

apology by the son. Everyone in the homestead was obliged to show deference to its head in their everyday behaviour... Each homestead wanted to have the most populous domestic group possible, with numerous sons as a potential fighting force.

Thus men had (at least) a very important role as owner and ruler of the household and its members, and men had both power and authority. The male head, together with his sons, was also responsible for safeguarding the wellbeing of all members. Clan loyalty passed from father to son, and all disputes were directly mediated through male family heads. Informally, and regardless of genealogy, the mature men of the neighbourhood were collectively the neighbourhood bosses. They would meet regularly as a clique to relax, drink beer and talk local business affairs. Local cases would be brought to them to be judged in accordance with Abagusii law which all adult men were supposed to know (Mokebo 2015).

In the traditional Abagusii code, manliness was based on father's and husband's dignity, reflected in respect from juniors in his family, his wives and most importantly, his own self-restraint (Mayer 1965). The male head of the household was its decision-maker and controller of wealth (land, cattle, and labour, including that of women). As long as he lived, he was the only person who could officiate at sacrifices to the ancestors, whose goodwill controlled the health and fertility of the whole family. Moreover, men had unchallenged control of political and legal relations and institutions (LeVine, 1966).

Manliness was also strongly related to men's 'role' as warrior. Abagusii men, as men elsewhere, were defined by their violent deeds (Ortner and Whitehead 1981). The warriors in charge of the cattle camps (*ebisarate*) were subjected to rigorous training and to a number of very strict rules- an education towards manhood- which was to

ensure that each warrior was capable, strong, quick-acting, courageous and disciplined. (Were and Nyamweya, 1986; 128) have observed that:

After the boys had successfully gone through the circumcision trials, they were now men who could marry and be admitted to Gusii governing councils. But their education in the ways of men and tactics of war was not complete until they lived in *ebisarate*, (*egesarate* sing.).... . The young people were instructed that to succeed in life they had to cooperate.... In short, *ebisarate* helped to unite all the inmates in a strong brotherhood.... . Those who did not cooperate were cautioned about their obstinacy, selfishness and uncooperativeness. In fact, a disobedient *egesarate* dweller could be denied his share of milk, meat and fat (*amaguta*) even if these items were produced by his own cow. If he remained obstinate after such a ruling, he would be asked to quit and start his own *egesarate*. If he pulled out and went back home to his parents he was laughed at and ridiculed by the elders who heard that he had failed to comply with *egesarate* rules. Pulling out actually meant that the young man was a coward who was not ready to defend his nation; he had run back home to hide under the aprons of his mother.

After a boy had passed through all the educational stages up to and including *egesarate*, he was regarded as almost fully educated as to the potentialities and weaknesses of the economy of his society and on the social, moral and political fibres that bound his society together and made it work smoothly. The young men who had lived together in *ebisarate* became mystically and ritually in effect one body, one community, one people. Education acquired from infancy to the *egesarate* stage was put into practice in adult life during which it was tested and refined. An adult was regarded as 'medicine'. He was expected to discuss problems objectively and suggest solutions. Adult men should store knowledge and wisdom (Were and Nyamweya, 1986).

The *ebisarate* were officially abolished by the British administration in 1912. Until the 1920s, fathers still sent their unmarried sons out together to camp in the bush and jointly look after their fathers' cattle. The boys would practice fighting with spears, and sometimes they would attack other cattle camps. This could escalate into feuding and warring with other cattle villages until the old men met to negotiate peace

(LeVine 1966). Nyasani (1984) has observed that Gusii men were highly respected as fighters/raiders.

2.3 Social-Economic Organization of the Abagusii up-to 1900.

In pre-colonial Kenya, Gusii institutions were not, as they are now, they were differentiated into political, economic and religious spheres (Mokebo 2015;32). However, clan and family/household were cardinal social, economic and political institutions of the Abagusii which underpinned social and economic relations between men and women.

Among the Abagusii, men were permanent residents of the home/household from birth to death, while women came from other clans (LeVine 1966). This is because marriage was based on exogamy. Gendered division of labour, among the Abagusii, set adult males apart from women and children along lines which contributed to their position in the social hierarchy. There was a clear sexual division of labour which was manifested in two separate hierarchies, where male hierarchy (sons, husbands, elders) was superior to the female (daughters, wives and elder women). The division of labour, then, was characterized by separateness and separate spheres; tasks and roles were reserved for one sex only. Only men could herd the cattle. In hut-building, men put up the wooded framework while women plastered it. Only men could make ropes, or work with iron. Only women could cook, tend the household fire and brew beer (Levine, 1979;9).

Male and female spheres were also divided in physical space. Men did not climb into the rafter storage place where women kept their pots and threshed grain. Women did not go into the men's day hut. Similar separation has observed was practiced between

old and young, children and circumcised youth, the married and unmarried. And while men could eat fowl, women could not (LeVine, 1966).

Like in many other African ethnic communities, before the advent of colonial rule, Gusii women stamped their authority in certain economic fields which included: trading in form of local and long-distance commercial network, iron smelting, agriculture, craft works, food processing, pottery and livestock production. Nana-Fabu (2006) has asserted that pre-colonial women were the economic backbone of their societies unlike modern women who occupy economically precarious positions at the lower echelons of the socio-economic scale. She then concludes that even though “modernization has brought some good for ...women.... the ills of modernization far outweigh the good brought by modernization” (Nana-Fabu 2006:148). Like women in other pre-colonial African settings, Gusii women heavily participated in the traditional economy of the Abagusii community. While there were economic fields of operations reserved for Gusii women, there are those economic fields in which women complimented men.

The Abagusii engaged in a variety of economic activities, in the pre-colonial era, to derive their livelihood. More specifically, the pre-colonial Gusii traditional economy involved trade and commerce, manufacturing in various forms, agriculture, craft works, iron smelting, and traditional medicine, among others. The involvement of women folk to a large extent, in the Gusii traditional economy, enhanced the successful conduct of most of these economic activities in the pre-colonial era. Gusii women’s participation in traditional economies provided the Abagusii community with the resources to establish control over the society and contribute to its advancement, provided the ruling elite with a power base to exercise their authority

effectively, and gave the right stimulus to the process of establishment and promotion of intergroup and inter-ethnic relations (Ochieng', 1974).

The Abagusii women were responsible for the food producing cycle, for general domestic services (the procuring of firewood and water, preparation of food), for tending and training young children and nursing the sick, for helping to keep good relations with neighbours and kin. Most activities were carried out on a cooperative basis, in the sense that men would go out hunting, cattle keeping and to war in groups, and women would work together in groups when carrying out their agricultural activities (Silberschmidt 1999).

The fact that the ideology of society was based on separation of the male and female spheres, gave certain limits to male domination. In addition, the fact that men, depended on women for food provided women with a 'counter-control' and possibilities of sanctions against men. However, there seems to be little doubt that male superiority and dominance were accepted and respected- at least in theory (Ibid).

Inheritance of property or wealth was always on the male line (Masese, 2006; 257). As a result, boys were looked upon as the future 'fathers' or heads of the extended family, whereas girls were expected to leave their father's family and join their husband's family through the institution of marriage. Thus, women were valued, to the lineage process, as instruments of procreation. If a woman's husband died, she had no basic rights to the house, land or household properties, other than certain material possessions clearly defined as her own. A widow, however, was not simply tossed out. In most cases she was taken over by a brother of the former husband. Women were, thus, clearly defined in terms of their relations with men.

2.3.1 Gusii Precolonial Economy

The family or household functioned as a unit of economic expansion and social control (Silberschmidt., 1999). Each household was responsible for supplying its own food as well as meeting many of its other needs. Polygamous families were the common denominator among the Abagusii. Polygamy, itself, was of socio-economic and political significance to the wellbeing of the Abagusii. The more wives a man married, the more land could be cultivated, the more daughters he would get whose marriages would give him cattle as bride wealth, and the more sons he would get to herd the cattle and to defend the homestead from outside attack.

The increase of wives, children, herds and crops was a common occurrence and a mutually reinforcing phenomenon. Polygamy, then, was not only a cardinal feature of the Gusii household but an important economic institution. The head of the household had at least two, ideally four and occasionally more wives (Silberschmidt (1999). The Gusii names which distinguished women's grades are as follows: *Mobucha ibu*- the first wife, *Nyamesanchu*- second wife, *Nyabweri rogoro*- third wife and *Nyageita*- the fourth wife (KNA, DP/18/13).

The economic conditions which existed in pre-colonial Gusiiland permitted these modes of growth to be mutually reinforcing. Polygamy enabled more women to get husbands since large numbers of men were killed in warfare. In addition, land was abundant and the only way through which a man would get more land to himself was through marrying excess wives. In polygamous family set-up, each wife had her own house with its own yard. The husband allocated fields to her which she was responsible for cultivating. Her produce was stored in her own granary. The wife and her children were supposed to be agriculturally an independent self-supporting unit (Mokebo, 2015;34). On their part, men owned land, property and cattle.

Inheritance of property or wealth was always on the male line. As a result, boys were looked upon as the future 'fathers' or heads of the extended family, whereas girls were expected to leave their father's family and join their husband's family through the institution of marriage. Thus, women were valued, to the lineage process, as instruments of procreation. If a woman's husband died, she had no basic rights to the house, land or household properties, other than certain material possessions clearly defined as her own. A widow, however, was not simply tossed out. In most cases she was taken over by a brother of the former husband. In this kind of a situation, the elders could decide which brother could take over the woman. The woman did not have any say. The man that was chosen by the elders could go to and cut the roof top of the house (*egechuri*) of the woman whose husband had died. After the funeral period was over, the woman was expected to take beer to the house of that man as a sign of accepting him as her husband and welcoming him to her house (Onchonga, O.I. 16/4/2015). Women were, thus, clearly defined in terms of their relations with men.

Farming and animal husbandry was the main economic mainstay of the Gusii in pre-colonial era (Mokebo, 2015). Cattle herding, however, overshadowed agriculture by far- in social significance if not actually for subsistence. Men acquired large herds of cattle, and numbers were augmented through breeding and raids on neighbouring clans. Other economic activities, which the Gusii depended on, included iron working. This industry supplied the much needed implements, such as hoes, needed for farming. Equally important was the need for spears which the Gusii needed to defend their traditional economy against invasion by neighbouring Luo, Maasai and Kalenjin communities (Kinara, 1988).

As stated earlier, both the Gusii and their neighbouring communities valued cattle more than farming. Thus, cattle herding together with the protection of it- warfare- went hand in hand and the demand for weapons of warfare was great. However, these economic sectors could not meet all the needs of the Gusii and as such, trade existed between the Gusii and their neighbours (Ochieng', 1974). Trade was also facilitated by the fact that the Gusii never consumed all they produced. Sometimes they produced economic surplus which they disposed off in exchange of what they did not produce.

Since the Gusii depended mainly on agriculture and animal husbandry, there was much demand for land. The same activities are also labour intensive. As such, both land and labour were important, if not the only, factors of production. This is bearing in mind that these economic activities depended on land. Land was therefore a factor of economic production and, as thus, in great demand. The head of the household, the husband, had access to as much land as his family could cultivate and use for grazing (Nyaboke O.I, 17/04/2015).

2.3.2 The Role of Women in Securing Land and Labour in Gusii.

As stated in the preceding section of this chapter, land and labour were in great demand as factors of production on which farming and animal husbandry heavily depended. Women played an important role in securing these factors of production. Women were important in securing land needed for both farming and animal husbandry. It is for this reason that polygamy was cherished by Gusii men (Morendi, O, I, 17/04/2015).

Polygamous families were the common denominator among the Abagusii. Polygamy, itself, was of socio-economic and political significance to the wellbeing of the

Abagusii. The more wives a man married, the more land could be cultivated. Indeed, land was at the centre of the survival of the Gusii as a people. Gusii native law and customs made provisions for those with scarce land to obtain more (KNA, DP/18/13). This enabled the women to cultivate the land and produce surplus food which they could sell to obtain other goods that they did not have.

Pre-colonial land laws and customs of the Gusii people promoted law and order in matters of land. The law and customs prescribed how people were to relate with regard to land ownership and use rights. More importantly, pre-colonial Gusii law and customs prescribed that “a man had rights in land if he was the first person to occupy inhabited land or if the land was granted to him by his parents” (KNA, DP/18/13). Likewise, there was no right for a person to use land beyond the limit of his/her boundary. A person could, however, obtain permission for the right of cultivation on other person’s land. Such user rights were obtained on a temporary basis. This is because land could not be bought or sold. In most cases, thus, invitation for cultivation only lasted for a period of one year even though in certain circumstances such rights could be extended by the owner of the land to two years or more.

In situations where a person’s user rights were extended, such a person was required to return back to his home land before his wife’s hair turned grey (*chimbuche*). In cases whereby a person could be allowed permanent occupation of land, a boundary was put in between him and the rest of the family members who had granted him permanent user rights. In spite of this, there are persons who could not be allowed permanent occupation land rights namely: son-in-law or brother-in-law (*omoko*), nephew (*omoigwa*), a man who married from the same house (*semo*), father-in-law (*tatabiara*), or a friend (KNA, DP/18/13). However, a man could exploit available provisions of acquiring more land if he had more wives. So wives helped men to

secure more land and, with this, men were able to acquire wealth which land brought with it (farming fields and grazing land).

The cycle of poverty in Gusiiland was determined by the number of wives that a man had. A poor man lacked the bride wealth with which to marry many wives. Consequently, a man with one wife would not acquire more land and, as a result of less land and labour to till it, a man remained poor. Silberschmidt (1999) observes that only poor men had one wife and men with only one wife were ostracized. Even today the proverb, among the Gusii, has it that when a man with only one wife goes to the bar he should sit next to the door (Silberschmidt, 1999).

2.3.3 Women and Supply of Labour

Apart from securing land, women in precolonial Abagusii society played a role in securing of labour. Wives were themselves, mainly, labourers. In addition to this, many wives gave birth to many children who supplied labour on family farms and in looking after cattle. Before daughters got married, they offered their labour to the family. When they got married, their fathers got more cattle as bride wealth while the sons would get to herd the cattle and to defend the homestead from enemy attacks. We have observed that the pre-colonial Gusii economy was predominantly cattle based. We had what the Gusii called cattle camps (*ebisarate*) which were guarded by warriors. The warriors could stay at the cattle camps for long periods of time taking care of the animals. They could take bang' and tobacco to keep them awake overnight, in order to protect their cattle from being taken away.

Additionally, these warriors were subjected to rigorous training and to a number of very strict rules- an education towards manhood- which was to ensure that each warrior was capable, strong, quick-acting, courageous and disciplined (Momanyi, O,

T 17/04/2015; Akama, 2006:86,239). It is women who gave birth and cared for these warriors thereby supplying male labour to the Gusii society. Based on this logic, therefore, the ideal situation among the Abagusii was proliferation of wives and this translated to more children, herds and crops. The head of the household had at least two, ideally four and occasionally more wives (Nyaboke, O, I 17/04/2015).

The situation that existed in Gusiiland before 1915 also allowed or favoured polygamy to flourish. Polygamy enabled more women to get husbands since large numbers of men were killed in warfare which was common in those days. In addition, land was abundant and the only way through which a man would get more land to himself was through polygamy (Silberschmidt, 1999).

In polygamous family set-up, each wife had her own house with its own yard. The husband allocated fields to her which she was responsible for cultivating. Her produce was stored in her own granary or kept in *emenyoncho*, (baskets) that were kept in hut rafters' storage space, *irongo*. The fact that men could not set foot into granaries and rafter storage area which were dominantly women's spaces is clear evidence that men's dominance had limitations. The wife and her children were supposed to be agriculturally self-supporting and an independent unit (Mokebo, 2015; Choti, 2013).

There was no direct payment for labour in pre-colonial Gusiiland. In most cases, labour was mainly compensated for in kind, for it was held that to pay meant that one had not been truly assisted. Cattle and food would be used to compensate for hired labour. By supplying labour through procreation and child care, women saved their husbands the cost of labour which would be incurred through cattle and food payments.

The Gusii women are well known for their forms of cooperative labour parties as the *egesangio*, *ekebasono* and *risaga*. These were inter-household forms of group labour by women and girls who helped one another in tasks, such as weeding, on a rotational basis. The parties were seasonally formed and dissolved after the need for them was over.

Due to the on-going subsistence production of women, the men were free to go from time to time on hunting expeditions, which were sporting and political activities rather than an economic one. Mies (1998:58) calls hunting 'an economy of risk' and argues that 'the various forms of productivity which men developed in the course of history could not have emerged if they could not have used and subordinated the various historic forms of female productivity'. It is evident, therefore, that women played a crucial role in agricultural production among the pre-colonial Gusii. Men acquired exclusive rights over female labour as well as labour of women's children through marriage and payment of bride price (KNA, DP/18/13).

That women were considered for their ability to supply labour is understood when examining how important women's fertility was held and vice versa for a woman's infertility. Women who lacked the ability to conceive and procreate were allowed to marry another wife who would then beget children for her (KNA, DP/18/13). This underscores the importance of Gusii women in supplying, taking care (upbringing) and nourishing human labour. A woman was also respected when, apart from her childbearing capacities, she was strong, capable, energetic, entrepreneurial and a good manager of her household (LeVine 1966). Despite so called subordination to men, women traditionally had essential, semi-autonomous roles as producers and distributors of goods. While men were in control of women, they were also dependent on women for their personal wealth (wives, children, cattle and land); for respect,

honour and esteem from others; and (by marriage) for peaceful relations with potential enemies from other clans.

Women not only supplied human labour through procreation but they also recreated it. Recreation is the process by which labour is made more productive. In the capital-intensive industrial sector, machines need repair maintenance and replacement in order to assure productivity. In the labour-intensive traditional Gusii economy, human beings need recreational services. Gusii women provided recreational services in various ways. They offered sexual nourishment to male labour, prepared food for them and brewed beer with which male labour refreshed themselves. Stichter (1982) observes that it is Abagusii women who have been primarily responsible for food production, household management and the nurture of children. By doing this, Gusii women ensured that human labour was well nourished and, consequently productive.

Human labour was very much upheld among the Abagusii to the extent that any act which deprived the society of its labour was heavily punished. There are two ways through which the Gusii society could be deprived of labour. One was through abortion and the other was through murder. For example, depriving Gusii society of its labour through murder, out of malice aforethought, by a close relative was heavily punished in pre-colonial Gusii society. In such cases, the murderer was made to pay “four head of cattle and two goats but if the deceased belonged to a clan which was by law intermarrying with his clan, he was ordered to pay twelve head of cattle or any amount which was considered enough to cover the bride-price, or offer a girl for marriage by the relative of the deceased” (KNA, DP/18/13). This kind of punishment was intended to enable the reinstatement of labour, as it afforded the offended party with enough wealth with which to marry or procreate (supply labour).

Abortion, which denoted the deprivation of future labour, was also heavily punished. Procuring an abortion in Gusii society was proscribed. Abortion was not liable to punishment if it was self-administered. However, the girl who administered abortion to herself was made unpopular in society. However, if for whatever reasons, a girl resorted to another person to do it for her, and if that person agreed to do it for her, he/she was severely reprimanded. Such a girl was normally married to a destitute or old man only (KNA, DP/18/13). Having looked at who the Gusii people are and how they came to settle in their present location, the next section examines the participation of women in enhancing traditional economy of the Abagusii people before 1915.

2.4 Participation of Gusii Women in Precolonial Economy

The Gusii traditional economy comprised of various economic activities in which both men and women participated. This section examines, on a case by case basis, the participation of women in Gusii traditional economy. The next section examines the participation of Gusii women in agriculture.

2.4.1 Participation of Gusii Women in Agriculture

Agriculture is among the most important forms of economic engagements in pre-colonial Kenya. It engaged the services of the larger proportion of the working populace, and constituted a major thrust on which the economy of most of the pre-colonial Kenyan communities was based. Apart from farming to raise food and cash crops as well as vegetables for domestic use and exchange, agriculture also involved livestock production, animal husbandry, and manure production, among others. In assessing the impact of coffee production on Abagusii women in western Kenya, Omwoyo (2008) notes that:

The pre-colonial Gusii were mixed farmers, herding animals such as cattle, sheep and goats, as well as cultivating crops such as *wimbi* (finger millet) maize, *mtama* (sorghum), pumpkins, sweet potatoes and cassava.

Most of the agricultural practices in pre-colonial Gusiiland were conducted with the involvement of the women folk as noted that:

Women played a crucial role in the agricultural process. For example, land that was the fundamental resources for crop cultivation and animal production was designated into different uses with women in mind. The arable land was basically divided into three main parts. The first was land on which a family homestead was located and on which the wife, or wives) the Abagusii being largely polygamous) carried out farming. The second was the land the patriarch cultivated for his private use or as security in case of food shortage. This, too, was divided out for each wife, although the produce was considered the patriarch's. The third portion, consisting of all the remaining land, was communal and belonged to the clan. Women could gather fruits, firewood, vegetables and medicinal plants here as they wished. (Omwoyo, 2008;160).

The Gusii women participated in specific aspects of agricultural production such as land preparation, planting; crop tending, harvesting, and farm produce marketing. In the preparation of land Omwoyo (2008) further notes that the Gusii women:

....did the digging in two stages: first, just tilling or breaking the ground and, second, pulverisation, involving the collection of all vegetative matter, which was then heaped in moulds called *amatuta*. The sowing of *wimbi* and planting of many food crops was the preserve of women. Women and their dependants largely did the weeding and harvesting of *wimbi* and other crops. In all these processes, women exhibited a mastery of agricultural knowledge, including identifying fertile areas to be cultivated, selecting good seeds for sowing and inter-cropping to minimize labour and maximize output. Their expertise even extended to designing ideal storage devices that minimized wastage and loss through rotting or exposure to moisture, pest infestation or attack from animals.

Women cultivated varieties of crops such as vegetables, pepper and tomatoes all-year round.

They also planted a kind of vegetable known as *risosa*. From these vegetables they got gourds known as *ebirandi* or *amakuri* for storing milk (Samwel, O 16/04/2015).

Cultivating a variety of crops was meant to increase the level of survivability since “for a long time agricultural production in Kenya was extremely precarious and experimental and was heavily supplemented by hunting, fishing and gathering” (Ogonda and Ochieng’, 1992:14). Crop failure called upon communities to study, understand and accumulate vast ecological knowledge. Gusii women were very instrumental in this arena. Thus, Ogonda and Ochieng’ observe that “Kenya cultivators experimented with crops under their control in their environment and sought to produce as many [crops varieties] as possible. Farmers had to sow a great variety of crops with a great variety of characteristics in order to survive, no matter what the climatic variations, so that they could not be wiped out”. Crop experimentation and acquiring ecological knowledge was essential to the Gusii considering that the community had been threatened with starvation following crop failures.

In western Kenya the Gusii, when they entered the southern highland of Kenya in the middle of the eighteenth century from the plains around Winam Gulf, were faced with instant crop failure which led to famine and massive death. They were forced to de-emphasize several varieties of sorghum and other lowland crops and to expand the production of finger-millet and root crops that did well in their new environment (Ogonda and Ochieng’ 1992:14).

Women acquired a lot of agricultural knowledge which they utilized in agricultural production. This is owing to the fact that it is women who participated most in agriculture. Women and Gusii women in particular, were essential in agricultural experimentation and had a better understanding of ecological knowledge required for agricultural productivity because, as Ogonda and Ochieng’ (1992:14) have observed:

...there was a great deal of under-utilized male labour time among older married males who, in most Kenyan societies, left most agricultural work to women.

By providing the labour requirements in certain areas of agricultural production, and through direct participation in such practices that were peculiar to production relations within the agricultural sector as already identified, the women folk contributed to the growth of indigenous crop production process, and thus became quite important to the agricultural industry in pre-colonial economy (Raji, 1998).

The participation of Gusii women in the agricultural sector seems to mimic the role that women in other communities played. In Nigeria, for example, it has been documented that the Igbo women performed the task of crop cultivation, harvesting of crops and transportation of farm produce. The *Gbagi* women of the middle belt were mainly responsible for the transportation of farm produce. In the Jukun, Tiv and Idoma areas, women were involved in weeding and harvesting of crops. Among other Nigerian communities, women performed tasks which were performed by men. Among the *Katab* people of Southern Zaire, for example, women played important roles in land clearing (Greene and Ryan, 1975 and Bonat 1981).

Labour to work the family land was provided by all members of the family or household. However, women played the most important role of providing labour on family farms. As pointed out earlier, Gusii women contributed to the sowing, weeding and harvesting of crops. However, as pointed out elsewhere, when the labour to work on the household (family) farms became insufficient, women resorted to the cooperative working groups variously known as *egesangio* in Gusii, *gayya* in Hausaland, *Owe* and *aaro* in Western Nigeria and *egbe* in Nupeland.

It is not just the Gusii women who played an important role in agriculture. Women participation in agriculture has been documented in other parts of Africa. In the Middle belt of Nigeria, for example, women reared goats, sheep, and cows and therefore played an important role in livestock production. Similarly, in Eastern Nigeria, women in Ake-eze monopolized fishing in the Ake-Eze River located in Afikpo. Again, in the Benue and Katsina-Ala areas, both men and women participated in fishing activities (Hamman, 1983; Gbande, 1982).

We cannot round-up this section without making some observations. Generally, Gusii women were not allowed to own land even though they participated heavily in land-related economic activities. Women's rights to land were basically usufructuary. This prevented women from being a properties class and rendered them powerless in society. However, even though livestock keeping was considered a male domain in the Gusii society, Omwoyo (2008: 168) observes that there were some "enterprising women among the Gusii, who acquired livestock of their own besides what was apportioned to them by the head of the homestead". They could be able to buy cattle by selling their farm produce. According to (Keremensia, O.I., 14/4/2015) from the funds she sold finger millet, she bought cows which enabled her to marry a woman who had children because she was childless.

2.4.2 Participation of Gusii Women in Iron Industry

The Gusii have a long history of iron working. Even though it is not possible to state when this industry began in Gusiiland, old Gusii men estimate that iron working may have started in Gusiiland since the time of Mogusii. As a result, Ochieng' (1974) states that iron working may have existed in Gusiiland since the 16th Century especially at the Sironga valley. Wandiba (1992:18) has underscored that craft and manufacturing industries were "important economic pursuits in the lives of many

nineteenth-century communities [the Gusii included] in Kenya.” Such industries produced goods which were vital to society, supplementing and complementing agricultural and pastoral activities. Some of the products made from iron industry were more important than others. The most utilitarian or more useful products were those that supported pastoralism, farming, warfare, hunting and initiation rites.

Less important items included those generally grouped as ornaments which included chains of various sizes, rings and coiled ornaments worn about the ankles (*ebitinge*) and wrists (*omootoro*), different types of knives such as *ekoyo* (A special type of knife that was used to shape stools known as *ebiteni*, that men could sit on in the sitting room) and *esarangenyi* (a special type of knife that was used to cut meat). There were other knives that could be used by the circumcisers to circumcise boys and girls. In this category can also be included knee and ankle bells worn during dances (Rioba, J 15/04/2015).

Some of the iron items had cultural significance other than just serving as items of beautification. For example, according to Kemunto (O.I., 20/04/2015), a married man usually gave his wife a special bracelet (known as *ebitinge* in Gusii language). If they divorced, the man was required to cut the *ebitinge* using a special type of spear called *endobo*. He did not need actually to cut them, so long as he struck the spear on one of them, the symbolic striking meant that after the act the women may cut them herself and from that moment of striking, she no longer belonged to the husband. It was a taboo for a woman to cut these ankle bracelets herself privately without her husband's agreement. After this process, the bride price of the husband was repaid fully and all the children, if any, were declared to belong to the husband (KNA, DP/18/13)

Utilitarian artefacts included weapons and agricultural implements. Weapons made from iron smelting included spear blades, arrow-heads and swords. Agricultural

implements included hoes, bill-hooks, sickles, digging knives such as those used by the Kikuyu and Akamba, harvesting knives and axes. Other utilitarian implements included razors used for shaving hair, circumciser's razors used by women in the operation of clitoridectomy, bleeding arrows, tweezers for pulling out facial and pubic hair, crow-bars for breaking up hard surfaces and bells for livestock. The Gusii made a number of iron items which included axes, spears, razors and arrows.

Iron items, in Gusiiland, were manufactured mainly in Kitutu and North Mugirango. The iron was got from a special type of soil which was found along river beds. In North Mugirango, it was got from a place known as Monga and Sironga. According to (Rioba, J 15/04/2015)), this soil could then be heated to form iron which in gusii was known as *ribiria*. *Ribiria* could then be shaped to different desired products. This type of iron could also be used in shelling maize and finger millet. Shelling was mainly done by women. This type of soil was dug out by men who knew it and the women could help them in carrying it home. The men that were specialised in the manufacture of iron or Iron Smithing were known as *Abaturi*.

Iron Smiths were professional craftsmen who kept their speciality entirely to themselves. It was a hereditary occupation. The smelting of iron ore was an easy job, done usually by the young men of the lineage who underwent a sort apprenticeship course. The iron smiths, like traditional medicine men, were highly respected and wealthy, (Ogot, 1976).

Those people that didn't have the skill of iron working could purchase the iron products from *Abaturi* by use of the barter method of trade where they exchanged with hens or goats. Some men could get those iron products in large scale from their family kin that knew how to make them and sell them to other people (Kerubo, O.I., 12/04/2015). Other areas, in Gusiiland, known for iron workings are Bassi, South

Mugirango and Majoge. North Mugirango was known for the production of ornaments which included the leg-rings (known in Gusii language as *ebitinge*), arm-rings (known in Gusii language as *omootoro*) and earrings (Ochieng' 1974)

Iron objects were very important to both pastoralists (who needed iron weapons to accumulate and protect their livestock) and agriculturalists that needed iron implements for clearing and tilling their farms as well as harvesting their products.

Ochieng' (1992:40) has observed that:

Occupying the more geographically favoured regions, and equipped with iron technology, the Gusii and Luhya practiced extensive cultivation, in contrast to their Nilotic Luo, Nandi, Kipsigis and Maasai neighbours who led a more pastoral life.

The Gusii needed iron items for various reasons, two of which are worth mentioning. Upon settlement in their current locations, the Gusii found themselves surrounded by warlike ethnic communities namely the Maasai, Kalenjin and Luo. Indeed, it is recorded that the Gusii were a threatened lot. These communities would not allow the Gusii to own cattle. Thus, the Gusii needed iron weapons to protect themselves against their neighbours and sometimes to raid them also. The Gusii did not just lose their livestock to their neighbours because they also engaged in cattle thefts from them. In this regard, war weapons were important to young Gusii men who needed them to raid other communities for cattle and also protect their community against enemy attacks (Kebaso, O.I., 24/04/2015). It has to be remembered, also, that Gusii men went into hunting expeditions and these weapons were needed. Iron implements were also required by women in the area of farming because it is Gusii women who mostly did farm work.

The technology applied in iron industry, according to Wandiba (1992:18), "was probably the most complex of the industries of the time" and because of this "not all

communities were involved in the smelting of iron and the subsequent forging of the tools. Even among the communities which engaged in iron smelting, this trade was restricted to certain families or clans. In some instances, iron smelting was associated with magico-religious powers whereas in certain areas, it was just regarded as an ordinary work. Smiths were regarded with high esteem in certain communities while in others, they were despised. Among the Maasai, Samburu and Kikuyu, smiths were condemned into a caste status and “were not allowed to marry outside the caste” while in other communities such as the “Luhya, Gusii and Luo” smiths were “highly respected for their skills and apparent riches and were thus allowed to intermarry freely with any section of the community”.

It can easily be argued that iron industry was a male domain since only men had the techniques required in this sector. Wandiba (1992:20) notes that both smelting and forging required special skills which had to be learnt. This was done through apprenticeship, and very often the skills were passed on from father to son”. Most sectors which required complex skills have over the years been dominated by men, even in contemporary times. However, it must also be remembered that iron industry was a labour intensive undertaking. A lot of labour was required in the first stage which comprised of acquisition and transport of raw materials from iron was smelted. Iron ore, the raw materials from which iron was smelted came from sand or marram. Iron-ore bearing sand was derived from decomposed granite and was mined from the bed of some perennial streams. Iron ore, after being obtained, was sieved to separate the grains of iron from the sediment. This was mainly done at the quarry site. Gusii women participated in iron industry by providing the much needed labour. More particularly Gusii women provided labour in the acquisition and transport of raw

materials needed to smelt iron (Wandiba, 1992). Silberschmidt (1999) has underscored the participation of Gusii women in iron industry as stated below:

It had been discovered by the Gusii, in the 18th century, that iron could be obtained by heating a certain kind of soil. Many men were busily involved in the handling of iron and many worked as blacksmiths manufacturing agricultural tools such as farm implements, weapons of warfare (spears and arrow heads), and beauty products such as ankle rings for married men. The digging of this kind of soil was hard labour. Holes to a depth of 10 feet had to be dug in order to find the right kind of soil. Women participated in the sense that they filled their baskets with the 'iron soil' brought it back home where it was their job to dry the soil and remove unwanted particles (Silberschmidt 1999:36).

It is the second stage in which Gusii women provided less participation. It would seem that this was deliberate as men feared that women would acquire the technology and use it against men. Iron smelting was done in a furnace which was located in a smithy. The smithy was a shelter, usually with a grass thatched roof but no walls. While in some societies the smithy was located close to the smith's house, in others it was located away as it was considered ritually impure (Ibid). The blacksmithing industry was an important indigenous industry that engaged the services of different segments of the society and which contributed to the growth of the pre-colonial economy.

2.4.3 Gusii Women Traders at the Eve of Colonialism

It is evident that one of the most lucrative economic activities that engaged the attention of the women folk in pre-colonial Gusiiland was trading. This was also one of the important forms of economic activities of the women in ethnic communities neighbouring the Gusii. Trading has remained the main occupation for the women folk in every part of contemporary Kenya. The specific forms of trading practiced by the Gusii women included the long distance trading, short distance trading, domestic trading, wholesale and retail trading and hawking. The articles of trade were household goods, farm produce, jewellerys, implements and other products of the

blacksmithing industry, craft works, oil, soapstone, fish and vegetables. The Luo and the Gusii, between 1870 and 1900, fixed markets where all groups exchanged the products of different environments (Wright, 1975:184).

Trade in pre-colonial period was necessitated by production of economic surplus. Since the Gusii women exported a lot of grain to Luo land, it can be argued that Gusii women produced more of what they were able to export. Indeed, grain constituted the most important item of trade for the Gusii people. Those who were involved in the production of grain were women (Ochieng' 1974). Likewise, those who transported grain to Luo land to exchange it with Luo-produced items were women and children.

Gusiiland is blessed with fertile soils and reliable rainfall which supported cultivation of variety of crops. Ecological differences between the areas inhabited by the Luo and the Gusii made trade possible because the two ecologies enabled the production of different items which would be traded. Ochieng' (1992:40), for example, notes that "the stark contrast between the drier and low-lying plains and the lake land economies of the Maasai and Luo and those of the highland Gusii and Luhyia structured western Kenya's regional exchange, with active trade of foodstuffs, livestock and livestock products crossing and re-crossing these ecological divides.

Ecological conditions in Gusii highlands "ensured high yields of Sorghum, millet, vegetables and bananas" (Ochieng' 1974:180)". In order to get meat, the Gusii turned to hunting, fowl-keeping and raiding their neighbours for livestock. If they were not raiding, the Gusii would trade with their neighbouring Luo to get livestock. Thus, ecological differences between the Luo and the Gusii prompted trade, (Ochieng' 1974).

Ecologically, the Gusii and the Luo depended on each other for a number of reasons. The Luo people lived in a relatively drier country than that of the Gusii. Their country favoured extensive pastoralism, while the wet and fertile Gusii highlands favoured extensive cultivation. Although the Luo were also cultivators, very often their country was hit by droughts and prolonged famines, particularly Nyakach and Kano. During periods of hardships, the Luo heavily depended on the Gusii for grain-finger-millet. The Gusii were periodically referred to as the 'granary' of the Luo (Ochieng' 1974).

In concluding this section emphasis is laid on the fact that grain and iron were the main commodities which the Gusii exported to Luo land. These items were exchanged for a variety of items, the main one being livestock.

Livestock was a very important currency with which the Gusii paid many things including dowry and fines. If a married woman was found to be guilty of committing adultery, her father paid one head of cattle and one goat to her husband. The goat was used for cleansing (KNA, DP/18/13). Livestock was also used in many rituals among the Gusii (KNA, DC/KSI/18/13; KNA, DP/18/11)). For this reason, and bearing in mind that the Gusii had lost most of their livestock when they settled in their present highlands to raids of the Maasai and Kipsigis, the Gusii always insisted to exchange their products with livestock (Ochieng' 1974:214). Another area where livestock was useful among the Gusii was in the realm of traditional religion. Rituals were often performed to mend and harmonize the relationship between the people and their god who was known in Gusii language as *Engoro*. Ochieng' (1974:186) states that "the ancestor spirits [God's intermediaries] were to be appeased in order that they might not bother the living members of the lineage".

Apart from exchanging their items for livestock, the Gusii also depended on the Luo for cattle-salt, hides, ghee, milk, fish, pots, drums, baskets, beautifully decorated

headdresses of different types, particularly those made from feathers or fur which Gusii harpists or lyrics wore during performances (Ochieng' 1974). It has been observed that "pots in particular, continued to be the largest commodity which the Luo exported to Gusiiland, even during the colonial times". This trade still flourishes in places such as Manga, Rongo, Suneka, Nyamira, Nyakoe, keroka, Riana and Oyugis (Ochieng' 1974:215).

The fact that the Luo imported iron works from the Gusii does not mean that the former (Luo) were not iron workers. Indeed, the Luo were iron workers except that, as Ochieng' (1974) has observed, they practiced the industry on small scale. Iron working was practiced mostly among the Luo called *Walowa (Waturi)* who did not meet the great demand sufficiently. As we set out to demonstrate in this chapter, Gusii women traded with their neighbouring Luo (Ochieng' 1970). Gusii ironware was very expensive and this made those who worked iron to be very rich. Gusii iron workers were, however, displaced with the arrival of Europeans who, together with Asian traders, introduced cheap implements. The Europeans also threatened to cut the fingers of any man who was found manufacturing iron among the Gusii (Marasi, O.I., 23/04/2015).

Subsequently, many of them stopped manufacturing the iron for fear of losing their fingers. Ochieng' (1974:215) has alluded to the participation of Gusii and Luo women in long distance trade that linked Gusii and Luo in trade network.

It was women and children of both tribes who largely handled it, especially during periods of hostilities. Gusii women and children would carry all manner of merchandise deep into Luoland. Similarly, Luo women and children, from Kabondo, Nyakach, Gem or Kamagambo, would travel deep into Gusiiland and no harm would befall them. Men were never keen on travelling outside their clan areas, although there are a number of elders who allege that during their youth- before the Europeans arrived in Gusiiland- they travelled

with their fathers to locations like Kanyama, karugu, Kochia or Karachuonyo, deep in Luoland.

One would expect that trade between the Luo and the Gusii exposed the women into some danger of attacks while on the journey to and from their locations. Ochieng' (1974) has observed that "in the early years of twentieth century the Kitutu again attacked the Mukusero on the pretext that the later were in the habit of attacking Kitutu women folk who traded in Luoland" (See also, Maxon, 1989).

According to Moraa (O.I., 22/05/2015), Gusii women in Nyamira County got pots (*esiongo*) from the Luo which was used to store water and traditional beer. They also got baskets, ropes, fish and mats (*amachambe*) which they could use in airing grains. Gusii women took the farm products to the Luo and in return could get pots, baskets and fish. The men exchanged goats and hens for ropes and mats (*amachambe*) from the Luo. The ropes could be used to tie cows especially when milking and measuring land one could dig or harvest, during the times when people used work parties to do farming.

Human trafficking was also a lucrative trade among the Gusii, Luo and Kipsigis. Among the things that necessitated this trade included; famine and barrenness. Among the Gusii, a woman that was not able to give birth was despised. The same case applied to a woman who had only given birth to daughters. Such kind of situations forced these women to buy children to save themselves from this kind of disgrace. These kinds of women worked hard to get enough finger millet with which to buy children. A baby boy was equivalent to a basketful (*omonyoncho*) of finger millet. The success of this trade relied on the fact that there were women who had many children but did not have enough food for them. There were times when parents

could marry off their younger daughters in exchange for food (Nyanchera, O.I., 10/04/2015).

In times of famine such as the year 1889 famine led to mass selling of children for food. In the year 1888, Gusiiland was invaded by a huge swarm of locusts which thoroughly devastated green crops that were still in the field. The following year there was unprecedented drought. It is said that the country was so dry that hundreds of wild animals particularly elephants, roamed all over Gusii land in search of water. Because the previous year had been destroyed by locusts, the year 1889 saw a terrible famine, generally remembered as the famine of *Amakongiro*. So terrible was the famine that people were reduced to eating green leaves of any tree that they could lay their hands on. In the same year, an epidemic was experienced, in Nyamira County, which killed large herds of cattle. Many Gusii mothers are said to have sold their children to the Kipsigis and Luo to ensure that they lived (Ochieng, 1975).

Trade in pre-colonial era was undertaken on small scale. This was because communities lacked the capacity to produce surpluses on large scale. Factors which inhibited production of agricultural surplus are many. Firstly, communal land tenure system could not allow a man to develop or invest in land over a long period of time. Secondly, the quality of labour in those days differed from the contemporary times where many hours are put in farming and industrial activities. Thirdly, there was backwardness of technology since iron or wooden hoe was the major implement of land tillage. Finally, there was lack of infrastructure to support trade and commerce on large scale (Ogonda and Ochieng' 1992).

Apart from agricultural products, the Gusii also made hoes and other iron implement which they sold to the Luo. We have examined in some detail the iron working

industry among the Gusii in which we demonstrated that Gusii women participated by offering the much-needed labour for acquiring and transporting the raw materials used in making of iron items.

2.4.4 Participation of Gusii women in traditional medicine

Traditional medicine played a very important role in the health sector among the Gusii in pre-colonial period. Apart from medicine men and medicine women, the Gusii also had traditional birth attendants who helped women in child delivery. Women who participated in these sectors were paid in kind. The medicine men and medicine women had some specialities. There were those who could heal people who had been bewitched. Such were many and were known as (*Abanyamesira*). These people were known to have supernatural powers which could enable them to know who bewitched who, how that person was bewitched and what could be done to reverse that process (Bochaberi, T 1/04/2015). This group of people was highly respected and could be given gifts especially finger millet in return for their services. The (*Abanyamesira*), included both men and women.

There was another group of women who were specialists in giving medicine to young children and others suffering from common diseases such as malaria, sexually transmitted infections among others. It was believed that in order for the drugs of these women, to help someone to recover, one had to pay for the services. If someone did the contrary, that person could not recover from his/her illness even if one took the drugs. These women could also cure children who had been bewitched by being looked at by bad eyes (*ebibiriria*). In this case, there were people who had some supernatural powers which could enable them to put the things surrounding a person into his or her body by just looking at that person. This problem (*ebibiriria*) could only be treated by these women by washing the child using special herbs.

2.4.5 Gusii Women and Female Circumcision

Female circumcision was practiced in pre-colonial era as a rite of passage for women. Elderly women who effected the female cut were also paid in kind. The skill of clitoridectomy was passed from grandmother to granddaughter. Circumcision among the Gusii was a culture that was taken with high regard. A girl who had not gone through the cut was ridiculed by her mates and could be taken as a prostitute. Such kind of girls could be threatened with not getting married if they were not circumcised. The shame of being ridiculed and the thought of not getting married in future made many of them go through the cut. This stage was also very important, because it was during this time when a young woman could be taught her roles as a woman especially when she got married. This rite of passage was therefore, of great importance among the Gusii and was celebrated with songs, dance and a lot of festivities. A woman especially from the Luo community, who did not have this kind of practice, who had been married to Gusii, was circumcised before she gave birth.

This was necessary because this kind of woman was considered a threat to other women's husbands. Given the importance of this practice, the women who performed the act were highly respected and highly appreciated for their good work. In return for their services, they were given millet, maize, bananas and other different types of food staff. When money was introduced, it was used to pay for the services. According to the Gusii culture money got from shedding blood could not be used to do any investment. During the circumcision period, which was often during the harvesting period, the girls who were to be circumcised were taken to the circumciser by their mothers, aunties and senior cousins. However, if there were daughters who were twins, the circumciser could go to circumcise them at their home. The same case

applied to a child whose mother had experienced a lot of problems in giving birth, through miscarriages (Bochaberi, T 1/04/2015).

The circumciser who often was a grandmother was required to start with her granddaughter, that is, a daughter to her son. The girls could sit on a stone from where they were circumcised and they were not expected to cry or scream. After circumcision, a girl could be secluded in a room and could be given an older girl (*omosegi*) who had been circumcised to take care of her during that period. In such a house, fire could be lit and could be kept burning till the period of seclusion was over. A special type of blade grass (*esuguta*) could also be got from the mountain and could be planted inside that hut. The circumcised girl was supposed to take care of it by ensuring that it did not dry. She was supposed to wash her hands from that blade grass before and after eating. The care given to this grass was a show of how this woman could take care of her family when she got married. Some cuts which were filled with ash were also made on her face which could be a show to everyone that she had been circumcised. After the period of seclusion was over, the girl who had been circumcised was celebrated and on that particular day she could sleep at the home of the older girl who had been taking care of her (*Omosegi*). Henceforth, this young woman could be taken as a complete woman fit for marriage (Nyaboke, O.I., 2/04/2015).

2.4.6 Women and traditional beer-brewing among the Gusii of Nyamira County

Beer brewing was also done in many parts of the country by Gusii women. Beer was important in refreshing men (Silberschmidt 1999) in which case it can be argued that it was useful in recreating male labour as we have discussed in the preceding section of this chapter.

Beer drinking also accompanied some of the Gusii rituals. Beer was used in *amaera* oath among the Gusii. This oath was used where arson was suspected and the offender unknown. The owner of the burnt house could mix some of the ashes of the burnt house with water or “*amarwa*” (native beer) and this mixture would be given, openly, to all people living adjacent to be drunk on the site of the alleged arson. Anyone who refused to participate in the oath by drinking would be regarded as the offender. Such a person would be ordered by the elders to pay for the damage (KNA, DP/18/13).

Native beer, among the Gusii, was also used in customary divorce processes. If a Gusii man wished to divorce his wife, he would ask his wife to return to her parents’ home. Then sometime later the parents of the wife brewed beer to which the husband was invited with a few relatives. While in the feast both the husband and the wife stated their grounds for divorce (KNA, DP/18/13).

This beer was also very important in marriage. It was often used in the Gusii wedding where men were brewed for by the women. Since in such kind of a party, there were many people who could take the beer, the women could use the rotating work parties (*ebisangio*) to assist them to manufacture enough beer.

The process of manufacturing beer was very tedious. It involved pouring water on the finger millet in order to make it grow (*ememera*) and then drying it for several days. This finger millet that had grown and dried (*ememera*) was threshed using a stone or *ekige*, (a kind of basket that was made by men using long sticks and could be smeared with cow dung by women) to make flour. The flour got from the finger millet was mixed with water inside a hole that had been dug and covered with banana leaves. The mixture was then covered with banana leaves and logs of trees for seven days. However, before the seven days were over, they could keep mixing the mixture by use of long sticks. After seven days, the mixture was fried then mixed with water again

and stored in the house. The alcoholic smell from that beer, could inform the women that it was ready to be taken. The women could then serve the men with beer in a pot, who could share the beer from the same pot by use of *chinkore* (straws). Women were not allowed to take Beer before men (Mongina, M 2/04/2015).

Beer was also used as a sign of acceptance of a man by a woman. This was especially so to a woman who had lost her husband. After the death of a husband, the wife could be chosen for a husband by the elders. After she was through with mourning her husband, she could prepare beer which she could take to the new husband to be, as a sign that she had allowed him to come to her house (Masira, J 20/04/2015).

2.4.6 Traditional Gusii women potters

The pottery industry was as one of the dominant forms of indigenous industrial enterprises which predominantly engaged the services of the women folk during the pre-colonial period. The industry mostly produced both domestic and industrial utensils in clay forms which were usually fashioned into objects such as cooking pots, water cans, trays, storage tanks, weavers/dyers pots, and other items of various grades and sizes. The products were also used for spiritual activities by herbalists, diviners and other traditional medical practitioners.

Among the Gusii, pots were also used in rituals, involving oath taking. For example, parties in a land dispute were required to partake the *rigio* oath. *Rigio* oath involved the breaking of an old pot in a disputed land (KNA, DP/18/13). This oath was not encouraged but only used in airtight situations. If the aggrieved party felt that he had some substantial rights in the land in dispute which the elders awarded to the other party, then such an aggrieved party could, if he considered the situation desperate, take the *rigio* oath. The land on which the *rigio* oath had been taken was considered cursed and neither parties nor their close relatives could cultivate it. Only a person

from a different clan who was not related to the disputants could cultivate it (Nyaboke, M 1/04/2015).

Even though the Gusii women bought most pots from the Luo, they made some of the pots to supplement those that were got from the Luo. In most communities, including among the Gusii people, the pottery industry remained dominant during and after the colonial period (Awero, S 2011). The major raw material used for production in Gusii pottery industry was clay which was of various varieties. In Gusiiland, pots were made from clay derived from soapstone (Ocheing' 1974) or from the river. However, this was not done on large scale as was done among the Luo. Production, thus, would not satisfy the demand. It is for this reason that the Gusii imported pots from Luoland as we have examined in the preceding section of this chapter. In West Africa, the pottery industry provided gainful employment for several groups of women and was a source of revenue for the emirate's treasury during the 19th century. The demand for products of the Ilorin pottery industry was high in the pre-colonial period as the industry received patronage from customers who engaged in commercial relations at the different markets.

It would seem that pottery was a women's domain. Even among most Nigerian communities, pottery was mainly done by women. For example, pottery was done mainly by professional women potters known as Ba-zimi in Wukari (Hamman, 1983). Similarly, women were the main potters in the Gwari speaking area (Hassan and Naibi, 1952), in the plateau area, Kano and in Ojaba in Western Nigeria (Falola, 1984).

2.4.7 Gusii Women and Basketry

Apart from farming the women used to weave a special type of basket that was known as *ekee* in singular and *ebiee* in plural. *Ekee* was used to serve ugali especially in ceremonies such as weddings. *Ekee* was made from wimbi stalks. These stalks could be soaked and then used to make the *ekee* and they also used a special type of plant known as *orosore*. Those women that knew how to make this type of baskets could sell them to those people who didn't know how to make them by the use of the barter method (Bosibori, J. O. I 05/05/2015)

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

The foregoing has clearly shown that the process of traditional economic relations among the Gusii people during the pre-colonial period was coordinated by both male and female folks who were fully committed to the development of the traditional society. Women folk in pre-colonial Gusiiland engaged themselves in a wide range of social and economic activities that proved vital to the survival of the Gusii society. Some notable economic activities that engaged the attention of women in pre-colonial included the local and long distance commercial network, weaving and dyeing, bead making and jewelleries', agriculture, craft works, food processing, pottery and livestock production, among others.

CHAPTER THREE:
ENGAGEMENT OF GUSII WOMEN IN THE COLONIAL
ECONOMY IN NYAMIRA COUNTY 1901-1945.

3.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, we have examined the participation of women in the indigenous economy of the Gusii people before the advent of colonialism. The establishment of colonial rule in Gusii, however, led to social, economic and political changes which transformed Gusii pre-colonial economy. This chapter examines the engagement of Gusii women in the colonial economy in Nyamira County between 1900 and 1945. We should, however, take note of the fact that the establishment of colonial administration in Kenya introduced the colonial capitalist mode of production, but it did not completely erase the participation of women in the pre-capitalist economic set-up (Maxon, 1992).

Thus, Gusii women of Nyamira came to participate in a dual economy comprising of pre-capitalism and colonial capitalism. Gusii women of Nyamira County participated more in the pre-capitalist mode of production because the colonial state encouraged male labour supply in European capitalist ventures. Gusii men were recruited to work on government projects such as road and bridge construction. In addition, most of them were contracted to work on European-owned farms (Maxon, 1989). Some of them were employed to work as chiefs, headmen (Silberschmidt, 1999) while others were employed as police officers (Foran, 1962). This chapter begins by examining the establishment of colonial rule in Nyamira County and the entire Gusiiland. It then proceeds to analyse the articulation of the Colonial Capitalist mode of production and

its consequences on gender relations of production that relegated women more intensively to the informal sector.

3.2 Establishment of Colonial Administration in Nyamira, 1900-1908

While the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya began in earnest in 1895 (Foran, 1962), it was not until 1902 that proper presence of colonial rule in Nyamira was experienced. The Mukseru clan of the Gusii people had made attempts to invite colonial rule in Gusiiland earlier on but this came to fruition in 1902 (Maxon, 1989). Leaders from the Mukseru sub-clan approached the British administrators at Kisumu asking for security assistance because the sub-clan was living under threats and attacks from another Gusii clan called Kitutu (Onduru, 2009).

The Mukseru, who lived on the western border of Kitutu in Nyamira County, had experienced heavy pressure from their more powerful neighbours (the Kitutu). The Kitutu had carried out these attacks “on the pretext that the Mukseru had been in the habit of attacking Kitutu women who traded in luoland” (Maxon 1989:17). As a coping strategy, the Mukseru had scattered among the Luo and other Gusii clans with the danger of losing their clan territory. Initial attempts to woo the colonial government into Gusiiland began in November 1900 when a Gusii man called Ombati, Muskeru’s prominent man, led a delegation to Kisumu to ask for military intervention (Maxon 1989). However, it was not until 1902 that the British help which the Mukeru sought materialized in 1902, the year when the Eastern Province of Uganda was transferred to Kenya (Onduru, 2009). The effect of this transfer was closer administration of South Nyanza, including the area known as Nyamira County.

The transfer of the Eastern Boundary of Uganda into Kenya led to rapid opening up of government stations not just among the Gusii of South Nyanza District but also in the

neighbouring regions. An administration station was opened up in Kericho in May 1902, among the Kispigis who were neighbours of the Gusii. Another station was opened in Karungu on the Lake Victoria shore in early 1903 (Onduru, 2009). Administrative officers from these stations began visiting Gusiiland. The Gusii reacted differently to early colonial penetration into their area. While, in 1904, for example, Mr. H.B. Pantington, an officer in charge of the Kericho station visited Gusiiland and was well received, another officer, Mr. F.W. Isaac was not well received when he visited the Kitutu area of Gusiiland in 1905 (Maxon, 1989).

Apart from safeguarding the Mukseru against Kitutu attacks, the British government was also determined to safeguard friendly communities such as the Luo against attacks from the Gusii and this was the basis of sustained attempts of the British to bring the Gusii under colonial control (Maxon 1989:19). The administrative station at Karungu came to play an important role in the pacification of the Gusii who had been in the habit of attacking the Luo. Mr. G.A.S. Northcote, who had been stationed at Karungu as the District Commissioner, organized activities to pacify the Gusii from the Kitutu section. In 1905, a troop of soldiers was dispatched to Gusiiland after it came to the attention of government that the Gusii had stolen stock and killed a man in Luoland (Maxon 1989).

On entering Gusiiland, the patrol spent six days collecting fines from the various areas of Gusiiland. Public meetings were held in which the government officers discussed with local elders about payment of fines (Maxon 1989). While fines were obtained with ease in certain areas, it was not easily forthcoming in others. Force was, thus, used in some instances to obtain the fines. Following the resistance which some sections of the Gusii put up during this expedition, it was felt wise to establish an administrative station in Gusiiland.

As a result, Northcote and R.W. Hemsted, District Commissioners of the Ugaya District (under which Gusiiland was administered) chose a site in Gusiiland in 1907 (Munge *et al.* 2016). The site was known to the Gusii as Getembe and lay close to the lands inhabited by the Nyaribari, the Wanjare and the Kitutu (Munge *et al.*, 2016). Apart from its centrality to the Gusii people, it was also supplied with water from two streams. The establishment of a government station at Kisii town brought the Gusii of Nyamira under close colonial administration (Mune *et al.*, 2016; Maxon, 1989). The establishment of the colonial administration in the heartland of the Gusii people introduced profound economic changes with which the Gusii women of Nyamira began to engage.

One of the changes occurred in the area of commerce whereby local Gusii men and women began selling their grain to foreigners who established themselves in the emerging administrative centres (Munge *et al.* 2016). These changes were capitalist in nature and were grafted onto pre-capitalist modes of production which the Gusii women had been accustomed to before the establishment of the colonial administration. By 1908, the colonial government had established the administrative machinery in the heartland of Gusii people. What followed were political and socio-economic changes which impacted on the women's engagement with the colonial economy. We first begin by examining the immediate impact of the introduction of colonial administration on Gusii women in Nyamira County.

3.2.1 Immediate Impact of the establishment of colonial administration in Nyamira County on Gusii women (1907-1908)

The establishment of colonial administration in Nyamira County helped Gusii women to trade with the Luo on a more enlarged scale because a moment of peace was

established. Before the establishment of colonial administration in the heartland of Gusiiland, clans and ethnic communities were embroiled in incessant wars between and amongst each other (Ochieng', 1974). For example, men from the Kitutu clan of the Gusii people were in the habit of attacking the Mukseru clan "on the pretext that the latter were in the habit of attacking Kitutu womenfolk who traded in Luoland" (Maxon, 1989).

Gusii women traders were victims of inter-clan and inter-ethnic conflicts and wars as most of them were attacked while on their trading sprees. Thus, the establishment of colonial administration in the heartland of Gusiiland came to provide some security and peace which enabled Gusii women to build strong trading ties with their neighbouring communities. The Mukseru were the happiest of the Gusii section to the establishment of colonial administration in Gusiiland as this provided them with the protection they needed (Maxon, 1989).

Establishment of colonial administration in Gusiiland also encouraged non-Gusii people to come and settle in Nyamira County. Most of them settled around government administrative centres which were better secured by police. These people were the target of attacks from locals in the initial years of colonial rule. In 1907 for example, two policemen, an Indian trader and Luo porters were killed as they were associated with the colonial rule (Maxon, 1989). However, as proper colonial establishment took effect, more and more urban dwellers came to Gusiiland and these people opened up trade between themselves and Gusii women in Nyamira County (Maxon, 1989).

Thus, the establishment of colonial administration in Gusiiland provided the necessary security for traders to come into Nyamira County. Consequently, women in

Nyamira County were afforded an opportunity to trade with these aliens. Gusiiland which had hitherto been inhabited by Gusii speakers only came to accommodate other races and ethnic groups and trade flourished. Ultimately, trade opportunities expanded for the Gusii women who had only been trading with the Luo (Ocheing', 1974) before the establishment of the colonial rule. Trading networks between Gusii women of Nyamira County was extended to include, mainly, Europeans, Nubians, and Asians. Initially, non-Gusii people who settled in Gusiiland, wanted to be supplied with building materials, food and firewood (Maxon, 1989).

Apart from introducing non-Gusii people in Gusiiland, with whom Gusii women engaged economically, the colonial government also introduced other changes in Nyamira County which impacted on Gusii women. The introduction of hut and poll tax in Gusiiland, for example, had the most profound impact on how Gusii women engaged with the colonial economy. This is examined in the next section.

3.2.2 Impact of introduction of Hut and Poll Tax on Gusii women in Nyamira County

The law which introduced hut and poll tax in Kenya came into existence in 1902 (Maxon, 1992). However, effective enforcement of these laws came to fruition in Nyamira County in 1908 after the appointment of colonial Gusii chiefs (Maxon, 1989). Colonial chiefs were tasked mainly with the responsibility of collecting taxes on behalf of the colonial government. Taxes were introduced in order to force Africans to seek paid work outside their rural homes. Taxes were mainly paid in monetary terms. To get money with which to pay taxes, Gusii men were forced to seek paid employment. The migration of Gusii men in search of paid employment

left many households under the charge of women. Most of them came to perform male duties.

White settler farmers were the main beneficiaries of African labour (Maxon, 1992; Kenyanjui, 1992). From the early years of colonial establishment, many white settlers were encouraged to come and farm in Kenya. Indeed, these settlers were given land on which to farm. However, the labour which these farmers needed was not easily forthcoming. As a result, hut and poll taxes were levied in order to force men to seek paid work which would earn them money with which to pay taxes.

Colonial tax laws were enacted and amended regularly in order to ensure a steady supply of labour force on Europeans farm. There were a number of tax laws which included the East African Hut Tax Regulations of 1901 (East African Protectorate 1902), the East African Hut Tax Ordinance 1903 (East Africa Protectorate 1903), the East African Hut Tax Ordinance 1907 (East African Protectorate 1908), and the Native Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance 1910 which was also amended in 1912 (East African Protectorate 1913: 12-13). The tax laws gave African colonial chiefs a lot of enforcement powers.

By amending the 1910 hut and poll tax ordinance, the headmen and council of elders were included in this amendment as officers in charge of the districts whose responsibility was to cause a complete roll of tax payer in their respective districts, to be prepared. Every tax roll was to include (a) the name of every owner of a hut, the number of huts owned by each hut-owner, and the number of wives of each hut-owner, and (b) the name and father's name of every native liable to pay poll tax (East African Protectorate, 1913: 12-13).

In cases where tax laws failed to drive men out to work, force was used. Taxes levied on Gusii men pushed them to seek paid employment on white-own investments. According to Boyani, colonialists also introduced compulsory labor “*Okirimiti*” agreement on people to offer labour on sisal plantations at the tea estates (Boyani, O. I 23 04/ 2015). If the head of the homestead failed to pay, his cows were confiscated by the sub chief and the police (Ibid). Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012:50) note that:

The punishment against a tax defaulter was enormous and overwhelming. Africans dreaded not to pay tax. Tax evasion was very difficult because the colonialists devised a very effective system of collection and accountability. The colonialists had up-date record or statistics of adult tax payers in any community. In some communities they did the collection through the assistance of the traditional institution. Africans were also made to see taxation or tax payment as a civic responsibility to the state. The implication of this was that a defaulter was treated as a criminal and the offence committed was against the state. This intimidatory approach to taxation was strong enough to compel almost all adult African males to seek for employment in the colonial services in order to earn adequate money to pay their tax. Thus, African labour was made readily available for colonial use.

Tax laws led Gusii women in Nyamira County to lose most of their male companions and this made women to work extra hard to make ends meet. Mostly, these women worked on their farms. Gusii women did not only lose men, in some cases household property such as livestock was confiscated and these left most women with limited means of livelihood. Thus, women found themselves shaving to work hard to support their families. It was reported in 1914 that wage labour attracted “nearly 4000 men” from South Kavirondo District, Gusiiland included, who “were sent to work outside the [South Kavirondo] district during the 12 month, nearly all on long contracts, 3-6 months” (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). While it is men who were taxed by the colonial government, Gusii women in Nyamira contributed to the acquisition of money to pay the taxes through their farm labour. Most men went out of their homes to seek wage

labour on white farms and government projects such as construction of roads and bridges leaving behind their women to tend to the farms.

The men have been dispatched to all parts of the protectorate, and it is trusted they have returned or will return with minds enlarged, trained to work, and will assist in this somewhat conservative district. Many hundreds have been at work with the Public Works department all over the country, on Harbor and Water works at the coast, on fuel cutting for the railway, on irrigation works in the Maasai Reserve, on Railway building at Magadi, and a few on cotton and fibre plantations, and many have thus acquired useful training.... More work appears to have been achieved within the district in the way of road making and cultivation of land for economic products than was formerly the case (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

While many Gusii men declined to seek wage labour voluntarily, force was used through the colonial chiefs to round them up and send them away for wage labour.

Personally I have not found it a difficult matter to get the Luo, to turn out to work but with regard to the Kisii it is an entirely different matter....[due to]... the unwillingness of the elders to allow their young men to leave the district. Latterly in order to fulfil labour requisitions, force have had to be applied i.e. the young men have been rounded up during the night. Personally, though I dislike resorting to such methods, I fail to see any other course (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

According to a letter dated 29th August 1921 written by the senior labour inspector, to the principal medical officer, there were some Gusii men who were sent to work at the Magadi Soda co. As more Gusii men left Nyamira County in search for paid work, either voluntarily or by force, it is their womenfolk who were left to do farm work and other domestic duties. Wages paid to these men were not enough to cater for their household needs.

Thus, Gusii women in Nyamira had to work hard to raise the money. In addition, some women were forced to fully take the responsibilities of their absentee husbands because some of them never came back. According to a letter dated 22nd June, 1921 from the senior commissioner, Kisumu to the Principal Medical Officer, Colony and

Protectorate of Kenya, there were some Kisii men who had died from Cerebro- Spinal meningitis at Punda Millia while doing their duties. The introduction of plantation farming did not phase out subsistence farming. As the men participated in plantation farms the women continued with the subsistence farming given that they were not given an opportunity to participate in plantation farming that could enable them get wages.

3.3 Women introduced to the growing of new crops in Nyamira County.

Accompanying the establishment of colonial rule in Nyamira County was the through introduction of new crops such as groundnuts, maize and sim-sim and sophisticated farm implements such as European hoes (*jembes*) which replaced the traditional Gusii hoes. These innovations led to increased production and, consequently, increased food stock for both subsistence and sale. Food was sold for local consumption and export (Maxon, 1989).

Indeed, the Gusii stepped up production of grains. By 1913, for example, the Gusii were producing more than they could consume from their lands as noted by the District Commissioner thus:

Kisii natives have made considerable progress. The Kisii have cultivated a large amount of sim-sim and some linseed in addition to growing a quantity of native grain in excess of their own requirements. The Kavirondo while not such industrious cultivators as the Kisii, have nevertheless responded to our efforts and there is now a very much large area of land under cultivation that has never been the case the past. The natives with very few exceptions are exceedingly prosperous, partly owing to their own efforts in producing economic products and also owing to the high prices at which they can sell....than was the case a few years ago” (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

In addition, the colonial administration introduced the money economy with the aim to replacing barter trade which characterized pre-colonial Gusii economy. By 1913 the Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza Province, observed that the natives of his

native subjects, the Gusii included, were becoming accustomed to the money economy.

The pushing of trade in the districts and the consequent increase of their demand for imported goods and money, with which to buy them, will help in their evolution to a higher order of things.... There is noticeable an increasing desire to spend money. Formerly it was the universal custom to bury rupees. While this practice of hoarding rupees is certainly continued by many of the people whose ambition is to obtain sufficient money to enable them buy female stock, it is undoubtedly a fact that it is not continued in locations where trade had obtained a real hold.... The people are comparatively well to do. Large sums of money are continually circulating... (PC/NZA/1/8, 1913)

Money was introduced in order to facilitate the integration of Gusii people into the colonial and global economy much faster. The colonial administration created both the need and appetite for money among the Gusii people. Firstly, the Gusii needed money in order to pay poll and hut tax to the colonial government. Secondly, they needed money in order to buy imported products from Europe. Thirdly, they needed money to buy cattle since the practice of stealing cattle was criminalized and checked by the colonial administration through the banning of cattle villages which were called *ebiserate* (Maxon 1989; Silberschmidt 1999; Were and Nyamweya 1986). These three issues, among others, as examined in the next sections, impacted on how Gusii women of Nyamira engaged the colonial economy.

3.4 Introduction of Imported Products in Nyamira

Another aspect of the colonial economy which Gusii women engaged with, regarded imported products. The Gusii needed money in order to enable them purchase imported goods and services. By 1909, blankets, beads, and wire imported from Germany and white cloth imported from the United States of America and Bombay were already popular among Africans. Africans bought other items like hoes, slashes, sugar, salt, flour and rice (Ngesa 1996). By 1913, the Gusii had begun buying a few

imported goods such as blankets and American clothes as noted in 1913 by the District commissioner thus:

At present the natives generally speaking show little desire to utilize their savings in buying imported goods and with the exception of well-known articles such as iron-wire, beads, hoes, knives and a certain amount of american and blankets ((KNA, DC/KSI/1/2)

The Gusii women of Nyamira needed money to buy beauty products such as beads and clothes which were made available at the market centres by Indian traders. They were able to buy these imported goods by selling farm products. More importantly, Gusii women in Nyamira sold vegetables to Indians in the nearby market centres.

As early as 1910, the Asians had established businesses in Kenya. In Gusii, among the places they established their shops included; Bonyunyu and Ikonge in North Mugirango, present Nyamira County and Getembe the present Kisii Town (Nyakundi, 2015). The Asians functioned as bakers, butchers, dhobis, chemists and restaurant owners. They opened *dukas* and traded items such as salt, Jembes, sugar and clothes which became very popular among the Africans. They bought maize, vegetables, eggs and other cereals which were mainly sold to them by the women (Ibid). From the foregoing, the introduction of imported products went hand in glove with the emergence, growth and development of urban centres. Imported products were mainly sold by Asians who lived in urban centres. Urban centres acted as points of facilitating trade in Nyamira. Natives sold their farm produce at urban centres and bought imported products from Asians. Thus, urban centres integrated Gusii women into the global economy through centre-periphery relationship.

3.5 Ban on Cattle Villages

The Gusii had been accustomed to using cattle as a medium of exchange (Ocheing 1974). Cattle was used to secure goods in barter trade. Dowry was also paid in the

form of cattle. This had encouraged cattle thefts which were kept in what was called cattle villages (*ebisirate*). The colonial government introduced money in order to replace cattle as medium of exchange. By about 1913, for example, measures had been undertaken “to stop the practice of Kisii building cattle villages on their outskirts of their locations far away from tribal control. Such villages were undoubtedly utilized for hiding stolen cattle..,” (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo, District Annual Reports 1913-1923).

Cattle thefts were common between the Gusii and their neighbours (the Maasai and Kispigis). It was culturally normal for the Gusii to steal cattle from their neighbours. This practice was brought to a stop by the colonial administration through various measures. Cases of cattle rustling were solved through punitive measures. In most cases, people were made to expose cattle thieves in their midst otherwise they would be made to pay collective fines. The whole village or location would be punished collectively (Boyani, O.I., 23/04/ 2015).

The colonial government introduced harsh penalty for cattle thieves via the Stock and Native Produce Theft Ordinance No. 8 of 1913 (East African Protectorate, 1913: 11-12). According to this Ordinance, cattle theft was heavily punished. Enforcement of this legislation marked a transformation and redefinition of cattle raids among the Gusii and their neighbours. This colonial law or ordinance stated that:

Whenever any court shall convict any native of the stock or produce, the court shall, in addition to or in lieu of imposing any other punishment authorized by law, sentence the native convicted to pay a fine which shall in no case be less than ten time the value of the stock or produce in respect of which the offence has been committed (East African Protectorate, 1913: 11-12).

Punishment was not just unleashed on the individual thief. Sometimes, it was extended to the whole community. Thus, communal punishment was introduced as an

additional measure of dealing with cattle thefts. If a cattle thief was unable to pay a fine imposed upon him, his family, and sometimes his entire ethnic community, was made to pay.

Unless the amount of the fine shall be forthwith paid, issue the warrant for the levy of the amount of the fine by distress and sale of any moveable property of the offender or of the offender's family, sub-tribe or of any member of the offender's family, sub-tribe or tribe (communal punishment) Section 3&4 of the ordinance (East African Protectorate, 1913: 11-12).

Communal punishment was a foreign idea among the Gusii which was introduced by colonial law and order. In most cases punishment, whether inflicted on individual cattle thieves or community, was in monetary form. This, further, raised the demand for money among the Gusii while at the same time transforming Gusii indigenous economy. In 1914 for example, a collective punishment was awarded onto the people of Wanjari location, under chief Oyugi. The fine was in the amount of Rs.1300/- on account of stolen cattle traced to the location. The chief collected the amount in full. Kitutu Location was also subjected to collective fine of Rs. 500 following theft of a cow which was traced to the location (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). Thus, the colonial government introduced the money economy in order to discourage the use of cattle as a medium of exchange since the same had encouraged cattle thefts. The banning of ebisarate in 1912 discouraged the Gusii from stealing cattle. Thus, increasingly over time, the Gusii came to be crop farmers and less of cattle keepers. With fewer cattle to enable them transact business and day-to-day cultural activities such as marriage, the Gusii had to work hard to produce surplus crops for sale (Maxon, 1989).

The colonial administration encouraged the sale of western type goods such as European style hoes, iron buckets and bicycles on which the Gusii would spend their excess earnings from sale of farm crops. However, the demand of such products did not take root until the end of WWI (Maxon, 1989).

Whereas hut tax was meant to bring out Gusii men for paid work, by 1911, few of them were turning up for work. Those who turned up preferred to work and be paid in terms of cattle. This is because the colonial government had banned *ebisarate* in which Gusii men kept stolen cattle under guard (Silberschmidt, 1999). Cattle was the chief item which the Gusii people used as a medium of exchange (Maxon, 1989). By 1912, most Gusii men would get their tax money by selling their farm products. Young men who had been freed from cattle protection channeled their labour to farming. As such, most Gusii women provided farm labour but they also helped in the transportation of farm products to markets for sale.

Only 300 able bodied men were enlisted for labour by a contractor at Sultan Hamud in Machakos District but one hundred of them deserted even before they left Gusiiland. This was sure sign that their enlistment was not voluntary. This was worsened by the fact that some died while at work (KNA, DC/KSI/1/1). This and the death, in 1911, of some men from North Mugirango who had gone to work at a fibre company at Masongaleni near the coast served to discourage the Gusii men from working far away from home (Stichter, 1982).

It was not until 1913, when the administration forced men to work outside the district that most Gusi men left in large numbers (Maxon, 1989). Force was used to get men out to work (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2; Maxon 1989). In 1913-14 DC, C.E. Spencer, sent nearly four thousand Luo and Gusii men out of the District to work for the Public Works Department, the railways and harbours on short term contracts (KNA, DC/KSI/1/1).

The exodus of young men from Nyamira signalled a new era in the transformation of Gusii women as many of them were left to carry on the duties which men traditionally

carried out in Gusii society. More importantly, this provided women with the opportunity to fend for their families through trade. Thus, Gusii women of Nyamira were not only forced to step up agricultural production but also to engage in trade in order to raise money with which they bought essential household goods (Maxon, 1989).

3.6 Informal trade during the inter- war period- 1919 -1939

As observed in the preceding section, WWI dampened trade opportunities for the Gusii people including Gusii women of Nyamira. Maxon (1989) has observed that immediately after the War, trade between the Gusii and Luo increased due to failure of the rains and the consequent famine in Luo inhabited areas of the district (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). This brought a measure of prosperity in Gusiiland and led to increased cultivation of grain crops in the years that followed. It also brought a lot of cattle from Luoland to Gusii Highlands. This was particularly welcome as cattle had been snatched from Gusii as punishment to their anti-colonial resistance (Maxon, 1989). Also, Gusii men had been forced to sell their cattle at auctions begun in 1916 (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

After the war, the government continued its promotion of the policy of agricultural development among European settler farmers. But very little was done for African farmers in Nyamira. Still much emphasis was still placed on sending Gusii men outside the district to work. Most Gusii men starting going out to work as from 1920 and this was pleasant to the colonial government (Maxon, 1989). But this outmigration was by sheer force. Chiefs acted on DC's order to get men to go out and work. Force was used this time because wages were poor and working conditions were unattractive to Africans. So, there was a circular issued in 1919 by Governor

Northey that sanctioned the use of force by colonial administrators to get men out to work for European farmers.

There was yet another pressure placed on Gusii men after WWI and this was in the form of increased taxation. Tax was raised to 8 rupees up from 5 rupees in 1920 (Maxon, 1989; Munro, 1986). Increased taxation was accompanied by currency changes. The currency of Kenya was changed in 1920 from the rupee to the florin and, in 1922, to the shillings. This led to confusion in the commerce sector and some monetary loss to the Gusii. What happened during the period between 1907 and 1920 was creation of conditions which led the Gusii people to be less friendly to colonial administration. However the years 1920 to 1930 laid the foundation upon which these relations improved markedly.

3.6.1 Flourishing trade- 1920-1930

Post-war depression gave way to better trade conditions in late 1921 as increased production took place in spite of lack of enthusiasm on the part of the colonial state to support African agricultural development (Maxon 19189). What led to increased production was nothing other than an increased land area. The Gusii, during this time placed much of their land under farming. But the colonial state had occasioned this opportunity by creating peace between neighboring communities which were under constant conflicts. Thus, land which had been set aside as buffer zones between conflicting communities was brought under cultivation. The colonial state reduced conflicts between the Gusii and their neighboring communities and by doing so set free land which had been allocated to defense measures. Young men started to occupy such land which existed outside that belonging to their lineages (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

Indeed, the result of this increased cultivation was relative expansion of production and prosperity down to 1930. The initial two decades of colonial rule in Gusiiland had done very little to transform the basis system of household reproduction (Maxon, 1989). A European agriculturalist was posted to Gusiiland in 1928. However, a large amount of exports from Gusiland was made up of hide and skins. This was in the formal economy. Much informal sector trade took place involving Gusii women and Indian traders in the same period. Indeed, the urban population rose and with this rise came demand for grains and vegetables which Gusii women were accustomed to selling in urban and market centres.

Urban areas were becoming swarmed up with rising population mostly Nubians, Somalis, Baganda, Goans, Indians, Europeans. Apart from this, the moment of calm which was provided by the post war period also encouraged an increase in missionary work that boosted demand for grains and vegetables from Gusii women suppliers in Nyamira County. Before the 1920s, there had been little efforts of establishing missionary work in Gusiiland (Maxon, 1989). Grain production for exports from Gusiiland kept on fluctuating between 1923 and 1926.

Table 1Table 3.1: Gusii grain exports (tons)

Export grains	1923	1924	1926
Beans	27.6	538.4	328.6
Maize	903.5	187.8	46.4
Maize flour	20.6	31.6	64.1
Sim Sim	1084	-	1428.9
Wheat	20.3	-	0.5
Wimbi	103.8	-	314.7

Source: Maxon (1989:94)

Some of the exported grains were obtained through informal channels whereby Gusii women sold grains to Indian traders. In turn Indian traders would sell to European exporters. This again illustrates how the informal economy is linked to formal

economy. The government dropped the forceful recruitment of Gusii men in 1922 but this saw an increase of men leaving Gusiiland for paid work outside their district (Maxon, 1989). Most of them took short term contracts after which they returned to their homes.

3.7 Introduction of the flour mill, maize and flour trade in Nyamira

During the same period, early 1920s, there was an introduction of power mills for grinding grains into flour. This was an indication of the growing importance of maize in Gusiiland. These power mills were established in Gusiiland by the Indian and European traders (Maxon, 1989). Some Gusii men also established mills along streams to be powered utilizing water (KNA, PC/NZA.3/33/8).

The government discouraged non-natives from establishing mills in native areas (KNA, PC/NZA.3/45/1). Thus, the colonial state was prepared to see the start of capitalist enterprise in rural Gusiiland. Most of the mills were owned by Gusii chiefs and village elders as they had start-up capital to purchase such assets. Some of the flour mills established at Eyaka River, Ria Mariga at Kiambere which belonged to a village elder known as Mariga and Nyakentita river (Tinga), in Bosiango village which belonged to an elder known as Obonyo (Nyandege, O, I). Given that they had the backing and favour of the colonial state, they had plenty of land on which to grow maize, and would easily obtain government seeds for planting (Maxon, 1989). In doing this, they had support from their wives and children who supplied household labour. Given that they had other duties to attend to such as settling disputes, most of the time they left the mills under the care of their trusted wives and children.

Thus, these wives started selling maize flour informally to locals. By this time maize flour mill had become popular with the people of Gusiiland because of its white

colour. The Gusii referred to it as *encholi* meaning ‘pure white’. There are those women who bought maize flour from these women in bulk and they would sell it in smaller quantities. Yet, there are those who took maize to mills to grind with the aim of selling maize flour in nearby market centers such as Nyambambo market and Miruka (Keremensia, O.I., 2/5/2015). Thus, the introduction of water-powered flour mills and maize encouraged a new form of trade between Gusii women and their neighbouring Luo community.

3.8 Gusii women’s engagement in the colonial economy during 1914-1945

The colonial administration initiated changes during the First World War which had a bearing on how Gusii women of Nyamira engaged the colonial economy. Firstly, native taxes were increased in order to push more men to seek employment including military work. Secondly, a number of urban/market or shopping centres came up and attracted non-Gusii population who mainly lived through trade. Thirdly, the period witnessed sweeping legislations bent on commercializing pre-colonial Gusii indigenous economy. More specifically, there was regulation, control and commercialization of native liquor. This section examines some of these sweeping changes during this period and how they impacted on Gusii Women of Nyamira with regard to their engagement in the colonial economy.

3.9 Growth and development of urban and market centres in Nyamira

The First World War saw a further expansion of urban centres in Nyamira. Many of these urban markets had sprung up before the War. This expansion was occasioned by increased demands for African produce and imported products. Africans got a chance to sell their farm produce owing to increased demand for food occasioned by the War. As the trading sector became more attractive, more women income seekers moved in to trade. Many of the new traders were women whose husbands were recruited into

the war, forcing them to assume the roles of heads of families. Employer's need for male rather than female workers was already apparent and women assuming the roles of heads of families took to trading to meet their ever-rising demand for imported commodities.

Gusii women joined commuter traders, selling their farm produce in African markets. Among the markets they went included, Bonyunyu, Tinga, maeli, sondu, daraja mbili and Keroka. These markets were significant in that they provided a good platform for women to buy and sell goods. Bochaberi, T 1/04/2015 explains that they sold mainly fresh food items such as vegetables, fruits, bananas, potatoes, chicken and eggs. They sold their vegetables in the African market mainly to Indian grocers, who resold them in their shops in the town centre. For many old traders, opportunities brought by the war created a new spirit of enterprise. Many commuters took up full-time trading as an occupation. They no longer depended only on the surplus produce of their farms, but bought much of their stock from other rural producers, and their role as traders became more distinct (Ngesa 1996).

Their operations were further aided by the coming of the push-cart, a popular means of transporting goods during the war. Since these were owned by a few individuals, Bochaberi, further, explains that they could hire them on particular days. This enabled them to sell more of their produce hence able to accumulate some cash and put it to other uses. They purchased chairs, tables and beds, as well as goats and sheep.

As we have observed in the preceding section of this chapter, Gusii had become accustomed to imported goods but not in large numbers. As a result, the local colonial administration continued in their efforts to have as many Gusii men and women consume these goods. By 1915, for example, the District Commissioner was

personally influencing Gusii men to buy bicycles. The District Commissioner noted the same year that;

I have during the five months in which I have been here, induced a considerable number of natives to take an interest in bicycle riding and so far sold 40 machines and I hope this year to sell further bicycles to the extent of at least 200. It is very noticeable and somewhat gratifying fast that natives insist on buying expensive cycles i.e. machines which cost Rs. 130/- are infinitely preferred to a RS. 75/- make, of which the British East Africa Corporation stock a number... (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2)

Urban centres which sprung up during the First World War attracted more people who needed food. Urban centres which sprung up in Nyamira attracted not just Indian traders but also Nubians from Nairobi. Many Nubians settled at Nyanchwa. They settled in market centres and began buying food from the Gusii women. Ngesa (1996) has also observed that commodities sold by the women were sold to Indian traders, African servants of Europeans and Asians, and African women residing in the towns. These social categories were mainly settled in urban centres.

By the outbreak of the First World War, townships and trading centres in South Nyanza, Nyamira included, had a sizeable population of Europeans, Indians, Arabs, swahilis, Nubians and other non-Africans who needed to be supplied with food items by the neighbouring Gusii men and women. This population is shown in the table below.

Table 2Table 3.2: Colonial Urban population in Nyamira and Kisii Counties

	<i>Males</i>	<i>Females</i>	<i>Male children</i>	<i>Female children</i>	<i>Total</i>
European officials	3	2	-	1	6
European traders	2	-	-	-	2
European missionaries	12	2	2	-	16
Goan officials	2	-	-	-	2
Goan traders	4	1	-	-	5
Indian traders	118	28	19	22	187
Arabs, Swahilis, Nubians and others	302	150	41	62	555

Source: KNA, DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Yearly Report, 31st March 1914, p. 301

The tradition of social drinking practised in African societies was introduced in Nyamira by Nubian men who settled there. Nubians were known for brewing the Nubian Gin. To do this, Nubians needed raw materials which they acquired from the Gusii. As a result, Gusii women in Nyamira got a chance to sell their farm products to the Nubians and other communities who settled in urban centres in Nyamira. Related to beer, the colonial administration introduced changes in beer brewing and consumption. As a result, beer became a commodity to be bought and sold.

Thus, urbanization which mushroomed during the First World War onwards created opportunities for trade. More importantly, there was trading relationship between rural and urban dwellers. Thus, as Ngesa (1996) has observed, urbanization led to an increase in commuter trade whereby rural farm producers took their produce to the

urban centres for sale. Gusii women took advantage of these opportunities as more urban centres sprung in Nyamira during the War period.

The growth of townships and trading centres in South Nyanza District, including Nyamira area, was much faster than in other areas of the Kenya colony. This is because, the people of South Nyanza, especially the Gusii, embraced farming much faster. Therefore, there was much progress in the District which attracted trade. By 1914, South Nyanza boasted of several trading centers (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). These centres were mainly occupied by Indian traders. Other areas which, by 1914, had not been upgraded into townships or trading centres such as North Mugirango (found in Nyamira) had attracted the presence of Indian traders (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

Indian traders were not confined in urban centres alone. In most cases the Indian traders would accompany Europeans government officers on their administrative tours into the interior of Gusiiland. Writing about this in 1914, the District Commissioner notes that:

A very considerable impetus was given to trade in this District during the year by the adoption of the system (originated in Kisumu) of permitting Indian traders to accompany [colonial] officers on safari with trade goods, which the natives were encouraged to buy... (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2).

Commuters traded mainly in order to get money to purchase imported goods. Gusii women's trade was facilitated by improved production in the African land units as a result of the favourable climate at the turn of the 20th C. Owing to a glut in rural produce; little local trade took place in the rural areas. Commuter traders therefore targeted the urban population which depended on produce from the surrounding cultivators (Ngesa, 1996).

Generally, commuter trade was target oriented. Women came to trade at irregular intervals, to fulfil the needs of the moment (Ibid). Otherwise they spent much of their time doing small- scale cultivation to produce for family consumption. They also attended other social roles such as doing domestic work and caring for children. The roles of trader, farmer and housewife were all combined.

In their trading activities, barter and monetary trade went side by side. This was especially due to the subsistence orientation of their business. The two modes were particularly used by the hawkers, who accepted second hand clothing, blankets, umbrellas, or hoes in exchange for their goods instead of cash. Thus, as examined in chapter one of this study, the establishment of colonial rule in Gusii enabled the co-existence of both pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production.

While most of the Gusii women in Nyamira sold what they cultivated on their farms, there are those who emerged and started operating as “middle women” between the farmers, and the consumers. Many at times, these were women whose land was not very productive and therefore had to look for an alternative. Given that there were men who had gone to seek jobs in towns, they decided to take that opportunity of selling to them goods that they could not easily get at the town. Many of these men were employed in Asian shops and Hotels. According to Bosibori, O I, the Asians preferred men to women in their enterprises. The women could only be employed as *ayahs* by the Asians. Given firewood was the common source of energy for urban dwellers in the early days of colonial establishment Ngesa (1996), these women foraged firewood from the surrounding bushes and sold to the African living in town as well as the Nubians. Given that the women were not given enough opportunities to work in Asian premises, they had to seek alternative ways of surviving such as selling firewood hence illuminating the socialist feminist theory. Alternative fuel such as

charcoal and paraffin were as yet unaffordable to the Majority of Africans, who continued to rely on firewood. Profit accrued from these early trading activities was mainly for household consumption.

The period between 1920s and 1930 also saw an increase in the supply of and demand for western education. Education led to changes in the lifestyles of school going children as they needed clothes or school uniforms (Mzee Onchari, O.I. 24th April 2016). Most of the men who first attended school in the 1940s still remember how their mothers sold farm products to buy them uniform (Mzee Onchari, O.I. 24th April 2016). Mill Hill Mission baptized their first Gusii converts in 1922 (KNA, DC/KSI/1/2). As more and more Gusii became Christian converts, so did the number of children who went to school and with this came an increasing demand for uniforms. As a result, women came to appreciate increased agricultural production because then they would buy uniform for their children.

By the 1920s, Gusii men were still reluctant to send their children to school because of household labor demand. Boys were also valued for their labour in looking after cattle while the girls were valued for marriage and dowry payment. But things were to change, though gradually and as more and more Gusii respondent to missions and mission education so did their appreciation of increased agricultural production. every school had an agricultural demonstration plot. The first Africans who attended school were trained to appreciate modern methods of farming rather than while color jobs. By mid 1920s, there was a handful of Gusii men and women with western education. Though insignificantly a low percentage, those few educated Gsuii were an engine of change in their midst. They became opinion leaders and shapers and the colonial government used them extensively to initiate the change they desired.

While economic progress among Gusii men was realized in the 1920s, the money they got from their economic activities as farmers, traders, investors, educators, administrators and migrant workers was spent on litigation unlike women who spend their meager earnings from informal economy on household expense. In 1920s, for example, it was reported that Gusii men were spending most of their money on litigation and this hampered progress as money for economic development was channeled the wrong way (Maxon, 1989; KNA, DC/KSI/1/3).

3.10 1930-1939 - economic depression, start of development and Gusii women traders

The world economic depression which began in 1929 brought with it the introduction of coffee planting and inauguration of a government school. The depression witnessed a reduction in the number of men who were enlisted for work outside Gusiiland. Many Europeans were unable to find a profitable market for their crops and had to stop planting. This in turn led to a reduction in the demand for labor. However, for most African household in Nyamira, farming became the main economic activity which was depended on for the raising of tax. Gusii women in Nyamira County came in handy to supplement household monetary requirements with small scale informal commercial transactions. According to Maxon (1989:117) this was the first time when supply of labour in Gusiiland outstripped demand. This situation persisted until 1932. Not until 1934 were labour contracts made available to Gusii men to go and work outside the district.

Trade itself was hampered by a sharp drop in agricultural exports from Nyamira and the other parts of Gusiiland. Agricultural production fell because of lower prices which farm products fetched. Also, heavy rains which were experienced in 1930 prevented any farming activity except the production of *wimbi* (Colony and

Protectorate of Kenya, 1930). A further decrease in formal trade was experienced. Indian traders took advantage of the unfavourable conditions to exploit Gusii farmers as they bought their farm produce, especially that taken to market by women at low prices.

While this was the case, yet another disaster struck Gusiiland when it was invaded by locusts. Crops were destroyed and this added to the economic predicament of the Gusii people, including Gusii women traders. Due to impending famine which the colonial administration predicted, the government prohibited the sale of any food crops except by permit (Maxon, 1989). Although the Gusii retained much of their farm produce to avoid famine, some trade indeed took place between the Gusii and the Luo because the Luo had been hit very much by famine the Gusii (Maxon, 1989). Also, the demand for money to pay government taxes and access other essential goods and services led the Gusii to exploit existing informal channels to sell food to the Luo who were in the thick of famine. Maxon (1989) observes that the damage to Luo crops by locusts in 1930 resulted in famine there and consequent higher prices for Gusii grown maize (KNA, PC/NZA.4/5/7).

As a result of trade with the Luo, Gusiiland obtained a lot of cattle from the Luo in exchange for grains (Maxon, 1989). This boosted dairy production in Gusiiland and trade in milk products occupied Gusii women of Nyamira County (Maxon, 1989).

The other areas continued to produce grains and vegetables which were sold locally in urban and market centers and informally to the neighboring Luo. The locust problem persisted until 1935 and so were prices for agricultural prices on the formal markets. Gusii women continued to exploit the informal channels of trading with the Luo which had been laid down in the pre-colonial period. In this way, pre-capitalist modes

of production and exchange relations continued to thrive among the Gusii of Nyamira County and the Luo.

So while the closed markets, the stagnation of trade, the increasing incursions of locusts and the increasing difficulties in meeting the demands of taxation made the years 1930-1935 difficult for the Gusii (Maxon, 1989), Gusii women of Nyamira still managed to create trade opportunities out of an otherwise unfortunate economic situation. Maize was by 1930 a well-established agricultural good in Gusiiland. Indeed, according to Maxon (1989) maize had by this time become a major food crop of the Gusii people. Maize and wheat were unable to bear the cost of transport from Gusiiland to potential markets (Spencer, 1975). There was only a limited market for wimbi outside Gusiiland, and beans could never be produced on a large scale to become a really marketable crop (Maxon, 1989). And by this time, cash crop production had not really made an impact in the African economy in Nyanza (Fearn, 1961).

However, as a result of economic depression witnessed between 1920 and 1935, the colonial state embarked on a major path of economic recovery throughout the Colony (Maxon, 1989). The state got prepared to promote the dual economy policy in spurring an export-oriented and driven economic growth in Kenya. This was manifested, in the case of Nyamira County, by the introduction of cash crop farming. The dual economy policy was not so much geared towards benefiting Africans as much as it was designed to keep the European settler community afloat (Kitching, 1980). Anderson and Throup have tended to disagree with Kitching by stating that the real idea behind the introduction of the dual economy in African areas was to ensure the survival of the colonial state which was ultimately more important than the

protection of the inefficient settler farmers (Anderson and Throup, 1986). Maxon (1989) asserts the strategy was to meet both ends.

Whatever the thinking and justification lay behind, the dual economy did not just create a dual economy but also promoted the co-existence of both informal economy and formal economy. The work of District Officers of Agriculture changed drastically in areas such as Nyamira County (Maxon, 1989). Prior to the introduction of a dual economy agricultural officers were mainly preoccupied with giving instructions in methods of cultivation and the maintenance of small demonstration plots. This line of action was discontinued and more attention was placed on building up a staff that was fully trained and qualified (Maxon, 1989).

Attention was also placed on provision of high quality yielding seeds to African farmers. A staff of African agricultural instructors was set up to spread propaganda and instruction on better farming practices. This translated in large acreages of maize, wimbi and beans being planted in Nyamira County (KNA, DC/KSI/1/4).

The introduction of coffee growing in Nyamira also brought with it a lot of cash which was paid mainly to men. But the introduction of coffee reduced land for food crops and the money which men made from coffee was spent on purchase of food. Women who planted food crops on small pieces of land had an opportunity to cash in on the money which coffee brought in Nyamira. Prior to the introduction of coffee growing by Africans in Gusii, Gethin had already experimented with coffee growing on a six-acre plot between 1920 and 1924 (Barnes, 1975). The first sales of coffee by the Abagusii in 1937 served to escalate the interest of Africans in the crop (Maxon, 1989).

Not everyone was allowed to grow coffee (Maxon, 1989). So we had farmers who drowned into coffee growing and others who remained to grow food crops. Those who grew food crops had an internal market within Nyamira County where they would sell their produce. Those who delved into cash coffee growing were in government service, migrant labourers or had attended mission education (Barnes, 1975; Maxon 1989). Others planted coffee because of pressure from chiefs while others just wanted to expand their opportunities for cash incomes (Barnes, 1975). Another cash crop that was introduced in Gusiiland was tobacco and wattle trees. These crops also brought a lot of cash in the economy of the Abagusii people. Cash crop farming in Gusiiland was paternalistic. Men were targeted as farmers but women offered their farm labour for pay. This is bearing in mind that cash cropping farming was labour intensive. Thus women benefited from cash crops' money through informal channels.

Dual economy was export-oriented whereby production was intended for exports. While much of the sale of cash crops and food crops for export was done through formal means, a lot of informal trade also took place during the period 1930-1940. The expansion of tea in Kericho led many men from Gusii to go and work there (KNA, PC/NZA.4/5/8). The dual economy led to some start-up in the recovery of the economy and this saw Gusii men leave their homes to work outside of their district (Maxon, 1989). By 1939, the demand for education by Gusii was still low and this made them to continue being employed on European farms. As such, Gusiiland continued to supply cheap labour to European farms and this left many households in a poor state of economic wellbeing only dependent on household peasant farming as the only way out of poverty.

Thus, for a long time since the introduction of colonial rule in Gusiiland, the area remained a chief supplier of both cheap male labour and cheap food exports to neighboring Luo areas and to Indian traders who finally sold to overseas exporters

3.11 Participation of Women in Illegal Beer Trade in Nyamira

Due to poor economic outcomes which were occasioned by the First World War, the colonial establishment in Kenya introduced some changes, through legislation, which impacted on economic landscapes in rural settings, Nyamira included. One such area which was impacted by the introduction of new legislation was beer drinking.

The Gusii, just like other pre-colonial Kenyan communities, brewed and drunk their traditional beers. Beer drinking was both a recreational activity as well as a cultural undertaking. Many sacrifices, rituals and ceremonies were accompanied by beer drinking. Criminalization of Gusii traditional brews was done through the enactment of several ordinances. The first ordinances were the East African Native liquor ordinance, 1907 and the East African Native Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance, 1908. These two ordinances were repealed in 1915 by the Native Liquor Ordinance 1915; an ordinance to regulate the sale of native intoxicating liquors dubbed as Ordinance No. 22 of 1915 (East African Protectorate, 1915: lxxxv-lxxxviii). This ordinance was intended to regulate palm wine (*tembo tamu* and *tembo kali*), *pombe*, fermented *asali* and all other liquors prepared by natives containing alcohol” (East African Protectorate, 1915).

According to this ordinance “no person was allowed to sell any native intoxicating liquor except if he had first taken out a license in that behalf from the District Commissioner. The ordinance also excluded women from selling native liquor. The license authorized the holder of a liquor license to sell native intoxicating liquor on

such premises only as the District Commissioner shall approve and specify on the license. The District Commissioner was given sweeping powers to regulate the sale of native liquor because he could “refuse to grant a license in respect of any premises or to any person” (East African Protectorate 1915). The Ordinance also regulated the hours of drinking native liquor which was between the hours of 10 am and 9 pm. Basically the Ordinance sought to deal with drunkenness since “no licensed person [could] supply any native intoxicating liquor to an intoxicated person or allow drunkenness upon his licensed premises. A police officer may arrest any person who may be found in or near any premises licensed under this ordinance drunk and incapable and disorderly (Ibid).

The enactment of this legislation did not, however, stop the Gusii women from brewing native liquor. Due to the migration of men to the towns, away from their wives who traditionally were responsible for production of beer for them, they were forced to buy. This had therefore become a lucrative business for women.

The interaction of the Gusii women with the Nubians further enhanced this trade. From the Nubians, the Gusii women learnt to manufacture better beer known as *changaa*. The process of making the Nubian gin was similar to that of preparing the Gusii traditional beer. The only difference was that, after this beer had reached its final stage, it could be distilled by heating it to collect a colourless liquid that was called *changaa*. Since this alcoholic drink had been outlawed, these women could dig holes and hide it there. While some women could sell the beer in the evening from door to door, others had houses from which they could sell (Zaida, O.I., 06/04/2015). Very many men preferred to buy it because it was cheap, had a better taste than the Gusii traditional beer and sometimes could be given on credit (Onchari, O.I., 3/05/2015).

As sellers of their own commodities, the female illegal beer sellers had a more enticing business language compared to the people employed at the brewery. They also sold brands which did not exist at the brewery. Most important to the African with meagre means, the women were willing to sell on credit. Many Africans therefore were attracted to them, as the atmosphere there provided both a sense of belonging and an opportunity to consume a favourite drink. (Ngesa 1996)

Bochere (O, I) explains that, among the things that motivated women to work hard to get money was the fact that their husbands were not able to get enough money to pay taxes, something that had forced some co wives to share houses, which was against the Gusi culture. The outbreak of the First World War saw an increase in native taxes. The colonial government increased taxes in order to push more men to seek paid work. For example, the Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance was amended in 1915 thereby giving the Governor powers to “increase the respective taxes to a sum not exceeding five rupees per annum in each case, within such district, area or place” (East African Protectorate 1915). Indeed, the Deputy Governor, Mr. C.C. Bowring, exercised these powers and increased the Native and poll tax to 5 rupees in South Kavirondo District where the Gusi people of Nyamira lived (proclamation Number 9 of 16th February 1916 in East African Protectorate, 1916).

3.12 Kisii Pottery During the Inter-War Period

Pottery in Gusiiland was women’s affairs. The presence of the European population in Kenya introduced a new demand of pots. Europeans needed pots in which to plant flowers around their houses. Some of the Europeans obtained their post from Kisii. For example, a letter dated 11th May 1928 from Ag PC, Nyanza to the Senior Commissioner, Eldoret on Kisii pottery read “I am sorry to say that the fish lorry failed to call at this office today to fetch the two cases of pottery received from Kisii,

though warned to do so last night. Will you instruct the driver to call the next time he comes to Kisumu... (PC/NZA/3/26/7).

Gusii women of Nyamira had engaged in pottery trade with the neighbouring Luo (Ochieng 1974; Maxon 1989). However, the changes which were introduced by the colonial government worked against continued indigenous trade relations between the Gusii and the Luo. In addition, the introduction of the lorry as a means of transport by the colonial government facilitated the transportation of pots between places. This transformed foot transport which had characterized pre-colonial trade between the Gusii women and the Luo.

3.13 Kikuyu Settlers in Nyamira and their Trade with Gusii Women

At around 1930s, there were some Kikuyus who came to live among the Gusii (Moraa, S O.I). According to the letter written by the provincial commissioner, central province, dated 18th January 1945, they migrated to Kisii due to shortage of land that had been caused by alienation of land for the white settlers. The approximate number of the Kikuyu migrants was 4800, many of whom were women. The Kikuyus are said to have had a lot of influence to the Gusii. They are said to have settled at around Tinga in Nyamira South Sub County. They used to live along the rivers and they grew quite a number of crops which included: sugar cane, maize, vegetables, arrow roots among other things. The animals they kept included: cows, goats and sheep. They are said to have influenced the Gusii to start keeping bees in hives. Previously, the Gusii used to keep bees by using pots. After harvesting their honey, they could take it to Kisii town where they sold it to the Indians and the Nubians (Wangare, T 15/04/2015).

The Kikuyu women could go to Miruka market where they bought pots, ropes, mats, milk (*egechieta*), salt (ebara), groundnuts, simsim, sweet potatoes and fish (*omeno*) from the Luo. To the Luo, they sold finger millet, maize and maize flour. These women could then bring these things and resell them to the other women who could not be able to go to Luo land to buy these things from there. Among the markets they sold included, Tinga market, Keroka market, Ikonge market and Bonyunyu market, they could move from one market to the other buying and reselling goods (Keremensia O, O 14/04/2015).

Keremensia alongside other women also started preparing food and selling it at the market. Among the foods they made included; sweet potatoes, boiled maize and the Kikuyu could sell *Irio* (a mixture of green maize and potatoes). They were able to sell their foods very well because the women, who used to migrate from one market to the other, were not able to prepare enough food which could sustain them the whole day as they moved from one market to another. Besides, carrying food was hard because they went on foot from one market to the other. They therefore bought the food that was readily available. Among the goods that the migrant women sold included vegetables i.e; *kales*, *chinsaga*, *managu* among many others. They also sold tomatoes and pepper to the Indians.

3.14 Gusii Women Traders During the Economic Depression of the Late 1920 to the 1939

In 1930, Kenya was hit by the worldwide depression which began in the West in 1929. There was a drop in world commodity prices, especially of agricultural produce, and it affected Kenya. By 1931 the price of Maize, Wheat and Sisal had dropped by 50 per cent and coffee by 40 per cent from their 1929 values. (Ngesa 1996). There was a fall in rural and urban employment. Demand for coffee pickers

virtually ceased between 1931 and 1933. Employment on tea Estates fell from about 10,000 to 8,000 in the same period, and many sisal estates were closed down. Consequently, many Africans who were formerly engaged as labourers were laid off. The wages of those employed, fell drastically from an average of Shs. 19.00 a month to 15.00 for skilled labour and semi- skilled labourers while unskilled labours' wages fell as low as shs. 8.00 a month from Shs. 14.00.(4). In spite of the fall in wages, taxation remained Shs. 12.00 per month. Additional revenue was also collected from Africans as customs and exercise duties.

Similarly, the European purchasing power declined. As the prices of commodities fell, some settlers abandoned their farms, and they and their European employees became jobless. Between 1932 and 1933 alone, the number of Europeans employed on agricultural holdings decreased by 425 2364. (Ngesa 1996).

New administrative measures posed further constraints to African women traders. In 1928, the report of the Feet ham commission granted the white community its long desired official political supremacy in Kenya, by increasing European representation in the Legislative council from six to nine, and of Asians from five to six. (Ngesa1996). This meant a defeat of Asian agitation for equal representation adversely affected Africans. For example, benefits, such as unlicensed hawking accruing to them under the pretext of "paramountcy", were no longer necessary. The council authorities therefore promulgated new rules in 1929 reintroducing hawking fees which became a burden to women. Some women market traders not only endured the Depression but were even able to accumulate some profit.

Individual success at the market depended on individual women's entrepreneurial skills. During the depression, buyers for lack of cash sought the cheapest market. To

keep the regular customers, some women gave good bargains and provided credit. This enabled them to accumulate a lot of money.

The women dealing in home-made beer were less affected by the depression. The Social, Political and Economic problems leading African workers to prefer home-made beer were heightened while the economic advantages accruing to the sellers became more pronounced. Drinking on credit was sought by more Africans than before, owing to lack of cash. African grievances, over land in particular became increasingly widespread as disenchantment with the colonial government deepened. The need for safer places for political discussions made beer dens increasingly appealing. For women dealers, especially of gin, profits were higher than before. By 1934 the gin trade was so profitable that a gallon sold as high as Shs. 24.00.

The police however continued to harass the women beer traders, given that they attributed the problem of African 'laziness' to the drinking of homemade beer. Police harassment led to the adoption of strategies by women which made detection extremely difficult. They concealed the beer under vegetables, or other produce in baskets, and sold it in various places.

In the 1930s, a number of contrasting developments occurred. During the first several years, the Great depression led to a decline in the commercial viability of Kenya. The enactment of new laws governing African trade imposed further limitations on the trading activities of women. Consequently, the trading vibrancy, which typified the last half of the 1920s, declined. In the period that followed, commercial prospects rose, and trade revived. The number of women traders was increased by women from as far as Nyanza and Western Kenya.

The recovery enabled women to make further strides in trade. By 1939, more women commuters had used part of their trading proceeds to put up shops in their rural market places. Among the residents, some traders had emerged as “middle- women” wholesalers of agricultural produce or beer.

3.15 Gusii Women Traders of Nyamira during the Second World War (1939-1945)

The Second World War created challenges for the colonial government, especially on the economic front. Production declined and the need for African labour (especially in the military) rose. In order to secure African labour in the military and increase farm production, the colonial government made legislative amendments. More specifically, the colonial administration increased taxes to be paid by natives during the Second World War. Taxes, as we have observed in the preceding sections of this chapter were used to push men into paid work while at the same time ensuring maximum production on farms. This would generate money for Africans to pay taxes.

The Native Authority (amendment) Ordinance 1940, which amended the native Authority Ordinance, 1937 states that “any native who is liable to pay the local native rate and who fails to pay such a rate shall be guilty of an offence and shall, on conviction by a magistrate or a native tribunal, be ordered to pay such rate together with such court costs, not exceeding one shilling, as the magistrate or native tribunal may, in his or its discretion as the case may be, determine, and in default of payment may be sentenced to imprisonment or detention for a term not exceeding two months” (Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1941:122). This law was enacted because the government wanted to raise more revenue during the war period (WWII). Indeed the government sought to amend the Income Tax ordinance, 1940, so as to provide for the raising of additional revenue during the present war (Ordinance No. XXVI of

1940, Colony and Protectorate, 1941:137). Indeed, as Ngesa (1996) has observed, the late 1930s saw a gradual economic upturn from the harsh conditions of the Depression. Employment opportunities also increased. In 1937, the number of men with jobs was 20,000; by 1939, the number had reached an estimated figure of 25,886.

The development of trade unionism during the period helped to raise the wages of some Africans above those of the 1920s. The improvement in employment and wages increased the purchasing power of Africans in Towns and hence boosted trade which the Gusii women of Nyamira took advantage of. In the rural areas, Africans responded to market forces by further increasing production tremendously. The bulk of this production was in the category of food crops such as maize, beans, potatoes, and vegetables.

Women did not only supply food stuff to the urban dwellers. They also made sure that urban dwellers were entertained with native brews. It is during this time that the District commissioners got themselves concerned with regulation and control of native liquor once again. In a meeting of District commissioners of Nyanza Province held on 3rd may 1944, it was resolved that “in future the sitting of native beer shops should be in the discretion of District commissioner, provided that they should not normally be established within five miles of an inter-district boundary without prior consultation between the district commissioners concerned” (KNA, DP/1/30).

Opportunities for trade which the War occasioned threatened to occasion famine because Africans were selling almost all the food. They were, however, selling most of it through black market because the official market was offering poor prices due to the economic depression which the war had occasioned. As a result, colonial administration evolved a new policy towards the sale of African produce (Ngesa

1996). The central part of this policy was the attempt to reorganise the marketing of African maize produce, (and later other goods), and to bring it under the effective control of the administration. The need for control was prompted by the low maize prices in the World market, which made it difficult for settlers to make a decent profit. The African maize, produced at lower costs, would bridge the deficit in the export market (Ibid).

A step towards this control was the introduction in 1935 of commodity inspection in central and Nyanza provinces. The Kenya Farmers Association, the settler marketing body registered in 1932, was to control the inspection centres, enforce high standards and high prices, and assure traders of a profit (Ibid).

Throughout 1935, inspection remained a voluntary service, but towards the end of the year, legislation made it compulsory. The central province produces to undergo inspection, in addition to wattle bark (Whose inspection was made compulsory much earlier), included maize, beans, and potatoes (Ngesa 1996) Yet the expected control was not achieved, because other outlets for the sale of produce remained open, and prices there compared favourably with the inspection centres. Moreover, in the rural markets all produce regardless of quality would sell. The same was not true with inspection centres, which emphasized good quality for export (Ibid).

Additionally, inspection was only limited to a few items, and other commodities such as vegetables, bananas, sweet potatoes, poultry and eggs were still exchanged freely in the African areas. As late as 1938, Africans selling produce in the reserves were numerous, and were still increasing (1996). The commuter traders were still able therefore to purchase produce in the reserves and transport it to town for sale. By 1938, they were “middle-women” using the motor Lorries which had become familiar

means of transport, in the trade between town and surrounding areas. Some women used their trading proceeds to establish business in their local markets, to be close to their homes. For example, some women built wooden stores where they sold provisions and rented out part of the building.

For some Christian women, trading provided a measure of economic independence and therefore power to break away from African traditions considered repulsive to the faith. Some women refused to be inherited after their death of their husbands as tradition demanded. They used their profits to purchase most necessities, an inheritor, whose main role traditionally was to provide support to the widow, was unnecessary (Ngesa 1996). Trading also enabled some women to discharge certain roles specifically meant for males at the time. Some women were able to purchase enough livestock for their sons' dowry (Ibid). The Second World War thus provided the Gusii women of Nyamira with expanded opportunities to undertake trade. The next chapter examines how Gusii women of Nyamira participated in the informal economy between 1945 and 1963.

3.16 Conclusion

We have examined in chapter three that the colonial government first and foremost introduced the money economy and sought to discourage barter trade to which Gusii men and women were accustomed. Men were subjected to payment of taxes in order to force them to work for wages. Women too needed money to enable them buy modern clothes and support their families since men's wages were inadequate to meet family needs. The colonial government worked on the logic of pushing men towards the formal money economy.

CHAPTER FOUR:
PARTICIPATION OF GUSII WOMEN, OF NYAMIRA COUNTY, IN THE
INFORMAL SECTOR AFTER THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1946-1963.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the various areas of the informal sector in which Gusii women participated in order to earn an income and the changes that took part in it. The introduction and expanded growth of cash crops such as tea, coffee and Pyrethrum which were owned by men, due to registration of land on their names, pushed the women to the periphery hence justifying the socialist feminist view that women are subordinated because they are not given enough opportunities to empower them. The women could only provide labour in these farms and continue with their traditional economic activities. Since they also needed money, they transformed their activities from barter to money trade.

Therefore, even though, colonial capitalist mode of production was introduced, it did not phase out the pre capitalist mode of production, hence articulation of the two. This section examines the various areas of the informal sector in which Gusii women participated in order to earn an income and changes that took place in this sector. They include; wage labour in cash crop farms which emerged as a result of the settlement of the Europeans in Gusii land and trade of farm produce and traditional practices which were transformed from barter trade to money trade. The money acquired from these activities was not controlled hence referred to as informal. We begin by examining women's wage labour on cash crop farms.

4.2 The effect of cash crop growing on women.

The period after the Second World War witnessed emergence and expanded cash crop farming activities in Gusiiland. The colonial administration started a gradual process of agricultural reorganization of African areas, culminating in the Swynnerton plan of 1954. The plan allowed African peasants to grow cash crops and engage in small-holder farming. Among the cash crops grown included; Tea, Pyrethrum and Coffee (Omwoyo, 1990: 168).

The colonial state embarked on a rapid expansion of coffee growing in Gusiiland after WWII. This was because they wanted to increase African coffee planting so as to make up for a significant drop in acreage on European coffee plantations. In order to entice farmers, the coffee prices were increased. For example; the price rose from twelve cents a pound in 1949 to twenty five cents per pound in 1954 (Maxon, 1989). The removal of the maximum acreage limitation on Coffee led to expanded growth of coffee henceforth. The table below shows the increasing growth of Coffee in Gusiiland from 1950 to 1958.

Table 3 Table 4.1 Showing Growth of The Gusi Coffee Industry, 1950-1958

Year	1950	1951	1952	1953	1954	1955	1958
Growers	789	1,470	1,746	2,923	3,425	5,764	11,138
Acreage	270	370	472	756	1,136	2,165	2,996
No. of Primary Co-ops.	9	10	12	15	15	15	27

Source: South Nyanza Gazeteer, KNA: DC/KSI/5/31

However, as compared to other crops such as maize, the farmers were lowly paid because of diseases, plucking of small, under ripe and yellow cherry and poor drying procedures (KNA/DC/KSI/1/20). Despite these challenges, the government made loans for improvement not only to the cooperative societies but to individual growers

as well to ensure that the farmers were not discouraged. Expanded growth of Coffee reduced the land for cultivation of maize and finger millet, which was the domain of women. However, since money got from coffee was not enough to sustain the family needs; the women had to continue growing subsistence crops for household consumption and trade.

Pyrethrum was another cash crop that experienced expanded growth during this period. It was introduced in the district in 1952 and the first few commercial plots were established in Rigoma area of Kitutu location. It became popular among the Gusii people because of its high profitability. By 1954 its production had reached 7,870 lbs from 80 acres earning the producers Sh. 14,953.00 (KNA/DC/KSI/1/16). In 1955, the production of pyrethrum trebled over the previous year's to 24,317. In 1956 the crop covered 160 acres with 793 growers and a production of 28.5 tons. By 1961, in spite of efforts at limiting expansion, the crop covered about 18,000 acres grown by 25,000 farmers, totaling a production of 1,598 tons. Due to the labour intensive nature of pyrethrum, the duty of planting, weeding and harvesting of the flowers was mainly left to the women (Ibid). the women therefore, had a say on how money got from this crop could be spent. Nyanchera (O, I), narrates how she could weed and harvest her field of pyrethrum alongside her daughters. They could then take the flowers to the board and when they were paid, her husband could allow her to plan for some of the money earned.

In the year 1961 there was reduction in the price of pyrethrum in excess of quota. In that year, the Board paid the full price for all production within the quota and reduced the price for overproduction. In response to this financial penalty for overproduction many farmers uprooted their pyrethrum (KNA/DC/KSI/1/23). Those that uprooted

their flowers mainly grew subsistence crops such as maize, finger millet and vegetables while others grew tea which by now had started becoming popular.

In 1962 a system on individual production quotas was introduced in which every producer was allocated a specific poundage of dried flowers and was warned that one could receive lower payments per pound for over or under production(Garnest, 1972:142). Rather than face financial penalty, the peasants sold the allowed quota while retaining the excess produce. This forced those that over produced to sell dried flowers to those who had under produced the flowers to avoid lower payment. According to Nyamusi, L (O, I 30/04/2015), she could harvest all the flowers that were ready to be harvested and sell the surplus to other farmers who had under produced. The buying and selling of these flowers was mainly done by women. The men tended to shy from this crop, because it was labour intensive as compared to other crops such as coffee.

This period also witnessed the introduction of tea as another cash crop. The colonial state decided to undertake tea planting in 1956, and by 1957, ninety growers in Kitutu and North Mugirango had planted sixteen acres. By the end of 1959, the first tea from Gusiiland had been delivered to Sotik and 122 acres of the crop had been planted (ibid).The figure increased in the subsequent years and by 1961, the acreage had almost trebled. Even so, Kisii district was relatively unimportant in relation to total tea production in Kenya. In 1961 only 0.04% of the nation's production came from the district, and in 1963 it had increased to 0.13% (Garnest 1972:128). Meanwhile, tea leafs were delivered to the Sotik Highlands Tea Factory for processing; it was not until 1965 that the first tea factory was built in Kisii District (Omwoyo 1990).

The women mainly provided labour in the tea farms. However, because the tea factory was far, many farmers preferred to grow subsistence crops which could be locally sold such as maize and finger millet. The introduction of tea, led to the introduction of a new trade item. The women alongside men started making baskets ‘*ebitonga*’ which were used for plucking tea, Moraa, M (O,I 1/1/2016). Most people bought these baskets because this skill was a preserve of a few people.

In 1960, passion fruits were introduced as another cash crop. Only 6 acres were in production in 1960, and these increased to 40.87% in 1961 among 105 growers between Mosebeti and Keroka location. Its production increased rapidly, posing competition to earlier established crops. At a price of 15 cents per 1b, it was considered the best priced cash crop in the district in 1961 (KNA/DC/KS1/1/23). The fruits were delivered to Lanyon’s factory at Sotik for extraction, and its production increased rapidly. However, it slowly established itself as a small-holder crop contrary to the suggestion of the Agricultural officer that the crop be financed on a big scale, to improve its production. (Omwoyo 1990:189). Kemunto, D (O, I 2/10/2016), narrates how she grew these fruits because they were easy to cultivate and did not require a large piece of land. She was able to accumulate a lot of money with which she was able to pay school fees for her children. The women were therefore forced to start selling the fruits locally along the road and market places.

The period 1960 to 1963 witnessed continuous cash crop developments. The acreage given to the traditional staples such as maize and finger millet decreased while growing interest in cash crops led to the planting of increasing acreages of coffee, pyrethrum and tea. This process took place as there were few new lands to open for cultivation of cash crops; cash crops were, in many instances, planted where food crops had previously been grown.

The introduction of cash crops reduced the land on which women grew food crops which was their domain. This reduced the authority of the women on agriculture because the cash crops were owned by men. However, the women continued providing labour on these farms. According to Washington Kibagendi (O, I) the cash crops grown during this time belonged to the head of the household who was the man. The duty of the women was to weed and help in harvesting the crop. The Swynnerton plan of 1954 which led to land registration on the male kin, also meant that, the cash crops were registered on the male kin. The women were left with the duty of producing food crops to supplement the family income because the returns got from the cash crops were low due to lack of enough skills to manage them (Maxon 1989).

The Swynnerton plan, further, relegated maize and finger millet to the position of mere food crops, and their place taken by the more valuable cash crops. The decline of maize and finger millet in the period after 1955 was exacerbated further by the fall in their prices at the world market as shown in this table.

Table 4.2: Maize and Finger Millet Yields, Price and Value

Year	Yield per acre (bags)		Price per bag (Sh)		Value per acre (Sh)	
	1955	1961	1955	1961	1955	1961
Maize	6	9	25/80	22/30	154.80	200.70
Finger Millet	4	4	30/50	27/75	122.00	91.00

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/17

The fall of maize and finger millet prices from 25.80 a bag in 1955 to 22.30 in 1961, and 35.50 to 22.75 respectively led to the increased sell of the crops by the women locally in large amounts especially in Nyamira and Kisii town, to the Nubians and the people who had gone to seek jobs in towns, because that enabled them to fetch higher profits (KNA/ DC/KSI/1/23).

4.3 Gusii Women's Labour on Cash Crop Farms

This period witnessed mass privatization of land. Some people were able to accumulate a lot of land while others were not. Those that were able to accumulate a lot of land represented the rich while those that had little land represented the poor. The poor were therefore compelled to seek work in other households because the gross income that they got from their farms was not enough to sustain them (Omwoyo, 1990: 167). The rich many at times were also civil servants, they therefore depended on other people's labour to work on their farms. Most of the paid labour on rich peasants' farms was drawn from Gusii women Kemunto, L (O, I). Unlike in the past where women could use the joint rotating parties to assist each other, during this period, this practice was diminishing because there were households that were well off than others.

Even though the colonial administration encouraged migration of Gusii men only, there is evidence that Gusii women also migrated to exploit economic opportunities, especially on tea plantations, in the neighbouring Kericho District. It is reported that a Kisii woman in Kericho tea estates murmured that they (women) were travelling in bad conditions in taxis owned by Indians and even those owned by Africans. She said that this happens always because taxis managed to accommodate 35 to 45 passengers. In the Kericho Estates the women worked alongside their husbands. This was because their husbands were not sufficiently paid and there was need, therefore, for Gusii women to supplement their wages (DP/1/95).

4.4 Training of Gusii women in Home Craft and their Enhanced Participation in Informal Economy.

The colonial government introduced the department of community Development in 1954 charged with the training of women in home craft courses. Although these

courses were intended to reinforce the participation of women in unpaid domestic economy such as cooking, child care, sewing, knitting, embroidery, hygiene and housewifery, among others (KNA, DP/1/75, KNA, DP/1/78), some women got a chance to innovatively transform these course into income greeting ventures. Some women began to bake cakes and sell them at market centres and to families in rural areas.

Home craft courses were not only unique to Gusii women. At the Kericho Homecraft Centre the women were taught sewing, handcraft, embroidery, knitting, laundry, cookery, housewifery, agriculture, childcare, hygiene, home nursing, first aid marketing and accounts (KNA, DP/1/75). In 1962, the courses which were offered at the Kisii District Homecraft Training Centre, mainly, comprised housewives courses which included children care, family budget, community group work and activities, nutrition and agriculture. Others included; animal husbandry, bee keeping, among others (KNA, DP/1/75). Gusii women were able to transform knowledge acquired through such training into economic ventures. However, much of the skills acquired were put into practice as unpaid domestic work for the benefit of their family members.

According to the report of Miss Shepherd's, homecraft training officer, on her inspection visits, in 1956, in North Mugirango, she realised that the babies of this area were well taken care of. From the club exhibitions; Bonyunyu group, in particular, had good knitting. Cakes from Banana flour were shown and tasted good. At the Kisii hall the women's work was seen which included; banana flour, groundnut oil, baskets in various materials to smocked dresses and knitted sweaters. One club put on a good exhibit of African utensils, pottery, gourds and so on (KNA, DP/1/75). Whereas most

of the items made by women participating in home craft training were used at home, some of them were sold to generate money for family use.

Some of these women were employed by other women to assist them in taking care of children. Kemunto (O, I) narrates that an Asian woman preferred to employ her as an *ayah* to other women who had not gone to the home craft centre. She was paid five schillings a month, money that enabled her to buy the Asian clothes for her family. According to this informant, those that attended the home craft training were able to make better products especially baskets and mats, most of which they could sell to the Europeans. This type of education therefore did not help these women much to move to the formal sector. On the contrary, it enhanced the position of women in the informal trading activities.

4.5 Sale of Farm Products by Gusii Women

There was rapid population growth after the Second World War (Maxon 1989). The table below shows an estimate of the population of people in the post war period. Among the reasons for the increase in population was the return of the war veterans.

Table 5Table 4.3 Showing Gusii Population Density Per Squire Mile.

LOCATION	1948	1962
Bassi	231	505
Kitutu	349	864
Machoge	302	651
Wanjare	302	480
North Mugirango	314	808
Nyaribari	368	632
South Mugirango	262	502

Source: S. H. Ominde, *Land and population Movements in Kenya* (Evanston, North Western University Press, 1968),197.

The creation of two administration centres in Gusii land i.e Nyamira and Kisii town also led to the migration of people from the rural areas to these urban centres.The

colonial authorities separated Gusiiland to two administrative divisions in 1958. One was North Kisii constituting of Kitutu, Wanjare, and North Mugirango; and was administered from Nyamira in North Mugirango. South Kisii on the other hand included South Mugirango, Bassi, Nyaribari and Machoge which was administered from Kisii.

The increase in population especially in the urban areas led to increased demand for food. The foodstuffs that were sold and bought at local markets in Gusiiland included; maize, millet, sorghum, bananas, sweet potatoes, ground nuts, tomatoes, lemons, onions, kales, cabbages and sugarcane. The farmers also used to sell milk to Kenya Cooperative Creameries (K.C.C.), their animals as well as hides and skins. Among the livestock kept included sheep, goats among others (KNA, DP/3/9). Even though Gusii men participated heavily in these trades, there were some Gusii women who also participated in the same. This is bearing in mind that some women were widowed and heads of households. These women had to engage in the informal sector trade in order to support their families.

Women greatly participated in potato trade. This was because the potatoes were in great demand by urban non-African residents in Gusiiland. According to the letter written by the district commissioner to the provincial commissioner on 4th Dec, 1940, there was a small quantity of potatoes grown to supply the small local demand of the few European and Indian consumers in the district. These were, for the most part sold by the producer to the consumer direct without the intervention of a middleman (KNA, DP/3/10).

Some women specialised in vegetable selling during this period. Given that there was mass migration of men to the urban centres in search of jobs, vegetables became in

high demand in the towns especially Kisii and Nyamira Town. According to Kerubo, she could go to the village where she could buy a lot of vegetables at a lower price and could resell them at a higher price in town. Since she was able to accumulate a lot of profit, she became a full time vegetable seller.

Some women started selling cooked groundnuts and sugarcane. According to Nyaboke (O, I, 12/10/2016), following the death of her husband, her brothers in law took her piece of land and left her with a small piece of land that was unproductive because she did not have sons. She was therefore forced to find an alternative means of earning a living. She could go to Miruka Market, where she bought groundnuts which she could boil and at times fry. She could then sell them in the market on market days and at the school gates on days that were not market days. She could also buy and resell sugarcane.

4.5.1 Women and Specialisation in Trade.

The women who migrated from one market to the other, buying and reselling goods specialised in doing this business. This was because there was high demand for food especially in Kisii Town due to increase in population. Given that Some of these women did not have fertile land, which could enable them produce, enough food and get more money, this became a good avenue for them that could made them financially independent. Some women specialised in selling fuel to the town dwellers. Given that, the modern types of fuel such as charcoal, paraffin and gas were expensive for the African town dwellers, they preferred to buy firewood. The collecting of fire wood was a domain of women. Some women resulted to collecting and selling fire wood to the Kisii Town dwellers. They were able to make huge profits through this activity which enabled them to build modern houses, educate their children and buy the Indian goods.

4.6 Gusii women in Stone Breaking Enterprises

The women in Rangenyoo started breaking stones after WWII. The reasons as to why they started this trading activity was because some of the men that had gone to fight in WWII never came back. Since the women according to the Gusii culture could not be remarried, she had to stay at that home.

Some women, found themselves in this activity of breaking stones because their husbands had migrated to towns to look for jobs. There were some men who were taken to central Kenya, while others went as far as Tanzania. Majority of the men married other women at the places they went and could therefore not send their wives money home. Given that most places in this area had a lot of stones, there was no much agriculture that could be done. They started breaking stones alongside men which they could sell to the Europeans for construction purposes. The women, whose husbands were still there, could cook and take food to their husbands. These women could attend to other duties in the morning which included going to the farm to do farming activities and could join their husbands in the evening (*ekiamarogoba*) in breaking the stones, collecting and putting the ballast together and carrying them to the road side. They also assisted in loading the vehicles. The stones could be sold by use of wheelbarrows. One wheel barrow of stones could be sold at one schilling. Men and women could sell their stones and each could keep his or her own money. The men could not claim the money earned by the women. The money earned could be used to pay school fees for the children who were going to school and buying cows and goats. The women could use such money to buy pots from the Luo which they used for cooking, storing water and the gusii traditional beer as well as baskets and fish from the Luo Kemunto, R, (O,I 26/03/2015).

A number of buildings at this area benefited from this economic activity. They included; the Rangenyo catholic church which was built in 1947, The Rangenyo convent, Nyamaiya hospital and North Mugirango hall which was used by the Gusii elders to settle cases and disputes, among the Gusii. There are Gusii men who were also able to build stone buildings during this time. These men basically used to sell ropes and by so doing were able to earn a lot of money.

4.7 Traditional Gusii Birth Attendants and Medicine Women

Even though hospitals by this time had been built, most Gusii women still preferred to give birth from home. There were traditional midwives who assisted the women to give birth. Unlike in the past where these women could be given finger millet in exchange for their services, in the post war era they were given money in return. It was only highly complicated problems that could be referred to the hospital.

The medicine women also continued with their duties. In most cases they provided herbs to young children because by this time it was very few women who knew about post- natal care for children. Even those who had knowledge of such facilities preferred the traditional herbs which could be boiled or burnt into ashes to form medicinal ash (*obosaro*) that could be licked. Some diseases such as headache, malaria or stomach ache could also be treated in the same way. Sometimes one was required to inhale the smoke of the herbs when it was still burning (*goikamerera*) and could recover from their illness Nyaboke, I (O.I 2/04/2015).

By this time the problem of the sexually transmitted infections was in the increase. It is said that most of the men who had gone to fight in the WWII, came when they were sick. They transmitted those diseases to other people especially through marriage and prostitution. Prostitution was a lucrative trade by this time because many couples

were having marital problems. Many of the women who suffered from these diseases, in most cases, got medical assistance from the medicine women. Unlike in the past where they could be paid in kind, in the post war period, they were given money in exchange for their services. It was generally believed that whoever did not pay for the services, could not recover from her or his illness even if one took the herbs Kemunto, T (O.I 21/04/2015).

4.8 Women in Illegal Gusii Native Beer Brewing and Selling

By this time the Gusii women had advanced their knowledge of beer production from the traditional beer (*ributia*) to the Nubian distilled beer (*Changaa*). Most people preferred *changaa* because it had a better taste than the traditional one. The significance of the traditional beer was also reducing because previously it was made by a wife to her husband and friends or could be made for the joint rotating men party that could be used for farming and ceremonies such as weddings.

By this time most men had gone to look for jobs in the towns while others had migrated to the Kericho tea Estates. In most homes the men were absent. The weddings had also reduced because most girls eloped, because men did not have enough money with which to pay the bride price since they were given low wages. Besides, the fields or land on which finger millet (the major raw material for production of beer) could be grown had been reduced due to the introduction of maize and cash crops. 'Free beer' was therefore limited.

Due to the high demand for *changaa*, most women preferred to make it because of the profits that accrued from it. Even though it had been outlawed, it was secretly made and sold from home. Holes were dug in which this *Changaa* was kept. In most cases, men went to the homes where this liquor was made to take it from there, but

sometimes, the women could pass it from house to house in the evening and sell it
Moraa, M (O.I 22/05/2015).

Men, such as those who had participated in the WWII found this liquor to be of help as it could temporarily relieve them the frustrations of the unfulfilled promises of land and jobs by the Europeans. The places that they met to take this liquor also provided a good forum for them to deliberate on how to get their independence from the Europeans. Some women used their profits to build rental houses. These houses were mainly rented to the women who had moved to town to do prostitution. Majority of the women who became prostitutes, were those who were facing marriage problems, or had been forced to get married to the men they did not want. Prostitution became a lucrative business because at Kisii Town, there were European men who had not come with their wives. From this money, the women were able to get money with which to pay rent, to sustain their life in Kisii town and could send some money home to sustain their children and send them to school. A house was rented out at Ksh 2/= per month (Nyamusi, L O.I 30/04/2015).

The high demand for the Nubian Gin (*changaa*) led to large scale production and specialisation by some women. Some women started selling fermented and fried flour (*chinkara*), which they could sell to the women who manufactured the gin. Some women specialised in selling finger millet that had been made to grow a little bit, in preparation for grinding it to make flour that could be fermented (*ememera*). This finger millet could sometimes be sold at the market or could even be sold from home. Bosibori, K (O.I 25/04/2015), Said that she changed from small scale production of the gin to large scale production. Women from Kisii town could come and buy the gin in smaller quantities from her and could go and resell it. She was able to amass much

money with which her husband used to buy iron sheet roof for their hut, He also bought a bicycle and educated some of their children.

4.9 Gusii Women in Banana and Sugarcane Growing

Bananas and sugarcane were among the crops that used to be grown by the Gusii right from the pre- colonial period (Maxon1989: 25). This practice continued to the colonial era, though on a small scale. A banana grove could last for 50years and produce food to support several people (Green, E 2008: 6). The dominance of banana growing in the traditional farming system minimized soil erosion and other destructive effects (Turner 1990:536). The Gusii could ripen the bananas and eat them as a fruit. According to Nyaboke, O I, since the bananas used to be in plenty at the onset of colonialism, no one bothered to sell them. However due to pressure of paying taxes and the need to buy the European goods, some started selling the bananas at the market places, even though the buyers were very few.

Given that it was a food crop, it was mostly planted by women. According to Moraa, O I, the bananas were not only used as food. She could also use the banana leaves in the production of beer, especially in covering the hole in which the beer was hidden because this was an illegal practice. After the Second World War, there was increased market for the bananas. Moraa further explains that she started transporting the bananas to Kisii Town where she sold them to the Nubians, Asians and the African men and women who had moved to town to seek for jobs. She could sell both raw and ripped bananas. She was able to get money with which she assisted her husband to build a house with an iron sheet roof. Zubbedda, O I said that she could buy bunches of bananas from the Gusii women at the market and transport them to her brothers and sisters in Kibera at Nairobi.

Sugarcane, just like bananas was among the food crops used to be grown by the Gusii. Sugarcane had been grown in Kenya since 1902 in small quantities and two Asian owned sugar mills had been built at Miwani near Kisumu and Ramisi on the Coast, though Kenya imported most of its sugar (Hornsby, C. 2012: 134). According to Great Britain (1946), sugarcane was grown for commercial purposes in large plantations by a few European and Asian Companies. Each plantation had its own factory. The Gusii on the other hand grew the sugarcane as a food crop. Its significance was however realized at around 1930s with the coming of Agikuyu settlers to Gusii land. According to Onchong'a (O I), from the Agikuyu he learnt that the juice of sugarcane gave porridge a sweeter taste, when mixed with it.

This, therefore, encouraged the Gusii people to plant a lot of sugarcane. Moraa, O I said that she could take the sugarcane to the market and sell it though this was not a common practice among the Gusii women. Her husband had died while fighting in the WWII and it was not possible for her to get married to another man because this was against the Gusii culture. Therefore, she had to use all means possible to sustain her family by herself because her in-laws were not very supportive. She not only sold the sugarcane at the markets but also at Sironga School, where she sold the sugarcane to the pupils.

Bonareri, O I together with her husband was able to accumulate a lot of money from sugarcane. This was due to the introduction of the Nubian Gin which required sugar as one of its ingredients to sweeten it. Since most of the sugar was imported and therefore expensive, most women turned to the use of jaggery. Bonareri with her husband bought five bulls whose work was to help in squeezing the sugarcane to obtain the sugarcane juice which she could then heat to obtain jaggery. She could then sell it to the women who were responsible for the production of *chang'aa*. While

some women bought the jaggery from her in small scale, others bought it in plenty for purposes of reselling it to other people because it was in high demand.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to investigate and analyse the changes that took place over time in the economic activities of the women of Nyamira South Sub County between 1900 to 1963. A pre-colonial study was however, done to provide a historical base for this study. The objectives included; To examine the participation of women in the pre-colonial economy of the Abagusii of Nyamira County by 1900, To interrogate the extent to which colonialism transformed women's economic engagement in Nyamira County between 1900 and 1945 and To assess the participation of women in the informal economy in Nyamira County in the period 1945-1963.

This study was premised on the following; women participation in the provision of labour in the traditional economy of Nyamira South Sub County complimented that of men, colonialism led to transformed social economic roles of the women of Nyamira South Sub County and With men's engagement in World Wars women turned in greater numbers to the informal sector to sustain their families. The literature reviewed in this work established that some studies had been undertaken on the transformation of Women's economic activities in colonial Kenya. However most of those studies were done in the big urban areas of Kenya which included Nairobi, Mombasa, Nyeri among other places.also, little scholarly study had been done on the transformation of the women's economic activities in Nyamira South Sub County in the years 1900-1963.

The study employed oral interviews to collect primary data and archival sources. Secondary data was obtained from written sources such as books, journals, articles, thesis and dissertations. They were obtained from the Kenyatta University Library, Kisii University Library and Kenya Public Libraries.

This study is significant in the sense that it documents the role of women in the informal sector in Gusiiland and will open new avenues for further research on women in the informal sector in Kenya.

We have applied the concepts of feminist and articulation of modes of production theories in our examination of Gusii women's participation in economic activities in the pre-colonial and colonial and in the analysis of the Gusii encounter with the colonial capitalist mode of production.

In our analysis of the pre-colonial social economic organization of the Gusii, we showed that labour was gender based. The Gusii women participated in a number of economic activities which included; growing different types of food crops for household consumption and for exchange for other goods that they did not have. The fact that it was women who cultivated the farms, gave them authority over the farm produce even though the Gusii culture did not allow them to own Land.

The Participation of women in Agriculture enabled them to produce surplus crops which they exchanged for cows which could enable them acquire children by marrying, for those women that did not have children or give their sons to pay dowry. The acquisition of more children led to increased labour supply which was essential in the cultivation of more land. Apart from cows the women were able to acquire other goods through trade such as baskets for harvesting and storing grains, pots for fetching and storing water, salt, ropes, and mats among other things from their neighbours.

Apart from agriculture, there were women who earned their living by being medicine women and circumcising girls. Even though the Gusii traditional beer was not sold, it was used to acquire more labour on the farms. The women could prepare beer which

could be given to the men who assisted them in cultivating land. The women could also use work parties in the cultivation of land and in the preparation of beer during ceremonies. These work parties were rotational hence helpful to every woman. Even though most pots and baskets were got from the Luo, there were some that were made by the Gusii women. They could make them and exchange for other goods.

Chapter three focused on the colonization of Gusii land by the British. The entry of the British in Gusii land led to alienation of Gusii land for European settlement and building of the European administration offices which reduced the land on which the Gusii women cultivated. Apart from land alienation, the British introduced money, taxes and forced labour in order to quickly integrate the Gusii into colonial capitalism.

Since the women were not many at times used in the provision of labour on European farms, they most of the time took over all the duties of cultivation including those of their absentee husbands. Unlike in the pre-colonial times where they exchanged goods for goods, they now exchanged goods for cash in order to aid their husbands in paying taxes because the wages their husbands were given were low. The desire to purchase imported goods also encouraged women to work hard on their farms in order to get money with which to buy those goods.

The introduction of new crops in Gusii land led to changes in the goods sold by the women of Nyamira south Sub County. When maize was introduced, the women started selling and maize flour more than finger millet. They started replacing finger millet cultivation with maize cultivation. There were increased trading activities among the women because of the several markets that were opened by the Europeans during the colonial period. They moved from one market to another selling their goods not only to the Africans but also to the Indians. They travelled as far as Kisii

Town to sell their goods to the Nubians. Some women ended up being full time migrant traders. They could buy goods from one market and resell them to another market.

The Gusii traditional beer started being sold during the colonial period. This was because many men moved to Nyamira town to look for jobs and could not be able to get access to the beer made for them by their wives. They therefore had to buy beer from the women for refreshment purposes. The traditional liquor was sold secretly because the women were not allowed to sell it. The medicine women also started giving their services in exchange for money unlike in the past when they were paid in kind.

The women also started baby-sitting the children of the Indians from where they were able to get extra money. The Gusii women not only sold Pots to their fellow Africans but also to the Europeans for flower vessels. The interaction of the Gusii women with the Kikuyu women led to the introduction of the idea of selling food in the market by the Gusii women. The interaction of the Gusii women with the Nubians led to the adoption of the Nubian gin by the Gusii which enabled them to make more money because it was at a higher demand than the traditional beer because it had a better test. The women were able to make large sells during the world depression because of their produce was sold to the black market because it offered better prices for their goods unlike the official market.

Chapter four examined the post WWII period. This era was characterized with mass cultivation of cash crops such as Tea, Pyrethrum and Coffee and privatization of land following the introduction of the Swynnerton Plan. This further reduced the land on which women grew their food crops hence further reducing their authority over land

even though their role as cultivators did not change. They were forced to work on the cash crop farms of their husbands and plant food crops on the side because their role as food providers for the family did not change.

Due to the decreased land for cultivation, the women were not able to produce enough surplus goods for trade. They were therefore forced to buy from other women and then resell at the market centers. In the process some women specialized in the large scale selling of farm produce while others specialized in the retail selling of farm produce.

Specialization was also experienced in the African liquor preparation. Some women specialized in the selling of the raw materials for preparing the beer, while others specialized in large scale manufacture and selling of the beer and others specialized in the retail selling of the beer.

The death of many men in the WWII, forced some other women to stone breaking. Many at times they could cultivate their farms in the morning hours and break stones in the afternoon hours with an aim of getting extra cash for their families.

The education that the women acquired from the home crafts enabled them to engage in informal practices such as baking cakes and selling them, making baskets for sell, smoking clothes and knitting sweaters. Circumcision for girls also became a lucrative business since this was a culture that was cherished by many. Unlike in the past where this skill could be inherited from grandmother to granddaughter, many women leant to circumcise girls regardless of their position in the family.

By the time Kenya was getting its independence the Gusii women's indigenous economic organization had been radically transformed from its pre- colonial state to the informal sector in colonial Kenya.

Further research can be done on; Transformation in Women's informal activities in other communities in Kenya, Transformation in men's economic engagement in Kenya during the colonial period and Transformation in women's informal activities in the post- colonial period.

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KNA, DP/3/11 Agriculture, crop production, marketing and sales of produce, produce inspection. 16 January 1939- 30 August 1947

KNA, DP/18/11 Kisii law panel minutes. 11 June 1963- 11 June 1963

LIST OF INFORMANTS

Alfred Morendi; 90 Years Interviewed on 17th April 2015 at Rangenyo

Bochaberi, Truphena 87 Years Interviewed on 1st May 2015

Bosibori Jeriah 91 Years Interviewed on 5th May 2015

Bosibori Lidya 96 Years Interviewed on 25th May 2015

Boyani Elmeldah 88 Years Interviewed on 23rd April 2015

Jane Nyaboke. 85 Years Interviewed on 17th April 2015 at Rangenyo.

Janet Nyaboke 80 Years Interviewed on 2nd April 2015

Jared Onchari 85 Years Interviewed on 3rd May 2015

Julius Rioba; 86 Years; Interviewed on 24th April 2015 at Bonyunyu

Kebaso, Ooga 89 Years Interviewed on 24th April 2015

Kemunto Ruth. 70 Years Interviewed on 26th April 2015 at Kebirigo

Kemunto, Sophia; 75 Years; Interviewed on 16th August at Nyachururu

Kemunto, Teresa 89 Years Interviewed on 21st April 2015

Kemunto, Vane 80 Years Interviewed on 20th April 2015

Keremensia Bosibori; 84 Years; Interviewed on 24th April 2015 at Bonyunyu

Keremensia Ongoro. 81 Years Interviewed on 14th April 2015

Keremensiah Billiah 83 Years Interviewed on 2nd May 2015

Kerubo, Elizabeth 82 Years Interviewed on 12th April 2015

Kibagendi, Ezekiel; 85 Years; Interviewed on 18th August at Sironga

Marasi, Elijah 92 Years Interviewed on 23rd June 2015

Masira. Joseph 93 Years Interviewed on 20th April 2015

Momanyi Jeremiah. 83 Years Interviewed on 18th April 2015 at Nyairicha.

Mongina Mellen 96 Years Interviewed on 1st April 2015

Moraa Mary 95 Years Interviewed on 22nd April 2015

Morendi Andrew 87 years Interviewed on 17th April 2015

Nyaboke Irene. 80 Years Interviewed on 18th April 2015 at Kebirigo.

Nyaboke Miriam 85 years Interviewed on 1st April 2015

Nyaboke, Irine 94 Years Interviewed on 17th April 2015

Nyamusi Linet 87 years Interviewed on 30th April 2015

Nyamusi, Maria; 80 years; Interviewed on 16th August 2015 at Tinga

Nyanchera, Martha 90 Years interviewed 10th April 2015

Onchonga Jared. 90 Years Interviewed on 17th April 2015 at Kebirigo

Ongwae Samwel 93 Years Interviewed on 18th April 2015

Rioba Jared 97 Years Interviewed on 25th April 2015

Rioba, Joseph. 90 Years Interviewed on 15th April 2015

Samwel Omwoyo. 87 Years Interviewed on 16th April 2015

Wang'are Teresa 87 Years Interviewed on 15th April 2015

Zaida Mohammed 92 Years Interviewed on 6th April 2015

APPENDICES**APPENDIX 1****INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

This research is meant for academic purpose only. It is intended to find out the participation of Women in the informal Economy in Nyamira South Sub County. The following items will be used to guide the researcher during the interview process.

Name _____

Sex _____

Year of Birth _____

Place of Birth _____

Marital Status _____

Racial group _____

Address _____

The participation of Gusii women in traditional economy in Nyamira South sub-County up to 1900.

What activities did Gusii women engage in before colonization?

What activities did Gusii men engage in before colonization?

What products did Gusii women produce (pots, baskets, beads etc.) before colonization?

What products did men produce before colonization?

Did the Abagusii people sell and buy products among themselves before colonization?

If yes to the above question:

(a) What did women sell and buy?

(b) What did men sell and buy?

Did the Abagusii people engage in trade (sell and buy goods and services) with their neighbouring ethnic communities (Luo, Kipsigis, Kuria and Maasai)?

If yes to the above question:

What did women sell and buy?

What did men sell and buy?

The impact of colonialism on women's economic engagement in colonial economy in Nyamira South Sub County between 1900 and 1945.

Did Gusii women continue to engage in their old activities after colonization?

Did Gusii men continue to engage in their old activities after colonization?

Are there any activities that the Abagusii men abandoned when colonization set in?

If yes to the above question, which activities did they abandon and why?

Are there any activities that the Abagusii women abandoned when colonization set in?

If yes to the above question, which activities and why?

What new activities did Gusii women engage in after colonization?

If yes to the above Question, which activities?

What new activities did Gusii men engage in after colonization?

If yes to the above question, which activities and why?

Were there men who went to fight in the world wars?

If yes to the above question, how did that affect the women?

Were their men who migrated from Gusii during the colonial period?

If yes to the above question, why did they migrate and how did that affect the women?

The participation of women in the informal sector after the second World War in Nyamira South Sub County between 1945 and 1963.

What kind of economic activities did the women do after the Second World War?

What kind of economic activities did the men do after the Second World War.

Which goods and services did Gusii women:

(a) Sell to their fellow Abagusii people?

(b) Buy from their fellow Abagusii people?

Which good and services did Gusii women

Sell to Europeans?

Buy from Europeans?

Which goods and services did Gusii women:

(a) Sell to Asians?

(b) Buy from Asians?

Which goods and services did Gusii women:

Sell to their Neighboring ethnic communities (Luo, Maasai and Kipsigis)?

Buy from their Neighboring ethnic communities (Luo, Maasai and Kipsigis)?


What did Gusii women sell and buy in their homes?

What did Gusii women sell and buy in their local markets?

What did Gusii women sell and buy from outside their district?

APPENDIX II

AUTHORIZATION LETTER FROM KENYATTA UNIVERSITY


KENYATTA UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL

E-mail: dean-graduate@ku.ac.ke P.O. Box 43844, 00100
NAIROBI, KENYA
Website: www.ku.ac.ke Tel. 810901 Ext. 57330

Internal Memo

FROM: Dean, Graduate School DATE: 5th August, 2015

TO: Nyaboke Ayuka Mildred REF: C50/CE/21891/2012
C/o History Department.

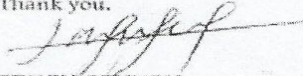
SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL
=====

This is to inform you that Graduate School Board, at its meeting of 29th July 2015, approved your Research Proposal for the M.A. Degree Entitled, "Transformation in Abagusii Women's Informal Economy. The Case of Nyandira County, Kenya. C.A.D 1900-1963".

You may now proceed with data collection, subject to clearance with the Director General, Commission for Science, Technology & Innovation.

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

Thank you.




EDWIN OBUNGU
FOR: DEAN, GRADUATE SCHOOL

c.c. Chairman, Department of History

Supervisors:

1. Dr. Susan Mwangi
C/o Department of History, Archaeology and Political Studies
Kenyatta University
2. Dr. Miguda
C/o Department of History, Archaeology and Political studies
Kenyatta University

**APPENDIX III: NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY
AND INNOVATION RESEARCH PERMIT.**


**NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,
TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION**

NAICDS/DP/16/27768-13052

12th August, 2016

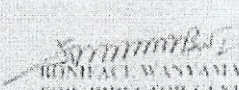
Mildred Namboko Azila
Kenya Institute of
P.O. Box 43844-00100
NAIROBI

RE: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION

Following your application for authority to carry out research on "*Study of gash women in the informal economy in Nyamira South Sub County, Nyamira County, Kenya. C. 1966-1968.*" I am pleased to inform you that you have been authorized to undertake research in Nyamira County for the period ending 11th August, 2017.

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

In recognition of the research, you are expected to submit two hard copies and one soft copy in pdf of the research report to this office.


EUNICE WANYAMA
FOR: DIRECTOR-GENERAL/CO

Copy to:

The County Commissioner
Nyamira County

The County Director of Education
Nyamira County