

The study examines the impact of differential gender access to agricultural resources on production in Nandi from 1954 to 2000. It begins with an attempt to trace gender access to agricultural resources in pre-colonial Nandi from the nineteenth century to 1953. The aim is to determine the changes in gender access to agricultural resources before the period of study.

Feminist political economy is applied to analyze the changes in gender access to agricultural resources in Nandi economy. Feminist political economy analyses how the complex interaction between economic, social and ideological aspects has influenced gender relations of production in Nandi. Using the paradigm it is possible to demonstrate how change in institutional arrangement in the society constrained prospects of equality in gender relations. In response, gender politics come to focus on social roles in which women as agents of change aspired to initiate improvement of their status. The study makes the assumption that the measures which were undertaken by the colonial authorities to reform agriculture contributed to the decline of agricultural production in Nandi. Moreover, these reforms adversely affected gender relation of production in the region.

The study is an outcome of the use of oral data collected in the field, archival material in Kenya National Archives and secondary data mostly books and journals on the subject from various libraries. The main findings were that political, social and ideological factors interacted in a complex manner and over time influenced gender access to land, control over labour and produce, extension services, technology and credit. Gender relations are essentially perceived as a notion of inequitable power relations. In the Nandi society, women had less power than men. Consequently, they were unable to control most of the agricultural resources. The strict control over women's access to resources in Nandi was frustrating to some women. Alternatives did exist for strong-minded women who sought to evade the strict control over access to resources. Some of these activities included running away from their marriage to urban centers, engaging in woman to woman marriage, and also engaging in income generating activities without informing their husbands.