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**FACING KIRINYAGA: A SOCIOECONOMIC HISTORY OF RESOURCE USE
AND FORESTRY INTERVENTION IN SOUTHERN MOUNT KENYA**

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University of California, Santa Barbara, 1988

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ABSTRACT

Facing Kirinyaga:
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and Forestry Intervention in Southern Mount Kenya
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This study analyzes the relationship between socioeconomic change and resource use in a rural Kenyan district during the past century. It considers how and why land use and livelihood have changed among the Ndia and Gichugu Kikuyu in Kirinyaga District, a densely populated region of high agro-economic potential on the southern slopes of Mount Kenya. The purpose is to illuminate the multidimensional nature and historic roots of the "crisis" of livelihood and development in a rural Kenyan district. Specifically, the study concentrates on six aspects of rural life: demographic change, especially patterns of growth and settlement; agrarian production, including land tenure, food and cash crop interventions, and agrarian institutions; nonfarm activities such as migrant wage labor and trade; socioeconomic and political structure, particularly the issues of inequality and political representation; the management of community forestry resources such as wooded commons, sacred groves, and forest reserves; and local adaptation to crisis, including environmental stress, adverse market conditions, and warfare.

The process of societal change in Kirinyaga is viewed from an anthropological perspective, emphasizing the linkages between social structure, culture, and political economy. The study is

also concerned with natural resources and their use in a specific social setting. It describes how agricultural and forest resources in Kirinyaga form part of a very dynamic socioeconomic system which has become increasingly integrated into the world economy and the national political arena.

The research for the study included a survey of over 570 families in four agro-ecozones within Kirinyaga, interviews with key informants, and use of local and national archives.