

THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN THE POLITICAL-ECONOMY OF  
KENYA: A CASE STUDY OF BUKUSU WOMEN IN BUNGOMA DISTRICT,  
1902 - 1960. //

M. A. THESIS

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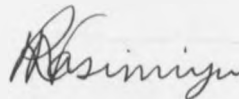
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Declaration

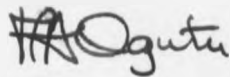
This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University.



Ruth Nasimiyu

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University Supervisor.

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Dr. M. A. Ogutu

Dedicated to My Father and Mother, Nelson and Esther  
KIBITI WAPANG'ANA, for their unfailing support.

9.43 ✓

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However, any errors, mistakes, or misinterpretations are entirely my own responsibility.

NOTES OF ABBREVIATIONS

AR	.....	Annual Report
CCEA	.....	Christian Church Education Association
C.M.S.	.....	Church Missionary Society
D.C.	.....	District Commissioner
P.C.	.....	Provincial Commissioner
NAD	.....	Native Affairs Department
KNA	.....	Kenya National Archives
N.K.	.....	North 'Kavirondo'
N.N.	.....	North Nyanza
E.N.	.....	Elgon Nyanza

## A B S T R A C T

This is a local case study. Research was conducted in Bungoma District in Western Province of Kenya from November, 1981 to June 1982. The main emphasis of the study is on the participation of women in agricultural production in the district during the colonial period.

The study opens with a discussion of women's participation in the pre-colonial economy. At the turn of the century, Bukusu women in Bungoma District played a critical role in the production of food for the community, a role which also called for their considerable contribution to the resources of the households. Women were, therefore, not economically dependent on men. However, with colonialism, new economic patterns were introduced and they significantly changed the value of women's economic roles in the community and the household. These changes also meant increased workload for women, given the low level of technology. A pattern of women's dependency on men was created and the colonial government played a major role in initiating and consolidating the dependency, especially through the Swynnerton Plan of 1954. Land consolidation and registration changed women's land rights because the land was registered in the men's names.

Furthermore, considering the dependency framework, resources were heavily channelled to men in the form of education, employment, improved technology and agricultural extension services. The limited educational opportunities for women meant that only few of them were found in professional employment. As a result, women had little access to cash in an agricultural



economy controlled by men.

Women, therefore, resorted to raising cash from trading activities such as brewing beer, petty marketing of agricultural produce, ~~poultry~~ and poultry products. They formed groups to enhance their status and to increase their incomes. Women's groups are utilized by women as a strategy to avoid extreme individual dependency on men for financial assistance.

In the final analysis, we observed that women's workload did not reduce given the assistance they received from the women's groups. However, we recommend that improved and appropriate technology in the agricultural sector be instituted with a view to improving and alleviating women's workload.

P R E F A C E

I was inspired into undertaking this study after reading the works of such scholars as Esther Boserup, in her book, Women's Role in Economic Development, Margaret Jean Hay in her Ph.D. thesis, "Luo Women and Economic change during the Colonial Period," and Achola Pala Okeyo, in her paper, "Definitions of Women and Development: An African Perspective". Okeyo's work highlighted the need for micro-research on rural households because decisions on production, consumption, marketing and education are complex household decisions in which the woman is often a key factor and participant. She further illustrated the need for local researchers to pursue research on women in rural households.

What concerns me in this study is primarily the changing economic role of women in the Bukusu society in Bungoma District in Western Province during the colonial period. This is a case-study and it is hoped that it will go a long way to contribute to the new and rapidly expanding field of women's studies.

The study is divided into six chapters with a conclusion. Chapter one presents the framework on which this study is based. In Chapter Two, the geographical setting of the region under study is made. A vivid description of the role women played in the economic set-up of the pre-colonial Bukusu society is also presented. Chapter three focuses on the new economic patterns introduced during the colonial period and how they changed the role of women in the society.

Here, it is argued that women's dependency on men was created at this time and that the colonial state played a major role in initiating and consolidating that dependency through the Swynnerton Plan of 1954. In this context, resources were heavily channelled to men in the form of technological innovations, employment, agricultural extension services and education. Further, the transition to a cash economy affected the division of labour according to sex. With the rise of urban job opportunities, men migrated to urban areas, and the gap they left in a basic farm production was filled by women. This led to increased workload for women.

Chapter Four discusses the development of markets and trade in the District. We begin the chapter by analysing the pre-colonial patterns of trade which we link up with the modern trade patterns. Through trade, women were able to acquire independent property from their husbands. They were also able to raise the badly needed cash.

Chapter Five examines the limited educational opportunities available to women. Access to schooling in low-income families was often sex-specific. It was usually the female child who dropped out of school to reduce the financial cost of schooling within the household unit. Further, the credentials schooling provided were used as a selection mechanism for acquiring professional employment. A substantial portion of women was, therefore, effectively excluded from formal employment.

However, women's groups were used as a strategy not only in reducing the extreme individual dependency on men for financial assistance but also in coping with now expanded work responsibility on the farms. This is what we analyse in Chapter Six.

In this study, we have relied mainly on published material as well as on oral information collected between November, 1981 and June, 1982. Official documents at the Kenya National Archives were also consulted.

However, there were some limitations. There was the general lack of statistical information on the subject matter. In certain cases, this meant scrutinizing sources for any information that would provide a clue to the female participation in either agriculture, market activities, education or women's organisations. In some cases, there was a lot of insufficiency or even complete lack of comparative data for analysis.

## CHAPTER ONE

### I N T R O D U C T I O N

#### Statement of the Problem

This study is an analysis of the changes in the roles that Bukusu women played in the production process in the articulation of the pre-capitalist modes of production into the market economy. The study will assess the nature and extent to which women in Bungoma District were disadvantaged and over-burdened in the course of their participation in Kenya's colonial political economy.

In this study, I wish to investigate the role played by women in the agricultural production process. I wish to investigate some of the problems that women encountered in the process of the articulation of the pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production. In the pre-capitalist mode of production, women were in control of agricultural production. It is against this background that the capitalist mode of production was being introduced. This study seeks to investigate some of the problems that women encountered in the process of the articulation of modes of production in Bungoma District.

#### Theoretical Framework

My concern in this study is to get an appropriate theory, to enable me to explain problems that affected women in the course of their participation in agricultural production. What is adopted for this particular study is the underdevelopment and dependency theory. African countries have been placed in a disadvantaged position because of the

international division of labour, where African countries have continued to provide raw materials to the industrialised countries like Europe and the United States of America. These raw materials are primarily agricultural products and therefore women are at the centre of the production of these raw materials. That is why I chose to investigate the role they play in the agricultural production processes within the perspectives of underdevelopment and dependency.

A lot has been written on the under-development of the periphery. However, very little of this literature has addressed the problem of ~~the~~ women within the same parameters. And indeed, no such study has been done on Bukusu women. We intend to delineate the role of women in the context of under-development. To assess adequately the role of women in the colonial political-economy of Kenya, it is also essential to understand the roles they played in the pre-capitalist mode of production, that is, before the advent of colonialism. Furthermore, it is important to point out that the articulation of modes of production is such that these modes overlap over a given period of time.

In contributing to the urgent need to study the history of women, Professor B.A. Ogot suggested that:

... we should look at female experience in various cultures and societies throughout time,

and then look at the cumulative, as it were, history of women. That is when we should look at the role of women in pre-capitalist and pre-industrial societies where their roles tended to be that (sic) of delegates of families, and women in capitalist societies increasingly aspiring to roles as individuals and members of the community in their own right.<sup>1</sup>

We therefore intend to delineate the role women played in the pre-capitalist mode of production in the pre-colonial social formation in Bukusu society. Furthermore, this study will also endeavour to show how these roles changed in the articulation of modes of production during the colonial period.

The penetration of finance capital into Kenya was done through British colonization from 1895 onwards. With colonization, the incorporation of Kenya into the world capitalist system was established. The creation of an export oriented economy in the country was the next logical step. A series of levels of exploitation of natural and human resources through commodity production was set in motion. The commodity production aimed at satisfying the metropolitan social and economic needs. In the process, maximum profits were made through the realisation of

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1. B.A. Ogot, "The silences in the old narratives or new trends in cultural history." Paper presented during The Eastern Africa History conference on "Social and Cultural History of Eastern Africa." in Naivasha, 12th - 15th November, 1981 p.10.

1a. For more information on the penetration of finance capital into Kenya, see Nicola Swainson, The Development of Corpora Capitalism in Kenya 1918-1977, Heinemann, London 1980

excessive surplus value. The participation of Bukusu women in the Political Economy of colonial Kenya will be examined within this framework.

### Significance of the Study

A general survey of literature on women in Africa and Kenya in particular shows that the study of women has not been adequately done. Professor B.A. Ogot, must have noted the absence of scholarly work in this particular field of study when he stated;

First, the history of women ... What have African historians done in this field? The answer is "very little." Women feature in every culture and every society and therefore we must think seriously of integrating the history, the perceptions and the experience of women into the history of Africa.<sup>2</sup>

This study therefore seeks to generate some empirical data concerning women's changing economic activities in a particular area within the context of satellitization of regions like Kenya.

This study is centred on rural women because they have not received adequate attention from scholars. Moreover, local level research is needed to bring into relief the vital role that women have assumed and continue to play in the process of production.

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2. B.A. Ogot: Ibid., pp.8 - 9



Studies on women have revealed a diversity in the female experience in various cultures and societies. In this study, we shall examine changes in the roles and structure of women's participation in the production process among the Bukusu women in Bungoma district. There is a need for such a study. In examining various views on African women's involvement in development, Achola Pala observes that:

Like the education systems inherited from the colonial days, the research industry has continued to use the African environment as a testing ground for ideas and hypothesis the locus of which is to be found in Paris, London, New York or Amsterdam.<sup>3</sup>

Pala feels that research is often conducted because of what is the fashionable topic for research in Western Metropolis. This further affects research, for often these Western research centres will provide fundings for only special types of research projects, namely those that are "popular." One solution is to have local scholars to do research in their own geographical areas. Pala concludes that African scholars, and especially women must bring their knowledge to bear by presenting an African perspective on women's prospects and problems in local societies.<sup>4</sup>

Studies of this kind have not been done among Babukusu. This study, it is hoped, will update the work of Gunter Wagner with specific reference to women.<sup>4a</sup> The study covers

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3. A. Pala, "Definitions of Women and Development: An African Perspective", in *Signs*, 3 Autumn, 1972, p.10

4. A. Pala, *Ibid.*, p.13

4a. G. Wagner, *The Bantu of Western Kenya* London, O.U.P. 1970 pp.20-53.

the period 1902-1960 because 1902 is the year when parts of the then Eastern province of Uganda were formerly transferred to what became "British East Africa Protectorate." 1960 was chosen because it marked the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Kenya, the decade of 'Uhuru.'

However, the significance of this study lies in its contribution to the general knowledge of women and particularly the understanding of the role they have come to assume in the articulation of the pre-capitalist mode of production into the market economy in Bungoma District. The study will, it is hoped, increase our knowledge about the role of women in Kenyan history.

The Objectives

In this study, we intend to show how women were disadvantaged and over-burdened under the capitalist mode of production, Bukusu women being used as an example. The study will evolve around the following themes:

the roles assumed by women in the pre-capitalist mode of production in the pre-colonial social formation in the Bukusu society. We shall attempt to assess the changing nature of the social relations of production and how this in turn brought about changes in the roles of women in the production process in the Bukusu society. We shall examine the extent to which they contributed to the unequal relationship between men and women in the appropriation of surplus value in the course of the articulation of modes of production during the colonial period.

At the ideological level, traditions required that a wife had to show her husband respect and even fear.

But, behind these traditions were concrete social relations of production which had changed by the first half of the 20th century. In this light, we shall examine changes in the roles and participation of women at the level of production and how these changes in turn led to changes in the patterns of oppression and increased workload for women. The argument here is that these changes laid heavy burdens on female labour and eroded the dominant control that women assumed in the pre-colonial period.

The position of women in relation to the means of production in that society: this will involve an examination of the land tenure system and how it affected the position of women in the production process. In the pre-colonial Bukusu society, land, the basic means of production was a communal property. However, the family plot was owned by the family and the head of the family was the custodian of the plot. These sort of arrangements were recognised by the Bukusu traditional customs. Further, it is important to indicate that the pre-colonial system of land holding created stable security of tenure which acted as an incentive to full and committed participation by women in the economy.

At the level of technology: Did the changing nature of technology influence in any way the participation of women in production and conversely, did women's participation

in the production process influence the nature of technologic changes?

At the level of exchange: Did women participate in the petty-commodity production and sale? What were the staples of the trade? Were there any trading co-operatives of women? What was the government policy towards women in trade?

At the social level: Did the women's participation in the economy in Bungoma district lead to any form of social stratification among them within the Bukusu society? Did Bukusu women experience oppression just because they were women?

At the level of public welfare: What role did the Bukusu women play in social welfare projects, road construction, building of schools, dispensaries and community centres. These are some of the central points around which the dissertation will evolve.

### Statement of Hypotheses

This study will specifically be centred on the following hypothesis:

1. THAT: the articulation of the pre-capitalist mode of production into the market economy eroded the economic basis of women's participation and control of agricultural production in Bukusu society.
2. Colonial policies affected men and women differently, particularly labour, land and education policies, to the extent that as they favoured men's economic and social status, they eroded that of women.

3. Control over women by men increased as surplus realisation increased.
4. Changes in technological development led to increased workload for women at the same time as it lightened that of men.
5. The successful development of cash crop production depended on women's labour.
6. Women's involvement in petty trade was a result of their desire to acquire money and property independently of men.
7. Women's organisations were a response to changes in the socio-economic conditions of life.

#### Literature Review

The penetration of capitalism into the periphery set into motion a whole series of levels of oppression and exploitation of the societies affected. The nature and extent of this exploitation cannot be viewed in isolation from the general process of underdevelopment and dependency between the colonial state and the so called 'mother country'

A.G. Frank<sup>5</sup> and S. Amin<sup>6</sup> postulate that the advent of capitalism in Africa led to the evolution of a variety of peripheral systems of production which were orientated towards the export of commodities to larger world markets. The peripheralisation process in this particular context, "connotes a centralization and an uneven distribution of the means of production; the formation of classes and the

5. A.G. Frank, Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America's Monthly Review Press, New York, 1967.
6. S. Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale Vol.1. Monthly Review Press, New York, 1973.

increasing contradictions between forces and relations of production."<sup>7</sup> But most important of the peripheralization process is the exploitative relationship between the centre and the periphery and between the emerging underdeveloped capitalist and the pre-capitalist modes of production co-existing within the periphery.

A.G. Frank, the Latin American theorist totally rejects dualism. He argues that the whole of the Third World Societies have been drawn into the international capitalist system and hence the so called traditional sectors are simply those which have to be kept in subordination to the dominant metropolitan centres in order to make it possible for the surplus to continue to be extracted from them. This, he argued, was combined with the continued existence of subsistence production based on pre-capitalist modes of production in the African reserves, as it were, which served to maintain and reproduce the reserve army of agricultural workers.

Van Allen's analysis of the effect of "Modernization" on African women suggests, how the development of Africa's export economy, has depended on the labour of rural women. The export industries have been able to maintain low wages and hence, high profits, due to women's contribution to the family's subsistence from agricultural production. She notes that the profits extracted from Africa:

... would not be possible except for the unpaid

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7. A.G. Frank, op.cit., pp.78-92.

labour of the wives of their African workers, who feed, clothe and care for themselves and their children at no cost whatsoever to the companies.<sup>8</sup>

Samir Amin contends that the question of the relations between the sexes and the dominated status of women dates in part from primitive communism and in part from subsequent phase of early class formation. He asserts that, "we may know how family organisation inter-relates with different modes of production. But we cannot conclude from this that women are a social class exploited by men."<sup>9</sup> He suggests that the correct way to analyse the women's question is to look at the domination of the capitalist mode over the peasant modes.

E.A. Brett<sup>10</sup> argues along the same lines that the colonial society was linked to the outside world through the system of international capitalism, whose political and economic centres are located in the most advanced parts of Europe, the United States and a little belatedly in Japan. A.P. Okeyo reinforced Brett's argument when she stated that central to an understanding of the situation of

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8. J. Van Allen, "Women in Africa: Modernization means more dependency," in The Center Magazine Vol.XII No.3 May-June, 1974 p.61.
  9. S. Amin, Class and Nation: Historically and in the current Crisis. Heinemann, London, 1980 pgs.38-40
  10. E.A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939. Heinemann, Nairobi, 1973.

African women is based on the international division of labour which places Africa in a dependency relationship with Europe and the United States. She argues that we are confronted with those constraints of unequal economic power emanating from a division of labour in which our countries continue to provide raw materials for industrial production that is carried on in the metropolitan countries. This division of labour was highly intensified during the era of colonialism.<sup>11</sup>

Further, A. Pala, in her study of Kisumu district says that:

Women were predominantly responsible for agriculture which, in most African societies with subsistence economy amounted to food production with relatively poor technology, the hoe ... this meant a monopoly of agricultural skills by women.<sup>12</sup>

Pala cites the findings and conclusions of other scholars.<sup>12a</sup>

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11. A.P. Okeyo; "Reflections on development Myths in Africa Report, March-April, 1981, p.8.
  12. A.P. Okeyo; "The Changing Position of Women in Rural areas: Case Studies from Kisumu District, Kenya." IDS, working paper No.156, April, 1974 pp.13-14.
  - 12a. Baumann, "The Division of work according to sex in Africa Hoe Culture" in Africa Vol.1: No.3, 1928 pg.286-319. C.K. Meek, A Sudanese Kingdom; an ethnographical study of the Jukun Speaking people of Nigeria, Kegan Paul, 1931. pp.548. J.H. Driberg, "The Statues of Women among Nilotics and Nilo-Hamites" in Africa Vol.4, 1932, pp.404-421. Harris, "The Economic Life of the Ozuitem Ibo" in Africa Vol.XIV, No.1 1943 pp.12-13. E. Earthy: Valenge Women. The Social and Economic Life of the Valenge Women of Portuguese East Africa. O.U.P. for Int. Afr. Inst. 1933, pp.251. P. Kaberry: Women of the Grassfields, 1952. G. Wagner: The Changing Family Among the Bantu of Western Kenya, J.G. Peristiany: The Social Institution of the Kingdoms, 1939.



However, it has been submitted, that the mode of cultivation was made relatively simple in terms of labour because the virgin lands and forest fallow permitted rotation; thus poor lands could be left to rest. Secondly, division of labour was based on sex and age. Here women played the key role in the sense that they performed their duties on the "shamba" while they carried out an array of domestic chores.

Although these scholars have analysed the sort of work that women performed in the pre-capitalist social formations, they do not ask the most crucial questions namely, "Who benefited and controlled the surplus generated by the labour of women?", "How does the European external contact and especially the introduction of capitalist relations of production affect the balance of the sexual division of labour?" This is what we intend to do in this study.

Furthermore, Pala has given a critique of those scholars who have argued that women's work can be solely seen in terms of a non-market activity. However, she has suggested that new directions of research by removing the distinction between market and non-market activities are redefining the value of women's work in the household, in child care and in subsistence production, thus, placing emphasis on its production. She therefore suggests that emphasis should be made on the real value of women's work and its

functional relationship to other vital development processes. In this study we want to address ourselves to the question: How does domestic production i.e. subsistence economy, contribute to the capitalist mode of production? Because it is through this crucial relationship between domestic production and capitalist commodity production that one will be able to understand the manner in which women were over-burdened under the capitalist mode of production.

Another source of dependency theory as it relates to the women's question is Norma Chinchilla. She has argued that one "cannot understand power relations between men and women without seeing them in the context of the mode of production."<sup>13</sup> But how the mode of production affects Third World women is part and parcel of an international system based on dependency.

Karl Marx indicated that the mode of production includes the forces and relations of production. F. Engels reinforced this argument by suggesting that the subordination of women arose not from sexual differences but rather from technological developments that led to changes in the relations of production. Thus, advances in technology (the domestication of animals) led to new relations of production between the sexes. Engels, therefore, concludes that the development of private property and the increased

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13. S.N. Chinchilla; "Industrialization, Monopoly, Capitalism and Women's Work in Guatemala" in Women and National Development (Eds) Wellesley editorial committee, 1977. pp.87-103.

control of land and domestication of animals by males led to female subjugation.

Engels, in The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State gives a description of how women's social position declined as private property gained strength as the guiding principle of society, and weaves in an analysis of why property had the effect it had, specifically how it transformed women's work organisation and more generally the relationship of property to class and sex. He further argued that under the communal mode of production, the productive resources were owned communally by the tribe or the clan.<sup>14</sup> Production was to meet people's subsistence needs. There was no surplus produced for the purpose of exchange. Exchange under the communal mode of production was in items needed for communal purposes. In this way exchange in these societies differed from that of the capitalist societies.

However, Engels submitted that as production for exchange eclipsed production for use, it changed the nature of the household, the significance of women's work within it and consequently women's position in society. Women worked for their husbands and families rather than for the society as a whole. But what Engels does not indicate and explain is how family organisation inter-relates with different modes of production. For example, during the

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14. F. Engels, The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State. New York, International Publishers, 1972.

slave trade, there was the whole question of slave breeding. The caravan rule was that men wanted women to sleep with them for purposes of reproduction.' The question, therefore, is how were women exploited? The same thing applies to the era of merchant capital, how were women exploited and oppressed? In other words, how does the exploitation of women come about under different modes of production or what form does the exploitation of women take under different modes of production? This is what we intend to investigate from this particular study.

S. Stichter (1975) has pointed out the three major systems of labour that grew up in Kenya. These included semi-proletarianized migrant labour on European agricultural and industrial undertakings, squatter and independent peasant cash crop production.<sup>15</sup> Although these systems were within the new capitalist order, yet they incorporated and depended upon the subsistence labour still performed in many African reserves. Hence, in each of these colonial labour systems, African women performed integral functions. Much of this work was performed in the traditional subsistence economy but it had now become part of the new colonial system of production and was critical in enabling European and Asian entrepreneurs to make profit.

Meillassoux (1972) has argued that the labour migration system in Africa was one in which the wage paid to the usually male worker was barely sufficient to cover the cost of

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15. S. Stichter, "Women and Labour Force in Kenya 1895-1964" in *Rural Africana*, No.29, Winter 1975. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, pp.45-61.

maintaining the worker from day to day during the period of his employment with perhaps a small surplus to purchase additional commodities for himself or his family at the end of six month or two year working period.<sup>16</sup> Under such circumstances, women's contributions to the welfare of their families were very significant. As Ambassador Mildred Malineo Tau,<sup>17</sup> concludes, women's contribution to an active involvement in subsistence farming and wage activities, their critical presence in marketing, food distribution networks and their continued responsibilities as wives and mothers, combine to make their role in the survival of the family and the community most important.

However, under capitalism land, the basic means of production, is owned by men. As A.M. Malineo Tau points out, "the situation of African women has negatively been influenced by colonialism."<sup>18</sup> Where land ownership traditionally fell to the elders, it would appear that administrators who failed to appreciate the importance of this system often gave land title deeds to males as heads of households rather than to women who worked and were frequently de facto heads of households. Thus, the lives of African women have been conditioned by the discriminatory practices

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16. C. Meillassoux, "From Reproduction to Production." in Economy and Society Vol.1 1972 pp.94ff.

17. A.M. Malineo Tau, "Women: Critical to African Development" in Africa Report, March-April, 1981 p.4

18. A.M. Malineo Tau: Ibid. pg.4

inherent in their own societies and by the different, but no less discriminatory norms of Western cultures.<sup>19</sup> In this particular context, how did land registration in Kenya and in Bungoma district in particular affect the participation of women in the economy? What sort of legal constraints did the registration process impose on women in Bungoma and how did the registration process weaken the female control of the agricultural economy? These are some of the issues we shall take up and discuss in detail later.

Walter Rodney (1969) argued that colonialism distorted the position of women in society by reinforcing the exploitative tendencies of pre-existing social forms while at the same time setting up bureaucracies in which women's entry was effectively barred by lack of training and anti-feminist attitudes that the colonialists had acquired in their capitalist society.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the articulation between modes of production in this case ensures that the surplus labour which is appropriated from the non-capitalist mode is realised as surplus value within capitalist units of production. This is so because women's labour within the non-capitalist mode reduces the value of labour power in relation to capital, thus increasing the rate of surplus value and enhancing capital accumulation for the capitalist.

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19. Ibid.

20. W. Rodney; How Europe Underdeveloped Africa p.248 London and Dar-es-Salaam. Bogie L'Onverture publishers, and Tanzanian Publishing House, 1972, p.248.

Furthermore, capitalist expansion in the periphery intensified women's economic participation in non-capitalist modes of production, particularly in rural areas where women's work is geared to subsistence agricultural production, petty commodity production and circulation. Moreover, the articulation between modes of production in the periphery is done in such a way that the social relations of production and the corresponding division of labour with women agriculturalists in the subsistence production unit enhances the exploitation of women. This inequality is then reflected in a low value of labour power within the peripheral capital accumulation or is transferred to the centre through unequal means of exchange or other modes of surplus extraction.

Esther Boserup in many ways led the spurt of new research on women, pointing to the predominance of female farmers in Africa and their "loss of status under colonial rule."<sup>21</sup> Women are the backbone of African subsistence production, doing an estimated 60-70% of the agricultural work.<sup>22</sup> Progressive African leaders have recognised the

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21. E. Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development London, George Allen & Unwin 1970. pp.4-27.

22. Human Resources Development Division, African Training and Research Centre for women, United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, "Women and National Development in African countries: some profound contradictions " in African Studies Review Vol.18 No.3 Dec.1975 pp.47-70.

essential exploitation in this system.<sup>23</sup>

Furthermore, Esther Boserup submitted that European penetration in many parts of Africa resulted in women enlarging their part in agricultural work in the villages. She argued that this was so because both colonial officers and white settlers recruited unmarried and married males to work voluntarily or forcibly in road building or other heavy constructional work in mines and plantations. But the issue scholars on the women's question in Africa avoid to confront is how were the African women exploited and oppressed if they were not directly involved in the capitalist mode of production? In reference to Bukusu women in Bungoma District, how were they being disadvantaged, exploited and over-burdened? It is true that the tenurial basis of agriculture was altered, first by limiting the area of land available for African use and also in terms of the crops that the Africans had to grow. However, how did this lead to an increase in the workload of women? Our thesis in this study is that these changes in the land tenure system laid heavy burdens on female labour. This, in fact is one area that Esther Boserup failed to explain in detail in relation to the woman question in Africa. This is what we intend to pursue in details in this study.

Marjorie Mbilinyi examined the articulation of what she

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23. J.K. Nyerere, "Socialism and Rural Development, in Ujamaa Essays on Socialism, London, Oxford University Press, 1968 pp.106-144.



calls "Patriarch relations" with pre-capitalist and later, capitalist relations of production. She examined the conditions of women in the 18th and 19th centuries of the Shambaa Kingdom in the present day Tanzania. She postulates that within the homesteads, Shambaa women's subsistence labour freed men to produce tobacco for the barter trade, for tributes to the rulers and later for cash economy. The individual lineage head she argued, was one mechanism through which the royal clan extracted surplus from women. In addition, women themselves also produced surplus that was taken directly by the royal clan. As the colonial state replaced the local rulers, the lineage head, remained the mechanism for obtaining surplus from women for the state, although the growth of cash economy led to the devaluing of women's subsistence.<sup>24</sup>

Although this type of study provides an understanding of the economic relationship between men and women in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, however, Mbilinyi does not explain in detail how women were exploited and oppressed in terms of women's access to land, increased differentiation between men's and women's roles, particularly in relation to the colonial labour policies and the extent to which the exploitation of women intensified during the colonial period. In this study, we intend to take up these issues

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24. Marjorie Mbilinyi, "The Social Transformation of Shambaa Kingdom and the Changing Position of Women," delivered at the Southern African Universities, social science conference, University of Dar-es-Salaam, 1979.

and discuss them in detail later.

\* Gunter Wagner submitted that the family was a self-sufficient economic unit of production and consumption among the Kitosh (Bukusu) and Maragoli. Division of labour was based on sex and age was used as a mechanism for controlling the allocation of tasks. Land constituted the major means of production and its cultivation was characterized by co-operative labour on communal basis. Economic cooperation at the family level was also worked out on the basis of sexual division of labour.<sup>25</sup> However, Wagner does not explain how the articulation process affected this sexual division of labour. Who, for instance, controlled the women's labour among the Bukusu and who benefited from this sort of arrangement. This study will investigate and try to provide answers to the above question.

M.J. Hay has postulated that the long term economic impoverishment of the colonial rule in western Kenya was through the withdrawal of resources required to subsidize the development of the European sector of the colonial economy. Yet, at the same time that the British officials were extracting capital and labour from the rural economy, they insisted that African cultivators should increase their level of agricultural production. Further, African families were expected to meet all their staple food requirements through their own production. The

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25. G. Wagner, The Bantu of Western Kenya. London O.U.P, 1939. pp.42-45.

artificially low wages paid to African workers also meant that in many cases rural families had to supply foodstuffs to labour migrants in towns as well. Africans in the rural areas were also expected to continue the production of surplus commodities for sale and export. She points out that the real burden of coping with this nearly impossible situation in the rural areas fell on the women who remained in the rural areas.<sup>26</sup> How did women cope with this impossible situation in Bungoma district? What other alternatives were open to Bukusu women? Trade was one of them. Were there any other alternatives? In this study, we shall pursue the alternatives that were open for women in their effort to earn extra cash.

Susan Himmelweit attempted a theoretical examination of the role of domestic labour in capitalist society and its relationship to the capitalist mode of production.<sup>27</sup> John Harrison on the other hand characterized domestic labour as a separate but client mode of production, the household mode of production.<sup>28</sup> While Wally Secombe placed domestic labour at the periphery of capitalist production.<sup>29</sup>

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26. M. Jean Hay, "Luo Women and Economic Change during the Colonial Period," in Women in Africa (Ed.) by Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, Stanford University Press, 1978. pp. See also her Ph.D. Dissertation, "Economic Change in Luoland: Kowe 1890-1945." Ph.D thesis (History) University of Wisconsin, 1972.

27. S. Himmelweit, "Domestic Labour and the mode of Production," Discussion paper No.33, 1974 Dec.

28. J. Harrison, "The Political Economy of Housework," Bulletin of the conference of Social Economists, Spring 1974.

29. Wally Secombe, "The Housewife and her Labour under capitalism" in New Left Review, 83, Jan-Feb., 1974

The conclusion of the above analysis inevitably placed women in a reactionary role politically, since their labour was situated in a context where its existence was justified through its functional relation to the capitalist system. The question that these scholars did not adequately answer is whether housework is productive under the capitalist commodity production and if it is, what then is the nature of the benefit that housework represents for the capitalists? ~~Indeed~~, how does the capitalist system benefit from the identification of women's primary role with housework?

Several scholars have had different issues to raise about women. However, there is one general weakness in most of their contributions. This is mainly in their failure to link up the exploitation of the peasants, proletariats and women. Most scholars agree that under capitalism, the exploitation of women is not direct, because they are not employed by the capitalists for pure capitalist commodity production. Hence, their exploitation is through other mechanisms developed by the capitalists i.e. through peasant petty-commodity production. Given this sort of strategic connection between the exploitation of peasants, proletariats and women, is it therefore possible to talk of the liberation of women without liberating the peasants and the proletariats. My view is that since women are exploited by the world system of capitalism, like workers and peasants, their liberation should be part and parcel of the general liberation of the peasants and the proletariats.

*Kilubi is revolutionary*

It is also important to point out the fact that if women were managing the domestic economy on behalf of their men who had been syphoned off to the capitalist farms and plantations, then women were servicing capitalism. They were also producing, feeding and maintaining the future workers of capitalism, including their own children and relatives. They were also topping up the food rations of their men and this was exploitation.

### Methodology

In this section, we present the methods of research and analysis used for the study.

A combination of different methodologies was used to obtain the relevant data essential for this study. It is, therefore, necessary to present a brief summary of each method, its advantages and disadvantages from our fieldwork experience.

### Archival Research

This included research at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. Most of the documents at the National Archives contain information on the white settlers, administrative records and in some cases, on issues related to male participation in labour riots and tax collection reports. Information on women's participation in agriculture in the colonial period was completely lacking. With this setback, we decided to go to the field to conduct interviews.

### Observation

We were in the field, Bungoma District in western Kenya

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from November 1981, to June 1982, a period of about eight months. While in the field, we observed and collected data related to women's activities and interaction in farm and non-farm activities.

### Selection of Respondents

The respondents for this research were limited to the elderly women and men who were born before or in the early part of the colonial period, especially the 1902-1920 cohort. We interviewed a total of 120 people in this age category. These respondents had observed the changes that they talked about in their own lifetime. Male respondents were interviewed for the purpose of cross checking the information that female respondents had given. Furthermore, with the help of the District Commissioner for Bungoma, District Officers and Chiefs, we were able to get a list of names from each division in the district for the interviews. Most of these informants were chosen because they are recognised by their local administrators and other members of the community as the most knowledgeable people as regards issues pertaining to their past histories.

### Interviews

We asked informants open ended questions. We did not use a formal questionnaire because questionnaires give work the character of an official enquiry which most informants suspected and, therefore, declined to part with their wisdom on the subject matter under investigation. We, therefore, used to formulate questions and then ask informants

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in the course of the interview. One advantage with this method was that informants talked freely without having to be asked a lot of questions. We therefore proceeded to ask questions using the themes outlined under the objectives as a guideline. Following were some of the most representative ones:

1. What roles were assigned to women, girls, boys and men in the pre-colonial Bukusu society?
2. What was the position of women to the means of production?
3. Who controlled the surplus?
4. How did changes in the land tenure system affect women's participation in production?
5. How did changes in technology affect the participation of women in agriculture?
6. Did women participate in the local trade?
7. Why were women trading?
8. Did these women form any organisation?

These were some of the central questions around which the interviews proceeded.

### Discussion Groups

Although we intended to use private and individual interviews, we ended up having group interviews. This was because, every time we made an appointment with an informant, he in turn summoned two or more of his/her friends to come along. As a result, we ended up conducting group interviews. The advantage with group interviews is that

other people in the group who listened to the actual informant or speaker checked and corrected them when they went wrong. The other advantage is that it was teamwork, therefore, the informants could not easily distort facts because of the vigilant ears of the on-lookers. When they detected falsifications, they immediately corrected them.

In cases where we managed to have individual interviews, we tried to synthesize and verify the facts an informant delivered by consulting other experts on the same thing.

In the process of interviewing, we used both pen and paper i.e. note taking and tape-recording. We used a recorder because we found it very difficult and sometimes too straining to listen to an informant, make useful notes and at the same time ask relevant questions. In this way, we decided to use a tape-recorder. We used to interpret and transcribe the information on tapes at the end of each working day. In this way, we were able to follow the discussions in the next sitting.

#### Research Site

My research site was Bungoma district, in Western Province, Kenya. The territory traversed was therefore large and it was binding for us to seek for relevant data from every corner of the district. This means that we were involved in an extensive and comprehensive work. When collecting data, we were at a comparative advantage because there was no language barrier to be surmounted during the



various discussions because we were well versed with the Bukusu values, social organisation and settlement patterns. As a result, our research work was not hindered because we followed most of the discussions without much inquiry. But the factor of travelling from one place to another was indeed a burden. This will become clear in the next chapter where the location and geographical setting of Bungoma District is explained.

How did you analyse your data? No  
 Mention of method(s) of data analysis!  
 The study is basically  
 descriptive

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN IN BUKUSU ECONOMY:

#### THE SITUATION AS AT THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

To clearly understand the role assumed by women in economic production in the Bukusu society, it is essential not only to understand what the economy is now, but how it was at the turn of the century. This is crucial because the participation of women in the economy at the turn of the century was a reflection of the degree of the development of the productive forces. The structure of the economy and various socio-political aspects such as division of labour and the land tenure system, were rooted in custom and tradition. The level of technology also determined the level of social production. In this social production women tended to participate in non-labour intensive activities. These activities included planting, weeding, harvesting and domestic chores.

In this chapter, we shall present an account of the economy of the Bukusu at the eve of colonialism with an emphasis on the social relations of production. We shall also make an analysis of the part played by Bukusu women in production of the commodities needed by the society.

#### The Background

The majority of Babukusu inhabit the greater part of Bungoma District in Western Province of Kenya (Map.1). There are pockets of Babukusu living in the neighbouring districts of Trans-Nzoia, Kakamega and Busia. Bungoma district covers an area of 3,046km<sup>2</sup> (Map.2). The general

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altitude of the district ranges from about 1370m to 1525m above sea-level. Mt. Elgon, known locally as "Lukulu Lwa Masaba," is the most prominent feature in the whole district, in fact in the whole of Western Kenya. It stands at 4,420m high.

The geology, topography and climate of Bukusuland have combined to determine the soil structure and pattern. The prevailing type of soil is the extremely fertile red soil. However, the fertility ratio varies from place to place and also according to the structure of the soil. S.H. Ominde has made the following observation:

There are two distinctive types of soil in the area. The higher parts of Mt. Elgon in the extreme North have distinctive soil types alternating with each other. The alpine meadow soil and the shallow stony soils on the ridges. At lower altitudes this gives place to 'brown loam soils' with rock outcrops on the ridges alternating with alluvium or peaty swamps in the valley.<sup>1</sup>

Writing in 1963, Wolf<sup>2</sup> noted that at the foothills of Mt. Elgon, the soil consists of dark red friable clays with a deep humic top soil with a carbon content of 3-7%.

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1. S.H. Ominde, "Land and population in Western Districts of Nyanza Province," Ph.D Thesis, London, 1963 pp.77-78.
  2. J.J. de Wolf, "Political and Religious innovation among Babukusu," Ph.D. Thesis, London, 1963 pp.19-20.

Wolf explained that this poor infertile soil was derived from sediment and basement rocks, partially covered with mere humic ash and pumic soils that were themselves derived from recent unconsolidated ash. This is in conformity with S.H. Ominde's research findings. He observed that the productive soil of the foothill zone of the Mt. Elgon consists of dark red friable clays and sandy clay loams alternating with the stony soils on higher ridges and recent alluvium over the broad valley floors.<sup>3</sup> It was the soil fertility of the region which enabled the Bukusu to grow a variety of food crops to be discussed later in this chapter.

The agricultural potential of the area does not wholly depend on the composition of the soil, but also on the amount of rainfall. Indeed, climate forms the linkage between the soil structure and human activities. The area has got rainfall throughout the year except in January and February when there are two maxima in April and May (long rains) and in October to November (short rains). The average rainfall for the district is 1270mm, The adequate rainfall in the district and on Mt. Elgon has resulted into well-distributed drainage system of rivers and streams. The most important of these are Kamukuywa, Kuywa, Nzoia, Lwakhakha (Malaba), Chwele, Malakisi and Sio. Most parts of Bungoma District are, therefore, ideal for both farming and animal husbandry.

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3. S.H. Ominde, op.cit., p.78

Commercial farming and animal husbandry have been introduced in the recent past. However, our concern in this chapter is to analyse the Bukusu economy on the eve of British colonialism. An important aspect of that economy was the land tenure system.

### Land Tenure System

In the pre-colonial Bukusu society, land formed the focus of social relations. Land as a major means of production, was communal property. In general, land belonged to the whole clan and the clan controlled its allocation and disposal.<sup>4</sup> Individual members of the community could have exclusive rights over portions allocated to them but such rights were restricted to the rights of access and the use of that land. It was a usufructual right. The collective land tenure system recognised the fact that certain sections of the individual allocations were open to communal use. There were grazing fields, salt licks, forests and their products. People who lived in one fort<sup>4a</sup> grazed their animals together for purposes of security. Apart from common grazing land and salt licks mentioned above, there were also public watering points in the rivers and streams.

The exploitation of forest products like firewood was done by women. Women and children used to gather mushrooms and white-ants. Certain types of mushrooms like bukochwe, buswa and bukusuma were appreciated as they were a rare

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4. Enock Mukhwana, Oral interview, Kibichori, 7/11/81

4a. A fort was a walled enclosure scattered by a ditch. The wall delineated a village compound. Forts varied in size depending on the number of people living in it. Forts were built because of the fear of encroachment from the It

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delicacy. They were subject to strict rules of exploitation. This was also the case for certain types of termites like chisisi, chinunda and kamaswakhi<sup>and Malesi</sup>. This was a direct appropriation of the wild products. It was just part of hunting and gathering economic activities of the people (Bukusu) as a supplement to agricultural production. Hunting grounds for men were also communal.

The right of access to agricultural land was vested in the clan elder, namely, Omwami we Pokoto.<sup>6</sup> He determined where the clan was to be settled. Omwami we Pokoto was the head of the fort where the clan lived. He was assisted in his duties by Babami be Lichabe (P1).<sup>7</sup> The latter were several depending on the number of 'gates' on the fort. Each fort had its own portion of land and inhabitants of the fort tilled the area chosen for them by the head of the fort. The individual allocation of the plots was done by the leader of each gate namely, Omwami we Lichabe.<sup>8</sup> Every man in the fort was given a plot on which to plant crops. In describing the land tenure system in Africa, C.K. Meek has this to say:

Land is held on (a) Kinship and/or (b) a local group basis. Individuals have definite rights,

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5. Julia Namuleyi, Oral interview, Mukwa, 17/12/81

6. Luka Namulala, Oral interview, Musese, 10/12/81

7. Luka Namulala, Ibid.

8. Omwami We Lichabe: was in charge of people using a particular gate as dictated by the internal structures of that fort. Cf. Simiyu Wandibba, "The Bukusu Forts" B.A. dissertation, U.O.N. Dept. of History, 1972.

but these are qualified by membership of a family, kindred and ward (or small village). Similarly the individual claims of families exist concurrently with the wider claims of the clan or local group. Title, therefore has a community character --- the elder is the custodian of land, but not its owner. The normal unit of land ownership is the extended family or kindred. Land, once granted to a family, remains the property of that family and the chief has no right to any say in its disposal.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, although land continued to be legally a communal property, the family plot was owned by the family and even this ownership finally passed into an exclusive ownership of the head of the family. In the pre-colonial Bukusu society, kinship relations, therefore, controlled the sources and relations of production.

In the communal farmland, each man was allocated a plot. The man in turn divided his plot into strips according to the number of wives he had. Under this system, women's security of tenure was enhanced by the fact that as a wife she was entitled to a parcel of land over which she had paramount authority as a cultivator. It was also the responsibility of a husband to allocate sufficient land to the wife or

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9. C.K. Meek, Land Law and Custom in the colonies. Oxford University Press, London, 1946, pp.26-27.

wives.<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that the size of the strip per wife depended on the industry of the woman who cultivated it.<sup>11</sup> This meant that more industrious women got larger plots than those <sup>the</sup> less industrious. Women were, therefore, not allocated land as individuals but through their husbands.

This was confirmed by the report of the land tenure committee which investigated into the "system of land tenure" among the Bantu of Western Kenya. This committee observed that,

A woman has no right of her own in land. A wife cultivates on her husband's land. A widow cultivates on her late husband's land, on the parts she has previously cultivated while her children are growing up.<sup>12</sup>

However, women had virtual control and monopoly of crop production and distribution of surplus if there was any. This led to the development of rights of women to have land they controlled for the growing of crops for the upkeep of the family. This has been well summed up by Roy G. Willis

( ---a woman as a member of her lineage enjoys all the advantages of a man in respect to rights of usufruct throughout her span of life --- as

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10. In a monogamous home, the piece that was allocated to a man was automatically cultivated by his wife. But she could also give out portions of that land to other women who were in need of it to plant potatoes, sorghum, green-grams, eleusine and simsim.

11. Biket Bisakaya, Oral interview, Wamono, 4/2/82

12. KNA File No.DC/NN/10/1, Political Associations, 1926-40



a wife or daughter, she assumes full responsibility for the management of her farms and in practice, she is free to lend sections to her kin and friends. Thus, land tenure often meant that both men and women had the right over the land they were assigned to cultivate.<sup>13</sup>

The Bukusu land tenure system made adequate provision for women to get land and use it effectively. Mature girls (marriageable age) were allocated their own strips, while young girls worked with their mothers.<sup>14</sup> This was what Wagner observed in the 1930's.<sup>15</sup> In Bukusu land, he explained, "girls are given their own gardens at the age of fourteen. The crops raised by them were stored in a special granary which after their marriage were ceremoniously 'opened' by their fathers in-law and served to give them a start in their own household."<sup>15</sup> Girls in Bukusuland used to get married at the age of 18 to 21 years. The suggestion by Wagner that they used to be given strips at the age of fourteen years is therefore not true. Furthermore, girls did not dispose of the surplus from their strips of land. 1939

The produce from the girls' strip of land was stored separately from the mother's. In case of famine, the father

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13. R.G. Willis, The Fipa and related peoples of South-West Tanzania and North-East Zambia. Ethnographic survey of Africa, London, International Africa Institute, 1966 p.47
14. Raeli Nabalayo, Oral interview, Butonge, 11/1/1982
15. G. Wagner, The Changing Family among Bantu of Western Kenya, O.U.P. London, 1939 p.9

of the girl would exchange the girl's produce for an animal. Such animals were usually given the names of Nasiaki <sup>of</sup> (Granary). If such a thing happened, then the cow or animal bought belonged to the father and not to the girl. This shows that the Bukusu society was and still is a very patriarchal society.

Bukusu is essentially patrilineal and exogamous society. The inheritance of any form of property was defined along male lines of descendants. Basically the status of sons and daughters differed with regard to the inheritance of family property. From the father, a cow or a parcel of land was passed over to his sons and later to the grandsons.<sup>16</sup> In fact, this is what Wagner said in 1939. He noted that men had an upper hand in inheritance.<sup>17</sup>

Women's right of inheritance was further eroded by the system whereby women were also inherited as if they were part of the property. A report from the committee which investigated into the system of land tenure in Western Kenya confirmed this when it stated:

A woman does not own land. A girl who, has married cannot come back to claim any clan land - when a man dies his wife is inherited together with her cultivation, by the heir. If the heir is a son, he inherits his father's property and provides for his mother.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Nuhu Kitanyi, Oral interview, Butonge, 9/12/81  
 17. Wagner, op.cit.,p.30  
 18. KNA, File No.DC/NN/10/1, Political Associations, 1926-40.

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The Bukusu rights of inheritance and ownership of land, therefore, made it impossible for women to inherit property and own land. However, it should be noted that at the turn of the century, social relations permitted a wider scope of female participation in the economy.

### Forces of Production

One of the features of production was that it was not a static process; it was always in a state of change and development. This means that the history of development of societies is above all the history of development of productive forces and people's relations of production. In a society like the one being dealt with in this study, the economic base was characterised by a low level of forces of production. The forces of production were at a very low level of technological development. Production was for subsistence purposes although any surplus was bartered or stored for future use.

At the turn of the century, agricultural production was already based on iron tools. The basic Bukusu agricultural tool was the hoe. The Bukusu used iron hoes for digging and weeding. The Bukusu hoe was an iron blade attached to an 'L-shaped' wooden handle. The hoe was also used for breaking up and preparing the soil for planting.

The scythe (engeso), tied on a long stick was used for clearing the bush and trees could be felled by either burning using piles of wood around their base or by cutting them using axes and swords.<sup>19</sup> Digging sticks were made

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19. Luka Namulala, Oral interview, Musese, 10/12/81

either of kiminyubuti or kimitamaywa trees known for their hardness. The digging sticks (kimilo) were used mainly for weeding eleusine, green-grams, simsim and vegetables (esaka). The bill-hooks were also used for clearing the bush, and cutting sorghum for easy harvesting.

Production

The Bukusu practised a subsistence economy. The main economic pursuits of this community were animal husbandry and agriculture. The early European travellers in the region observed that "South of Mt. Elgon, the Bukusu were already a true agricultural people, they are great cattle breeders."<sup>20</sup>

To start with, it must be stated that the kind of marriage system in Bukusu traditional society reflected the social relations of production at the time. The cultural emphasis on procreation by parents was not just the desire to have children but it was a response to an objective economic factor. In fact, the economic aspects of marriage were reflected in the man's choice of a wife. His choice was dictated by three major factors which were traditionally considered as the right qualities. These were proven capacity for hard work and the ability to till the land, thereby producing enough food to feed those who came to the homestead no matter how unexpectedly. Obedience was another quality that was expected. This was to be shown towards her husband in future and towards her seniors. One scholar had this to say:

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20. C.W. Hobley. "Notes on Journey round Mt. Elgon Nyanza 1896" in Geographical Journal Vol. 6 p.178

East African women, particularly those who live in rural areas, are brought up to consider men as leaders and themselves as of secondary status.

Women are brought up to obey their husbands rather than to develop a relationship of companionship in marriage. They learn to do housework, take care of children and farm. The biggest events in woman's life are coming of age, marriage and child-bearing.<sup>21</sup>

The situation was similar in the Bukusu society.

*The Jargon of the year has it*

As an instrument of labour and an element of the productive forces, the woman had to be industrious. It was primarily for her economic services that a woman was sought for marriage. Given this, she had to produce children to increase the household's labour power. The whole question of payment of dowry should be viewed within this wide perspective of the traditional economic set up. The number of cattle payable in the form of dowry at the turn of the century varied from place to place and generally depended on how hard-working the girl was.

The economic importance of women was the basis of polygamous marriages in Bukusu society. Additional wives were considered as a source of labour: they and the children they would bear. They were, therefore, a source of wealth, producing grain which would be exchanged for cattle and daughters to marry off, bringing in more cattle. This interpretation of marriage emphasizes once again the importance of the wives' role in agricultural production.

In a polygamous home, each household was a separate

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21. "The Status and Role of Women in East Africa" Social Welfare services in Africa. UN E/CN:14/SWSA/b, 1967.

economic unit. All women in the polygamous home grew food and each additional wife was an economic asset. A man apportioned a piece of land to each wife to till, from which she was expected to feed her children. He also provided each wife with enough field acreage, with an eye toward equalizing the food supply of each household.<sup>22</sup> However, every additional wife meant that the burden of the other wives was reduced, so was the size of land per woman. Considering the low level of technology, another pair of hands lightened the burden tremendously. Among Babukusu at the turn of the century, all agricultural produce was controlled by women.<sup>22a</sup> But, it is important to state here that the introduction of cash economy undermined this control.

#### Agricultural Production.

Bukusu agriculture was not only a simple subsistence system but also produced surplus which was exchanged for other commodities. The main crops grown included eleusine, sorghum, green-grams, simsim, bananas, pea-nuts, sweet potatoes, tobacco and an assortment of vegetables which included pumpkins, chisaka, litoto, murere, kimiro and cow-peas.<sup>23</sup> The Bukusu practised shifting cultivation and crop rotation. However, the length of time for which an area was cultivated and the fallow period depended on the types of crops, the fertility of the soil, the availability and accessibility of other land. Land was utilized for four

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22. Elizabeth Naliaka, Oral interview, Kimilili, 4/2/82

23. Luka Namulala, Oral interview, Musese, 10/12/81

22a See G. Wagner. The Changing Family Among The Bantu of

consecutive years, after which it was allowed to lie fallow for several years as grazing field.

The following table shows the order in which crops were planted and rotated.

Crop Rotation Among Babukusu

Months:	March - July	Aug. - December	Jan. - Feb.
<u>Year</u>			
1	cutting the stalks of Sorghum to allow retourne crops to grow. Breaking of the soil	Simsim ( <u>chikhanu</u> ) Pea-nuts ( <u>chimande</u> ) Green-grams ( <u>chibalayo</u> )	Sorghum Eleusine Harvesting
2	Bananas (Plot of its own) Sorghum (retourne) ( <u>Kamarwarwa</u> ) Green-grams, Pea-nuts	Sorghum Pea-nuts Simsim	Sorghum Eleusine
3	Sorghum (retourne)	Sorghum Green-grams Pea-nuts Simsim	Eleusine Sorghum
4	Sorghum (retourne) Green-grams	Sweet-potatoes	Eleusine Sorghum Sweet potatoes
5	Sorghum (retourne)	Harvest of sweet-potatoes, Green-grams, Pea-nuts	Eleusine Sorghum
	Fallow	Fallow	Fallow

Table 1<sup>24</sup>

24. Oral interviews at Chwele, Musese, Kimilili, Kibingei, Wamono, Butonge and Mukwa. For dates, see bibliography at the end.

From the above table, several observations can be made. Certain crops were planted at certain periods of the year. Long rain crops were eleusine and sorghum. Leguminous crops were planted in March-April and July and August. These included crops like cow-peas, green-grams, simsim, and peanuts. Tubers like potatoes, yams and bananas were planted in April. Then there were short rain crops like potatoes and the harvest of retourne crop(sorghum) in December and January.

Succession: Eleusine was planted in places where potatoes had been harvested. It could also be planted on virgin land.

Inter-Cropping: Certain crops could easily combine with others. Simsim combined with green-grams, simsim could also inter-crop with eleusine. Before bananas developed heavy foliage, crops like eleusine, sorghum, green-grams and pea-nuts could be planted. Yams could be planted in the banana plantation. But potatoes were always planted alone.

Bananas were usually planted in an old fort site or former cattle-kraal sites, where cattle manure used to be deposited. Each wife had her own banana grove. Other plants and vegetables planted in the former kraal sites included pumpkins and esaka.<sup>25</sup>

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25. Enock Mukhwana, Oral interview, Kibichori, 7/11/81 and Nuhu Kitanyi, Oral interview, Butonge, 9/12/1981



## Women in Agriculture

When the dry season ended in late February or early March, men cleared fields and women cultivated the soil in preparation for planting the first crop. The first crop would very likely be a quick growing grain. Planting was the duty of women and children. After planting, there were necessary waiting periods between seedling and weeding. These periods were utilized for various chores such as repair of new tools by men to replace the worn out tools.

When the planting was completed, work slackened briefly only to pick up again at the weeding. Weeding of crops was mainly the duty of women and children, but occasionally they were assisted by men. As one scholar observed, women have argued that although their husbands accompanied them to the shambas, the work they performed was negligible. S.G. Rogers observed that, "women do not work as hard as men. They work harder."<sup>26</sup> A man knew at all times which fields were held by which one of his wives and he was expected to assist each wife in the heavy agricultural labour required in her fields.<sup>27</sup> This means that men's contribution to farm labour was less as compared to that of women.

Women formed weeding groups. Several women in a neighbourhood teamed up and worked together on individual plots.<sup>28</sup> This lessened the burden of their work as many

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26. S.G. Rogers, "Efforts towards women's Development in Tanzania: Gender rhetoric Vs. Gender realities," Unpublished Paper, 1981.

27. Matini Matumbufu, Oral interview, Kibingei, 3/11/81

28. Ibid., Oral interview, Kibingei, 3/11/81

hands cleared a plot in a short period. This team work was also present during harvesting periods and the drying of sorghum and eleusine before it was finally stored in the granary. This system of communal labour was more active during peak periods of the agricultural cycle.

In order to harvest a large field of finger millet (eleusine) or sorghum for example, a man asked his wife or wives to prepare about four large pots of beer (made from eleusine or sorghum) from the previous harvest. Much planning was called for in this effort because beer takes two weeks to prepare. A man had therefore to determine when he wanted the harvest to be done so that it did not coincide with a similar arrangement in the neighbourhood. Then he informed all the neighbours of the arrangements he had made and the day when the beer would be ready, and therefore the actual harvesting done.

On the material day, all married men and their wives in the neighbourhood were expected to appear in the fields of the hosts. Even unmarried young men were expected to appear and join others in the harvest. It was customary for them to work from sunrise until shortly after noon, when they took a brief rest, washed themselves and then began to drink the beer. Food was served to the working team of men in the field. Food was prepared and served by the owners of the home with help from a few of their neighbours. Both men and women participated in the actual harvesting.

Work arrangements: were as follows,

Women	Men	Women, Children and Me
Brewing of beer preparation and serving of food	Making of the stores with the owner	Actual harvesting transporting the harvested crop home

Table 2<sup>29</sup>

From the above table, we can observe that a lot of mutual work was being done by the entire community. Women brewed beer in addition to their daily chores in the house. It can be noted that harvesting involved a lot of work. Labour was exchanged for beer and food.<sup>30</sup> This practice of sharing work between kinsmen and neighbours at peak labour seasons suggests that the household did not exist in isolation

Thus, the Bukusu recognised the duty of each individual in promoting community prosperity. Work was therefore understood and performed in terms of social relationships. Economic co-operation at the family level was worked out on the basis of sexual division of labour.

### Storage

Each woman (wife) stored her foodstuffs in her own granaries. Sorghum and eleusine were stored in separate

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29. Oral interviews, Chwele, Musese, Sirisia, Wamono, Butonge, Malakisi, Kimilili, Mukwa and Kanduyi.

30. There were various purposes of beer brewing. There was mutual friendship beer (Bu kengele). It was paid back in the same form i.e. individuals brewed beer and then invited their friends to drink. Then, there was beer which was brewed for exchange with labour. The community devised forms of acquiring labour which was a kind of purchase. A person who did not participate in the actual harvesting or cultivation was never allowed in to drink that beer.

granaries respectively. Eleusine and sorghum were the staple food crops of Babukusu. In addition, sorghum served as a basis for brewing alcoholic beverage. Eleusine was also used in the local breweries but mainly as a yeast. Bananas were either boiled and eaten straight or left to ripen as fruit. They were sometimes peeled, dried and stored as Bukekhe. Later, they were either boiled and eaten or mixed with sorghum or eleusine and ground into flour. The flour was then used in the normal way i.e. making Ugali.

An alternative meal to the eleusine ugali was a compound meal consisting of potatoes and either greengrams or cow-peas. When beans were later on introduced in Bukusuland in the twentieth century, they were boiled together with sweet potatoes and eaten with simsim stew.

Girls, as already indicated, had their own granaries. According to oral evidence, the mothers of respective girls stored their own harvests.<sup>30a</sup> Mothers were not allowed to enter granaries of their daughters to get out foodstuffs.<sup>31</sup> It was believed that if a mother entered a daughter's granary to get foodstuffs from it, then the girl would never give birth when she eventually got married. But in case of famine outbreak, the father of the girl opened that granary to either exchange the food for an animal or share it out to his family members and relatives in case the granary was big —

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30a. Matini Matumbufu, Oral interview, Kibingei, 3/11/81

31. Matini Matumbufu, Ibid.

enough. In a situation where a girl was a hardworking one, she normally converted her sorghum into kamalwa kamakhalange.<sup>32</sup>

Sorghum was converted to kamalwa kamakhalange to enable them to preserve it for a long period. Kamalwa kamakhalange was exchanged by the father of the girl to any willing buyer for an animal. This animal once again became the property of the father and not of the girl.

It has also been submitted that cultivation of crops was undertaken in conjunction with cattle raising.

#### Animal Husbandry

Among the Bukusu, cattle had both an economic and social value. Herdsmen went to graze their cattle fully armed in case their enemies attacked them.<sup>33</sup> Cattle belonged to the man and herding was entirely the work of men and young men. However, it has been suggested that a woman had a theoretical possession of all the cattle she milked. If a man had more than one wife, his cows were permanently distributed to all of them.<sup>34</sup> These cows literally belonged to the children of the respective wives. Possession of a large number of cattle, sheep and goats was an indication of wealth.

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32. Kamalwa kamakhalange, was kneaded and fermented sorghum flour which would then be roasted on an open pan. The product was dried in the sun and stored or used for brewing alcohol.

33. Luka Namulala, Oral interview, Musese, 10/12/81

34. Luka Namulala, Ibid.

Besides being a symbol of wealth, cattle provided the owner with milk and blood, both of which were highly valued in the Bukusu society. From milk were derived butter and ghee. Butter had important functions to play. During a wedding, a bride was anointed with butter. Butter was also used for leather works for softening skins so that they could be functional as dress, bedding and leather straps. Butter churning on a large scale was done in a gourd strapped and hung in the middle of the house so that every member of the household could participate in turns in the churning.<sup>35</sup> Women were the keepers of milk because they were the ones who used to milk the animals and, therefore, stored surplus milk which they transformed into butter and ghee. In addition, butter served as a supplement to meals of cattle-blood and meat and was used in the barter trade for acquiring salt, and other goods.

However, what actually happened to cattle was entirely the decision of the man. Sheep, goats and poultry were usually reared for ritual purposes. Most sacrifices demanded the slaughter of either sheep or a hen. Sheep, goats and chicken had important roles to play in rituals. Women and girls were not allowed to eat poultry and poultry products. Goats were also useful because their skins were used in the making of clothing for young men and for women (lulware). Goats and sheep were also used as items of exchange. Although

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35. Timeteo Wepukhulu, Oral interview, Wamono, 3/2/82

36. Timeteo Wepukhulu, Oral interview, Wamono, 3/2/82

we argued that cattle belonged to men, women also played important roles in maintaining them, for instance, milking them, clearing the cattle enclosures (bomas) and the related industry like the manufacture of butter and ghee. Cattle were used in the payment of dowry.

### Traditional Industries

Bukusu traditional industries,\*included the manufacture of iron tools, pottery items, basketry, cloth and the production of aesthetic items. Iron working was a career that had spiritual implications. The art was not only restricted to the iron working clans (babasi) for example, Bakhoma, Bachemwile, and Bakolati but was also restricted to men. No taboos specifically affected women. Taboos on iron working were addressed to any other people that do not have the ritual among them, that of course included women.<sup>37</sup> Taboos on iron working are part and parcel of the professional secrets. The techniques of iron smelting excluded women because it was highly technical as well as hazardous. The smelting process was arduous and hence inappropriate for women.

Although Bukusu women did not participate in the manufacture of iron implements, they played very important roles in the production of pottery items. Here the arrangements were that men dug out the clay. Women and children transported it from the mine to their homes where they made pots. Once pots had been made, the women fired them and

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37. Timothy Wepukhulu, Oral interview, Wamono, 3/2/82

\* This term is used to refer to various types of crafts and skills which were in existence in Bukusuland at the turn of the nineteenth century.

then marketed them.<sup>38</sup> Both men and women were therefore involved in the production of pottery items.

Several stages were involved in the making of pots. If we take the making of water pot, (Esongo), the process was as follows: First was the kneading of the clay soil and thrushing it to make it fine so that there were no pebbles because pebbles could make the pot break or crack at the time of firing. Once the base was made, it was left to solidify before the rest of the body was built. The clay was rolled into a kind of spindle and built around the base until the body was made. Then it was smoothed using water and smoothing disc, bellying it at the same time. Then it was left to solidify again for another day before the neck was added. The pot was left to dry for about seven days to twelve days and it was polished thoroughly both inside and outside using a smooth water stone. When it was dry after two or three weeks, it was fired. This was and still is the pre-wheel technology method.

Pottery items included cooking pots (chinjio) and (chinungilo) and some form of bowls called bibumba. They also made pots for storing water (chisongo). Men made pots for brewing beer (chinjika and chimbanga). Both men and women made smoking clay pipes (binaka).

It is, however, important to state that not all people were engaged in the production of pots. There were certain types of pots that were associated with ritual ceremonies.

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38. Nuhu Kitanyi, Oral interview, Sirisia, 9/12/81



These included pots like (mulubende) and (namunwebili).

These pots were normally made by elderly women. Mulubende was associated with barren women and was normally used in the cleansing ceremonies. Namunwebili pot was one with two or more 'mouths' and was normally used by rain-makers. It was also used in some sacrifices.

Pot making required some form of specialization and, therefore, only a few people in the society could make them.<sup>38</sup> Some people were forced to rely on other individuals for the supply of pots and other items that they never produced on their own. This shows that the economy of the Bukusu at the turn of the century was already engaged in small scale production of commodities destined for exchange.

Basket making was one area that was dominated by women. Baskets of all sizes and patterns were made from bamboos, palms and reeds. Once made, the baskets were offered for sale. Women were also involved in the production of beadworks. Beads of different types were made, among them chindili and burare.<sup>39</sup> Men made aesthetic items like ankle-lets (chindekwe), chinalo and chimbami.<sup>40</sup> Women exchanged most of the items that they produced.

### The Barter System

In Bukusu society on the eve of colonialism, barter dominated the exchange system. There were no formal markets

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38a. For more information about Bukusu pottery, see Stephen Nang'endo: "Bukusu ceramics", B.A. dissertation, History Department, University of Nairobi - 1984.

39. Rebecca Nasipondi, Oral interview, Sirisia, 4/3/82

40. Timothy Wepukhulu, Oral interview, Wamoño, 4/3/82

where people took their produce. Instead, those people who were in need of certain items went to forts where the products were made and purchased them directly from the individual manufacturers. When a good agricultural season produced a bumper harvest, the surplus was exchanged.

Babukusu produced more crops than their pastoral neighbours. They therefore, exchanged eleusine, sorghum, sweet potatoes and bananas against smoked meat from the Kalenjin speakers.<sup>41</sup> Pottery products constituted another category of trade items. The Kalenjin speakers living on the slopes of Mt. Elgon were not pot makers. Moreover, the volcanic soils on Mt. Elgon are not suitable for this industry. Babukusu on the other hand, lived on the plains and had access to areas of clay suitable for pot making. These items were bartered for smoked meat, milk and honey which the Kalenjin speakers on the slopes of Mt. Elgon produced. Honey was measured in skin bags. One bag of honey was worth a pot (see the table below).

Iron products formed the third category of staples. The Kalenjin did not engage in working iron. There were numerous iron sites (Burare) in Bukusuland. This is confirmed by the observations of Frederick Jackson who travelled through the area in 1889. He saw furnaces, so he wrote:

In 'Kitosh' (Bukusu) there is a fair amount of iron ore of a quality the 'natives' prefer --- outside every occupied village we passed there were

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41. Luka Namulala, Oral interview, Musese, 10/12/81

one or more smelting furnaces.<sup>42</sup>

The Bukusu blacksmiths, therefore bartered part of what they manufactured to the Kalenjin speakers and other people (Babukusu) who did not engage in the manufacture of iron items. Items manufactured were, spears, knives, swords, hoes, axes, neckbells (bikhutu) for the animals to help check their movements, arrow-heads for bleeding cows, ornamental items as discussed earlier on in this chapter and small discs that were chained together and tied around the head by women. One hoe was equivalent to two baskets of kamalwa kamakhalange. One goat was equivalent to three hoes. One stabbing spear was equivalent to one cow. There were also trade relations between Babukusu and the Samia. The Samia mainly sold hoes to Babukusu in return for sorghum and eleusine.

The following table gives some items of exchange and their equivalent value between 1895-1902.

Item	Equivalent Value
1 cow	1 granary of eleusine
1 ox	1 granary of <u>kamalwa kamakhalange</u>
1 bullock	8 she-goats
1 she-goat	8 hens
1 ox	1 shield
1 cow	1 stabbing spear
1 goat or sheep	3 hoes
1 goat or sheep	6 bundles ( <u>binywa</u> ) of eleusine
1 calf	1 ox

Table 3<sup>43</sup>

42. F. Jackson, Early days in East Africa. Dawsons of Pall Mall, London, 1969 p.231.

43. Oral interviews, Chwele, Kibichori, Kimilili, Kibingei,

Grain was measured in granaries or baskets. There were baskets of various sizes used in measuring. Tobacco and eleusine could be measured in bundles called chimbenga and binywa respectively. There was beer which was brewed and exchanged for foodstuffs. The following table gives items of exchange and their equivalent value in grains.

Item	Equivalent Value in Grains
1 hoe	2 bundles of eleusine
1 basket of dried bananas ( <u>bukekhe</u> )	2 bundles of eleusine
1 pot of butter	1 bundle of eleusine
1 bag of honey	1 pot
1 hoe	2 baskets of <u>kamalwa kamakhalange</u>
1 basket of sorghum	1 basket (depending on the size).

Table 4<sup>44</sup>

But there were years when droughts affected the harvest. Hence, the volume of the trade was much less but the activity of looking for food to buy was more intensive by virtue of the fact that there was less food. This commodity trade based on barter exchange was a significant factor in the development and transformation of the Bukusu society at the turn of the century.

Apart from the iron products, Bukusu women played important roles in the production of other items like baskets, pots and the production of agricultural products. Their role

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44. Ibid. Oral interview

The above rates (tables 3 and 4) were in operation at the various localized places and times of the year as indicated in the localities of the interviews.

in agricultural production surpassed that of men. Women featured prominently in the fields of agricultural production and exchange.

CHAPTER THREEWOMEN IN AGRICULTURE 1902 - 1960

Kenya's economy depends heavily on its agriculture. Women, being the majority (see table 1 and 2) of the rural population contributed the larger share of the rural labour force. During the colonial era, although their work remained the same as that which they performed in the traditional subsistence economy, it had become part and parcel of the new colonial system of production. Their contribution in agricultural production was in fact crucial in enabling Europeans and Asians to make profits.

Recent researches have revealed that African women in rural areas not only shouldered their traditional role as cultivators but they combined this with the roles which previously were associated with men.<sup>1</sup> For example, when labour intensive cash crops were introduced and men found employment away from their homes, women took on any jobs that were traditionally considered as male jobs. For example, grazing, clearing, scaring birds and repairing food stores. In overall social reproduction, women played a key role in the sense that they performed their duties in "shamba" work as well as an array of domestic chores.

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1. UNDP/ILO Report, Employment, incomes and equality strategy for increased employment in Kenya, 1972 Geneva p.358

Population of North 'Kavirondo' 1921-1948

Year	Men	Women	Children	Total
1921	80,110	99,581	110,254	289,945
1924	87,547	97,578	113,676	208,801
1927	93,620	100,079	120,424	314,123
1930	104,582	108,020	128,630	341,232
1933	106,968	107,772	126,177	340,917
1937	80,752	106,896	158,140	345,780
1940'	89,829	115,851	168,850	367,530
1948	124,127	181,288	328,153	633,568

Table 1<sup>2</sup>

The above statistics are not terribly reliable, but what is important for our study is to indicate that women were more in number in the area of our study. From the above table, it can be observed that women were more in number than men in rural areas. Even if one considered the population of rural areas on a locational basis, women formed the majority of the rural population. For instance, the following was the estimated population of these locations:

Year	Location	Men	Women	Children	Total
1933	Kimilili	5,787	6,885	7,442	20,114
	Elgon	1,066	1,123	1,286	3,475
	Malakisi	3,469	3,831	4,287	11,587
	South Bukusu	5,513	6,733	7,192	19,438

2. KNA, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Reports 1921-48. See also Afri Population of Kenya Colony and Protectorate: Geographical and tribal studies. East African Population Census, 1948. Published by the East African Statistical Department, 15th September, 1950.

Year	Location	Men	Women	Children	Total
1934	Kimilili	6,097	6,912	9,262	22,271
	Elgon	1,106	1,106	1,338	3,604
	Malakisi	3,370	3,647	4,045	11,062
	South Bukusu	5,510	6,696	9,142	21,348
1948	Kimilili	12,606	16,290	30,741	59,637
	Elgon	1,694	2,178	3,981	7,853
	Malakisi	6,009	7,267	10,946	24,222
	South Bukusu	9,251	12,879	22,521	44,651

Table 2<sup>3</sup>

The burden of women further intensified and worsened with the introduction of cash crops like cotton, coffee and maize. Women provided the bulk of labour needed in the production of these crops. This led to an increase in the workload and longer working hours for women. The role played by women in agricultural production was also restricted to the provision of labour force, while men controlled both the means of production and the surplus. These were some of the changes that took place with the introduction of cash economy. This was particularly the case with changes in land tenure system. This limited the arable land available for the cultivation of subsistence crops like sorghum, eleusine, potatoes, bananas and cassava. As a result, the participation of women in agricultural production was made difficult. All these acted consecutively to weaken the female participation and control of agricultural production.

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3. KNA, North 'Kayirondo' District Annual Reports, 1933, 1934 and 1948.



In this chapter, we shall deal with three themes. The first section will discuss the changes in the land tenure system as it affected women. Here, it is noted that the indigenous land tenure remained the same upto 1954. Although parceling of land started in the 1930s, registration and individualization of land ownership began in 1954 with the Swynnerton plan. How did this affect women's position in agricultural production?

Agricultural innovations are analysed in section two of the chapter. It is observed that the traditional farm implements remained in use throughout the period under study. This did not alleviate the burden of women in agricultural production. The slow process of introducing ploughs meant that production was to rely on the use of the hoe. Hence, before the use of the plough became generalized in the 1950s, the heaviest burden of agricultural production fell on women. Even when the use of the plough was generalized in the 1950s, it meant that more land was ploughed and therefore more weeding was to be done by women.

In section three, a detailed description of the work done by women in agricultural production is made. With the introduction of cash crops, women's workload increased. The production of traditional crops which persisted throughout the period under study meant that the burden of producing them lay more heavily on women. In the final submission, it is observed that technological innovations did not alleviate the burden of women in agricultural production. The introduction of cash crops increased women's workload in agriculture. There was also diversification of vegetable production with the

introduction of cabbages, tomatoes, onions and sukuma wiki . Women were involved in the production of all these commodities. This expansion in scale also meant expansion of women's labour.

#### The effect of the changes in Land Tenure System on Women, 1902 - 1960

By the turn of the century, most of the indigenous people of Kenya had developed their forces of production to the stage of communal ownership. This was reflected in the land tenure systems of most of these people. Furthermore, the land tenure systems recognised rights on land not in current occupation but still needed in the shifting agricultural system and pastoralism practised at the time. With the establishment of colonial administration, there were certain observable changes in terms of land utilization. In this section, an analysis of the changes in land tenure system and how it affected women from 1902 to 1960 is made.

For immediate governmental use, the Indian Land Acquisition Act of 1894 was used. This enabled the administration to acquire land by force for railway construction, government buildings and other public works. But for the purpose of providing land for settlers, the British government made it possible for the Protectorate authorities to expropriate land from the indigenous peoples of this country through the concept of 'crown lands'. From 1897, Europeans could acquire

twenty-one year renewable land leases in Crown Lands.<sup>4</sup>

Further, in 1901, the real meaning of the concept "Crown Lands" was officially spelt out and was published. In that year, the East Africa Lands Order-in-Council defined Crown Lands as:

All public lands within the East Africa protectorate which are subject to the control of His Majesty by virtue of any treaty, convention or Agreement or His Majesty's Protectorate and all lands which have been or may hereafter be acquired by His Majesty under the 'Lands Acquisition Act, 1894' or otherwise howsoever.<sup>5</sup>

In 1913, the above definition was improved upon and extended to include, "all Lands occupied by the 'native' tribes of the Protectorate and all lands reserved for the use of any members of any 'native' tribes".<sup>6</sup> Further,

all land --- concerning which no claim or claims for a certificate of ownership shall have been made --- shall be deemed to be Crown Land.<sup>7</sup>

Africans did not make any claim for certificate of ownership to any land they occupied anyway. They were not aware of the existence of such laws. And so, without their knowledge, their land was declared Crown Lands, which in effect was a broad day-light robbery of their land.

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4. Rita Mary Breen, "The politics of land. The Kenya Land Commission (1932-33) and its effect on Land Policy in Kenya". Ph.D dissertation, Michigan, 1976, p.20
  5. M.P.K. Sorenson, Origins of European Settlement in Kenya. Nairobi, Oxford University Press, 1968 p.53
  6. Sorrenson, Ibid, p.223
  7. See section 17 of the Ordinance

Furthermore, Africans had no right to alienate any land whether they occupied it or it was reserved for their use. All these steps by the Protectorate government ensured that all land in the Protectorate was the property of the Crown and no other rights and claims to its ownership including that of the indigenous peoples were henceforth recognizable. This also enabled the gradual occupation of African land by European settler farmers.

However, the rights and needs of the indigenous peoples of Kenya were very conveniently seen in terms of actual occupation only. The 1902 Crown Lands Ordinance provided for the outright sale of land to foreigners. While in 1897, leases was extended to Ninety-nine (99) years by the 1902 Ordinance and to Nine Hundred and Ninety-nine (999) years by the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance. Thus, the disinheritance of the indigenous people of Kenya from their basic means of production, land, was completed by the 1915 Crown Lands Ordinance. The Protectorate government had therefore acquired power to rule and control the usage of land in the Protectorate. Ainsworth described the resulting practice as follows:

As a basis of all argument --- it has been absolutely laid down that no native has any title to (sic) and the land is the common wealth of the people. A 'native's' claim to any land is recognised even according to 'native' custom only as long as he occupies beneficially. The principal usage is to recognise all unoccupied

land as Crown Land and the administration is free to deal with it as it considers to the best advantage --- vacant land i.e. land vacated by a native reverts to the crown automatically.<sup>8</sup>

Beginning in the first decade of the century, 'native' reserves were demarcated, and by 1926 all African rights to land were restricted by law to such reserves.<sup>9</sup> Agricultural development of 'unused' lands became an exclusively European prerogative. This was further facilitated through the implementation of the Crown Lands (Amendment) Ordinance of 1938 and the Kenya Highlands Order-in-Council of 1939.<sup>10</sup> The Ordinance demarcated the Highlands, while the Order-in-Council made this demarcation inviolable by providing that alterations to them were to be made only with authority from the British Crown. By the 1940s, they had crystallized into a deliberate political policy aimed at allocating the necessary resources of the country to the settler community. All these land ordinances affected Africans, males and females equally upto 1950s.

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8. Ainsworth was the sub-commissioner for Ukambani. See his 1895-1905 Report relative to the administration of the East Africa Protectorate, Parliamentary Papers Vol.LXXX Cd.2740 Africa No. 6(1905)p.15. See also H.W. Okoth-Ogendo: "The Political economy of Land Law: An essay in the legal organisation of Under-development in Kenya, 1895-1974". Ph.D Dissertation, Law School, Yale University, 1978.
  9. Sibiko Wafula: "Colonial Land Policy and the North Kavirondo African Reserve to 1940". "B.A. Dissertation. University of Nairobi, Department of History, 1981 p.33-3
  10. Ghai and McAuslain, Public Law and Political Change in Kenya. Nairobi, London, Oxford University Press, 1970 p.

The Swynnerton Plan (A Plan to intensify the development of African agricultural policy Kenya) of 1954, drawn up by R.J.M. Swynnerton, then Assistant Director of Agriculture, pointed to the stagnation of African agriculture. Fragmentation of land tenure were seen as major factors that made it impractical for African farmers to develop their holdings to engage in farming practices considered 'sound' from the point of view of soil conservation. It was thus recommended that the preservation of traditional systems of land tenure should be (summarily) abandoned. All African land of high "agricultural potential" should be surveyed, fragmented holdings should be granted to individual household heads. The colonial land policy herded Africans together into fixed reserves, where overcrowding and land shortage in time resulted into a rapid decline of soil fertility and erosion. In fact, the individualization and registration of land advocated by Swynnerton occurred in this already overcrowded reserves.

The changes that took place as the result of the Swynnerton plan had a significant impact on the situation of women vis-a-vis men. In the first place, women's economic rights were undermined by land consolidation. Further, the colonial administrators failed to understand the complexity of the traditional land tenure system in which women had important usufructory land rights. Among the Bukusu, land had been communally owned by both sexes, holding rights to use land. Conversely, through the implementation of the Swynnerton plan, land was converted to a form of private property held by individual males.

The adoption of the Swynnerton Plan in 1954 paved the way for the implementation of a different policy toward African production especially in areas of "high agricultural potential" which included Bungoma. This process is perceptively analysed by Colin Leys,<sup>11</sup> a critique of the inequalities of colonialism and neo-colonialism. However, even Leys fails to appreciate a major basic inequality when he states:

the long-term social and economic effects of individualized tenure and the differential provision of credit --- would be far reaching. In the short-run, however, most people with some customary title to land got a new title under registration, and it was only the landless in the overcrowded parts of the former reserves who found themselves worse off.<sup>12</sup>

The above sentiments of Leys' did not apply in Bungoma district. What happened was that most males got titles. However, the traditional rights of women were virtually ignored as a complex system of use-rights that included women was converted into a system of western-style ownership from which women were for the most part excluded.

Furthermore, since lack of collateral in the form of a land title made it impossible to get credit, it followed that women had no access to loans for the development of their own enterprises. This was a long-term consequence which

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11. Colin Leys: Under-development in Kenya. London, Heinemann, 1976.

12. Leys, Ibid;p.74

became evident in the 1960s and onwards. The control of the most profitable cash crops came to be in the male hands as well.

In fact, the changes in the land tenure system resulted in the widening of the economic gap between individuals with differential access to resources. Though differences in wealth had already been emerging, this was the turning point in the movement toward real stratification. However, the individualization and registration of land brought a series of problems for women. In Bungoma, women were dispossessed of their usufructory land rights through the adoption of the Swynnerton plan. The introduction of individual rights to land, which went mainly to men on the assumption that it was them who were heads of families, removed the security previously enjoyed by women. Since the production of cash and subsistence crops were directly linked to the access of land, women were confronted with a whole range of handicaps in fulfilling their role as producers. Lack of control over land and all that goes with it became a major cause of women's economic dependence. Without land, women were reduced to a state of dependency, with no security and only provision of labour. This further limited their ability to increase production for the benefit of their families and the community at large. Women's participation in agricultural production became difficult as it will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

#### Agricultural Innovations 1902 -1960

Agriculture in African areas was not mechanized. In most areas, cultivation was done with the hoe. The traditional farm implements, hoes, swords and weeding sticks, remained in



use throughout the whole period under study.

The pre-colonial methods of agriculture which involved shifting cultivation and inter-cropping were an indication of attempts by the Africans to maximize land usage given the low level of instruments of production. These methods were condemned by the Europeans as unproductive and labour consuming. This created a need on the part of the colonial government to revolutionize the instruments of production.

Although some achievements were made in agricultural research in the 1920s and 1930s, qualitative changes in African agricultural methods were very limited. In the first instance, British capital did not find it imperative to make an all-out effort to rapidly transform the Peasants' low level of production technology in agriculture. Besides, the economic weakness of Britain after the first and second world wars limited the extent to which "surplus capital" could be invested or given as loans to colonial governments to be used in improving agriculture.<sup>13</sup> But most important was that capital was not capable of revolutionizing the Peasants' instruments of production. Consequently, capital did not seek the thorough destruction of the pre-capitalist mode of production in colonial like Kenya. Describing a similar situation in Uganda, Mamdani notes that:

While Pre-Capitalist relations (forms) were conserved, their content, the productive forces now functioned strictly in the interest of capitalist accumulation.<sup>13b</sup>

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13. Africans were not given any loans. Settlers were however given some loans.

13b. M. Mamdani, Politics of class formation in Uganda, Heinemann, 1976, p. 128

In analysing the impact the penetration of finance capital has had on the peasantry in developing countries, Bernstein notes that:, "as a result of capital conserving the peasantry<sup>14</sup> in a dependent relation, capital was not capable of instituting drastic changes in the instruments and forms of the labour process".<sup>14b</sup> Hence, despite attempts to capitalize peasant agriculture or at least make it more productive through increased acreages, the traditional instruments of production persisted. However, these traditional instruments of production did not alleviate the burden of women in agriculture.

Family labour and the hoe were the predominant means of production. Even on company farms,<sup>15</sup> women's labour was increasingly needed to plant, weed, harvest and shell maize. In 1930, the District Commissioner observed:

I have noticed recently in the reserves that most of the shelling of maize is done by women and by hand. This is an extremely slow and laborious process.<sup>15b</sup>

The introduction of the modern type of hoes in the 1920s also intensified women's participation in agriculture. Although there are no statistics available in terms of the distribution of hoes among Babukusu, it is almost certain that by the 1930s, every home had at least a hoe (individuals

14. Peasantry as a socio-economic category was a creation of colonialism. See, E.S. Atieno-Odhiambo: "The Rise and Decline of the Kenya Peasant, 1888-1922" in African Social Studies, ed.P.C.W. Gutkind and P. Watermann, Heinemann, 1977, pp.235.

14b. H. Bernstein, "Notes on Capital and Peasantry" in Review of African Political Economy. No.10 1978 p.61

in different homesteads had purchased their own hoes from Asian traders as indicated below in the table). For instance, Wagner observed that the introduction of modern hoes was to encourage deeper digging. He noted:

The introduction of modern hoes has been a complete success.<sup>16</sup>

The following table shows the allocation of modern hoes in 1943 to various traders in the district to sell to the public.

Centre	Trader	No. of Hoes
Malakisi	Mohamed Yusufu	240
Bungoma	Gulam Ali Meghji	240
Webuye	Mohamed Kanji	240
Total allocated to traders		720
Total allocated to North 'Kavirondo'		2,664

Table 3<sup>17</sup>

In his annual report for 1927, the District Commissioner addressed himself to the problem of introducing ploughs.

He observed that:

There were only eight ploughs in the district and that more people had not started using them. This was because of the initial outlays, the fact that there were considerable grazing difficulties in the south of the district owing

16. G. Wagner, The Bantu of Western Kenya Vol.II, Oxford University Press, London, 1970, p.40

17. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/2/2, Agriculture: Implements General, 1936-1943. By 1944, a total of 5,000 hoes and 2,500 pangas were sold in North 'Kavirondo'. See also KNA

to the density of population. The Bukusu being primarily pastoral by owning vast herds, could supply their wants without much effort and the fact that people sold their trained oxen and reverted to old methods.<sup>18</sup>

But the most important reason was that Babukusu refused to plough with oxen as they considered it as a mistreatment of their animals. Their bulls were to be fattened for slaughter in traditional ceremonies. In fact not all people knew how to use a plough let alone to train oxen. Furthermore, most of the ploughs in use on European farms during that time were of two or three blade variety which took two to three people to operate. One person led the oxen, another drove them and a third person sat on the plough to control it. Since most of these ploughs were very heavy, between 6 to 9 pairs of oxen were required to pull one plough.<sup>19</sup> They also required the harness of chains and yokes which were to be bought separately. This heavy capital investment was clearly beyond the means of most people. In his study of capital and the peasantry in third world countries, Bernstein observes that:

These were expensive inputs into production that were not accompanied by increased returns commensurate with costs incurred.<sup>20</sup>

This slow process of introducing ploughs meant that production was to rely on the use of the hoe, both traditional

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18. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/8, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report 1927, pp.27-29.

19. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili, 5/2/82

and modern. Between 1920s and 1940s before the plough became generalized, the heaviest burden in agricultural production fell on women.

The following table shows the numbers of ox-ploughs that were in use from 1927 to 1938.

Year	No. of ploughs in North "Kavirondo" <sup>21</sup>	Increase in Ploughs
1927	103	-
1929	209	106
1930	275	66
1938	2,109	1,834
Total	2,696	1,906

Table 4<sup>22</sup>

It was only in some areas that these ploughs were in use at all. Bungoma was one of the outstanding areas where ploughs were used.<sup>23</sup> This was so because of the whole idea of ploughing companies.<sup>24</sup> Hence, the biggest buyers of ploughs were ploughing companies. There were individual buyers as well. According to the reports of the agricultural officers, it was observed that between 1929 and 1936, Kimilili

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21. North "Kavirondo" in the dissertation included the whole of the present Kakamega, Bungoma and Busia District. No separate figures exist for Bungoma alone.
22. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/2/4, Agriculture Implements, General 1945-1952.
23. J. Heyer, "A Survey of Agricultural Development in the Small Scale Farm areas of Kenya since 1920s". Institute for Development Studies, working Paper No.194, U.O.N. p.1
24. Ploughing Companies: These were groups of men who formed cooperative ventures to farm together as a team. Usually, these companies involved four to five people. Members were often related to each other, but sometimes friends were included.

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division alone had 45 ploughing companies.<sup>25</sup> Each ploughing company had an average of about four ploughs. The inputs of individual members varied. Two to three members owned ploughs, while others bought chains, yokes and supplied the oxen.

Further, the influence of the companies extended beyond the land they actually farmed themselves since ploughs could be rented out to other people. The example set by these entrepreneurs spread rapidly through the region with two consequences. It encouraged the adoption of maize cash-cropping even by those who did not own ploughs and it also facilitated the introduction of the single-bladed ploughs which were soon brought by Indian traders. Although the distribution of ploughs was dictated by the technological advancement of the people, the proximity to European settler farms was a very decisive factor. However, the use of the ploughs did not reduce the burden of women in agricultural production.

According to the annual report of 1937, it was stated, "in Malakisi, prior to 1937, hardly a plough or hand-posho mill had been sold. In respect of 1937, there were 44 ploughs and 10 posho-mills".<sup>26</sup> There was no doubt, therefore, that in almost all parts of the district the sale of agricultural implements had increased. The economic survey of North 'Kavirondo' during 1938 revealed the following figures of machinery as being in possession of the 'Natives'.

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25. KNA, Ministry of Agriculture, 4/124, 1936

26. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/19, North 'Kavirondo' Annual Report, 1937.

Type of Machine	No. in Possession (North Kavirondo)
Ploughs	2,100
Water Mills	514
Overshot Water Mills	5
Power Driven Mills	3
Maize Planters	84
Ox-Cultivators	213

Table 5<sup>27</sup>

By 1938, it was reported that, "there were 2,109 ploughs in the district as compared with 1,609 ploughs in 1937".<sup>28</sup> In 1941, a census for agricultural implements revealed the following:

Location	.2 Furrow Disc Ploughs	.Mouldboard Ploughs
Elgon	2	153
Kabras	4	540
North Bukusu	64	1,486
South Bukusu	-	776
Malakisi	-	461
Total	70	3,416

Table 6<sup>29</sup>

A statement of sales of agricultural implements to "natives" indicates that the indigenous people of North "Kavirondo" by 1944 had acquired more agricultural implements.

27. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/20, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report 1938. See Economic Survey of North 'Kavirondo' during 1938, pp.

28. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/20, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report 1938, pp.

Agricultural Implements Acquired by 1944

Item Bought	Number Bought	Total No. Bought
Ploughs: Victory	1,152	1,534
Rhodesian	380	
Mahindi	2	
Mills: Colonist	15	
Atlas	148	
Trek Chains 3/8ins	1,864	1,864
Yokes (complete harness)	85	85
Shares: Victory and Rhodesian	9,128	9,128
Hoes: 2½lb., 3 lb and 3½lb	4,079	4,079

Table 7<sup>30</sup>

It was further indicated that by this time the "district possessed approximately 5,000 ploughs. These ploughs will be most useful in any drive for increased production".<sup>31</sup> The introduction of ploughs meant a much more intensive use of land, the end of shifting cultivation and enhanced value of property in land. However, technological changes led to an increase in women's workload.

The introduction of the ploughs meant that more land was ploughed and therefore more labour was needed in the production process.

For instance, by 1935, there were 45 ploughing companies operating in the Kimilili region each ploughing between

30. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/2/1 Implements, 1936-43,. See also Economic Survey File No.DC/NN/1/20, North 'Kavirondo' 1941, pp.2-3.

31. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/2/3 Implements General, 1942-45. See also File No.DC/NN/1/23, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1941, p.8.



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twenty and thirty acres.<sup>32</sup> However, oral data demonstrates that some cooperative companies were ploughing much more than that. One company alone had 225 acres under cultivation in 1935 and when it broke up shortly afterwards, its individual members ploughed farms which together added upto nearly 500 acres.<sup>33</sup> In 1939 for example, "The Yalusi Farmers club of South Kimilili consisted of eleven farmers who together had 600 acres of land under cultivation."<sup>34</sup> Some of the members of this cooperative included Shadrack Waswa and Sibachi Murunga among others.

By 1940s, the household ratio of ploughs was 1:6 and by 1950s, the ratio was 1:2. With the introduction of the single-bladed ploughs in the 1940s, many people were encouraged to purchase their own ploughs. By 1960, most people had their own ploughs. This was possible with the introduction of the single-bladed ploughs which were cheap.

Owing to modern economic conditions, women have had to assume more and more responsibility in agriculture. When discussing their problems, women mention especially the difficulties of obtaining sufficient food for the family and the large amount of garden work, both of which they

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32. Pascal Nabwana, Oral interview, Kimilili 4/2/82. See Nyanza Daily correspondence: Trade and Commerce, See also letter from DC, North "Kavirondo" to Ag.PC Nyanza, 13th April, 1935 in File No.PC/nza/3/27/23. 1935.
33. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili 5/2/82 and Pascal Nabwana, op.cit.,
34. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/21, North 'Kavirondo' District, Annual Report, 1939, p.21

reckon are problems directly related to the existing pattern of agriculture. An elderly woman when comparing their lot with that of young women said, "they had less work to do, it was of a lighter kind and food was plentiful."<sup>35</sup>

It has been observed by the Economic Commission for Africa that, "modernization including the adoption of agricultural technology imposes additional farming tasks on rural women. As children who previously assisted mothers are sent to school, as labour intensive cash crops are introduced, and men find employment away from the family farm, women's burdens increase."<sup>36</sup>

The following table gives an estimate number of men who went out to work from North "Kavirondo" reserve.<sup>37</sup>

Labour Recruitment from North 'Kavirondo'  
1914 - 1945

Year	Registered Labour Outside District	Registered Labour Inside District	Estimated Unregistered Labour	Total Recruited Labour	Comments
1914	10,190	204	-	10,394	Military - 6,022. The 10,394 represents other forms of employment
1918	8,682	3,542	1,700	13,908	Only a small proportion of men went out to work unregistered

35. Julia Namuleyi, Oral interview, Mukwa, 16/12/81

36. Daily Nation, 16/10/1983

37. According to the District Commissioner's report, only a small proportion of the men who went out to work were registered. See File No. DC/NN/1/1, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1917-18, p.11.

Year	Registered Labour Outside District	Registered Labour Inside District	Estimated Unregistered Labour	Total Recruited Labour	Comments
1919	3,623	5,274	3,000	11,897	
1926	29,213	-	-	29,213	5% of the able adult male population between 15-40 years were in employment
1928	25,182	-	-	25,182	This figure exceeds that of every district in the country. Central "Kavirondo" was the nearest rival with 1,348 less
1929	23,884	-	-	23,884	The number accounted for 34.18% of males between 15-40 years of age
1930	25,735	-	-	25,735	This increase over 1930 was doubtless due to the poor price of locally grown produce which forced labour to earn cash
1931	20,828	-	-	20,828	This figure accounted for 26% of the male population between 15 and 40 years of age
1938	31,000	-	-	31,000	

Year	Registered Labour Outside District	Registered Labour Inside District	Estimated Unregistered Labour	Total Recruited Labour	Comments
1944	41,834	-	-	41,834	This figure accounts for those males in civil employment only
1945	50,738	-	-	50,738	This was the highest total in the colony

Table 7<sup>38</sup>

Several observations can be made from the above table. The indigenous food crops grown such as eleusine and sorghum required relatively large labour inputs. From the above table, there was little "surplus" labour left behind particularly at the times of planting. Weeding and harvesting as North "Kavirondo" reserve had the same rainfall patterns as the areas occupied by the European settler farmers and therefore the peak labour requirements for both coincided. The table indicates that there was reduction in the supply of labour on the individual peasant holdings in the reserve. The implications of this reduced supply of labour were twofold. One, it jeopardised the food supply of individual peasant families, thus threatening the very survival of their families. Two women's workload increased in an effort to fill the gap that had been created by the migrant males. The result was that women experienced more

38. North "Kavirondo" District Annual Reports 1914-1945. By 1955, an average of upto 80% of the men were reportedly away at any one time. See File No. DC/NN/1/36, North Nyanza District, Annual Report, 1955 p.9

responsibility which diverted their labour time and deteriorated capabilities to produce adequate food supplies. Furthermore, cash crop production increased women's labour in the fields leaving them less time to cultivate separate food crops and vegetables.

As it has been succinctly put by Bryceson and Mbilinyi, labour intensification rather than labour productivity was the basis of the colonial era.<sup>39</sup> In the case of the Bukusu women, increased labour was related to the introduction of new cash crops that were to be produced along with traditional crops like sorghum, eleusine, potatoes and bananas. The burden of producing these crops lay heavily on women. In the absence of able-bodied men and grown up children to help mothers with farm labour, women's workload increased.

#### Agricultural Production, 1902 - 1960

As we pointed out in chapter one, the traditional crops included eleusine, sorghum, simsim, green-grams, pea-nuts, potatoes, bananas and vegetables. Women performed different duties in the production of these crops. The roles played by women in the production of these crops changed. These changes occurred in the relative importance of some of the traditional crops.

In the practice of traditional agriculture, extra labour from kin and neighbours could always be found if necessary.

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39. D.F. Bryceson and M. Mbilinyi, "The changing Role of Tanzanian women in production: From Peasants to Proletaria Paper presented for discussion at the History Department. Seminar on 30th November, 1978, University of Dar-es-Salaam.

Traditionally, there was reciprocation of labour during harvests but by the 1950s; every job and exchange was mediated by money. Some traditional crops had acquired a market value, that is, they could be exchanged for money. For instance, bananas were sold in the ripe or raw states. Potatoes, pea-nuts, simsim, greengrams and all types of vegetables had acquired a market value. Women were therefore involved in the production of the traditional crops and later on, when they acquired a market value, they also exchanged them.

Let us now sketch out a typical division of labour among men, women and children in the production of traditional and cash crops.

Division of Labour, 1902 - 1949

Crop	Men	Women and Children	Men, Women and Children
Eleusine	Clearing bush, Scaring birds and construction of stores	Land preparation, planting, drying, actual storing and winnowing	Weeding and harvesting
Sorghum	Clearing bush Scaring birds and construction of stores	Land preparation, planting, drying, storing threshing and winnowing	Weeding and harvesting
Pea-nuts	Clearing bush	Land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting, storing and shelling	-
Bananas	Digging of holes, planting and de-sucking	Continuous weeding mulching, maturing, de-sucking, harvesting, storing ( <u>bukekhe</u> )	Prunning, suckers planting
Simsim	Clearing bush	Preparation of land, planting, weeding, harvesting, storing and threshing	-

Crop	Men	Women and Children	Men, Women and Children
Potatoes	-	Preparation of land, cutting vines, planting, weeding, harvesting	-
Vegetables	-	Preparation of land, planting, weeding, plucking for use and sell	-
Cotton	Farm preparation, spraying with pesticides, marketing in bulk	Hand digging, weeding, sorting	Planting, picking and transporting to markets
Maize	Purchase of Farm implements ploughing, weeding with plough construction of stores, repair of implements and marketing in bulk	Weeding, shelling, storing and petty-marketing	Planting, harvesting and storing

Table 8<sup>40</sup>

From the above table, it can be concluded that women played a key role in the production of traditional crops. But as a shift in the division of labour occurred, women began to do jobs formerly considered men's work. For example, clearing, grazing, construction and repair of food stores and scaring of birds. Thus, by assuming extra responsibility which demanded masculine labour, women's workload increased.

In this section, we shall examine the role played by women in the production of cash crops. Our argument in this

40. Oral interviews, Sirisia, Wamono, Butonge, Kimilili, Bokoli, Chwele, Musese, Misikhu, Kibabii and Kibingei.

section is that the introduction of cash crops led to an increase of the area under cash crop production. Consequently, this led to an increase of the workload of women. This was the case because cash crops competed for labour with the traditional crops and the latter were less well-cared for.

#### Division of Labour and the Production of Cash crops

As a result of a variety of influences, for example agricultural instruction, taxation, the opening up of the district roads and railway, the organisation of marketing facilities, the creation of new wants that could only be satisfied through the means of money, Africans began to produce a steadily increasing quantity of cash crops. In Bungoma district, these cash crops were mainly cotton, maize, coffee and to a lesser extent beans, onions and sunflower.

The following table shows the division of labour among women, men and children in the production of the above cash crops.

Division of Labour and Production of  
Cash Crops, 1950-1960

Crop	Men	Women and Children	Men, Women Children
Cotton	Farm preparation spraying with pesticides and marketing in bulk	Hand digging, weed- ing, sorting (separating good fibres from bad fibres) petty- marketing	Planting, pick- ing and trans- porting to markets
Maize	Purchase of farm implements, ploughing, weed- ing with plough, construction of stores, repair of stores and farm implements and bulk market- ing	Weeding, actual storing and petty- marketing	Planting and harvesting



Crop	Men	Women and Children	Men, Women and Children
Coffee (After 1951)	Land preparation, digging holes, collection of seedlings..plant- ing, pruning, spraying with pesticides marketing through the co- operatives	Filling the holes with animal manure, continuous weeding, picking of coffee berries, sorting out "mbuni" from good berries, dry- ing "mbuni" in the sun and continuous manuring, mulching and terracing	Transportation of coffee beans to the factory
Ground-nuts	-	Preparation of farm, planting, weeding, harvesting, shelling and selling (this was normally planted on small scale)	-
Onions	Preparation of seed beds in large scale farming, plant- ing on large scale together with women and children and hired labour	Preparation of seed beds, planting, weeding harvesting and drying (small scale farming)	Carrying to markets
Vegetables (cabbages and <u>sukuma</u> <u>wiki</u> )	Making of seed beds	Preparation of land, seed beds and trans-planting, weeding, plucking for use and selling	-
Beans	Preparation of land and bulk marketing	Planting, weeding, harvesting, sorting and storing and petty marketing	Carrying to markets

Table 9<sup>11</sup>

Several observations can be made from the above table. It can be noted that women's work in agriculture surpassed that of men. While men continued to swell the categories of

41. Oral interviews, Sirisia, Wamono, Butonge, Kimilili, Bokoli, Chwele, Musese, Misikhu, Kibabii and Kibingei.

land preparation and cattle care, women did a sizeable portion of the remaining work in planting, weeding and harvesting of both food and cash crops.

Agricultural tasks done by men were those requiring superior strength like clearing and ploughing. Farming tasks done by women tended to be less stimulating and were more repetitive ones, hence they tended to be time consuming. For example, hand-digging, harvesting and winnowing. But the distinctions were not clear-cut. Women participated in clearing and ploughing when there were not enough men or boys available and men helped to weed unless the family could afford to engage help from outside. For most farming families in the district, weeding was considered to have been the most time-consuming single-task. In fact women were unanimous in declaring hoeing to be the hardest of all. But they reckoned that it was necessary labour to produce good crops. Weeding was considered tedious work and it took the longest time to perform.<sup>42</sup>

Much tedious and laborious work was involved in the care of the crops after planting until the time they were harvested or dug up for use in the case of root crops. The crops had to be protected against the depredations of wild and domestic animals.<sup>43</sup> Weeds had to be prevented from smothering the growing seedlings and certain crops had to be given special care to ensure good yields.

The peak labour demands of the agricultural cycle occurred from March to May and from September to November.<sup>44</sup> These

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42. Elizabeth Naliaka, Oral interview, Kimilili, 2/2/82

43. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili 5/2/82

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periods corresponded with the seasons of long and short rains respectively. It was in these periods that distinctive work roles of men and women were evident as it is shown in the table below.

Agricultural Cycle: Work Pattern After 1950

Month	Jan - Feb	March/April/ May	June/July/ August	Sept/Oct/Nov/ December
Weather	Hot/Dry	Long rains	Short	rains
Crop				
Cotton	Clearing the fields, sorting out and marketing	-	Planting Weeding Spraying with pesticides	Main harvest and marketing
Maize(The eight-month variety before the introduction of hybrid varieties)	Preparation of land	Planting, Weeding and Manuring	Weeding	Harvesting
Coffee	Preparation of land, digging holes for planting, filling holes with animal manure, pruning and mulching	Planting continuous weeding, spraying with pesticides	Planting, thinning continuous weeding, plucking coffee berries	Plucking coffee berries, manuring wind-break and shade
Potatoes	-	Preparation of land, tubers planting	Weeding	Tubers planting
Bananas	-	Prunning, mulching continuous weeding, removing suckers and planting	Continuous weeding	Suckers, prunning and mulching

Month	Jan - Feb	March/April/ May	June/July/ August	Sept/Oct/Nov/ December
Weather	Hot/Dry	Long rains	Short rains	
Cassava	-	Continuous weeding, harvesting	Preparation of land and planting, harvesting	Weeding, Pruning
Sorghum	Preparation of land, planting	Weeding	Harvest retourne crop	Preparation o land
Eleusine	Preparation of land and planting	Weeding	Making of stores and harvesting	-

Table 10<sup>45</sup>

It can be observed from the above table that during the peak labour seasons, women were usually expected to work on their husband's cash crop farms as well as handle their own food crop farms alone. The introduction of cash economy led to the expansion in scale of production. This in turn meant expansion of women's labour.

Furthermore, as the production of cash crops like cotton, maize and coffee spread, struggles emerged between family heads (husbands) and their wives over land usage and allocation of the women's labour. It was remarked by some elders that, "provided she fulfils her duty of supplying the family with food, the husband has no right to interfere in matters relating to her gardens."<sup>46</sup> But, "if she does not cultivate well, he may beat

45. Oral interviews: Sirisia, Wamono, Butonge, Kimilili, Bokoli, Chwele, Musese, Misikhu, Kibabii and Kibingei. For dates, see bibliography at the end.

46. Luka Namulala, Oral interview, Musese, 10/12/81

her."<sup>47</sup> As one elder put it in describing the relations between a husband and a wife, "if there is no war between them, she may plant sorghum or eleusine or other crops in her gardens and he will not refuse."<sup>48</sup> The husband's unallocated land was strictly reserved for the production of cash crops and the product was retained by the husband. At the same time, women were forced to work on these farms as well as on their own plots.

While there were no hard and fast rules governing the labour contributions between men and women with regard to particular crops, one may argue that the contributions of men varied with the proportion of the crop destined for sale and its importance for cash earnings. Thus, whereas women did nearly most of the work on sorghum and eleusine which were mainly consumed at home, men usually did much of the work on maize, cotton and coffee farms. These latter crops were the ones from which men controlled the cash earnings.

From the evidence, presented in tables 8 and 9, it can be postulated that with the introduction of cash crops, agricultural work was done by both husband and wife but the wife had more responsibilities for the major part, namely, the food crops. The husbands tended to concern themselves with cash crops in order to obtain money with which to pay taxes. Table 9 points to the conclusion that women participated in more responsibilities than men. It is also important

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47. Timothy Wepukhulu, Oral interview, Wamono, 3/2/82

48. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele, 7/11/81

to indicate that the traditional farming system had changed with regard to the sexual division of labour, land utilization, importance of crops i.e. new crops had been introduced and above all, farming techniques had changed. In this case, colonialism represented domination of traditional economy and secondly, cultural domination because the Europeans did not recognise the traditional sexual division of labour and the peculiar position of women arising from that.

In conclusion several issues can be observed. The individualization and registration of land brought a series of problems for women (1) In Bungoma, women were dispossessed of their usufructory land rights through the implementation of the Swynnerton plan of 1954. (2) The introduction of individual rights to land which went mainly to men on the assumption that they were heads of families, removed the security previously enjoyed by women. (3) Since the production of cash and subsistence crops was directly linked to the access of land, women were confronted with a whole range of handicaps in fulfilling their role as producers. (4) Lack of control over land and all that goes with it became a major cause of women's economic dependence. Thus, (5) without land, women were reduced to a state of dependency, as providers of labour force with no security. This further limited their ability to increase production for the benefit of their families and community.

As a result of technological changes, women's workload increased. This was particularly the case because women continued to use their traditional instruments of production,

the hoe. The introduction of ploughs meant that more land was to be ploughed and more labour was therefore needed to plant, weed, harvest and even shell especially in the case of maize production which by the 1930s was well expanded in scale. Hence, technological changes also meant that women were to work harder and for longer hours. The introduction of cash crops increased the arduousness of women's work. Cash crop production led to increase in the area under cultivation. This meant that more weeding had to be done by women. Thus, this extra work was done in addition to individual women's small scale farm labours and domestic chores.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### WOMEN AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MARKETS IN THE DISTRICT, 1902 - 1960

With improved agricultural production noted in our previous chapter, the introduction of money and the creation of transport facilities, the need for public markets nearer home became necessary. Furthermore, the establishment and development of markets in Bungoma was closely related to the development of agriculture. The more crops the peasants produced, the more trade it stimulated and therefore the increase in export - import trade. For women, market trade represented a means of acquiring economic independence.

In this chapter, an analysis of the development of trade and markets<sup>1</sup> in Bungoma district is made. Furthermore, we shall attempt to link up the traditional trade patterns with modern trade patterns. Modern trade patterns are associated with the introduction of cash economy. However, the development of markets and the participation of women in commercial activities is discussed in three sections. The first section links up the traditional trade patterns with modern trade patterns. The development of the infrastructure and modern markets is presented in section two. Case studies of individual women traders to illustrate the participation of women in the development of trade and markets is presented in section three of the chapter.

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1. Market in this chapter is used to refer to all points where fairly large numbers of individuals gather to exchange goods.



Traditional forms of trade based on the barter system continued throughout the period under study. The only observable change was that some of the items were being sold for money. However, it is important to indicate that money had not very much penetrated women's staples, such as basketry, pottery and vegetable trade. A pot was exchanged for what it could hold in eleusine or sorghum and later on maize. In fact, the persistence of the barter mode of trade is observable throughout the period under study.

From the time the Bukusu settled in Bungoma until the beginning of the twentieth century, there were no prolonged periods of peace (because of the Bukusu tribal wars with the Iteso) to encourage the development of trade and trading centres. However, the absence of markets does not rule out the existence of internal trade which involved the exchange of agricultural products and other commodities which included iron implements, basketry and pottery (see chapter one). Although there were no market centres in Bungoma district between 1844 and 1895, the period during which the long distance trade flourished in some parts of East Africa, some trade in guns and other commodities however, existed. When Hobley went to Mumias, it was reported that Babukusu had guns. Babukusu had acquired these guns in exchange with cattle and food.<sup>2</sup> This shows that Babukusu participated in trade that existed at the time despite the absence of trading centres.

At the turn of the century, women were primarily involved in the local trade. Most of the goods sold by women were

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2. C.W. Hobley: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony  
Frank Cass, London, 1928 p.81.

agricultural products and home-crafted products such as pots, baskets, beads and mats. In discussing the role of women in agricultural production in African economies, Boscrup notes that the manufacture of goods was for sale and not for household use. She further observes that this transforms the nature of domestic production and brings about a certain degree of specialization in women's work.<sup>3a</sup>

However, since there were few other occupations open to illiterate rural women, the market was highly competitive and farm produce was sold for a very small profit. Further, the market place became the centre for social activity for the rural women. When they were not working on the farm, women sat the whole day at the market and sold surplus food.<sup>4</sup> Women sat under shades of trees and exposed their goods for sale or sometimes hawked them across the village.<sup>5</sup> Not only do most Bukusu women in Bungoma district trade, but they also dominate local trade in many commodities. The areas in which they exercised the greatest dominance were in the trade of vegetables, grains, cooked foodstuffs like beans, bananas, sweet potatoes, cassava, sugar cane and boiled green-maize. They also sold termites, smoked mushrooms and products of their home production as already mentioned.<sup>6</sup> The provision carried to the market, however, changed according to place, season and demand.

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3. E. Boserup, Women's Role in Economic Development. London, George Allen and Unwin, 1970 p.68.

3a. Ibid., p.68

4. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili 5/2/82.

5. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele 3/12/81.

6. Julia Namuleyi, Oral interview, Mukwa, 17/12/81.

After the battle of Chetambe, between the Babukusu and the British in 1895, and especially after the posting of the Swahili agent Mohammed Musee at Nalondo in 1902, the area was penetrated by petty Swahili traders.

Musee's presence at Nalondo created a sporadic market there and other Swahili traders were travelling from fort to fort selling such items as beads and white vegetable salt.<sup>7</sup>

However, in Bungoma, the development of trading centres was not encouraged immediately after the establishment of British administration because of its location. The location of the present Bungoma District was very far North of the main transport routes connecting Mumias to Mombasa and Uganda. Reference was, however, made in the 1903 quarterly report to ivory brought from the Bukusu area.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in the quarterly report for 1905, mention was made of a Swahili caravan which was captured while smuggling ivory from Karamoja through Bukusu.<sup>9</sup> This trade was channelled southwards to Mumias and Kisumu. Except for the caravans through the area, no report was made concerning internal trade or trading centres until 1909 when Malakisi was established as the first trading centre in the region. In 1910, Malakisi trading centre was surveyed and gazetted.<sup>10</sup>

However, markets seem to have developed after the establishment of British administration in the area (Bungoma District).

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7. Festo Wakoli, Oral interview, Sirisia, 3/2/82. See also, KNA, File No.DC/NN/3/1. 1900-1916 Political Record Book North 'Kavirondo' District Part I pp.16-17.
  8. KNA, Quarterly Report, North 'Kavirondo' District, 1903 p
  9. KNA, Quarterly Report, North 'Kavirondo' District, 1905 p
  10. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/5. North 'Kavirondo' District

Once established, the market symbolized the link between the old and new modes of trade. The old mode was based on barter system of trade and consisted in the plain exchange of commodities. The new mode presupposes handling of money and the making of profit. Furthermore, most periodic markets were established because of local response to various stimuli such as the introduction of modern cash economy, innovations in transport, development of infrastructure and exploitation of the natural resources. Further, some of the most successful periodic markets in Bungoma were initiated by the indigenous people themselves without any official sanctions. However, the construction of roads to connect the then existing government posts in the province led to an increase in trade. As a result, a pattern of trade developed whereby women traded in the open-air markets in the centre.

#### Pattern of Infrastructure and Trade.

From the inception of administrative control, the government was also interested in building roads, largely for its own use. The earliest roads in Bungoma District linked the area with Mumias, then the District headquarters until 1920. As early as 1909, there was a road from Mumias to Ndivisi, but this was probably no more than a track.<sup>11</sup> A major road of later years went to Malakisi in the west. In 1910, Malakisi trading centre was surveyed and gazetted.

However, trading centres were established by the colonial government to increase trade through the agency of Indian traders. Further, during this period, Malakisi in Bungoma

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11. KNA, File No.DC/NN/3/1, North 'Kavirondo' District, Political Record Book, 1900-1916.

district predominated in trade and became a focal point in the communication network of the time. However, it was only during the First World War that a more direct road from Kakamega to Lugulu was built using missionary supervisors and forced labour.<sup>12</sup>

In the 1918/1919 annual report of North "Kavirondo" District, mention is made of the thirty miles of road which had been constructed from Mumias to Malakisi and five miles of Malakisi-Mbale road.<sup>13</sup> Similarly, the annual report of North "Kavirondo" District for 1923 shows that by 1923 the bridge over river Nzoia on the Kisumu-Kitale road had been completed saving long journeys through Mumias to Bukusuland which added to the cost of transport. In 1924, a schedule for road construction was produced linking the main trading centres to chief townships outside the District. The roads included the one from Kaimosi to Kitale via Bukusu and then from Kitale to Uganda via Kimilili and Malakisi.<sup>14</sup>

However, new trading centres were located at junctions of transport lines. Some of these new transport lines were constructed to provide links between these trading centres. For instance, Malakisi is located in the cotton growing area at a road junction. By 1924, it already had a cotton ginnery and had become an important cotton buying post. Although Malakisi was well served with more roads than other

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12. KNA, File No.DC/NZA/1/2 Nyanza District Annual Report, 1910.

13. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/2, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1918-1919, p.5

14. KNA, File No. Nyanza Province: Roads and Bridges, North 'Kavirondo' District, 1925-29, PC/NZA/3/42/2.

centres, the District Commissioner in the annual report of 1912 hoped to put up another township to tap the wealth of the Bukusu area as Malakisi was badly placed.<sup>15</sup> He added that Malakisi did not do well because of transportation difficulties.

The coming of the railway led to the establishment of Kimilili, Webuye and Myanga centres. In the 1925 District annual report, the District Commissioner recommended that Kabuchai should be moved where the new railway line crosses the main road. Kimilili, in a maize producing area was located at the junction of the Kitale Malakisi road and the branch line to Webuye.

In the annual report of 1926, mention was made of the application for the gazetting of the trading centres at Kimilili and Kabuchai (Bungoma). This application was made as far back as 26/10/1925 and the approval of the local 'Native' council was obtained on 4/1/26. These trading centres were, however, not yet gazetted as the Chief 'native' Commissioner considered that they should await the passing of the Crown Lands Amendment Ordinance passed in October 1926.<sup>16</sup> Hence, no application had been made for the gazetting of the trading centre at Myanga.

Applications were also made in 1926 for roads to be constructed to Webuye and Myanga railway stations.<sup>17</sup> In May,

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15. KNA, File NoDC/NN/1/3, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report 1912.

16. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/7, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1926.

17. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/42/2: Nyanza Province, Roads and Bridges, North 'Kavirondo' District, 1925-29.

1927, it was found necessary to connect Myanga by road to Malakisi to enable Malakisi traders to have access to the nearest railway station. During this period, smaller centres and camps sprang up along the major roads. In November 1927, reference was made in the annual report to Thwere's (Chwele) camp lying between Kimilili and Malakisi.<sup>18</sup>

However, what is important for us to note is the fact that trading centres were established by the colonial government to increase trade through the agency of Indian traders. Through the establishment of these centres, Babukusu were gradually integrated into the emerging colonial economy. Open-air markets which emerged in the region under study after 1925 were established close to the market centres which were already in operation.

#### Development of Modern Markets 1925-1960.

The establishment of modern markets linked up the traditional trade with modern trade patterns. Furthermore, women's participation in commercial activities took a new turn in the 1920s. This period witnessed the establishment of open-air markets where women came to play a key role in trade.

Open-air markets were established in Bungoma district after 1925.<sup>19</sup> Most of these open-air markets were established close to market centres that were dominated by Indian traders. Further, open-air markets played an important role in local trade. Buying from the open-air markets was localized except

18. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/51/2/1: Nyanza Province Trading Centres and Townships 1925-1928.

19. Johnston Khisa and Pascal Nabwana, Oral interviews, Kimilili 4/12/82 and 5/2/82.

where the goods required were of high quality, Small centres sold foodstuffs and other low-quality goods to provide people with income for their daily requirements. The larger centres like Bungoma, Kimilili, Webuye, Malakisi, Chwele, Sirisia, Cheptais and Lwakhakha had and they have continued to have fixed market days. They sell high order goods as well as foodstuffs.

The pattern of holding open-air markets was and still is circular. The following table gives an illustration of the circular pattern of open-air markets.

#### Markets and Weekly Market Days

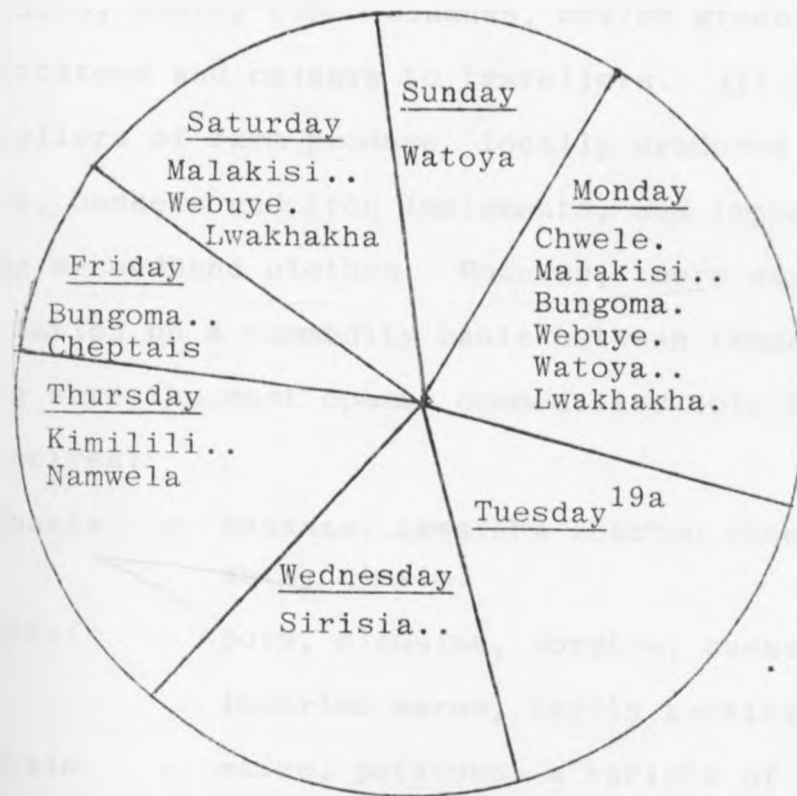


Chart 1

19a. Left out because the day was set for the meetings of women at Malakisi under the Chairmanship of Namukhula, Murunga's wife.



From the above chart, it can be observed that each market centre had a fixed day or days in a week when all sorts of wares were brought and sold. Some markets like Chwele, Sirisia, Cheptais and Lwakhakha held open-air markets once in a week. Other market centres like Bungoma, Webuye, Kimilili and Malakisi held open-air markets twice in a week. This was influenced by the presence of the Indian population operating at these centres. Open-air markets were arranged in such a way that no two open-air markets in the same neighbourhood were held on the same day.

However, apart from the above large markets, smaller markets were located on bus routes. They sold foodstuffs such as sugar cane, fruits, mostly ripe bananas, boiled green-maize and cooked potatoes and cassava to travellers. All open-air markets were suppliers of farm produce, locally produced commodities like pots, baskets and iron implements, and imported goods including secondhand clothes. However, there was some specialization on a commodity basis between these markets. The following were the most common commodities sold at the different market centres:

- |           |   |   |
|-----------|---|---|
| Lwakhakha | - | bananas, kamaleha (bamboo shoots), ground-nuts, simsim.   |
| Malakisi  | - | pots, eleusine, sorghum, cassava, vegetables, imported wares, cattle auction.   |
| Cheptais  | - | maize, potatoes, a variety of vegetables, imported wares, cattle auction.   |
| Bungoma   | - | cassava, eleusine, potatoes, sorghum, a variety of vegetables and imported wares, clothes, simsim, ground-nuts, cattle auction. |

- Chwele - maize, bananas, potatoes, pots, a variety of vegetables.
- Sirisia - bananas, potatoes, cassava, pots and cattle auction.
- Kimilili - maize, bananas, a variety of vegetables, imported wares and cattle auction.
- Watoya - for various commodities including cattle auction.

From the above list of items sold at different markets, it can be observed that opening up of markets created a wider scope for women to sell their wares. Further, the situation for women's participation in trade improved with the introduction of cash crops. This is reflected in the quantity of cash crops sold.

The main source of produce sold in the markets and the chief buyers of essential goods were and still are women. Prior to 1945, most markets were located in an open air-space under tree shades. In fact for a long time, women did not have permanent stalls in markets but they continued to give service to their customers. However, a market day was a day for women. One aspect of marketing that has not changed is the market using population. The majority of market users were and still are women who deal in a wide variety of agricultural produce. In fact, sexual division of labour was also evident in the marketing of the objects produced. For instance, women sold pots of different functions except for brewing beer, which was the speciality

of men, smoking pipes, baskets, dried mushrooms, termites, agricultural produce: the petty marketing was done by women and marketing in bulk was done by men, vegetable salt, vegetable fat, cotton seed oil (Udo), ghee(Samuli), poultry and eggs. Women sold cooked foodstuffs like cassava, potatoes, bananas, maize and hot gruel which they prepared on the premises. Other commodities sold in the open-air markets included paraffin, cigarettes, soap, utensils and sauce-pans. Women decided to sell such commodities as foodstuffs and vegetables as a means of earning independent income.

Within the market, people who sold the same goods were grouped together. However, women traders had to know the season or period of high demand for some of the commodities. Vegetables were in high demand during dry seasons; the latter were also periods of shortages. During this time customers came to buy a lot of commodities from the market. Furthermore, we have observed that women did not necessarily sell what they produced on their farms. A shrewd marketwoman brought something for sale, and after earning cash for it, she bought some other goods and then resold them at a much better price later in the day. Business women repeated this operation many times and they earned better profits in excess of the value of the goods which they brought to the market in the first instance. This was made possible because of the greater influx of people into the market later in the day when the operative forces of supply and demand created favourable conditions in the sale of certain commodities.

It was however observed that, some of the perishable products used to rot in the selling places. For instance, ripe bananas, and vegetables because the majority of people in rural areas live at subsistence level and tend to produce most of their foodstuffs, therefore, the demand was low. These were some of the difficulties that confronted women traders who operated business in the rural areas.

Furthermore, there was lack of facilities for adequate transportation to ensure quick delivery of commodities from one market centre to another. This was another problem that confronted women traders. Consequently, since the only practical means of travel between markets and most of the neighbouring markets was on foot, and since goods were transported in head loads, this determined the trader's choice of commodity and the markets at which she bought and sold. Women around Chwele region took their produce to Chwele market, Kimilili, (which was about nine kilometres away) and Sirisia market which was about eleven kilometres away.<sup>19</sup>

However, L.J. Wood suggested that the dominant role of women in market activity reflected the continuity of a practice developed to solve problems of food insecurity. The predominance of women in market trade also reflected an extension of the women's traditional concern and responsibility for the supply of basic foodstuffs.<sup>20</sup> This also explains the nature of the commodities sold at different market centres,

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19. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili, 5/2/82.

20. L.J. Wood: "Pre-Colonial Markets in East Africa" reprinted from journal of Geographical Association of Nigeria Vol.17 No. 1, June 1974

most of which were foodstuffs.

Further, some of the market centres discussed above were used by Indian traders and later on Maize and Produce Board to buy cash crops like maize and cotton from peasant farmers. For instance, cotton stores were situated at the following market centres, Sirisia, Lwakhakha, Mayanja, Myanga, Changara and Malakisi where a ginnery was situated.<sup>21</sup> Maize was sold at the following market centres, Webuye, Bungoma, Lugulu, Kimilili, Chwele, Cheptais, Kapsakwany, Kamukuywa, Kuywa, Misikhu, Kabula, Myanga and Bokoli. Eggs, were sold at the following markets: Kimilili, Bungoma, Webuye, Kitale and Eldoret.

Among Babukusu, the only form of property that was traditionally regarded as the domain of women was poultry and poultry products. Although women were not allowed to eat poultry and poultry products (see chapter one), they, however, sold poultry and poultry products. Further, the amount of cash that was gained through the sale of poultry and poultry products was controlled by women. The following table indicates the number of eggs exported from Webuye from 1940-1946.

Monthly egg return from North 'Kavirondo' District:  
Eggs exported from Webuye, 1940-1946.

Year	Month	Eggs Exported	Cost per egg	Total cost
1940	Jan-Dec	322,500	@ 3 cents	9,675.00
1944	Jan-Dec	320,600	@ 6 cents	19,236.00.
1945	Jan-Dec	1,439,950	@ 6 cents	86,397.00

21. Timothy Wepukhulu, Oral interview, Wamono, 3/2/82.

Year	Month	Eggs Exported	Cost per egg	Total cost
1946	Jan - Dec	747,671	@ 6 cents	44,850.26

Table 1<sup>22</sup>

Considering the fact that women had limited sources of income, the sale of eggs enabled them to earn their own independent money. The price of eggs was also very low, therefore one had to have very many hens to enable her to realise a reasonable income. However, the money earned from the sale of eggs was not enough to enable women to meet their most immediate felt needs like buying utensils, salt, paying school fees and buying school uniforms for their children. Furthermore, these eggs were graded so that the lower the grade of eggs, the lower the cost. The following table shows some of the eggs purchased at various centres indicating their grades in 1945.

Eggs and their Grades in 1945

Centre	1st Grade	2nd Grade	3rd Grade	Cooking	Bad	Total	% of fres appr
Kimilili	2,309	3,349	1,730	1,599	1,101	10,088	70%
Chebukwa	1,709	1,839	253	653	340	4,794	80%
Khachonge	1,743	1,901	431	817	611	5,503	80%
Shang'alo	718	1,036	578	306	219	2,857	80%
Total	7,372	10,443	2,972	5,103	2,610	29,105	70%

Table 2<sup>23</sup>

22. KNA, File No. Agr. 5/45/2, 1949. Poultry: Egg Industry and Legislation. PC/NZA/3/2/164, Poultry and Poultry Farming Department of Agriculture, Kakamega, 1940-1945, p.2.

From the above table, it can be observed that the use of the grades further reduced the profits women earned from the sale of eggs. Consequently, women had to engage in other forms of small business.

However, there were other developments during the same period that gave women access to limited amounts of cash. This included the brewing of traditional beer. After the shift to maize cultivation as the staple, women continued to cultivate independently, patches of eleusine. Apart from being a food crop, eleusine was also used in brewing traditional beer either as a yeast or it even served as the main ingredient apart from sorghum and maize. As the cultivation of eleusine had come to be largely conducted by women, and as the brewing of beer had traditionally been women's work, the beer industry in the colonial period came to be the one profitable cash venture that was primarily controlled by women. This continues to be the case up to the present.

The commercialization of beer brewing took a more dramatic turn in the 1940s with expanded production of maize. However, beer was brewed and sold by women in individual homes. But in the late 1950s, beer clubs were established on local markets. By the time of the abolition of beer clubs, Bungoma district had the highest number of beer clubs in Kenya. This shows that beer brewing was actually the most profitable cash venture undertaken by women.

There were different types of traditional beer and they were also priced differently. There was, for example, a mixture of traditional beer with banana wine, there was

'chang'aa (Nubian gin) and there was 'kwete' which was local brew from white maize. The most expensive of all these types of alcoholic beverages was the illegally distilled form of dry gin, called chang'aa, followed by a mixture of beer with banana wine and kwete was the cheapest. One glass of chang'aa in the 1950s was 50 cents but this increased to 1.00 shilling in the 1960s. A bottle (pint) of chang'aa used to cost 1.50 to 2.00 shillings in the 1950s and in the 1960s it had increased to 2.50 to 4.00 shillings.<sup>24</sup> Chang'aa was expensive because of the expensive ingredients that were used which included sugar and yeast. The process of distilling chang'aa was a tedious as well as an expensive one and since the whole exercise was illegal, one needed to have a lot of courage to take the risk of preparing it. Kwete was sold at 25 cents per standard tin (2 pints), or 1.00 shilling per sitting session. A mixture of Kwete and banana wine was sold at 50 cents per standard tin (2 pints).

Furthermore, women earned limited amounts of cash through the petty marketing of such cash crops as cotton, maize and in some cases coffee. In his book, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa, Walter Rodney argued that where male workers were paid low wages, women's productive labour in the subsistence sector subsidized production for export. As indicated in our previous chapter, Africans began to produce a steadily increasing quantity of cash crops as a result of the creation of new needs that could only be satisfied by means of money. In Bungoma, they consisted chiefly of cotton, maize, coffee and to a lesser extent beans, onions and sunflower.

24. Kerementino Nalike. Oral interview. Ch... 6/5/82



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Cotton was introduced in Sirisia division from Tororo in 1922.<sup>24a</sup> Both men and women used to plant cotton. Further, women used to sell cotton in small quantities, while men sold in bulk. The following table indicates the quantity of cotton that was exported from Bungoma from 1924-1960

Cotton Exported From Bungoma, 1923-1960

Year	Average Quantity Exported in Pounds (lbs.)	Cash Return in Shillings
1923	221,466.67	620,106.67
1926	313,449	56,420.82
1929	589,224	94,275.84
1932	1,196,315	143,557.80
1935	3,890,284	544,639.76
1938	1,603,630.3	192,435.63
1941	964,600.67	125,398.08
1944	616,218.67	92,432.80
1947	560,441.67	117,692.75
1950	1,767,479	441,869.75
1953	1,495,435.7	418,721.99
1956	1,037,200	518,600.00
1960	153,588.33	767,941.65

Table 3<sup>25</sup>

Women acquired limited amounts of cash through the sale of cotton. Furthermore, women earned limited amounts of cash through the petty marketing of such crops as maize and in some cases, coffee. As indicated in our previous chapter, maize production in Bungoma was not entirely for

<sup>24a.</sup> Administratively, Malakisi, Wamono and Lwakhakha fall under Sirisia division.

<sup>25.</sup> KNA, Ministry of Agriculture Deposits. Agr.5/1/26 1939-1949. District and Provincial annual reports, 1923-1960. Most of these figures were based on estimates

consumption, but for export as well. For instance, the production of maize in Bungoma increased tremendously between 1930 and 1960, otherwise before 1930, it was only a subsidiary crop of which negligible quantities were sold.

As a result of the marketing facilities created by the completion of the Kampala branch of the Kenya and Uganda railway, the introduction of plough-farming on a major scale, and the issue of seed, production for sale rose between the years 1932 and 1960. The figures showing the quantity of maize railed from Webuye demonstrate this increase in maize production. Consequently, maize railed from Webuye rose from 4,600 bags in 1932 to 25,000 bags in 1935 and to 137,000 bags in 1940.<sup>26</sup> Usually, the quantity sold reflected the quantity produced.

The following table shows the quantity of maize exported from Bungoma from 1940-1960.

Maize Exported from Bungoma, 1940-1960

Year	Average Quantity Exported in bags	Cash Return in Shillings
1941	176,246	881,231.65
1944	346,074	2,076,444.00
1947	220,797	2,207,966.60
1950	483,867	6,290,253.50
1953	217,707	6,531,199.80
1956	173,557	5,206,699.80
1959	165,482	4,964,460.00

26. KNA, District Annual and Provincial reports, 1930-1941.

Year	Average Quantity Exported in bags	Cash Return in Shillings
1960	140,000	4,200,000.00

Table 4<sup>27</sup>

What is significant for us to observe is the fact that the petty marketing of maize in the district was done by women.

Coffee was also exported from Bungoma. Coffee was introduced in Bukusuland in 1950 and the first cooperative society was built at Chwele in 1953. The following quantity of coffee was exported from Bungoma from 1956-1960.

Coffee Exported from Bungoma 1956-1960

Year	Quantity Exported in tons	Cash Return in Pounds
1956	coffee clean 41 Tons	£ 34,899
	coffee ' <u>mbuni</u> ' 46 "	£ 6,275
1957	coffee clean 60 "	£ 41,538
	coffee ' <u>mbuni</u> ' 40 "	£ 5,163
1958	coffee clean 100 "	£ 41,588
	coffee ' <u>mbuni</u> ' 40 "	£ 5,168
1959	coffee clean 148 "	£ 59,201
	coffee ' <u>mbuni</u> ' 37 "	£ 3,476
1960	coffee clean 282 "	£111,623
	coffee ' <u>mbuni</u> ' 141 "	£ 12,409

Table 5<sup>28</sup>

The petty marketing of cotton, maize and coffee was done by women. This enabled them to earn limited amounts of cash. However, women participated in the marketing of other commodities as the following case studies will illustrate.

27. Source: KNA, District and Provincial Annual Reports, 1931-1960. Ministry of Agriculture Deposits at the Ministry of Agriculture Library, 1930-1960.

28. District Annual Reports and Ministry of Agriculture deposits, 1950-1960.

Biography and Commercial activities of Women Traders  
in Bungoma District.

Sarah Nabwala 71<sup>1/2</sup> years old, was one of the women petty traders in Bungoma district. She used to make pots for domestic use until 1950. In the 1950s, she used to make pots and exchange them against maize. Sometimes, she exchanged pots against baskets from the Mt. Elgon Kalenjin.

The cost of a pot depended on the size. For example, a medium sized water-pot was sold for 50-60 cobs of maize. A small sized pot for brewing beer (Sipanga) was sold for 40 to 50 cobs of maize.

Sarah Nabwala sold other commodities as well. These included, sugar, salt, matches, paraffin, soap and cooking fat (ghee and cotton seed oil). She bought these items in large quantities and then exchanged them against maize.

The following table indicates the quantity and rates of exchange:

Quantity and Equivalent Rates

<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Equivalent rates</u>
1 mug of sugar (lb.)	20 maize cobs
1 glass of salt	6 maize cobs
1 bar soap	20 maize cobs
1 basket	20-60 maize cobs depending on the size
1 cup of paraffin	5 maize cobs
1 cupful of oil ( <u>Udo</u> or <u>Samuli</u> )	20 maize cobs
1 match box	5 maize cobs

Table 6<sup>29</sup>

29. Sarah Nabwala, Oral interview, Chebukube, 16/4/1982.

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It can be observed from the above table that with the introduction of cash economy, women's commercial activities expanded. It can also be observed that the cost of the commodities did not take into account the rate of devaluation. Maize was being used instead of cash because it was later on resold at a better price and therefore increased profits for the petty trader. Maize was either sold to maize cooperative societies or to Indian traders who had established themselves at different market centres. The cost of the above commodities also depended on the geographical location of the area. In some areas, the cost was higher than what has been listed above.

Between 1950 and 1953, Sarah Nabwala used to sell up to five lorries of maize per year to Akbar, an Indian trader at Lwakhakha. As a result of her trading activities, she managed to buy four acres of land at Kibichori. She also used to pay school fees for her children with the money earned from her trading activities. One of them is now a University lecturer.

However, Sarah Nabwala's trading activities were carried out both in her home and at the open-air market. Her customers used to come to her house to purchase either paraffin or pots. Further, she did not have a permanent shop from where she sold her commodities. Furthermore, Sarah's income varied a great deal depending on the season. During harvesting seasons, she made maximum profit but this declined during the period of scarcity.

Women used to participate in a variety of trading activities. For instance, Miriam Walucho, was born in 1908 and used to trade in foodstuffs. In the 1940s, she used to sell foodstuffs like ripe bananas, porridge and boiled maize. In 1950, she built a tea canteen at Chwele market. Here, she used to sell tea, scones and doughnuts. She also used to buy bananas from other women in the surrounding areas and then she took them to Kitale. This was possible because in 1950, a certain Indian called Modi owned buses which used to operate between Kitale and Malakisi via Chwele.

In 1957, she built another tea canteen at the Chwele Cooperative Society. Here she used to exchange tea against coffee mbuni with farmers who brought coffee to the Cooperative Society. One cup of tea and mandazi (doughnuts) was equivalent to one sibaba<sup>30</sup> of coffee mbuni. The coffee mbuni which she bought in this way was later on resold to the Cooperative Society after she dried it. For example, in 1958, she sold 28 bags of coffee mbuni to the Cooperative Society. In 1959, she sold 20 bags of coffee mbuni to the Society.

As a result of her trading activities, Miriam managed to buy 8 acres of land at Makhonge. She also managed to buy a grinding mill (hand-operated). She also built a hotel at Chwele market. For Miriam, the following were the rates of exchange.

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30. Sibaba: Was a small standard tin used for measuring smaller quantities of either maize, eleusine, sorghum ground-nuts or coffee mbuni.

Quantity	Equivalent rates
1 bunch of banana	50 cents
1 mandazi	10 cents
1 scones	10 cents
In 1950-3: 8-12 ripe bananas	10 cents
From 1954-56: 6-10 ripe bananas	10 cents
From 1957-60: 5-8 ripe bananas	10 cents
In 1983: 3 ripe bananas	50 cents
1 glass of banana wine	80 cents - 1.00

Table 7a<sup>31</sup>

The following were the rates for grinding maize, eleusine or sorghum.

Quantity	Equivalent rates
1 tin of maize	36 maize cobs
1 tin of eleusine	30-45 maize cobs
1 tin of sorghum	30-45 maize cobs
1 tin of <u>Kamamela</u> <sup>32</sup>	30-48 maize cobs

Table 7b<sup>33</sup>

However, most people who owned hand grinding mills did not allow their customers to grind sorghum and eleusine. The high rates charged were meant to discourage the would-be

31. Oral interview, Ben Wanambisi, Kibichori 6/4/82

32. Kamamela (Yeast): This was germinated eleusine used for the brewing of local liquor.

33. Ben Wanambisi, Oral interview, Kibichori 6/4/82.

users from using them. Consequently, grinding stones were mostly used in grinding sorghum and eleusine.

Several observations can be made from the above tables 7a and b. Through the establishment of weekly markets, women came to be exposed to more and more money. It was also in these weekly markets that industrious women came to feature more prominently. They not only sold the surplus from their agricultural produce, but they also sold other commodities which included manufactured goods like utensils, paraffin, vegetable salt, cooking fat and second-hand clothes. One woman trader who featured prominently in this trade was Selina Nakhaya Kwoba.

Selina Nakhaya Kwoba was born in 1920. She started her business in 1950 by buying maize in small standard tins (bibaba). One small standard tin of maize was sold to her at 15 cents. In 1950, she sold 3 lorryfuls of maize to the Indian trader at Malakisi. Between 1951 and 54, she bought and sold the following maize to the Cooperative Society at Kuywa.

1952 - 53	6 lorries
1953 - 54	5 lorries
1954 - 55	7 lorries
1955 - 56	8 lorries

Table 8<sup>34</sup>

Selina participated in other commercial activities. She used to buy bananas from women in the neighbourhood and

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34. Selina Nakhaya Kwoba, Oral interview, Chwele, 11/4/82



then she resold them at Kitale and Eldoret. From Kitale and Eldoret, she used to bring second-hand clothes which she sold at the local market. The cost of transporting one bunch of banana from one point to the other was 25 cents from 1950 to 1955. But from 1956 onwards, this was increased to 50 cents. The cost of buying bananas from the producers depended on the size of the banana but they generally ranged between 50 cents and 1.50 cents between 1950-1955. But it increased to 1.00 Shilling and above after 1956. The cost of second-hand clothes was between 2.00shillings to 4.00 shillings. Selina sold sugar, paraffin vegetable salt and cooking fat as well.

As a result of her participation in commercial activities she managed to purchase her own plot and in 1954 she built her own shop at Chwele market. In 1957, she also bought 6 acres of land.

There were other women traders who participated in different commercial activities. Julia Namuleyi, born in 1912 used to sell foodstuffs which included cooked bananas, porridge and boiled maize. She also sold paraffin, cigarettes, vegetable salt and green-vegetables. Through her trading activities, she managed to purchase a plough at KShs.200 in 1959. She also bought a hand grinding mill at KShs.150 in 1955. She also bought four goats, which she later exchanged against two cows. These two cows were used by the husband to purchase a piece of land in the settlement scheme in 1964. Julia used to pay school fees for her co-wife's children as she did not have her own children. She said

that she used to pay school fees for her co-wife's children because she did not want her husband to interfere with her trading activities.

However, there were other women traders who through their commercial activities managed to educate their children. Marita Manasi was born in 1919. She is married with several children. She used to buy and sell bananas at Kitale. She also sold sugar-cane, ripe -bananas and green-vegetables. Through her trading activities, Marita managed to educate her children.

There were other women traders who participated in all sorts of commercial activities. For instance, Kerementine Naliaka, used to brew all types of beer ranging from kwete to chang'aa.<sup>35</sup> She also used to sell green-vegetables, potatoes, dried cassava, kamamela (Yeast) and both raw and ripe bananas.

However, what can be observed from the above commercial activities of different women traders is that there was no specialization on a commodity basis. The more the number of commercial activities that individual women traders engaged themselves in, the higher the income and therefore profit. The main aim of women traders was to make maximum profits.

✱ In conclusion, one can say that women's commercial activities diversified with the introduction of weekly markets. Furthermore, weekly open-air markets were meant

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35. Kwete and chang'aa are locally brewed beer.

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for the ordinary African, men and women to buy and sell surplus produce, livestock and poultry. It was in these weekly markets that industrious women featured prominently. Women not only sold the surplus from their agricultural produce, but sold other manufactured goods. Women managed to acquire their own independent property as a result of their participation in commercial activities. But, women's participation in commercial activities did not reduce their workload. In fact, women's participation in trading activities was a part-time undertaking. Women combined farm activities with business. All women traders had a definite relationship to the land. Trading was therefore a supplementary activity. Some women stated that their desire to participate in market trade was due to the low market prices for agricultural products, low productivity of small agricultural units, lack of investment in the agricultural sector and unavailability of land to farm.

However, women played a substantial if not major role in the development of markets and market trade in Bungoma District. Furthermore, the relative role of women in marketing agricultural produce increased with the rise of the weekly markets. But on the whole, it is still the women who sell by the small tin and the men who sell in bulk. This means that the profit women make through the petty marketing of cash crops is minimal and therefore they have to participate in a variety of communal activities to make maximum profits. Furthermore, women dominated market activities because it was the only area that was open for them regardless of their educational background / as will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVECOLONIAL EDUCATION AND WOMEN UPTO 1960

The school is one institution that both perpetuates the myth of women's inferiority and helps to transform the myth into a reality. Traditionally, women have been considered inferior to men everywhere. This was used as a justification for the difference in educational opportunities available to men and women. Furthermore, the education of girls was distinct in substance from that of boys. At the beginning, women were forced out of formal education to learn domestic skills from their mothers at home. Later, when a curriculum for women's special needs was established, they were encouraged to attend schools.

In this chapter, the Bukusu women's response to colonial education is presented. A comparative analysis of enrolment of boys and girls in schools is given. An analysis of figures covering the whole of Kenya, North Nyanza and Elgon Nyanza have been given to demonstrate the enrolment of girls in schools and their increase over the period under study. Finally, the performance of girls in examination is also shown. A comparative table of boys and girls who sat for the Kenya preliminary examination and the number of passes are shown to illustrate the low number of passes received by women students (candidates). This will enable us to assess the changing parental attitudes towards the education of girls. Lastly, an examination of other forms of education available to women in the period under study is made

Colonial schooling was tied to employment outside indigenous occupational structures like farming, handicrafts and pastoralism. The employment possibilities schooling opened are important in discussing colonial education. However, since girls did not attend schools in large numbers as boys, they were excluded from salaried employment. But for those girls who managed to get jobs within the colonial setup, they normally worked in occupations approximating their roles as mothers. For example, employment opportunities open for women included nursing, midwifery and teaching. African families sent their children to school for economic betterment and with the expectation of a good job. In this particular respect, boys were given first priority.

The development of schooling in Kenya was bound inextricably with missionary work.<sup>1</sup> When the Kenya Uganda railway line opened at the turn of the century, the movement of the missionaries inland was swift, enthusiastic and widespread.<sup>2</sup> By the beginning of World War I, missionaries had established some thirty-two schools and mission stations. However, the effort slowed down somewhat during the war years but picked up again with another twenty schools being established between 1920 - 1927.<sup>3</sup> It was argued that the African reaction to early missionary education was first of suspicion and rejection. During the 1920s and 1930s, it changed slowly to

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1. J.N.B. Osogo, "Educational Development in Kenya 1911 - 1924 with particular reference to African Education," in B.A. Ogot. (ed) Hadith 3 Nairobi E.A.P.H., 1971, p.103
  2. R. Oliver. The Missionary Factor in East Africa London, Longman , 1965 pp.168 - 169
  3. J.N.B. Osogo. op. cit.,pp.117 - 119

acceptance and thereafter to eager and clamorous demand beyond the capacity of the mission churches or the colonial government to meet.<sup>4</sup>

Apart from the control of cash crops and means of production by men in the colonial era, there were other developments during this period that made women less competitive in their participation in the colonial economy. This was particularly true in the field of education. In traditional societies, education was usually indirect, oral and pragmatic. Children learned not by attending school, but by observing and participating in the life of the community. However, the introduction of modern education changed this considerably. It is important to indicate that the attitudes of parents did not seem to have kept pace with modern concepts of education.

When Western education was introduced, women were not the first to be allowed the "privilege" of going to school. The Bukusu have their own explanations as to why girls did not attend school in large numbers as boys. Parents, particularly female relatives of girls, were afraid of European education. They were not willing to put their daughters under the protection of a man and more so, allow them to go to school together with boys as this was regarded as an impeachment of the cultural norms.<sup>5</sup>

Furthermore, mothers needed girls to help them at home. This was particularly important because women and girls bore

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4. J. Anderson, The Struggle for the School, London, Longman, 1970.

5. Raeli Nabalayo, Oral Interview. Butonge, 11/1/82

the main economic burden in the homesteads. The girls learnt life's duties through actual participation and the school would break continuity. Hence, parents resented any interference with those essential duties. However, it seemed to the elders that the change from polygamy to monogamy which the missions expected from Christian girls further weakened the economic structure of the Bukusu domestic life.<sup>6</sup>

Among the Luhya communities, polygamy was much more established in Bukusuland than anywhere else.<sup>6a</sup> The value of women among the Bukusu was therefore higher as compared to boys. This was so because of the existence of polygamy and the demand for girls to be married. As a result, the marriageable age of girls was between eighteen to twenty years old. Because of the social pressure from relatives, parents and friends, girls themselves did not want to stay in school for long. Hence the other factor militating against girls' attendance of schools in large numbers was socio-cultural. Moreover, parents did not see immediate benefits to be gained by sending their children to school particularly girls, when they should have been helping in the gardens.

It was further stated that since girls would eventually get married, the parents would not benefit from their education as they would from that of the boys, who may by higher training earn more money.<sup>7</sup> Once a girl was married, she became the "property of her husband" so that even if she was taken to school and was earning money, that money would

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6. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele, 3/12/81.  
 6a. See G. Wagner, The Changing Family Among the Bantu of Western Kenya, London, O.U.P. 1939, p.18-21.  
 7. Enock Mukhwana, Oral interview, Kibichori, 7/11/81.

legitimately belong to her husband.<sup>8</sup>

Girls' education was less considered by the majority of people in the country. In fact, not many parents paid attention to the education of their daughters since dowry made no distinction between the uneducated and educated girls. Furthermore, the educated girls seemed to cause an inestimable loss to their fathers if girls were valued in cattle.<sup>9</sup> Referring to the general state of female education in a survey of seven countries, of which Kenya was one, M.A. Riegelman succinctly says:

Indications are that when primary education is first introduced into a rural area outside the influence of the modern economy, boys are generally sent to school first. This seems to be true because education of boys is considered a better investment as it is assumed that girls will marry and leave the family.<sup>10</sup>

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8. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele, 3/12/81 see also K.L. Little, "The changing position of women in the Sierra Leone Protectorate," in Africa Vol.XVIII, 1948. pp.1-17. K.L. Little argues that the social position of women is somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, there is obviously no doubt that they are regarded as a form of property, in the first case, of the family into which they are born, and in the second, of the men to whom they are married, p.7.

9. Kinisu, Ibid., Oral interview.

10. M.A. Riegelman, (Ed) "A seven country survey on the Roles of Women in Rural Development." A report prepared for the Agency for International Development under contract No.AID/CM/ta-c-73-4, Dec. 1974 p.29.



It is likely that preference for investment in schooling for boys may relate to the patrilineal descent systems in which inheritance passes through the male line (see chapter one). Sons, therefore, retained the responsibility of looking after their parents as they grew old, while daughters were incorporated into their husbands' families. Thus perceived, the link between education and employment in an economic system in which males had better prospects for wage jobs in

the formal sector provided an additional consideration for educating sons ahead of daughters.

Some informants argued that boys were sent to school in earlier years and not girls because parents suspected that the knowledge and thinking bestowed by the schools upon their daughters might endanger them for marriage and motherhood.<sup>11</sup> In outlining the reasons for the slow start in girls' education, as compared to boys, in Kenya during the colonial period, Jean Holland had the following to say:

conservatism - girls don't need education.  
poverty - where fees was difficult, parents gave preference to boys. Usefulness of girls at home - and parents' fears of mishaps.<sup>12</sup>

There were many reasons for the inadequate education of African girls. The most important relate again to the low status of women in traditional African societies.<sup>13</sup> Even the colonial government did not encourage girls' education. Education of girls was entirely the responsibility of mission churches.

The Church Missionary Society which tried to build up girls' education from its earliest years found that "the girls' schools were more or less shelters of refuge where girls could come to escape persecution by relatives. There

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11. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele, 3/12/81.

12. J. Holland, "Girls Education in Kenya," paper presented at the first Kenya Women's seminar: "The Role of African women, past, present and future." Limuru Conference Centre, 5th - 11th December, 1960.

13. J. Carlebach, "The position of women in Kenya." UNECA Workshop, Addis Ababa, 1963, p.4.

was a number of small girls who wanted protection from cultural initiation rites, and there were older girls who were threatened with marriage into polygamous households."<sup>14</sup>

In describing the state of female education in Africa, K.L. Little correctly observed,

--- attendance at primary schools in most areas has, in the past been begun late, been irregular, has been characterized both by a considerable amount of repetition of classes and by a tendency to leave school before completing a course.

Opposition on the part of conservatively minded parents also comes into the matter and the consequence is many girls did not in fact finish more than two years of schooling.<sup>15</sup>

The missions had a monopoly in girls' schools, and the government left them entirely in their hands. One education report succinctly states:

The little which has been achieved in the education of African women and girls is almost entirely the result of their far - sighted efforts (various missions - Protestants and Catholic). The state

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14. D.W. Furley and T. Walson, A history of Education in East Africa Nok Publishers, New York, 1978, p.169.

15. K.L. Little, African Women in Towns, Cambridge University press, 1973 p.31, See also J.A. Nkinyangi, "Socio-Economic Determinants of repetition and early school withdrawal at the primary level and their implications for education planning in Kenya." Ph.D. Dissertation Stanford University, 1980.

has done little to supervise or coordinate the work.<sup>16</sup>

In 1942 educational grants to mission schools for Africans totalled £48,097. Of this amount, only £10,426 or 21% per cent was allocated to the education of women and girls.<sup>17</sup>

It is however important to note that African education was inspired by experiments in "Negro" education in the Southern States of the U.S.A.<sup>18</sup> Such an education stressed "working with the hands," a clear adjunct to the white settler economy since it was meant to provide semi-skilled workers especially prepared to meet the demands on settler farms and to fill subordinate positions in the colonial bureaucratic structures. It placed emphasis on technical rather than literary education and regarded Kiswahili or the African languages rather than English as the appropriate media for instruction in African schools.<sup>19</sup>

The ideological justification for this kind of education was evident in comments like the following:

It is obvious that a 'native' who has had some education and has had his intellect developed on proper lines must be a better labourer. He is more able to understand his instructions and to see them properly carried out.<sup>20</sup>

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16. KNA, File No.CCEA 404, E7 Education Department. Education Women and Girls in Kenya, 1947-49, p.2.

17. KNA, Ibid., p.2.

18. M. Carnoy. Education as Cultural Imperialism, New York, Mckay, 1974.

19. J.A. Nkinyangi, op.cit., p.70-80.

20. East Africa Protectorate. "Education Commission Report, 1919" Government Printer, 1919, p.7

In 1926, it was also observed that,

With a 'native' population containing probably 500,000 boys and girls of ordinary school age, it is necessary to realise and above all to make people realise that a very small proportion of that number can be absorbed into clerical or educational professions. The destiny of the majority must be that of an agricultural and pastoral people making a living by the use of their hands and brains, and the only way for them to ensure a wage above the average is to acquire superior skill in the use of their hands. In other words, the education to be provided for the mass of 'natives' must be essentially industrial and vocational, and the three Rs are of importance only in so far as they are ancillary to practical industry. <sup>21</sup>

The Friends missionaries were in Bungoma District from 1912 onwards. It was said that they first followed the policy of trying to induce the British-appointed headmen and Mlango to send their sons to the mission school - at Kaimosi to learn how to read and write. At the beginning, parents used to send their "difficult" children to school if only to keep them away from mischief.<sup>22</sup> But later, this changed and all male children were sent to school. As E.H. Odwaku correctly puts it:

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21. KNA, File No. Native Affairs Department (NAD) North: 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1926.

22. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili, 5/2/82

To the African, education was the acquisition of the art of writing, reading and counting (doing arithmetic) not for the sake of reading the Bible and loving the Lord more, but for attainment of status in the colonial setup, it was in view of the changed circumstances in their tribal setup, a means to prosperity and privilege.<sup>23</sup>

To the African, education became the key to "all things" and in a money economy into which Western Kenya had been exposed to by the Europeans, education increasingly became the only sure way to this money. Education was also a means to a livelihood. This points to the conclusion that women who had rare opportunities for educational advancement could not move into other sectors of the economy that required literate awareness. In fact, a certain amount of basic education was generally a prerequisite for almost any form of employment above the unskilled level. Thus, the lag in women's education generally placed them at a relatively greater disadvantage.

Parents refrained from sending their daughters to school because of the distance which had to be covered from Bukusulan to Kaimosi in the absence of proper transport facilities. It was not until 1922 when Rev. Ford started a Friends mission at Lugulu that girls began to attend school. But only those parents who had been converted to Christianity were willing to

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23. E.H.O. Odwako, "The church and education: The contribution of Church Missionary Society to education in Western Kenya, 1905 - 1965," M.A. dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1975, pp.53-88.

send their daughters to school.<sup>24</sup>

In 1931, a new phase noticeable was the desire for the education of girls.<sup>25</sup> The government was then willing to participate in the education of girls. In June 1935, the Advisory council on African education met and discussed "Principal matters, among others, was the need for additional grants-in-aid for girls" schools.<sup>26</sup> This concern to develop girls' education was out of a realisation that manifested itself in progressive reserves. It was noted that development and progress were seriously handicapped unless girls received education as the boys.<sup>27</sup> But above all, the rationale for girls' education in the 1930s had been better preparation for motherhood and wifehood. This was evident from the subjects that were taught to girls in schools. However, the education of girls was not always immediately relevant to the enhancement of opportunities within the modern economy. Programmes designed specifically emphasized Western-oriented domestic science rather than agriculture.

By 1936, the following number of schools were in operation in the whole of Kenya:

Government Schools	Schools which received grants-in-aid	Unaided Schools	Total number of schools
51	353	1,101	1,504

24. Yohanna Wafula, Oral interview, Namwela, 6/2/82
25. Native Affairs Department, North 'Kavirondo' District, Annual Report, 1931.
26. NAD, North 'Kavirondo' District, Annual Report, 1935.
27. KNA North 'Kavirondo' District, Annual Report, 1935.

The following number of pupils were in school by 1936 in the whole colony:

Males	Females	Increase over the previous year	Total number of pupils in school
69,000	31,218	of the 4,000 additional pupils, 874 were girls	100,218

Table 1<sup>27a</sup>

The breakdown was as follows:

Elementary education	:	96.77%
Primary education	:	3.05%
Secondary education	:	0.18%

The above figures represent only 12½% of African children of school age at that time.<sup>28</sup>

In Bungoma (North "Kavirondo") district, the following number of schools were in operation by 1939:

27a. KNA, Native Affairs Department North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1936.

28. KNA, Native Affairs Department, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1936 p.53.



Number of Schools

Location	Elementary	Sub-Ele.	Unaided	Total	Salaries	Equipment	L.N.C. Grants	Fees
North Bukusu	5	5	94	103	5,205/-	2,161/-	4,153	1,432/-
South Bukusu	3	0	65	68	2,628/-	901/-	2,708/-	513/-
Malakisi	0	1	26	27	310/-	16/-	100/-	96/-

Table 2a<sup>29</sup>

The following table shows the population, expenditure and grants for elementary and sub-elementary schools by 1939 on locational level:

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29. KNA, File No.DC/KMGA/1/4/7, See also Christian Churches Education Association (CCEA) CCEA 404:E7 Education Department. Primary School Examination, 1947. Practical Domestic Science pp.1-6.

Location	Aided schools	Salaries	Repairs Buildings Equipments	L.N.C. Grants	Fees	Attendances Sub-Std.1	II, III, IV
Population: 21,550	Ele: Lugulu (FAM)	1,890/-	951	1,016/-	1,506/-	83	159
	Chesamisi "	537/-	160	515/-	182/-	42	17
	Chwele "	1,125/-	218	802/-	501/-	31	52
	Kimilili(MHM)	624/-	354	650/-	375/-	93	25
	Butonge (CMS)	576/-	142	583/-	135/-	43	10
	Sub-Ele: Bokoli(FAM)	-	100	100/-	-	-	-
	Misikhu "	-	100/-	100/-	-	-	-
	Kaptama "	333/-	30	287/-	76	31	3
	Bukokholo(MHM)	120/-	106	100/-	57	85	20
<b>Total</b>	Ele. 5 Sub-Ele. 3	5,205/-	2,161/-	4,153/-	1,432/-	408	286
<b>South Bukusu</b>							
Pop: 21,739	Ele: Kibabii (MHM)	1,236/-	480/-	1,240/-	293/-	138	68
	Kabula "	792/-		842/-	93/-	92	14
	Kimatuni "	600/-	206/-	626/-	127/-	90	20
<b>Total</b>	Ele.3	2,628/-	901/-	2,708/-	513/-	320	102
<b>Malakisi</b>							
Pop: 12,680	Ele: Nil						
	Sub-Ele. Kolanya (S.A)	310/-	16/-	100/-	96/-	98	27
<b>Total</b>	Ele. 0 Sub-Ele.1	310/-	16/-	100/-	96/-	98	27

Table 2b<sup>30</sup>

In Nyanza Province,<sup>31</sup> it was being appreciated more and more that the education of girls was a necessary factor for real progress. The Church Missionary Society had schools at Butere and Ng'iya, while the Friends African Society had a school at Kaimosi. These schools were exclusively for girls and a total of about 400 pupils were in attendance. The Mill Hill Mission received grants-in-aid for their schools at Mumias and Kakamega (Mukumu) on condition that they were to be converted into girls schools.<sup>31b</sup> The following table indicates the number of girls by class in Butere by 1935:

Class Attendance in Butere, 1935

Class	Roll	Present
Junior Infants	47	17
Senior Infants	18	10
Senior I	40	8
I Ib	50	23
I Ia		
III	20	7
IV	18	7
V	11	7
VI	18	7
Total	222	88

Table 3<sup>32</sup>

31. Nyanza Province then included what is today Western Province.  
 31b KNA, Native Affairs Department (NAD) North 'Kavirondo' District, Annual Report, 1935 p.76.  
 32. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/3/6/100. schools: Missions: C.M.S.,

The above table illustrates the role missionaries played in educating girls.

In the 1935 education report, it was indicated that while co-education at elementary stage was useful, it was desirable that special classes should be designed for older girls many of whom spent only one or two years at school.<sup>33</sup> The following table indicates the number of boys and girls by class in Kaimosi from 1938 - 1943.

Attendance of Classes in Kaimosi, 1938-43

Year	Standard	Roll		Present	
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1938	Std. IV	43	8	43	8
	Std. V	30	11	29	11
	Std. VI	41	2	37	2
Total		114	21	109	21
1942	Std. IV A	34	2	34	2
	Std. IV B	29	11	29	11
	Std. V	35	-	35	-
	Std. V B	21	8	21	8
	Std. VI	23	1	23	1
Total		142	22	142	22
1943	Std. IV A	42	-	40	-
	Std. IV B	33	7	31	7
	Std. V A	33	-	32	-
	Std. V B	30	7	19	7
	Std. VI A	25	-	24	-
	Std. VI B	22	-	21	-
Total		175	14	167	14

Table 4<sup>34</sup>

33. KNA, File No. DC/KMGA/1/4/7, Friends Africa Mission School 1937-49, pp.19-32.

34. KNA, Ibid., pp.19-32.

The above table reveals the characteristics and trends of enrolment of girls in schools. Further, attitudes that girls' education was not as important as that of boys greatly influenced the access of girls to education. The data in the above table though incomplete, was indicative of the low enrolment of girls in schools.

In another report submitted by the inspector of schools for Nyanza in 1942, the number of African girls at school in North and Central 'Kavirondo' was as follows:

African girls at School in 1942

North 'Kavirondo'			Central 'Kavirondo'	
Sub-Std. A	1,484			1,722
Sub-Std. B	557			416
Std. I	399			315
Std. II	244			148
Std. III	171			55
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,855</b>			<b>2,656</b>

Table 5<sup>35</sup>

Of the above total, only 19 girls from three girls' Boarding schools took the Primary Certificate. The above table further reinforces our argument that the participation of girls in education was very low. Furthermore, those girls who went to school did not stay in school for a long period.

The fact that there were very few elementary schools in the present Bungoma district up to the mid 1940s, (see table 2b) points to the conclusion that the attendance of Bukusu

35. KNA, CCEA 404:E7 Education Department. Education of Women and Girls in Kenya, 1947-1949, p.2.

girls in elementary day schools was most disappointing. In the annual report for 1941, it was observed:

There is a demand for the provision of Primary facilities in the northern locations. As will be appreciated from the list of schools in the district, there is nothing north of Mumias and Kakamega. While south appears to be adequately provided, there would seem to be a case for considering the extension of day primary work in the Bukusu locations of Malakisi, South Bukusu and Kimilili.<sup>36</sup>

In fact it was after long protests that Catholics opened a Standard VI (secondary) class at Kibabii in 1945 for boys only.

For instance, the following table indicates the number of girls in Kibabii Primary School by class in 1945:

Attendance of boys and girls in Kibabii School in 1945

CLASS	ROLL		PRESENT	
	BOYS	GIRLS	BOYS	GIRLS
Sub-Std A	67	30	42	29
Sub-Std B	24	28	20	28
Std I	65	18	51	17
Std II	39	13	27	13
Std III	12	10	11	9
Std IV	20	4	18	4
TOTAL	227	103	169	100

Table 6<sup>37</sup>

36. KNA, File No. DC/NN/1/23, North 'Kavirondo' District Annual Report, 1941.  
 37. KNA, File No. PC/NZA/3/6/92 and Ed/3/5/10, Kibabii Mill Hill Mission, 1935 - 1945

From the above table, it appears that the higher the girls advanced in grade at school, the more regular their attendance. It was observed that the girls in standard one were elderly (above twelve years) and did not remain in school for very long.<sup>38</sup>

However, irregularity of attendance was the biggest handicap to the progress of girls in schools. The average attendance was comparatively high at the beginning of first term and low at the end of third term. For example, the following figures from Lugulu school in 1947 indicate the enrolment of pupils at the beginning of first term and at the end of third term of the year. The enrolment was as follows:

First Term	Boys	%	Girls	%
	333	76.4	103	23.6
Third Term	308	92.5	36	35
Less	25	7.5	67	65

Table 7<sup>39</sup>

From the above table, it can be observed that most girls dropped out of school within a very short time. This was because of non-payment of school fees and since most of the girls were mature (marriageable age), they got married before completing school.

What then was the attitude of girls towards frequenting a school? Girls themselves were attracted to the schools since they saw their brothers go there. They preferred to go

38. Yohana Wafula, Oral interview, Namwela, 6/2/82. He was a school teacher, both in the colonial and post-colonial period

39. KNA, File No.DC/KMGA/1/4/26(ED/13/3/2, 1947), Friends Africa Mission Schools, 1947-1954, pp.8-12.

to school rather than do hard work at home under the supervision of their mothers.<sup>40</sup> However, as a former school teacher explained, most of the girls' schools had great difficulty in getting girls to stay on after standard four.<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, collecting fees in girls' schools was a very difficult exercise.<sup>42</sup> For instance, between 1935 and 1947, the following was the break-down of school fees at Lugulu school and Kibabii School.

Break-down of School fees in Kibabii and  
Lugulu Schools, 1935-1947

School	Std.	Boys	Girls	School	Std.	Boys	Gi
Kibabii	Sub.Stds.	50 cts	50 cts	Lugulu	Sub-Stds.	-	
	Std I	1.00	1.00		Std I	3.50	1
	Std II	2.00	2.00		Std II	5.00	2
	Std III	6.00	6.00		Std III	7.00	3
	Std IV	10.00	10.00		Std IV	10.00	5
					13.00	6	
					16.00	8	

Table 8<sup>43</sup>

At Lugulu school, the addition of 50 cts for the first standards and Shs.1/= for other Standards was charged for competitions, sports and hiring transport for contestants. The low school fees rates charged for girls' education at Lugulu was to induce parents to send their daughters to school. The amount of the above fees was decided upon by the education

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40. Esther Mykhwana, Oral interview, Kibichori, 7/11/81  
 41. Yohana Wafula, Oral interview, Namwela, 6/2/82  
 42. Yohana Wafula, Ibid  
 43. KNA, ED/3/5/1/10, Schools missions, Mill Hill Kibabii 1935 - 1945 and DC/KMGA/1/4/26 (ED/1/3/3/2. 1947)



committee of the local baraza. It can also be observed from the above table that when confronted with constraints of limited resources for primary schooling, parents generally favoured the education of male children. What this meant for women was that they were kept out of salaried employment, thus reducing their chances of earning money of their own. It can also be noted that the Catholics at Kibabii charged equal fees for both boys and girls.

It was also argued that some of the associations which were formed in the colonial period, like the Abaluhya Welfare Association, were not concerned with the issue of promoting education for girls.<sup>44</sup> This association supported boys' education apart from other issues. For example, the association used to pay school fees for those male students whose parents were unable to pay. One report about the Abaluhya Welfare Association says:

Our fund is mainly expended in providing scholarships for Abaluhya boys in junior secondary schools. Last year for example, the association gave scholarships to two boys at Maseno school, one at Musingu school and there is money for a third and fourth boy at the St. Mary's school Yala. This year we hope to do the same.<sup>45</sup>

Female students were not awarded scholarships by the association. This shows that education for girls was not

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44. Marita Munoko, Oral interview, Kolani 7/2/82

45. KNA, File No.DC/NN/10/3. Political Associations, 1948

taken seriously by the association. This points to the fact that the association did not support the idea of educating girls. However, the continued growth of many co-educational schools gradually produced a change of attitude, and the colonial government also endeavoured to promote girls' education as it will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

In 1936, the Director of Education noted that co-education had proved to be successful and an increasing number of girls attended primary schools. It should be observed that girls seemed to be quite able to hold on their own in class, and received special tuition in domestic science and needlework when boys were occupied in agriculture and handiwork. Where girls schools were situated in proximity to hospitals, arrangements were made for their training in the rudiments of health work and midwifery.

By 1946, it was noted that although the former prejudice against the education of girls was changing, the number of girls who received western education was still far less than the number of boys. This is indicated by the following figures from two large provinces of Kenya in 1947. (See Table 9 overleaf).

The table below shows the same trend as others. The figures make clear one problem in African education, namely, the low attendance of girls. For girls, the usual staff difficulties were aggravated by the fact that few girls

Class attendance in Nyanza and Central Provinces in 1947

Province	Standard	Std I	Std II	Std III	Std IV	V	VI	FORM I	F. II	F. III	F. IV	F. V	F. VI
Nyanza	Boys	43,675	18,873	12,521	7,314	6,090	1,714	682	532	60	71	-	-
	Girls	16,279	7,841	3,705	1,749	815	224	86	40	-	-	-	-
Province	Standard	Std I	Std II	Std III	Std IV	V	VI	Form I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Central	Boys	27,269	12,450	11,816	6,982	6,840	1,209	514	339	83	81	38	31
	Girls	11,994	6,734	3,292	2,051	1,389	351	96	54	1	1	-	1

Table 9<sup>46</sup>

46. KNA, CCEA 74 S.B. Statistics, Education, 1947-1950. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Education Department Annual Report, 1947 p.4.

were prepared to remain unmarried for long after they reached marriageable age. As one informant remarked, "sometimes, girls got married at a very early age, and this usually put a premature end to their education."<sup>47</sup> Hence, the higher education of girls was similarly handicapped.

Education, as already stated, was organised by Christian missions in the present Bungoma district. But their concern for women's education in the 1950s was very serious, not only in Bungoma district but in the whole of Western Kenya. This concern, it has been argued, was in part dependent on C.M.S. awareness of the need for fresh evangelism in the light of a new development whereby the educated male Africans were running away from the church.<sup>48</sup> N.C. Smith and Capon argued that "in reserves the strength of the churches was dependent on the women and that, if in the future the great majority of the women were bound to be almost illiterate, the prospects were poor."<sup>49</sup> The C.M.S. had realised that without meaningful education for many girls the church faced the danger of extinction. It was, therefore, imperative that the C.M.S. took a most serious view of girls' education. As this was done, benefits inevitably accrued to the women, but the main aim was the protection through literacy of the Anglican church from extinction.

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47. Nuhu Kitanyi, Oral interview, Butonge, 9/11/81

48. C.M.S/1/573; C.M.S. Regulations part IV: church organisation in the mission field., 1948-1953.

49. C.M.S. 1/614, Beecher Report, 1950. See also C.M.S. meeting on 14/2/50

By 1950, the following number of pupils attended schools in North Nyanza:

Pupils in schools in North Nyanza by 1950

African Schools and Other Schools	Std	I	Std	II	Std	III	Std	IV	Std	V	Std	VI	Form	I
	Sub-Roll	StdA Att.	.Sub-Roll	StdB Att.	Std Roll	I Att.	Std Roll	II Att.	Std Roll	III Att.	Std Roll	IV Att.	Std Roll	V Att.
Boys	1,679	1,500	1,431	1,295	1,493	1,355	1,350	1,239	1,526	1,463	371	345	33	30
Girls	748	668	751	693	641	602	493	446	329	318	34	30	-	-
Unaided Schools														
Boys	16,983	14,744	4,957	2,590	1,891	1,352	396	355						
Girls	11,408	9,299	1,535	1,225	781	472	203	165						

Table 10<sup>50</sup>

From the above table it can be observed that parents had begun to realise the importance of girls' education. Even girls themselves had started to stay for a little bit longer in school.

50. CCEA 520, Annual school statistics, - Educational Correspondence, 1951-1953.

In 1951, the following were Girls' Boarding schools in North Ny

Girls' Boarding schools in North Nyanza

Name of School	Schools Management	Std Day Girls	V Boarders	Std Day Girls	VI Boarders	Form Day Girls	I Boar
Butere	C.M.S.	-	-	-	34	-	28
Mumias	Mill Hill Mission	1	24	-	32	-	7
Kakamega	Mill Hill Mission	10	19	5	15	-	30
Nangina	"	-	9	-	6	-	-
Kaimosi	F.A. Mission	-	-	-	34	-	35
Bunyore	Church of God	7	31	5	37	-	38

Table 11<sup>51</sup>

Several observations can be made from the above table. Girls w  
in school for a long period as compared to the situation in the 1940  
towards girls education had changed. Parents were willing to send t  
boarding schools.

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51. File No.CCEA 632, African Education.,1950.

In 1952, the following number of educational Institutions were situated in North Nyanza District.

Education Institutions in North Nyanza District, 1952

T3 Teacher Training Centres	-	5
T4 Teacher Training Centres	-	5
Trades and Technical School	-	1
Secondary Schools (Boys)	-	2
Junior Secondary Schools (Boys)	-	12
Junior Secondary Schools (Girls)	-	4
Intermediate Schools (Mixed)	-	25
Intermediate Schools (Boys)	-	13
Primary Schools (Aided)	-	245
Primary Schools (Unaided)	-	533
Total		<u>851</u>

Table 12<sup>52</sup>

There were more boys' schools than girls' schools. By 1952, Junior Secondary schools included standards Five and Six. Although the above table does not include girls' Intermediate schools, it is evident from other sources that by 1952, there were four girls' Intermediate boarding schools.<sup>53</sup> There were thirty-eight Intermediate Schools in North Nyanza district by 1952 and fifty-two Intermediate Schools by 1954. There were four girls' boarding schools, two boys' boarding schools and forty-three day Intermediate schools.

52. KNA, File DC/NN/1/33-34, North Nyanza District Annual Reports, 1951-52.

53. CCEA 632, African Education. Western Regional Education Board 1951-53. pp.12-15.

The following table shows the number of children (boys) and girls) who were attending schools in 1951 and 1952.

Number of Boys and Girls by Class in North Nyanza in 1951 - 1952

Year	1951		1952	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
I	9,889	4,075	7,556	2,921
II	6,784	3,473	7,415	2,954
III	6,180	2,439	6,656	2,669
IV	4,849	1,569	6,035	1,953
V	4,752	1,140	2,970	495
VI	1,759	121	76	5
Total	34,213	12,817	30,708	10,997

Intermediate Schools other than girls' boarding Schools

V	-	-	1,293	162
VI	538	-	1,457	66
Form I	575	-	748	1
Form II	436	-	484	-
Total	1,549	-	3,982	229

Table 13<sup>54</sup>

Several observations can be made from the above table. The number of girls who stayed in school throughout their Primary education was very low as compared to boys. The sharp drop from Standard Five to Six was due to the competitive Common Entrance Examination taken at the end of that class

54. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/34, North Nyanza District Annual Report, 1952.



to go to Junior Secondary grade. The number of girls who dropped out of school was very high. The rate at which girls dropped out of school was higher as compared to boys. Above all, there was a very high failure rate of girls at the competitive Primary Examination taken in Primary Standard Five. Further, the above figures indicate that the reluctance of sending daughters to school was changing. The change in attitude was indicated by the rise in female enrolment figures commensurate with the increase in facilities for the education of women.

However, the distribution of schools followed closely the distribution of child population as the following table shows:

Distribution of Schools by locations in 1951

Location	Estimated child Population	Primary Schools	Aided Schools, Intermediate
Kimilili	30,000	21	2 double streams
Malakisi	10,000	10	1
South Bukusu	21,000	12	1
Elgon	4,500	2	-

Table 14<sup>55</sup>

By 1955, the following was the estimated child population in Kenya:

55. KNA, File No.DC/NN/1/33, North Nyanza Annual Report 1951.

Estimated child Population in Kenya  
By 1955

Number of Boys	Number of Girls	Percentage of Boys attending School	Percentage of Girls attending School	Total Number of Schools
384,000	372,000	67%	23.6%	3,050

Table 15<sup>56</sup>

The following were the number of Schools in Kenya by 1955:

<u>Schools</u>					
Primary Day	Intermediate Day (Mixed)	Intermediate Boarding Schools for Boys	Intermediate Boarding Schools for Girls	Sec. Schools for Boys	Sec. Sch for Gir
3,050	332	9	33	19	2

Table 16<sup>57</sup>

Although there were more boarding schools for girls than boys at the intermediate level, not many girls went to these schools as they charged higher fees compared to day schools. Furthermore, parents were not prepared to spend a lot of money on the education of girls

However, although there were distinct signs of improvement of girls' education and attendance of schools, the following comparative table shows that the enrolment of girls was still far below that of boys:

<sup>56</sup>. Department of Education, North Nyanza District Annual Report, 1955.

<sup>57</sup>. Department of Education, North Nyanza District Annual Report, 1955.

The Enrolment of Boys and Girls in Schools in Elgon Nyanza in 1956

Location	No. of aided School	Std. I		Std. II		Std. III		Std. IV		Total		Grand Total
		Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
Kimilili	38	1042	902	1004	814	970	518	1107	331	4123	2565	6,688
South Bukusu	28	982	448	867	378	861	304	796	188	3506	1318	4,824
Malakisi	18	661	276	598	221	506	213	527	125	2292	835	3,131
Elgon	7	175	58	142	40	152	40	185	39	654	183	837

Table 17<sup>58</sup>

Even at the national level, the enrolment of girls was still far below that of boys.

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58. KNA, PC/NZA/4/53, 1952 - 1961, Primary Education: Africans.

Note: The regional disparity within the district, shows that Kimilili is most advantaged while Elgon is the least advantaged.

The Enrolment of Boys and Girls in Schools in Kenya,  
1955 - 1960

Year	Primary Boys	Girls	Intermediate		Secondary	
			Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
1955	256,876	87,662	39,892	8,449	2,024	143
1956	282,591	107,127	44,200	9,946	2,360	226
1957	315,807	125,111	47,646	11,702	2,798	336
1958	370,124	160,211	56,752	14,323	3,507	415
1959	397,929	181,261	70,047	17,868	4,280	614
1960	415,853	203,315	86,231	21,493	4,623	786

Table 18<sup>59</sup>

The above figures represent the whole of Kenya. Several observations can be made from the above table. About two-thirds of the primary total enrolment were boys. The percentage of the potential primary enrolment in the four year age group from seven to eleven years attending school in Kenya was as follows:

Year	Boys' Percent	Girls' Percent
1955	67%	23.6%
1956	72%	28%
1958	80%	32%

Table 19<sup>60</sup>

59. Department of Education, North Nyanza District Annual Reports 1955-1960.

60. Department of Education, North Nyanza District Annual Reports, 1955-58.

In Kenya, the enrolment of female students in primary schools had increased by 1960. Parents realized that education itself had some value.<sup>60a</sup> In Elgon Nyanza district, 13,630 girls were in school by 1960. While there were no legal laws restricting education for girls, the use of girls for domestic duties by their parents was an obstacle to school attendance. Hence, certain socio-cultural factors militated against girls taking full advantage of the educational opportunities which were open to them.

Furthermore, girls' performance in examinations was very poor. In fact, a very small number of girls enrolled for examinations. The following comparative tables shed some light on this phenomenon.

The following number of pupils attempted Common Entrance Examination and Kenya African Preliminary Examination in 1954 and 1955 in North Nyanza.

CEE	1954	1955	K.A.P.E. 1954	1955
Boys	8,324	10,123	1,153	1,410
Girls	2,507	3,048	161	249
Total	10,835	13,171	1,314	1,659

Table 20<sup>61</sup>

Out of 10,835 candidates who attempted CEE in 1954, the following boys and girls were selected for entry to Intermediate schools in 1955.

60a. For more information on female education and education in general see J. Anderson, The Struggle for the School. Longman, Nairobi, 1970. J.R. Sheffield, Education in Kenya: An Historical Study. Teachers College Press, Columbia University Press, New York, 1970.

61. KNA, File No.PC/NZA/1/4/53, 1952-1961, Primary Education, Africans p.19.

	Boys	Girls	Total
Candidates	8,328	2,507	10,835
Selected	2,112	718	2,830

Table 21<sup>62</sup>

488 girls gained places in Intermediate schools which represented an average of over eight per cent per mixed Intermediate school. Two hundred and thirty girls were admitted in girls' Intermediate boarding schools.

Out of 13,171 candidates who attempted CEE in 1955, the following boys and girls were selected for entry to Intermediate schools in 1956:

	Boys	Girls	Total
Candidates	10,123	3,048	13,171
Selected	2,221	559	2,860

Table 22<sup>63</sup>

The following number of boys and girls sat for the Common Entrance Examination and K.A.P.E. in 1957.

CEE Management	Boys	Girls	Total	K.A.P.E. Boys	Girls	G.B. School
F.A.M.	2,323	987	3,310	431	58	35
A.C.A.	1,253	485	1,738	354	44	33
P.A.E.A.	1,071	444	1,515	109	45	-
C. of God	972	538	1,510	145	22	26
S.A.	282	111	393	-	-	-

CEE Management	Boys	Girls	Total	K.A.P.E. Boys	Girls	G.B. School
D.E.B.	183	58	241	62	4	-
M.H.M.	1,476	425	1,901	201	-	85
Total	7,560	3,048	10,608	1,302	175	179

Table 23<sup>64</sup>

The following table gives a detailed breakdown of the Kenya African Preliminary Examination Results for Elgon Nyanza District in 1959: (See table overleaf).

The cause for poor results for Africans was attributed to many things. Some of these included, long distances walked by pupils, wild bush hazards, poor paths, (muddy and rough) and the economic set up required co-operation from all members of the family hence children had no extra time to improve on their school work. Girls were especially used for most of the domestic chores in the home and therefore had no extra time to prepare for their examinations. Further, English was introduced late to the Africans and yet all examinations were set in English. Therefore most Africans could barely pass.

Since the economic set up required cooperation from all members of the family especially girls, many had to discontinue learning to participate in economic activities. Consequently, the rate at which girls dropped out of school was very high.

64. KNA DC/KMGA/1/4/26, Friends Africa Mission Schools, 1954-59.

## KENYA AFRICAN PRELIMINARY EXAMINATION RESULTS FOR ELGON NYANZA DISTRICT 1959

School	Boys entered	Girls entered	Boys passed	Girls passed	Boys failed	Girls failed	% Pass of Boys	% Pass of Girls
Butula R.C.	34	-	18	-	16	-	47.05	-
Amukura "	32	-	20	-	12	-	62.50	-
Chakol "	36	-	13	-	23	-	38.24	-
Kabula "	36	-	16	-	19	-	44.44	-
Luyia "	34	-	21	-	13	-	62.83	-
Kimilili Boys	36	-	22	-	14	-	68.54	-
Kisoko	29	-	9	-	19	-	30.45	-
Bokoli F.A.M.	34	6	18	-	16	6	47.05	-
Chwele "	32	8	20	3	12	5	62.50	37.50
Chesamisi "	28	5	12	2	16	3	42.85	40.00
Kaptama "	32	3	2	-	30	3	6.25	-
Lugulu "	33	4	17	1	16	2	51.51	33.33
Ndivisi "	33	5	11	3	22	2	33.33	60.00
Milo "	33	5	11	1	22	4	20.00	33.33
Kolanya Girls S.A.	-	26	-	3	-	23	-	11.53
Kolanya Boys "	37	-	24	-	13	-	64.54	-
Bukhalalire A.C.	27	-	8	-	19	-	29.63	-
Butonge "	34	5	13	-	21	5	38.23	-
Kamusinga "	35	3	22	-	13	3	62.85	-
Nambale "	32	-	8	-	22	-	26.66	-
Bungoma D.E.B.	30	3	12	-	17	3	41.37	-
Namang'ofulo A.C.	34	5	21	1	13	3	61.76	25.00
Total	724	78	318	14	406	62	46.49	17.28

 Table 24<sup>65</sup>

65. KNA, PC/NZA/4/53, 1952 - 1961. See also KNA, DC/KSM/1/10/3, Education General 1933 - 1958.



For example, the following comparative table of boys and girls enrolment in standards one to eight in Elgon Nyanza district in 1960 show the difference between the number of boys and girls who attended school.

Enrolment of Boys and Girls in Elgon Nyanza District  
By Class in 1960

Standard	Boys	Girls
1	5,566	3,393
2	5,101	3,046
3	4,610	2,926
4	6,797	2,926
5	1,850	573
6	1,577	369
7	1,179	318
8	687	189

Table 25<sup>66</sup>

Although examinations eliminated girls from schools, the rate at which girls dropped out was very high too. This again relates to the economic set up and the participation of girls within that set up.

However, there was a serious neglect of girls' education as shown in the statistics of tables 3, 4 and 10. But with the implementation of the recommendations of the Beecher report which coincided with the universal declaration of human rights drawn up on 10th December, 1948 Article 26 on education, girls started to compete with boys in higher education (see tables 11, 18 and 23).

In conclusion, we have indicated in this chapter that the lag in educational opportunities for women frequently noted in educational annual reports meant that few girls qualified for professional employment. As a result, the majority of women remained as home producers rather than wage workers for foreign enterprises because home production did not require literacy, foreign language competence nor special training. Furthermore, although girls' response to Western education was positive, statistics confirm the small incidence of female education. This was the case because parents had negative attitudes towards educating girls as they thought that it contributed to the disruption of the family. Hence, parental opposition and the cost of educating girls were the main obstacles to girls' education in the early 1920s to 1930. In 1930s, the rationale for girls' education was preparation for motherhood and wifedom. By 1950s, education was seen as a means to economic self-betterment for both girls and boys. Even women's organisations that were formed in the 1950s stressed the need for increased opportunities for girls' education as it will be seen in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX.

WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS

Women are initiators and active members of various organisations. The origin of women groups can be traced back to the pre-colonial period. As some informants remarked, "Women like to work together in small groups (Mumikanda) or at least to a garden nearby."<sup>1</sup> In this way, work became less tedious and monotonous if it was interspersed with an occasional conversation and indeed a little local discussion did much to revive a flagging spirit. By the 1940s, the need for women to continue with this teamwork became necessary as a result of intensified commodity production in the absence of men who had migrated to European settler farms and urban centres.<sup>1a</sup>

Women's organisations have their origin in co-operative processes among them, a process which started in the pre-colonial era. It was recognised that some women were much better cultivators than others or as they said, "some women know how to cultivate well."<sup>2</sup> One characteristic of a lazy woman was that she does not know how to cultivate well although she has the strength.<sup>3</sup> This latter statement sheds some light on the women's attitude towards laziness and towards the physical strength which enables them to do their

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1. Julia Namuleyi, Oral interview, Mukwa. Raeli Nabalayo, Oral interview, Butonge. Marita Munoko, Oral interview, Sirisia.
  - 1a. For more details, see Chapter Three pgs.77-80.
  2. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele, 7/11/81
  3. Fwamba Kinisu, Oral interview, Chwele, 7/11/81

garden work. A woman who was habitually lazy was despised. A lazy woman began work late in the day and then she worked for a few hours without making progress. However, such women received encouragement to work hard when they worked in a group (Mumukanda). Consequently, women were engaged in extensive organisational activities including mutual-aid groups (Bulala or Buambani) and communal agricultural groups (Kimikanda) for planting, weeding and harvesting crops. Women's groups acted as centres of disseminating social, economic and agricultural information. Their motto was "litere lilala selira enda ta"<sup>4</sup> meaning, it takes more than one finger nail to kill a louse.

Furthermore through their organisational network, women raised money for the welfare of their families and the community at large. Women participated in groups activities in addition to their individual small scale farm labours. However, the presence of cash seems to have enhanced women's group processes. As women began to acquire money through their trading activities and control over that money, a number of new functions and economic activities began. The groups initiated during the colonial period enabled members to cope with the changing economic conditions. Consequently, in the 1950s, several women's groups were formed. In this chapter, we shall analyse the activities of all these women groups. We shall also trace their origin, organisation and developments.

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4. Julia Namuleyi, Oral interview, Mukwa, 17/12/81.

The chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, we shall attempt to explain the types and nature of women's groups that exist among the Bukusu women. In section two, an analysis of the economic activities of the various women's groups is made. Women's organisations provide a focus for economic, social and cultural development for women in the rural areas. The aim of these women's organisations is to assist women to acquire knowledge and skill through participation in group activities. Women have continued to receive help to adjust to society's changing technological and economic conditions through their participation in group activities. In section three, a Historical analysis of some of the earliest women organisations is made.

#### TYPES OF WOMEN'S GROUPS

The objectives and economic activities of different women's groups varied but the general emphasis was on improving the economic status of women.

##### Kimikanda Women's Groups

These were communal labour groups for agricultural activities organised on a residential basis. Participants generally numbered between six and twenty people. The members used to plant, weed and harvest for individual members during peak labour seasons. Members who failed to turn up for the work assignment compensated for their absence with cash.<sup>5</sup> This ensured group discipline. Group functions were

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5. Elizabeth Naliaka, Oral interview, Kimilili, 4/2/82

formalized and included a chairman, a secretary, a treasurer and an 'askari' (a kind of a chief whip). The 'askari' blew a whistle or rang a bell on days of work. The 'askari' was also responsible for organising members on the day of work. The secretary, a semi-literate lady, recorded the names of those who failed to turn up on assignment days and theoretically served as a check on the treasurer.<sup>6</sup>

Women in Kimikanda groups worked for an average of about five hours a day and for four days a week.<sup>7</sup> Emphasis was laid on starting the day's work early before the sun got hot. Although Kimikanda women's groups were continuities of the past organisations evident in the pre-colonial era, by the 1940s, they had acquired new dimensions. The members of a particular Kumukanda group could be hired out to work for cash, which means that, some of these groups were money making organisations. The cash earned from such collective work was kept by the treasurer and was shared among members at the end of the agricultural period.

Women seem to be more willing to cooperate in garden work than men. The absence of men's organisations give enough evidence to demonstrate the above statement. In polygamous families, each wife was essentially an independent economic unit with her own gardens and grainstores. Yet in such families, wives assisted each other in the work of their respective gardens in turns.<sup>8</sup> This was necessary because

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6. Mrs. Marita Munoko, Oral interview, Sirisia, 7/2/82

7. Raeli Nabalayo, Oral interview, Butonge, 11/1/1982

8. Johnston Khisa, Oral interview, Kimilili, 5/2/82

the agricultural cycle and labour requirements show that agricultural work was not evenly distributed throughout the year. Furthermore, a glance at the agricultural calendar (see chapter 2) reveals that the busiest periods were those in which the hardest tasks were performed. Co-operative labour was therefore a strategy which was developed by women to assist them to solve the problems of increased responsibility in agricultural work in the absence of their husbands. But by the 1950s, most of these groups had changed from working teams to income-generating activities. The concept existed in the pre-colonial period but was given a formal character and function in the 1950s.

#### Bulala Women's Groups

This was a kind of cooperation, often geared towards financial gain. Most of these groups started as Kimikanda groups but changed to Bulala groups.<sup>9</sup> The changing focus of these women's organisations demonstrated the important aspects of the colonial experience. Bulala groups were formed by women themselves to deal with what they saw as their own social, economic and educational needs.<sup>10</sup> Bulala groups raised money for immediate functions. Members in Bulala groups were mostly concerned with the satisfaction of immediate needs. As a result, contributions were made to meet the individual members' basic needs, for example domestic requirements such as buying utensils, simple household furniture, home improvements, paying school fees, buying books, seeds and even clothes.

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9. Raeli Nabalayo, Oral interview, Butonge. 11/1/82.

10. ...

As a different kind of mutual aid group, members of Bulala groups paid a fixed sum of money at regular intervals and the total was given each time to one of the members. The amount contributed by members and the number of members per group varied from ten to thirty members. Contributions ranged from Shs.5/= to 30/= every month. Bulala groups appeared to have been a strategy for women to try and cope with the changed economic conditions. Individual women's participation, therefore, depended in part on their ability to make their monthly financial contributions to the group.<sup>11</sup>

#### WOMEN'S GROUP ACTIVITIES AND PROJECTS

The types of activities and projects undertaken by women's groups were quite varied. The range of activities undertaken by women's groups seemed to have covered the members' social, economic and educational needs. The table below illustrates the range of projects and activities undertaken by women's groups. For purposes of analysis, these projects and activities may be placed under the following headings: education, agriculture, handicraft processing and home products, art, trade and entertainment. Emphasis was placed on income-generating activities. This was intended to help women to solve their economic problems.

Group activities indicated by leaders and members of the various groups can be grouped into six categories.

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11. Mrs. Marita Muncko, Oral interview, Sirisia, 7/2/82.



## Women's Group Activities and Projects

Category	Sphere	Activity/Project
1. Education	Home Economics	cookery, nutrition, home-hygiene, child-care, adult literacy classes, home improvement for example, improved fire places, sun-tables for drying dishes and utensils and roofing of houses (hired men to do the roofing)
2. Agriculture	Farming	disseminating agricultural information on improved farming practices, vegetable growing, poultry keeping, communal labour on members' farms.
3. Art and Crafts	Handicrafts	handicraft for example weaving, sewing, embroidery, dying, pottery, baskets, mats, bead-work; brooms, gourds and <u>chingara</u> (used for carrying water pots on the head, to enable women to balance pots on their heads).
4. Rural Development	Self-help Activities	building nursery centres, schools, road cuttings and construction of temporary bridges and contributions for school fees, protection of springs and wells (both men and women).
5. Trade	Business	selling of handicraft, food-stuffs, eggs and vegetables

Category	Sphere	Activity/Project
6. Entertainment	Cultural and Recreational Activities	traditional songs and dances

Source: Table 1<sup>12</sup>

Several observations can be made from the above table. women's groups were and still are engaged in a variety of activities. Women who were experts in the production of certain items that required some form of specialization like pot making engaged in the production of pottery items. Other women participated in the production of other items that did not involve any form of specialization. However, through their participation in group activities, some women were able to learn new skills and techniques from others who were experts in the production of different items

As a result of women's participation in group activities, their economic status improved. There was money for them to pay school fees for their sons and daughters, buy for them school uniforms, buy household utensils and food which they did not produce on their farms. Women did a lot of voluntary services which had both social and economic impact on the society at large. Through their participation in group activities, women seem to have directed more of their energies to attaining economic independence.

12. Oral interviews at Mukwa, Kimilili, Sirisia, Chwele, Kimalewa, Kanduyi, Kibingei, Malakisi, Butonge, Milo, Webuye and Misikhu. See also "The Women's Group Programme: A strategy for Education and Rural Development" in The Kenya Education Review, Vol.2 Nairobi, University of Nairobi, 1975 and The Women's Groups Programme in The SRDP (ed) Pala, A.O. Reynolds, J.E. Walls M.A.H. and Browne D.L. IDS occassional Paper No.13, University of Nairobi, 1975.

However, women's participation in group activities did not alleviate their workload. Group activities were performed in addition to their daily social and economic obligations. Thus, women's workload increased as a result of their participation in group activities.

Furthermore, women joined these groups as independent members. There were many women's groups in Bungoma district from 1950 to 1960, but thirteen women groups were among the earliest groups to be organised in the district. The table below indicates the thirteen groups in the district. The table illustrates the range of activities performed by each group.

Women's Groups in Operation Among Babukusu, 1949-1960

Year	Name of Group	No. of Members	Activities and Projects
1949	Malakisi Women Advancing Council	Over 200 members Membership fees KShs.5/=	Built dispensary, schools rural road cutting, construction of bridges, home improvement and home economic classes.
1950	Malakisi Women Egg Circle	Started with 42 members between 1950- 1957. Members fees KShs.5/=	Selling eggs, home improv ment, home economics clas construction of bridges rural roads.
1958	Milo	84 members. Admission or membership fees KShs.5/= yearly contribution KShs25/=	Construction of temporary bridges and rural roads. constructed a semi- permanent social hall.

Year	Name of Group	No. of Members	Activities and Projects
1959	Khalumuli (near Webuye township)	50 members. membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs5/=	Cooperative farming, construction of rural access roads to transport their crops to market centres, protection of springs and well, cooperative weeding.
1959	Kalaa (Kamusinde) (near Kimilili township)	64 members 42 women and 22 men.	Started cooperative farming with a team of oxen. Had 6 ploughs which used to plough together. Protected 3 wells, opened up rural access roads to enable them to transport their produce to the market centres. Built a nursery school.
1959	Siata (it was also known as Kimalewa)	60 members, 18 men and 42 women. membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs.25/=	Constructed a cattle dip, helped to develop Kuywa school, constructed a temporary bridge on Kuywa river, constructed rural access roads.
1960	Siuna	34 members. membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs.15/=	Group farming, constructed rural access roads, constructed bridges over seasonal streams, put up a nursery school, at the time of research it was a Primary school. Protected wells. Entertainment activities used to sing traditional songs and dances.

Year	Name of Group	No. of Members	Activities and Projec
1960	Namakhale	48 members membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs.20/=	Cooperative farming. formed a team of traditional dancers f entertainment, constr ed a cattle dip.
1960	Embako	55 members 20 men and 35 women. member- ship fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs.20/=	Farming collectively. They had a <u>ng'ombe</u> group, they had 6 ploughs. Improvement of individual members homes: bought utensil for individual member Cooperative weeding o individual members' farms, protected 4 we constructed rural acc roads. Women made pot
1960	Khalaba (near Bungoma town)	51 members. membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs.25/=	Constructed rural acc roads. Home improvem bought utensils for individual members, bedding and furniture they used to weed, harvest and plant cro for individual member
1960	Sikhendu (near Kimilili)	80 members membership fees KShs.2/=. Yearly contribution KShs.20/=	Put up a semi-permane hall. Constructed ru access roads for tran porting crops e.g. ma to market centres. Th had a <u>ng'ombe</u> group a they had 3 ploughs.

Year	Name of Group	No. of Members	Activities and Projects
1960	Muchi	45 members. membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contribution KShs.20/=	Cooperative weeding. Construction of rural access roads, protected 6 wells, collected eggs which were sold at Webuye town, home improvement: bought utensils for members and paid school fees for the children of the members
1960	Makhonge	70 members 38 women and 22 men. membership fees KShs.5/=. Yearly contri- bution KShs.25/=	Protected wells, constructed rural access roads mostly leading to schools and market centres. Had a team of oxen to plough their farms. Cooperative weeding.

Table 2<sup>12a</sup>

Several observations can be made from the above table. Some groups listed above included both men and women. In most cases, women were the majority. In such situations, women had a separate committee for women's welfare. Furthermore, it was common for the entire rural community, both men and women, to work together on a rural road or construction of a bridge on a seasonal river. This ready integration at the rural level in most cases was to stimulate attitudes of self-reliance with a view of making them partners in development.

12a. Oral interviews at Kimilili, Webuye, Chwele, Sirisia, Malakisi, Bokoli, Wamono, Namwela, Kimalewa, Butonge, Milo and Sikhendu.

In analysing the origin and organisation of women's groups in Mombasa, M.A. Strobel observed that the objectives of women's groups were and still are primarily two-fold:

- a) To achieve social welfare.<sup>13</sup>
- b) To implement commercial projects.

The situation was similar among women in Bungoma District. Most groups were actually multi-purpose, generally combining mutual assistance in a kind of rotating credit association with cultural handicraft, social, education and economic (income-generating) activities.<sup>14</sup> However, the objectives and activities of women's groups differ from one region to the other, both in terms of scale and diversity. In the next section, we shall examine the objectives, activities and achievements of four different women's groups.

Case Studies

Women, as already indicated, were always prepared to work as hard as possible whether they were paid or not. After the Second World War, women realized that they could do tremendous work if only they organised themselves in groups. The women's groups which were formed after the Second World War had new objectives as opposed to the ones which existed at the turn of the century. The major objective of these new

13. Margaret Ann Strobel, "Lelemama Associations" and "Improvement Associations" in "Muslim Women in Mombasa Kenya, 1890-1973" Ph.D Dissertation, California, Los Angeles, 1975 pp.214 ff.

14. Royal Feldman, "Women's Groups and Women's Subordination: An analysis of Policies Towards Rural Women in Kenya" in the Journal of Review of African Political Economy No.2718, 1984 pp.67-85 See also, Lynn Adelman: "Economic Development and Rural Women's Groups in Kenya: The means rather than the end." A research paper at Mazingira Institute, 1983.

women's groups was, improvement, which was geared towards acquiring skills and knowledge to enable them to function in a modern community. It was with this objective in mind that the Malakisi Women Advancing Council was formed in 1949.

#### Malakisi Women Advancing Council

This group was started by the Malakisi Advisory Council which consisted of eighteen men and two women.<sup>15</sup> Further, women thought that if they had their own group (women's group), they could be able to develop and therefore improve their own economic status.

The Malakisi Women Advancing Council therefore aimed at improving the socio-economic conditions for the Bukusu, Iteso and Kalenjin (Mt. Elgon) women in the Malakisi region. This was achieved through social interaction. The Malakisi Women Advancing Council recruited members from across ethnic boundaries. Membership to this particular group was confined to women and girls above twenty years of age.

#### Leadership

The Malakisi Women Advancing Council recruited leaders from the prominent women or wives of prominent people in the area and school teachers. The chairperson of the group was Mrs. Ruth Barasa (a wife of a Chief) and the vice-chairperson was Mrs. Kukubo (wife of a former Chief) and then Mr. Washington Kwanjeko, who was then the Chief's Clerk acted as their secretary before Mrs. Anne Kwanjeko was appointed. Mrs. Kwanjeko was a school teacher. The treasurer

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15. Mrs. Ruth Barasa, Oral interview, Sirisia, 4/3/82.



was Mrs. Ruth Barasa but later Mrs. Esther Sirengo was appointed. Mrs. Sirengo was the wife of the court elder. The Vice-treasurer was Mrs. T. Kusienya, a school teacher and a daughter of Esther Sirengo. Later in 1956, Mrs. Marita Bilindi and Norah Musundi were appointed to serve as secretaries successfully.

However, membership to this group was not open to all women. First there was a membership fee of KShs.5/- to be paid by members. Considering the general scarcity of money in the 1950s, in the District, most women could not afford to pay the membership fee. In fact, the little money that women managed to save was spent on different items as indicated earlier.\* As a result, most of the women who were members of this group were recruited from those families that had been converted to Christianity. What is significant is that the five shillings paid as membership fee excluded women who were mostly poor. Furthermore, poor women were excluded from the group by yet another demand which required members to pay KShs.20/- as yearly subscription to the group. Consequently, Malakisi Women Advancing Council consisted of women who were fairly better-off economically. As it can be observed from the leadership, most members of the Malakisi Women Advancing Council had received Western education although the level varied from one individual to another. The projects and activities organised by this group emphasised women's needs and then those of the society at large. Many kinds of activities were undertaken by women's groups, and the type of projects chosen by any particular group depended on the community's needs and the resources available to the group.

## Projects and Activities

The Malakisi Women Advancing Council wanted to build a dispensary. This was essential because women had a lot of maternity problems. The nearest clinics were in Kaimosi, Kolanya, Kakamega and Tororo, all of them, at least 30 miles away except Kolonya. Due to the long distances which had to be covered, and due to problems of transportation, many women used to deliver on the way. This led to high mortality rates among women during child-birth. Members of the Malakisi Women Advancing Council therefore wanted the colonial government to assist them to build a dispensary at Sirisia. In 1949, members of this group decided to contribute money to start their own clinic on a kind of harambee basis. The District Commissioner (D.C), who was also the chairman of A.D.C. supported these women and hence the government accepted to build a dispensary at Sirisia towards the end of 1949. Through the activities of the council, public health nurses and midwives worked very closely with members of this group. These health officers and midwives visited individual members of this group in their homes.<sup>15a</sup> These visits were arranged by the chairman of the group. Village representatives took nurses and midwives around.

By the time the government accepted to build Sirisia dispensary, the members of the council had contributed KShs.200/=.<sup>16</sup> This money was later on used in the construction

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15a. Health officers did not pay visits to other women who were not members of the group.

16. Mrs. Ruth Barasa, Oral interview, Sirisia, 4/3/82.

of the present Sirisia social hall where the group used to meet. The hall was also used for adult literacy classes by women.

Members of the Malakisi Women Advancing Council also participated in the construction of the rural access roads and bridges. Although Chwele-Sirisia road was in operation, there was no bridge on the Yabeko river near Sirisia market. The Malakisi Women Advancing Council took it as their responsibility to construct the bridge on the Yabeko river. Another bridge was constructed on the Ndakaru river. Both Yabeko and Ndakaru are seasonal rivers. The Malakisi Women Advancing Council also constructed rural access roads to several elementary schools that were already in existence. Children used to get a lot of problems when going to school due to lack of proper roads and floods. School inspectors faced similar problems with the result that schools were poorly supervised.

However, it was observed that in the construction of a rural road and bridge across a seasonal river, both men and women participated in the exercise.<sup>17</sup> Men cleared the bush while women did the actual digging and levelling of the surface. Further, in the construction of a bridge, women used to collect and bring stones at the construction site. Men put up the structure of the bridge, while women brought the Maram for surfacing it.

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17. Marita Munoko, Oral interview, Sirisia. Mutenyo Wamakhanya, Oral interview, Sirisia, 9/3/82.

The Malakisi Women Advancing Council had the responsibility of protecting springs as well. In the protection of springs, men used to clear the bush around the spring, while women used to collect stones used in the actual cementing of the spring. By 1956, a total of fourteen springs had been protected by the group.<sup>18</sup>

Apart from the construction of springs, rural access roads and protection of springs, Malakisi Women Advancing Council participated in other activities. These included, child-care lessons, home improvement activities and general home hygiene. In 1952, when Ruth Barasa and Irene Daudi came back from Kericho, where they had attended home economics course, they began to teach home economics. Members of the council were taught how to construct good cooking fire-places, how to prepare balanced diets, constructing sun-tables for drying dishes and utensils, vegetable growing, nutrition, cookery, child-care, general home hygiene, knitting and sewing. Members of the council used to make pots, baskets, spinning and weaving of towels and blankets. They also used to dye their works. For dying their works, they applied local dying plants like Nabululu, Chesisakwe and Namasaka. These plants used to give them a green colour. Other plants used included:

<u>Plant</u>	<u>Colour</u>
<u>Bukembekembe</u>	Purple
Roots of <u>Kimichachasi</u>	Maroon
Mixture of <u>Bukembekembe</u> and Lemons	Red
<u>Musamali</u>	Orange <sup>19</sup>

18. Ruth Barasa, Oral interview, Sirisia, 4/3/82.

19. Marita Munoko and Ruth Barasa, Oral interview, Sirisia. 7/2/82 and 4/3/82.

Only bright colours were preferred. But later, they started to buy dying colours on the market.

Development of girls' education was another issue that the Malakisi Women Advancing Council looked into. Girls faced a lot of problems when going to school as already discussed in chapter four. In 1956, the Malakisi Women Advancing Council decided to put up a school for girls at Sirisia and members were asked to contribute money towards this endeavour. Construction works started but due to problems of mismanagement of funds, work had to stop. Instead, the father of the Catholic Mission, in charge of Sirisia then decided to continue with the construction of the school.

In 1959, the council changed the name from Malakisi Women Advancing Council to Malakisi Women Welfare Society. This change of the name was out of a realisation that the organisation was for improvement purposes. They also wanted to involve other women who had originally been excluded either by virtue of the fact that they were not Christians or because they could not afford to pay membership fee of five shillings and yearly subscription of twenty shillings. In 1959, membership fee was reduced to two shillings and yearly subscription was reduced to ten shillings.

#### Malakisi Women Egg Circle

Malakisi Women Egg Circle was a branch of the Malakisi Women Advancing Council. It was started in 1950. Like the Malakisi Women Advancing Council, the major objective for this

group was to improve women's socio-economic conditions. The members of this group were 42 by 1950. This number had, however, increased to 72 by 1957. Members of this group agreed to collect eggs on a daily basis so as to sell them in bulk. The money so received was to be used in solving the problems encountered by women in their group.

Membership fees for the Malakisi Women Egg Circle was KShs.2/-. However, membership in these two groups reflected the denominational influences in the area. Members of the Malakisi Women Advancing Council were predominantly members of the Friends African Mission, while members of the Malakisi Women Egg Circle belonged to the Anglican Church and the Salvation Army. But what is important is that there was no rivalry or competition between the two groups.

Members of the Egg Circle collected their first batch of eggs at the beginning of 1950. The eggs were sold at Webuye, Kitale and Eldoret. In one of the district annual reports, the North Nyanza District Commissioner stated:

The (Kitosh) Bukusu do a very considerable trade in chickens and eggs with the Kitale and Eldoret farmers which should be encouraged.<sup>20</sup>

The following table shows the egg collection and sales for 1950 and 1951

Year	Eggs collected	Eggs sold	Eggs broken	Bad Eggs
1950	1,600	854	740	6
1951	1,520	501	1,019	-
Total	3,120	1,355	1,759	6

Table 3<sup>21</sup>

From the above table, it can be observed that half of the eggs got broken on their way to the market centres.

The problem of transportation confronted the Malakisi Women Egg Circle. There were no good roads and there were no means of transportation in the form of country buses or 'matatus' to transport the eggs to Webuye. And so, they had to ship the eggs by rail via Myanga railway station. The women themselves had to carry the eggs on their heads to the railway station. This was quite a hazardous business. What was more, one of them had to accompany the commodity to Webuye. This ate into whatever profits that were realised. Consequently, the members of the circle decided to seek an alternative means of transport: the use of a bicycle. But, there was no person to take their eggs to Webuye on a bicycle. Malakisi Women Egg Circle did not therefore achieve their target. And so, in 1953, the group decided to abandon the egg business.

However, the group did not collapse but continued to participate in other development projects initiated by the Malakisi Advancing Council until 1958 when this group split into factions. These other groups that emerged in 1958 were organised on sub-locational/and or village basis rather than on a locational level. Of significance here, was the attempt by rural women to initiate income-generating projects. We can conclude therefore that lack of home market (local demand for eggs), poor infrastructure and lack of transport facilities, all combined, led to the collapse of the egg

business of the Malakisi Women Egg Circle, which was otherwise an income-generating activity. The circle was an example of the commercial types of women's groups

#### Kala'a Women's Group

The revival of the traditional self-help groups in the second half of the 1950s relate to the internal dynamics of the economic set up among Babukusu. Kala'a Women's group trace their origins to pre-colonial times, when women used to form mutual aid teams to assist each other in the heavy agricultural labour requirements. With the introduction of cash crops such as coffee in the 1950s, and the continuous and expanded production of maize, both for local consumption and sale, members of the Kala'a women's group found it difficult to complete most of the agricultural tasks as individuals.

Formally, Kala'a women's group was started in 1959, with 24 members, all women. But later, those women who were members encouraged their husbands to join them. However, by the end of 1959, there were 48 members, 18 men and 30 women. At the beginning of 1960, there were 64 members, 22 men and 42 women. It was in 1960 that this group started a 'ng'ombe' group for ploughing. Male members of the Kala'a women's group had complete sets of six teams of harnessed oxen and ploughs which used to plough together for the members of the group. At the same time, all members of the Kala'a women's group were encouraged to plant coffee. When planting coffee seedlings, the tasks undertaken by women included filling coffee holes with animal manure, mulching and continuous weeding. Male members on the



other hand prepared land, dug holes and planted the coffee seedlings.

By the end of 1960, male members of Kala'a women's group had planted 6,600 coffee stems.<sup>22</sup> Every male member had planted an average of upto 300 coffee stems. The group had 6 ploughs and they used to hire out their services to other people who did not have ploughs. In 1959, the district agricultural officer's report stated:

Five tractors operated by two Europeans and an Arab worked in the district on a basis of contract ploughing. The operators found, however, that they had to compete with ox-plough hire charges of Shs.30/= per acre and that they had difficulties in collecting payment.<sup>23</sup>

It can be observed from the above quotation that the work done by ploughing teams in the district was quite effective. The money the group (Kala'a) received from hiring out their services was used in maintaining the ploughs. They bought spare parts to replace the worn out ones and by 1961, they also managed to buy two new ploughs for the group.<sup>24</sup>

Female members of the Kala'a women's group completed other tasks which included planting, weeding and harvesting. Members of the Kala'a women's group planted bananas for female

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22. Makokha Namunguba, Oral interview. Kimalewa. 4/2/1982.

23. KNA, File No DC/EN/1/4, Annual Report, Elgon Nyanza, 1959.

24. Makokha Namunguba and Selina Wanyonyi, Oral interview. Kimalewa, 4/2/82 and 2/4/82.

members of the group. By 1960, a total of over 3,000 banana stems had been planted and each individual female member of the group had a grove of over 150 banana stems.<sup>25</sup> Kala'a women's group protected three springs and opened up rural access roads for purposes of transporting their cash crops, mainly maize and coffee to the nearby market centres and cooperative societies.

The main public targets for this group were the clearing of homestead compounds, building cattle kraals, the clearing and renovation of individual members' houses which included plastering and whitewashing of walls. This target had been achieved in a total of 63 buildings and dwelling huts by the end of March, 1960.<sup>26</sup> Windows had been installed in 35 houses by householders themselves, 27 latrines had been built and were in use.<sup>27</sup>

Female members of the Kala'a women's group planted famine crops such as potatoes and cassava. Individual members were encouraged by their leaders to plant these crops which were particularly useful during food shortages.<sup>28</sup> The production of such famine crops was undertaken in addition to individual farm plots which fell directly under the responsibility of each woman.

### Leadership

The first leaders during the initial organisation of

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25. Selina Wanyonyi, Oral interview, Kimalewa, 2/4/82

26. Makokha Namunguba, Oral interview, Kimalewa, 4/2/82

27. Ibid., Oral interview, Kimalewa, 4/2/82

Selina Wanvonvi, Oral interview, Kimalewa, 2/4/82

Kala'a women's group were all women. The chairman then was Selina Wanvonvi. But when men were allowed to join the group, leadership changed to men. The chairman of the group was Makokha Namunguba until 1964 when the group collapsed.

#### Maendeleo Groups.

Maendeleo groups in Bungoma district were preceded by and co-existed with a large number of local groups as already indicated above. The year 1959. was the re-opening of institutes with the revived interest and availability of leaders. The main centres of this revival were in Kimilili, Bungoma and Sirisia townships and in addition, junior maendeleo groups came into existence. This latter innovation proved popular as too often in the past the older women had resented the presence of young unmarried girls in their groups.<sup>29</sup> But with the establishment of Maendeleo Institutes at Sirisia. Bungoma and Kimilili, junior groups received help and advice. Hence, the way was paved for the establishment of a more harmonious relationship between the older and married members and their younger sisters and daughters.

Maendeleo groups elected their own leaders and the Community Development Assistant (C.D.A) acted as their co-ordinator. Such groups, it was reported, sprang up all over the district.<sup>30</sup> Each group had an average membership of about 20-24 women. Tasks done by such groups ranged from planting, weeding, harvesting, pasture-clearing to spring

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29. Marita Munoko, Oral interview, Sirisia, 7/2/82.

30. Ruth Barasa, Oral interview, Sirisia, 4/3/82.

protection. Members of the Maendeleo groups were also encouraged by the CDA's to plant a variety of vegetables.

### Education

Members of the Maendeleo groups were also taught things like spinning, weaving blankets and towels, knitting, sewing, home improvement, cookery and child-care. The main objective of the Maendeleo groups was to develop and improve the status and conditions of life of women and girls of all communities in Kenya. They also encouraged discussions among members on problems affecting women and children in Kenya.

However, what is significant for us to note here is that although women derived certain benefits by virtue of being a member of a women's group, there were of course, additional responsibilities placed on women. Further, as women took on these extra responsibilities, their workload continued to increase.

In conclusion, it has been observed that Malakisi Women Advancing Council and Malakisi Women Egg Circle provided a foundation on which the present women's groups in Sirisia division emerged. An important aspect of these new women's groups was their emphasis on projects. Furthermore, early welfare groups were not concerned with the question of income-generating activities. This is a very important point because most of the women's groups that were formed in the 1950s or earlier were social improvement welfare groups whose origin was traced back to the indigenous social institutions.

However, women's participation in group activities did not reduce their workload. As it was stated elsewhere in this chapter, women's participation in group activities created a strong social welfare system whereby immediate financial needs could be met through group action. In her study of the impact of development on Third World Women, Irene Tinker notes that, "The workload of women has been increasing in recent years."<sup>31</sup> It is, therefore, rural women who stand the most to gain from appropriate technology.

Women's groups are representatives of the rural female labour force. Hence, group activities were and still are undertaken in addition to the individual farm plots each woman was (and still is) responsible for. Consequently, as stated in chapter two, it is primarily this household economy which subsidized the wage labour of male migrants through their agricultural production, trade and marketing activities (see chapter 3). Further, through women's groups, women participated in a variety of activities as it is indicated in this chapter. However, women not only participated in group activities, but at the same time, they continued to farm individual plots for their subsistence and cash crops. This meant an increase in the women's workload. In this respect, access to technical knowledge is required for women to understand how their workloads can be reduced.

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31. Irene Tinker: "The Adverse Impact of Development on Women." Washington DC, 1976 p.58

## C O N C L U S I O N

The purpose of this study has been to analyse the changing role of women in Bukusu society during the colonial period. In this regard, our major concern was to assess Bukusu women's participation in agricultural production processes. In this chapter, a summary of the major findings and some suggestions are presented.

The framework for this research has been that female dependency and under-development are mainly economic in nature. We observed that economic dependence affected women more adversely than men.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, land, the basic means of production was owned communally. Under this system of land tenure, women enjoyed usufruct rights in land. Division of labour based on sex and age was used as a control mechanism. Children, especially mature girls, assisted their mothers with farm labour and other domestic chores. In this way, women's workload was considerably reduced. Furthermore, we observed that production was basically for domestic consumption, although surplus was bartered.

In this thesis, it has been demonstrated that inheritance of property was along patrilineal lines of descent. Consequently, women and girls did not inherit any form of property from their parents. At the same time, traditional customs made it possible for women to set the pace for the inheritance arrangements. We have, for instance, shown that sons inherited pieces of land that their respective mothers used to cultivate. This applied to animals as well. Male

children inherited those animals that their individual mothers used to milk.

Furthermore, women participated in the production of basketry and pottery items. They also supplemented the production of foodstuffs by gathering wild products: fruits, roots, termites and mushrooms. It was concluded that traditionally, agriculture was the main area in which women worked to achieve self-sufficiency and in this way, they avoided economic dependence.

It was shown that new economic forms were introduced by colonialism which significantly changed the value of women's economic roles, thus creating a pattern of women's dependency on men. With the establishment of colonial rule and with the subsequent introduction of cash crops, women's participation in agricultural production was limited to the supply of labour force alone. Peasant petty-commodity production had several implications for women. The ownership of cash-crop farms was mainly in the hands of men, food farming on a small scale was the main type of agriculture open to women. This was tedious and not very profitable. In fact, the commercialisation of agricultural production processes led to reduced acreages for the production of subsistence crops.

This study has also demonstrated that land consolidation and registration changed women's land rights as land was registered in the males' names to the detriment of women.

In fact, we have shown that with the introduction of cash crops such as cotton, maize and coffee, women's workload increased. We noted that technological development tended

to favour men. Women, therefore, continued to use their traditional instrument of production viz:, the hoe. However, in the absence of grown-up children, who by then attended schools, and of men, who had migrated to urban areas, women's workload worsened. Consequently, during planting, weeding and harvesting seasons, there was more work to be done than the female labour force could cope with.

During the colonial period, Bukusu women had inadequate access to education. Although girls' response to Western education was positive, statistics confirm the small incidence of female education. Prevailing attitudes that girls' education was not as important as that of boys greatly influenced the access of girls to education and vocational training facilities. This accounts mainly for the general lag in women's educational attainment in Bungoma District. Thus, the lag in women's education generally places them at a relatively greater disadvantage. Finally, we observed that the use of education as screening mechanism in this case, effectively excluded a substantial portion of women from almost any modern sector of employment above the unskilled level.

As a result, it was observed, women have considerably limited access to cash income than men. Therefore, women are forced to obtain money from trading activities as discussed in chapter three.

This study has shown that with the introduction of cash crop production and with the subsequent development of weekly markets, women's trading activities expanded. It was demonstrated that in an agricultural economy, women do not benefit from the fruits of their labour. However, through



acquire their own independent property. Using the cash obtained from their trading activities, women have become less dependent on their husbands financially. Further, it was shown that women's participation in trade and trading activities did not alleviate their workload. Trade was and still is a supplementary activity to farming.

Women's groups were and still are the most significant area of female activity. Women's groups fulfilled important functions in disseminating agricultural information, generating labour and small sums of cash. Women's groups provided the most effective and strategic means by which women could cope with a rapidly changing economic structure. Through women's groups which served as a vehicle for communal agricultural teams and mutual aid groups, women had access to additional labour and finance, unavailable to them as isolated individuals. In addition, by relying on mutual help through groups, women are able to avoid extreme individual dependence on men for financial assistance.

The author is aware that this study has some limitations and inadequacies, largely because data was not available on certain issues. Constraints of time and funds also imposed their own limitations. As a result of the above factors, certain issues in this study still remain obscure. For instance, data to indicate the number of women who have managed to get land title deeds for their own pieces of land was not forthcoming. Because of limited time, the author was not able to provide data to show the number of acres of land set aside for the production of both subsistence and cash crops.

Furthermore, this study does not provide data on how women allocated time for different tasks. For instance, when discussing the question of increased workload for women, details on how women divided up their time for performing different tasks have not been given. For example, how much time did they allocate for weeding, fetching water, collecting firewood and on other domestic chores?

Reference was made to the fact that some well-off families used to hire labour. But, data to show the number of families that used to hire labour was not easily available. Hopefully, however, the main findings presented in this thesis will enable the reader to understand the role of women in the political economy of Kenya generally.

On the basis of this study in Bungoma District, we can generalize that, in Kenya, women play an outstanding role in agricultural production. Furthermore, in Kenya, which is primarily an agricultural country, women form the majority in rural areas. Here they have come to dominate agricultural production processes both in terms of food crop and cash crop production. Furthermore, this study has demonstrated that women's participation in agricultural production is characterised by increased workload. In fact, there are signs that the burden of women is growing because the more men migrate to urban areas in search of wage labour, the greater the share of women's work in agriculture.

Studies done by Margaret Jean Hay in South Nyanza,

Achola Pala Okeyo in Kisumu and Alice E. Gold in Nandi Districts<sup>1</sup> have also indicated the outstanding participation of women in agricultural production processes. In addition, evidence from the above studies and S. Le vine's study among the Gusii of Kenya<sup>2</sup> shows that women in other parts of Kenya faced problems similar to those of women in Bungoma District. However, it is recommended that more case studies of this nature should be encouraged and undertaken by scholars. Such studies will enable us to indicate regional variations and differentiations of women's participation in agricultural production in Kenya.

However, as far as women's workload was concerned, the author suggested that improved and appropriate technology would reduce and relieve them of some of the pressure of work.

#### Suggestions for Further Research

There is an urgent need for research to be done in the following areas: the effect of women's participation in cash crop production and marketing on nutrition. Here, investigations

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1. Achola Pala Okeyo: "The Changing Position of Women in Rural Areas: Case Studies from Kisumu District, Kenya" I.D.S. Working Paper No.156, April 1974. M. Jean Hay: "Economic Change in Luoland: Kowe 1890-1745." Ph.D Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1972. A.E. Gold: "Women in Agricultural Change: Nandi (Kenya) in the 19th Century." Paper presented to the African Studies Association Conference, Nov. 14th 1978.
  2. S. Le Vine: Mothers and Wives: Gusii Women of East Africa. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979.

should aim at providing information relating to the following issues: women's increasing role in cash crop production and cash crop marketing and their level of income over the years under study. Such a study should also try to assess their expenditure - for example, how much goes to food and what is the nutritional quality of that food.

The other area that calls for immediate attention is, the history of women and child labour in Bungoma District and Kenya in general. This type of study should provide possible answers on the following questions: the origin and use of women and child labour in Kenya and the increasing use of women and child labour in the production of different cash crops. There is need to investigate into the number of active working hours per day. This kind of study has already been done by Sharon Stichter in central Kenya.<sup>3</sup> However, more case studies should be undertaken to enable us to increase our knowledge on the labour history of Kenya.

On the whole, this is pioneering work in the area under study. Other studies of this nature have already been done in Nyanza Province by Margaret Jean Hay, Achola Pala Okeyo and in Nandi District by Alice Gold.<sup>4</sup> However, there is a need for many more case studies to enable us to understand the changing economic role of women in Kenyan societies.

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3. S. Stichter:, "Women and Labour Force in Kenya 1895-1964" in Rural Africana No.29, winter 1975. Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan.
  4. M. Jean Hay: op.cit., see also "Luo Women and Economic Change During Colonial Period" in Women in Africa by Nancy J. Haikin and Edna G. Bay (Ed) Stanford. Achola Pala Okeyo: op.cit., and A University Press, 1978 Alice E. Gold: op.cit.,

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Sarah Nabwala, Chebukube, 16/4/82  
Ben Wanambisi, Kibichori, 6/4/82  
Selina Nakhaya Kwoba, Chwele, 11/4/82  
Mutenyo Wamakhanya, Sirisia, 9/3/82  
Selina Wanyonyi, Kimalewa, 2/4/82  
Makokha Namunguba, Kimalewa, 4/2/82  
Esther Mukhwana, Kibichori, 7/11/81  
Marita Munoko, Kolani, 7/2/82  
Yohanna Wafula, Namwela, 6/2/82  
Ruth Barasa, Sirisia, 4/3/82  
Festo Wakoli, Sirisia, 3/2/82  
Kerementine Naliaka, Chwele, 6/5/82  
Timothy Wepukhulu Wamono 4/2/82  
Jeremiah Kukubo, Sirisia, 10/2/82

Marita Manasi, Chwele, 9/5/82  
Nelson Mafura, Changara, 4/3/82  
Wafubwa Kere, 17/5/82  
Reba Murunga, Webuye, 11/4/82  
Ann Kwanjeko, Butonge, 5/12/81  
Salome Wekesa, Kanduyi, 2/6/82  
Joseph Wanyonyi, Chebukaka, 3/4/81  
Eliud Wepukhulu, Chwele, 7/1/82  
Fwamba Mayuba Teremi, 10/2/81  
Elam Mrunga Sicheyi, 6/9/81  
Joash Walumoli Sicheyi, 4/12/81  
Sichangi Wanaubisi Sicheyi, 3/1/82  
Melab Namarome Busakala, 5/12/81  
Susan Namaemba Sitikho, 3/7/82  
Justo Mbuliki Kibichori, 9/6/82  
Nichola Sitati Malakisi, 3/5/82  
Salome Bukokhe Mukwa, s/4/82  
Agnes Matete Butonge, 3/6/82  
Salume Siakilo Butonge, 19/3/82  
Luka Wekesa Butonge, 22/3/82  
Timona Malaba, Sirisia, 25/1/82  
Stephen Wekunda Namwela, 20/1/82  
Wanyonyi Chelewa Changara, 10/2/82  
Simiyu Mulupi Sikusi, 19/4/82  
Leah Luswati Marakaru, 13/5/82  
Birita Machani, Kabuchayi, 17/5/82  
Margaret Kibulo, Misikhu 24/4/82

Simon Sikanga, Misikhu 25/4/82

Peter Wanyama Misikhu 28/4/82

Elizabeth Ndelema Sirisia, 30/4/82

Dina Fwamba Kituni, 21/5/82

Sila Wakusi, Matisi, 23/5/82

Milimo Wamakuria Sicheyi, 7/5/82

Munyasha Natembeya Sicheyi, 19/12/81

Sipora Nakitara Sikulu, 20/12/81

Wekesa Mukhekhe Kimalewa, 21/3/82

Selina Nasimiyu, Mwalia,, 22/5/82

Wekesa Ndimu, Changara, 20/2/82

# THE LOCATION OF BUNGOMA DISTRICT IN KENYA



SCALE 1:5,100,000

20 0 40 80 120 160 200 240 280 320 360



# BUNGOMA DISTRICT ADMINISTRATIVE UNITS

