A HISTORY OF FOOD PRODUCTION MECHANISMS AND GENDER RELATIONS IN COLONIAL MARAGOLI- KENYA, 1895-1963

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Conferment of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

November, 2025

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dear wife Sarah Amisi and our beloved children; Wenzil Brian, Albryte Peaches, Densel Osteen and Eistein Biden

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

ALDEV - African Land Development Board

CEEC - Central European Economic Community

CIDP - County Integrated Development Plan

DC - District Commissioner

EAEP - East African Educational Publishers

EAP - Economically Active Population

FAO - Food and Agricultural Organization

FGDs - Focus Group Discussions

GBS - Girls Boarding School

GNI - Gross National Income

IBEAC - Imperial British East African Company

KAR - King's African Rifle KNA Kenya National Archives

KNA - Kenya National Archives

KNBS - Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

KPRC - Kakamega Provincial Record Center

Ltd - Limited

LNC - Local Native Council

MCA - Member of County Assembly

MOP - Mode of Production

NaCoSTI - National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

NCPB - National Cereal and Produce Board

NKCA - North Kavirondo Central Association

OI - Oral Interview

OUP -Oxford University Press

PC -Provincial Commissioner

Pp -Pages

RoK -Republic of Kenya

ROAPE -Review of African Political Economy

UNESCO -United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

VCIDP -Vihiga County Integrated Development Plan

GLOSSARY OF MARAGOLI TERMS

Amakuyu - Wild figs.

Amasahi mahiu - Warm blood.

Amasahi mazilu - Cold blood.

Avakana va jibiesi - The GBS girls

Avamirika - Circumstancial aliens e.g war victims.

Baraza - Meeting usually called by the chiefs, subchiefs, and local elders to sensitize the public on government policies

Egudu - Long rains season (April - May), extended from January to July.

Ehili - A large group of related clans.

Ekitale - A hard wood tree prefered for making traditional hoes.

Emilimi - Plots of farm land see mulimi next page.

Emilimilu - Bushlands; occassionally cleared and used for communal and individual farming.

Evembe - Special grass used for thatching.

Evinusu - Half coins.

Ichuvwi - The short rains season (August-September), the bean season.

Idisi - Young men's hut.

Iliini - Straight line in which the Christian villages were positioned.

Inyumba - House/may also refer to a household

Lidala/amadala(pl)- Maragoli term for extended homestead

Ligaka - Aloevera.

Ligutu - Village elder.

Lugongo - A territorial unit made of several tsisoma (plural of lusoma).

Lusoma - A territorial unit made of several related villages.

Nyanza - Lake.

Omumenya - Refugees

Omwatirwa - Tenant at will

Olovego - Hair-shaving ceremony performed by the relatives of the deceased after

burial; it is intended to be a cleansing ritual.

Omwene hango - Owner of a home.

Oluako/*zinzako*(pl) - Boundary marks for either individual clan or tribal land/territory.

Omulimi gwa guga - Ancestral land

Teminari - Tribunal; Local Native Council.

OPERATIONALIZATION OF KEY CONCEPTS

Articulation -The patterns and process of change brought about in the Maragoli pre-colonial food mechanisms after the introduction colonial policies in Maragoli.

Capitalist mode of production - The new changes in the ways in which the Maragoli produce the necessities of life due to the coming in of the colonial era.

Culture -Refers to the Maragoli way of life, characterized by traditions and beliefs that distinguishes the Maragoli as a people from others.

Ecology -The system that defines the Maragoli relationship with the immediate environment- mostly plants, animals and the nonliving things.

Famine -The period in Maragoli land when the area experienced high levels of food shortage in suffiecient to sustain life.

Food production mechanisms- Strategies employed by the Maragoli to extract consumables from immediate environment.

Gender - Socio-cultural construction of roles and relationships between Maragoli men and women -Roles and relationships that change over time and are context specific.

Geder relations - The interactions that exists between the Maragoli men and Women in their endeavours to avail food for their sustainance.

Maragoli Abaluhya - A sub group of the Kenyan Western Bantu under the linguistic group.

Maragoliland -The geographical area in Western Kenya occupied by the Maragoli people.

During the colonial time it was a division Kakamega district. On the onset of devolution in 2010, it was curved into the present Vihiga and Sabatia Sub counties

Mode of production -A combination of social relations and forces of production among the Maragoli structured by the dominance of the relation of production

Patriarchy -The rule of Maragoli men over women which points to the dominant patterns of relationships which structure domestic work.

Pre-capitalist mode of production- The type of production among the Maragoli based on kinship relations of ownership and relies on the traditional

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter endeavored to provide the background to the study, statement of the problem, general objective, specific objectives, research questions, significance of the study, justification of the study and scope of the study. Thereafter, limitations of the study and the literature review in order of the stated objectives followed. Summary of the research gaps, theoretical and conceptual frameworks are also provided. The research methodology was divided into research approaches, research design, study area, target population of the study, sampling techniques, data collection procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations. Chapterization of the thesis and the chapter summary come at the very tail end of the chapter.

1.2 Background to the Study

Food production mechanisms and gender relations is as old as humanity.[1] This is because, there is no one known human society whose success and prominence were realized without the roles of the male and female gender. This was regardless of how skewed the involvement of gender may seem to have been. These successes notwithstanding, various factors ranging from climatic to technological changes have all along affected food production mechanisms in human history.

[1] K.L. Muchanga, "Impact of economic activities on the ecology of Isukha and Idakho areas of Western Kenya c. 1850-1945." MA thesis, Kenyatta University. Nairobi, 1998., p.1.

Existing scholarlarly evidence reveals that from reindeer herding to gathering wild plants and berries, men and women in different human societies have generated and collected food in complex, holistic and resilient ways.[2]

Globally, food and women have been assumed to be synonymous.[3] While women account for more than 50% of food production worldwide,[4] their contribution to farming, forestry and fishing may be underestimated because many surveys and censuses only focus on paid labour[5]. However, women are active in both cash and subsistence agricultural sectors and much of their work in producing food for the household and community consumptions is as important as it is for food security. Yet, this is not accounted for in statistics. The roles that women play in agriculture vary from region to region and country to country. Despite this, men and women often have complementary roles, sharing or dividing tasks in crop production, livestock raising, fishing, and use of the forests.[6] For instance, where largescale cash cropping has been introduced, men tend to be involved more where it is highly mechanized with women becoming increasingly responsible for household food production and small-scale cash cropping that require low levels of technology. Women also supply a significant proportion of the agricultural labour on plantations.[7]

[2]FAO and Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. Indigenous Peoples' food systems: Insights on sustainability and resilience in the front line of climate change. Rome ,2021, p.9. https://doi.org/10.4060/cb5131en Accessed on 20th/12/2023.
[3] Clinton L Beckford., and Kevon Rhiney. *Globalization, Agriculture and Food in the Caribbean*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p.8.
[4] FAO and Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT. ,2021, p.6.
[5] World Bank report, 2012.
[6] FAO., (1995), *Op*., *Cit*., p.12.
[7] FAO., Growing Food for Nine Billion. FAO at Work 2009-2010. Rome, FAO,2009, p.12.

A global literature survey of food production and gender relations highlights a number of significant issues. Beginning from Asia, women account for approximately 50 percent of food production overall in the region, with considerable variation from country to country.[8] For instance, women compose 47 percent of the agricultural labour-force in the Philippines, 35 percent in Malaysia, 54 percent in Indonesia and over 60 percent in Thailand.[9] In South East Asia, women play a major role in rice production, particularly in sowing, transplanting, harvesting and processing.[10] Men and women in Asia often play complimentary roles with a division of labour similar to those found in Africa. In Nepal, fodder collection for buffalos is exclusively a women's job. Women also prepared the animals for ploughing, tend cattle and other livestock, transplant seedlings, participate in harvesting and threshing and play a major role in horticulture.[11] In Pakistan, women carryout 60 to 80 percent of the cleaning, feeding and milking of cattle. In both South and South East Asia, women supply significant amount of the labour on plantations producing tea, rubber and fruit. [12]

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Nepal occupy four of the top five positions in the global ranking of underweight children. Notably, Bangladesh and India rank among the highest incidences of low-birth-weight babies, an indicator of maternal malnutrition.[13] For this reason, it would be argued that the inferior status of women in South Asia is a key

[8] Ibid p.13.
[9] World Bank., *Gender in Agriculture Source Book,* Washington, DC, World Bank, 2009, p.14.
[10] Ibid. p.15.
[11] FAO., *Women, agriculture and rural development: a synthesis report of the Africa Region.* Rome: FAO,1994, p.2.
[12]Ibid. p.3.
[13] World Bank.,2012, *Op*, *Cit*, p.18.

factor in the failure to translate agriculture-led poverty reduction into nutritional improvements.[14]

Welfare improvements at the household level are not just a function of increasing incomes for households; they are related to who accrues the income within the household. Asia as a continent has also registered some indicators of agricultural success. For instance, India has been remarkably successful in using agricultural development to foster economic growth and poverty reduction.[15] It has moved from food deficits to food surpluses on the national level. Moreover, India has a higher gross national income (GNI) per capita at $730 than most of subSaharan Africa.[16] However, its child stunting rates are high at 46 percent indicating the women strained efforts on child care probably due to the increased agricultural demands and agricultural commercialization at the expense of food crop production.

Women in the Pacific participate in food production mechanisms in a variety of ways. In Papua New Guinea where the population is overwhelmingly rural (87percent), women comprise 71 percent of the agricultural labour force, but studies show that data gathering methods have not captured women's labour in household food production, unpaid labour on family farms and petty trading activities. Throughout the Pacific, women play prominent roles in food marketing and in fisheries.[17]

Agriculture as a key food production mechanism in Europe, account for a relatively small percentage of employment for both men and women. In the European Union, the

[14] Ibid.
[15] World Bank., (2012). *Op. Cit,* p.17.
[16] Ibid, p.19.
[17] Ibid, p.19.

percentage of the economically active population (EAP) in agriculture ranged from 2.3 percent in the United Kingdom to 21.9 percent in Greece in 1992. Of these percentages, women accounted for a low of 10.4 percent in Ireland and a high of 44.5 percent in Greece in 1990.

The percentage of women in the agricultural labour force ranged from 4 percent in Slovenia to 57 percent in Albania. In line with general trends in agriculture in both Western Europe and the Central European Economic Community (CEEC), a growing number of women are leaving farming and those who are staying are tending to become more professional.

The rural population in Latin America and the Caribbean has been decreasing over the past few decades as well as the proportion of workers employed in agriculture. This is because historically, these regions were always dependent on imported food, and food imports are necessary and critical to nutritional and food supply stability.[18] But trade liberalization ushered in a regime of imports that included fresh produce from North America such as potatoes, carrots, red peas, and onions which hitherto were produced in the islands by small-scale producers.[19] These imports were often cheaper than local produce and not surprisingly had disastrous consequences for local farmers and their families with limited income-earning opportunities outside their rural communities. Whereas 55 percent of the population was engaged in agriculture in 1950, only 25 percent worked in agriculture in 1990. Women's contribution to agricultural production in the region are underestimated in official data collection and censuses in the region, as women are mainly engaged in

[18] Clinton L. Beckford, and Rhiney Kevon, *Globalization, Agriculture and Food in the Caribbean*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016., p.8.
[19] Ibid.

subsistence farming, particularly horticulture, poultry and raising small livestock for domestic consumption.[20]

Women's contributions to food production in the Near East, as in other regions, are mainly through agricultural production. This though has been underestimated due to the fact that their labour is mainly unpaid work in subsistence food production. Recent studies have shown that women's contributions are significant when unpaid and seasonal labour is taken into account.[21] In Turkey, women account for 55.3 percent of unpaid agricultural labour. As such, women are responsible for the more time consuming and labour-intensive tasks of crop and livestock production, sowing, application of fertilizers, weeding, harvesting, transporting, threshing, winnowing, cleaning, sorting, grading and bagging.[22] These tasks are carried out manually or with simple tools.

Access to food was declared a human right in 1948 upon the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.[23] The right to food is a right to feed oneself in dignity and individuals are expected to meet their own needs through their own efforts using their own resources.[24] The right to food is also echoed by the Constitution of Kenya 2010 under the Bill of Rights which states that every person has the right to be free from hunger and to have adequate food of acceptable quality.[25] According to FAO, the right to food as a human right gives

[20]Charmaine Gomes, "The case of small island developing states of the Caribbean: The challenge of building resilience",2014, p.12.
[21]World Bank., *Engendering Development—Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2001, p.7.
[22] World Bank, 2012, *Op*, *Cit*, p.1.
[23] UN, United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948. United Nations, 1949, p.1-2.
[24] UN, The Right to Adequate Food. Geneva: United Nations, 2010, p.7.
[25] RoK, The Constitution of Kenya, 2010. Kenya Law Reports, Republic of Kenya,2010. p.23.

food security the 'human face' by placing individuals, both male and female at the centre of approaches to food security.[26]

Various studies have illustrated gender issues in Africa with a greater emphasis on the role of women in the social political and economic spheres.[27] Through these studies, a demonstration of the unique role that the pre-colonial African women played has been concretized.[28] Buserup for instance has illustrated that African women played a pivotal role in the food production mechanisms.[29] This was through the established spheres which made them economically productive and autonomous. The Egyptian, Ghanaian and Nigerian case studies on pre-colonial African women demonstrate that African women were forces to recon in trade related endeavors.

In regard to socio-political dominance and influence, evidence of successful African women councilors and spiritual gurus is insurmountable. The Delta Igbo of Nigeria had for instance *Omu* who commanded great influence within her jurisdiction.[30] In the Kenyan context, the Kikuyu and Meru elderly women had their women councils with powers to ensure discipline of their members and even punish the errant ones. This points to the evidence that in pre-colonial Kenya, socio-political and economic assignments were shared equitably if not equally among both males and females on the gerontocratic basis. From the foregoing discussion, it can be concluded that the gender inequality that persists today

[26]U N., The Right to Adequate Food. Geneva: United Nations,2010, p.16.
[27] G. Cattell Maria, "Holding up the sky: gender, age and work among the Abaluyia of Kenya." In *Ageing in Africa*, Routledge, 2017, p.21.
[28] S. J. Neethling, "Xhosa folktales as a vehicle for protest." *Southern African journal for folklore studies* 7, no. 1 ,1996, p.55.
[29]E Boserup, E. *Women's Role in Economic Development*. New York: Allan and Urwin, 1970, p.10.
[30] Dorothy A. Nyakwaka, "Gender and political transformation in Kenya: a case study of women in Luoland, 1895-2002." PhD diss., Egerton University, 2013, p.2

is not a creation of the pre-colonial era. Moreover, the male gender contribution to food production is assumed to be dominant yet not documented.

The segmented approach on pre-colonial African food production in regard to gender relations calls for a critical schorlarly re-evaluation. While commenting on women and colonialism, Hay posits that colonial conquest in Africa greatly impacted on the place of African women.[31] This was through the western ideas of state and society, and the separation between private and public domains of life. The penetration of colonialism disarticulated the African women traditional authority and influence. The male dominated colonial political structures made a determination to bring down the influential pre-colonial African women to the status of their European counterparts.

Throughout colonial Africa, various European powers took a deliberate move to administer their colonies through the traditional male rulers.[32] The new state of affairs uplifted the status of the African men. Consequently, the place of women was further pushed to the administrative periphery, all this being accelerated through the colonial state engineered policies through education, migrant male labour, taxation and individual land ownership.[33] The onset of private individualized land ownership witnessed more men being at the forefront due to the European western notion of male chauvinism especially in land rights.

[31]S. J. Neethling, "Xhosa folktales as a vehicle for protest." *Southern African journal for folklore studies* 7, no. 1, 1996, p. 52.
[32]M.A Muleka., 'Historical Context of Daniel Toroitich Arap Moi's reign in Relation to its Socio-Econo-Political Empowerment of Abaluhya Women of Busia District, Kenya,1978-2002' Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology, 2022, p. 118.
[33] Ibid p.119.

Danson P.L. Esese while writing on agriculture and socio-economic changes among the Wanga of Mumias Division outlines that the pre-colonial Wanga had an elaborate land tenure system which ensured sufficient food production.[34]

This demonstrates that the Wanga had a very effective land law, inheritance procedure, land rights and administration system. Through this, Esese contends that the Wanga, as many other pre-colonial African societies were self-sufficient and that shortages were caused mainly by ecological rather than human factors. According to Esese, this elaborate food production system was disrupted on the onset of colonialism due to the various state choreographed policies making wangaland be prone to farmine and food shortage.

Paul Tyambe Zeleza posits that African land practices reflected the ability of African farmers to manipulate the environments' capacity for regeneration. He goes on to say that African farmers adapted to the climatic variations and the conditions of their soils[35]. He asserts that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, farmers in various parts of Africa had long learned how to manipulate and exploit their respective ecosystems, each of which demanded different forms of land management.

Turning to Maragoli, there exists a number of studies on women during the colonial era.[36] These studies emphasized on colonial impact on Maragoli social economic pre-colonial establishments. Despite the existence of all these studies, none specifically focuses on

[34]D.P.L Esese, 'Agriculture and Social Economic Change among the Wanga of Mumias Division", 1860-1945' UnpublishedM.A Thesis Kenyatta University,1990, p.148.
[35] P. T. Zeleza, "The Current Agrarian Crisis: Its History and future" in the *Journal of Eastern Africa n Research and Development*.Vol.16,1986, p.151-181., p.162.
[36] For more readings on Maragoli women, See J. M Abwunza., "Logoli Women of Western Kenya Speak: Needs and Means" Ph.D. Thesis University of Toronto, 1991 Read Also V. Ritu., *Gender, Land and Livelihoods in East Africa Through Farmers Eyes*, International Development Research Centre Ottawa, 1997 See also K.Mutongi., *Worries of the Heart Widows*, *Family and the Community in Kenya*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, 2007.

dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli between 1895-1963. Maragoli is a unique area in that the region is densely populated and part of Kenya's 17% most potential agricultural land.[37]

This study therefore sought to fill the gap by undertaking a historical inquiry into the dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Since time immemorial, humans adopted various food production mechanisms among them crop cultivation, hunting, gathering, fishing, trade among others. This was intended to guarantee them constant food supply. Both males and females apportioned themselves specific roles in food production mechanisms depending on societal dictates. For instance, in pre-colonial Africa, men were tasked with scouting for productive virgin lands and reclaiming them for agricultural use as women came in during secondary ploughing, weeding and harvesting.

However, with penetration of colonialism, all pre-capitalist gendered roles were greatly changed resulting into feminization of food production sub-sector of agriculture. During the colonial era, men migrated to urban centres and to white farms in search for labour. The subsequent monetization of the economy, forced labour, payment of taxes, conscription in the British army and other colonial mechanisms removed men from their traditional responsibilities leaving women to take up.

[37]Patrick O., Alila, Kabiru Kinyanjui, and Nick Gatheru Wanjohi. *Dynamics, problems, and policies: rural landlessness in Kenya*. University of Nairobi, 1993., p.15.

Due to feminization, women have been seen to enable agriculture to expand in leaps and bounds. Even with this expansion notwithstanding, third world countries and Kenya in particular remains food insecure. A number of challenges continue hindering full expansion of agriculture and hence sufficient supply of food globally. Such include limited women access to land, poor access to credit by women and cultural barriers to full feminization of food production.

Nevertheless, it remains debatable whether to fully feminize agriculture or bring back the forgotten male gender to boost agriculture. Thus, there was need to interrogate why feminization is not adequately addressing the food crisis in Maragoli which is one of the most densely populated rural areas in Kenya.[38]

Although a number of studies on women and agriculture have been carried out, the studies have not given focus to the issue of feminization. Moreover, most of the studies have given emphasis on climatic and technological changes leaving gender issues unattended to. Only a few attempted to discuss gender have primarily focused on women as individuals hence leaving the men out. This has made the studies inadequate in unravelling the male female gender interplay in food production. The need to historicize the African gender food production mechanisms and Africanize them becomes necessary. Before going out for external solutions, African researchers must first examine the African stock of solutions. The established African pre-colonial solutions should be revisited and reinforced to build a better African gendered agrarian economy.

[38] Patrick. O. Alila, Kabiru Kinyanjui, and Nick Gatheru, *Op*, *Cit*, p.5.

1.4 Research Objectives

This section examined the general and specific objectives employed by the study as follows:

1.4.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study was to investigate the dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

1.4.2 Specific Research Objectives

The study sought to achieve the following specific objectives which were to:

i. Trace the pre-colonial history of Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender roles.
ii. Interrogate the patterns of change in food production in relation to gender during the initial colonial period, 1895-1920.
iii. Assess the dynamics in food production mechanisms and gender relations during the inter-war period, 1920-1945
iv. Evaluate the changes in food production mechanisms and gender relations in post-World War II, 1945-1963.

1.5 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

i. How were the pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms organized to ensure a balanced gender participation in food production?
ii. What were some of the key patterns of change in Maragoli food production mechanisms in relation to gender during the early colonial period?

iii. In what ways did the inter-war era global geo politics interfere with the established Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations?

iv. In what ways did the colonial policies in the post-World War II period impact on Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations, 1945-1963?

1.6 Significance of the Study

Factors affecting food production are not only natural and technology-oriented. Social relations along gender lines also contribute to food production dynamics. It is, therefore, important to explore changes in gender relations to help address food production-related issues. This study adopts a gendered approach to investigate the historical trends in Maragoli food production mechanisms from the pre-colonial to colonial era. It awakens people to understand the disjuncture between African traditional food production mechanisms and their continuing transition, which was encoded in the emergence of alternative food production systems. The study locates the structure of the pre-colonial Maragoli food production cycle in comparison to the new ones generated by the expansion of colonial capitalism.

The food production systems of the pre-colonial Maragoli were marginalized during the transition to colonial capitalism. The indigenous food production system in Africa has faced challenges. Addressing these concerns assists African societies in developing localized strategies to meet the numerous issues facing Africa, particularly in the food production sector. Such studies are essential as they enhance our comprehension of a community's traditional lifestyle. One may thereafter identify the many elements of a community's culture that have been assimilated from numerous other cultures. This study's

recommendations assist researchers in reaffirming the significance of gender in food production as fundamental to social and economic connections.

Considering the significant commonalities among African populations, the findings and suggested solutions aid in forecasting the future dynamics of Maragoli gender relations and food production. These could influence families, religious organizations, national and county governments to recognize the interconnection between gender and food production.

Hence, the foundation for the development of social structures that reflect attitudes and values conducive to a gender-sensitive society.

The existence of stable social structures would enhance the current food production system by integrating all individuals into the food production cycle. As a result, there would be the development of laws that promote equitable land ownership rights for both males and females. Empowerment of both male and female children in school, including a focus on fostering healthy marriages and families, is emphasized in the face of the varied and unprecedented difficulties confronting this essential institution. These initiatives enable society to collaboratively and mutually address the food scarcity crisis without attributing guilt to a certain gender or those presumed to be the only food producers. Ultimately, women cannot be equated with gender. No studies reviewed herein had focused on the interrelations of gender groupings in food production. This study, therefore, addresses the deficiency in the agricultural gender history of the Maragoli.

1.7 Justification of the Study

The justification of this study was divided into three sections: Academic, philosophical and policy justification.

1.7.1 Academic Justification

An examination of food production and gender relations is a key area of cncern in agricultural history. This is due to the limited academic attention to gender as an analytical tool in Maragoli historical studies.

Writing on African women, scholars such as Spender and Stamp used the feminist perspective, treating women and men as two different independent entities hence failing to explore the link that exists between the two groups.[39]

The current study has explored this through the gender analysis perspective. Even though this is a particularized study, its findings combined with other case studies which have documented women and agricultural issues in Kenyan societies especially the Agikuyu and the Luo will give Kenya a more elaborate gendered economic history.[40] This has left the history of Maragoli food production and gender relations untold hence the necessity for a study like the current one to fill the existing academic gap. Such particularized studies will greatly contribute to advancing Kenya's gendered agricultural history. The study is also important in the general gender studies bearing in mind that they are not well grounded in Kenya's academia. This is because though gender is as old as humanity, many gendered studies have treated women and men as ever at conflict.[41] This has made clarification of

[39]D. Spender, *Man Made language.* London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd, 1980, p.18; See Also P. Stamp, *Technology, Gender and Power in Africa*. Otatwa: IDRC, 1989, p.61.
[40]W. M. Musalia, *"*Gender Relations and Food Crop Production: A case of Kiambu District Kenya",1920-1985 Un Published Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2010, p.60; For the Agikuyu. See Also O. Ayot, 'The Position of Women in the Luo Societies Case study of the Jok' Onyango AD 1750-1920' Un Published Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990 for the Luo, p.77.
[41]Edward Namisiko Waswa Kisiang'ani, "Decolonising gender studies in Africa." *African gender scholarship: Concepts, methodologies and paradigms*, 2004, p.12.

the unique role that each group play for the well-being of the two gender groups necessary. This gap is addressed in the present research.

The study contributes to additional knowledge about the scanty and fragmented gender studies on Maragoli. This is because scholarly works on Maragoli only address general women's contribution to the Maragoli society without a gendered historized touch[42].

Amisi's work touches on gendered agricultural issues but as an afterthought.[43] Moreover, through this study, the present scholars will be able to accurately locate the colonial Maragoli food production dynamics and gender relations for the sake of comparative analysis and contextualization of other societies.

1.7.2 Philosophical Justification

This research adopted two philosophical justifications, namely, feminist epistemology and interpretivism research philosophy to analyze the study's research findings. It is from the research philosophy, that a road map of the beliefs and values that guide the research design, the collection and analysis of data in a research study is clearly demonstrated. These choices complement philosophical principles of research.[44] As a research philosophy, interpretivism emerged in the 18th Century with Giambattista Vico as its main proponent. In regard to its historical roots in academia, interpretivism is associated to anthropology. However, due to its contradictory stands against positivism, it is sometimes known as anti-positivism.[45] This research philosophy was a reaction to the views of

[42]Ibid., p.17.
[43]A. M Amisi "Patterns of Land Use Among the Maragoli of Sabatia Constituency; 1900-2010" Un Published M.A Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2021, p.82.
[44]G. Ryan, "Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory." *Nurse researcher* 25, no. 4 (2018): 41-49, p.44.
[45]Flick, Uwe. "An introduction to qualitative research." (2022): 1-100., p.9.

Descartes, arguing that there is a distinction between the natural and social world and more importantly, that social organisation and social experiences form our perceptions of reality and truth.[46]

According to this research philosophy, truth and knowledge are subjective, as well as culturally and historically situated, based on people's experiences and their understanding of them. Researchers can never be completely separate from their own values and beliefs, so these will inevitably inform the way in which they collect, interpret and analyse data.[47] Subjectivism, as an analytical instrument, considers the many and multifaceted viewpoints of the nature of reality. Is reality defined by human perception and sensation, or is it determined by measurable phenomena? Subjectivism posits that reality is constituted by our perceptions, experiences, and emotions.[48]

Interpretivism embraces a relativist perspective that interprets reality via intersubjectivity, emphasizing the significance of meaning in research and the comprehension of social and experiential dimensions. Reality can alone be elucidated within a socially created framework.[49] Saunders and others, in their discourse on the same topic, assert that due to the intricacies of persons and societal phenomena, several truths frequently coexist.[50]

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[46]G. Ryan., *Op*, *Cit*, p.6.
[47]Alan Bryman, *Social research methods*. Oxford university press, 2016., p.10.
[48]Kerry E Howell, "An introduction to the philosophy of methodology." *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Methodology* (2012): 1-248., p.15.
[49]Ma Junjie, and Ma Yingxin. "The Discussions of Positivism and Interpretivism." *Online Submission* 4, no. 1, 2022, p.11.
[50]Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis, and Adrian Thornhill, "Research methods forbusiness students." *Essex: Prentice Hall: Financial Times*, 2003, p.13.

Interpretivism, grounded on relativist ontology and subjective epistemology, posits that people are inextricably linked to knowledge. Moustakas asserts that interpretivist epistemology examines the relationship between the researcher and the subject, emphasizing the significance of meaning, voice, perspective, experience, ideas, and emotions articulated by the person.[51]

In light of the preceeding argument, the researcher ventured into the field to gather oral submissions from the Maragoli community concerning the diverse mechanisms of food production and gender relations. This inquiry aimed to capture their perspectives on the dynamics present during the study period and the subsequent effects on their lives. Tuli, in his submission concerning interpretivism, notes that knowledge serves as the bedrock of ontological presuppositions, thereby establishing a profound interconnection between the ontological and epistemological perspectives that underpin interpretivism.[52] The aim of interpretivist research is to study how particular social groups or individuals formulate different realities and give them meaning, as well as to demonstrate how these norms explain their behavior.

Interpretivism portrays individuals as distinct from natural occurrences, highlighting their ability to cultivate profound significance. Wellington and Szczerbinski astutely note that interpretivism posits that truth and knowledge are contingent upon individuals' interpretations of reality across diverse histories and cultures, employing narrative data for research, distinct from the methodologies utilized in the natural sciences.[53]Contextualizing

[51]Ibid. p.14.
[52]Fekede Tuli, "The basis of distinction between qualitative and quantitative research in social science: Reflection on ontological, epistemological and methodological perspectives." *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences* 6, no. 1 (2010) p.98.
[53]J. Wellington., & M. Szczerbinski., *Research methods for the social sciences*, London: Continuum.,2007, p.20.

the food production mechanisms and gender relations in Maragoli calls for a reconceptualization of the Maragoli food production issues as being driven by the Maragoli men and women as active participants. To achieve this, an interpretivism trajectory is necessary.

The Maragoli food production isssues should be examined within the prism of the locals as active, powerful, knowledgeable, gender sensitive actors who can institute change[54]. Put precisely, an appropriate cross-cultural methodology recognizing research as a dynamic and social encounter, complete with dilemas, subjective interpretations and multiple meanings and human agency. In the current investigation, these aims were realized through personal narratives and interview sessions, which offered a profound avenue for examining the intricacies of food production and gender relations, as well as delving into the complexities of the daily lives of local women and men.

A nuanced understanding of the attitudes, opinions, priorities, and knowledge of local actors, specifically the Maragoli men and women, is essential for comprehending the influence of wider political, economic, and historical processes on the lives of local individuals. The understanding of the actors' interpretations and strategies emerges through the intricate processes of negotiation and accommodation, coupled with a deliberate commitment to attentively engage with the participants and to genuinely consider their perspectives. [55] This endeavor aims to facilitate the realization of viewpoints that underscore the authentic experiences of individuals. This viewpoint acknowledges the

[54] Verma Ritu, *Gender, Land and Livelihood in East Africa. Ottawa*, Canada: International Development Research Centre. 2001.p.36.

[55] Long 1991, p.5, See Also Gupta and Ferguson 1992 p. 36

diverse realities and evolving identities of different participants, including the researcher themselves.[56].

Through the lens of interpretivism, the intricacies of individuals lived experiences are illuminated, highlighting the significance of their perceptions and personal narratives. This mitigates the likelihood of forming erroneous conclusions regarding existence. By embracing complexity and the specificity of context while recognizing the evolution of circumstances, interpretivism as a research philosophy facilitates a departure from the inclination to fabricate static facts. This research exemplifies how interpretivism as a philosophical approach facilitates a nuanced examination of gendered narratives within daily life, allowing for a thorough exploration of the diverse and concurrent challenges faced by local actors that influence food production cycles.

Personal narratives, especially, serve to challenge generalizations and disrupt the mechanism of othering[57] and raising questions about how people live and experience the dynamics in food production mechanisms a critical ingredient of human survival, when viewed from a gendered lens, and what meaning they give to those experiences. Personal narratives challenge essentializing views that are often detatched from the complex and multiple realities of the participants[58]. They give local men and women opportunities and

[56] Ritu Verma *Op. Cit*., p.36.

[57] Abu-Lughod, Lila. *Writing women's worlds: Bedouin stories*. University of California Press, 2008. p.13.

[58]Mies, Maria. "Globalization of the Economy and Women's Work in a Sustainable Society." *Gender, Technology and Development* 2, no. 1 1998, p.63 Mies, Maria. "Towards a methodology for feminist research." In *Theories of women's studies*, pp. 117-139. Routledge, 1983.See Also Kirkby and Mckenna 1989 p.164.

space to articulate their own knowledge, views and experiences. In the words of Abu-Lagnod,

> In telling their own stories, the women amd men reproduce their own images of themselves and their relations with others. This is a type of data often ignored by conventional histories as too individual, too specific and atypical.but it is this very specificity and concreteness which gives it strength as a challenge to longstanding generalizations and the possibility to examine interactions of class and gender in specific historical situations[59].

Therefore, the subjective narratives of both women and men possess a distinct integrity, as they are situated within their authentic and gendered experiences of life. They offer a chance to investigate realities that have historically been overlooked and contest the broad generalizations of realities presented in traditional methodologies, thus resisting narrative finality and the suppression of diverse perspectives.

Maragoli represents a distinct social group in Kenya, characterized by its own unique socio-economic and political frameworks that have persisted since the pre-colonial period. This study posits that these systems were distinctively characteristic of the Maragoli. In instances of acculturation arising from interactions with neighboring communities, the Maragoli initially assessed the significance of the introduced customs and practices before subsequently adapting them to align with their own requirements. Only the Maragoli possess the capacity to articulate their distinctive narrative through oral submissions, supported by existing archival and secondary sources.

[59] Ngaiza and Koda 1991, Cited in Mbilinyi 1992,p.66.

Feminist epistemology, as a framework for inquiry, articulates the ways in which gender shapes and should shape the comprehension and interpretation of knowledge.[60] Central to this interpretation is the role of those who hold knowledge, as well as the methodologies of inquiry and the processes of justification. It elucidates how prevailing notions and methodologies of knowledge attribution, acquisition, and justification marginalize women and other subordinated groups, and endeavors to reform these frameworks to better serve the interests of these communities.[61]

A multitude of feminist epistemologists and philosophers of science contend that prevailing knowledge practices impose disadvantages on women in numerous respects.[62] These include the exclusion of women from investigation and the development of social phenomenon theories that obscure gendered power dynamics, as well as the production of knowledge that is either inapplicable to those in lower roles or that promotes gender and other social inequalities. [63] The feminist epistemologists attribute the failures to erroneous notions of scientific technique, objectivity, knowers, and knowing. .[64] They provide a variety of perspectives on how to surmount these setbacks. They also intend to elucidate the reasons behind the emergence of new theories and discoveries as a result of the integration of feminist scholars and women into many academic fields. The purpose of this

[60] Code, Lorraine. 1991. *What Can She Know? Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press. p.8

[61] Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599. p.584.

[62] Anderson, Elizabeth. "Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science." (2000). p.23

[63] Harding, Sandra. *Whose science? Whose knowledge? Thinking from women's lives*. Cornell University Press, 1991.

[64] Anderson, Elizabeth. "Feminist epistemology and philosophy of science." (2000).p.8.

is to illustrate the causal influence that gender and feminist beliefs and viewpoints have played in these shifts.

Long argues that local realities and practices encapsulate ‘macro representations’and are only intelligible in situated contexts. They are grounded in the meanings accorded them through the ongoing life experiences and dilemmas of men and women[65]. Feminist epistemology enables research unravel the interconnectedness of micro and macro changes over time as they impacted over the various food production mechanisms. Such analyses are done within people’s complex livelihoods, and the way in which these changes are grounded in women’s and men’s every day experiences.

The approach addresses some of the problematic asumptions about food production and the farmer in particular as un differenciated and gender-neutral category and reconceptualizes food production as an endeavor in a way that places the complexity, diversity and gendered life worlds of farmers at the centre of analysis.

Feminism emphasizes gender and household relations as focal points through which relations of production are mediated within the context of natural resource management[66]. Through such an endeavor, the historical dynamics are contextualized within specific cultural contexts and the multiple regimes of property rights and land use practice. Through this epistemology, the inter related factors that shape human endeavours such as food production are better analysed. This position is eloquently summed up by Moore when he notes:

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[65]Long, Julia. *Anti-porn: The resurgence of anti-pornography feminism*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012.

[66] Carney, Judith. "Converthg the Wetiands, Engendering the Environment: The intersection of gender with agrarian change in Gambia In Libration Ecologies: Environment, Development. Social Movements. eds. Watts, M. and R Peet 165-187." 1996 p.165.

> By fusing together an understanding of the mutual constitution of micro-politics, symbolic practices and structural forces, it may be possible to unravel how competing claims to resources are articulated through cultural idioms in the charged context of local politics.[67]

The feminist perspective emphasizes that men and women have multiple positionalities which are a result of various intersecting systematic networks. These networks include; class, life cycle positioning, marital status and age, that position them and that are experienced differently in different cultural economic and political contexts.[68]

While men and women share important experiences with those of their own sex as a consequence of gender identity. This gender identity is not necessarily sufficient to override the social and political barrier of status, class, age and disability.[69]

Power relations vary by both nature and degree, and it is simplistic to assume that all men or all women necessarily identify with each other on that basis alone.[70] In the Maragoli case for example, colonialism presented a new era in the gender sphere. There was a section of men who became chiefs, teachers, doctors, World War soldiers as others joined the colonial wage labour force in towns. These categories were thus differently articulated and integrated into the capitalist economy depending on their proximity to the echelones of power.

Feminist epistemology gives a focus on gender as a powerful conceptual framework for understanding and analyzing local realities and environments. Gender becomes an invaluable entry point for gaining insights into the ways in which both social and political

[67] Moore, 1996, p. 125
[68] Mohanhy, 1991a, p.33.
[69] Verma Ritu 2001, p. 37.
[70] Cotterill 1992, p.595

environmental change is inextricably intertwined with women's and men's livelihood concerns, and the way in which food production mechanisms are adapted and reconfigured to cope with larger political, economic and social changes. [71] A focus on gender relations reveals how local resources are controlled, used and struggled over- both materially and symbolically. Thus, such a focus is important in analyzing women and men specific priorities and constraints.

In feminist philosophy, "gender" refers to systems of meanings, social identities, roles, norms, and associated behaviours, traits and virtues ascribed or prescribed to individuals on the basis of their real or imagined sexual characteristics.[72] It also encompasses the subjective identifications and orientations of individuals toward these meanings. Psychological qualities are classified as "masculine" and "feminine" if they induce their owners to adhere to the gender norms that are attributed to men and women, respectively. From a performative perspective, masculinity and femininity are not permanent qualities, but rather different patterns of behavior that can be shown by individuals of any ascribed or subjective gender identification in nearly any function. [73]

Ultimately, gender symbolism involves the metaphorical attribution of gendered concepts to both animals and inanimate objects. In Maragoli, for instance, rituals surrounding birth

[71] Leach 1991a: p.17

[72] Sally Haslanger, "Feminism in metaphysics: Negotiating the natural." *The Cambridge companion to feminism in philosophy* (2000): p.115

[73] Candace West, and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing gender." *Gender & society* 1, no. 2 (1987): 125-151.; See Also Jon Butler, *Awash in a sea of faith: Christianizing the American people*. Vol. 6. Harvard University Press, 1990.

and death were conducted in accordance with the gender of those involved. To commemorate a deceased male family member, a bull is slaughtered, rather than a heifer. The same principle was observed in the shaving rituals of a newborn; if the infant was male, a rooster or another male animal would be sacrificed. By integrating the concept of situated knowledge with the understanding of gender as a social construct, one can produce a comprehensive list of ways in which individuals' knowledge, or their perceptions of knowledge, may be shaped by their own gender (roles, norms, traits, performance, identities), the genders of others, or prevailing notions about gender (symbolism).[74]

A significant aspect of feminist research philosophy is the focus on the phenomenology of gendered bodies. The human body exhibits a diversity of sex characteristics and gender identities. Early childhood socialization conditions the physical behavior of boys and girls to adhere to distinct norms of bodily conduct. Once assimilated, these norms significantly influence the experience of embodiment. They elucidate the unique first-person experiences of individuals, highlighting the distinct ways in which one inhabits a body and expresses capabilities that are specific to each sex, such as the act of breastfeeding.

The experiences of gendered behaviors that both men and women can engage in are influenced by varying degrees of fluidity and self-awareness. Certain feminist epistemologists contend that prevailing models of the world, particularly regarding the relationship between minds and bodies, have appeared persuasive primarily to male philosophers due to their alignment with a masculine phenomenology.[75] From this

[74] Haraway, Donna. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14 (3): 575–599. p.584

[75] Susan Bordo, *The flight to objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and culture*. Suny Press, 1987 P.20; See Also Iris Marion Young, "Throwing like a girl and other essays in feminist philosophy and social theory." ,1990 p. 30.

comprehension, Maragoli women cultivated and nurtured feminist domains to protect their realms, notably in the areas of food production, childbearing, and domestic spaces.

In response to the necessity of protecting these regions, the Maragoli established a system of taboos designed to formalize and bolster these roles. In Pre-colonial Maragoli, for instance, the process of feminizing childbearing and upbringing was such that the seasoned Maragoli men, represented by the grandfather within a homestead, were prohibited from closely engaging with the newborns. *Kutura mmadiku ganga Natsengere, guga siyavugilwa kohenza ku mwisukuru weve nakiri indana. Kekorwa kuri yiki cha romba msakuru avakura vwangu*[76]. This was according to the oral submissions collected from Maragoli during the field work. This can be loosely translated into; Right from the ancient days, a grand father was never allowed to frequently interact with a newly born grand child. This was because, such an act would make the grand father prematurely loose his sight. In practice, such a tender age was prone to diseases and a lot of care. All these activities had been sanctified and restricted to the women folk.

The feminist philosophical perspective also underscores the importance of distinguishing between the current positionalities in relation to gender concerns. Knowing sexual harassment in third-person terms is one thing. It is another matter to acknowledge that "I have been sexually harassed." Many women are aware that women are generally disadvantaged and struggle to acknowledge that they are in the same situation as women. [77] The pre-colonial maragoli women utilized their proximity to the partriachal installations

[76] Violet Chavulimu, (56 years) Oral Interview at her home in Kisatiru village, Sabatia Sub County, held on 3rd August 2023.
[77] Susan D. Clayton, and J Crosby Faye. *Justice, gender, and affirmative action*. University of Michigan Press, 1992.

of power as wives of the council of elders to advocate for the interests of women in society, which is a direct result of this profound comprehension.

The issues of self-awareness are urgent for feminist philosophical basis, as it is dedicated to philosophizing in a manner that women can employ to enhance their lives. This implies that women must be able to identify with their lives in feminist narratives of women's struggles. It is from this perspective that Maragoli women utilized their back-door decisions and proxies to male monarchs to advocate for women's rights. Through this understanding, Maragoli women developed and sustained feminist spheres to safeguard their territories, particularly in the realms of food production, childbearing, and domestic environments.

In light of the imperative to safeguard these areas, the Maragoli instituted a framework of taboos aimed at formalizing and reinforcing these responsibilities. In pre-colonial Maragoli, the approach to childbearing and upbringing was characterized by a distinct feminization process, wherein the experienced Maragoli men, epitomized by the grandfather figure within a homestead, were restricted from closely interacting with the newborns.[78]

Moreover, feminist epistemology is also defined by gendered attitudes, interests, and values. A representation is considered androcentric when it illustrates the world through the lens of male or masculine interests, attitudes, or values. An interest attributed to a male individual is one that arises from the objectives assigned to him by societal roles deemed suitable for men, or from his personal identification with his gender. An interest

[78] Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a feminist theory of the state*. Harvard University Press, 1989.

characterized as “masculine” pertains to a man's engagement with virtues traditionally associated with male attitudes. The cognitive framework of individuals is shaped by their attitudes and interests. For example, they might affect the manner in which heterosexual men categorize women, determining their perceived eligibility for sexual engagement.

A representation is considered gynocentric when it illustrates the world through the lens of female or feminine interests, attitudes, or values. A particular interest, attitude, or value may also carry symbolic gender connotations. The ethics of care articulates moral dilemmas through the lens of values traditionally linked to femininity, reflecting cultural associations with women's roles in society.[79] It is a symbolically gynocentric perspective, even if men also adopt it. Feminist epistemology raises numerous questions about these phenomena.

Can situated emotional responses to things be a valid source of knowledge about them?[80] Do the prevalent practices and concepts of science correspond to an androcentric perspective, or do they represent other dominating positions, such as colonial control and race? [81] Do the common practices and notions of science align with an androcentric perspective, or do they represent other dominant positions, such as colonial control and race? [82] Are the prevalent scientific methods and concepts consistent with an androcentric

[79] Carol Gilligan, "New maps of development: new visions of maturity." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 52, no. 2 (1982): p.199.

[80] M.Jaggar Alison, and Susan Bordo, eds. *Gender/body/knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*. Rutgers University Press, 1989., John M. Keller,"Motivational design of instruction." *Instructional design theories and models: An overview of their current status* 1, no. ,1983, p.400, Victoria Pitts-Taylor, "I feel your pain: Embodied knowledges and situated neurons." *Hypatia* 28, no. 4 (2013): p.860.

[81]Carolyn Merchant, "The death of nature: Women, ecology, and the scientific revolution." (1980).; Harding, Sandra G. *The science question in feminism*. Cornell University Press, 1986. Schiebinger, Londa. "Getting more women into science: knowledge issues." *Harv. JL & Gender* 30 (2007): p.365.

[82] Bordo 1987, *Op*, *Cit*, p.23; Code, Lorraine. *What can she know? Feminist theory and the construction of knowledge*. Cornell University Press, 1991, p.35; Rooney, William D., and Charles S. Springer Jr. "A comprehensive approach to the analysis and interpretation of the resonances of spins 3/2 from living systems." *NMR in Biomedicine* 4, no. 5 (1991): p.215.

perspective, or do they reflect other dominating perspectives, like colonial rule and race? [83]

Gender norms delineate the social realms accessible to individuals with varying gender identities, in addition to shaping how one presents themselves to others. Individuals of varying gender identities consequently possess distinct insights regarding others. Male and female ethnographers might gain access to distinct social environments and exert varying influences on their informants. The inquiry into the acquisition of information about individuals via personal interaction prompts an examination of how the outcomes may be shaped by the gender dynamics between researchers and participants, as well as the potential advantages of gender-diverse research teams in recognizing these influences.[84]

Certain skills are categorized as either masculine or feminine. This is due to the necessity for individuals to fulfill their designated societal roles based on gender. The extent to which a skill is viewed by the agent or others as appropriate for an individual of a different gender may hinder its execution or the social acknowledgment of success in its execution. These phenomena provoke a range of inquiries pertaining to knowledge and understanding. Does the symbolism associated with certain scientific skills, particularly the adoption of a "objective" perspective towards nature, hinder the inclusion of women in the field of science?

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[83] Anderson, Elizabeth. *Value in ethics and economics*. Harvard University Press, 1995b p.56, Rolin, Kristina. "Standpoint theory as a methodology for the study of power relations." *Hypatia* 24, no. 4 (2009): p.220.

[84] Diane Pat Caplan Bell, and Wazir Jahan Karim. "Gendered fields." *Women, Men & Ethnography, London* (1993).; Leacock, Eleanor. "History, development, and the division of labor by sex: Implications for organization." *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 7, no. 2 (1981): p.490

There are gender theorists who propose distinct cognitive styles between men and women. The veracity of this assertion aside, cognitive styles are often represented through gender symbolism.[85] Cognitive styles characterized as deductive, analytic, atomistic, acontextual, and quantitative are often associated with masculinity, whereas those described as intuitive, synthetic, holistic, contextual, and qualitative are frequently linked to femininity. Articulating a viewpoint through argumentation is associated with masculinity while conveying a perspective through narrative is linked to femininity. Argument is often framed as a confrontational form of communication, akin to warfare, whereas narrative is perceived as an alluring mode of expression, reminiscent of romance. These phenomena raise epistemic questions: does the quest for masculine prestige by using masculine methods distort practices of knowledge acquisition?[86] Are some kinds of research unfairly ignored because of their association with "feminine" cognitive styles?[87]

Critics of feminist epistemology assert that feminist critiques of rationality equate to an endorsement of irrationality, a claim that fundamentally misunderstands the essence of these critiques. Should the principles of rationality be examined and redefined, it follows that the principles of irrationality may also undergo a similar reconstruction. This is predicated on the foundational argument presented by Bordo, Lloyd, and Hekman, which posits that the binary opposition of rationality and irrationality plays a crucial role in shaping the dualism of masculine and feminine, and conversely. Consequently, what critics perceive as an elevation of irrationality can only seem that way if those dichotomies persist.

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[85] Phyllis Rooney, "Gendered reason: Sex metaphor and conceptions of reason." *Hypatia* 6, no. 2 (1991): p.90.

[86]Kathryn Pyne Addelson, "The man of professional wisdom." *Discovering reality: Feminist perspectives on epistemology, metaphysics, methodology, and philosophy of science* (1983):p.270; Brent R Moulton, "Human Capital Accumulation and Trends in the Male-Female Wage Gap in the United States, 1956-1983." *Eastern Economic Journal* 12, no. 3 (1986): p.268.

[87] Keller 1983, *Op*, *Cit*, p.420.

1.7.3 Policy Justification

This study aims to elucidate the ways in which gender relations have influenced the diverse mechanisms of food production, thereby providing valuable insights for policy formulators. Such endeavors will significantly contribute to mitigating the escalating issue of food scarcity. Agriculture remains the cornerstone of Kenya's economic framework. Consequently, it is imperative to guarantee the generation of sufficient and superior food, given that the nation continues to depend on its agricultural sector to support its growing populace. Moreover, attaining food security represents a crucial advancement in the endeavor to eradicate poverty within both rural and urban populations, in harmony with the objectives outlined in Kenya's Vision 2030.

Additionally, the elimination of poverty and hunger stands as a primary aim of the Millennium Development Goals. This can only be achieved by identifying the origins of the dynamics within food production systems as they pertain to gender roles, thereby necessitating a thorough examination of colonial transformations, which constitutes the essence of the current study.

This study aimed to meticulously reconstruct and document the food production mechanisms and gender relations of the colonial Maragoli for future reference. Cosmas Butunyi posits that history loses its value if not properly documented, as this omission allows the past of a community to be susceptible to manipulation by revisionists seeking to serve their own interests.[88] Butunyi further notes that people take advantage of the fact that there is no authority against which claims are held up to the light.[89] He writes:

[88] Butunyi, C. *Colonial capitalism and wage labour in Kimilili, Western Kenya*. International Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 2(23), (2012), pp.256–263.
[89] Ibid.

"Documenting history helps it remain unadulterated by whatever interests and whims that may score political points or whip up passions, even if it means bending facts and making wild claims."[90]

On the other hand, the old men and women who are the custodians of the pre-colonial and colonial Maragoli gendered food production mechanisms are dying fast. Therefore, there is need to recover and capture this wealth of information. Through this study, the County government of Vihiga will develop and formulate policies that will improve their gender approaches to the various food production mechanisms since agriculture is a devolved function as per the 2010 Constitution. This study strengthened the need for the County to re-evaluate how she has engaged her food production mechanisms efforts within the gender spectrum cognizant of the emerging global trends and learning from how the pre-colonial Maragoli adjusted to colonial conquest. This is because every human effort must be geared towards benefitting the locals to compete favourably with the emerging life challenges food insecurity included.

Moreover, the study further aimed at providing data that would aid in the development of fresh ideas to increase food production and balance gender participation particularly in Maragoli; one of the emerging rural urbanized settlements in Kenya with very high food production potentials. Last but not least, this study can help policy makers to fix the gender dysfunctions in the agricultural field in order to create a level ground for both males and females to maximize food production since gender debates are taking a central stage globally and specifically in Kenya's social political and economic endeavours.

[90] Ibid.

1.8 Scope of the Study

The focus on dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli highlighted the Maragoli pre-colonial food production mechanisms and gender roles, food production and gender roles in the initial colonial era, 1895-1920 as well as the food production and gender relations in the inter-war period,1920-1945. Finally, the study discussed the changes in food production and gender relations during the post-World War II era, 1945-1963.

The Maragoli inhabit Vihiga and Sabatia Sub-Counties, therefore, the two sub-counties were included in the geographical scope.[91] The choice of Vihiga County was because it is part of the 17% most fertile parts of Kenya with the highest agricultural potential.[92] Further, Maragoli is the most populous out of the three sub groups (Tiriki, Banyore and Maragoli) in Vihiga County, with the highest population growth projection. Maragoli land also happens to be among the most fertile land and hence with the highest agricultural potential.[93]

The study covered the period between 1895 and 1963. The year 1895 is significant in Kenyan history since it is the year in which Kenya became a British protectorate.[94] Since this study covered Maragoli land under colonial rule, 1895 was picked as the most convenient year to begin the research. Colonial era was considered as a suitable period for examining dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in Maragoli because colonialism remains the biggest foreign agent that has brought the most

[91]RoK. 2010 Costitution of Kenya,2010. Kenya law Reports, Republic of Kenya, 2010.
[92]Patrick O Alila, Kabiru Kinyanjui, and Nick Gatheru Wanjohi. *Dynamics, problems, and policies: rural landlessness in Kenya*. University of Nairobi, 1993., p.5
[93]Vihiga County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022, Government printers ,2017, p.12.
[94]Lonsdale, John M. "The Politics of Conquest: the British in Western Kenya, 1894–19081." *The Historical Journal* 20, no. 4 (1977), p.858.

fundamental impact on Maragoli pre-colonial establishments. A deeper analysis of this period was found insightful in situating the food production mechanisms and gender relations for the necessary intervention measures to be undertaken. The year 1963 is crucial since it was in this year that Kenya attained her independence from the British colonial masters; an official end of colonial epoch in Kenya. The collection of data lasted for six months stretching from May 2023 to November 2023.

1.9 Limitations of the Study

Data collection was challenged by a number of factors including fading memories of informants and inadequate record keeping. Through cross examination and tying in relevant material, the researcher helped the informants remember the strategies and techniques employed by the Maragoli men and women to acquire food. The researcher also made use of snowballing technique to reach out to additional respondents who remembered and provided more details. In regard to poor documentation, the researcher and research assistants collected and pieced together pieces of information that helped reconstruct the colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations.

In addition, there was a challenge due to the scattered respondents as a result of migration especially to Bungoma and Trans Nzoia counties. This challenge was solved through snowballing technique. Finally, some respondents were uncooperative and were unwilling to freely respond to the issues under inquiry due to suspicion on the motive of the research. On this, the researcher gave clear explanation of the purpose of the study which helped to address the fear. This made the respondents to freely respond to research questions. This was further strengthened by seeking the services of local research assistants. Through purposive sampling and snowballing, respondents were earmarked.

1.10 Literature Review

This section examined the relevant literature and related research on the study. To bring out the various gaps, the literature review was based on the specific objectives. This resulted in the section being further subdivided into four sub-sections namely; Studies on pre-colonial food production and gender roles, Food production and gender roles during the initial colonial era, 1895-1920, Food production and gender relations in the inter-war period, 1920-1945 and Changes in food production and gender relations in the post-World War II era, 1945-1963. A summary of major gaps is provided to wrap up the section.

1.10.1 Pre-Colonial Food Production Mechanisms and Gender Roles

Right from the pre-colonial era, most scholars concur on the idea that African women were part and parcel of the domestic and public domains of their respective societies. O' Barr while writing on African women in politics, posits that there was no clear demarcation between economics, religious power and political power in the pre-colonial Africa. It is, further, demonstrated that in most political undertakings, women were assumed and male dominance prevailed.

The pre-colonial political power according to the author was divided into direct and indirect aspects. Women used their direct political power both individually and collectively.[95] This work though general since it covers the whole continent, provided a basis for analyzing the Maragoli food production mechanisms and Gender relations.

This is especially by bringing out the complexities and realities in the pre- colonial African power structure which greatly determined the gender roles not only in the political spheres

[95] Jean O'Barr, "African women in politics." *African women south of the Sahara. Essex, Massachusetts: Longman* (1984): 140-155., p.146.

but also in resource allocation and general economic set up which food production is a sub-set. Apart from examining the distinct gender roles in the pre-colonial African set up, the study also outlines the fusion between all these roles. The present study on food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli as a micro study on African gender relations, it builds on the foundation of O' Bar's work.

Meillassoux, in his analysis of the social organization of peasantry, argued that African lineage communities were structured around lineages. Within this framework, production relations were understood as personal dependencies between elders and juniors.[96] The economy functioned as a self-sustaining system, relying on the direct exploitation of the environment. Additionally, goods were distributed through networks of kinship, affinity, and clientage, as well as through presentation, gift redistribution, and exchange.Regarding its relevance, this work greatly benefited from discussions on kinship and lineage relations, as these aspects played a crucial role in determining access to and use rights of land.

Among the various benefits, food production mechanisms emerged as the most significant. However, unlike the present study which looks at not only social factors determining the pre-colonial African relations but also interrogated the economic aspects. Moreover, Meillassoux's study was a general study on peasantry, but the current one narrows down to food production and gender relations.

Wickins, in his discussion on pre-colonial African economic systems, highlights that the fundamental economic unit was typically the family or homestead. Within this structure,

[96] Meillassoux, Claude. "The social organisation of the peasantry: the economic basis of kinship." The Journal of Peasant Studies 1, no. 1 (1973): 81-90.

an individual's rightful position within a group—be it a clan, lineage, or village—was firmly established.[97] Through this group collectivity, an individual's right to participate and access resources such as land without permanent claim to a specific area was guaranteed. Access to community resources was carefully regulated to prioritize those with urgent and immediate needs. This preferential treatment was extended to certain members, particularly men with families to support or those who had recently married. These individuals were granted additional land, which they cultivated on an allotment basis

As the custodians of the socio-economic order, the elders were responsible for selecting new land each year. They subdivided the land into contiguous strips and allocated it to householders, ensuring a structured and organized distribution. Through this work, a clear picture on land systems and land use in Africa as a whole is brought to a better understanding. This work was,however, too general unlike the present study which is particular to Maragoli.

Thematically, the current study is more specific on food production mechanisms unlike Wickin's study which was general on economic systems and also failed to capture the gender relations aspect which the current study captures. The study aimed to address the gap in understanding the land system in Maragoli and examine how changes in land ownership, introduced through colonial land policies, impacted the community's food production mechanisms.

[97] Peter L. Wickins, "An economic history of Africa from the earliest times to partition." (1981)., p.60.

Godolier, in his analysis of modes of production, kinship, and demographic structures, highlighted the significance of kinship relations in pre-capitalist social formations. He argued that kinship relations operated both as infrastructure and superstructure, influencing various aspects of society. Specifically, they governed access to production conditions and resources, regulated marriage arrangements, shaped the social framework for politico-ritual activities, and functioned as a form of ideology. This research greatly benefited the current study by enabling it to unravel the social relations which defined even the economic set up which food production mechanisms are part of. However, unlike the present study, Godolier's work failed to capture the gender interplay which the present study captures.

Walter Rodney, in Chapter Two of *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, observes that land labour in pre-colonial Africa was primarily organized on a family basis. Individual families or households cultivated their own plots while also participating in joint farming activities alongside extended family or clan members. Additionally, large-scale annual hunting and river fishing activities were coordinated by entire extended families or village communities, creating a shared labour pool that enhanced efficiency and boosted economic output.

This work was utilized in the present study as a collaborative reference to provide insights into pre-existing labour systems in Africa before the introduction of Western capitalism through colonialism. It also examines how the transition to a capitalist labour system impacted agricultural production across the continent. However, though insightful, Rodney's work was on general Africa which is too amorphous with regional points of departure. Additionally, Rodney did not zero in on the gender relations in food production as the present study does.

Coward, in his analysis of *Patriarchal Precedents and Social Relations*, presents overwhelming evidence of gender disparity in Africa's division of labour.[98] He highlights that women make up the majority of both the agricultural and informal labour force while holding the lowest positions in the formal sector, primarily as semi-skilled or unskilled workers. Additionally, within households, women are responsible for most domestic duties, often categorized as reproductive tasks. These tasks encompassed childbearing and rearing, food processing, caring for the sick and spouses, as well as other essential functions necessary for the reproduction of human labour.

However, while Coward touches on these aspects, he does not delve into the origins of this subordination. This work was valuable to the present study as it offered important insights into the theme of women's subordination, particularly as a significant gender group in Kenya and specifically in Maragoli. Nevertheless, Coward's analysis does not sufficiently address gender relations between men and women in colonial Kenya, a gap that the current study seeks to fill.

Another key difference between Coward's work and the present study is the scope—while Coward examined the entirety of Africa, leading to inevitable generalizations in such a macro-level study, the current research focuses specifically on the Maragoli area.

Paul Tyambe Zeleza, in his analysis of pre-colonial African agriculture, highlights how African farmers skillfully adapted to their environments to ensure continuous agricultural production. He explores the various strategies used to navigate climatic variations and soil conditions, demonstrating their resilience and ingenuity. To support his argument, Zeleza

[98] Rosalind Coward, *Patriarchal precedents: Sexuality and Social Relations.* Routledge, 2022, p.63.

situates African land use practices within the early nineteenth century, offering a historical perspective on how different communities manipulated and utilized their ecosystems. Each approach required distinct land management strategies, reflecting the diversity of agricultural techniques across the continent. Although his work takes a broad view of Africa, it provided valuable insights for the present study, helping to appreciate how African communities historically employed risk aversion mechanisms to maintain food security, particularly during times of crisis

The present study sought to explore the risk aversion mechanisms that were employed during agricultural disasters in pre-colonial Maragoli. Such disruptions included droughts, epidemics, and other environmental challenges that threatened food security. Understanding these traditional strategies can provide valuable insights into how the Maragoli community adapted to crises, ensuring resilience and continuity in food production. However, unlike Zeleza whose work only focused on agriculture as a food production mechanism, this present study investigated other food production mechanisms such as hunting gathering and even animal keeping.

Moreover, Zeleza decided not to give any special regard to gender relations in the pre-colonial African agriculture. This present study analyses gendered nature of the Maragoli food production mechanisms.

Kamene Okonjo while discussing the dual- sex operation among the Igbo of Nigeria ventilates on a number of gendered issues on pre-colonial African women.[99] In her

[99] Kamene Okonjo, "The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women and Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria. Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic Change, eds. N. J. Hafkin and EG Bay." (1976): p. 54.

submissions, Okonjo discusses the operation as a dual-sex operation in which politics was institutionalized along gender lines. The male and female gender groups each governed their own affairs based on distinct parameters such as kinship and age-grade. Within this system, the roles assigned to women were recognized as explicitly political. In this context, women held authority over markets, where the Igbo women monarch, the Omu, gained prominence.

As a leader, the Omu was regarded as the mother of all her citizens, with responsibilities that complemented those of the Obi, the male monarch. She had her own cabinet, operating parallel to that of the Obi, and her jurisdiction primarily encompassed market affairs and women's interests.This notwithstanding, her powers also extended to men in market matters or when men brought cases involving their wives or other women, that had not received a fair hearing at the grassroot level.[100] This work's geographical setting though based in West Africa, the present study greatly benefited from it both conceptually and theoretically. The study used the Igbo case to find out the role Maragoli men and women played in trade as a key food production mechanism.

While writing on the Interlacustrine Kingdoms of East Africa, Berger observed that, at a general societal level, women were often perceived as uninvolved in political affairs. However, there were distinct pathways through which women could rise to high-ranking positions, surpassing conventional subordinate roles. One such avenue was participation in spirit mediumship cults, which provided women with influence and authority beyond traditional expectations.

[100]Ibid p. 55.

These mediumship roles even though confined to the religious realms; religious, economic and political confines and boundaries were not cast on stones. Interactions between these spheres were always accommodated. In certain instances, women who became spirit mediums assumed quasi-political roles, gaining authority typically reserved for men. A female spirit medium could sit in judicial tribunals, deliver judgments, and even receive greetings as a chief. Some mediums rose to such prominence that they presided alongside the king in ceremonies aimed at the spiritual renewal of the entire kingdom, reinforcing their influence beyond traditional societal expectations.

There were occasions, for example, according to Berger's submissions that the women took on the attributes of kings, gathering large entourages, collecting tribute, being carried on litters and consolidating their positions in the manner of male monarchs.[101] The present study finds the analysis of women mediums particularly valuable, as it offers a crucial framework for examining the intersections between politics, religion, food production systems, and gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

Their roles in spiritual leadership and political influence provide a deeper understanding of how these elements shaped societal structures and interactions during that period. Berger's work also helped the present study to show the complexities and diversities that existed in the pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms in relation to institutionalized religious practices. Such a study has never been undertaken in Maragoliland hence the present research intents to fill the gap.

[101]Iris Berger, "Rebels or status seekers? Women as spirit mediums in East Africa." (2005): 148-156., p.152.

Mwanzi examines the history of the Kipsigis, a sub-ethnic group of the Kalenjin, focusing on their transformation and the development of agricultural practices, particularly pastoralism. He describes the evolution of pastoralism among the Kipsigis as a gradual process, with livestock accumulation primarily centered at the clan level, where individuals owned goats and sheep. These livestock holdings played a foundational role in shaping the economic and social structures of the community. As livestock accumulated, they were eventually exchanged for cattle. Mwanzi identifies a disparity in this accumulation, particularly among communities near the southern border close to the Southern Mau escarpment. Regarding the spread of cattle, he argues that Swahili caravan traders played a crucial role in facilitating their distribution. These traders introduced new cattle varieties from the Maasai and other regions, exchanging them for ivory. Mwanzi uses this occurrence to illustrate how economic evolution and agricultural transformation emerged through interactions between different communities

Raiding played a significant role as an economic activity among the Kipsigis, particularly in their interactions with neighboring communities such as the Gusii. Through cattle raids, they were able to expand their herds, reinforcing livestock accumulation as a crucial element of their economy.

This practice not only shaped their economic structure but also influenced broader social and political dynamics within the region. This is well captured in the following observation:

> The Kisii at Gasage and Kabianga had grown in numbers. Although both groups had once been together, the Kabianga

> Kipsigis became very jealous and started to steal the cows of Gasage Abarangi.[102]

Raiding provided the Kipsigis with a consistent source of cattle, reinforcing their livestock-based economy. The study also explored the development of cattle keeping among the Elgeyo, highlighting how agricultural practices evolved within their community. This comparative analysis offers valuable insights into how different groups adapted their economic activities to ensure sustainability and growth. In terms of relevance, this work helped the present study to widen its scope of the various precolonial activities related to pastoralism which was one of the activities that bailed out the Maragoli out of famine especially after a poor harvest. This work however did not capture the gender dimension of agriculture as a food production mechanism one of the main focus of the present study.

Ayot while writing on Luo women of Jok Onyango, examines their roles within society, covering economic, social, and political aspects. She argues that, despite societal constraints, some Luo women attained leadership positions within the council of elders, particularly those who were medicine women, warriors, and prophetesses. These women played influential roles, contributing to community governance and decision-making processes.[103] In regard to relevance, Ayot's work greatly enriched the research with insights into the pre-colonial women role in the economic engagements.

However, the present research examines the dynamics of food production and gender relations of the colonial Maragoli, hence a geographical and thematic divergent.

[102]Ibid., p.164

[103] 2T. O Ayot, "The Position of Women in the Luo Societies; A Case Study of Jok OnyangoA. D 1750 1920." Unpublished PhD Thesis) Kenyatta University (1990), p.100.

Hay's research on the Luo people of Kowe in Seme Location, Kisumu District, examines economic changes between 1890 and 1945. She observes that wealth in Luo society was measured not only by the ownership of cattle, sheep, and goats but also by the accumulation of food stores, multiple wives, servants, tenants, and children.[104] Hay's approach to studying Luo women appears to be shaped by Western patriarchal concepts, particularly those emphasizing subordination in the Global South contexts. By collectively categorizing animals, material possessions, and human beings as part of a man's wealth, he reinforces a perspective that does not acknowledge Luo women as individuals with inalienable rights within their society.

The foregoing interpretation underscores the broader socio-economic structures of the time but also reflects an external analytical framework that may not fully capture indigenous perspectives on gender and autonomy.[105] Through this study, the present research gained invaluable insights into the various interpretations and arguments especially from the Eurocentric apologists like Hay in order to help make a balanced Afrocentric view of the pre-colonial African woman in relation to her place in the food production matrix. Unlike Hay who only concentrated on women place in relation to property ownership, this current study gave a holistic analysis on the entire gendered relations in the food production process as a whole.

Atieno-Odhiambo and Cohen, in their work on Siaya, examine the role of Luo women in medical therapy and psychotherapy. They argue that elderly women, commonly referred

[104] Margaret Jean Hay, *Economic Change in Luoland: Kowe, 1890-1945* (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972, p.70
[105]Ibid p. 73.

to as *pim*, held significant responsibilities within Luo society. These women were central to nurturing and educating children, offering guidance and wisdom that shaped the community's social and cultural fabric. Their influence extended beyond caregiving, as they also contributed to the healing and well-being of individuals through traditional therapeutic practices. They also helped the young adults get socialized to a world wider than the household.[106] This work is important to the present study in that it expounds on the socialization roles of elderly women. However, it does not say anything on their food production mechanisms roles. It also avoids mentioning the place of the old men in the same. The current study builds on this work by looking at the role of the elderly Maragoli women and men in socializing the young adults in the various food production mechanisms.

Gunter Wagner writes on the economic aspects of the Western Bantu with special regard to the Maragoli and Bukusu. Among the key aspects he discusses include land tenure and ownership, crop cultivation, livestock production and exchange among the Bukusu and the Maragoli.[107] The work proved insightful to this study as it covered some aspects of food production mehanisms among the Maragoli during the pre-colonial. However, unlike the present study, Wagner did not give a special regard to gender relations in food production.

Wagner's work has been critiqued for its broad anthropological approach, which, as M.G. Smith describes, falls into "the fallacy of the ethnographic present"—the assumption that

[106]E.S Odhiambo, Atieno. *Siaya: The Historical Anthropology of an African Landscape*. J. Currey, 1989., p.45.
[107]G. Wagner,1956, *Op, Cit,* p.45.

societies remain static over time[108]. Additionally, Wagner's advocacy for modernization theory reflects a perspective that may overlook the complexities of African resistance to Westernization. His argument that Africans relied on magic and religious beliefs in their rebellions has been contested, as it does not fully account for the political, economic, and strategic dimensions of anti-colonial resistance.Beyond these concerns, historians have traditionally been critical of social anthropology due to its historical ties to colonialism. For a long time, the discipline was used as a tool to analyze and categorize indigenous societies through a colonial lens, often reinforcing narratives that served imperial interests. This tension between history and social anthropology has led scholars to approach anthropological interpretations with caution, especially when examining African societies in the context of colonialism and resistance.

Judith Abwunza while writing on *Logoli women in Western Kenya Speak: Needs and Means* discuss the place of women power in collective and capitalist structures where the author recognizes the important economic position of women.[109] Through this work, Abwunza demonstrates that women's work is not universally confined to the domestic sphere, nor is gender inequality in productive relations a result of the eclipse of communal and family-based production and family ownership. According to Abwunza, the pre-colonial Maragoli women had their place in decision making and even economic spheres. This was especially through the back-door decision and their control over kitchen, subsistence farming and food stores. Abwunza, however, confirms that partriachy was the

[108] K.L Muchanga, "Impact of economic activities on the ecology of Isukha and Idakho areas of Western Kenya c. 1850-1945." MA thesis, Kenyatta University. Nairobi, 1998, p.60

[109] J.M Abwunza, "Logoli Women of Western Kenya Speak: Needs and Means." Ph.D. Dissertation University of Nairobi,1991.

order of the day in the precolonial Maragoli hence women were expected to remain subservient to their men counterparts. In regard to relevance, the present study greatly benefited from Abwunza's work through the enriching pre-colonial Maragoli literature. However, unlike Abwunza's work which was anthropological and hence entrapped in the ethnographic present, the present work greatly benefited from the historical perspective which provided the necessary rear mirror to look into the past and piece it into the realistic present.

Alex.M. Amisi while writing on patterns of land use among the Maragoli of Sabatia Constituency, 1900-2010 discussed various themes under this topic. Key among them included; Migration and settlement of the Maragoli, pre-colonial Maragoli socio economic and political organization, the Maragoli traditional land tenure system. Agricultural production during the pre-colonial period, women and land use, gender land use and decision making were among the other themes discussed.[110] Through Amisi's study, the present study was able to encase itself adequately both theoretically and thematically. However, unlike Amisi's work which tackled gender issues as a second thought, the present study centralized gender as a key yard stick in its analysis.

1.10.2 Food Production and Gender Relations in the Initial Colonial Era, 1895-1920

Spender in his writing on 'Man Made Language' distinguishes between the public and private world.[111] Spender opines that the public world is male dominated while the private world is women dominated. Spender asserts that during colonial times, the male dominated

[110] A. M. Amisi.,2021, *Op*, *Cit*, p.50.
[111] Dale Spender, *Man Made Language* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), 142.

world gained prominence at the expense of the private world. This was the genesis of women insubordination. Colonial labour system, education and the Christian doctrines further widened the gap between the public and the private worlds. In regard to relevance, Spender's work greatly enriched the present study by giving a general global thematic scope on women and men world views. However, theoretically, while Spender used the feminist perspective, this present study made use of the Gender Analysis theory.

Kathleen A. Staudt, in her discussion on women and the food crisis in Africa, argues that the continent's food insecurity is closely linked to the neglect of African women, whom she identifies as the primary food producers. She emphasizes that despite their central role in agricultural production, women often face systemic challenges, including limited access to land, financial resources, and agricultural support. Staudt's perspective highlights the need for policies that recognize and empower women's contributions to food security, addressing the structural inequalities that hinder agricultural development. Staudt emphasizes the critical role of understanding women's labour, particularly in relation to the socio-political and economic policies implemented during the colonial period. The author highlights that male out-migration imposed a significant burden on women, as it disrupted traditional agricultural practices.

The shift had a direct impact on food production, especially for labour-intensive crops like millet, reducing overall output and exacerbating food insecurity. The work underscores the necessity of addressing gendered labour dynamics to develop effective agricultural and economic policies.[112]Staudt acknowledges the historical evolution of agriculture and its

[112]Kathleen A. Staudt, "Uncaptured or unmotivated? Women and the food crisis in Africa." *Rural Sociology* 52, no. 1 (1987): p.65.

intertwined relationship with gender dynamics in production. By employing a gendered lens, she examines how labour differentiation, incentives, and struggles over resources influence agricultural development. The author argues that while multiple factors contribute to the decline in food production in Africa, a comprehensive understanding of the food crisis must consider the demands placed on women's agricultural labour and their stake in securing returns for their work.

Furthermore, Staudt highlights how male out-migration intensifies the burden on rural women, increasing their workload without a proportional compensation or recognition of their contributions. The present study greatly benefited from Staudt's work both in theoretical standpoints and the rich and diverse intellectual arguments that the work highlighted. Secondly, just as Staudt's work which discussed the various colonial policies and their impact on food production. The present study also outlines the genesis of the colonial policies such as labour laws during the initial colonial era. However, unlike Staudt's work which was too general covering the whole African continent, this particular research narrowed down to Maragoli for a deeper and critical analysis on dynamics in food production and gender relations.

E. Boserup in regard to African women in economic development argues how the Europeans decided to promote the men agricultural pursuits at the expense of their women counterparts especially in areas they had introduced cash crop farming. This European perception was embedded on the assumption of men being better farmers than women hence the need to absorb them into the colonial agricultural economy for faster expansion of the sector. To achieve this, the colonial government heavily invested using all the

possible resources at their disposal.[113] Boserup's work though a macro study played a ground breaking role for the future gendered micro studies the present one included.

Guyor, while writing on the Akan, argues that the Ghanaian colonial regime strategically exploited women's labour to transition Ghana into a cash crop-producing economy. Despite the introduction of capitalism, pre-capitalist gender relations remained largely intact, with the shift primarily benefiting certain groups of African men. This suggests that colonial economic policies reinforced existing social hierarchies rather than disrupting them, further entrenching gender disparities in labour and resource allocation.[114] The claim is that there is a multifaceted historical connection between the state, capitalism, and patriarchy that necessitates comprehension. This argument regarding the tripartite linkage is pertinent to the investigation of Maragoli, as the present investigation aimed to investigate the efforts of Maragoli men to regulate the mobility of women during the colonial era. However, unlike Guyor who only focused on gender relations dynamics in the cash crop sub sector, the present study widened its scope to the bigger picture of food production mechanisms as a whole.

Carney and Watts, in their study of rice cultivation among the Mandinka of Senegambia, examined the gradual shifts in domestic household relations. They argue that the government's push to expand rice production led to intra-household conflicts over land and labour control. As rice became an essential staple with growing demand, women were increasingly burdened with the responsibility of dedicating more labour to its cultivation,

[113]E. Boserup., *The Conditions of Agricultural Growth*, Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1974, p.82.
[114]Jane I. Guyer, Michael L. Burton, R. Dove Michael, Carol Carpenter, Carol R. Ember, Stephen Gudeman, Karen Tranberg Hansen et al. "The multiplication of labor: historical methods in the study of gender and agricultural change in modern Africa [and comments and reply]." *Current Anthropology* 29, no. 2 (1988): p.260.

reflecting broader gendered disparities in agricultural workloads. Their work provides a nuanced perspective on how economic policies influenced household dynamics and labour distribution.The introduction of groundnut as a cash crop, primarily cultivated by men, placed additional strain on labour dynamics within households. As men shifted their focus to groundnut production for market trade, they increasingly neglected the cultivation of millet and sorghum—traditional subsistence crops that had previously supported household food security.

The shift not only altered agricultural priorities but also intensified the burden on women, who were often responsible for maintaining food production to sustain their families. Such changes highlight the broader implications of cash crop economies on gendered labour distribution and household subsistence strategies.[115] The introduction of groundnuts as a cash crop led to a significant shift in gendered labour divisions, moving from task-based roles to crop-specific responsibilities. This transition reinforced distinctions in agricultural duties, with men primarily focusing on groundnut cultivation while women carried the burden of rice production and household subsistence farming.

Additionally, the authors argue that state programs designed to expand rice production among the Mandinka often triggered conflicts over household resource allocation. These struggles centered on access to land and labour, highlighting the complex socio-economic dynamics that emerged as agricultural policies reshaped traditional farming practices. The present study greatly benefited from the above since their discussion revolves around

[115]Judith Carney, and Michael Watts. "Disciplining women? Rice, mechanization, and the evolution of Mandinka gender relations in Senegambia." *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society* 16, no. 4 (1991): p.655.

dynamics in food production and gender relations during the colonial times. More-over, through Carney and Watts' work, the present study was able to critically situate the various new food production mechanisms introduced during the initial colonial era and their impact on Maragoli food production mechanisms. However, the geographical context and the individual communities in the two studies are different hence the divergence in contextual specificity.

Wangari Martha in chapter two while writing on gender relations and food crop production among the Agikuyu of Kiambu discusses a number of issues on gender relations and food crop production in the pre colonial Agikuyu. Key among these issues include s ocio-political and religious organization of the pre colonial Agikuyu, economic organization, gender, division of labour and decision making and the pre colonial trade in kikuyu land. Out of these pertinent issues, Wangari illustrated that the pre colonial Agikuyu had an established food crop production mechanism embedded on a balanced gendered relation. It is from this balanced gender relations that surplus food crop produce was exchanged for goats and sheep to expand their livestock and even farm lands.[116] Wangari's work proved resourceful to the present research since it helped the research adequately encase itself in the gender analysis theory.

Moreover, Wangari's work had quite a number of striking similarities in its thematic approach to the present study. However, unlike Wangari who based her study among the Agikuyu of Central Kenya, the current study focused on Maragoli of Western Kenya, hence a geographical and contextual divergence. Moreover, Wangari only focused on gender relations through the Gender Analysis theory while the present study went further and

[116]W. M., Musalia., *Op*, *Cit*, p.38.

incorporated Articulation of Modes of Production theory to situate the role of colonial state in the food production and gender relations dynamics. In addition, unlike Wangari who only singled out the aspect of food crop in the entire food production mechanisms system, the current study looked at all food production mechanisms among the Maragoli.

Ndege observes that the period between 1895 to 1920 was marked by a number of major events which shaped the future of Kenya as a colony. These events included declaration of protectorate status over Kenya- the then East Africa protectorate, the colonial military conquests, the 1902 transfer of Kisumu and Naivasha provinces from Uganda to Kenya, establishment of various administrative posts in the protectorate, the coming of Christian missionaries and finally the declaration of Kenya as a British colony in 1920.[117] Through Ndege's work, the present research was able to get the historical context within which the various changes in food production mechanisms and gender relations were discussed. More over, the theoretical framework of Articulation of Modes of Production used by Ndege further provided the necessary theoretical guidelines for the present discussion.

However, unlike Ndege who focused on economic change without a gender dimension, the present study discusses dynamics in food production within the gender dimension. Ndege's discussion focused on the Luo of Kaspul and kabondo who are River Lake Nilotes linguisitically while the present study focuses on Maragoli who are western Bantu, hence the cultural diversity between the two groups.

[117]Peter O. Ndege, "Economic change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962." MA Thesis, University of Nairobi., 1987., p.81.

Turning specifically to studies on Maragoli, Gunter Wagner writes on the economic aspects of the Western Bantu with special regard to the Maragoli and Bukusu. Among the key aspects he discusses include land tenure and ownership[118]. The work was useful to this study as it covered some aspects of agricultural production among the Maragoli during the initial colonial era. This work, however, unlike the present study did not give a special regard to gender relations in food production. Moreover, Wagner's work was an anthropological account while the present study takes a historical perspective. As an anthropologist, Wagner emphasized on giving descriptions of the then affairs without a comparison with the past to bring the cause effect historical thread. Lack of the historical thread made Wagner's work suffer from what historians call being tied in the ethgraphic present.

Judith Abwunza in her work on Logoli women in Western Kenya discusses the place of women power in collective and capitalist structures where she recorgnizes the important economic position of women. Through the work, Abwunza demonstrates that women's work is not universally confined to the domestic sphere, nor is gender inequality in productive relations a result of the eclipse of communal and family-based production and family ownership[119].

Abwunza asserts that Maragoli women are opposing the notion that gender inequality is on the rise in Maragoli. Maragoli women ascribe the trend of increasing gender disparity to the efforts of men in enshrining old cultural ideals of partriachal ideology, which tend to diminish and reject the expanding productive role and worth of women. Maragoli women

[118] G. Wagner., *Op., Cit*., p.10.
[119] J M Abwunza, *Op, Cit,* p.20.

are not subject to partriachal ideology, despite the fact that these beliefs constitute a component of cultural rhetoric.

In Maragoli, women choose a position of ideological and institutional acceptance that is associated with the "Avalogoli manner" as a conscious social action. They are producers of both use and exchange value in the collective and capitalist structure, extending 'homework' responsibilities to 'outside work' using cultural avenue to power. This work proved handy to the present research since they both focused on the place of women in economic and social life. However, whereas Abwunza gave emphasis on women as individuals, the current study aims at focusing on women as a social group. Moreover, whereas Abwunza's work was an anthropological account, the present study uses a historical approach.

Amisi while writing on patterns of land use among the Maragoli; discusses various themes under this topic. Key among them include; introduction of colonial rule, changes in Maragoli; land ownership and administration, food production and labour relations in the pre and post- World War I era.[120]. This work is an extensive study and focused almost on similar theme as the current study, it is however a general study on land uses and does not specifically address the food production mechanisms and the gender relations in details as the present study. Amisi also lamped together the colonial era hence failed to do justice to the three colonial segements; the initial colonial era included as the presnt study does.

[120] A.M. Amisi., *Op, Cit,* p.84.

1.10.3 Food Production and Gender Relations in the Inter-War Period, 1920-1945

Colonial impact on the established pre- colonial African food production mechanisms occurred through colonial capitalism which integrated the peripheries as appendages to the metropoles, in a relationship that was and still is characterised by unequal exchange. Through this process, resources of the colonised were greedily exploited with little or no perception to the previously established gender relations and even ecological order.[121]Walter Rodney while writing on How Europe Underdeveloped Africa in his chapter five, notes that colonialism repatriated African surplus to the so called mother land. This led to development of Europe as part of the same dialectical process in which Africa was underdeveloped.

Colonial employer paid extreamely small wages, a wage usally insufficient to keep the worker physically alive and therefore had to grow food to survive. This applied in particular to farm labour of the plantation type, to work in mines and to certain forms of urban employment. Europeans relied on legislation backed by force to do the rest.[122] This work was used in the present study as collaborative work to provide insights on colonial dynamics in regard to the established African labour relations in food production. Through Rodney's work, a demonstration is shown how the new capitalist labour system affected agricultural production in the African continent.

[121]K. L. Muchanga, *Op*, *Cit*, p.19.
[122]R. Walter., *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, London and Tanzanian Publishing House, Dar-Es-Salaam ,1973, p.135.

However, though insightful, Rodney's work was on general Africa which is too amorphous with regional points of departure. Additionally, Rodney did not zero in on the gender relations in food production as the present study does.

Ndege in his work on the economic change of the Luo of Kaspul and Kabondo, argues that the inter-War period witnessed a number of changes in the economic set up of the Luo. Such changes were occasioned by a number of factors including development of migrant labour, agricultural policy and trends in crop production, livestock keeping and extraction of livestock products, and finally development in roads, markets and entrepreneurship. All these changes were necessitated by the colonial state with the aim of articulating the Luo of Kaspul and kabondo into the colonial capitalist demands.[123] Through this work, the present study was able to pick a number of key historical land marks that shaped the colonial Kenya which Maragoliland was part of. More-over, due to the close geographical proximity between the Luo and the Maragoli, a lot of assimilation has occurred in food production mechanisms, Ndege's work helped the present study pick similarities between the two groups in their economic set ups to enrich the present study. However, unlike Ndege who only focused on economic change, the present study interrogated the relationship between food production mechanisms and gender relations.

Kasongo Tukumbi Lumumba while writing on gender disparities in Africa observes that the current gender disparities in African societies and the magnitude of the problems posed by gender inequality in every aspect of society today are as a result of a complex set of

[123]P. O. Ndege,1987, *Op*, *Cit*, p.195.

factors.[124] Kasongo notes that while some of these factors are indigenous to African cultures, others were created by the policies and rules designed in the colonial context and the legacies of these have been perpetuated by African male dominated legislative and executive structures that have developed little or no gender awareness. Kasongo further observes that although Africa bears no responsibility for the historical patriarchal foundations of western societies, European colonial policies are nonetheless directly or indirectly a determining factor in gender inequality in every sphere of contemporary African socio-economic and political dynamics.[125] Amadiume while writing over same concludes that the Victorian concept imposed by colonialism minimised the role of African women.[126] Although these studies are-too-general and do not focus on any specific African country, they all demonstrate the fact that gender inequality that exist in contemporary African societies is as a result of colonial legacies. These works aid this study in looking at how far colonialism impacted on food production mechanisms and gender relations in Kenya and Maragoli specifically.

Martha Wangari in chapter three of the doctoral dissertation on Gender relations and food crop production among the Agikuyu of Kiambu posits that there were a number of activities that were done by pioneer British colonial agents in Kiambu that changed the pre-colonial Agikuyu food crop production endeavors.[127] Wangari goes on to discuss the various British

[124] Kasongo, Tukumbi. Lumumba "Rethinking educational paradigms in Africa: Imperatives for social progress in the new millennium." *African voices in education* (2000): p.145.
[125]Ibid.
[126]Ifi Amadiume, *Male daughters, female husbands: Gender and sex in an African society*. Zed Books Ltd., 2015., p.12.

[127] W.M. Musalia., 2010, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 66.

pioneer activities in Kikuyu land which according to her included; the activities of the IBEAC, the British military expeditions and finally the land, labour and tax policies.

According to Wangari, these colonial policies led to a paradigm shift in the Agikuyu gender relations in regard to food crop production. Among the major changes noted during this period were alienation of land, male migration to settler farms and commercialization of food crop produce. In regard to relevance, Wangari's work helped the present study to familiarize itself with the pioneer British activities in Kenya as a whole and how these activities shaped the later day colonial Kenya's food production policies. More-over, through Wangari's work, the present study was enriched by the colonial literature and the Gender Analysis theoretical approach adopted by Wangari. However, since Wangari focused on the Agikuyu of Kiambu, the geographical and contextual setting of the Agikuyu and Maragoli made the two study areas have quite a number of points of departure in regard to colonial interactions. Wangari's failure to properly situate colonial activities such as Christianity and Western education among others on established African food production mechanisms in totality necessitated a study like the present one.

In analyzing the labour history of colonial Kenya, Sharon Stichter demonstrates how the African economies were changed curtesy of the foreign colonial interests in the capitalist global market. Stitcher goes further to illustrate how Africans innovatively adjusted to these new challenges and opportunities. The study further examined the growth and subsequent modification of the migrant labour economy.[128] All these notwithstanding, Stitcher's work falls short of addressing the salient factors like food shortages and famines

[128]Sharon Stichter, "Migrant Labour in Kenya: capitalism and African response, 1895-1975." MA Thesis Nairobi University (1982), p.107.

which were at the very tail end of the colonial labour and land policies. Nevertheless, Stitcher's work has contributed to the development of the theory and enrichment of the current study.

1.10.4 Changes in Food Production Partaining to Gender Relations in Maragoliland, 1945-1963

Bryceson's study in Tanzania discusses the dynamic interaction between peasant food production and commodity production under conditions of increasing penetration of capital especially after the Second World War. The author asserts that increased commodity production had a direct link to the serious food shortage and even famines experienced in colonial Tanzania. The paper traces some of the most significant changes that took place in peasant subsistence production and consumption during the study period.

Decline of food production was, therefore, a consequence of colonial policies that were aimed at restructuring African economies to boost colonial economy more so after the devastating effects of World War II.[129] The current study immensely benefited from the above work in the sense that both were grounded within the frame work of agricultural dynamics during the colonial era. However, whereas the present study focused on food production dynamics within gender perspectives, Bryceson's work was silent on gender relations. Besides the Maragoli, a number of other Kenyan communities including the Agikuyu, Kipsigis, Idhakho, Isukha, and Samia scholars have researched on food

[129]Deborah Fahy Bryceson, "Changes in peasant food production and food supply in relation to the historical development of commodity production in pre-colonial and colonial Tanganyika." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 7, no. 3 (1980): p.285.

production mechanisms and other interrelated concerns including but not limited to gender interplay.[130]

Omwoyo argues that, food security among the Kipsigis was determined by the methods of food production and storage. Omwoyo analyses the agricultural changes among the Kipsigis especially those relating to land ownership during and after the Second World War. Therefore, the current study explored the manner in which the colonial agricultural policies land ownership included impacted on women food production mechanisms among the Maragoli more so during and after World War II.

The effect of inedible cash crops and labour on food crop production in Western Kenya is examined by Olenja. Olenja argues that availability of labour is the single most crucial factor in household production. But Samia's incorporation into the wider world economy disrupted the society's division of labour. This was accelerated by male out-migration and children's formal education since they denied the household the traditional labour force. The men recruitment into World War II as carriers-coups and war soldiers further incapacitated the collapsing Samia agricultural activities. The absence of men meant that women took up the tasks of producing subsistence for their households and also commodities for exchange. The women had to look for strategies to alleviate their constraints. The strategies included hiring labour, which the author thinks, is more of a motivation than a real solution. The over- reliance on cotton in Samia has had adverse effects on a large section of Samia community especially with regard to food production.

[130] Samson M Omwoyo, "The Colonial Transformation of Gusii Agriculture." MA thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, 1990, p.88.

As food providers, the women were most affected because of diminishing land on which to grow food crops. Though this work is anthropological and thus had the limitation of being stack in the ethnographic present, it is relevant to the present study because it investigated changes in division of labour and the impact of cotton production on food crop production.

The question as to whether growth of inedible cash crops like coffee and tea impacted on food production and the precolonial gender relations in Maragoli is a concern to the present study. Unlike Olenja who just concentrated on inedible cash crops and women labour, the present study casts its net wider and encompasses all food production mechanisms among the Maragoli.

Nasimiyu's study on the role women in agriculture in Bungoma District from 1902 to 1960 establishes that women continued to perform their traditional agricultural chores and at the same time participated in the new colonial system of production. The study raises three themes and their impact on women's agricultural production: agricultural innovations, introduction of cash crops, and land tenure system. Nasimiyu concludes that any changes brought on Bungoma's agriculture only intensified the exploitation of women's labour.[131] Nasimiyu concentrates on pre-colonial and colonial Kenya dealing specifically on women. This was a divergent from the present study which focused on dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

The theme of labour is taken up by Jalang'o-Ndeda. Ndeda focused on the impact of male migration on rural women in Siaya District from 1895-1963; Ndeda indicated that the

[131] Ruth K. Nasimiyu, "The Participation of Women in the Political-economy of Kenya: A Case Study of Bukusu Women in Bungoma District, 1902-1960." MA Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1984, p.108.

changing gender relations in the division of labour was a result of the various colonial policies. According to Ndeda, colonial economic policywhich favoured the settlers interfered with division of labour in Siaya District. The study ended at independence and concluded that women's labour was most stretched by the colonial policies.

The present study used the above findings to establish if there were any similarities or divergences between Siaya and Maragoli land. While these scholars concentrated on changing division of labour, the present study investigated other aspects that influenced food production including labour but not limited to labour. The theme of gender and food production is also explored by Martha Wangari. In her work, Wangari focusesd on gender relations and food crop production in Kiambu district from 1920 to 1985.[132] The work demonstrated how colonialism changed the Agikuyu of Kiambu's pre-colonial gender relations in respect to food crop production. According to Wangari, gender relations between females and males that are characterized by differential assignments to labour tasks and decision making have changed over time.

Wangari argues that colonial economic policies and the emergence of Nairobi as a colonial capital of Kenya greatly impacted on the Kiambu women's pre -colonial gender defined roles in food crop production. The present study used Wangari's findings to establish the similarities and divergencies between the Maragoli women and Kiambu women food production dynamics in relation to gender. Judith Abwunza while writing on Logoli women of Western Kenya Speak: Needs and Means; posits that colonialism contributed greatly to the increase in gender inequality among the Maragoli.[133] However, the Maragoli women

[132] W.M. Musalia., 2010, *Op*, *Cit*, p.76.
[133] J. Abwunza., 1991, *Op*, *Cit*, p.82.

did not silently succumb to the increase in gender inequality. Colonialism created a political system characterized by male chiefs in Maragoli. This articulated the Maragoli patriarchal tendencies into the new colonial administrative structure.

The introduction of wage labour also served to commoditize the initial abundant Maragoli labour leading to many men moving into towns, hence reducing the male labour for rural food production related activities. This work proved handy to the present research since they both focused on the ways in which the place of women in economic and social life were transformed after colonial conquest. However, whereas Abwunza gave emphasis on women as individuals, the current study focused on women as a social group. Moreover, whereas Abwunza's work was an anthropological account, the present study used a historical approach.

Amisi in his work on patterns of land use among the Maragoli of Sabatia constituency; 1900-2010 discusses the changes in Maragoli land use. Among the key themes addressed under this include; food production and labour relations in the pre- and post-World War II period, land use changes during the decolonization period among other themes.[134] This work is an extensive study and focused almost on similar theme as the current study, it is however a general study on land uses and does not specifically address the food production mechanisms and the gender relations in details as the present study.

1.11 Theoretical Frame work and Conceptual Model

This research made use of two theoretical stand points. These were Gender Analysis and Articulation of Modes of Production.

[134]A. M. Amisi, 2021, *Op, Cit,* p.130

1.11.1 Gender Analysis

This theory draws its roots in philosophy, anthropology and psychology. As a theoretical framework, Gender Analysis has a number of key tenets that helps it critically analyse the various human experiences through the different historical epochs. These tenets are; All human endeavours are gendered and that this gendered nature impact on access to and control over resources and decision-making potentials. It is from this tenet that this particular study has illustrated that the Pre-colonial Maragoli had gendered food production endeavours. Men on one hand cleared agricultural lands in addition to engaging in iron working, baskretry and hunting. Women on the other hand concentrated on weeding agricultural lands, harvesting most of the farm crops in addition to gathering and pottery. Partriarchy as asystem universally works to oppress women. In the Maragoli case, men were the family heads, council of elders' members, land owners and by default the main decision makers.

Other tenets of this theory include; Women and men as social groups not individuals, production and reproduction are both biological and social constructions and how these two are actualized in the society determine given socity's gender relations. More-over, masculinity and femininity are sets of mutually created characteristics that shape the lives of members of a society and therefore the two aspects do not operate in history according to fixed biological determinants.

Women and men as social groups are differentiated in terms of rights and opportunities. Another tenet of this theory is that there exists a relationship between the two gender groups

and those men and women do not exist as absolute categories. Finally, gender as a concept is not complete by itself but is dependent on other socio-political and economic happenings.

This theory is also known as the Havard Analytical Framework owing to its origin in the Havard institute of International Relations.[135] The use of gender analysis began in the 1980s after scholars realized the importance of taking gender as an important analytical category. As a theory, Gender Analysis traces its tenets from philosophical, psychoanalytic and anthropological backgrounds.[136] The theory is, therefore, interdisciplinary and therefore adequate enough to explain the societal socio-economic and political realities in the different human epochs within time and space.

Previously, the question of women had been studied from the various feminism perspectives with women being assumed to be synonymous to gender.[137] Since gender is a social construction, the focus is not on the individual women and men but on the system, which determines gender roles/ responsibilities, access to and control over resources and decision-making potentials.[138]In an analysis, Gender Analysis problematizes gender relations in the on going struggles between local actors over meaning and control of strategic resources and relationships.

[135]For more reading; on Gender analysis, Check the Havard Analytical framework (Gender roles framework) equilo.:0/gender analysis-
[136]Reeves, Hazel, and Sally Baden. *Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions: Prepared for the Department for International Development (DFID) for Its Gender Mainstreaming Intranet Resource*. Bridge (development gender), Institute of Development Studies, 2000., p.50.
[137]W. M. Musalia., 2010, *Op*, *Cit*, p.23.
[138] Haleh Afshar, (ed). *Women, work, and ideology in the Third World*. 1985., p.35.

It is important to bring the complex interactions of power, knowledge and agency to bear on the analysis of gender relations and struggles. By doing so, it is possible to explore how these interactions operate in every day life and affect natursl resource management through on going processes of negotiation and resistance within gender relations. Gender Analysis offers an alternative perspective that views power as afluid and multifaceted force that sometimes manifests itself only for flickering moments. This force takes different forms and has different consistencies, which makes it impossible to measure but conspicuous enough to describe.[139]

Power is not a zero-sum game in which possessing it means that others are without it.[140] From this perspective, for example, the pre-colonial Maragoli women were not victims, powerless and subjugated; they were not utterly trapped in patterns of domination and powerlessnessbut were agents involved in negotiation and acts of resistance.[141] Conversely, the powerful are not in complete control of all aspects of social and political life and are influenced, affected and sometimes subverted by the powerless. In short rather than being something that is possessed, power is constituted in interaction.[142] Within every day interactions, actors are thinking agents who create space and room to maneuver, manipulating resources and constraints in order to promote their own interests and projects

[139] Villareal 1992, p.258.
[140] Long and Villareal 1994, Long 1992b.
[141] Villareal 1992, p.257 See Also Scones and Thompson 1993, p.13.
[142] Verschors 1992, p.177

and to gain an edge or advantage over others in struggles over access to and control over resources.[143]

According to this study, the Maragoli men and women were also actors and thinking agents who strategized and problematized situations. They processed knowledge and information and brought together elements necessary to manage their food production mechanisms and sustain their livelihoods.[144] They processed social experiences and devised coping strategies, even under the most extreme conditions or coercion.[145]

As a theory, Gender Analysis is a set of ideas guiding historical and other scholarship at large.[146] In social history it particularly thrived in the United States and Great Britain, with far fewer followers on the European continent. Thus, Gender Analysis theory developed as an off shoot of the feminist's literature that came out in the 1980s targeting at coping with the complex nature of gender relations. The debate centred on universality of patriarchal ideology as a step towards the understanding of women as members of an oppressed class. The debate also touched on other gender issues such as production and reproduction both biologically and socially.

Gradually in their quest for a more plausible theoretical framework, there emerged several schools of thought among the feminist writers with regard to gender issues. There are those who have recognized equalitarianism in relation to African gender issues in economic and

[143] Verma Ritu ,2001, p. 23.
[144] Long and Villareal 1994, p. 48
[145] Verma Ritu 2001, p.39.
[146]G. Rubin, "The traffic in women: Notes on the" political economy" of sex." (1975)., p. 160.

political roles within the pre-capitalist setup.[147] Other scholars maintained that African women have always been oppressed.

While viewing colonialism and class structure as oppressive to women, they, nevertheless, promoted the prospect of women being released from their traditional bondage once neo-colonialism and class oppression were overthrown.[148] Cutrufelli, for instance believes that for all practical purposes African women are an oppressed, powerless class of human beings yet at the same time she realizes the complexity of the various African cultures within the context of geographical set up of the African continent.[149]

Essentially, Gender Analysis theory proposed looking at masculinity and femininity as sets of mutually created characteristics shaping the lives of men and women. It replaced or challenged ideas of masculinity and femininity and of men and women as operating in history according to fixed biological determinants.[150] In other words, removing these categories from the realm of biology, it made a history possible. For some, the idea of gender history was but another term for women's history, but for others gender theory transformed the ways in which they approached writing and teaching about both men and women. To some extent it may be hypothesized that the major change brought about by gender theory was that it complicated the study of men, making them as well as women gendered historical subjects.[151]

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[147]I Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society*, London: Zed Press, 1987, p.54.
[148]G. Rubin, *Op, Cit,* p.162.
[149] Maria Rosa Cutrufelli, and Nicolas Romano. "Women of Africa: Roots of oppression." *(No Title)* (1983).
[150]G. Rubin, *Op*, *Cit*, p.166.
[151]Lawrence Knopp, "Sexuality and the spatial dynamics of capitalism." *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 10, no. 6 (1992): 651-669., p.657.

Another source of gender theory was philosophical and literary. These disciplines brought out outstanding gender connotations such as; One is not born, one is made a woman.[152]This dense and lengthy description of the making of womanhood discussed Marxist, Freudian, literary, and anthropological theories that, according to Beauvoir, actually determined women's behavior.[153] In her view, women in contrast to men acted in accordance with men's view of them and not according to their own lights.

Theoretically, the focus on gender as an analytical category was impelled by the recognition that women are not an undifferentiated group. Moreover, the approach acknowledges that women and men as social groups are differentiated in terms of rights and opportunities in society. The focus of analysis of this perspective is, therefore, the social relations of gender rather than men or women as isolated categories.[154] By doing so, the analysis acknowledges that gender relation as a key aspect in the theory is a concept, which refers to a particular form of social relations. It refers to the hierarchical relations of power between men and women that tend to disadvantage women.[155] Hence, the core of gender analysis is the relationship of gender groups rather than absolute categories of men or women. It is important to note that gender is not complete by itself but occurs in conjunction with other systems of social and economic relationships.

[152]Ibid., p.659.
[153] Ibid., p.658.
[154]Imam MT Ayesha, Amina A. Mama, and Fatou Sow. "Engendering African social sciences." (1997)., p.19.
[155]Lynd, Helen Merrell. *England in the eighteen eighties*. Routledge, 2019, p.30.

Therefore, proper understanding of gender relations can well be captured if analyzed in terms of their interrelations with other systems of stratification and vice versa. In fact, Knopp argues that gender like other social categories such as class, race and ethnicity that are related to power are deeply implicated in the constitution of each other as social relations.[156]

Reeves and Baden continue to argue that gender relations constitute and are constituted by a range of institutions, such as the family, legal system or the market.[157] They are a resource, which is drawn on daily to reinforce or redefine the rules, norms and practices, which govern social institutions. Since historically women have been excluded from many institutional spheres, or their participation circumscribed, and they often have less bargaining power to affect change in these institutions. Gender Analysis maintains that for a proper understanding of gender relations, there is need to examine how gender intersects with other social forces. Consequently, any analysis which persists in seeing only one form of relationship or viewing gender, race, or class as separate layers is clearly less than adequate as a theoretical understanding for transforming oppressive realities since they are simultaneous relations, which affect each other.[158] However, truth are not only statements within socially constructed discourses, they are also simultaneously facts about reality. [159]

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[156]Narain, Iqbal. "Democratic Decentralisation: The Idea, the Image, and the Reality." *Indian Journal of Public Administration* 9, no. 1 (1963) p.11.
[157]Reinhard, Wolfgang. "Reformation, Counter-Reformation, and the Early Modern State a Reassessment." *The Catholic Historical Review* 75, no. 3 (1989): 383-404., p.386.
[158]M I Ayesha, *Op, Cit,* p.21.
[159] Moore and Vaaughan 1994 As Quoted in Verma Ritu 2001: p.24.

Within this conceptualization, knowledge is considered both a representation (a matter of conversation and social practice) and a fact.

Multiple interpretation of facts exist. There are multiple truths -many complex networks of knowledge – instead of one unitary truth and knowledge system.[160] Gender analysis recognizes that knowledge processes are embedded in social and cultural processes, which themselves are imbued with aspects of power, authority and legitimation, often involving social struggle, conflict and negotiation. Knowledge is shared and negotiated through a multiplicity of actors and networks. Like power, knowledge is not simply processed, accumulated or problematically imposed on others, nor is it a commodity that can be reduced to single cohesive structures, stocks and stones that can be precisely measured in terms of quantity or quality.[161] It is on this premise that it becomes plausible for every endeavor of reconstructing local knowledge to fully engage narrations and dialogues from the actual local participants. Knowledge thus emerges out of processes of social interactions that are ultimately influenced by acts of power.

In addition, local knowledge, practices and discourses do not exist in a vacuum. They are often influenced by the movement of people (such as migrants passing through an area), learned during journeys to other places or adopted selectively from interventions. Such as colonialism as it is for this particular study.[162] Rather than considering local knowledge and experience as unitary and linear, or frozen in time, the multiplicity, variation, adaptation and improvisation that take place in daily livelihood struggles must be examined.

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[160] Long and Villareal, Op, Cit. p.54. See Also Flax 1992.

[161] For more on this Read Long 1992b, Long and Villareal 1994, Scones and Thompson 1993.

[162] Verma Ritu, *Op*, *Cit*., p.24.

In this way, global forces and intervetions are not only characterized by simple Eurocentric uniformity but by co-existing and complex socio-cultural determinants based on the dynamic negotiation and mastering of a complex web of variants and range of influences over time.[163]In short, local knowledge is a process of negotiation. Another component of gender analysis is its recognition of the role social systems play in the formation of gender relations. The interaction of social and economic relationships, ideology and, politics greatly impact on gender relations. In Africa, social systems and ideology have influenced the social organization of the societies. In pre-independence period, the systems of patriarchy and matriarchy not only influenced the socio-political but also economic organization. These systems influenced individual's access to power and productive resources. In particular patriarchal gender relations that demonstrated the concentration of power on men was widespread in pre-colonial Africa. Patriarchy has, however, been transformed over time and space contrary to the assertion of radical feminists that patriarchy is uniform.

Commenting on this, Ritu Verma notes that power and knowledge are inextricably intertwined. Knowledge is context specific, socially and historically constructed. In this way, it is inherently political in that the determination of what is excluded and who is qualified to know involves acts of power. [164] Each society has what Peet and Watts call the

[163] Ibid. p.25.

[164] Verma Ritu, *Op*., *Cit*, p.24.

regimes of truth that control the political and economic apparatuses that diffuse truth in the form of discourse.[165]

In colonial Africa, African and European forms of patriarchy intermingled to form a new system of patriarchy. The most outstanding aspect introduced by European patriarchy was the separation of private and public domains assigned to women and men respectively. This compartmentalization of life was aimed at making the ideology of capitalism work in Africa. Colonialism and capitalism became sources of women's oppression especially in economic production. However, African women employed their own agency and initiative against any measure that was oppressive and hence transformed gender relations.[166]

Without esteeming one social force against the others, Gender Analysis is able to show how gender relations are formed by the interaction of diverse social forces. Once gender analysis is applied in an African situation, particularities as well as commonalities of African experiences are examined and, as a result, the historical specificity of the area is put into perspective. This is because the interweaving of class, gender and imperial relations has produced quite distinct histories, traditions and cultures. The African people experienced colonialism differently, whether they were incorporated as agricultural commodity producers or migrant labourers, all these changes brought shifts in gender division of labour. Since gender systems are institutionalized through education systems, political and economic systems, legislation, culture and traditions, this study picked the

[165] Peet and Watts, 1996, p.13.

[166] Cora Ann. Presley, *Kikuyu women, the Mau Mau rebellion, and social change in Kenya*. Routledge, 2019., p. 45

economic system and particularly food production mechanisms to account for the nature of gender system in the colonial Maragoli. The perspective is suitable in analyzing the whole period under study.

The patriarchal system practiced by the Maragoli in the nineteenth century organized all relations whether in social, political or even economic. The patriarchal system organized socio-political power, which influenced individual's ownership and access to productive resources. For instance, marriage among the Maragoli was polygamous and residential pattern was patriarchal. Moreover, bride price was given to the woman's family. This kind of organization impacted on husband-wife relationship. A married Maragoli woman was meant to provide both productive and reproductive labour to the husband's lineage. It was through the woman's and the man's together with their children interrelated complementary efforts that the family wealth was accumulated. This was backed up by the cultural arrangement that defined the household as a unit able to accumulate wealth with the man as the titular head. Therefore, the more labour-force that the head would mobilize, the more wealth the household would accumulate. This formed the main premise upon which polygamy in the pre-colonial Maragoli was encased.

A focus on the gendered division of roles, responsibilities, rights and interests contextualizes changes in resource management and the meanings they are given by different people.[167] The ideas of relation of production and relations in production, the former understood as property relations and the later as labour processes provide important

[167] Leach, 1991a, p.22.

conceptual tools for understanding local resource management issues.[168] Relations of production, such as land and its related assets are critical in resource management, because arrangement for resource tenure and access always implicate gender relations.[169]

For instance, Gender Analysis has illustrated that people with secure tenure rights invest in land with long term view, but their ability to do so can be compromised by lack of access to economic or other resources vital to the maintenance of their livelihoods.[170] Within relations of production, Gender Analysis of the availability of labour shows us how tasks are divided and how work is sequenced or segregated between women's and men's crops and space. Gender Analysis also shows us the links between division of labour and right to access resources and how they change in value over time.[171]

While aspects of decision making reveal a lot about hoe gender relations impinge on resource management, Leach argues that they also hide a lot. Leach suggests that, in fact many people are not making decisions that they necessarily like, but are dealing with dilemmas and constraints in context in which agri-ecological and socio-political issues are intertwined.[172] In this way, coping with changes in the political economy, the environment and new social contexts in response to broader changes means coping with emerging dilemmas and problems.[173] This has implications on gender relations. Even though coping

[168] Carney and Watts 1990: p.217.
[169] Leach, 1991a, p.19.
[170] Mackenzie,1995, See Also Leach 1991a , p.18.
[171] Verma Ritu, *Op*, *Cit*., p.27
[172] Leach,1991a, p.23.
[173] Verma Ritu, *Op*, *Cit*., p.27.

mechanisms and decision-making processes are affected by the prevailing food production levels, they are bound up in context specific notions about relations between husband and wife, between older and younger people, among co-wives, among members of an extended family and among neighbours, friends and patrons.[174]

Gendered access to resources, distribution and control is commonly although not exclusively, negotiated at the household level.[175] The household is a site that represents to both women and men a channel of access to productive food production resources such as land, labour and income. It is also a space where other important social relationships intersect. To understand the gendered options and opportunities available to Maragoli farmers in terms of resource management, it is important to explore the processes by which household members gain access to and control over resources that are available to the household as a whole and the forms of negotiation, bargaining and conflict that occur between household members.[176]

The household unit plays a crucial role in shaping and defining family authority relations and property relations. These two aspects have within time and space structured gender division of labour and access to rural resources. Colonialism as a major agent of change in this particular study introduced new market places, new labour demands and value on the Maragoli rural resources. All these socially constructed relations of the household labour and property rights often exploded with gender conflicts. Struggles over labour as a key ingredient of food production reveal deeper struggles over meanings in the ways that

[174] Verma Ritu, Op, Cit., p.27. See Also Berry, 1989, Crowley 1994
[175] Adano, 1998 p.2.
[176] Verma Ritu, Op, Cit., p.27. See Also Whitehead 1981, Leach 1991a.

property rights are defined, negotiated and contested within the political arena of the household, work place and the state.[177]

The position of the husband permeated through all productive endeavours. The prime intention of this stand was to ensure order, sanity and accountability for the common good of all. However, some scholars have taken a divergent view on this point to point out the ego-centric interests of the family patriarchs. Robertson while writing on the Pre- colonial Agikuyu observes that in the late nineteenth century individuals like Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu and Karuri wa Gakure accumulated wealth through the Swahili-European caravan trade.[178] Further, Kikuyu women though they could trade in foodstuffs, which they grew, the women did not have absolute autonomy of the proceeds.

The present study takes the position that though patriarchal orders gave men an elevated position compared to women; the African communal lifestyle and customary laws were always invoked to safeguard women rights and privileges. Though Maragoli men were the family heads, women too were given their own spheres of influence which though not very prounced as per the capitalistic interpretations but adequate enough to make their voices and contributions notable.[179] Inheritance is another aspect that can help explain the nature of the Maragoli pre-colonial gender relations within the patriarchal setting. Women could

[177] Carney, 1996, p.165.
[178]Claire C Robertson, "Gender and trade relations in central Kenya in the late Nineteenth century." *The International journal of African historical studies* 30, no. 1 (1997): 23-47., p.35.
[179]J. Abwunza., *Op., Cit*., p.67.

not inherit land, but always held it in custody for their sons. This trusteeship role played by women ensured that women were ever at liberty to make use of this land and also safeguard it against any possible infringement from the children of the other wives within the polygamous set up.

Therefore, patriarchy was an aspect of gendered power relations, which ensured that land as the basic and most valuable economic resource was under stable control but still accessible to the family members for any prudent use.

Due to patriarchy, Maragoli women remained producers who would not have absolute ownership of productive resources especially land but were still adequately accommodated within the food production cycle. Men though the titular owners of the land, none of them would selfishly dispose the land or any other prime economic resource without the consent of his family members especially the wife. Such checks and balances safeguarded the family unit against authoritarian rule by the patriarchs. Men had their own male specific crops, granaries and other male specific economic activities such as hunting to ensure a gendered balanced contribution of the two gender groups in food production.

The advent of colonialism significantly altered the dynamics of patriarchy within the Maragoli community, granting women greater autonomy in the management and oversight of food production processes. This phenomenon can be attributed primarily to the policies governing colonial migrant male labor and the subsequent monetization of the Maragoli economy. Women emerged as pivotal figures, assuming the demanding administrative responsibilities in food production alongside their traditional pre-colonial roles. This signified the beginning of the feminization of food production mechanisms. The colonial

strategy of commercializing agricultural output, enhanced by the introduction of Birmingham jembes and superior seeds, significantly elevated food production in Maragoli. Nonetheless, this augmented food production was directed towards the external market rather than the internal Maragoli market. The sale of such produce was undertaken to obtain the new colonial necessities, resulting in food shortages and starvation within the colonial Maragoli.

The Maragoli forests, once abundant with edible roots, fruits, and wild game, have been entirely cleared to make way for maize cultivation, followed by the introduction of coffee and tea as non-food crops. The deforestation of these woodlands has adversely affected the Maragoli ecosystem, rendering the Maragoli susceptible to recurrent droughts and, consequently, food scarcity.

The implementation of indirect rule in Kenya and other British colonies necessitated the preservation, albeit in a distorted manner, of pre-colonial political structures by the British authorities. In a manner similar to Zimbabwe, the British in Kenya employed colonial chiefs and elders as instruments to uphold tranquility in the rural regions. In nearly every instance, African colonial chiefs were individuals who leveraged their roles to amass considerable wealth. The British successfully collaborated with African patriarchs to exert control over both women and young men, significantly undermining the pre-colonial gendered systems of food production. As elucidated in chapter four, the Maragoli patriarchs, guided by the elders of the North Kavirondo reserve, exhibited a pronounced interest in regulating the physical mobility of their female members. Nevertheless, the colonial political economy did not consistently enable the government to endorse the notion of regulating the physical mobility of Africans.

As previously noted, the implementation of indirect rule gave rise to new institutions that had not existed before. The government implemented a gradual regulation of women's participation in trade by criminalizing their activities within this sector. Both the Maragoli patriarchs and the government exhibited a pronounced interest in directing women's labor towards endeavors they deemed productive from their own vantage points.

It is important to recognize that there has historically been a persistent discord between African men and the colonial government regarding the matter of women. While African politicians have frequently expressed concerns regarding the issue of forced labor affecting women, there has been a noticeable hesitance to support the migration of women to urban areas.The women took advantage of the changing terrain to create new spaces for themselves.[180] For instance, despite the criminalization of their trade, women continued to trade in Nairobi and other Kenyan urban centres like Kisumu and Kakamega while others completely left the rural areas in an attempt to escape patriarchal control.[181] In order to analyze gender relations during the colonial period, it is essential to critically engage with the concept of the state in relation to gender dynamics. Primarily, the state possesses the authority to create institutions that influence the dynamics of gender relations within society.

During the colonial era, the state devised economic policies that produced varied impacts on different groups of men and women, consequently influencing gender dynamics. In the colonial Maragoli, the policies governing land and labor brought about profound changes in gender relations. The recently implemented individual land tenure system has

[180]Tabitha M. Kanogo, *African womanhood in colonial Kenya, 1900-50*. Boydell & Brewer, 2005, p.64.
[181]Luise White, *The comforts of home: Prostitution in colonial Nairobi*. University of Chicago Press, 1990, p.78.

undermined women's access to land and curtailed the rights of young men regarding land inheritance. The process of land consolidation has led to a decrease in the amount of land available for agricultural cultivation.

This, in turn, significantly influenced the food production sector, profoundly transforming the dynamics of gender relations within the realm of production. The various advancements in agriculture have significantly influenced the dynamics of gender relations. This study adopts gender analysis as the most fitting theoretical perspective. From a theoretical perspective, Gender Analysis highly values experience as a credible source of knowledge and a guiding principle for analysis. Thus, the examination of the experiences of both women and men emerges as a pivotal component of gender analysis.[182]

Nevertheless, gender analysis, which emphasizes the quotidian experiences of local individuals, must resist the allure of individualism and trivialization. It ought to focus on tackling disparities and understanding essential patterns, relationships, and mechanisms that structure and delineate the social landscape.[183] Gender Analysis offers a systematic framework that identifies patterns of gendered power dynamics, perceiving chaos as a reflection of the diverse methods through which individuals navigate challenges and limitations in their existence.

The perceptions and interpretations of participants regarding both personal and collective experiences must be carefully examined and deconstructed, ensuring that the narratives

[182] Martin 1995, p.84.
[183] Villareal 1992. P.248.

presented are not accepted as unquestioned evidence.[184] The narratives and histories of both women and men offer essential insights into the resistance against prevailing gender dynamics.

The significance of these accounts lies in their capacity to elucidate local natural resource management, highlighting the active human agency and the role of individuals as social actors. Nevertheless, it is not solely what Scott refers to as public transcripts; the infrequent and transparent material contests regarding access to vital resources are equally significant. The significance of concealed narratives and the tactical contests over interpretation occurring in ambiguous spaces, which are not always apparent, is also essential.[185]

Gender relations can occasionally be expressed through overt conflicts, demonstrations, petitions, and uprisings; however, these actions do not encompass the entirety of the narrative. The expansive and intricate political arenas, frequently eluding direct scrutiny, are shaped by offstage discourses, gestures, and practices that either affirm, challenge, or nuance the prevailing ideologies surrounding gender relations. Thus, the ideological, symbolic, dissenting, and discursive politics that consistently challenge the boundaries of what is allowed or endorsed are fundamental to the examination of gender relations.[186] This fundamental truth has prompted the current research to incorporate Maragoli folk songs and aphorisms in order to contextualize the pre-colonial and colonial dynamics of food production and gender relations among the Maragoli people.

[184] Mbilinyi *Op*, *Cit*., p.52.
[185] Scott 1990, Quoted in Verma Ritu, *Op*, *Cit*., p.26.
[186] Schroeder 1996, p.20.

The interplay of knowledge, power, and human agency in negotiation and bargaining is fundamental to understanding the evolving dynamics of gendered social relations.Decisions regarding land, labor, and surplus within the household are pivotal elements in the context of resource struggles and accumulation.

Consequently, they play a pivotal role in comprehending the intricacies of food production and gender relations within specific contexts such as that of the Maragoli. To effectively interrogate the concept of the household, proponents of Gender Analysis contend that it is a multifaceted variable that cannot be understood in isolation from other institutions and relationships. Evans, in his discourse, suggests that pre-colonial African families exhibited dynamic and adaptable structures, wherein the delineation of boundaries proved to be quite elusive.[187] Indeed, the remarkable cross-cultural diversity of household forms nearly eludes precise definition.

This variety encompassed numerous facets of the domestic sphere. For example, the composition of families and households, along with the mechanisms through which social relations were facilitated via kinship, marriage, and other social institutions, resulted in a diverse array of conjugal and residential configurations.[188] As a way of moving beyond the household as a unit of analysis, Carney and watts suggest:

> It is the porosity of the household boundaries, the tensions and the competing interests among and between enterprises and individuals, the fluidity of the internal social processes and the constitutive role of eternal political economy that have become the bench marks of Pre-colonial African household studies.[189]

[187] Evans 1991, p. 54.
[188] Ibid.
[189] Carney and Watts, 1990. P.217.

Berry on his part in attempt to offer a way out of the household conundrum argues that the household should be treated as a point of departure for gender analysis.[190] The household is a socially constructed concept.

Its activities may not have a singular locus and any one locus does not necessarily represent a single unit of labour or resources.[191] Nonetheless, the household remains a valuable concept for exploring the effects of the different gendered interests, options and social relationships on dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations.

The conjugal contracts defined as the terms by which spouses exchange goods, incomes, and services including labour is a useful concept for drawing out these issues. It pays attention to the changing nature of these terms according to the broader changes in the political economy.[192] The conjugal contract varies depending on factors such as cultural patterns of inheritance and residence. And on the context to which resources are joined or pooled or dealt with as separate holdings.[193] Because of these types of factors, women's and men's access to resources such as labour, income and all other food production inputs is determined by their positions in relation to the complex webs of responsibilities, obligations and rights within conjugal contracts, kinship groups and the wider social and political economic environments.[194]

[190] Berry 1984, p. 28.
[191] Robberts, 1995, p.62.
[192] Whitehead Op, Cit., p.88.
[193] Evans *Op*, *Cit*., p.51.
[194] Ibid p.57.

Recognizing the fluidity of conjugal contracts makes it possible to focus on the complex interplay of power, knowledge, labour and resource relations and to incorporate gendered politics. The strategic and symbolic differences of partriachal discourses, the marital and non marital metaphors, the rhetorical struggles, the wars of words all these are used to determine gender relations and to shift responsibilities and rights within a changing political economy.[195] Understanding the complex overlapping rights and competing interests, relations of domination and cultural representations that produce and reproduce power relations is important in comprehending the power struggles associated with the control of resources.

The household also intersects a number of other social institutions such as kinship relations and other non sanctioned social organizations. Women and men increasingly invest in social instituions such as kinship relations as a diversification strategy whenever faced by increasing unstable economic conditions. Such relations offer a critical opportunity to explore struggles over resources and the way they are controlled, managed, accessed and made available to different people.[196]Women related social organizations provide women with autonomy and freedom to pursue their own interests and projects.

[195] Schroeder 1996 As Quoted in Verma Ritu, 2001, p.30.

[196] For more readings on this, Check Evans 1991 and White head 1981.

Non sanctioned social relationships such as extra marital sexwork are contentious yet important channels of accessing resources for women in difficult circumstances.[197] By exploring different multiple and sometimes hidden social institutions and relationships in which women and men invest as diversification strategies in the face of increasingly stressful circumstances, it is possible to explore how different types of context specific social institutions shape struggles in attempt to secure sufficiency in food production.[198]

There are also important links between social relationships, social institutions and partriarchy that shape the gender division of labour, property relations and responsibilities.[199] Partriachy is pervasive in influencing gender relations and the outcomes of men and women struggle in food production cycle. However, partriachy is not fixed, monolithic, timeless and unchanging. It is rather both a dominant ideology that underpins cultural norms, idioms, practices an unequitable social structure that shapes and permeates gender relations.[200] Women are not powerless within the structures and ideology of patriarchy.

They are actors who resist and manipulate patriarchy to access resources vital to the sustenance of their livelihoods especially and not only the various food production

[197] Verma Ritu Op. Cit., p.30. See Also Jefromova, 1991a, 1991b.
[198] Berry 1997, p.1228.
[199] Carney and Watts, Op, Cit., p.218.
[200] Judith Abwunza, *Op*, *Cit*., p. 33.

mechanisms.[201] The discussion on Gender Analysis as the main tool of analysis for this study notwithstanding, the nature of this study necessitated a second theory. This was because, the current study is an analysis of the dynamics of food production in colonial Maragoli.

Since colonialism in Kenya was a British economic exploitative agenda actualized through various state mechanisms, a stronger politically biased theory that would adequately problematize the colonial policies was brought in. More-over, for the purpose of properly situating the dynamics in food production, a theory that would juxtapose the pre-colonial and colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations was felt handy. This study picked the Articulation of Modes of Production theory to complement gender analysis theoretical stand.

1.11.2 Articulation of Modes of Production

In regard to origin, the theory originated in 1960's from Banaji's summary of Kautsky's "The agrarian question" which was first published in 1899.[202] This publication raised debates on relationship or articulation between capitalist and other modes of production. The theory came to wide usage in from 1980s. It is primarily concerned with interaction between different modes and social formations.

According to Gutkind and Wallerstein, the paradigm of Articulation of Modes of Production combines concepts of the dependency perspective (unequal exchange, the changing international division of labour and unequal development) with Marxist concerns

[201] Verma Ritu, *Op.Cit*., p.32.

[202]Jairus Banaji, "Illusions about Peasantry: Karl Kautsky and the Agrarian Question." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 17, no.2,1990. p. 300.

of accumulation within the spheres of production and the processes of class formation and class struggle.[203]

Articulation of Modes of Production as a theory is therefore an alternative approach to and a critique of the dependency perspective with its over-emphasis on capital accumulation.[204] This theory conceives a mode of production as an abstraction which links the material realities of everyday life in the society in which they occur. It is defined by societal forces of production and the corresponding relations of production. Thus, the inter-relationship between forces of production and the social relation of production makes up a society's mode of production or its economic structure.[205]

The paradigm is, therefore, an analytical approach within Marxist political economy. It is therefore explicitly historical, interdisciplinary and inter meshes the so called social economic and political factors of change in one ongoing historical process. Cooper while criticizing the above observes that unlike classical Marxism, which treats capitalism as an implacable entity redefining social structures through its own requirements, Articulation of Modes of Production emphasizes African's response to capitalism.[206] Kenyanjui observes that the concept of Articulation of Modes of Production therefore explains the process of penetration, interaction and conflict between the capitalist mode of production and pre-capitalist mode of production.[207] It also examines the role of the colonial state in

[203]Gutkind, Peter. "Proletarianism in Urban Africa." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 8, no. 3 (1978)., p.10.
[204] K.L Muchanga, *Op*, *Cit.*, p.39.
[205] F. Cooper., "Africa and the World Economy'' in *African Studies Review*, Vol.24, Nos2/3, London: O.U.P, 1981: p.2.
[206]Ibid., p.17.
[207]Kenyanjui K., "The Political Economy of Educational Inequality: A study of the Roots of Educational Inequality in Colonial and Pre-colonial Kenya", ED.D Dessertation; London: Harvard University,1979, p.11.

the process of interaction between the capitalist mode and indigenous modes.[208] In other words, the approach is suited to the study of colonial capitalism.

According to the perspective, introduction of capitalist mode of production did not eliminate pre-capital modes but rather reshaped them. Thus, the indigenous modes of production were progressively in subordinated to the capitalist mode of production through a process of dissolution, conservation and transformation.[209] In colonial Kenya, for example land alienation, taxation and forced labour were some of the mechanisms used by the colonial state to erode or dissolve the self-sufficiency of African economies.[210] Such incorporation or dissolution was done at the expense of a number of traditional African food production mechanisms such as hunting, gathering and traditional African food varieties such as millet. However, there were some aspects of pre-capitalist African economies such as land tenure systems which were left undisturbed so that these economies could reproduce cheap labour thereby subsidizing capital.

Articulation of Modes of Production recognizes the contribution of Africans to the current situation rather than putting the blame on western world. Articulation means the relationship that exists between the reproduction of capitalist economy and the production of the productive units organized according to pre-capitalist relations.[211]The capitalist mode of production gradually aligned itself with the non-capitalist modes and uses them to

[208]Berman, Bruce J., and John M. Lonsdale. "Crises of accumulation, coercion and the colonial state: the development of the labor control system in Kenya, 1919–1929." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 14, no. 1 (1980): 55-81., p.63.
[209]Ibid. p.71.
[210]Ibid., p.73.
[211]Göran Hydén, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: underdevelopment and an uncaptured peasantry*. Univ of California Press, 1980, p.79.

its benefit. This process made the periphery to become an. appendage to the capitalist World system.[212]

In the case of Maragoli, some pre-capitalist modes of production such as monopoly on subsistence production and the use of simple tools were destroyed while others survived within the capitalist system such as labor but in different social formation.[213] For instance, the capitalist mode of production emphasized on a system of production where labour itself became a commodity for sale in the market. This led to commercial relationship between peasant society and capitalists. Thus, in classical Marxist conception, "capitalist development" will always destroy "the socially accepted ideologically reinforced subordination of women".[214] The imports of these views are:

To begin with, the pre-colonial African women were largely subordinated, almost enslaved to men, and secondly, that modernization of pre-colonial societies as a result of the penetration of these societies by western values positively changed the statuses of African women, a conclusion which could be affirmed or negated only after a thorough historical study of the dynamics in gender relations in Maragoli a subset of the current study. Marxist theory, which also attracted many Africanists, did not push the study of gender in Africa any further than the modernization theory. In fact, Marx class system based on the ownership of the means of production could not apply to pre-colonial Africa, especially the Maragoli among whom property ownership, as will be shown in this study, was never

[212] K.L. Muchanga,1998, *Op*, *Cit*, p.39.
[213]Ibid., p.39.
[214]P.O. Ndege., *Op*, *Cit,* p.56.

so unilinear in the Marxist concept. Even if the concept of Articulation of Modes of Production is applied, the theory does not, in anyway, lend itself well to the analysis of pre-colonial African socioeconomic and political relationships.[215]

Marx was never concerned with non-peasantry societies such as existed in pre-colonial Maragoli society, because for him a peasant existed only when he produced within the context of capitalist mode of production. As he put it:

> The (capitalist farmer) sells his entire product and has therefore to place all his implements, even his seed, in the market, the (peasant) consumes the greater part of his product directly, buys and sells as little as possible, fashions, tools, makes clothing ..., so far as possible himself ... what characterizes capitalist production would then be ... the extent to which the product is treated as an article of commerce, commodity.... For this reason, capitalist (and hence also commodity production) does not reach its full scope until the direct agricultural producer becomes a wage-labourer.[216]

Marx's conception of peasantry would thus be more applicable to the present study since the study is interested in analyzing the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli with a view of producing knowledge about that society. But to do this it is hoped that the inquiry and the knowledge produced are looked at within a problematic whose components, which according to Bernstein and Depelchin, "include both a set of concept and a set of procedure which govern both the construction of the concepts and their employment in analysis".[217] The concepts that have been employed in this study are division of labour whose major objective was the fulfilment of certain goals in the society. This division is looked at within the context of communal mode of productions in the pre

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[215]L. D., Schiller., 'Gem and Kano: A Comparative Study of Stress in Two Traditional African Political Systems in Nyanza province, Western Kenya, C1850-1914' Staff Swminar paer No. 16 1976/77, Department of History, University of Nairobi., p.17.

[216]Walgio O Orwa, "An Investigation Of Vocational Education In Kenya With Reference To Village Polytechnic Programme." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 1982., p. 34.

[217]Henry Bernstein, and Jacques Depelchin. "The object of African history: a materialist perspective." *History in Africa* 5 (1978): 1-19., p.14.

-colonial Maragoli. The division was free from class antagonism which characterizes capitalist mode of production.

The other tool of analysis employed in this study is articulation which provides a base for examining the link between pre-capitalist societies and the capitalist state.[218]Mode of production embraces two aspects: forces and relations of production. Within the context of forces of production, one may include climatic factors, soils, the available raw material, technological aspects which include tools used, the skill, and knowledge applied and inventiveness of labour.[219] Man's ability to appropriate nature can be defined or looked at within the framework of forces of production. On the other hand, the organization and reproduction of labour, how what is produced is used and the way surplus is extracted and distributed – all these are elements of relations of production. But there is a linkage between forces and relations of production so that changes in one, do, in one way or the other, affect the other.[220]

The activities of individuals led to appropriation of nature, extraction and distribution of surplus produce which is basically done in "a given political, ideological and religious institutional framework".[221] All these forms what has been termed as super-structure and our notion of communal mode of production would seem to be linked with it. Thus, there is a relation between them, each determining the other. Meillassoux argues that once forces

[218]Ibid.
[219]Reuben M Matheka, "The Political Economy of Famine: Ecology and History in Machakos District during the Colonial Era." MA Thesis Kenyatta University, 1992., p.30.
[220]P.O. Ndege,1987., *Op., Cit*., p. 15.
[221]Ibid. p.16.

of production had developed, such development eventually led to division of labour which brought in new responsibilities and relationships which were economic in nature.[222]

Further, in a lineage-based system of cooperation in production, the appropriation and redistribution of the product by the elders puts the younger men in a relation of dependence, and at the same time ensures the reproduction of this dependence at social level.[223] Therefore, only the elders are in a position to acquire wives for themselves and their dependents, and a dependent must work for the elder in order to obtain the amount of dowry, and so the possibility in emancipating himself.[224] Dupre and Rey have also argued that in the pre-capitalist African societies women and juniors were exploited by elders who seemed to have had monopoly over the products of their labour.[225] They also "presided over the redistribution of surplus and also over juniors' marriage".[226]

Ndege quoting Terray examines the argument put forward by the latter that "exploitation exists when the control of the means of production gives those non-producers who exercise it the means to determine the amount of surplus allotted to themselves".[227] It is this type of control that places the producer in a position of subordination in relation to the non-producers. Although Marxist anthropologists like Meillassoux have argued that the' "kin-based societies have a class structure based on the appropriation by elders of the labour of women and young men" the argument seems to have been based on a misunderstanding of

[222]C.Meillassoux, (1972), *Op., Cit.,* p. 130.
[223]Ibid., p.132.
[224]Ibid p. 130.
[225]Dupre and Rey, (1973), *Op., Cit*., p.90.
[226]Peter O Ndege, (1987), *Op.Cit.,* p.11.
[227]Ibid, p.67.

the class system and its application to other societies. As Stamp has explained, "class is a category that is self-reproducing through relations of production.

An illustration of this can be a bourgeoisie maintaining itself through the production of capital from the value created by a working class".[228] Nkrumah explains that within such a structure "the ruling class possesses the major instruments of economic production and distribution, and the means of establishing its political dominance, while the subject class serves the interest of the ruling class, and is politically, economically and socially dominated by it.[229] A close examination of the Maragoli society demonstrated that in the context of communal mode of production and the flexibility of gender division "no group, was free to appropriate and accumulate the surplus produced by another group, for their own benefit. Moreover, within the Maragoli society as will be demonstrated in this work, the ability to appropriate value produced could not have been in the hands of elders.

Contrary to what is prevalent in the feminist literature, it was the women who had control over the surplus produce from the farm. This was as a result of their own personal initiative. Therefore, if anything, it is the women who could have appropriated labour of other groups since it is they who held monopoly over the surplus grains produced. There was no time when elders hoarded such commodities as will be explained in this study. It is lack of understanding of the various pre-capitalist African societies that has tended to lead western scholars into believing that all African societies were basically the same. Thus, some of them present distorted views of such societies as being exploitative in nature. The pre-

[228]C. Meillassoux, (1972). *Op*, *Cit*, p.78.
[229]Nkrumah. K., (1970). *Op, Cit,* p.13.

capitalist Maragoli society seems to indicate that the communal mode of production had the characteristics of classlessness as will be demonstrated in this study.

The other concept employed in this study is that of articulation. In an attempt to explain this concept, Berman states that it is "the linkage between two societies whose modes of production are dominated by a different developmental dynamic or internal logic".[230]This is exemplified by what "happened during the incorporation of pre-capitalist societies into the capitalist system".[231] Ndege quoting Berman explains that "Berman has argued that the articulation of the capitalist mode of production within African modes during the colonial period was a process of struggle and uncertainty in which the latter were partially transformed and preserved in the interest of capitalism".[232]

The articulation of the colonial state with pre-capitalist political and economic structures will be helpful in understanding the impact of the colonial state and how the indigenous peoples responded to it. An analysis of the major objective of the colonial state in establishing colonial administrative structure for the maintenance of law and order will help put this in perspective. This was achieved through punitive expeditions. Once this was done, it created an atmosphere conducive for economic exploitation of the area. Therefore, there was a direct linkage between the search for economic territory and quest for political territory, so that changes in one automatically affected the other. Thus, the appointment of new chiefs, the establishment of native councils, the establishment of the court systems by

[230]Berman, Bruce J. "The concept of “articulation” and the political economy of colonialism." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 18, no. 2 (1984): 407-414., p. 409.
[231]Peter, Ndege O., (1987). *Op., Cit.,* p.8.
[232]Ibid., p.8.

the colonial state and the partnership between the colonial state and Christian church - all created a conducive atmosphere for the success of colonial economy.

The colonial state played a major role in the articulation of pre-capitalist modes of production with world capitalism and no doubt this created an impact on African social formation. That the colonial state "represented capitalist interest and coopted indigenous rulers to suppress those whom it exploited" and rendered it a capitalist state.[233]

In Kenya, the Marxist debate has concentrated around the consequences of articulation of capitalist mode of production with peasantry mode of production with some asserting that this articulation marginalized and pauperized the peasant producers.[234] Like Marx himself these scholars have not been interested in how articulation of modes of production affect sexes division of labour in the pre-capitalist and colonial social systems. It is assumed that men owned land and that when the settler capitalist appropriated land, the Kenyan peasantry became landless squatters and pauperized. But it is not indicated which sex was more pauperized nor are we told whether pauperization was similar across the sexes.[235] Africans were exploited and most of their pre-capitalist activities modified to fit to the capitalist mode of production.

The reshaping of various African economic aspects had a great effect on food production. The colonial policies did not favor adequate subsistence production but cash crop

[233]Ibid., p.13.
[234]ES Atieno Odhiambo, "The cultural dimensions of development in Africa." *African Studies Review* 45, no. 3 (2002) p.13.
[235]P.T. Zeleza, T. "The Establishment of Colonial Rule 1925 – 1920", In Ochieng', W. (ed.) *A Modern History of Kenya 1895 – 1980.* London: Evans Brother Limited, 1989, p.56.

production. Ignoring food crop growing made famines inevitable in most Kenyan communities.

The concept of articulation has faced a number of scholarly criticisms, such scholars have pointed out that linking different modes of production together weakens a mode of production making it lack of a base to reproduce itself. For instance, Clarence Smith argues that modes of production were non existent in Africa and that African only had models and abstractions.[236] He raises his contentions to a higher level and discounts the application of the concepts of articulation. Another critique comes from Klein who joins Smith to discredit the use of the concept of modes of production, especially in creating typologies.[237] The fore mentioned criticisms notwithstanding, Articulation of Modes of Production as theoretical framework has received accolades from a variety of scholars.

Freud and Newbury support the use of the mode of production concept in historical analysis[238]. The two support the use of articulation especially for the colonial era in which there are evidences of destruction, transformation and preservation.[239] The concept of Articulation of Modes of Production has some limitations. There is no pure mode of production as years of articulation have resulted into different forms of hybridizations. Consequently, a problem of specificity and particularization of individual modes of production.[240]

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[236] Clarence-Smith, William Gervase. *The Third Portuguese Empire, 1825-1975: a study in economic imperialism*. Manchester University Press, 1985.p.10.
[237] K. L. Muchanga., (1998), *Op., Cit*., p.40.
[238] Freud, Peter. (1985) *Op, Cit,* p.57.
[239] Ibid p.59.
[240] K.L. Muchanga., *Op, Cit,* p.40.

Putting into consideration the highlighted limitations, it is therefore evident that the concept cannot be used to analyze African history 'in toto'. The concept can therefore be appreciatable when the colonial and post independent Africa is put in perspective.[241]

Despite these limitations, the concept has assisted in examining the role of the colonial state in the process of the interaction between the capitalist and indigenous modes of production. Thus, it is a good tool by which the study of colonial capitalism may be enhanced.

In colonial Kenya, land alienation, taxation and forced labour were some of the mechanisms used by the colonial state to erode or dissolve the' self-sufficiency' of African economies.[242]The theory is anchored on a number of key tenets, according to Meillassoux, Claude,[243] These include; Firstly, every society has a mode of productions which is an abstraction which links the material realities of everyday life in the society in which they occur. In addition, a mode of production or the economic structure of a society is defined by forces of production and the corresponding social relations of production. Terence Ranger, also notes that capitalist mode of production upon its introduction in Africa interacted with the pre-colonial modes of production in a number of ways leading to; destruction, preservation and modification.[244] All these aimed at exploitation of the earlier modes of production, particularly in the periphery.

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[241] Ibid. p.100.

[242] Maxon, Robert. "The colonial financial system." *An Economic History of Kenya. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers. Retrieved from http://www. worldcat. org/title/economic-history-ofkenya/oclc/655670874* (1992)., p.62.

[243] Meillassoux, Claude. *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.

[244][244] Hobsbawm, Eric, and Terence Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983. p.56

Additionally, according to the theory, various modes of production co-exist within a given society. This implies that, Societies can exhibit multiple modes of production simultaneously (e.g., capitalist wage labor alongside subsistence farming). These modes are not isolated but interact with and influence each other.

Moreover, there is no pure or single M.O.P existing on its own. Different modes of production are integrated through institutions such as the state, market, or colonial administration. This integration often leads to exploitation and transformation of traditional systems.[245]

Another tenet is that the articulation process is always conflict ridden.[246] Articulation creates contradictions (e.g., between capitalist accumulation and communal land tenure), which can lead to resistance, transformation, or collapse of existing systems. The seveth tenet is that capitalist penetration involved both building upon Kenya's traditional economies and introducing new elements in the economic system. Different modes of production are integrated through institutions such as the state, market, or colonial administration. This integration often leads to exploitation and transformation of traditional systems. And finally, capitalist mode of production gradually aligned itself with the non-capitalist modes and uses them to its benefit. This, therefore, means that Articulation is not static; over time, subordinate modes may be transformed or destroyed, usually favoring the expansion of capitalism.[247]

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[245] Wolpe, Harold. "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid." *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–56.

[246] Ibid

[247] Worsley, Peter. *The Three Worlds: Culture and World Development*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984.

Narrowing down to Maragoli, this articulation manifested in the coexistence of women's subsistence farming with men's participation in wage labour and export-oriented agriculture, producing tensions, displacements, and new gendered inequalities. By combining the Gender Analysis and articulation of modes of production approaches, the study was able to link structural transformations in the colonial economy with the lived experiences of men and women, thereby revealing how shifts in production mechanisms directly reshaped gender relations and laid the foundation for enduring inequalities in Kenyan agriculture.

1.11.3 Conceptual Model

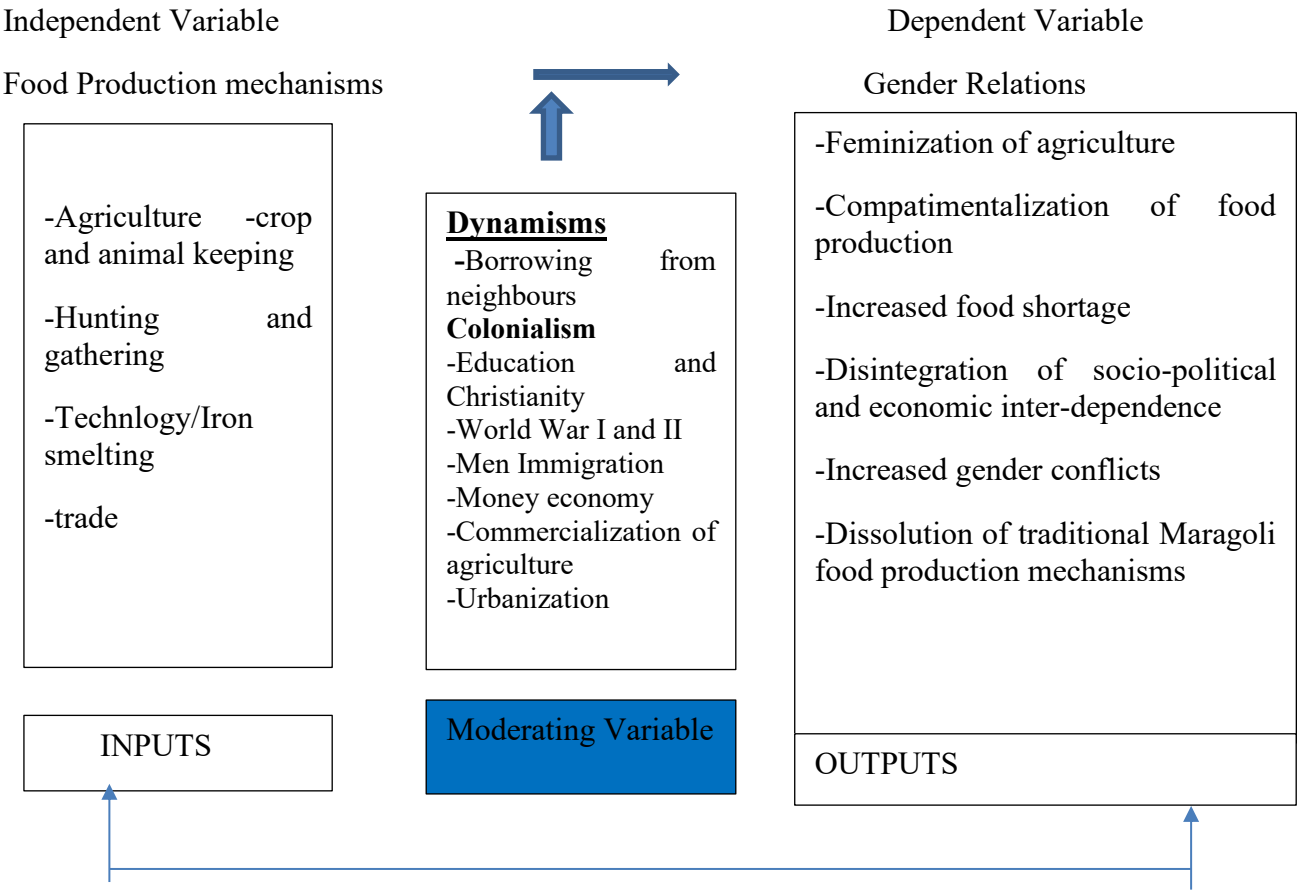

Fig 1.1 Conceptualizing dynamics in food production and gender relations

(Source: Researcher 2024)

Fig.1.1 illustrates the conceptual model that guided the study. In the model, a demonstration is made on how the independent variable, moderating variable and the dependent variable interacted in the course of the study. The two theories, Gender Analysis and Articulation of Modes of Production, guided the formulation of this conceptual framework. The independent variable is the food production mechanisms.

The inputs impact the gender relations in the colonial Maragoli. The dynamisms in food production were as a result of several factors and trends that originated from both within and without the colonial Maragoli. These two factors in a way or the other have a bearing on the resultant colonial Maragoli gendered food production mechanisms.

Agriculture which is the main food production mechanism in Maragoli is at the top of the independent variable; food production mechanism. Agricultural production from both crops and livestock among the Maragoli greatly impacted on the Maragoli food production sub-sector. Through agriculture, the Maragoli got the surplus to exchange, baskets and pots (crafts) to store their produce and even iron implements for farming, ornamentation and even bows, arrows and spears and knives for defence and hunting.

The Maragoli food production mechanisms has also been influenced by borrowing from their neighbours. The Maragoli though initially crop cultivators, their interaction with pastolists especially Kalenjins made them borrow ideas on livestock keeping and related practices. More-over, there were a number of crop varieties such as Sorghum, millet, which were borrowed from their neighbours like the Luo, Gusii, Idakho, Isukha among other Luhya communities. Finally, the Maragoli through interaction with the Luo borrowed

various ideas on fish eating. This made the Maragoli later integrate fish into their diet and also made fish a key item of trade between the Maragoli and the Luo.

Colonialism has come out to be a key singlemost external factor that has greatly impacted the pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms and the related gender relations. This colonial impact came out clearly through the various policies which were introduced during the colonial era.

The pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms were articulated into the colonial production system. The interconnectivity between colonial policies and the colonial state has made the apologists of the articulation of modes of production theory refer to these changes as key aspects of colonial capitalism. Among the major state policies introduced by the colonial state included Christianity, Western education, male immigration, taxation, individualization of land, among others. Christianity in Maragoli was introduced through the Quaker Friends mission at Kaimosi and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) at Nyang'ori. These two mission centres especially the Kaimosi one attracted the Maragoli boys mostly of the widowed women. These women on seeing their sons run to the Kaimosi mission centre turned to their late husbands' kinsmen to report their way ward sons to reprimand them and prevent them from straying away from the Maragoli way of life. However, there were those boys who stack to their decision and even a thorough bitting from their uncles never changed their minds. In the mission centre, they were taught whiteman's mannerisms and way of life.

Christianity as a new religion also brought in division of the initially close knit Maragoli society tnrough the introduction of the Christian villages which now became the basis of

Maragoli settlement. Under this new arrangement, the Maragoli Christian converts established a new residence characterized by the new Christian life style. This brought about a breakdown in the pre-colonial Maragoli labour appropriation system especially the communal pool labour- *ovufuva* which had been of great importance especially during the peak agricultural seasons such as planting and harvesting. This reduced labour supply consequently meant a reduction in food production.

The new converts were also discouraged from mingling with the heathens and also involving in superstitious traditional Maragoli practices. Some of these so-called susperstitious involved preservation of Maragoli foods, rituals to ensure boundful harvest, preservation of the Maragoli ecology to ensure continued and sustained food production. Neglect of all these maragoli traditional practices contributed to food shortage and starvation in the colonial Maragoli.

Individualization of land was another colonial policy. Through this policy, the communal Maragoli land ownership practice was dissolved. In the colonial maragoli, there was introduction of the land title deeds. These titles were given to the male members hence sidelining the women from land ownership. Unlike the pre-colonial Maragoli where women were given unlimited usurfrant right to land with the council of elders strictly controlling the male land owner, the colonial maragoli witneseed a dramatic change. After the individualized titles, a majority of male land owners began disposing land with very little consent from the wife and children. This new situation reduced women access to land for food production.

The introduction of inedible cash crops first through coffee and later tea also changed the Maragoli food production. Coffee as the initial inedible cash crop in Maragoli land had some gendered features. First the crop remunerations were tied to the titular owner who mostly happened to be the man. Since the rural labour force was predominantly sourced from women, the same women being delinked from coffee remuneration worked against coffee crop success in Maragoli. All coffee payments were given to plot number registered owners who happened to be men. Upon its introduction, tea as a cash crop picked a number of lessons from the challenges that faced coffee. Tea payments had a flexible gendered approach. Both men and women had equal chances to access the tea benefits.

This was because, these tea payments were given to the tea farmers as per the registration details. This was alittle bit flexible since the process had been delinked from titular ownership requirement.

Women took advantage of this and concentrated on tea bushes at the expense of coffee bushes. Even cases where the registered titular men were absent and the payments were due; the wife went to the area sub-chief for an introduction letter confirming her as the wife to the owner of the tea bushes hence accessing the payment. This balanced gender access to the tea benefits helped tea to be sustained for a longer period compared to coffee. All these not withstanding, the introduction of inedible cash crops reduced the women agricultural farm for food crop production. Maragoli women having been socialized to be producers and sustainers of their families turned to non farm activities such as petty trading. Through trading activities, the Maragoli women joined the nearby shopping centres such as Mbale, Chavakali and Lunyerere. Among the key goods the women traded in included fish, maize, beans and the newly introduced colonial crops. Through trade, women were

able to redeem their lost glory in food production by providing the essentials to their families.

Gender relations in colonial Maragoli has been chosen as the dependent variable, with gender analysis as a theoretical standpoint playing a significant role. Through gender relations, the changes in food production as they have impacted on Maragoli men and women the key players in food production is brought out. Dynamics in food production catalysed by colonialism as the main agent of change has brought about feminization of agriculture, compatimentalization of food production, increased food shortage, disintegration of socio-political and economic interdependence, increased gender conflicts and dissolution of traditional food production mechanisms.

Due to introduction of new cash crops especially tea, the previous Maragoli food reserves such as forests and marshy areas were cleared and used for tea cultivation. The forests in the pre-colonial Maragoli had served as reserves for supplementing the agricultural food production especially during drought seasons. This was through such forests acting as hunting and gathering grounds for both Maragoli men and women. The marshy areas on their part had acted as cultivation lands for Maragoli crops such as yams and millet. Clearing of such lands therefore limited the Maragoli food reserves leading to food shortage. The boys and gilrs who were heavily relied on to take over after apprenticeship were now going to schools and the opened colonial labourforce. The conceptualized tripartite relationship between the independent, dependent and moderating variables shows how the relationships between the variables as informed by the theories, helped to explain the dynamics in food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

1.12 Summary of Major Gaps

In summary, this section has reviewed a number of studies related to the present study in the order of specific objectives. From the reviews, the following major gaps emerged. Foremost, there has been no study which has historicized the Maragoli pre-colonial food production mechanisms. Among the existing studies on pre-colonial Maragoli a mention on food production mechanisms is made but in passing.[248] The present study, therefore, steps in to fill this gap.

Moreover, Gender is one of the key aspects of human society that in a variety of ways shape human society and development. However, in the pre-colonial Maragoli, there exists no study which has attempted to link gender relations and the Maragoli historical realities. The researcher, therefore decided to use gender as a tool of analysis in order to interrogate the Maragoli pre-colonial history as a way of filling the existing gap.

Turning to colonial era, there exists no study of the Maragoli which has categorically divided the various colonial epochs for a thorough investigation since each of these epochs had its own unique interactions and resultant impacts on pre-colonial Maragoli aspects. This explains why the present study decided to divide the colonial era into the three eras. According to this study, colonialism was the biggest agent of change to the established pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms. It is from this backdrop that the present

[248] Gwako, Edwins Laban Moogi. "Polygyny among the Logoli of western Kenya." *Anthropos* (1998): 331-348., p.336.

study concentrated on colonial Maragoli as the period of study to fill the existing gap on Maragoli colonial food production dynamics.

In addition, it is evident that agricultural history both at continental and national level has been fairly addressed. However, most of the studies have been done from a physical and macro-levels. The specificity of agricultural endeavours however calls for a further interrogation. It is in this regard that the current study adopted a specific study area of Maragoli and narrowed on gender relations and food production mechanisms. Due to the great significance of colonialism on Maragoli food production, the present study chose to deeply delve into the colonial era. This was through dividing the era into three epochs; the initial colonial era;1895-1920, the inter War period;1920-1945 and finally the 1945-1963 era. This is because, previous studies on Maragoli have lamped together the colonial era as one big bomb shell.

The present study took cognizance of the unique happenings under each epoch and investigated how each epoch impacted on the established Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender realtions.Moreover, food sufficiency globally has been identified as precursor for industrial take-of. Therefore, for Kenya to industrialize, the micro-Kenyan food production systems Maragoli included must be properly situated. It is only when this is done that the Kenyan case will be properly analysed hence the need for a study like the present one. Since food production is predominantly dependent on women labour, a proper understanding of how this social group has been aided or disadvantaged by other social, political and economic changes over time is essential. Quick and haphazard fixes devoid of a critical historical lense stand to be blamed for the recurrent Kenyan and by extension African agrarian crisis.

In conclusion, it is evident that agricultural history both at continental and national level has been fairly addressed. However, most of the studies have been done from a climatic, technological and macro levels. The specificity of agricultural endeavours calls for a further interogation. It is in this regard that the current study adopted a specific sudy area of Maragoliland and narrows on gender relations and food production mechanisms. It is hoped that the study will help both the African academia and policy formulators unravel and appreciate the mystery in Maragoli food production mechanisms and the gender relations.

1.13 Research Methodology

Among the key sub-sections of this section include the study area, study population, sampling techniques, study collection equipment and data processing techniques. The section winds up with ethical issues considered in the research. In this section, description of the research approaches and procedures used to gather, analyze and present research data are discussed.

Babbie and Marton while commenting on research methodology opine that a research methodology act as a road map for the study clearly states the specific duties and techniques carried out and applied during the research.[249]

[249]Pontian G. Okoth, "Research as a cornerstone of quality assurance in University Education with specific reference to Uganda Martyrs University." *Journal of science and sustainable development* 5, no. 1 (2012) p.40

1.13.1 Research Underpinnings and Paradignms

Feminist epistemology and interpretivism ideas are well-suited to this study. This is because, feminist epistemology, which values marginalized perspectives and critiques power dynamics, illuminates the gendered impacts of colonial agricultural policies. It underscores how colonial interventions often reinforced patriarchal structures, affecting women's roles in food production. Additionally, interpretivism, focusing on understanding human experiences within specific historical and cultural contexts, complements this by emphasizing the subjective meanings and lived experiences of Maragoli women. Moreover, ontologically, both approaches assume that reality is socially constructed and contingent on historical and cultural contexts. This ontology supports the examination of how colonialism redefined gender relations and agricultural practices, highlighting the interplay between external forces and local gender dynamics.

Together, these philosophical underpinnings offer an indepth understanding of how colonialism reshaped food production and gender roles in Maragoli, emphasizing the importance of context and marginalized voices in historical analysis.

1.13.2 Research Approach

There exists two main reaserch approaches; quantitative and qualitative. The nexus between qualitative and quantitative research lies in their complementarity: while quantitative methods focus on numerical data, patterns, and generalizations, qualitative approaches emphasize meanings, interpretations, and lived experiences. In studying the history of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli, qualitative research is more appropriate because the available sources—such as oral traditions, archival records, and missionary documents—are largely narrative rather than

statistical.[250] Moreover, gender relations and cultural practices are better understood through interpretation of experiences and symbolic meanings than through numbers alone.[251] Since colonial records often marginalized or distorted African voices, qualitative methods provide the flexibility to reconstruct silenced perspectives, capture the complexities of changing food production systems, and reveal how Maragoli men and women negotiated shifting roles under colonial pressures.[252] Thus, qualitative inquiry offers the depth necessary to uncover both the processes and meanings behind historical transformations.

This method allows for the exploration of a wide gender dynamics and personal experiences of colonial agricultural changes. Through interviews, oral histories, and document analysis, researchers can uncover the subjective meanings and lived realities of Maragoli individuals. This approach is essential for capturing the complex interplay between colonial policies and local gender relations, providing rich, contextualized insights that quantitative methods might overlook. Thus, qualitative research offers a comprehensive and empathetic understanding of historical gendered experiences which this study delved expansively on.

1.13.3 Research Design

The study used a historical research design. It is a technique in which a researcher sequentially organizes data in relation to past events in order to establish the causation and

[250] John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History: Aims, Methods and New Directions in the Study of Modern History* (London: Routledge, 2015), 122.
[251] Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), 45.
[252] Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 87.

effect trends.[253] This was in order to help comprehend the past, present and the projected future happenings. This design was chosen due to the nature of the objectives that guided the study. This study sought to establish facts and draw conclusions about dynamics of food production mechanisms in relation to gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

The narrations are descriptive in the historical research design.[254] This involved reconstruction of the past by building a significant narrative as a result of the researcher engaging in a dialogue with the sources. In the context of the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli, the necessity of a thorough historical research design was found necessary. An elaborate contextualization of the food production mechanisms and gender relations within the colonial spectrum were adequately analyzed.

By using a historical perspective, the study targeted at unfolding the complexities of food production and gender relations by historizing the pre-colonial Maragoli food production and gender roles, how it changed during the initial colonial era; 1895-1920, the Inter-war period;1920-1945 and finally during the post-World -War II era;1945-1963. This was in order to help the study adequately situate the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli.

As a research design, historical design helped the research engage in a chronological analysis of events and developments. For example, in the pre-colonial Maragoli, food production was highly valued and everybody was assigned distinct but complementary roles to ensure a continuous seamless food production cycle. However, on the onset of

[253] Smith, Ruth Ann, and David S. Lux. "Historical method in consumer research: Developing causal explanations of change." *Journal of Consumer Research* 19, no. 4 (1993): 595-610. p.605.
[254]Corinne Strydom, and M. E. Tlhojane. "Poverty in a rural area: the role of the social worker." *Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk* 44, no. 1 (2008)., p.137.

colonialism, a number of colonial policies were rolled out in Maragoli which greatly re-organized the pre-colonial food production mechanisms. These policies ranged from taxation, commercialization of the Maragoli agriculture and the male labour migration. The historical contexts, therefore, helped the study locate the genesis of the dynamics in food production with precision that no other design would match.

Additionally, the historical research design facilitated a contextual appreciation of the socio-economic and geo-political happenings that shaped the colonial Maragoli food production and gender relations during the study period. By highlighting the key water shed moments such as World war I and II and their impact on colonial policies, the study elucidated the impact of such changes on the established food mechanisms and gender relations. In order to achieve this, the dialogues start with a timeline of events and thereafter interrogate the puzzles of why the occurrences in question happened and how they are related to one another.

It is this relationship that helped the researcher piece together the happenings in order to create the unique historical thread which makes the narrative historical. These procedures helped to interpret and relate these reports and observations of the participants into a thorough account. This is usually through the answer the participants give to the research questions as per the dictates of the interpretivism research philosophy.[255]In the words of Stydom, Fouche and Delport, a research design is a specification of the adequate operations aimed at testing a specific hypothesis under a given condition.[256] Kothari describes

[255]F. Tuli, (2010), p.56
[256]Earl Babbie, and J. Mouton. "Social research." *Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Group* (2002), p.67.

research design as the arrangement of conditions for collection and analysis of data in a manner that aims to combine relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

A research design can be perceived as the conceptual frame within which the research is conducted. It is the process by which the topic is turned into a researchable project.[257] For effectiveness in research, a researcher is obliged to identify the best research approach and there after implement the research design in two parts. First the researcher must begin by identifying with precision what he/she wishes to explore, and there after go for the most appropriate plan to implement this. In his submissions, Jackson argues that a research design is an arrangement of conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that is aimed at combining relevance to the research purpose with economy in procedure.

Among the cardinal defining features of a historical design was its emphasis on primary sources ranging from archival sources, official records and oral inteviews. These sources provided first hand accounts which greatly enriched the study.

1.13.4 Target Population

In research, a population consists of all elements—individuals, objects, and events—that meet the criteria for inclusion in a study. According to Burns and Grove, the target population refers to the specific group from which the sample is drawn, representing the entire population within the study area.[258]In regard to the 2019 housing and population

[257]M. Elizabeth H., Hammond, Daniel F. Hayes, Mitch Dowsett, D. Craig Allred, Karen L. Hagerty, Sunil Badve, Patrick L. Fitzgibbons et al. "American Society of Clinical Oncology/College of American Pathologists guideline recommendations for immunohistochemical testing of estrogen and progesterone receptors in breast cancer (unabridged version)." *Archives of pathology & laboratory medicine* 134, no. 7 (2010): p.60.

[258] Nancy Burns and Susan K. Grove, *The Practice of Nursing Research: Conduct, Critique, and Utilization* Elsevier, 2005, p.15.

census, Sabatia Sub County had a population of 131,628 of which 62,944 were males and 66,683 were females.[259] Vihiga Sub County on other hand had a population of 95,292 residents of which 45,788 were males and 49,501 were females.[260]

The Maragoli males and females aged eighteen years and above therefore constituted the study's target population. The data for this study was therefore collected from this population. All the Maragoli people from all walks of life aged eighteen years and above qualified for inclusion into this research. This was because each one of them had his or her unique and diverse ways of obtaining food for his/her daily subsistence. It was from such varied food production mechanisms that a comparison between the pre-colonial and colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms were juxta paused in order to ascertain the dynamics in food production and the related gender relations.

The data from the respondents was supplemented with information from other sources as part of triangulation which is acceptable as a technique in historical study. [261]

1.13.5 Sample size and Sampling Techniques

A manageable sample size was determined from the target population. Being a qualitative type of research, the study lacked a definite sample size hence the choice of purposive and snowball-sampling techniques that were necessary to objectively collect relevant historical information from the respondents. With this in mind, therefore, there was no specific quantitative formula that was used to derive the number of informants who were

[259]Laureen M. Karima, "Demographic Patterns of Socio-economic Needs; Informing Public Resource Allocation Criteria in Kenya." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2022., p.18.
[260]Ibid. p.20.
[261]N. C Lumuli, "An investigation into internal efficiency measures in promotion of access and completion rates in public secondary schools in Bungoma South District." *Unpublished M. Ed Thesis, University of Nairobi* (2009)., p.25.

interviewed during field work. This study made use of 150 respondents. This was after research attained content saturation level hence no more new information could be gathered from more respondents.

Involvement of agricultural officers was critical because they were influential and important links between the government and the local people especially in policy formulation and implementation. This group gave key highlights on food production policies and the gender interplay. The manner in which this group was influenced by the colonial food production related policies provided them with critical information that informed the study findings. In addition, experts on historical matters related to food production and gender were considered to be of great impact to the study.

This was because they were regarded to have vital information regarding food production and gender and how the two have been changing over time. The experts further helped the study contextualize and interpret the various historical happenings and trends in order to enrich the study through their expertise. Their insights enhanced the study's interpretation of historical data and permitted a comparative analysis of the pre-colonial and colonial food production and gender dynamics in colonial Maragoli. More-over, experts in history helped the study in developing policy recommendations based on lessons learnt from the ealier happenings.

The religious groups were included to compare how these groups were in any way contributing to food production and gender relations. This was upon realization the pivotal role that religion played in the pre-colonial Maragoli agriculture especially through the

institution of *Musalisi Munene*-the senior-most religious leader who always opened the agricultural Maragoli cycle at Mungoma.

1.13.6 Study Area

Maragoli is a Luhya sub group found in western Kenya and speaks the *Lulogoli* dialect. The term also refers to a geographical area curved out during the colonial times as a division in the Kakamega district and covers 198 square Kilometers immediately north of the equator. Currently, Maragoli land is situated in two sub counties of Vihiga and Sabatia in Vihiga County as per the 2010 constitution.[262] Maragoli land, the cultural heartland of the Maragoli people—one of the principal sub-groups of the Luhya community—is primarily situated within Vihiga and Sabatia subcounties of Vihiga County in western Kenya.

Vihiga Subcounty, home to the administrative center Mbale, serves as a vibrant hub for governance and cultural activities, anchoring the Maragoli identity in the region. Sabatia Subcounty, encompassing key towns like Chavakali and surrounding areas, complements this heritage with its rich traditions and historical significance. Together, Vihiga and Sabatia form the core of Maragoli land, bordered by neighboring communities and counties such as Kakamega to the north and Kisumu to the south, and characterized by lush hills, dense population, and a strong sense of cultural continuity.[263]

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[262]RoK, 2010 Constitution.

[263] Mapcarta. "Maragoli Map - Village - Vihiga County, Kenya." Accessed September 19, 2025. https://mapcarta.com/12721156, Ombima, Martin. "Rocky Hills Where a Forest Once Stood and the Plan to Regrow It." *The Star*, May 18, 2021. https://www.the-star.co.ke/counties/coast/2021-05-18-rocky-hills-where-a-forest-once-stood-and-the-plan-to-regrow-it, and Sabatia Constituency. "About Sabatia Constituency." *National Government Constituency Development Fund*. Accessed September 19, 2025. https://sabatia.ngcdf.go.ke/.

In this section, a number of aspects will be outlined in regard to the study area. These will include; demographic background of the Maragoli, Geo-economic description of the Maragoli and finally the physical features of the Maragoli land.

1.13.6.1 Demographic Background of the Maragoli

According to the 2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census, Vihiga County had a total population of 590,013, with Sabatia and Vihiga sub-counties accounting for 131,628 and 104,383 people respectively.[264] In Sabatia, the population comprised 62,816 males and 68,804 females, while Vihiga sub-county had 49,715 males and 54,667 females, reflecting a consistent gender imbalance favoring females.[265]

Major urban centers such as Mbale in Vihiga and Chavakali in Sabatia have also shown steady growth, with Mbale hosting approximately 60,000 residents and Chavakali around 20,000 as of 2019.[266] By 2025, projections based on a 2.1% annual growth rate estimate Vihiga County's population to reach approximately 652,130, with Sabatia and Vihiga sub-counties growing to around 146,800 and 116,400 respectively. These projections suggest that the relative population shares and gender distribution of Sabatia and Vihiga sub-counties have remained stable, while urban centers continue to expand as part of the county's development strategy.

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[264] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, *2019 Kenya Population and Housing Census: Volume I – Population by County and Sub-County* (Nairobi: KNBS, 2019), 25, https://www.knbs.or.ke/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/2019-Kenya-population-and-Housing-Census-Volume-1-Population-By-County-And-Sub-County.pdf.

[265] Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, "Sabatia and Vihiga Sub-County Profiles," *Kenya Open Data Portal*, 2019,https://kenya.opendataforafrica.org/rickyg/2019-kenya-population-and-housing-census-volume-i-population-by-county-and-sub-county?county=1003100-sabatia.

[266] Vihiga County Government, *Vihiga County Urban Integrated Development Strategy*, June 2019, https://vihiga.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/UPDATED_CUIDS.pdf.

1.13.6.2 Geo-Economic Description of Maragoliland

In terms of agriculture, the county arable land is 404.8Km^2 being 76% of the county's area coverage. The main crops in the county include tea, coffee, bananas and horticulture crops. Other food crops include maize, beans, sweet potatoes, vegetables, millet and sorghum. Majority of farmers plant atleast two crops for food through intercropping during the long rains (April to June) and short rains (September to November).[267]The average farm size in the county is 0.4ha for small scale and 3ha for large scale farming. In terms of land use, 98.7% of the arable land is under farming, mostly subsistence, while 1.3% is under housing. The major activities that drive the county economy are; cottage industries, small scale subsistence farming, Tea farming, wholesale and Retail trade, quarrying and mining. Contributions from the diaspora though significant have not been captured to reflect the external impact of the county economy.

Agriculture remains the backstay of the economy of the county with approximately 85% of the inhabitant directly or indirectly depending on the sector.[268] Proportion of parcels with title deeds is 28.3% while the rest are communal. Women and youth ownership of land is also low due to cultural barriers. This has limited access to credit from financial institutions.[269]The high population density in Maragoli land has also led to further sub division of land into uneconomical parcels. Poverty level in Maragoli land is at 39% compared to the national's 45%. This is a decrease from the previous planning period 2013-

[267]Ibid. p.524.
[268]CIDP, Vihiga 3rd Generation County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP 2023–2027), Kenya Literature Bureau 2023, p.1.
[269]Ibid.p.6.

2017. High percentage of Maragoli land is in agriculture and rural development sector. Agriculture provides 70% of employment opportunities.

The population is predominantly self-employed engaging in small scale businesses and farming. The county's labourforce is 15-64years which translates to 49% of working population. The composition of this labourforce was 55% female and 45% male.[270]

The available storage facilities in the county are; NCPB silos, improved granaries, traditional stores and bags. The silos are located in Chavakali and Hamisi market centres. However, they operate below capacity due to low crop production. The county does not have sufficient storage facilities that support livestock, horticulture and fish farming.[271]

The county is categorized into two main agro-ecologicla zones, the upper and lower mid lands. These zones dictate land use patterns and population settlement in the county. The upper midland zone comprises of Hamisi, Sabatia and parts of Vihiga Sub counties is well drained with fertile soils[272].The county experiences equatorial type of climate with fairly well distributed rainfall through-out the year with an average annual precipitation of 1900mm. Long rains are experienced in the months of March, April and May while short rains are experienced in the months of September, October, and November. The driest and hottest months are December, January and February.[273]

[270]VCIDP, Vihiga County Integrated Development Plan 2018-2022, Kenya Literature Bureau, 2017, p.8
[271]Ibid.p.11.
[272]CIDP, Vihiga 3rd Generation County Integrated Development Plan (CIDP 2023–2027), Kenya Literature Bureau 2023, p.4.
[273]Ibid.p.3.

1.13.6.3 Physical Features in Maragoli Land

Maragoli land is in Vihiga County in the Western part of Kenya and agriculture is the most prevalent economic activity. The outstanding topographical feature in Maragoli is the Maragoli Hills, which rise to heights of over 600 feet. The southern boundary of these hills is defined by the Maseno and Maragoli faults. The Vahani River, flowing Southward towards Lake Victoria has deeply incised an area between the peaks of the hills. The northern area forms a peneplain, lying at 4500 to 5000 feet above the sea level. Except in zones bordering the hills, where sandy soils and large rocks predominate, the soils from the volcanic rocks are richly red and fertile.[274]

Currently, Maragoli land is made up of two administrative units, that is Sabatia sub county and Vihiga subcounty which are 110.90 and 90.2 square Kilometres in size respectively. Sabatia as a sub county has six administrative wards namely; Chavakali, Busali, North Maragoli, SabatiaWest, Wodanga and Liaduywa/Izava. While Vihiga sub county has four administrative wards namely; Lugaga/Wamuluma, Central Maragoli, South Maragoli and Mungoma.[275]

[274]Ibid.p.3.
[275]Ibid.p.4.

MAP OF KENYA LOCATING THE STUDY AREA



Figure 1.1: Map of Vihiga and Sabatia Sub-counties in Vihiga County

Source: Vihiga County Integrated Development Plan (2018-2022)

1.13.6.4 Validity of Research Instruments

Validity deals with how accurately the data obtained in the study represents the variables of the study and is largely determined by the presence or absence of systematic error in the study. Validity represents the truthfulness of the findings.[276] The research instruments were validated in terms of content and face validity. Content validity measured the degree to which data collected using the research instruments represented the content of the concepts under study. Research instruments were given to the supervisors to cross check the contents and ascertain quality, proficiency and credibility. Content validity involved assessing whether or not there was a logical link between the two variables that form the concept under investigation.[277] The researcher also employed triangulation where the research was done from multiple perspectives. This involved using several moderators, different locations and multiple individuals analyzing the same data.

In the present study and as a way of ensuring achievement of validity, the following activities were undertaken. First, the people to be interviewed were notified at least two days through phone as a way of confirming the appointment and informing them the area and issues to be addressed under investigation. Secondly, interviewees were encouraged to bring any appropriate documents that would back their assertions, and the researcher took notes as record of their conversations. Moreover, the researcher undertook a comparison of data collected from multiple sources to validate them. Groupings and coding were set up for data placement. Finally, the researcher sought for the assistance of a

[276]Altheide, David L., and John M. Johnson. "Criteria for assessing interpretive validity in qualitative research." (1994).
[277]Seren, *et al.,*2003, p.15

colleague PhD student to re-examine a sample of data and place different descriptions into groupings.

1.13.7 Data Collection Procedure

This was a historical study, based on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included archival information and oral interviews. During the field research at the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi, records consulted included District deposits for North Nyanza and Kakamega , Provincial deposits for North Nyanza and Western province, Local Native Council Minutes report, African Affairs reports, colonial government publications, confidential reports, missionary reports, colonial land labour and taxation reports journals, complaints and petitions, The East Africa Standard and development reports during the colonial era. Based on the content of the available documents, major variables were abstracted especially those concerning the Maragoli during colonial era. All these were keenly analysed within the context of the study.

Other important primary sources were oral interviews that were conducted among the Maragoli between October 2023 to March 2024. The oral interviews were conducted based on the prepared unstructured interview schedules. A total of 150 informants among the Maragoli were interviewed. The informants were identified through purposive sampling and snowballing sampling procedures. Purposive sampling method selects a sample from participants or group of participants that are judged to be appropriate, or especially knowledgeable, for the purpose of the research. In order to enhance the data collection process, a contact person was enlisted. Through his links in Maragoli, the contact person was personally known to many of the Maragoli elders. He was able to advise on who to

visit and where to find the desired informants presumed to be well versed with the dynamics in Maragoli food production mechanisms and the related gender relations.

Apart from giving their own information, key informants identified in the purposive sampling above were identified interviewed and asked to identify other people who were knowledgeable on the various aspects of concern to the study. Thus, the research obtained informants through “snowballing’’ technique.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) was also used to collect data. Informants, both male and female, spread across the various socio-economic divides such as married/single, educated/uneducated, civil servants, agricultural specialists among other indicators falling within the age of 40-99 years were purposively selected. This was with the help of the contact person and the research assistants. Forty -ninty nine years were assumed to be appropriate age bracket because such individuals were well versed with information on food production and gender relations. This was because these were young adults in their prime family bracket. Such individuals also stood a chance of having heard from their grand parents and thus more knowledgeable and resourceful than the younger generation below them. Beyond ninety nine years coherence had become a problem, hence, such individuals were exempted from the research. There were however some unique scenarios during the field research where youth of 18-20 years availed to the research some traditional Maragoli hoes and pots that had been used in the food production endeavours. Such information proved insightful and hence included in the research.

A total of 4 FGDs were used in this study; 3 from Sabatia Sub County and 1 from Vihiga Sub County. Three of these FGDs were of purely Maragoli women and one was of the

mixed males and females. Each FGD had a membership ranging from 8-10 with a total of 36 informants being interviewed through FGDs.

FGDs provided the research a moment to explore the thoughts about the gendered nature of food production mechanisms and the dynamics over the study period. The participants were selected from across section of the population considering;

a). If the person had been mentioned by other documentary or oral informants.

b). If the persons were recognized by local administrators and researchers.

c). Elderly people who were knowledgeable on matters of people's history.

After these considerations, the identified persons based on their convenience were converged into the nearby public facilities such as shopping centres or primary schools where the FGD sessions were conducted.

A number of limitations were faced during the Oral interviews. There were, for example, distortions and variation of information on personal recollections, posing many of the problems that arose while dealing with more formal oral interviews. It was noticed that some of the old persons who were rich in knowledge had failing memories. This was eventually settled by recourse to corroborative evidence from archival sources. Sometimes the accounts could contradict or be drilled with pronounced romantization of the past and degnigration of the present. Thus, the researcher relied on contact persons to identify the potential participants.

Further more, secondary sources were also relied on to support an analysis and discussion based on primary sources and in search of information relevant to the study. The library

materials that were utilized to write this thesis included both published and unpublished works of both electronic and non electronic books, journals, newpapers and dessertations.

This information was accessed from major libraries in Kenya including MMUST library, Moi University's Magaret Thatcher library, University of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta library, Kenyatta University Post Modern library were visited in search for the information relevant to the study. The secondary data gave various interpretations scholars had given on food production mechanisms and gender relations and the changes over time. This was not only in Kenya but also Africa and the entire globe in general. This study however, relied heavily on primary sources for purpose of originality.

The researcher first received a letter of introduction from Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology Directorate of Post Graduate Studies. Upon receipt of the letter, the researcher went on to apply for a permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NaCoSTI), an institution charged with the responsibility of granting research permits in Kenya. On receipt of the permit, the research then went on to recruit six research assistants to assist in undertaking the research exercise. As such, the researcher went on to recruit and train 6 research assistants, 4 from Sabatia and 2 from Vihiga Sub counties. The training of research assistants was aimed at familiarizing them on what was expected of them in relation to the objectives of the research.

The researcher and research assistants then proceeded to various sampled areas for familiarization tour aimed at briefing administration of the intended research and setting of dates for administering research instruments. The data collected from such oral research was compared with other data for validity and reliability. This formed the data that lay

ground for analysis and the interpretation of issues related to dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli for the study period.

1.13.8 Data Analysis

At the end of the research, a lot of information was gathered from the oral interviews, archival, and library research. The information was analyzed qualitatively. This process involved three steps. The first one involved theoretical reflection in which data collected was examined against the theories used. The second step entailed corroboration of the extensive field notes gathered during the oral interviews with the archival and secondary data. This was done to remove any bias and to ensure accuracy and reliability. Since the research was interested in the general patterns and dominant themes as set in the objectives, repeatition of data was looked for. This was achieved through careful reading and re-reading of both pre-colonial and colonial records together with other relevant secondary sources in order to unearth significant patterns. Issues or aspects that seemed to fit together and reinforce each other were considered more significant than the isolated ones. Finally, the research went through the necessary sources and extracted excerpts or relevant information. In most instances, the researcher quoted verbatim to make strong arguments. Collected data was anaysed qualitatively, providing ways of discerning, examiming, comparing, contrasting and interpreting meaningful patterns or themes on which conclusions were drawn.

In summary, the study was valid and reliable. To achieve this, all the data was classified according to their content, and the specific historical time-frame within which events and developments took place. This was important because historical inquiry requires the establishment of the historical specificity of social phenomena in terms of its constituent

elements and of the relations between these elements over time. Since gender studies are contemporary, corroborating information with the past was necessary to retain the historical significance and therefore, historicize gender.

1.13.9 Ethical Considerations

According to Mukherji and Albon, ethical considerations are critical for any research.[278] During the research process, the researcher observed a number of values that included; confidentiality of the information obtained from the respondents, obtaining informed consent from the respondents, and not treating the information received with prejudice. The respondents were assured of confidentiality of the information received and protection of their identity.

The researcher undertook all necessary measures to ensure that the study met the demands of ethical issues in research as regards issues to do with data collection and interpretation by ensuring that; the welfare and rights of the participants took precedence over the expected benefits to human knowledge. Secondly, the free and informed consent of participants involved in research projects was obtained; and finally, the research projects took into account local, cultural and social attitudes.

In order to comply with requirements, set by the National Council of Science, Technology and Innovation (NaCoSTI), research permit was sought prior to undertaking of actual study. Furthermore, as a way of maintaining this study's research ethics, respondents were made cognizant of their rights in partaking in the study including refual to avoid forceful

[278] Mukherji, Penny, and Deborah Albon. "Research Methods in Early Childhood Masterclass Interview." *Interviews from the SAGE Early Years Masterclass 2018: with Kathy Brodie* (2018): 133-156, p.142.

acquisition of information from un willing participants. The respondents further signed an informed consent form (see appendix 3), which outlined the purpose of the study, identity of the researcher (address, email and location), the institution where the findings were submitted, use of the data and its storage. Similarly, all sources of secondary data were properly acknowledged. However, their exact words were paraphrased, summarized or quoted to avoid issues of plagiarism. The participants were guaranteed secrecy and confidentiality. However, since the study was a historical account which must be evidential, the respondents were informed that some of their information would be quoted verbatim with their names appearing. Sensitive and personal information where the respondent wished to remain anonymous was also considered.

The researcher was also cognizant of the unethical conduct of deception. Deception can be a controversial issue in qualitative research as well. Punch observes that some dissimulation is intrinsic to social life and, therefore, to field work.[279] Gans literates this position by asserting that if the researcher is completely honest, with people about his activities, they will try to hide actions and attitudes they consider undesirable and so will be dishonest.[280] Although use of deception may be controversial, it can only be used as a last resort and sparingly as possible. For the case of this study and to illumine the ethics of deception, the researcher will make the respondents to understand the significance of undertaking the research.

[279]Punch, Maurice. "Politics and ethics in qualitative research." *Handbook of qualitative research* (1994)., p.19.
[280]Gans, Chaim. "The liberal foundations of cultural nationalism." *Canadian journal of philosophy* 30, no. 3 (2000): p.457.

Further, it is unethical to conceal research findings after completion of the research.[281] A researcher may fail to reveal findings if they are contrary to their expectations or their sponsor's expectations or if they are likely to affect certain policies or institutions negatively.

The researcher will divulge the findings to the higher learning institution as the research is purely for academic purposes. Academic freedom is important as the researcher will be free to discuss and publish findings without fear of intimidation or victimization.[282]Moreover, the study emphasized cultural sensitivity, respecting Maragoli traditions, norms, and values when framing questions and engaging with elders, women, and community leaders. Non-exploitation as another ethical principal was observed by ensuring that participants' knowledge and oral histories were not misused, and that findings were presented in ways that acknowledged their contributions rather than appropriating them. Finally, the research adhered to principles of accuracy and honesty, avoiding distortion of oral testimonies or archival data, and ensuring that women's voices—often marginalized in colonial records—were represented fairly.

This section has discussed the ethical considerations inherent in conducting research, particularly regarding consent, confidentiality, and power dynamics; the next section discusses how these ethical concerns are shaped by the researcher's positionality, including their social identity, cultural background, and relationship to the research context.

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[281]Norris, Dennis. "Shortlist: A connectionist model of continuous speech recognition." *Cognition* 52, no. 3 (1994): p.202.

[282]Thayer, Robert E., J. Robert Newman, and Tracey M. McClain. "Self-regulation of mood: strategies for changing a bad mood, raising energy, and reducing tension." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 67, no. 5 (1994): p.912.

1.14. Researcher's Positionality in the Study

Discussions on researcher's positionality and its resultant effect on research findings in any research endeavour have gained prominence in modern research undertakings.[283] Merrian, Johnson- Bailey, Lee, Lee, Ntseane, and Mohammed opine that positionality in research is the reseacher's position concerning the research being undertaken. In this regard, positionality answers the puzzle of the rersearcher's stand on data collected, and the respondents.[284] Conversely, the researcher's voice must always be heard through out the reseach. The researcher's positionality forms the dialectical space where subjectivity and objectivity meet.[285] A qualitative research can not achieve pure objectivity, nor can the researcher delink from subjectivity.[286] Thus, in positionality, the researcher must acknowledge who they are as individuals across socio-cultural and political groups.[287]

In the present study, the researcher was an insider, a Maragoli by origin. In the words of Breen, an insider is a researcher who studies a group to which he/she is part of.[288] Insider research may involve studying one's social group or society. [289] An insider research has both opportunities and challenges. For example, such a research may fast track access to the study population, recruitment of participants, trust and greater understanding of the opportunities' aspect.[290]

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[283] S.B. Merrian, *et.al.,* Power and Positionality. Negotiating Insider/Outsider within and across Cultures. *International Journal of Life Long Education,*20(5), 2001, p.417.
[284] Ibid.
[285] E.W. Wakwaubi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.34.
[286] P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (30th Aniverssary Ed.) New York NY: Continum, p.56
[287] Ibid.p.58.
[288] Ibid 65.
[289] N.A Naples., *Feminism and Method*: *Ethnography*, *Discourse Analysis and Activities Research*. New York, Routledge, p.40.
[290] P. Rooney., Researches from inside, Does it Compromise Validity? *A Discussion Level* 3(3), pp.1-19

However, the researcher encounters challenges dealing with a multiple duty of being both a subject and an object in the research, a challenge of the participants believing that he/she is an expert may hinder the researcher's ability to handle the emotional aspect of the study population leading to the loss of objectivity as well as the researher's subjectivity and inherent bias. In this particular research, the researcher is a Maragoli.

This, therefore, may make the researcher unconsciously approach the study from an eviable or previledged point of view.[291] The researcher took cognizance of how important it is to take a step back and critically analyze the research demands and respond to them with the precision and academic rigour as dictated by academia.

The usual academic rigour and standards of research at the doctoral level were never compromised. The design of the study, the theoretical framework employed and the approaches of data analysis were carefully developed as discussed in the methodology section in order to address issues of biasness. These approaches, for example, data triangulation, reduced biasness, which might emerge due to objectivity or subjectivity, while continuous reflections made the process more rigorous.[292]

1.15 Thesis Chapterization

This thesis was divided into six chapters. The first chapter encompassed the introduction and all the research proposal aspects of the study. These included; the background to the study; the statement of the problem; research objectives; research questions and the significance of the study. It further gave philosophical, academic and policy justification

[291] A.L.A Lusambili, B. Sadig & K. Muchanga., Op.Cit.,2020, p.40.
[292] D.L. Morgan., *Focus Groups as A Qualitative Research* (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oak C.A: Sage Publications, p.38.

of the study. Moreover, the scope, limitations and significance of the study were also handled. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in the study are thereafter discussed followed by the research methodology with Research validity, ethical consideration and the positionality of the researcher coming ther after. A chapter summary winds up the chapter.

In chapter two, the pre-colonial gendered food production mechanisms of the Maragoli were discussed. Specifically, socio-political and economic organization of the Maragoli, the origin of the Maragoli agriculture, Maragoli agricultural calendar and the gendered agricultural activities were explained to form a baseline for understanding the gender relations of production before foreign intrusion.

In chapter three the relations of the Maragoli with the early foreigners who contributed directly to changes in the gender relations of production were considered. This chapter explained the factors that set-in motion the transformation in gender relations of production in Maragoli before the establishment of the Kenya colony in 1920.

Gender relations of production during the inter-war period are examined in chapter four. Government policies in regard to land and labour are investigated as they related to production in the division. The impact of the First World War on gender relations of production and change in terms of crop type were also examined. The chapter further illustrates the effect of the war and particularly the heavy demand placed on African labour, which directly affected gendered labour relations were discussed.

In chapter five, gender relations in the post World War II period;1945-1963 were analyzed. The impact of World War II and the other global geo-politics that impacted on food production mechanisms and gender relations in Western Kenya and Maragoli specifically are examined. Moreover, the political tension in the country gave the colonial authorities an opportune time to consolidate and register land under individual ownership. The chapter examines the consequences of individual land registration on gender relations of production.

Further-more, the chapter examined the transformation of gender relations of production as the Maragoli responded to changing economic circumstances. Chapter six concludes the study by giving conclusions, a summary of the major findings, recommendations and suggestions for further study.

1.16 Chapter Summary

The chapter began with an introduction. It gives the background to the study using the funnel strategy. That is from the global point of view narrowing to the African continent, to the East African region to Kenya then finally to the study area. The statement of the problem is discussed situating the inadequacy of the current studies in colonial Maragoli on food production mechanisms and gender relations.

The general and specific objectives are thereafter highlighted. The chapter further gave the justification of the study by examining the philosophical, academic and policy justification. The significance, scope and limitations of the study came thereafter. A comprehensive literature review was presented basing on the study objectives therefore identifying the lacunae to be filled. The theoretical and conceptual frame works were discussed. The

conceptual frame work outlined how the various variables in the study interacted with the theories to achieve the intended study objectives.

The chapter further discussed the methodology by identifying that the historical research design was adopted, making the study lean on the qualitative approach. The study area was identified to be the current Sabatia and Vihiga Sub Counties also reffered to as the Maragoli land. The target population was picked to be the male and female adult maragoli ranging from 40-99 years with unique cases of 18-20 years being included.

Out of the target population, a total of 150 respondents composed of 80men and 70 women were reached to gather the required data for the study. The 150 respondents were reached at after the study attained content saturation. Sampling techniques which included purposive and snowballing are discussed. Data collection methods ranging from primary sources to secondary sources and data analysis techniques. The chapter sums up by discussing the validity of the Research, ethical considerations, positionality of the researcher and proposed chapterization. The next chapter discusses the Maragoli origins, migration and pre-colonial economy in relation to gender dimension.

CHAPTER TWO

THE PRE-COLONIAL MARAGOLI FOOD PRODUCTION MECHANISMS AND GENDER RELATIONS UPTO 1895

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discussed the following aspects; Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Maragoli in Western Kenya, The socio- political organization of the Maragoli people, Economic organization of the Maragoli during the pre-colonial period, The pre-colonial Maragoli agriculture, Gender relations in food production among the pre-colonial Maragoli, distribution, exchange and trade, Organization of labour in pre-colonial Maragoli and finally the chapter summary.This chapter is based on the premise that, socio-political and economic organization of the Maragoli significantly influenced the social construction of both men and women to suit certain gender roles. In regard to theoretical frame work, this chapter made use of the Gender Analysis theory.

The chapter examines the migration, settlement and the pre-colonial economy of the Maragoli. Specifically, it undertakes to survey the various food production practices of the Maragoli in the pre-colonial period. This entails a closer examination of land as a factor of production as well as the various economic practices that were evolved by the Maragoli in the period under review.

2.2 Origin, Migration and Settlement of the Maragoli in Western Kenya

The history of the Maragoli still generates a lot of debate because there seems to be no generally accepted version about the origin, migration and subsequent settlement of the people in the present day Maragoli land.

It is such debates that have attracted both the Maragoli and non-Maragoli scholars to write about the Maragoli.[293] Although the actual details regarding migration routes and the duration taken in terms of the sequence in time may be conjectural, there can be little doubt about the general direction of the Maragoli at particular times.

The Maragoli form part of the Luhya linguistic group found in Western Kenya. From the maragoli Oral submissions during this study, most of the oral respondents outlined that the term Luhya is derived from the maragoli word *urusha* which means blood line. Closely related to this was *Uruvamba.*[294] This position concurred with Were's position that luhya is a term which was used to refer to tribesmen.[295] According to Were, the cradle of the Maragoli is in a place known as Misri during the pre-13th Century.[296] The Focus Group Discussion sessions (FGDs) during this particular research also confirmed that the original home of the Maragoli was in Misri, which is associated with Egypt.[297] The Maragoli reference to Misri as their original homeland raises the question of the historical importance of myths. Misri legends dominate a number of Kenyan communities' explanation on their origin. Notable among these communities include the Gusii, Kabras, Bukusu, and all Luhyia clans claim to have migrated from a land identified as Misri.[298]

[293]Judith Abwunza, *Op, Cit,* p.76.
[294]John Amugavo (60 Years), Oral Interviews held on 23rd August 2023.
[295] Gideon S. Were, *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya: C.1500–1930* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), 1–5.
[296] Ibid.p.6
[297] FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023

[298]William Robert Ochieng, *An outline history of Nyanza up to 1914*. East African Literature Bureau, 1974, p.31.

There are divergent views on the Misri legends among scholars. Those with the contrary position argue that the idea and usage of Misri in reference to Egypt is a distortion of African history by Biblically influenced informants. In his submissions over the same, Kipkoprir opines that the Misri legends cannot be ignored as merely modern-day invention. It is worth noting that the ancient Egypt before the coming in of the Hyksos, the Ptolemies and Arab invasions; Egypt was inhabited by the blacks. More-over, the modern-day Southern Egypt is still occupied by black people who extend further into north eastern and north –western Sudan. This evidence raises the need for a more critical and objective historical inquiry into the Misri phenomenon.[299]

The history of the proto Maragoli begins in Misri about the fourth century CE under the leadership of Kintu. This Proto Maragoli moved from Misri - what is now known as the Southern Sudan and Egypt. When this group first arrived in what is now Northern Kenya from Southern Sudan, their ruler was Kitanga.The proto Maragoli moved further South probably along the Turkwel River where they had constant supply of water for their crops, animals and various industries such as metal working and building. This made them keep on moving along the river into what is now Western Kenya and Eastern Uganda, and settled near the source of that river, Mt. Elgon.[300] In regard to the Misri myth, this research took the position that Misri was just taken by the Maragoli to illustrate the beginning of time hence not necessarily a given geographical location.

[299]AM Amisi, *Op, Cit,* p.46.
[300] EA Gimode, *Op*, *Cit*, p.65.

According to the Maragoli accounts of migration and descent their ancestors then moved to Congo though not very clear how but taken on mythical account.[301] From Congo, they travelled overland to Uganda, then crossed Lake Victoria from Uganda to today's Kisumu, Kenya. Some forefathers died on the journey, Muyeli in Ethiopia and Nabwege in Uganda.[302] A strong wind on Lake Victoria is said to have split up the canoes. The canoe here was taken to mean some sort of wooden logs that facilitated their movement on water but not the canoe in the modern sense.[303] This resulted in some forefathers going south and some going north.

However, the grandfather of the two groups was the same person, and wherever people went they left behind those who had the same customs and language as the Maragoli.[304] The forefathers of *Mulogoli*, the ancestor of all Maragoli people, stayed for some time (many years) on the shores of Lake Victoria, (from about 1250 AD to about 1450 AD).[305] The father of *Mulogoli, Andimi*, moved farther inland, dying in South *Nyanza. Mulogoli,* tired of fighting with the Nandi and the Maasai, moved north-west to Seme, then Maseno and finally to Mwigono (Maragoli Hills) or *Evologoli*, today's Maragoli. His cousin, *Anyore*, settled nearby, in today's neighbouring Division, Bunyore. The Maragoli

[301]Ibid. p.67.
[302] G. S.J. Lisingu, *Kitabu Kya Mulogoli Na Vana Veve. (The Mulogoli History and Family).* Nairobi: Colonial Works, 1946 Mwelesa., Chart: Amita Ga Vaguga Ne Vikevo Mulogoli. Private records, Nairobi,1971, p.6.
[303]Edwin Atianyi Gimode, "An anatomy of violent crime and insecurity in Kenya: the case of Nairobi, 1985-1999." *Africa Development/Afrique et Développement* 26, no. 1/2 (2001) p.300.
[304] A. N. Ligale, "Some factors influencing the pattern of rural settlement in Maragoli, western Kenya." *East African Geographical Review* 1966, no. 4 ,1966, p.67.
[305]Ibid.

settlement by the ancestor, *Mulogoli*, with his wife *Kaliyesa*, is considered to have taken place around 1700 AD.[306]

From the oral submissions collected during this study, it was noted that Mulogoli and Kaliyesa had four sons, Musali, Kizungu, Kilima and M'mavi.[307] These four sons make up the *tsinyumba tzinene,* (great houses) in the segmentary lineage structure of the people of Maragoli.[308] Mulogoli, as all fathers do, gave his sons land. *Musali* moved north, as did *Kizungu. Kilima* went to the west and the last born, *M'mavi*, "remained behind", in the south, *yatigala nalinda misango gia Mulogoli,* (caring for his father's land).[309]

In terms of authority, the north is the home of the first-born son, Musali, the south of the last-born son, M'mavi, two important hierarchical statuses in the segmentary system. Chavasu in his work on Maragoli concurs with Ochieng' about the migration of the Abagusii and the Maragoli.[310] In this regard, the two scholars agree that Maragoli originally migrated into Nyanza from a homeland the Maragoli identify as Misri (presumably in the River Nile Valley in Egypt) to the North of Mt. Elgon at the beginning of the sixteenth century.[311] This stand point concurs with the Maragoli oral submissions during the study

[306]G. S Were, "A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya, Nairobi, 1967." *Western Kenya Historical Texts Nairobi* (1967)., p.7.
[307] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023

[308] Ibid.
[309]A.M Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.46.
[310]Henry Onzere Chavasu, "British colonialism and the making of the Maragoli diaspora in Western Kenya, 1895–1963." MA Thesis, Moi University,1997, p.30.
[311]Ibid.

where a number of respondents pointed out that Mulogoli and Mugusii came from the same stock with Mugusii as the elder brother to Mulogoli. Mulogoli left the elder brother and moved to the Mungoma (Maragoli hills) where he promised the elder brother that whenever he sees a smoke and fire signal from the hill, it was a confirmation that his younger brother is still alive.[312]

From the Maragoli oral traditions, the term Maragoli is derived from the term *Omuraguri* meaning a diviner.[313] This origin seems to concur with the Abagusii oral traditions that explain that Maragoli are believed to be initially a small clan among the Abagusii which produced diviners, hence the term *Omuraguri.* The Maragoli identify Mulogoli as the founder of their society and the person after whom their group is named. The Abagusii History alludes evidence to Mulogoli's and Mugusii's father as Osogo, son of Moluhya, son of Kigoma, son of Riabiaka, who was the son of Kintu.[314]

Kintu led the migration from the land of Misri to the foothills of Mount Elgon, where they stayed for four generations before dispersing to various directions due to droughts and other natural pestilences. The Abagusii traditions also indicate that Muluhyia, the grandfather of Mulogoli, had a number of sons who founded some of the other Baluhya sub-groups or clans. Osogo's descendants are said to have founded the Abagusii, Kuria, Logoli and Suba ethnic groups while Mogikoyo gave rise to Kikuyu, the Embu, Kamba and Meru groups.[315]

[312]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interviews, on 15th August 2023.
[313]Alfred Gungu, (53 Years) Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.
[314] Gladys Nyaboke Achoki, "The Emergence of Abagusii Diaspora in Kenya's South Rift, 1895-2007: Opportunities and Challenges." 2020, p.63.
[315]Ochieng, William Robert. "Kenya's People: People of the South Western Highlands-Gusii." Nairobi: Evans Brothers (1986), p.30.

From Misri they moved to Mt Elgon with the Maragoli only to separate later in Kisumu. B.A Ogot notes that, the Gusii oral tradition indicate that, they were the same people as the Kuria, the Maragoli, the Bukusu, the Suba of south Nyanza, the Kikuyu, the Meru, the Embu and the Kamba.[316] The Maragoli oral traditions also indicated that from Misri they were together with Ganda and Soga.[317]

The two ethnic groups branched off from the rest of the migrants around Mt. Elgon, in a South Westerly direction. The Kikuyu, Meru, Embu and Kamba are said to have travelled Eastwards toward what is now the central highlands of Kenya while Bukusu remained around Mount Elgon. According to B.A Ogot, linguists like Whitley Gilbert and Greenberg Roger, and anthropologists like Hobley, Johnston, and Oliver, who have studied the Abagusii and other Bantu languages, have agreed that, the Abagusii, Maragoli, Kuria, Kikuyu, Embu, Kamba and Meru languages are closely related.[318] They argue that from Misri they all migrated to the foothills of Mount Elgon where the final dispersal took place.

Ochieng notes that, the remaining clusters, Abagusii, Kuria, Suba and Logoli migrated southwards following the course of River Nzoia, arriving on the Eastern shores of Lake Victoria around 1490 AD-1520 AD.[319] Turning east, they travelled along the lakeshores and eventually settled at Goye Bay in Yimbo Kadimo location where Mogusii and Mulogoli, the respective eponymous founders of the Abagusii and Maragoli societies were born. From here, their homestead spread to Ulowa, Sare, Ungera, at the foot of Ramogi Hills, where the first wave of the Luo immigration into Western Kenya found them.

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[316] Bethwel, Allan Ogot., (1976), *Op*., *Cit*., p.29.
[317]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023

[318]B.A. Ogot.,1976, *Op*., *Cit*., p.35.
[319]W.R Ochieng, *Op*, *Cit*, p.40.

Ochieng further indicates that, Maragoli economic and social institutions underwent a fundamental transformation in the period between 1520 AD and 1755 AD as they established themselves in the lake region where they spent about two generations.[320] Due to constant migration, Gusii-Maragoli culture became inevitably a mixture of various influences, combining original Bantu elements with aspects borrowed from or imposed by contacts with Nilotic speaking people, notably the Luo, Maasai and Kipsigis. This argument can be used to explain the existence of Maasai and Kalenjin affiliated sub clans among the Maragoli including *Avadamai* who resemble the Maasai *Aldamait*, *avatemburi* among others.[321] After prolonged cattle rustling, conflict between the Maragoli and the Luo, who posed a big security risk and infiltration, and other Bantu groups from north-eastern around Lake Victoria like Munje, Nzaba, Maswa, Boko Ini and Lungo who were also a threat to Maragoli.

The Abagusii and Maragoli were compelled to move out for this reason. They eventually moved to Alego, Gangu then to Kisumu led by Mogusii and Mulogoli. It is at Kisumu where Mogusii disappeared [either he died or too old to command general respect as a group leader]. Nyakomogendi, the mother of Mogusii also died in Kisumu settlement. Because of drought and famine, they left Kisumu and eventually migrated to Kano plains led by some warriors such as Oibabe, Mobassi, Omugesero, Mochorwa and Kimanyi where they settled between 1620 AD and 1755 AD.[322] While at Kisumu, the Maragoli broke off and travelled northwards into Kit Mikayi then to Maseno and to their present homeland.

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[320]Ibid.
[321]E.A. Gimode., "Culture and History: The Religious Experience of the Avalogoli", C.1850- 1945, Unpublished M.A Thesis Kenyatta University,1993, p. 56
[322]W.R Ochieng, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 49

Their outward movement was probably due to drought and famine. After settling and constituting themselves into a complex social unit, the Maragoli began to harness the natural endowments of their environment. This was essential because human societies are not static but naturally dynamic. This dynamism is brought about as a result of the complex interaction between human activities and the environment.[323]

The Maragoli settlement in Kano plains probably lasted seven generations between 1640 AD and 1755 AD.[324] They settled by the lakeshore from Dunga to Nduru and spread into the interior along streams. It was in this period that the Maragoli economic and social institutions experienced a notable transformation. It not only witnessed the expansion and transformation of individual family units into small but distinct clans, but also the evolution of small groups. Clan leaders came into existence at this point. Around this period, the Maragoli social institutions such as sectional totems, clans and, sub- national structures emerged.[325]

W.R Ochieng'maintains that, Maragoli interacted with other people in the plains in a variety of ways acquiring from them iron working and fishing technology.[326] B.A Ogot also indicates that the economy of the Maragoli during their stay in Kano was mixed.[327] They cultivated finger millet, which was grown together with sorghum, beans and sweet potatoes and used cattle meat for food, drank milk and cattle-blood. They also ate roots, yams, pumpkins, vegetables, fish, birds and fruits like strawberry, raspberry, raised berry, lily berry and cape berry. They hunted the buffalo, bushbuck, wildebeest, and hares, among

[323]Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "Visions of freedom and democracy in postcolonial African literature." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 25, no. 3/4 (1997): p. 30.
[324]W.R Ochieng, *Op*, *Cit*, p.88.
[325]Ibid.89.
[326]Ibid. p.93.
[327]Bethwel Allan Ogot, (1976b), *Op*, *Cit*, p. 56.

many others. Men dominated the hunting activities as women concentrated more on gathering the wild tubers and fruits.

Unlike their Luo neighbours who traced some of their clans to outstanding women in the society, none of the Maragoli clans traced its origin from any matrilineal lineage. This is well captured in the following statement;

> When it comes to the territorial expansion of Karachuonyo, the matrilineal dominance becomes evidence to the extent that the clans are named after the wives of Rachuonyo. For instance, those areas which have evolved as a result of the marriage between Rachuonyo and Owaga Nyaluo, Auma, Adwet and Nyipir Adero are today inhabited by Joka Nyaluo, Jok' Adwet, Jok' Auma and Joka-Nyipir.[328]

It, therefore, emerged that Maragoli have their unique way of addressing and tracing their lineage which is patrilineal unlike their neighbours the Luo. Among the Maragoli, all the principal clans were named after their partriachs as already indicated in the four founder clans of the Maragoli. Though Mulogoli had daughters, very little is mentioned in regard to their later family lives. They were only the subsequent subsidiary clans that were named after women whose sons suceeded from their former clan and thus became the founder of the new clan.[329] According to Gunter Wagner, such clans were only named after the women if this happened to have been a person of great influence. Among the clans mentioned in this category are Avatemburi.[330]

This section has discussed the origin and settlement of the Maragoli, highlighting the processes through which they established themselves in their present homeland. The next

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[328]T.O. Ayot, "The Position of Women in the Luo Societies; A Case Study of Jok OnyangoA. D 1750-1920." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis Kenyatta University 1990, p. 114.

[329] Leen Kavulavu, The History and Culture of Idakho People of Western Kenya during Pre-colonial Period, Sociology and Anthropology 5(8), DOI:10.13189/SA.2017.050810 ,2017, p.658.

[330] G. Wagner, Op, Cit, 1956 p.65.

section discusses how these settlement dynamics not only secured territorial belonging but also directly informed the Maragoli's socio-political organization, as kinship ties, clan networks, and patterns of land distribution that emerged during settlement evolved into the core structures of governance and social cohesion.

2.3 The Socio- political Organization of the Maragoli Nationality

This section describes and demonstrates how the socio-political and economic institutions of the Maragoli evolved in pre-colonial period. A brief understanding of this setup will also help us to focus on pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms which are believed to have taken place in the socio-political and economic milieu and the related gender roles.

Gunter Wagner while writing on the political organization of the "Bantu of North Kavirondo" posits that before one can meaningfully engages in a conversation in regard to a people's political organization; one must first determine whether their entire society can be looked at as constituting a single political unit or whether their society constitutes a multiplicity of political units.[331] By a political unit he means; that which constitutes a group of people which submits persistently and in an organized manner to leadership for the purpose of maintaining itself as a unit.[332]

Among the Maragoli, the family either extended-*Mugitsi* or nuclear-inyumba formed the basis of a polity.[333] Every homestead had a patrilineally sequenced chain of command with the oldest male as the overall head- *Mwene hango.*[334] Just like their Isukha and Idakho

[331]G. Wagner., (1949), *Op*, *Cit*, p.180.
[332] Ibid.
[333]Luke Imbwaga, (85 Years), Oral Interview held at Chanderema Village on 16th August 2023.
[334]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023

neighbours, the Maragoli line of authority extended to the higher political units either village-*Lidala* or territorial unit-*lusoma.*[335]

Every homestead as an autonomous political unit had a pseudal judicial system presided over by the head of the homestead.[336] The powers of the head of the homestead were diffused to all and sundry within the home including the wives, sons and unmarried daughters. However, even though upto this point there is the assumption that the action is with males and that women are peripheral to the events of politics. However, this was less true in the pre-clonial Maragoli as an African society like many other African cases.[337]

Maragoli women were not just passive listeners but had their space to influence political decisions silently but powerfully.[338]The senior most wife in a homestead or any of the wives of the seniormost male elder in a homestead would queitely talk to the husband in regard to an impending case before him. The man even though on grounds of patriarchal egocentricism pretended not to bend down to such a woman voice, the man silently considered the wife's input while rulling the case.[339]

As the political head of the homestead, the seniormost man was empowered to curse the social misfits by invoking the relevant dictates of a particular taboo(s).[340] This was because taboos were part and parcel of the Maragoli unwritten but irressable constitutional

[335]Wilfred Barusi, (68 Years), Oral interview held at Vibwoni village on 10th August 2023. See Also K.L Muchanga, 1998for more reading on Isukha and Idakho.
[336]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023
[337]Dorothy.A. Nyakwaka, "Gender and political transformation in Kenya: a case study of women in Luoland, 1895-2002." Ph.D. diss., Egerton University, 2013., p.41.
[338]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Govoga Chief's Office Grounds, on 2nd September, 2023.

[339]Ibid.
[340]Judith Abwunza, "Mulogoli's" Posterity": Fathers and Sons Living the Land." PhD diss., Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Western Ontario, 1985., p.12.

framework.[341] Difficult domestic cases were brought before the village or clan elders council. It was observed from the oral presentations made during this specific study that the homestead council, in which a grandparent may call a baraza of the older sons to address family concerns, may have given rise to the institution of the council of elders.[342] Because the Maragoli society was patrilineal and acephalous, the institution of the council of elders took on great significance as they served both religious and political purposes.

Despite the male preponderance on this council of elders, women's positions were well-protected and secured. For instance, women might speak with the wives of council members using their backdoor influence in an attempt to subtly influence the council's decision on situations involving women.[343] Because of the crucial role their wives played in providing for them, particularly in terms of food, the males made sure that most decisions were fair and acceptable to their female counterparts. This was due to the fact that anything less would entail a silent goslow in the crucial industries controlled by women, particularly household management and food production.[344] In Maragoli, the lineage councils at the lineage level (*Miliango*), formed the highest court of appeal. The council of elders were selected on the basis of both age and wisdom. The head of the council (*kirwwatso*) was called *Mwami*/*Mkurundu wi kirwatso*- (an equivalent of the chief).[345]

In addition to holding a position of power within the community, he also had the means of coercion at his disposal, allowing him to enforce rules and uphold law and order in his domain. Before someone was promoted to the status of council of elders' membership, a

[341]Alfred Gumanyi, (67 Years), Oral Interview, on 3rd August 2023.
[342]Ibid.
[343]Judith Abwunza, *Op*, *Cit*, p.160.
[344]Ibid p. 163.
[345]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 5th October 2023.

variety of considerations were taken into account. These included, among other important things, the person's relationship with his or her immediate community, particularly with neighbours, the degree of charity the person showed towards other members of society as a whole, and the careful management of the person's family, including their spouses and children.[346] It is from such pre-qualifications that made a council member to remain cognizant of the healthy and humane gender relationship with his female counterparts.[347] Any gross misconduct or abuse to the considered weak gender formed a solid ground for a council member to be dropped from the council membership.

The elders' unanimous decision was to be listened to by the Mwami. Elders were revered as divinely appointed to guide clans in social gatherings and group sacrifices. They were held in great regard as a result. For instance, when it came to cultivation, seeding, planting, and harvesting, they were given first attention. They exhorted people to combine their resources and efforts during times of conflict or hunger. They oversaw matters related to the military.[348] The existence of relations of subordination and exploitation in the productive and distributive systems among the Maragoli meant that there were stresses and contradictions within the people's mode of production. These stresses and contradictions were man-made and also included intra and inter familial and clan jealousy and competition for ownership of land and wealth. There were also cattle raids and struggles over land between the people and their neighbours especially the Kalenjin neighbours-*Avatwa.* Other stresses, like famines of the 1870s, 1880s and 1905 and the epidemics which killed people

[346]Maureen.A. Muleka, *Op*, *Cit*, p.98.
[347]Ibid.
[348]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview on, 5th October 2023 and K.L. Muchanga, *Op*, *Cit*, p.57.

and cattle, were natural.[349] It was mainly as a result of the people's responses to these stresses that political and religious systems and the normative and ideological principles on which they were based evolved.

The political systems of the Maragoli like those of other Luhya groups were based on the principle of kinship, seniority and territoriality.[350] The principles were of long standing and did not suddenly develop in the nineteenth century. They were constantly adjusted to meet new challenges and were duplicated at all levels of socio-political organization. The basic level at which the principles operated was the polygamous family, *mugitsi/lidala* which was composed of the father, his wives and children.[351] The family was a productive, reproductive political and socialization unit. Its members were bound together by the feelings of affection, respect and fear for the father and older brothers and cooperation in economic activities. The respect and fear felt for the father was based on his judicial, distributive and ritual functions. He possessed the powers to bless an obedient son or daughter and to curse recalcitrant ones. After his death, his eldest son took over these responsibilities.

The family homestead was demarcated with euphorbia trees-*vinagotsi/vigingi*. A number of genealogically related families formed the minimal lineage, *inyumba* who occupied the lineage settlement, *lidala.* The group was led by a senior elder, *Mkurundu wi d'dala,* from the core lineage. He performed judicial functions, distributed land among the constituent families and represented them in their relations with other lineages. He also possessed ritual

[349]L.White, *Op, Cit,* p.25.
[350]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 13th August 2023.
[351]Suba Muhandale, (72 Years), Oral interview, on 17th August 2023.

power.[352] The largest territorial unit occupied by the maximal lineage was *lusoma* which was composed of members of the founder lineages and stronger clans who had been incorporated.[353] The need to cope with the problems of gaining adequate economic resources and exploiting them to the maximum, and also defending these resources from natural disaster and external raids led to the emergence of political and ritual leader referred collectively as *Omusalisi Munene.*[354]

Politically, power among the Maragoli was not concentrated in individuals but was diffused within age set (*rikura*).[355] The political, judicial and religious functions were performed by an age set. An age set was established after undergoing the rite of circumcision for boys which was a pre-requisite to attaining full adulthood.[356] However, the age set took political responsibilities of the territory after thirty years on assuming the status of senior age set. Their predecessors moved to the status of elders in the governing council. Just like the Agikuyu of Central Kenya, before assuming senior status, the Maragoli warriors had to pass through junior cadre, which performed the work of the military. They also acted as executive officers to the elders being entrusted with such activities as policing duties in the markets and during festivals.

Among the Maragoli, there was no gender equality in the political structure, which discounts Muriuki's assertion that almost all African societies were egalitarian.[357] To begin with, the Maragoli girls had no pre-qualification test into the community's political life like

[352]Leonard Ishuga, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 20th July 2023.
[353]Gunter, Wagner, *Op, Cit,* p.87.
[354]Ibid p.90.
[355]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023
[356]Ibid.
[357]Ibid.

their boy counter parts. Unlike other communities like the Agikuyu whose girls underwent the initiation ceremony, which acted somehow as an entrance to socio-political authority, girls did not qualify to join the council of elders, which was the supreme political institution among the Maragoli. Women were usually not publicly consulted on corporate political decisions and were therefore, not admitted as members of the Maragoli governing councils, the *kirwatso cha vakurundu*, in the villages, the district and the entire Maragoli territory. Judicial authority was also bestowed on these councils.[358]

Age and associated ceremonies ensured political progression for men. At the lowest level was the junior members' council. Members of this council performed physical tasks like soldiers, couriers and sergeant-at-arms during meetings. They are also thought to have overseen women clearing and preparing the council meeting place. This put junior men in higher positions over women even though the women would have been older than them and, therefore, discounts the claim of egalitarianism among the pre-colonial Kenya societies by Muriuki.[359]

In regard to women inclusion in the governing councils, the oral collections from Maragoli negated this position. Although they were shut off from the governing council, women were allowed to have their own assembly, *kirwatso cha vakari*-council of women.[360] This stand point was well captured by one of the respondents who gave the following response during one of the interview sessions:

> *Imima ja murogori si javugilaku mundu wi kikaye komoroma mu chikalu anoho kirwatso chikaliywi na vikura dave, Avandu vikikaye vara tsa ni vikalu noho virwatso vyavo vyokomoroma mang'ana gi*

[358]Magaret Salamba, (76 Years), Oral interview, on 12th August 2023.
[359]Magaret Salamba, (76 Years), Oral interview, held at Lunyerere village on 12th August 2023.
[360]Anjeline,Vugutsa, (73 Years), Oral interview, held at Chanderema village on 12th August 2023.

> *kikaye.*[361] (The Maragoli traditions never allowed a woman to talk in a men's council, women had their own councils to deal with women affairs.)

From the *Wu Mulamu* FGD sessions, submissions were made in concurrence with the position that Maragoli women councils were traditionally not allowed to interfere with the men's council on matters of warfare, territorial expansion or the maintenance and regulation of the judicial system.[362] Issues relating to resources especially land was not directly in the domain of women. Women were contented as long as they were allowed access to land.[363] Despite this, women joined the public limelight in that they prepared the girl child through informal education for marriage and officially handed her over during the marriage ceremony, which was of public concern[364] Another way in which women used to make their presence felt in the public sphere was use of ridicule against men. Through proverbs and songs sung during work parties, women could shame men who mistreated their spouses especially the batterers.

It is argued here, therefore, that Maragoli women just like other African women were not entirely confined to the private sphere as some European feminists suggest.[365]

From the ongoing discussion on the origin, migration and settlement of the Maragoli, there emerges an agreement that the Maragoli had four major patrilineal descent groups (*tsihiri*) as *Avasaali*, *Avakizungu*, *Avakilima* and *Avamavi*, which genealogically stem from the four

[361]Magaret Salamba, (76 Years), Oral interview, held at Lunyerere village on 12th August 2023.
[362]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023

[363]Douglas Amwai, (79 Years), Oral interview held on 12th August 2023.
[364]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023

[365]Kasidi Risper, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.

sons of Mulogoli.[366] Today there are more than thirty clans and they still operate as one of the most basic social units among the Maragoli.[367]

The Maragoli had several levels of social organization. These included the traditions of the clan *ihili*, the village, *ilidala*, and the territorial unit *lusoma* together with the age set institution; *rikura*.[368] These clans are related to one another either directly or indirectly by way of patrilineal or matrilineal descent if not by association.[369] The clan was the central social arena where individual roles, groups, status acquisition, corporate action, religious and political authority were carried out.[370]The village, *ilidala* itself was considered one of the most important social group among the Maragoli. Each villager therefore had a strong identity not only with his clan but also with his village. For example, villagers of the same generation regard themselves as brothers, even if one was a member of the enemy clan. This meant that although marriage between them was not prohibitive, they were not allowed to marry each other, because they were "brothers" so far as they belong to the same village.[371]

These aspects played a great role in determining the day-to-day Maragoli religious, educational and general well-being of the Maragoli as a people. In essence, the social life

[366]Matsuda, Motoji. "Urbanization and adaptation: a reorganization process of social relations among the Maragoli migrants in their urban colony, Kangemi, Nairobi Kenya." Ph.D. diss., 1984., p.47
[367]Ibid.
[368]Gunter Wagner, (1956); *Op, Cit*, p.25.
[369]A.M. Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.48.
[370]Gunter Wagner, *Op, Cit,* p.30.
[371]Ibid p.50.

among pre-colonial Maragoli was centred on family, lineage, clan and age-group. It consisted of a man, his wife or wives, their children and other relatives. This had its effects on marriages, initiation ceremonies and land ownership. The most fundamental social unit was the family which was made up of one married couple with children. It was also a unit of cultivating, co-living and house-holding. There was a clearly defined division of labour within the family. Both men and women played a significant role.[372] The woman was partly the co-owner of the land that was owned by the husband.

In this sense it can be called household. Extended family, the core of which was a small patrilineal descent group of two or three generations, however, played an important part in some rituals and daily mutual help such as delivery or receipt of bridewealth (*ovukwi*), funeral(*mariga*), vigil (*magenga*) and remembrance (*ilihoma ikilidwa/rovego*).[373]

The significant role of the family has been acknowledged by different writers on pre-colonial luhya. Leen Kavulavu while writng on this theme among the Idakho notes that the family constituted the basic social group that cooperated most widely in their activities of every day with a clearly defined division of duties within the family.[374] This position was also found to be the same among the Maragoli. Oral submissions during the field work validated this position.[375] It is from the clearly defined gendered roles among the Maragoli that enabled both men and women play a significant role in the food production cycle.

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[372] Leen Kavulavu, *Op, Cit,* p.660

[373] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[374] Leen Kavulavu *Op, Cit,* p.660.

[375] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

However, these roles were closely tied to the Maragoli marriage institution. Upon marriage, a wife became a co-owner of the land that belonged to her husband. This gave women power over the home and all other means of production within the homestead. Although Maragoli was a partriarchal society where men inherited land from their fathers; thus, accorded a superior status, the woman place was never suffocated and consequently dissolved by such partriachal dictates. Men in this regard would go and clear virgin land and break the ground and help women plant crops. Women on their part weeded and harvested the crops. In essence, the duties carried out by men complemented those done by women. Men and women needed one another's labour for social production.

This Maragoli position contradicts the generalized gender relations theory position that partriarchy universally has over time insurbodinated women role in political, social and economic endeavours.

Table 2.1 Division of Duties Within the Family Group in Maragoli

Duties for men	Duties for women
Hunting and providing security to the family;	Gathering and taking care of the home;
Clearing the forest;	Second digging of the land;
Breaking the ground;	Weeding;
Offering sacrifices on behalf of the family;	Singing on public occasions; including the sacrifice grounds.
Negotiating dowry;	Asking for brides;
Socialising boys and taking boys for circumcision;	Socialising daughters;/Singing during the circumcision ritual.
Taking cattle, goats, and sheep to the grazing field;	Gathering firewood, wild fruits, eggs and tubers/ fetching water for animals after grazing.

Slaughtering an animal.	Cooking and entertaining female guests.
Serving chicken;	Serving food except chicken;

Source: Field Data, 2023.

The division of duties within the Maragoli family group reflects a deeply rooted gendered social structure, where roles were clearly delineated along lines of masculinity and femininity, particularly in relation to food production and social responsibilities. Men were primarily tasked with activities that involve external engagement, physical labor, and symbolic authority—such as hunting, clearing land, breaking ground, and offering sacrifices. These roles positioned men as providers and protectors, with control over livestock and ritual practices that reinforced their status within the household and community.

Women, on the other hand, were central to the sustenance and continuity of the domestic sphere. Their responsibilities—such as weeding, second digging, gathering wild foods, cooking, and entertaining—highlight their critical role in food production and preparation. The exclusion of women from serving chicken, a culturally significant dish, underscores the symbolic hierarchy in food distribution, where men retain privilege over prized resources. Furthermore, the gendered division in socialization and marriage negotiations—men negotiating dowry and circumcision rites, women asking for brides and nurturing daughters—illustrates how cultural reproduction is managed through gendered channels. Overall, this structure reflects a complementary yet unequal system, where both genders contribute to the survival and cohesion of the family, but with men occupying roles of higher symbolic and material control, especially in relation to food and ritual authority.

It is worth noting that most of the informants acknowledged the fact that the worst curse that one could ever receive came from a woman.[376] This involved a woman, mostly elderly, stripping naked. This act was followed by utterances of condemnation from the woman. It was therefore every man's desire never to push a woman to that level, be it one's wife or relative. Taboo, therefore, seemed to have existed almost like a constitution among the Maragoli. The following are some of the gender-inflicted taboos among the Maragoli: for a man to spend time sitting in the kitchen, for a man to ridicule an old person, for a married man to sweep his own house, for a woman to sit on her husband's stool, for a woman to dig a grave, for a woman to serve chicken from "the mans'pot", for a woman to eat chicken or eggs, for a daughter-in-law to take milk to one's father-in-law's house, for a newly wedded wife to drink sour milk before bearing a child, for a woman to milk cows, and for a woman to visit a witch doctor. These taboos governed the way of life of the Maragoli just as it was among the other Luhya sub groups.[377]

Children were trained at an early age to share the duties of family life. At about the age of six, boys began to herd sheep, goat, and cattle, a duty which they outgrew after being circumcised.[378] The girls assisted their mothers in the daily work of fetching water, gathering firewood, wild roots, and vegetables, and above all, in the weary task of grinding finger millet. By the late fourteenth century, the Maragoli were already practicing rituals such as rain making, divination and many more. Around these rituals, there emerged

[376] Susana Chondo (80 years), Oral interviews on 13th August 2023 in Mungoma Village, Vihiga sub county.

[377] L.Kavulavu Op, Cit, p. 328.

[378] Annet Kadenyi, (73 years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.

sacrificial priests who also exercised considerable authority.[379] Although they enjoyed a high social status, and by virtue of their roles acquired great wealth, these attributes did not translate into actual political power. Their authority was limited to particular domains and did not extend to matters outside their competence.[380]

Through polygamy, the Maragoli ensured that the society's posterity was assured. Women played a great role in the reproduction of lineage members. The numerical strength of lineages was important for production and defence purposes.[381] To some extent, polygamy was perceived as having to do with giving security to the man.

Another reason advanced in support of polygamy was that a man's wealth was measured in terms of the number of wives, children, or livestock he had.[382]A man who had wealth was respected. It was therefore prestigious to have many wives among the Maragoli during the pre-colonial period. Wife inheritance was one of the cherished institutions among the Maragoli. A woman once married belonged to the clan. The death of the husband in some sense loosened the ties that bound the woman to the clan. A clan member or an age mate to the deceased husband was asked to inherit the woman. Thereafter, elaborate rituals were performed.[383]

According to E. S. Kabaji, marriage among the Maragoli conveyed status. He described how a bachelor was seen as an incomplete man.[384] In the same vein, a similar thought

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[379]Francis Chrysostomos Bode, "Leadership and Politics Among the Abaluyia of Kenya, 1894-1963." Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Yale University, 1978, p.56.
[380]A.M. Amisi, *Op, Cit*, p.48.
[381]Peter Odhiambo Ndege, *Op, Cit*, p.48.
[382] Chavakali FGD held on 10th October 2023 at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds.
[383] Ibid.
[384] E. S. Kabaji. The construction of gender through the narrative process of the African folktale: A Case study of the Maragoli folktale Doctor of Literature and Philosophy: University of South Africa, 2005. As Quoted in L. Kavulavu, 2020, *Op.Cit*. p.15.

though milder, was also directed towards childless couples. An unmarried woman who remained in her village of birth, though rare, was a target of hostility even from her own brothers. She was an eyesore to her family.[385] Such a woman had no role or status in the society and was denied access to certain occasions. Such occasions ranged from child shaving, birth and even wedding rituals.[386] This was mainly because of the belief that their unmarried status had a spiritual link which could be passed on to the next generation through participation in trans generational ceremonies.

Kinship also determined one's residence and rights to land ownership. Jealousy and competition to increase their own wealth existed among co-wives and sons leading to divisions. Members of the lineage had permanent and inheritable rights to land, bushes and rivers which they used for crop and animal husbandry, hunting and gathering among other related food production mechanisms. All these practices made both the Maragoli men and women in the Maragoli society develop an intricate and special relation with their environment. The refugees-*avamenya* who had been incorporated within the clan shared similar rights.[387] The original Maragoli clans later segmented into various sub-clans due to jealousy and competition. Such happenings watered down the effectiveness of kinship relations in food production relations which had been based on genealogical distance between the various sub clans and their original founder.[388]

[385] Vincent Lubia,(55 years), Oral Interview held on 5th August 2023 in Itegero Village in Busali East Location.
[386] Magaret Salamba Oral Interview held on 5th August 2023 in Itegero Village in Busali East Location.
[387]Amwai Douglas, (79 Years), Oral interview, on 23rd Novemebr 2023.
[388]Peter Odhiambo Ndege, *Op, Cit*, p.50.

Maragoli like any other society in the world developed its own set of knowledge, norms and practices which were enshrined in the socio-political and economic milieu. Wisdom is related to experience, skill, self-control and an understanding of the community's goods depending on age.[389] It is from such an experience-based mind set that the interpretivism research philosophy facilitated the deeper analysis of the collected data to expouse the pre-colonial maragoli food production mechanisms and the related gender relations. Through apprenticeship, the young were taught various skills in healing diseases and performing various functions.

The practice of herbalism was 'sacred'. It was an art for specific family groups and it was a terrible disaster to attempt such an art without the prerequisite training and coronation rituals.[390] That is why the custodians of this wisdom were old people from whom it was disseminated to the new generations in the course of the normal socialization processes and apprenticeship.[391] This knowledge was socially distributed along the gender lines. Such gendered distribution of experiences made the research bring on board the feminist epistemology as a second research philosophy to enable the research adequately illustrate the Maragoli gendered food production mechanisms. There were different categories of knowledge which remained a preserve of women. Such knowledge ranged from midwifery to family control herbal solutions. Men herbalists on the other hand specialized in herbs relating mostly to animal disease control. [392]

[389] K.L Muchanga *Op, Cit.,*pp. 72-73
[390]K.L. Muchanga, *Op*, *Cit*, p.71.For more reading check Gunter Wagner ,1956.
[391]Ibid.
[392]Demesi Wilfred, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 13th Sept.2023.

The established patriarchal orders also permeated the Maragoli social relations. Men always remained obliged to extend a hand and care for the widowed within their kinship ties. Such social order made men never to ignore a widow's plight without risking ridicule from other community members for deficiencies of masculinity.[393] They had to respond because traditional gender roles stipulated that men be strong, powerful and paternalistic and demanded that they assist widows with the tasks once performed by their husbands.[394]

Women, on the other hand, and widows in particular, were regarded as dependents, as people who were expected to become helpless at the death of their husbands. And so, men afraid to be humiliated in public, afraid to be seen as lesser men in front of their peers, were often forced in this indirect way to give assistance. Widows by invoking the very gender roles that were designed to control them by turning the language of patriarchy into one of entitlement, were able to get what they needed and at the same time enforce gender roles upon men. To put it bluntly, widows sometimes found ways to use patriarchy to their own advantage.[395]

The social organization of the Maragoli in pre-colonial period was complex as it involved various socio-cultural activities featuring birth, marriage and death rites, religious beliefs, their education, just but to mention a few.[396] A village in most cases was determined by the presence of a physical feature like a stream, river or a small hill. People from a certain

[393]Kenda Mutongi, "Worries of the Heart: Widows." *Family, and Community in Kenya,* Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2007, p.8.
[394]Ibid.
[395]Ibid.
[396]A.M. Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.54.

village participated in different activities such as defending the community and forming various working groups.[397]

Subsistence pre-capitalist mode of production existed in Maragoliland thus working groups were formed by women from different villages who helped one another in food production as a way of mitigating famine. Due to division of labour, it was the cultural obligation of women to work in farms while men hunted and offered security to the homestead.[398] The Maragoli social organization provided the necessary structures through which agricultural production and labour, the household kinship and labour relations form an important approach in analyzing household labour organization.

Labour processes organization at household level and exchange of commodities occur in relation to the needs of the household. Intra household labour dynamics complicated definition of labour.[399]

In the pre-colonial Maragoli, elders who were culturally and traditionally regarded as being knowledgeable in law constituted the council which was headed by *Mukurundu wi kirwatso/Mwami.*[400] The council of elders acted as court of appeal and ensured law and order was maintained in the whole community while the other elders acted as the custodian of the sacred places. Traditionally, it was the old men and women who acted as custodians of the traditions because they were believed to be knowledgeable on the community's

[397]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 35.
[398]Obeda Kagota, (67 Years), Oral Interview held on 3rd October 2023.
[399]Danson Peter Lumumba. Esese, "Agriculture and Socio-Economic Change Among the Wanga of Mumias Division, 1860-1945." MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990, p.56.
[400]Kavetsa Christine, (74 Years), Oral Interview held on 23rd October 2023.

practices.[401] Gender, age and seniority defined the roles, rights and responsibilities within the household and in the wider Maragoli society.

The Maragoli were a patriarchal community; Hence the men headed the socio-political and religious institutions. The Maragoli lived in collective homesteads with each homestead-*mugitsi* consisting of the man's hut, the wife's hut and one or more grain stores (*ichage-singular vyage- plural*). The general term for the family was also *inyumba*. In a polygynous family, children born of the same father could call themselves by the name of their father, and therefore belonged to their father's family. Children of a specific wife would call themselves by the name of their mother, meaning that they belonged to her household. Children sharing a common name would also be reffered to using their mother's name to create the difference.

For example, if there were two children named Avuya one whose mother was Anjeline and the other was Niphreda, the children would be identified as Avuya *wa* Anjerina-Avuya from Anjeline's house and Avuya *wa* Niphreda-Avuya from Niphreda's house. This was a scenario to differentiate two children named Avuya using their mother's names.

The family, *inyumba* was the basic socio-political unit and was supposed to be economically self-sufficient.[402] At the household level, a man was the outright head of his family, which may have been made of his wife or wives and their children. At the community level, the sub-clan; *ihiri* was the major socio-political institution. By the end of 17th century, the sub clan's socio-political institution seems to have been well -

[401]Kivuto Ndeti, "Elements of Akamba Life", 1968, p.4855.
[402]Annet Kadenyi, (73 Years), Oral interview, at Viyalo village, Mambai Sublocation on 10 July 2023.

established in Maragoli. Male elders formed the sub clan council, which coordinated their affairs.

Like many other Kenyan societies, the place of warriors in Maragoli Social economic and political life was highly regarded and safeguarded. While writing on Agikuyu for example, both Grace Muriuki and Louis Leakey agree that warriors in the Pre-colonial Kenyan societies could sometimes attend the sub-clan council meetings. However, while Muriuki asserts that warriors participated in the discussions,[403] Leakey argues that warriors attended the council meetings as onlookers and audience.[404] He maintains that by attending, warriors were meant to learn the techniques of debate and acquire the knowledge of law and customs.

Since respect for age and seniority was very crucial in the social relations among the pre-colonial Kenyan societies, it is doubtful if warriors could actively participate in the discussions as Muriuki claims. The young men had to be contended with being junior to the senior men until they were married and had their own families.

The status of women was quite different from that of men. While with age men would become completely independent, women remained dependent on male guardians either as daughters or wives. However, age and seniority helped women to have some limited power. A first wife in a polygynous family exercised authority over her co-wives especially by influencing the husband. In fact, a hard-working first wife needed to be consulted if another

[403]Grace.W. Muriuki, Chris Jacobson, Clive McAlpine, Leonie Seabrook, Bronwyn Price, and Greg Baxter. "Migrating, staying, or moving on: migration dynamics in the Chyulu Hills, Kenya." *Population, space and place* 17, no. 5 (2011) p.400.
[404]Leakey, Louis Seymour Bazett. *The southern Kikuyu before 1903*. Vol. 3. Academic Press, 1977., p.41.

wife was to be married.[405] In other instances, she could encourage the husband to marry and would even pick a girl for him.[406] This position goes in agreement with Cutrufelli's stand on African gender analysis where he argues that African women are an oppressed, powerless class of human beings yet at the same time, the women group change this position due to complexities in the different African cultures. Thus, the Maragoli gender relations never operated as per the fixed historical and biological determinants.[407]

The main aim of getting co-wives was to help in the provision of the much-needed agricultural labour. But despite her privileged position, the first wife was answerable to the male head either a husband or the first son of the widow. Such cultural guidelines ensured a gendered balance between men and women. Even in other social activities, there were restrictions to ensure effective consultation and gender balance.

Just like there Luo neighbours, the Maragoli man was not permitted without his first wife to erect a new homestead, likewise it was unheard of for a woman to erect a new homestead without a husband, even if she was the senior most.

> … even though Obarungu was the first wife of Biu, the unwritten law of succession of responsibility does not permit a woman to build a house and therefore Obarungu and the other four women could not erect a new homestead for themselves.[408]

Apart from the family, clan was also an important institution of socio-political organization. It was through the clan that one was provided with a sense of belonging to the wider Maragoli community. The Maragoli have four clans, which are all given names according to the four Mulogoli sons born out of Mulogoli's principal wife *Kalyesa.* These

[405]Esther Iminza, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.
[406]Leakey, Louis Seymour Bazett (1977), *Op*., *Cit*., p. 794.
[407]M. Cutrufelli., *Women of Africa: Roots of Oppression* London: Zed Books Ltd, 1983, p.20.
[408]Niphreda Avuya, (65 Years), Oral interviewheld on 10th August 2023.

four clans are *Vasaali, Vakitsungu, Vakirima,* and *Vamaavi*. The suffix *Va* in Maragoli means people of. Since Mulogoli's sons were Sali, Kitsungu, Kirima and Maavi. Their respective descendants came to be identified by their progenitors.[409]

Below the clan was the sub-clan or *inyumba/muriango.* The sub-clan was made of members who traced their descent from one male. This meant that, in one clan, there would be several sub-clans. For instance, individuals from the named clan, *Mukitsungu* would belong to several sub-clans *tsinyumba*.[410] One would say he is a *Mukitsungu wu muriango gu mwigina* (he is of *Mukitsungu* clan of the *Mwigina* sub-clan). Due to population increase and dispersal, by around 17th century, the sub-clan was the community's binding factor.

The leadership of the clans and sub-clans was the preserve of men. There also existed social grades among the Maragoli. For instance, *mwana*; child, *omuyayi;* little boy who is not circumcised, *Omukana;* little girl, *Omukari;* married woman, *Omusoreri;* unmarried young man who was a warrior, *Omusatsa;* middle aged man who is married with children, Omusakuru; aged man and *Omukurundu*; an elderly man with some high social status who took part in discussing matters of peace and communal operations. The most significant grade was the graduation from Omuyayi to *Omusoreri.*[411] Arising from the minutes of the North Kavirondo Local Native Council in 1933; this was the definition of *omusoreri;* 'Any

[409]Paillard, Bertita, Emile Haraszti, and Willis Wager. "Franz Liszt and Richard Wagner in the Franco-German War of 1870." *The Musical Quarterly* 35, no. 3 (1949): p.389.
[410]Ibid.
[411]Chabaga Humprey, (45 Years), Oral Interview, on 15th September 2023.

male of Maragoli considered being of age by the *kirwatso cha vakurundu* ready to marry, who was not to partake of intoxicating liquor'. [412]

Like political structure, religion influenced gender relations among the Maragoli. They believed in one God; *Nyasaye*. The names and attributes of Maragoli God indicate that He was a man. For instance, *Nyasaye* was viewed as the distributor *Umugavuri* just as a Maragoli man distributed resources to his dependents, a commander/ sovereign warrior; *Nyasaye wa mahii* just as a Maragoli man was the commander of his homestead. Almost all public ceremonies remained the domain of men. In fact, men religiously conducted almost all Maragoli ceremonies from birth to planting.[413]

Other than believing in the existence of one God, the Maragoli also recognized ancestral spirits who were believed to reside in the land.[414] Through family and public worship that was characterized by pouring out libation and the propitiation of the ancestors, the Maragoli became attached to their land.The pouring out of libation connected the living and the dead who were thought to have ensured the wellbeing of the society in general and the specific family in particular.[415] It was imperative for all family members to participate in the ceremony unless one was out for an important mission like defense in the case of warriors. So far, it has been shown that patriarchal system organized the Maragoli socially and politically.

[412]KNA/DC/NN/3/3/2.

[413]Ibid.
[414]Ibid.
[415]Ibid.

P.O Ndege while commenting on the kinship relations of the pre colonial Africa, posits that the productive activity in the pre-colonial African societies were influenced by superstructural institutions which helped the society resolve contradictions between themselves and nature. These contradictions also forced the communities to develop forces of production and labour power through improved skills and technology. Land was transformed from an object of production to a factor of production. It is from these developed forces of production that division of labour and new social political and economic responsibilities emerged. These new responsibilities later defined the social relations between the male and female gender groups.[416]

As per Meillaussoux's kinship approach, the Maragoli kinship system enabled the society to structure itself along gender lines and assign both men and women responsibilities in order to balance the gender relations in food production endeavours.

Kinship in this sense therefore laid the infrastructure upon which food production mechanisms were anchored.[417] The kinship structure also played the role of acting as the super-structural framework from which the judicial and political functions were dispensed from. In the political case, kinship and lineage structures represented the ideological and political form of a relation of exploitation between elders and youths. [418] The criticism that has been levelled against Meillaussoux's approach is that it isolates relations of production as such from kinship relations.

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[416]Peter O. Ndege, *Op*, *Cit*, p.10.

[417]Jeremy Keenan, "The concept of the mode of production in hunter-gatherer societies." *African Studies* 36, no. 1 (1977): 57-70., p.61.

[418]Joel S.Kahn, "Marxist anthropology and segmentary societies: a review of the literature." *The anthropology of pre-capitalist societies* (1981): p.61

Godelier while writing on the same adopts a blend of the two. According to his standpoint, kinship has a multifunctional role; specifically having an economic infrastructural function as well as other functions. He argues that kinship relations functions simultaneously as infrastructure and superstructure. Infrastructurally, kinship determines individual and group access to the conditions of production and to resources, and super-structurally regulates marriages providing the social framework of political ritual activity.[419]

In an economic endeavour like the present one, Godelier's formulation takes pre-eminence since it facilitates an appreciation of the essence and value of non-capitalistic relations as the pre-colonial Maragoli. This section has discussed the socio-political organization of the Maragoli; the next discusses their economic organization, exploring how social structures influence patterns of production, distribution, and resource management.

2.4 Economic Orgaanization among the Maragoli during th Pre-colonial Period

This section endeavoured to illustrate the various activities engaged in by the pre-colonial maragoli society in order to secure their dietary demands. Among the key activities discussed herein include hunting and gathering, animal husbandry, crop cultivation, iron working, pottery and trade.

Due to the centrality of land as the prime resource among the maragoli, a section is dedicated for a deeper scrutiny into the Pre-colonial land ownership and use. All the issues abive are discussed with a key concern on the gendered nature of participation between the Maragoli men and women. Even before encorporating agriculture into their main stream economic sphere, hunting and gathering formed the basis of the maragoli food production

[419]Peter O. Ndege, *Op, Cit.*, p.47.

system. Hunting and gathering as a system of appropriation of subsistence from nature is universal and was practiced as late as the nineteenth century in Kenya. This is according to Sharriff who also opines that this system requires little energy in production of food.[420] The Maragoli supplemented their animal husbandry and cultivation by hunting and gathering. Hunting played an important role in providing the diet of the community. Meat that was consumed in the household was mainly from hunting and rarely from domestic livestock which were generally left to multiply and only slaughtered during important occasions.

The Maragoli practised hunting and gathering to supplement the main stream economic activities such as livestock keeping and crop cultivation. The leader of the hunting group- *Umwimili* wu *ruhitsi* had the duty to organize the hunters especially the hunting rules, days and ground.[421]

Hunting was basically a male activity while gathering of vegetables, herbs, fruits and insects was mainly done by the female folk. From the oral collections during field work, it was also noted that the pre-colonial Maragoli women also played a vital role in receiving the men after the hunting.[422] The women also during gathering would identify certain hunting grounds which the men due to one reason or the other had failed to notice. Women were responsible for cooking meat brought home from the hunting activity.[423] This confirms that though hunting was dominated by men, women too played a role. Hunting

[420]A. Sheriff., "Social formations in pre-colonial Kenya." *Hadith 8: Kenya in the 19th Century* (1985): p.14.
[421]Godfrey Mwambuki, (56 Years), Oral interview, on 15th June, 2023.
[422]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.
[423]Ibid.

dogs were given smaller portion of meat, skin and bones as it was believed this made them "smell" the animal during hunting expedition.

According to Dorothy Nyakwaka, hunting among the Luo just like the Maragoli, was considered as a profession and was done by hunters- *avahitsi* who had acquired hunting skills from *umwimili wa vahitsi* through apprenticeship.[424] *Omuhitsi* hunted game such as wild pigs- *tsimbitsi*, antelopes-*tsiswara*, alegator- *tsimburu*, buffalo, gazelles, zebra, warthogs, ant-bears and hippos as a source of regular supply of protein for domestic consumption. *Avahitsi* were required to carry spears- *matimu'*, clubs-*vigong'o*, knives, bows and arrows.

The dogs which had special training in hunting especially male dogs accompanied *avahitsi* to hunting venues which were bushes and near water bodies where the animals resided.[425] There were also some outstanding female dogs which were out of the lactation period were also included in the hunting.

During the FGD session at Wumulalu market, the discussion confirmed that the Maragoli had special hunting techniques which were applied to kill different animals.[426] For example, deep pits were dug strategically and covered with grass in order to kill big and fierce animals such as buffalo. The animal would then come and fall inside this trap and this made it easier for the hunters to kill such animals using spears and clubs. *Avahitsi* also

[424]Dorothy A. Nyakwaka, "Gender and political transformation in Kenya: a case study of women in Luoland, 1895-2002." Ph.D. Thesis, Egerton University, 2013, p.67.
[425]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023.

[426]Ibid.

knew different *ovogono* (places where the animals rested or slept) and using their dogs, they were able to corner the animal from their *vogono.*[427]

Once the animal was killed, the leader of the hunting group-*mwimili wu ruhitsi* was able to divide the meat using the hunting rules- *marago gu ruhitsi* which mainly depended on blood relationship between the killer of the animal- *umwiti wi nyama*, the leader of the hunting group- *mwimili wu ruhitsi,* and the owner of the dog. For example, the owner of the dog which fell the animal was given head of the animal- *omutwi*, intestines-*amara* and the front part of a thigh. This was a recognition of his prowess in training the killer dog. He was therefore, given the head as a motivator for the good training to his dog and to challenge the other hunters to better their dogs. He was the undisputed head of that kill, thus given the head and the and the front thigh, while *umwiti* was also given the front part of the thigh to reward his shrewdness.[428]

In other scenarios where the animal was killed by a group of hunters, the meat was shared as follows; *mwimili wu ruhitsi* took the head, the brothers were given the front part of the thigh, the nephews the arm while the rest shared the ribs-*tsimbaru* and the remaining parts.[429] Other game products including skins of bigger animals such as buffaloes were used to make slippers, bedding and clothing. Rare skins such as those of leopards and Columbus monkeys were a source of trade and were on high demand as they were worn as ceremonial outfits during special occasions such as war, circumcision and coronation of

[427]Ibid.
[428]Jephride Sukuna, (50 Years), Oral interview, on 20th August 2023.
[429]Stela Kamasi, (78 Years), Oral Interview at Bukulunya Village, on 15th July, 2023.

clan elders. Special skins from certain animals were also used to make drums which were sounded to alert people on special occurrences and misfortunes such as death, and circumcision rites. The hunters also sold some game meat in cases where they had surplus. Both adults and children ate cooked birds such as doves *makuru,* ducks- *mabada* weaverbirds-*masasi* and pigeon doves (*makuru*). Smaller birds were usually roasted and eaten by children.

Women gathered a variety of wild fruits, wild vegetables, medicinal herbs and insects. Wild fruits and vegetables included *mutere* (*Corchorusolitorius*), *risutsa* (*Solanum nigrum*) *Mito* (*Crototaria Spp.*) pumpkin leaves and *enderema (Basella alba)*. The herbs were used to treat children whenever they experienced fever or intestinal problem. Women were also treated for infertility-*uvugumba*, recurrent miscarriage, and eased childbirth and psychosomatic disorders. Honey was also collected /harvested from the forest though at times the bee-hives- *miringa* could be placed on trees far away in the forest. To make the bee-hive, a thick tree was cut down and a log from it was split into two halves and hollowed out. When it was ready it was fixed up in a well scented tree in the forest where bees could be attracted. The bee-hive was smeared with sheep's fat -*ikivana* to help in attraction of bees into the bee-hive. The honey was collected at night by men using a flaming fire torch-*ekegenga* made of a bundle of sticks tied together which burn very slowly providing bright light. A knife and a container/bag in which the honey would be put were among the items used. Honey was mainly utilized for brewing honey-beer drink and as food as well as for medicinal purposes.[430] From the oral submission, it was realized that honey harvesting

[430]Gumanyi Alfred, (67 Years), Oral Interview, on 2nd October 2023.

technique had been borrowed from the Kalenjin neighbourhood and hence the domination of the practice among the Maragoli neighbouring the Kalenjin group.[431]

The pre-colonial Maragoli also had an elaborate economic system structured along the gender lines. Being primarily crop cultivators, land as the prime economic resource among the maragoli was emphasized. In order to achieve this intended objective, this section discusses a number of aspects ranging from land ownership and use, loss and change of ownership of land, rights to communal resources and finally land administration and inheritance.

In pre-colonial Maragoli, land remained the main source of all food. A study on food production mechanism in Maragoli cannot be complete without a deeper understanding of the various land aspects including but not limited to land ownership and use, land administration and inheritance and access to communal property. Land in Maragoli was the only resource which co-joined all the aspects of the Maragoli life. On the social front, through the land they obtained sacrifices which they offered to their God, politically the land products were used to persuade and solicit the peoples favour for political ascendance to power and finally land remained the only resource from which all the Maragoli wealth was obtained from.

Land was a major means of production among the Maragoli. As an agricultural people, land was an important source of livelihood for them. It was not only wealth but also a source of wealth. A man who owned land was referred to as *mwene mulimi* (land owner)

[431] Ibid.

and was highly respected.[432] Being mixed farmers, the pre-colonial Maragoli kept animals such as cattle, sheep and goats, and also cultivated crops such as *ovoro* (finger millet) *maduma (*maize), *mavere* (sorghum), *mungu* (pumpkins), *mabwoni* (sweet potatoes) and *miogo* (cassava).[433]

Land ownership and use was therefore of great significance to Maragoli since their life depended on how prudent they made use of this great resource. Both men and women were assigned gendered roles in order to ensure optimum use of land. This notwithstanding, Women played a crucial role in the agricultural process. For example, land as a fundamental resource for crop cultivation and animal production was designated into different uses with women in mind.[434]

The arable land was basically divided into three main parts. The first was land on which a family homestead was located and on which the wife, or wives) the Maragoli being largely polygamous) carried out farming. The second was the land the patriarch cultivated for his private use or as security in case of food shortage. This, too, was divided out for each wife, although the produce was considered the patriarch's property. The third portion, consisting of all the remaining land, was communal and belonged to the clan. Women could gather fruits, firewood, vegetables and medicinal plants here as they wished.

[432] 1917/18 KNA: DC/NN.1/2 See Also G. Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p.12.
[433]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[434]Samson Omwoyo, "Assessing the impact of coffee production on Abagusii women in western Kenya: A historical analysis (1900-1963)." (2008), p.160.

It has been found that the survival of humankind has been due much more to 'woman-the-gatherer' than to 'man-the-hunter' activities, thus making women's productivity the precondition of all human productivity.[435]

Women linkage to marriage, whether polygamous or monogamous enabled them access land. Among the precolonial patrilineages, Maragoli included, women obtained land rights only through either fathers or husbands.[436] More significantly, marriage was a means of establishing households and there by giving its sons and in some cases daughters access to land, the main source of food production.[437] Decisions about who farmed a particular piece were made by clan heads but often resulted from discussions in the family and clans guided by customs that took into account the need of various persons in the group. Gender, age, and position in the clan were all factors that played a role.[438]

Prisca Tanui while writing on Nandi notes that land ownership among the Nandi was linked to male female gender relations. Through marriage, a man and a woman would own a cultivated land.[439]

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[435]Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and accumulation on a world scale: Women in the international division of labour*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014, p.58.

[436]P.O.Ndege, From Accumulation of women and children to 'Land grabbing": Agrarian Kleptocracy and the land question in Kenya (Inaugural Lecture: Moi University press, 2012), 10. Retrieved from www.ir.mu.ac.kepdf . Accessed 25/11/2023. See Also P.Shipton Lineage and Locality as Antithetical principle in East Africcan Systems of land tenure , Ethnology, Vol.23; No.3.1986,117-132.

[437] P. Shipton, Lineage and Locality as Antithetical Principles in East African Systems of Land Tenure", *Ethnology, Vol. 23, No. 3.1986, 117—132.*

[438] D.A.V. Kimanthi, The Akamba land tenure system and its impacts on women' land ownership in Masinga division, 1895-2010. (M.A Thesis, Kenyatta University 2016),p.18. Retrieved from www.ir-library.ku.ac.kepdf.Assessed 4-01-2023.

[439] Prisca tanui, A gender Analysis of of the influence of colonial policies on Access to land and Agricultural technology Among the Nandi in Kenya, 1895-1954 in International journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Vol. 5,No.9, Sept.2015,219-220.Accessed from www.ijhssnet.com.Accesssed on 10/05.2024., See Also P.O.Ndege, From Accumulation of women and Children to Land Grabbing ; Agrarian Kleptocracy and the land Question in Kenya.(Inaugral Lecture , Moi University Press 2012),10 Retrieved from www.ir.mu.kepdf. Accessed on 25/11/2023.

Marriage availed an opportunity for a man to establish a household thereby giving sons and daughters access to land. Decision about who farmed a particular piece of land was made by clan heads but often resulted from discussions in the family and clan guided by customs that took into account the needs of various persons in the group. Gender, age and position in the clan were all factors that played a role. Among the Maragoli, a man could only access land rights upon marriage. Unmarried man was considered not responsible hence excluded fom land ownership.[440]

According to Tanui, marriage in pre-colonial Nandi marked a point at which a man and a woman could jointly own a cultivated land.[441] For the polygamous case, cultivated land was divided basing on the number of wives. It becomes obvious that each married woman had her own farm which she cultivated. The size of the farm was pegged on the individual's ability to mobilize labour. She further argues that an individual was at liberty to decide the amount of land to cultivate. An elderly man could also own his small parcel near the homestead in which he planted tobacco.[442]

Land once cleared for cultivation belonged to the person who had cleared it. Incase of death, the land would be inherited by the sons of the woman who cultivated it and their wives. Tanui further notes that the development of a fully conscious idea that land belonged to men did not develop in the pre colonial Nandi.

[440] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.
[441] Prisca Tanui, *Op*, *Cit*., p.220.
[442] Ibid

This was because, cultivated land was ideologically associated with women activities. This striking resemblance was also noted in the maragoli case as evidenced by the field work oral submissions.[443]

Z.J Mokebo while exploring the same theme outlines that marriage protected the woman's place in matters access to land among the pre-colonial Gusii. A married woman remained the principal trustee to her sons' inheritance upon her husband's demise.[444] Further more, married women among the Gusii who were unable to bear children on their part easily manipulated their marital status to be ''women husbands.''these women were allowed to 'marry' other women to bear children.[445] The maragoli case concurred with their Gusii cousins' take on married women being principal trustee to their husbands but failed to conclusively confirm the existence of 'husband women'. More inquiries into the absence of husband women was mostly linked to the polygamy which always came in handy to solve childlessness and also the high fertility rate among the Maragoli women which reduced childlessness.[446]

The pre-colonial Maragoli acquired and owned land in different ways. There were family, communal bush land or forests, individual and no man's land based on ownership, use and control.[447] Family land was the land inherited whole or part from grandfather or father or

[443] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[444] Z. J. Mokebo , Women Political Participation : A case of Boma Choge Constituency in Kenya,1963-2013, MA Thesis Kenyatta University,2015. p.89. Retrieved from www.ir-library .ku.ac.kepdf. Accessed on 20/05/2023.

[445][445] Ibid p.90.

[446] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Ground, on 10th October, 2023.

[447]Gunter Wagner., (1949). *Op. Cit*. p.32.

any other land inherited as part of the family property[448]. Family land expanded as sons opened up new cultivation areas from bush land.

Inheritance system caused further subdivision as more sons got married and set up new homes faster than land could be acquired at individual level. Family land was not necessarily in one place but could be found scattered in different places but within the same village or locality.[449]

Communal land ownership was a feature of pre-capitalist African mode of production, Kabira while writing about land in Mbeere notes that land was a community property and individuals were entitled to use without ownership.[450] She observes that among the Mbeere, land was the most important property but culturally women lacked ownership and inheritance rights. Among the Maragoli, all the property belonged to the community and most valuable property was land which was communally owned. Communal land was under the control of elders comprising of the council of elders. Each village land was under the control of the council of elders. Communal land was divided into two; the communal pastures and relief land. Pastures belonged to the entire community, each village with its own under the village elder (who ensured that no cultivation encroached on the pastures).

Every clan's man could graze here on condition that his use sustained the existing Maragoli social order.[451] Relief lands on the other hand were used by villagers to boost production during the short season- *edjuvwi* especially if the main season- *egudu* was hit by calamity leading to poor harvests. If food shortage seemed eminent such lands were allocated to

[448]KNA: DC/EN /3/3/2:1932:7.
[449]A.M. Amisi, *Op. Cit.,* p 57.
[450]Kabira, Wanjiku M., and Elizabeth A. Nzioki. "Celebrating women's resistance: A case study of women's groups movement in Kenya." (1993), p.15.
[451]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 3rd July 2023.

homesteads under the village elder's supervision and auspices. The bushlands-*emilimilu* were opened up and planted with sweet potatoes on a communal basis.[452]

Family property was under the care of a male head and the property became inheritable to sons only. Hobley notes that among the African communities, women were never allowed to own land just like livestock though they had power to use the land for production just as was the case in livestock products like milk for the children.[453] From the oral submissions, it was realized that the main reason why the pre-colonial Maragoli women were not owning land was that land issues were always under protests and war confrontations. In order to safeguard the land from such, it was only the young men who had the advantage of teaming together especially after circumcision as an ageset; *irikura*. The women on the other hand did not have a binding military wing to provide such. More-over, even if women could have formed such a wing, upon marriage such a wing would have been disrupted due to the girls getting married off to different places.[454] Concerning the Agikuyu women, Louis Leakey observes that in the ordinary course of any event it is true that a Kikuyu woman did not inherit or own property.[455]

The cultural explanation to the prohibition of Maragoli women from property ownership was that their gender role was primarily to concentrate on food production. This was achieved through the management of the household farm. Hence, women only exploited

[452] KNA: DC/NN/1/4:1923:4
[453]Ibid.
[454]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023

[455]Carolyn M Clark, "Louis Leakey as Ethnographer: On the Southern Kikuyu before 1903." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 23, no. 3 (1989) p.381.

the husband's lands but were not entitled to any land rights. This fact placed women in a strategic position to mitigate the effects of famines.[456]

Marxist feminists argue that women are exploited through the ownership and inheritance of property which is rooted in the patriarchal society. For the case of Maragoli the ownership of property created a hierarchical order that placed women at the lower end of the social ladder. This was not necessarily the subordination intonated by the capitalist scholars. The African conceptualization and explanation is necessary. African land was always under contest and external attacks. The males were therefore obligated to ensure the territorial peace and tranquility. This explains why in the pre-colonial Maragoli men compared to women, played a minor role in daily farm management practices to solely concentrate on safeguarding the land militarily.[457]

In the African communities, men took up jobs that required physical energy such as felling down trees, building and constructing houses and granaries and hunting which became their specialization.[458] The African woman was responsible for both productive and reproduction tasks. This was not only the case in Maragoli but almost similar in all pre-colonial African socieities. Among the nomadic societies such as the Fulani, a woman was expected to milk cows and produce butter while among the Rendile, women milked cows, treated the sick livestock, looked after children, and processed dairy production while men built houses, dams and fabricated wood products.[459]

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[456]Julius Mutugi Gathogo, "The Relevance and Influence of African Religion in post-apartheid South Africa and Beyond–Part 1." *Churchman, https://biblicalstudies. org. uk/pdf/churchman/121-02_163* (2007), p. 78.
[457]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023

[458] KNA:DC/NN.1/3, See Also Musalia 2010 *Op.Cit*. pp.90.
[459]Margaret Jean Hay, and Sharon Stichter, eds. *African women south of the Sahara*. No. Ed. 2. ,1995, p.22.

Moreover, the Maragoli also had clan lands which were composed of uncultivated bushes. This formed a critical reserve of wild fruits, tuber, vegetables, edible leaves and wild game. These food reserves bailed out the many families facing food shortages and were important sources of supplementary foods.[460] Each clan had its land which it considered theirs by ancestral rights or prior occupation to be cared for, protected and sometimes expanded as they saw it fit.[461] Sometimes the boundaries of clan territory were definite if delimited by river streams, hills, and shorelines. However, they were disputable when there were no such discernible markers.[462] Individual land was acquired by the right of first cultivation by the act of clearing forests. A tenant got such by cultivating land allotted to him by his host for over two generations.

Unlike family land, this could be entered into transaction without complications. Some clansmen could get such from relatives or friends by exchanging the right with a goat or a hoe. If a man cultivated this land for two or more generations, he acquired ownership rights to it.[463] There was also the no man's land- *rigendi nyama* which was the land between two distinct clans or different sub-ethnic groups. The no man's land- *Rigendinyama* increased in size if one clan moved further away. Such lands could be used by the nearest clans to them. Individuals who acquired such lands had full ownership rights. The no man's land also acted as a food reserve especially wild fruits, tubers, eggs and even wild game. Such wild game supplemented the Maragoli agricultural activities especially during droughts or when there was a poor harvest. An individual had rights of owning and using his father's

[460]Cyprian Mugala, (75 Years), Oral interview, on 3rd July 2023.
[461]A.M Amisi, *Op, Cit*, p. 58.
[462] KNA: DC/EN /3/3/2:1932:8.
[463]Amisi, A. M. (2021). *Op. Cit.* p.59.

or family's land.[464] This right of a specific piece of land was complimented by the rights he had in sharing other communal resources.

Land was individually owned and used thus two brothers or cowives could not cultivate the same piece of land at the same time. Each wife, married son and elderly daughter had their piece of land, while the man had full rights of ownership, usufruct and alienation. The women only had usufruct and very limited ownership rights.[465] According to the Focus Group discussion during the field work, this land use practice was put in place in order to reduce land related family conflicts which would interfere with the Maragoli established food production mechanisms.[466]

The pre-colonial Maragoli temporal land use was divided in to three, first were the seasonal tenants- *Avatirwa,* who were individuals who mostly on friendship basis had been allocated a section of land to use for a season. This was mostly the short season. Secondly were the tenants at will-*avamenya* when they had cultivated a land for more than two generations continuously; they became pseudal owners-*avamirika* with their land claims closely monitored by the council of elders. *Omumenya* (as a tenant) did the following before acquiring any land right; first offered regular gifts to the land owner at the end of every farming season. Secondly, brew beer and welcome elders and the land owner to partake. In all pertinent clan and village matters he had to adopt a subservient status.[467]

[464]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years) Oral interview, on 5th August 2023.
[465]Gunter Wagner, "The Bantu of Western Kenya: with special reference to the Vugusu and Logoli." *(No Title)* (1970), p.89.
[466]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[467] KNA: DC/NN/1/7:1926:10

A dependent lost any ownership rights to land if his conduct became anti- social. The same applied to his sons. *Avamirika* constituted of war victims, children captured with their mothers during wars, and children obtained in exchange of grains.[468] They were all welcome and allocated land to settle from village bush lands. Any male offspring born to the woman within the group were given full rights to land within their respective homesteads. An individual could only grant land or part of it to any member of his sub-ethnic group but not any other.[469]

In pre-colonial Maragoli, an individual could not lose land without due course and endorsement by the elders. Land could not change ownership without certain circumstances being taken into consideration. For example, if a man went away from clan lands and settled in another clan, as a tenant for over two generations, his land reverted to the clan. This was according to the Wu Mulalu FGD conducted during this research.[470] But this was only possible if he left the land without a trustee. If a man became irresponsible in his way of using land, the elders evicted him from the village. He lost his homestead and land to other villagers at the discretion of the elders. Therefore, in circumstances like these, land could change ownership.[471] From the oral submissions, such cases though rare, once an individual lost his land through irresponsible acts mostly witchcraft and murder, the

[468]Danson PL Esese, "Agriculture and Socio-Economic Change among the Wanga of Mumias Division, 1860-1945." MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990, p.83.

[469]KNA: DC/EN /3/3/2:1932:12.
[470] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023
[471]KNA: DC/NN/1/22:1940:23.

heavy punishment given was to deter the other clan members from repeating such inhuman acts.[472]

Land could shift from one homestead's use to the other with the council of elders' permission and with the approval of the elders. Such belonged to an evicted clansman or an elder who could not cultivate it for one reason or another for example old age. For such to be used by another individual, negotiations had to be held between the owner and the prospective user.

The agreement was witnessed by the council of elders and the neighbours so that incase the grantee claimed full rights in future, the facts of the case could easily be verified.[473] A son had rights to bar his father or brother from granting land to another person on the grounds that the deal was harmful to his or some other family rights. This was however very rare. Such cases were only permitted on the grounds that the father had proved irresponsible and adamant to pick the council of elders' advice after a number of sermons.

Moreover, family members or an elder or son had power to stop a brother or father from granting land to a third party. The family held the powers of intervening in the granting out land when they had satisfactory grounds of doing so. For example, if the family learned that their father or one of the sons who intended to alienate his land did not possess adequate land for his family, they had the right of vetoing the deal.[474] Once land had been alienated involving three parties, any dispute arising from it was dealt with by the council

[472]Afanda David, (70 Years), Oral Interviews, on 12th Agust 2023.
[473]KNA: Abaluhya Land Law and Customs.
[474]KNA: DC/EN/3/3/2:1932:15.

of elders using specific procedures. The elders from the two families involved and other independent witnesses could sit.

The pre-colonial Maragoli ensured that communal resources were accessible by all. An individual had both limited and unlimited accessibility rights to communal resources ranging from communal grazing fields-*ichairo*/*vyairo* (pl), water source-*kidaho,* bushlands-*rigendinyama* depending on his membership status in the clan or village and his overall social conduct. Every member of a village had a right of way to essential facilities including water and pastures. A right of passage or accessibility to a foot path, cattle track leading to the pastures or watering point or a path leading to a cultivated field.[475] This could be claimed by a man whose homestead was completely encircled by other people's lands and crop farms. The elders of the neighbourhood had a duty of opening a way for such a man.[476] If his crops were constantly destroyed by livestock going to a watering point, he had the right to close the route on condition that he and the local elders opened up a new passage for the stock. The new route had to be convenient and acceptable to all users.[477]

An individual also had rights to natural fruits, trees and banana groves. Different kinds and varieties of natural fruits could be found growing in the bush or on someone's uncultivated land. Everyone had a right to these fruits so long as they were not growing on a cultivated piece of land. Mushrooms and berries were collected freely from the pasture lands or someone's uncultivated land. Besides the natural trees, a man could plant trees of his own choice on condition that they were not harmful to a neighbour's safety.[478]

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[475]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p.60.
[476]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 15th August 2023, See Also A.M Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 67.
[477] KNA: DC/NN/1/7:1926:12.
[478]KNA: DC/NN/1/20:1938:23.

In regard to natural forests, no one was allowed to cut down a medicinal tree or fruit tree for firewood, or deny any society member access to a natural forest on the grounds that could not be substantiated and approved by the council of elders.[479] There were laws governing the rights to the use and protection of natural forests.

Banana groves could change ownership if the owner exchanged his land with another person or if he offered usufructuary rights to another party together with the trees and bananas.[480]

Mostly, even when land changed ownership, the planted trees or banana remained the property of the former owner who had the right to collect fruits, timber or wood from them. If this vegetation was felled and new ones sprouted, they now belonged to the new owner.[481]

Turning to land administration and inheritance, Land could cease to be an accessible resource if improper administration and control structures were used within a community. Poor administration and control structures would result in the limited and unequal accessibility to land by all. This led to the emergence of landed and landless classes. Such a polarized land ownership situation brought about further differences in the social relations of production.

The two classes had unequal relations of ownership, control and accessibility to the means of production (land).[482] Individual, family and community had ownership and alienation rights but within a legal and regulated system. Part of these rights were established within

[479]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023
[480]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023, See also A.M. Amisi, *Op*,*Cit*, p.70.
[481]KNA: DC/EN /3/3/2:1932:25.
[482]Erick M. Aseka, *Op*, *Cit*, p.120.

the rights of an individual to land. While on the other hand, the elders remained a cardinal factor in the land ownership and use.[483]

Land laws and customs remained critical aspects in the accessibility and use of land. Land was owned along the patriarchal line of descent and their patrilineal aspect continued through the administration and control practices. Land administration remained a preserve for the elderly men who incidentally were also the leaders in the social and political spheres.

This built up the paternal control and supremacy of the male elders as the key determinants of resource accessibility, use and control among the Maragoli before the establishment of the colonial rule.

The land administration was based on gender, age, social status and political leadership which were based on community's social economic super structure.[484] The village elders doubled up as political and social leaders as well as arbitrators in land cases. They handled all land cases within their jurisdiction. The council of elders could impose fines of stock or grains on those who were found guilty of breaching land law.[485] The council could impose corrective and punitive measures against a villager acting contrary to the land law within the communal areas.

From the oral interviews, a number of respondents alluded evidence to a general agreement that villager who was found denying his kinsmen access to the communal land or instigating violence in such places would be summoned to the council of elders. The

[483]KNA: DC/NN/1/22:1940:12.
[484]KNA: DC/EN/3/3/2:1932:34, KNA: DC/NN/1/4, p.10.
[485]Hezron Mwamili, (56 Years), Oral interview, on 23rd August 2023.

council of elders based on evidence would suspend such a villager from accessing the communal resource for a specified period. Laws and customs pertaining to land ownership, use and conservation were strictly observed and executed. Persistent offenders were evicted from clan lands. Their appeals against such convictions remained null and void.[486]

According to archival evidence, up to 1900 A.D, council of elders among the Maragoli formed a powerful land authority.[487] They organized community land resource use, their conservation and dispensed all legal aspects pertaining to land. They ensured that no one lost his land illegitimately and that inheritance and alienation procedures were properly followed.[488] They also protected individual's rights to property (land) and ensured the security of tenure for all.

The elders protected the posterity's rights to land and evicted tress-passers over people's land. They were the trustee holders and general administrators of clan lands who protected other villagers from an individual's carelessness in land use through eviction and also provided a forum for arbitration and solution of land disputes.[489]Demarcation of boundaries on land was done through land boundaries-*zinzako/oluako*. Individual fields were marked off by trenches or furrows and occasionally also by stones, but only rarely by trees. When a man intended to start a fresh cultivation on a piece of unused clan land, he would delimit the area claimed by him through staking it off by poles. He would then announce the claim

[486]KNA: DC/EN/3/3/2:1932:5, KNA: DC/NN/1/3:1920: p.4.
[487]KNA: DC/NN/1/13:1932: p.54.
[488]Ibid.
[489]Joseph A McCartin, "“A Wagner Act for Public Employees”: Labor's Deferred Dream and the Rise of Conservatism, 1970–1976." *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 1 (2008), p.130.

by telling all his neighbours about it. If someone else thought that he had a prior claim he would remove the markings.

The dispute provoked by this action would be settled by the council of elders, the older claim being recognized if it could be substantiated by the evidence of witnesses.[490] If a man had staked off a piece of bush land, but neither cultivated it himself nor surrendered it to another clansman for tillage, his claim for it would lapse after seven years.

Clan and tribal boundaries were likewise called *ezinzako*. They were definitely fixed only as a result of disputes over land. Between traditionally hostile tribes for instance between the Luo and the Nyang'ori; an uninhabited zone, a mile or so was maintained so that the inter-tribal boundary in such cases was a strip of territory rather than a border line. With population pressure, the uninhabited border zones were narrowed down until they disappeared.

Clan boundaries were also marked by the planting of trees especially wild fig trees or amakuyu, a certain kind of gum tree called *evirimbu*, and sage brushes or *eviloka*.[491] If a man wished to cultivate a piece of virgin bush land in the doubtful zone lying between the areas occupied by two clans, he could not simply go ahead as in the case of bush land that lay well within the area occupied by his own clan. But first of all, he had to notify his own village elder of his intentions. The latter then went to consult the village elder of the neighbouring clan to make sure that the man's activities would not be regarded as an encroachment upon the land of the adjoining clan. If such a preliminary agreement between

[490]KNA: DC/EN/3/3/2:1932:3, KNA: 64 DC/NN.1/14:1923: p.17.
[491]KNA: DC/NN/1/7:1926:2.

the two village elders were omitted, fighting and eventually a feud would have ensued between the two clans concerned.[492]

The village elders and the war leaders are said to have discouraged their people from starting cultivations far away from their villages- *amadala*. Such an act would have made it difficult to summon the men quickly if they had to defend themselves against attacking enemies. It appears that among the Maragoli the conception of clan ownership of land in the sense of control over communally used grazing land and surplus bush land developed only gradually and after the various clans had already become political entities.[493] As each son grew up and set up his own household (after the birth of his first child), he was given land by his father to cultivate. The father, however, retained the right to sow the first seeds in the garden apportioned to his son, and the latter sent his father harvest gifts as an acknowledgement of the fact that the father was still the titular owner. This relationship was retained till the father's death.

If a man did not have enough land to provide for all his sons, the younger ones either tilled a piece of unused clan land or 'bought' a field or lived as *avatirwa* on lands given to them by their mother's brothers or wives' brothers. They returned to their clans after their father's death, when the land retained by the father for his own and his wife's use was divided up among the heirs. The ancestral land- *omulimi gwa guga* always went to a man's eldest son, while the youngest son helped the mother to till the land apportioned to her and

[492] KNA: DC/EN /3/3/2:1932: p.12.
[493]A.M Amisi, *Op. Cit,* p.65.

later inherited it. In principle, all sons upon reaching full married status were entitled approximately to equal share in their father's land.

The distribution of the estate among the sons was done either by the father himself before he died or on the occasion of hair shaving ceremony.[494] Any disputes arising over the distribution of the father's land were settled by the arbitration of elders appointed by the village elder. If a man died before his sons were of age, one of his brothers administered his land, acting as trustees for his nephews until they became of age. During the time of his trusteeship, he could claim the right of usufruct in one of his deceased brother's fields. Part of this field could keep for himself even after his brother's sons were grown up but after his death, this too reverted to his brother's sons or their heirs if they claimed it. If a man died without leaving any child or wife, his lands were inherited by his brothers or failing them, by his nearest classificatory brothers as well as by his sister's sons.[495]

Regarding women and land matters, the Maragoli land laws only recognized men as real land owners and therefore daughters did not inherit any of their father's land. The land of the great grand father-*Omulimi gwa guga* was usually apportioned to the first wife and plots of decreasing size to the junior wives. However, adjustments later made according to number of children in each house. This was according to the FGD collections during the study.[496] The first wife was given a bigger protion since she was believed to have preceeded the other wives in the home. The first wife was also considered to be the main custodian

[494]Susana Lastarria-Cornhiel, "Impact of privatization on gender and property rights in Africa." *World development* 25, no. 8 (1997): p.1326.
[495]KNA: DC/NN/1/10:1929: p.30.
[496]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023

of the home. This made her entertain more visitors of the home, and also be relied on during most of the Maragoli cultural rites including burying the husband.

There were however certain circumstances under which a younger wife would be allocated more land compared to the elder wife[497]. Such circumstance was mostly on basis of the dependents especially sons. In case where a younger wife had very many sons compared to the elder wife, the husband would be forced by circumstance to give the youngrer wife a bigger portion. This was primarily because; the pre-colonial Maragoli land was assigned to the wives as custodians for their sons.[498] Before marriage, a young girl was given her own garden plot for one or more seasons, mainly to grow the simsim which she needed in connection with her wedding ceremonies[499]. She stored the crops raised on 'her' land in her mother's granaries, and upon her marriage her rights in the land given expired.[500] The Maragoli women were left out of land ownership due to a number of factors. To begin with, land a primary resource among the Maragoli was ever under protest which were only handled by the titular owner as per the Maragoli customary laws.[501] This titular owner was expected to be masculine, able to engage in physical battles to safeguard the land.

The Maragoli circumsicion rite enabled young men form age sets-*makura* who acted as warriors to safeguard the Maragoli land rights.[502] Such an age set setup would not work for women since the Maragoli lacked a concrete ritual rite to unite their women within an age

[497]Ibid.
[498]Ibid.
[499]A.M Amisi, *Op.Cit*. p.74.
[500]Caplan Patricia, "Cognatic descent, Islamic law and women's property on the East African coast." In *Women and Property*, pp. 23-43. Routledge, 1984, p.24.
[501]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023

[502]Ibid.

bracket.[503] The marriage of Maragoli women into other clans also broke their social ties to their ancestral homes hence unable to keep abrest with the daily dynamics in land control in case they would have been given any.[504] Maragoli women as primary producers were pre-occupied with agricultural production leaving land administration to their male counterparts who were dismally involved in the daily agricultural pursuits.[505] Finally, the cultural establishment of assured access of the Maragoli land to women for agricultural production reduced the women needs to pressurize their men to include them in land control matters. All the above made Maragoli women get satisfied with the ursufranct land rights given to them.[506]

From the oral data collected during the field work in regard to occasions when a family only had daughters, it was noted that a portion of their father's land would be distributed to them in order to til it as the remaining parcel went to the man's remaining brothers.[507] However, due to the need to avoid constant encounters with the in laws, the husbands to such wives would advise their wives to dispose the land to their immediate neighours or just plough the land without settling there.[508] There were also cases of unmarried girls to a given homestead. Such girls were given portions to facilitate their subsistence. These portions were aimed at keeping the unmarried girl busy and prevent her from being

[503]Ibid.
[504]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Govoga Chief's Office Grounds, on 2nd September, 2023
[505]Ibid.
[506]Ibid.
[507]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.
[508]Ibid.

unnecessarily idle.[509] The practice of remaining unmarried was highly discouraged and mechanisms were always put in place to ensure girls got married including polygamy and discouraging divorce in the pre-colonial Maragoli society.[510]

The preceding analysis demonstrates that the study of pre-colonial Maragoli economic organization is enriched through the integration of multiple theoretical frameworks and research philosophies. The Articulation of Modes of Production theory traces the transition from hunting and gathering to a mixed economy centered on agriculture. Gender Analysis theory and Feminist Epistemology research philosophy foreground the critical roles and agency of women in economic life, challenging patriarchal interpretations by emphasizing their contributions to food production and resource management. Interpretivism, as a research philosophy, enables a deeper engagement with oral traditions and cultural practices, offering insights beyond empirical data. Collectively, these frameworks illuminate the centrality of land as both a productive asset and a symbol of wealth, while revealing how gendered divisions of labour and land use shaped Maragoli socio-economic structures. This interdisciplinary approach provides a nuanced understanding of the complex interrelations between gender, production systems, and cultural norms in pre-colonial Maragoli society. Building on the previous section, which outlined the economic organization among the Maragoli during the pre-colonial period, the following discussion shifts focus to examine the agricultural practices that underpinned their subsistence and social structures.

[509]Ibid.
[510]Samson Sande, (65 Years), Oral Interview at his home in Mweywe village, on 16th August 2023.

2.5 The Pre-colonial Maragoli Agriculture

The Maragoli agriculture incorporated both crop and livestock husbandry and birds or chicken rearing.[511] In order to adequately situate the Maragoli agriculture in relation to food production mechanism, this section will be divided into a number of segments including the Maragoli agricultural calendar, crop cultivation, livestock rearing and finally the use and disposal of agricultural produce.

By 1800, the Maragoli had developed an elaborate calendar characterized by clearly marked seasons.[512] The traditional year began with the first hoeing of the eleusine gardens during the latter half of July and it ended with the eleusine harvest, which normally took place in the middle of July. The Maragoli distinguished two main agricultural seasons in the year; the short season (*etjuvwi),* the bean season, from August till December, and the main season (*egudu),* the eleusine season, extending from about January until July. *Egudu* was the season of the big rains (April-May) and *etjuvwi* that of the small rains (August - September).

The distinction between these two seasons was very clearly marked. People referred to the sorghum raised during the big rains as the sorghum of *egudu.* Within the two main seasons, the Maragoli distinguished a number of sub seasons, each named after its most characteristic agricultural activity. Thus, the short season was divided into the following four sub seasons, the bean clearing season (2nd half of July – August), the planting of beans (September), the weeding of beans (October - November) and the beans harvesting time.

[511] Edward Nyange, (70 Years), Oral Interview at Viyalo home in Mambai on 11th August 2023. See Also Leen Kavulavu, Op, Cit, p. 659 for the Idakho case.
[512]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p.35.

[513] The long rains season on the other hand began with the hoeing for eleusine (December - January). This was followed by the planting of the eleusine (February), the weeding of eleusine (March- April), digging of sweet potatoes (May) and the native year wound up with the eleusine harvest (July).

The agricultural seasons or sub seasons were not coordinated with the lunar months which played no part in the agricultural calendar or in the sub divisions of the year. It will be seen then that the Maragoli grew two sorghum crops a year but only one eleusine and one bean crop as well as one crop of sweet potatoes.[514] The Maragoli had a definite system of crop rotation which they followed. According to the Maragoli oral interviews, through crop rotation, the society was able to control crop pests and also improve the nutritive value of their agricultural plots. Moreover, crop rotation helped Maragoli diversify their diet, in addition to making them synchronize their planting season in relation to the rain patterns.[515] There were for example crops which required less rain and those that required more rains.[516] The first crop planted on a freshly cleared field or on one that had been lying fallow were sweet potatoes or occasionally sesame. Frequently, only part of a new garden was planted with sweet potatoes while the remainder was ploughed for the planting of the first eleusine crop. Sweet potatoes were followed by eleusine, succeeded by beans, replaced by pure strand of sorghum and finally by second crop of sorghum raised from the stubble of the first. This was then followed by another season or two seasons of fallows.[517]

[513]KNA: DC/NN/1/22:1940: p.7.
[514]KNA: DC/EN/3/3/2;1932: p.8.
[515]Edward Nyange, (70 Years), Oral Interview at Viyalo home in Mambai on 11th August 2023.
[516]Finorah Mahasi, (72 Years), Oral interview at Bethefage home in Mambai, on 11th August 2023.
[517]KNA: DC/NN/1/22:1940: p.20.

The type of cultivation was shifting agriculture within which various foods including sorghum, millet and bananas were grown as suitable crops to the soils and climate of the region. Shifting cultivation as with any other agricultural activity was responsive to innovation as a means of providing for expanded capital accumulation and for the greater release of time for other activities. Shifting itself was a manifestation of innovation in traditional agriculture; such necessity to re-design fields and configurations from time to time as part of the agricultural system required innovation in the application of farming principles to crops and livestock development.

Farmers who successfully practiced innovation in the design and layout of fields for the most effective utilization of the land available permitted not only greater productivity but also a time efficiency that would allow them address more amenable matters in the society. Hence shifting cultivation as with any other agricultural activity was responsive to innovation as a means of providing for expanded capital accumulation and for the greater release of time for other activities.[518] Clearing virgin lands of trees and bush was the work of men. For first ploughing, a long digging stick (*omulo)* was used. People could not begin hoeing for eleusine until after the sacrificial elder (*omusalisi Munene)* had ceremoniously opened the digging season by the performance of a sacrifice at Mungoma.

The various clan heads would there upon begin to hoe their gardens and the fields, and thus having officially opened the season.[519] It was believed that if any Maragoli would begin planting before the official announcement by the sacrificial elder would result into poor

[518]Joshia Otieno Osamba, "The Migrant Labour System in the Asian-Owned Sugar Plantations in Kisumu County, Kenya, 1940–1963." (2016), p.77.
[519]Moses Mosonsieyiri Kansanga, *et. al.,* "Agricultural mechanization, environmental degradation, and gendered livelihood implications in northern Ghana." *Land Degradation & Development* 31, no. 11 (2020): p.1427.

harvest. This was because such an act would attract the wrath of the ancestors resulting into a curse manifested through poor harvest.[520] The communal Maragoli life made them believe that such curses would atimes extend to the whole society hence strictly ensured that every body adhered to this practice.

After the official opening of the season, the elders would give the signal to the general public by dispatching messengers blowing horns. Similarly, the planting and harvesting of the eleusine and bean crops were ceremonially opened by the clan elder while those of subsidiary crops, such as sweet potatoes and cassava, were not subject to such rules. About three days after the second hoeing, people began to plant. The first few handfuls of the seeds were always thrown by the owner of the field, either the husband as the head of the family or his father if he was still alive.[521]

The pre-colonial Maragoli farmer manured his field only with the *ashes-amagoke* obtained from the house fire. Cow dung was used if at all only to manure the kitchen garden or vegetable garden behind the house. People using cow dung for manuring their fields would be suspected of trying to bewitch-*kuloga* their own fields as well as those of their neighbours and would accordingly be prevented by force from doing so. This practice was rooted on the premise that Maragoli were primarily crop cultivators from the very initial beginning. Livestock rearing had gradually been borrowed from their pastral neighbours especially the Nandi.

[520]Richard Andambi, (50 Years), Oral Interview at his home in Chanderema Villge – Mambai, on 11th August 2023.
[521]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 23rd August 2023 See Also G. Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p.35.

The pioneer Maragoli cattle keepers were the aggressive group which had moved out of the Maragoli especially as herds men to such neighbours. Such herds' men ended up marrying from the nilotes. The incoming wives, further, increased the use of such innovation leading to more agricultural success. It is this aggressive nature that probably prompted them experiment with the new things not initially done by the Maragoli.The docile group thus crafted a mechanism to deter the society from rapid changes hence running to negative connotations which could only be based on witch craft. This position is reinforced by Wagner in his discussion on the Bantu of Western Kenya.[522]

Regarding formalized agricultural activities, the Maragoli like other traditional farmers did not have a formalized single agricultural practice but innovatively worked on their varied environmental conditions to suit their agricultural pursuits. The early farmers devised various techniques and methods of working on the lands to produce food crops. Such techniques included shifting cultivation, slash and burn, crop rotation, use of cow dung and mixed cropping.[523] All these techniques were not only a product of internal innovations but also borrowed from their immediate neighbourhood especially the Nilotic speakers.[524]

The main innovation borrowed from Nilotes was the use of cow dung as manure. Such innovations enabled the Maragoli develop a number of mechanisms to control their environment in order to maximize agricultural productivity. This is reinforced by Rodney when he notes that: 'For there to be collective economic gain, a society develops economically as its members increase jointly their capacity of dealing with

[522]G. Wagner, *Op, Cit,* p.20.
[523]KNA: DC/NN/1/20, See Also Ogutu & Kinyanjui, *Op*, *Cit*, p.54.
[524]Kizito L. Muchanga, *Op*, *Cit*, p.80.

environment'.[525] This capacity of dealing with environment is depended on the extent to which they understand the laws of nature and on the extent to which they put that understanding into practice by devising tools.It is reasonable to assume that farmers who successfully practiced innovation in the design and layout of fields for maximum utilization of land available permitted not only greater productivity but also a time efficiency that would allow them address more amenable matters in the society.

The above discussion has been centred on maragoli agricultural calendar. It is worth noting that agriculture and women in Maragoli were two inseparable entities. It has been established that the Maragoli agricultural calendar was dominated by food crops which were principally grown and taken care of by women. Even the subsidiary season planting activities depended highly on women labour for success with men coming in just but to offer a hand especially in moments of crisis. The various duties assigned to Maragoli men and women members ensured food production as a process ran efficiently.

It is from this stand point that Gender Analysis the main tool of analysis in the present research emphasizes on gender relations and treatment of the male and female gender as groups and not individuals in order to appreciate the unique contribution each group play in realization of a better society.[526] Such an appreciation can only be through a deeper interaction and dialogue with a variety of sources derived from the society in question with special attention to the society's way of doing things to single out the uniqueness.[527] All

[525]Nzau Mumo. "On political leadership and development in Africa: A case study of Kenya." *Kenya Studies Review* 3, no. 3 (2011): 87-111. p.94.
[526]M.I. Ayesha, *Op*, *Cit*, p.21.
[527]Ma Junjie, Ma Yingxin, *Op.Cit*. p.11.

this can best be done through a rigorous and meticulous research philososphy like interpretivism as adopted in the current study.

The indigenous crops characterized the pre-capitalist mode of production. These include finger millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, arrow roots, pigeon peas, guavas, and pumpkins.[528]Maize was probably a recent introduction in the 1890s to the people of Western Kenya as it had a very limited use. This is well confirmed by Hay when he pointed out that Lord Lugard visited Kavirondo in 1890, and saw "little or no maize."[529]Grant study, posits that travellers to Uganda came across maize in Central Buganda and Bunyoro by 1862, in Acholi by 1880. Thus, it seems possible that maize travelled along the main trade routes from Buganda and Bunyoro to Mumias from where it later spread to the other parts of Kavirondo.[530]

Maragoli agricultural activities were influenced both by the soil fertility and the rainy seasons. The Maragoli took advantage of the different soil types to grow a variety of food crops that satisfied their subsistence needs throughout the year, except in periods of natural calamities like drought or floods. In Maragoli, Sowing began on the onset of rains to allow seeds to germinate fully and establish itself for growth and survival for longer periods. Crops were grown in different seasons depending on maturation timelines. For instance; maize, beans, pigeon peas, finger millet and sorghum were planted during the long rains while sweet potatoes, arrow roots and pumpkins were favorable for the short rains.[531]

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[528]Muthui Dorcas Kisungi, "Women and Famine In Colonial Kenya's Kitui West Region, 1895–1963." MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2021, p.92.

[529] M.J. Hay Economic Change in Luo Kowe 1890-1945. PhD. Dissertation, University of Wiscons *Op*, *Cit*, As Qouted in Leen Kavulavu, 2017, *Op*. *Cit*. p.660

[530] Ibid.

[531]A.M Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.50.

Through oral tradition, an informant recalls what she was told by her mother, that in the pre-colonial era all household members went out to the fields for sowing before the occasional rains, which were experienced.[532] It was the expectation of the society for every woman in each household to mobilize the family members for cultivation. However, there were lazy women who never showed any concern and therefore songs were sung to ridicule them.

Ndiegu Atsia Kusuma, Akima Mwana,
Na Mwana atsia Kusuma, Akima Ndiegu,
Ndiegu Vava, Ukariranga gu…,
Tsunu Tsunu Tsunu.

The song is about a mother by name Ndiegu who went out in search for food which due to her igocentric tendencies denied her child. This song emphasizes the position of pre-colonial Maragoli women as traditional food producers. Failure to effectively play this role made a woman lose her dignity and hence face public ridicule. There were women who took over the responsibilities of their husbands and grew what was considered as men crops such as fruit trees and bananas. These women were given titles redicule their manlike tendencies.

These titles included the bearded woman (*mukari wi tsinderu)*. Once given such a title, their women folk would disassociate with them denying them the necessary women network for maneuvering through various women related discussions. Such ridicule ranged from being made subjects in mockery songs especially during women dominated activities like weddings and also being sidelined from women led community activities and

[532]Cynthia Ingado, (69 Years), Oral Interview held on 5th September 2023.

celebrations.[533] The prudent home keepers were always used as points of reference in the community and even preserved in praise songs.[534]

That food crop production was an important economic activity for the Maragoli long before colonial rule is evidenced by the fact that before 1887, the Maragoli supplied large quantities of foodstuffs to the Arab and Swahili trade caravans from the coast.[535]By the time the British arrived in Maragoliland in the last decade of the 19th century, the Maragoli had established a habit of growing surplus foodstuffs for exchange.[536] By the turn of the twentieth century, Maragoli had built up trade and commerce to supply caravans with food supplies. The foodstuffs produced and sold to the caravans included sugarcane, millet, maize, beans and bananas.

Kabira noted that women's responsibilities could often become overwhelming. To alleviate this, small women's groups were organized within communities to increase their collective labor capacity for agricultural tasks. These work groups played a crucial role in ensuring subsistence by providing food, and this practice was a key aspect of the pre-capitalist mode of production. During oral interviews, one informant mentioned that women sometimes received assistance from relatives or friends through these work groups—called *uvufuva*

[533]Humphrey Chadianya, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 3rd August 2023.
[534]Esther Kinavodoli, (76 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th October 2023.
[535]Marcia Wright, "Strategies of Slaves and Women: Life Stories of East/Central Africa." (1993), p.29
[536]Muey C Saeteurn., and Muey Saeteurn. *Cultivating Their Own: Agriculture in Western Kenya During the" development" Era*. Vol. 90. Boydell & Brewer, 2020, p.82.

and *ifisti*—which consisted of women from various households within the village. They would take turns helping each other with fieldwork. In some cases, these work groups were also formed based on friendships.[537]A woman who failed to keep good relationship with her peers failed to get incorporated into such group activities.

The timing of weeding cereal crops planted by women varied depending on the type of crop in season. For instance, Maragoli women typically weeded sorghum about a month after planting. This practice was crucial to prevent the crops from competing for water and nutrients. The speed of weeding depended on the size of the field and the availability of labor, whether from family members or friends.[538]

Subsistence food production relied heavily on free labor, a key characteristic of the pre-capitalist mode of production. Once crops like millet and maize ripened, women and children took on the responsibility of guarding the fields to protect them from birds and animals. They had to watch out for wild boars, squirrels, baboons, and porcupines. Harvesting was traditionally seen as a woman's duty, and to manage this, women would mobilize relatives and neighbors to help.

The work was done in shifts, with people moving from one family's fields to another's. This process began at dawn and lasted until dusk throughout the entire harvesting period. Afterward, the harvested grains were stored in granaries, which were built as the crops ripened. In addition to granaries, other storage facilities like large urns and pots were also used to keep the grains safe.[539]

[537]Anjeline Vugutsa, (73 Years), Oral Interview, on 20th August 2023.
[538]Susana Agesa, (50 Years), Oral Interview, on 20th September 2023.
[539]Ibid, p.67.

The produce from the fields was stored in granaries. In polygamous households, each woman had her own house and, by extension, her own plot of land to cultivate, along with separate granaries. The contents of these granaries were considered the woman's personal property, as she alone had the right to access them. While children could be sent to fetch grain, it was never the role of a man to do so. The granaries were seen as personal spaces for the women, a clear marker of their ownership and control over the produce they had worked to harvest. This was part of the Maragoli gender relations structures to empower a wife of a particular household to fully control the food sub sector and only brief the husband on the status of the food reserve in the home.

The mischievous men who went into the granaries to check the food status were ridiculed through songs and a times sidelined from serious male council matters and even branded women. Societal laws strictly prohibited men from entering the granaries; doing so was considered a taboo.[540] This restriction reinforced the woman's exclusive responsibility for, and control over, the agricultural produce. By sanctifying this practice, the law granted women complete economic autonomy.

To prevent disputes and ensure the hard work and independence of each household—especially within a polygamous family structure—the pre-colonial Maragoli community did not have a communal granary for the entire homestead. Each woman’s granaries were separate, reflecting her individual ownership and control over the crops she cultivated.Similar to other agricultural communities like the Akamaba and Agikuyu, Maragoli women were primarily responsible for reproductive work, in addition to

[540] Gudrun Krämer, *A history of Palestine: From the Ottoman conquest to the founding of the state of Israel*. Princeton University Press, 2008., p.89

performing various domestic chores. These tasks included cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood, and caring for children. This division of labor placed significant pressure on women, as they balanced the demands of both subsistence farming and managing the household.[541]

A woman was regarded as the homemaker, as it was her duty to shoulder the burden of maintaining the household. Culturally, agricultural work was seen as primarily a woman's role, and women played a crucial part in ensuring food security through their involvement in food production, a pattern that was common across many African societies, including the Maragoli.[542] As Wolff notes, any productive effort related to the home and farm was recognized as a special responsibility of women.[543] Their labor was central to sustaining both the household and the community. Musalia observes that, about 70-80% of Sub-Saharan Africa's food was attributed to women.[544]

Women have often been described as producers, reproducers, consumers, and managers of the environment. These roles highlight the multifaceted contributions women made to both their families and society. As producers, they participated in agricultural labor and played a critical role in ensuring household and community food security. As reproducers, they

[541]Ibid., p.80
[542] Elizabeth Muyagide, (73 Years), Oral interview, held at Mambai village on 12th September 2023.
[543] Richard D. Wolff, *Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The economics of colonialism*. Transafrica Publishers, 1974, p.17.
[544]M.W. Musalia, *Op*,*Cit*, p.78

bore and raised children, ensuring the continuity of the community. As consumers, they manage household needs and resources.

And as managers of the environment, women played a crucial role in maintaining and sustaining natural resources, ensuring that both the land and their families thrived. These interconnected roles highlight the significant yet often overlooked economic and social contributions of women. As producers, pre-colonial Maragoli women were the primary source of labour which the family unit relied on to avail adequate food from both the on-farm activity of cultivation and off farm activities ranging from trade, crafts and gathering of wild fruits and tubers.

The reproductive role of the Maragoli women was best manifested in their family responsibilities. The pre-colonial Maragoli society through polygamous marriage, heavily relied on the woman labour force to bring forth the required labour through procreation. It was through procreation that many descendants who were to carry on the societal obligations were brought forth. A man who died without descendants was not highly regarded;[545] it was as though he had never truly lived. In contrast, women played a crucial role in the reproduction of lineage members, and their importance in this regard was emphasized by the fact that children in a polygamous household were often identified by their mother's name.[546] The strength of a lineage, both in terms of numbers and vitality, was vital for production and defense, as larger lineages provided greater labor force and security

[545] Peter O. Ndege, *Op, Cit*, p.48.

[546] Elizabeth Muyagide, (73 Years), Oral interview at Chanderema, on 12th September, 2023.

for the community. This underscores the central role women played in ensuring the survival and prosperity of their families and lineages.

The pre-colonial Maragoli women role as consumers was brought out beginning from the relationship that the maragoli society established with land as the primary resource. To begin with, in the pre -colonial Maragoli, land was divided based on the number of wives a man had. This was because, it was expected that it was these wives who would make use of the land. Additionally, upon clearing a bush land, the pre-colonial Maragoli men first gave priority to the newly married men to pick a bigger portion then the rest followed.[547] This was on the belief that the newly married man required more land not only to produce more food for his expanded family but also had acquired more users or labourforce which would help him plough more land.

Maragoli women finally as managers were expected to come up with prudent strategies to help them organize their households to maximize food production. It is due to such expectations that the prudent Maragoli women would carefully isolate their best seeds. This was done after harvest and preserved for the next planting season. In the same vein, Maragoli women as managers always moved around both within the village and outside in order to tap the best agricultural practices including the best crop varieties. After getting such varieties, the women would come experiment them and if proved better than their original stock, the women would domesticate the improved varieties. This was a mark of prudent management. Among the good qualities of crop varieties sought by these maragoli women included fast maturing ones to cushion their families from famine, drought and

[547]Gunter Wagner, *Op. Cit*, p. 20.

pest resistant varieties and finally the varieties with high yields to increase their family seasonal harvests.[548] Upon marriage for example, the bride would be given a heifer to take care of as a manager and out of her shrewd and competent management, the father in law expected that this daughter in law would be in position to take care of this animal upto a time of maturity to enable his grandsons and daughters get their daily milk for subsistence.[549] As the family managers, the maragoli women nursed their families in their position as family doctors and physicians.

Most of the herbalists in pre-colonial Maragoli just like many other Luhya communities were women.[550] Upon the birth of a child, a Margoli woman was expected to know the various herbs which would protect the new born and ensure that the child was safe. This duty extended to the entire family; a married woman was to regularly check her children and even husband and give the necessary herbal prescriptions as a way of managing their health.[551]These attributes are clearly reflected in women's roles in collecting water, gathering firewood, and farming. Women's close interaction with the environment, through these essential tasks, has enabled them to play a pivotal role in sustaining the household. As a result, men and children often relied on women for their daily food and other basic needs. Women's work in managing these resources has been foundational to the survival and well-being of the family, reinforcing their central role in the domestic economy.[552]

[548]Risper Kasidi, (70 Years), Oral Interview held at Mambai village on 10th August 2023.
[549]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.

[550] K.L Muchanga, *Op*, *Cit*, p.36
[551]Magaret Salamba, (76 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th August 2023.
[552]Dorothy A. Nyakwaka, *Op*,*Cit*, p.56

In the preparation of land for cultivation, women carried out the digging in two distinct stages. The first stage involved tilling or breaking the ground, while the second stage was pulverization. The process included collecting all the vegetative matter from the land and heaping it into moulds known as *amatuta*. These stages were crucial for creating a fertile environment for planting, and women played an essential role in ensuring the land was properly prepared for the crops. Cultivation of wimbi (finger millet), alongside the planting of various other food crops, was predominantly entrusted to women. Women, frequently aided by their dependents, adeptly oversaw the weeding and harvesting of wimbi and various other crops.

Throughout these agricultural processes, women demonstrated a profound understanding of local farming knowledge and techniques. They possessed the acumen to discern the most productive regions for agriculture, choose the finest seeds for planting, and employ inter-cropping strategies to optimize efficiency while enhancing yield. Their proficiency encompassed the creation of efficient storage solutions that minimized waste and loss, safeguarding the harvest from decay, moisture, pests, and animal intrusions. The adept management of these responsibilities by women was essential for guaranteeing food security and maintaining the sustainability of the household.[553]It is due to this unique place that Maragoli women occupied in agricultural production that explains why women dominated pottery and acquisition of baskets which were the principal storage facilities among the Pre-colonial Maragoli.

[553]S.O. Omwoyo, N. M. Gitonga, and J. M. Machuka. "Plant regeneration via somatic embryogenesis of tropical maize (Zea mays L.) commercial hybrid lines." *Journal of Tropical Microbiology and Biotechnology* 4, no. 1 (2008): p.26.

Although the Maragoli kept livestock, their primary economic activity centered around cultivation. Animal products, especially meat, were rarely consumed except during important ceremonial occasions. The Maragoli's diet was primarily carbohydrate-based and vegetarian, with millet, beans, bananas, and sweet potatoes forming their staple foods. They also enjoyed a variety of green vegetables, which complemented their meals. This diet reflected the community's reliance on farming as their main source of sustenance, with animal products playing a more occasional, ceremonial role.[554]

The family formed the core of agricultural labor, although work parties were sometimes organized during peak periods. As the head of her own hut, a woman directed her children to work on the portion of land allocated to her. Men worked on their own plots but occasionally enlisted help from their dependents—typically more as a command than a request. Wives were expected to respect the husband's authority and rarely challenged it. While agricultural tasks were generally gendered, there was some flexibility in practice.[555]

Labor responsibilities often shifted depending on the task at hand. Men were responsible for clearing virgin land, brushwood, and undergrowth. They also hoed fallow land, which was considered even more challenging than virgin land. This was done using a large digging stick called *muulo*, crafted from a specific type of hardwood known as *kitate*. Once the men had dug the ground, women immediately followed to perform the harrowing

[554]David Afanda, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 4th August 2023.
[555] Esther Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1970), 47.

(*kuvusa* or *kumusa*). However, before this could begin, a man was expected to allocate portions of the cleared land to his wife or wives, in order to prevent disputes.[556]

It was the duty of a man to ensure that each of his wives had sufficient land on which to cultivate food for her children. To minimize the risk of total crop failure, the cultivated plots were often distributed across different villages. Each woman was responsible for harrowing her assigned portion in preparation for planting. Women used small digging sticks for this task, working while bent at the hips. In contrast, men typically squatted while harrowing—though it was uncommon for them to do so, and there was no cultural taboo against it.[557]

Among the Maragoli, food crop production was largely gendered. Women were primarily responsible for seasonal crops such as beans, while men typically cultivated perennial crops like bananas. However, this division was not strictly rigid. As a result of this gender delineation, certain crops came to be associated with either male or female cultivators. Women commonly grew legumes such as pigeon peas, green grams, kidney beans, as well as staple crops like maize, sorghum, and millets. In contrast, men were generally responsible for planting and tending to bananas, yams, cassava, gourds, tobacco, and sweet potatoes. Maragoli cuisine was enriched by a wide variety of green leafy vegetables,

[556]David Afanda, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 4th August 2023, See Also Obioma Nnaemeka, ed., *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity, and Resistance in African Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997), 103.
[557]Leta Tulu Bedada, S. Seth, Steven Maina Runo, Wondyifraw Tefera, and Machuka Jesse. "Regenerability of elite tropical maize (Zea mays L.) inbred lines using immature zygotic embryo explants." *African Journal of Biotechnology* 11, no. 3 (2012): p.601, See Also Claire C. Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 89.

including pumpkin leaves (*riseveve*), *enderema, mutere, ritunde*, and cowpea leaves (*rikuvi).*[558]

Women also cultivated a variety of legumes, including pigeon peas (*tsinjugu*), cowpeas (*rikuvi*), and green grams (*mmbochi*). Pigeon peas, which are slow-growing, were often sown during the short rains but harvested during the subsequent long rains. The stalks were permitted to recover during the brief rains after the harvest, as the leaves were frequently consumed as a vegetable. Cowpeas were sowed during the extended rains. Beans were frequently intercropped with staple crops, including maize. Beans were an essential food supply during periods of scarcity, particularly just prior to the maize harvest, due to their rapid maturation. These beans were cultivated during both the short and long rainy seasons.[559]

Intercropping as an agricultural practice was necessitated by a number of reasons. First, the intercropped crop varieties had different maturity times. Maize and beans when intercropped for example enabled the Maragoli have a better distribution of food through out the year. Beans mature faster than maize[560]. Intercropping therefore enabled the Maragoli begin by depending on the beans as they wait for the maize to mature much latter hence mitigate famine. Secondly, intercropping of especially legumes with non leguminous crops enabled the non leguminous crops like maize benefit from the leguminous nitrogen fixing ability hence improving their productivity.[561]

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[558]Ibid p.605

[559]Christine Obbo, *African Women: Their Struggle for Economic Independence* (London: Zed Books, 1980), 76.

[560]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023

[561]S.O. Omwoyo., *Op*, *Cit*, p. 67.

Millet was a vital food crop and formed a central part of the Maragoli diet. Although there were various types of millet, all were cultivated and tended by women. While there was no taboo preventing men from handling bulrush millet, they rarely did so. Bulrush millet was never intercropped, though maize could occasionally be planted along the edges of the field. Both sorghum and finger millet were typically sown during the short rains using the broadcasting method. This method required ample land to ensure a good harvest, making access to sufficient farmland especially important for women cultivating these crops.[562]

Maize had become a significant staple meal among the Maragoli by the beginning of the nineteenth century. Maize was not indigenous to Africa, in contrast to tiny grains like millet and sorghum, which are attributed to the Ethiopian and East African highlands.In the sixteenth century, the Portuguese introduced it to the continent, initially achieving coastal communities. It is probable that its expansion into the interior was facilitated by existing commerce routes. Posnansky observes that cassava and maize were already available in Uganda by 1900, which implies that they were introduced by coastal traders. [563]

Hay's writings on maize affirm that the crop was introduced to Western Kenya in the 1890s, and it took a considerable period for it to be fully assimilated into the agrarian economy of the Kavirondo people. Hay notes that during Lord Lugard's visit to Kavirondo in 1890, he observed a scarcity of maize, if any at all. The Grant study posits that travelers to Uganda

[562] Elizabeth Schmidt, *Peasants, Traders, and Wives: Shona Women in the History of Zimbabwe, 1870–1939* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1992), 64.

[563]Posnansky, Merrick, and Christopher R. DeCorse. "Historical archaeology in Sub-Saharan Africa—A Review." *Historical Archaeology* 20 (1986): p. 10 See Also Merrick Posnansky, "Agricultural Change in Uganda," *The Journal of African History* 3, no. 2 (1962): 271.

first observed the presence of maize in Central Buganda and Bunyoro by the year 1862, and in Acholi by 1880.

It appears that maize may have traversed the primary trade routes from Buganda to Bunyoro and subsequently to Mumias, from which it disseminated to various regions, including Kavirondo and Maragoli.[564] The suggestion is made that maize was being farmed in Maragoli prior to the advent of Europeans, as Maragoli maintained connections with the shore as early as 1800. [565]

Nevertheless, the existence of several maize types suggests that maize has adapted to its surroundings. [566] The varieties exhibited diminutive cobs and demonstrated rapid maturation. Owing to its rapid expansion and the practice of cultivating maize biannually, the Maragoli often achieved self-sufficiency in maize, barring instances of extreme drought.

As previously noted, maize was primarily cultivated by women; however, it was not considered inappropriate for men to assist, particularly if their wives faced health challenges.

As previously noted, Maragoli men engaged actively in the realm of agricultural production. In the division of agricultural labor, women tended to the cultivation of annual crops, whereas men took on the responsibility of managing perennial crops. In contrast to the agricultural practices associated with women, the cultivation of men's crops required a

[564]Hay, Margaret Jean, and Marcia Wright. *African women & the law historical perspectives*. Boston University, African Studies Center, 1982 As Quoted in Leen Kavualvu Op, Cit., p.859.
[565]A.M. Amisi., *Op*, *Cit*, p.113.
[566]Stanley Chabaga, (87 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th August 2023.

reduced amount of labor input after the initial planting phase. The agricultural produce encompassed sugarcane, cassava, arrowroots, yam, and bananas. All of the crops were introduced, none being indigenous to Maragoliland. Sugarcane (*mukonye*) was cultivated in proximity to streams and wetlands.

The availability of ample water resources near streams and swamps enabled the year-round cultivation of sugarcane. The observation that men performed the rituals clarifies the reasoning for sugarcane's classification as a crop associated with men. The banana was, in addition, a crop associated with men. Multiple varieties exisisted: *muraru*, *kisigame*, and *isiaramuli*. This information was derived from the Chavakali FGD session conducted during the fieldwork. The diverse varieties of bananas suggest a certain degree of adaptation to their respective environments.

It is noted that while the banana was brought to the East African region, it boasts the greatest diversity of varieties globally. Upon the completion of this field study, informants referenced only two varieties: *muraru* and *kisgame*.

Participants indicated that there had been crossbreeding with contemporary varieties, resulting in faster-growing bananas that, however, lacked the flavor quality of earlier cultivars.[567] To maintain the banana, men had to prop them with special props called-*itiru*. Moreover, they cut dry leaves; *marara* and bark; *makora*, which was put around the base of the banana. These wastes formed organic manure for the banana plant. Little work was therefore, required for bananas.[568] In addition to serving as a nutritional resource, bananas were utilized by women, particularly in the immediate aftermath of childbirth, to address

[567]Tabitha Ajami, (50 Years), Oral Interview, on 30th August 2023.
[568]Ibid.

matters of parentage. A newborn, whose belonging to the homestead was questioned, was placed beneath the Kisigame banana plantation, where sap from the banana fruit was applied to the infant's forehead. If the child was indeed not of that particular homestead, the baby would promptly succumb. Infidelity was prevented through the implementation of such rites. Banana leaves and fibers were also sources of traditional lye that were employed to enhance the flavor of traditional foods. [569]

Among the Maragoli's most significant perennial crops were sweet potatoes. The vines supplied animal feed, and the potato tubers were a source of nourishment. The sweet potatoes were a significant way of wealth accumulation since they could be exchanged for goats. [570] However, the paramount significance of sweet potatoes and other perennial crops, including arrowroots, cassava, and yams, lies in their remarkable capacity to withstand drought, thereby serving as a reliable resource during periods of water scarcity. The maintenance of these crops required minimal intervention regarding weeding. During the late 1920s, there was a gradual decline in the production of these crops, particularly cassava. In his examination of the Bantu of Kavirondo, Wagner cataloged an array of crops that the Maragoli considered their primary sources of sustenance, as detailed in the following table:

Table 2.2 Principal Sources of food Among the Maragoli

[569]Jenipher Afandi, (67 Years), Oral interview, on 30th September 2023.
[570]Charles H.K. Muchoki, "Remotely sensed relationships between wooded patch habitats and agricultural landscape type: a basis for ecological planning." (1988): p.88.

Maragoli Name	English-Botanical Name
Maduma	Maize or Indian Corn-*Zea mays*: Varieties gekebendi, Marogori,
Ingumba	Bulrush millet-*Pennisetum tyhoide*
Makwana	Edible Arum-*Colacasia esculenta.*
Mukonye	Sugar-cane -*Saccharum offiararum*
Rigomia	Banana-*Musa*. Varieties-*Muraru, Kisigame, Isiaramuli*
Mwogo	Cassava-*Manihot esculenta*
Mavere	Indian-Millet-*Sorghum.*Varieties-*Kisudi, Ingumba*
Mabwoni	Sweetpotato-*Ipomoea batatas.* Varieties-M
Tsimbande	Monkey beans
Induma	Yam-*dioscorea.*
Tsimbindi	Cow-pea-*Vigna unguiculate*

Source: G. Wagner. *The Bantu of Western Kenya*, 1956, p.6

The principal sources of food among the Maragoli reflected a diverse and ecologically adapted agricultural system rooted in indigenous knowledge and subsistence farming. Staple grains such as *maduma* (maize) and *mavere* (sorghum) formed the backbone of the diet, with locally recognized varieties like *gekebendi*, *kisudi*, and *ingumba* indicating a tradition of seed selection and crop specialization. Complementing these were drought-resistant cereals like *ingumba* (bulrush millet), which provided food security during dry seasons. Root and tuber crops—including *makwana* (edible arum), *mwogo* (cassava), *mabwoni* (sweet potato), and *induma* (yam)—were essential for nutritional diversity and were often cultivated by women, who played a central role in food production and gathering.

Fruits and sugar sources such as *rigomia* (banana) and *mukonye* (sugarcane) served both dietary and ceremonial functions, while legumes like *tsimbande* (monkey beans) and *tsimbindi* (cowpea) contributed protein and improved soil fertility through nitrogen fixation. This rich inventory of crops illustrated the Maragoli's deep connection to their land, their adaptive strategies for food resilience, and the gendered division of labor that sustained their agrarian lifestyle.

In addition to land, labor constituted a crucial element of production that the Maragoli required to maintain their agricultural endeavors. The capacity of farmers to access and manage labor as a fundamental resource was intricately linked to the diverse experiences of individuals within their social roles—encompassing wives, co-wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, daughters-in-law, widows, and, more generally, as men and women.Given that a significant portion of food production relied on familial labor, both women and men encountered various constraints and opportunities , shaped by their distinct personal circumstances and the dynamics of gendered power relations within the family unit.

J. Carney and M. Watts, in their examination of rice cultivation in the Senegambia region, articulate the presence of power dynamics within the household. Given the pivotal role of family labor in food production, it is essential to analyze the diverse constraints and opportunities faced by men and women, taking into account their unique personal circumstances and the gendered power dynamics within the family structure. In their examination of rice cultivation in the Senegambia, J. Carney and M. Watts underscore the

existence of power dynamics within the household.[571] The Maragoli family structure was rooted in patriarchy, with power concentrated in the hands of men. Senior men held the authority to define ownership, access, and control over household resources. While young men had the opportunity to ascend to the status of senior elders over time, women remained dependent on male guardians within this social framework.

As previously noted, upon marriage, a woman's labour shifted from her own family to her husband's matrimonial family. The men within this family, represented by the husband, had the authority to claim a woman's labour as their right. Both male and female respondents affirmed that a woman's labour was regarded as belonging to her husband, with one female respondent explicitly describing it as "part of the husband's possession."[572]

Apart from crop cultivation, the precolonial Maragoli was also a pseudo pastoral society and therefore animal husbandry played a pivotal role in Maragoli food production. As primarily agriculturalists, the Maragoli did not rely on cattle as extensively as their neighbors, the Luo and the Nandi.

However, cattle played a role in formalizing marriages through bride-wealth (uvukwi) and served as a source of food during celebrations. In addition to cattle, the Maragoli also kept goats and sheep, which were typically herded by boys. The Maragoli relied on land for their agricultural activities, but they also needed labor. Farmers' ability to access and manage labour as a key resource was deeply connected to the varied experiences of

[571] Judith Carney and Michael Watts. "Manufacturing dissent: work, gender and the politics of meaning in a peasant society." *Africa* 60, no. 2 (1990): p. 217.
[572]Esnasi Ombonyo, (82 Years), Oral interview, on 2nd August 2023.

individuals within their social roles—as wives, co-wives, husbands, mothers, fathers, daughters-in-law, widows, and, more broadly, as men and women.

Family labor was crucial to food production, so it's instructive to think about the various opportunities and challenges that women and men encountered within the context of gendered power dynamics within their own families. In their discussion of Senegambia rice cultivation, J. Carney and M. Watts mention the presence of domestic power systems. Since family labour played a central role in food production, it is crucial to examine the various constraints and opportunities that men and women encountered in their distinct personal circumstances and within the gendered power dynamics of the family. Household power dynamics are brought to light by J. Carney and M. Watts in their discussion of Senegambia rice production. .[573]

Like many pre-colonial African societies, the Maragoli relied on livestock production for their livelihood. Beyond its economic significance, livestock was highly valued for its social prestige. Those who owned large herds of cattle were regarded with great respect, as livestock was considered one of the most prestigious assets to possess.[574]

In essence, animal wealth was a key indicator of a person's economic status. Livestock served as crucial markers of a man's standing within the economic hierarchy—an ascent that many aspired to achieve at some point in their lives.

[573]KNA: DC/EN/3/3/2:1932:12.

[574]Winnifred Mwikali, Nicholus Makana, and Priscah Tanui. "From Cattle Herders to Cash Earners: The Emergence of a Migrant Wage Labour Class and Its Impact on Livestock Economy among the Akamba of Machakos, Kenya, 1895-1963." *International Journal of History and Philosophical Research* 9, no. 2 (2021): p.12.

According to Charles H. Ambler, wealth and influence were inextricably intertwined in the pre -colonial African societies.[575] Since land was freely available, prosperity and security depended essentially on access to and control over labour. A fact that was illustrated in the popular Akamba and general African aphorism *andu ni indo*, "people are livestock" in this case, wealth meant livestock. So, it can also be translated to mean that 'people are wealth. Cattle among the Maragoli played a vital role acquiring the tag "the black man's bank" *ebenji yu mumwamu*.[576] In addition, livestock was also the most important form of saving in the Maragoli economy. At the subsistence level, cattle provided the essential foods which included meat, milk, ghee, blood and butter. The herd also acted as a bank from which resources could be drawn to satisfy some needs like buying grains in times of food scarcity. In case of severe famine, cattle would be exchanged with grain.[577]

Generally, during the pre-colonial era, most Africans depended on the produce from their farms as well as livestock keeping to sustain their livelihood. However, livestock keeping was more valued because of their social and economic value. Even among the sedentary agricultural peoples and in the mixed agricultural and pastoral societies, the possession and control of livestock had a high economic and social value in the 19th century.[578] The basis of political power of the Bahima or the Tutsi ruling classes in western Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda was based on their ownership of livestock rather than on any ethnic

[575]Charles H. Ambler, "Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism: the central region in the late nineteenth century." (1988)., p.54.
[576] Wu Mulalu FGD held at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre on 3rd October , 2023, See Alco K.L Muchanga, The Indigenous Ecological Knowledge of the Isukha and Idakho Communities of Western Kenya c.1895-1963, Utafiti Foundation, 2025,
[577]A.M Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.89.
[578]Van Zwanenberg, Roger Maurice Arthur, and Anne King. "An economic history of Kenya and Uganda 1800–1970." MA. Thesis (1975)., p.70

differences within the societies.[579] The Maragoli who are the focus of this study, were agro-pastoralists. Prior to the colonial regime, the Maragoli as earlier discussed grew sorghum, millet, maize, cow peas, beans, sweet potatoes, bananas, yams and sugarcane among other crops. They also reared animals like cattle, goats and sheep.

Although crops were viewed to be important source of staple food, livestock was also highly valued as a source of food during dry seasons when crops would fail.[580]The Maragoli would also exchange their livestock with the neighbouring communities like the Wanga to acquire other commodities like grains especially during famine. As such, cattle served as an insurance against crop failure because seasons of low rainfall did not always result in scarcity of pasture.[581] The spatial and ecological design of traditional Maragoli life provided a sustaining foundation for their economy.[582] Livestock economy played a significant function in the evolution of the Maragoli institutions. It provided both political and social necessities largely influencing the evolution of the social and political institutions which were established among the Maragoli community. The significance of livestock in the Maragoli social and political system was well expressed in social structures and institutions.

The Maragoli livestock attachment intervened at one point or another in the ceremonies concerned with all their social and political structures and functions. For example, livestock was an important ingredient of the family, clan, marriage, child birth, initiations, death

[579] Ibid., p.72
[580]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 25th July 2023.
[581]Reuben M. Matheka, "The Political Economy of Famine: Ecology and History in Machakos District during the Colonial Era." MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1992, p.108.
[582]W. Mwikali, and P. Tanui, "The Role of Colonialism in the Transformation of Livestock Economy among the Akamba of Machakos, Kenya, 1895-1919." *Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies* 5, no. 3 (2021): p.18.

rituals among others. At the family level, livestock was an important aspect of the Maragoli.[583]

The father was the head of the family. He played the managerial function. Further, he had the physical and jural rights over the household's livestock. The father, therefore, had the right to transfer physically an animal from his herd to somebody else. For instance, he could transfer part of his animals from his herd to that of his in laws in the form of bride wealth. The members of the family had the jural rights of ownership of animals. According to this right, they physically owned the animals and enjoyed the use of their products like milk, blood and meat but had no right to transfer these animals to friends.[584] In child birth ceremonies, livestock was highly involved.

As M. Herskovits notes, the livestock attachment intervened at one point or another in the ceremonies concerned with the birth of a child among the Akamba just like the Maragoli.[585] For instance, there was the use of animal products and the imposition of animal products-taboos on the mother before the birth of her child. On the day after the birth of a child, the family would have a feast; a he-goat would be slaughtered for the celebration, or, if the family was well-to-do, an ox would be slaughtered.[586]

As far as circumcision ceremony (*kekevo)* was concerned, livestock played a very crucial role. The father to the initiate (*mkuru)* had to pay a certain fee to the circumcizor (*mkevi)*. The fee was a bull or a certain number of goats agreed by the father of the *mkuru* and the

[583]W. Mwikali, and P. Tanui, *Op, Cit,* p.18.
[584]Ibid.
[585]M.Herskovits., The Cattle Complex in East Africa. American Anthropologist, New Series, Vol. 28, No. 3. 1926, p.498.
[586]Hezron Mwamili, (56 Years), Oral interview on 3rd September, 2022.

mkevi. Such fee was higher in case of complications on the initiate. Such complications ranged from the initiate being a twin or defecating or urinating to the *mkevi* during the circumcision ritual.[587] If a man was too poor and could not afford this fee, he would postpone the circumcision of his children till he could raise the fee. On the material day, the elders would have good supplies of meat around a fire place. The animals to be slaughtered for these elders would be provided by the parents to the *mkuru* as a payment for the privilege of going through the ceremony. The fathers to the *mkuru* could also use this opportunity to buy a higher rank in the council of elders by providing more animals for slaughtering as compared to the others.

The gesture would appease the elders who would then consider them for higher ranks. The animals provided during these ceremonies were eaten in common.[588] In the marriage institution, livestock occupied an integral part as it was used for the payment of bride-price. Traditionally, the bride-price, known among the Maragoli as *vukwi*, was paid in terms of cows and goats.[589] The father (or the lineage) was responsible for acquiring the first wife for each son. A young man depended on the good will of his father for the payment of the bride price, hence the father determined whether his son would get a second wife or not. Sometimes the livestock for the sons' dowry was acquired through dowry payments for their sisters.[590]

In some instances, the capacity of a man to marry more than one wife would be determined by his wealth rather than his father's. Thus, those who could afford to pay *uvukwi* could

[587]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 6th July 2023.
[588]Charles William Hobley, *Ethnology of A-Kamba and other East African tribes*. No. 96. CUP Archive, 1971., p.97.
[589]Joseph Muthiani, "Akamba from within: Egalitarianism in social relations." *(No Title)* (1973) p.15.
[590]Sylvia Musimbi, (43 Years), Oral interview, on 5th July, 2023.

marry another wife. In this case, if a man was wealthy enough (which meant having a huge flock of livestock), and could afford to pay the bride-price, he took a second wife with the consent of his parents and, of course, that of his first wife. Therefore, men ensured both the material and biological reproduction of their lineages through what Sheriff, calls their control over the means of production, cattle and procreating women.[591]

Thus, individuals used livestock to expand their lineages and to create allies or clients. The Maragoli also used livestock to offer sacrifices to their ancestors and also to God -*Nyasaye*. Mbiti while commenting on the same topic contends that the Akamba made sacrifices to God on occasions such as at the rites of passage, during planting period, at their first harvest, when holding a purification ceremony after an outbreak of a disease and above of all, during droughts. This was also similar to the Maragoli as attested to by Wagner in his work.[592] Therefore, there was always a good reason to occasion the offering of sacrifices among the Maragoli during pre-colonial period. In the political sphere, those who had livestock to pay to the elders could rise in the political ladder and sit in the council of elders. Those were the ones who had reached the age of a *Mkurundu* (an adult male). However, upon reaching the *mkurundu* age they were required to pay some livestock to the council in order to be allowed to be part of it. In fact, according to Lindblom, the *mkurundu* grade did not in itself carry with it the right to a seat in the council of elders.[593]

[591]Bethwell A. Ogot, "Kenya in the 19th. century." *(No Title)* (1985)., p.107.
[592]Ibid., p.110
[593]Sheriff, Abdul. "Social formations in pre-colonial Kenya." *Hadith 8: Kenya in the 19th Century* (1985): 1-32. p.17

Any elder-*mkurundu* who wished to be admitted in the Council of Elders had to make a special payment to the sitting council members and had to be a member of the immediate lower grade. This was usually a bull. This means that the attainment of a higher grade among the elders was chiefly a question of economic means and in this case, livestock.[594] It is thus evident from the above discussion that though initially an agro society, the Maragoli interaction with the neighbouring pastoral societies especially the Kalenjins made them acquire the importance of livestock keeping and the related practices. This was demonstrated through the Maragoli folk songs like the one sang by Akivambo on *ambere kigimuga gajira avayayi vevorogori vahamira inandi.* (the sour guard milk made many Maragoli young men relocate to Nandi.) In order to reduce such temptations, the Maragoli began to integrate pastoral activities into their economy.

In pre-colonial Maragoli, agricultural technologies ranged from craft to industries like iron working which supplemented cultivation and pastoral activities. Some of these activities particularly iron working were full time occupations carried out by specialists who had learned the skill through apprenticeship. The products of the crafts and industry like pottery items and tools and weapons produced by blacksmiths provided a basis for exchange as they formed the items of trade. They also provided important agricultural farm implements and storage facilities like hoes-*tsimbago* and baskets-*tsingungi*. This field therefore complemented the agricultural sector among the Maragoli. Pottery, a skillful art was mainly undertaken by women from the *Vaani* clan who were specialized in it[595].

[594]Japheth Avuya, (40 Years), Oral interview, on 2nd July, 2023.
[595]G. Wagner., *Op*., *Cit*., p.23

The pottery clay was of two types, the red and the black type. The red type was more preffered since its pots were more attractive. As an art, it enhanced agricultural production. Pots were used for carrying, storing and cooking. Various designs of pots were made from clay. This activity unlike the case of ironworking which will be discussed later was not a full-time activity. It was seasonal and after placing an order. The pots made were of various sizes and therefore suited various uses. The very small one -*ruvindi* was used for preparing vegetables and the medium size, *inyambeva* was used for stewing vegetables. There was also one for making millet meal (*vuchima*) called *inyanguruga* and larger ones (*tsisiongo*) for fetching and storing water.[596]

Pottery played a crucial role in the economy of the Maragoli people. Apart from providing them with the necessary storage and cooking vessels, pots were also exchanged with other items not locally available in the community. These pots were meant to enhance subsistence farming as they stored grains and drinking water. For instance, with the absence of refrigerators in the pre-colonial Maragoli, the stored water was cold enough to quench thirst on hot weather.[597]

Pre-capitalist Maragoli economy was also characterized by basic industries. Such industry and art relied on the locally available resources. Culturally men specialized in basketry and women in pottery. The baskets were made from a variety of materials such as sisal-*makonge* and papyrus reeds-*mafunzu*, which were processed, left to dry, then separated into small threads and twisted to make baskets- *tsingungi.* Women also made calabashes-*vimuga* from gourds which were either big or small in size.

[596]Imali Tsinafa, (56 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023.
[597]Joyce Musimbi, (65 Years), Oral iinterview, on 23rd August 2023.

One could intersect a calabash into two halves, and one half was referred to as *kisanda*. The *kisanda* had different uses; the big sized ones were used by women for winnowing grains. The small ones were used for serving porridge and local liquor, and also fetching water from the rivers and wells. Notably, the *kisanda* for serving porridge had power relations around it. For instance, there was a specific *kisanda* for serving the head of the family while the rest were shared by women and children.

The pre-colonial maragoli interacted in a variety of ways with their immediate crop, animal and non-living things which made up an important part of their environment. Resourcefulness and exigencies of the environment in pre-colonial Africa acted upon by people's potential intelligence stimulated societal adaptation and innovativeness. It was within this perception that Marx stated that in the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will relations of production which correspond to a definite state of development of their material productive forces. Consequently, he concluded that the sum total of these relations constituted the economic structure of society, their real foundation, on which rises the legal superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of consciousness.

According to this rich formulation, issues pertaining to the environment and its role in human development are not repugnant to the scientific method of political economy since legal relations as well as forms of state have their roots in the material conditions of life of which ecology is a preponderant index.[598] It is equally true that the environmental resources in pre-colonial Africa even at this stage of communal agriculture and pastoralism had

[598]KNA:DC/NN.1/3; See Also Eric Masinde Aseka (1989b); 114

become a kind of tangible census, a convenient means for identifying individuals and families, defining their social or political importance and relating them to each other and to the whole society.[599]

The essential feature of this pattern in which resources were appropriated was land, the most readily apparent manifestation of social organization. These resources and their utility created a degree of labour division allowing certain members to occupy themselves with politics, craft production and later trade. Class lines developed along with aspiration towards improving individual status, power and prestige which became linked with accumulation of wealth.[600]

Maragoli pre-colonial food production mechanisms by 1850 AD were consequential mechanisms of both environmental providences, its largely determined mode of production and productive forces. The availability and scarcity of certain resource materials within the Maragoli and their social demands dictated the division of labour in their production and exchange. For social and political purposes, the Maragoli made distinctions between the extended family homestead or *lidala*, the village *lusoma* and a territorial unit of several villages or *lugongo.*[601]

Like in many other places in pre-colonial Africa where trees provided the raw materials for stools, logs for hollowing out of canoes, pestles and mortars and all sorts of wooden handles, the Maragoli wood carvers also produced wooden bee hives which helped them

[599] Eric Masinde Aseka (1989b); 114
[600]KNA: DC/NN/1/22:1940:12
[601]Ibid

harvest honey from the nearby forests. This honey was used for medicinal purposes and also exchanged internally and with their neighbours for food suppliments.[602]

In the late 1850's the Maragoli developed hunting paraphernalia which composed of shakers-*vikuri,* clabs-*vigong'o,* spears-*matimu.* All these endeavours were because of the special place that hunting occupied in the pre-colonial Maragoli society as a food production mechanism. The wild animals killed during the efforts provided skins, bones or horns mostly used for assembling the paraphernalia worn in many of the ceremonial activities.[603]

In the pre-colonial era, the Maragoli devised mechanism of dividing their physical environment into zones, each of which was utilized for a particular purpose. Buildings were only erected in a few of these zones especially the residential compound. Within the homestead were buildings which were set up to satisfy the needs of daily living, defence, storage and even ritual activity.[604] These architectural structures constructed by men were mostly round at the base and a conical grass thatched roof. The most common tree used for building was *olusiola-* a local tree that mostly provided the vertical uprights and the horizontal rails.[605] Women were heavily relied on to mud the dwelling huts during the rainy season.

However, the first mudding on a newly built hut was done by both men and women. The men helped in making the mud since it required more masculine energy. Women on their part helped in the plastering of the walls. Subsequent occasional mudding remained a

[602]KNA: DC/EN./3/3/2:1932:10
[603]Ibid
[604]Julius Museve, (63 Years), Oral Interview held on 23rd October 2023.
[605]KNA: DC/NN/1/3:1919:23

women affair.[606] Emphasis was put on the grass resistant to rotting and those commonly found. The thatching grass-(*evembe*) due to its ability to compact and avoid water leakage was the common thatching material.[607] Houses were decorated by using engraving designs on the floor. The decorations were layered on a carefully smeared veneer of cow dung and mud using alovera- *ligaka* to engrave patterns of marks on the floor.[608]

2.6 Gender Relations in Food Production among the Pre-colonial Maragoli

In most pre-colonial African societies, division of labor was based on gender lines. There were different women and men roles dictated by the cultural practices of a particular community. The gender lines were a creation of culture, stereotypes and beliefs that had evolved over time.[609]

Through the gender analysis practice, an inquiry on how Maragoli men and women were socialized to undertake particular obligations within their cultural setting is made possible. [610]Among the pre-colonial Maragoli, there was traditional division of labour on gender basis. This scheme isolated different responsibilities for men and women. The gender-based roles were further reinforced by the patriarchal society in which the males have a dominant role in the control of property and political power.[611] In patriarchy, the descent of the family was regarded in the male lineage unlike in the matriarchy where the descent was considered along female lines.[612]

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[606]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[607]A.M.Amisi., 2021, *Op*. *Cit,* p.72.
[608]KNA: DC/EN./3/3/2:1932:5.
[609]Anna Ellen Mudukuti,. *Factors related to Zimbabwe women's educational needs in agriculture*. The Ohio State University, 2001, p.16.
[610]G. Wagner, The changing family among the Bantu Kavirondo Volume XII, No 1., 8. AS Quoted in Leen Kavulavu, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 66.
[611]Masheti Masinjila. "Patriarchy." *Delusions: Essays on Social Construction of Gender* (1994).
[612]Ibid., p.21

The traditional patriarchal structure in the pre-colonial African communities was manifested on property ownership and inheritance.[613] Wickins while writing on pre-colonial Africa observes that in some African societies, the elders had rights over the land use and its disposal.[614] The land tenure system was culturally determined and its allocation was gendered. Mbiti notes that among the Kamba, land had an economic and social importance.[615] It met the subsistence needs of a family, which acted as a channel for survival during famines. Culturally, land was a measure of wealth and if an individual did not have any piece of land, he was regarded as poor.

Pre-colonial Maragoli men and women had differentiated roles in food production activities. The Maragoli gendered food production mechanisms in a way, negates the notion put forward by Dupree and Rey that in the pre-capitalist African societies women and juniors were exploited by elders who monopolized the products of their labour.[616] The section reveals that the ability to appropriate value produced was in the hands of women who seem to have had more control over the surplus produce than men in relation to food production activities.

In the pre-capitalist Maragoli society, men undertook to perform certain tasks while women performed others. The tasks for men included scouting for new agricultural lands, clearing agricultural land in preparation for ploughing, defending their homesteads among others.

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[613]Ibid., p.40
[614]Kabira, Wanjiku, M. Masheti, and W. Mbugua. "Delusions: Essays on Social Construction of Gender, Ed. Kabira W. Masheti M. and Mbugua W.: African Womens Communication and Development Network, Nairobi." (1994)., p.67.
[615]Ibid., p.73
[616]Dupre Georges, and Pierre-Philippe Rey. "Reflections on the Pertinence of a Theory of the History of Exchange." *Economy and Society* 2, no. 2 (1973): 131-163. p.2.

Women tasks included secondary ploughing, weeding, harvesting together with gathering wild fruits and tubers. However, these gender roles were never cast on stones.

There were times when either gender criss-crossed the set gender role boundary in order to offer a hand when need arose. A husband would, for example, turn up and help his wife weed millet especially when the wife was overwhelmed. A wife on the other hand would a times turn up during the clearing season and help the husband in clearing. Food production activities were also undertaken within the concept of gender relations. The concept determined how men and women in a family set up controlled the surplus of farm produce, cattle and even gains from wild game. Food production related activities must therefore be looked at in terms of communal mode of production.

A number of previous studies conducted among the pre-colonial Kenyan societies, Maragoli included, seem to indicate that women in the pre-colonial Kenyan societies were not passive.[617] On the contrary, they were involved in the day-to-day activities of their societies. From Imunde's work, the significance of pre-colonial African women labour contribution is amplified. He submits that if land nourishes man all through his earthly life, it is the woman who feeds him her milk during the first years of his existence.[618] She is also the medium through which food coming from the earth passes to be cooked and offered to man.[619]

The gender relations theory explores the interaction between the two gender groups to establish how each group was aided or disadvantaged by several social cultural and political factors. Such included but not limited to the patriarchal systems within the family

[617]Ibid., p.34.
[618]P.Imunde "Land, Cattle and Women in the Meru Cosmology", (1977), p.24.
[619]Ibid., p.26.

setups. The kind of power of greatest interest in this thesis is that both men and women had a role to play in any impactful production cycle. This made the pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms run seamless with very minimal inadequacies and in-efficiencies. The purpose is not to reduce gender contradictions to "myths about male or female rule", but to provide analysis "about real relationships of men and women".[620] The Maragoli mode of production prior to colonialism approximated the "kin corporate mode of production".[621] "People were all members of a corporation with collective ownership of the main means of production and, in one or another sense, were thus political decision makers with respect to the basis of their group's economic well-being".[622]

The Maragoli spoke of a sense of a collective action and ownership in the pre-colonial times, for example men's ownership of land but women's rights to land, as well as a notion of collective action expanding through forms of reciprocity. In practice, gender differences and hierarchy strengthened these idealised expectations. For example, in the memory of Maragoli men and women, men always aged towards their position of *omwene hango,*"homestead owners" while women practically turned out to be "*omwene inyumba*" the household owners. This can be picked from the Maragoli saying upon a young man's marriage "*anyoye inyumba*" that the young man has now got a house.[623]

During the oral interviews, a number of respondents observed that; for a homestead to make any meaning, it had to have stable households' independent enough to provide sufficient food and other requirements to its members. A husband, therefore, as the

[620]Karen Sacks, "Sisters and wives: the past and future of sexual equality." *(No Title)* (1979), p.122.
[621]Ibid., p.123.
[622]Ibid., p.115.
[623]Anjeline Vugutsa, (73 Years), Oral interview held at Chanderema Village, on 25th August 2023.

homestead owner and undisputed head, had to work closely with his wives in order to build a strong home with sufficient food supplies which they could lend a hand to their immediate neighbours and friends who paid them a visit.[624]

Among the Maragoli, land ownership was based on inalienable rights passed down through the male line. Within this patrilineal structure, land was regarded as "family land"—an idealized collective asset held by the lineage for the benefit of all its members, including men, women, and children. However, in practice, control over the land rested with the senior elder, who held authority over its management and distribution.[625]Acceptance of the elder's decisions often depended on his authority and the degree of opposition from others within the lineage. Women accessed land through marriage and were primarily responsible for farming, a role they consistently held. Men, on the other hand, served as warriors, hunters, and leaders, while also contributing to tasks such as digging and house construction. This idealized notion of the lineage as a collective extended beyond land ownership to the distribution of produce, which was shaped by reciprocal obligations and mutual benefits within networks of kin and affines.[626]

Within this collective structure, men and women occupied separate but symbiotically connected spheres, grounded in mutual dependence between women's and men's work. This interdependence fostered a system of distinct yet complementary roles. Within each sphere, differences and hierarchies were present, though mechanisms such as the right of appeal existed to challenge unjust or untenable authority. Such a lifestyle built up a

[624]Esther Kinavodoli, (76 Years), Oral Interview held at igunga village, on 29th October 2023.
[625] William R. Ochieng', "A Pre-Colonial History of the Maragoli," *The Kenya Historical Review* 5, no. 2 (1977): 215–230.
[626]Judith M. Abwunza, (1991). *Op.Cit*, p.10.

respectable and mature gender relationship with every member in the homestead operating within his social nitche.

In Maragoli society, it is evident that while women faced marginalization, men held dominant positions—a claim that, as will be demonstrated later, remains open to contestation. Men occupied key leadership roles as heads of households, village elders, members of the council of elders, and leaders of territorial units. Across these levels, male figures exercised authority by making decisions and judgments that shaped the social and political order.

Additionally, men paid dowry to a woman's family—a practice often interpreted as symbolizing the transfer of a woman into the husband's household, where she was expected to adhere to decisions made by men. In the predominantly polygamous Maragoli society, men were permitted to marry multiple wives, whereas women were not allowed to have more than one husband. Defenders of polygamy have argued that it provided women with social security, protecting them from marginalization or promiscuity. However, despite these structural inequalities, Maragoli women in the pre-colonial period were not entirely powerless. They exercised forms of influence that could temper or even undermine male authority. When women collectively resisted, male power could be rendered ineffective.[627] Men's power was qualified by women's cooperation.

Although the patriarchal structure was generally oppressive to Maragoli women, both age and marital status could enhance a woman's influence within the household. Older women

[627]Ibid., p.8

and those with seniority in marriage often held more power in the family hierarchy. For instance, a senior co-wife typically enjoyed greater privileges than her junior counterparts. This was partly because, in many cases, the bride-wealth for the first wife was paid with assistance from the husband's parents, whereas the man was responsible for raising the bride-wealth for subsequent wives. In doing so, he often relied on the agricultural labor of the first wife. Given her crucial role in supporting the family economy and facilitating future marriages, it was customary for the husband to consult or at least inform her before marrying another wife.[628] As a result, the first wife exercised a degree of authority within the marital framework, particularly regarding decisions about subsequent marriages.

Within a similar context, Karen E. Butterman, writing on pre-colonial Luo society, notes that surplus agricultural produce—particularly grain cultivated by women—was often exchanged for livestock. This livestock, controlled by men, was then used to pay bride-wealth for additional wives.[1] Such practices highlight the complex interplay between women's labor and male authority in polygynous societies, where women's economic contributions indirectly shaped household and lineage dynamics.[629] Therefore, Butterman concludes that "as a group, women paid their own bride wealth," effectively participating in their own exploitation within pre-colonial Luo society.[1] Despite their central role in agricultural production, the labor of women remained under the control of their husbands, a condition legitimized through the institution of bride-wealth. Butterman further argues that this form of exploitation has often been misinterpreted, largely due to analyses

[628] W.R.Ochieng Op*., Cit. p.*225.

[629]Shem Otieno Oricho, "Journal of History 1 (3) July, 2019." *Journal of History* 1 (2019): 3., p.8, See Also Karen E. Butterman, "Luo Social Formation in Change: Class and Gender Struggles in Siaya District, Western Kenya, from 1900 to 1970" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979), 56–59.

grounded in capitalist frameworks that fail to fully account for indigenous systems of power and gender relations. Such insights invite a re-examination of gendered labor dynamics in pre-colonial African societies beyond simplistic economic models.[630]

In the pre-colonial African context, individualistic accumulation of wealth was virtually nonexistent. Instead, labor was organized communally, with a collective orientation aimed at maximizing outcomes for the benefit of the entire group. This cooperative structure reflected the guiding ethos of *ubuntu*—a philosophy emphasizing human interdependence, mutual care, and communal well-being. *Ubuntu* served as a foundational principle in the African conceptualization and organization of socio-political and economic relations.[631] As a philosophy, *ubuntu* prioritized communal development through an ethics of means, emphasizing mutual responsibility and shared purpose. Rooted in reciprocity and a deep value for interdependence, *ubuntu* fostered a social environment in which individuals shared what they had, recognizing that one's humanity is intrinsically linked to that of others. As Desmond Tutu eloquently expressed, "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life"[632] This worldview underpinned the

[630] Karen E. Butterman, "Luo Social Formation in Change: Class and Gender Struggles in Siaya District, Western Kenya, from 1900 to 1970" (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1979), 59.

[631] Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness.* New York: Random House,1999, p.5. For Further readings, also Check Mogobe B. Ramose, *African Philosophy Through Ubuntu* (Harare: Mond Books, 1999), 49–52.

[632] Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999), 31, For more readings, Check Augustine Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, p.12. Augustine Shutte, "Ubuntu as the African Ethical Vision." In *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, edited by Felix Murove, Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press,2009, p.88.

cooperative structures of pre-colonial African societies, shaping how resources, labor, and social obligations were understood and distributed.[633]

An African is not a rugged individual, but a person defined through their relationships within the community. As theologian and philosopher John Mbiti famously stated, "I am because we are, and since we are, therefore I am."[634] This expression captures the core of African communal identity, where personhood is realized through belonging and mutual interdependence.Similarly, as Yusuf Turaki explains, people in traditional African societies are not autonomous individuals living in isolation, but members of a community, embedded in relationships and bound by interdependence.[635] This communal orientation shaped every aspect of social, political, and economic life, reinforcing the value of collective identity over individualism.

The communal approach on life made *ubuntu* acquire an emphasis on a good life being characterized by a virtuous character and a just society with a non individualistic character. In order to demonstrate this *ubuntu* reciprocity and interdependence, the Maragoli

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[633] Augustine Shutte, *Ubuntu: An Ethic for a New South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2001, p.12. Augustine Shutte, "Ubuntu as the African Ethical Vision." In *African Ethics: An Anthology of Comparative and Applied Ethics*, edited by Felix Murove, Pietermaritzburg: University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press,2009, p.88.

[634] John S. Mbiti, *African Religions and Philosophy* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 108. See Also J.M Nyasani, "The Ontological Significance of 'I' and 'We' in African Philosophy", in *I, We and Body: First Joint Symposium of Philosophers from Africa and from the Netherlands*, ed. Heinz Kimmerle Amsterdam: B. R. Grüner,1989, p.8.

[635] Yusuf Turaki, *Foundations of African Traditional Religion and Worldview* (Nairobi: WordAlive Publishers, 2006), 55. See Also Thaddeus Metz, "Toward an African Moral Theory." *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 15: 321–41. 2007b. "Ubuntu as a Moral Theory: Reply to Four Critics." *South African Journal of Philosophy* 24: , 2007a.,p.373. See AlsoThaddeus Metz, "Ubuntu as a Moral Theory and Human Rights in South Africa." *African Human Rights Law Journal* 11 (2): 2011, p.540.

developed aphisms to illustrate this. A classical example of such aphism was *Ekegeshi varitsa ni kivuli.* Meaning that those who luckily managed to avail something for their upkeep always remained mindful of their kinsmen who were unable to obtain anything for their daily subsistence.

It is from such a strong belief that the Maragoli solidified the relationship between the haves and the havenots into a familial cordial relationship of a sister and a brother. Kegeshi was and remains a Maragoli name for female children and Kivuli is a Maragoli name for the male children.[636]

The primary duty of the woman was to provide labour to her matrimonial home, directly and indirectly, through her offspring. The importance of a woman's labour was also exemplified by the Maragoli saying that on marriage, a woman had gone "to cook for her husband" or had cooked there in reference to where someone had got married- *yadeka wa vuyu*. Maragoli pre-capitalist mode of production greatly relied on the availability of adequate land and labour. This labour actualization was one of the human endeavours where the gender relations interplay came into the fore. The success of any man was determined by the number of women he had married who in turn helped him raise the relevant children for the needed labour demand. Moreover, the girl children after they were married off also boosted the father's economic standing through the dowry received.[637]

[636] Phanice Kinavodoli, (67 years), Oral interview held on 5th August in Mungoma Village, Vihiga Sub County.
[637]Shem Otieno Oricho *Op*, *Cit*, p. 19.

The position of women exploitation in relation to the traditional labour demands and the general gendered hierarchical order has been contested. The pre-colonial Kenyan societies moved directly from communalism and received the first dosage of a capitalist system in the twentieth century, having by-passed both the slave state and the feudalist structure. Burlow maintains that the African man " ... lolled about watching his women slaving for him".[638]

And Hay explains that "labour, not land, was the limiting factor of production well into the early colonial period, and this contributed to the high social value of polygamy.[639] Butterman concludes that, in the pre-colonial period, an African man could use the labour of his wives to obtain surplus grains which he would exchange for cattle which he would use to marry new wives.[640] All these scholars of the pre-colonial Kenyan societies looked at the women through the western concepts and saw them simply as a source of labour supply for the man. This approach is based on the capitalist mode of production where one exploits the labour of the other in order to gain some profitable returns.

Michael Whisson while writing on pre-colonial African women posits that the first step towards becoming a chief in the Pre-colonial African society was to do business (investment) in acquiring many wives.[641] He states that "investment in wives was the critical first step for someone aspiring to become a chief. Such approaches tend to degrade the status of women. Women among different pre-colonial Kenyan societies for example

[638]Von Bülow, Dorthe. "Bigger than men? Gender relations and their changing meaning in Kipsigis society, Kenya." *Africa* 62, no. 4 (1992): 523-546., p.527
[639]Hafkin, Nancy, and Edna G. Bay. *Women in Africa: Studies in social and economic change*. Stanford University Press, 1976., p.94
[640]Ibid., p.101
[641]Whisson, Michael. "Change and Challenge: a study of the social and economic changes among the Kenya Luo." (1964)., p. 7

within the Luo society were recognized for their major contribution in the field of politics, economics and the social aspects of their respective communities.[642] In the social sphere, the male female gender relations was highly depended on in providing the foundation of the Maragoli society. Through marriage, Maragoli men and women got a previledge to achieve any status in the society even considered an adult.

Marraiage was considered a community affair since through it, children to continue both family and community life were born.[643]It was within marriage that individual males and females legally exercised their procreative rights.[644]

M.A Oduyoye from a feminist view point stated that:

> In marriage, the woman is an indispensable part of the institution. The transitional rite that establishes and solidifies relationships that enables her to function as a channel by which the ancestors can return to the community.[645]

A close look at the matriarchal African societies reveals that the birth of female children took priority over the birth of males. This was because, "without them no blood could be transmitted and no ancestors could return to life dooming the clan to perdition".[646] In the Maragoli case, though a patriarchal society, the woman place was sacredly preserved and respected. The oral interviews affirmed that this was especially due to the pseudo divine role bestored on them as life transmitting vessels.[647]

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[642] T.O Ayot (1990). *Op.Cit*., p. 120.

[643] K.A Phiri, *African Traditional Marriage: A Christian Theological,* Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2011,p.24.

[644]L. Magesa, *African Religion; The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life.* Nairobi*:* Paulines Publication*,* 1997*,* p.15.

[645]M.A. Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* New York: Orbis 1995, p.132.

[646] L. Magesa*, African Religion; The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life* Nairobi: Paulines Publication, 1997, p.110.

[647] Annet Kadenyi Oral interview held on 5th August in Mungoma Village, Vihiga Sub County.

It is from this understanding that the maragoli women especially expectant ones were strictly monitored through charms, herbs, special diet and even excemption from the normal daily household duties. These expectant mothers were also assigned specialized midwives to regularly check on them and help them walk through this special and delicate moment.[648] The high premium placed on the men and women cordial relationship in Maragoli could not be emphasized better than the realities revealed from a scrutiny of the traditional Maragoli marriage set up.

Through marriage, a family was expected to give rise to children of both sexes since each gender had a unique role in the food production system and other related social economic and political spheres.[649] A family with only males for example was considered socially and economically impotent due to the value attached to the girls' dowry payment upon being married off. Similarly, a family without the male children was also regarded incomplete. This was because of the partriachal nature of the Maragoli society and thus the perceived notion that family inheritance was to be passed on to the next generation through the male descendants.

Traditions collected for example among the Jok'Onyango shows that there were women chiefs and warriors in these societies. If investment in wives was the critical first step for someone aspiring to become *"ruoth"* or "chief", then what type of "investment" did a woman need in order to become chief among the Luo?[650] The works of Ndege on the

[648] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023.
[649] Leen Kavulavu, Changing Patterns in Marriage Among the Isukha People Of Kakamega County, Kenya, 1894-2010, Ph.D. Thesis Moi University,2020, p. 20.
[650]T.O Ayot (1990). *Op.Cit*., p. 149

Abagusii, Pala on the Luo, Driberg on the people of Eastern Sudan , Harris on the Ibo of Nigeria and Kabbery on the Bamenda of Cameroon all seem to indicate that there was division of labour according to the sexes and therefore negates the idea of labour supply purely for man's profit.[651]

Ndege, having examined colonial factors and underdevelopment in Gusii country, concludes that "for purposes of effective production, the Gusii divided farm labour among themselves on the basis of sex, age and the nature of work".[652] Such a division was meant to achieve specific goals, but one fails to see exploitation in it.Every time, researchers tend to take some aspects of the social practice of a people and use this to show the inferior position of the women compared to that of the men. For instance, Le Vine explains that "the Gusii women were considered morally and emotionally immature, irresponsible and lacking in judgement ...".[653]

Le Vine, further, states that a man's room was regarded as being on the right-hand side of the house, the woman on the left - a representation of female inferiority in Gusii belief. The woman was buried outside her part of the house (i.e. its 'left'), the man outside his part of the house (on its 'right')" which to her emphasizes the inferiority of the woman to the man.

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[651]Peter Odhiambo Ndege, *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in Gusiiland, 1900-1939*. University of Nairobi, Department of History, 1977, p.121; Pala, Achola O. "The role of African women in rural development: research priorities." (1974): p.31; Driberg, Jack H. "The status of women among the Nilotics and Nilo-Hamitics." *Africa* 5, no. 4 (1932): 404-421., p.409.; Harris, Marvin. "Culture, man, and nature: An introduction to general anthropology." *(No Title)* (1971)., p.48 and Kaberry (1952 Kaberry, Phyllis, and Mitzi Goheen. *Women of the Grassfields: A Study of the Economic Position of Women in Barmenda, British Cameroons*. Routledge, 2005.), p.89.

[652] Ibid., p.92.

[653]Sarah LeVine and Robert Alan LeVine. *Mothers and wives: Gusii women of East Africa*. University of Chicago Press, 1979, p.9.

She failed to understand the cultural implication of this burial practice which is similar to that of the Maragoli, the Gusii cousins.The right hand symbolizes the strength of a man - the hand that he uses to protect not only himself, his home but also his wife or wives and children. In these early days, when raiding was the order of the day, a man had to be vigilant about his homestead and the cattle therein.

For this reason, even when he went to sleep, he would have to sleep on the side where he could jump out without necessarily stampeding over his wife. As a result, over the years, men had to sleep on a specific side of the bed even long after the raiding activities had ceased. The point to be emphasized here is that, even in death, it was believed that the man would continue to protect himself and that, therefore, he needed his right hand and this had nothing to do with the superior or inferior position of either of the sexes.

Driberg cautioned that the assumption that the African woman was accorded a low status in her society simply because of certain cultural practices should be discarded.[654] He called for more open-minded research on the role of women and by extension gender relations, especially on the issue of the division of labour according to the sexes, age and the nature of the task to be performed. Basing his work on the people of Eastern Sudan, he maintained that "the occupations and opportunities open to men and women depend on the general culture and there is no artificially imposed bar which keeps women in a state of subjection".He noted that while the men carried out activities such as felling trees, clearing the bush, herding, hunting and occasionally involving in warfare, the women on the other hand, performed duties such as the preparation of food, tilling the land, sowing and weeding. This would seem to indicate that the division of labour complemented each sex's

[654]Jack H. Driberg, Op., *Cit*., p.410

effort in order to achieve a satisfactory result. This was true among the Maragoli in the nineteenth century especially when they had established permanent settlements and became specialized in farming, cattle-keeping and hunting.

The Ozuitem Ibo, as reflected in the work of Harris seem to confirm that there was a division of labour according to sex among the Ibo people where men performed duties peculiar to them and the women did likewise.[655] This included agricultural work and subsequent produce from the field. The fact that there was a division of labour between men and women should not be interpreted to mean a lower status for women. Commenting on Wagner's work on the Maragoli women, Pala concludes that both men and women joined in planting, weeding and harvesting.[656] In this way, the family was a self-sufficient economic unit in which the work of women, men and children complimented each other and this was the purpose of the division of labour.

Le Vine confuses the role of the Gusii women when she states that "despite their visible subordination and publicly inferior status, Gusii women were forces to be reckoned with". This seems to negate what she calls an "inferior status", because an inferior person cannot possibly be a force to reckon with. On the other hand, Le Vine negates herself when she says that "the Gusii diviners *(Abaragori)* who played the most extra domestic role in rituals were virtually all women ..." Such women wielded a lot of power in their communities and

[655]Larry D. Harris, *The fragmented forest: island biogeography theory and the preservation of biotic diversity*. University of Chicago press, 1984., p.16.
[656]Pala Achola O. "The role of African women in rural development: research priorities." (1974): p.40.

could not possibly be regarded as "morally and emotionally immature, irresponsible and lacking in judgement".[657]

Because she misinterprets the Gusii tradition, Le Vine paints a very gloomy picture of the Gusii women whom she says are always regarded as strangers and outsiders within the clans in which they are married.[658]

From the oral submissions from the Maragoli respondents, there was a conclusion that the pre-colonial Maragoli had a place for Maragoli women. There was an emphasis on the economic independence of the women within their societies, an aspect which was sanctioned and recognized by the Maragoli society.[659] The Maragoli recognized the women as the owners of the house, in charge of their household activities. When the woman was given land to utilize as a source of her agricultural produce, she was given a free hand in the control of the produce from the family land.

Thus, within the various Maragoli clans, as was the case with other Luhya subgroups in Western Kenya, the woman had her own piece of land in which she worked, sometimes with her husband and sometimes with her children or she was assisted by the members of her extended families, both from the husband side and from her parental home. She also had a garden of vegetables and also another piece of land where she planted potatoes. But

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[657]Le Vine, S., *Mothers and Wives: Gusii Women in East Africa*. University of Chicago London Press, 1979 As Quoted in Pala Achola O. Op., Cit., p.17.

[658]Ibid. p.40

[659]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023.

there was order pertaining to the economic activities among the Maragoli and other Luhya groups. When it was time for cultivating, time for planting, for weeding and harvesting, there were certain rituals that had to be performed in which both men and women of the homestead had to participate before all these activities could be undertaken.[660]

In the home, there were stores of food, among them the granaries-*vyage* separately owned by both men and women. The produce from the field was kept in the granaries and in big pots-*tsisika*.[661] In a polygamous home, each woman had her own house and it follows, therefore, that each woman had her own land which she cultivated, and therefore her own granaries.

Whatever was kept in the granaries was regarded as the women's property, for it was them alone who could climb the granaries to get the grains. Children could be sent there to get the grain but never a man. This was part of the Maragoli gender relations structures to empower a wife of a particular household to fully control the food sub sector and only brief the husband on the status of the food reserve in the home.

The mischievous men who went into the granaries to check the food status were ridiculed through songs and a times sidelined from serious male council matters and even branded women. The laws of the society forbade a man from entering the granaries; it was a taboo.[662] By this action, the law held the woman solely responsible and in charge of agricultural produce and by sanctifying it, she was given complete economic

[660]Kigalu Obeda, (76 Years), Oral interview, on 25th August 2023.
[661] Anjeline Vugutsa (73 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023. See Also Leen Kavulavu 2017.
[662]Gudrun Kramer, *A history of Palestine: From the Ottoman conquest to the founding of the state of Israel*. Princeton University Press, 2008., p.89.

autonomy.The woman was, moreover given the right to dispose off the produce from the field as gifts to relatives, friends and other acquaintances without necessarily consulting her husband or asking for permission to do so. A man who always spied on his wife in regard to what she was exchanging with her women folk was regarded as too stingy and womanish attracting ridicules in songs especially during circumcision festivals.[663]

This position affirms that the woman in the pre-colonial Maragoli society was economically independent and this meant that even if her husband had other wives, her economic security was not threatened so long as she had her land which was a source of her livelihood.[664] Her husband's other wives would be similarly endowed to maintain their own economic independence.

From the ongoing discussion, it can be deduced that the women did not depend on the men for food production and processing, neither did they depend on them for their daily supply of food.[665] The pre-colonial Maragoli men in actuality depended on the women for their food supply as Imunde points out. Imunde further states that the "woman is the medium through which the food coming from the earth passes to be cooked and offered to man."[666] The autor goes further to explain that "by giving birth to children, the woman sustained the entire tribe with nourishment which guarantees its visible perpetuation beyond the disappearance of the individual member through death. She accords to man and his ancestors the prolongation and maintenance of his vital force on this earth. But to produce

[663] Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds on 10th October 2023,
[664]John Imunde, "Land, Cattle and Women in the Meru Cosmology", (1977), p.24.
[665]Gudrun Kramer. *A history of Palestine: From the Ottoman conquest to the founding of the state of Israel*. Princeton University Press, 2008., p.19.
[666]Ibid., p.41.

and reproduce in order to ensure the continuity of the society, the members of this society must be fed and it is the woman who must ensure that there is food to sustain them.

Kaberry's work on the Bamenda of the Cameroons confirms the free hand which Bamenda women had over their produce from the fields.[667] In her analysis of Kaberry's work, Pala states that among the Bamenda people of the Cameroons, a woman could, when and if need be, dispose of crops as gifts without necessarily consulting her husband; however, a man must obtain permission from his wife if he has to give gifts to his relatives or friends from the family crops.[668]Likewise among the Maragoli, if a man wished to give some of the crops to his relatives or the wife of his friends in time of famine, he had to ask his wife to give the relative or the friend's wife some grain, since as already stated, it was a taboo for him to enter her granaries. Therefore, the man could neither take the crop without the consent of the woman nor by force.[669]

However, to safeguard the man's interest in the agricultural field, the husband always had his own field. In cultivation, sowing, weeding and harvesting, he was assisted by his wife or wives and children. The produce from the man's field was kept in the specific granary or granaries, depending on the strength of the man and the yearly harvest. Like the woman, the man could dispose of his grains without consulting his wife or wives. They too did not have a say in his granary. If a relative or friend's wife went to ask for grains because of famine in her area, the wives of the man would naturally give her some of their grains; but if the husband felt that she had not been given enough, he always added from his own

[667]P.M Kaberry., "Land Tenure Among Among the Nsaw of the british Cameroons." *Africa* 20, no.4, 1950, p.315.
[668] Ibid., p.320.
[669]Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds on 10th October 2023, See Also Wagner *Op*., *Cit*., p.60.

granary and though this was man' s own, he could not enter into it. All he could do was either to send his children or one of his wives to get the grains for him. If one of his wives did not have enough crops to take her through the next harvesting season, the man could always supplement what the woman had by giving some of his grains.[670]

The man's granary was the lender of the last resort. It was the granary that protected the homestead. It, therefore, served as a safety valve or as the man's bank which was kept for a rainy day. The other reason why a man had a granary was that, if he had several wives, it was not possible to help all of them with agricultural work. If he assisted only one wife, that would create a misunderstanding and disharmony in the home as he would be accused of favouring one at the expense of the others. Therefore, as the women worked on their own pieces of land, the man also busied himself on his own field. Peristiany carried out research on the Kipsigis speaking people which indicated that there was a division of labour between men and women within this society.[671] There were three aspects to this division.

The first was the *Kabungut,* the second, an *imbaret a mossop* and the third, *an imbaret aabsoi or kapande.* The women also participated in decision making processes as far as agricultural produce was concerned. Pala while commenting over the same observes:

> *A kabungut,* was a small vegetable garden planted and cultivated exclusively by a woman and her daughter. They grew vegetables which formed part of the food which was cooked with blood and meat. An *imbaret a mossop* (field of the house) was owned by each married woman. In other words, each household had its own field. Work on this plot was done mainly by women assisted by relatives and members of the *kokwet,* including husbands in erecting fences and sowing.

[670]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 10th August 2023.
[671]Anne Sorensen, "Women's organisations among the Kipsigis: change, variety and different participation." *Africa* 62, no. 4 (1992): p.550.

> Grains from this field was stored in a separate granary over which the husband had no authority to take supplies for beer for his friends ... *And imbaret ab soi* or *kapande was the man's field.*[672]

As was the case among the Maragoli, the produce from the man's field was stored separately from that which was controlled by the women. As the Maragoli man could dispose off the produce from his field, such as giving some to the relatives or exchanging some for cattle, just like the Kalenjin speakers, the Maragoli man used the produce from his plot as he pleased. Therefore, it would not be correct to infer here that among the Maragoli and some of the communities already cited, the women monopolized "agricultural skills" and they had greater control over the food production mechanisms of their respective societies.

All agricultural activities and produce were controlled as per the set gender relations rules specific to the community in question without the capitalistic exploitative interpretations. It was during the late 19th century that population explosion and land scarcity started to make Maragoli men plots to disappear hence more agricultural activities being left to women as the main actors.[673] This is evidenced by many respondents who failed to remember the existence of separate plots for men agricultural activities.

Bonnie and David Kettel who conducted research in Seretunin, North Baringo discovered that within this community "each nuclear unit of husband, wife or minor or children shared their labour in the exploitation of certain plots of land. The Tugen were polygamous, but contact between the co-wives was kept to a minimum.[674] Each wife had her own house, her

[672] Ibid., p.551.
[673]Ibid., p.568.
[674] Bonnie and David Kettel As Quoted in T.O Ayot, Op., Cit., p.89.

own plot, and her own crops and stock which she looked after with her husband and children."[675] Apart from their work in farming activities, the women also participated in trade as part of their economic undertaking. For instance, when there was surplus grain the women exchanged the grains for goats and a times cattle with the consent from the husband especially when one area had been hit by severe drought. The cattle thus received were used by the sons of the particular household to marry wives.

During a severe drought resulting in famine, people were engaged in what was referred to as *rundo, ji ne rundo;* that is, buying and selling and, therefore, exchanging what they had for what they needed.Such an exchange often led to the development of market centres such as the one used by the Kanyamwa and called Mirunda which derived its name, from *rundo.*[676] Within the Maragoli, the woman traded in pottery, basketry and grains during harvest. Such were exchanged with the neighbours such as the Luo and Idakho for fish among other necessities. However, unlike their Tugen counterparts, no Maragoli woman was allowed to exchange her agricultural produce for livestock. Any livestock transaction was strictly under the domain of the household male, either the husband or the eldest son.[677] According to the oral submissions obtained during this research on traditions of the Maragoli, a man could not be allocated land as his own property without a wife. Therefore, men got land only through their wives. In any case, an unmarried man was considered a child until such a time that as he got himself a wife; then he passed from boyhood to adulthood.[678]

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[675]T.O. Ayot, "The Development of Political Leadership in South Nyanza, 1700-1900", Staff Seminar No. 41980/81, Department of History, University of Nairobi, (1980), p. 41.
[676]Ibid., p.62.
[677]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview held at Chanderema Village in Mambais Sub location on 15th August 2023.
[678]Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds on 10th October 2023.

According to Hay, a man would assign specific fields to each of his wives, according to her abilities and her needs (largely determined by the number of her children).[679] Women never held permanent rights in lands, since a husband would reassign garden plots if he saw it fit". In a situation where a man has moved out of his father's home in order to establish his own homestead, and he moves into a virgin land, then, as he gets married, he apportions specific fields to each one of his wives. The Maragoli case seems to contradict with Hay's position. From the oral testimonials during the field work for this particular study, it was established that in the pre-colonial Maragoli, once the land had been given to a particular woman it could never be given to another wife. Such an act would provoke hatred between the members of one's family.[680] Therefore, Hay's suggestion that "women never held permanent right in lands' is an incorrect statement, for indeed the pre-colonial Maragoli women held land which was allocated to them permanently and these were often passed to their sons through their wives.

Additionally, it was an unwise man who took away land from one of his wives to "reassign" to another when and if he saw it fit. Whatever the case, the Maragoli oral respondents during the study seem to negate this assertion by Hay as the said act would lead to disharmony in the home.[681] Moreover, Hay states that "labour, not land, was the limiting factor of production well into the early colonial period, and this contributed to the high social value of polygamy and the desire to have numerous offsprings". Here, too is a gross misunderstanding of the importance of polygamy as an institution in the pre-colonial

[679]M. Hay, Economic change in Luoland, Kowe 1890-1945. PhD. Dissertation, University of Wisconsin,1975, p.80, See Also Nancy Hafkin and Edna G. Bay. *Women in Africa: Studies in social and economic change*. Stanford University Press, 1976, p. 99.
[680]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[681]Amaganga Moses, (73 Years), Oral interview, on 12th September 2023.

African societies. The pre-colonial Maragoli for example did not marry several wives as source of labour supply.[682]

Exploitation of one's labour by another is an alien phenomenon and is based on the capitalist western mode of production, as it were, and it is a pity that Hay uses this as a yardstick in devaluing the position of the woman in the Pre-colonial Africa when she reduces her to a mere source of labour. If this was the case, then why would any woman have her own fields as already demonstrated earlier among the pre-colonial Maragoli bearing in mind that the man could just use his wives' labour in his own field.

Again, Butterman while writing on Pre-colonial Karachuonyo, states that in pre-colonial African societies, a man could exploit the labour of his wives in order to gain surplus grains which he would exchange for cattle in order to marry more wives.[683] Oral submissions collected among the Maragoli affirms the unquestioned authority of the woman over the grains from her field.[684] Therefore, one can infer here that women were not married just to fulfil the demand for labour supply. More-over, even if any benefit accrued to an individual household due to a particular wife's industriousness, such benefits remained in that particular household. This was best exemplified through oral testimonials during the field study.

It was noted from these testimonials that even though the man collectively owned the homestead as the homestead owner- *omwene hango,* each individual wife enjoyed a good

[682]Ibid.
[683]Judith Marianne Butterman, *History of Kanyamkago*. University of Nairobi, Department of History, 1977.pp. 8.
[684]Cynthia Ingado, (69 Years), Oral Interviews, on 12th September 2023.

degree of independence to manage the resources within her domain.[685] Cattle for example which came from a particular wife's daughter remained a property managed within that particular household. The husband could only request to use such animals for personal benefit but not transfer them without the involved wife's consent to another co-wife.[686] This was mainly because such an act would breed hatred and also cause laziness in the benefitting wife. Such a lazy wife would sit and wait for the spoils and spillovers from their hardworking co-wives.

Hay moves one step further and confirms her lack of understanding of polygamy as an institution among the Pre-colonial African societies by saying "moreover, the practice of polygamy ensured that a woman's economic security rested with her sons and not with her husband. A wife, in fact, could not inherit from her husband, although she could inherit from her sons."[687] First of all, it has been mentioned that, when the woman moved to cook in her own house, she was given a calf, or a cow and its calves; this was considered the woman's property. As she began to have her own children, some of whom would be married, more cattle came into the house, so that although regarded as the man's cattle this was only in name, the woman owned the cattle and the man could not use it without bringing her into the picture. When Hay states that the women could inherit from their sons, the question is at what age would the mother inherit land, cattle or whatever property from her son considering of course, the age difference between the mother and the son.

[685]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023.

[686] M. Hay, *Op*., *Cit*., p.100.
[687]Ibid

In regard to the above question, the Mambai Focus Group Discussion (FGD) demonstrated that the sons inherited their mother's land as well as cattle, goats and whatever else that the mother may have had. The point on sons inheriting from their mother was best captured by the following Maragoli statement from one participant in the Mambai FGD;

Omuyayi mukogoti vuri kase kutura mmadiku ganga natsengere yatigara mugitsi na rinda virindwa ni miandu gi vivuri veve.[688] The above statement loosely translates into; the last born son right from the ancient days remained in the homestead guarding his parents' graves and other family inheritance.

It is important to point out that from the above statement, it would be erroneous to accept Hay's standpoint. Additionally, the wives inherited the land, the cattle and other properties from their husbands.[689] According to these pre-colonial Maragoli oral submissions, when the daughters were married, cattle given as dowry were usually considered to belong to each house of the girls' mothers; therefore each house had its own cattle, although they belonged theoretically to the man by virtue of being the husband to his wives and father to his children.[690]

In a scenario where a given house in a polygamous family set up had no daughter, the communal Maragoli set up had a mechanism which allowed the disadvantaged household benefit from the proceeds of the other household's bride-wealth on the basis of mutual understanding not as aright. Milk, for example, would be shared out to such a household.[691]

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[688]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023.

[689]Obeda Kigalu, (76 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.

[690]Jenipher Afandi, (67 Years), Oral interview held in Chanderema Village on 23rd August 2023.

[691]Josphat Kihima, (50 Years), Oral Interview held at his home in Mukunya village Mambai Sub location on 2nd September 2023.

Everybody in the family and even within the extended family knew the number of cattle that belonged to each woman's house and they knew also the number of sheep and goats there were, so that in the event that the husband died, the immediate members of the family, including the brothers in-law, knew that in such and such a house there were such a number of cattle, goats and sheep and the wives would continue to have their cattle.

The same was true of the land even at the time of the death of one's husband.[692] From the ongoing discussion it is becoming clear that Maragoli gender relations and kinship system transcended the traditionally set social, political and economic boundaries.

A man's consideration to join the council of elders was, for example, pegged on his shrewdness and charisma in his homestead. In other words, a man's social economic and political prowess was always a function of his relation with his immediate women folk. Discipline of one's children together with the orderly nature of a man's homestead were considered key indicators of his authority and command to qualify his appointment into social or political office. The hospitality accorded to visitors and relatives during their visits and a man's ability to welcome his neighbours occasionally for a celebration were all considered when a vacancy in a political office occurred. Culturally, due to gender division of labour, women acted as producers and therefore all food for the family consumption was through their subsistence production.[693]

[692]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview held at his home in Chanderema Village mambi Sub location on 15th August 2023.

[693]Cleophas Lado, "Female labour participation in agricultural production and the implications for nutrition and health in rural Africa." *Social Science & Medicine* 34, no. 7 (1992): p.794.

Traditionally, economic chores were gendered among the Maragoli.[694] Both men and women had different obligations, which influenced decision-making and division of labour.[695] So far, it has been shown that Maragoli men controlled women's agricultural labour, which was very crucial for a man's prosperity. However, all family members provided labour, which was gender-specific. For instance, the first weeding -*kosembera kwu kutanga*, which was considered important, was done by everyone. Women did the subsequent weeding for seasonal crops. Weeding for the seasonal crops was labour-intensive especially for all varieties of millets since they had to be weeded four to five times before harvest. Moreover, bulrush millet needed protection from birds two months prior to harvesting far more than other millets.[696] While the women and the children did the scaring during the day, men had to remain in the field at night to ward off wild animals, like pigs, porcupines and small ducks.[697]

From the discussion, the Maragoli had gender-specific roles in agricultural production. This was, however, not static since there was no taboo in helping during times of labour shortage. There was nothing wrong for men for instance, to plant millet or sweet potatoes, which were women's crops. Planting women crops was always cumbersome for men because they disliked bending waist downward like women.[698] As a result, they preferred planting crops as they squatted. While women would dig out sweet potatoes and

[694]Robert L. Tignor, *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900-1939*. Princeton University Press, 2015, p.289.
[695]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.
[696]Jeanne Fisher, "The anatomy of Kikuyu domesticity and husbandry." *The anatomy of Kikuyu domesticity and husbandry.* (1964) p.56.
[697]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 98.
[698]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.

arrowroots, they could not do the same for yams. Technical skills and strength to avoid destroying the crop was necessary. The digging out of yams was male-specific work.

Agricultural decision was the responsibility of either the man or woman depending on the land one was working on. Moreover, gender specialization in food crop production was dictated by the traditional norms of what role and responsibility the man or woman played in the family.[699] Once her husband assigned her a portion of land, it was upon her to decide what to plant. A man was equally responsible in planting his crops in his portion.[700] Cassava and yams grown by men were usually dug out during famines. A man's agricultural contribution was very vital in cushioning his family from possible starvation.[701]

Men also closely supervised and even assisted in the cultivation of millet since it was from the crop that they brew their traditional liquor for leisure and also exchanged for livestock. Such socio-economic linkages ensured full participation of both gender groups in food production with very little friction and confrontations.[702] However, most Maragoli produced a surplus that they exchanged with their other luhya neighbours or even with other ethnic groups particularly the Luo as it shall be demonstrated in the subsequent sub-section.

The study on gender relations in food production among pre-colonial Maragoli intricately weaves together several theoretical frameworks and research philosophies. These endeavours aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play.

[699]Gunter Wagner, *Op*., *Cit*, p. 99.
[700]Ibid.
[701]W.M. Musalia, *Op., Cit*, p.69.
[702] Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds on 10th October 2023.

Articulation of Modes of Production and Gender Analysis theories acted as tools of analysis while Feminist Epistemology and Interpretivism came in as research philosophies. All these collectively shed lights on the gendered division of labour, power dynamics, and economic structures within Maragoli society.

Through gender analysis, the study examined how Maragoli men and women were socialized into specific roles dictated by cultural practices, revealing a traditional division of labor along gender lines. The patriarchal system reinforced these gender-based roles, with men typically holding dominant roles in property ownership and political power. Feminist epistemology challenges traditional narratives of women's passivity by highlighting their active involvement in day-to-day activities. It emphasizes the significance of women's labour contributions and their agency within the socio-cultural context. This perspective underscored the nuanced interplay between gender roles and power dynamics.

Interpretivism research philosophy enabled the researcher assemble and effectively develop a deep exploration of subjective experiences and cultural contexts, enabling the study to uncover the complexities of gender relations in food production. By engaging with oral histories and indigenous knowledge, the research captures the lived realities of Maragoli men and women, revealing how they negotiated gendered roles and responsibilities.

The synthesis of these theoretical frameworks and research methodologies illuminates the multi-faceted nature of pre-colonial Maragoli society, offering insights into the intricate interplay between gender, power, and economic structures in food production. It challenges simplistic narratives of male dominance and female subordination, highlighting the agency

and resilience of Maragoli women within their socio-cultural milieu. The next section endeavoured to illustrate how the discussed gendered relations in food production availed the essentials of life and how these essentials were distributed within the Maragoli and its immediate environs, buiding up robust trading relations between the Maragoli and their neighbours.

2.7 Distribution, Exchange and Trade

The subsistence orientation of the Maragoli economy did not imply the absence of surplus for exchange or trade. Although people reproduced for the purpose of consumption and reproduction, there existed produce in excess of what was actually required. It is this excess produce which constituted a surplus. That it existed implied that there was surplus labour; that is the amount of time spent in work by the productive class, men, women and juniors, in excess of time required to reproduce themselves at the existing level of the means of production.

The volume of surplus produce was limited by the relatively low levels of technology and the small-scale organization of the labour force. Some of the surplus produce was exchanged by families for livestock, implements for cultivation and other commodities.[703]Some of it was loaned to relatives (*kusuminya*), who because of misfortune were unable to harvest sufficient produce. Visiting friends and relatives were also given some food staffs as a general gesture of hospitality. This was on the understanding that it was part strengthening the kinship system and they would also reciprocate if similar misfortune befell their benefactors[704]. Part of the surplus was also used for the preparation

[703] Wu mulalu FGD held at Wumulalu Shopping Centre on 3rd October 2023.

[704]Humphrey Chadianya, (70 Years), Oral interview held at Bethefage village in Mambai sub location on 15th August 2023.

of beer which members of the lineage were invited to drink. This was also done on the reciprocal basis.

Produce which still remained up-to the next harvest season was taken out of the granaries and stored on top of the new harvest to be utilized before new produce was consumed. Sufficient quantities of grain were also preserved for sowing during the next season. This was dried and mixed with ash to protect it from pests and with sand to ensure that it was not eaten up by the members of the family.[705] Produce from the family head's garden was stored in his own granaries. This was exchanged for livestock. Some of it was distributed to his wives in case of shortage in their households. That excess agricultural produce was exchanged for livestock and other products meant that it had both a use-value and an exchange value, and was therefore a commodity.

In the history of humankind all over the world, trade was witnessed due the fact that different societies were endowed with different resources and commodities hence the need for exchange. This was because people inhabited different geographical regions which had varied ecological niches. According to P.O. Ndege, trade and exchange was an important invention by humanity.[706] This enabled him acquire all the important commodities he needed for survival and pleasure. During the pre-colonial period, the exchange of goods with other goods was a common practice among the Kenyan communities.

[705]Ibid.
[706]Peter Odhiambo Ndege, 1987, *Op*, *Cit*, p.60.

A standard economic unit of measurement was derived to be used during every transaction.[707] V.N. Nyaboke adds that the exchange of goods within the same community or outside the borders was small-scale and this mainly existed when they produced surplus goods.[708] W.R. Ochieng'argues that the economy of the communities who lived in Western Kenya was mainly subsistence and whenever they conducted trade it was mainly barter.[709] Towards this, D. R. Kandagor notes that local trade was conducted through barter because the money economy was not yet known by local communities[710]. Through trade, neighbouring communities were able to obtain what they lacked while disposing the surplus produce.

The Maragoli exchange of commodities (trade) within themselves and with their neighbours developed as a result of the peoples' interdependence. The Maragoli engaged in trade long before 1895 and had well-established internal and external foodstuffs.

Due to ecological differences within the region, individuals and groups of people were not able to produce all they wanted. This inter-regional trade was nonetheless irregular and was significant during famines or other ecological disasters.[711] At other times, exchange took place because they produced a surplus. Trade was organized on the basis of exchange or barter. It was mostly carried out in homes, and in periodic market places which were situated along the borders with the Luo and the other Luhya groups key among them being

[707]H. Reed, "Cotton growing in Central Nyanza, Kenya, 1901–1939." *Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Michigan State University* (1975) p.89.
[708]Vane N. Nyaboke, "Assessment of Household Land Size and Use For Sustainable Food And Livelihood Security In The Maize-Tea-Dairy Mixed Farming System: A Case Study Of Bogeche Sub Location In Kisii County." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2020., p.88.
[709]William Robert Ochieng, *An outline history of Nyanza up to 1914*. East African Literature Bureau, 1974., p.109.
[710]D.R Kandagor, "The economic transformation of the Tugen of Kenya: 1895-1963." PhD diss., 1993., p.125.
[711]Ibid., 127.

the Wanga and Abanyore. The Maragoli Wanga relation was mostly strengthened in the 1900 due to the Wanga active involvement in trade links especially after the completion of the Kenya Uganda railway.[712]

After the value of trade had been realized, elders from Maragoli met those from the neighbouring clans and agreed through ritual to observe peace in the market places. Market places became highly respected. They were mostly operational during famines and other reasons of demand.[713] Compared with the men, women participated in both internal and external trade by the mere fact that they were more involved in agricultural activities. Women high frequency in trade compared to men is also explained by the fact that it was a taboo to molest them even during war, meaning the women trading activities would continue smoothly even during war without disruptions. Gender was important in establishing links, which were trans-ethnic among the Maragoli and their neighbours including the Wanga and Luo. Though internal trade was more frequent, extensive and involved and affected larger populations, the Maragoli also traded with their neighbours.

Before the late 19th century therefore, Maragoli men just like most of other Kenyan societies had participated in trade merely as facilitators and not actual traders because of traditions.[714] C.A. Presley asserts that among the Agikuyu, men could wait for women's trade caravans at specific points to welcome them and help to carry the trade goods to the last leg of the journey.[715] The contact with the Wanga had made the Maragoli participate

[712] Kenneth R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and Other Tribes of the Elgon District, British East Africa." *Journal of the Anthropological* Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 43,1913, p.60.
[713]Ibid., p.130.
[714]McEwen, Madison. "Spaces Surrounding Freedom: Enslaved Women's Resistance and Agency on the East Coast of Africa in the 1890s." PhD diss., The State University of New York at Buffalo, 2018, p.19.
[715]Cora A. Presley, "Labor unrest among Kikuyu women in colonial Kenya." (1986): p.262

in the caravan trade as foodstuff suppliers. The Western Kenya cultivation including the Maragoli one may have expanded as early as the 1860s in response to the demands of the caravan traders.[716]

From 1860s, with the penetration of the Swahili-Arabs caravans, the Maragoli had become part of the frequent suppliers to these caravans. By the 1880s, European-led caravans started to expand to the interior later reaching Maragoli land.[717] The last one and half decades of the nineteenth century witnessed transformation in the social structure of the caravan trade. This transformation was a result of several factors. In the first instance, there was increasing conquest of the Maragoli by the British, which caused a lot of insecurity since more people especially girls were kidnapped. Second, there were natural disasters and epidemics that hit the region in the 1890s that only helped to weaken them against the adversaries.[131] Despite these setbacks, the caravan trade was becoming more profitable during the same period. As a result of insecurity, the number of women in trade began to decline. Consequently, women were sidelined from the caravan trade as especially the young men took up the role of porters.[718]

By the beginning of the 20th century, therefore, Maragoli women had been pushed to the production sphere with constant restrain from engaging in trade. It is important to understand who controlled agricultural surplus in order to shed light on gender relations of food production. It is argued here that the amount of control over the surplus either encouraged or discouraged women from producing a surplus. Some authors have argued

[716]John Lonsdale, "The conquest state, 1895–1904." *A modern history of Kenya* (1989): p.17.
[717]Kenneth R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and Other Tribes of the Elgon District, British East Africa." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 43 (1913): (1), p.32.
[718]Ibid., p.42.

that pre-colonial Kenyan women producers had complete control over the types of crops they planted, how they produced them, and the products of their labour.[719] F.M Muchoki while writing on pre-colonial Kikuyu argues that Kikuyu men took no interest in harvested crops and it was the women who decided what was to be consumed at home and what to give out either to relatives or those in need.[720]

The women also judged whether any exchange was possible after ensuring there was enough food for the families. Fisher while writing on the Kikuyu states that men were not even allowed to peep into women's granaries. She maintains that once land was allocated to a woman, she was free to decide what to grow on it.[721] While the decision of crop choice and the subsequent tending of it were left to the woman, the appropriation of the profits from surplus remained a site of struggle.[722]This was also the case among the Maragoli since they too remain the principal custodians of the homesteads food stores hence better placed to know the exact quantities that would last up to the next harvest before disposing the excess.

F. M. Muchoki on the other hand, thinks that Fisher's conclusion on woman's "complete control" was far from true, because the wife had to accept her husband's request to sell some of her surplus.[723] It appears that men were concerned with the surplus if it was much.

[719]Ruth Nasimiyu, "Women in the colonial economy of Bungoma: Role of women in agriculture, 1902–1960." *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development* 15 (1985): p.66.
[720]F. M. Muchoki, "Organisation and development of Kikuyu agriculture 1880-1920." PhD diss., Kenyatta University, 1988., p.84.
[721]J. Fisher, The Anatomy of Kikuyu Domesticity and Husbandry Nairobi and London; Department of Technical Cooperation,1954, p.63.
[722]Martha Wangari. Musalia, *Op.Cit.*, p.78.
[723]Ibid., p.82.

According to Leakey, when surplus was abundant, a wife could be asked not to interfere with such grain because it could be sold to purchase a goat or sheep.[724]

Robertson argues that women did not have complete autonomy over the products of their labour because they were in a patrilocal residence which played a critical role in determining the level of women's autonomy.[725] The fact that the woman was the newcomer in the matrimonial home, she had insignificant autonomy over her labour especially because bride-wealth had been paid. The rights of women to dispose of the surplus and control the profits constituted, therefore, a critical element in pre-colonial power relations. One of the informants in her eighties indicated that though women traded, the husbands had the right to make use of those proceeds.[726]

Discussing the proceeds of trade, Presley asserts that on arrival from her journey, a woman handed over the trade goods to her husband or the eldest son if she was a widow.[727] Though the goods belonged to her, she was acknowledging the authority of the husband over her more than the capitalist interpretation of oppression and inferiority.

This ritual of handing over the goods can well be explained within the confines of patriarchal system, which governed the Maragoli social relations.Under the patriarchal order all and sundry in the homestead belonged to the senior most male of the homestead with the other members being granted unlimited use rights to the assets. This was however

[724]Losuis Seymour Bazett Leakey, *The southern Kikuyu before 1903*. Vol. 3. Academic Press, 1977., p.16.
[725]Dence, M. R., Richard AF Grieve, and P. B. Robertson. "Terrestrial impact structures-principal characteristics and energy considerations." In *Impact and explosion cratering: Planetary and terrestrial implications*, 1977, p.254.
[726]Stellah Kamasi (82 years)held at Vuyiya village on 7th October 2023.
[727]A.C. Presley Labour Unrest Among Kikuyu Women in Colonial Kenya in Women and Class in Africa (eds.) Robertson Claire and Berger Iris New York, London, Africana Publishing Company,1986, p.123.

far fetched from the individualistic capitalism tendencies. Women also traded foodstuffs, which they produced alongside items they made from the local industries.

Among the Maragoli, the role of *avatemburi*—a distinct group of female traders—challenged the notion that women's economic autonomy was entirely constrained by patriarchal norms. These women operated with notable independence, engaging in trade across village and district boundaries, and managing surplus proceeds outside strict marital or kinship control. Their mobility, entrepreneurial networks, and strategic reinvestment of profits positioned them as influential actors in local economies. While broader gender structures shaped trade relations, *avatemburi* exemplified how Maragoli women could assert agency and reshape economic roles within a patriarchal society.[728]

Overally, the pre-colonial Maragoli engagement in trade was not to make huge profits but to build up subsistence strength, which was the motivating factor. Trade emerged in Maragoli as an alternative way of survival following famines when the rains failed because the available food was insufficient to feed the growing population. This led to growth of markets which were known as key exchange and interaction points.

From the discussion in this section, the study has revealed that despite the subsistence orientation of the Maragoli economy, surplus produce existed, indicating surplus labor within the society. Gender analysis theory helps understand how this surplus was distributed and exchanged, with women often playing significant roles in both internal and external trade due to their involvement in agricultural activities. Feminist Epistemology

[728] Judith M. Abwunza, *Logoli Women of Western Kenya Speak: Needs and Means* (Toronto: University of Toronto,1988) https://erepository.uonbi.ac.ke/bitstream/handle/11295/41781/Abwunza_Logoli%20Women%20of%20western%20Kenya%20speak.pdf.

highlights the agency of women in decision-making regarding crop production and surplus disposal, challenging traditional narratives of male dominance in economic matters.

Interpretivism research philosophy allows for a comprehensive exploration of the cultural and social dynamics shaping trade practices, revealing the interdependence among Maragoli and neighboring communities. Through trade, surplus agricultural produce acquired both use-value and exchange value, becoming commodities in the pre-colonial economy. The study also elucidates how patriarchal norms influenced the control and distribution of surplus, with women's autonomy over trade proceeds often constrained within marital and kinship structures.

Despite broader patriarchal structures within Maragoli society, the emergence and activities of *avatemburi*; independent female traders demonstrated that women could exercise significant economic agency beyond the confines of male authority. These women navigated trade networks across villages and districts, managed surplus proceeds, and reinvested in their enterprises with relative autonomy, challenging conventional gender hierarchies. Their role enriches our understanding of how distribution, exchange, and trade were organized and negotiated in pre-colonial Maragoli society. This aspect reveals a more nuanced interplay between gender, economy, and culture; where women, through *avatemburi*, actively shaped market dynamics and redefined their position within the socio-economic landscape. The next section discusses organization of labour in pre colonial Maragoli.

2.8 Organization of Labour in Pre-Colonial Maragoli

The place of labour in economic production is recognized by both Marxist and bourgeois scholars. Bourgeois scholars recognize it as a factor of production just like land and capital. The Marxist scholars on the other hand believe is very important in socio-economic production. Labour not equally rewarded otherwise known as exploitation of labour is the basis of the process of capital accumulation.[729] Even pre-capitalist had surplus value which is the difference between the total output of the individual and his subsistence requirements that would be alienated by the state, king or elders. Under feudalism, the free labour service on the Lord's farm by a tenant would be part of the surplus product.[730] Regarding agricultural production and labour, the household kinship and labour relations form an important approach in analyzing household labour organization. Labour processes organization at household level and exchange of commodities occur in relation to the needs of the household. Intra household labour dynamics complicated definition of labour.[731]

By 1850, the Maragoli had three main forms of labour. First was the labour at house level which was based on the household as a production and consumption unit. Through this labour, the household was able to reproduce and sustain itself as an entity. The second one was the bonded labour which was a form of forced labour based on economic production system in the form of slave, squatter and indentured labour.[732]

The last form of labour was the free labour. This was a labour source where coercion was not employed in its extraction. Such included relatives and neighbours offering labour

[729]Erick M. Aseka, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 90.
[730]Ibid., p.91.
[731]Danson P.L. Esese, *Op*, *Cit*, p.100.
[732]V. C. Malherbe, "Indentured and unfree labour in South Africa: towards an understanding." *South African Historical Journal* 24, no. 1 (1991): p.11.

without being compelled or paid, with food being offered as appreciation.[733] This free labour was also offered by tenants at will (*avamenya*), which was similar to slavery. Where people were kept to provide labour on farms because they were economically disadvantaged. Because of this stigma, most of them did not get married due to lack of cattle for dowry.[734]Some of these people however could be given food or wives during their stay and eventually moved form the homes of their masters with their families to a parcel of land prepared for them in an adjacent area.[735]

Cultivation was also done by both sexes according to choice. There also existed other forms of cooperative labour right from the family unit to the village or clan level. There was intra-family or household labour exchange where wives of one husband could join hands to cultivate one another's field in turns. There was also inter-household labour which was a group of young women and girls who helped one another in the morning tasks such as weeding on strictly rotational basis. The group was seasonally formed and was subject to dissolution after accomplishing the goal. Corporate labour pools (*risanga* and *ovufuva)* on the other hand involved pooling together of labour from specific households within a village or clan to help with tasks that required colossal labour input, including clearing, cultivation, madding a house or harvesting.[736] It was a semi-permanent group territorially based; and like some other Maragoli institutions lacked formal authority or leadership.

A person in need of accomplishing certain task notified members of the group who would arrange to provide their concerted labour. Muchanga K.L while commenting on the same

[733]KNA: DC/NN/1/20:1938:17.

[734] Mambai FGD held on 30th sept. 2023 at Mambai Primary Assembly Grounds.

[735] Kizito Lusambili Muchanga, *The Indigenous Ecological Knowledge of the Isukha and Idakho Communities of Western Kenya, c. 1895–1963* (Nairobi: Utafiti Foundation, 2025), 135

[736]Mambai FGD held on 30th sept. 2023 at Mambai Primary Assembly Grounds.

adds that such work groups would assist construct granaries and general cleaning such as cleaning up sidewalks, water springs and rivers.[737] According to the Wu Mulalu FGD, father's work parties was very important for thrashing of finger millet and sorghum. Thrashing was regarded as the work of old men only. Mother's work parties were commonly used in clearing, thrashing grains, winnowing (*kwirura*) storing the harvest and gathering wild fruits.

The responsibility of youth work groups was slashiung and herding of the animals. Among the Maragoli people of western Kenya, various clans historically specialized in distinct occupational roles that contributed to the community's economic and cultural development.[738] Notably, the Abang'ali (also known as Avaruli or Muluri) were renowned for their expertise in iron working and blacksmithing, crafting tools and weapons essential for agriculture and defense.[739] Their skills in metallurgy were highly valued and often passed down through generations. These occupational specializations reflect a complex social structure where clan identity was closely tied to economic function and cultural legacy.

Writing on Isukha and Idakho, Muchanga notes that the Baruli clan had such occupational work groups to combine forces to produce iron implements to sell to the needy after which

[737] Muchanga K.L, *Op*., *Cit*., 133-134.

[738] Wu Mulalu FGD held on 3rd October 2023 at Wu Mulalu Primary school Assembly Grounds See Also Osogo, J. S. *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1966. pp.89-91

[739] Wagner, Gunter. *The Bantu of Western Kenya, Volume II: Economic Life*. London: Oxford University Press, 1949, pp.112-115. See Also Were, Gideon S. *A History of the Maragoli of Western Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967 pp.45-47

they could share what they earned from their work equally depending on the work contribution of those involved. Apart from very special roles performed by men or women, there were instances in which responsibilities overlapped. One elder for instance made the following observation: At construction for example, women prepared mud, children fetched water, and men roofed and thatched, such work place brought together diverse age groups of both sexes to do the same activity.[740]

After completing their tasks, they would be rewarded with a beer party, although the amount of beer given was not related to the size of task performed nor the hours spent working. A wealthy household would call a work group more frequently than others since it could afford to provide the necessary rewards, but the rights existed equally for the poorer homesteads. At times only women were called to work, but their husbands would come in to enjoy the beer.[741] The Maragoli also had a cooperative herding arrangement in which livestock was pooled for herding. It was common mainly in the cattle village where young men took turn in herding and guarding animals in the boma. The Maragoli could also come together to undertake a venture of common good to all the participants. A group farm for example was initially jointly reclaimed from a bush by a group of cultivators who cleared and prepared the land together.[742] They would then share out the fields and work on their strips individually.

According to Ucheundu the system helped a young man whose parents were short of land to earn income by investing his labour.[743] Through this, the young man acquired livestock

[740] Simeon Muhandale, (80 years) Oral interview, on 15th July 2023.
[741]Mary Kanyigula, (65 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd July 2023.
[742]Seabrook, Leonie, Clive McAlpine, and Rod Fensham. "What influences farmers to keep trees? A case study from the Brigalow Belt, Queensland, Australia." *Landscape and Urban Planning* 84, no. 3-4 (2008): p.267.
[743]Ibid., p.269.

to pay bride-wealth. There was no direct payment for labour contributed in many domestic activities. Labour was mainly compensated for in kind for it was held that to pay for it meant that one had not been helped.[744] However, a few types of specialized labour were actually paid for.The blacksmiths for example could be requested to make an anklet for a newly married maid and paid for as in normal exchange. Thatching of a house almost amounted to paid labour; this was specialized job for which the thatcher was entertained with a lot of food and paid a goat or two at the completion of the task.[745] Black smith being a trade that was passed from father to son, it followed that there were specific clans which specialized in blacksmiths.The next section presents the chapter summary.

2.9 Chapter Summary

From the foregoing discussion, the following conclusions are drawn. The Maragoli are part of the Luhya linguistic group. Acccording to Maragoli oral sources, the term Luhya comes from Maragoli word *Urusha* or *Uruvamba* which means blood line. This definition concurs with Were's submission that Luhya is a term which refers to kinsmen. Turning to Maragoli as a term is linked to a religious leader/ diviner (*Omuraguri).* The Maragoli owe their descend to *Mulogoli* and *Kalyesa*. Mulogoli had four sons who form the four principal clans amomg the Maragoli. In regard to social formations evolved over many years as a result of the community's interactions with different environments and other groups of people.

The outcome of these was the development of economic and social systems which operated at the household, family and lineage levels. The Maragoli lived in lineages which also

[744]Hezron Mwamili, (56 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd July 2023.
[745]Charles Inyangala, (63 Years), Oral interview held on 23rd July 2023.

helped them define their socio-political and economic structures. The lineage mode had, by the end of the nineteenth century became dominant, subordinating the other two to its needs. The lineage mode of production was based on the triple principle of kinship, seniority and territoriality.

These principles reinforced and legitimized the patterns of material production, reproduction, distribution and relations of production / distribution at the domestic, family and lineage levels. Duplicated at the political sphere, these principles aimed at establishing equilibrium in society. Maragoli being a partriachal society, the place of men in socio-political and economic aspects was emphasized. Men were the members in the council of elders which decided on land distribution, settled disputes and also presided over religious functions. Women on their part formed women council which though sidelined from the major clan issues, helped handle women related issues. Women on their part used their positions especially in the food production sector and as principal assistants to their husbands to ensure women issues were given a hearing during the men council meetings.

Furthermore, the chapter has demonstrated how the Maragoli organized material production, the technology they used, how labour was organized and reproduced. The purpose for which what was produced in their mixed economy was used and the roles of kinship, seniority and territoriality in both economic and political organization has also been situated in the chapter discussion. The manner in which the Maragoli adjusted themselves to the environmental changes among other challenges and the resultant patterns of change in the nineteenth century has also been a point of concern in this chapter.

Moreover, Maragoli gender relations have been analyzed. It has been shown that their socio-political and economic organisation were influenced by the patriarchal system. The gender relations in pre-colonial Maragoli seem to have favoured Maragoli senior men who controlled the socio-political institutions, which directly influenced the socio-economic organisation. These notwithstanding, women were reserved a special mention especially in the agricultural production and the indigenous education. Through all these, a secure and stable food production mechanism was established. The importance of Maragoli women's labour is demonstrated by the kind of crops they grew. All the women controlled crops were annual crops and formed the main diet for the community. It was therefore, the women's labour that sustained the community.

Apart from sustaining the community, it was the women's labour that enriched the Maragoli men. This was through children labour on the farm, exchange of surplus agricultural produce for livestock and even dowry from the daughters after marriage. Ownership of and access to land was first and foremost influenced by land tenure system. In Maragoli, individual ownership seems to have been practiced before the arrival of the British. The arrival of the Europeans only helped to entrench a process that was already there. Ownership and access to the means of production was important in influencing the ability of each gender group in production of food crops. Since females would only access land through a male guardian, they had to be either married or remain in their father's homestead, which was not always acceptable in the society.

Maragoli being primarily crop cultivators, most of their food production mechanisms revolved around agriculture. This made the Maragoli develop an elaborate agricultural calendar to maximize their agricultural production. This calendar was characterized with two seasons; the main season-*egudu* and the subsidiary season(*idjuivwi*). The main season had better yields making the Maragoli give it more attention as characterized by the season being officially launched with the sacrificial elders and rolling down to the council of elders' members.

The penetration of imperial agents in the late nineteenth century brought in new economic policies greatly altering the established maragoli gendered food production mechanisms. Due to the prejudiced attitude European men had towards their women, African women's position was even more compromised from the late nineteenth century. Changes that took place as a result of the people's incorporation into the colonial state and economy are the subject of the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER THREE

CHANGES IN MARAGOLI FOOD PRODUCTION AND GENDER ROLES DURING THE INITIAL COLONIAL ERA , 1895-1920

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has demonstrated that food production mechanisms in pre-colonial Maragoli were adequate due to a gendered division of labor that ensured efficiency, sustainability, and resilience. Men handled tasks like land clearing and livestock management, while women played a central role in crop cultivation, food processing, and agricultural decision-making. When challenges such as drought, labor shortages, or land access issues arose, women adapted by diversifying crops, reorganizing labor, and mobilizing communal support systems to maintain food security. However, colonial interventions between 1895 and 1920 disrupted these mechanisms. Land alienation, forced labor, taxation, and the promotion of export-oriented cash crops reduced access to fertile land and shifted priorities away from subsistence farming. Male outmigration for wage labor increased women's burdens, while movement restrictions and administrative controls further strained traditional systems. Despite these threats, Maragoli women responded with resilience, intensifying their farming efforts and preserving indigenous knowledge to safeguard household food sufficiency.

This chapter was sub-divided into a number of subsections. These were, the Maragoli encounter with colonialism, impact on food production and gender relations, the Western Kenya and pioneer colonial experience, Christianity and western education, impact on food production and gender relations, crop production and agricultural policies during the initial colonial era, food production and gender relations in the pre and post world War 1 period,

dynamics in land and labour relations in Maragoli up to 1920, colonial changes on Maragoli food production mechanisms, Socio-economic changes in Maragoli up-to 1920 and finally the chapter summary winds up the chapter.

This chapter examined the food production mechanisms in Maragoli before formal establishment of colonial rule in 1920. This chapter was premised on the assumption that early colonial period brought about some key changes in Maragoli food production mechanisms in relation to gender. To achieve this, the chapter analysed the articulation of the colonial state with pre-capitalist socio-political and economic structures and the changes this brought about. This was also in relation to the accompanying changes in gender relations.

Colonialism was a major impetus of change, given that it introduced new mechanisms of change within highly dynamic social and economic system of the Maragoli as it did to any other Kenyan community.[746] Consequently, the process of articulation began characterized by subjugation, subordination, exploitation, destruction, restructuring, modification and marginalization of the indigenous food production mechanisms in Maragoli. This was also in relation to the accompanying changes in gender relations. It is, therefore, important to provide a synopsis of the early contact between the Maragoli and Europeans as examined in the next section.

[746] S.M. Omwoyo and A.S. Nyanchoga. "Economic and Social Change in western Kenya: 1895-1920" in The *Eastern African Journal of Historical and Social Science* Research Vol.2. No.2. (2000), 40. See Also Leen Kavualvu *Op*, *Cit*, p.121 for the Isukha case.

3.2 The Maragoli Encounter with Colonialism, Impact on Food Production and Gender Relations

The early Europeans in Western Kenya and Maragoli in particular were traders, travellers and missionaries who traversed the region for their different reasons. Their contacts date back to 1883 when the Scottish explorer and adventurer Joseph Thompson and his companion, J. Martin came to Mumias.[747] Joseph Thomson in his work gives impressionistic observations describing the region as thriving, self-sufficient communities with plenty of food to eat.[748]

Sponsored by the Royal Geographical Society, Thomson made his debut trip travelling from the coast through Masailand and arriving in western Kenya in December 1883.[749] Thomson's description of Luyialand is not as detailed as we would like (he visited western Kenya largely because the region happened to be on the way to his major destination, Lake Victoria); but it is, for the most part, sufficient to give us a general overview of the area before the arrival of British colonizers.[750] Thomson describes the land as fertile, peaceful with welcoming people and plenty of food this was in contrast to what he had observed in Bukusu land.[751]

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[747] G.S.Were,1967a, *Op*, *Cit*, p.156, Dealing, *Op*, *Cit*, 1974, p.300, E.C. Burt., Towards an Art History of the Baluyia of Western Kenya Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1980, p.300 As Quoted in P.W. Wekesa, Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya: The Case of The Babukusu of Bungoma District, C. 1894- 1963, M.A Thesis Kenyatta University,2000, p.94.

[748] Kenda Mutongi, 2007, *Op*, *Cit*, P.15., See Also P.W. Wekesa, *Op*, *Cit*, p.94.

[749]S. Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya*: *Capitalism and African Response 1895-1975* London: Longman,1982, p.11-12

[750] Leen Kavulavu, 2020, *Op*, *Cit*, p.121.

[751] P.W. Wekesa, Op, Cit, p.97.

Thomson farther observes that... “the country became more diversified and pleasing, rolling in gentle undulations and dotted over with flowering shrubs.”[752] Though Thomson has been described as ever ambitious hurrying young man wishing to please his people back in Europe by assuring them his peaceful African voyage, it is on record that throughout the slave trade years of the mid- to late nineteenth century, the Luyia remained a stable agricultural people, despite the occasional feud over cattle or land.[753] Thompson and his caravan gives a vivid description of a pre-colonial Maragoli with plenty of food. ...our carravan passed a perfect lane of people, all carrying baskets of food, which they were dying to dispose off for beads. They were honey, milk, eggs, fowls, beans among others.”[754] This made Thomson to be very impressed—so impressed, in fact, that he deemed his hasty transit through Luyialand “almost like a triumphal progress.

The supposedly innocent land of “honey and milk” was to change in 1894, when the British established a formal administrative center there, in a place called Mumias, the most important trading post on the main route to Uganda[755]. Charles Hobley was appointed to take charge of the center, a position into which he was hurriedly ushered, in order to settle a major feud that had arisen between the local people and government officials. This was Hobley’s first crack at colonial administration, and he proved marvelously suitable for the

[752] Ibid.p.16.

[753]James Baird Thomson, *Joseph Thomson, African Explorer: A Biography*. S. Lowe, Marston, limited, 1897, p.92.

[754]Kenneth R. Dundas, "The Wawanga and Other Tribes of the Elgon District, British East Africa." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 43 ,1913: 19-75, p. 22.

[755] Gordon H. Mungeam, "Masai and Kikuyu Responses to the Establishment of British Administration in the East Africa Protectorate1." *The Journal of African History* 11, no. 1 (1970): p.130., See Also Leen Kavulavu, 2020, *Op*, *Cit*, p.122.

job.[756]After the conclusion of partition in 1885, the British took the step of effectively occupying her sphere of influence.[757] After the Berlin treaty, the foreign office in London accepted an offer in 1887 from Sultan Khalifa bin Said of Zanzibar of the grant of concession to administer his coastal mainland territory.[758]

Nevertheless, the British government wanted to avoid investing large capital in the region and therefore, placed the sphere under a chartered company, the Imperial British East African Company (IBEAC).[759] Agents of the company were the first colonizing agents that came into contact with the Maragoli. The British government even after taking over the East Africa region as per the 1884-85 Berlin Conference did not assume immediate control of their "sphere of influence" from IBEAC. The company faced severe financial, transportation, and military challenges, ultimately rendering it incapable of effectively administering the territory.[760] By 1894, it had gone bankrupt and withdrawn, compelling the British government to take control of the region.[761]

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[756] Joseph. Nabwera, "European settlers in the trans Nzoia district: A case study of racial domination in the Kenya white highlands, 1920-1946." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 1987, p.78,.See Also P.W.Wekesa, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 120 for the Bukusu and K.L.Muchanga, 1998 *Op.Cit*, For the Idakho and Isukha p.143, E.M.Aseka, The colonial economy During and after the Second World War and Political activities in Buluyia", In Staff Seminar Paper No.6. KUSP/1/1989/90. History Department (Kenyatta University, July 1990),

[757] Leen Kavulavu, *Op.Cit*, p.122.

[758] R.W. Foran ,The Kenya Police(London: Robert Hale, 1962), p.2.

[759] B.A Ogot, 1963:249; Mungeam, 1966:7, as Quoted in P.W. Wekesa, *Op*, *Cit*.

[760] Mungeam, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 9-10.

[761] KNA PC/NZA I / 4- 1908-1909

Determined to establish proper governance in what would become Uganda, the British sought to facilitate commerce and assert authority over African ethnic communities along key trade routes to prevent ongoing disruptions to the company's activities.[762] This interaction, which significantly impacted the Maragoli as part of Luhya land, was inevitable due to prior trade connections with the Wanga, whose Nabongo served as the company's key representative in Western Kenya.The Wanga were widely regarded as "the most important tribe in Kavirondo" and were perceived as "more powerful and civilized than any other."[763]

In 1894, the British Foreign Office assumed control of the territory after the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) failed to administer it effectively. Subsequently, on July 1, 1895, the region was officially declared the East Africa Protectorate and placed under the direct authority of the Foreign Office.[764] That same year, the Uganda Railway was commissioned to create a direct link between Uganda and the Indian Ocean—a project motivated by Britain's strategic interests in the region, especially after the 1862 discovery of the Nile's source, which heightened the geopolitical importance of controlling the headwaters.[765]

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[762] R.W. Foran, The Kenya Police (London: Robert Hale, 1962), p.2, See Also Leen Kavulavu Op.Cit. p. 122.

[763] KNA DC/EN/3/11/7- 1930. See Also P.W. Wekesa, *Op*, *Cit*, p.94.

[764] KNA PC/NZA I / 4- 1908-1909, See AlsoRobert Tignor, *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900 to 1939* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 19. D.P.L. Esese L, Agriculture and Socio-Economic Change among the Wanga of Mumias Division, 1860-1945 M.A Thesis Kenyatta University, 1990, p.191, Check P.W. Wafula, Op., Cit, p.100 for further reading.

[765] Mervyn F. Hill, *Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1949), 23. See Also Marjorie Ruth Dilley, *British policy in Kenya colony*. Psychology Press, 1966., p.15.

Until 1901, Western Kenya held little strategic or economic significance for the British, serving primarily as part of the caravan route and as a vital refreshment and rest stop along the journey to Uganda.[766] Earlier punitive expeditions had been conducted against the Maragoli and Isukha communities, and following their pacification, the decade between 1900 and 1910 was marked by a missionary scramble for the region. The Friends African Mission (FAM) established a mission station at Kaimosi in 1902, while the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) acquired land at Nyang'ori in 1909.[767]

The competition for mission stations in Buluya, following a difficult period of conquest and imperial subjugation, exemplifies the broader dynamics of colonization, in which religious expansion operated alongside and reinforced colonial authority. Initially, missionaries functioned as pawns within the broader imperialist agenda, facilitating colonial penetration under the pretense of spiritual salvation. Over time, they evolved into agents of cultural alienation, persuading the Maragoli to adopt European ways of life under the guise of civilization and Christian progress.[768] With the arrival of Europeans in the late nineteenth century, conditions were set for the Maragoli to undergo the most abrupt and forcefully imposed external domination in their history. By the early twentieth century, the British perception of the Protectorate had evolved from a mere transit zone to a resource-rich region ripe for economic exploitation.

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[766] William R. Ochieng', *A History of Kenya* (Nairobi: Macmillan Kenya, 1985), 112. See Also Ross W. McGregor, *Kenya from Within: a short political history*. Routledge, 2012, p.69.

[767]Robert J. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875–1935* (London: Heinemann, 1978), 95–97.

[768] Martin C.J. "Education and consumption in Maragoli (Kenya): Households' educational strategies." *Comparative Education* 18, no. 2 (1982): p.145. See Also Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1989), 45–48.

To integrate the Maragoli's well-established food production systems into the colonial economy, the administration devised comprehensive policies targeting two foundational pillars of their livelihood: land and labour.[769] During this period, British imperialists—initially represented by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC)—entered the region under a charter granted by the British government. Although the IBEAC failed to establish a stable and effective administration, it nonetheless laid the groundwork for the eventual imposition of formal British colonial rule. Walter Rodney argued that Europeans often favored territories they had already become familiar with, as such regions were more easily brought under control.[770]

The arrival of British imperialists through the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) marked a significant shift in the trajectory of indigenous governance and socio-economic systems. While the IBEAC failed to establish a durable administrative structure due to inadequate resources and growing resistance, its presence symbolized the beginning of direct European involvement in internal African affairs. This commercial foothold, although short-lived, set the stage for the eventual takeover by the British Foreign Office and the formalization of colonial rule under the East Africa Protectorate.

Walter Rodney notes that Europeans often consolidated power in regions they had already penetrated, as familiarity with local geography, politics, and economic structures reduced the cost and risk of domination.[771] This was particularly true in Western Kenya, where

[769] Berman, Bruce J., and John Lonsdale. *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class*. (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), 86–88.
[770] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972), 205.
[771] Ibid.

missionary activity and exploratory expeditions had already paved the way for more intrusive forms of control. The Maragoli, like many other Luyia subgroups, were drawn into the colonial state through a combination of coercion, negotiation, and indirect rule mechanisms that increasingly disrupted their political autonomy and social cohesion.

Following the transition from company rule to direct colonial administration, the British began instituting policies that targeted core aspects of indigenous life, especially land tenure and labor relations. The transformation of land from a communal resource to an alienable commodity, coupled with the forced recruitment of African labor for settler farms and infrastructure projects, signaled the reorientation of the local economy to serve imperial interests.

The Maragoli, whose agrarian systems were previously organized along kinship lines and shaped by intergenerational reciprocity, now found themselves enmeshed in a new structure that devalued traditional authority and prioritized compliance with colonial economic demands. This transformation was further reinforced by the missionary establishment, which redefined social roles particularly for women, and introduced a moral economy that elevated European values over indigenous norms. Additionally, earlier exposure to foreign trade had made certain African communities more vulnerable to colonial political and economic influence, facilitating their incorporation into the imperial system.[772]

[772] D.A. Low and A. Smith, *History of East Africa, Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 135. Aso Check W. Rodney "The colonial economy", In A. Boahen (ed.) *UNESCO General History* Vol.VII: *African under Colonial Domination*, Paris, UNESCO, 1985, p.383.

Securing a sufficient African labour force became a priority for the colonial administration. By the turn of the century, various strategies were employed to recruit African workers, with taxation serving as a key tool to compel them into wage labour. Consequently, policies concerning land, labour, and taxation were all designed to facilitate the successful settlement of European colonialists. Although the colonial administration showed little interest in Maragoli agriculture, the Maragoli readily embraced new crops that were making their way into the interior. They expanded food crop cultivation to meet the rising demand, particularly in the growing towns of Kisumu and Kakamega.

In 1896, the construction of the Sclater Road—designed primarily for ox-carts—extended from Fort Maxsted (present-day Kakamega) to Mumias, effectively incorporating Kakamega into the early colonial transport network and setting it on a trajectory toward urban development.[773] However, Mumias retained its position as a key administrative center within the North Kavirondo District, serving as the principal hub for colonial governance over the Luyia communities. It housed the offices of the early District Commissioners (DCs) and the core of the British bureaucratic infrastructure necessary for administering the region.[774]

With the introduction of Native Authority, the Maragoli were formally incorporated into the structures of British colonial rule and recognized as subjects of the colonial state,

[773] North Kavirondo District Annual Report 1919/20, KNA, DC/NN/1/3.

[774] R.M. Maxon, *Conflict and Accommodation in Western Kenya: The Gusii and the British, 1907–1963* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 47.

thereby becoming obligated to pay hut and poll taxes imposed by the administration.[775] Each Luyia clan was reorganized into an administrative location governed by a colonial-appointed chief, whose primary responsibilities included the collection of government taxes and the enforcement of law and order, often under the framework of officially recognized customary law. This system of indirect rule was crucial to the colonial state's ability to govern efficiently with limited personnel.

In 1901, the arrival of the Uganda Railway at Port Florence (present-day Kisumu) marked a turning point in regional connectivity and colonial integration. Shortly thereafter, on April 1, 1902, the former Eastern Province of Uganda—encompassing parts of Western Kenya—was transferred to the British East Africa Protectorate, thereby consolidating colonial control over the Luyia-speaking communities.[776] After the administrative headquarters for Nyanza Province was relocated from Mumias to Kisumu, Mumias retained its importance as the district headquarters of the then Elgon District. This administrative unit was later renamed North Kavirondo District, within which Maragoli Location was incorporated.[777]

Colonial rule was established with relative ease, largely due to the superior firepower of the Maxim gun. While Nabongo Mumia chose to ally himself with the British, some Luyia communities attempted to resist colonial domination, though their efforts were largely

[775] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), 100–102. See Also Leen Kavulavu, Op, Cit. p.126.
[776] D.A. Low and A. Smith, *History of East Africa, Volume II* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), 141–143.
[777]Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/NN/1/1, *North Kavirondo District Annual Report*, 1920. See Also P.A. Memon., "Some Geographical Aspects of the History of Urban Development in Kenya", In B.A. Ogot, (ed) Hadith 5: *Economic and Social History of East Africa*, (Nairobi Kenya Literature Bureau, 1976, p.141

unsuccessful.[778] This was largely due to the significant military and technological gap between the Maragoli and the British colonizers, as traditional weapons like handmade spears and arrows were no match for the powerful guns used by the British.

As a result, colonialism was forcibly entrenched in Maragoli territory, ushering in profound transformations to their social structures, economic practices, and political institutions. The imposition of foreign rule disrupted indigenous governance, restructured land tenure systems, and subordinated local authority to the colonial state[779] Colonialism fundamentally restructured pre-capitalist institutions across African societies, redirecting them to serve the political and economic interests of the colonial metropoles. As historian John Lonsdale notes, the period from 1894 to 1910 was characterized by extensive geographical surveys, the establishment of military outposts, and the systematic use of military force to secure colonial control over the territory that would eventually become Kenya.[780]

The profitability of the caravan trade in Maragoli during the late 19th century led to the expansion of cultivated land. This trade significantly transformed the socio-economic structure of Maragoli society, particularly affecting the gender division of labour. As more land was brought under cultivation to supply food for the growing number of European caravans, the demand for women's labour in agriculture increased. More notably, the profits from the caravan trade initiated a process of social differentiation, with some men

[778] Ibid, p.127, See Also P.W. Wekesa Op, Cit, p.101.

[779]Hezron Mwamili (56 years), Oral interview held on 15th August 2023 in Viyalo Village Vihiga Sub County. See Also Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), 95–97.

[780] John Lonsdale, "The Conquest State and the Different Types of Colonial Rule in Africa," in *States and Power in Africa*, ed. Jeffrey Herbst (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 69–71.

leveraging the economic opportunities to accumulate wealth and property, thereby altering traditional social hierarchies.[781]

The Maragoli's precolonial political organization was decentralized and grounded in lineage-based authority. Senior male elders exercised decision-making power through *amakanda/virwatso* (councils of elders), overseeing land allocation, social discipline, and inter-clan relations. Authority was embedded in kinship hierarchies and rooted in consensus, rather than coercion.[782] However, the colonial policy of indirect rule disrupted this governance system by appointing chiefs to act as state intermediaries. These chiefs were frequently selected without respect for traditional legitimacy—often drawn from junior lineages or other communities—thereby marginalizing elders and undermining the moral basis of political authority.[783] This introduced a centralized, hierarchical power structure alien to the Maragoli's relational system and replaced collective accountability with top-down enforcement mechanisms such as taxation and forced labor.[784]

This political reorganization was inseparable from shifts in gender relations and the transformation of food production. In the precolonial setting, women were the primary food producers, responsible for cultivating staple crops and sustaining household subsistence. Their access to land was mediated through marriage and clan affiliation, allowing them

[781]Rogers, Peter. "The British and the Kikuyu 1890–1905: a reassessment." *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 2 (1979): 255-269, p.262.
[782] Gunter Wagner, *The Bantu of Western Kenya: With Special Reference to the Vugusu and Logoli* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 52–55.
[783] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992), 110–113.
[784] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 42–45.

indirect but vital control over productive resources.[785] However, with the rise of colonial chiefs—who were overwhelmingly male and tied to state authority—the redistribution of land and labor increasingly sidelined women's traditional roles.

Chiefs and colonial officers promoted male-dominated cash crop production and demanded labor for public works or settler farms, often diverting male labor away from communal subsistence activities.[786] As men became more involved in wage labor or colonial administration, women bore the brunt of agricultural responsibilities but lost authority in land-related decisions.

The redefinition of land as an administrative resource under colonial rule further diminished women's autonomy. Land allocation became a political tool wielded by male chiefs, whose decisions often excluded women or subordinated their interests to those of the colonial economy.[787] Consequently, colonialism did not merely impose a new political hierarchy—it restructured gender relations and food production systems, reducing women's socio-economic influence while deepening patriarchal control within the household and community.

By expanding the amount of land under cultivation, men—particularly local leaders and chiefs—were able to produce more goods to supply the caravans. These chiefs are reported to have married multiple wives, who provided a dependable source of labour for the increased agricultural demands. This practice not only enhanced their production capacity

[785] Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 19–22.

[786] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 48–51

[787] Agnes R. Quisumbing and Ruth S. Meinzen-Dick, "Land Rights and Women's Empowerment in Sub-Saharan Africa," *IFPRI Policy Brief*, 2001.

but also reinforced their social and economic status within the community.[788]The burden of colonial taxation not only restructured male economic roles but had profound consequences for women and the domestic economy. As men migrated for wage labor to meet tax demands—often to settler farms or towns like Kisumu and Nairobi—women were left behind to manage household food production and care work.[789] Yet, despite their intensified responsibilities, women were largely excluded from decision-making over land, income, and agricultural priorities, as colonial chiefs and tax collectors negotiated primarily with men.

In response to their marginalization and increased labor burdens, women adapted by creating informal economies—such as beer brewing, small-scale trade, and basket weaving—often operating outside official colonial scrutiny.[790] These income-generating strategies provided women with some financial autonomy and served as quiet forms of resistance to male and colonial control. In some cases, women pooled labor and resources through kinship and church-based networks, reinforcing communal solidarity and enabling survival under exploitative conditions.[791]

At the household level, these changes also produced new tensions. Men's prolonged absences and shifting loyalties (especially under the influence of mission Christianity and wage labor) destabilized polygymous family structures. First wives, who traditionally held

[788]Ibid., p.264.
[789] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 62–66.
[790] Luise White, *The Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 103–106.
[791] Claire Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men, and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890–1990* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 42–45.

authority within the homestead, increasingly lost ground as younger wives were sometimes favored due to missionary or colonial gender norms.[792] Kinship hierarchies became contested spaces, as women sought new forms of influence through church participation, education, or the informal economy.

Moreover, the imposition of colonial taxes and labor demands sparked direct resistance in some regions of Western Kenya. Although often overshadowed by better-known anti-colonial uprisings, localized forms of dissent—such as non-compliance with tax collection, sabotage of colonial infrastructure, and community refusal to provide labor—were common.[793]Women played a central role in these acts, leveraging their moral authority within the community to protest excessive demands or the illegitimacy of appointed chiefs. As Lynn Thomas argues, "women's activism was often rooted in struggles over the domestic economy and reproductive labor."[794]Thus, the colonial taxation regime not only monetized and gendered labor, but also catalyzed new forms of female resilience, adaptation, and quiet rebellion, even as patriarchal control deepened.

Among the Maragoli, the colonial state's centralization of authority and its disregard for customary systems had significant gendered consequences. By formalizing land tenure through chiefly intermediaries and the District Commissioner's office, the state reinforced patriarchal norms that excluded women from direct land ownership, even though they

[792] Derek Peterson, *Ethnic Patriotism and the East African Revival: A History of Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 80–84.
[793] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 138–141
[794] Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 89.

remained the primary agricultural producers.[795] Under customary law, women accessed land through marriage and lineage, but colonial codification transformed this relational access into de facto dispossession, as land titles and authority over allocation became the preserve of male elders and colonial chiefs.[796] Women's control over the means of production eroded, and their labor was increasingly directed toward cash crop production, often without accompanying control over the income generated.[797] This deepened their economic marginalization and dependency on male kin.

Despite these constraints, Maragoli women were not passive victims. They participated in covert and overt forms of political resistance. Some resisted taxation by withholding labor, while others utilized church networks and informal economies (such as brewing and trade) to assert autonomy and negotiate power within their households and communities.[798] Their activism—though often unrecognized in formal nationalist narratives—represented a critical form of everyday resistance to the dual oppressions of patriarchy and colonialism. In this way, the gendered effects of colonial rule were not only a story of exclusion, but also of adaptation, resilience, and subversive agency.

Like all states, the colonial state in Kenya—once established—operated on two interrelated levels. First, it served as the ultimate institutional mechanism for the reproduction and

[795] Kanogo, Tabitha. *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50*. Oxford: James Currey, 2005, 59–65.
[796] Stamp, Patricia. "Motherhood and Inheritance in Kenya: A Comparative Legal Study." *Africa Today* 38, no. 4 (1991): 9–15.
[797] Thomas, Lynn M. *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003, 40–44.
[798] Robertson, Claire. *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men, and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890–1990*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, 72–75.

accumulation of capital, primarily for the benefit of the colonial metropole.[799] It restructured indigenous economies around commodity production, enforced taxation, and commodified land and labor, ensuring a steady flow of resources and profits outward. Among the Maragoli, this was evident in the transformation of subsistence agriculture into cash crop economies, directed by chiefs under colonial authority.[800]

Second, the colonial state functioned as an agent of class domination and subordination. It entrenched hierarchical social structures by empowering loyal African elites (chiefs, tax collectors, and mission-educated clerks), often at the expense of traditional authority figures and ordinary people.[801]This reconfiguration of power created new local class divisions within African communities. Chiefs and their kin benefited from new privileges—including land, wages, and access to colonial institutions—while the majority of the population, particularly women and the youth, faced increased exploitation through labor extraction and legal exclusion.[802] In this way, the colonial state was not a neutral administrative force, but a deeply political institution designed to serve imperial economic and ideological ends.

To achieve this, the colonial state had to extend its authority and assert control over indigenous economic and political institutions—many of which it either dismantled or restructured in the process. It is within this context that the nature and impact of colonial

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[799] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 17–21.

[800] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 62–65.

[801] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992), 142–145.

[802] Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 33–37.

administration must be understood and analyzed.[803]It is this role that the colonial state played in articulating the pre-capitalist societies Maragoli included that resulted into colonial capitalism within the articulation of modes of production theory. The fact that the colonial state carried out its roles in a determined way does not mean it was entirely omniscient or omnipotent.

As Berman has argued, it operated amid uncertainty and instability, constantly navigating the conflicting demands of overseeing capital accumulation while also providing ideological legitimacy to its rule.[804]In fulfilling its dual role, the colonial state was shaped by several key factors. Chief among these were the nature of local political and economic institutions and the necessity of identifying or cultivating local collaborators.

Additionally, the specific process through which the indigenous economy was integrated and connected to the global capitalist system played a crucial role. Lastly, the extent of expatriate involvement—driven by the pursuit of profit from the colony's particular resources—significantly influenced the direction of expatriate economic interests. Before turning to labour, taxation and other related colonial policies and their impact on the subject under study, it is important to situate how the Western Kenya region was brought under effective European control. The subsequent section illustrates this.

[803] Ibid., p.152.
[804]Bruce Berman, *Control and crisis in colonial Kenya: The dialectic of domination*. East African Publishers, 1992, p.78.

3.3 Western Kenya and Pioneer Colonial Experience

The first Europeans to arrive in Western Kenya referred to its inhabitants as the "Bantu Kavirondo," a term they had borrowed from coastal Swahili speakers who used it to distinguish these interior Bantu-speaking communities from their Nilotic neighbors.[805] The label, though ethnographically imprecise, was adopted by colonial administrators and missionaries, and it persisted in official documents, maps, and administrative divisions well into the early 20th century. This broad and often arbitrary categorization ignored the linguistic, cultural, and historical distinctions among the various groups it encompassed, including the Maragoli, Banyore, and Idakho, and reflected a broader colonial tendency to flatten indigenous complexity into administratively manageable units.[806] The origin and meaning of the term 'Kavirondo' remain unclear, even to those coastal communities who first used it.[807] Despite this ambiguity, the name was widely adopted and continued to be used by both the local population and European colonial authorities throughout much of the colonial period.It was through such colonial usage that this region of Western Kenya came to be officially designated as the North Kavirondo District—a name it retained until 1961, when it was administratively renamed North Nyanza District.

The term "Nyanza," derived from a Luo word meaning "lake," more explicitly referenced Lake Victoria and reflected broader efforts to standardize colonial territorial

[805] Ogot, Bethwell A. *History of the Southern Luo: Volume I: Migration and Settlement, 1500–1900*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967, 25–27.
[806] Hannah Reid, "Indirect Rule: Law and Questionable Ambitions in British East Africa." *Unbound: Rev. Legal Hist. & Rare Books* 9 (2016): p.27.
[807] Michael G. Kenny, "The Stranger from the Lake: a theme in the history of the Lake Victoria shorelands." *Azania: Journal of the British Institute in Eastern Africa* 17, no. 1 (1982): p.23.

nomenclature.[808]Over time, the approximately fifteen distinct Bantu-speaking groups inhabiting this region came to be collectively identified under the ethnonym "Luyia" (or "Abaluyia"), despite their linguistic and cultural diversity.[809] The Maragoli, one of the largest of these groups, maintained a distinct identity while simultaneously being incorporated into this broader political and cultural framework shaped by both colonial administration and post-independence ethno-political realignments.

The Kenya-Uganda Railway is widely recognized as the pioneering colonial infrastructure project that played a pivotal role in integrating Western Kenya into the colonial economy.[810] The completion of the railway helped entrench colonial rule in Luyialand, the broader Nyanza Province, and the Uganda Protectorate. The enhanced mobility it provided allowed colonial authorities to swiftly suppress African resistance by facilitating the rapid transport of soldiers. In addition, the railway spurred increased trading activities and enabled European settlement in the fertile western highlands, a move actively encouraged by Commissioner Charles Eliot.Commissioner Charles Eliot argued that settler farming would generate enough revenue to make the Uganda Railway financially sustainable. By 1905, administrative officer John Ainsworth had identified fertile land in the Trans-Nzoia and Kitale regions, which he described as a 'wonderful' asset within the broader Kavirondo area.[811]

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[808] Ogot, Bethwell A. *Politics and Nationalism in Colonial Kenya: The Dilemma of the Luo, 1910–1960*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967, 43–45.

[809] Were, Gideon S. *A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya, c. 1500–1930*. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967, 6–9.

[810] P.W. Wekesa, *Op*, *Cit*, p.96.

[811] J..D. Ainsworth, Pioneer Kenya Administrator 1864-1946 London: Macmillian & Co. Ltd,1955

Nevertheless, the gradual spread of the colonial capitalist system and the commoditization of production significantly altered traditional Maragoli gender relations, particularly in areas such as land ownership, livestock management, and labor organization—domains that had long been governed by customary practices.[812] This was done through the various land ordinances and labour laws that were instituted. The far-reaching power of the colonial government could not be underestimated.

By the end of 1904, Hobley—assisted by locally recruited soldiers—had brought much of the region under control, although he was unable to fully extinguish all forms of resistance.[813] To achieve this, Hobley recognized the need for more than just military dominance—he needed a system that would extend the government's influence over the local population. He turned to bureaucracy as a means of consolidating his authority. To assert colonial control over the Luyia in general, and the Maragoli in particular, he imposed taxation, demanding payments in traditional forms of currency such as glass, cowries, beads, clothing, and labor. Hobley expressed satisfaction with this development, noting that the payment of taxes was 'an outward and visible sign that this particular section had definitely accepted Government control.[814]

The colonial administration in Western Kenya certainly reshaped Luyia society through economic policies, forced labor, taxation, and military force. The British imposed hut taxes and land restrictions that forced many Luyia men into wage labor on settler farms or

[812] Leen Kavulavu, *Op*, *Cit*, p.128.
[813] Ibid.
[814] "C. W. Hobley's Views on Punitive Patrols, September 22, 1896," in Mungeam, Kenya, 122; and Berman and Lonsdale, Unhappy Valley, p.54.

government projects. Additionally, the colonial administration disrupted traditional governance and societal structures, sometimes using indirect rule through appointed chiefs rather than existing leadership systems.[815]

Absolutely—colonial conquest didn't just reshape political power structures; it disrupted entire ecosystems of survival. The forced reorganization of land and labor under British rule had devastating consequences for food security among the Luyia. Traditional farming practices were displaced by cash crop economies that prioritized exports like coffee and cotton over local sustenance. Many indigenous communities lost access to fertile land, leading to sharp declines in local food production.

Meanwhile, diseases surged due to crowded living conditions in colonial settlements, poor sanitation, and the introduction of foreign illnesses. Colonial labor migration, where people were forced to work far from their homes, spread diseases more rapidly than before. These disruptions meant that famine and disease weren't just unfortunate consequences—they were deeply entrenched in the colonial machinery of control. The effects of this kind of violence stretched across generations. [816] As a direct consequence of their flight from British military expeditions in the early colonial period, many Luyia groups—including the Maragoli—were forced to seek refuge in dense, bush-covered areas infested with tsetse flies.

The ecological zones, while offering temporary safety from punitive raids, exposed the displaced populations to sleeping sickness (trypanosomiasis), a devastating parasitic

[815] Clough, Marshall S. "Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa." (1992): 650-652., p.563.

[816]Vail, Leroy, and Robert Rotberg. "Imperialism, Colonialism and Hunger: east and central Africa." (1983): p.39., See Als K.Mutongi Op, Cit.p.20.

disease that attacks the central nervous system and can result in fatal brain lesions.[817] Compounding this humanitarian crisis, the movement of Sudanese soldiers (often employed as colonial askaris) and the growing influx of Swahili trade caravans into the interior introduced new disease vectors—most notably smallpox.[818] These outbreaks severely undermined the health and demographic stability of Luyia communities, intensifying the social dislocation caused by conquest and laying the groundwork for more intrusive colonial health and land policies.[819]The disease spread rapidly, killing hundreds.

The jigger menace was a harrowing aspect of colonial impact. The arrival of jigger fleas (Tunga penetrans) with Indian laborers was an unintended consequence of British policies, yet its effects were devastating. The parasites burrowed into skin, especially the feet, causing painful sores, infections, and in severe cases, loss of mobility. For agricultural communities that relied on manual labor, jigger infestations were not just a health crisis but an economic catastrophe.

The British administration did little to address the problem, despite its widespread impact on local productivity. Many affected individuals were unable to work their fields, leading to food shortages and deepening cycles of poverty. The persistence of jiggers in Kenya long after colonial rule shows how some health crises introduced by external forces can leave lasting scars.[820] Rinderpest was one of the most devastating diseases introduced

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[817] Lyons, Maryinez. *The Colonial Disease: A Social History of Sleeping Sickness in Northern Zaire, 1900–1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 19–21.
[818] Feierman, Steven. *Peasant Intellectuals: Anthropology and History in Tanzania*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1990, 47–49.
[819]Henry Dewey and C. W. Hobley. "51. Some Obsidian Implements from Kenya Colony." *Man* 25 (1925): 88-92, p.90.
[820]Opolot. Okia, "The Northey Forced Labor Crisis, 1920-1921: A Symptomatic Reading." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 41, no. 2 (2008): 263-293., p.269.

during colonial rule, and its impact on Mumias—and broader Western Kenya—was profound. This viral disease, which primarily affected cattle, led to massive losses of livestock, crippling local economies that depended on cattle for trade, food, and labor.

Before its introduction, indigenous communities had developed ways to manage livestock health, but the arrival of rinderpest, likely transmitted through trading networks and colonial movements, overwhelmed local resources. The consequences were far-reaching: with fewer cattle for plowing, transportation, and trade, many communities faced food insecurity and economic decline. The colonial administration did little to mitigate the outbreak, often prioritizing settler interests over African livelihoods.

Over time, rinderpest outbreaks contributed to shifts in agricultural patterns, forcing communities to adapt in ways they hadn't anticipated. Foot-and-mouth disease was yet another force that reshaped African economies and societies under colonial rule. The spread of this highly contagious viral disease among cloven-hoofed animals devastated herds, crippling livestock-dependent communities like the Maragoli. Since cattle played a central role in food production, trade, and social status, the outbreaks not only led to economic hardship but also disrupted gender roles and labor divisions that had been deeply ingrained in pre-colonial systems.

In many African societies, men typically managed cattle herding while women focused on crop cultivation. The massive loss of livestock forced shifts in these responsibilities, often pushing women into new agricultural roles to compensate for dwindling food supplies. Simultaneously, colonial authorities-imposed restrictions on cattle movement and trade, further weakening indigenous food security.

The cascading effects of war, famine, and disease did not just decimate populations—they radically altered social structures. The loss of men in conflicts over dwindling resources left many women and children vulnerable, forcing shifts in family roles, survival strategies, and economic dependencies. By the time missionaries arrived in 1902, the region had already undergone drastic changes. The colonial grip tightened as socio-economic transformations accelerated, introducing new land tenure systems, labor exploitation, and missionary-led interventions that further reshaped local customs and traditions. The idea that Western Kenya was once seen as a land of "honey and milk" underscores the contrast between pre-colonial abundance and the hardships brought by colonial rule.

Before the British could fully exploit Kenya's agricultural resources, they needed to reshape the existing social structures to serve colonial economic interests. Among the Maragoli, this meant disrupting traditional land ownership, labor systems, and community organization. Colonial authorities introduced land tenure reforms that prioritized European settler farms and cash crop cultivation, while restricting indigenous access to fertile lands. The imposition of taxes forced many Maragoli men into wage labor on settler farms or government projects, breaking up communal labor networks.

Additionally, missionary influence reinforced changes in gender roles and education, further altering family structures and economic survival strategies. These transformations were not incidental but deliberate mechanisms of colonial control. By weakening traditional self-sufficiency and forcing dependency on colonial economic systems, British authorities ensured that agriculture served imperial interests above all else. Christianity and Western education didn't just arrive as neutral influences; they were active tools in

reshaping Maragoli society to fit colonial priorities. Missionary activities introduced new social norms, often undermining indigenous beliefs and practices, while formal education trained a new generation in colonial administrative and economic systems.

These influences deeply impacted food production and gender dynamics. As more men were drawn into wage labor and missionary-led schooling, traditional agricultural roles evolved, with women increasingly shouldering farming responsibilities. Western-style education further reinforced economic shifts, guiding young Maragoli into colonial professions rather than indigenous livelihoods. Over time, these changes entrenched colonial economic dependency and altered gender relations in ways that persisted long after independence.

3.4 Christianity and Western Education, impact on Maragoli Food production and Gender Relations

The early 20th century was indeed marked by intense missionary activity in Western Kenya. The Friends African Mission (FAM), which established Kaimosi in 1902, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC), which settled in Nyang'ori in 1909, were among the key players in this missionary expansion. Their presence was not just about spreading Christianity—it fundamentally reshaped education, labor, and social structures.[821]

Missionary schools became a primary vehicle for instilling Western education, preparing local populations for roles in the colonial economy. These missions also influenced gender roles, as formal schooling and Christian teachings often shifted traditional responsibilities

[821] Erick M. Aseka., *Op. Cit.,* p. 263.

in Maragoli society. Additionally, land acquisition for mission stations altered local agricultural practices and displaced some communities from their ancestral lands.822 This "missionary scramble" mirrored the broader colonial agenda, integrating religious influence with socio-economic transformation. It's fascinating how these early missionary settlements became centers for education, health, and religious conversion, influencing Kenya's history well beyond the colonial period. The establishment of mission stations in Maragoli was more than just a religious expansion—it reflected the broader colonial strategy of control and transformation.

The British colonial forces had already subdued resistance and imposed new governance structures, but missionaries played a crucial role in embedding colonial influence deeper into society. Mission stations were strategic centers for education, conversion, and economic reorganization. By introducing Western schooling, missionaries helped create a local workforce that aligned with colonial administrative and economic needs. Christianity, meanwhile, reshaped social norms, reinforcing colonial hierarchies and altering traditional gender roles. This missionary scramble mirrored the broader colonial conquest—it was not just about territorial control but cultural domination and long-term socio-economic restructuring.823

[822] Hezron Mwamili, (56 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023.
[823]A.M. Amisi., *Op. Cit.,* p.88.

By introducing Christianity and Western education, missionaries legitimized colonial rule under the guise of "civilization." These institutions disrupted indigenous knowledge systems, reshaped gender roles, and redefined economic priorities. Over time, conversion was not just about faith—it became a tool for social transformation, aligning Maragoli society more closely with colonial structures. The emphasis on European customs and values led to a gradual alienation from traditional ways of life, making colonial authority seem like a natural progression rather than an imposed system.[824] By the time they reached Maragoli, their mission wasn't just about spreading Christianity—it was deeply entwined with colonial restructuring. Their teachings, alongside Western education, gradually transformed Maragoli's social and economic patterns. Many converts were drawn into colonial labor systems, while traditional beliefs and gender roles were reshaped through new religious frameworks.

The origins of these missionaries reveal how interconnected colonialism, religion, and migration were.[825] While missionaries like Willis R. Hotchkiss, Edgar T. Hole, and Arthur B. Chilson worked to integrate Maragoli society into Western religious and educational frameworks, their presence also sparked cultural negotiation and resistance.Many early converts found themselves caught between new colonial structures and traditional customs, leading to adaptations that were not always in line with the full colonial agenda. Christian teachings influenced some Maragoli responses to colonial rule, fostering both compliance and moments of defiance. For example, Western literacy and missionary schools became tools for Africans who later pushed for self-rule, using European education to challenge

[824]Erick M. Aseka., *Op. Cit.,* p. 265.
[825] K. Mutongi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.25.

colonial systems. Missionary influence didn't just shape day-to-day life—it played a critical role in long-term transformations, reinforcing colonial frameworks while also inadvertently contributing to later independence movements

The ideological divide between frontier Quakers and their Hicksite counterparts underscores how different interpretations of faith influenced missionary work. Unlike the Hicksite Quakers, who emphasized contemplation and waiting upon the Spirit, evangelical fundamentalists like Hotchkiss, Hole, and Chilson carried a more proactive and mission-driven approach. Hotchkiss's experience in Ukambani before arriving in Kaimosi suggests that he was already familiar with the dynamics of missionary work in Kenya. His Scottish missionary background likely shaped his methods and expectations for outreach among the Maragoli.

The arrival of these pioneers via the Kenya-Uganda railway in 1902 not only marked the beginning of a new chapter in Western Kenya's colonial history but also reflected the expanding reach of European infrastructure, which facilitated both commerce and religious expansion. Their settlement in Kaimosi laid the foundation for long-term missionary engagement, influencing education, agriculture, and socio-political structures. The warm reception by Maragoli chiefs was a pivotal moment in missionary engagement. Their willingness to welcome Hotchkiss, Hole, and Chilson suggests an openness to new influences, possibly driven by strategic considerations—whether for trade, access to education, or forging diplomatic ties in the shifting colonial landscape.

For the missionaries, this reception reinforced their belief in the necessity of their work, encouraging them to establish deeper roots in Kaimosi and beyond. Their interactions with

local leaders played a crucial role in shaping how Christianity and Western education spread across the region. Over time, missionary presence contributed to changes in governance, economic structures, and social organization, blending new religious ideas with existing traditions.[826] That level of cooperation between the Maragoli chiefs and the missionaries significantly shaped how Christianity and Western education took root in the region. By granting them land and sharing local knowledge, the chiefs facilitated the missionaries' establishment, making their mission more effective and far-reaching.

This was not just an act of goodwill—it likely reflected a strategic engagement with foreign influences, allowing local leaders to navigate the emerging colonial order in a way that might benefit their communities.

The administrative support from the chieftaincy also highlights how colonial structures and missionary expansion often worked hand in hand. With access to political backing, missionaries could implement their agendas with fewer obstacles, integrating themselves into the social and governance fabric of the Maragoli. Over time, this partnership shaped land ownership, education systems, and religious practices in profound ways.[827] Absolutely, the spread of Christianity in Maragoli was not just a missionary-driven effort; it depended significantly on local participation. Once Kaimosi was established as a central mission hub, local converts played a crucial role in expanding the reach of Christianity. They helped build mission stations, acted as intermediaries, and even became evangelists themselves, carrying the teachings to different parts of Maragoli.

[826]Ibid.
[827] Mambai FGD held on 30th September 2023, at Mambai Primary School Assembly Grounds.

The spread of Christianity in Maragoli wasn't a simple process of imposition but a complex interaction between missionaries and local agency. Some Maragoli leaders and communities actively participated, seeing potential benefits in education, political connections, and access to new resources. Their engagement helped cement missionary influence, making Christianity more integrated into social structures rather than a purely foreign force.

The effects went beyond religion, Christianity reshaped governance by influencing leadership roles, altered education by introducing Western-style schooling, and transformed labor systems as more individuals entered colonial economic frameworks. Over time, these shifts aligned Maragoli society with broader colonial structures, reinforcing European dominance while simultaneously creating opportunities for African adaptation and resistance.

The transformation from the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) to the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) in 1918 reflected broader theological and organizational changes within the global Pentecostal movement. The 1913 Pentecostal conference in Arkansas played a key role in shaping doctrinal interpretations and missionary strategies, influencing how Pentecostalism expanded worldwide.

By the time PAG took root in Maragoli, it became a significant force in shaping religious identity, education, and community structures. Like other early mission churches, it contributed to Western-style schooling and social transformation, embedding Christian teachings more deeply into local society. Over the decades, PAG remained influential in Kenya's religious landscape, adapting to cultural shifts while maintaining its evangelical

foundations.[828] As a church, PAG had its preachers drawn from diverse walks of life including fishermen and farmers to tradesmen and other professionals. This underscored the grassroots nature of Pentecostalism.

Unlike some mission churches that prioritized theological training from established institutions, PAC's approach allowed individuals from various walks of life to take leadership roles in spreading Christianity. This made Pentecostalism accessible to ordinary people, aligning with its emphasis on direct personal experience with faith. The varied backgrounds of PAC preachers allowed Christianity to integrate into Maragoli society in ways that felt natural and familiar. Instead of a rigid, institutional approach to faith, these leaders used everyday experiences to make religious teachings accessible.

Fishermen related spiritual lessons to their trade, farmers spoke of growth and harvest in biblical terms, and tradesmen found ways to connect scripture to daily labor. This relatability helped Christianity take deep root, making the church not just a foreign import but a lived experience within the community. Beyond religious practice, this diversity also influenced the church's role in social and economic life. Leaders who understood local livelihoods contributed to discussions on development, trade, and education, shaping PAC into more than just a spiritual institution. Over time, its influence extended beyond evangelism, embedding itself into Maragoli's evolving identity.[829] Such a background was assumed necessary in enabling the churches adequately respond to the diverse needs of the church both social and economic.

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[828] O.D. Bosire., The Role of Pentecostal Assemblies of God Chuurch in the Development of Education in Nyamira County From 1938-2015, Un published MA Thesis Religious Studies, Egerton University, 2017, p.1.
[829]Ibid.

J. Mugambi and P.M Kavaya note that PAC work in Kenya was pioneered by Rev. Otto and Marion Keller in 1918. Marion was a wife to Rev. Karl Wittick who was a missionary in Tanzania. Otto Keller was initially a business man but abandoned it on getting the sad news about the death of his friend Karl Wittick. He then decided to come to Africa in ordrer to complete his friend's missionary call. He landed in Kenya but because of World War 1, he was not allowed to go to Tanzania then a German colony.[830] Marion joined Otto Keller in Kima Church Mission Society (CMS) and later got married.[831]

The two are accredited to be the founders of PAG church in Kenya. Initially, Nyang'ori missions land belonged to Clouder Miller a missionary of the independent Pentecostal Mission in 1908. The land belonged to British army officers Bolt and Gahmers.[832] Owing to his agricultural background, Otto Keller met Miller in the agricultural farm in Nyang'ori and became friends. Out of this friendship, Miller left Keller in charge of this farm and mission station as Miller went back to Furlough. It was in 1920s that Miller sold the mission to Keller under PAC mission which met the cost of the farm for PAG missionary activities.[833] It is therefore evident that the founders of PAC were great agriculturalists and academicians by extension. It will be interesting therefore to keenly follow the PAG later doctrines and see how the church will later integrate food production mechanisms into its congregants and even the theological trainees from the mission. The church has also been

[830] Ibid p.2.
[831]For more readings, check J. Mugambi, *Five Decades of God's Faith*. *The Amzing Story of Christ Minisry*, Nairobi, UOP, 2009, p.10, See Also P.M. Kavaya., *The Pentecostal Assemblies of God History,* Nairobi Get Way Graphics, 2003.
[832] Ibid.
[833]O.D. Bosire., *Op. Cit*., p.2.

founded by a woman effort, hence another interesting aspect to be monitored on how the church will integrate and solidify the gender relations phenomenon in its operations.

In the foregoing discussion on church and formal education establishment in Maragoli, a number of questions emerge from this realization. These include; What factors led them to establish schools, what influenced local people to become Christians and acquire Western education? The most appropriate answers to these questions can only be sought by a deeper analysis of the intentions and nature of colonial conquest in Kenya and Maragoli in particular. Among the characteristic features of colonialism right from its onset was its need to establish a new political order distinguished by new political values and power relationships.

Colonialism also came in with a new economic order based on materialism and exploitation. In their administration, the British administrators and the local African representatives ruled oppressively. More often or not, these officials threatened to employ force with a number of occasions actualizing their threats.[834] These colonial transformations produced deep cultural and psychological consequences. The increasing alignment of social advancement with formal education, Christian conversion, and the adoption of colonial norms created a powerful incentive for the Maragoli to imitate the social forms of the colonialists.

Within a relatively short period, many began to adopt Christian ideals, enrolled their children in mission schools and internalized the value systems deemed acceptable within

[834]Peter O Ndege, *Op., Cit*, p.97.

the colonial order. This phenomenon illustrates Paulo Freire's assertion that "the oppressed, at a certain point in their existential experience, adopt the guidelines of the oppressor."[835] The process of colonial assimilation, therefore, was not only material but ideological—restructuring worldviews and redefining the criteria for social belonging and success.

Although many Maragoli converted to Christianity due to its material appeal—access to education, medical care, and possible employment—their expectations of upward mobility and socio-economic security were rarely fulfilled. Missionary institutions offered a new vision of opportunity, promising a pathway to advancement within the colonial order. In particular, Western education became a key attraction, with Maragoli families investing in the schooling of their children in hopes of securing clerical positions, teaching jobs, or administrative appointments.[836]

This early enthusiasm was driven by the desire to adapt to a rapidly changing colonial landscape, where traditional forms of authority and economic security were being systematically undermined. Yet, for most, these aspirations remained elusive. Access to meaningful opportunities was often limited to a small elite, while the broader community faced increasing marginalization within a colonial system structured around exploitation and exclusion.[837] However, this enthusiasm was neither fully satisfied nor equitably rewarded. Western education and Christianity primarily served as instruments for the

[835] Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. New York: Continuum, 1970, 47.
[836] Strayer, Robert W. *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875–1935*. London: Heinemann, 1978, 102–105.
[837] Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981, 263–266.

expansion of colonial capitalism.[838] They facilitated the integration of the Maragoli into the colonial economy and worldview, not necessarily on their own terms, but through intellectual reorganization and the cultivation of new social preferences aligned with colonial hierarchies.

Educated Maragoli men—often mission-educated and baptized—were recruited into the colonial administrative system as chiefs, clerks, and teachers.[839] These roles afforded them steady incomes, new forms of authority, and cultural prestige, enabling them to model and enforce the values of the colonial state. In doing so, they inadvertently helped reshape local social structures and aspirations, becoming intermediaries between the colonial government and the wider Maragoli society.

The elite class was the first to appreciate the new colonial cash crops and modern seeds. Such included the exotic bean, maize and the newly introduced groundnut varieties.[840] The new colonial education had its own gender matrix. The colonial education prioritized males at the expense of females. This resulted in an enhanced male position in regard to colonial competition which was fashioned on the basis of the level of formal education. It was from such eventualities that the educated Maragoli men rose to prominence leaving the Maragoli girls and women at the periphery of the colonial socio-economic ladder. This was a paradygm shift from the pre-colonial Maragoli education which had been gendered and

[838] Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1981, 263–265.

[839] Berman, Bruce, and John Lonsdale. *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa—Book One: State and Class*. Athens: Ohio University Press, 1992, 143–147.

[840]Stanley Chabaga, (87 Years), Oral interviewhled in Nabwani village in Gaigedi Sub Location on 2nd September 2023.

synchronized to give attention to the unique male and female contribution in general life and food production subsector.[841]

Additionally, the colonial education disrupted the pre colonial Maragoli established gendered family relationships. The colonial education made the Maragoli men disregard the Maragoli traditions. This was because, the time previously spent in acquiring the Maragoli moral values was now spent in colonial education establishments. The colonial education also introduced a male gender superiority complex over their female counterparts reducing effective consultations and incorporation in family decisions including food production. Last but not least, through colonial education, women who remained primary producers were left out of the latest colonial dynamics in food production to meet the new colonial demands.

This was because most of the women remained in the pre colonial production system even as the colonial programs continued to be unveiled in the newly established schools and agricultural colleges.

Since western education and Christianity were bed fellows, exclusion of women from the initial education facilities also blocked them from ascending to meaningful church positions even though they constituted the critical mass in the church gatherings.[842]

From the Mambai FGD, it was confirmed that formal education sessions delinked the Maragoli youths from the apprenticeship sessions which were vital in inculcating the necessary pre colonial food production skills such as cultivation and hunting together with iron working. Christianity and Western education thus emerged as colonial tools that

[841] For more readings on gender division in food production read Leen Kavulani 2017.

[842] Mambai FGD held on 30th September 2023at Mambai Primary School Assembly grounds.

articulated the Maragoli young men into the new colonial spectrum. This was first by changing their mannerisms and mindset to fit into the new Christian religious thinking. Though gradual, this change was apermanent way of entrenching the western ideals into the Maragoli society. These colonial endeavours to articulate the Maragoli into the new colonial order was never devoid of challenges. For instance, the mission education curriculum was not relevant to the needs of the local people.[843]

Financial constraints meant that, throughout the colonial period, the number of schools available in Maragoli and the broader region remained woefully inadequate relative to the demand for education among the local population. Despite this limitation, missionary and colonial schools played a crucial role in the ideological socialization of African communities. Through the intertwined messages of salvation, obedience, and industriousness, Christianity and colonial education worked in tandem to inculcate values that aligned with the colonial order. Education—whether administered by missionaries or under the supervision of the colonial state—was not designed to foster critical thinking or independent inquiry.

Rather, it was deliberately simplified and instrumental, aimed at instilling loyalty, discipline, and acceptance of colonial authority.[844] It focused on "implanting certain truths" rather than encouraging reasoned explanation or reflection, functioning more as a mechanism of control than a tool for genuine empowerment.[845]

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[843]Peter O. Ndege, *Op, Cit*, p.97.

[844] Ranger, Terence. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 57–59.

[845] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1986, 4–7.

The African was assumed to have little power of reasoning. Learning was carried out by rote and by faith.[846] All that was taught was accepted as legitimate by virtue of the authority of the teacher. Little attempt was made to make education practical and relevant to the local peoples ' everyday experiences. The new colonial education system impacted on Maragoli food production and gender relations in a number of ways. The children who were initially depended on for household labour were now increasingly joining formal education through mission stations especially the Kaimos mission centre.

Kenda Mutongi notes that missionary centers, despite their disruptive effect on traditional social structures, became spaces of refuge and opportunity for some young Maragoli men—particularly those from vulnerable households. Young men who had defied the authority of their widowed mothers and gravitated toward these centers were often rewarded materially and socially. At the missions, they ate regularly, received medical care, and lived under the close supervision of missionaries.

In return, they worked in the fields or assisted with domestic duties, while also learning to read, write, and internalize Christian teachings through daily Bible study.[847] These centers thus functioned as microcosms of the colonial moral and economic order, rewarding conformity and loyalty with tangible benefits. However, this reordering of generational and gender authority subtly undermined traditional structures, particularly the maternal authority of widows, and contributed to the broader ideological transformation of Maragoli

[846]Ibid., p.8.

[847] Mutongi, Kenda. *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 42.

society under colonial rule. This colonial education was looked at as avenues to secure the new white-collar jobs availed in the colonial employment structures.[848]

During the *Mambai* FGD sessions, it was confirmed that formal education sessions delinked the Maragoli youths from the apprenticeship sessions which were vital in inculcating the necessary food production skills such as cultivation, hunting and gathering, together with iron working.[849] Christianity and Western education thus emerged as colonial tools that helped articulate the Maragoli young men and women into the new colonial spectrum. This was first by changing their mannerisms and mindset to fit into the new Christian religious thinking. Though gradual, this change was a permanent way of entrenching the western ideals into the Maragoli society.

Converts were expected to abandon what missionaries and colonial officials labeled as "superstitions"—a term that dismissed indigenous beliefs, rituals, and cosmologies—and instead adopt Western habits and moral codes. This included changes in dress, diet, hygiene, family structure, and religious practice, all aimed at reshaping African identities in the image of the colonizer.[850] The process of conversion was thus not merely spiritual but deeply cultural, demanding a rupture with ancestral traditions and aligning one's life with the values of Western modernity.[851] Part of these considered superstitutions were Maragoli cultures and education systems regarding ecological knowledge on food

[848]Kenda Mutongi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.104.
[849] Mambai FGD held on 30th September 2023at Mambai Primary School Assembly grounds.
[850] Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 235–240.
[851]K. Mutongi, *Op*., *Cit*., p.105.

preservation and cultivation techniques which had been previously passed to the youths informally through traditional education.[852]

The new converts were also expected to value, and even covet, material goods—a shift closely tied to the Protestant ethic of hard work, individual success, and accumulation. Missionary teachings often emphasized personal discipline, industriousness, and moral responsibility as pathways to spiritual and material salvation. In doing so, they introduced capitalist values that sharply contrasted with the Maragoli's established communal ethos, which prioritized collective well-being over individual accumulation.[853] Over time, this ideological shift—driven by missionary teachings and colonial economic restructuring—undermined traditional Maragoli systems of reciprocity, kin-based solidarity, and collective responsibility. As Western ideals of individual success and material accumulation took root, the fabric of communal life began to fray. The result was a gradual but significant fragmentation of Maragoli social cohesion and the emergence of individualized aspirations aligned with the logics of colonial capitalism.[854]

Since most of the early Maragoli converts were young boys mostly of widowed women who lacked a father figure to stamp the necessary fatherly authority. Such boys grew up into a modern capitalist generation later to be depended on by the society to spread the new colonial gospel of modernization as per the colonial definition. The exclusion of women in the pioneer Christian conversion led to gender bias against women in church leadership.

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[852]Obeda Kigalu, (76 Years), Oral interview, on 3rd October 2023, Also Check K.L Muchanga, *Op, Cit,* for More readings on traditional Education.

[853] Weber, Max. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. London: Routledge, 2001, 35–50.

[854] Iliffe, John. *The African Poor: A History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, 155–158. See Also Ranger, Terence. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 60–63.

This further limited women alternatives to life forcing them to concentrate on agriculture hence feminization of Maragoli agriculture. This was part of the colonial capitalism ideology of using religion as a platform of articulating the Maragoli into the new capitalist mode of production.

According to the missionary gospel, the Maragoli—like other African communities—were perceived as inherently idle and morally deficient. Missionaries preached that through conversion, the Maragoli could transform their supposed laziness into industriousness, learn the virtues of hard work, and thereby become self-reliant and less inclined to engage in behaviors deemed immoral or criminal, such as theft.[855] This narrative not only moralized poverty and labor but also served to legitimize colonial economic structures by casting indigenous practices and livelihoods as inferior and in need of reform.[856] This reference to taking what was not theirs, is a demonstration of a clear conflict between the previous Maragoli communal ownership in the transition process to capitalistic life. Ownership as per the Maragoli pre-colonial establishment had been based on necessity.

During the Pre-colonial era in Maragoli, for somebody to claim a piece of land lying fallow, he only needed to erect some boundary around it in form of twigs. After a week or so, if no body protested that particular individual went on to possess the land.[857] It can therefore be concluded that the pre-colonial Maragoli society did not have the individualistic tendencies as anticipated by the missionaries. It was from such an ideological conflict that

[855] Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1: Christianity, Colonialism, and Consciousness in South Africa*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991, 154–158.
[856]Ranger, Terence. *Evangelical Christianity and Democracy in Africa*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 58–60. See Also Kenda Mutongi, (2007), *Op*. *Cit*, p.45.
[857]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*., p.90, See Also Leen Kavulavu,2017, *Op, Cit,* p.559 for the Idakho case.

the missionaries encouraged their new converts to "use their hands to make bricks and to build with them a comfortable home that is suitably furnished or grow crops from which they can realize means to buy clothing and other necessities.[858]

Hard work would turn the Maragoli into self-sufficient, conscientious, and, above all, honest men and women "becoming a Christian does not mean merely learning to read and write and becoming a school teacher or a preacher, but it does mean to be a steady, industrious man or woman, living out in everyday life the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ." These were, in short, the tenets of "practical Christianity" and, as one missionary put it, among "the many many things the poor ignorant Maragoli" needed to learn.[859]

According to the missionaries, the new religion was to bring about a total overhawl in the manner in which the maragoli were doing their things. The new converts were to change their building design from the previous circular manner to a linear approach, with the new converts houses built in a straight line; locally called *ilini* to create the Christian villages. The coming of the Missionaries in Maragoli therefore greatly impacted on almost every aspect of Maragoli life. The new Christian villages became the centres of Chrisitan civilization.

From the Chavakali FGD oral submissions, through such residential boundaries between the converts and the heathens, the converts were able to retain their purity free from the Maragoli superstions.[860] There, ideally, they could spread the teachings to their new

[858]Kenda Mutongi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.46.
[859]Ibid., p.18.
[860] Chavakali FGD held on 30th September 2023 at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds.

neighbors. These Christian villages, called *iliini* (line), were so named because the houses in them were laid out in two straight lines on either side of the road. The residents of the villages were expected to live in a morally upright and separated as per the Christian teachings. Such boundaries were aimed at distinguishing them from the pre-colonial Maragoli superstitious and uncultured life as per the Christian standards.[861] The creation of these villages led to social disintegration of the pre-colonial Maragoli family and lineage set up which had been previously the epicentres of Maragoli food production system. From the lineage kinships, communal labour groups (*uvufuva)* had been organized by the women to easien the labour demands during peak seasons.

However, due to the introduction of the Christian villages, such labour structures were disrupted since there were those who had failed to be converted but initially members of such labour groups.[862] Conversely, the Christian village idea backed up by the Western education introduced agricultural reforms which positively impacted the planting pattern among the Maragoli. Key among these reforms included row planting and use of animal manure. Through these agricultural innovations, a distinct agricultural class among the converts emerged characterized with improved agricultural yields.[863]

Members of these villages were instructed to plant their crops in lines unlike the other Maragoli who continued to broadcast their seeds. Such new rules continued to widen the gap between the Maragoli Christian converts and the rest.[864] The mission work also

[861] Robert mahangilu (40 years), Oral Interview held on 3rd September 2023 at Fumi village in Gaigedi Sub Location

[862]Patrick Wolfe, "Land, labor, and difference: Elementary structures of race." *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001): p.869.

[863] Dickson Amadagi (49 years), Oral Interview held on 5th August 2023 at Givudianyi village.

[864]Mutongi Kenda, *Op., Cit*, p.46.

spearheaded the introduction of modern seed and animal varieties in Maragoli all of which greatly revolutionalized the Maragoli agricultural and food production endeavours.[865]

In regard to social order and kinship systems, Christian missionary work greatly altered the Maragoli settlement. There were cases where the mission centres used the colonial structures such as the chiefs to effect eviction of non-converts in order to create the Christian village system. Mutongi in her writing notes the following;

> ... my parents left in the morning to go find out where they could go live. When they returned, they found all their belongings in the yard and their hut torn down. The chief and his Christian people had evicted them...they went and lived as avamenya [refugees] with people of other clans. And this is how my people became masikini tu, paupers, just paupers." Olovoga stared at me, signaling that the story was over.... evictions obviously bred ill will: the evicted felt their rights utterly violated, and those they went to live with felt infringed upon and, worse still, infringed upon by distant clan members to whom they felt they owed little. "The evicted families felt like beggars, just beggars," Olovoga recalled.[866]

This statement serves to illustrate the manner in which Christianity impacted on the pre-colonial Maragoli social order which had defined the Maragoli food production mechanisms in regard to cultivation and also the gender relations. In the pre-colonial era, the Maragoli had settled based on their clans. The inter-clan relations such as marriage had been territorially defined. The evictions however caused a mix up of various clans leading to a dilution of the established Maragoli male female relations.

From the oral submission, it was also noted that not all Christian village set up intentions and results were negative. The new villages also created a new sense of brotherhood among

[865] Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds on 10th October 2023.
[866]Ibid., p.58.

the new converts. Christian families often engaged in cooperative labor to construct their new dwellings, reflecting both communal effort and alignment with the emerging colonial order.

Men were responsible for erecting the structural framework—setting up poles and thatching the roof—while women undertook the plastering of walls with mud, enabling completion of the house within a week. This efficiency was not merely a product of religious zeal or social cohesion; it was also facilitated by the political support these Christian converts received from local colonial chiefs, many of whom were themselves aligned with missionary institutions.[867] As such, Christian households benefitted from both symbolic and material privileges that further entrenched the link between religious conversion, political authority, and access to resources.[868]

Discussions like this forms part of a demonstration to illustrate how the new colonial establishments built on certain aspects of the pre-colonial Maragoli such as gender relations at the household level and restructured the roles of the chiefs to help establish the colonial rule as per the articulation of the modes of production theory. The gender dimension of how the Maragoli men and women through their personal narrations in the present research enabled the research adequately illustrate the individual and collective perspectives and dynamics within the gender epistemology as a research philosophy.

From the on-going discussion, it is evident that the introduction of Christianity into Maragoli brought conflict and contradictions in the established Maragoli norms and belief

[867] Mutongi, Kenda. *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007, 43–45.
[868]Phoebe Kinavodoli, (72 Years), Oral interview at at her home in Kigama village, on 3rd October 2023.

system associated with Maragoli marriage, a key ingredient in the pre-colonial Maragoli food production system and its related male- female gender relations. Christianity failed to accord dignity and respect to the pre-colonial communal aspects of marriage. Parents and relatives were by passed and assumed in the marriage preparations. All this was due to the individualistic tendencies introduced by Christianity which failed to acknowledge a Christian marriage within the traditional Maragoli framework.[869] In this regard, Christianity managed to change a number of key aspects of Maragoli belief system which had formed the support base for the food production sub sector.

Due to introduction of Christianity, western laws and values, the pre-colonial Maragoli status of women was significantly weakened. Polygamy as a key feature of Maragoli marriage was replaced with monogamy. Consequently, the traditional house-property complex—within which women, particularly senior wives, exercised authority as heads of distinct domestic units—began to lose its internal logic under the influence of Christianity and colonial administration. The communal recognition of women's roles in managing agricultural output, overseeing household labor, and maintaining lineage continuity was gradually eroded. In its place emerged a new patriarchal model, reinforced by missionary teachings and colonial legal structures, which positioned men as the undisputed heads of households and sole guardians of property.[870]

The shift not only diminished women's economic agency but also redefined gender roles within the domestic and social spheres.[871] From these findings, it emerged that, gender

[869] Leen Kavulavu, *Op, Cit,*p.22

[870] Guyer, Jane I. *Family and Farm in Southern Cameroon*. Boston: Boston University Press, 1981, 112–114. See Also Moore, Henrietta. *Space, Text, and Gender: An Anthropological Study of the Marakwet of Kenya*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, 89–93

[871] Ibid p.22

analysis theory, feminist epistemology, and interpretivism research philosophy have provided crucial insights into understanding the impact of Christianity and Western education on Maragoli food production and gender relations. Through these lenses, the research findings reveal the complex interplay between colonial ideologies, missionary activities, and local responses. Gender analysis theory elucidates how the introduction of Christianity and Western education influenced gender dynamics within Maragoli society. The exclusion of women from church leadership and the emphasis on male education reshaped traditional gender roles, leading to the feminization of agriculture as women increasingly focused on farming to support their families amidst social disruptions.

Feminist epistemology ensures the inclusion of women's voices and experiences, uncovering the multifaceted effects of colonialism on Maragoli women. It highlights the gendered nature of missionary evangelism and educational policies, illustrating how women were marginalized and coerced into adopting Western norms and values. Interpretivism research philosophy facilitates a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural context in which colonialism and Christianity operated, emphasizing the agency of the Maragoli people in navigating and resisting colonial pressures.

The research findings underscore the role of Christianity and Western education in perpetuating colonial capitalism and social hierarchies. Despite promises of material benefits and social advancement, the education system proved inadequate and discriminatoive, reinforcing colonial power structures. Moreover, missionary activities led to the dissolution of traditional communal practices, disrupting Maragoli food production systems and kinship networks. The establishment of Christian villages and evictions of non-converts reshaped social order, leading to conflicts and social disintegration. In

general, therefore, gender analysis theory, feminist epistemology, and interpretivism research philosophy illuminate the complex and often contradictory impacts of colonialism, Christianity, and Western education on Maragoli society.

This section has revealed the enduring legacies of colonial oppression and the resilience of local communities in the face of cultural assimilation and social upheaval. The next section illustrates the various colonial endeavours in crop production backed by the agricultural policies during the initial colonial era.

3.5 Crop Production and Agricultural policies During the Initial Colonial Era

Much of colonial-era scholarship has focused on broad administrative policies and economic exploitation, but the internal mechanisms of production and accumulation- and how indigenous communities navigated them often receive less attention.Colonial capitalism in Kenya wasn't just imposed from above; it involved layers of adaptation, resistance, and participation. African workers and producers found ways to engage with colonial economic structures—sometimes resisting, sometimes innovating within imposed systems.

The informal economies, indigenous trade networks, and community strategies for survival amid capitalist extraction are all vital aspects that deserve deeper exploration.[872]When pre-capitalist modes of production were incorporated into colonial and world capitalist systems, they underwent significant transformation, yet also displayed surprising forms of

[872]Martin Legassick, "Perspectives on African 'Underdevelopment'." *The Journal of African History* 17, no. 3 (1976): p.437.

resilience. Colonial capitalism did not immediately eliminate indigenous economic systems; rather, it restructured them to serve the interests of imperial accumulation. This process involved the selective integration and redefinition of local practices, especially those related to land, labor, and social reproduction.

What changed was primarily the function and organization of production. For example, subsistence agriculture was increasingly subordinated to commodity production and cash crop cultivation, driven by colonial taxation and market demands. Labor, once embedded in kinship and communal obligations, was monetized and extracted through coercive systems like forced labor, hut taxes, and migrant labor. Gender roles were also reconfigured: women's agricultural labor, which had been central to household economies, was devalued or made invisible under capitalist frameworks that prioritized male wage labor and private property.[873]

What remained resilient were certain social norms, customary land tenure systems, and gendered labor divisions—though even these were often adapted under pressure. Indigenous ideologies of reciprocity, collective work (e.g., *mwethya* or *risaga*), and household-based production persisted, albeit in hybrid forms.[874]

This resilience, however, was often informal and operated in tension with the imposed capitalist structures, creating what scholars like Mahmood Mamdani and Walter Rodney have called "dual economies" or "articulated modes of production.".[875] Yet, as scholars like

[873] Rodney, Walter. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1974.
[874] Meillassoux, Claude. *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
[875]Mamdani, Mahmood. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996. See Also Peter O. Ndege, (1987). *Op*, *Cit*, p.65.

Ann McClintock and Terence Ranger observe, these hybridized forms have received relatively less scholarly attention compared to the more visible disruptions caused by colonial rule.[876] This neglect leaves important gaps in understanding how African societies negotiated the contradictions of incorporation into global capitalism without wholly surrendering their pre-capitalist logics. Such illustrations are indeed central to understanding the complexities of colonial economies. The systems of production established in colonies were not merely passive reflections of European capitalism but developed their own internal dynamics, tensions, and constraints that influenced their trajectory.

Colonial economies were structured to serve imperial interests, focusing on resource extraction and cash crop production for export. Nevertheless, local inconsistencies surfaced throughout these systems. Upon establishing colonial rule in Kenya, the primary objective of the colonial authority was to ensure that all regions of the country could produce enough goods and services to support the minimal level of government and military forces needed to uphold foreign rule.

The colonial state's first priority was ensuring economic self-sufficiency to sustain governance and military control without excessive costs to Britain. This meant establishing an extractive economy where resources and labor were efficiently mobilized to support administration while feeding imperial markets. To achieve this, colonial authorities:

[876] McClintock, Anne. *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. New York: Routledge, 1995. See Also Ranger, Terence. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

Introduced cash crops like coffee, tea, and sisal, often at the expense of local food production, enforced taxation (such as hut and poll taxes) to push Africans into wage labor and ensure revenue for administration. The government restricted indigenous land ownership, favoring European settlers, particularly in the White Highlands. Colonialists developed essential infrastructure (railways, roads, communication networks) primarily to facilitate resource extraction rather than indigenous development.

Moreover, the colonialists-controlled labor mobility, forcing African workers into plantations, settler farms, and emerging colonial industries. This focus on productivity wasn't just about sustaining colonial rule in Kenya—it also fueled broader imperial ambitions, ensuring Kenya became a profitable part of Britain's global economy.[877] The early colonial economy in Kenya was fragile and heavily reliant on the extraction of raw materials rather than sustainable agricultural or industrial production. The revenue shortfall of £16,000 in March 1909 underscores how costly colonial administration was, especially in its early years. The fact that most exports consisted of raw materials—ivory, beeswax, hides, and skins—reflects the initial reliance on natural resource exploitation rather than a structured economic model.

This economic instability led the British to aggressively push for commercial agriculture, particularly cash crops like coffee, tea, and sisal, which later became central to Kenya's colonial economy. To make this shift viable, colonial authorities-imposed labor policies, land alienation, and taxation systems that forced Africans into wage labor while favoring settler-owned plantations. The dependency on extractive exports also highlights Kenya's

[877]Peter O. Ndege, (1987). *Op*, *Cit*, p.84.

early role as a supplier of raw materials for British industries rather than a self-sustaining economy. This pattern of exploitation set the stage for long-term economic inequalities, with African communities bearing the burden of colonial economic policies.[878]

In 1905, Major (later Sir) Humphrey Leggett was dispatched to Kenya to assess the economic potential of the East Africa Protectorate in light of mounting fiscal challenges. Leggett proposed a dual agricultural strategy to address the financial crisis: the promotion of highly capitalized settler plantation agriculture alongside the encouragement of African peasant production. This recommendation emerged in response to the escalating debt incurred from the construction of the Uganda Railway, which had failed to yield the anticipated returns quickly enough. The economic pressure was further intensified by the British government's decision to reduce financial allocations to the protectorate.[879] Leggett's vision laid the foundation for the colonial state's later agrarian policies, which would entrench racialized land alienation and economic stratification.

Governor Girouard's vision for Kenya's economic development reflected a deeply colonial perspective—one that prioritized European agricultural production over indigenous economies. Like many British administrators, he saw settler farming as the foundation of the colony's profitability, believing that European agricultural expertise, capital investment, and infrastructure development would drive economic growth. This approach led to policies that favored European landownership, particularly in the White Highlands,

[878]C. C Wrigley, "Kenya: the patterns of economic life, 1902-1945. S. 209-264 in: V. Harlow/EM Chilver/A. Smith (Hrsg.), History of East Africa, Band II." (1965), p. 221.
[879] Sorrenson, M. P. K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968.

while restricting African access to fertile land. Indigenous farming systems were disrupted as colonial authorities pushed cash crop cultivation suited for export rather than local food security. The emphasis on settler agriculture also reinforced labor exploitation, as African workers were often forced into wage labor to sustain settler farms.

Girouard's development model, like many others implemented across colonial Africa, disregarded indigenous agricultural systems and local knowledge. Instead, it advanced an extractive economic structure tailored to serve Britain's imperial objectives. African agricultural productivity was reoriented not for local subsistence or development but for the generation of exportable surpluses to support the metropole. This approach undermined pre-existing modes of production and marginalized African farmers from the policy-making processes that directly affected their livelihoods.[880] In line with his fiscal policies, Sir Edward Girouard, then Governor of the East Africa Protectorate, expected the European settler population to contribute 20 percent of the projected £680,000 in revenue for the 1910–1911 financial year.

In stark contrast, the African population—despite limited income and minimal access to capital—was expected to contribute 4 percent, amounting to £273,000.[881]This disproportionate taxation policy exemplified the colonial logic of economic extraction, wherein Africans were compelled to finance an administration that primarily served settler and imperial interests.[882] This marked the beginning of the "dual policy" that would define Kenya's agricultural development under colonial rule. Notably, the program prioritized

[880]Tignor, Robert L. *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900 to 1939*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976

[881] Maxon, Robert M. *Struggles for Land: The Political Economy of Land and Agriculture in Kenya from 1870 to 1970*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1993.

[882]Ibid.

settler interests over African output, reflecting the colonial state's priorities. The United States Department of Agriculture did not start worrying about the state of agricultural production in Africa until the 1920s, despite the fact that it had been around since 1903. .[883]

Girouard's policies set the stage for long-term land disputes and economic inequalities that persisted far beyond colonial rule. By prioritizing European agricultural production, he reinforced a system that disenfranchised African farmers, limiting their access to fertile land while pushing them into wage labor for settler farms. This land alienation directly contributed to later struggles, including the Mau Mau uprising, which was fueled in part by land grievances. The emphasis on export-driven cash crops over subsistence farming also led to agricultural disparities, where African communities struggled with food security while colonial farms flourished. Even post-independence, structural imbalances remained, with land ownership skewed in favor of colonial-era allocations, leading to continued socio-economic divisions.

The colonial administration's early agricultural policies in Maragoli and North Nyanza reveal a mix of continuity and disruption. On one hand, the promotion of traditional crops like sim sim (sesame) and millet acknowledged indigenous farming practices, but on the other, the introduction of groundnuts, maize, and cotton signaled a shift toward cash crop economies geared for colonial markets. The distribution of new seeds suggests an effort to

[883]Peter O. Ndege, (1987). *Op.Cit*, p.90.

modernize agriculture, but it was ultimately structured to serve imperial needs rather than local food security. Cotton, in particular, was a strategic colonial crop, aimed at feeding textile industries abroad. Maize, though eventually becoming a staple, was initially encouraged as a more export-oriented crop compared to millet, which had deeper local agricultural significance.

The policies were part of a broader colonial agenda; stimulating production without fundamentally transforming ownership and control. The burden of labor and adaptation largely fell on African farmers, while European authorities reaped economic benefits.[884] These seeds were to be grown in demonstration farms, and the introduction and sale of iron hoes and ploughs.[885] The report from 1908 provides an insightful look into how colonial taxation shaped agricultural choices in North Kavirondo.[886] The preference for paying taxes through economic products and native plants suggests that local communities adapted to colonial economic pressures while trying to maintain some level of control over their traditional farming systems.

Rather than relying solely on wage labor or direct monetary taxation—which was often imposed elsewhere—the people of North Kavirondo sought to leverage their agricultural production as a means of meeting colonial demands. This approach likely allowed them to sustain their livelihoods while engaging with the new economic structures without full dependence on colonial cash economies. By convincing African farmers that they could

[884] G.Wagner, 1956, *Op*,*Cit*, p.54.

[885]David William Cohen, and ES Atieno Odhiambo. *Siaya: the historical anthropology of an African landscape*. East African Publishers, 1989, p.78.

[886] Shanguhyia, Martin S. "The Local Native Council, Economic Imperatives, and Colonial Forest Preservation in Western Kenya, c. 1900–1950." *African Economic History* 49, no. 2 (2021): 77-106.

earn rupees through agriculture, colonial authorities encouraged market dependency, shifting subsistence farming toward commercial production. This strategy reinforced colonial control over labor and trade, ensuring economic activity aligned with imperial interests rather than local self-sufficiency. The push for cash crop cultivation also had lasting effects—while it created opportunities for African farmers to engage in commerce, it often prioritized export crops over food security, deepening economic vulnerabilities.

The idea that wealth could be accumulated through colonial markets framed capitalism as the dominant economic logic, embedding patterns of dependency that persisted beyond colonial rule.[887] Such statements were suggestive of the administrative compulsion that characterized the early years of official sponsorship of African crop production; it also anticipated the paternalism which was to characterize North Nyanza's food production mechanisms in future. The distribution of seeds through chiefs and the imposition of production quotas reflects a deliberate effort to integrate African farmers into colonial economic systems.

Chiefs, often acting under colonial directives, became key intermediaries in enforcing these new agricultural expectations, transforming leadership roles and community dynamics.The involvement of Indian merchants in Kakamega, Mbale, and Lunyerere further illustrates the layered colonial economy. Persuading them to import and sell Birmingham-made hoes created dependency on foreign tools while subtly eroding indigenous farming technologies. The sale of 1,200 to 1,500 hoes between 1914 and 1920 signals a gradual but significant shift—traditional Maragoli agricultural techniques, once self-sufficient, were being

[887]KNA: DC/NN.1/1, See Also Sanyal, Kalyan. *Rethinking capitalist development: Primitive accumulation, governmentality and post-colonial capitalism*. Routledge India, 2014.

replaced by imported European tools and practices. This was not just an economic transition; it was a systematic articulation process designed to engulf and eventually suffocate pre-colonial Maragoli agricultural systems. Once farmers were integrated into colonial production networks, they became increasingly reliant on European inputs, disrupting local autonomy, food security, and traditional knowledge systems.

Though the colonial government initially detested traditional Maragoli food production systems, they were, at first, compelled to rely on them. These systems provided a necessary foundation upon which the colonial administration could gain traction before gradually phasing them out. Such was the case with crops like millet and sim sim (sesame), as previously illustrated. This reliance occurred despite the colonial authorities' limited understanding of the region's climatic and soil conditions. Beyond the compulsion and paternalism that often characterized colonial agricultural initiatives, several other factors influenced how the local population responded to the cultivation of both traditional and introduced crops in quantities exceeding their subsistence needs.[888]

For instance, local communities assessed whether certain crops possessed high exchange or cash value. Specifically, whether they could be used to accumulate cattle or generate sufficient income for paying taxes and purchasing household necessities such as clothing. This economic consideration was weighed against the cash returns from wage labor, which was increasingly becoming a viable alternative means of livelihood. As such, decisions to grow both traditional and newly introduced crops were not made in a vacuum, but were

[888]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p.45.

deeply informed by a pragmatic evaluation of economic returns and shifting livelihood options under colonial influence.[889]

With regard to the adoption of new crops, two additional considerations shaped local responses. First, people evaluated whether the crops could be incorporated into their existing diet—whether they were palatable, nutritious, and culturally acceptable. Second, they assessed whether these crops could be easily integrated into the traditional agricultural routines and domestic labor systems to which they were already accustomed.

Crops that demanded unfamiliar techniques, tools, or labor patterns often faced resistance, especially if they disrupted the established gender and age-based division of labor within the household and community.

Another significant factor in the spread of new crops was the identity of the first individuals or groups to adopt them. These early adopters often played a key role in influencing broader community acceptance.

Their willingness to grow new crops was shaped by various influences, notably the teachings and encouragement of missionaries, as well as exposure to different agricultural practices through wage labor in other regions. Additionally, population growth exerted pressure on land and food resources, thereby influencing the scale and intensity of crop production. Despite these factors, the widespread cultivation of new crops was a gradual process. The local population generally approached colonial innovations with cautious pragmatism. “Let us first see its nature...” captured the people’s characteristic attitude—an

[889] Ibid.

inclination to observe, evaluate, and adapt only after the innovations had proven their worth and compatibility with local needs and practices.[890].

During the early years of colonial rule in Maragoli, and up to 1920, traditional crops such as millet, finger millet, and sim sim remained the dominant agricultural products in the region, particularly within Maragoli and the wider North Nyanza district. Among these, sim sim (sesame) stood out for its commercial potential, as it enjoyed a ready and reliable market. This continued reliance on traditional crops during the early colonial period underscores both the resilience of indigenous agricultural systems and the pragmatic decisions made by local farmers in response to market demands and colonial uncertainty.[891]

The shift toward new crops such as maize and cash crops like cotton and coffee began to gain momentum from the 1920s onward. Several interrelated factors contributed to this transition. First, colonial economic policies became more aggressive in promoting cash crop agriculture. The administration increasingly sought to integrate African farmers into the colonial economy through the production of export-oriented crops. This was done through coercive policies such as taxation, land alienation, and compulsory crop growing orders, which compelled Africans to engage in cash crop farming to meet financial obligations.

Infrastructural development such as the expansion of roads and railways facilitated market access, making it more practical and profitable for local farmers to produce crops for sale rather than just for subsistence. This increased access to urban and export markets,

[890]Peter O. Ndege, (1990). *Op. Cit.,* p.150.
[891]William Robert, Ochieng, and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An economic history of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992., p.90.

especially for maize and cotton. Missionary and colonial agricultural officers played a growing role in promoting the cultivation of these crops. Demonstration plots, agricultural shows, and extension services were introduced to encourage African farmers to adopt new farming techniques and crops perceived as more productive or valuable by the colonial authorities. Additionally, population growth and land pressure made traditional shifting cultivation less viable. Farmers were pushed to intensify land use, and high-yield or high-return crops like maize became attractive alternatives. Maize, in particular, was more adaptable to the changing agricultural landscape and gradually began to replace millet as a staple.

Social influence played a role. As more early adopters of new crops began to show visible signs of economic success by accumulating wealth, paying taxes with ease, or acquiring livestock others in the community followed suit. This mimetic effect helped to accelerate the adoption of new crops, especially where integration into colonial markets offered tangible benefits. Despite this shift, traditional crops were not abandoned overnight. Many farmers continued to cultivate them alongside new crops, reflecting a strategy of risk diversification and cultural continuity in the face of colonial pressures. The transition to cash crop agriculture restructured traditional gendered divisions of labor in a variety of ways; to begin with, this shift led to men's increasing control over agriculture.

Traditionally, food production (especially crops like millet and sim sim) was largely managed by women. However, with the introduction of cash crops such as maize, cotton, and coffee—often associated with income generation and colonial markets, men began to assert greater control over land and agricultural decisions. This marked a shift from subsistence farming (dominated by women) to market-oriented farming (dominated by

men). Moreover, the shift led to marginalization of women: As men took over the cultivation of lucrative crops and controlled the income from their sale, women were often left to maintain subsistence farming, yet with reduced land and resources. This deepened gender inequality and undermined women's economic autonomy.

Another major shift was witnessed through increased labor burden on women. Despite being sidelined from cash crop production, women's workload grew. They were still responsible for food production, household tasks, and childcare, but also had to contribute labor to men's cash crop farms—often without corresponding access to the financial benefits. The shift also had complex consequences for food availability and nutritional stability. As land and labor were redirected toward cash crops, less was devoted to growing traditional, nutritionally rich staples like millet and sim sim. This led to reduced dietary diversity and greater vulnerability to hunger during poor harvests or market disruptions. Additionally, the shift increased reliance on market-purchased food. As households became more monetized, they increasingly depended on buying food, including processed maize, which replaced traditional grains. This market dependence made communities more vulnerable to price fluctuations and crop failures. Finally, led Seasonal food shortages becoming a normal occurence.

Cash crops like cotton or coffee had specific growing and harvesting periods that did not always align with food needs, leading to periods of scarcity, especially among poorer households that lacked adequate land or labor. From the oral submissions, it was noted that the cash demands necessitated by the colonial economy and its appendages greatly influenced the Maragoli people's decision in integrating the newly introduced crops into

their agrarian economy.[892] Moreover, this cash demand made many maragoli men move into the urban centres and the established settler farms. Such migrations served as the major accelerating factors of articulating and integrating the Maragoli into the colonial economy.

The migrants out of Maragoli got an opportunity to taste these new colonial crops and even carried the seeds of the crops that had impressed them. Such seeds once planted, gradually but steadily got integrated into the Maragoli food production system. It slowly became accepted as a food crop after those who grew and ate it failed to die.[893] It was also realized that in comparison with other crops, groundnuts fetched a higher price. It is worth noting that by 19030s the crop took the place of sim sim, which had ceased to be a significant export crop due to the decline in its price as it will be demonstrated in the subsequent chapter.[894] The popularity of groundnuts was further enhanced by the fact that, as a root crop, it survived the locust infestation of 1930-32.[895] Throughout the rest of the colonial period the crop was grown in increasingly larger quantities both as a food and cash crop.

During this time, maize was an important crop, along with ground nuts and simssim. Traditional speckled maize was grown in very limited quantities by the Maragoli people before the introduction of *gibendi*, a sort of yellow flint maize, and Hickory King, two

[892] Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School Asselmbly Grounds on 10th October 2023.
[893]K. Mutongi Op., Cit. p.129.
[894]FitzSimmons Margaret, "The new industrial agriculture: The regional integration of specialty crop production." In *The Rural*, Routledge, 2017, pp. 3-22.
[895] K. Mutongi, *Op, Cit,* p.128.

varieties, in 1910 and shortly afterward, respectively. [896] Because of their increased hardness, the new maize varieties were a pain to grind. Similar to the classic variety, initially only small quantities were cultivated, primarily for roasting and eating straight off the cob or combining with beans for baking. .[897]

Maize flour meal, which is commonly referred to as "Ugali," required some time to be fully integrated into the mainstream Maragoli food sector in order to accommodate and fully integrate into the Maragoli economy. The majority of individuals consumed ugali produced from maize flour for the first time during the 1918-19 famine. The colonial authority had transported numerous bags of maize meal to Kisumu during the famine, from where it was dispersed for sale in all other local centers within the Nyanza region, including North Kavirondo. [898] Additionally, individuals who had engaged in paid labor had developed an appetite for it. Despite this, it was still believed that maize meal was light and could only provide temporary satisfaction when consumed alone. Therefore, it was a popular practice to combine maize flour with ground sorghum to give it "weight."

The new maize variety did not achieve notoriety until water mills were locally installed in the 1930s, as processing this corn on the old grinding stone proved difficult. .[899] Maize was cultivated because to its compatibility with the soil and climate of the region, despite its lower cost than sorghum and finger millet. Additionally, it was effortlessly integrated into the conventional agricultural cycle and labor procedure. Moving on to the introduction of

[896] Humphrey Chadianya, (70 years), Oral Interview held on 4th August 2023 at Givudimbuli village. See Also G. Wagner, *Op., Cit.,* p.67.
[897]Staller John, *Maize cobs and cultures: history of Zea mays L*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2009., p.72.
[898]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, 3rd July, 2023.
[899]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, at his home Chanderema village Mambai, on 3rd July, 2023.

inedible income crops in Maragoli and North Nyanza as a whole, the initial attempts at colonial official sponsorship of inedible cash crops in North Nyanza were the cultivation of cotton. This was constructed in the Samia region in 1908; however, it was promptly abandoned due to the fact that "it was futile to encourage the locals to grow it until it was feasible to implement consistent supervision over their shambas." .[900]

In 1914, it was claimed that "cotton had practically lapsed" due to the low pricing and lack of interest from the indigenous residing in cotton-growing regions. .[901] Cotton cultivation was not significantly revived by the colonial administration until 1925, when agricultural officials were dispatched to the region with the primary objective of promoting it. [902] The increase of crop production regions occurred in the years leading up to 1914 in this and other African places. About three quarters of Kenya's exports—and the bulk of its income—came from African products. Wrigley, Christopher C. [903] uses the phrase "years of prosperity" to describe the time. The reason behind this was that the colonized could still actively participate in colonial development initiatives during this period.

Also, local production cycles had not been disrupted by global shocks like the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918 or anything else that happened during World War 1. The years that followed were disastrous, with African agriculture's influence waning in the colonial

[900]G. Wagner, Op., Cit., p. 72, See Also Peter O. Ndege, "Economic change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962." MA Thesis, University of Nairobi., 1987., p.102.
[901] Ibid.
[902] Ibid.
[903]Christopher C. Wrigley, "Kenya: The patterns of economic life, 1902-1945." *History of East Africa* 2 (1965): p.214.

economy as compared to that of European settlers (1915–1920). The colonial era saw no reversal of this trend. .[904]

Even after the brief prosperity that followed World War I (1922–1928), the Great Depression (1932–1938), the boom that followed World War II (1939–1945), and the post-war reconstruction (as will be shown in the next chapter), the state of agriculture in Africa continued to fluctuate in response to fluctuations in the global economy. The administration's recruiting of the Carrier Corps during the first world war (1914–1919) disrupted agricultural productivity in Maragoli by removing some of the male laborers needed for the job. According to the archival records, 29, 205 males were conscripted as carrier corps from the district between 1914-1919.[905] There was a famine in 1918 when crops failed due to a lack of rain. Many people died that year as a result of the influenza outbreak (ehoma ya njirimani). Even if their recollections are beginning to fade, the participants in this study recalled how their grandfathers had described the severity of the influenza pandemic and how it had been spread by returning German soldiers from World War I. [906]

In 1920, the Department of Agriculture released a significant policy on African Agriculture, which basically reiterated the country's dual approach to agricultural growth

[904]Lewis Henry Gann, "Economic development in Germany's African empire, 1884-1914." *Colonialism in Africa 1870-1960: The Economics of Colonialism* 4 (1969): p.218
[905]KNA: DC,1/1 North Kavirondo District Annual Report 1917-18 p.11, See Also KNA: DC, NN.1/2 North Kavirondo District Annual Report 1918-19.
[906]Chavakali FGD held at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.

and the continuing practice of discrimination in favor of the settler sector. The following words were used to describe them:

> It will be seen that in order to develop the agricultural resources and wealth of the country, it is essential if the natives are to take their proper place in the economic life in Kenya, that they should be made to utilize profitably those large sections of the country in which they are left in undisturbed and peaceful possession. Under any circumstances progress must inevitably be comparatively slow among tribes which have so recently come into touch with civilization and whose methods and outlook cannot easily be changed . . . an increase in native production should be directed towards an output of produce which can be exported: maize, sorghum, groundnuts, simsim, cotton, beans and peas. Each of these crops is well suited to the resources and facilities of the native and no question of competition against the European grower should arise.[907]

It was as a result of this attitude that the colonial administration continued to pay little attention to the development of agriculture in African areas. The above discussed colonial agricultural policy and the changing trends in crop cultivation greatly impacted on the traditional Maragoli food production mechanisms. Moreover, the World War I labour and food demands globally further interfered with the Maragoli food production and gender relations. As it has already been established, World War 1 led to conscription of a significant number of able-bodied men into the military.

Such labour had been initially relied on for scouting new agricultural lands and ploughing them. Their withdrawal therefore significantly reduced the labour forcing women to come in to ensure agricultural continuity.

All these altered the gender relations in food production. The subsequent section discusses the Maragoli food production and labour relations in the pre and post World War1 period

[907]Lewis Henry Gann, *Op. Cit*, p.220

with the aim of situating the gender dynamics and its consequential impact on food production.

3.6 Maragoli Food Production and Labour Relations in the Pre- and Post-World War 1 period

Richard Wolff outlined three main strategies employed by colonialists from 1895 to 1930 to incorporate African locals into colonial wage labor. The years 1895–1914 were the foundational years. During this time, the colonial administration tried out many approaches to development before settling on settler-dominated estate agriculture as Kenya's economic foundation. The second stage, which occurred concurrently with the mobilization of the career corps for war, occurred between 1914 and 1919 and was distinct from the regular labor recruitment process. The third stage, which began in 1919 and lasted until 1930 and into 1939, is detailed in the upcoming chapter.

From the outset, the war exerted pressure on both land and labor in African regions. Notably, areas with high agricultural productivity were prioritized for recruitment into the war effort and other essential services. As a result, steps were taken to formalize the process of labor acquisition.[908] Moreover, the outbreak of this war, locally reffered to as *vurwani vwa njirimani nu mwingeresa* coincided with the delicate and naïve colonial stage in Kenya.[909]

During this stage, the colonial state was still in the trial-and-error phase trying to figure out the best approach to be used to lay the foundation for the protectorate's economy. The

[908]Nyberg–Sorensen, *et. al.,* "The migration–development nexus evidence and policy options state–of–the–art overview." *International migration* 40, no. 5 (2002): p.10.
[909]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, at his home Chanderema village Mambai, on 3rd July, 2023.

colonial decision to lamp Africans into reserves had resulted into a significant reduction in the African farmland sizes consequently affecting Africans agricultural productivity[910]. Food shortages and insufficient funds to cover tax demands were among the initial difficulties that Africans in the Reserves encountered. .[911] Much of Kenya's economy, particularly its agricultural incomes, did not take off during the colonial era, as this shows. For example, the administration noted in its first annual report for the district for 1917–1918 that, due in large part to low agricultural output, there were more instances of interclan disputes over land ownership. .[912] The North Kavirondo reserve Maragoli people had it bad before, and their meager grain harvests from shrinking fields made things even worse. According to oral histories and district annual reports, many families were struggling to pay their fair share of taxes and get their hands on the resources they needed to start a family.[913]

According to one of the main sources, four of the five adult males in his family enlisted in the military, leaving just one adult to tend to the fields' tough labor. [914]Since almost all of the adult men had been forcibly recruited into military service, several additional respondents also mentioned that their families had to beg from relatives for food. [915].

For the years 1914–1919, the amount of physically capable men requisitioned to service in the British army is displayed in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Carrier Corps labour from North Kavirondo

[910]Kjell Havnevik *et. al., African agriculture and the World Bank: development or impoverishment?* Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, 2007., p.34.
[911]Carl K. Eicher, "Facing up to Africa's food crisis." In *Africa in Economic Crisis*, London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1986, p.173.
[912]KNA: DC/NN/1/1:12
[913]Kenya National Archives (KNA), *North Kavirondo District Annual Report*, 1934; Hezron Mwamili Oral Interview held on 15th September, 2022 in his home at Chavakali.
[914]Hezron Mwamili Oral Interview held on 15th September, 2022 in his home at Chavakali.
[915]A.M Amisi, *Op.Cit*. p.103.

Year	1914-1915	1915-1916	1916-1917	1917-1918	1918-1919
Carrier corps labour	4,372	7,459	6,469	10,036	869
Other labour registered	6,022	5,558	4,205	3,872	N/A
Total	10,394	13,017	10,674	13,909	869

Source: KNA: DC.NN.1/1 North Kavirondo District Annual Report 1917-18 pg.11
KNA: DC.NN.1/2 North Kavirondo District Annual Report 1918-19

The trends in Carrier Corps labor recruitment from North Kavirondo between 1914 and 1919 reveal a wartime surge in male conscription, peaking in 1917–1918, followed by a sharp decline in 1918–1919. This pattern underscores the colonial state's increasing reliance on African male labor during World War I, which significantly disrupted local gendered labor systems. As men were absorbed into military service, women were compelled to take on expanded roles in agriculture and household provisioning, blurring traditional gender boundaries in food production.

This recruitment greatly impacted the establishe Pre-colonial Maragoli gender and food production: women assumed tasks typically reserved for men, such as land preparation and managing livestock, while continuing their own responsibilities like weeding, harvesting, and gathering wild foods. This shift not only intensified women's labor burden but also elevated their role as primary food producers during the war years. Although their contributions became central to household survival, formal recognition and control over resources remained limited, reinforcing gendered inequalities even amid increased economic responsibility. The data thus reflects both the colonial extraction of labor and the

adaptive resilience of Maragoli women, whose efforts sustained community livelihoods under wartime strain. Additionally, the steady decline in "other labour registered"—from 6,022 in 1914–1915 to 3,872 in 1917–1918, with no data recorded for 1918–1919—suggests that civilian labor was deprioritized as colonial authorities focused on military logistics. This further deepened the labor vacuum in local communities, compounding the pressure on women to sustain food production and community life. The dual impact of male conscription and reduced civilian labor availability reshaped gender roles and intensified women's burden in maintaining household and subsistence systems during wartime.

As food supplies declined in rural areas due to the restriction on free movement of goods, the strain on Maragoli households became even more apparent. All four of the district's key cereals—finger millet, sorghum, beans, and maize—failed, but the prohibition stayed in effect. [916] Protests against colonialism reached new heights as a result of the food shortage that hit the communities. Even Maragoli territory felt the effects of the food crisis. Despite the government's tendency to attribute the poor harvests to weather, the reality showed otherwise. In the course of the First World War, the district's labor force was decimated as a large percentage of its population was compelled to serve as soldiers or in the Carrier Corps by the British government. .[917]

During the course of the war, a significant number of able-bodied men were compelled to serve in the public transport sector within the colony, thereby facilitating the swift and

[916] Kenya National Archives (KNA), *North Kavirondo District Annual Report*, 1918; see also Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905–1963* (London: James Currey, 1987), 45–47.
[917]Kenya National Archives (KNA), *North Kavirondo District Annual Report*, 1919; David Killingray and James Matthews, "Beasts of Burden: The British Army and the Carrier Corps During the First World War," *The Journal of African History* 19, no. 4 (1978): 529–545.

effective transportation of goods and personnel to areas in need (refer to table 3.2 below). Analysis of the data reveals a significant increase in the total number of Africans from North Kavirondo conscripted to serve in the Carrier Corps, with figures rising from 4,372 in 1914–1915 to 10,036 in 1917–1918. During the period from 1917 to 1918, the district witnessed an unprecedented surge in enlistments for the Carrier Corps, despite the subsequent year yielding only 869 recruits, a stark contrast to the average of 7,084 observed over the preceding four years.[918]

Table 3.2: Native Labour Statistics North Kavirondo District, 1914-1919

	1914-1915	1915-1916	1916-1917	1917-1918	1918-1919
Registered for work outside the District	10,190	12,712	10,340	13,370	8,662
Registered for work inside the District	204	305	334	178	91
Total Natives of North Kavirondo registered in Kisumu	-	-	-	-	3,451
Estimated unregistered natives who have not gone outside the District for work	-	-	-	-	1,700
Squatters	-	-	-	-	22
Total	**10,384**	**13,017**	**10,674**	**13,908**	**13,946**

Source: Table adopted and compiled using data from KNA: North Kavirondo District Annual report for years 1914-1919

[918] Kenya National Archives (KNA), *North Kavirondo District Annual Report*, 1914–1918; see also David Killingray, "Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa 1870–1945," *Journal of Contemporary History* 24, no. 3 (1989): 483–501.

The labour statistics from North Kavirondo between 1914 and 1919 reveal a clear and consistent trend of male outmigration for colonial labour. Each year, thousands of men registered to work outside the district, peaking in 1917–1918, while local employment remained minimal. This pattern reflects the colonial administration's prioritization of external labour demands, often for infrastructure and plantation work, over local economic development. By 1918–1919, the emergence of unregistered workers and squatters suggests growing resistance or displacement within the system. Overall, the trend underscores how colonial labour policies disrupted traditional livelihoods, extracted male labour from rural economies, and placed increasing pressure on women to sustain food production and household stability in their absence.

This study posits that the rise in wage labor participation among Africans stemmed from an entrepreneurial drive to diversify income sources, prompted by the unpredictability of agricultural earnings. Considering the two alternatives of agriculture and pursuing wage employment, the latter emerged as a more appealing choice compared to the uncertainties associated with grain cultivation. Oral accounts indicated that there was a notable sense of indifference in the Reserve, attributed to diminishing agricultural output, insufficient financial means to fulfill tax obligations, and the heightened demands of mandatory public labor conscription.[919] The decline of household and familial labor capacity played a crucial role in shaping the structural dynamics of land ownership within the Maragoli community. This phenomenon can be attributed to the colonial land policies, which led to a notable reduction in the average landholdings per household.

[919]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview at Chanderema Village Mambai, on 15th August 2022.

Consequently, the demand for land intensified, thereby linking ownership to its active use.[920] In numerous villages inhabited by the Maragoli, it is evident that various families ultimately forfeited their rights to ancestral lands, which had been provisionally assigned to families in need during times when the original proprietors had left the land uncultivated.[921] Consequently, it became evident that gender analysis theory, feminist epistemology, and interpretivism research philosophy provide significant insights into the study's findings regarding Maragoli food production and labor relations during the pre- and post-World War I era. Theoretical frameworks elucidate the intricate interactions among colonial policies, socio-economic dynamics, and gendered experiences within Maragoli society. Richard Wolff's examination of colonial labor integration strategies offers valuable insights into the evolving labor dynamics of this era.

The recruitment of African men by the colonial government for the war effort significantly altered established gender roles and labor dynamics, resulting in heightened demands on women to maintain agricultural output in the absence of male laborers. The delineation of labor along gender lines illustrates the complex interplay between colonialism and patriarchy in the formation of Maragoli society. Feminist epistemology guarantees the incorporation of women's viewpoints and experiences in the examination, illuminating the varied methods through which women have maneuvered and opposed colonial influences.

[920] Kenya National Archives (KNA), *North Kavirondo District Annual Report*, 1920 See Also Bruce Berman, "The Origins of the 'Moral Economy': Colonialism and the Emergence of Land, Labour and Market in Kenya," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 15, no. 1 (1981): 35–38.
[921] Ogendo Okoth and Hastings Winston, "*Tenants of the Crown. Evolution of Agrarian Law and Institutions on Kenya*." (1991), p.14.

The capacity of women to address food shortages and labor requirements highlights their significant involvement in influencing agricultural methodologies and household financial systems. The interpretivist research philosophy enables a sophisticated comprehension of the socio-economic landscape, emphasizing the influence of colonial land policies and labor recruitment on the Maragoli communities. The research outcomes elucidate the structural disparities and power relations intrinsic to colonialism, exemplified by the dispossession of land and labor capacity within Maragoli households.

The examination of missionary endeavors adds layers to the narrative, revealing the intricate interplay between religious institutions, economic activities, and gender dynamics within Maragoli society. The founders of the Pentecostal Assemblies of God (PAG) exemplified a dual commitment as both missionaries and agriculturalists, underscoring the complex interconnections among spirituality, economic sustenance, and gender dynamics. In summary, Gender Analysis theory, Feminist Epistemology, and Interpretivism research philosophy deepen our comprehension of the intricate socio-economic and gendered dynamics in Maragoli food production and labor relations during the pre- and post-World War I era.These frameworks illuminate the capacity of Maragoli individuals and communities to navigate the disruptions of colonialism and to actively shape their livelihood strategies.

3.7 Dynamics in Land and labour Relations in Maragoli Up to 1920

The preceding chapter elucidated that the Maragoli land tenure system was inherently communal in nature. Land was collectively held and managed by clans and extended families, where access rights were determined by lineage, kinship, and negotiated use, rather than by fixed individual ownership.

This framework underscored the importance of fair allocation, adaptability to seasonal variations, and a commitment to social accountability in the utilization of land resources. With the emergence of colonialism, the British administration initiated a methodical effort to undermine African land tenure systems. Colonial officials and settlers frequently regarded communal landholding as an archaic, unstable, and ineffective system—claiming that Africans were devoid of any substantive or legal understanding of land ownership.[922] This ideological framework offered a rationale for the establishment of European-style land tenure systems, emphasizing individual ownership, defined boundaries, and formal title deeds.

This colonial reconfiguration of land tenure effectively fulfilled multiple objectives. It enabled the appropriation of land for settler agriculture and state initiatives, allowed for the taxation of African families according to their individual landholdings, and synchronized rural land utilization with the requirements of cash crop farming. In regions such as Maragoli, characterized by fertile land and high population density, this transition produced notably disruptive consequences. The gradual erosion of communal rights led to the commodification of land.

Initially via registration and surveys, subsequently through the processes of buying, selling, and leasing. The alterations in question eroded established authority, exacerbated social stratification, and set the stage for enduring land scarcity and conflict. This was

[922] Kenya National Archives (KNA), *PC/NZA/1/15/3, Native Land Tenure Memorandum, North Kavirondo Province, 1924*; see also Bruce Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990), 204–210.

accomplished by declaring all lands as crown lands, thereby facilitating the alienation of African land for colonial purposes through various legislations such as land ordinances. The assertion was made that African land rights were contingent upon the active utilization of the land. Any land that was not being actively cultivated or utilized was deemed 'vacant' or 'unoccupied.' These fallacies were frequently employed by the colonial authorities to rationalize the appropriation of African territories.[923]

The British colonial administration's prior indifference towards the East Africa Protectorate underwent a significant transformation after the completion of the Uganda Railway in 1901. The railway, concluding at Port Florence (present-day Kisumu), addressed the logistical challenges of reaching the interior and facilitated the extension of direct colonial governance, military deployment, and settler encroachment into areas that were once isolated.[924] This infrastructural advancement marked a pivotal moment in the colonial government's capacity to infiltrate local economies and implement novel agricultural and administrative strategies.

The advent of the railway for the Maragoli signified the onset of a profound transformation in their food production systems.

In Maragoli, agriculture before colonial influence was fundamentally oriented towards subsistence, characterized by collective labor and a variety of crops tailored to meet local dietary, spiritual, and ecological requirements. The incorporation of the region into the colonial economy, enabled by railway connectivity, imposed market-driven demands and

[923]Ibid., p.17.

[924] M. F. Hill, *Permanent Way, Volume I: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1949), 115–117.

administrative oversight on Maragoli agriculture. Farmers found themselves increasingly urged—or compelled—to cultivate commercially viable crops such as maize and cotton, in lieu of traditional staples like millet and sim sim.[925]

This reorientation of production had far-reaching implications for Maragoli's social and economic structures, particularly in terms of gender relations of production. Women's traditional control over food production and land use was progressively undermined as men aligned themselves with the colonial cash economy, claiming control over cash crops, labor allocation, and the resulting income.[926]

As land and labor were reallocated to fulfill colonial economic aims, the significance of women's roles diminished and became more marginalized, despite the growing demands of their domestic and subsistence labor. Consequently, the Uganda Railway transcended mere physical connectivity; it functioned as an instrument of colonial economic transformation that reconfigured land utilization, gender dynamics, and local economies in Maragoli and its surroundings. The railway line initially facilitated transportation, and subsequently, the decommissioned railway line. Employees of Asian descent identified the vicinity adjacent to the railway as conducive for commercial activities and proceeded to establish business establishments in that location. The railway facilitated the arrival of various missionary groups, who played a pivotal role in setting the stage for the eventual colonization of Maragoli.[927]

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[925] Kenya National Archives (KNA), *DC/NN/2/5/4, Native Agriculture Reports, North Kavirondo, 1910–1925*

[926] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–1950* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 86–89.

[927]Stellah M Mukhovi, "The impact of farm technologies on household food security among smallholders in western province of Kenya: A gendered perspective." PhD diss., University of Nairobi., 2009, p.57.

Consequently, by the year 1901, the consensus was established that the protectorate must sustain its existence through progressive development. The approach and catalyst for development presented a complex challenge. At the outset, the concept of Asian migrants serving as agents of protection for development was proposed.

It has also been proposed that Jews would be resettled. This was attributable to the industrious disposition of the Jewish community and the imperative to enhance Kenya's economic viability as a colony. However, following extensive deliberation and consultation among British industrialists, the notion of Asian settlers was ultimately discarded in favor of European ones.[928] The Jewish settlement was equally opposed by the Planters' and Farmers' Association in the protectorate who favoured European settlement.[929] The Jews had been opposed due to the feeling that once they had been settled the Jews would be more independent and hence compromise the British interests in the protectorate.

The rise and establishment of settler estate production in Kenya was not a mere coincidence; rather, it was the result of a deliberate interplay of economic, political, and geographical factors. By the early 20th century, officials at the British Foreign Office grew increasingly concerned regarding the financial strain that Kenya was imposing on the imperial treasury. The substantial expenses linked to colonial governance, military pacification efforts, and infrastructure development—most notably the construction of the Uganda Railway—resulted in an increasing reliance on financial support from Britain.[930]

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[928]Ibid., p.66.
[929]Ibid., p.73.
[930] Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Book One: State and Class* (London: James Currey, 1992), 84–85.

The railway to Port Florence (Kisumu) was completed in 1901, and subsequently, the focus shifted to the economic viability of this costly infrastructure. The objective of colonial planners was to encourage commercial activity along the rail route in order to entice European settlers who could build productive estates, pay taxes, and contribute to colonial revenue streams, as well as to generate freight revenue. .[931] Settler agriculture—particularly the cultivation of cash crops such as coffee, tea, and later pyrethrum—was thus positioned as a solution to multiple problems: the repayment of railway costs, the self-financing of the colony, and the consolidation of British geopolitical presence in East Africa.

Geographical factors also favored the establishment of European estates in Kenya. The central highlands and parts of the Rift Valley were identified by colonial agronomists and settlers as ideal for temperate cash crops, due to their high altitude, fertile soils, and moderate climate. These areas were systematically alienated from African communities and designated as "White Highlands," reinforcing racialized patterns of land access and economic opportunity.[932] This economic model not only reshaped landholding patterns but also contributed to labor displacement and the coercive integration of African communities—including the Maragoli—into wage labor and market-oriented production, often under exploitative terms.

This British position made the colonial government intensify its policies on the Locals the Maragoli included and started including the Maragoli into the taxation program. This was through initially asking them to pay their taxes in kind and later introduced the Rupee as a

[931] M. F. Hill, *Permanent Way, Volume I: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway* (Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbours, 1949), 135–140.
[932] Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Henry Holt, 2005), 40–43

standard of paying tax. In Maragoli, new crop varities such as the white flint maize and ground nuts began to be introduced into the region to increase the region's contribution to the export trade hence make the railway construction an economic venture.

Consequently, Britain was confronted with the challenge of fostering local export industries in order to ensure that "both the Protectorate and railway pay." ."[933] The encouragement of European immigration was predicated on the expectation that these individuals would contribute to production for export purposes. The significance of European settlement was notably emphasized in 1901 when Charles Eliot succeeded Hardinge as commissioner. Eliot expressed opposition to Indian settlement, advocating for the confinement of Indigenous peoples to the lowlands, while designating the highlands exclusively for European habitation. He contended, "Holding the view that the East African highlands predominantly belong to the white man, I question the prudence of establishing substantial populations of Indians in the colony."."[934] With such support from the commissioner, the deal had been sealed; European settlers were to be settled in Kenya.

The influx of European settlers in Kenya emerged as a pivotal element in the nation's historical narrative, influencing colonial political, social, and economic strategies from the early 20th century through the aftermath of the Second World War, all aimed at facilitating European settlement in the region. The concentration of European migrants in agriculture, coupled with the agricultural policies implemented that favored settler agriculture, significantly influenced gender relations of production, not only in Maragoli but throughout the entire colony. In the context of the Maragoli case, the introduction of

[933]William Robert Ochieng, (1989). *Op.Cit*, p.39.
[934]Maurice Peter Keith Sorrenson, *Op.Cit*, p.36.

colonial chiefs in the region was perceived as a preliminary measure aimed at facilitating the integration of the area into the broader framework of colonialism. The colonial policies were disseminated to the local populace through the intermediaries of the chiefs.

The initial leaders were predominantly Wanga rather than Maragolis, following the elevation of Nabongo to the status of paramount chief. The chieftaincy served as the conduit through which the Maragoli commenced their tax contributions to the colonial administration and became integrated into colonial labor initiatives. At the dawn of the 20th century, the consensus emerged that white settlement represented the most advantageous pathway for the advancement of the protectorate. The process of establishing white settlers was, nonetheless, a complex endeavor that necessitated the comprehensive backing of the government. It became imperative to establish regulations governing the acquisition of land initially, followed by the procurement of labor. The policies implemented regarding land, labor, and taxation were strategically designed to bolster settler agriculture, thereby effecting a gradual yet significant transformation in the economic framework of African societies, which in turn influenced gender relations within production. The alterations in land tenure, labor, and taxation were perceived in varied ways among different ethnic groups, social classes, and gender categories.

Land alienation was the initial approach to evicting Africans from their economic output, with the intention of freeing up African labor for settler production. Though land alienation was not very much serious in Maragoli as other parts like Kikuyu, this colonial policy had myriads of consequences to the Maragoli society; the increased settler demand for labour saw many Maragoli young men leaving their initial agricultural assignments to go and work on the created settler lands. Previous Maragoli intensive land use and shifting-cultivation

as a key feature of their pre-colonial food production mechanism would not be compatible with settler agriculture.

Consequently, the Maragoli were compelled to discontinue their practice of agricultural production. Consequently, every conceivable measure was implemented throughout the colony to exclude Africans from the economic production process. .[935] The Imperial British East African Company (IBEACo) enacted the first land law in 1894. The occupant/settler was given a certificate of occupation of 21 years lease.[936] This law remained in force until 1897 when the lease was increased to 99 years.

The settlers' aspiration for land and labor served as compelling motivations for the government to enact legislation that further alienated African land. The implementation of the East Africa (Lands) Order in Council, 1901, dissuaded individual settlers from engaging in negotiations with Africans regarding land acquisition. All territory within the protectorate was allocated to His Majesty the King. The order's implication was that Africans relinquished ownership of their land, granting the government the authority to alienate land for the benefit of settlers.

In 1902, the Crown Land Ordinance was enacted which, stated

> …in all dealings with the Crown land regard shall be given for the rights and requirements of natives, and in particular the commissioner shall not sell or lease any land in the actual occupation of natives.[937]

The settlers' pursuit of land and labor acted as significant incentives for the government to implement laws that increasingly marginalized African land ownership. The enactment

[935]Ross W. McGregor, *Kenya from Within: A Short Political History*. Routledge, 2012, p.44.
[936]Ibid., p.78.
[937]Maurice Peter Keith Sorrenson, *Op*, *Cit*, p 18.

of the East Africa (Lands) Order in Council, 1901, discouraged individual settlers from entering into negotiations with Africans concerning land acquisition.

All territory encompassed by the protectorate was designated for His Majesty the King. The order suggested that Africans surrendered their rights to land, thereby empowering the government to appropriate land for the advantage of settlers.[938] Additionally, it extended the lease length from 99 to 999 years. Additionally, the law acknowledged the existence of African reserves but failed to establish boundaries, so creating the potential for additional estrangement. Until 1926, African reserves were not delineated to safeguard them from more alienation. .[939] Ex-soldiers were urged to establish themselves in the Soldier Settlement Scheme by the conclusion of the First World War.

The 1915 ordinance's most detrimental effect on the Africans was the complete segregation of the highlands for Europeans alone. [940] The Maragoli upon creation of the White highlands, especially in the Rift valley, a number of their young men started moving into the highlands for wage labour in order to help their families back in Maragoli meet the new colonial demands. Such young men who initially formed an integral part of the Maragoli food production cycle reduced the Maragoli male labour supply on the Maragoli farms.

Moreover, the settler farms created a new avenue for the young men to break themselves from the traditional patriarchal orders. Instead of relying on their fathers for land and cows for dowry, industrious yong men now became the becon of hope for their families. From the oral submissions, it was confirmed that there were quite a number of young men who

[938]Ibid., p.21.
[939]Ibid., p.107.
[940]Ibid, p.118.

came back in Maragoli and even purchased their own lands and cattle from their wage labour.

Others on return joined the upcoming townships as professionals ranging from tailoring and masonry. This was due to the new skills they had acquired through external interactions in the wage labour market. Emergence of such professionals began to diversify the Maragoli food production mechanisms from dependence on farm production to the new colonial employment. Since most of those who were joining the colonoial employment were ypung men, a new gender dimension began to emerge.

The traditional partriachal order was now giving way to the colonial partriachy where the young male professionals were now taking over the place of the old Maragoli partriachs due to the latter's interaction and integration into the new colonial system. There were also a few Maragoli girls who joined the new urban life especially as domestic home workers in the towns. Such girls used this chance to join the working class and support their families as bread winners. This gradually began to bring in a new gender twist of women becoming visible economic family pillars.

Despite sweeping changes brought about by colonial economic restructuring, the majority of Maragoli women remained tied to the land, continuing their primary role as food producers. While men were increasingly drawn into wage labor or cash crop farming—often under colonial coercion or economic pressure—women sustained subsistence agriculture, though now under more challenging conditions.The alienation of African land for settler use and infrastructure development, combined with population growth, meant

that traditional mechanisms for responding to land pressure, such as territorial expansion or shifting cultivation, were no longer viable.[941]

Africans, including the Maragoli, were forced to make do with increasingly limited land resources. This situation compelled some to seek wage employment on settler estates, while others migrated to emerging urban centers like Nairobi and Kisumu in search of opportunities.[942] These shifts fragmented families and altered community structures, often intensifying the burden on women who remained in rural areas to manage households and farms under constrained conditions.The transformation of the late 19th and early 20th centuries also had a profound impact on the Maragoli land tenure system. Initially shaped by communal ownership and lineage-based access, the system began to fracture under the twin pressures of commercialization—driven first by the caravan trade—and formal land alienation under British rule.

As land became a commodity and boundaries were fixed, communal landholding gave way to more individualized claims, particularly among male elites who aligned themselves with colonial authorities.[943] This not only eroded the traditional flexibility of the tenure system but also marginalized women and the landless, deepening social inequality within the community.The landowning sub-clan became possessive when there was no more land to occupy, and the community's generous spirit, which had previously fostered a feeling of responsibility, began to fade away. [944]

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[941] Kenya National Archives (KNA), *DC/NN/2/4/6, North Kavirondo Land Inquiry Reports, 1925*

[942] Frederick Cooper, *On the African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 45–49.

[943] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–1950* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 92–96.

[944]Kigalu Obeda, (76 Years), Oral interview, on 13th August 2023.

That shift toward individualism among the Maragoli marked a profound transformation in social and economic structures. The communal land ownership that had defined pre-colonial society was steadily eroded by colonial policies that emphasized private property, land titling, and capitalist agricultural models. By the 1950s, individual land ownership had become an accepted reality, reshaping kinship ties, economic relations, and even social identity.[945] Land alienation had particularly deep consequences for gender roles. As arable land shrank due to colonial appropriation and cash crop prioritization, women—who traditionally played central roles in food production, found themselves increasingly marginalized.

The transition to export-oriented farming disrupted local subsistence economies, pushing men into wage labor while limiting women's access to land and agricultural autonomy. This process was not just about economic restructuring. It was a forced adaptation to colonial rule that reshaped how the Maragoli engaged with land, labor, and community life. The breakdown of communal governance also weakened collective resilience, making it harder to resist further colonial pressures.[946]As the majority of arable land in Maragoli was designated for annual crops, women experienced significant losses due to the colonial enterprises. The territories that once flourished with agricultural opportunities for women, particularly within forested areas, have now been appropriated and cleared for colonial

[945] Bruce Berman & John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (1992): Discusses colonial governance, land policies, and African resistance.

[946] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1972): Examines economic exploitation and capitalist articulation in colonial Africa.

purposes, encompassing the establishment of health, educational, and administrative facilities.

This constituted an integral aspect of the articulation process, serving as a fundamental principle within the framework of the Articulation of Modes of Production theory.

In the pre-colonial era, women received land from their husbands, derived from ancestral claims, as well as access to nearby bushes and forests. With the entrenchment of colonialism in Maragoli territory, the allocation of land to brides by their husbands diminished, as opportunities for expansion became increasingly scarce. The loss of land profoundly influenced the dynamics of gender relations within the labor sphere. A greater number of males were compelled to leave Maragoli in pursuit of wage labor opportunities.[947] After securing land, the settlers' next move was to find a steady supply of workers to cultivate it.

The colonial settlers' guru, Lord Delamare, famously said, "land is of no use without effort." .[948] He posited that in addition to the Africans ceding their land to the white settlers, they were also anticipated to furnish labor to render that land productive. His assertion consequently initiated the resolute endeavors of the colonial administration to compel the African populace to furnish the necessary labor force. The initial measure undertaken by the colonial administration to establish a class of migrant wage laborers involved the abrogation of land rights from the African populace, alongside the imposition of taxation.[949]The process of land alienation was executed through various methods, including

[947]Harris, Larrel W., David L. Stitcher, and William C. Heyl. "Effects of inhibitors of acetylcholine synthesis on brain acetylcholine and survival in soman-intoxicated animals." *Life Sciences* 30, no. 22, p.1870.
[948]William Robert Ochieng and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An economic history of Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Publishers, 1992, p.60.
[949]W. Mwikali, and P. Tanui, *Op*, *Cit*, p.13.

direct seizure, conquest, coercion of local chiefs, and any other strategies available to the colonial powers. This action was undertaken to render the Africans impoverished, thereby compelling them to seek wage labor.

The chiefs were consequently granted the authority to not only gather hut and poll taxes but also to supply affordable labor for public and settler needs. Consequently, this period witnessed the implementation of a variety of labor regulations.[950]

The migration of Maragoli men to seek employment beyond their native territories significantly influenced their livestock production practices. The exodus of labor resulted in significant shortages within the pre-colonial food production systems in Maragoli. In light of these shortages, the conventional distribution of domestic responsibilities underwent modification. In contrast to the pre-colonial period, there has been a notable increase in the participation of younger individuals, the elderly, and women in activities related to food production. This represented an emerging phenomenon within the Maragoli economy, instigated by the requisites of colonial labor. As a consequence of the high demand for labor, several Maragoli farmers had to sell off their livestock and agricultural products in order to avoid being forced to work for the colonial government as wage laborers. [951]

During the initial decades of colonial governance, the necessity for sufficient labor was paramount, particularly given the undercapitalization faced by both the state and the settlers. Furthermore, the establishment of the colonial economy necessitated a workforce: the construction of rail lines and roads, the building of dams and bridges, the creation of

[950]Ibid., p.16.
[951]Ibid, p. 18.

administrative centres, and the establishment of settler farms were all imperative tasks. Even missionaries, who believed that Africans required the development of a consistent and disciplined "work ethic" as a prerequisite for their progress, did not regard forced labor as inherently malevolent.[952] Acquisition of African labour created stiff competition for labour between the African cultivators and White settlers.

There was a need for agricultural labor from both settlers and indigenous, according to Charles Eliot's most recent annual report, and the Indians had few reasons to leave their country to labor for the Europeans. .[953] In light of the reluctance exhibited by Africans to engage in labor for settlers, various policies were instituted to facilitate the acquisition of inexpensive African labor by Europeans, consequently altering the established gender division of labor. The arrival of European settlers disrupted traditional gender roles in production, leading to a reallocation of tasks that had previously been designated for specific gender groups. The settler plantations in the vicinity of Maragoli and the emerging towns exerted a dual influence on the dynamics of gender relations within the sphere of production.

On one hand, settler plantations and the emerging towns functioned as recipients of the surplus labor generated by the transformations brought about by colonialism. Conversely, they established a prepared marketplace for the agricultural products cultivated in Maragoli. In light of market availability, Maragoli persisted in meeting the demand by consistently cultivating agricultural products from their farms and distributing them to

[952]Mary Omosa, "Incorporation into the Market Economy and Food Security among the Gusii: Paradise Lost or Paradise Gained?" *African Journal of sociology* 4, no. 1 (2008) p.94.
[953] Ibid.

neighboring communities, even as there was a gradual decline in male labor participation in the region. The gradual expansion of women's labor began to influence the varieties of crops cultivated, a shift that became evident by the mid-1920s, as Maragoli transitioned to less labor-intensive crops like maize while discontinuing the cultivation of more labor-demanding crops such as sorghum and millet.

This, in turn, adversely affected the food security of Maragoli, as the decline of traditional crops, which were rich in nutrients and more resilient to the caprices of weather, became evident. Historically, these traditional crops have served the purpose of brewing beer, playing a significant role in celebrations and encouraging male involvement in food production endeavors. The removal of these crops from the Maragoli agricultural calendar disheartened men, leading them to abandon agriculture altogether. The emergence of alternative leisure beverages, particularly in the newly developed towns where Maragoli men have begun to migrate, has exacerbated the allure of beer, diverting attention from agricultural pursuits.[954]

The significance of migrant labor emerged as a crucial element of the colonial economy in the early twentieth century. In the initial phases of colonial governance, Africans did not prioritize migrant labor as their primary choice, as they maintained their capacity for independent production free from governmental intrusion. However, the persistence of independent production among Africans would have resulted in an inadequate labor supply for settlers, ultimately leading to the collapse of settler estates. Consequently, legal

[954]Ibid., p.20.

frameworks were established from the outset to guarantee a sufficient influx of African labor, despite the persistently inadequate colonial wages.

Historical evidence from colonial Africa demonstrates a consistent collaboration between the colonial state and the foreign office, which facilitated the establishment of a legal framework that enabled the recruitment and maintenance of labor in sufficient quantities and at minimal expense to the employer.[955]In a manner reminiscent of their approach to land alienation, the white settlers played a significant role in the formulation of numerous labor laws. Given that the government stood as the largest employer, the demands put forth by the settlers were seldom challenged. For example, as early as 1906, a draft of the Master and Servant Ordinance submitted to the government by the settler was accepted with minimal modifications. Government officials endorsed the ordinance "to secure adequate services from the indigenous population, who are unaccustomed to the advantages and responsibilities associated with sustained labor."[956]

Notwithstanding the implementation of the 1906 ordinance, the anticipated influx of African labor did not materialize as expected. This facilitated the implementation of the 1908 Communal Labour Law, which was designed to enhance labor for governmental initiatives, including the construction of infrastructure such as roads, waterways, bridges, and railways. This practice was frequently employed to compel Africans into labor for private entities.[957] The arrival of the white man significantly transformed the Maragoli,

[955]David M. Anderson, "Master and servant in colonial Kenya, 1895–1939." *The Journal of African History* 41, no. 3 (2000): p.461.
[956]Ibid, p. 467.
[957]Ibid., p.469.

profoundly influencing the lifestyle of the community. In 1918, for example, the practice of compensating for squatting and taxes in kind was eliminated and supplanted by taxes originating from public works or settler farms for wage labor, which subsequently transitioned to monetary tax payments, primarily in Rupees and later in shillings. In 1919, as taxation emerged as a recognized norm, the hut tax was elevated from three to five Rupees, equivalent to an entire month of labor on a settler's farm. From 1912 to 1921, the aggregate tax revenue derived from the Maragoli land exceeded 100,000 Rupees, with hut and poll taxes constituting the predominant sources of this income.[958]

The magnitude of taxation was comparable to, in tangible terms, 65,000 goats, or alternatively, 3,000 years of complete labor, or 1,000 full bride wealth payments as per the established Maragoli customs.[959] The hut tax led to the sale of livestock, such as bullocks, to white farmers, as well as the commodification of labor to white settlers. The living conditions of the Maragoli families were adversely impacted, as they resorted to demolishing their structures in an effort to evade hut tax, ultimately leading to overcrowding as a form of resistance. The dismantling of the goats' shelters necessitated that the goats cohabitate within the primary dwelling alongside the family, thereby compromising sanitary conditions. The encroachment of colonial capitalism was, consequently, gradually destabilizing the Maragoli pre-colonial economy and way of life.

The capacity of the chiefs and headmen to levy taxes as needed served as the benchmark for evaluating their effectiveness in the eyes of the colonial administration. Their subjects were assessed by an alternative standard. A chief regarded as effective in tax collection by

[958]KNA, DC /NN1/4.
[959]Henry, Nancy. "George Eliot and the Colonies." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2001): p.418.

the administration was perceived as oppressive by the populace, yet he was diligent in his efforts towards the colonial market and merited advancement.[960]

The leaders found themselves caught in a dilemma, balancing the imperative to administer effectively while ensuring just governance for their constituents. Frequently, the former held greater significance. Instances of tyranny and malfeasance among the chiefs were prevalent. This positioned the administration in a state of contradiction. The justification of an oppressive and corrupt leader signifies a profound betrayal of the very subjects whose welfare the administration was ostensibly tasked with safeguarding.

However, should this occur, tax payments would be hindered, resulting in the colonial state's inability to adequately amass capital.[961] At times, the administration specifically identified and addressed instances of corruption, apprehending or dismissing leaders accused of such misconduct. This was executed without consideration of the inherent relationship between corruption and oppression. The laxity exhibited by the chiefs in the collection of taxes provided a further justification for the removal of these leaders. While writing on the Luo, Ndege[962] gives such an illustration. 'As early as 1911, D.R Crampton, the District Commissioner of Kisii, complained in a letter to the Provincial Commissioner at Kisumu that:

> There seems to have been a great deal of dissatisfaction in certain clans owing to oppression by the chiefs. When we first came to the country, an effort was made to strengthen the hands of the chiefs and give them authority over their respective tribes, and although this was to a great extent brought about, it resulted in the chiefs levying fees in the name of the Government but without reference thereto, and with the object of enriching themselves only.[963]

[960]KNA/AGRI/1/42.
[961]Peter O. Ndege, *Op*, *Cit*, p.58.
[962]Ibid p.814.
[963]Ibid., 815.

In the subsequent years District Commissioners in the colony reported that in the majority of cases, the chiefs and headmen were indolent, incompetent and untrustworthy. The outbreak of the First World War also had profound effects on the Maragoli's labour pattern. The division of labour was disrupted. A large number of able-bodied young men were recruited to join the carrier corps to participate in war between the British and Germans in Tanganyika.[964] The initial recruits who joined were recruited voluntarily. This was because warrior activities had been rendered redundant by the colonial state.

When voluntary labour to serve in the army was no longer forthcoming, direct coercion was used to recruit labour into the carrier corps.[965] Chiefs ensured that the needed labour was available by capturing young people and forcing them to join the army.[966] There was generally a high demand for fighting men as well as porters to serve in King Africa Riffles (KAR). Due to the poor conditions and high mortality rate of the carrier corps, work in the settler farms became particularly popular.[967] Squatting became a more attractive alternative. From the foregoing discussion, the widespread exodus of manpower due to taxation and World War I adversely affected production in Maragoli land. Women and elderly men were left in the reserve to carry out all the agricultural activities. Due to extraction of labour, coupled with land alienation and famine of 1917 to 1920, African crop production declined.

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[964]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 20th June 2022.
[965]Maxon, Robert, *East Africa: an introductory history*. West Virginia University Press, 2010, p.96
[966]Kigalu Obeda, (76 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023.
[967]Maxon, Robert M., and William Robert Ochieng, eds. *An Economic History of Kenya*. East African Educational Publishers, 1992, p.96.

Women and elderly men started carrying out all cultivation and cattle keeping duties, leading to a decline in food production capacities. In 1919, the colonial government began to enforce passed Northey labour circulars which legalized forced labour in Kenya.

Northey, the Governor of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1919 had instructed government officials to coerce African labour to work on settler-owned farms and estates. This had far reaching ramification on Kenya in general and Maragoli in particular as their agriculture and livestock sector was affected due to shortage of labour. In the absence of any viable mineral deposits, the British became keen on turning around the economic entrepreneurship of the Kenyan colony based on agriculture. Essentially, the British believed that land was the most critical economic asset that the new colonial economy in Kenya (and East Africa as a whole) offered as a versatile of capital accumulation.[968] This explains why upon the declaration of the protectorate government over the colony, all land was declared Crown land.[969] The creation of African reserves, the alienation of land for European use and the designation of protected forest areas brought an end to the Maragoli land abundance. Much like the Native Americans in North America, herding was restricted to specific areas.

A more serious situation confronted the farming people, particularly in the Rift valley part of Kenya an area where a number of the Maragoli had already started running to in search of better life due to increased misery in the North Kavirondo reserve.[970] Large tracks of land that were set aside for European settlement at first remained accessible to the Maragoli

[968]Ibid., p.101.
[969]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University, 2009, p.127.
[970]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 20th August 2023.

farmers; they were allowed to graze animals and grow crops. The Maragoli on their side would reciprocate by offering milk and later working on European farms. The Maragoli viewed such relationship in traditional terms that both were benefitting from the land.[971] The situation of joint ownership between the African and European farmers suddenly changed when the later invoked the colonial laws by imposing restrictions on African activities.The African farmer was forced to see that a land dispute had been created and that changes in traditional practices were necessary.[972] The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 stated that all lands not occupied were crown land.[973] It was now clear that as per the 1902 ordinance; no African had any title to land; and his claim to land was only recognized as long as he occupied it.[974] Together with Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 which outlined demarcations of "native reserves" the Maragoli found themselves confined in an area without an option of spreading out as was the case previously. Right from the beginning, reserves were established to make way for European settlement.[975] The creation of reserves had increased pressure on land.

Between 1895 and 1920, the Maragoli people of Western Kenya were drawn into colonial labour systems through coercive policies like hut and poll taxes, which forced men to migrate for wage labour. This disrupted traditional gender roles and family structures, as women took on greater agricultural responsibilities amid land scarcity and declining yields. Using Gender Analysis theory, Feminist Epistemology, and Interpretivism philosophy, the study reveals how colonialism reshaped communal land tenure, labour exploitation, and

[971]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, (2009). *Op. Cit.,* p.130.
[972]Ibid.
[973]Ogendo Okoth, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 30.
[974]Ibid., p.32.
[975]Elspeth Joscelin Grant Huxley, *Op*, *Cit*, p.45.

gender dynamics. These frameworks highlight women's agency under colonial constraints and help interpret the complex power relations and resistance within Maragoli society. Together, they underscore how gender, colonialism, and the struggle for autonomy shaped the Maragoli socio-economic landscape. The next section explores how these colonial changes affected food production mechanisms.

3.8 Colonial Changes on Maragoli food production mechanisms

The Maragoli kin corporate mode, with its collective underpinning, integrated and articulated with capitalism during British colonial rule. The collective system was affected by a British ideology of patriarchy and latter amplifying the role of *omwene hango*. Important changes in political aspects were in the imposition of chieftainship; first a non-Maragoli Paramount Chief, replaced in the early 1930's by Maragoli location chiefs, and bounded reservation areas.[976] Maragoli continued kin corporate relations and traditional land-owning practices and aspects of reciprocity in these reserve areas. Maragoli men began a circular relationship with outside wage labour imposed by British rule, (the need for labour on settler farms and taxation) and their land at home. In men's absence, women added men's labour and managerial responsibilities to their farming duties and worked to produce and feed the male labour force.[977] At the time when women's responsibilities increased, women's and men's worlds became more separate.

Extended periods of food shortage became notable in colonial Maragoli as early as 1906. Such food shortage was caused by extended periods of drought which led to food shortage.

[976]Judith Mae Abwunza,1985, *Op*, *Cit*, p.65.
[977]Ruth Nasimiyu, "Women in the colonial economy of Bungoma: Role of women in agriculture, 1902–1960." *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development* 15 (1985): p.60.

In early 1906, drought struck the Maragoli region, and widespread hunger followed as surely as one season follows another. So severe was the hunger that people resorted to the traditional remedy of tying a string around their waist to diminish the hunger pains. Mutongi while writing over the same reports that she was informed nearly a century later that;

> "The string shrank the stomach." "With a string tied tightly around your stomach," Jane Mirimu told me, perhaps drawing on her own recent experience of food shortages, "your stomach did not make many hunger noises so you forgot about your hunger and just lay there."[978]

Colonialism had dissolved a majority of the pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms, the Maragoli famine striken individuals ran to the newly created colonial food availing mechanisms. Many ran to the Kaimosi mission centre where they obtained food for upkeep. The missionaries on the other hand seized the opportunity to articulate the Maragoli into the new Chrisitan faith. From the Focus Group Discussion sessions, most of the participants concurred that Kaimosi mission centre continued to play a great role in cushioning the Maragoli during the hard times of famine.[979]

When colonialism brought cash and commodities to the traditional Maragoli economy, a further separation was encouraged between women and men. Relations between them were thus made additionally problematic. Women resented the implication of responsibility connected to the necessity to provide more than daily food requirements from "home work" in order to survive. They also resented that colonial policies led to inadequate land to get

[978]K. Mutongi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.33.
[979]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Govoga Chief's Office Grounds, on 2nd September, 2023

the cash needed to buy food items and commodities. This resentment was directed to men who had failed to supply land and cash.

Men added further to the responsibility shouldered by women by blaming them for mismanagement, for example when the yield of maize from a garden was low or when it disappeared "too fast".[980] The culturally defined categories of work by gender created difficulties but these were made worse when men or women did not live up to expectations.[981]

Men and women suffered community disapproval or a loss of social status when they began to participate in work deemed the responsibility of the other. This was particularly evident for men who started doing women's work.[982] This was seen as role confusion: "A lazy woman tells her husband 'go and get water and cook', and he goes! Or there are women who claim to be sick, refuse to go to hospital, the husband does the work, but she gets up to eat! This is a woman acting like a man and a man acting like a woman".

When a man engages in woman's work, both he and his wife are highly criticised; a man fetching water probably due to the wife being engaged in other activities such as selling certain items in the nearby market centre suffers ridicule and his wife is considered lazy.[983]

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[980]Loyce Agiza, (50 Years), Oral interview, on 17th July, 2023.
[981]Williams Joan, *Unbending gender: Why family and work conflict and what to do about it*. Oxford University Press, 2001, p.43.
[982]Leacock Eleanor *et. al.,* "Women's status in egalitarian society: Implications for social evolution [and comments and reply]." *Current anthropology* 19, no. 2 (1978): 247-275., p.250.
[983]Williams Christine L., *Still a man's world: Men who do women's work*. Univ of California Press, 2023., p.53.

In one case, a sick wife's request to remove the cow dung brought a tirade of overwhelming magnitude from her husband, concluding with, "Do you think I have breasts?[984]

The Maragoli people were gradually drawn to a money economy through the levying of taxes, collective fines, offering their labour for wages and growing of cash crops such as maize. The British wanted to make their presence felt, especially during these early years. Through the above stated policies, the Maragoli were gradually brought under capitalist economy. Berman[985] argues that the indigenous societies in which money, commodity production, wage labour and bureaucratic forms of organization were virtually unknown were progressively subdued gradually in favour of European forms of capital by a state that already had more than two centuries of development.

The African societies were subjected to contradictory forms and patterns of transformation, destruction and preservation of their internal structures, resulting in a wide variety of intermediate and hybrid social formations. This process, he continues to assert, did not occur instantaneously or uniformly in a single broad wave, but in a variety of forms and phases encountering different local conditions and responses. The resulting variations were determined by particular forms of external capitalist penetration and political subjugation of the structures of the indigenous societies and the diversity of the local ecology and resource endowment.

[984] Ibid.
[985] John Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya.* Nairobi: Heinman, (1990). p. 35.

Apart from government initiative in alienating land, settlers were also particularly keen in urging the government to delimit land occupied by Africans so that the "surplus" population would flow to settler areas as labourers. Such settler demands worsened the already frustrated colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms. Settlers' demands were articulated by the Colonialist Association formed in 1902, which became very vocal with the arrival of settlers from South Africa at the beginning of 1905. It is possible that settlers' pressure made the Land Commission to suggest the creation of African reserves as early as 1905 to limit their expansion[986] and by 1908, this insistence was continuing as indicated in the following statement:

> …the land set aside for Natives Reserves should be limited to the present requirements of the natives…the existence of unnecessary extensive reserves is directly antagonistic to an adequate labour supply.[987]

The settlers' desire for both land and labour acted as push factors for the government to pass acts alienating more African land. The settlers' appetite for land was further satisfied with the enactment of the 1915 Crown Land Ordinance. The ordinance declared all Africans' land, Crown Land and therefore, disinherited Africans making them tenants-at-will in their former land. This meant that they lost all legal rights to their land.

The ordinance empowered the governor to alienate African land if it was not "beneficially" occupied.[988] Besides, it increased the lease period from 99 to 999 years. Moreover, the ordinance recognized the existence of African reserves but did not demarcate them and therefore, left room for further alienation. It was not until 1926 that African reserves were

[986]Ibid., p.36.
[987]Ibid., p.37.
[988]Eidenoje Ososе. "Upgrading customary land title documents in Nigeria." *Africa Nazarene University Law Journal* 5, no. 2 (2017): p.89.

demarcated protecting them from further alienation.[989] By the close of the First World War, ex-soldiers were encouraged to settle in the Soldier Settlement Scheme. This was however, outside Maragoliland. The transformation in the late 19th century influenced Maragoli. In particular, commercial production for the caravan trade and later colonial policies, directly influenced Maragoli land tenure system and subsequently the attendant food production mechanisms. With no more new land to occupy, landowning sub-clan became possessive and the generosity that formerly ensured a sense of accountability in the community gradually lost significance.[990]

A phenomenon of individualism that had not been encouraged among the Maragoli just like in other African communities took root in the early years of the twentieth century, and by 1950s, became almost an accepted norm. Land alienation had important impact on gender relations of production. Most importantly, the amount of arable land dedicated to food crop production was considerably reduced.[991] Since most cultivable land in Maragoli was put under annual crops, women lost extensively to the new colonial land use policies.

In progressive years, the amount of land allotted to brides by their husbands reduced since there was no more land for expansion. Loss of land had significant effect on gender relations of labour. More males were pushed out of Maragoli to seek wage labour while women began to take responsibility for domestic production with little or no male help.[992] In the first decades of colonial rule, adequate labour was necessary especially because both the state and the settlers were undercapitalized. Moreover, labour was needed to lay the

[989]Ibid., p.90.
[990]Hezron Mwamili, (56 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th July 2023.
[991]Razavi Shahra. "Introduction: Agrarian change, gender and land rights." *Journal of Agrarian change* 3, no. 1-2 (2003): 2-32., p.7.
[992]Ibid.

foundation of the colonial economy: rail lines and roads had to be built, dams and bridges constructed, administrative centres erected and settler farms established. Forced labour was not considered as evil even by missionaries who thought that Africans needed to inculcate a steady and disciplined "work ethic" as a pre-condition for their advancement.[993]

Acquisition of African labour created stiff competition for labour between the African cultivators and White settlers. In his last annual report, Charles Eliot had indicated that settlers and natives needed agricultural labour at the same time and that natives had little incentives to leave their land to work for settlers.[994] Despite the Africans' unwillingness to work for settlers, policies were put in place to enable the Europeans procure cheap African labour thus disrupting gender division of labour. European settlement interfered with gender relations of production as men and women began doing chores that were previously assigned to specific gender group. Settler plantations around Maragoli and the proximity of Kisumu had double impact on gender relations of production.

Settler plantations and the upcoming urban centres around Maragoli served as receivers of the created "surplus labour" as a result of the various new colonial policies. On the other hand, they created a ready market for crops grown in Maragoli. Due to market availability, therefore, the Maragoli continued to satisfy the demand despite a gradual withdrawal of male labour from the agricultural activities. The stretching of women's labour slowly impacted on the types of crops grown, which became noticeable by the mid-1920s with the Maragoli growing less-labour demanding crops like maize. The diminishing cultivation of traditional crops such as millet and sorghum which were of higher nutritive value and more

[993]Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "The establishment of colonial rule, 1905-1920." *A modern history of Kenya* ,1980, p.50.
[994]Henry Nancy, "George Eliot and the Colonies." *Victorian Literature and Culture* 29, no. 2 (2001): p.420.

resistant to the vagrancies of weather negatively impacted on the established pre-colonial Maragoli food security.

Migrant labour became an important aspect of colonial economy from early twentieth century. However, in the early years of colonial rule, Africans never took migrant labour as the first option since they continued to produce independently without government interference. But the continuation of Africans' independent production would have meant that settlers could not get sufficient labour supply and therefore bringing settler estates to their knees. Thus, legal measures were taken from the earliest period to ensure adequate flow of African labour even though colonial wages remained miserably low.

Historical evidence from colonial Africa indicates that the colonial state and the foreign office always colluded with capital in providing the legal framework within which labour could be recruited and maintained in adequate numbers and at low cost to the employer.[995] Just as they put pressure during land alienation, the white settlers were behind most labour laws enacted and because the government was the biggest employer, rarely were settlers' demands objected. For instance, as early as 1906, a draft of Master and Servant Ordinance that was presented to the government by the settlers was accepted largely unaltered.

Government officials supported the ordinance "in order to obtain reasonable services from the natives who are unused to the benefits and obligations of continuous labour."[996]Despite enacting the 1906 ordinance, African labour was not forthcoming as anticipated. This

[995]David M. Anderson, *Op*, *Cit*, p.469.
[996]Ibid p.462.

promoted the putting in use of the 1908 Communal Labour Law aimed at raising labour for government projects like building infrastructure such as roads, waterways, bridges and railways. The same was often used to force Africans to work for private individuals.[997]

From the early years of the protectorate, African men moved to the coastal town of Mombasa as wage laborers. Most of these came from upcountry. In the early years of the twentieth century the migrants were attracted to the town by the high wages. While in the highlands one would obtain Rs. 3 to 5, at the coast he could make something between Rs.7 and 10 and sometimes more.

Most of them came from Ukambani and Kikuyu land. Governor Girouard pointed out in 1910 "The men are coming mainly from Wakikuyu, who without any recruiting, start off on their own initiative and walk 300 miles to the coast to seek work."[998] By 1912, the Luo and Luhyia (Kavirondo) and the Akikuyu dominated the labour composition in Mombasa. But by 1925, the Luo and the Luhia were dominating in Mombasa. There were 1,941 Kavirondo labourers compared to 1,185 Kikuyu labourers in Mombasa according to the Native Affairs Department Annual Report.[999]

By the first decade of the twentieth century therefore, Africans were moving to wage labour voluntarily. The amount of labour in the wage market was however, not sufficiently providing for the settlers and the government labour needs. Consequently, coercion to extract African labour for government projects was inevitable. Using Native Authority Laws of 1910 and 1912, the government appointed headmen who were required to compel

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[997]Ibid., p.470.
[998]Bethwel A. Ogot, (ed). *Hadith 5: Economic and Social History of East Africa*. Kenya Literature Bureau, 1976, p.90.
[999]Joseph Nabwera, "European settlers in the trans Nzoia district: A case study of racial domination in the Kenya white highlands, 1920-1946." Ph.D. diss., University of Nairobi, 1987, p.109.

Africans to suspend their domestic production to work on assigned government projects. This corvee labour on government projects was required from all able-bodied males and females for six days out in every three months.

In effect, this was forced labour for government purposes in the reserves. Failure to participate attracted a fine of thirty shillings or one-month imprisonment.[1000] The Village Headman Ordinance of 1902 authorized government appointed officials to recruit labour for public work deemed to be in the interest of the village. Despite this, labour remained scarce. Settlers' evidence before a Native Land Commission in 1913 maintained that the labour crisis could be settled through increase of African taxes and reducing the "native" land. They further advocated the use of corporal punishment on Africans.[1001] The commission resolved that government officials could "encourage" Africans to go for wage labour.[1002]

Given that white settlers would not manage intensive capital farming, and were also not prepared to do manual work, they expected the government to supply them with adequate and quality African labour. Ainsworth reminded the government that Whites would not work in a country inhabited by the "black race."[1003] Though the British had outlawed slavery, Ainsworth did not find it inappropriate to use Africans in the development of the colony. Scholars have argued that the British had outlawed slavery only after it had

[1000]Ibid., p.110.
[1001]Ibid., p.112.
[1002]Frederick Cooper, "From free labor to family allowances: Labor and African society in colonial discourse." *American Ethnologist* 16, no. 4 (1989): p.755.
[1003]Mungeam Gordon Hudson, "British rule in Kenya, 1895-1912: the establishment of administration in the East Africa Protectorate." *(No Title)* (1966)., p.133.

industrialized.[1004] By the 20th century, Kenya still lacked industries and therefore, the "black race" had to work just like they had done in Britain and other developed lands.

The option left for the government was to enact laws that would compel or even force Africans to work for the settlers. In 1908, during the tenure of Sir James Hayes Sadler, a labour Inquiry Board under the chairmanship of Sir Charles Bowring was instituted. It urged the government to be more aggressive in ensuring that Africans moved out of their homes for wage labour.

The committee was further of the opinion that:

> …the land set aside for Native Reserves should be limited to the present requirements of the locals; the committee being of the opinion that the existence of unnecessarily extensive reserves is directly antagonistic to an adequate labour supply.[1005]

According to the statement, the committee was of the opinion that alienation of more African land would force them to seek wage labour. To force the Maragoli work for settlers, the colonial office and the settlers made every effort to deny them the right to grow high valued crops like tea and coffee.

Without these crops, the Maragoli had either to grow foodstuffs for sale or seek wage labour. The introduction of foreign consumer products like cigarettes, liquor and clothes was a further push factor for the Maragoli to seek avenues for cash. The idea of small-scale farming was also discouraged in Maragoli because it restricted the flow of labour to settler

[1004]Walter Rodney, *Op*, *Cit*, p.108.
[1005]J.A McGregor,"The Victoria Falls 1900–1940: Landscape, tourism and the geographical imagination." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 29, no. 3 (2003): p.723.

farms as the labourers tended to give priority to their farms.[1006] But despite these restrictions, Maragoli continued to grow food crops in response to market opportunities availed by the upcoming urban population.

Scarcity of labour as a problem saw the formation of the 1912 Labour Commission, which was mandated to find ways and means of inducing the natives to "come out and work."[1007] The commission outlined various reasons for the poor labour supply. Among the reasons given was that "some tribes were rich out of land, stock and trade profits making it unnecessary to go for wage labour.[1008] It is not certain to what extent the settlers' suggestion to the Labour Commission influenced its recommendation. The commission recommended the registration of all male "natives" of sixteen years of age and above. It was not until 1919 with the conclusion of the war that the recommendation was implemented and its effects experienced by Africans. The implementation gave birth to the infamous *Kipande* system that was detested by Africans from 1920, and was notable in altering gender labour relations in colonial Kenya.

The First World War, 1914-1918 greatly impacted on labour not only in Maragoli but also in the rest of the protectorate. The war caused a crisis in labour demand because its several projects needed huge amounts of labour force. Labour was needed for example, to complete the infrastructure development started in the pre-war years. It was also required in plantations of coffee, tea, maize and sisal all directed to the war. Third, the war required African men both as carrier corps and real combatants. Consequently, thousands of able-bodied men were conscripted either forcefully or “voluntarily” for the British in the East

[1006]Kigalu Obeda, (76 Years), Oral Interview 10th July 2023.
[1007]McGregor JoAnn, *Op, Cit,* p725.
[1008]Ibid., p.726.

African campaign. But Maragoli like other Kenyan communities disliked conscription as expressed by a Maragoli woman, "when they were captured by force, we were left weeping and mourning."[1009]

The withdrawal of able-bodied males meant that agricultural labour both in African and settler farms fell on women, old men and children. Those left behind were not willing to work for the settlers as the following statement by a settler who was complaining for lack of labour illustrates: ‘’I feel most strongly that the world would not be rendered poorer by the elimination of those members of the society…who would rather starve than work.’[1010]The labour situation in the post-war period was even worse. European settlement was expanded in the post-war period with the settling of white ex-soldiers in the protectorate. Subsequently, there was heightened demand for African labour. Like in the early years of settlement, the government was sympathetic to the settlers.

In 1919, Governor Sir Edward Northey issued a circular dated 23rd October to government officials to “encourage” Africans to go for work. The district officers were asked to do “what they can to induce an augmentation of the supply of labour” for farms “by every possible lawful influence….”Chiefs and elders were also to "encourage" labourers since they had to be “repeatedly reminded that it is part of their duty to advise and encourage all unemployed young men to go out and work on plantations.”[1011] By using officials and the machinery at disposal, the colonial authorities were determined to get males out of the reserves.[1012] Compulsory labour was targeted for specific services. These included public

[1009]Elizabeth Muyagide, (73 Years), Oral interview, on 12th June 2023.
[1010]Anthony Clayton and Donald Cockfield Savage, *Government and labour in Kenya 1895-1963*. Routledge, 2012, p.87.
[1011]Ibid., p.112.
[1012]Ibid., p.113.

service and private contractors working with the state, which under the circumstances could mean anybody.[1013]

Consequently, the Northey labour circular was implemented without informing the colonial office and it remained in force until 1921 when the secretary of State Winston Churchill discontinued it, in a dispatch commanding government officials to desist from recruiting labourers, Churchill instructed that, "government officials will in future take no part in recruiting labour for private employment". [1014] But despite this command, the use of force in recruiting continued. Consistent and efficient labour supply remained a thorny issue.

Having failed to maintain a consistent labour supply, the government made the next attempt by passing the Registration of Natives Ordinance in 1920. The introduction of *kipande* represented an attempt to systematize the labour control system. This is because once a worker was registered, he could not be deregistered. The *kipande* was designed as an instrument to be used to keep track of labour supply. It facilitated the enforcement of labour contracts in that it enabled penal sanctions to be returned to their former employers. Tracing of runaway employees was possible because local chiefs helped in tracing such deserters.

The k*ipande* also restricted workers' freedom to leave their workplace and change employers. Finally, the *kipande* system led to standardization of low wages because it made it virtually impossible for a worker to bargain with a new employer for a wage that was higher and unrelated to his former wage as recorded on his *kipande.*[1015] Resident labour or

[1013]Paul T. Zeleza, "Labour, Unionization and Women's Participation in Kenya, 1963-1987." (1988), p.51.
[1014]Ibid., p.52.
[1015]Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, "The democratic transition in Africa and the Anglophone writer." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 28, no. 3 (1994): p.486.

squatter labour was another system of labour in colonial Kenya. Because the Africans were managing to make payments in cash, in 1918, the Resident Native Ordinance required that future payments be made in labour and not cash.

The earliest cases of squatters were original inhabitants of the alienated land and those who lost access to land in the reserves. During this period there was increased growth in urban wage labour employment due to push factors rather than pull factors. The wages were low and living conditions were also miserable. Men migrated as they left their women to subsidize the colonial capital accumulation. The colonial labour system completely restructured Africans' gender relations of production. In fact, the colonial labour system was burdensome to everyone. This explains why not only men but also women resisted colonial labour laws when an opportunity arose.[1016] Moreover, resistance was not confined to certain specific region but spread out to other regions in a variety of ways in the colony.

The colonial government was however, determined to force Africans to fully participate in the development of the colonial economy. Imposition of taxes was the third method used apart from land alienation and labour laws to disengage Africans from their economic production. Taxation served two purposes: it encouraged wage employment and stimulated peasant commodity production but it also delimited peasant accumulation.[1017] Taxes were introduced in 1901 but it was not until 1910 that they were paid in money rather than kind. By 1902, the Hut tax had been introduced to areas that were under proper administration.[1018] It was latter extended to other regions as colonial administration was

[1016]Ibid., p.487.
[1017]Ibid., p.488.
[1018]Ibid., p.210.

established. It was however, only after the War that they began to be increased sharply and to be collected efficiently.[1019] The hut tax was nevertheless limiting in the collection of revenue because only married men were required to pay as owners of dwellings.

To rectify this status in tax collection, a poll tax was introduced in 1903. It was payable by all male adults of over sixteen years of age. The tax targeted young men who had not yet married and were, therefore, not taxable under the hut tax. As most population pyramids in developing country show, young people must have been more.[1020] Moreover, taking the fact that Maragoli population had been reduced in the late 19th century, the early 20th century's population was probably that of young adults.

The introduction of the poll tax coincided with the increased settler population in 1903, an indication of the desperate position the government was in trying to raise labour for the settlers.[1021] The rate of tax increase and not taxation was the major issue for Africans. If the rates remained low, it would have been possible to raise it from their production. However, rates continued to be raised and more taxpayers enlisted as the government sustained pacification of Africans. By 1905, the tax rate was three rupees in Kikuyuland and Ukambani. These two African regions were first to be taxed because of their closeness to European settlements to ensure that Africans were forced to seek wage labour on settler farms. By 1913, it was officially acknowledged that taxation was the best way to force Africans to wage labour

> …"we consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased

[1019]Robert L. Tignor, *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900-1939*. Princeton University Press, 2015, p.8.
[1020]Atiba R. Ellis, "The cost of the vote: Poll taxes, voter identification laws, and the price of democracy." *Denv. UL Rev.* 86 (2008): p.1023.
[1021]Ibid., p.1024.

> for the native, and… it is on this that the supply of labour and the price of labour depend."[1022]

Having been made mandatory, tax became a sure way of forcing Africans into wage labour. Using land, labour and tax policies the government was able to restructure the Maragoli economic organization subsequently transforming gender relations of production. The Maragoli were not just passive in the midst of these changes. They reacted to the changes in an attempt to fit in the new socio-political and economic matrix. The responses to these changes were gendered in that females and males responded differently and therefore, affected gender relations of production in Maragoli. It suffices to say here that Maragoli agriculture went through significant change between 1890s and 1920 when Kenya became a colony. The colonial changes in food production mechanisms spread to all oter key sectors of the Maragoli society. The next section amplifies the manner in which the colonial imposition impacted the Maragoli socio-economic life.

3.9 Socio-Economic Changes in Maragoli to 1920

Settler agriculture in the years before 1920 was pampered by the state for its survival. Through the Department of Agriculture, settlers were provided with extension services, equipment, seeds, seedlings and stud animals. It was through the state for instance that settlers were encouraged and financed to grow coffee, which became an important cash crop in Kenya. African producers were denied the right to grow coffee with the excuse that they would cause diseases.

[1022]Ibid., p.1025.

Despite this the protectorate was run by African peasant production before 1920. The settler weakness made it possible and necessary for peasant production to continue, and indeed, expand in some areas in the period leading to, during, and immediately after the First World War.

By 1920, the settler estate sector had emerged as an important pillar of Kenya's economy by virtue of the enormous resources allocated to it.[1023] It should be noted that colonial policies that were often passed in favour of the settlers impacted on the gender relations of production in Maragoli and the rest of the protectorate.Between the late 1890s to1920, Maragoli food production went through significant transformation especially in terms of division of labour and types of crops grown. The changes were more as a response to the markets availed by the Swahili-European caravans of the late 19th century, the growth of urban centres around Maragoli especially Kisumu and the settler farms around the North Kavirondo reserve. From the 1890s, Maragoli not only increased land under cultivation but also diversified the types of crops grown. For instance, increased demand for maize by the caravans resulted to increase in its production.

Miracle indicates that a new maize variety, which was high yielding, the Hickory King-white maize began to penetrate parts of Western Kenya regions even before the colonial administration issued the seed.[1024] Moreover, the Rose Coco bean was also another crop grown by Africans long before the government encouraged African production. Peasant production in Maragoli was encouraged by growing markets for food crops on settler farms

[1023]Ben Paul Fanstone, "The pursuit of the 'good forest'in Kenya, c. 1890-1963: the history of the contested development of state forestry within a colonial settler state." (2016)., p.80.
[1024]G. Karigi, "The System of Land Ownership and Crop Production: The Case of Embu North Sub-County, 1890-1963." MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2015, p.112.

and in colonial towns. In particular, the swelling population of Kisumu during the First World War led to increased demand for peasant production. Therefore, from the proximity of Maragoli to Kisumu, Maragoli people supplied a lot of these items to the town.

By the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, land shortage in the North Kavirondo reserve was being experienced because of the colonial policies and commodity production. This affected pre-colonial tenancy relationships. The tenants at will, the most affected had to seek wage employment. There was also private accumulation of land that negatively affected the young men. Educated elites for example teachers, preachers, clerks, court interpreters were able to buy land using their incomes.

By the beginnings of the 1920s there was an embryonic class formation in rural Kenya. These changes generated changes in all social relationships- as kinship and family patterns and obligations were reshaped by shifts in land tenurial arrangements and the changes in the organization and division of labour that were taking place. By the turn of the twentieth century, commercial production had taken root in North Nyanza district; with the availability of markets in the nearby upcoming urban centres and the gold prospects in Kakamega helped to expand production.[1025] Between 1905 and 1918, there was an increase of beans and maize grown in the protectorate. Increased food crop production was necessitated by the ready market availed by the First World War. These agricultural changes were taking place in the midst of great alteration in work routines. The conscription of males for the war efforts and migration into wage employment within the

[1025]Gordon Omenya, "The relations between Asian and African communities: a comparative study of Nyanza and Western Provinces 1900-2002." PhD diss., Pau, 2015., p.77.

protectorate had critical impact on gender relations of production. Domestic labour reorganization was necessary to take care of the absent male labour.

Women largely shouldered the district's food production mechanisms during the war years. North Kavirondo District Commissioner ascertained that women and children were undertaking traditional male tasks.[1026]

In Maragoli division, the effects of male conscription had a negative impact on food production to some extent. The officials argued "these functions fall to the lot of the women and children more than in the past". One consequence was that "women had less time to keep the *shambas* (farms) clean so that food supply necessarily suffers to a certain extent."[1027] The *shambas* that women could not comfortably tend were those that had labour-intensive crops such as sorghum. The crop either rotted on the stalk or sprouted before it could be harvested.[1028] Millet and sorghum shortage would mean famine being the major staple foods.

The conscription of males for the war efforts had a lasting impact on colonial attitude towards female labour.

Previously, the government had never viewed women as a reliable source of wage labour. But the absence or shortage of male labour drastically changed this perception and females and juveniles began to be used on government public works and even on settler farms like coffee all over the colony. From 1917 to 1920, the government began to earnestly "encourage" females and juveniles to engage in wage labour. This became even more

[1026]KNA, AR/273, NN 1915-1916, 9: p.1.
[1027]KNA, AR/275; NN/10; KNA, AR/NN/1916-1917: p.1
[1028]Ann Cora Presley, *Kikuyu women, the Mau Mau rebellion, and social change in Kenya*. Routledge, 2019, p.65.

necessary in 1917, when more African males were conscripted to fill the diminishing ranks of the carrier corps thus draining males who were still in the reserves.[1029] The Northey Circular of 1919 mentioned earlier was particularly used to get females into wage labour.[1030]

By 1920, women and children were heavily engaged in coffee picking in areas which pioneered cash crop farming especially in Central Kenya as reported by the Kiambu District Commissioner:

> A very heavy coffee crop has been picked mostly by the women and children…The whole situation had been somewhat altered by the Circular 1 in which we are instructed to obtain labour for private and public enterprises through chiefs and headmen.[1031]

The use of women not only for farm related activities but also road-building caused serious tensions between the Maragoli and the colonial government from the 1920s.

Like men, women faced violence not only from the settlers, but also from the labour recruiters. The violent treatments made them resist colonial oppression through labour protests of various kinds from as early as 1912.[1032]

Colonial perception that African women were passive or only acted out of male initiative was misplaced as was latter in the anti-colonial protests all over the colony.[1033] In West Africa, the case of Women War against the colonial installed warrant chiefs further demonstrates women's agency in colonial Africa.[1034] Despite the absence of statistics, there

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[1029]Kennedy M. Moindi, "The Colonial Political Economy in Kenya." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Kenyan History*, p. 99-114. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023, p.102.
[1030]Ibid.
[1031]Florence Achieng' Ojwang, (2021). *Op*, *Cit*, p.98.
[1032]Ibid p.101.
[1033]Miles Larmer, "Historicising Activism in Late Colonial and Post-Colonial Sub-S aharan A frica." *Journal of Historical Sociology* 28, no. 1 (2015): p.72.
[1034]Marcia Wright, "Gender, Women, and Power in Africa, 1750–1914." *A Companion to Global Gender History* (2020): p.418.

are indications that labour mobility was high among the Maragoli just like their Kikuyu and Luo counterparts.

Owing to the demands to pay taxes and other financial obligations created by the new socio-economic situation, more males left the reserves in search of employment. The result was a breakdown of the traditional division of labour between the men and the women.

F.M. Muchoki clearly indicates that women shouldered men's agricultural responsibilities of heavy work like, clearing the bush, planting and harvesting men's crops, as well as providing food for their families.[1035] This position has also been affirmed in the Maragoli case from the oral interviews carried out.[1036] From 1912-1913, Maragoli women were carrying a heavier farm work as they tried to produce a surplus. The colonial government never took any keen interest in African agriculture before or during the First World War. Neither was it keen on the quality nor the quantity of African produce since it was not viewed to be of any profit to the colony. As a result, Africans did not receive any agricultural advice or capital from agricultural department.

However, before the close of the war, economic problems facing Kenya reversed government's attitude towards African production. But while all interested parties agreed on making African labour that possessed economic value better, they differed on where that labour was particularly needed: either in the African reserves or European farms. John Ainsworth, the advisor on Native Affairs in the War Council was of the opinion that there was need to compel Africans to put maximum effort in production in their own farms. The

[1035]K. Muchoki, *Op. Cit*. p.62.
[1036]Anjeline Vugutsa, (73 Years), Oral interview, on 23rd July 2023.

non-official member with the support of settler representative Dalemere, opposed this bill introduced in 1918 to compel Africans to cultivate their land.

Ainsworth's bill was thrown out only to be replaced by the Northey labour Circular of 1919 that ensured constant flow of African labour to European farms. It was not until 1923 that instructors were sent to African reserves on a regular basis.[1037] Although lacking government support, agricultural production in Maragoli was not strangled. Their response to market opportunities in the upcoming townships and urban centres next to Maragoli made the Maragoli reorganize not only in the types of crops they grew but also gender division of labour to cope with the new challenges. African production expanded during this period despite lack of support from the state authorities. However, as peasant production expanded, there was also rural class formation. There was a regional difference in peasant production, which was influenced by several factors. One was the potential of cash-crop production and proximity to settler occupied areas and colonial towns. It was also influenced by the pre-colonial social formations.

3.9.1 Chapter Summary

The first European contact with Maragoli was pioneered by Josph Thomson in 1883. His explorative mission and success in the region formed the basis upon which other Europeans later got interested in Maragoli, later coming in as traders, missionaries and travellers. These early Europeans reffered to Western region as Kavirondo, a name they got from the coastal traders who had visited western region during the caravan trade. Thomson described the area as food secure and with welcoming inhabotants. In regard to colonial

[1037]Gunter Wagner, *Op.Cit*, p.21.

establishment, the Kavirondo region came under colonial rule in 1894 after a formal establishment of a colonial administration centre at Mumias.

Charles Hobley was appointed as the first British administrator with the sole objective of helping the British bring order for effective British control. The Wanga due to their formalized political structure were pointed out as the most powerful and civilized local group to help the British administer the Kavirondo region. As the british point men, the Wanga through Nabongo appointed chiefs whom they sent out to the different parts of North Kavirondo. This preferential treatment made the Wanga to become an integral part in the caravan trade which extended to Maragoli land.

Through the caravan trade, Maragoli agricultural production expanded and began taking the capitalistic tendencies of production for exchange. Through this agricultural expansion, new set of gender dynamics were brought into Maragoli. Women being the primary agricultural producers, more of their labour was exploited for more agricultural profits. Since men were the owners and distributors of wealth, a large section of the profits from the trade was accumulated by the men hence creating the genesis of the gender imbalance in food production and distribution in Maragoli.

The pioneer Maragoli point men in the caravan trade took advantage of this trade to grow more crops, buy more crops and trade items from the neighbours and even alienate more land for agricultural production. Such men after getting the caravan trade profits even married more women as a way of increasing their agricultural production. Some of such men were later appointed as colonial chiefs, a factor that helped to better their socio-economic status in the society. It is doubtful if women were able to take advantage of the

caravan trade to accumulate. After bringing maragoli into effective British control, the administrators embarked on setting up strategies in order to fully exploit the region for colonial benefits. Key among these strategies included taxation and labour recruitment.

The labour recruitment strategies aimed at expanding the settler agriculture at the neglect of the pre-colonial maragoli agricultural establishments. In response to this, the Maragoli on their part adopted the new colonial policies which were benefitial to them including adoption of the new and improved colonial crop varieties into the agricultural production. The Maragoli also took advantage of the colonial developments especially in roads, railway and urbanization to expand their agricultural production. Such roads helped the Maragoli link to the developing townships in order to access the new urban market such as Kisumu and Kakamega.

Another key feature of the early colonial era in Maragoli was the decisive move by the colonial government to articulate the key aspects of Maragoli food production into the colonial spectrum. These aspects were labor and land. As a way of effectively integrating the maragoli into the colonial economy, the colonial system asserted itself against the Maragoli political and economic establishments, some of which it had to destroy or restructure in the process. The colonial government destroyed the clan system as the basis of Maragoli social economic and political setup. The colonial government on the other hand decided to retain the women labour in the rural set up as a mechanism of helping the government subsidize the meagre urban and settler farm wage that the employees were getting. It also retained but modified the Maragoli chieftaincy as the key Maragoli political establishment.

The earliest impact of colonial imprints in Western Kenya and particularly Maragoli was the increase in farmine and diseases. This situation was brought about by the flight from the British military expeditions, forcing the Maragoli sleep in the tsetse fly infested forests making them contract sleeping sickness.

In addition to this, the Sudenese soldiers and the Swahili trade caravans introduced small pox to the people killing many. Last but not least, jigger menace was also introduced into the region by the Indian railway workers. The jigger menace barrowed the inhabitants' feet making it difficult for them to engage in the agricultural and other food production related engagements. Christianity and formal education were also another distinctive mark of the colonial inprint in Maragoli. The Friends African Mission (FAM) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) were the pioneer missionary groups in Maragoli. These mission groups set their headquarters in Kaimosi and Nyang'ori respectively.

The Maragoli as a people decided to adopt Christian ideals and values, went for western education and finally assimilated all these value systems as a way of adjusting to the new colonial reality. This was in line with Paulo Friere position that the oppressed at certain level of existential experience, adopts the attitude of adherence to the oppressor. Moreover, upon its introduction, Christianity was seen as an obstacle to the established Maragoli way of life.

Fathers as the official heads of families came out to stamp their authority and stopped their sons from joining the Kaimosi mission. The orphaned boys due to economic hardships and absence of a father figure in their families, ran to the mission centres for food and other related western goodies including clothes. This made such orphaned boys to be the first

benefitiaries of Christianity and Western education at the expense of the well to do sons of the rich and strict traditional Maragoli men. Since western education was a prequisite for colonial employment, the orphaned educated boys became the pioneer colonial employees, bringing about one of the earliest dramatic paradigms shift in the Maragoli socio-economic strata.

Owing to the strategic position that agriculture occupied in the Kenyan economy, the colonial government was forced to adopt a number of strategies to uplift agricultural performance in the colony. These strategies ranged from encouraging growth of traditional crop varieties, distributing new seed varieties to the locals and finally carrying out agricultural research to estasblish the crop varieties suited for the different Kenyan climatic conditions. All these efforts were aimed at improving the Kenyan export trade. The huge expenses incurred during the construction of the Kenya Uganda railway and the consequential reduction in British capitation to the colonial also influenced Kenya's and particularly Maragoli agricultural policies during this period.

The establishment of colonial governance in the late 19th century significantly altered the land tenure system. The colonial government's primary objective was the economic exploitation of the colony, leading to the establishment of structures that alienated Africans from their domestic production and compelled them to labor for the benefit of the colonial economy. The colonial administration implemented legislation that enabled the dispossession of African territories. The Crown Lands Ordinances of 1901, 1902, and 1915 articulated that Africans were considered tenants at the discretion of the British Crown,

resulting in the alienation of African land. The inhabitants were entirely stripped of their means of production. The establishment of African reserves further constrained the availability of land for African populations. The estrangement of land in Maragoli and its surrounding areas contributed to the advancement of an individual land tenure system, as land-owning sub-clans were unwilling to share their land with those who had experienced alienation.

The circumstances became increasingly intricate due to the erosion of the influence of social institutions, such as the clan, particularly regarding land issues, following the colonial government's assumption of administrative control over the colony. As a result, individuals did not consistently have the option to seek the clan's assistance for constructive mediation in matters concerning land. The estrangement of land profoundly influenced women's capacity to cultivate food crops, which were fundamentally within their purview—sustaining and nurturing the family unit.

The departure of male labor from the Maragoli household added layers of complexity to the existing circumstances. The conventional responsibilities of males in food production were neglected and subsequently assumed by women. This placed an excessive burden on women and exacerbated the gender disparity in Maragoli food production, marking the inception of the feminization of Maragoli agriculture. The distinctive contributions of men were consequently muted. This was particularly evident in the engagement with family agricultural mobilization, where the cultivation of male-designated crops significantly alleviated the household's challenges during periods of food scarcity, while also enhancing food supplies through practices such as hunting, blacksmithing, and cattle rearing.

The commencement of World War I in 1918 further amplified the transformations already underway in Maragoli food production and gender dynamics. As a consequence of this conflict, a greater number of physically capable Maragoli men were conscripted from Maragoliland to participate in the war, either as combatants or in logistical support roles. Given the significant contributions of Maragoli men in the acquisition of agricultural land, their efforts in cultivating previously untouched areas.

Such was accompanied by such food providing a crucial safety net during periods of food scarcity through their male crops and granaries, it is evident that their role has been pivotal. Their emigration from Maragoli resulted in a significant void in food production, consequently exacerbating the food shortage. The Wanga caravan trade connections in the region signified the initial commercial interactions between the Maragoli and European traders.

The financial gains derived from these trade connections significantly enhanced the cultivation of crops in Maragoli. This ultimately transformed the gender relations of the pre-colonial Maragoli society. Women who initially cultivated crops for family consumption began to engage in production at levels surpassing their household needs, aiming to acquire goods for exchange with caravan traders. Individuals on the opposing side engaged in these trading activities driven by the potential for profit and the necessity to uphold their status as the recognized heads of their families and connections. The demands of trade, particularly concerning agricultural products, have led to an escalation in the exploitation of female labor, as women constituted the principal agricultural workforce in Maragoli. The male chiefs of Maragoli also participated in the profitable endeavor, thereby significantly enhancing their agricultural pursuits.

In addition to agricultural products, the women of Maragoli engaged in the exchange of crafted items, including pots and baskets, within the newly established trade networks. By 1920, the dynamics of gender relations within the Maragoli community had undergone significant transformation. In their engagement with both internal and external influences, the established division of labor by gender experienced significant disruption.

Men became increasingly distanced from the mechanisms of household food production, resulting in women and children bearing the majority of the responsibilities. In light of the evolving market demands, the Maragoli embraced the cultivation of new crops that were particularly sought after in the burgeoning townships surrounding the Maragoli region. In the absence of male labor, women were compelled to progressively enhance their contributions in both quality and quantity to satisfy not only the demands of their precolonial context but also the newly imposed requirements of colonialism.

The land tenure system of the Maragoli faced significant challenges posed by the emerging political economy. The commercialization of agriculture, spurred by the demands of both Swahili and European caravans at the close of the nineteenth century, fostered a foundation of individualism in Maragoli. With the European occupation of territory hindering any potential for further expansion, and as landowners persistently increased the area under cultivation, there was a significant escalation in land value. Consequently, certain individuals were displaced from their land. These individuals were pioneers in engaging with wage labor, whether in the African regions or urban centers. Some individuals relocated to the Rift Valley, taking up residence as squatters on European agricultural estates.

The alterations in land ownership and accessibility have had a direct impact on Maragoli agricultural output, particularly in relation to gender dynamics. The stipulation that women could only obtain access to land via a male guardian resulted in a scenario where, with the alienation of land, women from these families found themselves entirely dispossessed. Their circumstances were exacerbated by the infrequent migration of Maragoli women to urban areas during the initial phases of colonial governance.

During the initial decade of the 20th century, the colonial administration lacked a definitive policy regarding African agriculture. As a result, any advancements, whether in the expansion of cultivated land or in technological innovation, were not initiated by Africa itself, but rather driven by market forces. The interests of the colonial state were increasingly aligned with settler production, driven by the belief that such production would enhance the economy. Furthermore, by the conclusion of the First World War, the influence of settlers in colonial Kenya had grown substantial, as evidenced by their prominent role in the Legislative Council.

By the time Kenya was established as a colony in 1920, considerable transformations had occurred within Maragoli and the broader North Kavirondo region. The socio-political and economic policies implemented by the colonial government significantly shaped the dynamics of gender relations in the production processes within the Maragoli division. The subsequent chapter delves into the policies enacted following World War I, particularly in the context of gender dynamics within the sphere of production.

CHAPTER FOUR

FOOD PRODUCTION MECHANISMS AND GENDER RELATIONS AMONG THE MARAGOLI, 1920-1945

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has established that between 1895 and 1920, colonial rule in Maragoli disrupted traditional food production through land alienation, forced taxation, and the promotion of cash crops like cotton and coffee, which undermined subsistence farming. Male labor migration and conscription during World War I reduced their agricultural role, while deforestation for colonial timber demands limited foraging activities. Christianity and Western education further shifted cultural norms, drawing young men away from farming into mission schools and urban jobs. From 1920 to 1945, these pressures intensified as land fragmentation, soil degradation, and population growth strained food systems. The Great Depression collapsed global commodity markets, forcing households to rely more on subsistence farming, while World War II deepened male labor shortages through conscription. Women became the primary food producers, adapting through crop diversification, indigenous knowledge, and communal labor systems to sustain household survival under mounting colonial, economic, and environmental challenges.

The chapter was divided into a number of key subsections. These included; a synopsis of the Post World War 1 era, Dynamics in Maragoli Labour demands During the interwar period, 1920-1945, Maragoli Agricultural Production in the Post-war Period, Changes in the Maragoli land ownership and administration, Economic changes: The new cash economy, The Maragoli and the 1930s Kakamega gold rush, Maragoli land Problem and

Gender Relations in the interwar Period, Transformation of Gender Division of labour and Food Production, Agricultural Marketing in the 1930s and its Effects on Gender Relations, Impact of Wage Labour on Maragoli Food production Mechanisms,1945-1963 and finally the chapter summary.

In relation to the study objectives, the chapter set the pace for the analysis of the gist of the study; the colonial impact on Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations. Right from the onset, the study argues that colonialism was and remains the biggest external force that has ever intercepted the established Pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms illustrated in the previous chapters. Regarding the theoretical framework, the chapter makes use of Articulation of Modes of Production theory and gender analysis. This is a departure from the norm but since the study is on dynamics in food production during the colonial era.

This cannot be studied without an emphasis on the role of colonial state which played a pivotal role in articulating the Maragoli pre-colonial food production mechanisms into the new colonial dispensation. The articulation theory remains gender insensitive yet the study analyses a number of gender issues, necessitating the need to make the articulation theory walk side by side with Gender Analysis theory throughout the chapter.

4.2 A Synopsis of the Post-World War 1 Era

The consequences of the war profoundly affected the African populace. The circumstances were exacerbated by the epidemic of 1918-1919 and a subsequent drought, leading to famine that compelled the government to resort to food imports.

The situation regarding famine was exacerbated by the influenza epidemic, which devastated numerous populations across Africa. This scenario does not bode favorably for the agricultural sector in Africa.

In the year 1920, Kenya was officially designated as a colony under British rule. This effectively centralized the policy and administrative responsibilities of the colony within the purview of the Secretary of State for Colonies in Britain. The transition from protectorate to colony status was intended to suppress the demands for self-governance by Europeans in Kenya. By refusing settlers self-governance, Kenya's political trajectory diverged significantly from that of other colonies such as Southern Rhodesia. The issuance of the Devonshire White Paper in 1923 established a pivotal moment in Kenya's political trajectory, as it conferred upon the colonial office the exclusive authority to serve as the trustee for the African populace. Despite the intention for African interests to take precedence, the colonial office persisted in enacting policies that were significantly shaped by the minority White settlers within the colony.

The administrative framework of the colony underwent modification with the creation of three principal governing bodies: the Governor, the Executive Council, and the Legislative Council. In his capacity as the representative of His Majesty the King, the Governor held the responsibility to "safeguard the indigenous population". However, none of the governors exhibited the fortitude to confront this challenge, as many continued to be swayed by the influences of the settlers. As a result, the policies enacted in the colony prior to the conclusion of the Second World War were entirely advantageous to the settlers. The politico-economic policies in question have significantly shaped the gender relations

of production among the Maragoli, a point that will be elucidated in the following discussions.

The subsequent section elucidates the complexities of labour demands in Maragoli throughout the inter-war period.

4.3 Dynamics in Maragoli Labour demands during the interwar period, 1920-1945

Throughout the interwar period, the Luhya represented a significant portion of the colonial labor force. Due to the pressing issue of land scarcity and the significant population density in Maragoli, the Maragoli undeniably formed the predominant segment of this Luhya labor force.[1038] The migration encompassed individuals from diverse backgrounds. These encompassed individuals possessing minimal or no formal education, as well as those with scant or no land ownership. This trend, emblematic of semi-proletarian conditions, was propelled by a pragmatic assessment of economic necessity.[1039]

In Richard Wolff's examination of the methods employed by the colonial administration to assimilate Africans into the colonial wage labor system, the initial two phases were addressed in the preceding chapter. The third phase commenced between 1919 and 1930, extending until 1939. This phase was marked by the creation of a consistent workforce derived from wartime mobilization efforts.[1040] In addition to these three stages, one must consider two further periods: the interval from 1939 to 1945, which witnessed the reactivation of the Pioneer Corps for both military and civilian labor during the Second World War.

[1038] Kenda Mutongi, *Op, Cit,* p.83.

[1039] Leen Kavulavu, *Op, Cit,* p.187.

[1040] R. D. Wolff, Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930, *The Economics of Colonialism*, Transafrica Publishers, 1974, p.30.

The fifth stage, which transpired from 1945 to 1963, will be examined in detail in the following chapter. The progression of these stages aligned with a heightened demand for labor from the Government, European settlers, private farms, and individuals, thereby shaping the approaches to labor recruitment and the overarching labor policies enacted by the Government.

The colonial imposition on Maragoli before the onset of the First World War significantly disrupted the established norms of labor utilization. The labour demands of the Maragoli during this period were profoundly influenced and molded by the political economy established by the settlers. Within the framework of this new system, numerous limitations were imposed on various sectors of the indigenous economy in Kenya during its colonial period. This occurred despite the existence of a colonial administration that ostensibly fulfilled the role of a trustee.[1041] The imposition of these restrictions gradually permeated Maragoli, unfolding in a deliberate and consistent manner.

Furthermore, the settler economy swiftly cultivated a distinct form of economic nationalism, which, to a significant degree, inadequately represented the pre-capitalist economies, including the Maragoli, within the classical-imperialist framework of a genuine capitalist economy intended to benefit the Maragoli.[1042] The economic policy and development priorities of the Maragoli were increasingly shaped by the imperatives of the European metropolis, as embodied by the colonial chiefs in Maragoli.[1043] The political

[1041]Paul Mosley, "The settler economies: studies in the economic history of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900-1963." PhD diss., 1980, p.6.
[1042]Ibid.
[1043]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023

economy established by settlers has led to a regression in the pre-capitalist economies of Kenya, particularly among the Maragoli. This situation has resulted in a stagnation of real wages, inefficiencies among white farmers, and significant constraints on industrial expansion due to the decline of the peasant economy.

The colonial political economy fostered stereotypes and myths that categorized Africans as lacking development, attributing this to an alleged absence of an economic spirit within them.[1044] In this context, the colonial administration formulated taxation and labor policies aimed at integrating the underdeveloped Maragoli into the colonial workforce, thereby facilitating their incorporation into the framework of colonial capitalism. In the pre-colonial era, the concept of exchanging labor for monetary compensation was largely absent. The mobilization of labor was facilitated through the kinship system, grounded in the principles of reciprocal relations as previously delineated in chapter two.

While this pattern persisted to a degree, external demands for labor compromised the foundation of its reproduction, as such labor was, to some extent, alienated. The process became estranged as the labor dynamics inherent in wage labor transformed into a mere extraction of value from natural resources, thereby disconnecting workers from the realization of their own intrinsic purpose. The process of wage labor was integrated within the limited oversight of the capitalist. The situation entailed a structured hierarchy of labor throughout the duration of formal engagement, contrasting with the historically established labor process.[1045] The settler political economy in the Kenyan colony mimicked what was happening allover the British settler economies allover Africa. It is from this understanding

[1044]Paul Mosley, (1980). *Op*, *Cit*, p.110.
[1045]A.M. Amisi, p.137.

that Murray while writing on Southern Rhodesian case notes that ...'the administrative system favoured political agitation rather than more efficient production as the means for earning a bigger income. In order to achieve this, the colonial government created what has been termed as extra-market operations, i.e. non-market means used to achieve economic ends.[1046]

The colonial economy created a new tripartite relationship between the key players in the pre capitalist Maragoli market. These key players had their distinct market goals clearly set out. Beginning from the producer, who wished to maximise, or at any rate ensure a secure level of profits; - the consumer, wishing to keep down the unit cost of the things he buys. These things may or may not be inputs into a production process. If they are, he may well wish in addition to prevent other consumers that is rival producers from having them; and finally, the trader, who all the times wished to maximise his own profits, and hence (at any rate until diseconomies of scale set in) to maximise the amount traded.

These diverse interests during the colonial time were pursued by means of a variety of different strategies; many, though not all, require support from government.[1047] It is this role played by the state that the apologists of the articulation theory refer to as colonial capitalism. The settlers since they were the economic pillars of the colonial regime ever manipulated the colonial government to develop policies to advantage the settler production. From the settler political economy, a contradiction between the producers, consumers and traders emerged based on their divergent interests. The producers' desire for restriction of competition conflicted with traders' desire for an open market. The

[1046]Ibid., p.138, Also Check P.O Ndege 1987 for more readings.
[1047]Ibid., p.11

producers' wish to keep the price of their output up conflicted with consumers' wish to keep the price of their inputs down, and finally, whenever producers succeeded in setting up discriminatory arrangements for the marketing of their output of the supply of their inputs. There always arose a conflict between producers over rights of access to the dearest market or the cheapest source of supply.[1048]

These were the three main sources of conflict over the nature and extent of extra-market operations. Whenever such conflicts arose, the African farmer and in this case the Maragoli always bore the burden. In order to cushion the settler producer from unfortunate market eventualities, the colonial government came up with tax and labour policies targeting at availing a cheap labour to the Settler in order to keep the settle in the production sector.

Moreover, the settler producer always ran to the colonial government to develop restrictions against the Maragoli farmer in order to lock the Maragoli farmer from growing the lucrative crops like coffee. This was to help the settler monopolize the market for a better agricultural return. From this discussion, three principal arguments in regard to settle political economy emerge. First, the pressure on the state to implement extra-market operations was concentrated in periods when a loss was being made on agricultural exports.[1049] This meant that when the survival of the 'white agricultural bourgeoisie' was threatened. Secondly, the white agricultural bourgeoisie was inescapably characterised by both internal producer-consumer conflict and internal producer-producer conflict. This means that the sector of white agricultural capital must, contrary to the analysis of many

[1048]K. C. Mwanza, "The political economy of food security and agriculture in Zambia." *Food policy and agriculture in Southern Africa.* (1993): p.40.
[1049]Ibid.

scholars,[1050]be seen not as one but as several sectors if the extra-market operations actually implemented are to be understood.

The onset of the First World War expedited the transformations occurring within domestic labor. The exit of male members from a family required a reevaluation of the gendered distribution of labor and domestic production. As a result, women and children assumed additional responsibilities within the production process alongside their traditional roles. A greater number of women participated in transactions involving livestock on behalf of their spouses.[1051] A group of peasants, faced with exorbitant hut taxes, resorted to burning several of their huts, thereby altering the familial structure within their households.[1052]The position of the Maragoli within the colonial labor market during the inter-war period must be comprehended within the broader context of the expansive settler colonial economy in Kenya. Owing to the insufficient financial support from the colonial administration, the settler farmers were compelled to investigate methods of securing a reliable labor force to achieve self-sufficiency.

The growth of the colonial economy was fundamentally rooted in the accumulation of capital achieved through the exploitation of inexpensive African labor.[1053] It is unequivocal that labor migration has contributed to the degradation of the rural community's economic standing. African peasants retained some degree of land ownership, and families of migrant workers managed to sustain themselves while also providing for their migrant

[1050]Mary Omosa, *Re-conceptualising food security: interlocking strategies, unfolding choices and rural livelihoods in Kisii District, Kenya*. Landbouwuniversiteit Wageningen, 1998, p.122.
[1051]D.L. Esese.,1990, *Op*, *Cit*, p.315.
[1052]Ibid., p.319.
[1053]Sneyd Adam, Alexander Fomin Legwegoh, and Lauren Q. Sneyd, "Food politics: perspectives on food security in Central Africa." *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 33, no. 1 (2015): p.146.

relatives, who received minimal wages, thereby contributing to a reduction in the socially necessary wage within the framework of capitalistic accumulation. The absence of migrant workers' contributions to domestic production was offset by the self-exploitation of their family members who remained at home.[1054]

In the absence of significant exportable crops within their District, the Maragoli increasingly turned to migrant labor as a means to fulfill their tax obligations. Consequently, Maragoli land, akin to other regions in North Kavirondo district, soon encountered the challenges associated with labor availability.

The advent of a cash economy resulted in the disintegration of extended kinship networks, as well as a reduction in the prevalence of collective endeavors. Similar to other African communities in Kenya, the Maragoli encountered the necessity of generating tax revenue and, due to colonial regulations, were compelled to provide labor.[1055] In their capacity as primary administrators at the grassroots level, the colonial chiefs formulated various strategies to enlist and maintain the African labor force. Central to these methods was the practice of seizing animals, particularly goats, from those who defaulted on labor obligations, as well as the acceptance of bribes, predominantly in the form of livestock, to exempt specific individuals from mandatory labor recruitment. This information was

[1054]Sara S. Berry, "The food crisis and agrarian change in Africa: a review essay." *African Studies Review* 27, no. 2 (1984) p.101.

[1055]C. J. Martin, "The agrarian question and migrant labor: The case of Western Kenya." *Journal of African Studies* 11, no. 4 (1984): p.164.

derived from the Chavakali Focus Group Discussion conducted during this specific research endeavor.[1056]

Similar to numerous other communities in Kenya, the Maragoli utilized various strategies to resist or avoid tax obligations and conscription for labor. They sought refuge until the tax collectors departed from the village. Certain tax receipts were utilized by individuals who had fulfilled their obligations, as the tax collectors were not familiar with each taxpayer individually.

On occasion, they resorted to bribing the hut counters to ensure their names were excluded from the register. At times, they utilized the names of minors and subsequently sought exemption on the grounds of their age.[1057]

The establishment of colonial governance facilitated the infiltration of capitalism into Maragoli. Colonialism subsequently influenced the expression of indigenous Modes of Production (MOP) alongside the capitalist MOP, facilitating the incorporation of African economies into the Western capitalist framework via the establishment of chiefs and various other mechanisms. Their role was to delineate the connection between the Maragoli peasantry and the colonial state, primarily by enabling the exploitation of the peasantry via taxation and the recruitment of labor. However, the cessation of labor from the peasant use value was destined to transform the conventional mechanisms of food production. This compromised the established Maragoli agrarian economy.

[1056] FGD of Maragoli Women farmers held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds, on 10th October 2023.

[1057]FGD of Maragoli Women farmers held at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds, on 10th October 2023, See Also Samson Moenga Omwoyo, "The Agricultural Changes in the Kipsigis Land, c. 1894-1963: An Historical Inquiry." Ph.D. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2000 p.121.

Concurrently, the establishment of an external governance system instituted frameworks that allowed merchant capital to exert a degree of control over the Maragoli, albeit not in an absolute manner. Following the advent of colonial governance, the Maragoli economy transitioned its focus from subsistence production to market-oriented production, driven by the necessity to fulfill tax obligations and acquire goods available within the district's marketplace.

Consequently, marketing arrangements mirrored the requirements of societies that were fundamentally reliant on the cultivation of subsistence crops, fishing, and livestock management.[1058] Consequently, the implementation of taxation, the conscription of labor, and the formation of markets were carried out by chiefs in Maragoli, and these institutions disrupted the traditional food production systems of the preceding society and its economic framework. The interplay of governmental policies, demographic dynamics, and the agency of the Maragoli, among other elements, catalyzed a transformation in production methodologies, leading to the establishment of a diversified economy characterized by wage labor, trade, and market production.

The individuals engaged for public projects, as well as those who entered wage labor in response to the introduction of taxation, were assembled through the initiatives of local chiefs. The recruits were no longer relinquishing their efforts to alter the inherent properties of natural materials, such as land, which they had previously possessed and

[1058]Hebert M Amatsimbi, "Economic transformation in rural Kenya: a case study Tiriki division, 1902-1963." MA Thesis, Nairobi University, 1993.p.30.

governed entirely. Their awareness of possessing the means of production and their ability to labor was converted into a mechanism for generating value for both settlers and the colonial state. Subsequent to the conclusion of the First World War, 15% of the male population in the North Kavirondo district had been integrated into the various colonial employment frameworks. A segment of this workforce was tasked with transporting the diverse colonial goods throughout the various regions of the district during both the pre-war and post-war eras. The remaining segment of the workforce was tasked with enhancing the region's infrastructure, particularly the road networks.[1059]

Responsibilities that were once designated for men were increasingly assumed by women as men engaged in wage labor or participated in the war as members of carriers' corps and recruits. In certain households, albeit not universally, there were instances where women engaged in the clearing of bushes and the preparation of fields, receiving assistance from their male relatives. Children transitioned from merely engaging in minor activities such as food collection and herding to contributing labor on the farms. With the traditional authority of village and clan elders supplanted by the new administrative framework, only a limited number of households succeeded in coordinating work parties for exceedingly short periods. This was conducted at the community and local level, engaging individuals of all ages and genders. The remnants of the men's work parties during the inter-war period were diminished in scale when juxtaposed with the preceding colonial era.

The individuals who had once collaborated by pooling their labor and resources for the purposes of exchange, construction, or building assumed new roles. They pursued wage labor both within and beyond Maragoli. They advanced their competencies for the

[1059]Francis Chrysostomos Bode, *Op, Cit,* p.238.

standardized labor market economy. From 1920 to 1945, there was a notable rise in the emigration of former and prospective laborers from the district to various regions within Kenya. In addition to various other influences that have been noted, several compelling push factors contributed to this phenomenon.[1060] In the first instance the increasing pressure to produce cash crops for sale to pay taxes and to purchase the new consumer goods was reducing soil fertility. This led to lower agricultural productivity in some parts of the district especially Maragoli and Bunyore.[1061]

The increasing production of maize and ground nuts among the Maragoli exerted pressure on the arable land in the villages. This contributed to the emigration of males into wage labour.[1062]

The presence of land, labor, and a cash crop alone proved inadequate to mitigate the underlying forces driving emigration. There existed a prolonged period characterized by agricultural failures and significant variations in market prices. The impact of this phenomenon was predominantly experienced during the economic downturn, characterized by a significant decline in commodity prices. A select group of African producers, notably the petty bourgeois traders, managed to endure the repercussions of the post-depression era and reaped advantages from the subsequent price adjustments.Consequently, the cultivation of cash crops did not serve as a lasting remedy

[1060]Sheelah Eddlyne. Ambani, *Colonial Urbanization in Kenya: The Case of Nanyuki Town, 1920-1963*. Egerton University, 2015, p.89.
[1061] G. Wagner, *Op, Cit.* p.67.
[1062]R. Van Zwanenberg, "The agricultural history of Kenya to 1939." *Nairobi: East African Publishing House* 111 (1972) p.78.

for generating the necessary funds to fulfill tax obligations. The pursuit of wage labor became necessary to support the production of cash crops.[1063]

Overall, the interplay of social, economic, and ecological factors constituted the driving forces that compelled the Maragoli, akin to other agrarian communities, to vacate their reserves. Furthermore, as a result of the state's control over the marketing of specific commodities such as maize, groundnuts, and dairy products, along with the associated pricing and taxation, many impoverished peasants encountered challenging economic circumstances. Consequently, they were compelled to pursue wage labor beyond the reserves to augment their limited agricultural income.[1064]

In the year 1938, on the cusp of the impending conflict, a considerable number of 31,000 Africans from the region were engaged as wage laborers across various sectors, including mines, agricultural lands, and urban areas throughout Kenya. This represented 9% of the district's overall population (377,438), equating to 44% of the male demographic, with a significant portion being young individuals.[1065] Considering that, aside from the European hoe and a limited number of hybrid seeds, there was a lack of substantial advancements in the technology of crop and livestock production, the increased responsibility for enhanced farm management assumed by women resulted in a notable intensification of female labor hours. On one hand, this compelled women to exert greater effort in the production of both food and cash crops, thereby supplementing the insufficient wages earned by men.

Conversely, it hastened the impoverishment of rural households and contributed to the emergence of a quasi-proletariat class of producers who possessed little more than their

[1063]Ibid.
[1064]A.M Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 145.
[1065]Ibid.

labor power to sell for wages in order to sustain their livelihoods. The impoverished agrarians in Maragoli land faced the brunt of adversity, yet the circumstances were scarcely more favorable in the remainder of the province. In an effort to address the issue of labour supply, the colonial administration augmented both hut and poll taxes, concurrently reinstating forced labour in 1935.

The state also implemented a novel system for acquiring wage labor, which was based on mutual agreement, locally referred to as *ogirimiti*. In this instance, Indian agents collaborated with African chiefs and local petty bourgeois merchants to establish an accord with prospective laborers regarding a mutually agreed wage and duration of employment.

The engaged laborers were subsequently transferred to the government for allocation and conveyance to the locations where their services were required.[1066] The procurement of labor through mutual agreement demonstrated a more efficacious method of securing workforce, albeit the turnover rate remained notably elevated. The Indian labor agents and their African counterparts were awarded a substantial bonus for each laborer they successfully recruited. This prompted them to resort to unscrupulous methods in the recruitment of laborers. For example, numerous prospective laborers were enticed by deceptive promises of high wages, only to receive significantly lower compensation. Certain individuals were not transported to the designated workplaces they had previously committed to attending. The working conditions in certain locales, such as towns and European farms, were exceedingly inadequate for sustaining human life, resulting in the tragic demise of some workers.[1067]

[1066]Nyange Edward, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 13th July 2023.
[1067]Nyange Edward, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 13th July 2023.

Beyond the confines of the district, the Maragoli represented a segment of the African populace engaged as wage and contract laborers within the European agricultural sectors, particularly on maize and sisal plantations located in Uasin Gishu and Nzoia districts, in addition to other agricultural regions within the Rift Valley and Central Provinces. A significant proportion of Africans found employment as migrant laborers in the White highlands. In 1938, for example, the estimated number of such workers reached 180,000, in addition to around 150,000 squatters.[1068]

Between 1923 and 1929, about 36 to 40% of these workers came from western Kenya while some 24 to 32% came from Kikuyu areas. The rest came from other parts of the country.[1069]

The Maragoli labour migration greatly increased on the on set of the second World War. This war placed demand on Maragoli manpower both in the armed forces and in those sectors of the economy highly attached to the ongoing war activities. A labour census taken at the end of 1944 revealed that close to 48.89 percent or 46,952 Luhya males were employed as wage earners.[1070] Keeping in mind that North kavirondo supplied very few squatters, it follows that the district supplied more labour in proportion to population than any other district in the colony, much more for example, than the Luo, their nearest

[1068]Sharon Stichter, "The formation of a working class in Kenya." In *The development of an African working class*, pp. 21-48. Routledge, 2023, p.28.
[1069] Ibid.
[1070] Registrar of Natives to Labour Commissioner, for January 22nd 1945, KNA, PC/NZA/3/13/15.

competitors.[1071] A number of factors made the Luhyia still retain a huge labour resourvoiur regardless of such a huge labour out flow. Such factors included; the Luhyia tendency to retain close attachments to their rural homes, their dislike for permanent jobs, their inherent family links and property and their apparent disregard for a career and incentive.[1072]

Due to these colonial labour policies, Maragoli social hierarchies, including but not limited to gender were reshaped. The Native Authority system empowered local chiefs to enforce colonial directives, including the promotion of cash crops. In some cases, chiefs and early adopters of cash crops were rewarded with land or recognition, leading to the emergence of a rural elite. A 1938 provincial communication stated: "Chiefs have been instructed to identify progressive farmers for cotton demonstration plots."[1073]

This policy fostered inequality and created a tier of privileged individuals who could accumulate wealth while others fell behind: "Our fathers followed what the chief said. But not everyone had land for cotton. Those with land became rich, others remained with nothing."[1074] This development mirrors broader colonial patterns across Kenya, where access to land and colonial favor became key determinants of social mobility.[1075]

4.4 Maragoli Agricultural Production in the Post-war Period

The interests of European settlers significantly shaped the process of post-war reconstruction. Consequently, the enhancement of African agriculture occurred provided it did not adversely affect settler agriculture. Indeed, the colonial administration lacked a

[1071] Annual Report North Nyanza 1935, KNA, DC/NN1/17.
[1072] Leen Kavulavu, 2020, *Op,Cit,* p.188.
[1073] Kenya National Archives (KNA). *PC/NZA/2/7/4, Provincial Commissioner Correspondence, 1938*.
[1074] Anonymous elder, oral interview, Maragoli Cultural Archive, 1995.
[1075] Kanogo, Tabitha. Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905–1963. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987.

distinct initiative designed specifically for the advancement of African agriculture. The endeavor to enhance European agriculture led to governmental intervention in the production dynamics of Africa.

Consequently, the examination of Maragoli gender relations in food production must be contextualized within the expansive political economy established in the aftermath of the war.

This period was characterized by the World War I aftermaths. Due to this war, widowhood had increased in Maragoli since quite a number of the Maragoli military conscripts perished in the war.[1076] From the FGDs submissions supported by archival data, the 1920s witnessed a paradigm shift in the family leadership since those families which had lost the family heads turned to the mothers to offer the necessary family leadership.[1077]

In addition to the World War I deaths discussed above, there were also children who had lost their fathers to the colonial warfare or to the major outbreak of smallpox. As earlier outlined, the pre-colonial Maragoli families had relied on the male heads to scout fertile lands and give general leadership in matters regarding ploughing and cultivation.

The absence of such men almost crippled the Maragoli agricultural activities. The orphaned children especially sons lacked a father figure to discipline and direct them. Instead of assisting their widowed mothers in cultivating the land and other food production mechanisms, majority of these boys ran to the Kaimosi Mission Centre where they could easily get food.[1078] The missionaries on their part took advantage of this situation and

[1076] K. Mutongi, *Op*, *Cit*,
[1077]African Report, March 1920.
[1078]K. Mutongi, *Op., Cit.,* p.30.

inducted the boys into the new colonial education and Christian faith hence divorcing the boys more from the established Maragoli food production systems. These boys realized that colonialism had brought in new survival mechanisms such as teaching and clerical jobs.[1079]

The 1920s jigger menace had also caught up with the Maragoli. Due to this menace, it became problematic for the infested individuals to get into the the farms or any other gainful food production activity. Food production therefore greatly dropped as a result of this jigger menace. The plight of the orphaned families had been exacerbated by the earlier rinderpest epidemics, which had decimated their livestock. Devoid of paternal figures and the livestock typically bestowed as bridewealth, young orphans often gravitated towards the mission centers earlier than their peers, engaging in menial labor in return for sustenance and to accumulate resources necessary for the acquisition of cattle.

This situation could not be captured better than one of the archival documents did:

> Mudaki was just such an orphan-a little fellow of ten or eleven years old, but small for his age. He was bright and vigorous and carried his load without grumbling. Amugune, was a little, naked, dirty lad of eleven or twelve, interested only in getting cents for a month's work. Ahonya was another feeble, little lad looking for food and Vyoya was a fatherless lad interested in rupees and cattle only. For children such as these, the missionaries offered physical sustenance that was impossible to disregard.[1080]

The dual policy, initiated in 1923, served as the principal economic development strategy following the war. In the year 1923, Governor Sir Robert Corydon articulated the policy

[1079]Joyce Musimbi, (65 Years), Oral interviews, on 23rd September 2023.
[1080]African Report, 1923.

as the "complementary development of non-native and native production." The conference of governors in 1926 posited that,

> ….steady progress cannot be secured in rural areas unless every able-bodied native who shows no tendency to work is given to understand that the Government expects him to do a reasonable amount of work. Either in production in his own Reserve or in labour for wages outside of it…. [1081]

A further clause stated that:

> The policy of the Government in this connection is a dual policy, namely, both economic development by natives in the Reserves and general development of the country as a whole: and that steady co-operation in both is expected of the native population.[1082]

The dual policy delineated the responsibilities designated for Africans, yet it failed to consider the contributions of Europeans in the colony's development.

Consequently, the policy necessitated the simultaneous advancement of both African and European economies.[1083] In practice, however, the dual policy appeared to imply that any measures advantageous to Africans were to be implemented only to the extent that they did not disrupt the interests of Europeans. The governor articulated that the policy served a dual purpose. Initially, it was imperative to motivate African producers to cultivate substantial amounts of foodstuffs that would yield a surplus suitable for the market. Furthermore, African men were to be motivated to pursue wage employment beyond their designated reserves. Therefore, for the enduring revival of the economy, it was imperative for each individual in Africa to engage in a manner that would be advantageous to him.

[1081]Winston L. Cone and J. F. Lipsomb, "*The history of Kenya agriculture*." University Press of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya 74 (1973), p.66.
[1082]Ibid, p.67.
[1083]Maurice Peter Keith Sorrenson, *Op. Cit,* p.41.

The shift in perspective regarding African agriculture following the depression was primarily focused on providing support to white settler farming, which had experienced setbacks during the economic downturn of the early 1920s.[1084] This is evidenced by the reality that Africans residing in proximity to settler estates were prohibited from cultivating coffee, the most profitable crop in the colony, due to concerns over the potential loss of African labor.[1085]

Consequently, the dual policy remained feasible only while Africans refrained from provoking the settler agriculture. The Economic and Financial Committee, established under Bowring, recommended the promotion of African efforts to generate a surplus in the Reserves for export purposes. The surplus production in Africa was primarily allocated to the domestic market to sustain the labor force employed on estates, particularly those engaged in coffee and sisal cultivation.[1086]

The enhancement of agricultural education in Africa was likewise advocated to elevate production levels across the continent. Nonetheless, in light of these suggestions aimed at enhancing agricultural output in Africa, there remained a persistent encouragement for able-bodied men to depart from the reserves in pursuit of wage employment. Clearly, the stipulations of the dual policy indicate that African labor was a focal point for the colonial administration if any substantial progress was to be realized in the colony. This had a significant effect on the division of labor by gender, as the government's primary concern was to remove male labor from the reserves. The departure of men from the reserves had

[1084]Ibid, p.46.
[1085]Carolyn Barnes, "An Experiment with Coffee Production by Kenyans, 1933-48." *African Economic History* 8 (1979): p.200.
[1086]Bruce Berman, *Control and crisis in colonial Kenya: The dialectic of domination*. East African Publishers, 1992, p.118.

a significant impact on the agricultural division of labor, as it has been noted that both Maragoli men and women historically engaged in food production in a manner that was either even or equal.

From 1920 to 1922, the annual reports of the Native Affairs Department and the Agricultural Department underscored the government's apprehensions regarding African agriculture.

The reports recorded in 1920-1921 stated:

> It is regretted that hitherto so little has been done to develop African agriculture potentialities. An analysis of the estimates of the Department of Agriculture would appear to show that the heavy expenditure of that Department is mainly devoted to helping the European farmer and to research work from which no doubt the native will, in some distant future, benefit.[1087]

The official stance regarding African agriculture mirrored that of the wartime era. For the first time, the Agricultural Department proposed the oversight of agriculture in the African reserves by European agricultural supervisors.

The inaugural agricultural supervisor was dispatched to the Maragoli division. The duty of the field officers was to motivate Africans to cultivate crops that are both edible and suitable for export. Among the agricultural products that were promoted for cultivation in Africa were maize and beans. The promotion of maize cultivation aligned with the expansion of Kisumu, the burgeoning gold opportunities in Kakamega, and the resulting reliance on Maragoli agricultural output during the 1930s. In 1923, efforts were initiated

[1087]Robert L. Tignor, *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900-1939*. Princeton University Press, 2015. p.294

to curtail the local distribution of maize in various directions, as well as to restrict hawking, in order to fulfill the emerging demands of the colonial administration.[1088]

During the period from 1920 to 1923, as well as in the early 1930s, Africans received a constrained form of agricultural training. The training, nonetheless, encountered significant challenges due to insufficient financial support and inadequate facilities provided by the government for this endeavor.[1089] Scott Agricultural Laboratories, founded in 1922 in Kabete, holds the distinction of being the inaugural agricultural institution in the colony. The geographical positioning in southern Kiambu may have influenced agricultural output in both Kiambu and the broader Central Province. In the year 1923, the inaugural agricultural supervisor was appointed to the laboratories. The second institution established was the Bukura Agricultural School, inaugurated in North Kavirondo in the year 1923.[1090] Furthermore, priority was granted to "tribes" from these regions, enabling them to return to their communities as educators upon completion. [1091]

Selection of trainees in the early years of the century was both gender and class biased. Every effort was made to "secure sons of Headmen and chiefs".The prejudice directed towards African women was predominantly observed in British Africa, as the British perceived these women through a Eurocentric lens. The British were notably shaped by the Victorian conception of a "ideal" woman, characterized by her domestic confinement and minimal involvement in productive activities. This perception obscured the

[1088]Gunter Wagner, *Op. Cit.,* p.32; See also Robertson, C. C. *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890-1990*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, (1997b), p.45.
[1089]Irvin D. Talbott, *Agricultural innovation in colonial Africa: Kenya and the great depression*. Vol. 18. Edwin Mellen Press, 1990, p.60.
[1090]J. F. Lipscomb, & C. Winston, *The History of Kenya Agriculture*. Nairobi: University Press of Africa, 1972, p.68.
[1091]Ibid., p.69.

administrators' awareness of the active involvement of Maragoli women in production. The inclusion of male trainers in the educational institutions reflects a disregard for the established gender roles within African societies. An additional consideration that constrained the opportunities for women and girls to enroll in schools was the stipulation of possessing a certain degree of formal education, which many women lacked.

By the year 1928, a total of eight Africans had successfully completed a rigorous three-year program at the Scott Agricultural Laboratories. Given that it was not a requirement to pursue a career in agriculture, these graduates transitioned into various other professions, including teaching, clerical work, and driving. This initiative was particularly designed for the trainees of Scott Agricultural Laboratory, as the geographical closeness of Nairobi provided the graduates with a significant advantage.[1092]From the Bukura School, of the four that completed their training in the early 1920's, only one became an agricultural instructor while the others moved into other fields.[1093] The preceding examination of the agricultural institutions distinctly indicates that the initial participants did not adequately enhance the capabilities of African food producers.

Women persistently shouldered the responsibility of food production, often lacking access to contemporary agricultural knowledge. The agricultural training provided to Africans between 1920 and 1923 was designed to rejuvenate the economy, as suggested by the Economic and Finance Committee. In pursuit of the committee's recommendations, agricultural instructors were dispatched to diverse regions across Africa. Nyanza was allocated 17, Central received 49, whereas both Coast and Ukambani were assigned two

[1092]Tony Becher, and Paul Trowler. *Academic tribes and territories*. McGraw-Hill Education (UK), 2001.
[1093]KNA: PC/NZA/1/7.

each.[1094] Based on the distribution of instructors across various regions, it can be inferred that those areas deemed to possess greater potential for elevated production were allocated a larger number of instructors in contrast to lower-producing regions such as Ukambani.

The distribution of enhanced and substantial amounts of flat white Congo maize seed and Canadian Wonder beans, both aimed at export, significantly impacted production in Maragoli. Maize held significant importance for the Maragoli community, bolstering food security and serving as a fundamental crop for their sustenance. The capacity to adjust to regional circumstances facilitated reliable yields, catering to the nutritional requirements of the community while also generating excess for commerce, thereby promoting economic stability and advancement.

The Bowring committee advocated for the cultivation of maize by Africans. This effort sought to improve local nutrition and strengthen economic self-sufficiency by leveraging the flexibility and high production potential of maize in African climes. Thus, the government's initial engagement in African agriculture included the supply of high-quality seeds, the maintenance of demonstration plots, and the provision of limited veterinary services.[1095]

The cultivation of maize was significant due to its dual role as both a commercial product and a source of sustenance. Africans preferred maize cultivation because, unlike millet and sorghum, it needed less labor, making it a practical choice amid declining male labor availability. This led to enhanced maize output. The colonial rulers preferred maize as it liberated both men and women from tying duties, so allowing them to labor on European

[1094]Ibid.
[1095]Thomas Wright, "'Constituencies of control': repertoires of coercive punishment in Kenya's Mau Mau emergency, 1952-1956." PhD diss., University of York, 2022., p.122.

fields. This likely indicates that maize has supplanted area once utilized for other crops such as millet and sorghum, as the Maragoli seem to favor monoculture agriculture. As labor increasingly disengaged from conventional agricultural tasks, the cultivation of labor-intensive crops such as millets was progressively discontinued or entirely eliminated from farms, compelling many to depend on the market for family provisions.[1096]

Production for the market was also motivated by the increased prices of commodities from 1922.[1097] The increase motivated producers from Maragoli to bring their commodities to the nearby towns especially Kisumu. Since the prices were better than in the local markets.[1098] Revitalized initiatives to augment output during the economic downturn incited fresh conflicts within Maragoli society between the gender factions. The decline in global pricing of products including maize, coffee, and sisal incited concern within both the government and the settler population. The inability of settlement agriculture to endure the slump revealed its susceptibility. Settlers were unable to return the requisite revenue to the government, although Africans remained to be subjected to taxation.

The government asserted that by regulating both production and selling via the Native Produce Ordinance of 1935, it hoped to enhance and elevate the quality of African agriculture through the inspection and grading of produce, as well as the licensing of dealers.[1099] Due to insufficient agricultural personnel, the onus of enhancing agricultural productivity was placed on the District Officers, who were required to manage agricultural

[1096]Gibson Kadenge, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 23rd July 2023.
[1097]William Robert Ochieng and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An Economic History of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992, p.94.
[1098]Ibid., p.102.
[1099]A. M. Amisi, *Op*, *Cit*, p.98.

and veterinary duties alongside their administrative responsibilities. District administrators predominantly depended on local chiefs and headmen to enhance agricultural productivity. The latter gathered barazas to discuss colonial agricultural policy. They also engaged local labor for tasks on community demonstration farms and, at times, in their own farms.

Local labor was further enlisted for employment in the Kericho tea farms and other regions of the nation. Unlike African agricultural output, European settler sectors got more regular extension services, financial assistance, and superior infrastructure. Produce from settlers commanded greater prices than that from Africans. Wrigley noted that African agricultural economics, particularly in Nyanza province, had been suppressed to favor European agriculture, resulting in African contributions to Kenya's entire export commerce being less than 20 percent by 1928.[1100]

The 1928 locust invasion, the drop in prices from 1928 to 1930, and the catastrophic drought from 1931 to 1934 exacerbated the challenges of agricultural production in Maragoli and other regions in North Nyanza. The yearly damage to food crops experienced by indigenous, as recorded by the District Commissioner in 1934, is of a magnitude that would be intolerable to European farmers cultivating crops for commercial purposes.[1101] This was not to suggest that the depression did not affect European farmers.

African producers had greater hardship as their crops were more severely affected by the downturn than those of European agriculture. Ironically, it was during the years of

[1100]Christopher C. Wrigley, "Kenya: The patterns of economic life, 1902-1945." *History of East Africa* 2 (1965): p.210.
[1101]KNA: DC/NN/1/19.

economic downturn that the district administration initiated a program to enhance agricultural productivity in North Nyanza. Instruction plots were withdrawn in 1931. A cadre of professional agricultural teachers was established, and Local Native Council farms were created to supply farmers with high-yield seeds. By the conclusion of 1934, the district comprised 10 government and 29 LNC compensated instructors. During the years of economic downturn, individuals were compelled to engage in more extensive cultivation to get enough yields.

The commencement of the Second World War in 1939 generated significant demand for food supplies, especially to equip Allied forces in the Middle East and Ethiopia. Consequently, the colonial administration promoted increased cultivation of food crops, especially maize and millet. The whole personnel of the Department of Agriculture was mobilized in support of this initiative. In January 1940, as well as in August and October 1942, the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner and Agricultural Officer, accompanied by the North Nyanza District Commissioner, conducted a tour of the Maragoli division and other areas within the district. They conducted barazas to urge local residents to promptly enhance the growing and selling of food crops.[1102] A requisition order was issued for the procurement of millet and maize, and those who declined to sell their goods in violation of the decree encountered legal consequences. The sole purchaser of any surplus produce was the Kenya Farmers Association.

The agrarian issue in Maragoli stemmed from the wartime strategy of maximizing productivity. This was mostly caused by delays in reaching the district's assigned European

[1102]KNA:D.C./NN/1/22, KNA:D.C./NN/1/24,

markets. Despite the constancy of agricultural techniques, there has been a promotion for enhanced crop production. Overcropping thus led to erosion and soil depletion. Iron hoes and ploughs were utilized more often than previously; yet, workers lacked sufficient training for their effective usage, exacerbating the issue. As fields were plowed downhill, the topsoil may be readily eroded by precipitation.[1103] Extensive gullies supplanted agricultural boundaries. Weeds, particularly striga, infiltrated fields as superior land was cultivated and soil became depleted due to mismanagement and erosion. This led to crops competing with one another for the limited plant nutrients.[1104] Crop pests multiplied, inflicting significant damage to agricultural produce.

In contrast, a Board of Agriculture in Europe facilitated enhanced planning and cooperation for agricultural output. To avert the disastrous consequences of overproduction, Production Committees were formed in this industry during the War in each region to sanction planting and sales schedules for crops. Consequently, the European settler sector performed more favorably post-war compared to the African sector, whose output contributions remained inconsistent and erratic years after the battle.

4.5 Changes in the Maragoli Land Ownership and Administration

In the lack of significant mineral reserves, the British sought to revitalize the economic enterprise of the Kenyan colony through agriculture. The British saw land as the fundamental economic asset provided by the nascent colonial economy in Kenya and East Africa, serving as a vehicle for capital accumulation. This elucidates why, upon the

[1103]Simeon Muhandael, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 25th July 2023.
[1104]KNA:D.C./NN/1/25

proclamation of the protectorate administration over the colony, all land was designated as Crown territory.[1105]

The establishment of African reserves, the appropriation of land for European utilization, and the identification of protected forest regions culminated in the cessation of Maragoli land plenty. Similar to the Native Americans in North America, herding was confined to designated regions.

A more grave scenario confronted the agricultural community, notably in the Rift Valley region of Kenya, where many Maragoli had begun to migrate in pursuit of improved living conditions owing to heightened adversity in the North Kavirondo reserve.[1106] Extensive tracts of land initially designated for European colonization remained available to the Maragoli farmers, who were permitted to graze livestock and cultivate crops. The Maragoli would respond by providing milk and then laboring on European farms. The Maragoli saw such partnership in traditional terms that both were profiting from the land. The shared ownership arrangement between African and European farmers abruptly altered when the latter applied colonial legislation to impose limits on African operations. The African farmer was compelled to acknowledge the emergence of a land dispute and the necessity for alterations in customary methods.

The Crown areas Ordinance of 1902 declared that all unoccupied areas were designated as crown land. It was evident that according to the 1902 legislation, no African possessed any land ownership; their claim to property was acknowledged just while they held it.[1107] Alongside the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915, which delineated the boundaries of "native

[1105]Ibid.
[1106]A. M. Amisi, Op, Cit, p.87.
[1107]H. W. O. Okoth-Ogendo, "The Law of Kenya: An Introduction by Tudor Jackson." (1970): p.307.

reserves," the Maragoli were restricted to a designated territory, lacking the opportunity to expand as they had in the past. From the outset, reserves were created to facilitate European colonization.[1108] The creation of reserves had increased pressure on land.

The interwar period established a definitive shift in the perceptions of land ownership and utilization among Africans and colonial authorities. The governor and the director of the Native Affairs Department were resolutely dedicated to resolving the land issue by implementing improved agricultural methods and overseeing homesteading activities throughout this period. The district's agricultural development was mostly ascribed to the advice and support from the Agricultural Department. This was achieved both directly and indirectly through the oversight of the agricultural education offered by government and mission institutions.

Before this period, irregular and unstructured techniques were utilized to distribute groundnut, maize, and sesame seeds as early as 1909. The procedure started in 1923.[1109] The primary objective of the district's agricultural strategy was to preserve soil fertility while achieving a significant increase in production.

Two strategic levels were employed to achieve this objective. The first objective was to demonstrate to the Maragoli farmer how his traditional tillage methods may be enhanced and to convince him of their deficiencies.[1110]

The second objective was to supply superior seeds for existing crops to improve the newly introduced varieties. Agricultural officers were deployed in the region to enhance effective

[1108]Ibid.
[1109]KNA: DC/NN.1/3 See also KNA: DC/NN.1/4:1923:5.
[1110]Gunter Wagner, *Op*, *Cit*, p. 34.

supervision in order to achieve these objectives. An Agricultural Office was formally created in Kakamega in 1930, and an Agricultural Officer was sent there permanently in 1931. The Agricultural Department's average number of field staff rose from twelve in 1933 to sixty-eight in 1937, including twenty-seven Native instructors, thirteen produce inspectors, seven agricultural inspectors, thirteen temporary instructors for the cotton sector, and eight soil control inspectors.

Superior varieties such Canadian Wonder, Madagascar butter beans, Black Chiroko, Kunde black, and Kunde red replaced the many indigenous bean species. In the District's corn-growing areas, 2,230 sacks of maize were distributed as seed material throughout the seven years from 1931 to 1937. When all types of seed were provided in plenty, they were distributed free of charge. However, when new or specialized varieties of seed were concerned, supply were restricted to the most reliable farmers, who were obligated to repay an equivalent quantity after the initial harvest. Consequently, colonial leaders and headmen were granted priority.[1111]

Initially, a portion of the seed was devoured instead of being planted; nevertheless, the total seed distribution was ultimately effective. Estimates indicate that this singular measure increased the yield per acre for beans, sorghum, and eleusine by almost 30%, and for maize, sesame, and corn by nearly 40% over the years 1937–1938.[1112]The Agricultural Department and several mission stations in the district promoted the cultivation of diverse edible plants and fruits to enhance vitamin intake and diversify the standard diet.

[1111]A.M. Amisi, Op, Cit, p.78.
[1112]KNA: DC/NN/2/12:1937:6.

Africans were therefore urged to cultivate unfamiliar fruits and vegetables, such as oranges, lemons, pineapples, pawpaws, melons, and cabbages, alongside European crops such cabbages, carrots, onions, English potatoes, and particularly tomatoes, from around 1930.[1113]

Following the entrance of Europeans into the District in 1931 after the discovery of the Kakamega gold fields, a significant local market for fruits and vegetables emerged, although their acceptance as supplementary components of the African diet was delayed.[1114] All the aforementioned efforts were conducted within the framework of the pre-colonial Maragoli modes of production to facilitate the adaptation of this pre-capitalist economy to accommodate and support the expansion of the new colonial economy.

This chapter's investigation revealed that nearly all colonial agricultural practices were not designed with the interests of African peasants in mind, but rather served primarily to enhance settler objectives. The focus on the aforementioned agricultural breakthroughs was aimed at enhancing the colonial state's international reputation and financial strength to confront and overcome any African opposition that emerged.

4.6 Economic Changes: The New Cash Economy

The colonial economy afforded African farmers several chances for generating income. The primary means of obtaining new colonial employment encompassed non-agricultural labor in industries, services, and government service in urban areas, as well as cash crop production on farms and employment on European estates. The colonial period established

[1113]KNA: DC/NN/1/12:1931:6.
[1114]KNA: DC/NN/1/13:1932:5.

a new context in which Africans need currency for taxes, educational expenses, and the acquisition of consumer items.

In the reserves, African farmers had greater prospects for profit in agricultural cultivation than in livestock management.[1115] This contrasted with the pre-colonial arrangement. This new structure diminished the value of cattle relative to certain crops. The value of cow husbandry diminished further when limits on grazing territories were implemented. Many of these limitations were prompted by European colonization and the heightened need for arable land, resulting in the reduction of pasturelands. The population growth severely diminished the already limited grazing pasture. All these circumstances significantly diminished the practice of livestock rearing among the Maragoli.[1116] The value of the area utilized for the cultivation of animals and vegetables also fluctuated.

As the valuation of agricultural and animal production fluctuated, sites optimal for agriculture became increasingly appealing for human habitation, hence enhancing land value in certain areas. Conversely, pasture pastures have diminished in value due to less demand. In terms of geographical extent, the acreage in Kenya suited for rain-fed agriculture is less than that designated for animal production.[1117] Nevertheless, the colonial focus on crop cultivation led many individuals to engage in agricultural production, hence augmenting the value of land in fertile regions. The Africans in the reserves situated in

[1115]John M McIntire, Daniel Bourzat and Prabhu L. Pingali, "Crop-livestock interaction in sub-Saharan Africa." (1992)., p.78
[1116]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd July 2023.
[1117]William Robert Ochieng and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An economic history of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992, p. 35.

those regions also participated in the effort to get arable land. African farmers developed many strategies to expand their landholdings.

The techniques included the sale of cattle, wage labor savings, and the selling of cash crops. Government official personnel, notably the chiefs, used their positions to get additional land. The colonial period altered the conventional African entitlement to land from a customary right to a means of power and riches.[1118] The Maragoli returns from European farms to the reserves were the most adversely affected group. This group experienced the whole ramifications of these developments. These squatters were expelled from the European farms by the enforcement of colonial land legislation. Upon their return, they discovered that the same legislation was being employed by their knowledgeable relatives to deny them their customary privilege.[1119] The alterations in trading mechanisms impacted several Maragoli food production systems, including agriculture, animal production, and cash crop economy, among others.

4.6.1 Agriculture

The incursion of colonial capitalism disrupted the Maragoli's pre-colonial food production systems. The commercialization of the rural region rendered the Maragoli vulnerable to an economy they could scarcely influence. The farmers began generating excess for sale to fulfill tax obligations, although the pricing of the produce were dictated by the colonial

[1118]Berry Sara, "Debating the land question in Africa." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44, no. 4 (2002): p.650.
[1119]William Robert Ochieng and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An Economic History of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992: p.42.

authorities. The Maragoli farmers were progressively turned into peasants and commodity producers.

Anyang Nyong'o asserts that peasant communities have some common characteristics.[1120] The bulk of peasants reside in rural areas and create surplus, which is then transferred to the dominant classes within a certain social structure through different processes. Thirdly, peasant producers of excess possess less influence over the allocation of this surplus, and ultimately, several peasant societies rely on non-peasants for products and services, frequently incurring significant costs. The delivery of these commodities and services frequently serves as a means of extracting surplus from rural cultures.[1121] In this connection, Atieno Odhiambo made the observation that the peasantry as a social category in Kenya is a product of colonial situation.[1122] The establishment of peasants in the Maragoli instance was initiated by the implementation of the colonial system.

The crucial observation is that the Maragoli experienced a heightened loss of control over the distribution of surplus to Europeans and Indians. The peasant farmers needed to be convinced to cultivate the crop, and its implementation had to be executed in a manner that allowed for oversight by a government official. Their function was to persuade and even coerce villagers into recognizing the profitable nature of the crop. The chiefs and colonial authorities, in addition to persuasion, did not allow economic incentives or education to

[1120]Mncube, Malusi. *In search of PAN-African Development Agency: a comparative analysis of the 1980 Lagos plan of action, the 1991 ABUJA treaty and the 2001 New Partnership F0r Africa's Development (NEPAD)*, University of Johannesburg (South Africa), 2020, p.78.
[1121]Abba Evseevitch Gaissinovitch, "CF Wolff on variability and heredity." *History and philosophy of the life sciences* (1990) p.183.
[1122]White Luise, "Precarious Conditions: A Note on Counter-Insurgency in Africa after 1945." *Gender & History* 16, no. 3 (2004), p.610.

serve as motivators for change.[1123] A sequence of prohibitive directives mandated individuals to cultivate cash crops for taxation or an additional field of cassava as a safeguard against famine. Subsequently, mandates dictated that Africans adhere to specific planting methods, eliminate designated noxious weeds, or employ particular fertilization techniques. Consequently, the imposition of coercion in agricultural reforms persisted, despite the peasants' strong aversion to such coercion.[1124]

In the 1930s, the Agricultural Department recognized that maintaining soil fertility to enhance surplus crop production required not only traditional methods, such as applying ashes from burnt grass and remnants of previous crops, but also the use of cow dung and green manure.[1125] The Agricultural Department has, for several years, strongly promoted the utilization of boma dung by indigenous cow owners, as well as the cultivation of various leguminous crops to be incorporated into the soil as 'green manure.' It also initiated a compost pit campaign. Despite the presence of hundreds of tons of cattle dung either lying unused or incinerated in enclosures, efforts to promote its application as fertilizer for agricultural fields had, by 1937, not achieved any significant results.

The opposition to incorporating green manure seems to have been founded on concepts of mystical religious order.[1126] This position can be summed up in a statement as ancestral spirits- (*the evigingi*) would be angry at a man who was to dig in anything he had planted, for by doing so he was spoiling a good thing in a bad way."[1127] The abandonment of shifting

[1123]KNA: DC/NN/1/12:6
[1124]Eric Masinde Aseka, Bill Freund, Ran Greenstein, Ulf Himmelstrand, Martin Legassick, Julius E. Nyang'oro, and Eddie Webster. "Mahmood Mamdani and the analysis of African society." (1997): p.98.
[1125]Michael Saffle, *Richard Wagner: a guide to research*. Psychology Press, 2002, p.88.
[1126]Richard W. Malott, "Rule-governed behavior and behavioral anthropology." *The Behavior Analyst* 11 (1988): 181-203., p.186.
[1127]Michael Saffle, (2002), *Op. Cit.,* p.34

cultivation led to a rapid decline in soil fertility and the emergence of serious erosion problems.As a result, despite the colonial government's implementation of prolonged agricultural labor, the Maragoli peasants' dependence on labor-intensive techniques did not provide returns commensurate with their expenditures of time and resources.[1128]

Consequently, ensnared in a basic reproduction dilemma and limited by the underdevelopment of their productive capacities, households in these regions became exceedingly susceptible to the collapse of their material means of production. This situation was exacerbated by climatic fluctuations, including hailstorms, seasonal abnormalities, floods, and droughts.[1129] Post- 1930, the affluent wage-earning migrants, including local leaders, headmen, and educators, transitioned into land-owning households within the constraints imposed by established reserve limits on the community. Consequently, male labor was extracted from the smallest holdings, leading to its relegation to the bottom tier of the wage labor market and ultimately into the agricultural labor market of other small holdings.

The primary factor distinguishing farming households was the rate of savings and investment derived from agricultural revenue, with wages being the predominant component.[1130] Consequently, alterations in land tenure and land usage, together with escalating land accumulation, contributed to the diversification process. This rendered land the most significant factor in the escalating inequality among African households.

[1128]Amwai Douglas, (79 Years), Oral Interview, on 20th September, 2023.
[1129]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 15th September 2023.
[1130]William Robert Ochieng and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An economic history of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992., p.25

Alterations in tenure and utilization resulting from agricultural commercialization have also influenced bride wealth customs, the sexual division of labor, and the relationship between the increase of farm and off-farm revenue.[1131]

All these alterations formed facets in the stratification process. As land scarcity intensified, boundary conflicts proliferated in Maragoli, frequently handled in Native tribunal tribunals favoring the powerful factions.[1132] The disparity in land ownership, coupled with population pressure, rendered small landowning households vulnerable. The aforementioned inequities contributed to the agricultural reforms and commercialization of output following 1950, as will be examined in relation to the decolonization agriculture initiatives from 1945 to 1960.

4.6.2 Subsistence Agriculture

During the early colonial period, indigenous crop types remained predominant in agricultural techniques among the Maragoli, despite the introduction of exotic alternatives by colonial officials. In reaction to the political economy established by colonization, the Maragoli community adeptly adjusted by expanding food crop production—not alone for sustenance but also for commercial objectives. This transition signified a crucial change

[1131]Deborah Fahy Bryceson, "Gender and generational patterns of African deagrarianization: Evolving labour and land allocation in smallholder peasant household farming, 1980–2015." *World development* 113 (2019): 60-72., p.69.
[1132]Hezron Mwamili, (56 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023.

in the community's agricultural focus, as the encroachment of capitalism market frameworks started to alter conventional economic relationships.

The coexistence and interaction of capitalism and pre-capitalist systems within the same socio-economic area are clearly articulated here. This revolution lacked gender neutrality; the rearrangement of work, particularly within homes, created new gendered dynamics in production and resource management. From an interpretivist standpoint, the Maragoli's decisions and adjustments to colonial pressures exemplified intricate cultural discussions, rather than mere passive assimilation into enforced systems.[1133] As a result, the pre-colonial practice of selling surplus was replaced with intentional surplus production for sale, leading to the gradual formation of a Maragoli peasantry. The regime aimed to undermine indigenous crops such as finger millet and promote the cultivation of exportable crops, mainly maize, among the Maragoli.[1134]

The pre-colonial tradition of selling surplus was supplanted by deliberate surplus production for sale, culminating in the gradual emergence of a Maragoli peasantry. The dictatorship sought to subvert indigenous crops like finger millet while advocating for the development of export-oriented crops, mostly maize, among the Maragoli.[1135] The colonial

[1133]Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456; Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); Teresa Barnes and Everjoice Win, "To Live a Better Life: An Oral History of Women in the City of Harare, 1930–70," in *Hidden from History: Recovering the Histories of Women in Africa*, ed. B. Bozzoli (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1983), 139–157; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).
[1134]KNA: DC/NN/1/19:1937:9.
[1135]Patrick Wolfe, "Land, labor, and difference: Elementary structures of race." *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001) p.900. See Also Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 299.

government did not consider finger millet a strategic commodity, even though it was an essential part of indigenous diets and helped ensure food security at the family level. Thus, it became the target of official propaganda that sought to cast doubt on its usefulness.

Colonial officials, such as District Commissioners, frequently criticized millet as a "poor" and "unsatisfactory" crop, and they pushed for the cultivation of maize as a substitute, reasoning that maize was more suited to the export and market demands of the colonial era. .[1136] Millet cultivation was mainly done by women, while maize production was taken over by men because of its connection to cash income. This change mirrored the articulation of capitalist production modes onto subsistence economies and also disturbed gendered divisions of labor. [1137] Colonial agricultural policies furthered economic and epistemic subjugation by silencing indigenous women's knowledge systems and reducing their prominence in local agrarian expertise, according to feminist epistemology. [1138]

Meillasoux, in his commentary on the same subject, notes that neither capitalism nor feudalism are unique to the household economy, as they depend on domestic interactions to sustain themselves. .[1139]It is more accurate to see the historical connection between indigenous and colonial production systems as a dialectical process defined by mutual transformation and dependency than as a straightforward replacement of one system by the other. When looking at how capitalist relations have seeped into the Maragoli home

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[1136] J. Tosh, *Colonial Chiefs in a Stateless Society: A Case Study from Northern Uganda*, *The Journal of African History* 28, no. 1 (1987): 59–80; see also Berman and Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London: James Currey, 1992), 217.

[1137] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 105–110.

[1138]Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 45–67; see also Amina Mama, *Beyond the Masks: Race, Gender and Subjectivity* (London: Routledge, 1995), 32–50.

[1139]Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, meal and money: Capitalism and the domestic community*. Cambridge University Press, 1981., p.132.

economy, you can see a complicated articulation of how pre-existing institutions have been both eroded and preserved, leading to different kinds of poverty and accumulation all at once. [1140] One example is maize farming in Maragoli, which was already part of the native agricultural culture before the arrival of colonizers.

Colonial agricultural policy started to shift the economy away from subsistence crops and toward market demands in 1910, when the *gibendi* type of exotic yellow flint maize was introduced. .[1141] The colonial focus on *gibendi*, a crop valued for its commercial potential, reorganized labor relations by placing control progressively in the hands of men, a change that was both economically and profoundly gendered. Traditionally, women had been the primary managers of maize cultivation within a subsistence framework. [1142]

From an interpretivist perspective, these modifications must be comprehended not alone via tangible alterations in production but also through the lived experiences, cultural significances, and gendered identities that rural individuals associate with such changes.[1143] The shift in crop preference indicated underlying conflicts between external economic

[1140] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 25–45.
[1141] Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of Colonial Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1902–1964* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999), 68; see also Cora Ann Presley, *Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), 37.
[1142] Jane L. Parpart, "Gender and Labor in African Historiography," *African Studies Review* 32, no. 3 (1989): 111–117.
[1143] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5–6; see also Signe Arnfred, *Sexuality and Gender Politics in Mozambique: Rethinking Gender in Africa* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2011), 91–92.

demands and indigenous knowledge systems, particularly those influenced by women's responsibilities in food sovereignty and home provisioning.[1144]

The Maragoli enthusiastically embraced the novel maize brought by the colonialists. This evident responsiveness likely stemmed from the Maragoli's possession of their first variety, enabling them to recognize early on that the new maize produced a superior yield compared to their own crop. Certainly, there was a component of administrative motivation to cultivate maize and sustain the laborers of the settlers. From this early time, maize and millet emerged as the predominant crops cultivated for sustenance and as sources of economic gain.[1145] The study revealed that the introduction of novel maize varieties considerably influenced the Maragoli ecological system by improving agricultural output, modifying traditional farming methods, and impacting local biodiversity. This transition resulted in enhanced food security, although simultaneously diminished the diversity of indigenous crops and altered landscape and soil management techniques.

The cultivation of maize had a notable rise, particularly in South Kitosh (Tiriki, North and South Maragoli, and Bunyore), where before 1930 it was just a secondary crop consumed directly from the cob (boiled or roasted when still immature), with little quantities being marketed. Due to the marketing capabilities established by the building of the Kampala

[1144]Maurice Amutabi, "The Role of Traditional Music in the Writing of Cultural History: The Case of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya 1." In *Africanizing Knowledge*, Routledge, 2017, p.194.
[1145]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview at his home in Chanderema village - Mambai, on 12th August 2023.

section of the Kenya Uganda railway, and significantly influenced by the initiative of seed planting, production for sale increased by about 2800% between 1931 and 1936.[1146]

Table 4.1: Commercial Maize production in South Kitosh for Years 1931-1936

YEAR	Quantity Sold for export (in Tons)
1931	116
1933	418
1934	982
1935	2593
1936	3325

Source: G. Wagner., *The Bantu of Western Kenya* in One Volume London: Oxford University Press, 1956, p.24

Between 1931 and 1936, commercial maize production in South Kitosh shows a dramatic upward trend, rising from just 116 tons in 1931 to 3,325 tons by 1936. This exponential growth suggests a significant shift toward export-oriented agriculture, likely driven by colonial policies promoting cash crop production over subsistence farming. The increasing quantities indicate expanding land use, greater investment in farming inputs, and possibly coercive labour practices. This shift may have disrupted traditional food systems, as land and labour were redirected from local food crops—often managed by women—to maize cultivation for external markets, reinforcing colonial economic structures and altering gender roles in agriculture.

The choice for maize over conventional staples such as millet was not only a question of agricultural convenience. It signified the intentional reorganization of native industry to fulfill colonial economic requirements. Maize, although being nutritionally inferior than sorghum and millet, was more economical and better suited to wage-labor demands. Its

[1146]Maurice Amutabi, *Op*, Cit. p.195.

mass and caloric output rendered it appropriate for supplying the expanding colonial labor force, particularly the African laborers on settler farms and in developing urban areas.

The reconfiguration also has significant gender ramifications. The cultivation of millet and sorghum has historically been situated within female-dominated domains of household production. The colonial transition to maize, a crop geared towards market demands, increasingly involved males in its cultivation, consequently undermining pre-colonial gendered divides of agricultural work. Women's responsibilities were both marginalized and exploited—confined to food processing and the reproduction of the labor force, while their control over food systems diminished.

The shift was actively engaged with through a culturally informed perspective. Indigenous knowledge systems, attitudes, and practices frequently conflicted with the enforced colonial agricultural paradigm. The emphasis on maize production signifies not only a technical alteration in crop selection but a profound cultural and social reconfiguration of the Maragoli rural economy in response to colonial dominance. Such energy would enhance the laborers' satisfaction, enabling them to work more joyfully.[1147] Maize served as an instrument for the advancement of capitalism in rural regions due to its superior marketability.

According to Samuel Bowles, the research revealed that "maize was introduced to facilitate a transition in the MOP in Kenya from a pre-capitalist form to a capitalist one." Colonial administrators perceived capitalism as advancement and so viewed maize farming

[1147]Samuel Bowles, "Endogenous preferences: The cultural consequences of markets and other economic institutions." *Journal of economic literature* 36, no. 1 (1998): p.77.

as progressive.[1148] The transition to maize production by the Maragoli was not a result of independent agricultural choices but a compelled adjustment to the requirements of the colonial economy. African peasants were forced to prioritize maize because of the creation of a lucrative market, which illustrated the overarching structural forces of capitalist integration. The apparent increases in maize production should not be viewed as signs of agricultural prosperity but rather as indicators of intensified exploitation through mechanisms of unequal exchange, in which peasant labor was integrated into a global system that devalued African produce while overvaluing imported goods and settler profits.

The reconfiguration of agricultural production illustrates the argument posited by proponents of the articulation of modes of production, which asserts that throughout the colonial period, pre-capitalist systems were neither entirely obliterated nor retained, but rather adapted to fulfill the imperatives of colonial capitalism..[1149] In this dialectic, traditional subsistence economies were subjected to the demands of accumulation, resulting in the transformation of the peasants into a largely proletarianized class linked to the market.

The transition has significant gendered implications. Maize production, increasingly linked to cash farming and male labor migration, disturbed the traditional gender division of labor, wherein women were integral to the cultivation of sorghum and millet—staple crops vital for food security and social reproduction.[1150] As males were increasingly

[1148]Ibid., p.84.
[1149] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456.
[1150] Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 112–117.

involved in the market-driven maize economy, women's authority over family food systems waned, marginalizing them within a shifting agricultural framework that favored exportable goods above subsistence needs.

From an interpretivist viewpoint, these alterations cannot be solely attributed to economic coercion. The incorporation of maize also involved transformations in cultural significances, dietary inclinations, and domestic power structures. The Maragoli experience provides factual evidence for Wolff's claim that the colonial focus on export-oriented agriculture was motivated by Britain's urgent financial concerns, not than local need or ecological rationale.[1151]Attempts were undertaken to identify exportable commodities beyond maize in Maragoli land, with government officials conducting isolated experiments to encourage the cultivation of crops such as groundnuts, sesame, and beans. Initially, seeds were distributed at no cost; however, once their economic value was recognized by the Maragoli, they were subsequently sold. [1152]

The primary challenge was identifying which plants were appropriate for each specific place due to variations in rainfall, temperature, and overall climatic conditions. All varieties of beans thrived and were sown from April onwards. Indian shopkeepers established themselves in Lunyerere upon the township's inception. The shopkeepers procured agricultural goods and subsequently gave or sold it to the Maragoli as seeds on behalf of the government.[1153]

[1151] Richard D. Wolff, "Capitalism and the Colonial State in Kenya: The Development of a Land Policy," *Review of African Political Economy* 3, no. 7 (1976): 74–78.
[1152]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview at Chanderema village in Mamabi, on 23rd August 2023.
[1153]KNA: DC/NN/1/12:1931:7.

In spite of all these experimental crops, it should be noted that millet, sorghum and maize remained Maragoli land's most important agricultural exports. Through their cultivation, the Maragoli were gradually incorporated into the colonial capitalism system. The control of the market, the determination of crop prices and the transportation of produce were all controlled by merchant capital dominated by the Indian shopkeepers. Maragoli labour was exploited through the cultivation of the crops which fetched low prices and the Maragoli had to expand acreage with the consequent ecological degradation.[1154] Despite the presence of several experimental crops, millet, sorghum, and maize continued to be the principal agricultural exports of Maragoli area.

The Maragoli were progressively integrated into the colonial capitalist system through their agricultural practices. The market management, agricultural price setting, and produce transportation were all governed by merchant capital, predominantly influenced by Indian shopkeepers. The Maragoli workforce was exploited via the cultivation of inexpensive crops, requiring an extension of land that led to ecological degradation.[1155]

The secondary purpose was to enhance traditionally cultivated crops by introducing diverse new varieties and supplying superior seeds. Afforestation commenced, entailing the tillage of extensive land areas at educational institutions and the cultivation of trees and grains. These standards, in conjunction with support from the agriculture department, enabled the Maragoli to acquire modern agricultural practices for more efficient commodity

[1154]Eric M. Aseka, *Op*, *Cit*, p.103.
[1155]Gunter Wagner, *Op.Cit*, p.36.

production.[1156] Maize was more susceptible to soil exhaustion than any other crop. M. P. Miracle thinks that this illness can be attributed to three distinct sources.

Primarily, maize depletes the soil at a faster rate than any other cereal due to its massive vegetative growth. [1157] As a result, it necessitates a seed bed that is consistently fertilized. Secondly, maize necessitates a seed bed that is both deep and well-prepared. Finally, it is imperative to prevent weeds from infiltrating the crop during the growth season. The probability of crop failure increased as a result of the extensive cultivation of maize and the scarcity of undeveloped land, as all of these approaches necessitated a significant amount of work. [1158]

During the 1929–1933 global crisis, prices plummeted to previously unheard-of depths, with some essential items losing more than half of their value. By the first quarter of 1931, the value of international trade had decreased by one-third from 1929. [1159] In 1934, when prices for manufactured goods began to rise, the world economy saw a temporary rebound; yet, prices declined again between 1938 and 1939. Subsequent to the Great Depression, a transient phase of inflation occurred from 1939 to 1945, as wartime shortages of goods precipitously escalated prices.

The price escalation for manufactured goods surpassed that of essential commodities. During the war, commodity shortages and heightened demand for manufactured products

[1156]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview 2023held at his home in Chanderema Village mambai Sub - Location, on 20th August, 2023.
[1157]Marvin P. Miracle, "Maize in Tropical Africa." (1966): p.344.
[1158]Reuben M. Matheka, *Op*, *Cit*, p.110.
[1159]KNA: DC/NN/1/11:1930.

precipitated inflation, resulting in elevated prices for manufactured items due to interrupted supply chains and escalated military production requirements.The Great Depression and the Second World War significantly impacted Kenya's international commerce, affecting micro-regional economies, such as that of the Maragoli. During the Depression, the prices of Kenya's principal agricultural exports fell more sharply than those of imported industrial goods, leading to an adverse terms-of-trade situation for African producers.[1160] The colonial government responded by enhancing its regulatory oversight of trade. Marketing boards were established to regulate the quality and flow of agricultural exports; nevertheless, they frequently determined producer prices that were significantly lower than the current global market rates, which had a disproportionate impact on African smallholders. [1161]

The ever-shrinking export opportunities for Kenya only served to deepen the country's economic marginalization. Traditional African goods like simsim (sesame), ghee, skins, and hides were no longer major exports by the 1930s. Instead, European settlers, who enjoyed state-sponsored infrastructure and marketing channels, dominated the sectors that produced high-value crops like as sisal, tea, and coffee, which led to their rise to dominance. [1162]

Local markets kept prices of African-grown maize, a staple food for people like the Maragoli, constantly low, so there was little motivation to produce more than needed. [1163]

[1160] David Kenneth Fieldhouse, *Black Africa, 1945–1980: Economic Decolonization and Arrested Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 48–51.
[1161] Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35–37.
[1162] Robert Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 24–29.
[1163] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 88–90.

The structural dynamics highlight the inequitable incorporation of African economies into the global market under colonial capitalism, when indigenous producers suffered from price instability and policy marginalization.

The decline of international commodity prices during the global economic depression compelled the colonial authority in Kenya to adjust its domestic trade policy in accordance with global market variations. In rural regions like as Maragoli, these macroeconomic transformations were implemented by localized state mechanisms. Chiefs were directed to disseminate official notifications governing the production, acquisition, and commerce of essential agricultural goods. By 1944, the selling of cereals like sorghum was rigorously regulated. Sales were organized via colonial middlemen, with freshly grown sorghum purchased within strict timescales at predetermined prices—specifically, 1 shilling and 10 cents every debe (half bushel), or 8 shillings and 25 cents per 200 pounds. State-imposed price limitations restricted local producers, particularly women, who historically occupied essential positions in the cultivation and selling of these grains within subsistence and informal trading networks.[1164]

The post–World War II economic recession further destabilized Kenya's settler-dominated economy, compelling the colonial authority to reevaluate its financial strategy. Confronted with a diminished settler sector and increasing fiscal constraints, the administration sought to engage African peasant farmers to address the agricultural deficit and enhance colonial income. This transition indicated a more comprehensive expression of production methods,

[1164] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005), 91–94..

as African smallholders were integrated into the colonial economy not via growth but via regulatory compulsion and price manipulation.[1165]

The reorganization of African agriculture fulfilled two primary purposes: meeting settler demands and reinforcing the colonial treasury. These measures stimulated increased political consciousness among African producers. The 1930s and 1940s were an era in which economic entrepreneurship served as a medium for political expression. The Luyia communities, particularly the Maragoli, experienced a heightened awareness that led to the establishment of structured African commercial platforms.

In 1933, the initial Kavirondo Chamber of Commerce, comprising Luo and Luyia merchants, was established as the inaugural organized African commercial organization in Nyanza.[1166] It had split into smaller, more localized groups by 1934, with names like the North Kavirondo African Chamber of Commerce, the Kisumu Native Chamber of Commerce, and a revived Kavirondo Chamber of Commerce. The fact that South Maragolian Habil Ndagalu was its secretary by 1935 shows how the Maragoli nobility were already active in economic nationalism in Africa. [1167]

The institutionalization of African entrepreneurship, especially via maize-growing groups in Kimilili and Webuye, which sprang from Maragoli and Tiriki, highlighted the politics of economic space and the gendered restructuring of rural economies. The emergence of

[1165] Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture Publications, 1972), 163–170.
[1166] Robert Tignor, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu, and Meru in the 19th Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 210–213.
[1167] Rosberg, Carl G., and John Nottingham, *The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), 37–39.

these organizations signified progress in African economic autonomy, it also highlighted the gendered exclusions inherent in colonial capitalist structures. These first chambers were mostly dominated by men, marginalizing the essential economic contributions of women in the informal and subsistence sectors. The shift from subsistence to commodified agriculture not only transformed production relations but also reconfigured gender dynamics, frequently bolstering patriarchal power under colonial influence.[1168]

4.6.3 Cash Crop Economy

The colonial introduction of non-food income crops like tea, coffee, and cotton into the Maragoli economy faced significant socio-cultural and structural opposition. Although several Maragoli farmers embraced coffee cultivation—similar to the adoption of cotton by other Luhya subgroups—the incorporation of these crops into indigenous agricultural systems was neither smooth nor widely accepted. This transition signified a rupture from the standpoint of modes of production: the enforcement of capitalist, export-oriented agriculture onto an established subsistence economy rooted in community and cultural principles.[1169] Coffee and cotton, despite their use in the colonial economy, were seen by many Maragoli as agronomically and socially inferior to indigenous mainstays like as sorghum and finger millet.

These traditional crops were not just sources of sustenance but also have deep cultural and gendered importance. Sorghum and millet served as the foundation for beer production, an activity integral to rites like funerals, marriages, initiation ceremonies, and communal

[1168] Lynn Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 56–59.
[1169] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456.

gatherings.[1170] In these ceremonial economies, women had a pivotal function as growers, processors, and guardians of both sustenance and significance. From a feminist epistemological perspective, the marginalization of these crops under colonial agricultural policy concurrently diminished the significance of women's knowledge systems and labor contributions.[1171] The promotion of male-centric cash crop agriculture disrupted the gender equilibrium of pre-colonial agricultural practices, diminishing women's economic independence and ceremonial power.

Viewed via an interpretivist perspective, the Maragoli's rejection—or, at best, ambivalence—toward non-food crops should be understood not as mere opposition to change, but as a culturally reasonable preservation of a significant way of life. Local actors evaluated novel crops for both their market worth and their compatibility with socially rooted traditions and collective identity. The gradual or inconsistent adoption of tea, coffee, and cotton cannot be seen just through economic lenses; it signifies a multifaceted interaction of material circumstances, cultural knowledge systems, and gendered experiences throughout colonial change.[1172]

Local trade networks did not allow for the bartering of coffee for other items, animals, or services since it lacked the transactional flexibility of conventional grains. Consequently, many Maragoli and wider Luhya groups saw it as an unimportant crop that didn't contribute

[1170] Chavakali FGD held on 10th October 2023 at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds.

[1171] Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 112–119.

[1172] Duncan Amisi, (76 Years), Oral Interview at his home in Chavogere, on 12th October 2023. For readings on this, see Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–262.

much to their economics or culture. On the other hand, maize, and especially the improved exotic variety brought in from Kisumu, became a popular cash crop in South Maragoli in the early 1920s. [1173]

A cautious adaptation strategy, rather than sweeping acceptance, was seen in the initial choice of several Luhya sub-groups to interplant local varieties with the modified maize, despite its rapid spread. It appears that there was an effort to strike a balance between economic opportunity, food security, and cultural familiarity through this dual planting practice. A subtle but significant shift occurred in local agricultural systems when higher-yielding modified cultivars of maize gradually replaced the original maize. Colonial agricultural extension programs and the improved maize's fit with market demands, especially in areas where economies were just starting to take shape, pushed its adoption. [1174] Nonetheless, this shift emphasizes how capitalist agricultural logic is being selectively integrated into specific local contexts. This fits well within the theoretical framework of the formulation of modes of production. Because it served both subsistence and commercial purposes, maize was more widely consumed than coffee, which was neglected due to its lack of immediate utility and trade value in local contexts. [1175]

Nearly 48,000 acres were devoted to growing maize in North Nyanza by 1936, and the region was selling an estimated 250,000 bags of the crop every year. A portion of this production was sent to the posho mills in Kisumu for use in the local market as well as sale

[1173] David Throup, *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau, 1945–1953* (London: James Currey, 1987), 32–35.

[1174] Robert Bates, *Markets and States in Tropical Africa: The Political Basis of Agricultural Policies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 28–30.

[1175] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 98–101. Also check KNA, DC/NN/1/4:1923:30.

to Uganda. [1176] Although African intermediaries participated in this trade, the colonial government progressively interfered to reorganize the indigenous economy by promoting excess maize and other cash crop production among African farmers. This intervention demonstrated a wider expression of production methods, in which subsistence-oriented peasant economies were progressively subjugated to a colonial capitalist accumulation model.[1177] The peasant home, although somewhat incorporated into market production, continued to rely on unpaid family labor, particularly that of women, highlighting the unequal and mixed characteristics of colonial capitalist transition.[1178]

The colonial agenda, therefore, was not impartial. It was gendered in both its conception and execution. The responsibility of excess production frequently rested on women, who, although being marginalized from official decision-making in colonial agricultural policy, played a crucial role in the material sustenance of the home economy.[1179] African women were recast as active actors whose labor underpinned the shift from subsistence to market-oriented production, according to feminist epistemology, which in turn questions the masculine bias in colonial archives and development discourses. [1180]

Their crucial role in navigating the paradoxes of the peasant production method under colonialism is obscured in official records, but it was no less important.

[1176] Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/KMG/1/1, *Annual Report on North Nyanza District, 1936*.

[1177] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456.

[1178] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 57–60.

[1179] Cheryl McEwan, "Gender, Geography and Empire: Victorian Women Travellers in West Africa," *Gender, Place & Culture* 7, no. 3 (2000): 271–288.

[1180] Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

The state's widespread use of Indian intermediaries in the selling and distribution of African maize exemplifies the racialized division of labor that was prevalent in colonial economies. But by 1938, the settler-controlled marketing group known as the Kenya Farmers Association (KFA) was trying to cut out the middlemen in India. [1181] In Yala, Luanda, Butere, and Webuye, the KFA leased go-downs from the Local Native Council (LNC) and started buying corn straight from African farmers. [1182] It was an effort by settlement groups to reshape the accumulation circuits to serve their own interests that caused this change. These changes cannot be seen as purely administrative or economic upheavals from an interpretivist point of view. African communities' experiences, struggles, and adaptations to changing material situations, especially those of women, must be considered while interpreting these texts. [1183] By reading colonial texts critically, we may see the lived and subjective aspects of colonial agricultural transformation, which is crucial in light of the power, gender, and knowledge production dynamics at work.

4.6.4 Animal Husbandry

The advent of colonial control caused rapid and extensive upheaval in cattle herding, which had historically functioned as both an economic cornerstone and a fundamental organizing element of Maragoli culture. The hut tax was a pivotal mechanism of this disruption, converting traditional household structures into taxable entities and altering the indigenous method of production by putting financial duties on daily life. Every hut inside a Maragoli homestead was evaluated for taxation, and noncompliance frequently led to compulsory

[1181] David Throup, *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau, 1945–1953* (London: James Currey, 1987), p.43.
[1182] KNA, DC/KMG/3/2, *Correspondence on Grain Marketing and KFA Involvement, 1937–1938*.
[1183] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012), 22–24.

labor. This exemplified the integration of production modes, as capitalist principles were superimposed on precolonial community economies, not via their replacement but by using existing frameworks for colonial benefit.[1184]

The tax's impact on the domestic realm had gendered implications: huts, frequently associated with women's reproductive labor and authority within the home, were targets of governmental appropriation, so marginalizing women's responsibilities while concurrently amplifying their burdens. As males were drafted into wage work or evaded taxation by migrating, women were compelled to uphold the family economy with scarce resources.[1185] The hut tax, when seen through an interpretivist lens, disrupted the Maragoli homestead's long-held symbolic and spiritual implications of shelter, kinship, and ancestral continuity, going beyond its revenue-extraction function. [1186] Destroying the material and symbolic bases of livestock production and communal life, this forceful budgetary policy forced many Maragoli households to remove non-essential huts, including village cowsheds. [1187]

In response to colonial taxes, the Maragoli increasingly relied on the sale of cattle and agricultural products as their principal source of monetary revenue. This change indicated a pivotal juncture in the expression of production methods, signifying the move from a

[1184] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–56.
[1185] Cheryl Walker, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1991), 30–35.
[1186] Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–62.
[1187] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 66.

mostly subsistence-based economy grounded in familial duties and communal reciprocity to one that is largely assimilated into and dominated by colonial capitalist frameworks.[1188]

The commercialization of cattle under these conditions not only changed their economic value but also profoundly altered their function within Maragoli society. Cattle, once integral to conventional social relations—serving as wealth reserves, instruments of bridewealth, dispute resolution tools, and ways of maintaining moral order—were progressively reinterpreted by market dynamics that eroded their indigenous roles.[1189]As a coercive layer of official power was imposed on traditional customs, the confiscation of cattle from the homes of tax evaders or those who refused to comply with labor conditions became commonplace. [1190]

Gender played a significant role in this metamorphosis. Because of their long-established roles as milkers, caretakers of young animals, and economic managers of the household's dairy resources, women bore the brunt of the livestock loss and the devastation of cowsheds. [1191] From a feminist epistemological perspective, colonial tactics obliterated the significant although sometimes unrecorded contributions of Maragoli women in maintaining cattle economies.

[1188] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456; Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

[1189]FGD of Maragoli of Maragoli Women farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre , on 3rd October , 2023. See Also Paul Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato: A Study of Rituals of Rebellion* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), 112–118; Jean Davison, "Gender, Lineage and Ethnicity in Southern Africa," in *Women, Culture and Society*, ed. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 134–137.

[1190] Sara Berry, *Chiefs Know Their Boundaries: Essays on Property, Power and the Past in Asante, 1896–1996* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2001), 110–112.

[1191] Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female Husbands: Gender and Sex in an African Society* (London: Zed Books, 1987).

The colonial record, imbued with masculinist and Eurocentric biases, predominantly overlooked women's economic action and the gendered ramifications of cattle dispossession.[1192]From an interpretivist perspective, these changes cannot be solely attributed to material loss. They were an affront to Maragoli worldviews, collective memory, and quotidian routines. The removal of huts and cowsheds represented not only a geographical rearrangement, but a degradation of cultural significance, identity, and autonomy. Indigenous reactions to these disturbances, such as calculated cattle sales and participation in migrant labor, demonstrate not passive victims but active interaction with the dynamics of colonial capitalism.

Likewise, cattle was occasionally seized as retribution for offenses perpetrated by individuals or collectives. Quarantine measures were used in reaction to illness outbreaks, including gastroenteritis. An exemplary case is the significant rinderpest outbreak in the North Kavirondo District from 1910 to 1912. The infection caused the demise of roughly 10,000 cattle along the Yalla River, an area populated by the Kisa, Idakho, and Maragoli populations, leading to a loss of nearly one-third of the region's cow population.[1193]It was common practice for some to gift their leader a cow or goat as a means of avoiding paying hut tax and preventing him from being employed for employment outside the District. .[1194]

[1192] Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997).
[1193] Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *Annual Report on the Veterinary Department* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1912), 34; North Kavirondo Native Council, *Minutes and Reports, 1910–1912*, KNA/DC/NN/1/4
[1194]Isaac Tarus,"The Kenyan Shilling: History of an East African Currency." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Kenyan History* Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023, p.119.

While pretending to obey a colonial administration mandate, some chiefs would steal animals and use them for their personal benefit. This allowed the leaders to amass extraordinarily large cow herds. [1195] All these colonial measures established a conducive environment for individualistic capitalistic behavior to become ingrained in Maragoli society. Such inclinations gradually permeated all the socio-economic institutions established by the Maragoli, including gender interactions.

Among the Maragoli and adjacent groups, oral accounts indicate that during the colonial era, it became customary to offer cows or goats to local chiefs—not out of allegiance or tradition, but as a strategic maneuver to deter them from pursuing employment beyond the district or to evade hut tax responsibilities. Elders from South Maragoli narrate how specific chiefs used this system, amassing animals under the pretense of adhering to colonial directives.[1196] These chiefs, frequently protected by the power of indirect rule, accumulated disproportionately huge herds and began to function more as private businesspeople than as communal leader. The transition was not just due to opportunism, but rather a component of a wider interaction between indigenous subsistence economies and the advancing colonial capitalist system. The colonial administration's imposition of taxation, wage labor, and indirect control established a structural framework that promoted private accumulation at the expense of communal reciprocity. Oral histories indicate that the chiefs' acquired riches enabled them to control local economic networks, frequently undermining wider familial responsibilities and communal redistribution.[1197]

[1195]Joel Chambiti, (45 Years), Oral Interviews at his home Matsu, on 21st October 2023.

[1196] Oral Interview with Mzee Johnson Musiru, South Maragoli, Vihiga County, July 2023; see also Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/NN/1/6, "North Kavirondo District Annual Report," 1913.

[1197] Oral testimony of Mama Sarah Asega, Mbale, August 2023; see also E. Atieno Odhiambo, *The Paradox of Collaboration and Control in Colonial Kenya*, Journal of African History 29, no. 2 (1988): 201–22.

This transition has significant consequences for gender dynamics. The roles of women in livestock management, subsistence agriculture, and reciprocal trade became progressively reduced as males, especially chiefs and elders, asserted ownership and authority over the burgeoning cow economy. The emergence of private cattle ownership among male elites undermined established gendered labor roles and decision-making frameworks inside the home. Consequently, oral accounts from elder Maragoli women underscore a progressive diminishment of female power in economic and ceremonial spheres, paralleling the ascendance of patriarchal authority bolstered by colonial policy and capitalist rationale.[1198] The reorganization of gendered labor systems to benefit an emerging indigenous elite mark a watershed point in the integration of colonial capitalism with conventional forms of production.

During the oral interviews, one participant commented on these shifts and said that the colonial chiefs exhibited their power and riches by buying more cattle, which they then used to buy bride wealth for the women they had just married. [1199]Not many Maragoli would have paid an extra Ksh.2 to get their cows branded and inoculated in the early years of colonial rule. It was noted in the Chavakali FGD responses that inoculation raised the costs of livestock management, which in turn discouraged the maragoli from keeping additional cattle.

[1198] FGD with Maragoli elders and women's cooperative leaders, conducted in Chavakali, October 2023

[1199] Benard Asembeka (52 years), Oral Interview at his home Gahumbwa on 12th August 2023.

The introduction of these new cow diseases also led to a rise in cattle mortality, which had a knock-on effect on the cattle's role in Maragoli's food production cycle. [1200] Not all of the wealthy peasants were eager to inoculate their livestock in order to acquire the necessary funds. The locals were understandably sceptical of the European medication when the majority of the infected cattle perished. Plus, the trade of livestock persisted. There could have been no effective quarantine because of this. [1201] The increasing individualization in catlle ownership, the dwindling size in land parcels among other economic hardships, the Maragoli custodial livestock management practice-*Kwegeka* was steadily fading away.

By 1907, as the integration into colonial capitalism deepened in Maragoli, the division experienced an increasing development in commodity production and trading. This provided greater opportunity for youngsters, particularly boys, to engage in economic pursuits. This allowed these young men to amass money in the form of land and cattle. All these shifts affected numerous Maragoli gender relations, enabling younger males to access increased options for participation in economic activities, including cattle dealing. This occurred on a larger scale compared to their female colleagues, who frequently stayed at home managing the agricultural property.

The gender imbalance in economic involvement in colonial Maragoli was caused by the disintegration of co-ownership of land and other vital economic enterprises within the familial structure. Colonialism established a new paradigm in which the husband singularly had nearly all economic resources inside the household, derived from his own

[1200] Chavakali FGD held on 10th October 2023 at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds.
[1201]KNA: DC/NN.1/4:1923:23.

efforts exemplified by the colonial rupee and then the shilling, courtesy of wages and other colonial transactions.

Some young Maragoli men re-invested the agricultural earnings made after the First World War into livestock acquisition, a traditional indicator of social rank and prosperity. [1202] Because of this, young people who were already well-off in terms of land and other productive resources started keeping a lot more animals. After 1930, however, the demand for consumer items in the home increased, and in 1935, the colonial government raised taxes, putting further strain on rural livelihoods. As a result, this upward tendency quickly fell. [1203]Looking at this time period through the lens of modes of production exposes how intertwined pre- and capitalism systems were: young men tried to make it in both worlds, but they were stymied by colonial takeovers of surplus. [1204] Gender inequality in resource availability was a major factor. The commodification of agriculture was more advantageous to men, especially those who had access to land, labor, and capital. [1205]

On the other hand, women were already at a disadvantage because their duties were mostly related to reproduction and because patriarchal systems frequently obstructed their access to essential resources.

[1202] M. F. Lonsdale, *A Political History of the Maragoli in Colonial Kenya, c.1900–1963* (PhD diss., University of Cambridge, 1968), 154.

[1203] David Anderson, *Eroding the Commons: The Politics of Ecology in Baringo, Kenya, 1890s–1963* (Oxford: James Currey, 2002), 87.

[1204] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1973): 431–56.

[1205] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 105.

Looking at these changes via an interpretivist perspective also shows how locals understood money, prestige, and how to survive in a colonial economy that was changing so fast. [1206]

Despite the increasing integration of the Maragoli into a wider production and market economy, cattle ownership remained predominantly a male domain, with women mainly excluded from individual ownership rights. Despite the expansion of economic possibilities via increasing commerce, the extent to which Maragoli women benefitted from these advancements remains ambiguous. Livestock production remained a crucial component of Maragoli sustenance, and its importance was evident in the conflicts that emerged, especially about inheritance and unresolved bridewealth responsibilities. These confrontations, sometimes stemming from disputed ownership claims and marital dissolution, highlight the persistent significance of cattle in Maragoli social and economic interactions.

The oral responses throughout this research indicated that changes in cattle usage and ownership significantly affected the Maragoli marriage institution, a cornerstone of the society's gender relations.[1207] As a result of the social relationship that was initially established by dowry payment weakening as a result of these marriage instabilities, the involvement of women in food production, particularly agriculture, diminished.It was sometimes impossible for colonial judicial systems to adequately resolve conflicts over livestock ownership, especially those stemming from inheritance issues and unresolved

[1206]KNA: DC/NN/1/19, See Also Terence Ranger, "The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa," in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 211–62.

[1207] Magaret Salamba (76 years), Oral Interview in her Matsigulu village home held on 15th August 2023.

bridewealth claims. Hence, African court elders were often called upon to resolve such disagreements, and their decisions were based on indigenous social norms, customary knowledge, and interpretive reasoning.[1208]

The evolving expression of production modes is at the heart of these disputes, which in turn reflect larger changes in animal production. The Maragoli people's reliance on market processes, such buying and selling, to acquire cattle declined in the early 20th century, a reflection of the increasing influence of capitalist relations in Maragoli society. .[1209]The traditional practice of trading cattle for grain had lost much of its luster by 1925, when monetary transactions had established a set market value for cattle. [1210]At the same time, communal ownership of grazing areas and associated resources continued to erode, which had a negative impact on collective herding methods and the kinship-based cooperation that used to govern livestock management. According to indigenous perspectives, these changes were a response to colonial rule as well as internal socioeconomic upheavals, and they represented more than just a change in material practices; they also represented a change in meaning and value. [1211]

[1208] Sally Falk Moore, *Law as Process: An Anthropological Approach* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), 49–53.

[1209] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 87–92.

[1210] P. L. Shinnie, *The African Iron Age* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), 112.

[1211]Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5–6; Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456. See Also Jamsranjav, Chantsalkham. "Sustainable rangeland management in Mongolia: the role of herder community institutions." *Land Restoration Training Programme, Reykjavik* (2009)., p.104.

The *Chavakali* FGD revealed that by the early 1920s, the communal grazing areas of Maragoli had contracted, leading to private land ownership and a heightened need for agricultural production. This situation was also prompted by the dynamics of Maragoli population. Over time, each household cultivated its own livestock with its own labor. Comparable alterations were occurring in agricultural production, where the workforce was declining in both variety and efficacy. By the late 1930s, the registration of land marked the conclusion of the pooling system for herding livestock.

The comments gathered from the *Wumulalu* FGD sessions indicate that this problem was exacerbated by the enrolling of male pupils in the newly established mission schools. The remaining girls, women, and elderly men, due to the colonial conscription of young, vigorous males, experienced frustration that ultimately resulted in the disintegration of the pre-colonial Maragoli community herding system.[1212] The colonial government's rising desire for labor, along with European farmers' necessity for funds to settle taxes, expedited this process. These regulations retracted a portion of the domestic labor that was obligated to serve the interests of colonial capitalism.[1213] Livestock took on a market value as opposed to its previous use and exchange value. Livestock was no longer exchanged for grain or iron tools only, but for the rupee and later shilling.

[1212] Wu Mulalu FGD held on 3rd October 2023 at Wu Mulalu Shopping centre.

[1213]Bruce J. Berman and John M. Lonsdale. "Crises of accumulation, coercion and the colonial state: the development of the labor control system in Kenya, 1919–1929." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 14, no. 1 (1980): 55-81., p.65.

Post-1925, livestock sales among the Maragoli became progressively commercialized, with the shilling emerging as the principal means of exchange. This transition fostered an increasing interest in the standardization of bridewealth payments.

The Maragoli aimed to streamline the historically intricate dowry procedure by assigning it a predetermined, refundable monetary value, eliminating the need to trace specific animals via several communal trades.[1214] New market and trading centers developed alongside older ones, becoming supplementary hubs for commercial activity. These marketplaces emerged as crucial centers for the exchange of products, transitioning commerce from village-centric barter systems. Livestock items, including ghee, meat, milk, skins, and hides, previously traded informally among local communities, are now being transacted in formal market environments for cash.

This represented the commercialization of the rural economy, when barter exchange was progressively supplanted by currency.[1215] The colonial authority periodically implemented restrictions to reorganize cattle ownership and transportation as part of efforts to establish control over indigenous farming systems. These initiatives clearly demonstrated the state's effort to subjugate precolonial subsistence methods to burgeoning capitalist demands.[1216] Nevertheless, some Maragoli agrarians persisted in conventional cattle husbandry, frequently ignoring colonial mandates. An exemplary case is the Native Land and Stock

[1214]Robert Eastwood, Michael Lipton and Andrew Newell. "Farm size." *Handbook of agricultural economics* 4 (2010): p.3363.
[1215]Peter Anyang. Nyong'o, "The development of a middle peasantry in Nyanza." In *Review of African Political Economy* 8, no. 20 (1981): p.114.
[1216] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 95–101.

Ordinance (No. 2) of 1920, which, citing apprehensions over livestock illnesses, prohibited the slaughter and eating of cattle within homesteads.[1217]

To direct cattle products into taxable, state-regulated marketplaces, the ordinance made it illegal to sell meat informally outside of licensed butcher shops situated in designated trading centers. [1218] This not only constrained indigenous culinary traditions but also facilitated the incorporation of African producers into a commodified colonial economy.The law demanded mandatory vaccination and branding of all cattle, inciting much skepticism and opposition among peasants. Numerous individuals perceived branding as an infringement of ownership and had concerns over the ulterior motives of the colonial government.These apprehensions materialized from 1942 to 1945, when diminishing livestock supplies—aggravated by wartime exigencies—resulted in the compulsory confiscation of branded animals for military use.[1219] The branding, which was originally intended to control diseases, ended up being used as a tool for appropriation, which shows how indigenous ways of production were forced to align with colonial capitalist systems. [1220]

The privatization of animal ownership was accelerated by the individualization of land tenure under colonial administration, which in turn reshaped traditional patterns of control

[1217] Kenya National Archives (KNA), Native Land and Stock Ordinance No. 2 of 1920, Legal Notices and Ordinances Series.
[1218] John Lonsdale, "The Moral Economy of Mau Mau: Wealth, Poverty and Civic Virtue in Kikuyu Political Thought," in *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, vol. 2, eds. Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (London: James Currey, 1992), 315–318.
[1219] KNA DC/KMG/3/1/4, District Commissioner's Reports, Kakamega, 1942–1945.
[1220] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," Economy and Society 1, no. 4 (1972): 425–456.

and appropriation. The transition, which was fundamental in defining capitalist and pre-capitalist production systems, weakened communal and lineage-based livestock rights, especially for sons in the household. Even though the sales put their future claims to homestead herds at risk, sons increasingly lacked the moral and traditional authority to dispute their fathers' livestock transactions. [1221]Similarly, by the 1930s, elders who had renounced their traditional administrative roles in land governance were no longer able to use lineage rights as an excuse to oppose cattle sales. .[1222]

Inheritance techniques were also rethought as a result of this change. Without the collective supervision that had previously legitimized succession, the father was now free to divide his possessions as he saw fit, including the livestock. From an interpretative standpoint, this change shows a larger realignment of social meaning: property rights were getting more personal, which separated them from the reciprocal duties that used to govern family ties. [1223]Equally important were the effects based on gender. Livestock was still primarily owned by men, but as community checks and balances were weakened, older men (fathers and elders) were able to amass wealth at the cost of younger male relatives and with little legal protection for women who were systematically excluded from claims to property ownership. [1224] With the removal of traditional restrictions on livestock transactions, elders

[1221] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 79–82

[1222] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 109–112.

[1223] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 5–6.

[1224] Jean Davison, "Gender, Lineage and Ethnicity in Southern Africa," in *Women, Culture and Society*, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 133–138.

were able to take advantage of untapped market opportunities and amass wealth in ways that were previously restricted by community governance. [1225]

Additionally, the youth's distancing from animals as property and a productivity factor was hastened by the transition. The high monetary and practical worth of livestock made it an important type of property. Because of this, the older generation was able to establish a monopoly on the ownership and production of land, grain, and animals, which gave rise to distinct economic forces and power and contributed to the stratification of society. Some young people, though, were able to amass fortunes through alternative offshore farming ventures. [1226] The disparity between men and women regarding land and cattle remained. It was reinforced via the individualization of land and subsequently livestock as components of personal property.

The commercialization of the agricultural economy during colonial authority resulted in substantial alterations in access to livestock and its products; yet, these changes did not lead to enhanced economic empowerment for Maragoli women. The continuation of patrilineal cattle ownership patterns effectively barred women from wealth accumulation through livestock, hence perpetuating gender inequalities within family and communal

[1225] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 435–437.
[1226]Lesa B. Morrison, "The nature of decline: distinguishing myth from reality in the case of the Luo of Kenya." *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 45, no. 1 (2007) p.119.

frameworks.[1227] From a feminist epistemological stance, this exclusion shows how indigenous and colonial patriarchies worked together to strip women of agency in the economic production process, making their work essential but their access to resources secondary. .[1228]

Maragoli and other African villages were subject to the colonial policy of forced livestock requisition when World War II broke out in 1939, exacerbating preexisting structural disparities. In order to satisfy the wartime demand for cattle, the Livestock Control Board, following military orders, brutally took thousands of heads from African homesteads. [1229]The strategic loss of a crucial production factor, particularly in dairying, and the disruption of home economies that were already susceptible to capitalist penetration were both caused by this extraction. Here we can see the modes of production articulated: pre-capitalist agricultural systems were brutally subjected to imperial accumulation needs by colonial military and economic imperatives. [1230]

Because cattle were essential to household food production, bridewealth, and reproduction in general, the effects were felt strongly at the household level. When cattle started disappearing from the bomas, it was a real blow to the women who worked there because they were the ones who milked, processed, and distributed the dairy products. [1231] The

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[1227] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 93–96.

[1228] Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 161–164; Oyeronke Oyewumi, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 110–112.

[1229] Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/KMG/3/1/4, District Commissioner Reports, Kakamega, 1939–1945.

[1230] Harold Wolpe, "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-Power in South Africa: From Segregation to Apartheid," *Economy and Society* 1, no. 4 (1972): 429–432.

[1231] Jean Davison, "Gender, Lineage and Ethnicity in Southern Africa," in *Women, Culture and Society*, eds. Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974), 136–140.

enormous herd of cattle that colonial officials saw as exploitable reserves for imperial logistics was estimated by the Chief Native Commissioner in 1930 to be between half a million and 600,000 head of cattle, reflecting their anticipation of demand during warfare.[1232]

4.7 The Maragoli and the 1930s Kakamega Gold Rush

The local population in western Kenya received a much-needed economic boost from the finding of gold, which occurred during the Great Depression, when the rest of the nation was hit hard by the economic depression and falling prices of agricultural items. At the turn of the century, the western Kenyan peasants had already had enough hardship, with three years in a row of crop failure due to drought and locusts. [1233] Swarming locusts had invaded the region, voraciously consuming maize and millet stems with relentless fervor, first at the onset of the extended growth season in February then again, unabashedly, during the abbreviated growing season in September and October. Local residents orchestrated significant locust eradication initiatives to address the incursions.

Individuals of all ages seized sticks, pots, pans, brooms, blankets, or any available makeshift weapon and rushed to the fields to drive away the pests, vociferously uttering curses, ululating, and chanting commands for the pests to depart and perish in Lake Victoria, distant Embo, or Luoland.[1234]Despite the best efforts of the villagers, the early depression years saw a severely reduced harvest. Between 1930 and 1932, locusts wiped

[1232] KNA, Chief Native Commissioner's Circular, 1930, Livestock Census Data, Western Province.
[1233]KNA: DC/NN.1/12, Annual Report, 1931.
[1234]Sadruddin, Aalyia Feroz Ali. "The care of "small things": aging and dignity in Rwanda." *Medical Anthropology* 39, no. 1 (2020): 83-95., p.85.

out approximately 60% of the grain, leading to widespread starvation in Maragoli. [1235] The locust infestations prompted an exodus of individuals to the mines in search of employment and financial resources to get sustenance. In 1933, at least seven thousand African males from the surrounding regions were employed in the mines and other businesses.

These workers facilitated a 20 percent rise in the number of males reliant on salaries in the region. A significant proportion of the laborers originated from Maragoli; indeed, as stated by the district commissioner (DC), the Maragoli were regarded as "the most favored tribe for subterranean work." In in need of funds to get sustenance for their swiftly expanding population, the Maragoli were amenable to signing, often for the month-long contracts favored by the mining corporations.[1236]

Wages in the mines were higher than those on the nearby sugar, tea, and sisal estates.[1237] Surface and underground workers earned an average of nine shillings per week in 1935, with 3% earning twice or five times that amount. At least 13% of the workforce in the mines earned twice as much, if not more, than the twelve shillings per month average for clerks, carpenters, drivers, domestic help, and hospital assistants. [1238] In contrast, agricultural laborers on sisal estates earned as little as five shillings per month.[1239] By 1934, some miners were apparently becoming so dependent on wages that the local labor officer claimed that a "special mining class was springing up fast."[1240]

[1235]KNA: DC/NN.1/14, Annual Report, 1933.
[1236]Ibid
[1237]Fearn, Hugh. *An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953*. East African Institute of Social Research by Oxford University Press, 1961., p.18.
[1238]Gavin N. Kitching, *Class and economic change in Kenya: The making of an African petite bourgeoisie 1905-1970*. Yale University Press, 1980., p.82.
[1239]Ibid., p.84
[1240]Roberts Andrew D. "The gold boom of the 1930s in Eastern Africa." *African Affairs* 85, no. 341 (1986): 545-562., 554.

Gold mining was clearly transforming Kakamega and its environs. Wagner, in describing the changes brought on Kakamega by the mining industry, Wagner noted how this once "quiet district station with a few Indian dukas and a native market" was now "bustling with life."[1241]

He noted that the economic life of "a far greater number" of people had been affected by the "market which the mining companies and individual European claim holders offered for foodstuffs, timber for building and mining purposes, mats, among other items.[1242]A few of these improvements were witnessed by Maragoli personally. With its prime location between Kisumu and Kakamega, Maragoli saw more traffic than any other western Kenyan town or region. In fact, an all-weather road connecting the two towns passed via Mbale, the town's main market. [1243]

Mbale was not only a local market; it functioned as a regional hub that drew customers and merchants from far areas such as Nandi and Luoland. During the mid-1930s, Wagner devoted considerable time to Mbale, documenting the many indigenous and foreign goods available in the market and witnessing the negotiations and haggling that transpired. He characterized Mbale as "a vast expanse of land bordered by a primary thoroughfare." The field contained a substantial storage shed for maize, a butcher's shop, a small brick structure with a cement floor and a corrugated iron roof, a hut for processing hides and skins, and a spacious shed for the shade drying of hides, all arranged in straight lines and interspersed with several square huts or stalls functioning as stores, tea rooms, and tailors' shops.[1244]

[1241]Gunter Wagner, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo: Volume 1*. Routledge, 2018., p.47.
[1242]Ibid., p.62
[1243]Ibid., p.63
[1244]Ibid., p.66

The Maragoli and their neighbors traded locally grown corn, beans, fish, grinding stones, baskets, quail-cage supplies, and livestock at the market. [1245]

On the other hand, in the stores, or dukas, "enterprising Maragoli who had learnt trade from their Indian tutors" sold imported items such as "cigarettes (only King Stork, an East African brand), Sunlight toilet soap, paraffin (sold in bottles), matches, tea, sugar, Amerikani (calico), khaki drill, thread and needles, safety pins, writing pads, envelopes, ink, pens, lavender powder, and combs."[1246]The local Maragoli had easy access to many of the sixty-four markets in the district, not only Mbale. Maragoli was home to several of the 200 African dukas that the district had in 1937. [1247] For example, of the sixty-two traders Wagner surveyed in Maragoli, thirteen specialized in imported goods: "two bought coffee and tea at Kisumu and sold it from their houses, three others sold sugar and soap from their houses and at the main market, two traded in new and second hand clothes which they bought every other month from Nakuru or Nairobi, and six were owners or part owners of roadside dukas."[1248]

All the traders cultivated their own gardens, and about half of them had other occupations as well. Of the six store owners Wagner interviewed, two were also trading in cattle, one was buying up and selling maize, and another was a preacher or interpreter for the Friends African Mission. "One of the tea and coffee traders was also a partner in a water-mill

[1245]Gunter Wagner, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo: Volume 2: Economic Life*. Routledge, 2018., p.34.
[1246]Ibid
[1247]Nebert A. Mtange, "Exploring the possibilities of using lisanga small groups in disciple-making among the Avalogoli people of Kenya." (2006)., p.56.
[1248]Ibid., p.59.

company and made bricks, and one of the sugar traders sold groundnuts as well."According to Wagner, these petty traders were likely to make a profit because "all the articles were in a steady demand on the part of a broad section of the African population."[1249]

Wagner noted that the turnover of goods was "fairly rapid and the trade does not carry any considerable risks such as are involved in keeping large stock." The increasing demand for consumer goods was clearly encouraging a spirited new entrepreneurship.

In other major markets in the area, Indian merchants owned larger stores and sold luxury items like sewing machines, bicycles, plows, hoes, shoes, hats, and belts, goods whose consumption rose dramatically in the 1930s. Basing his knowledge on a recently finished economic survey of the area in 1937, the DC reported that the sale of these "luxuries" had "curiously enough increased." Sewing machines were particularly popular, and reports of their increasing numbers abound in the records. "One of the noticeable features in the reserves," noted the DC proudly in his 1937 annual report, "is that the verandahs of all Asiatics have sewing machines that cost 300 shillings each."[1250]

Similarly, Wagner observed that there were seventeen tailors working on the verandas of African dukas in Mbale, each one of them "equipped with a sewing machine and such accessories as the tailor's scissors, tape measures, among others." Anxious to protect their trade, the tailors had in fact organized themselves into a "tailors' union" that determined the prices for the various kinds of garments they made and also enforced certain "standards of cleanliness." "The busiest of these tailors," Wagner noted, "used 144 yards of Amerikani

[1249]Gunter Wagner, (2018). *Op. Cit.,* p.46.
[1250]KNA: DC/NN.1/20, Annual Report, 1937.

cotton a month."[1251] Indeed, tailors became quite popular in the 1930s. The figure of the tailor, always an African man, attired in a khaki shirt and shorts and seated behind a Singer sewing machine, appears over and over again in the colonial and ethnographic literature of the time.

In 1937, approximately 60% of the items imported were cloth for creating clothing, indicating a significant need for tailors in the 1930s, according to the DC. [1252] Goods circulated more widely in the 1930s than before. Wagner noted, for instance, that "the introduction of money and the creation of transport facilities" had led to a "considerable increase in local traffic in goods as well as a steadily growing trade with the outer world".[1253] This shift was undoubtedly accelerated by the gold mining industry. Even at its height in the late 1930s, gold accounted for just 10.7 percent of the colony's exports, well behind numerous agricultural products like maize and coffee. Consequently, the economic impact of gold mining in western Kenya was minimal compared to the overall impact of the colony's exports. [1254] The value of the gold bullion was always a negligible fraction of the overall value of domestic exports, even during the early 1930s, when agricultural prices were quite low. Many prospectors, therefore, made a pitiful profit, and the government received almost no direct funding from the sector. [1255] Nonetheless, the social impact of gold mining on Maragoli remained undeniable.

[1251]Edwins Laban Moogi Gwako, "Widow inheritance among the Maragoli of western Kenya." *Journal of Anthropological Research* 54, no. 2 (1998): 173-198, p.178.
[1252]KNA: DC/NN.1/20, Annual Report, 1937
[1253]Edwins Laban Moogi Gwako, (1998). *Op. Cit.,* p.176
[1254]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University,Ph.D. Thesis, 2009, p.82.
[1255]Ibid., pp.142.

Mutongi while writing on Maragoli, takes note of such individuals who gold mining greatly impacted on their life. According ot her,

> ….Chavulimu and I talked about all kinds of things, but he was particularly very excited to talk about his work in the mines. He had had various jobs there: from mining to cleaning offices to cooking to working as a messenger at the hospital. He was proud of his former work and had left the mines with regret (when they closed in the 1950s), forced to return to Maragoli, where he barely had enough land to grow food to feed his family[1256].

Since many of the miners were Maragolis, the money they earned from the mines didn't go very far because of the colonial commodities' sudden popularity and the frequent trips back and forth between Kakamega and their homes.

In this regard, Hunter states:

> In fact, it was impossible for the workers to escape their families' demands, for even if they decided not to return home at the end of the month, their families would track them down in Kakamega and demand that they provide for them. "If you didn't go home after pay day, you would come from the mines and find your wife waiting for you at the mine gate so that you could give her some money before you ate it all," recalled Petero Kilivia, another respondent who worked in the mines.[1257]

Mutongi concurs that the workers usually left for Maragoli the day after they got paid in order to rest for a couple of days before resuming work. They often bought sugar and tea—the "nice sweet things"—for their families. Other workers indulged a bit more, however, and bought head scarves, pots, lanterns, and cups for their wives and mothers; they even bought Vaseline, which, according to Wagner, their wives took pleasure in smearing "liberally" on their faces, legs, and hands. New goods were becoming available in this land

[1256]Emma Hunter, *Political thought and the public sphere in Tanzania*. Cambridge University Press, 2015, p.92.
[1257]Ibid, p.106.

of ours for the first time," Kilivia explained. "The Indians brought them and sold them in Lunyerere market, and if you had money, you bought them.[1258]Therefore, it emerged to the study that, Wagner noted class divisions among the Maragoli, observing that some still lived in "low, circular mud huts with peaked straw roofs," unchanged since Joseph Thomson's 1883 visit.

The traditional huts highlighted the enduring cultural architecture amidst evolving socio-economic conditions, reflecting persistent disparities within the community";[1259] but, he continued, every now and then one saw "a red brick house with a straw or corrugated-iron roof, the home of an African teacher, trader, or Chief."[1260] The discovery of gold facilitated this transformation. Gold mining fostered a secular society that contributed to the decline of Christian communities by luring individuals away from the church and village schools. This purported secular society, characterized by materialism and commercialization, just marked the onset of decline. The study indicated that the change undermined conventional values and communal structures, signifying the loss of existing religious and educational institutions and heralding a larger societal transformation.

4.8 Maragoli Land Problem and Gender Relations in the Interwar Period

In conjunction with other developments, the finding of gold in western Kenya generated significant concerns over land loss: peasants apprehended that the colonial administration would expropriate their property, as it had previously done in eastern and central Kenya..[1261] To be sure, land had always been a sensitive topic in Maragoli due to the

[1258]Ibid, p.107
[1259]Thomas Barbara P. "Development Through Harambee: Who wins and who loses? Rural self-help projects in Kenya." *World development* 15, no. 4 (1987): 463-481., p.466.
[1260]Wagner Gunter. "The political organization of the Bantu of Kavirondo." In *African political systems*, pp. 197-238. Routledge, 2015., p.199.
[1261]Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the roots of Mau Mau, 1905-63*. East African Publishers, 1987, p.102

region's high population density; as we have seen, European travelers to the area at the turn of the century often commented on its overcrowding and attributed the high population to Maragoli's good climate, which provided ideal growing conditions for a variety of crops.

Moreover, the population had grown steadily during the first three decades of colonial rule, so that by 1932 it had nearly doubled to about 590 people per square mile, making Maragoli one of the most densely populated regions in Africa.[1262]

The Maragoli themselves offer different explanations for the rise in population. They attribute it to a rise in fecundity.[1263] According to Maragoli elders, the capacity to procreate was closely linked with warm blood (*amasahi mahiu*), while impotence was believed to be a result of cold blood (*amasahi mazilu*). The elders alleged that fecundity increased in the decades immediately following colonial conquest as people began to eat new foods—sugar, bread, oil, and avocado—that possessed aphrodisiac powers that "burnt the body and the blood" and thus eliminated ritual periods of sexual abstinence that the Maragoli had previously observed to facilitate child spacing.[1264]

Some informants also commented on how the new foods made women fat, which they believe turned their wombs into fertile places to nourish healthy babies: "The new foods made women nice and fat and fertile, and they gave birth to many children," retorted one of the informants interrogated by the study.[1265]The cultivation of cash crops like maize, then, became more and more important; cash crops provided the means by which Africans

[1262]KNA: PC/NZA/1/7 and DC/NN.1/8, Annual Reports, 1912 and 1935.
[1263]Joseph Wokulira Ssennyonga., *The Maragoli Population Trends: Experiential Perceptions of the Maragoli Themselves*. No. 107. Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, 1978., p.66.
[1264]Tabitha Ajami, (50 Years), Oral Interview, on 13th August 2023.
[1265]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 2nd October 2023.

could enter the economy. And, in turn, land became an even more coveted resource. To make matters worse, the demand for land was aggravated by the Great Depression of the 1930s.

As the prices paid for maize declined, requiring the peasants to cultivate more land in order to grow more crops so they could earn an income adequate to feed their larger families. Inevitably, land became a major source of tension, and people fought for its possession more intensely than ever.[1266] Litigation over land, however, was not necessarily a new thing for the Maragoli. Land conflicts had become fairly common even before the 1930s, and officials had been forced to make a detailed study of the native land tenure system in the district in order to make recommendations as to what "rules should be enacted to govern the occupation rights of tribes, clans, families, or individuals."[1267]

The risk that the new mining enterprises provide to land rights should not be overlooked. The pursuit of gold precipitated a plethora of new and devious infringements on African land rights, many of which were profoundly degrading in their disregard for the rights of Africans. Furthermore, this is attributable to the disputes regarding land appropriation by white settlers in the Rift Valley and eastern and central Kenya during the 1910s and 1920s, where government officials were compelled—primarily due to African agitation—to acknowledge African land rights in the designated reserves.[1268]

In 1930, officials actually passed the Native Land Trust Ordinance, which stipulated that no European could occupy land that was currently owned by Kenyans: "the reserves," it

[1266]KNA: PC/NZA/1/7 and DC/NN.1/16, Annual Reports, 1912 and 1935.
[1267]1930 Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in the North Kavirondo Reserve (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1930), p.12.
[1268]David Throup, "Economic & social origins of Mau Mau 1945-53." *(No Title)* (1987), p.78.

said, “were for the use and benefit of the native tribes of the Colony for ever.” The ordinance further stated that if for some reason officials needed to use some of the land in the reserve for public (not commercial) purposes, “an area equal in extent and, if possible, in value should be added (to the owner’s land).” Moreover, the ordinance maintained that “no lease could be granted nor exclusion made before the Central Land Board had obtained the views of the Local Native Council (LNC) in the area concerned.”[1269] The LNC was a body sanctioned by officials to oversee the concerns of Africans in each district and consisted almost entirely of African men; members of the LNCs became some of the most vocal people in many Kenyan districts.[1270]

Kakamega was designated as a conservation area. In Kakamega, officials contravened the provisions of the code and declined to compensate the impacted Africans with land of equivalent value as mandated by the ordinance. Instead, they opted to reimburse them with cash, which, naturally, offered minimal advantage to the dispossessed as there was no land remaining to purchase. Officials opposed the use of "equivalent" land as compensation, asserting that the mining duration would be short and, thus, deemed it "impractical" to utilize land for compensating the peasants displaced by mining firms. The authorities further contravened the regulation by declining to consult with the LNC as required.[1271] Such a consultation, one official alleged self-servingly, would merely be “a farce” since it would add to the aggravation of the Africans.

[1269]1930 Native Land Trust Ordinance (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1930), 10.
[1270]Lynn M. Thomas, *Politics of the womb: Women, reproduction, and the state in Kenya*. Univ of California Press, 2003, p.90.

"On every single occasion," he noted, "if we went to the natives concerned or the Local Native Council, they would say 'we don't want to do it'; and we should then have to say: 'it doesn't matter whether you want to do it or not; it has got to be done.[1272]

At least he was honest. Consequently, the officials proceeded with their plan without consulting the Africans. On November 12, 1931, the colonial secretary presented a new statute to the Legislative Council convening in Nairobi, permitting the temporary exchange of land for monetary compensation in regions with gold reserves. The secretary contended that the settlers should engage in mining to recuperate losses sustained in agriculture as a result of the slump. The entirely Caucasian Legislative Council required minimal persuasion. Their unanimous decision established the new rule, allowing European miners to freely acquire land by the end of 1931.[1273]

The news was bound to be poorly received by the peasants in and around Kakamega. To begin with, the cash compensation that the miners offered in exchange for land was often not enough to cover the losses incurred by the peasants. For example, Rosterman, the leading mining company, leased 155 acres for twenty-one years at five pounds per acre and paid the affected peasants a lump sum of ten pounds per acre.[1274] Given the acute land shortages in the area, ten pounds was certainly not enough money to sustain a family for a year, let alone twenty-one years. Moreover, in cases where the Africans refused or hesitated to agree to the leases, the miners simply occupied the land with force. Often, one missionary noted, "a native would get up some morning and find a European driving stakes

[1272]KNA: Legislative Council Debates, Dec. 20, 1932
[1273]Clare Catherine Buswell, *Women's Identity and Moral Authority Under Colonial Rule in Kenya*. Flinders University of South Australia, School of International Studies., 2012, p.34.
[1274]Paul C. Smither, "An Old Kingdom letter concerning the crimes of count Sabni." In *The Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 28, no. 1 (1942): 16-19, p.18.

and digging trenches across his gardens."[1275] The violations were absolutely ruthless, and the victims could do little or nothing.

The officials' failure to honor the 1930 ordinance particularly infuriated members of the LNC and of the North Kavirondo Central Association (NKCA).[1276] Their grievances were repeatedly emphasized by the District Commissioner in his annual reports, both to inform his superiors in Nairobi, who had played a crucial role in enacting the new law, about the crisis induced by mining in the district, and to illustrate that Africans were consistently obstinate and unappreciative. In 1932, the District Commissioner observed that it is futile to feign that gold mining is viewed by the Indians alone with profound mistrust and distrust, as asserted by the District Commissioner.:

> ....any advantages which they obtain, such as market for their produce and opportunities of obtaining wages, all pale into insignificance beside the ever-present fear of losing their land, and in addition the inconvenience and disturbance to which they are frequently subjected to by mining operations.[1277]

From the official colonial stand it was emphasized that the natives had to be excluded from any land claims. Such discrimination intensified enemity between the natives and the colonial government further contributing to decline in the Maragoli food production efforts especially the agricultural sector.[1278]

Unable to avert the relentless land confiscations, representatives of the NKCA and the LNC endeavored to be present for the monetary compensation of peasants, aiming to verify that

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[1275] Mutongi, Kenda Beatrice. *Generations of grief and grievances: a history of widows and widowhood in Maragoli, western Kenya, 1900 to the present*. University of Virginia, 1996, p.80.
[1276]John M. Lonsdale, "Political associations in western Kenya." *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (1970): 589-638, p.595.
[1277]KNA: DC/NN.1/13, Annual Report, 1932.
[1278]KNA: DC/NN.1/13, Annual Report, 1932.

the miners fulfilled their financial obligations for the land. However, the monetary compensations, as I have observed, failed to alleviate the peasants' feelings of loss. Hugh Fearn, an economist who conducted research on land consolidation in Kenya during the 1950s and 1960s, found that the compensation provided for land loss or disturbance did not alleviate the insecurity caused by the mining incursion in Kakamega..[1279] "The memories of the disturbance and the fear of insecurity engendered by the advent of mining," wrote Fearn, "would hamper future discussions of land tenure reform in western Kenya."[1280] Anxiety over land extended to Maragoli, where, in reality, several dispersed gold mines had been discovered. Maragoli was officially prohibited to miners due to concerns that mining in this highly populated region would cause significant disruption.[1281]

Nonetheless, the Maragoli, like everyone else in the area around Kakamega, worried that Europeans would seize their land, and they felt forced to tighten their grip upon it. The tension was felt most intensely in the Christian villages, where there occurred at least four distinct scenarios. As we may recall, the Christians had practically evicted the nonconverts in order to establish their Christian villages in the early 1920s.[1282] The Christians had, in reality, appropriated the property of nonconverts in a way analogous to how white invaders had previously usurped African territory: by coercion and without ethical considerations. Furthermore, the nonconverts persisted in harboring animosities against these intruders, akin to the sentiments the Africans currently harbored towards the white miners.

[1279]Moindi, Kennedy Mokaya. *State economic policy and development in Kenya: A study of African entrepreneurship in Kisii Township and its environs, 1930–1978*. West Virginia University, 2008, p.133.
[1280]Ibid., 149.
[1281]KNA: PC/NZA/2/1/36, Minutes of the North Kavirondo LNC meeting, May 29, 1932; KNA: DC/NN.1/13, Annual Report, 1932.
[1282]Rideout, Walter B. *The Radical Novel in the United States 1900–1954: Some Interrelations of Literature and Society*. Columbia University Press, 1992, p.65.

As land pressure intensified, the nonconverts were apprehensive about the prospect of reclaiming their territory in the Christian settlements, prompting them to insist that the Christians relinquish their property.[1283] Moreover, the kind hosts who had previously welcomed the nonconverts few years prior were now expelling them, since they, like others, were increasingly feeling the compulsion to safeguard their territory. This marked the initial scenario in the Maragoli community's land reallocation. The second possibility entailed discord among the Christians themselves.[1284] Individuals who had consented to convert to Christianity to preserve their land began to insist that subsequent converts, who had joined them and shared the property, either pay rent or vacate the premises.

The elder converts, who believed their conversion afforded them a form of indemnification, saw the newer Christians as outsiders, akin to squatters. Typically, conflicts about rent and other compensation resulted in the eviction of recent converts who either declined to vacate freely or were unable to afford the rent.[1285] The third scenario involved the land that the Christian squatters had left behind when they moved to the Christian villages. Their relatives who remained on the farm started asserting ownership over it. They contended that the land had belonged to them when the Christian converts vacated it by relocating to the Christian settlements. Several of these cousins had been selling portions of the land,

[1283]Perez Erika, *Colonial intimacies: Interethnic kinship, sexuality, and marriage in southern California, 1769–1885*. Vol. 5. University of Oklahoma Press, 2018., p.89.
[1284]Maurice Odhiambo Makoloo, Yash P. Ghai and Yash P. Ghai. *Kenya: Minorities, indigenous peoples and ethnic diversity*. London: Minority Rights Group International, 2005., p.78.
[1285]Ibid., p.82.

which brings us to the final scenario. During the 1930s, land values increased more than fivefold, with a field priced at 10–20 shillings in 1925 escalating to about 100–150 shillings by 1937.[1286]

Motivated by the rising prices, individuals sought to sell any land they could economically relinquish, even disputed properties. After the land was sold and the sale agreement executed, it frequently proved challenging for the original owners to reclaim the property. Regardless of the consequences, land disputes compelled individuals to seek judicial intervention to resolve their issues. The developments placed widows in extremely challenging situations, compelling many to go in court for the first time to assert their land rights. The widows faced significant challenges, as the colonial courts of the 1930s were complex to navigate.

The land disputes in Maragoli possesses a convoluted history. Prior to colonial control in 1894, a council of village elders adjudicated land disputes that could not be resolved within the family unit.[1287] Such conflicts were, however, rare because land was relatively plentiful. In these communities, male members of each lineage communally owned the land on which they, their children, and their wives lived.[1288] Each man was allowed only use-rights to the land. Each, however, maintained a personal claim to land he had cleared (the Maragoli practiced shifting cultivation, whereby first clearance meant temporary ownership). These claims had also extended to the man's widow (or widows).

[1286]KNA: DC/NN.1/13, Annual Report, 1932.
[1287]Gunter Wagner and Lucy Philips Mair. "The Bantu of Western Kenya: with special reference to the Vugusu and Logoli." *(No Title)* (1970)., p.89.
[1288]KNA: PC/NZA/1/1.

Thus, widows, with their children, cultivated land that had belonged to their deceased husband's lineage, and they continued to use the land until the soil was depleted of nutrients, at which time they shifted to another piece of land owned by their lineage, just as they and their husband had done while they were still alive.[1289]

If members of a certain family allowed their property to remain uncultivated, it reverted to the authority of the lineage elders, who were essentially the custodians of all lineage land. The elders guaranteed that only family members may cultivate their ancestral land, safeguarding it against individuals of other lineages who could encroach upon it.[1290] As local land administrators, then, the elders were expected to represent individual Maragoli men and women in matters concerning land disputes, since land belonged to the whole lineage and not only to individuals.

Transgressions of territorial borders incurred severe penalties. Typically, each male witness in a land dispute presented his testimony to the gathered elders by wielding his spear and shield, culminating his declaration by plunging the spear into the earth. Upon the determination of the border, representatives from each faction impaled a spear into a proximate tree and pledged to honor the delineation. It was thought that any individual breaching such a pledge would perish. In the case of a fatality attributed to such a violation, the tree would be down and eradicated to avert more fatalities. Due of the lethal consequences of violating this ceremony, individuals inherently respected the land rights of others.

[1289]1930 Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in the North Kavirondo Reserve, 12

[1290]KNA: PC/NZA/1/4, Annual Report, 1909; and Norman Humphrey, The Liguru and the Land: Sociological Aspects of Some Agricultural Problems of North Kavirondo. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1947, p. 5.

The ceremony remained beneficial under colonial governance; but, its significance began to wane when chiefs, mostly young men allied with the settlers, supplanted the traditional elders. The new leaders held less conventional authority and were frequently seen as illegitimate by their followers, complicating the execution of their responsibilities in monitoring the rituals. Consequently, when the chiefs assumed control over land conflicts, they rapidly gained influence, while the elders, who had historically held judicial authority, gradually adopted a stance of indifference, sullen compliance, or even animosity."[1291] Eventually, they became so angry that colonial officials were forced, in 1910, to restore their judicial authority.[1292]

Nonetheless, the elders' authority had been so severely compromised that it could not be simply restored. The chiefs, albeit retaining their executive powers, hated having to cede their judicial authority to the elders. The anticipated outcome was that the chiefs did not consistently implement the elders' decisions with enough determination.[1293] In the end, this quibbling tended to diminish the stature of local courts. People simply did not take the court verdicts seriously. Meanwhile, the colonial officials retreated—in fact, they refused to intervene at all, claiming rather lamely that it was against their principles "to interfere with indigenous institutions."[1294] The officials' lack of supervision, however, resulted in "corruption and inefficiency," as the chiefs and elders began to look for personal gain at the expense of the whole community.[1295]

[1291]Phillips, Report on Native Tribunals, 14.
[1292]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 3rd October 2023.
[1293]Phillips Arthur,. *Report on Native Tribunals*. Legal Department, 1945, p.8.
[1294]Ibid., p.10.
[1295]Ibid., p.15.

By the 1930s corruption and bribery had become so rampant in the tribunals that colonial officials were forced to intervene. They were particularly concerned that the chiefs and elders were swindling court revenues that they had collected in the form of fines—the issue of fair court verdicts was not necessarily a priority.

Throughout the early 1930s, then, officials instituted several changes designed to prevent court workers from stealing cash from the courts. For instance, they "reduced the number of tribunals and of elders sitting on each tribunal; they introduced a panel system consisting largely of elders nominated by chiefs; they paid court workers a fixed salary; they built modern court houses and ensured the separation of the executive and the judiciary."[1296] New authorities were appointed, including permanent presidents and vice presidents, primarily consisting of young, educated individuals selected by the DC in collaboration with the local chiefs. Chiefs were irrevocably prohibited from adjudicating issues before the tribunals.

The modifications elevated the status of African courts and significantly impeded the ability of court personnel to misappropriate court money. Following a visit to a court in western Kenya in the late 1930s, Arthur Phillips, appointed by the colonial government to examine the native tribunals in the colony, observed a commendable level of professionalism; however, corruption and nepotism persisted as significant issues. Ingrained clan conflicts frequently manifested in the new courts, opposing neighbor to neighbor and clansman to clansman; these courts often exhibited bias, as they supposedly

[1296]Ibid., p.14

remained under the chiefs' sway. The chiefs designated the presiding elders, often selecting individuals from their own clans regardless of their qualifications.

The DC remarked on the crooked nature of this procedure, noting the unusual degree of animosity it has generated.[1297] The Chiefs' influence, wrote the DC, "was naturally resented by other clans whose claims to any consideration were ignored." An "immediate uproar," the DC noted, was the natural response of many people.[1298] Unfortunately, the local courts often became unprincipled venues of nepotism, making it difficult for many people to trust leaders to treat them fairly.

According to court proceedings preserved at the Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), numerous widows encountered disputes over land rights following the deaths of their husbands. One notable case involves a widow, Erika Kisiru, who instituted legal action against her brother-in-law, Matayo Odanga, after he unlawfully appropriated land belonging to her late husband.[1299]In her testimony, Kisiru stated that Odanga had initially assured her he would "take care" of her following the death of her husband, who had left her with five young children. However, it soon became evident that Odanga's primary interest lay in appropriating his late brother's land rather than in fulfilling the role of a husband. During the court proceedings, Odanga conceded that the land rightfully belonged to Kisiru's deceased husband but contended that he had cultivated maize on it for seven years and sought permission to continue its use for an additional two years. The council of

[1297]KNA: DC/NN.1/14, Annual Report, 1933.
[1298]KNA: DC/NN.1/13, Annual Report, 1932.
[1299] Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), Civil Case File, *Erika Kisiru v. Matayo Odanga*.

elders ultimately ruled in favor of Kisiru, affirming that "according to customary law, a widow cannot be evicted from the land of her husband."[1300]

She obtains a life interest in the shamba or shambas she was cultivating at the death of her husband. In this case Kisiru has a right to the land, not only because she is a widow but because she has a son to whom the land should revert at her death."[1301]

During the inter-war period, questions of ownership and access to land in Maragoli Division became particularly critical. The persistent shortage of land was largely attributed to rapid population growth and the continuous expansion of cultivated acreage.[1302]

By the 1920s, commercial agriculture had emerged as a defining feature of the Maragoli economy. The increasing scarcity of land, driven by population growth and the continued expansion of cultivated areas, transformed ownership into a central issue within the community's economic framework, thereby intensifying debates over the land tenure system. As discussed in Chapter Two, Maragoli land tenure had shifted from private ownership to a communal system under the authority of the clan. However, this communal framework soon became contested as individuals sought formal title deeds in order to protect their holdings from potential appropriation by the colonial administration, as well as from encroachment by both clan and non-clan members.[1303]

The conventional land tenure structures in Maragoli remained mostly unchanged until 1926, when the political roles of the clans and the power of its leaders, known as amagutu,

[1300] Ibid.
[1301]Kakamega Provincial Record Center (hereafter KPRC): DX/1/5
[1302]Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), Land Tenure Files, 1930s.
[1303] Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), Land Tenure Files, 1920s.

were supplanted and progressively dismantled by the implementation of the paid milango headmen system. The displacement of the ligutu and the elders as the paramount land authority, replaced by colonial-appointed chiefs and headmen, was integral to the articulation process. During this articulation process, pre-colonial structures were retained yet adapted to accommodate the emerging capitalist system.

Due to a rise in land disputes between 1920 and 1930, the colonial administration established a commission in 1930 to examine the systems of African land tenure in the North Kavirondo reserve. This committee was tasked with recommending regulations to regulate the land occupancy rights of ethnic groups, clans, families, and individuals. Based on the oral comments collected during the fieldwork, the majority of respondents ascribed the land issue of the late 1930s to many cause factors.

The participants in one of the focus group discussions contended that the principle of universal land access would not be maintained by the existing clan system.[1304] During the pre-colonial era, the clan had been the bed rock social institution that controlled social relations. However, curtesy of colonial penetration, the clan was steadily losing significance in the face of individualism.[1305] This was in line with the articulation theory where the new capitalist mode of production was dissolving the pre-colonial establishments which paused a threat to the new mode's penetration to the indigenous mode[1306].

[1304]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.

[1305]Ibid.

[1306]Paule Tiyambe Zeleza, (1985), *Op*., *Cit*., p.23.

In some instances, clan elders were assuming power in land negotiation by virtue of their position in the clan, thus denying sons of junior wives and the descendants of *avamirika* (war victims).[1307]There were various incidences where the traditionally protected vulnerables such as the widows and their sons had been evicted from the land which had been left to them by their desceced family head.[1308]

Most of the respondents accused the Tribunal; Local Native Council (LNC)-locally known as *teminari* for the increased land problemes in the late 1930s due to the council's discriminative tendancies.[1309]The committee was to examine the actual boundaries between different groups and ascertain the legitimacy of the claims and conflicts between families, clans and ethnic groups as pertains to land.[1310] Politically, this was very useful to the government in the appointment of headmen and members of the Native Tribunals which was already causing a lot of tension and unrest among the different clans and sub-ethnic groups in the entire Luhyia region.[1311]

At the core of these challenges was the question of land ownership and its administration, which underscored the broader instability and tensions surrounding landholding patterns in the Maragoli region. These disputes were not merely local in character but were also symptomatic of the colonial state's broader attempts to restructure African land tenure systems in ways that often conflicted with indigenous practices. By promoting individual

[1307]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.

[1308]Ibid
[1309]Ibid
[1310] Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in the North Kavirondo Reserve; (1930), p. 1.
[1311]Robert M. Maxon, "Economic and Social Change Since 1963, p.92; Robert M. Maxon." *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya: Essays in Memory of Professor Gideon S. Were* 293 (2002)., p.19.

titling and commodification of land, colonial policies disrupted traditional systems of communal ownership, fueling insecurity and contestation over access and rights.[1312]

By 1930, it became imperative to register land and delineate distinct pieces and limits. The colonial administration asserted that this initiative would facilitate citizens in obtaining title documents for their holdings and assist in mitigating numerous issues associated with land ownership. Various more issues were seen as rationale.

The widespread litigation over property among the Maragoli and the rest of Buluyia would be curtailed as each individual's allotment would be formally delineated according to its borders. The limits of an individual's property would be delineated and documented to prevent future intra-family and inter-clan border conflicts.[1313] Further, the registration of individual parcels of land would give the owners security of tenure and of ownership. Consequently, the judicial resolution of land disputes by the courts would be streamlined, rather than relying on inherited genealogies of deceased individuals who could not provide testimony. The delineation of borders would significantly expedite the distribution of land to a father's heirs upon his demise. Conversely, rights of passage, such as footpaths and cattle routes, would be permanently established and legally acknowledged to prevent individuals from arbitrarily obstructing or relocating them owing to unresolved grievances.[1314]

It was anticipated that following the government's adoption of the registration principle, all inhabitants would be mandated to register their various land parcels in line with a method established by the government and local authorities. This was to be succeeded by the

[1312] Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), Land Tenure Reports, 1930s.
[1313]Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in the North Kavirondo Reserve, 1930, p.4.
[1314]Ibid., p.7.

issuance of a legitimate title to each landholder. Any landholder who has gained prescriptive rights to land must also be permitted to register the land and get a legitimate title for it. Before registration, the village elders and witnesses were required to resolve any border disputes under the authority of the District Commissioner (DC). Aside from the aforementioned boundary-related issues and recommendations, additional circumstances have forced a re-evaluation of land ownership in Maragoli:

The initial discovery was the 1930 committee's report on land tenure, the growth of commodity production, particularly cash crops, and the effects of taxes and colonial governance. The most notable alterations in the Maragoli land tenure system resulted from the execution of the 1930 committee report. The proposals addressed eight critical components of land tenure: borders, land ownership, land disputes, land rights, land alienation, land administration, land usage, and land parcel registration.

The execution of the suggestions signified the definitive collapse of the pre-capitalist land institutions in Maragoli. The alterations in land ownership were not isolated events; rather, they were integral to broader socio-economic transformations that will be examined in relation to the suggestions. The committee advised that it would be permissible for the District Commissioner to instruct that the boundaries of each village within a specified region be delineated by a designated group of individuals at any time, in the presence of appointed witnesses as directed. Three categories of plants were formally selected for boundary demarcation. The fig tree (Ficus), euphorbia (Euphorbia), and makuvu were identified. It was illegal to establish such trees or plants in rows outside of an official village border. If this were to transpire, the DC was the sole one authorized to permit it.

The local authorities were authorized to remove any of the three types of plants established in a way that may create border ambiguity.[1315] Specific modifications were established in the revised land ownership structures. Every village was required to establish a land ownership record to be administered by the District Commissioner. The registry included a serial number for each village, a detailed description of the boundaries of each village, and the date of its registration. It was also required to carry the designation of the clan or sub-clan inhabiting it, as well as the ethnic group to which the group belonged.

The identities of all village men, leaders, and sub-ethnic groups needed to be documented. Each proprietor of a homestead and crop plot was required to be recorded alongside the owner in the register. Modifications to the registry regarding village leaders, headmen, or landowners were required to be executed upon the remittance of a fee.[1316] These new regulations replaced the old customary system of land ownership. From then on, individuals no longer owned land as part of their known clan and family heritage; but as items in the register.

The possession of rights to land now depended on evidence of individual ownership as recorded in the register. This weakened further the position of the elders as the highest land authority in Maragoli. Much of their power here was transferred to the DC.[1317] The customary land ownership patterns were intricate and difficult to contest in the courts. Therefore, all disputes over village boundaries or over other lands within a village where registration had not been done, the matter was referred by the parties affected first to the elders of the clan before any suit was recommended to be presented before a Native tribunal

[1315]KNA: DC/NN.1/5:1924:24.
[1316]Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in the North Kavirondo Reserve ;(1930), p.14.
[1317]Mwamili Hezron, (56 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th August 2023.

court or any other judicial body.[1318] Any unit of land in a village was entered into a register with its particulars of ownership. This became evident but not conclusive proof of the matters recorded. It was lawful for the DC at any time, and acting on the facts of the application of any member of the clan who adduced evidence of error or fraud, to correct or cancel any such entry.

It was the applicant's onus to prove that he was prevented by causes beyond his control from contesting the entry when it was made.[1319] Every individual land owner was required by law to register his land holding. The registration of such holdings and of villages was done on the payment of fees to the Local Native Fund. Every new entry into the register had to be paid for; for instance, the registration of a new tenant or chief. Every tenant who belonged to a clan outside the district was required to pay an annual fee to the Local Native Fund as an appreciation of tenancy. Once such an individual stayed for a long time, the DC could exempt him on the grounds of long occupation.[1320]

During the colonial period, the government dispensed with two types of land holdings in Maragoli and modified one type. Family and individual lands remained in existence but had to be registered as individual parcels. Communal lands were dissolved and distributed to people on individual ownership basis. There were no longer communal pastures for all members of a village. Every individual had to develop his own pastures. The public utility areas were too small to be used as communal pastures though colonial administration considered them as such.[1321] However, the principle of communal land use was reflected

[1318]Catherine Boone, *Property and political order in Africa: Land rights and the structure of politics*. Cambridge University Press, 2014, p.52.
[1319]Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in the North Kavirondo Reserve, (1930), p. 12.
[1320]Ibid., p.12.
[1321]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 20th August 2023.

in the establishment of public utility or reserved areas. These were demarcated by the DC at any place and for any public use he felt was necessary. The most common establishments were schools, mission centres, government stations, prisons, markets and trading centres.[1322] On the eve of the Second World War, there was a lot of fermenting discontent in Maragoli against the new government dominated land registration system.

It limited many people from accessibility to extra (communal) land as a factor of production. What the colonialists' thought was a solution to land disputes was threatening to cause even more disputes.[1323]On the other hand, the forest or bushland zones were subdivided faster because; since precolonial period, these were the areas where more land for agricultural production would be acquired both on individual and family basis. As the population increased within the homestead, more members went out to clear farm land from the uncultivated bushland. Hence it was with a lot of disappointment that the Maragoli lost part of these lands to the colonial administration.[1324]

Absolute sale of land rights was not practiced in Maragoli land during pre-colonial period. But in 1935 due to individualization of land and the increasing pressure of taxation and the need for money to purchase the new consumer goods, a number of people began selling off their individual lands. Those individuals who needed land and had money acquired the land through purchase. This was mainly due to rural land commoditization that the new market

[1322]Jeffrey R. Henig, *Rethinking school choice: Limits of the market metaphor*. Princeton University Press, 1995., p.32.
[1323]Abbas Pourgerami, "Authoritarian versus nonauthoritarian approaches to economic development: Update and additional evidence." *Public Choice* (1992): 365-377., p.369.
[1324]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd July 2023.

that the colonial capitalist process had set into motion and the peasants' positive response to the new market economy.[1325]

The number of people selling land in totality in Maragoli reached significant levels and availed the youth opportunities to purchase and own land. Unlike in the pre-colonial period, an individual member of one clan could acquire land in another clan for cultivation, residence or pasture. This was made illegal as the DC was empowered to nullify such transactions.

This was a strategy of limiting the individual's accessibility to more land for increasing commodity production without government's knowledge and approval.[1326] In a few instances, an individual would acquire land from people who had more land than they needed or were unable to cultivate. Such land owners were either very aged people with no male children or widows. Within the villages, land would be acquired from a close kin who shifted with his family from his land and went to seek long term wage employment with no desire of returning to the village in the near future.[1327]

The new land regulations changed the mode of land acquisition from the forest or bushland. Individuals could not clear new farming fields from these areas as land here was subdivided and allotted to individual owners. The colonial administration sanctioned the acquisition of land outside one's village with the DC's approval. In this manner, the customary practice of promoting proper use of land and other resources and the eviction of people who failed to observe these requirements was rampantly flouted by the DC who now had an upper

[1325]Joseph O. Ogutu, *et. al.,* "Dynamics of ungulates in relation to climatic and land use changes in an insularized African savanna ecosystem." *Biodiversity and Conservation* 21 (2012): 1033-1053, p.1039.
[1326]C. Sanz. De Galdeano, "Geologic evolution of the Betic Cordilleras in the Western Mediterranean, Miocene to the present." *Tectonophysics* 172, no. 1-2 (1990): 107-119, p.105.
[1327]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, 20th July, 2023.

hand in land administration. This marked the end of the different ways of acquiring land as seen in the pre-colonial period.[1328] Whilst the British recognized that land disputes were common, they changed the procedure for settling in the case of a few crowded villages.

In 1911, in the face of increased number of land disputes, the government transferred the responsibility of solving land disputes from the local council of elders to the newly formed Native courts which additionally were charged with the responsibility of solving other minor social and civil cases.[1329] Articulation of modes of production as a theory outlines that through the colonial state, a new relationship between the capitalist and the precolonial reproductions and forces of production were greatly reorganized.

The Crown Land Ordinance, the 1930 North Kavirondo recommendations together with the new taxation policies were all part of colonial reforms which greatly reoriented the Maragoli land use and its subsequent food production mechanisms into the capitalist structure. Due to British presence in Maragoli, new nature of land conflicts was created. Most of these conflicts were emanating from the squatters' life. The conflict occurred because the Maragoli squatters carried their traditional concepts of land usage and tenure into the settled areas. Since traditionally all land belonged to the clan but individual members made use of it, the Maragoli squatters on settler land did not surprise them. To their dismay in 1920, the colonial government issued labour ordinance which granted European farmers the right to hire and fire farm workers, the squatters were to be tied to farmers by forced arrangements which gave them the status of serfs. Within the traditional

[1328]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, 20th July, 2023 held in Chanderema Village.
[1329]Chaim D. Kaufmann, "When all else fails: Ethnic population transfers and partitions in the twentieth century." *International security* 23, no. 2 (1998): 120-156, p.123.

land tenure practices in Maragoli, the original occupier of land had a right to it even when left fallow.[1330]

Given that by 1914, many of the farm lands cultivated by the Maragoli were not developed by their settler owners; there had been misconception by the Maragoli squatters as to their right of ownership. The Native authority system provided both the frame within which the bastardized form of indirect rule in Buluyia was molded and the administrative structure within which it operated.[1331]

The colonial government in one of its measures to gain control of African land tenure system abolished land acquisition at clan level. From 1912 there were no more 'empty' lands for community to acquire or occupy freely. Land was now acquired at the individual level only.

An individual could acquire land by inheritance, purchase and from 1924, by being allocated more land for cultivation by the DC.[1332] In 1913 land administration was put under a new court system controlled by the DC. In some cases, an individual could obtain rights of ownership of land next to bush land or swampy areas on condition that he should have cultivated it for over two decades.[1333] Land was inherited by the sons of a man along the procedures seen under the pre-colonial era. However, a few changes emerged here during this period. Several factors accounted for the changes. In the first place, the new capitalist system changed the value of land from the old use value to the new combined

[1330]KNA, DC/NN/1/3:19919/20.
[1331]Erick M. Aseka, "Political Economy of Buluhya: 1900-1964." Unpublished Ph. D. Dissertation, Kenyatta University (1989), p.143.
[1332]KNA: DC/NN/1/10:1929 pp.8.
[1333]KNA: Abaluhya Land Law and Customs

market and use value, the use aspect being in the form of producing commodities. Land like labour and crop production was commoditized.

The new market value of land made land to change ownership more frequently than in the previous period. Secondly, land ownership was individualized. This gave fathers more powers in the disposal of land than in the previous period. Further, the commoditization of production, the commercialization of the rural economy and the changing house hold labour patterns were rapidly weakening the traditional family lineages and kinship ties. This was to the extent that land as a critical factor of production became more individualized than before.[1334]

The processes mentioned above availed more opportunities of production to the youths. Thus, land was no longer the most important or the only source of wealth in Maragoli land. This individualization of land engendered changes in its acquisition and disposal.[1335] In addition, by 1940, due to the increasing pressure on land in most homesteads arising from the individualization of land, a son who shifted or had gone to stray away from home for along time was not considered in the distribution of land on their father's death.[1336] He had no reserved rights to claim part of the land from his brothers. Rather, he had to apply for land from the head man or chief of his village, who in turn forwarded the application to the DC. It was now the DC to allot him land where he (the DC) felt land was available for the applicant. This aspect was a major change in land acquisition that became evident by

[1334]Ruth K. Nasimiyu, "The Participation of Women in the Political-economy of Kenya: a Case Study of Bukusu Women in Bungoma District, 1902-1960." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 1984., p.136.
[1335]Eve L. Crowley and Simon E. Carter, "Agrarian change and the changing relationships between toil and soil in Maragoli, Western Kenya (1900–1994)." *Human Ecology* 28, no. 3 (2000): 383-414., p.392.
[1336]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd July 2023.

1945.[1337] The village elder and the council of elders lost the authority they held over distribution of land to all sons including the home coming son.

The DC usurped their power and role. The elders protested firmly against the loss of their power in land distribution.[1338] They expressed their disappointment by influencing the general public to ignore public meetings (barazas) called by the new handpicked colonial administrators. To contain their anger, the DC restructured the composition of the Local Native Councils (LNC's), the Local African Courts and of the tribunals to accommodate a few of the former members of the council of elders. Later, it became a requirement that before a land case was brought before the tribunals, it had to be heard first by the elders sitting on the Local African courts, a few of whom had hitherto comprised part of the membership of the council of elders.[1339]

Pressure on land in Maragoli was also partly caused by the reduction of empty lands following the individualization and dissolution of such lands. The need for more land to produce adequate food and cash crops for sale exerted pressure on land for agriculture. This reduced the total area for crop rotation and fallowland.[1340] By 1930, while the fallow period in Wanga had dropped from 4-6 years, to 1-2 years it was virtually disappearing in Maragoli.[1341] A practice that led to individuals expanding their farm lands into neighbor's lands was the production of the new marketable crops especially simsim and maize.

[1337]Brian Fulfrost, *Four hectares and a hoe: Maragoli smallholders and land tenure law in Kenya*. The University of Arizona, 1995, p.16.
[1338]KNA: DC/NN/1/21:1939:23.
[1339]Amutamwa, Oral Interview held on 20th June 2023
[1340]Humphreys, A. R. "" The Eternal Fitness of Things": An Aspect of Eighteenth-Century Thought." *The Modern Language Review* 42, no. 2 (1947): 188-198., p.193.
[1341]KNA: DC/NN/1/11:1930.

African merchants and Indian traders provided a ready market for these crops.[1342] The imposition of taxes, the combination of hut and poll tax in 1910 and the increase in taxation in 1935 put more pressure on the Maragoli households to produce more cash crops, besides meeting its own consumption requirements.

Taxes were effectively paid using the proceeds from the sale of crops instead of offering labour, grain or livestock to the government. This was more so due to the introduction of the European hoe which facilitated deeper tillage compared to the traditional hoe.[1343] The European hoe initiated major changes in land use as it enabled individual producers to put to use more agricultural land under crops; which also affected the customary pattern of land ownership, use and rights.

Enterprising young men with access to the European hoes produced more cash crops, and the income realized gave them a higher degree of self-dependence which turned them from the paternal control of their fathers and elders.[1344] Following the Local Native ordinance of 1924 and the implementation of the 1930 committee's recommendations, the status of the *avamenya* in terms of land ownership was greatly strengthened with the individualization of land ownership in Maragoli. Due to the arbitrary allocation and eviction of people from their lands by the colonial administration, with its limited knowledge of the land ownership patterns of the Maragoli land litigation had reached an alarming rate by 1945.[1345] Land use patterns were not totally replaced but some of its sustaining elements disappeared while far

[1342]Deborah Kay Fitzgerald, *Every farm a factory: The industrial ideal in American agriculture*. Yale University Press, 2008, p.53.
[1343]Ibid., p.56
[1344]Samuel Benin and Sunday Odjo. *Government Expenditures in Kenya, 1950–2014: Determinants and agricultural growth effects*. Vol. 1774. Intl Food Policy Res Inst, 2018., p.72.
[1345] KNA: PC/NZA/1/5

reaching new developments particularly in the sphere of economic life changed the traditional significance of land and created a new attitude towards it.

The traditional significance of land was determined by three factors; its economic uses, the socio-political structure of the tribal community and magico religious notions especially those connected with the ancestor cult. Economically, land was valued for the purpose of tillage and stock keeping as a means of production.[1346] The disintegration of the clan institution meant that land rights of the vulnerable especially the landless were disregarded. Wives of such people were even in worse position because it became difficult for them to produce food for their families.

By early 1930s, the land crisis had become severe leading to the establishment of the Kenya Land Commission of 1932 headed by Morris Carter. The commission was mandated to estimate African land requirements, and recommend, if necessary, the extension of African reserves. It was also required to investigate how far settler holdings had encroached on African land.[1347] The commission received submissions from individuals, clans and associations especially political ones. It is unfortunate, however, that the commission did not solve the African land problem. In dealing with the issue, the commission devised methods through which they were to base the compensation. They divided the land claims into two categories: those based on historical rights and those based on present and future

[1346]Clem Tisdell, "Economic indicators to assess the sustainability of conservation farming projects: An evaluation." *Agriculture, ecosystems & environment* 57, no. 2-3 (1996): 117-131, p.119.
[1347]Tabitha Kanogo, "The problem of the landless." *WAJIBU* 4, no. 3 (1989): 19-22., p.21.

needs.[1348] This categorization of land effectively blocked any claims by individuals or families.

Furthermore, the commission refuted the claims that African agriculture had deteriorated because of land alienation. The commission argued that poor African agricultural and animal husbandry practices and the population increases encouraged by the colonial rule were responsible for the poor production.[1349]The only solution to the African land problem was the adoption of improved agricultural practices and new system of tenure.[1350] The Carter Commission did not solve the African land problem. It was of course not possible bearing in mind the fact that the settlers' interests were always a priority of the government.

Land problem was worse in the inter-war years due to population pressure. Over the years, Maragoli population had gradually risen despite facing natural calamities in the late 19th century and casualties in the First World War.

Population increase in the 1930s coincided with the years of great agricultural output. The restriction of squatters in the white highlands had increased the land problem in the reserves not only in Maragoli but allover the colony. Before the restriction, individuals who had insufficient land or none at all in the reserves had moved to the settled areas as squatters.[1351] By 1930s, land ownership had become a major means of categorizing people. The amount of land one had determined how one was involved in the colonial economy. Those with above average holdings opted to cultivate rather than being engaged wage employment.

[1348]Shayne Breen, "Human agency, historical inevitability and moral culpability: Rewriting black-white history in the wake of Native Title." *Aboriginal History* 20 (1996): 108-132., p.112.
[1349]Ibid., p.116.
[1350]Ibid., p.118.
[1351]Duder C. J. D. and Christopher P. Youe, "Paice's place: race and politics in Nanyuki District, Kenya, in the 1920s." *African Affairs* 93, no. 371 (1994): 253-278., p.257.

Individuals in this category were mainly chiefs who had used their position to accumulate wealth and an emerging group of western educated Africans.[1352]

Therefore, individuals who made profit from commercial production or off-farm income were the ones keen on pushing for individual title deeds.[1353] The medium and small holders continued to alternate between producing for the market and selling their labour. Those with insufficient holding to support a family were forced into the labour market nearly as full-time workers and often became more or less permanent residents to the growing urban centres. Though statistics are not available, the number of men who became permanent migrants from Maragoli must have been higher than that of women.

But there were a certain number of women who moved to urban areas initially as traders but from the late 1930s, some became residents as a way of escaping rural hardships.
The youth who were interviewed stated that their engagement in foodstuff trade was due to lack of land because their parents had no land.[1354]Scarcity of land directly influenced the urban labour force. By the late1930s, there was marked expansion of the urban labour force, which had subsequently raised Nairobi's population. Between 1923 and 1932, Nairobi's population doubled from 12,500 to 26,265. By the break of the war in 1939, it

[1352]Andrew D. Robertson and Kenneth P. Murphy, "Protein structure and the energetics of protein stability." *Chemical reviews* 97, no. 5 (1997): 1251-1268., p.1259
[1353]Adrian Jones *et. al.,* "Evaluation of a method for clinically assessing osteoarthritis of the knee." *Annals of the Rheumatic Diseases* 51, no. 2 (1992): 243-245., p.244.
[1354]Mudika Anzirikam (89 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th August 2023.

stood at 50,000.[1355] By late 1940s, African urban workforce though ethnically differentiated, had increased into significant proportions. Statistics indicate that in 1947, Coastal Africans dominated in Mombasa, comprising 33 percent of the African workforce while the "Kavirondo" formed 20 percent while the Kikuyu were only 12 percent. Whereas Kikuyu were least in Mombasa during the same period, they dominated in Nairobi with 55 percent while the Kavorondo accounted for about 30 percent.[1356]

Stitcher argues that the different patterns of town ward migration from both Kikuyuland and Kavirondo were influenced by the differences in land-holding arrangements.[1357] She asserts that unlike the Kikuyu, the Luo and Luyia of Nyanza were always certain of retaining their pieces of land even if they migrated in distant areas and even for longer periods.

This was not the same in Kikuyuland where increased disintegration of the *mbari* institution, made it necessary for Kikuyu men, the recognized land owners to make frequent visits to home just in case it was construed that they had forfeited the land. The new socio-economic arrangement put the Maragoli customary land tenure into conflict. This section has discussed the Maragoli land problem and gender relations in the interwar period, highlighting how colonial land policies and socio-economic disruptions reshaped traditional gender roles. The next section discusses the transformation of gender division

[1355]Sharon Stichter, "Women, employment and the family: Current debates." In *Women, employment and the family in the international division of labour*, pp. 11-71. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1990., p.16.
[1356]Ibid., p.110.
[1357]Ibid., p.112.

of labour and food production, examining how these historical shifts compelled women to renegotiate their roles in agricultural systems and household economies.

4.9 Transformation of Gender Division of Labour and Food Production

After the war, settlers required supply of cheap labour to take advantage of the post-war boom. Regulations were passed to prevent idleness.[1358] The system of labour registration (*kipande*) ensured that men did not just leave their employment. Coercion was also used to have Africans work for settlers. This made wage employment in Nairobi attractive for most African men in the 1920s. The demand for unskilled labour in Nairobi rose sharply from 1926 when the Municipal entered into a construction boom. Despite the fact that wages were low compared to the living expenses, they were, however, much better than those given in agricultural labour. For instance, a domestic servant would earn three times.

In the post-war period, labour supply was problematic. A number of factors account for the low labour turnout in the early 1920s. After demobilisation, settlers expanded acreage under crop production far more than the labour available.

The flow of African labourers was low due to war casualties, diseases and malnutrition among the African survivors. Moreover, the global influenza and the great famine of 1918 had also killed many people in the reserves[1359]. Thus, the reserves were not able to provide labour not only to settler farms but also to state projects. But while natural disasters and the war may have interfered with the flow of African labour, other factors could have equally contributed. It is from such a background that government officials especially the District Commissioners thought that labour shortage was not just out of the problems that

[1358]Jose M. Ferro, and Sofia Madureira. "Age-related white matter changes and cognitive impairment." *Journal of the neurological sciences* 203 (2002): 221-225., p.223.
[1359]Paul Baines, *The house of forgery in eighteenth-century Britain*. Routledge, 2019., p.17.

faced Africans but also due to Africans' ability to weigh the economic benefits of any venture they engaged in. Such officials argued that acute labour shortage was likely to become worse: "because natives are becoming increasingly aware that their own labour employed on their own land and the comfort of their own homes is more profitable and congenial than in the outside market."[1360] It is suggested that the Maragoli were equally reluctant to work for the settlers whenever they were in a position to raise their cash independently.

Labour policy in the inter-war period was not any different from the previous decade. The government made concerted efforts to ensure constant flow of Africans to settler plantations. Since it was perceived as the colony's economic "backbone", settler agriculture had to be protected after the war to prevent it from eminent collapse.[1361] The measures taken had far-reaching consequences on gender relations of production in Maragoli.[1362]

In total disregard of African production relations, legislations were used to "entice" African men from the reserves to seek wage employment. Between 1919 and 1925, a number of labour legislations were passed which formed the fundamental labour framework in the inter-war years.[1363] The measures taken had far-reaching consequences on gender relations

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[1361] Bruce Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990), 205–207.

[1363]David Hyde, *Labour and Colonial Rule in Kenya, 1912–1939* (London: Routledge, 2018), 77–79.

of production in Maragoli, as men were increasingly siphoned off into wage labour while women were left to sustain household agriculture under severe constraints.[1364]

Subsequently, the 1919-1920 Native Registration Ordinance was enacted ensuring that African men of fifteen years and over were issued with registration certificate (*kipande*).[1365] It emerged that, for easier control of their movements and therefore guarantee constant and docile labour supply. The restrictions of movement made African men remain on employment and any attempt to desert attracted severe punishment.[1366] The control of African male labourers thus made the administration's work more comfortable since it was easy to track down deserters.[1367] Accordingly, African men were forced to stay for longer periods away from their families. The absence of men meant a reduction or total withdrawal of their agricultural labour input, which would explain why the Maragoli began changing the types of crops they previously grew. For instance, yam growing in Maragoli gradually declined and eventually disappeared.[1368]

According to a woman informant, the consumption of yam declined in the inter-war years, due to scarcity of men to dig it out because unlike cassava and sweet potatoes, yam vines go deep into the earth and, therefore, require not only physical strength but also expertise to avoid destroying the plant. Moreover, yams were also planted in the swampy areas which

[1364] Kenya National Archives (KNA), PC/CP/8/1, *Labour Legislation and Native Employment, 1919–1925*; Charles Ambler, *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 156.
[1365]Presley Cora Ann. *Kikuyu women, the Mau Mau rebellion, and social change in Kenya*. Routledge, 2019., p.83.
[1366]Francisco Herreros Vázquez, *Social capital and civic republicanism*. Instituto Juan March de estudios e investigaciones, 2000., p.77.
[1367]Donald C. Savage and J. Forbes Munro. "Carrier Corps Recruitment in the British East Africa Protectorate 1914–19181." *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 2 (1966): 313-342., p.328.
[1368] Mambai FGD held on 30th Sept, 2023 at Mambai Primary School Assembly Grounds.

were prone to risks.[1369] The absence of men to carry out these gender specific duties tasks directly impacted on the growth and consumption of yams in Maragoli.The Edward Northey's labour circular of 1919-1920 and the Native Authority Amendment Ordinance of February 1920 were the most severe in coercing African labour in the early 1920s.[1370] The two had originated from the Native Labour Commission of 1912-1913.

The Commission had recommended administrators to be more involved in impressing people "the desire of the government that their young men should go out and should keep the fact always before them."[1371] The government, therefore, stepped up its efforts in ensuring the flow of labour by using colonial administrators both African and non-African in the reserves.

Compulsion was used to get African men and later women out of the reserves. Empowered by the Native Authority Ordinance of 1920, chiefs and their assistants were able to implement the Labour circular of 1919-1920. The law allowed them to get "compulsory labour" that would work for up to sixty days annually. However, anyone who had worked voluntarily for three months was exempted from the compulsory labour. The concession of voluntary work was essentially meant to entice Africans to work for the settlers rather than be forced to work anywhere else without making a choice.

Hence, in the1920s, there emerged a migrant labour category composed predominantly of single men from high production areas specifically from Kikuyu districts and Nyanza. This

[1369]Jane Imbwaga, (65 Years), Oral Interview, on 30th October 2023

[1370]Okia, Opolot. "The Northey Forced Labor Crisis, 1920-1921: A Symptomatic Reading." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 41, no. 2 (2008): 263-293., p.274

[1371]Bruce J., Berman and John M. Lonsdale. "Crises of accumulation, coercion and the colonial state: the development of the labor control system in Kenya, 1919–1929." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 14, no. 1 (1980): 55-81., p.67.

migration gradually affected the labour composition in African reserves especially those neighbouring settler areas and upcoming urban areas.

By 1923, an estimated 75 percent of African men aged 15 to 40—excluding pastoral communities and those deemed medically unfit—were engaged in wage labor. This phenomenon must be situated within the colonial restructuring of African modes of production, where indigenous economies were forcibly subordinated to capitalist imperatives. The colonial state deployed taxation, land alienation, and labor ordinances to dismantle subsistence systems and compel Africans into wage labor, particularly in settler agriculture and infrastructure projects.[1372]Following the global economic depression, wages began to rise, prompting a surge in African labor migration. As Stichter notes, by the mid-1920s, African workers were increasingly moving far from their homelands in search of employment.[1373] This movement was not merely economic—it represented a reconfiguration of African spatial agency and a strategic response to colonial dispossession.

From a feminist epistemological standpoint, the narrative of labor migration must also interrogate the gendered dimensions of colonial labor regimes. While male labor was statistically dominant, African women's labor—often informal, reproductive, and unremunerated—was foundational to the survival of migrant households.

[1372] Maria Fibaek and Erik Green, "Labour Control and the Establishment of Profitable Settler Agriculture in Colonial Kenya, c. 1920–45," *Economic History of Developing Regions* 34, no. 1 (2019): 72–110, https://doi.org/10.1080/20780389.2019.1581058.
[1373] Sharon Stichter, *Migrant Labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African Response, 1895–1975* (London: Longman, 1985), 42.

Their contributions, though largely invisible in colonial records, sustained both rural economies and urban labor networks.[1374] The erasure of women's labor from official statistics reflects not absence but epistemic violence embedded in colonial documentation. Archival records from the British Colonial Office and East Africa Office in London provide rich documentation of these dynamics. For example, the *CO 544 Sessional Papers* (1903–1921) and *CO 822 East Africa Original Correspondence* (1927–1939) contain annual reports on labor, agriculture, and taxation policies that shaped African livelihoods.[1375] These sources reveal how settler profitability was directly linked to tightened labor control and reduced African mobility.[1376]Thus, African labor migration in the 1920s was not a passive absorption into colonial economies but a complex negotiation of survival, resistance, and redefinition of identity—one that must be read through both Afrocentric and feminist lenses.

The majority of the migrants were, however, from the three labour producing ethnic groups, the Luo, Luhia and Kikuyu who went as far as Mombasa where they outnumbered the Swahili and Hadramis. Thus, by the late 1920s, African male labour migrants moved out of their domestic production due to economic necessity, what Stichter calls "dull compulsion of economic relations" rather than outright coercion.[1377] With such a high percentage of able-bodied men outside the reserves, women automatically shouldered

[1374] Amina Mama, "Sheroes and Villains: Conceptualizing Colonial and Contemporary Violence Against Women in Africa," *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, eds. M. J. Alexander and C. T. Mohanty (New York: Routledge, 1997), 46–62.
[1375] Kenya National Archives, *Guide to Migrated Archives*, accessed September 17, 2025, Kenya Archives Guide.
[1376] Fibaek and Green, "Labour Control," 89–92.
[1377]S. M. Lind Holmes, "Aspects of land and labour in Kenya, 1919-1939." PhD diss., 1980., p.57.

domestic production and, therefore, being forced to reduce or abandon labour- intensive crops like millets in an effort to deal with the declining male agricultural assistance.

Northey's labour circulars did not just target men. Women and children were also viewed as important labour sources. The circular stated the need to encourage women and children living near farms to seek employment: "Where farms are situated in the vicinity of a native area, women and children should be encouraged to go out for such labour as they can perform".[1378] The use of administrators did not make the situation any better for women.

The headmen and recruiters harassed women as they coerced them into wage labour. Some chiefs may have been pushed to use force since District Commissioners kept records indicating a chief's helpfulness in recruiting labour.[1379] There are of course those who took advantage of the situation to have some women work for them. Due to the confusion that surrounded labour recruitment, some women were not only physically tortured, but also sexually assaulted. It was not until 1933 that the Ordinance on employment of women, young persons and children was passed to protect children and women.

The Ordinance like many others before, was difficult to enforce because there was no political will on the part of the colonial government due to the pressure exerted by the settlers.

Although force was used to push Maragoli women out of rural economic production, cash needs equally became significant pull factors beginning in early 1920s. The introductions of direct women's taxation under Ordinance 40 of 1934, made women engage in wage

[1378]Clayton & Savage 1974:112; Berman 1990:145.

[1379]David M. Anderson, "Punishment, Race and 'The Raw Native': Settler Society and Kenya's Flogging Scandals, 1895–1930." *Journal of Southern African Studies* 37, no. 3 (2011): 479-497, p.482.

labour to get the required tax. The women's direct taxation in the mid-1930s was not accidental, for it coincided with a shortage of female labour on settler farms just like the hut and poll taxes had coincided with the establishment of white settlements.[1380]

The most unfortunate thing is that the work calendar of women recruitment for government labour requirements coincided with the period of high labour demand on Maragoli farms. This consequently strained labour and, therefore transformed production relations in the district. The women had not only to work on the government public works but also continue with their domestic agricultural production with little or no assistance from men. This alteration of gender relations of production continued to transform food production in Maragoli.

Arguably, the increasing men's engagement in migrant wage labour meant that food crop production was gradually taken over by women and children from the 1920s onwards. Furthermore, women's involvement on government public works meant that any increased African production was squarely qualitative and quantitative increase of women's labour input in agricultural production.[1381] As women intensified their labour, the wage given to men was continually kept low making it difficult to accumulate any capital that would financially enable one to seek an alternative livelihood.[1382]

African production was made even unappealing because government's stated agricultural policy for Africans in the 1920s did not translate into action. Though Governor Sir Robert

[1380]Charles John David Duder, *The soldier settlement scheme of 1919 in Kenya*. University of Aberdeen (United Kingdom), 1978, p.18.
[1381]Grace Wanjiru Njuguna, "Transformation of white settler agriculture in colonial Kenya: the case of Molo, Nakuru district, 1904-1963." PhD diss., Egerton University, 2019., p.88.
[1382]Francis, Elizabeth. "Gender, migration and multiple livelihoods: Cases from Eastern and Southern Africa." In *Labour mobility and rural society*, pp. 167-190. Routledge, 2015., p.169

Corydon was under pressure to develop African agriculture, he only managed to invest in extension services and promote maize as a cash crop. There was, therefore, very little government impact on African production in the 1920s.

But despite the little attention given to Africans, there were impressionistic indications that African production increased during the decade. According to Kitching there was an increase of acreage of land under cultivation in the colony between 1920 and 1930.[1383] The increased acreage of land under cultivation was indirectly evidenced by the out-migration especially of the empoverished lot especially the landless. With no more land for expansion, as a result of an increase in population more disadvantaged people were forced to find alternatives.[1384] The only alternatives for the Maragoli were either the urban centres or the Rift Valley where they could become squatters in settler farms. This second alternative was most attractive to men who had big families.

The socio-economic policies had direct impact on crop production. With land shortage becoming an issue, the purpose of any crop grown was very important from the 1920s. The decade marked a gradual but significant trend towards satisfying the internal market, which Africans had taken over by the end of the First World War. Maize growing in Maragoli expanded in the 1920s. The increased African production in the 1920s was not considered a threat to the European growers. By 1930s European maize growers began to pressurize the government to intervene in controlling African production and marketing because they

[1383]Catherine S. Dolan, "“I sell my labour now”: gender and livelihood diversification in Uganda." *Canadian Journal of Development Studies/Revue canadienne d'études du développement* 25, no. 4 (2004): 643-661., p.659

[1384]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interviews, on 12th October 2023.

thought that African maize was "flooding" the domestic market, thus depressing their profit margin.[1385]

The introduction of exchange value to food crops was bound to generate gender conflicts that were previously minimal within the Maragoli community. With cash value attached to production at a time when land was becoming scarce, gender re-negotiations on labour use and control of the use of produce must have taken place. Women's labour continued to be tapped for African production though the state never openly acknowledged that the reserves were maintained by women labour and continued to assume that African men still maintained their families. McGregor-Ross[1386] clearly demonstrates the state's continual assumption that the African man maintained his family:

> The native is to be allowed to do the impossible-feed himself and all his dependents, produce his crops for export, and the same time keep all the European estates going to the satisfaction of their owners. The idea is nonsense.[1387]

Food crop production in the reserves was, therefore, gradually being taken over by women. Though a substantial number of men remained in the reserve, their actual participation in production was minimal while their involvement in trade rose. The Agricultural Supervisor of the Henry Scott Agricultural Laboratories, Lyne Watt, acknowledged that women were overworked.[1388] In Central Kenya, district of Fort Hall, the Medical Officer, Procter R.A.W. acknowledged as early as 1926, that women were overworked while their men did

[1385]William J. Talbott, "Intentional self-deception in a single coherent self." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, no. 1 (1995): 27-74., p.52.
[1386]Ross, McGregor, Kenya from Within. "A Short Political History." *London: Frank Cass* (1968)., p.76.
[1387]Ibid., p.84
[1388]Philip Drucker, "Rank, wealth, and kinship in Northwest Coast society." *American Anthropologist* 41, no. 1 (1939): 55-65., p.58.

little: “Among the eating shops are tea shops where the exhausted male may recover from the arduous toil of watching the women do the work, and may discuss the news of the day.”[1389] The situation in Maragoli was not different from that mentioned in Central Kenya. As indicated earlier, there were increased men migrants from Maragoli division especially to the tea estates in Kericho and later Nandi leaving domestic food production mechanisms to their women folk. It is the decline of male labour input that necessitated the growing of less time-labour crop like maize in place of millet and sorghum. Despite adoption of fast-growing crops, women continued to grow a substantial amount of millet in the 1920’s and 1930’s. Mackenzie Fiona asserts that women continued to grow millet though on a small scale because of their knowledge of the dietary importance of the crop.[1390] Moreover, their ability to exert greater control over its proceeds than on maize since women still took part in the local market may have encouraged them to grow the crop.[1391] By the close of the1920s, Maragoli had faced many challenges regarding labour. The colonial government had passed various legislations ensuring maximum labour flow. The study noted that the government favoured settler agriculture.[1392] Despite half-hearted government concern for peasant production, Africans were propelled by complex internal dynamics, which ensured increased production before 1930.

In Maragoli, there was agricultural diversification and production for the market by the end of the First World War. In the 1920s, there was expansion of cultivated land though with varying capacities within the divisions. The world depression of the later 1920s reduced

[1389]Fiona Mackenzie, "Exploring the connections: Structural adjustment, gender and the environment." *Geoforum* 24, no. 1 (1993): 71-87., p.74.
[1390]Ibid., p.79.
[1391]Anne Musoritsa, (68 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023.
[1392]Kennedy M. Moindi, "The Colonial Political Economy in Kenya." In *The Palgrave Handbook of Kenyan History*, pp. 99-114. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023, p.106.

prices of both food and inedible crops negatively impacting production in the colony. Though African maize production was not affected as much as that of the settlers, Africans were considerably affected by unemployment that accompanied the depression. Between 1929 and 1932, about 40,000 Africans lost their jobs.

For those who remained, their wages were reduced from 14 shillings to 8 shillings a month.[1393] The fact that African agriculture seems to have withstood depression woes made the government find it expedient to boost and encourage greater African production.

Women had dominated in food crop trade especially between the Maragoli and their immediate neighbours, the Luo. But this trend had progressively changed with the caravan trade in the last decade of the 19th century as their "security" became an issue, but more importantly, when the trade became more profitable encouraging more men to participate. Women's role as food producers had given them fundamental authority in the disposal of their produce and had continued to hold this though on a declining trend up to the late 1930s. By producing and selling millet and beans, women could effectively resist both Maragoli male and administration controls. By the close of 1920s, there was a marked differentiation in African participation in the trade. More men had taken up trade initially as porters and later as traders[75.2]

During the inter war period, more people both men and women engaged in trade especially because of the ready market and also due to the increasing loss of land through the newly introduced colonial policies. The 1920s witnessed an increase in trade involving both Maragoli men and women as this trade went without any administrative restrictions, since

[1393]Tabitha Kanogo and W. R. Ochieng.'. " Kenya and the depression." *Ochieng'WR, A modern history of Kenya, Evans Publishers, Nairobi* (1989): p.116.

the trade played a vital role in provisioning the upcoming townships in the Maragoli neighbourhood and also commodities for export. However, most of this trade fell on Maragoli men than women.[1394]

From the mid-1920s and increasingly from the 1930s, more Maragoli men got engaged in trade through the formation of co-operative companies. Gender reconstruction in terms of who engaged in trade was clearly being established. It should be noted here that Maragoli women like men sought ways in which they would continue with their traditional economic activities of trade despite restrictions put up both by the government and the Maragoli partriachs.[1395]This section has explored the transformation in gender division of labour and food production, emphasizing how shifting roles in agricultural work redefined women's economic participation. The next section examines agricultural marketing in the 1930s and its effects on gender relations, revealing how new market dynamics and cash crop economies further complicated gendered access to resources, income, and decision-making power within rural households.

4.9.1Agricultural Marketing in the 1930s and its Effects on Gender Relations

The 1929 economic depression negatively affected the colonial economy. Both African and European producers suffered from the declined prices of African commodities especially of sesame, beans, hides, skins, ghee, coffee and maize. The capital-intensive settler agriculture was greatly affected by the depression. By 1931 for instance, maize price fell by 50 percent of its value in 1929. This was a drop from about 11.10 to 5.06 in 1929.

[1394]W. H. Wagner Jr, "Biosystematics and evolutionary noise." *Taxon* 19, no. 2 (1970): 146-151, p.149.
[1395]Clare Catherine Buswell, *Women's Identity and Moral Authority Under Colonial Rule in Kenya*. Flinders University of South Australia, School of International Studies., 2012., p.20.

By 1933, the maize price stood at Kshs.3.30.[1396] Though market instability reduced African prices of seseme, beans, hides, skin, and maize, which largely commanded the internal market.

These products were, however, not severely affected for they had from the mid-1920s, expanded the area under cultivation as Kitching indicates that marketed output for maize had increased in all Kikuyu districts and also in Kavirondo.[1397] This had been encouraged by the fact that livestock keepers provided a ready market due to animal disease between 1928 and 1934.

The decline of world prices affected African producers and government's revenue since both African and settler producers were not able to remit revenue to the government. This affected the administration, which by the end of the 1920s was receiving about 30% of its revenue from settler export production. In the absence of this revenue, the only other source of revenue for the government remained African taxes. Instead of the government withdrawing taxation, Africans continued to be highly taxed despite the fact that their wages were substantially reduced.[1398]

From the ongoing discussion, it is certain that Maragoli people were quick to accept new crop varieties and farming methods. They positively adopted the Rose Coco anadian wonder beans.[1399] There was a renewed effort to expand production during the depression

[1396]Tabitha Kanogo and W. R. Ochieng.'. "Kenya and the depression." *Ochieng'WR, A modern history of Kenya, Evans Publishers, Nairobi* (1989): p.116.
[1397]Ibid., p. 64 and J. A. Kitching, "Ecological studies at lough hyne." *Advances in Ecological Research* 17 (1987): 115-186., p.128.
[1398]Ibid, p.117.
[1399]Ibid., p.125.

years. The pressure put into production brought gender conflict as individuals searched for ways of survival during the depression period. From the 1930s onward gender struggles were evident in trade as more wealthy individuals supplied the ready market especially in the urban centres.

However, more men than women joined trade because they had the capital.[1400] But most of these men traders were middlemen since they bought commodities from producers and later sold to consumers. From the mid-1930s to the outbreak of the Second World War, the amount and rainfall distribution affected agricultural production, especially of grains in Kiambu District. For instance, in 1936, there was excessive rainfall during the short rains, which destroyed the bean crop.

Additionally, Ochwada Hannington, while writing on Maragoli, also commends on the Maragoli tailors coming together and forming tailors' unions in the upcoming Maragoli townships especially Mbale, asserted:

> Anxious to protect their trade, the tailors had in fact organized themselves into a tailors' union that determined the prices for the various kinds of garments they made and also enforced certain standards of cleanliness. The busiest of these tailors, used 144 yards of Amerikani cotton a month.[1401]

As entrepreneurship started taking root in colonial Maragoli farmers began to give more attention to marketing in an effort to secure higher profits since middlemen were taking up most benefit. To countercheck these unbalanced terms of trade, groups of Maragoli ranging from craftsmen, farmers and petty traders. There were such cooperatives allover the colony.

[1400]Andrew D. Robertson and Kenneth P. Murphy, "Protein structure and the energetics of protein stability." *Chemical reviews* 97, no. 5 (1997): 1251-1268., p.1260.

[1401]Hannington Ochwada, "Negotiating difference: The Church Missionary Society, colonial education, and gender among Aβaluyia and Joluo communities of Kenya, 1900–1960." PhD diss., Indiana University, 2007, p.122.

In Kiambu for example, about 100 Kiambu producers formed the Kikuyu Native Producers Co-operative Society with the assistance of the Kiambu Local Native Council in 1939. A similar cooperative had been formed in Murang'a District.[1402]

In 1932, a Vegetable Growers‟ Association was formed to assist in better marketing of native grown vegetables.[1403] There is, however, no information on the gender composition of these societies. But going by the prevailing urge of Maragoli men to control women's social and economic movement, it is unlikely that women were allowed membership in the co-operative. The co-operative movement not only suffered from the hardships of depression, but also could not thrive in an economic arrangement that was meant to promote settler agriculture. Around 1932 and 1933, the African co-operative societies were disbanded for "failure to meet the expenses of a registered society."[1404]

The reason for disbanding was most likely the fear of an expanded African economy that could threaten the status quo in the colony hence the authorities' action. As already noted, the government would not give Africans an upper hand in the colonial economy. While the state bailed settlers out of the depression hardships, it failed to do the same for Africans. However, the disbandment of the co-operative movement did not discourage Maragoli entrepreneurs and agricultural producers because; the Local Native Council established buying stations within the reserves where producers took their produce to buyers. In effect, the Local Native Council (LNC) tried to make marketing easier for the producers. The establishing of buying centres could also reduce Asians' monopoly in marketing. Being

[1402]William J. Talbott, "Intentional self-deception in a single coherent self." *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 55, no. 1 (1995): 27-74., p.32.
[1403]Martha Wangari Musalia, "Gender Relations and Food Crop Production: A Case of Kiambu District Kenya, 1920-1985." Unpublished doctoral dissertation). Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya (2010)., p.147
[1404]Pamela J. Bretschneider, *Marion Talbot and the professionalization of women in higher education*. Boston College, 1998, p.11.

better capitalized compared to Africans, Asians used their better-serviced lorries not only to control most of the transport but also wholesale trade.

Their lorries enabled them to traverse African reserves, the white highlands and townships for the food crops among other things.[1405] But the Asian dominance began to wane in the 1930s as the government in cooperation with the Local Native Councils started to reduce their influence in the reserves. In the 1930s, the government continued with its determination to protect settler agriculture by introducing marketing regulations that were exceedingly controversial. These regulations became the standardized marketing procedures both in colonial and post-colonial Kenya until mid-1980s with the introduction of liberalization.

In 1935, the Native Produce and Marketing Act, which sought to control marketing of African produce, especially maize, was introduced.[1406] Traders were required to meet certain requirements before the Control Board could buy their maize.

Maize had to be graded before it was sold. Second, licensed individuals were allowed to buy maize at designated centers. This requirement was made even stiffer because the governor had excessive powers in that he could confer license on a single buyer and declare that certain products could only be sold at central marketplaces.[1407] The requirements of maize marketing introduced by the Native Produce and Marketing Act blocked many Africans from the market. Maize, which did not meet the set standards was condemned unsaleable and was therefore, bought at low prices.[1408] The regulations did not manage to

[1405]Steven Haggblade, Peter BR Hazell, and Thomas Reardon. "Strategies for stimulating poverty-alleviating growth in the rural nonfarm economy in developing countries." (2002), p.37.
[1406]Erika Wagner, *Chronology and cultural relationships of the Betijoque phase in western Venezuela*. editeur non identifie, 1973., p.68.
[1407]Steven Haggblade, Peter BR Hazell, and Thomas Reardon, (1976): *Op. Cit.,* p.301
[1408]Ibid., p.302.

keep Africans under control as most evaded the control board. Kitching does not think that the maize regulations had any significant effect on African production and consumption.[1409]

In 1940, there was a report about increased middlemen. The report noted a chain of five people dealing with the produce from the producer to the consumer. The arrival of the Union troops during the Second World War had only improved the market. The market, especially for vegetables, fruits, charcoal and firewood was improved. Therefore, more and more Kiambu Kikuyu took advantage of the war to intensively participate especially in vegetable trade. Both Indian and African traders severely opposed the ordinance because they viewed it as an opportunity for European firms to penetrate African reserves for foodstuffs hence limiting African trade activities. Many of the Africans who were opposed to the new market regulations were members of the newly formed African political and welfare associations.

Members of such associations were mostly men who had either acquired Western education and had, therefore, accumulated certain amount of wealth or were engaged in the commodity trade. The new marketing regulations especially the idea of getting trading licenses was not appealing to them since the governor had the discretion on who to license. It is not certain if Maragoli men were fighting for free trade inclusive of women. The status quo maintained by the political and welfare associations was not conducive for Maragoli women to participate in matters of trade.

As Presley notes, women were initially frustrated by economic associations that denied them formal membership, effectively excluding them from organized trade networks and

[1409]Ibid

decision-making structures.[1410] In response to these restrictions, the *vatemburi* emerged as a distinct and influential class of professional women traders during the inter-war period, carving out an autonomous space within the agricultural marketing dynamics of the Maragoli economy. Acting as key intermediaries, they facilitated the movement of food crops, dairy products, and other agricultural commodities from rural production zones to local and regional markets. By operating independently of male-dominated associations, the *vatemburi* not only circumvented institutional barriers but also became central to the circulation and monetization of agricultural produce, highlighting how women negotiated both structural exclusion and economic opportunity in colonial Maragoli society.Their activities facilitated the monetization of surplus produce, stabilized supply chains, and ensured the flow of goods despite the challenges posed by increasing population pressure and land scarcity. Archival evidence from the Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC) highlights individuals such as Mariamu Wanjala and Beatrice Nambuli, who petitioned authorities in the 1930s to protect their trading rights and secure access to market spaces, demonstrating their agency within the regulation and functioning of market networks.[1411]

Vatemburi operated alongside male intermediaries, who often controlled larger-scale trading networks or transport of bulk produce. While men dominated long-distance trade in cash crops and regional commodities, the *vatemburi* specialized in daily market transactions, retail distribution, and collection of produce from rural households. This

[1410] Presley, Mary. *Women, Trade, and Economic Agency in Colonial Africa* (Nairobi: East African Publishing, 1992), 78.

[1411] Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), "Petitions and Reports on Women Traders (*Vatemburi*)," File No. 45/1932–1939, Kakamega, Kenya.

gendered division of labor enabled women to carve out an autonomous economic space, allowing them to participate in the commercialization of agriculture without direct confrontation with male traders. The emergence of the *vatemburi* can be traced linguistically and socially to pre-colonial Maragoli society. Originally, the term denoted "people who move about" or "roamers," derived from *kutembura*, meaning "to wander or move from place to place."

Traditionally, such mobility was associated with men, whereas women's economic roles were largely confined to subsistence agriculture and domestic production. The inter-war colonial economy, however, introduced structural pressures—including land scarcity, population growth, and monetization of agricultural produce—that restricted women's access to land and created new opportunities in market-oriented trade. Within this context, the semantic and social evolution of *vatemburi* reflected women's strategic engagement with commerce: mobility became a deliberate tool to secure economic independence, participate in agricultural markets, and negotiate autonomy within both patriarchal and colonial frameworks. By linking production and markets, the *vatemburi* not only adapted to the constraints of colonial economic structures but also actively reshaped the marketing of agricultural commodities and gendered relations of labor in Maragoli society.

This section has discussed agricultural marketing in the 1930s and its effects on gender relations, showing how market integration and cash crop economies restructured access to income and reinforced gendered inequalities. The next section explores the impact of wage labour on Maragoli food production mechanisms between 1920 and 1945, revealing how men's migration to wage employment and women's increased agricultural responsibilities further transformed household labour dynamics and gender roles.

4.9.2 Impact of Wage Labour on Maragoli Food Production Mechanisms, 1920-1945

Migratory wage labour led to the extraction of surplus value from Maragoli division for the capitalization of the settler estates and also to loss of man power. Although the percentage of able-bodied adult males who went out to work over the years has been estimated at 35 % at the highest, these groups of people were away from their homes during the season when their labour was most needed there.[1412] There absence from the division meant that most of the productive work was done by women and children who were themselves not capable of clearing new lands for cultivation and as a result concentrated on the gardens which were already used. This led to over cropping and soil erosion which upset the delicate ecological balance and reduced the productive capacity of land.[1413] The problem began in 1920s and worsened in the 1940s.

The situation was further exacerbated by the fact that whatever agricultural skills that the labourers acquired from the tea estates and other work places were not applicable back home where climatic and soil conditions were different. Migrant labour also led to changes in the relations between men and women and young men and elders. Absence of men meant that women now became more responsible for the reproduction and the day-to-day running of the family. Apart from cultivating land and performing other necessary domestic chores women also engaged in petty trade to maintain their families.[1414]

[1412]Rohland Schuknecht, *British colonial development policy after the second world war: the case of Sukumaland, Tanganyika*. Vol. 14. LIT Verlag Münster, 2010., p.48.
[1413]Ivanov, Yu M. "Agrarian reforms and hired labour in Africa." (1979): p.252.

[1414]Misengo, M., and K. L. Chanda, eds. "Women in development in Southern Africa (Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi and Zambia): an annotated bibliography. Volume IV: Zambia." (1991): pp. vii+-78 , p.60.

Young men who saved their wages to buy cattle and agricultural farms accumulated productive capital, enabling them to marry independently of patriarchal control. Whisson observed that "where once the old man was able to control the economy of the home, now the senior person relies considerably upon the charity of his children to maintain himself in clothes, and often food, if he has not got a young wife to cultivate for him." This shift diminished the elders' economic dominance, reflecting broader social changes where younger generations gained financial independence and autonomy, altering traditional family dynamics and power structures.[1415]

The impact of exposure to the outside world in regard to the acquisition of new values depended on where one went to work and the working conditions there. Those who went to work in the Tea Estates in Kericho and constituted the majority of wage labourers from Maragoli, did not change their values and life-styles as much as others who went to such places like Mombasa, Nairobi and Nakuru. Two of the informants who worked in Kericho remembered that:

> In Kericho we did not learn much. Most of us who came from the same village worked and lived in the same Estates and the type o f social life we led was the same as it was back home. Our wives brewed beer for us and our musicians entertained us.[1416]

Such statements confirms the level to which colonialism impacted on Maragoli lifestyles slow but steadily with preservation of key Maragoli aspects being witnessed even as colonial capitalism tried to intergrate itself in to the colonial Maragoli.Labourers managed

[1415]Frank Khachina Matanga, "Non-governmental organizations, the state and the politics of rural development in Kenya with particular reference to Western Province." PhD diss., Rhodes University, 2000, p.44.

[1416] Rachel Mahasi, and Michael Asega Oral interview, on 25th October 2023 in their Chanderema home.

to buy clothes, shoes, blankets, bicycles and other imported goods, the possession of which was difficult for those who did not go out to work. Back home these people constituted a new social category.[1417] They were regarded with mixed feelings: on the one hand they were admired; on the other they were thought to be lazy and improvident for they never did well in other areas of life. According to one informant who never went out to work:

> Those who went to work bought clothes, shoes and blankets. But when they came back home and their money got finished, they sold these things to us. The majority of them never did well. Some of them who came back never went to work again became servants of prosperous farmers.[1418]

This view was confirmed by another informant whose father had gone to work in Mombasa in 1930 and stayed there for over ten years. He remembered that:

> Some of those who did not go out to work were in a better position than us. They married and got children before my dad. What my dad possessed were clothes, and a bicycle which they borrowed. But you cannot compare these things with children. Many of those who went to Mombasa did not marry because they stayed out there too long and came back very old. When they came back, they could only inherit widows. Others who carried heavy loads at the harbour became physically deformed.[1419]

But this was not true of all those who participated in wage labour. Some used their savings and newly acquired ideas to accumulate productive capital either in commodity production or trade once they retired from work. While in work some of these people like Samson Lugaye alias -Achuna (due to his outstanding tailoring prowess) from Mambai apprenticed in tailoring and bought sewing machines. He came back and opened tailoring shops.[1420]

[1417]Timothy Osiru Okatta, *et. al.,* "Unhooking tentacles of financial dependency: Challenges and opportunities of public benefit organizations in Nairobi County's informal settlements, Kenya." (2017)., p.77.
[1418]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 23rd August 2023.
[1419]Mugala Cyprian, (75 Years), Oral interview, on 20th September 2023.
[1420]Seth Mulema, (65 Years), Oral interview, on 15th September 2023.

Urban interaction provided chance to Africans from different backgrounds to share experiences and learn from each other. Ndege while writing on the Luo colonial economic change gives such an illustration: The experience of an informant who worked in the Tea Estates in Kericho in 1930s and later in Limuru in the 1940s illustrates how some migrant workers became rich rural cultivators: "while I was working in Limuru that I met a Mkikuyu friend called Kinyua whose influence changeds my career."[1421]

Such urban interactions greatly influenced the people's orientation and incorporation into colonial capitalism. P.O Ndege while wrting on this theme illustrates this. He quotes a young man from Luo Nyanza who was influenced through interaction with Kinyua another young man from Kikuyu land into turning his vast land into serious agricultural venture. Ndege continues to illustrate how this young Luo man went back to Luo land and fenced over 30 acres of land for his personal use. Since individual land demarcation and appropriation had noyt been embraced in this part of the country, many of his Luo kinsmen were surprised and concluded that the young man had gone berserk. It is thus evident that urban interaction as a colonial off shoot played a significant role in articulating the natives into colonial capitalism.

As a result of people's varied responses and adaptation to wage labour a process of socio-economic differentiation took place. Wage labour did not create a fully-fledged proletarian class in Kasipul and Kabondo as migrant labourers continued to derive their subsistence from land whose ownership they did not lose. When they seasonally went out to work, their wives and children cultivated land back home. But there eventually emerged two categories

[1421]P.O Ndege, *Op*., *Cit*.., p.99.

of migrant workers: a t one extreme were the workers whose low wages and conditions at the work place did not allow investment in lucrative commodity production and trade; at another extreme relatively better paid workers whose exposure to view ideas at the work place enabled them to invest in land and other inputs like ploughs, oxen, sewing machines, milk separators etc. After retirement the former became poor peasants and the latter rich peasants.

It is clear that the articulation of modes of production theory, gender analysis theory, Feminist Epistemology, and Interpretivism research philosophy have greatly enhanced the analysis of the study's findings on the impact of wage labor on Maragoli food production mechanisms from 1920-1945.

Moreover, the Articulation of Modes of Production theory elucidated how migratory wage labor extracted surplus value from the Maragoli division for the capitalization of settler estates, leading to a loss of manpower and altering traditional agricultural practices. Gender Analysis theory revealed how the absence of men due to labor migration shifted responsibilities to women, who became more involved in domestic and productive activities, thus reshaping family dynamics and power structures. Feminist Epistemology emphasized the importance of understanding women's agency and experiences in navigating these changes, highlighting their role in maintaining families and engaging in petty trade.

Interpretivism research philosophy facilitated a nuanced exploration of individual experiences and responses to wage labor, illustrating how exposure to different work environments influenced values, lifestyles, and economic outcomes.By examining

personal narratives, the study revealed the diverse impacts of wage labor on social and economic differentiation within the Maragoli community, highlighting how some individuals accumulated productive capital and became rich peasants, while others remained poor peasants or became servants. In general, the integration of these theoretical frameworks provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between wage labor, gender relations, social dynamics, and economic outcomes in colonial Maragoli society during the mid-20th century.

4.9.3 Chapter Summary

The first European contact with Maragoli was pioneered by Josph Thomson in 1883. His explorative mission and success in the region formed the basis upon which other Europeans later got interested in Maragoli, later coming in as traders, missionaries and travellers. These early Europeans reffered to Western region as Kavirondo, a name they got from the coastal traders who had visited western region during the caravan trade. Thomson described the area as food secure and with welcoming inhabotants. In regard to colonial establishment, the Kavirondo region came under colonial rule in 1894 after a formal establishment of a colonial administration centre at Mumias. Charles Hobley was appointed as the first British administrator with the sole objective of helping the British bring order for effective British control. The Wanga due to their formalized political structure were pointed out as the most powerful and civilized local group to help the British administer the Kavirondo region. As the British point men, the Wanga through Nabongo appointed chiefs whom they sent out to the different parts of North Kavirondo. This preferential treatment made the Wanga to become an integral part in the caravan trade which extended to Maragoli land.

Through the caravan trade, Maragoli agricultural production expanded and began taking the capitalistic tendencies of production for exchange. Through this agricultural expansion, new set of gender dynamics were brought into Maragoli. Women being the primary agricultural producers, more of their labour was exploited for more agricultural profits. Since men were the owners and distributors of wealth, a large section of the profits from the trade was accumulated by the men hence creating the genesis of the gender imbalance in food production and distribution in Maragoli.

The pioneer Maragoli point men in the caravan trade took advantage of this trade to grow more crops, buy more crops and trade items from the neighbours and even alienate more land for agricultural production. Such men after getting the caravan trade profits even married more women as a way of increasing their agricultural production. Some of such men were later appointed as colonial chiefs, a factor that helped to better their socio-economic status in the society.

It is doubtful if women were able to take advantage of the caravan trade to accumulate. After bringing maragoli into effective British control, the administrators embarked on setting up strategies in order to fully exploit the region for colonial benefits. Key among these strategies included taxation and labour recruitment. The labour recruitment strategies aimed at expanding the settler agriculture at the neglect of the pre-colonial maragoli agricultural establishments. In response to this, the Maragoli on their part adopted the new colonial policies which were benefitial to them including adoption of the new and improved colonial crop varieties into the agricultural production. The Maragoli also took advantage of the colonial developments especially in roads, railway and urbanization to expand their

agricultural production. Such roads helped the Maragoli link to the developing townships in order to access the new urban market such as Kisumu and Kakamega.

Another key feature of the early colonial era in Maragoli was the decisive move by the colonial government to articulate the key aspects of Maragoli food production into the colonial spectrum. These aspects were labor and land. As a way of effectively integrating the maragoli into the colonial economy, the colonial system asserted itself against the Maragoli political and economic establishments, some of which it had to destroy or restructure in the process.

The colonial government destroyed the clan system as the basis of Maragoli social economic and political setup. The colonial government on the other hand decided to retain the women labour in the rural set up as a mechanism of helping the government subsidize the meagre urban and settler farm wage that the employees were getting. It also retained but modified the Maragoli chieftaincy as the key Maragoli political establishment.

The earliest impact of colonial imprints in Western Kenya and particularly Maragoli was the increase in farmine and diseases. This situation was brought about by the flight from the British military expeditions, forcing the Maragoli sleep in the tsetse fly infested forests making them contract sleeping sickness. In addition to this, the Sudenese soldiers and the Swahili trade carravans introduced small pox to the people killing many. Last but not least, jigger menace was also introduced into the region by the Indian railway workers. The jigger menace barrowed the inhabitants' feet making it difficult for them to engage in the agricultural and other food production related engagements.

Christianity and formal education were also another distinctive mark of the colonial inprint in Maragoli. The Friends African Mission (FAM) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) were the pioneer missionary groups in Maragoli. These mission groups set their headquarters in Kaimosi and Nyang'ori respectively. The Maragoli as a people decided to adopt Christian ideals and values, went for Western education and finally assimilated all these value systems as a way of adjusting to the new colonial reality. This was in line with Paulo Friere position that the oppressed at certain level of existential experience, adopts the attitude of adherence to the oppressor.

Moreover, upon its introduction, Christianity was seen as an obstacle to the established Maragoli way of life. Fathers as the official heads of families came out to stamp their authority and stopped their sons from joining the Kaimosi Mission. The orphaned boys due to economic hardships and absence of a father figure in their families, ran to the mission centres for food and other related western goodies including clothes. This made such orphaned boys to be the first benefitiaries of Christianity and Western education at the expense of the well to do sons of the rich and strict traditional Maragoli men.

Since Western education was a prequisite for colonial employment, the orphaned educated boys became the pioneer colonial employees, bringing about one of the earliest dramatic paradigm shift in the Maragoli socio-economic strata. Among the major events during this period which greatly impacted on the Maragoli food production and gender relations included the effects of 1918-19 epidemic and drought, the World War 1 effects, the 1920 declaration of Kenya as a British colony, the 1923 devonshire white paper, expansion of Kisumu and Kakamega as urban centres and the increase of the Indian migrant population in the Western Kenya.

All the fore mentioned happened after the construction of the Kenya Uganda railway. During this period, the intial colonial policies were intensified as more others were introduced.

The establishment of colonial rule hence colonial economy interfered with labour organization among the Maragoli. The need to build the colony's infrastructure and also provide labour for the settlers made the administration force Africans out of their domestic production. In the early years of colonial rule, force was used to have Africans out of their domestic production. But as Africans became more entrenched into the colonial economy, less force was used to have them in wage employment. There were, however, important labour regulations that significantly altered gender relations and subsequently food production mechanisms.

The Edward Northey Circulars (1919) and the Registration of Natives Ordinance (1920) were the most important in transforming labour relations in colonial Maragoli. After enactment of the Registration of Natives Ordinance, the colonial government reduced the use of force until 1939 with the outbreak of the Second World War. The Second World War presented another moment when conscription for actual military effort and for production of essential commodities was done. The colonial labour regulations were gender-specific. For instance, the Edward Northey circulars were very categorical that African men were to be "encouraged" to seek wage employment away from their homes while women and children were to work within their home areas.

The Registration of Native Ordinance further demonstrated the gendered nature of colonialism. Registration of Natives mostly targeted men since they were the ones regarded as "workers" because of the influence of patriarchal nature of the European society while

women were viewed as “helpers”. As such, the government’s view was that women would seek employment within their home areas. Apart from changes in land tenure and labour organization affecting gender relations and hence food production mechanisms in Maragoli, taxation also interfered with household organization.

The inter-war period witnessed many economic, political and social challenges that greatly impacted on gender relations of production. Government intervention in African agriculture swayed from time to time as they tried to fit it within colonial economy. It was within this political and economic structure that made Maragoli’s food production change in line with the new economic needs. The Maragoli strategic location in relation to the two townships especially Kisumu and Kakamega, and the introduction of new crop varieties made it increasingly easy for Maagoli to turn to commercial agriculture. The chapter also ascertained that the proximity of Maragoli to the Kisumu and Kakamega towns transformed gender relations and food production mechanisms in the division. The two towns presented the Maragoli with ready market for their agricultural produce.

Moreover, the towns availed commercial ventures for many Maragoli who migrated from the division due to increasing economic hardships. All these dynamics affected the established Maragoli gender relations. Maragoli men tried to restrict women trade, especially that in the upcoming townships. But women's continual participation in trade only showed that they could no longer be confined to what the patriarchs regarded as ideal for the survival of the community.

Women’s agricultural labour was intensified by increased commercial agriculture and the introduction of improved farming implements especially the iron hoes and pangas during

the inter-war period. By mid 1940's therefore, Maragoli women were shouldering most of the agricultural work. But in order to cushion themselves from the diminishing labour pool, women planted crops that were of higher monetary value but required less labour. This meant that traditional crops like millet and yams were replaced with white maize and new beans varieties respectively.

Increased commercial production brought the issue of land ownership to the fore. The need to produce enough for the market gradually destroyed Maragoli tenurial land, which created classes of the landed and the landless. Women producers especially from poor families were most affected since they were not able to meet their daily family food requirements. Through the monetization of the economy, the Maragoli labour acquisition, a key factor in food production changed from the non- paid mode to a more commercial mode. Moreover, the increased external demand especially of the Maragoli male labour greatly threatened the initial pre-colonial gender relations in labour. This undermined the basis the basis of its reproduction. The cash economy led to the dissolution of the extended kinship groups and the decline of the forms of collective activities.

All these were emphasized and spread through the new tax and labour policies and the institution of new political offices especially the colonial chiefs. These colonial changes greatly impacted on the Maragoli established gender relations in food production. duties previously allocated to men were being taken over by women as men entered wage labour or the war as carriers' coups and recruits. This however did not occur in all households but in the few instances where it did, women turned up to clear bushes, and prepare fields with some help from male relations.

Children were no longer limited to small tasks of food collection and herding but also had to provide labour in the farms. Since the traditional power of the clan and village elders were usurped by the new administration system, only afew households managed to organize the work parties for very brief working durations. This was done at the work parties' village and neighbourhood level and involved all ages and sexes. What remained of the men's work parties was in the inter-war period was smaller in magnitude in comparison to the period before colonial era.

The individuals who previously had pooled their labour and resources in terms of exchange or building took on new functions. They sought wage labour both within and outside Maragoli. They further developed their skills for the commoditized labour market economy.

The 1930s gold prospects in Kakamega further increased male outmigration from Maragoli and also increased food demand for the gold miners. A number of Maragoli women moved to Kakamega to engage in petty trading. Since colonial Kenya was an agricultural economy, the colonial government was keen on developing this sector. However, much attention was given to settler agriculture because it was viewed as the backbone of the economy. Any agricultural attention given to African agriculture was gendered.

In particular, agricultural education given at the Scott Laboratories in Kabete and the Bukura Agricultural Centre only targeted men. This is understandable in view of the fact that the colonial patriarchal system confined women in the private domain while men occupied the public domain. The colonialists tried to impose their own society on the Maragoli. However, Maragoli women continued to dominate in food crop production

despite lack of attention from the government. By mid 1940s at theof of World war II, Maragoli had experienced tremendous changes due to colonial rule. The clan as a unifying institution among the Maragoli had steadily lost significance as people embraced individualistic tendencies in regard to acquiring economic prosperity. In such a scenario, they lacked a strong traditional mechanism of regulating gender relations.

This section has examined the dynamics of Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations during the interwar period (1920–1945), highlighting how colonial pressures and shifting labour roles began to reshape rural livelihoods; the next section explores the changes in food production mechanisms and gender relations in the post–World War II era (1945–1963), revealing how these earlier transformations intensified under new economic demands and evolving social structures.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHANGES IN FOOD PRODUCTION MECHANISMS AND GENDER RELATIONS IN POST WORLD WAR II ERA MARAGOLI, 1945-1963

5.1 Introduction

This chapter critically examines the transformation of food production and gender relations in Maragoli during the decolonization period, specifically between 1945 and 1963. Building upon the foundation laid in the previous chapter, which explored food systems and gender dynamics from 1920 to 1945, this analysis interrogates the specific objective of evaluating the shifts in agrarian practices and gendered labor roles in the post-World War II era. The chapter is organized into thematic sections that include: Christianity and Western education during decolonization; household labor; colonial labor demands and agricultural production; food production mechanisms and gender relations; agricultural production and control by Maragoli women; agricultural trade; the land issue up to the mid-1950s; land use changes; the 1954 Swynnerton Plan; the ADELV and the Million Acre Settlement Scheme; and post-war reconstruction and community development.

The sections are framed through the theoretical lenses of gender analysis and the articulation of modes of production, enabling a nuanced understanding of how colonial policies, religious ideologies, and educational reforms intersected with local gender norms to reshape agrarian livelihoods. The chapter employs feminist epistemology and interpretivist research philosophies to foreground the lived experiences of Maragoli women and to critically assess the socio-economic and cultural forces that influenced their roles in agricultural production during this transformative period.

5.2 Western Education and Christianity; Impact on Maragoli Food production Mechanisms and Gender RRelations in Maragoli; 1945-1963.

In the wake of World War II, the Maragoli community in western Kenya experienced a profound transformation as Christianity and Western education—introduced earlier by the Friends Africa Mission (FAM) at Kaimosi and later expanded to Vihiga—continued to shape local aspirations and social structures.[1422] The decolonization era saw a generational shift, with youthful, mission-trained Maragoli elites replacing aging pioneer educators. These younger leaders, often products of institutions like Chavakali and Mbale schools, demanded broader access to secondary education, viewing it as essential for securing a stronger Maragoli stake in Kenya's emerging postcolonial economy.[1423] Their advocacy reflected Marxist modes of production theory, as education became a conduit to wage labor in colonial administration and teaching, while also enabling entrepreneurial ventures in trade and agriculture.[1424]

A notable paradigm shift also emerged in attitudes toward girls' education. Previously marginalized under patriarchal norms and missionary biases that prioritized male literacy, Maragoli families increasingly recognized the economic and social value of educating daughters.[1425]

[1422] H. Misigo Amatsimbi, "Christian Missions, Government and Local Councils Partnership in Educational Development: The Case of Western Kenya, 1911–1938," *International Journal of Education and Research* 1, no. 9 (2013): 1–18, http://www.ijern.com/journal/September-2013/19.pdf.

[1423] Stafford Kay, "Local Pressures on Educational Plans in Colonial Kenya: Post-Second World War Activity among the Southern Abaluyia," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 11, no. 4 (1978): 689–710, https://www.jstor.org/stable/217199.

[1424]Bruce Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination* (London: James Currey, 1990).

[1425] Fatuma Chege and Daniel N. Sifuna, "Girls' and Women's Education in Kenya: Gender Perspectives and Trends," *Gender and Education* 18, no. 2 (2006): 211–230.

This shift was influenced by changing labor demands, Christian teachings on gender equality, and the visibility of educated women in church and market spaces.[1426] Girls began to access formal schooling in greater numbers, albeit still constrained by domestic expectations and limited institutional support. Feminist epistemology helps illuminate how these girls navigated dual identities—both as learners and as cultural negotiators—challenging colonial and patriarchal structures from within.[1427] Their lived experiences, often transmitted through oral histories and religious networks, constituted valid knowledge systems that had long been excluded from formal archives.

Interpretivist research philosophy further reveals that for the Maragoli, education was not merely a tool for economic advancement but a symbol of moral virtue, Christian identity, and cultural negotiation.[1428] Through this lens, the pursuit of Western education—especially by girls—emerges as a complex act of resistance, meaning-making, and identity redefinition within a community navigating both colonial legacies and postcolonial possibilities.

Western schooling exposed the Maragoli to a novel "world" and an altered self-perception. Western education signified employment opportunities, enhanced social standing, and dominance over the illiterate. Students participated in diverse courses that imparted practical skills. The instruction encompassed brick-making, construction of contemporary and enhanced housing, sanitation, and advanced agricultural practices.

[1426] Kenda Mutongi, *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[1427] Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1986).
[1428] Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875–1935* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1978).

The missionaries aimed to impart more than only the Bible to the Maragoli through such industrial training.[1429] Through such skills, the maragoli youths were equipped with extra skills to expand their intrepreneural engagements hence diversifying their food production endeavours from the initial on farm agricultural engagements. The missionaries also made a major contribution to the decolonization era Maragoli gender relations by insisting that boys and girls should have equal access to education. According to the Maragoli culture, women and children were considered as "objects and not subjects". For instance, most of the Maragoli traditions stated that "Women and children shall be given care and protection".[1430] Consequently, when the male head was not at home, his wife would say "There is no one here except me and the children."[1431] The missionaries resisted this conventional perspective.

Upon the establishment of education for women, missionaries saw women as "subjects." Consequently, women were to be granted access to other rights that had previously been denied, such as the ability to consume chicken and eggs.[1432]

Christianity thus met:

> Resistance on the part of Maragoli elders difficult to overcome, particularly regarding girl child education. Maragoli men believed that women were to perform domestic duties and not "waste" time in class. Missionaries, however, encouraged girls to go to schools where reading and writing, elementary arithmetic, cooking, knitting, laundry, and child-care were taught. However, changing the community's perception towards girl education was not that

[1429] Simeon Muhandale, (80 years), Oral Interview held on 23rd August 2023 in Chanderema village in Mambai Sub Location.
[1430] Chavakali FGD held on 10th October 2023 at Walodeya Primary School Assembly Grounds.
[1431] Ibid.
[1432] Sande Samson, (65 years), Oral Interview held in Chandumba Village , Chavakali on 1st August 2023. See Also Leen Kavulavu, *Op, Cit,* for the Idakho case.

> easy. This was largely due to the fear that educated women might "question the privilege of elders to select husbands for them".[1433]

Initially, women seeking education were those who had convinced their fathers that education was necessary for a girl child or who had run away from home in order to pursue education at missionary centre. But during the decolonization period, fathers and even the widowed women who had converted to Christianity and seen the benefits of mission training began to push for the education of their daughters and sent them to school.[1434] Marginalized individuals in society, such as witches and women fleeing coerced marriages, embraced Christianity to acquire a new identity. For these individuals, conversion represented a therapeutic act of self-enhancement.

Maragoli women who attended school were instructed in basic techniques of maternity and infant care, nutrition, and domestic management. Risper Avuya, one of the female teacher evangelists, became a primary educator at Kaimosi Primary School.[1435] Furthermore, educated women among the Maragoli catalyzed the emergence of a wage-earning class, illustrating the expansive transforming influence of Christianity and its institutions. Following the achievements of pioneering working-class women, parents increasingly enrolled their daughters in schools, particularly Bunyore Girls at Kima, Girls Boarding School (GBS) in Kaimosi, and Butere Girls, both within and outside Maragoli.

[1433] Odwako, 1975, pp. 60-62

[1434]FGD held at Mambai primary School Assembly Grounds on 30th September 2023 in Mambai Sub Location. , See Also K. Mutongi *Op, Cit,*p.128.

[1435] Risper Avuya Oral Interview held on 3rd August 2023 at Mambai village in Mambai Sub Location.

Consequently, the education of girls, akin to that of males, was regarded as a prospective investment. Consequently, parents were inclined to finance their daughters' education.[1436]

The newly educated Maragoli girls created a new class characterized with western modern mannerisms such as professional training and government employment. This class became commonly known as the GBS girls- *avakana va jibiesi.*[1437] Kenda Mutongi while writing on the worries of the heart, noted that such a classy attitude could easily be observed in the interaction with such girls as the following statement illustrates:

> Mary Jendeka, a GBS alumna, displayed no timidity in boasting of her admission to the GBS, saying that it was not a place "for ordinary girls." She happily cataloged the ways in which the GBS girls were exceptional: "We were *wastaarabu*, really good girls, we respected our teachers and parents, and we married civilized husbands." Stella Mbecha, another proud alumna, gloated, "I was one of the pioneers in civilization. You see, I went to the GBS. And that is where *ustaarabu* [modernity] started. No one, no one in North Maragoli had a house full of *ustaarabu* like mine."[1438]

Quality education for these girls not only equipped them for improved marriages and family life but also significantly increased their ability to manage agricultural fields, earning the praise of the people. Upon marriage, these ladies endeavored to improve their agricultural practices by cultivating contemporary crop kinds and raising unusual animal species.

Between the 1950s and 1963, a significant change in Maragoli, akin to that in neighboring Idakho, was the evolving position of women, evidenced by the increasing emphasis on

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[1436] Dorice Lifulu Oral Interview held on 3rd August 2023 at Viyalo Village in Mambai Sub Location.

[1437] Tabitha Ajami (50 years), Oral Interview held on 3rd August 2023 at Chanderema Village in Mambai Sub Location.

[1438] K.Mutongi, *Op, Cit,* p.128.

girls' education.[1439] The Idakho emphasized that education for their daughters was not only an investment, but also an investment in the family's social security.

This was from the evidence found, which indicated that a high proportion of girls who had gone to school tended to use their education to help siblings and were more concerned with contributing to siblings' school fees than boys who tended to emphasize acquiring capital to buy land.[1440]

The decolonization era also witnessed a transformation in the gender dynamics between widows and their departed husbands' relatives concerning the education of female children. The grieving mothers with their promising daughters felt compelled to seek assistance from their husbands' siblings. Such family readily complied, certain that they would have a just return on their investment once these ladies were married.[1441]The success of this female education made more parents begin to view girl child education equally important as that of boys. Indeed, educated women attracted a higher bride price.[1442] This stance was further corroborated by archive evidence. This occurred because, similar to males, educated women were working in many areas, earning incomes and achieving elite status independently. Furthermore, educated females, upon marriage, were revered figures in the hamlet. They served as community mobilizers and consultative centers for nearly all

[1439] Leen Kavulavu Western Education on the Changing Roles of Women: The Case of Idakho Community, Kenya in *US-China Education Review B*, May 2015, Vol. 5, No. 5, 325-332 doi: 10.17265/2161-6248/2015.05.005 Accessed on 02/06/2024.

[1440] Ibid

[1441] Amutamwa Jethro Oral interview held on 4th August 2024 at Jemov village Mambai Sub location.

[1442] FGD held at Mambai primary School Assembly Grounds on 30th September 2023 in Mambai Sub Location, See Also KNA: DC/NN.1/30, Annual Report, 1945.

village developments.[1443] These women leveraged their power to secure loans and invest in the newly introduced cash crops, particularly coffee, therefore enhancing their agricultural yields.

Despite being bereaved, the Maragoli widows of the decolonization era showed greater resilience than their pre-colonial counterparts and were not perceived as feeble individuals seeking patriarchal assistance and favors.[1444] This attitude clearly reflected the new contrasting roles of Christian women and men in the new economic situation of the 1960s.

A considerable number of Maragoli girls who completed the intermediate exams were compelled to pursue secondary education in institutions like as Bunyore Girls, Butere Girls' Secondary School, Kaimosi Girls Boarding School, or African Girls High School in Kikuyu. Several individuals enrolled in either teacher training or nursing institutions, which were subsequently placed below secondary education. Formal education has transformed Maragoli girls into outstanding individuals, cultivating civility and respect for elders, and enabling them to marry cultured spouses. Nonetheless, these exceptional traits occasionally hindered them, as one respondent said, referencing Daudi Kabaka's song.;[1445]

Msichana wa sura nzuri, - A beautiful girl like you,
Nini inakufanya usioleke, - What makes you not get married
Masomo unayo ya Kutosha, -if it is education you have more than enough.
Hata ng'ambo ukaenda ukarudi.- You have even flown oversees and came back.

[1443] K. Mutongi, *Op, Cit,*p.128.
[1444] Ibid.p.129
[1445]Amutamwa Jethro Oral interview held on 4th August 2024 at Jemov village Mambai Sub location.

The song pauses to ponder why such a gorgeous woman, despite possessing an exceptional education and extensive globe travel, remains unmarried. The oral responses indicate that education had fostered the emergence of a new class of Maragoli women, transcending the pre-colonial concept of a subservient, obedient, and domestically constrained wife. This resulted from the aggressive and independent disposition of the newly educated Maragoli women.

This new independent-minded woman outwitted the pre-colonial Maragoli male thought, resulting in some of these women being unmanageable inside the Maragoli marriage framework. The high demand for Western education made many girls who missed GBS admission go for elementary education in domesticity. This was with the hope of learning the basics.[1446] The eagerness of Maragoli households to get Western education for their daughters and women prompted C.H. Williams, the District Commissioner of North Kavirondo, to commend the Maragoli on the rise in female enrollment in educational institutions. He further noted that female education garnered favor even inside the local LNC meetings.[1447] The positive attitude towards girls' education had been prompted by the change in preference for educated men to go for a hand in marriage for the educated women.[1448] During the 1940s and 1950s, there was a remarkable increase in demand for domestic science. In regard to maragoli, the domestic science received a boost from *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Advancement of women). The main aim of this movement was to train women in home science.[1449]

[1446] K.Mutongi, *Op, Cit,* p.134.

[1447]KNA: DC/NN.1/30, Annual Report, 1945

[1448] K.Mutongi, *Op, Cit,* p.134.

[1449] Audrey Wipper, "The Maendeleo ya Wanawake Movement: Some Paradoxes and Contradictions," African Studies Review 18, no. 3 (1975): 99–120; Audrey Wipper, "Equal Rights for Women in Kenya?"

This initiative trained women on several subjects, including newborn nutrition, family finance, house upkeep, and contemporary agricultural techniques. The focus on women's education during the decolonization period extended beyond Maragoli. M.W. Musalia notes that the Jeanes school in Kabete focused on community development.

To further this, the college tailored its cariculum to be gender sensitive and responsive to the decolonization gender demands.[1450] The men's wing of the institution had a school farm offering agricultural classes, with other subjects like as citizenship and a hygiene department inside the Medical Training School. The ladies attended the trade school led by Miss Hollinshead, who instructed in needlework, food, washing, and childcare. Upon completion of the training, the trainees were anticipated to join women's groups in remote regions and disseminate their acquired knowledge.[1451]

The educated elite significantly contributed to the transformative movement of Maragoli. The church served as a conduit for economic advancement among the educated elite. Consequently, church participation afforded the aristocrats and their offspring access to advanced education, as well as practical experience in administrative protocols and adherence to emerging social conventions. The Christian church successfully articulated and integrated the Maragoli socially and economically into the ideals of colonial capitalism, in accordance with the Articulation of Modes of Production theory. These were essential competencies for assuming accountable roles in local government. In several

Journal of Modern African Studies 9, no. 3 (1971): 429–42: and Audrey Wipper, "The Maendeleo ya Wanawake Movement in the Colonial Period: The Canadian Connection, Mau Mau, Embroidery, and Agriculture," *Rural Africana* 29 (1975–76): 195–214. See Also M.W. Musalia, 2010, *Op, Cit,* p.190.for the Agikuyu case.

[1450] M.W. Musalia, *Op, Cit,* p.191.

[1451] Ibid

areas of Maragoli, administrative officials were males who had received formal education.[1452]

With the emergence of these new economic patterns, women and children increasingly comprised the majority of church membership among the Maragoli converts. Nevertheless, the male educated elite continued to dominate the most significant roles inside the churches, directing their focus towards the requirements of the educated class. For example, despite the presence of trained female educators in the 1960s, none held the position of headteacher.

While women were permitted to speak and lead prayers and hymns in small churches, they seldom participated in significant fundraising or nominating committees. A significant constraint on women's influence was the opposition, particularly over their perspectives on women leading men. In this battle, the church made few efforts to address the concerns of women, whose positions were perceived by African leadership as primarily supportive in church development.[1453]

Missionaries were significant innovators in Maragoli civilization. Embracing Christianity conferred significant monetary benefits, including opportunities in the "progressive" sector with remunerated positions, such as educators, as well as the quest of affluence and broader knowledge. The gradual transition from economic self-sufficiency within the family to heightened reliance on external markets and wage labor income influenced both the division of labor and the social cohesiveness of the family.

[1452] Finorah Mahasi, (72 years), Oral Interview held on 5th August 2023 at Bethfage village Mambai Sub Location.
[1453] Leen Kavulani *Op*, *Cit*.

Concerning the division of labor, the rising desire for cash income necessitated intensified agricultural practices for the cultivation of commercial crops, resulting in female household members frequently shouldering the additional workload while men engaged in wage labor. The economic role of the woman in the household economy has significantly diverged from that in the traditional family structure. She was no longer burdened by several daily familial responsibilities, contingent upon her husband's financial capacity to employ domestic help. Women had newfound autonomy.

They were relieved of most fieldwork and thus dedicated more time to raising their children and to more intricate housekeeping, with an emphasis on a higher material quality of life.[1454] This significantly undermined the economic rationale for polygamy. Simultaneously, several young men, used to self-sufficiency in urban environments or as wage laborers on European plantations, adopted a bachelor lifestyle, deferring marriage until the late 30s. Furthermore, widowers, who previously felt compelled to remarry for financial reasons, frequently remained unmarried.

In addition to Christianity, the imposition of colonial power in Kenya offered certain women in Maragoli an awareness of their rights within the altered social context. In the pre-colonial era, women were entirely subservient to their husbands. However, the imposition of colonial power precipitated significant social and economic transformations that profoundly altered the status of women in Maragoli. Missionaries condemned some cultural behaviors, including polygamy and other associated anti-Christian customs.

[1454] G. Wagner, *Op, Cit,*1939, p. 39.

Consequently, female converts insisted that they should not be constrained by norms that contradicted Christianity.

Simultaneously, women were able to produce their own monetary income as wage laborers, with others assuming roles as educators, matrons, and evangelists in the region. These opportunities allowed women to acquire some degree of independence,

> For example, Dorothy Pitman, one of the teachers at the GBS, was happy "to watch some of the Normal Training School boys scrutinizing the girls' sewing and other school work, which has been on display at different times in the year." She went on to proudly claim that "many of the boys have already realized that they can have happier homes if they can secure wives who have learned some hygiene, childcare, sewing, cooking."[1455]

This enthusiasm permeated all the missionary apologists, particularly the GBS educators. This frequently occurred when the educators observed their students ascending the social hierarchy following the GBS education. The peak of upward social mobility occurred when their daughters married, particularly in Christian ceremonies, to another educated young man from the Kaimosi boys' school nearby. Christian couples were anticipated to host their guests at the wedding in a contemporary manner, using modern cuisine such as rice, Irish potatoes, and carrots, among other dishes. All of them are accompanied with bread and tea. All these dishes were to be presented by local females attired in contemporary outfits.[1456] These missionary apologists believed that such actions were manifestations of their burgeoning westernization. The missionaries were led to believe that such a marriage would create households where Christ is acknowledged and esteemed,

[1455] Kenda Mutongi Op, Cit, p.130.
[1456] FGD held at Mambai primary School Assembly Grounds on 30th September 2023 in Mambai Sub Location.

houses that, in the words of Kenda Mutongi, were so “spic and span” that they were imitated by other women.[1457]

The Christian couples were anticipated to exhibit a paradigm shift from pre-colonial Maragoli customs while adhering to Western norms, especially among challenges. The Christian couple was anticipated to establish their household promptly and procreate after the white wedding. If their newborn died, as was usual during this era, they were required to exhibit strength, pray to God for fortitude, and refrain from resorting to the pagan Maragoli superstitions. All the aforementioned demonstrate how Christianity and formal education significantly contributed to the articulation of the Maragoli within the new colonial socio-economic worldview.

Western education and Christianity have significantly influenced food production dynamics, particularly through the lenses of gender analysis and modes of production frameworks. Western education introduced scientific farming techniques and formal agricultural training, often privileging Eurocentric knowledge systems while marginalizing indigenous and gendered contributions. Christianity, while promoting stewardship and community, also reinforced patriarchal norms that shaped gender roles in agrarian societies—often limiting women's access to land, labor, and decision-making. These dynamics are best understood through feminist epistemology, which challenges dominant narratives and revalues women's knowledge and labor, and interpretivist research philosophy, which emphasize lived experiences and socio-cultural meanings.

[1457] Kenda Mutongi, *Op,Cit,* p.135.

Together, these frameworks reveal how food systems are not merely technical but deeply embedded in cultural, religious, and gendered structures, calling for more inclusive and equitable approaches to agricultural development. These alterations further influenced the traditional Maragoli gender relations and food production systems. The following section delineates the dynamics of labor and agricultural output throughout the decolonization era.

5.3 The Dynamics of Labour and Agricultural Production During the Decolonization Era

Labor and agricultural production maintained a competitive stance due to their focus on the restricted African, primarily Maragoli, workforce during the period from 1945 to 1963. The pre-colonial Maragoli labor organization was further constrained by the new colonial requirements, as detailed in the preceding chapter. The colonial labor needs intensified beyond the Maragoli supply from 1945 to 1963. Oral interviews revealed that during this era, although many children had enrolled in mission schools, they were compelled to participate in activities, including farming, at a more rigorous level than previously.[1458] This was due to the labour shortage scenario necessitated by the increased colonial labour demands from both the Maragoli men and women.[1459]

The *Busali* East Focus Group Discussion (FGD) session with Maragoli women confirmed that certain girls were withdrawn from school to work as domestic helpers on the tea farms.[1460] Such girls while in such cosmopolitan places drifted away from the Maragoli mannerisms and even on coming back found it difficult to adjust into the Maragoli way of

[1458]Alex Mudaki, (65 Years), Oral interview, on 3rd October 2023.
[1459]Vincent Asamba, (68 Years), Oral Interview, on 3rd October 2023.
[1460]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Govoga Chief's Office Grounds, on 2nd September, 2023

life.[1461] The girls acquired new independence in the estates made it difficult on return for them to submit to the Maragoli patriarchal orders of a powerful husband and a woman as a home maker.[1462] Such incidents, among others, led to alterations in gender relations within colonial Maragoli society. Men increasingly participated in the colonial labor force through several avenues, including the Kericho and Nandi tea plantations, as well as urban jobs in Kisumu and Kakamega. All things were bequeathed to the ladies and the elderly of the Maagoli farms. As a result, agricultural production declined, resulting in prolonged times of famine and food scarcity.[1463]

In the post-World War II Maragoli, there was a notable growth in the demand for external wage work. This impulse was present not only in Maragoli but across the entire colony. A primary element in Maragoli was the demand on land. Other considerations included the necessity for an enhanced quality of life, a preference for industrial job, a yearning for Western civilization, the obligation to pay taxes or bride riches, and the aspiration to acquire trade goods.[1464]

A minority portion departed from Maragoli, cherishing their connections with the community indefinitely. One respondent highlighted that some of these individuals

[1461]Ibid
[1462]Ibid
[1463]Kenda Mutongi, (2007), *Op., Cit*., p.89.
[1464] Leen Kavulavu, 2020, *Op, Cit,* p.188.

relocated and established permanent residence in their new locations. The earned funds were used on prostitutes, alcohol, and other bad vices. This group never functioned effectively and merely devolved into a spiv.[1465] The Kenya Weekly News said that the majority of African males were employed as target laborers, and upon achieving their targets, they spent the remainder of their time in the "reserves," where the majority of labor was performed by women.[1466] There were also a section of other working men who established themselves with their families at some places of employment and remained there working for a number of years. This was, however, a small percentage of the total labourforce and were mostly composed of the skilled or semi skilled workmen.[1467] but even among these, the majority had the intention of eventually returning to their rural homes.

The presence of an alternate source of support for the African worker's family consistently contributed to the maintenance of low pay. As stated in chapter two, the Maragoli wife and family frequently relied on such assistance, as the Maragoli village economy necessitated the ownership of a field that significantly contributed to the family's sustenance. This was one of the articulatory aspects where certain pre-colonial production elements were retained to sustain the new colonial capitalist mode of production. Under typical conditions, the wage worker departed from home for several months, assured that his dependents would sustain themselves adequately without his support. Furthermore, the

[1465] Barusi Wilfred, (68 years) Oral Interview hheld on 5th August 2023 at Wumulalu village.

[1466]Mildred Ndeda, The impact of male migration on Rural women: A case study of Siaya District c.1894-1963 (PhD. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1993), 224 cited Kenya Weekly News.

[1467] Long stay migrants were usually composed of house servants, categories of soldiers, rail workers and civil servants. Even the individuals who were target workers only came back to rest and then go back to work either to the same employer or a different one. Or in certain cases they did not go back home but simply kept changing jobs.

increasing individuality and autonomy of males resulting from earned money led to a devaluation of women's significance.[1468]

Archival accounts from 1950 indicate that African women were deemed more hardworking than their male counterparts. Daily, women were observed transporting huge burdens while males strolled ahead, carrying only a walking stick. All home responsibilities were likewise assigned to women. All of these were articulated in various men's words such as, "I have paid the dowry, and the wife should work." This was evidently a colonial impact, as the majority of males were required to labor to acquire funds for purchasing livestock to secure women. The phrase "buying a woman" was frequently used by colonialists.

These comments undoubtedly reflect Ephraim Kagota's perspective about his wife and children, whom he asserted were his possessions, akin to the dogs and cattle he possessed, as long as the "bride riches" of seven heads of cattle he had provided remained with his in-laws.[1469] Such pejorative remarks were entirely un-African and a clear manifestation of the impact of the racist colonial caricature. In pre-colonial Maragoli society, bride riches was rendered as a gesture of gratitude to the bride's parents rather than as a transactional exchange in the colonial context of "purchasing" a spouse.

Obeda Kigalu, an informant, emphasized the significance of collaboration and interdependence among the Maragoli men and women. He asserts that the pre-colonial Maragoli civilization achieved efficient collaboration between men and women.[1470] The

[1468] Leen Kavulavu, *Op, Cit,* p.189.

[1469] Ephraim Kagota Oral Interview held on 3rd August 2023 in Chanderema Mambai Sub Location.

[1470] Obeda Kigalu Oral Interview held on 2nd August 2023 held in Viyalo Village in Mamabi Sub Location.

two gender groups worked, walked and visited social places together.[1471] It was noted that the colonial Maragoli men of 1950s were to adopt this as a way of enhancing a strong household. Women needed the support of their men in order to develop. This particularly pertained to the first wives deemed too advanced in age by their husbands forcing such men to bring in a second wife on the first wife's approval to enale the family adequately meet its socio-economic family demands. In the 1950s, it was observed that men regarded their women as personal property and were disinclined to discuss matters brought in Barazas with them. The belief among Maragoli men in the 1950s that women were inherently unable reduced the morale of many women and weakened male-female ties inside the household.

Women had the responsibilities of managing houses and nourishing children, and their capacity to lead effectively and thrive in other domains of life would likely have been augmented by the support and acknowledgment of their husbands.[1472]The issue of labor appropriation necessitates a more in-depth investigation, considering the fact that the organization of human labor is essential to the growth or underdevelopment of regionally defined social structures.

The Maragoli labor force, as a crucial element of production relations, was captured by the colonial state inside public enterprises. This generated surplus value, so improving the perception of colonial physical infrastructure and facilitating more opportunities for capital accumulation.[1473] As seen in the preceding chapter, from 1920 to 1939, there was a rise in

[1471] A.M Amisi, Op, Cit, p.67.

[1472] Leen Kavulavu, Op, Cit, p.190.

[1473]Eric M. Aseka, "Political Economy of Buluyia. 1900-1963." Unpublished Ph. D. Thesis, History Department, Kenyatta University (1989)., p.105.

the emigration of former and prospective laborers from the division to other regions of Kenya. In addition to other cited pressures, additional push factors contributed to this phenomenon. The rising demand to cultivate cash crops for sale to meet tax obligations and acquire new consumer items was diminishing soil fertility. This resulted in diminished agricultural output in several areas of the district, including Maragoli and Bunyore.[1474]

The increasing production of maize and ground nuts among the Maragoli exerted pressure on the arable land in the villages. This contributed to the emigration of males into wage labour.[1475] The presence of land, labor, and a cash crop alone was inadequate to mitigate the causes driving emigration. There were years of agricultural failures and market volatility.

The impact of this was predominantly experienced during the downturn when commodity prices fell excessively. Several African producers, notably the small bourgeois dealers, endured the repercussions of the post-depression era and profited from the subsequent price increases.

Consequently, cash crop cultivation was not a sustainable remedy for generating funds to satisfy tax obligations. Labor for wages was necessary to support cash crop cultivation. Overall, socio-economic and ecological causes contributed to the displacement of the Maragoli, similar to other peasant communities globally, from their reserves. Moreover, owing to the state's monopolization of the marketing of specific commodities, such as maize, groundnuts, and dairy products, along with their pricing and taxation, many

[1474]Hugh Fearn, *An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953*. East African Institute of Social Research by Oxford University Press, 1961, p.67.
[1475]Roger Van Zwanenberg, "The development of peasant commodity production in Kenya, 1920-40." *The Economic History Review* 27, no. 3 (1974): 442-454., p.448.

impoverished peasants encountered challenging economic conditions and were compelled to pursue wage labor outside the reserves to supplement their scant agricultural income..[1476] This emigration reached great proportions in 1945 when there were 50,737 Luyia in registered employment outside the district[1477] and about 30,000 conscripted in war as carrier corps and soldiers.[1478] Wage labour then appears to have been a valuable insurance against low incomes from poor commodity prices and food shortage.[1479]

By 1940, the establishment of individualized land and livestock ownership, along with the ongoing commodification of labor and production processes, resulted in the work party, a labor organization for agricultural production, attracting a varied membership as men emigrated for wage labor and periodically returned to rejoin.[1480]The emerging influence of nascent merchants and other financial sources intertwined the Maragoli labor process with the pursuit of successful manufacturing.

Consequently, the production process failed to integrate the labor process with the self-fulfilling generation of social value.[1481] The settlers and the colonial government in Maragoli and other regions of the nation now exercised limited control over the conditions governing the speed, skill, and dexterity of the hired Maragoli laborers. Consequently, when the wage labor process was integrated under the authority of the settlers and the colonial administration, it entailed a component of subordination of that labor. The newly

[1476]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University, 2009., p.145
[1477]Sibiko Wafula, "Colonial land policy and the North Kavirondo African Reserve to 1940." Unpublished BA Dissertation University of Nairobi (1981)., p.35.
[1478]NADAR,1945
[1479]Eric M. Aseka, (1989). *Op. Cit.,* p.107.
[1480]Nuno Guiomar *et.al.,* "Typology and distribution of small farms in Europe: Towards a better picture." *Land use policy* 75 (2018): 784-798., p.789.
[1481]Jackson Jeanne-Marie, "The facts at the heart of the matter: Character and objectivity in the making of the Fante Intelligentsia." *African Literatures as World Literature* (2022): p.233.

appointed chiefs of Maragoli were repressive in their tax collection and labor recruitment, provoking resistance.[1482]

Upon the conclusion of the Second World War in 1945, the Director of Agriculture attributed the underdevelopment of African agriculture on conservative agricultural techniques, neglecting to acknowledge that the colonial government had responsibility for this situation.

He also reiterated the virtues of paternalism. In his opinion:

> The African in Kenya has not yet arrived at the level of education which enables him, on his own accord, to plan his agricultural economy successfully. He has little knowledge of farming practices, no means of gauging the effects of external factors on his economy. In his case, therefore, it is essential that his general farming policy shall, to a large extent, be dictated to him in the light of the experience and knowledge of the officers of government responsible for his welfare.[1483]

This mindset defined the colonial strategy of enhancing agricultural sufficiency and soil conservation in African regions throughout the post-war era.

The Troup Commission, which assessed agricultural potential in African and European regions, advised in 1952 that substantial agricultural growth capable of generating significant marketable surpluses should be exclusively pursued in European settler estates. Only after the 1954 suggestions by Frank Swynnerton was the necessity for increased financing of African agriculture acknowledged. This was first initiated in the late 1950s in Central Province, where land consolidation had occurred and individual farm owners were

[1482]Eric M. Aseka, (1989). *Op. Cit*., p.108.
[1483]NADAR, 1945

guaranteed security of land tenure.[1484] In Maragoli where inheritance customs in land ownership and land fragmentation continued to characterize land tenure, such prospects of agricultural development were precluded.[1485] The municipal government in Maragoli focused mostly on soil erosion mitigation initiatives following the conflict.

In 1947, the district government mandated the construction of refuse lines connecting fields, the application of manure, the eradication of weeds, and the cultivation of root crops, primarily sweet potatoes and cassava.[1486] An Agricultural Betterment Fund was established in the region in 1949 to support efforts against soil erosion. Agricultural Committees were established in each site to facilitate communication between agricultural authorities and farmers. Additionally, one-week soil conservation seminars were conducted in Kakamega, attended by around eight individuals from Maragoli.[1487]

In 1950, the African District Council allocated £3,240 for soil conservation initiatives throughout the district. Soil conservation efforts were undermined by a lack of agricultural personnel and funding, as well as the manner of their implementation. A significant amount of force was employed. Farmers were mandated to eradicate weeds and accumulate them along the road for examination by agricultural instructors. Noncompliance resulted in fines. The program was soon perceived as an additional manifestation of colonial tyranny rather than a genuine effort to preserve the land.

[1484]Geofrey Towett, "Changing Political Regimes and Land Politics in Post-Colonial Kenya."In *Global Journal of Advanced Research* 8, no. 3 (2021): 56-67., p.63
[1485]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.
[1486]KNA:D.C./NN/1/31.

[1487] Ibid

Proposals to reform the land ownership structure in the area were considered but never implemented during the 1950s. All these activities were conducted utilizing the available female labor resulting from the rising migration of males to urban centers and settler farms for wage jobs.

This section has examined the dynamics of labour and agricultural production during the decolonization era, illustrating how political transitions and emerging nationalist policies reshaped rural work structures. The next section explores food production mechanisms and labour relations during the 1945–63 period, tracing how these earlier shifts influenced post-war agricultural strategies, labour mobilization, and gendered roles within evolving production systems.

5.4 Food Production Mechanisms and Labour Relations During the 1945-63 era.

The war first exerted strain on both land and labor in the African regions. High productivity districts were specifically sought for recruitment for the war and other critical responsibilities. Actions were implemented to formalize labor procurement.

The British government, under the Emergence Power (Defense) Acts enacted at the onset of the war, was granted extensive powers of requisition, movement control, and censorship.[1488] The 1940 Defense (Native Personnel) Regulations empowered the governor to instruct Provincial Commissioners to provide quotas of laborers for military and critical services. The state identified essential services, thereby allowing private contractors to

[1488]Paul Zeleza Tiyambe, "African social scientists and the struggle for academic freedom." *Journal of Eastern African Research & Development* (1992): 11-32., p.19.

gain from the use of African labor.[1489] To recruit African labour, both for military and essential services, all sorts of methods were used.

Apart from the use of force, African men were cheated that they were being taken to work only to find themselves in military camps. Moreover, others were taken out of school, while some employers gave a number of their workers.[1490] Some individuals, however, were lured by deceptive information. It was rumored that those who enlisted in the military may be excused from taxation. Africans were further enlisted for other significant tasks: the building and expansion of airfields, highways, ports, and military encampments. By 1945, over 98,000 Kenyans were enlisted in the military in various capacities.[1491] The advent of World War II significantly influenced Maragoli gender relations in several ways.

During the *Wumulalu* Focus Group Discussion (FGD), participants noted that World War II significantly altered living in Maragoli in several ways. Many young spouses of soldiers, prompted by economic hardships and societal transformations, migrated to the burgeoning towns, particularly Eldoret, Kakamega, and Kisumu.[1492] In these communities, people participated in various activities, including minor trade, domestic assistance, and some even resorted to prostitution. Mutongi similarly noted that during World War II, the colonial authorities, fearing that the spouses of Kenyan men participating in the war may engage in adultery, implemented harsh restrictions to limit the movement of young

[1489]Ibid., p.175.
[1490]Ibid., p.176.
[1491]Meshack Owino, "Kenya and the Second World War: A review of the historiographical landscape." *History Compass* 19, no. 3 (2021): e12649.
[1492]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023.

women.[1493] This intensified surveillance gave rise to malicious rumors and moral panics throughout Kenya. Familial trust broke down.

The FGD sessions at Maragoli illuminated some experiences from World War II. These sessions affirmed that World War II military recruits expressed concerns on the fidelity of their spouses, in whom they had significantly invested through bridewealth payments, during their unspecified absences.[1494]. Such men harbored skepticism over several topics concerning their women whom they were abandoning. Such skeptical attitudes were manifested through numerous questions that occupied the recruits' minds. These inquiries included whether their spouses would remain loyal. Would they comply with them as the head of the home upon their return?

Would they continue to regard them as their spouse, or would they embrace new concepts and perspectives?[1495] These fears did not just remain in the conscripts' minds but were eventually forwaded to the Kenya African Riffles (KAR) recruiting officers before the recruits left for the military assignements. On their part, the colonial officials led by the Provincial Commissioners gave the recruits an assurance that they would watch over their wives and cattle to ensure that no one encroached their property.

"On our engagement," wrote Angiro, "the Provincial Commissioner strictly spoke to us how no one can take neither your wife nor your cattle.''[1496]Despite these promises, the uncertainties in the minds of the conscripts remained unresolved. This was disclosed through the correspondence they composed during the war and their responses to their

[1493] K. Mutongi, (2007). *Op. Cit*., p.143.
[1494] FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.

[1495]Ibid.
[1496]KPRC: HB/9/10, Land Complaints, June 12, 1969.

spouses upon returning from World War II. Conversely, the Maragoli World War II recruits started to perceive that authorities had neglected to control their spouses, who had, in reality, been allowed to behave freely.

The reports of Kavirondo women observed wandering freely in Eldoret and Kisumu corroborated the distressing rumors that the recruiters had impregnated them shortly before departing from their spouses..[1497] More-over the village rumours on who had slept with their wives made some of the ex-soldiers on return compile list of the men who had slept with their wives.[1498] Such lists were forwaded to the Provincial Commisioner as evidence of their wives' wayward lives.[1499] Consequently, when such bitter men came back from the military service, they brought their suspicions home with them. The wives predominantly bore the consequences, occasionally with their lives, for the malevolent rumors disseminated during their husbands' absences.

These events adversely affected post-World War gender relations inside family structures, severely influencing pre-war gender dynamics in food production. Upon their return from the war, some men violently assaulted their wives—some of whom were daughters of widows—due to alleged infidelities.

Such issues were emblematic of the familial disputes of the day. In the Maragoli instance, the former soldiers returned to find their homes in disarray due to the extended absence of the customary male leaders. In his literature on Maragoli, Mutongi vividly depicts homes in which wives engaged in drinking sprees when their husbands were conscripted into the

[1497]K. Mutongi, (2007), *Op.Cit*., p.147.
[1498]Ibid., p.148
[1499]Ibid.

Second World War. During the oral interviews, several respondents said that the Second World War significantly affected Maragoli gender relations.

One individual recounted a situation in which a soldier returned completely irresponsible and exhibited extreme brutality towards his family, particularly his wife, subjecting her to daily physical abuse until their divorce, which resulted in profound suffering for their children.[1500] These were but a few instances that demonstrated how World War II significantly disturbed the established gender relations among the Maragoli.

The production of commodities during the war was crucial, since the colony needed to be self-sufficient and assist Great Britain. The conflict resulted in significant labor rearrangement among African homes. Women assumed responsibility for practically all agricultural output as most males were drafted for military service, while others relocated to metropolitan centers in pursuit of wage labor. Ndeda observes that Luo males from Nyanza fled their homes to evade conscription..[1501] The effect of male migrant labour was also felt in other parts of colonial Africa like Mozambique where Mozambican women were required to grow both cotton and subsistence crops.[1502]

Overal, Kenya African men migrated to Nairobi and Mombasa in large numbers during the Second World War.[1503] In the lack of able-bodied males, agricultural production inevitably devolved to women, children, and remaining men in rural regions. The increased productivity during the war in the settlement regions created a significant need for African

[1500]Sera Kaluhi, (54 Years), Oral interview, on 13th September, 2023.
[1501]Mildred Ndeda, "Women's Organising for Self Improvement in Colonial and Post Colonial Kenya: A Historical Analysis." *Pathways to African Feminism and Development, Journal of African Women's Studies Centre* 1, no. 1 (2015)., 78-93, p.81.
[1502]Benjaminsen Tor A., Jens B. Aune, and Daouda Sidibé. "A critical political ecology of cotton and soil fertility in Mali." *Geoforum* 41, no. 4 (2010): 647-656.
[1503]Chris Bevan, *Land law*. Oxford University Press, 2022., p.18.

labor. Nonetheless, African labor was scarce due to the elevated pricing of African products, which deterred them from engaging with settler farms. The Government faced significant pressure from numerous settler unions. One settler from Limuru summed up what the settlers required:

> What the farms want at times like these is a good, honest and plentiful supply of labour and a well-staffed Police Force- not gallons of ink and yards of paper. It is only work that counts.[1504]

The settler contends that "what the farms require...is a reliable and abundant labor supply together with an adequately constituted Police Force—not more documentation and paperwork." "Only labor matters" embodies the exploitative rationale of colonialism and necessitates critical examination from an Afrocentric viewpoint. This assertion reduces African individuals to simple working entities, negating their humanity, agency, and socio-political intricacies.

The demand for a "plentiful supply of labor" conceals the coercive mechanisms—such as land dispossession, enforced taxes, and pass regulations—that systematically undermined African livelihoods and drove people into exploitative wage work on settler farms. Furthermore, the focus on a "well-staffed Police Force" highlights the pivotal role of state violence in sustaining settler supremacy, wherein the police functioned not as impartial law enforcers but as tools of oppression against African opposition. The settler's contempt for "gallons of ink and yards of paper" signifies a wider colonial disregard for African voices, legal petitions, and intellectual opposition, all of which were essential avenues through which Africans challenged colonial injustice. The declaration prioritizes settler-defined "work" at the expense of African rights and dignity, hence negating the daily resistance

[1504]Anthony Clayton and Donald Cockfield Savage, *Government and labour in Kenya 1895-1963*. Routledge, 2012., p.62.

exhibited by African communities, such as labor slowdowns, migration, and the subversion of colonial demands. An Afrocentric interpretation exposes the profound moral and historical inconsistencies within the settler narrative, emphasizing African endeavors for land, sovereignty, and justice.

The Defense (Native Personnel) Regulations empowered the Provincial Commissioner to conscript labor from "fit persons" for military and other vital functions.[1505] The Defense (African Labour for Essential Undertakings) Regulations, enacted by the Secretary of State with few alterations, facilitated the conscription of Africans to labor for settlers. The limitations were effective only temporarily, since conscription was halted in February 1943 due to food shortages in reserves, which were linked to the depletion of personnel from African regions. The impact of the departure of agricultural labor from the reserves was felt throughout the last years. The war's onset significantly impacted food production across the colony. The war prompted a significant growth in commodities production due to favorable prices and government mandates for expanded output to satisfy wartime demands.[1506] Both settler and African producers took the challenge to increase production. The rise of export prices was particularly advantageous to settlers.[1507]

African production also expanded though this differed between regions and individuals.[1508] For instance, the proximity of Kikuyu districts to Nairobi and more notably Kiambu, enabled producers meet the increased demand for all types of foodstuffs to feed the military

[1505]Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau, 1905–1963* (London: James Currey, 1987), 120–122.
[1506]Barthelemy Dominique and Stephen D. White. "The" Feudal Revolution"." *Past & Present* 152 (1996): 196-223., p.198
[1507]Steven J. Presley *et. al.,* "Landscape ecology of mammals." *Journal of Mammalogy* 100, no. 3 (2019): 1044-1068., p.1058.
[1508]Paul Zeleza Tiyambe, "The global dimensions of Africa's crisis: Debts, structural adjustment and workers." *Transafrican Journal of History* (1989): 1-53., p.40.

personnel in Nairobi.[1509] In Nyanza Province, regional variation was also evident between north and central Nyanza. While North Nyanza occupied mainly by the Luyia expanded the production.[1510] There was decline in market output in Central Nyanza as a result of the absence of men given that a substantial number was working outside their homes.[1511]

The need to satisfy the war needs and cope with the economy that was increasingly involving cash, made Maragoli abandon their traditional food crops meant for subsistence in favour of the newly introduced marketable crop varieties. This meant that households began to gradually turn to the market to satisfy their subsistence supplies.[1512] From the late 1930s and increasingly throughout the 1940s, Maragoli became more focused on fulfilling market demands than on addressing the subsistence needs of the farmers. Consequently, all manufacturing was aimed at the market. This adversely affected the concept of "separate" gardens for women and men that defined Maragoli agriculture in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Indeed, several respondents appeared to lack recollection of "separate" gardens, asserting that by the 1930s, this occurrence had terminated among the Maragoli.[1513] The progressive diminishment of "separate" gardens may have sprung from land scarcity, necessitating the consolidation of household landholdings into a singular productive entity under the

[1509]Florence G. Musalia, "Challenges facing head teachers in implementing free primary education in Suba east division, Migori district, Nyanza province of Kenya." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 2005, p.98.
[1510]Samson Omwoyo, "Assessing the impact of coffee production on Abagusii women in western Kenya: A historical analysis (1900-1963)." (2013)., p.88.
[1511]Kitching R. *et.al.,* "Assessment of recharge to aquifers/Evaluation de recharge d'aquifères." *Hydrological Sciences Journal* 25, no. 3 (1980): 217-235., p.228.
[1512]A. I. Robertson, "Land-water linkages in floodplain river systems: the influence of domestic stock." (1997), p.78.
[1513]Tsinafa Imali, (56 Years), Oral interviews, on 20th September 2023.

jurisdiction of the household head. The establishment of a singular producing unit transformed the method of accessing production resources, necessitating a re-evaluation of gender dynamics in both labor and the distribution of outputs. The renegotiations of gender relations in the Maragoli agricultural sector mostly pertained to the distribution of agricultural advantages between spouses. This was mostly attributable to the rising family monetary requirements for everyday sustenance and investment. The males, as the primary leaders of their farms, exerted greater power over the agricultural operations, particularly as farm produce became increasingly marketed.

The colonial government established market centres like Mbale, Chavakali, and Lunyeyrere mainly to draw African communities into the cash economy, promote cash crop trade, and facilitate taxation. For Maragoli women, this meant displacement from their traditional role in subsistence farming and a shift into petty trade within these centres. While the markets offered them new economic niches, their participation was largely informal and marginal, reflecting how colonial policies prioritized male wage labour and export crops while relegating women to survival strategies on the periphery of the colonial economy.[1514]

Through these economic endeavors, women maintained a vital role in supporting their families. Despite these dynamics, a significant proportion of males persisted in relying on women's labor for the cultivation of commercial crops, particularly following the

[1514] Abwunza.J., *Op., Cit.,* 1987 p.45

introduction of coffee and subsequently tea.[1515] Women however used their own creativity to ensure their relevance in agriculture.

During the *Mambai* Focus Group Discussion (FGD), the session confirmed that coffee upon its introduction was highly attached to the land titular owner through the proof of a title deed.[1516] As the majority of titles were conferred upon males, they dominated the coffee revenues, even in urban locales where they sought work, with less recognition of the substantial labor contributed by women to achieve this outcome. Women, as devoted and exemplary Maragoli spouses according to patriarchal norms, started by dedicating their utmost efforts to the coffee bushes.[1517]

Upon realization that all the coffee proceeds were going to the men, they silently began to withdraw their labour. This later resulted into a big blow to the coffee crop.[1518] Tea as a cash crop took a different vector in regard to access of its benefits between the two gender groups. Tea remunerations were left open to any of the two gender groups to control depending on the involved household mutual agreement.[1519] This gave women a leeway to control tea proceeds. Women therefore turned up in full force embraced it making the crop to be sustained even into the later post-independence Maragoli era.[1520]

Tea remunerations unlike coffee were given to the owner of the owner of the tea bushes plot number who was not necessarily the male titular owner.[1521] Women could even get the

[1515]Wycliffe Ababu, (72 Years), Oral Interview, on 3rd November 2023.
[1516]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Mambai Primary School Assembly Ground, on 30th September, 2023

[1517]Ibid
[1518]Ibid
[1519]Ibid
[1520]Judith M. Abwunza, "Logoli women of Western Kenya speak: needs and means." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 1991, p.92.
[1521]Ibid.

tea remuneration upon a confirmation that she was a wife to the plot owner by the area sub-chief unlike coffee.[1522] Even with all these transformation in family power and economic relations, men continued to head the homesteads under the patriarchal system. Their social status was never jeopardized by the increasing women control of family income.[1523] This however did not preclude isolated cases of allegations of fear especially among the irresponsible men. This was rooted from the dawning reality that their wives were taking over family duties due to their indolence.[1524]

Irresponsible males were becoming estranged from their houses due to devoted spouses who had assumed the responsibility of paying their children's expenses. Such individuals had gradually but consistently succumbed to drinking and other sorts of newly imported colonial substances and recreational activities.[1525] It has been previously noted that Maragoli males preferred the allocation of commerce and food crop fields to be designated for men and women, respectively. Furthermore, they endeavored to restrict women's commerce, therefore compelling women to supply the essential labor. Indeed, women's labor was essential for cultivating high-value products for the market, necessitating the expansion of territory dedicated to marketable agriculture.

As previously noted, the cultivation of marketable crops has led many household heads to increasingly depend on the market to satisfy their families' subsistence needs compared to prior circumstances. Archival records indicate that since the 1930s, Maragoli growers have

[1522]Truphena Ambwere, (70 Years), Oral Interview, on 23rd August 2023.
[1523]Nakamura Akihiro *et. al.,* "The use of ants and other soil and litter arthropods as bio-indicators of the impacts of rainforest clearing and subsequent land use."In *Journal of Insect Conservation* 11 (2007): 177-186., p.179.
[1524]Beth A. Conklin, *Consuming grief: compassionate cannibalism in an Amazonian society*. University of Texas Press, 2001, p.92.
[1525]Ibid. p.96

been aware of the types and values of the crops they cultivated. Moreover, crops with high economic value and low labor requirements were favored due to the declining labor pool in the reserves. Consequently, throughout and subsequent to the conflict, there was an augmented production of maize, beans, and groundnuts, all of which commanded elevated prices and necessitated reduced labor time. The vegetable list explicitly indicates that the customary Maragoli green vegetables referenced in chapter two were absent among those cultivated for sale in the 1940s. This indicates that the area cultivated with traditional vegetables may have either diminished to accommodate lucrative new vegetable kinds or their cultivation has ceased entirely.

The decline in the cultivation of conventional green vegetables significantly affected the Kenyan African diet. Such research indicated that the native diet of Africans has declined throughout the years. The research indicated that indigenous green vegetables were progressively declining due to more intense farming. It was further observed that, "European vegetables are increasingly cultivated in specific regions; yet, in the majority of localities, they are regarded solely as a cash crop." These alterations have exacerbated the lack of vitamins A, B2, C, as well as calcium, phosphorus, and iron in Africans.[1526] The reduction of these vitamins was ascribed to the deficiency of green vegetables in the diet. These studies exemplify the effects of colonialism on African food production.

The commercialization of production impacted not just indigenous vegetables but also drought-resistant traditional crops such as cassava and yams. The extended maturation

[1526]Ervin H. Zube, James L. Sell and Jonathan G. Taylor, "Landscape perception: research, application and theory." *Landscape planning* 9, no. 1 (1982): 1-33., p.27.

period and labor requirements dissuaded Maragoli women from cultivating these crops. Moreover, these crops lacked an accessible market. This was an additional element that limited their elevated productivity.[1527] The decline in the cultivation of conventional food crops was attributed to the rising inclination towards individualism. The colonial administrators contended that the "greed" for high-value products, like as maize and beans, had displaced nourishing foods from Maragoli fields. Maize, while being a soil-depleting crop, was esteemed more than millet due to its export worth.

Another advantage was its little labor requirements for weeding and deterring wild animals, unlike millet.[1528] Maize production began to rise since the 1920s due to agricultural department's efforts in issuing producers with flat white maize seeds such as Hickory King, which was high yielding.[1529]The war made the government intervene in African production through encouragement and distribution of cereal seeds. This intervention was made necessary by the failure of the maize harvest in 1942, which caused famine. Africans had to rely on cassava, hence the name of the famine, *inzara yi miogo* (cassava famine). One informant from Mago remembered the famine vividly:

> "Between 1942 and 1943 we experienced famine, cassava famine (*inzara yi miogo*). We were just eating cassava flour that is why it was called cassava famine. The government was supplying us with cassava flour."[1530]

The famine made the government to begin focusing on the agricultural problems in the reserves.[1531] Despite acknowledging agricultural issues in African regions, the government

[1527]David Afanda, (70 Years), Oral interview, on 12th September 2023.
[1528]Robert C. Bailey, "Promoting biodiversity and empowering local people in central African forests." *Tropical deforestation: the human dimension* (1996): 316-341., p.322.
[1529]Nick Anastasovski, "Contestations over Macedonian Identity, 1870-1912." PhD diss., Victoria University, 2005., p.102.
[1530]Obeda Kigalu, (76 Years), Oral interview, on 15th August 2023.
[1531]David Throup, "Elections and political legitimacy in Kenya." *Africa* 63, no. 3 (1993): 371-396., p.376.

failed to implement targeted solutions. Conversely, the actions implemented were mostly aimed at European producers. The Increased Production of Crops Ordinance was enacted in 1942. The ordinance ensured European producers a minimum price for "scheduled crops," a guaranteed return per acre, and "free grants" for the cultivation of new land. The planned crops comprised wheat, maize, rye, flax, oats, rice, rubber, barley, potatoes, pyrethrum, and vegetable seeds.[1532] Despite acknowledging agricultural issues in African regions, the government failed to implement targeted solutions. Conversely, the actions implemented were mostly aimed at European producers.

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Available statistics show that the government was not able to ascertain what was being produced in Kikuyu districts because of the farmer’s evasion of the Control Board. Despite efforts made by producers, production during the war period suffered from set-backs

[1532]KNA/ DOA /AR, 1942:1
[1533]Shipton Parker and Mitzi Goheen. "Introduction. Understanding African land-holding: Power, wealth, and meaning." *Africa* 62, no. 3 (1992): 307-325., p.312.
[1534]John Musalia, "Household decision making among married women in Kenya: a latent class analysis." *Sex Roles* 78, no. 3 (2018): 182-193., p.186.
[1535]Waller, R. D. "The Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau, 1945-1953." (1988): 461-463., p.462.

especially during the 1942-43 drought. Nevertheless, settlers and African producers encountered the impacts of drought differently, as their accounts indicate. Settlers contended that they were not incentivized to cultivate maize. They asserted that the deficiency of agricultural machinery and spare components impeded their ability to cultivate substantial quantities of corn.[1536] Africans emphasized that reserves had been drained of their manpower as a result of military conscription and urban migration such that foodstuff production was left to the old men and the womenfolk.[1537]

Stichter agrees with the assertion that the withdrawal of African males from reserves greatly reduced the Africans production capability.[1538] Africans contended that the low prices for maize disincentivized its cultivation, rendering surplus production unfeasible. Furthermore, they asserted that the augmentation of cash crop output occurred to the detriment of food crops. The Chief Native Commissioner believed that the excessive removal of males from the reservations significantly contributed to the inadequate productivity. Central and Nyanza provinces were the most severely affected, since they were the primary sources of migrant labor.[1539] For example, the percentage of men away from home in Nyanza and Kikuyuland was 50 and 55 per cent respectively.

The 1944 Kakamega District annual report indicated that the number of able-bodied men from the district serving in the military had been underestimated and consequently, "the farmer" was experiencing problems in getting regular labour from the district.[1540] The term

[1536]Dijkstra Tjalling. *Trading the Fruits of the Land: Horticultural Marketing of the Land*. Routledge, 2018, p.17.
[1537]Ibid
[1538]Richard Theodore Ely, *Studies in the evolution of industrial society*. Macmillan, 1903, p.82.
[1539]Mildred Ndeda, "Women's Organising for Self Improvement in Colonial and Post Colonial Kenya: A Historical Analysis." *Pathways to African Feminism and Development, Journal of African Women's Studies Centre* 1, no. 1 (2015), p.18.
[1540]KNA/ DC/KMG/1/35: 1944

"farmer" in this context denotes the European settler, who remained reliant on African labor throughout the conflict. Consequently, in the lack of men, settlers had to rely on Maragoli women to fulfill the requisite labor for diverse agricultural needs.

In Central Nyanza, Owen contended in 1944 that women would refrain from participating in the war due to their existing burdensome responsibilities.

> Women in the reserves are not able to do what is generally counted as war work, because owing to the absence of so many men from this reserve, the fieldwork and the upkeep of Kraals, and even the care of cattle, increasingly devolves upon the woman. All millet which this reserve has produced, not to speak of other food such as eggs and chicken, etc could never have been attained the bulk it has with the hard work of thousands of women and girls.[1541]

Despite official acknowledgement of the negative impact the withdrawal of male labour had on rural production, nothing was ever done to rectify the situation. In fact, the situation became worse as more individuals both men and women moved out of the reserves for wage employment and formal education.[1542] African productivity was consistently surpassed by settler agriculture, which benefited from inexpensive labor and favorable government policy. The food crisis seen in the early 1940s resulted from wartime needs and the cumulative impact of discriminatory agricultural policy.[1543]

The continued negligence of African producers especially in the high producing areas of Central and Nyanza was exposed by the 1942-1943 famine. The scarcity of labour had negative impact on food production. Between 1942 and 1945, there was insufficiency of food all over the colony, which made the period acquire the name "*panya kuu*" or time of

[1541]L. O. Owens letter to D.C. October 13, 1942, KNA as quoted in Ndeda, 1991:191
[1542]Geissler Wenzel and Ruth Jane Prince. *The Land is Dying: contingency, creativity and conflict in Western Kenya*. Vol. 5. Berghahn Books, 2010., p.63
[1543]Paul Tiyambe Zeleza, (1989). *Op. Cit.,* p.150.

the rats (when rats were eaten).[1544] To solve the food crisis, in 1943, Local Native Councils which were male- dominated purchased relief food for the most affected groups in their respective areas.[1545] The councils also agreed that the chiefs were to issue compulsory directives to their subjects to grow at least a half an acre of sweet potatoes and cassava.[1546]

The instruction to cultivate the specified crops was explicitly aimed at the women who were the primary producers. However, it is uncertain to what extent this direction was executed, since individual considerations about cultivation methods and choices took precedence over those of the Local Native Council. In the Maragoli division, the famine prompted the convening of barazas (public gatherings) to counsel individuals on the imperative to cultivate additional food crops. A gathering occurred on 19th November 1943, during which the local chief delivered a public address. He advised the people not only to grow drought resistance crops but also avoid selling their produce.[1547] He further asked them not to rely only on flour but also consume other foods like fruits and vegetables.[1548] It is worth noting that the famine also impacted the gendered nature of food consumption in the colony.

The District Medical Officer in Maragoli expressed worry on the dietary patterns of the inhabitants. He observed that despite the cultivation of European vegetables such as carrots and cabbages in the region, the producers, notably women and children, were not consuming them, even in the face of impending starvation. He noted that whereas Maragoli

[1544]Anthony Clayton and Donald Cockfield Savage, *Government and labour in Kenya 1895-1963*. Routledge, 2012, p. 242.
[1545]Martha Wangari Musalia, "Gender Relations and Food Crop Production: A Case of Kiambu District Kenya, 1920-1985." Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation). Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya (2010), p.64.
[1546]KNA/ DC/NN/ LNC, 1938-1943:4.
[1547]KNA:D.C./NN/1/25.
[1548]KNA/D.A.O./KMG/1/63, 1939-1953:151-153.

males were consuming vegetables in urban African eateries and rural market settings, women and children had not altered their dietary habits. He consequently promoted cookery demos to instruct Maragoli women on the preparation and use of vegetables.[1549]

The famine not only revealed the inadequate dietary practices of African villages but also compelled several women to migrate to adjacent townships and even Nairobi to evade the hardships of rural life and capitalize on the wartime circumstances.[1550] The war notably transformed gender labor relations, emphasizing the significance of cash and compelling Africans to either cultivate commodities for sale or engage in wage labor. During this period, the duration of labor contracts began to evolve. In the 1920s and early 1930s, employment durations ranged from one month to two years; however, by the 1940s, a considerable number of African males were employed as wage laborers, seeking to sustain their livelihoods without the intention of returning to the reserves. This shift was facilitated by the emergence of employment opportunities. The substantial military presence and the general population increase in Nairobi and townships across Kenya created a significant demand for African domestic laborers, including cooks and cleaning staff.

By 1939, the Indian population in Nairobi reached 17,700, while the European population was recorded at 6,500, increasing to 8,000 by 1941. Concurrently, the African population surged from 41,000 in 1939 to 70,000 in 1941.[1551] The military and non-African civilians in Nairobi necessitated the services of African domestic workers. This fundamentally established a rivalry among the parties involved, namely the Europeans in Kenya and the

[1549]KNA/ D.A.O./KMG/1/63, 1939-1953, p.111,
[1550]R. Dunn, A. R. Harrison, and J. C. White, "Positional accuracy and measurement error in digital databases of land use: an empirical study." *International Journal of Geographical Information System* 4, no. 4 (1990): 385-398., p.390.
[1551]Ibid

Indians, consequently leading to an increase in wages for domestic service. In 1941, the count of domestic workers in Kenya stood at 22,054, which increased to approximately 30,000 by the conclusion of the war.[1552] The preference for domestic service can be attributed to the financial remuneration as well as the opportunity for advancement in culinary skills or kitchen management, contingent upon securing a competent employer capable of providing adequate training. One could feasibly accumulate resources and embark on the establishment of a business venture.

During the war period, men readily secured domestic employment, a privilege that was not extended to women. In the year 1944, it was estimated with caution that more than five thousand households in Nairobi engaged the services of domestic servants. Nevertheless, the aggregate figure of women engaged in non-agricultural wage labor throughout the entire colony amounted to a mere 2,218.[1553] This figure encompassed both casual and regular employees. The data also encompassed non-African women engaged in the role of ayahs, or domestic helpers.

It is important to recognize that the employment of African women as ayahs was limited, as Europeans exhibited reluctance in hiring them to care for white children, driven by concerns that their offspring might be influenced by what they perceived as an inferior culture.[1554] Consequently, child care remained predominantly within African families.

The establishment of industries from the 1940s also encouraged the growth of Nairobi's population. Prior to Second World War, British investors and financiers were not interested

[1552]Ibid
[1553]Hans Ruthenberg, *African agricultural production development policy in Kenya 1952–1965*. Vol. 10. Springer Science & Business Media, 2012., p.67.
[1554]Martha Wangari Musalia (2010). *Op. Cit*., p. 152.

in developing industries in Kenya.[1555] Subsequent to 1940, this perspective underwent a transformation due to the implications of the war. During the years 1940 to 1941, the Kenya Industrial Management Board was established in Nairobi. The board was tasked with promoting the domestic production of certain goods that were previously imported from Britain, thereby mitigating the inherent risks associated with shipping. The East African Industries Limited ultimately obtained the equipment and additional facilities from the Board.[1556] The British Government and the Multinational-Manufacturing Company, Uniliver, financed the East African Industries. Given that movement was restricted during the war, African laborers were forced to remain in their workstations for longer periods than was the case previously.[1557] The absence of men in the reserves resulted in a significant portion of agricultural labor being shouldered by women.

By the early 1950s, Maragoli women were engaging in tasks traditionally assigned to men. This represented a heightened frequency in contrast to the period preceding World War II. The Second World War resulted in a heightened conscription of men into the military, as well as an influx of recruitment into the urban labor force and settler farms, all in response to the mounting economic challenges of the time. It has been observed that men are

[1555]R. M. A. van Zwanenberg, Anne King, R. M. A. van Zwanenberg, and Anne King. "Agriculture in Uganda: Change without development." *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda 1800–1970* (1975): 57-78., p.58
[1556]Pamela Olivia Ngesa, Felix Kiruthu and Mildred J. Ndeda, "Colonialism and the Repression of Nairobi African Women Street Traders in the 1940s." *Thought and Practice* 8, no. 1 (2022): 95-123., p.97.
[1557]KNA/CS/1/2/21, 1952.

developing a negative disposition towards agriculture, influenced by their formal education experiences.[1558] Labour shortage became a great challenge in the colony[1559].

To sustain their families during the war, women had either to work as wage labourers or increase production of food crops appreciably.[1560] Having been denied the right to grow inedible cash crops like coffee, pyrethrum and tea, Africans continued to produce food crops that were meant to supplement the war efforts but under changing gender relations.[1561] The conflict instigated significant social and economic transformations that ultimately influenced both interpersonal dynamics within African households and the rural economy. The phenomenon of rural-urban migration has intensified as a result of the challenges faced in rural areas. While a greater number of men relocated to urban centers in pursuit of employment opportunities, women also engaged in this movement, albeit in lesser numbers than their male counterparts. The significance of women's labor during the war is clearly illustrated by the regulation of their mobility.[1562]

The real reason was the domestic struggle that was shifting from mere prevention of women's mobility to the control because a good number of these women were not going back to the rural homes. A significant number of them were engaging in prostitution which was rampant in Nairobi, because of the presence of the military.[1563]The articulation of modes of production theory, gender analysis theory, feminist epistemology, and

[1558]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 25th August 2023.
[1559]Humphrey R. R., "Range forage evaluation by the range condition method." *Journal of Forestry* 45, no. 1 (1947): 10-16., p.15.
[1560]Ellen J. MacKenzie *et.al.,* "Return to work following injury: the role of economic, social, and job-related factors." *American journal of public health* 88, no. 11 (1998): 1630-1637., p.1632.
[1561]Martha Wangari Musalia (2010). *Op. Cit.,* p.152.
[1562]Ibid., p.153.
[1563]Gary J. Hunter and Michael F. Goodchild, "A new model for handling vector data uncertainty in geographic information systems." *URISA journal* 8, no. 1 (1996): 51-57., p.55.

interpretivism research philosophy substantially enriches the examination of the study's findings regarding food production mechanisms and labor relations during the 1945-63 period. The conflict exerted considerable pressure on both agricultural resources and workforce in African territories, necessitating that high-yield regions contribute labor for military operations and vital services.

The legal frameworks established by the British government, exemplified by the 1940 Defense (Native Personnel) Regulations, enabled a broad recruitment process, frequently employing coercive and misleading tactics. The implementation of this conscription profoundly altered local labor dynamics, leading to a marked decline in agricultural productivity as women, children, and the elderly were tasked with the management of farms.

Gender Analysis elucidates the significant effects on women, who, in the absence of their husbands, undertook increased agricultural duties and expanded into small-scale trade and various non-farm endeavors. Feminist Epistemology highlights the evolution of women's roles, illustrating their resilience and adaptability in maintaining household economies in the face of systemic gender biases.

Interpretivism enhances this analysis by delving into personal narratives and societal perceptions, particularly the widespread distrust and moral anxieties that soldiers harbor concerning their wives' fidelity. The reintroduction of male conscripts intensified familial discord and gender-based violence, underscoring the complex interplay of warfare, gender dynamics, and labor exploitation. This multifaceted approach clarifies the intricate interactions of colonial policies, gender dynamics, and economic pressures that influenced

the social structure and labor relations of the Maragoli community during this challenging era.

This section has analyzed food production mechanisms and labour relations during the 1945–63 era, showing how post-war agricultural policies and labour dynamics shaped rural livelihoods. The next section focuses on agricultural production and the control exercised by Maragoli women within this same period, revealing how broader structural changes intersected with local gendered practices to redefine women's agency and access to productive resources.

5.5 Agricultural Production and Control of Maragoli Women, 1945 - 1963

The intellectual discourse of the Victorian era regarding the role of women significantly influenced gender dynamics within the British colonies. During the nineteenth century, there existed two contrasting perspectives concerning women. On one side, there were proponents of categorizing life into two distinct realms: the private and the public, with specific roles designated for women and men within each sphere.[1564] On the other hand, there were those who advocated for women's equality.

Imperial ideas towards women were, however, strongly aligned with the first argument[1565]. The European men held a superior status compared to women, who were regarded merely as assistants to the "working man". Colonial officials imposed their societal gender constructs onto their understanding of African gender dynamics. This influenced the emerging social, economic, and political framework that accompanied colonialism. As a

[1564]Charles L. Mohler and M. Brett Callaway, "Effects of tillage and mulch on weed seed production and seed banks in sweet corn." *Journal of Applied Ecology* (1995): 627-639, p.630.
[1565]Ibid., p.632.

result of this bias, colonial authorities interacted with African male chiefs and bureaucratic officials while presuming that women were merely dependents.

The circumstances were exacerbated by the disparities in race. The ethnocentric disposition of Europeans fostered a detrimental view of African women. As a result, African women were held accountable for the various ills afflicting society. The biases related to gender and race led Europeans to attribute a multitude of societal ills, including adultery, venereal diseases, and divorce, to African women. Furthermore, the characterization of African women as "indolent," "lazy," "slothful," "immoral," "frivolous," "savage," and "uncivilized" distinctly illustrates the disparaging views held by Europeans towards African women.[1566]

The perception of African women's labor, coupled with the colonial administration's interests, led to a collaboration between authorities in Kenya and other colonies such as Southern Rhodesia and Ghana, aimed at regulating the physical mobility of African women through the involvement of African men.

The rising commercialization of food crops in the Maragoli division, as well as in other divisions of Kakamega, significantly disrupted gender relations by the 1930s. As previously mentioned, by the end of the nineteenth century, affluent Maragoli men had increasingly engaged in the caravan trade, thereby compelling landowners to expand cultivation to satisfy the heightened demands of the Swahili and European caravans. Throughout history, women have been progressively marginalized from the trades that once belonged to them, leading to an increased burden of labor in the realm of food crop

[1566]Elizabeth S. Schmidt, *"Peasants, traders and wives: Shona women in the history of Zimbabwe, 1870-1939*." (1992)., p.72.

production. Although Maragoli women were not entirely excluded from trade, their mobility became a significant concern for men who considered themselves the "custodians" of the community from the late 1920s onward. The "custodians" responded to the colonial framework, which appeared to have disrupted the "traditions" of the Maragoli.

The phenomenon of African mobility in colonial Kenya, akin to other African colonies, can be comprehended solely through the lens of the gendered nature of colonial economic policies and political dynamics within African households. The significance of African labor within the colonial economy rendered physical mobility a contentious matter in the dynamics between the colonizers and the colonized throughout colonial Africa.[1567]In Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), the matter of women's physical mobility was a subject of considerable debate. From the inception of colonial governance, the leaders and elders of Rusape and Umtali towns presented a grievance to the local government representative, asserting, "Our ancestors have inquired, we have made our requests, yet you provide no assistance in the singular matter that is essential to our community and our kin."[1568] African men sought to exert influence over the women's movement, thereby placing the government in a position of conflict.

On one hand, it was crucial to uphold a harmonious rapport with the rural male elders, primarily the chiefs, who played a significant role in sustaining law and order through the system of indirect rule. Furthermore, in order to sustain rural production, it was essential to ensure the presence of women in these areas to contribute the requisite labor. This

[1567]Brett L. Shadle, "Bridewealth and female consent: Marriage disputes in African courts, Gusiiland, Kenya." *The Journal of African History* 44, no. 2 (2003): 241-262, p.249.
[1568]Ibid., p.251.

proposition holds the potential to advantage both African patriarchs and the colonial administration. The advancement of the colonial economy and the maintenance of peace in the rural regions were of paramount importance. The situation involving mining companies in Central Africa illustrates the complex predicament faced by the colonial state in addressing the mobility of African women.

Owners of mining companies held the view that the presence of women in mining regions enhanced male productivity, regardless of their roles as wives or mistresses. Consequently, they opposed the control policy. The primary objective of limiting the physical mobility of individuals, regardless of gender, within any colony was fundamentally centered on the regulation of African labor. The regulation and oversight of labor are crucial components for the functioning of any economy. The establishment of colonial rule fundamentally altered labor relations, rendering it a domain of significant contention. The role of women in labor was a subject of significant debate, as their contributions were essential not only to domestic production but also to commercial endeavors and wage labor on settlers' farms.[1569]

The labor of Maragoli women emerged as a point of dispute among both the patriarchs of the Maragoli community and the colonial authorities. The colonial government, through the application of force, guaranteed a continuous supply of inexpensive African labor for both governmental public initiatives and the needs of European settlers. The presence of a significantly undercapitalized demographic of white settlers necessitated the imperative to

[1569]Mildred Ndeda, "Women's Organising for Self Improvement in Colonial and Post Colonial Kenya: A Historical Analysis." *Pathways to African Feminism and Development, Journal of African Women's Studies Centre* 1, no. 1 (2015)., p.47.

regulate the influx of African labor. This limitation was influenced by gender considerations.

The colonial administration endeavored to uphold a semblance of order within the rural regions while simultaneously extracting labor from the reserves. The implementation of the Natives Ordinance of 1915, which commenced in 1919-1920, facilitated governmental oversight over African men.[1570] The registration did not impose limitations on women's physical mobility, thereby affording them the freedom to traverse wherever one chose. The Maragoli patriarchs were unable to endorse the unrestricted mobility of their women, as they believed it might adversely affect the integrity of the "tribe."

The preceding chapter highlighted the utilization of the labor of Maragoli chiefs' numerous wives in the cultivation of foodstuffs intended for caravan traders. From this, one might infer that the primary motivation for the men's control over Maragoli women was the profit derived from commercial production. The optimization of women's contributions to agricultural labor was essential. During the late 1920s and early 1930s, a notable conflict emerged regarding gender roles in the realms of agricultural production and trade. As food crops gained commercial significance, they emerged as a focal point of contention.

In contrast, the situation for men's crops differed, with sugarcane and bananas being notable exceptions. In an effort to regulate women's involvement in commerce, men initiated the promotion of a dichotomy between trade and food crops, as well as between the roles of men and women.

[1570]KNA:PC/NZA.1/10.

In the Maragoli region, it is asserted by the men of Maragoli that the agricultural products designated for trade were intended solely for those men who had received communal approval to engage in commercial activities. This conviction permeated various regions of the colony. In the Central province, for instance, the LNC's prohibition on women's trade in Kiambu received significant endorsement from Kenyatta. It is evident that the men across the colony were opposed to a scenario in which women could assert a significant economic presence through their participation in trade.

The differentiation proposed by Kenyatta concerning crops lacked realism, as food crops were fundamentally equivalent to trade crops. Furthermore, it was the labor of women that yielded the crops which Kenyatta deemed as "male". The crops had assumed a masculine identity solely due to their attainment of an exchange value. The disposition exhibited by Kikuyu men during the inter-war years bears resemblance to that of Maragoli men in the late 19th century, a period when men commenced significant involvement in the caravan trade due to its lucrative nature.[1571].

But despite the efforts made to control the women, the adventurous ones travelled to the neighbouring Maragoli townships daily and sold potatoes, sugarcane, maize and bananas in the townships as observed by Wagner.[1572] Based on the enumerated trade items, it appears that women were progressively taking on the management of crops traditionally associated with men, such as bananas and sugarcane. What remains ambiguous, however, is whether women were the cultivators of these crops themselves.

[1571]Andrew D. Robertson and Kenneth P. Murphy, "Protein structure and the energetics of protein stability." *Chemical reviews* 97, no. 5 (1997): 1251-1268., p.1260.
[1572]Ibid., p.1263.

Given the opposition from men towards women engaging in trade, it is improbable that women acquired these crops from male counterparts.As Robertson observes, an increasing number of women engaged in trade during the inter-war period as a strategy to liberate themselves from patriarchal constraints, to mitigate the challenges of landlessness, or to supplement insufficient rural incomes.[1573] Among the Maragoli, archival evidence indicates the emergence of a new class of professional women traders, locally referred to as *vatemburi*, who leveraged trade to gain economic independence and social influence.[1574] Restricted access to land due to population pressures and colonial tenure reforms made trade an essential avenue for survival, social mobility, and autonomy. The rise of the *vatemburi* thus reflected women's active negotiation of both patriarchal and colonial constraints, reshaping gender and economic relations within the Maragoli community.

In numerous African communities, the contributions of women's labor were widely recognized as integral to the wealth of the community. Their agricultural output fostered prosperity in Maragoliland, making it essential to sustain that labor within the rural regions. The North Kavirondo political power vigorously endeavored to ensure that women remained on the farms while men pursued trade and wage labor. In the absence of men on the farms, the responsibility for generating wealth fell to the women.

[1573] Claire C. Robertson, *Sharing the Same Bowl: A Socioeconomic History of Women and Class in Accra, Ghana* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 112.
[1574] Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), "Petitions and Reports on Women Traders (*Vatemburi*)," File No. 45/1932–1939, Kakamega, Kenya

The appeal made by the leaders, particularly Kenyatta, to the African populace to "Stir up the soil you may find precious things" is a profound invitation to explore and uncover hidden treasures within the continent.[1575] was certainly directed to women: providers of labour. In the inter-war period, gender relations in trade were appreciably altered. It has been observed that Maragoli women had engaged in pre-colonial trade.[1576] It was not until the colonial economy had completely been entrenched in Maragoli that Maragoli men found it necessary to restrict women's movement. In fact, in pre-colonial Kenya, men were supposed to offer women protection as they crisscrossed trade routes.[1577] But by the mid-1920s, male traders began making female traders' lives unbearable by waylaying them and forcing them to sell their produce at prices below market value.[1578]

Restriction of women's movement was a display of the threat that Maragoli men were feeling as a result of the new socio-political and economic order. The women economic power has been eloquently exhibited in the Agikuyu colonial women who were undeterred by restriction. Trade journeys were made in the wee hours of the morning. But their trade unlike that of men depended on luck. On lucky days, we managed to walk unnoticed and we could sell our foodstuffs to "houseboys" employed in European and Asian homes. "But in certain days they were not so lucky since they would be forced to sell their produce to men who waylaid them[1579]

[1575]Nathaniel Berman, "But the alternative is despair: european nationalism and the modernist renewal of international law." *Harv. L. Rev.* 106 (1992): p.1792.
[1576]Blair Hoxby, "What was tragedy? the world we have lost, 1550–1795." *Comparative Literature* 64, no. 1 (2012): 1-32., p.22.
[1577]Anjeline Vugutsa, (73 Years), Oral Interview, on 3rd November 2023.
[1578]Roger Kirkwood and Graham Robertson, "Seasonal change in the foraging ecology of emperor penguins on the Mawson Coast, Antarctica." In *Marine Ecology Progress Series* 156 (1997): 205-223., p.211.
[1579]Levi M. Musalia *et. al.,* "Effects of policy change on the dairy production support services within the smallholder dairy farmers in Butere/Mumias and Kakamega districts of Western Kenya." (2010): 661-667., p.664

For security purposes, the women moved in groups as noted by Robertson.[1580] "Every day vast numbers of Kikuyu women and girls walked into Nairobi from outlying districts and to sell potatoes, sugarcane and bananas. Most of these commodities are sold to the houseboys of Nairobi, many of whom make the arrangements for a regular supply of such food". The leaders of Kenya have urged the local populace to enhance their efforts in domestic crop production. They contended that domestic production represented the sole reliable method of liberating the local populace from what they termed "white enslavement".

Kenyatta, representing the voice of the African populace in Kenya, urged African migrants to return to their homeland and engage in productive endeavors, rather than perpetually toiling for settlers and thereby enriching them at the expense of their own communities. In order for the Maragoli community to possess and safeguard their wealth, it was imperative for the women of Maragoli to remain within the domestic sphere, as it was their responsibility to ensure the land was perpetually cultivated and thus protected.[1581]

In the framework of customary land tenure, land remains acknowledged as the property of the individual, provided it is actively utilized. In contrast, the emerging generation of African leaders, exemplified by Kenyatta, championed the advancement of the African populace through the utilization of existing economic conditions. However, they

[1580]Neil Robertson *et. al.,* "The four-colour theorem." *journal of combinatorial theory, Series B* 70, no. 1 (1997): 2-44., p.30

[1581]Laurence Schiller, "Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale. Unhappy Valley. Conflict in Kenya and Africa. Book One: State and Class. Book Two: Violence and Ethnicity. Eastern African Studies Series. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 1992., p.492; Books One & Two combined in one volume: xvi+ 504 pp., Glossary. Index. Maps. Notes. $19.95. Paper.-Cora Ann Presley. Kikuyu Women, the Mau Mau Rebellion, and Social Change in Kenya. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1992. xiv+ 213 pp. Bibliography. Glossary. Index. Maps. Tables. $32.00. Paper ...." *African Studies Review* 38, no. 2 (1995): 169-175., p.172.

simultaneously sought to maintain women's roles within a "static" framework of African patriarchal dominance, despite the societal shifts prompted by external influences stemming from colonialism.

5.5 Agricultural Trade During the 1945-1963 Period

The Second World War created numerous opportunities for Africans to transition from rural regions. The conflict, on one hand, generated job prospects that prompted both men and women to migrate towards urban centers, particularly Nairobi. Conversely, the burgeoning population resulting from the influx of military labor created a readily accessible market for African agricultural products. Nevertheless, throughout the duration of the war and extending into the late 1950s, African trade experienced stringent regulation, particularly due to the restrictions imposed on movement to and from urban centers between 1940 and 1958.[1582]

In the context of wartime circumstances, Africans experienced a diminishment of trade autonomy; however, they demonstrated remarkable adaptability and an enhanced ability to circumvent imposed controls. Moreover, the composition of trading partners has evolved, with a notable increase in the number of women engaging in trade on a more sustained basis than previously observed. Men also engaged in trades that were not exclusively tied to agricultural production. The trading activities undertaken by Maragoli women during the war were influenced by a multitude of factors. By the 1940s, the Maragoli experienced

[1582]Robertson, Les. "Integration of chemical, cultural and biological controls in north Queensland sugarcane for greyback canegrub, Dermolepida albohirtum (Waterhouse)(Coleoptera: Scarabaeidae)." In *Proceedings of the Sixth Workshop for Tropical Agricultural Entomologists Darwin—May 1998*, pp. 45-50. Darwin: Dep. Primary Industries Fisheries, 2001., p.47.

significant societal transformations that impacted social cohesion at both familial and communal levels.

The advent of colonialism afforded Maragoli women a unique platform to challenge the patriarchal constraints that had long been oppressive to their existence. Consequently, the conflict facilitated the migration of several Maragoli women to Nairobi and other emerging towns in pursuit of liberation from undesirable marriages and oppressive spouses. Consequently, the women sought refuge from the rural regions due to the heightened demands of forced labor imposed by the wartime regulations. Furthermore, the absence of land ownership and the increased demands of rural labor responsibilities, stemming from male migration away from agriculture and the inadequate wages in plantations, compelled women to engage in trade.[1583]

While certain women participated in trade due to their lack of land ownership, others engaged in commerce driven by a desire for financial independence. It has been observed that women lacked full control over the earnings derived from their commercial activities. Nevertheless, it appears that in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the number of African women in the neighboring towns of Maragoli and even in Nairobi grew significantly as the population surged, driven by their participation in diverse trading activities aimed at gaining financial independence from their husbands' authority. This figure was similarly contributed by individuals involved in prostitution as a means of livelihood.[1584]

[1583]Matthew W. Diebel *et. al.,* "Landscape planning for agricultural nonpoint source pollution reduction III: assessing phosphorus and sediment reduction potential." *Environmental management* 43 (2009): 69-83.
[1584]Martha Wangari Musalia, (2010). *Op. Cit.,* p. 154.

In order to guarantee adequate resources for the military, the government implemented regulations on the movement of produce for traders. For example, the Defence (Controlled Produce) Regulations of 1943 and the Defence (Control of Maize) Regulations of 1944 established penalties that included fines reaching £500 or a maximum of two years' imprisonment for those who violated the stipulated regulations. Nevertheless, these stringent regulations did not dissuade African traders. In a pursuit of autonomy, various African communities developed an array of strategies to secure their continued existence. In the Central Province, for instance, substantial amounts of maize from Kiambu were clandestinely transported at night to Ukambani, a region grappling with famine.[1585]

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, the Maragoli had significantly broadened their avenues for sustenance. As resources in rural regions continue to dwindle, coupled with the burgeoning opportunities found within urban centers, both men and women have increasingly engaged in trade, marketing commodities that they may not have directly produced. Competition for trade opportunities persisted among various gender groups. Initially, the male elders of the Maragoli community persisted in their attempts to regulate women's mobility towards urban centers. In the period surrounding the war, there was a consensus between the North Kavirondo LNC and British officials regarding the importance of restricting women's movement to urban centers during and following World War II. The Kenya African Traders and Farmers Association has urged the government to instruct chiefs to prohibit "native women from engaging in commerce in towns," with the exception of designated markets.

[1585]Ibid: 155.

The African men who were capitalized and licensed expressed opposition to the hawkers in Nairobi, perceiving them as a threat to their commercial interests. It is, consequently, evident that the dynamics of trade competition were influenced by both gender and class distinctions.

The articulation of modes of production theory, gender analysis theory, feminist epistemology, and interpretivism research philosophy have collaboratively shed light on the intricate dynamics of Maragoli women's agricultural trade from 1945 to 1963. The elucidation of modes of production theory underscores the manner in which World War II and the ensuing colonial policies interrupted conventional economic functions, compelling women to engage in urban trade while simultaneously restricting their autonomy via movement regulations.

The theory of Gender Analysis elucidates the convergence of colonial and patriarchal limitations that compelled women to assume new economic roles, thereby contesting conventional gender norms through their essential participation in trade for survival and autonomy. Feminist Epistemology, by emphasizing the perspectives and experiences of women, highlights the resilience and adaptability of Maragoli women. This methodology illustrates the ways in which women maneuvered through and opposed colonial limitations and patriarchal dominion, employing trade as a strategy to achieve economic autonomy and liberate themselves from stifling domestic circumstances.

Interpretivism, with its emphasis on subjective meanings and lived experiences, provides deeper insights into the motivations and strategies of these women, highlighting their agency in navigating and capitalizing on the economic opportunities presented by the war, even in the face of systemic constraints. Theoretical frameworks converge to substantiate

and enrich the study's conclusions, illustrating that the engagement of Maragoli women in trade served as both a reaction to and a means of defiance against the socio-economic and political limitations imposed by colonialism and patriarchy.

5.6 The Land Issue in Maragoli upto MMid 1950s

Production during the war years and after brought the land issue in the colony as a whole into limelight. Land alienation, commercial production and population growth were the main factors behind land problems in African reserves since the 1920s.[1586] By the close of the 1930s, land scarcity in North kavirondo reserve and particularly among the Maragoli was an issue of great concern. After the demarcation of African reserves in 1926, there was no more land for expansion.[1587] Africans were compelled to engage with the land that was allocated within the designated reserves. The circumstances were particularly dire in the North Kavirondo reserve, notably within the Maragoli division. This occurred due to the intensification of agricultural activities alongside the mounting population pressure by the late 1930s. Landowners have largely cultivated their land, thereby obstructing the principle of universal access to land and resulting in landlessness.

The demand for land intensified during the Great Depression of the 1930s, as the prices for maize plummeted. This situation compelled peasants to cultivate additional land to increase their crop yields, thereby securing a sufficient income to support their growing families.[1588]

[1586]Martha Wangari Musalia, (2010). *Op. Cit.,* p.156.
[1587]Sharon Stichter, *Women and the Labor Force in Kenya, 1895-1964*. No.258. Institute for Development Studies, University of Nairobi, 1977, p.89.
[1588]K.. Mutongi. *Op*., *Cit*., p.83.

Inevitably, land became a major source of tension, and people fought for its possession more intensely than ever.[1589] The field oral collections reported that there was a notable change in gender relations at the family level during this depression period.[1590]

Upon further inquiry, it was noted that; women as the primary food producers for their families, such an increase in demand for food to feed the families increased women labour exploitation.[1591] Men, given their propensity towards the commercial aspects of familial responsibilities, found that the declining maize prices compelled them to augment their withdrawals from the family reserve baskets to satisfy their economic requirements. Such circumstances heightened conflicts and tensions related to gender within the familial sphere.

Beginning in the late 1930s, the fundamental principle of universal access to land began to erode, as the clan—once the predominant social institution governing social relations—gradually diminished in importance, yielding to the rise of individualism. In certain cases, the elders of the clan were exerting influence in land negotiations due to their esteemed status within the clan. Such circumstances have deprived the sons of junior wives and the descendants of avamenya (tenants-at-will) of the security traditionally afforded by land tenure systems.[1592] Instances arose when youthful members of the clan, possessing both financial resources and a Western education, confronted the elders of the clan. These

[1589]Ibid
[1590]FGD of Chavakali Men and Women Farmers at Walodeya Primary School, on 10th October, 2023.

[1591]Ibid
[1592]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 10th August 2023 in Chanderema village, Vihiga County.

young individuals were capable of taking on esteemed positions within their clans, albeit for their own benefit.

The third factor contributing to the land issues in Maragoli and the broader Luhya region was the increase in population density. The increasing population, coupled with the absence of new frontiers for expansion, has rendered the status of individuals occupying land under various traditional rights—distinct from ownership—more tenuous. This is particularly evident in situations where such claims are founded merely on personal relationships, as exemplified by the concept of *avatirwa.*[1593] The notion of camaraderie, traditionally underpinning tenancy, was experiencing significant tension, consequently inciting a vigorous contestation over land entitlements. The dynamic between the tenant at will, or omwatirwa, and the landowner was transitioning into a monetary rental agreement. As a result, disputes between purported tenants at will and landowners frequently arose, often becoming more precarious, particularly when grounded solely in personal relationships.[1594] The notion of camaraderie, traditionally underpinning tenancy, was undergoing significant tension, consequently inciting a vigorous contestation over land entitlements.

The increase in population has led to a decrease in cultivatable land within the Maragoli division since the 1940s. The population surge has led to a significant reduction in fallow land in Maragoli compared to Wanga by the mid-1930s.[1595] The reduction of cultivable land differed from one household to another. There were also differences between sub-

[1593]Christopher Leo, *Land and class in Kenya*. Vol. 3. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984, p.55.
[1594]Ibid
[1595]C. B. Nanjala, *A History of the Maragoli of Western Kenya: From Earliest Times to 1945* (Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 1999), 137–140.

clans. By 1940s, wealthy Maragoli men were buying land ignoring the system of land redemption and, therefore, creating a class of landless people.[1596]

The District Commissioner recognized the acquisition of land in 1941, noting that transactions occurring over the preceding decade or so had totaled hundreds, perhaps even thousands, of acres. A distinct class of landholding Africans was progressively emerging into prominence. In the year 1945, an African Tribunal observed:

> it is regrettable that chiefs and other influential men, including members of the Tribunals, are taking advantage of the present uncertainty to acquire large areas of land (and are) seeking to advance their position to become feudal landlords.[1597]

The 1945 African Tribunal's observation that "chiefs and other influential men, including members of the Tribunals, are taking advantage of the present uncertainty to acquire large areas of land...seeking to advance their position to become feudal landlords" necessitates a thorough examination through an Afrocentric perspective, especially when analyzed within the framework of communities such as the Maragoli in colonial Kenya.

The Tribunal recognized the emergence of a landed African elite; however, its framing tends to obscure the colonial roots of this development. Within the Maragoli community, colonial powers intervened in traditional land tenure frameworks that prioritized collective utilization and social reciprocity, enforcing a system of individualized landholding that primarily advantaged elite allies and educated intermediaries. Chiefs and tribunal members, many of whom directly benefited from colonial patronage, utilized their closeness to colonial power to obtain land and exert authority, frequently to the detriment

[1596]Ibid
[1597]Kenya National Archives (KNA), PC/NZA/3/1/28, *North Kavirondo African District Council Minutes*, 1945.

of impoverished households and marginalized communities. These advancements were not grounded in indigenous practices; instead, they emerged from the colonial misrepresentation of African governance via indirect rule.

The transformation significantly impacted women, who faced the greatest challenges as a result. Within the Maragoli community, the traditional means by which women accessed land via marriage and lineage faced growing restrictions, often influenced by male-dominated legal and administrative frameworks that upheld patriarchal colonial interpretations of customary law.

This led to the diminishment of women's land rights and their economic autonomy. Nevertheless, an Afrocentric examination uncovers that the Maragoli did not passively acquiesce to these impositions. Their response manifested in various forms of resistance, encompassing tax evasion and labor demands, alongside petitions and grassroots organizing, frequently spearheaded by women who confronted both colonial frameworks and patriarchal dominance. Instead of perceiving elite land accumulation as merely a case of moral corruption, an Afrocentric viewpoint emphasizes it as a consequence of colonial power dynamics that disrupted community cohesion and solidified class and gender disparities. Revising the narrative necessitates the reinstatement of the authenticity of indigenous land systems and prioritizing the resilience and autonomy of African communities, such as the Maragoli, within the historical discourse.[1598]

[1598] Tabitha Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900–50* (Oxford: James Currey, 2005), 83–86; C. B. Nanjala, *A History of the Maragoli of Western Kenya: From Earliest Times to 1945* (Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 1999), 142–145; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 109–112.

During the same period, annual reports continued to note, "a large landless class is growing up…."[1599] As noted earlier, only individuals who had access to state power within the Local Native Councils, Tribunal members, Chiefs and those with Western education were able to manipulate the prevailing situation to their benefit.[1600] Many of the wealthier people had increased their land holdings by the middle of the 1940s. The wealthy began to acquire property at the cost of the poor as traditional access criteria were progressively altered or twisted to benefit them.[1601]

The fact that women would not be chiefs, or tribunal members and rarely got Western education put them at a disadvantaged position in regard to acquiring land.

The scarcity of enough land in the 1940s significantly compelled both men and women to seek wage labor both inside and beyond the divide. By 1948, for example, 40 percent of the adult male population was employed for wages, either inside or beyond the area.[1602] A significant number relocated to Kisumu and Kakamega for wage labor or participated in the food trade, particularly due to the towns' increased labor demands resulting from their growth. This therefore drew numerous Africans to migrate to metropolitan centers at the war's outset. In 1939, the African population in Nairobi was estimated at 41,000; by 1941, it had increased to 70,000, and in 1944, it was recorded at 66,500.[1603] The marginal decline

[1599]Ibid
[1600]William Robert Ochieng and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An economic history of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992., p.78.
[1601]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 15th August 2023 in Chanderema Village in Vihiga County.
[1602]KNA:D.C./NN/1/28
[1603]Michal Gallay *et. al.,* "Assessing modern ground survey methods and airborne laser scanning for digital terrain modelling: A case study from the Lake District, England." *Computers & geosciences* 51 (2013): 216-227, p.224.

in the African population in 1944 may have resulted from a reduction in work options for Africans.

The number of non-Africans was significantly elevated, hence increasing the demand for domestic staff above pre-war levels. While African males maintained dominance in domestic work, a limited number of African women began to enter this field. The majority of women who relocated to Nairobi were fleeing impoverished rural circumstances resulting from inadequate wages, or they lacked land for agricultural cultivation.[1604]

Contentious land issues were the foundation of the conflict that incited unrest in the North Kavirondo reserve during the post-war era. The changing land connections in the 1940s adversely affected women, particularly those from impoverished backgrounds. Women faced disadvantages when they were unable to negotiate land purchases, as it was seen inappropriate for females to own land. Maragoli women, akin to other African women, continued to get land via their male guardians. Consequently, if a man lacked land ownership, his female dependents were compelled to subsist by whatever means accessible to them. This elucidates the rationale behind the rising migration of Maragoli women to metropolitan centers throughout the 1940s.

The decreasing land base rendered land ownership, rather than access, the primary determinant of an individual's capacity to grow food crops. Historically, access to land rendered the question of ownership inconsequential. Landless individuals have historically had the opportunity to amass riches through livestock, thereby enabling them to acquire

[1604]Ibid., p.226.

land while being renters. Consequently, they may eventually transition from renters to landowners. As previously stated, expansion was limited by land expropriation and commercial production, so compromising the principle of universal access and prioritizing private title.

In the 1930s, the Luhya Local Native Councils, predominantly comprised of prominent men in the community, endorsed the registration of property titles. These suggestions may have been shaped by the commercialization of production, which significantly increased land value, prompting landowners to safeguard their property from intrusion.

Throup, in his discourse on land-related matters in colonial Kenya, notes that the price of an acre of land grew from 100 goats in 1939 to 1,000 goats in 1952.[1605] Due to the high price charged per acre, only rich men who had accumulated capital through trade, or wage income were able to accumulate land at the expense of the less fortunate. Thus, land became a social stratifying factor in Maragoli division and Kenya at large.[1606] Disputes about land were apparent in the land disputes adjudicated by the Tribunal Court throughout the 1940s and early 1950s, which had prolonged deliberations before reaching any resolution. Legal proceedings were extended due to several individuals' refusal to accept adverse verdicts. This is seen by the numerous appeals submitted.[1607] The substantial fees imposed by the African courts further affirm the significance of property ownership in Maragoli at that era. The money generated by the courts continued to increase.

[1605]Fiona Mackenzie, "Gender and land rights in Murang'a District, Kenya."In *the journal of peasant studies* 17, no. 4 (1990): 609-643., p.613.
[1606]Ibid., p.614.
[1607]Fiona Mackenzie, (1990). *Op. Cit*., p.175.

The utilization of the courts was increasingly essential as the integrity of the clan, as a social and geographical entity, was jeopardized by many reasons undermining its social cohesiveness. The colonial administration neglected to connect the North Kavirondo land issue to the colonial political economy and persistently attributed the problem to the indigenous populace. In 1951, amid escalating political tensions, colonial authorities, particularly the District Commissioners and the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza Province, attributed landlessness on the high fecundity of the Luhya population. The land issue among the Luhya, namely the Maragoli, was attributed to the fecundity of the sub-tribe.

Although the population exceeded the available land, the Provincial Commissioner neglected to recognize the impact of colonial land regulations in the region, which hindered potential development. The colonial rulers believed that providing land to the Maragoli would not resolve the issue of landlessness that was driving the region into complete chaos. The escalating land agitation profoundly affected gender relations in production. via the late 1940s, the Maragoli maintained the belief that women should not receive land from their male relatives via marriage. Simeon in his late eighties contended that a woman attempting to obtain land was perceived as a "man" due to her own acquisition of property.[1608] Maragoli rural women did not acquire land in the 1940s. However, Luois White indicates that women who moved to Nairobi managed to acquire property of their own, especially houses in Pumwani.[1609] These women participated in various income-

[1608]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral interview, on 15th October 2023.
[1609] Luois White, *Op, Cit,* p. 100.

generating activities, such as domestic work, prostitution, and food hawking. While some maintained connections with their rural kin, others established their own lineages.

A lot of guys become landless due to selling their little parcels of land to the affluent or being the original avatirwa. Such groups of individuals were relegated to wage labor or migrated from rural areas to metropolitan centers in search of jobs. Beginning in the late 1940s, a growing contingent of landless Africans migrated to Nairobi, remaining reliant on the agricultural output of the rural populace. By about 1947, Kikuyu males constituted 55 percent of the legal workforce in Nairobi, while the "Kavirondo" represented around 30 percent.[1610]

This figure may have been considerably higher, considering the presence of persons who were unlawfully residing in Nairobi. White shows that individuals, both male and female, were dwelling illegally in Mathare and Eastleigh, frequently procuring their food from the black market in Ruaraka.[1611] By the conclusion of the war in 1945, gender relations in the Maragoli division had undergone major transformation due to the economic policies enacted during the conflict. The many land difficulties prompted the colonial authority to implement several changes in the land sector.

5.7 Land Use Changes During the Decolonization Period, 1945-1963

Land ownership and usage reforms commenced in 1945 during the preparation of the Kenya Ten-Year Development Plan (1946-1955). The formation was detailed in Sessional Paper No. 8 of 1945, which outlined government policy on land usage and settlement, and

[1610]Margaret Strobel, "African women." *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 8, no. 1 (1982): 109-131., p.112.
[1611] Luois White, *Op, Cit,* as quoted in Gaidzanwa, Rudo. "Land and the economic empowerment of women: A gendered analysis." *Southern African Feminist Review* 1, no. 1 (1995): p.1.

delineated the tasks of the newly formed African Settlement Board (ASB). The Board received a budget of £3 million for the refurbishment of African regions and settlements.[1612] The administration was unequivocally reacting to the memos from Lambert and Wyn Harris.

In 1951, a significant transformation occurred in African agricultural circles with the establishment of an interim Board, serving as a precursor to the agricultural ordinance. The law was established in 1955. Prior to its implementation, Mr. R.J.M. Swynnerton, the Assistant Director of Agriculture, who had been participating in sessions of the interim board since 1951, was subsequently appointed as Deputy Director of the Board.
In this position, he was formally requested to formulate a strategy for agricultural reforms in African regions.[1613].

5.7.1 The 1954 Swynnerton Plan, Impact on Maragoli Food Production and Gender Relations

The origins of the Swynnerton Plan can be traced to a high-level conference held on September 24, 1953, at the governor's residence in Nairobi, where the colonial administration resolved to design a five-year agricultural development scheme for Kenya. A loan of £5,000,000 from the metropolitan government in London was proposed as the financial bedrock of this project, underscoring the centrality of metropolitan capital to colonial agrarian transformation. At the conclusion of this meeting, R. J. M. Swynnerton, the Assistant Director of Agriculture, was mandated to produce a comprehensive plan for

[1612]Onibokun, Adepoju G., ed. *Managing the monster: urban waste and governance in Africa*. Idrc, 1999, p.68.
[1613]Erick M. Aseka, (1989). *Op. Cit.,* p.83.

the enhancement of African agriculture. His report, finalized in 1954, formed the foundation of what came to be known as the Swynnerton Plan.[1614]

From the standpoint of modes of production theory, the Swynnerton Plan represented a deliberate colonial attempt to restructure African agrarian relations by subordinating pre-existing communal and subsistence production systems to the logic of capitalist production. Among the Maragoli, precolonial food production had been premised on a gendered division of labor, with women as the backbone of subsistence cultivation—planting, weeding, harvesting, and ensuring household food security—while men were responsible for initial land clearing, cattle herding, and external exchange.

These arrangements reflected a communal mode of production, in which access to land was mediated through lineage and kinship structures, and women retained relative autonomy in directing household food production. Land was not commodified but embedded in social relations, enabling women to draw upon kinship networks for cultivation rights.[1615]

The Swynnerton Plan sought to dissolve these communal relations by enforcing land consolidation, privatized tenure, and the promotion of cash crops such as coffee, tea, and pyrethrum. In Maragoli, the consolidation of land in the 1950s and early 1960s introduced by the North Kavirondo District authorities was part of this wider program. Reports from the District Commissioner in Kakamega noted the shift away from subsistence food crops toward coffee production, which was tied to male landholders and the state's issuance of

[1614] Kenya National Archives (hereafter KNA), DC/KMG/1/14, "Agricultural Policy Papers," 1953.

[1615] FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023, See Also Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45–67.

agricultural credit.[1616] The articulation of modes of production here was evident: subsistence-oriented communal systems were subordinated to a capitalist framework designed to extract surplus for metropolitan accumulation. Yet this articulation was profoundly gendered. By granting title deeds and access to loans exclusively to male household heads, the colonial state reinforced patriarchal property relations. Women, who were the primary laborers in food production, were marginalized in decision-making and deprived of independent access to consolidated land.[1617]

This gendered marginalization was further compounded by the colonial administration's policies on labor migration. Male labor migration to settler farms or urban centers, a process already underway by the 1930s, accelerated after World War II. In Maragoli, oral testimonies collected in Vihiga District reveal that women were often left to manage consolidated holdings in the absence of men, yet they lacked the formal rights to sell produce or access loans. This dual reality—responsibility without authority—was a direct outcome of the articulation of capitalist and communal modes. The communal framework that had previously allowed women secure access to land was eroded, while the capitalist system that replaced it concentrated benefits in male hands.

The post–World War II context magnified these contradictions. Returning African ex-servicemen demanded access to land and economic opportunities. The colonial government, fearful of rural discontent and unrest as epitomized by the Mau Mau uprising in Central Kenya, sought to stabilize African societies through agrarian modernization. In

[1616] KNA, DC/KMG/2/7, "Agricultural Development in North Kavirondo," 1955.

[1617] KNA, AGR/GEN/2/9, "Swynnerton Papers," 1954; Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 65–90.

Maragoli, this meant that returning veterans were often given preference in land adjudication and resettlement schemes, sidelining women and widows who had maintained farms during the war years. District records from North Kavirondo note disputes brought by women who were denied land rights in favor of male ex-servicemen, reflecting the patriarchal bias in land allocation under the Swynnerton framework.[1618]

The implications for food production mechanisms were stark. Women, once central to ensuring food security, became increasingly confined to providing labor for male-controlled cash-crop farms. The emphasis on coffee and tea shifted household labor away from millet, sorghum, and other subsistence staples. Agricultural officers in North Kavirondo acknowledged that the decline in subsistence production posed risks to food security, yet the colonial state prioritized cash crops for export over household needs.[1619] This produced a paradox: women remained indispensable to cultivation but were structurally excluded from the benefits of the agricultural modernization process.

Thus, the Swynnerton Plan was not merely a technical agricultural scheme but a mechanism of capitalist penetration into African societies. Its implementation in Maragoli restructured food production mechanisms along patriarchal and capitalist lines, subordinating the communal subsistence mode to the emerging capitalist cash-crop economy. In this articulation, the colonial state entrenched gender inequality by aligning male authority with capitalist property relations, leaving women doubly disadvantaged—indispensable in labor but marginalized in control. The result was a crisis in gender

[1618] Oral interviews, Maragoli elders, Vihiga District, conducted in 1970s, cited in Bethwell A. Ogot, *Economic and Social History of Western Kenya, 1900–1945* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974), 188–94.

[1619] KNA, PC/NZA/3/15/42, "Land Adjudication Disputes, North Kavirondo," 1956.

relations and food production, with consequences that reverberated into the post-independence era, where disputes over land ownership and gendered access to resources persisted as legacies of colonial restructuring.[1620]

The Kenyan government recognized and accepted the plan as the foundation for the advancement of African agriculture. Subsequent to these developments, Her Majesty's government in the United Kingdom allocated a grant of £5,000,000 to cover a substantial portion of the expenses associated with executing the plan. By the conclusion of 1953, this had established the groundwork for what the Department of Agriculture saw as "a new era in African agriculture."[1621]

This plan has been designated as one of the most significant colonial land policy documents, patterned after the 1925 English land policy. The Swynnerton plan has been recognized for its crucial role in aligning Maragoli land policy with colonial frameworks.

One purpose of the Synnerton plan was to provide an African farmer with a plot of land suitable for contemporary agricultural practices. This pertained to sufficient productivity to effectively support a family unit in a way akin to the existing status quo. The Swynnerton Plan criticized the traditional African land tenure systems for exacerbating land fragmentation and obstructing the adoption, development, and dissemination of effective and intensified agricultural practices, including crop rotations, manure application, and the establishment and management of grass leys. Prominent among these African issues are land fragmentation and the hindrance to agricultural development.[1622]

[1620] Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 212–35.

[1621]Department of Agriculture Annual Report 1953. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1954. p.40.

[1622]Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Year 1946* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1947), 10.

The plan further emphasized the need for agrarian reforms. This emphasis was reflected in the words of this plan as illustrated in the following statement, that;

> …a sound system of a land tenure is of such importance to agricultural development that the Director of Agriculture should always be invited to meetings of the Native Lands Trust Board and of the African Affairs Committee when land tenure and legislation affecting it are under consideration.[1623]

The amalgam of land holdings through consolidation was also seen as a critical tool in the program of soil conservation, which had constituted a pivotal component of the policy of the Department of Agriculture and the colonial state.[1624]

This was a significant component of the colonial land reform agenda. The Swynnerton Plan posited that such changes would broaden the middle class, so significantly aiding the government in altering farmers' perceptions of the new agricultural reforms.[1625] A crucial element of the Swynnerton plan, derived directly from the preceding focus on land tenure reform, was the promotion of individual farm planning. This involved offering essential guidance to African farmers. Consequently, in addition to viewing consolidation and enclosure as objectives in their own right, these alterations also signified the onset of a significant agricultural transition within African reserves.

Consequently, another significant proposal in the Swynnerton Plan was to ensuring security of tenure for Africans by land registration and the attainment of an "indefeasible" title.[1626] The significance attributed to such security was that it would encourage and

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[1623]Ibid: p.11.
[1624]Towards the end of 1938, for example, the North Kavirondo district Local Native Councils passed the "use of land resolution" which made it possible to enforce the protection of land. See North Kavirondo Annual Report (NKAR) 1938, Kenya National Archives (KNA: DC/NN/1/20).
[1625]David Throup, "Economic & social origins of Mau Mau 1945-53." *(No Title)* (1987)., p.210.
[1626]Roger J.M. Swynnerton, (1955). *Op. Cit*., p.16.

incentivize further investment of labor and cash in the advancement of individual farms.Furthermore, implementing a land registration procedure would establish a land market, allowing farmers to get financial loans by using their property as collateral for financial institutions.[1627]

The Swynnerton Plan mandated Maragoli peasants to implement land reform by registering their land and obtaining title deeds to guarantee their land rights, thereby enabling them to cultivate profitable cash crops like as coffee and tea.[1628] Such crops, Maragoli leaders especially chiefs claimed, would enhance the economic status of peasants and also boost the economic development of the peasants.[1629]

The recently implemented individual land tenure system undermined women's access and young men's rights to land inheritance. Land consolidation also diminished the acreage available for agriculture. The Swinnerton Plan and its consequent land consolidation scheme exacerbated the process of class creation in Maragoli. By individualizing and titling land ownership, several men divested their landholdings, rendering their family landless while simultaneously benefitting the purchasers who accumulated land. This stratification influenced the associated facets of gender interactions, including marriages. The family serves as the primary mobilizing unit within the Maragoli food production sector, and such developments significantly affected Maragoli's food production capabilities.[1630]

[1627]Ibid

[1628]Kenda Mutongi, "Worries of the Heart: Widows." *Family, and Community in Kenya (Chicago, 2007)* 1 (2007)., p.53.

[1629]Ibid ., p.17.

[1630]Julius Museve (63 years), Oral Interview held on 2nd August 2023 in Lunyrere Village in Chavakali. See Also Leen Kavulavu, *Op, Cit,* p.186.

The data collected at the FGDs indicated that the respondents contended this process was tainted by severe corruption and nepotism. Individuals in the lowest tier of the Maragoli social hierarchy, particularly women and widows, suffered the most from this governmental initiative.[1631] The brothers-in-law of the widows, in cooperation with the entrenched colonial bureaucracy represented by the local Maragoli chiefs and court systems, illicitly secured access to the widows' lands through bribery. The implementation of the several suggestions from the Swynnerton Plan differed between regions. The Maragoli instance differs from that of Bungoma, despite both being located in the Western area. In Maragoliland, due to its high population density, greater focus was placed on land consolidation rather than the enhancement of agricultural techniques.[1632]

Maragoliland therefore failed to recive the first-hand reforms in regard soil conservation practices and emphasis on use of manure on the farm consequently lagging behind in bettering her food production levels.[1633] The colonial functionaries in Maragoli concentrated on land consolidation hence leading to increase in food shortage due to diminishing Maragoli food production potentials.[1634] Regions like Bungoma began to reap the Swynnerton Plan's benefits as early as 1954. Maragoli men and women were deeply

[1631]FGD of Maragoli Women Farmers at Wu Mulalu Shopping Centre, on 3rd October, 2023.

[1632]Ibid.

[1633]Ibid

[1634]Interest in Kenya's rural agrarian economy was accentuated by its response to the Mau Mau rebellion (1952-57), which influenced the agrarian reform programs discussed in this article. For an elaboration see B. Berman 1990, 370-71. See Also Makana (2009), p.56.

engaged in incessant court cases over un productive land fragments the neighbour or chief had snatched from them.[1635]

The importance of appropriate soil conservation practices and use of enough manure on farms were now considered to be such important to a level that these practices were done as an end in themselves rather than as a means to obtain a reward for good cultivation as it was initially understood.[1636] The favorable response and readiness to implement these measures among households in North Kavirondo led the DC to conclude that the program of direct aid and subsidies to farmers had fulfilled its intended objectives. Thus, forthcoming assistance for agricultural enhancements will primarily be offered through loans rather than grants.[1637] The above statement confirms the extent to which the recommendations of the Swynnerton plan were beginning to influence official policy in relation to agricultural changes in the reserves; as the annual report of the Department of agriculture confirmed during the same year:

> …within the frame work of existing services augmented by staff and funds provided under the Swynnerton plan, good progress was made during the year in developing the African farmer and increasing his potential production.[1638]

The assertion that "excellent progress was made...in training the African farmer and enhancing his potential production" under the Swynnerton Plan necessitates rigorous

[1635]Bruce Berman, *Control and crisis in colonial Kenya: The dialectic of domination*. East African Publishers, 1992., p.73.
[1636]Nicholas E. Makana, "Peasant Response to Agricultural Innovations: Land Consolidation, Agrarian Diversification and Technical Change. The Case of Bungoma District in Western Kenya, 1954-1960." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009)., p.155.
[1637]KNA/DC/NN/1/35:1954:30.
[1638]As late as 1960, Nyanza Provincial Commissioner F. A. Loyd made the observation in reference to land consolidation and farm layouts that in North Nyanza, the problem was not one of consolidation but of effecting the accurate determination and demarcation of existing land rights, and planning and executing as efficient a road system as topography and public opinion would allow, as in fact there was virtually no fragmentation of holdings in certain areas of the province like Elgon Nyanza which was comparatively sparsely populated See Also Colony and Protectorate of Kenya (1954)., p.51.

examination through Afrocentric perspectives, analyses of production modalities, and feminist epistemological frameworks. From an Afrocentric perspective, the assertion embodies colonial paternalism and Eurocentric presuppositions on "progress," which disregarded local farming techniques and knowledge in favor of Western capitalist principles.

The Swynnerton Plan of 1954, frequently praised as an agricultural reform, was essentially a political instrument aimed at reorganizing African rural economies through the implementation of individualized land tenure and the incorporation of African farmers into the capitalist market economy, primarily to reinforce colonial authority amidst escalating resistance, exemplified by the Mau Mau uprising.[1639] Through the perspective of production modes, the Plan was a calculated effort to connect pre-capitalist community agricultural practices with capitalist production methods, thereby creating class difference within African society. Affluent, predominantly male, Africans obtained title documents and agricultural extension services, whilst the impoverished and landless became further sidelined.[1640]

A feminist epistemological analysis elucidates how the Swynnerton Plan reinforced patriarchal frameworks by defining "the African farmer" as male, so marginalizing women's roles in agriculture and food security. Land registration in men's names and the transition to cash crops significantly diminished women's access to land and control over subsistence production, strengthening both colonial and patriarchal forms of exclusion.

[1639] Diana Wylie, *A Little God: The Twilight of Patriarchy in a Southern African Chiefdom* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1990), 113–114; Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *African Land Development in Kenya: The Swynnerton Plan* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1954), 1–2.

[1640] Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 110–113.

Consequently, what was lauded as agricultural "advancement" was, in reality, a racially and gendered initiative of capitalist change that exacerbated inequality and dispossession within African communities.

Farm planning emerged as a principal method for enhancing the African farmer's capacity to produce, as envisioned by the colonial state to increase his productive potential. The Swynnerton Plan of 1954 established the consolidation of fragmented property into a singular holding and the issuance of individual title deeds as government policy. The Swynnerton Plan was established to provide access to financing for enhancements and allow progressive farmers to buy additional acreage.[1641] The fragmentation of Maragoli farms served as a safeguard against total loss due to disasters like disease outbreaks; hence, the government mandate instigated a significant transformation in Maragoli's land tenure system. This therefore heightened individualism, severing agricultural practices from their formerly communal nature.

Conversely, the novel concept of individual property ownership facilitated land sales, significantly exacerbating rural landlessness in Maragoli.[1642] The colonial administration utilized the Swynnerton Plan as a tool to disrupt the pre-colonial Maragoli land use patterns, aiming to establish a new land use framework that would facilitate the fulfillment of its aims in accordance with the Articulation of Modes of Production thesis.The extensive and voluntary use of these measures by households in the district shaped the District

[1641]William Robert Ochieng, and Robert M. Maxon, eds. *An economic history of Kenya*. East African Publishers, 1992., .p.48.
[1642]M. A. Amisi, "Patterns of Land Use Among the Maragoli Of Sabatia Constituency,1900-2010''Unpublished MA Thesis Kenyatta University, 2021, p.146.

Commissioner's perception that "the program of direct aid and subsidies to farmers had fulfilled its purpose and accomplished its intended outcomes."

In 1954, the quantity of awards for exemplary husbandry was significantly diminished to 220, down from 990 in the preceding year.[1643] Consequently, future aid for carrying out improvements in farming would be extended "mainly through the provision of loans rather than grants" testifying further to the extent to which the recommendations of the Swynnerton Plan were already impacting official policy in relation to rural agrarian change.[1644] As the annual report of the Department of Agriculture confirmed during the same year, within the framework of existing services augmented by staff and funds provided under the Swynnerton Plan, good progress was made during the year in developing the African farmer and increasing his potential production"[1645]. Farm planning emerged as one of the salient means to develop the African farmer and augment his potential production.

The inception of the Swynnerton Plan in 1954 was closely followed by the inauguration of farm planning in North Nyanza district, when a farm planning organization was started during the same year based on the experience gained in Nyeri district.[1646] North Nyanza district's annual report recognized this development as heralding the change from "the elementary to the intermediate stage in the introduction of improved farming methods."[1647]

[1643]Ibid., p.104.
[1644]Ibid., p.105.
[1645]Nicholas E. Makana, "Peasant response to agricultural innovations: land consolidation, agrarian diversification and technical change. The case of Bungoma district in Western Kenya, 1954-1960." In *Journal of Third World Studies* 27, no. 1 ,2010, p.159.
[1646]Nicholas E. Makana, *Op. Cit.,* p.55.
[1647]Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/KSM/1/1/59, North Nyanza District Annual Report, 1954.

By the end of 1954, ten planning teams were in action in North Nyanza district, supervised by the Assistant Agricultural Officer and supported by a central office, where farm plans were drawn up. As described in the district's annual report, there was no doubt that the process of farm planning was not only elaborate, it also required skilled personnel. Contoured plans of a farm were prepared prior to the fields being laid out by the farm planner. The plan included a key that depicted the crops to be grown and the rotation to be practiced annually. It was also necessary that the applicant for a farm plan be the owner of a farm which was of economic size.[1648]

In addition, the intended beneficiary of farm planning services needed to satisfy an officer of the Department of Agriculture that he possessed the required knowledge and determination to put the plan into practice. Care was also taken to make certain that the boundaries claimed by the applicant were not a subject of dispute. Finally, a survey and planning fee of two shillings per acre was levied, although this payment did not cover the full cost of the work done, and the applicant had to sign a commitment to the effect that should he fail to carry out the plan within five years, he would be required to pay the full cost of the survey.[1649]

These conditions clearly demonstrate a desire on the part of the colonial state to capture and co-opt a specific cadre of farmers in Kenya's rural areas—the rural middle class.The stringent conditions notwithstanding, the idea of farm planning was spontaneously received by households in Bungoma district, owing without doubt to the relatively larger acreages that characterized this region. As the District Commissioner observed in his

[1648]Kenya National Archives (KNA), DC/KSM/1/1/59, *North Nyanza District Annual Report*, 1954.
[1649]Ibid.

annual report, “the idea has caught on well, especially in the Northern and Western divisions and a considerable waiting list had been built up by the end of the year. The fact that only consolidated holdings of seven acres or more will be accepted has given an additional incentive to the more progressive farmers to bring about consolidation by purchase and exchange.”[1650]

The sentiments were largely in tune with the findings of the Department of Agriculture during the same year. With a specific focus on progress in improved farming in African areas during 1954, this annual report indicated that the planning of farms in North Nyanza had been met with great enthusiasm. Such enthusiasm was evidenced by the fact that by the end of the year, 110 farms had been surveyed and of these farms, a total of 4,025 acres had been planned. Many of these farms were large, and the greatest demand for farm planning had been witnessed in the Northern division and also in the Western division.[1651]

This trend persisted during the subsequent years, reflecting the continued capacity for innovation and adaptation among the households in the district. The Department of Agriculture’s 1955 annual report credited the good progress that had been made in farming in African areas to the fact that the extra staff and funds provided by the Swynnerton Plan

[1650]Nicholas E. Makana, "Peasant Response to Agricultural Innovations: Land Consolidation, Agrarian Diversification and Technical Change. The Case of Bungoma District in Western Kenya, 1954-1960." *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies* 35, no. 1 (2009)., p.93.
[1651]Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1954, p.51.

were having the desired effect.[1652] The Department was thus optimistic that the stage had now been set for rapid strides in the next few years. The positive response of the farmers to the imperatives of agrarian change was undoubtedly a significant factor influencing such optimistic views. With a focus on Nyanza province as a whole, it was reported in 1955 that North Nyanza continued to lead the province in better farming. In this area, a total of 168 farms were surveyed for farm planning, of which 128 plans were implemented, covering a total of 5,831 acres. Demand was highest in what was now Elgon Nyanza district, and many farmers were making very hopeful progress there.[1653]

Reinforcing this assessment were the figures for farm planning in 1956, which clearly indicated that in Elgon Nyanza alone, 199 small holdings were surveyed and 66 planned.[1654] It appeared that by this time, such tremendous progress in farming had been made that it was now generally thought more prudent to offer loan money to the farmer who wished to improve his farm, as this was more likely to induce a greater sense of responsibility compared to the pre-existing scheme of rewards for good husbandry.[1655] Consequently, although this rewards scheme had remained in operation in the district, it was decided to discontinue these awards in 1958.[1656] In its 1959 annual report the Department of Agriculture provided a summary of the progress made in farming in the district: “Agricultural development arising from planning and investment in recent years

[1652]Colony and Protectorate of Kenya 1955, p.46.
[1653]In 1956, what was formerly North Nyanza district was split into two districts, namely North Nyanza and Elgon Nyanza. The area of focus of this article fell within Elgon Nyanza district from this date on. See North Nyanza Annual Report 1956, KNA: DC/NN/1/37.
[1654]Hilda Nissimi, "Illusions of World Power in Kenya: Strategy, Decolonization, and the British Base, 1946–1961." *The International History Review* 23, no. 4 (2001): 824-846., p.828.
[1655]Ibid., p.47.
[1656]John Lonsdale and Bruce Berman, "Coping with the contradictions: the development of the colonial state in Kenya, 1895–1914." *The Journal of African History* 20, no. 4 (1979): 487-505, p.498.

by government and private enterprise was evident in 1959 in the fields of land consolidation, farm planning and farm layouts. This has created the need for an increasing demand from farming communities for the expansion of research and advisory services to meet the problems thrown up by more intensive farming and to provide the guidance to raise yields."[1657]

Closely tied to the concept of farm planning was the emphasis placed upon land enclosure. Although by 1954 very few farms had been enclosed in North Nyanza district, the idea was receiving considerable impetus from the campaign for farm planning. As a result, the district's annual report predicted the possibility that "in the near future the practice of enclosing land may snowball."[1658]Consequently, trials of suitable plants for line hedging were being given special attention in anticipation of such a high rate of land enclosure.[1659] The close affinity between farm planning and enclosure was further reiterated in 1955. Whereas the main emphasis of the work of the Department of Agriculture during that year was centered on farm planning, special emphasis had also been placed on the need to enclose land with perimeter hedges. In fact during this year, such enclosure of land with perimeter hedges had now been made a condition of obtaining a boundary certificate prior to farm planning.[1660]

Existing archival sources suggest persistence in these two facets of rural agrarian change in subsequent years. Asserting that 1957 was "a year of consolidation," the Nyanza province annual report added that the most spectacular progress during the year was made

[1657]Ibid., p.501.
[1658]North Nyanza Annual Report 1954, p. 21.
[1659]Ibid., p.24.
[1660]North Nyanza Annual Report 1955, p.26.

in the field of land enclosure and consolidation. In the entire province, "the gospel spread like the wind through the whole western division and by the end of the year was taking place in all other locations"[1661]

In 1958, on the other hand, the positive and voluntary response of African households to ongoing agrarian changes could be discerned from the following observations attributed to the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner: "It is pleasant to record that good progress was made in land consolidation in Elgon Nyanza and North Nyanza. Once again, these results were achieved at very low cost to government and with the whole-hearted cooperation of the people themselves."[1662] This evaluation was largely corroborated through the revelation in 1959 that "the demonstration provided by farm planning over past years is beginning to pay dividends in the province at large."[1663] On their own initiative, farmers in this area were starting to plan simple farm layouts which provided a useful example to their neighbors. Familiarity with farm planning over a number of years had given the farmers quite a sound idea of farm layout. The Provincial Commissioner thus expressed optimism that it would not be long before simple farm planning became as general as the Department of Agriculture's soil conservation measures. By 1959, land enclosure was also identified as "a basic factor and this is now a flowing tide."[1664]

An indication of this progress can be gleaned from the following table, which shows the figures of total acreages enclosed and consolidated in relation to the number of farmers involved as of December 1959.

[1661]Nyanza Province Annual Report 1957, p.78.
[1662]Nyanza Province Annual Report 1958,
[1663]Nyanza Province Annual Report 1959, p.17.
[1664]Ibid.

Table 5.1 Land Consolidation in Nyanza Province, 1959

District	No. of Farmers enclosed/consolidated	Acreages
North Nyanza	8,494	43,926
Central Nyanza	1,891	18,662
South Nyanza	833	18,511
Elgon Nyanza	15,075	274,510

Source: Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1959, **KNA: PC/NZA/1/55**

The data on land consolidation in Nyanza Province in 1959 reveals notable regional disparities, with Elgon Nyanza standing out as the most extensively consolidated district. It recorded over 15,000 farmers and more than 274,000 acres consolidated—far surpassing the other districts. This trend likely reflects colonial priorities that favored regions with fertile land, lower population density, and greater potential for commercial agriculture. In contrast, districts like Central and South Nyanza saw limited consolidation, possibly due to land fragmentation, population pressure, and resistance to colonial land policies.

When contextualized within the dynamics of Maragoli food production and gender relations between 1945 and 1963, these patterns underscore broader transformations in rural Kenya. During this period, Maragoli women increasingly assumed agricultural responsibilities as men migrated to wage labour. The colonial push for land consolidation and cash crop farming often excluded women from formal land ownership and decision-making, despite their growing role in food production. As a result, women became central to sustaining household economies, even as structural inequalities deepened. The consolidation trends in Nyanza thus mirror the Maragoli experience: a shift toward commercial agriculture that redefined gender roles, strained traditional labour systems, and placed women at the heart of a changing rural landscape.

The emergence and upsurge of farmers clubs in North Nyanza district during this phase in the development of Kenya's colonial economy also reflected a continued positive response to the imperatives of agrarian transformation. In 1954, for instance, the District Commissioner lauded the formation of farmers clubs in the district as "a hopeful line of development"[1665] These clubs consisted of groups of farmers who formed a club in order to afford each other, by cooperation, the advantage of larger units. The first such club to be formed was the Yalusi Farmers Club in south Kimilili location[1666]. It consisted of eleven farmers occupying some 600 acres of land, all of whose farms had been planned.

The 1955 North Nyanza annual report was categorical that the formation of farmers clubs had become popular in the northern parts of the district. Members of these clubs "regard themselves as aristocrats amongst their neighbors and give each other mutual support and even active help".[1667] These clubs became central in materially assisting in disseminating better methods of farming through example to others.[1668]The effectiveness of the farmers' clubs in the region had gained ground by 1954. This position was affirmed by the Nyanza provincial Annual Report during 1954 which stated; "An interesting development in North Nyanza has been the formation of a number of farmer's clubs all of whose farms have been planned and are being enclosed. So far, the advice given by the Agricultural Department has been carried out with energy".[1669]

The Swynnerton Plan fundamentally restructured gender relations in Maragoli society by shifting land tenure from communal to individualized ownership, with titles

[1665]North Nyanza Annual Report 1954, p.20.
[1666]Ibid., p.22.
[1667]North Nyanza Annual Report 1955, p.9
[1668]Ibid.
[1669]Nyanza Province Annual Report 1954, p.15.

overwhelmingly allocated to men. This legal transformation stripped women of their traditional access to land, which had been mediated through kinship and lineage systems. In precolonial Maragoli society, although men held authority over land, women had secure rights to cultivate family plots and were central to food production. Their labor sustained households and communities, and their agricultural knowledge shaped farming practices. However, the Plan redefined land as a commodity and positioned men as sole proprietors, effectively severing women's connection to the land they worked.

This shift had profound implications for gender relations. Men now held exclusive control over land decisions—what to plant, whether to lease, sell, or invest—while women became laborers on land they no longer had rights to. Agricultural extension services, credit facilities, and training programs were directed at male landowners, reinforcing the colonial assumption that productive farming was a male domain. Women's contributions were rendered invisible in policy and practice, despite their continued role in subsistence farming. This institutional exclusion not only diminished women's economic agency but also reconfigured household power dynamics, deepening male dominance and reducing women's influence in both private and public spheres.

In essence, the Swynnerton Plan did not merely marginalize women economically—it reengineered gender relations by embedding patriarchal control into the very structure of land and agricultural policy. The legacy of this transformation continues to shape gendered access to resources and decision-making in Maragoli and across Kenya.

The Articulation of Modes of Production theory, Gender Analysis theory, Feminist Epistemology, and Interpretivism research philosophy collectively provide a

comprehensive framework for analyzing the land use changes during Kenya's decolonization period, particularly under the 1954 Swynnerton Plan. The Articulation of Modes of Production theory helps to understand the transformation of traditional land tenure systems into a colonial model that prioritized individual land ownership and commercial agriculture, aligning with the broader colonial economic objectives. Gender Analysis theory and Feminist Epistemology reveal the inequities perpetuated by these reforms, highlighting how women, especially widows, were disproportionately affected by corruption and nepotism in land registration processes.

This gender-focused perspective shows that while the plan aimed to modernize agriculture, it simultaneously undermined the social and economic rights of marginalized groups. Interpretivism, emphasizing subjective experiences, is essential for capturing the nuanced responses and adaptations of African farmers to these imposed changes. Oral histories and field interviews underscore the mixed reactions to the Swynnerton Plan, with some regions embracing it more than others, and illustrate how local contexts influenced the implementation and outcomes of land reforms. These theoretical frameworks together elucidate the complex dynamics of colonial agrarian policies and their varied impacts on Kenyan society during decolonization.

This section has examined the Swynnerton Plan, highlighting how its emphasis on land consolidation, cash-crop farming, and individualized tenure not only restructured African agrarian economies but also entrenched patriarchal control over land, thereby marginalizing women and altering food production relations within the articulation of communal and capitalist modes. The next section discusses the African District Land Development (ADELV) initiatives and the One Million Acre Settlement Scheme, which

built upon the Swynnerton framework and extended its gendered exclusions by privileging male household heads as the main beneficiaries of land allocation and agricultural credit, while further eroding women's centrality in subsistence production and household food security.

5.7.2 The ADELV and the Million Acre Setttlement Scheme Plans

The contradictions of Kenya's late colonial land crisis must be situated within the broader trajectory of agrarian policy, particularly the legacy of the Swynnerton Plan of 1954. As noted earlier, the Swynnerton framework institutionalized land consolidation and individualized tenure, thereby creating a class of African farmers integrated into capitalist markets while simultaneously deepening gender inequalities. By vesting land titles and access to agricultural credit in male household heads, it systematically marginalized women, even as their labor remained essential to subsistence production. The plan thus represented not only an attempt to stabilize colonial rule through agrarian modernization but also a gendered restructuring of food production mechanisms that privileged male control at the expense of female autonomy.[1670]

The establishment of the African Land Development Board (ALDEV) in the 1940s, and its expansion in the 1950s, reflected the state's effort to build upon this trajectory by supporting African farmers deemed capable of commercial agriculture. Yet ALDEV's interventions, including loans for soil conservation and improved inputs, were distributed through male-headed households, reinforcing patriarchal property relations.

[1670] Kenya National Archives (hereafter KNA), AGR/GEN/2/9, "Swynnerton Papers," 1954; Mahmood Mamdani, *Politics and Class Formation in Uganda* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976), 65–90.

In areas such as Maragoli, where women had historically anchored food security through millet, sorghum, and root crops, the reorientation toward male-centered cash-crop farming eroded communal systems of land use and diminished women's influence in agricultural decision-making.[1671] This mirrored the wider articulation of modes of production, in which communal tenure and subsistence cultivation were subordinated to capitalist production and market imperatives.[1672]

These dynamics reached their most visible expression during the decolonization negotiations that culminated in the One Million Acre Settlement Scheme of the early 1960s. Designed to transfer land from departing European settlers to African farmers, the scheme was framed as a mechanism for resolving the land crisis while maintaining agricultural productivity. However, just as with the Swynnerton and ALDEV frameworks, the beneficiaries were overwhelmingly male, reinforcing patriarchal control over land in the postcolonial state. Women were excluded from land purchase schemes, from access to settlement loans, and from the formal recognition of farming enterprises. In this way, the late colonial settlement schemes carried forward the gendered exclusions embedded in earlier agrarian reforms, ensuring that decolonization reproduced rather than dismantled the inequities of land tenure.[1673]

[1671] KNA, PC/NZA/3/16/41, "African Land Development Board Reports, North Kavirondo," 1952–55; Bethwell A. Ogot, *Economic and Social History of Western Kenya, 1900–1945* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1974), 190–96.

[1672] Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45–67; Pierre-Philippe Rey, *Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism and the Mode of Production* (London: Heinemann, 1971), 55–80.

[1673] KNA, PC/NZA/3/21/9, "One Million Acre Settlement Scheme Correspondence, North Kavirondo," 1960–63; Lionel Cliffe, *The Transition to Independence in Kenya: The Politics of Land and Class* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), 102–19.

The cumulative effect was that by the time of independence in 1963, the land question in Kenya remained unresolved—not only in terms of the unequal distribution between Europeans and Africans but also in the less visible yet equally profound inequalities between men and women. For the Maragoli, as elsewhere, decolonization did not reverse the dispossession of women from land, but rather institutionalized their marginalization in the emergent capitalist agrarian order. The articulation of modes of production was therefore as much about gender as about class: women's indispensable labor in food production was maintained, but their claims to land and resources were systematically curtailed.[1674]

The execution of the ADELV and the Swynnerton plan in the 1950's have been considered as key colonial government's attempts to address the thorny land issue at the time.

Whereas ADELV emphasized on consolidation of lands in the colonial reserves, the Swynnerton plan went ahead and equipped the African peasants with an economically sound piece of land and the necessary agricultural knowledge for a better production.[1675] In Maragoli division as part of the then North Nyanza reserve, the problem of joblessness and landlessness was already justifiable through the increasing number of squatters encroaching into the government reserved lands.[1676]

The Million Acre settlement scheme program was imperatively designed with two principal objectives in mind; first, the program was to facilitate a rapid but orderly transfer

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[1674] Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 212–35; Lynn Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 85–96.

[1675]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University, 2009., p.104.

[1676]M. A. Amisi, "Patterns of Land Use Among the Maragoli Of Sabatia Constituency,1900-2010''Unpublished MA Thesis Kenyatta University, 2021, p.147.

of land ownership from the European settlers to native Kenyans without a disruption in agricultural production. Second, the program aimed at alleviating land shortage in the African reserves. The program had two important provisions with regard to the new land reforms initiated in Kenya. First, it provided for the purchase of tracts of arable land hitherto reserved for or used by the European settlers for subdivision and allocation to landless and unemployed Africans.

The lands were purchased using loans from British government ($ 19,977,000) and the government of Federal Republic of Germany, Kenyan Pounds 1,218,000). This was to be in conjunction with agencies such as the Common Wealth Development Corporation (CDC) and the International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD/World Bank). These loans were to be used for three main purposes; to purchase the land, to be given to the new settlers to develop their new plots and lastly to pay for the administrative and other auxiliary costs of the settlement program.

The loans were not disbursed in cash. Instead, the farmers received issue notes, ploughing orders to pay farm implements such as fertilizers, hybrid maize seeds, pesticides and farm tools.[1677] Second, the program provided for establishment of a limited number of group or cooperative farms commonly referred to as Shirika schemes. Under this arrangement, groups of potential African settlers were allocated group ranches or irrigation scheme projects on cooperative basis. However, the creation of these Shirika schemes should not be mistaken with the new government policy regarding land ownership. Indeed, following the dismal performance of group farms experiment under ALDEV, the new land use and

[1677]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, (2009). *Op. Cit*., p 240.

ownership system under the Million Acre program was strictly based on individual tenure with title deed. Consequently, all land in the new scheme was to be allocated to native Kenyans in line with the policy of individual tenure as stipulated in the Swynnerton plan of 1954.[1678]

Last but not least, the new policy of individual ownership and title deed was extended to cover the lands that fell under the Native trust lands comprising of the native reserves. In discussing the outlay of the program with oral respondents, it was revealed that many Maragolis expressed fears over the program's land allocation. There were fears that the government in enacting the structures of the schemes did not make provisions for those lands directly claimed by individual clans. This meant that even those lands that were officially classified as Native Trust Lands, the respective clans that owned them could not exercise full control of making decisions with regard to their occupation and use.[1679]

The Maragoli also applied for consideration in the new schemes, within the province on condition that they could service the loan and also outline the prevailing circumstances in their homes necessitating resettlement. The application was to go through the area DC for approval and their after be filed by the Chief for consideration when plots were available.[1680] Such applications and subsequent approval marked the genesis of the Maragoli dispersal into Bungoma and TransNzoia regions. In spite of its promise to calm dissent, it is important to mention that not everyone was convinced that the allocation of portions of the ex-scheduled areas was the final solution to the land problems in all parts

[1678]M. A Amisi, "Patterns of Land Use Among the Maragoli of Sabatia Constituency, 1900- 2010'' Unpublished MA Thesis Kenyatta University, (2021), p.148.
[1679]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 5th October 2023.
[1680] DC/KMG/2/13/18.

of the country. Apparently, the government did not think there was any problem beyond that of landlessness in the Nyanza and Coast provinces but strong apprehension was held regarding the situation among the Kikuyu in Central and Rift Valley provinces whose ambitions seemed to go beyond the land issue.[1681]

Wassermaan Gary argues that the principal aim of the A Million Acre settlement program was multifaceted.[1682] Economically, he argues that the African settlement program was paradoxically designed to "preserve the large farm agriculture system by removing most of the large farmers" on the one hand and to integrate and stabilize a European established farming system into an African dominated polity. To this end, the European mixed farmer was the fattened calf sacrificed on the altar of stability. He was removed either because he wished to leave, or could not stay." Inspite of these internal differences in opinion, the government proceeded with plans to settle the 50000 landless African families under the scheme.

Although the Maragoli were not geographically under the White highlands, the program greatly impacted on their land use. The hybrid maize which was emphasized and distributed to the schemes got into Maragoli together with the fertilizers. The new grade cattle which the plan also initiated through cross breeding also penetrated into the Maragoli land impacting greatly on the people's livestock productivity.[1683]The Maragoli agriculture as a section of the Kenyan larger economy was greatly affected by the above government

[1681]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University, 2009., p.149
[1682]Wasserman, Gary. "The independence bargain: Kenya Europeans and the land issue 1960–1962."In *Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 11, no. 2 (1973): 99-120., p.110.
[1683]Esese, Danson P. Lumumba. *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University, 2009., p.129.

programmes and agricultural strategies aimed at entrenching the capitalist system of production at the expense of the traditional African production. Such programmes also brought into the region more extension officers in order to ensure government directives are implemented to the later.[1684] The goal of this new emphasis on African agriculture was to provide a market for European production, particularly by displacing food crops and increasing cash incomes to African farmers so that they would have the ability to purchase the relatively higher priced and internationally uncompetitive European grown corn and wheat.

The 1954 Swynnerton Plan and the ADELV Scheme significantly impacted food production and gender relations in Maragoliland. The Swynnerton Plan promoted cash crop farming, leading to the commercialization of agriculture. Men, who traditionally controlled land, gained more economic power, widening gender disparities. Women, relegated to subsistence farming, faced reduced access to resources. The ADELV Scheme aimed to empower women through agricultural education and cooperative formation, slightly mitigating these imbalances by improving their agricultural skills and income. However, the persistent male dominance in land ownership limited women's full participation, reinforcing traditional gender roles despite these progressive efforts.

Both ALDEV and the One Million Acre Settlement Scheme must be understood not simply as technocratic solutions to Kenya's land crisis, but as historically situated interventions that deepened the articulation of communal and capitalist modes of production while reinforcing gendered hierarchies. From the perspective of articulation theory, these

[1684]Lado, Cleophas. "The state and peasant farmers' leverage in Kenya." *GeoJournal* 41 (1997): 33-41., p.36.

schemes subordinated subsistence-oriented, lineage-based systems of land use to capitalist imperatives of export production and private property, privileging male household heads as the primary conduits of modernization.

A feminist epistemological stance reveals that this restructuring was not gender-neutral: it systematically erased women's roles as custodians of food security, excluded them from access to credit and land titles, and silenced their agency within formal settlement frameworks. Through an interpretivist research lens, these policies can be seen as embodying contested meanings of "development" and "ownership," in which the colonial and postcolonial state inscribed patriarchal values into the very structures of land reform. Thus, ALDEV and the One Million Acre Scheme, far from resolving the land question, entrenched both capitalist dependency and gender inequality, shaping the enduring struggles over land and identity in Kenya.

This section has examined ALDEV and the One Million Acre Settlement Scheme, highlighting how both interventions reinforced the articulation of communal and capitalist modes while entrenching gendered inequalities in land access; the next section discusses post-war reconstruction and community development, situating these agrarian reforms within broader efforts to stabilize rural economies and reshape social structures in the aftermath of World War II.

5.9 Post War Reconstruction and Community Development

The African Land Development Board (ALDEV) and the One Million Acre Settlement Scheme represented early postwar interventions aimed at consolidating landholdings, promoting cash-crop production, and facilitating access to agricultural credit and technical support. From the perspective of articulation theory, these programs integrated precolonial

communal and subsistence systems into an emerging capitalist framework, privileging market-oriented production while marginalizing traditional practices.[1685] In Maragoli, male household heads were positioned as primary beneficiaries, while women—despite their central role in cultivation and food security—were excluded from land ownership, credit, and decision-making.[1686]

A gender analysis, reinforced by a feminist epistemological lens, reveals that knowledge about productivity, modernization, and proper land use was socially constructed to marginalize women's expertise, rendering their labor invisible within formal policy frameworks.[1687] Interpretivist approaches further highlight that these interventions were lived and negotiated experiences, with Maragoli men and women adapting, resisting, or contesting the new agrarian realities.[1688] Building on these settlement schemes, post–World War II reconstruction provided the broader context for restoring rural economies disrupted by wartime mobilization, environmental degradation, and demographic pressures. Reconstruction initiatives reinforced capitalist-oriented production, formalized male-dominated resource control, and reshaped household and community labor relations,

[1685] Pierre-Philippe Rey, *Colonialism, Neo-Colonialism and the Mode of Production* (London: Heinemann, 1971), 55–80; Claude Meillassoux, *Maidens, Meal and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45–67.

[1686] KNA, PC/NZA/3/16/41, "African Land Development Board Reports, North Kavirondo," 1952–55; KNA, PC/NZA/3/21/9, "One Million Acre Settlement Scheme Correspondence, North Kavirondo," 1960–63.

[1687] Lynn Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 85–96; Sandra Harding, *The Science Question in Feminism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 102–19.

[1688] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 23–45; John W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013), 50–62.

sustaining the intersection of communal and capitalist modes of production while perpetuating gendered inequalities that endured into the post-independence era.[1689]

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[1689] Samir Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale: A Critique of the Theory of Underdevelopment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974), 212–35; Lionel Cliffe, *The Transition to Independence in Kenya: The Politics of Land and Class* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975), 102–19.

sustaining the intersection of communal and capitalist modes of production while perpetuating gendered inequalities that endured into the post-independence era.

After the war, the government stepped in to prevent further soil destruction arguing that through ignorance, incompetence and greed, African peasant had "mined" the land and destroyed it.[1690] To do this, the government attempted to restore the authority of the indigenous land authorities, which it hoped could check the "land-miners" and protect the interests of the larger community.

The administrative and agricultural officers assumed that by organizing a massive programme of bench terracing through communal work soil erosion would be checked. The government, therefore, embarked on a planned and long-term assistance for African agriculture. The Worthington Plan was drawn to run for a period of ten years from 1946. It had an eleven million pounds fund of which half was to be used by the African Land Development Programme that targeted African agriculture especially the restoration of soil fertility for specific reasons. It was necessary to restore soil fertility to avoid a recurrence of food shortage as it had been experienced during the war. The government also aimed at encouraging Africans to produce not only to meet their subsistence needs but also have surplus for export, which could help Britain in the reconstruction at home.[1691]

[1690]A. Fiona D. Mackenzie, *Land, ecology and resistance in Kenya, 1880-1952*. Edinburgh University Press, 1998., p.71.
[1691]Martha Wangari Musalia, "Gender Relations and Food Crop Production: A Case of Kiambu District Kenya, 1920-1985." Unpublished doctoral dissertation). *Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya* (2010)., p.102.

Bench terracing was taken as the major way of reducing soil erosion in the African areas. Being a communal undertaking, both men and women were required to devote two mornings a week to the task. The work had no pay and absentees were liable to fines.
The chiefs and headmen were required to meet a specific target of workers hence they could have used force to achieve their goal. This programme disrupted day- to- day agricultural activities.

The effects of terracing were severely felt by persons who had small land, as most of it was lost in the course of terracing. The whole exercise was backbreaking especially for women who were majority in the exercise in the absence of the men. To avoid enlistment, women used all sorts of excuses. One woman informant remembered how her mother would pretend that she was insane whenever the recruiting agents came around. The mother would smear herself with cow dung and feign being dumb.[1692] It is not certain how this helped the woman manage to escape the scrutiny of the headmen. Men who remained in the reserves too resisted the terracing project. Kisanya remembered how men would pretend that they were blind only to be forced to walk over a steeping region and those who were scared of falling definitely opened their eyes.[1693] The resistance spearheaded by the women in the various parts of the colony proved that women too when provoked beyond measure could rise up in arms. The Murang'a women revolt in the then Central Province was an indication that women were able to rise against oppressive government policies.[1694]

While African women were rising against colonial administration, there was a group of colonizers who were advocating for the right of African women. In 1945, Olga Watkins

[1692]Jane Imbwaga, (65 Years), Oral interview, on 2nd November 2023.
[1693]Josphine Mbarani, (42 Years), Oral Interview, on 13th July 2023.
[1694]Martha Wangari Musalia, (2010). *Op. Cit.,* p.112.

writing in the East African Standard complained of the poor situation of the African women.[1695]

The European women through the East African Women's League, which was founded in 1917, for the advancement of women was against what they termed as negligence of African women.[1696] It is certain that without any specific welfare policy in African reserves, the socio-economic wellbeing of most rural Africans had deteriorated. This was even worse for women who were majority in rural production since many African men were increasingly moving into wage labour.

Despite the generally subordinate status of African women within colonial societies, a critical question emerges: why did European women begin to take a pronounced interest in African women's affairs precisely during the 1940s? This period coincided with significant social and economic transformations that altered women's roles in colonial economies. In the Maragoli context, archival records show that European women missionaries and members of women's associations actively engaged with African women—including the *vatemburi*—through literacy programs, vocational training, and initiatives regulating market participation.[1697] Their interventions were prompted not only by emerging international discourses on women's welfare and education but also by wartime disruptions and colonial modernization policies.

[1695]East African Standard, 23 February, 1945.

[1696]Audrey Wipper, "The Maendeleo ya Wanawake organization: The co-optation of leadership." *African Studies Review* 18, no. 3 (1975): 99-120, p.111.

[1697] Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780–1870* (London: Routledge, 1992), 214; Jane L. Parpart, *Women and the Politics of Development in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 45–47; Kakamega Provincial Record Center (KPRC), Missionary Reports on Women's Programs, File No. 78/1942–1948, Kakamega, Kenya.

All the programs expanded African women's participation in labor and trade. Consequently, European women's activism at this historical juncture reflected an intersection of global ideas, local economic change, and colonial administrative interests, revealing how African women became a focal point for social and economic reform despite their marginalized status.

The role of European women in imperial agenda has elicited debate among historians.[1698] Though they were considered inferior within a race that perceived themselves superior, they were significant in shaping social relations in the colonies. European women played different roles in the Empire. On the one hand, they advanced the interests of the colonizers by keeping the distance with the colonized while on the other hand they tried to ameliorate worst effects of imperialism. European women in Kenya had not been involved significantly in public matters until the 1940s. This turn of events was triggered of by circumstances in Britain between the late 1930s and the conclusion of the war. As the war came to an end, it was obvious that the Empire was disintegrating and the colonized peoples would not continue to be treated as before.

In Britain, two important changes occured within the British colonial service, which significantly altered the social relations in the colony. First, the colonial mission shifted to an emphasis on trusteeship and development. The colonized people had to be guided into

[1698]Margaret Strobel, *Gender, Race, and Empire in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Africa and Asia*. na, 1998, p.78.

development that would enable them actively participate in governance. Second, after agitation by British feminists, the colonial office in 1938 dropped its ban on admitting women. From the late 1940s, therefore, the Colonial Service significantly increased its recruitment of women as education and social welfare officers. It is likely that both the ideological change and the presence of female officers spurred the efforts of European women in the colonies to help the African women.[1699]

Social welfare in Kenya began before the conclusion of the war. In 1944, a committee had been constituted to develop a five-year development and welfare programme designed to improve the standard of living of Africans.This change of events may have been necessitated by government's declaration of mass education for Africans. It was hoped that adult education would improve the health and living standards of African people. Additionally, education would improve Africans' economic wellbeing and develop the political institutions in preparation for self-governing.[1700] We have noted that the Worthington Plan of 1946 was meant to tackle agricultural immediate problems like soil erosion.

In social welfare, which was changed to be community development by the 1950s, training covered economic and social aspects for betterment of life. Agriculturally, communities were required to acquire better methods of soil conservation, more efficient farming method and better livestock care. For proper health, teaching was done on better sanitation and water supply, proper measures of hygiene, infant and maternity welfare.[1701] This social

[1699]Ibid., p79.
[1700]Margaret Strobel, *Gender, Race, and Empire in Nineteenth-and Twentieth-Century Africa and Asia*. na, 1998., p.82.
[1701]ARC(MAA)2/5/1681,1949-51

welfare knowledge was disseminated through African women clubs or women institutes, which accidentally began in the late 1940s.

In 1946, African ex-service men had been enrolled at the Jeanes School for a social welfare course. Their wives, who accompanied their husbands, were trained on domestic subjects. To maintain the networking among themselves and the Jeanes School, these women formed women clubs in their rural areas.[1702] Thus, it was from these ex-service Jeanes trainees' wives that women clubs were formed. By the late 1940s the women clubs were scattered in most of the colony.[1703] European women volunteers taught African women various skills like spinning, weaving, sewing and knitting at a fee of one shilling annually. Women were also attending a Mrs. Aubrey's "Home makers" club where they were taught cooking.[1704] This enhanced women's domestic skills. While these initiatives empowered women economically and socially, male dominance in land ownership persisted, reinforcing traditional gender roles in Maragoliland.

By early 1950s, the importance of women institutions was acknowledged by the colonial administration. This was mostly because the leadership of the East African Women's League, under its President, Ely Wilson was indicating their worth to Governor Sir Philip Mitchell, at a time of political tension among Africans. In December 1950, the League wrote to the Governor signifying the work it was doing among African women. In spite of it indicating that its primary aim was to improve the welfare of women and children of all races, it was not of the opinion of enlisting women of other races in to the East African

[1702]Audrey Wipper, "The Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Movement in the Colonial Period: The Canadian Connection, Mau Mau, Embroidery, and Agriculture." *Rural Africana* 29 (1975): 195-214., p.198.
[1703]Mildred Adhiambo Jalango'-Ndeda, "The impact of male labour migration on rural women: A case study of Siaya District, c. 1894–1963." *Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Kenyatta University* (1991): p.110.
[1704]KNA/GH/ 7/24; 1929-1952.

Women's League. The League's administration hoped to organize other races and direct them to the League's goal of improving the welfare of women and children.

They also advocated the formation of a federation of all women organizations to counter the negative propaganda that was taking place among the coloured races.[1705] From the foregoing, there is all indication to show that the East African Women's League was inclined to keep the social distance between the colonizers and colonized. However, the work began by the European women gave a base from which African women were allowed more space in the colony's affairs by the administration.

In 1950 when the Jeanes School was placed under the Department of Community Development with Nancy Shepherd as the Assistant Commissioner, more African women were enrolled. Those enrolled had to have attended a three-months training course at a District Home-craft Training centre and proven leadership qualities in the field. Once trained, they were sent to their rural homes as trainers. By 1951, the various women clubs formed the *Maendeleo ya Wanawake* (Women in Progress). The federation became handy during the Emergency period of the 1950s. Formation of women clubs gave birth to the women movement in Kenya which continued into the post- independence era in variety of mutations and branding.

Post–World War II reconstruction and community development in Maragoli must be understood as more than technical or administrative interventions; they constituted complex processes of social, economic, and environmental restructuring. Through the lens of articulation theory, reconstruction programs embedded precolonial communal

[1705]Mildred Adhiambo Ndeda, (1993). *Op. Cit*., p.240.

production systems within capitalist frameworks, linking subsistence agriculture to market-oriented production while reshaping local labor relations.

Gender analysis reveals that these processes were inherently unequal: women continued to provide the bulk of labor in food production and soil conservation, yet were systematically excluded from decision-making, access to land, and agricultural credit, reinforcing patriarchal hierarchies within households and communities. However, the emergence of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake movement during this period began to challenge these exclusions, advocating for women's education, economic participation, and access to resources, thereby reshaping local perceptions of women's roles and increasing their visibility in development initiatives.

A feminist epistemological perspective underscores that the knowledge informing reconstruction—about productivity, modernization, and proper land use—was socially constructed to privilege male experience, but movements like Maendeleo ya Wanawake began to contest this by foregrounding women's expertise and agency. Finally, interpretivist approaches highlight that the outcomes of reconstruction and women's mobilization were not predetermined but socially negotiated, as Maragoli men and women adapted to, resisted, or transformed the evolving agrarian and social landscapes. Together, these lenses reveal that postwar reconstruction, community development, and women's collective action were deeply interconnected, producing enduring legacies in both the agrarian economy and gender relations.

This section has examined post–World War II reconstruction and community development, highlighting how agrarian policies and women's mobilization reshaped rural economies and gender relations; the next section discusses the impact of colonialism on established

Maragoli food production mechanisms from 1945 to 1963, analyzing how these interventions altered traditional labor divisions, land use, and household food security.

5.9.1 Impact of Colonialism on Established Maragoli Food Production Mechanisms, 1945-1963

The incorporation of the Maragoli into the world and colonial economy through the newly introduced colonial economic policies and political structures such as commodity production, cash economy and the new colonial administrators led to radical changes in the pre-existing forces and relations of production. In the forces of production there occured changes in the variety and quantity of crops grown by the people and also in the technology they used.[1706] In relations of production, the organisation of labour, the purposes for which what was produced was put, and how surplus was extracted and distributed, and finally, the reproduction of producers were all radically altered.

Women's power has both decreased and increased by the penetration of capitalism. In the pre-colonial Maragoli, the structural separation of Logoli women's and men's work gave women areas of power outside of men's control. The clear division between men's work and women's work has been eroded by capitalism. This paradigm shift in the gender relations has been necessitated by a number of factors including population increase, decrease in land resources and the heavy dependence on market economy. Women, curtesy of colonial experience are now required by necessity to confront these difficulties and to participate in areas of work that were considered men's work. Thus, this extension of their economic activity has also increased women's power as they are instrumental in providing

[1706]Peter O. Ndege, "Economic change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962." PhD diss., University of Nairobi., 1987., p.130.

necessary goods and services.[1707] Maragoli men demonstrate patriarchal ideology economically, socially and politically.

Drawing on a structure of patriarchy said to be grounded in tradition and reinforced by colonialism, men attempt to impose control over women's production, try to isolate women and subject women to increased physical violence. The economic power of women has weakened many of the behaviourial manifestations of patriarchal power, but not its expression in words and manners. Despite the intrusion of capitalism and increasing expression of patriarchal ideology, Maragoli women had and have considerable power and both men and women when pressed tacitly recognise women's power.[1708] Like most women in rural East Africa, Logoli women perform physically demanding labour, tasks that are indispensable to their family and the community.

Maragoli women appear at first glance to be marginal actors in a world controlled by men, their traditional spheres of power, e.g., in subsistence production and in reciprocal relations having been weakened, the short supply of land and cattle pushing women into reliance on wage and casual labour.[1709] But these women are goal setters for themselves and the community. They are active economic providers for their families, contributors to political and community causes and economic innovators.[1710]The Maragoli experience clearly demonstrates that the transition from pre-capitalist to capitalist mode of production did not occur because of internal dynamics of the Maragoli society. But occurred because of the

[1707]Judith M. Abwunza, "Logoli women of Western Kenya speak: needs and means." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 1991., p.106.
[1708]Ibid., p.3.
[1709]Judith M. Abwunza, "Nyayo: cultural contradictions in Kenya rural capitalism." *Anthropologica* (1990): 183-203., p.190.
[1710]Ester Boserup *et. al.,* "Research on African Women since 1972: A Commentary." *Canadian Journal of African Studies/Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines* 22, no. 3 (1988): 427-430., p.429.

colonial state with its use of force to integrate their economies with the metropolitan capitalist economy.[1711]

After integration, the Maragoli production became now export oriented resulting into merchant capital and its attendant impulses. Merchant capital of the colonial era intensified the process of incorporation of the Maragoli peasantries into a world or interregional economy. Therefore, this set-in motion powerful and more complex sets of processes which began to distance the peasants from each other politically, economically, socially and culturally.[1712]

Merchant capital can be defined as a type of capital that determines the distribution of an economy's produce within and without a specific economy. As a form of capital, merchant capital activities are only curtailed within a specified area of circulation and therefore only accumulate a surplus value by a means of unequal exchange. Merchant capital as an agency had begun to mediate on behalf of production capital in the metropole. This was by shaping the economic structures in the periphery of which the Maragoli sub segment exemplifies here.[1713] With the support of colonial policy and local administration, the colonial government laid an emphasis not only on subsistence production but also on targeting to shape Africans into a commercialized agricultural production.

[1711]M. A. Amisi, "Patterns of Land use Among the Maragoli of Sabatia Constituency; 1900-2010." *Unpublished MA Thesis, Kenyatta University* (2019)., p.150.
[1712]Judith M. Abwunza, "Logoli women of Western Kenya speak: needs and means." PhD diss., University of Nairobi, 1991., 91.
[1713]Gert J. Oostindie, "Historiography on the Dutch Caribbean (-1985): Catching Up?." *The Journal of Caribbean History* 21, no. 1 (1987): p.1.

To some extent, they encouraged the production process but manipulated their knowledge of prices in overseas markets to procure peasant commodities.[1714] Merchant capital also, contributed towards the dissolution of the reproduction cycle of the traditional peasantry.

Together with other mechanisms such as taxation, land alienation and labour expropriation, it began the historical process of breaking the back of Maragoli kinship ties, a precursor of the state. Thus, although the clan was to retain an important role in the community, the traditional mechanisms of its operations were directly undermined. The traditional Maragoli land tenure system whose operation had been regulated through mechanisms built in various clan-doms changed with the commercialization of agriculture and the overwhelming impact of merchant capital. Withdrawal of labour from use value production undermined the material reproduction of the traditional peasants' economy with respect to agriculture.

Similarly, the monetization of the key aspects of the Maragoli modes of production forced the Maragoli farmers into commodity production in the cash crop sector or as wage labourers.[1715] The establishment of colonial administration destroyed the conditions of the traditional peasant economy and created the social conditions of commodity production and proletarianization. Moreover, the colonial concept of land ownership began to be gradually internalized by the Maragoli following the inception of agricultural reforms built around the introduction of new crops and cultivation techniques. Although the ligutu could mediate in local disputes following the genesis of privatization of clan land by households

[1714]Erick M. Aseka, (1989). *Op. Cit.,* p.113.
[1715]Henry Bernstein, "African peasantries: a theoretical framework." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 6, no. 4 (1979): 421-443, p.428.

over common places such as water holes, salt licks, ceremonial lands and unutilized bush lands, land acquisition and the acquisition of rights to land were no longer to be a clan-controlled affair.[1716] Household heads (men) were to continue giving their sons rights to family land in the subsequent decades.

This tendency was to breed an ugly land fragmentation in Maragoli land in the post depression era. But one notable out growth of the colonial influence on the land tenure system was the right of house holds to sell their land without recoursing to the gerontocratic settlement of such alienation. On the whole, the colonial concept of land ownership and utilization now came to determine its use and proprietorship. But the appropriation of common clan lands by individual households especially the amagutu, headmen or chiefs using the power of their offices bred social conflicts unprecedented in the Maragoli historical experience. These were conflicts which were to be exacerbated by the land consolidation and adjudication measures of the late 1950's and 1960's.[1717]

Although the process of social stratification was still in its embryonic stages by 1914, the basis of rural land accumulation had set in. It depended upon the ability to use the government and its legal machinery, and access to wage income. It was only the chiefs and other colonial functionaries such as the teachers, preachers, clerks, court interpreters who were in such a position. They sometimes used the cash they obtained from wages and their official positions to buy land and employ wage labour.[1718] These changes increased the disparities between the male and female gender especially due to the colonial wage labour preference for the males. The peasantry became transitional class that was moving from

[1716]Simeon Muhandale, (80 Years), Oral Interview, on 12th September 2023.
[1717]Erick M. Aseka, (1989). *Op. Cit.,* p.57.
[1718]Paul T. Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War." (1989)., p.18.

primitive cultivators to capitalist oriented cultivators who could be restratified into capitalists and semi proletarians. The colonial land policies made it difficult for the African communities to continue practicing their pre-colonial food production mechanisms.

Among the first casualties in this context were the clan reserve land clan pastures grazed by the Maragoli stock and the no-man's lands between two communities. The new colonial land use regulations, individual parcel registration and other related ordinances caused both structural and utilization changes in the system of land ownership and use among the Maragoli. To begin with the British colonial office dissolved all the preexisting boundaries demarcating communal pastures that belonged to different clans in the area. These were replaced by new clan and ethnic boundaries based on the clan ridge (ie lugongo). This new system virtually forced African communities into overcrowded villages. These villages experienced severe shortage of pastureland.

The colonial administration simply dissolved clan pastures and demarcated them as open resources to all neighbouring clans or ethnic groups. This situation accentuated conflicts between the Maragoli and the other neighbouring Luhya sub groups over open pastures.[1719] The reduction in farmland sizes in African areas especially due to land alienation for European settlement, space for public utilities such as schools, hospitals and even roads greatly affected Africans' food sufficiency potententials. This inturn led to food shortages and limited resource availability for the new colonial demands such as taxes.

The present study found out that, although the colonial administration introduced new crops such as maize, groundnuts, cotton, and coffee, the growing of traditional ones like

[1719]Danson P. Lumumba Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000*. Michigan State University, 2009, p.134.

sim sim, finger millet and millet also continued. There was dramatic increase in the quantity of marketed crop and livestock products, as people sold these products to pay tax.[1720]

As local markets were established and as new needs such as payment of tax and acquiring imports such as iron hoes, ploughs and clothing arose, production ceased to be mainly for use value. Surplus produce increasingly acquired exchange value. Population increases also led to more land being brought under cultivation. Increase in the quantity of crop production was made possible by changes in technology as imported iron hoes and ploughs gradually replaced traditional wooden and small-bladed iron hoes which disappeared by the 1940s.

The new instruments of labour increased physical efficiency in production. Imported technology led to the gradual decline in traditional industrial skills, particularly the manufacture of iron tools.[1721] Instead traditional craftsmen increasingly became engaged in repairs of imported hoes and ploughs, and other domestic tools. Such dynamics in the technological set up of the newly emerging colonial Maragoli also impacted on the traditional gender relations in food production mechanisms.[1722] Through blacksmithing, men had contributed to food sufficiency in their households by exchanging their iron implements for food stuffs. However, the steady decline of the significance of the blacksmiths also reduced such men's contribution to food sufficiency in their families.[1723] Such gaps had to be filled by their female counterparts increasing gender imbalance in food

[1720]John M. Antle, "The new economics of agriculture." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 81, no. 5 (1999): 993-1010., p.999.
[1721]Amos O. Omore *et. al.,* "The Kenya dairy sub-sector: a rapid appraisal." (1999)., p.24.
[1722]Fridah Andanje Indeche, "The Changing Patterns of Land-Use Among the Kabras of Kakamega County, Kenya C. 1963-2010." PhD diss., Doctoral Dissertation. Kenyatta University, 2021., p.153.
[1723]J. Breman *et. al.,* "Nijmegen Studies in Development and Cultural Change.", p.97.

production in Maragoli.[1724] But the quantitative increase in crop production and the manufacture of livestock products was never accompanied by appropriate techniques in agriculture and livestock keeping due to lack of adequate extension agricultural and veterinary services.

As observed by the study, this led to deterioration in soil fertility and the condition of livestock. Consequently, there was relative reduction in both crop yields and livestock productivity per acre. Peasant production continued to be vulnerable to drought and crop and animal diseases. Further, administrative emphasis on crop production gradually led to the predominance of agriculture over livestock keeping.[1725] This undermined the balance which had existed between the two forms of production during the pre-colonial period. Such a balance had ensured diversity in food varieties hence reducing food shortage. Other economic activities like hunting and the gathering of fruits which were significant during the pre-colonial period also declined as forests became cleared for settlement and crop production.

The transformation of production from use value to exchange value also led to changes in the organization of labour within and among households.[1726] Whereas before the advent of colonialism people worked in their fields just long enough to satisfy their subsistence requirements, during the colonial period they were forced to work for longer hours to be able to produce surplus for sale.[1727] Also, due to the periodic absence of males from their

[1724]Sara Horrell and Jane Humphries, "The origins and expansion of the male breadwinner family: The case of nineteenth-century Britain." *International Review of Social History* 42, no. S5 (1997): 25-64., p.32.
[1725]Climate Change, "Agriculture and Food Security." *The State of Food and Agriculture; FAO (Ed.) FAO: Rome, Italy* (2016)., p.72.
[1726]Ibid.
[1727]Michael Watts, "Drought, environment and food security: some reflections on peasants, pastoralists and commoditization in dryland West Africa."In *Drought and hunger in Africa* (1987): 171-211., p.178.

homes to places of wage labour, domestic farm work, and even the herding of livestock, which had traditionally been the work of men, increasingly became to be the responsibility of women. Unlike in Elgon Nyanza (Bukusu area) where the participation of men in crop production was made more regular by the gradual widespread use of ploughs which required more physical effort.[1728]

In Maragoli the limited land sizes and the ragged land scape reduced the effective use of ploughs; crop cultivation therefore remained the domain of women with men playing a very peripheral role. Further, as each household became increasingly concerned with its own well-being, and as labour became monetarized, traditional cooperative work, *uvufwa*, declined. It was replaced by paid labour, *vibarwa*, as the more prosperous peasants hired labour at a cost. Commoditization further led to the marginalization of the producers. Although the entire colonial economy occupied a position which was peripheral or marginal to the world capitalist system, within the colony itself, the African peasant sector became subordinated to that of the European settler farmers. It became what may be described as a periphery within a periphery; a sub-economy. Through commodity production and deepening market relations, the people of Maragoli came to serve capitalist development by offering cheap labour, cheap food and markets for profit-making goods from the metropole.

Like peasants in other parts of Kenya their 'ultimate security and subsistence lay in their having certain rights in land and in the labour of family members on the land, but who were involved, through rights and obligation, in a wider economic system which included the

[1728]Ibid., p.180.

participation of non-peasants.[1729] At the levels of both production and distribution they became internationally related to metropolitan capitalists and locally to European settler farmers, a relation which was based on economic exploitation and political domination. Participation in a wider economic world as commodity producers led to a transformation in the people's cycle of reproduction.

Defining reproduction the renewal from one round of production to another of the social and technical elements and relations of production among producers', Harriet Friedmann has argued that for it to occur, the means of production must be renewed and the social product distributed among those who labour and those who control the means of production in such a way that production must recommence in its previous form.[1730] According to her the transformation of reproduction takes place when it is undermined and some of the old elements of production are recombined in to new ones.[1731] Among the people of Maragoli such transformation did not occur in the actual ownership of land as everyone possessed it, but in the size of family land holdings, which varied from household to household.

The present study found out that there was deterioration in the quality/fertility of land. Livestock also became scarce and more costly. New and more expensive instruments of production, iron hoes and ploughs were also introduced. Prices of surplus produce, which acquired an exchange value were low relative to imported commodities. All these increased the cost of production and decreased real returns to labour.[1732] People found it increasingly

[1729]This definition of peasants is attributed to John S. Saul and Roger Woods, See their essay, 'African Peasantries' in Arrighi G. and Soul J. (eds) (1974) *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa*, East African Publishing House ltd., p.407.
[1730]Harriet Friedmann, "Household production and the national economy: concepts for the analysis of agrarian formations." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 7, no. 2 (1980): 158-184., p.161.
[1731]Ibid
[1732]Henry Bernstein, *Class dynamics of agrarian change*. Vol. 1. Kumarian Press, 2010., p.67.

costly to renew their means of production to buy farm inputs, procure wives, rear children, eat a balanced diet as they sometimes sold even their subsistence requirements. This sorry situation which emerged has been described by Henry Bernstein as 'simple reproduction squeeze.[1733]

Commodity production did not create an entirely immiserised peasantry. It offered an opportunity for new forms of accumulation to a few people.[1734] Those who owned large pieces of land, oxen and ploughs were able to produce greater quantities of surplus whose returns they re-invested in further production and other forms of economic activity. Some of them even hired and paid labour to work on their farms. It was these people who bought milk separators and established water mills. They also entered trade in grain, hides, and skins and cattle. They owned shops and built *mabati*-iron roofed houses. The more adventurous ones bought lorries and entered transport business. A few of such people began moving out of Maragoli due to increasing shortage of land to other areas especially Bungoma and Trans Nzoia on the eve of independence.

5.9.2 Chapter Summary

This chapter has illustrated the contribution of the Second World War to the dynamics in Maragoli food production mechanisms along gender lines. The war needs both in military personnel and foodstuffs reorganized Maragoli gender labour relations. Through policies and regulations, the government directly interfered with gender relations in the colony and in North Kavirondo specifically. Women did most of the African production during the

[1733]Henry Bernstein, "African peasantries: a theoretical framework." *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 6, no. 4 (1979): 421-443., p.424.
[1734]Walter Chambati, Freedom Mazwi and Steve Mberi, "Agrarian accumulation and peasant resistance in Africa." *Inclusive development in Africa: Transformations of global relations* (2018): 104-132., p.108.

war since men had been conscripted for the war. Women' agricultural labour was so crucial such that Maragoli African men colluded with North Kavirodo Local Native Council and the other colonial administrators to ensure continued agricultural production through the available women labour.

The chapter has demonstrated how African production was reorganized not only to provide agricultural produce but also manpower in the construction of infrastructure during and after the war. Wartime production directly transformed gender relations because of the re-organisation of land tenure system and labour relations. Market expansion as a result of increased population in the upcoming neighbouring Maragoli townships encouraged Maragoli to produce more foodstuffs. Moreover, the increased gold prospects in Kakamega further increased male migration into the mines and increased demand for food stuffs for such labourforce.

The females were not also left behind, quite a significant number of them joined petty trade within the division opening small groceries and cereal shops, others went out of the division to supply the miners with food stuffs with a few even making attempts in prostitution. The consequence of this was increased inclination towards individual land tenure system. Labour relations in Maragoli division were also re-organized by the war. As the majority of African men joined the war and other wage employment, women were left maintaining and sustaining rural production.

At the end of the war, African reserves had experienced socio-economic problems, which made the government attempt a reconstruction of African agriculture. Communal farming and landownership, which were perceived as the best ways of reconstructing African areas

failed. Reconstruction was also tried among African communities through improving African women's welfare initially undertaken by the East African Women's League, before the government joined in.

Despite these restrictions, the war provided opportunities for both men and women to trade in the different townships that had emerged in the Maragoli especially as from the 1930s during the Kakamega gold rush. Such changes availed more opportunities and challenges for both men and women as it spurred intrapreneurial tendencies to a level never witnessed before. These new trends increased socio-economic problems in the district, more Maragoli participated in trade resulting to the emergence of a category of professionals ranging from tailors, craftsmen and even trade unionists.

The production during the war increased the value of land in the North Kavirondo district at large without sparing Maragoliland. Commercialization of agricultural production changed the tenurial relations even within households. For instance, the idea of “separate” gardens was discarded. Gradually women lost parcels of land they had formerly grown food crops as more land was put under intensified agricultural cultivation for sale, produce that were not necessarily consumed by the household members. Furthermore, increased demand for agricultural land led to clearing of the initial Maragoli wetlands and forests which had initially supplemented Maragoli agricultural food supply through wild game and gathering.

By the end of World War II, the land question was further complicated as the government reluctantly began to support individuals who had state patronage to accumulate land. The aspect of individualized land ownership begun to gradually become institutionalized with specific members of the society, the chiefs, tribunal elders and the Western educated capitalizing on the situation to accumulate large parcels of land at the expense of others. Maragoli women would not accumulate land since they did not occupy any position that gave them government patronage.

Moreover, through this chapter it has been established that the Mid 1940s colonial changes and developments created an enabling environment for the government to implement the Swynnerton Plan, which institutionalized individual land tenure system. The land tenure system affected both men and women but mostly the latter, from poor families. The Swynnerton Plan eroded women's usufruct rights that had previously been safeguarded in the Maragoliland tenure system.

Though maize and beans continued to be grown as the staple crops, these crops were commercialized divorcing them from their initial primary goal of ensuring household food sufficiency. The agitation towards growth of inedible cash crops especially coffee brought competition for land with food crops because of inclination to grow the profitable cash crops. Men were particularly keen in growing cash crops. By the end of 1950s, there was a marked decline in agricultural labour in the district. This was first as a result of the impact of the Kakamega gold rush. Second, the people and especially men were being pushed out of the district as a result of declining agricultural production and the fact that there were employment opportunities in the emerging manufacturing sector in the urban areas.

Women too were employed in the various colonial infrastructural demands in the absence of men during the mid1950s because there were few men on the ground.

Moreover, the economic stress that women were encountering forced them to take up jobs in the upcoming townships as petty traders, food vendors and even prostitutes. The movement of both men and women into wage and entrepreneurship sectors negatively affected provision of agricultural labour. Despite these changes, on the eve of independence, agriculture remained the main economic mainstay for the Maragoli.

But there was diversification because those with sizeable land acreage opted to put large areas under either coffee or the newly coming in tea. Horticulture industry was equally taking a significant share of land in the district. The shift to inedible cash crops and horticulture solidified gender class differences, because these enterprises required not only capital, but also land and, therefore, disqualified individuals who did not have access to these facilities. This leads to the last chapter which constitutes summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

The study's general objective was to investigate the dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. Four specific objectives and related research questions that helped to guide the interrogation of the related major literature to single out and define the gaps that needed to be filled helped the study achieve its intended objective. A strong theoretical framework supported by two theories was available to assist the researcher in the exploration of the specific objectives. Therefore, based on the stated specific objectives, this chapter gives a summary of the study's major findings, conclusions and recommendations. Finally, the study has made an effort to offer suggestions for further research.

The study's context, from which the statement of the problem was created, is described in chapter one. It also included the broad and detailed study objectives as well as the main research questions to aid in examining the phenomena of the dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. The chapter discussed the significance, scope and limitations of the study as well as the academic, philosophical and policy justifications. The literature review attempted to point out the numerous gaps in a variety of scholarly works that the study attempted to remedy. The four distinct research objectives served as the cardinal guide for this review. A theoretical framework that encompassed two theories; articulation of modes of production and gender analysis were offered in the chapter. Combining these two ideas provided direction on how to understand and analyze the data that was gathered.

The final section of chapter one covered the research methods and ethical issues, particularly with regard to the positionality of the researcher in the study.

6.2 Summary of Key Findings

The summary was based on the following objectives; first to trace the pre-colonial history of Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender roles in food production. Secondly, interrogate the patterns of change in food production in relation to gender during the initial colonial period, 1895-1920. Thirdly, assess the dynamics in food production mechanisms and gender relations during the inter-war period,1920-1945, and finally, evaluate the changes in food production mechanisms and gender relations in the post World War II era, 1945-1963.

6.2.1 Historization of the Pre-Colonnial Maragoli Food Production Mechanisms and Gender Relations up to 1895

The Maragoli belong to the Luhya linguistic group. According to Maragoli oral traditions, the term Luhya derives from the Maragoli words Urusha or Uruvamba, signifying bloodline. This description aligns with Were's assertion that Luhya denotes kinsmen. The name Maragoli is associated with a religious leader or diviner known as Omuraguri. The Maragoli trace their ancestry to Mulogoli and Kalyesa. Mulogoli had four sons who constitute the four primary clans of the Maragoli. Concerning social formations that have developed over many years due to the community's interactions with various settings and other groups. The result of this was the establishment of economic and social structures functioning at the home, family, and lineage levels.

The Maragoli resided in lineages that facilitated the delineation of their socio-political and economic frameworks. By the end of the nineteenth century, the lineage mode had become dominant, subordinating the other two to its requirements. The lineage method of production was founded on the triad of kinship, seniority, and territoriality. These ideas supported and legitimized the patterns of material production, reproduction, distribution, and relations of production and distribution at the domestic, familial, and lineage levels. These concepts, replicated in the political domain, sought to achieve equilibrium in society.

The acquisition of essential resources, specifically land and labor, was predicated on a patriarchal framework and societal standards that shaped gender relations of production in pre-colonial Maragoli. While Maragoli males possessed ownership rights to land, women were granted only usage rights through association with a male individual. Notwithstanding the patriarchal structure of the pre-colonial era, the Maragoli facilitated equitable access to land for agriculture for all individuals, regardless of gender, through established social organizations. Consequently, the land tenure arrangement in pre-colonial Maragoli facilitated productivity for all individuals. The gendered division of labor assigned separate yet complementary duties to men and women of different age groups in food production to guarantee adequate food supply. The division was sufficiently flexible to permit role swap when feasible to enhance production efficiency. The Maragoli social structure created regulations to standardize the production and distribution of food items and mitigate shortages to guarantee adequacy.

Prior to colonization, the Maragoli predominantly engaged in agriculture, with their food production systems largely centered on crop cultivation. This prompted the Maragoli to create a sophisticated agricultural calendar to optimize their agricultural output.

This calendar was defined by two seasons: the primary season, egudu, and the secondary season, idjuivwi. The primary season yielded superior results, prompting the Maragoli to accord it greater significance, as seen by the ceremonial inauguration of the season with the sacrificial elders, culminating with the council of elders.

The pre-colonial Maragoli civilization established a stable economy via specialization and division of labor. The father, as the leader of the home, served primarily as a steward of family resources. Every member of the community had a distinct function in the buildup of familial wealth. Beginning in the latter part of the 19th century, a progressive transformation in land tenure occurred due to the heightened production of foodstuffs to sustain the Arab-Swahili and subsequently European commerce caravans. The market opportunity created by these outsiders motivated the Maragoli to enhance their output, particularly of maize and beans. The heightened commercialization of food crops prompted the establishment of individual land tenure systems in Maragoli prior to the advent of colonial control.

The sufficient availability of labor was deemed essential for agricultural output in Maragoli. In pre-colonial Maragoli, patriarchy ensured that Maragoli males exercised dominion over women, young men, and children's labor. By exerting control over labor, senior leaders were able to amass money. Although males owned and managed labor, their participation in agricultural output was restricted in comparison to that of women. The gender distribution of labor was evident in the cultivation of many food crops in Maragoli.The agricultural produce was gender-specific, with women managing annual crops and males cultivating perennial crops. The allocation of crops was mostly dictated by the social responsibilities attributed to each gender group.

Crops planted by women were primarily consumed daily, whilst those farmed by males were intended for times of famine. Domestic labor was, thus, vital for the sustenance of the family. However, it has been observed that the gender division of labor was adaptable based on the circumstances.

6.2.2. Maragoli Food Production Mechanisms and Gender Relations up to 1920

The first European contact with Maragoli was pioneered by Josph Thomson in 1883. His explorative mission and success in the region formed the basis upon which other Europeans later got interested in Maragoli, later coming in as traders, missionaries and travellers. These early Europeans reffered to Western region as Kavirondo, a name they got from the coastal traders who had visited western region during the caravan trade. Thomson described the area as food secure and with welcoming inhabotants.

In regard to colonial establishment, the Kavirondo region came under colonial rule in 1894 after a formal establishment of a colonial administration centre at Mumias. Charles Hobley was appointed as the first British administrator with the sole objective of helping the British bring order for effective British control. The Wanga due to their formalized political structure were pointed out as the most powerful and civilized local group to help the British administer the Kavirondo region. As the British point men, the Wanga through nabongo appointed chiefs whom they sent out to the different parts of North Kavirondo. This preferential treatment made the Wanga to become an integral part in the caravan trade which extended to Maragoli land.

Through the caravan trade, Maragoli agricultural production expanded and began taking the capitalistic tendencies of production for exchange. Through this agricultural expansion, new set of gender dynamics were brought into Maragoli. Women being the primary agricultural producers, more of their labour was exploited for more agricultural profits. Since men were the owners and distributors of wealth, a large section of the profits from the trade was accumulated by the men hence creating the genesis of the gender imbalance in food production and distribution in Maragoli.

The pioneer Maragoli point men in the caravan trade took advantage of this trade to grow more crops, buy more crops and trade items from the neighbours and even alienate more land for agricultural production. Such men after getting the caravan trade profits even married more women as a way of increasing their agricultural production. Some of such men were later appointed as colonial chiefs, a factor that helped to better their socio-economic status in the society. It is doubtful if women were able to take advantage of the caravan trade to accumulate.

After bringing Maragoli into effective British control, the administrators embarked on setting up strategies in order to fully exploit the region for colonial benefits. Key among these strategies included taxation and labour recruitment. The labour recruitment strategies aimed at expanding the settler agriculture at the neglect of the pre-colonial Maragoli agricultural establishments. In response to this, the Maragoli on their part adopted the new colonial policies which were benefitial to them including adoption of the new and improved colonial crop varieties into the agricultural production.

The Maragoli also took advantage of the colonial developments especially in roads, railway and urbanization to expand their agricultural production. Such roads helped the Maragoli link to the developing townships in order to access the new urban market such as Kisumu and Kakamega.

Another key feature of the early colonial era in Maragoli was the decisive move by the colonial state to articulate the key aspects of Maragoli food production into the colonial spectrum. These aspects were labor and land. As a way of effectively integrating the Maragoli into the colonial economy, the colonial system asserted itself against the Maragoli political and economic establishments, some of which it had to destroy or restructure in the process.

The colonial state destroyed the clan system as the basis of Maragoli social economic and political setup. The colonial state on the other hand decided to retain the women labour in the rural set up as a mechanism of helping the government subsidize the meagre urban and settler farm wage that the employees were getting. It also retained but modified the Maragoli chieftaincy as the key Maragoli political establishment.

The earliest impact of colonial imprints in Western Kenya and particularly Maragoli was the increase in farmine and diseases. This situation was brought about by the flight from the British military expeditions, forcing the Maragoli sleep in the tsetse fly infested forests making them contract sleeping sickness. In addition to this, the Sudenese soldiers and the Swahili trade carravans introduced small pox to the people killing many. Last but not least, jigger menace was also introduced into the region by the Indian railway workers. The jigger

menace barrowed the inhabitants' feet making it difficult for them to engage in the agricultural and other food production related engagements.

Christianity and formal education were also another distinctive mark of the colonial inprint in Maragoli. The Friends African Mission (FAM) and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) were the pioneer missionary groups in Maragoli. These mission groups set their headquarters in Kaimosi and Nyang'ori respectively. The Maragoli as a nationality decided to adopt Christian ideals and values, went for western education and finally assimilated all these value systems as a way of adjusting to the new colonial reality. This was in line with Paulo Friere's position that the oppressed at a certain level of existential experience, adopts the attitude of adherence to the oppressor.

Moreover, upon its introduction, Christianity was seen as an obstacle to the established Maragoli way of life. Fathers as the official heads of families came out to stamp their authority and stopped their sons from joining the Kaimosi mission. The orphaned boys due to economic hardships and absence of a father figure in their families, ran to the mission centres for food and other related western goodies including clothes. This made such orphaned boys to be the first benefitiaries of Christianity and Western education at the expense of the well to do sons of the rich and strict traditional Maragoli men. Since western education was a prequisite for colonial employment, the orphaned educated boys became the pioneer colonial employees, bringing about one of the earliest dramatic paradigms shift in the Maragoli socio-economic strata.

The establishment of colonial governance in the late 19th century significantly altered the land tenure structure. The colonial government's objective was to economically exploit the

colony, leading to the establishment of systems that alienated Africans from their domestic production and compelled them to labor for the benefit of the colonial economy. The colonial authority implemented legislation that enabled the dispossession of African land. The Crown Lands Ordinances of 1901, 1902, and 1915 declared that Africans were tenants at will of the British Crown, resulting in the alienation of African land. The inhabitants were entirely deprived of their means of production. The establishment of African reserves further restricted African territory. The alienation of land in Maragoli and its surroundings contributed to the advancement of an individual land tenure system, since land-owning sub-clans declined to share their property with individuals whose land had been appropriated.

The problem was exacerbated by the dilution of social structures, such as the clan, particularly in land affairs, following the colonial government's assumption of administrative control over the province. As a result, individuals were not always able to seek the clan's assistance for favorable mediation in land matters. The alienation of land significantly affected women's ability to produce food crops, which were essentially in their domain- sustaining and nurturing the family. The withdrawal of male labour from the Maragoli household further complicated the situation.

The traditional roles of males in food production were left unattended to and latter picked up by women. This overburdened the women folk and widened the gender gap in Maragoli food production creating the genesis of feminization of Maragoli agriculture. The unique roles played by men was thus silenced. This was especially in taking up the family agricultural mobilization, planting the male labeled crops which greatly rescued the

homestead during food shortage, supplementing the agricultural food supplies through hunting, blacksmithing and cattle rearing.

The onset of World War 1in 1918, further, excerbated the already initiated dynaminism in Maragoli food production and gender relations. Due to this war, more able bodied Maragoli men were taken out of Maragoliland to join the war either as combats or carriers corps. Since Maragoli men had played a great role in securing agricultural land, breaking the virgin lands and offering a safety valve during moments of food shortage through their male crops and the male granaries. Their emigration from Maragoli left a food production vaccum hence increased food shortage.

6.2.3 Food Production and Gender Relations in the Inter-war Period,1920-1945

Among the major events during this period which greatly impacted on the Maragoli food production and gender relations included the effects of 1918-19 epidemic and drought, the World War 1 effects, the 1920 declaration of Kenya as a British colony, the 1923 Devonshire White Paper, expansion of Kisumu and Kakamega as urban centres and the increase of the Indian migarant population in the Western Kenya after the construction of the Kenya Uganda railway. During this period, the intial colonial policies were intensified as more others were introduced.

The imposition of colonial governance and economy disrupted labor organization among the Maragoli. The necessity to develop the colony's infrastructure and supply labor for the settlers compelled the authorities to displace Africans from their home production. During the initial years of colonial governance, coercion was employed to displace Africans from

their domestic production. As Africans became increasingly integrated into the colonial economy, coercive measures for securing wage work diminished. Nonetheless, considerable labor rules profoundly transformed gender relations and, in turn, food production systems.

The Edward Northey Circulars (1919) and the Registration of Natives Ordinance (1920) were pivotal in altering labor relations in colonial Maragoli. Following the implementation of the Registration of Natives Ordinance, the colonial administration diminished the application of force until 1939, coinciding with the onset of the Second World War. The Second World War was another instance of conscription for military service and the manufacturing of necessary goods. The colonial labor restrictions were particular to gender. The Edward Northey circulars explicitly stated that African males were to be "encouraged" to pursue wage jobs beyond their homes, while women and children were to remain in their local communities for labor.

The Registration of Native Ordinance further illustrated the gendered aspects of colonialism. The registration of Natives predominantly focused on men, who were perceived as "workers" due to the patriarchal impact of European civilization, whilst women were considered "helpers." The administration believed that women would pursue jobs in their local regions.

In addition to alterations in land tenure and labor organization impacting gender relations and food production systems in Maragoli, taxes also disrupted family organization.

The research determined that Maragoli's closeness to Kisumu and Kakamega towns altered gender relations and food production systems in the division. The two towns provided the Maragoli with an immediate market for their agricultural products. The research indicated

that the crops cultivated in the division were directly affected by the demand in the two towns. The commercialization of the economy transformed Maragoli labor acquisition, a crucial element in food production, from an unpaid system to a commercial one. Furthermore, the heightened external demand, particularly for Maragoli male labor, significantly jeopardized the pre-colonial gender dynamics in labor relations.

This destroyed the foundation of its reproduction. The cash economy resulted in the disintegration of extensive familial networks and the reduction of joint activity. All things were highlighted and disseminated through the new tax and labor laws, as well as the establishment of new political positions, particularly the colonial chiefs.

The colonial alterations significantly influenced the Maragoli's established gender dynamics in food production. Responsibilities once assigned to males were being assumed by women as men engaged in wage labor or enlisted in the military as bearers, coups, and recruiters. This, however, did not transpire in all houses; in the limited instances when it happened, women engaged in clearing shrubs and preparing fields, with assistance from male relatives.

Children were no longer restricted to minor jobs like food gathering and herding; they were also required to provide labor on the farms. Following the usurpation of traditional authority held by clan and village elders by the new administrative structure, only a limited number of families succeeded in organizing work parties for short periods.

This was conducted at the village and neighborhood levels of the work parties, encompassing all ages and genders. The remnants of the men's labor parties during the inter-war period were diminished in scale compared to the pre-colonial era. The persons who had previously combined their labor and resources for commerce or construction

assumed new roles. They pursued wage labor both in Maragoli and elsewhere. They enhanced their competencies for the commodified labor market economy.

The gold potential in Kakamega during the 1930s exacerbated male outmigration from Maragoli and heightened food demand for the miners. Several Maragoli women relocated to Kakamega to participate in minor commerce.

The colonial administration prioritized the development of the agricultural sector in colonial Kenya, given its status as an agricultural economy. Significant focus was directed into settler agriculture, since it was seen as the foundation of the economy. All agricultural focus directed towards African agriculture was influenced by gender considerations. The agricultural instruction provided at the Scott Laboratories in Kabete and the Bukura Agricultural Centre only targeted males. This is comprehensible considering that the colonial patriarchal regime restricted women to the domestic sphere while males dominated the public sphere. The colonialists attempted to impose their societal structure on the Maragoli. Nonetheless, Maragoli women persisted in their dominance in food crop production despite governmental neglect.

6.2.4 Mechanisms of Food Production and Gender Relations in Maragoli Land, 1945-1963

This chapter has demonstrated the impact of the Second World War on the dynamics of Maragoli food production systems concerning gender roles. The conflict necessitated a reorganization of Maragoli gender labor relations due to the needs for military troops and food supplies. The government directly influenced gender relations in the colony, particularly in North Kavirondo, through laws and regulations. Women predominantly undertook African production throughout the war because to the conscription of males.

The agricultural labor of women was so vital that Maragoli African males conspired with the North Kavirodo Local Native Council and other colonial authorities to guarantee sustained agricultural output through the existing female workforce.

This chapter has illustrated the reorganization of African production to supply both agricultural goods and labor for infrastructure development post-war. Wartime production fundamentally altered gender relations due to the reconfiguration of land tenure systems and labor interactions. The anticipated population growth in the adjacent Maragoli townships prompted Maragoli to enhance its food production. Furthermore, the enhanced gold chances in Kakamega augmented male migration to the mines and escalated the demand for food supplies for this labor force. The ladies were not neglected; a considerable number engaged in petty trade within the division by establishing tiny grocery and cereal shops. Others ventured beyond the division to supply miners with foodstuffs, while a few even resorted to prostitution. This resulted in a heightened preference for an individual land tenure system. The battle also restructured labour relations in the Maragoli division.

With the bulk of African males participating in the war and other wage occupations, women were tasked with maintaining and sustaining agricultural output. Following the war, African reserves faced socio-economic challenges, prompting the government to initiate a rehabilitation of African agriculture. Communal farming and landownership, seen as optimal methods for rebuilding African regions, were unsuccessful. Reconstruction efforts were also implemented inside African communities by enhancing the welfare of African women, first spearheaded by the East African Women's League, prior to government involvement.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the conflict created chances for both men and women to engage in commerce within the several townships that developed in Maragoli, particularly during the 1940s amid the Kakamega gold rush. These developments provided increased chances and challenges for both men and women, since they stimulated intrapreneurial impulses to an unprecedented degree.

The advent of new trends exacerbated socio-economic issues in the region, leading to increasing participation of Maragoli in commerce and the development of a category of professionals, including tailors, artisans, and trade unionists. The wartime productivity augmented the land value throughout the North Kavirondo area, including Maragoliland. The commercialization of agricultural production altered tenurial ties even inside homes. The concept of "separate" gardens was abandoned. Women progressively forfeited portions of land previously utilized for food cultivation as an increasing area was dedicated to enhanced agricultural production for sale, which was not necessarily consumed by family members. Moreover, heightened demand for agricultural land resulted in the deforestation of the original Maragoli wetlands and woodlands, which had previously contributed to the Maragoli agricultural food supply through wild game and foraging.

By the end of the 1940s, the land issue became increasingly complex as the government, while unwillingly, began to endorse people with official patronage in their efforts to amass property. The phenomenon of personalized land ownership began to be systematically established, with certain societal members, including chiefs, tribunal elders, and the Western-educated, using the circumstances to amass extensive property holdings to the detriment of others. Maragoli women did not acquire land as they held no positions that afforded them governmental patronage.

This chapter establishes that the colonial changes and advancements of the mid-1940s facilitated the government's implementation of the Swynnerton Plan, which codified an individual land tenure system. The land tenure system impacted both men and women, predominantly affecting women from impoverished backgrounds.

The Swynnerton Plan undermined women's usufrunct rights that were hitherto protected inside the Maragoliland tenure system. Although maize and beans remained the principal crops, their commercialization severed their original purpose of guaranteeing family food security. The need for the cultivation of non-edible cash crops, particularly coffee, has intensified competition for land with food crops due to the preference for more lucrative cash crops. Men had a pronounced enthusiasm for cultivating income crops. By the conclusion of the 1950s, there was a significant reduction in agricultural labor within the area. This initially occurred due to the effects of the Kakamega gold rush. Secondly, individuals, particularly males, were being displaced from the district due to diminishing agricultural output and the availability of work possibilities in the burgeoning manufacturing sector in metropolitan areas.

During the mid-1950s, women were engaged in numerous colonial infrastructure tasks due to the scarcity of men there. Furthermore, the economic strain faced by women compelled many to seek employment in emerging townships as tiny shopkeepers, food sellers, and even sex workers. The entry of both men and women into wage and entrepreneurial sectors adversely impacted the supply of agricultural labor. Notwithstanding these alterations, on the cusp of independence, agriculture continued to be the principal economic foundation for the Maragoli. However, diversification occurred when landowners with substantial estates chose to cultivate extensive regions with either coffee or the newly introduced tea.

The horticulture sector was also occupying a substantial portion of land in the neighborhood. The transition to non-consumable cash crops and horticulture entrenched gender class disparities, as these ventures need both capital and land, therefore excluding persons without access to these resources.

6.3 Conclusions

This section presents the conclusions of the four objectives employed in this investigation. The study indicates that the pre-colonial Maragoli possessed a stable and well-coordinated food production system founded on equitable gender relations. This system was founded on a patriarchal framework that, while affording men a dominant role in the control of production, also permitted women to contribute to food production. Despite being smooth, there were instances of food shortages caused mostly by the caprices of nature, particularly drought. Such adversities were mitigated via the liquidation of animals for sustenance and commerce with the local community utilizing their artisanal products such as pottery, baskets, and iron tools.

The Maragoli additionally cultivated crops such as yams, cassava, and foraged wild fruits and tubers from the forest to alleviate the food scarcity. An in-depth investigation of the earliest encounter between the Maragoli and the Europeans up to 1920 is presented in goal two. This purpose demonstrates that the Maragoli area initially encountered foreigners due to its important position along the caravan route. Through this caravan, Maragoli was recognized as a crucial refreshment station for the caravan traders.

Nevertheless, the caravan traders saw the potential of Maragoli land and so incorporated the Maragoli into the trade. The Maragoli capitalized on this chance to trade an assortment

of goods, including honey, corn, and beans. Additionally, the chapter has illustrated that early 1900s Maragoli was marked by missionary endeavors, with the establishment of the Friends Quaker Mission center in Kaimosi in 1902 and the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAC) in Nyang'ori in 1909.

These centers significantly contributed to the introduction of Christianity as a Western religion to the Maragoli, effectively integrating them into the colonial context through Western education, wage labor, and new colonial commodities. All these integrated the Maragoli into the capitalist system. The chapter confirmed the hypothesis that economic exploitation, initially by senior African males and subsequently by the colonial administration, modified the land tenure structure in Maragoli, hence altering gender relations in food production. The outmigration of both men and women from the division disrupted the established labor supply system, thereby altering the gender division of labor in food production.

Chapter four presents a discourse on the interwar period. This chapter indicates that the growth of towns around Maragoli, particularly Kisumu and Kakamega, significantly transformed gender dynamics in food production within the division. The chapter concludes that alterations in land and labor organization contributed to the transformation of gender relations in production within the Maragoli division. The estrangement of land in Maragoli and its surroundings undermined social structures, notably the clan system that had previously facilitated individual access to land. Although the pre-colonial Maragoli society was patriarchal, mechanisms exist that ensure women possess use rights. This was, however, undermined by the implementation of an individual land tenure system that favored men.

Chapter five emphasizes the colonial influence on food production systems and gender dynamics from 1945 to 1963. The chapter concludes that the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 provided women with the ability to independently own property without reliance on male relatives. Nevertheless, economic constraints have hindered women's attainment of this essential means of production.

This study also asserts that the colonial land and labor system reconfigured Maragoli gender relations of production. The majority of those whose land was expropriated were compelled to engage in wage labor, thereby becoming dependent on the market for their sustenance requirements. In addition, the application of tax initially on males and then on women withdrew more people from their productivity. The taxation of women compelled several Maragoli women to seek employment as wage laborers in tea plantations, initially in Kericho and subsequently in Nandi. This tight allocation of domestic labor occurred as they attempted to balance family production with wage labor, which was increasingly essential in the emerging political economy. The alteration in the land tenure structure and the reduction of agricultural labor elucidates the variations in the types of food crops cultivated in Maragoli during the duration of this research. The persistent push and pull forces that influenced the Maragoli, particularly wage work and escalating rural hardship, were identified as the primary catalysts for the migration of Maragoli males to metropolitan centers.

The departure of males to urban centers heightened the feminization of agriculture in the region. Due to the absence of the male labor force, their impact on agricultural food production was particularly evident in the recurrent food shortages in Maragoli. This era was marked by the return of World War II veterans. The men returned to Maragoli with

diverse mindsets that adversely affected the local food production systems and gender dynamics.

Initially, the soldiers returned mentally traumatized by the battle experiences. Such men would no longer engage in listening and discussing with their spouses as they had previously. Many returned with battle as the one language they comprehended for resolving issues. They assaulted their wives with clubs and whips, compelling several to flee for safety.

This adversely affected food production, as the Maragoli society designated the wife as the principal home manager and director of the family as the producing unit. The division possessed an accessible market for its agricultural produce. The influence of these towns on Maragoli food production is seen by the introduction of several marketable food crops. Furthermore, these settlements supplied Maragoli with the necessary resources to educate their children and to relocate from the densely crowded Maragoli to the more fertile regions of Trans Nzoia and Bungoma beginning in the 1950s, therefore facilitating their agricultural endeavors.

The study reveals that the types of food crops cultivated in the Maragoli division were determined not just by the availability of arable land and labor supply but also by the marketability of the output. For example, the English potatoes, Rose Coco beans, and Hickory King white maize were cultivated in Maragoli during the early 20th century. The towns provided opportunities for rural-urban migration. A greater number of men relocated to the towns compared to women. The substantial out-migration of adult males profoundly impacted gender dynamics inside the home. A significant effect was the augmentation of women's economic and social obligations.

However, despite women assuming men's duties, they did not get the accompanying authority and power associated with these positions. The exodus of men also heightened women's labor responsibilities on the land. The excessive load on women influenced the varieties of food crops cultivated in the division. The cultivation of male-specific crops diminished because women were either unable to manage the workload or lacked the necessary abilities to cultivate crops such as yams. Moreover, labor-intensive crops like as millet and sorghum were diminished or eliminated due to the demand on women's labor.

6.4 Overall Conclusion

The precolonial Maragoli community exhibited a diversified and gender-complementary food production system that included hunting, gathering, basketry, weaving, and iron smelting. These activities were not merely economic but were deeply embedded in the social and symbolic fabric of Maragoli life, with both men and women playing clearly defined yet interdependent roles. Men primarily undertook hunting and iron smelting—activities associated with protection and tools of production—while women were central to food gathering, basketry, and weaving, which sustained household consumption and community exchange.

From an articulation of modes of production perspective, this system reflected a subsistence-based communal economy, whose transformation under colonialism restructured labor relations, land access, and gender roles. Colonial capitalism introduced wage labor, monetized agriculture, and land privatization, which privileged male participation in cash crop farming and formal employment.

Simultaneously, Christianity and Western education, often mediated through missionary institutions, reinforced Victorian gender norms that idealized male breadwinners and domesticated, subordinate women. These interventions undermined women's centrality in food production systems and decision-making by devaluing indigenous knowledge systems and erasing women from newly formalized structures of authority. However, an interpretivist and feminist epistemological approaches revealed that Maragoli women did not passively accept this transformation. Instead, they reasserted their influence in domestic spaces such as food storage, meal preparation, and community rituals, which remained under their control.

Women's expertise in basketry and food preservation technologies, for example, remained vital in sustaining households, even as formal wage labor and colonial agriculture marginalized their roles in the public economy. This shows that while colonial gender transformation imposed new hierarchies, it also provoked localized strategies of resistance and negotiation. A more nuanced gender analysis thus challenges universalist narratives of female subjugation by highlighting how Maragoli women adapted, resisted, and redefined their roles within shifting socio-economic contexts. The study calls for a decolonized gender discourse—one that recognizes the historical complexity of African societies, the embeddedness of gender in modes of production, and the necessity for relational, context-sensitive approaches that promote coexistence and shared responsibility, rather than gender antagonism.

Therefore, the overall conclusion of the study is that the pre-colonial Maragoli had a well-established food production mechanism with a balanced gender participation. This situation was, however, greatly changed by the colonial policies to which the Maragoli

responded to not only to improve their lives, but also utilizing the opportunities availed to them to become the agents of their own change. The concept of linking colonial dynamics in food production to gender relations has not been captured adequately in most literature on Maragoli and therefore the study adds new knowledge to existing literature.

6.5 Recommendations

The study's results and conclusions led to the following recommendations based on each objective. The study suggests that the Maragoli society should re-examine the meaning of food production from a gendered perspective. This is based on the study's general objective which was to investigate the dynamics of food production mechanisms and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. This will help the Maragoli nationality to appreciate the place of both Maragoli men and women in food production mechanisms right from the pre-colonial era. Through such a perspective, the gender dynamics over time will be understood and properly contextualized.

This will also help to situate the colonial contribution to the changes in gender relations through a scholarly juxtapausition of the pre-colonial and the colonial Maragoli realities. The reason for pushing for the documentation of all these is that what exists now is the book titled "*The Bantu of North Kavirondo*''by Gunter Wagner. As a Euro centric anthropologist, Wagner detailed the history of the Maragoli within the Whiteman's anthropological perspective. The African scholars in Maragoli must retrace this history and

include more African voices, perspectives and gender aspects from an Afrocentric dimension.

Based on the first specific objective, the study recommends that there is need to trace the pre-colonial history of the Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender roles. This is because food production is a culturally specific endeavour which must be analyzed from a localized appreciation of the involved nationality. Anything developed by a nationality had its own validations which must not be ignored without a thorough objectified investigation.

Civic education programs especially through agricultural shows and government *barazas* should be made use of to make the Maragoli understand their progressive precolonial food production mechanisms. This is in addition to the roles all and sundry played to make the food production cycle a success. Since agriculture is devolved, the County government of Vihiga should play a leading role.

According to the second specific objective, the study recommends to the policy makers, political actors and the ordinary Maragoli people to recorgnize the specific changes introduced during the initial colonial era. This is with the intent to interrogate them and make them responsive to the Maragoli food production demands in line with gender relations. Understanding the dynamics, motivations and consequences of these initial colonial policies is essential for promoting an efficient food production with respect to the diverse gender contributions. All this will promote a deepened understanding of the pioneer colonial policies to avoid a blanket condemnation or glorification of the initial colonial era.

Regarding the third specific objective, the study recommends to policy makers and agricultural stakeholders in Maragoli and Kenya in general to prioritize fostering a deeper understanding of the dynamics of food production mechanisms and how this shaped gender relations during the inter war period. This is because this period was characterized by war crisis and proper integration of the Maragoli economy into the capitalist global economy. Through a proper understanding of this era, the policy makers and agricultural stakeholders will appreciate the strategies to employ in the moments of crisis in order to restore stability after any crisis.

Furthermore, a proper understanding of the interwar era will help the Maragoli society understand the reasons as to why the colonial government adopted some measures which greatly altrered the pre-colonial Maragoli food production and its related gender relations. Through such, the concerned parties will be able to make informed decisions on which of these policies negatively affectd the Maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations even up to date. This will help the policy makers realize those policies to de emphasize as they place more stress on the positive interwar policies in order to promote food production.

The recommendations of the sudy after interrogating and analyzing the changes in food production mechanisms and gender relations in the post World War II era, is premised on the basis that the post World War II era through the various colonial policies and programs such as Christianity and Western education, the Swynnerton plan and the Post War Reconstruction and community development programmes among others greatly changed the established Maragoli food production structure and its related gender relations

framework. All these programs were state initiated and did very little to empower the established gendered pre-colonial Maragoli food production mechanisms.

Thus, it is recommended that the present state managers especially the county government officials should embark on a more pro-active path to radically transform the key colonial policies especially on land ownership to bring a more inclusive land rights in respect to women. This is because women remain the primary producers and decisions on land access and appropriation that has been fully given to individual male owners disadvantages women full participation in food production.

The title deeds-the land ownership validating document, should be backed up with relevant legislation to properly situate the place of women in land succession. Such backings should be properly followed to avoid manipulation to the disadvantage of the parties along the gender lines.

6.6 Suggestions for Further Study

This study focused on food production and gender relations in colonial maragoli., Kenya, 1895-1963. This meant that background research had to be done in order to put the study into context. This was a big problem because there is almost no literature on food production and gender relations on Maragoli. The study suggests that further studies should be conducted on the histories of food production mechanisms and gender relations in Kenay more so on specific groups as it is lacking and what is there is scanty. This study had to rely fully oon oral interviews to historize the food production mechanisms and gender relations in Maragoli, an indication that the history of food production and gender relations in Kenya is not properly documented.

The study suggests that furher studies be conducted on the specific colonial policies introduced during the initial colonial era and how they impacted on various social groups including men, women, youths, those living with disability, the elderly among others. This will help to inform government poliy. As the study found out many policies introduced during the initial colonial era never had the African interest at heart. This resulted into neglect and insurbodination of the vital African and for this case Maragoli food production prsctices that had been tailored to suit the maragoli ecological and cultural demands.

Such pre-colonial food production practices were co-joined with relevant gendered practices which were all abolished.this has impacted on maragoli food production potentials in a variety of ways upto date.

Further research should be done on the impact of inter war policies on food production and gender relations in specific Kenyan localities. As the study found, the inter war period was the first colonial era where the maragoli pre-colonial practices faced the first serious foreign encounter both materially and ideologically. This was due to the massive recruitment of the Maragoli young men into the World War II and the increased migration of the maragoli men and even women in to the new labour markets in towns. This resulted into enomous acculturization which remains undocumented. Such further studies could aid in informing the future government policies as well as finding better and more efficient ways of implementing the same.

Finally, further studies should be conducted on the extent to which post World War II era influenced changes in food production mechanisms and gender relations. This study took an Afro centric perspective which mirrored a bottom -up approach bringing to light the

Maragoli response to the colonial policies on food production along gender lines. If more of such studies are conducted, not only will they inform policy, but also, they will make both men and women realize their potential and palce in food production as agents of their own change.

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Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

a). FGD, Maragoli Women Farmers (Busali East)

S.NO.	NAME	AGE	VILLAGE OF RESIDENCE	VENUE	INTERVIEW DATE
1.	Chakava Sarah	57 Years	Busweta	GOVOGA CHIEF'S OFFICE GROUNDS	2nd/September 2023
2.	Isabwa Esinasi	64 Years	Butiti		2nd/September 2023
3.	Javagala Magaret	54 Years	Mago		2nd/September/2023
4.	Kisaka Elizabeth	65 Years	Govoga		2nd/September/2023
5.	Kisanyanya Feminesi	58 Years	Chavogere		2nd /September/2023
6.	Mudavadi Trufena	60 Years	Chavugami		2nd /September/2023
7.	Mudidi Hannah	48 Years	Mukiguru		2nd /September/2023
8.	Munyasa Ezna	53 Years	Ikobero		2nd /September/2023

b). FGD 2, Maragoli Women Farmers (Mambai)

S.NO.	NAME	AGE	VILLAGE OF RESIDENCE	VENUE	INTERVIEW DATE
1.	Amfah Sela	63 Years	Wandefa	MAMBAI PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY GROUND	30th/September/2023
2.	Avuya Everline	63 Years	Matenga		30th/September/2023
3.	Amaganga Judith	65 Years	Vibwoni		30th/September/2023
4.	Chavulimu Morine	53 Years	Nabwani		30th/September/2023
5.	Kisanya Edith	50 Years	Wagevi		30th/September/2023
6.	Lifulu Dorice	70 Years	Chanderema		30th/September/2023
7.	Lukayu Phanice	68 Years	Mambai		30th/September/2023
8.	Mugala Rose	69 Years	Jemovo		30th/September/2023
9.	Ombeva Miriam	54 Years	Viyalo		30th/September/2023

c). FGD, Maragoli Women Farmers (Wu Mulalu Shopping centre)

S.NO.	NAME	AGE	VILLAGE OF RESIDENCE	VENUE	INTERVIEW DATE
1.	Amwai Selina	53 Years	Magaga	WU MULALU PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY GROUND	3rd /October/2023
2.	Kareha Eunice	67 Years	Wu Mulalu		3rd /October/2023
3.	Kegode Hellen	58 Years	Imusindu		3rd /October/2023
4.	Kisaka Alice	63 Years	Wakisai		3rd /October/2023
5.	Musiru Jackline	70 Years	Kisatiru		3rd /October/2023
6.	Mandu Josephine	61 Years	Kikuma		3rd /October/2023
7.	Mwachi Finorah	51 Years	Matagaro		3rd /October/2023
8.	Salano Anjeline	55Years	Chango		3rd /October/2023
9.	Salano Edna	62 Years	Vigina		3rd /October/2023

d). FGD4, Chavakali Men and Women Farmers (Walodeya Primary School)

S.NO.	NAME	SEX	AGE	VILLAGE OF RESIDENCE	VENUE	INTERVIEW DATE
1.	Agufana Alex	M	58 Years	Imonyero	WALODEYA PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY GROUND	10th/October/2023
2.	Airo Erika	F	60 Years	Walodeya		10th/October /2023
3.	Amadagi Jenipher	F	63 Years	Igunga		10th/October /2023
4.	Amayenze Prisca	F	52 Years	Chavugami		10th/October /2023
5.	Barusi Vincent	M	65 Years	Imonyero		10th/October /2023
6.	Chakava Hadson	M	65 Years	Igunga		10th/October /2023
7.	Chavulimu Simon	M	59 Years	Igunga		10th/October /2023
8.	Kamasi Joyce	F	62 Years	Wasundi		10th/October /2023
9.	Musiru Mildred	F	51 Years	Keveye		10th/October /2023
10.	Musudi Esther	F	61 Years	Bukulunya		10th/October /2023

LIST OF INFORMANTS

S.NO.	NAME	AGE	GENDER	POSITION IN THE SOCIETY
1.	Ababu Wycliffe	72 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
2.	Achala Aggrey	47 Years	M	Mudete Tea Factory Employee
3.	Adenya Vincent	46 Years	M	PAG Pastor
4.	Aduvuka Doreen	65 Years	F	Peasant farmer
5.	Afanda Alice	63 Years	F	Trader Majengo Market
6.	Afanda David	70 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
7.	Afandi Jenipher	67 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
8.	Agesa Susana	50 Years	F	Mudete Tea Factory Employee
9.	Agiza Loyce	50 Years	F	Mudete Tea Factory Employee
10.	Agoi Jairus	69 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
11.	Ajami Rachel	54 Years	F	Trader Mago Market
12.	Ajami Tabitha	50 Years	F	Wife Of Gaigedi Sub Location Sub Chief
13.	Ajega Samson	65 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
14.	Alenga Alex	42 Years	M	African Divine Church
15.	Alusi Simon	60 Years	M	Peasant farmer
16.	Amadagi Dickson	49 Years	M	Rtd. Teacher
17.	Amaganga Moses	73 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
18.	Ambwere Truphena	70 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
19.	Amfa Leah	50 Years	F	Trader Chavakali Market
20.	Amisi Duncan	76 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
21.	Amisi Girshom	65 Years	M	Peasant Farmer

22.	Amugavo John	60 Years	M	Retired Teacher
23.	Amutabi Catherine	68 Years	F	Rtd. Police Officer
24.	Amutamwa Jethro	60 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
25.	Amwai Douglas	79 Years	M	Former Employee Kericho Tea Estates
26.	Andambi Richard	50 Years	M	African Divine Church/Farmer
27.	Asamba Vincent	68 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
28.	Asamba Zerephata	45 Years	F	Friends Quaker Pastor
29.	Asega Michael	78 Years	M	Peasant farmer
30.	Asega Sarah	71 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
31.	Asembeka Beanard	52 Years	M	African Divine Church/Farmer
32.	Aseyo Juliet	47 Years	F	Teacher
33.	Aseyo Taphroza	67 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
34.	Asigi Japhred	64 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
35.	Atonya Francis	48 Years	M	African Divine Church/Farmer
36.	Avuya Japheth	40 Years	M	Retired Asst. Chief
37.	Avuya Niphreda	65 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
38.	Avuya Zablon	65 Years	M	Farmer
39.	Barusi Risper	45 Years	M	Friends Quaker Pastor
40.	Barusi Wilfred	68 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
41.	Bulemi Alfred	48 Years	M	Chavakali NCPB Employee
42.	Chabaga Humprey	45 Years	M	Chavakali NCPB Employee
43.	Chabaga Starnley	87 Years	M	Retired Chief
44.	Chadianya Humphrey	70 Years	M	Peasant Farmer

45.	Chadiku Esnas	70 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
46.	Chagwe Samson	40 Years	M	Chavakali NCPB Employee
47.	Chambiti Joel	45 Years	M	Vihiga County Employee -Agriculture Department
48.	Chamuada Silvia	50 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
49.	Changilwa Agnes	68 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
50.	changilwa Samson	48 Years	M	Mudete Tea Factory Employee
51.	Changilwa Stephene	56 Years	M	African Divine Church
52.	Chanyisa Moreen	65 Years	F	Vihiga County Employee-Agriculture Department
53.	Chavulimu Violet	56 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
54.	Chayuga Kennedy	49 Years	M	Teacher
55.	Chimbiru Rodrick	65 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
56.	Chondo Susana	80 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
57.	Demesi Wilfred	70 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
58.	Enzori Samuel	52 Years	M	Vihiga County Employee -Agriculture Department
59.	Gumanyi Alfred	67 Years	M	Village Elder
60.	Gungu Alfred	53 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
61.	Imbiru Alex	76 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
62.	Imbudi Starnley	55 Years	M	Sub Chief Gaigedi Sub-Location
63.	Imbwaga Jane	65 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
64.	Imbwaga Luke	85 Years	M	Senior Elder/ Former Member Of Lands Commission

65.	Iminza Esther	70 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
66.	Indimu Humprey	76 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
67.	Ingado Cynthia	69 Years	F	Peasant farmer
68.	Inyangala Charles	63 Years	M	Retired Civil Servant
69.	Ishuga Leonard	90 Years	M	Senior Clan Elder
70.	Jambiha Caroline	88 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
71.	Javagala Derrick	45 Years	M	Mudete Tea Factory Employee
72.	Kadagi Godfrey	56 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
73.	Kadenge Damaris	64 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
74.	Kadenge Gibson	70 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
75.	Kadenyi Annet	73 Years	F	Retired Teacher
76.	Kagota Obeda	67 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
77.	Kagota Samson	54 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
78.	Kaluhi Mwandishi	89 Years	F	Retired Chief
79.	Kaluhi Sera	54 Years	F	Peasant farmer
80.	Kamadi Christopher	65 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
81.	Kamasi Stela	78 Years	F	Peasant farmer
82.	Kanyigula Mary	65 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
83.	Kasidi Risper	70 Years	F	Peasant Farmer/ Wife To Retired Chief
84.	Kasidi Violet	60 Years	F	Wife To Retired Ass.Chief
85.	Kavetsa Christine	74 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
86.	Kayeri Beverline	48 Years	F	Vihiga County Employee-Agriculture Department
87.	Kedeng'e Emily	72 Years	F	Peasant Farmer

88.	Kegode Hudson	41 Years	M	PAG Pastor
89.	Kigalu Obeda	76 Years	M	Retired Pastor/ Senior Clan Elder
90.	Kihima James	67 Years	M	Peasant farmer
91.	Kihima Josphat	50 Years	M	Vihiga County Employee-Agriculture Department
92.	Kinavodoli Esther	76 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
93.	Kinavodoli Phanice	67 Years	F	Retired Teacher
94.	Kinavodoli Phoebe	72 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
95.	Lubia Vincent	55 Years	M	Vihiga County Employee-Agriculture Department
96.	Lung'ahu Robert	67 Years	M	Rtd. Teacher
97.	Madiga Jotham	67 Years	M	Retired Teacher
98.	mahangilu Robert	40 Years	M	Friends Quaker Pastor
99.	Mahangiru Hezron	67 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
100.	Mahasi Finorah	72 Years	F	Retired Teacher
101.	Mahasi Rachel	71 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
102.	Mandagi Seline	60 Years	F	Peasant farmer
103.	Matanye Zablon	48 Years	M	African Divine Church
104.	Mbafu Benson	54 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
105.	Mbarani Josphine	42 Years	F	Chavakali NCPB Employee
106.	Mbato Hannington	76 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
107.	Midenyo Linet	53 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
108.	Minyoso Agnes	40 Years	F	PAG Pastor
109.	Mudaki Alex	65 Years	M	Peasant Farmer

110.	Mudika Anzirikam	89 Years	M	Senior Retired Civil Servant
111.	Mudika Geofrey	50 Years	M	Chavakali NCPB Employee
112.	Mugala Cyprian	75 Years	M	Senior Elder
113.	Mugasia Dedan	50 Years	F	Vihiga County Employee-Agriculture Department
114.	Muhandale Simeon	80 Years	M	Retired PAG Pastor/ Senior Clan Elder
115.	Mulema Seth	65 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
116.	Mulira Anjela	54 Years	F	Vihiga County Employee -Agriculture Department
117.	Murovore Nathan	70 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
118.	Musagala Siphrose	43 Years	M	Mudete Tea Factory Employee
119.	Museve Julius	63 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
120.	Musimbi Joyce	65 Years	F	Community Health Volunteer/ Peasant Farmer
121.	Musimbi Sylvia	43 Years	F	Chavakali NCPB Employee
122.	Musiru Johnson	63 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
123.	Musoritsa Anne	68 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
124.	Musoritsa Beatrice	65 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
125.	Musuri Tyson	54 Years	M	Teacher
126.	Muyagide Elizabeth	73 Years	F	Retired Teacher
127.	Mwambuki Godfrey	56 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
128.	Mwamili Hezron	56 Years	M	Senior Elder
129.	Ndeda Sheila	63 Years	F	Peasant farmer

130.	Ngereso Alice	49 Years	F	Trader Mambai Shopping Centre
131.	Ngereso Zablon	78 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
132.	Ngesa Everline	64 Years	F	Peasant farmer
133.	Nyange Edward	70 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
134.	Obeda Silas	73 Years	M	Peasant farmer
135.	Ombonyo Esnasi	82 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
136.	Ondigo Gilbert	67 Years	M	Peasant Farmer
137.	Sakwa Anne	49 Years	F	Sub-Chief Mambai Sub-Location
138.	Salamba Magaret	76 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
139.	Sande Samson	65 Years	M	Paesant Farmer
140.	Sangale Emelda	64 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
141.	Sango Felistas	55 Years	F	Peasant farmer
142.	Silingi Edna	60 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
143.	Silingi Sarah	45 Years	F	Friends Quaker Pastor
144.	Sukuna Jephride	50 Years	M	Experienced Long Range Hunter
145.	Tabita Mudegu	70 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
146.	Tsinafa Imali	56 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
147.	Tsindoli Emily	43 Years	F	Trader Mudete Market
148.	Vodoti Elizabeth	48 Years	F	Rtd.Teacher
149.	Vugutsa Anjeline	73 Years	F	Peasant Farmer
150.	Vusha Rhoda	76 Years	F	Peasant Farmer

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY,

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION,

P.O. BOX

KAKAMEGA.

Dear participant,

RE: **DYNAMICS OF FOOD PRODUCTION MECHANISMS AND GENDER RELATIONS IN COLONIAL MARAGOLI-KENYA**

I am a postgraduate student at Masinde Muliro University in the department of Social Sciences undertaking my research on the above topic. You have been purposefully selected to participate due to the position you hold in the society. You are deemed to have critical information that may be of significant value in compiling data related to the above topic. Your participation in answering this questionnaire will be highly appreciated. All information gathered will only be used for academic purposes. Your identification as a respondent will only be done on your approval, otherwise your identity as a respondent will remain confidential.

Thank you.

Alex Amisi Muhandale

APPENDIX 2: LETTER FROM DIRECTOR OF POST GRADUATE SUDIES

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (MMUST)

Tel: 056-30870
Fax: 056-30153
E-mail: directordps@mmust.ac.ke
Website: www.mmust.ac.ke

P.O Box 190
Kakamega – 50100
Kenya

Directorate of Postgraduate Studies

Ref: MMU/COR: 509099

Date: 3rd May 2023

Alex Amisi Muandale
HIS/H/01-70497/2021
P.O. Box 190-50100
KAKAMEGA

Dear Mr. Muhandale,

RE: APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL

I am pleased to inform you that the Directorate of Postgraduate Studies has considered and approved your PhD. Proposal entitled: ***'Dynamics of Food Production Mechanisms and Gender Relations in Maragoli, Kenya, 1895-1963.'*** and appointed the following as supervisors:

1. Prof. Pontian G. Okoth - MMUST
2. Rev. Fr. Dr. Kizito L Muchanga - MMUST

You are required to submit through your supervisor(s) progress reports every three months to the Director of Postgraduate Studies. Such reports should be copied to the following: Chairman, School of Social Arts and Social Sciences Graduate Studies Committee and Chairman, Department of Social Science Education. Kindly adhere to research ethics consideration in conducting research.

It is the policy and regulations of the University that you observe a deadline of three years from the date of registration to complete your PhD thesis. Do not hesitate to consult this office in case of any problem encountered in the course of your work.

We wish you the best in your research and hope the study will make original contribution to knowledge.

Yours sincerely,

MASINDE MULIRO UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
DIRECTORATE OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES
P.O. BOX 190-50100, KAKAMEGA (K)

Dr. Consolata Ngala

APPENDIX 3: CONSENT FORM FOR RESPONDENTS

This is an official request to permit the use of photographs and verbatims from the respondents.

I hereby request for your permission to enable the us use your photos and verbatims in this study.

If yes

I.....(Respondent's name) allow the use of my

photographs and verbatims in this research /study on this day.....(Day and date).

If no

I.....(Respondent's name) allow the use of my

photographs and verbatims in this research /study on this day.....(Day and date).

Signature of the Respondent.....

APPENDIX 4: QUESTION GUIDELINE

Research: "Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli"

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

PART A

Name----------

Age----------Marital status

Division----------

Location----------

Estimated land acreage----------

How land was acquired (first occupier, inherited or bought)

Total land under food crops----------

Types of food crops----------

Land under inedible cash crops----------

PART B

MIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

1. Where did the Maragoli originally come from?
2. How did they move from there original home to where they are presently?
3. Did you come individually or as a group? If you came as a group who was the leader or who were the leaders of the group?
5. Did you find any other groups of people in the area and if so what happened to those groups?
6. Was the settlement to these places peaceful or did you have any conflict with he people whom you found in the area?
7. Was there intermarriage between you and the people you found in the area?

The Family Institution

8. What was the nature of the family structure and what constituted a family?
9. Was there a distinction between the home and the houses within a homestead? If so what characterized this distinction?

10. What were the differences which existed between a monogamous and polygamous home?
11. What was the nature of the organization of monogamous and polygamous institutions and what were the position of the women starting with the first to the last wife?
12. In cases of marriages, births and deaths, what rituals governed each and who performed these rituals?
13. What were the other social functions in the community? Did the women participate in any of these functions?

Economic Activities

14. What was the relationship between the family, the clan and the community as a whole when it came to issues of the land?
15. With regard to the family, who controlled the produce from the land?
16. Specifically were there any structural barriers with regard to division of labour and work force?
17. Did women participate in trade and if so, who controlled the profit from the trade?
18. What was the nature of the system of inheritance?
19. How did the women acquire property? Was it handed over to them by the head of the entire family or by the husband or someone else?

ACCESS TO LAND IN PRE-COLONIAL PERIOD

1. Did both Maragoli men and women have a right to access land before 1895?
2. Did both have a right to use land without any hindrances?
3. If both women and men had right of access and use, how were those rights protected?
4. Who was the custodian of the individual's land rights?
5. In case of violation of these rights, how was justice established?
6. Which was the main food crop among the Maragoli?
7. Did Maragoli keep any livestock ? if yes, which were these livestock?
8. What were the various wyas in which the maragoli used these livestock?
9. How were the products of these livestock used?
10. Did men and women have equal access to livestock? If not which mechanisms were put in place to levelized the inequality?
11. Were there reasons that would make an individual not have land on which to grow food crops?
12. If there was, which gender was most affected and why?
13. If there were people who had no right of access to and use of land, how did such individuals procure their foodstuffs?

COLONIAL PERIOD UP TO AROUND 1939

1.Who was the first whiteman to step in Maragoliland?
2. What were some of the first whiteman activities in Maragoli?
3.How did Maragoli respond to these white man activities?
1. Did the White man take any land from your parents/ close relatives or friends?
2. How did the taking of African land affect the growing of variety and quantity of food crops in Maragoli?
3. What effects did land alienation (taking away of African land) have on the rights of access and use between men and women in Maragoli

4. Were there food crops that certain homes stopped to grow altogether or reduced the quantity?
Name them.
5. What happened to the household food provision once these food crops were not grown?
6. Who grew these food crops? Note if the respondent says it was the women; ask what role the
men played in the provision of household food.

DECISION-MAKING TO AROUND 1939

1.Between men and women, who decided what particular piece(s) of land(s), was to be cultivated in a particular planting season?
2. Who decided the seeds for particular crop to be planted?
3. What influenced/ or influences the decision on the type of crops to be grown?
4. If the respondents say the wife/ or wives, ask whether they would make the decision without
consulting the husband/ or male relative at all.
5. Were there special cases that a woman would make the decision of what to grow without the
husband having no interest at all?
6. Who had authority over all the food crops that were harvested during a certain season?
7. The Maragoli are said to have had separate pieces of land between the women and men, did
the women control such produce without the men interferring?
8. Does this freedom to make decisions in terms of what to grow and how to dispose the produce the same in all households or are there variations?
9. If there are differences, what causes them?

FOOD SECURITY TO AROUND 1945

1. In your growing up, did you experience any serious food shortage close to a famine?
2. Around what period did you experience the food shortage?
3. If it was a famine, what was the name given to it? And why was the particular name given?
4. Can you recall the causes of famine as given by the Africans and the colonial government?
5. What measures did the colonial government take to curb the famine?
6. What measures did Kakamega Native Council take to help famine victims in the division?
7. During the particular famine, what food crops were mostly eaten and why?
8. Do you still use the same food in times of shortage? If not, why? And what is the alternative?
9. Can you explain the cause of the famine?
10. Do you think there was any relationship between poor /low food crop production and the particular famine? (Try to get the ratio of women to men in food crop production at the time of famine)

DIVISION OF LABOUR TO AROUND 1939

1. How was agricultural labour divided between the men and women?
2. Who owned (controlled) the family labour? Did the woman have say on her labour time?

3. Did the women have exclusive right over their labour? Did they decide what agricultural work to do without consulting their husbands/ or male relatives at all?
4. If yes, in what kind of works?
5. If no, which kind of work would they do dependently?
6. Did the husband and wife cultivate together?
7. If yes, what/which crops would they cultivate together?
8. If no, which crops were grown separately and why?
9. Was there a job meant for men or women that the opposite gender would not perform under whatever circumstance?
10. If there was, does this remain the same? What effect has this had on food crop production?
11. Were there self-help agricultural groups (meant to help members to cultivate) among the Maragoli?
12. If so, were they gender- biased? Which gender was particularly interested in these groups and why?

DIVISION OF LABOUR FROM AROUND 1939
If the respondent was mature during the World War Two, ask the following questions.
1. Do you remember what was happening during the Second World War?
2. Where were you living at the time?
3. How did the World War disrupt the family organization in terms of division of labour?
4. Did food crop production go up/or down during this period?
5. Which crops were particularly grown and why?
6. Who among the men and the women did more work to grow the food crops during the war period and why?
EFFECT OF COLONIALISM ON FOOD PRODUCTION MECHANISMS
1.Is there any of your family member who moved out of Maragoliland during the colonial era?
2. if yes which are some of the areas thy moved to?
3. what made them move to such areas?
4. how did their movement affect your pre colonial food production and gender relations
5. what were some of the new colonial leisure activities thea were introduced in Maragoli?
6. how did these activities impact on the pre colonial food production mechanisms and gender relations?
7.Who were some of the colonial administrators sent to Maragoli land?
8. What was the role of the colonial administrators in reinforcing the colonial agricultural policies?
9. Did this role have any impact on the pre colonial maragoli food production mechanisms and gender relations?
10. Were there any new crops introduced into MAragoli land during the colonial times? If yes name them.
11. Which gender group grew the new crops?
12. Why was the gender above more active in growing the said crops than the other?
13. How did this impact on the pre-colonial food production mechanisms and gender relations?
14. How did these crops contribute to food security status in Maragoli?

15. Did these new crops impact in any way on the Maragoli climatic conditions?
16. in your view, how has the introduction of fertilizers affected Maragoli pre colonial agricultural practices?

APPENDIX 5: INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

a): KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RELIGIOUS LEADERS

Research: "Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli"

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

Name of the church.....

Designation of the interviewee.....

Date of Interview.....

Permission to Acquire Informed Consent from the Respondent by the Researcher

Introduce yourself and indicate the objective of the research to the respondent. Clarify that you would like to use about 20 minutes of their time. Confirm to them that the information they will give will be very helpful in assisting the researcher establish the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. Categorically outline to them that this is a historical study and that everything they share will be made public. The information given can be quoted directly or paraphrased and if need be, the respondent can be foot noted or cited in the work. Indicate to them that participation is voluntary and thereafter ask them for their consent to participate.

Remember to thank the participant after the exercise.

1. In your church leadership, how is the gender composition?
2.In traditional Maragoli society did religion play any role in food production? how has this changed and what brought this change.
3. During the colonial time by which name did your church operate under?

4. How did your church handle food production during the colonial time?
5. How different was this from the pre-colonial times?
6. What were the factors that brought about this change?
7Do you have sermons/special occasions to educate your members of food production mechanisms? If yes how often? If no what plans do you have over the same?
8. other than farming, what else does your members engage in as a food production mechanisms?
9. how do you handle the vulnerables especially on food related matters during food shortage?
10.Do you run any school or church project? How do you interact with your school community on food production matters?

b): KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR COUNTY GOVERNMENT AGRICULTURAL OFFICIALS

Research: “Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli”

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

Name of the Department.....

Designation of the interviewee.....

Date of Interview.....

Permission to Acquire Informed Consent from the Respondent by the Researcher

Introduce yourself and indicate the objective of the research to the respondent. Clarify that you would like to use about 20 minutes of their time. Confirm to them that the information they will give will be very helpful in assisting the researcher establish the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. Categorically outline to them that this is a historical study and that everything they share will be made public. The information given can be quoted directly or paraphrased and if need be, the respondent can be foot noted or cited in the work. Indicate to them that participation is voluntary and thereafter ask them for their consent to participate.

Remember to thank the participant after the exercise.
1. When was your department established?
2. how is the gender martrix in your department?
3. how was your department structured at colonial time?
4. What role did the department play at colonial time?
5.What challenges do you face in your food production programs?
6. what is the gender matrix in your program participants at the grassroot? why the gap if any.
c). Women and men Groups
1. when was your group formed?
2. why was the group formed?
3.how did the objctives impact on food production in Maragoli?
4.Why did you decide to form a single sex organization and not a trans gendered group?

5.Do you have any activity /mechanism in regard to food production to reach out to the other gender? if no why?
6.how do you ensure linkage between your members and the other gender group?

c): KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR MUDETE TEA FACTORY OFFICIALS

Research: “Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli”

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

Name of the department.....

Designation of the interviewee.....

Date of Interview.....

Permission to Acquire Informed Consent from the Respondent by the Researcher

Introduce yourself and indicate the objective of the research to the respondent. Clarify that you would like to use about 20 minutes of their time. Confirm to them that the information they will give will be very helpful in assisting the researcher establish the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. Categorically outline to them that this is a historical study and that everything they share will be made public. The information given can be quoted directly or paraphrased and if need be, the respondent can be foot noted or cited in the work. Indicate to them that participation is voluntary and thereafter ask them for their consent to participate.

Remember to thank the participant after the exercise.

1. When was your department established?
2.Have you ever worked else? If yes in which capacity?
3. How does this factory help the immediate society address food shortage?
4. what is the gender composition in your department or factory at large?
5. if any disparity why and if none what has helped you achieve this?
6. do you have any reach out program to the vulnerables during critical food shortage ? if yes how often. If no why?
7.Being an indirect food production factory what link have you created with the main stream food production sector?
8. other than the employment opportunity, does the factory have any mechanisms to sensitize its

employees on their food sufficiency situation at their family level. If yes how? If no why?
9. Does the factory have any department to reach out to the farmers to find out how they produce the tea.
10. What is the factory's policy on the interaction between tea as a non-food crop and the main stream food crops?
11.How does the main stream food crops production relate with tea production.

d): KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE NATIONAL CEREAL AND PRODUCE BOARD(NCPB) OFFICIALS

Research: “Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli”

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

Name of the NCPB.....

Name of the interviewee.....

Date of Interview.....

Permission to Acquire Informed Consent from the Respondent by the Researcher

Introduce yourself and indicate the objective of the research to the respondent. Clarify that you would like to use about 20 minutes of their time. Confirm to them that the information they will give will be very helpful in assisting the researcher establish the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. Categorically outline to them that this is a historical study and that everything they share will be made public. The information given can be quoted directly or paraphrased and if need be, the respondent can be foot noted or cited in the work. Indicate to them that participation is voluntary and thereafter ask them for their consent to participate.

Remember to thank the participant after the exercise.

1. When was the board established?
2. What farm products does the board store?
3. Where does the board get its supplies for storage?
4. How does the board ensure it sustains the grain reserve set by the government?
5. Does the board have any mechanism to sensitize the locals on the board’s significance in the area?
6. What steps has does the board take to sustain food sufficiency /production in the area?
7. What are some of the reach out programs of the board to the local community?
8. What is the gender matrix in the board employment. If a disparity why and if none what has helped achieve this?

9. What is the nature of the gender of most of you clients ? if any disparity why and if none what has helped achieve this?
10. Has there been any change in the above? if yes when did it begin and what do you think contributed to the change.
11.What is the academic requirements for the highest and lowest cadre of your employees?

e): KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR THE INFORMAL/JUA KALI SECTOR (BODA BODA RIDERS, WELDERS, POTTERS, PETTY TRADERS, SHOE MAKERS, BRICK /BLOCK MAKERS, TAILRS)

Research: "Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli"

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

Type of the informal sector .....

Name of the interviewee.....

Date of Interview.....

Permission to Acquire Informed Consent from the Respondent by the Researcher

Introduce yourself and indicate the objective of the research to the respondent. Clarify that you would like to use about 20 minutes of their time. Confirm to them that the information they will give will be very helpful in assisting the researcher establish the dynamics of food production and gender relations in colonial Maragoli. Categorically outline to them that this is a historical study and that everything they share will be made public. The information given can be quoted directly or paraphrased and if need be, the respondent can be foot noted or cited in the work. Indicate to them that participation is voluntary and thereafter ask them for their consent to participate.

Remember to thank the participant after the exercise.

1. What prompted you to join this sector?
2. When did you join this sector?
3. Does your trade sustain your daily requirements? if no how do you supplement it?
4. What is the gender matrix of most of the colleagues you relate with?
5. Why do you think the situation in 4 above is so?
6. how is the gender matrix of the clients you deal with and why is the situation so? And how can it be improved or sustained?
7. has there been any change in your trade? if yes when did it begin? What brought about this change?
8. was this trade inherited or you trained?

9. If inherited get the geneology and how he learnt the trade.
10. in your family whom are you preparing to take from you and how are you preparing him

APPENDIX 6: FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS GUIDE FOR THE MARAGOLI FARMERS-MEN AND WOMEN

Research: "Dynamics of Food Production and Gender Relations in Colonial Maragoli"

Researcher: Alex Amisi Muhandale

Institution: Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology

School of Social Sciences Education

1. What was the original homeland of the Maragoli and how did they migrate to their present land?

2.How did Maragoli ensure a balanced gender participation in food production during pre-colonial era?

3.Were there any way in which those who abused such set gender rules were punished? If yes how? If no why?

4.Were there some crops specifically grown for men and women? If yes which were they and what reasons were given for this?

5.Were there any dynamics in the Maragoli food production and gender relations in the pre-colonial era? If yes what caused them and how did these dynamics impact on Maragoli food production and gender relations?

6.Why were women excluded from land ownership in Maragoli?

7.What happened in cases where a family only had daughters, who inherite the land?

8.What happened to the girls who did not get married? Did they inherit any land from their father?

9. In Maragoli was land equally divided in a polygamous family between the wives? If no who got more and why?

10. Was there any special regard to wives with more sons during family land division? If yes how special was the treatment?

11.Did colonialism bring about any change in the Maragoli food production and gender relations? If Yes what were these changes.

12.In what ways did the colonial policies change the Maragoli land ownership?

APPENDIX 6: NACOSTI RESEARCH PERMIT

REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE,TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: **161458**

Date of Issue: **25/May/2023**

RESEARCH LICENSE



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