

**HISTORY OF THE AGIKUYU WOMEN'S LOCAL TRADE SYSTEM IN
INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS AND ITS EFFECTS ON FOOD SECURITY IN
NYERI COUNTY, 1902-1980**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History of
Chuka University**

CHUKA UNIVERSITY

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DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS


Declaration

This thesis is my original work and it has not been presented for an award of diploma or conferment of degree in this or any other university.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my dear parents Mr. Newton Gitonga and Mrs. Mary Mutitu Nyakweya for their devotion through which all my siblings were able to acquire their education. Their dedication and hard work will forever be remembered by our families.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the history of Agikuyu women's local trade system on indigenous food crops and its contribution to food security in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980. The study was guided by the following objectives: To establish the role of pre-colonial Agikuyu women's local trade on indigenous food Crops in enhancing food security in Nyeri County, to analyze the change in the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980 and to assess the effect of emerging trade patterns in women's indigeous food crops on food security from 1902 to 1980. The research was guided by two theories Marxist feminist theory and articulation theory. This study was conducted in three sub-counties: Kieni East, Mathira East, and Nyeri Central. Data was collected from both primary and secondary sources such as key informats, archival data and document analysis. The research employed a historical research design based on qualitative procedures. The design enabled the researcher to explain, describe and give a historical analysis of the findings. This being a historical study, non-probability sampling procedures were used such as purposive and snowball sampling techniques to gather relevant information. A sample size threshold of 54 respondents was interviewed as Kathuru & Pals (1993) recommended since the total population of the three sampled sub-counties was classified as a minor group. The main research instruments were the interview guide and focus group discussion. Data for this study was analysed qualitatively using documentary content analysis, description and narration of the historical events. Data was also corroborated and both context and content analysis were done to ensure reliability and validity of the information. Interpretation was done within the framework of Marxist feminist theory and articulation theory. The study established that in pre-colonial period women formed the backbone of Nyeri County's food security through their local exchange system, leveraging their deep understanding on well-established trade networks of indigenous food crops that helped to mitigate food shortage. However, the women's local food crops trade system has not been static the colonial capitalist economic practices brought about profound changes in the economic and social fabric of Nyeri County and significantly undermined the women's local trade. This resulted to both positive and negative influence to the dimensions of food security in the study area. It was established that the indigenous food crops that women exchanged in the local markets were well adapted to local conditions, sustainably available and provided essential nutrients necessary for the health and well-being of the community. The findings of this study illustrate the pivotal role of Agikuyu women in local trade systems and its substantial contribution to food security in Nyeri County. The study concludes that the ministry of trade should come up with deliberate measures that will integrate women's local trade into the country's economic policies and practices and also consider the valuable contribution of women local trade in mitigating food shortage and ensuring eradication of extreme poverty and hunger.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Trade on indigenous food crops has been vital because indigenous food crops serve as a symbol of heritage, trademark, and culture in many societies. Besides offering an important opportunity to diversify the food base, it also enhances social-economic status of many societies in the world. Nevertheless, there has been increasing suffering from food shortage from time to time. According to UN reports, women participation in trade has often been ignored denying them access to resources, credit and training. Also, it can be argued that women work for longer hours as compared to men, but earn less and their work and opinions are undervalued (UN, 2019). On the other hand, women face obstacles to holding position of authority and may be exposed to threats of violence.

The research on the women's trade on indigenous food crops and its effect on food security have attracted the attention of different scholars for a long time; thus, there have been several research in different geographical regions and times. According to Kuczynski (1983) one of the most celebrated indigenous crops of the Americas is the potato, renowned for its origin in the Andean region of South America. Indigenous women in the Andes played a pivotal and multifaceted role in the cultivation, preservation, and trade of various potato varieties. Their expertise in selecting, breeding, and safeguarding diverse potato strains not only contributed to food security but also upheld cultural traditions and biodiversity in the region. Additionally, these women engaged in local and regional trade networks, enhancing the exchange of knowledge and resources across the Andean highlands. The enduring legacy of indigenous women in the Andes continues to underscore the significance of the potato as a vital cultural emblem in the Americas Kuczynski (1983).

In India which was a colony of Britain, women were considered physically and intellectually weaker yet morally superior to men, which meant that they were best suited to the domestic sphere. Not only was it their duty to counter balance the moral taint of the public sphere in which their husbands laboured all day, but they were also preparing the next generation to carry on this way of life in pre-colonial era women in

India were dependent on men (Shepherd, 1999). Their religious practices and traditions ascribed their subordination to men in all matters. They were denied access to trade, education, and access to social justice and equality. The Indian women surrendered meekly to the supremacy of the patriarchal system and accepted the roles assigned by traditions and allowed themselves to be dominated in the past Atieno- (Odhiambo, 1972). However, Indian women today have greater exposure to trade with education and economic independence that has put them in a conflicting state where though they desire independence, they also dread their traditional role and are hesitant to courageously walk out of the situation (Meena, 2016). This has enhanced their social- economic status which has always ensured food security in their community the same applied to African women before colonization (Berger, 2018).

In Yoruba societies, women are offered the greatest opportunities to participate in economic activities such as manufacturing and trade. Among the Yoruba, the responsibility of a woman is to provide material resources and care for her family. Similar to the practice among the Yoruba, the Agikuyu women traded in indigenous food crops which helped to improve the status of their society. This information detailing how many women were involved in trade has not been well documented beyond the locality of homes. Yoruban women, for example, were the central figures in long-distance trade. They amassed enormous wealth and held prominent titles (Hafkin,2018).

As scholars of Africa continue to challenge the place and role of Africa in world history, shedding light on women as valid historical actors in postcolonial Africa within the last three decades remains an ongoing and much-needed endeavor. African women in the past and the present have used their position as breadwinners, mothers, and community leaders to influence their social, economic, and political worlds and to assert their power Oyewùmí (2015). Women had numerous important roles and functions to carry out, many of which conferred a great deal of power and respect to them. The erosion of the status of women occurred gradually but was significantly exacerbated and hastened by foreign invasions, particularly colonialism which affected the role that women played in provision for their families through economic activities such as trade.

According to Sheryl (2012), areas that came under Islamic influence and rule in Africa aligned to male dominance. This prevalent male domination of society was strengthened by the coming of Islam which is a male religion founded on masculinity, patriarchy and male domination. It is well known for its repression, subjugation and discrimination against women. Islamic religion portrays women as inferior to men in every respect; spiritually, physically, mentally and even intellectually. Islam's holy book, the Quran, divinely sanctions and decrees this impression.

The Quran has been corroborated by the Hadiths traditions of Muhammad as sayings and deeds: and perpetuated by the interpretation of the Allahs, the sheiks and the imam in areas that came under Islamic influence and rule in Africa. This prevalent male dominated of society was further strengthened by the coming of Islam and despite these challenges women made significant contributions to west Africa food economy, perpetuating a long tradition of commerce. They participated in cross-border trade and regional outreach and hence securing food security in their society (Zezeza, 1991).

African women's history questions assumptions found in African history, particularly by understanding African experiences of marriage and family, economic production, religion, legal issues, and class formation, including slavery (Robertson, 2016). Though written in the 1980s, her argument continues to have value, in part because of the continuing marginalization of African women's history and very little content written about the role played by women in the development of their societies.

According to Zezeza (1991), most of the European colonizers and western historiographers of the nineteenth and early twentieth Century described African trade on indigenous food crops as "simple", "primitive", and "outdated". However, this was a wrong assumption, which may have been guided by the European modernization ideology that was meant to draw Africans into the international capitalism. African indigenous trade has been evolving slowly in response to modernization changes. Hopkins gives an emphasis to this point by arguing that the economic history of the pre-colonial period is a story of innovation rather than of stagnation Hopkins (1976). However, notable changes on the indigenous trade practices became evident when the

European colonial government attempted to promote and legalize European acquisition of Africa and with the establishment of colonial administration.

Although African women were the major participants in their pre-colonial communities, their role on the indigenous trade were not given due consideration during the implementation of the Europeans colonial policies. It is important to note that both African men and women's participation in the pre-colonial trade in indigenous food crops was highly disregarded by the European colonialists. However, Staudt (1988) observed that land alienation and labour policy during the colonial period excluded women from access to main production forces and also caused heavy burdens on their labour, which may have had negative impact on food crops production and trade hence affecting availability of food in their households.

The colonial government was biased against Africa women and had a preconceived idea of the role the African should play in the economic development of the county. The European perception of the role of women was guided by the 19th century European Victorian ideology of separate spheres that presented women as good mothers, wife and a house maker (Miles,1986). The ideology stated that the only proper place for a respectable woman was in the home undertaking domestic work, nurturing and providing comfort to her husband and children, supervising servants, making and mending cloths and caring for the elderly and the sick (Engels, 1972). This assumption compromised women's capacity to participate in the public sphere and therefore the capitalist competition, wage labour, trade and politics was continuously viewed as a difficult sphere preserved exclusively for men (Turner & Katherine, 2006). European colonialists equated men or male with "breadwinner" and as a result introduced to them western technologies which enabled them to be recruited for wage labour in mines, factories, plantations and towns which often took them off their traditional roles.

The study on transformation of trade on indigenous crops in both pre-colonial and colonial period has been largely ignored by scholars. The current study focuses on different areas in a bid to unearth the change in the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops. By focusing on this transformative journey during the pre-

colonial and colonial times, the researcher was able to locate the impact of colonialism on Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops as a main source of community livelihood and how that transformation influenced the socio-economic aspect of the people of Nyeri County.

The genesis of food insecurity in Africa can be traced back to the colonial era and is, therefore, a legacy haunting the continent from the colonial regime (Adedeji, 1985; Zeleza, 1991; Omwoyo. 2015). Many historians and policy makers have been concerned with African economic history. Subsequently, the integration of African traditional economies with the European capitalist economy has been a field of concern to many economic scholars such as Bernstein (1977), Lonsdale (1989), Berman & Lonsdale (1980) and Brett (1973). According to Berman and Lonsdale (1980), colonialism massively interfered with the traditional forms of trade that ensured food security in traditional societies.

In colonial Kenya, there were divergent economic interests that existed between the European, African and Indian traders. Africans were compelled to offer wage labour away from home and produce raw materials for the European industries and with the introduction of British colonial rule, Africa became the market for industrial goods as Africans purchased European merchandise. The colonial government was mainly interested in establishing an export-oriented production system in Africa. After the introduction of colonialism, the relationship between Africa's traditional economies and the colonial economy was disrupted and consequently affected food security in traditional societies (Brett, 1973).

Pre-colonial studies such as those of Wolf & Brettv (2013) concentrate on the change colonialism forced on African societies and the impact it had on the societal set-up. Though the cited studies are considered useful they lack a focus on African women with the entire focus being expended on male counter-parts. To provide a general review of the role of women on trade and economic conditions throughout the colonial period. They briefly discuss small scale traders and their problems within the colonial set up. Though this provides useful material the present study goes further to attempt to fit women within the history of this trade. It also tries to demonstrate how

the small-scale traders operated not in society as a whole in two durations which are pre-colonial and post-colonial but also unearthing the effect of transformation in the trade setup on livelihood in the current set up (Zwanenberg & King 1975; Skinner, 1972).

Much has been written about trade and markets in indigenous Africa, but dismissively. For a variety of reasons, it has been argued that trade and markets could not have developed in Africa. For one thing household subsistence agriculture was assumed to be the norm. Surplus produce therefore was unavailable to trade. For another climatic conditions posed grave problems of storage and technical difficulties seriously hampered bulk transportation of goods. And “for those who do not believe that traditional African societies had market systems suggest that evidence of such systems is a reflection of colonial and Western contact especially in the last hundred years” (Schneider, 1986) yet trade and markets of indigenous food crops were there and they played a significant role in enhancing food security.

The development of markets was inevitable even if self-sufficiency was assumed to be strictly operative. A homestead could not physically produce all its needs on the farm. By necessity a surplus over its needs was required to exchange for what it could not produce. In earlier times, such exchanges were done by canvassing from hut to hut, a time-consuming process. A market was simply a place where these exchanges could be made more easily. Where exchanges occurred regularly, a marketplace would develop. The institution of a market place then was a natural change (Brett,1973). The markets served as local exchange points or nodes, and trade was the vascular system unifying all communities and moving products to and from local markets, larger market centers and still larger centers. Abrahoni (2018) notes that in colonial era, gender inequities were evident in the distribution of trade opportunities.

Colonial masters mainly sought male labour at the exclusion of females. Some cultural setbacks, especially with regard to married women, reinforced this position. Yet women, even those living with working husbands needed extra income, as male wages were too low to support even a bachelor let alone a family. Abdalla (2013), similarly analyses the women's role as traders in period around 1940 at the height of

colonial era in Kenya. He argues that even as entrepreneurs women continued to be marginalized. For instance, they were excluded from obtaining official credit and as part of the African mass their activities were restricted in many aspects especially in the 1940s. There was also the impact of colonial local laws and regulations on the trading activities of women. According to the author it took a great resilience for African women to persist as traders during colonial era and argues that in spite of colonial control they grew in number, some flourished and they made a significant impact on the economy.

Women's trade in indigenous food crops in Kenya and the transition from pre-colonial to colonial times marked a significant shift in women's economic roles. Before colonialism, Bukusu women in Bungoma District played a pivotal role in food production for their communities. They were economically self-reliant, as their contributions to household resources were substantial. However, with the advent of colonialism and the introduction of new economic patterns, women's economic value underwent transformation. The colonial government's policies, such as the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 exacerbated women's dependency on men particularly in terms of land rights and access to resources (Kibiti,1984). Under these circumstances, women turned to trading activities such as brewing beer, marketing of produce, and poultry-related ventures, to secure cash in an economy largely controlled by men. This shift in economic roles underscores the resilience and adaptability of Bukusu women in the face of changing socio-economic conditions brought about by colonialism.

African women studies and their contribution to the economy in pre-and colonial period has remained a backwater for a long time. Much of the existing historiography of the colonial period is mainly studies of the male roles in society. Men are the social, political and economic luminaries. Even before imperialism the main kinfolks to be known were the Maasai, Kikuyu, Akamba among other communities. These tribes helped in making the country's diversity, rich culture and heritage. Nonetheless, Kenya didn't have much global contact; however, they did trade with the Arab merchants but kept it limited because they wanted to preserve their traditional aspects, which were eventually affected. Britain transformed Kenya into a rather more

modernized society than was before, for example by introducing transportations such as railroads, education, and new kinds of sports. The first railway to be constructed around the 1890s connected Mombasa to Kisumu, which took about 32,000 Indians workers to build. Many of the workers stayed in Kenya to start a business since it was easier and convenient than going back to India. This seriously affected the trade women were involved in because there was introduction of madukas by Indians and commodities sold there were exotic for example the bread which replaced the indigenous food communities were familiar with. Even the introduction of cash economy forced women to abandon trade and they started working in settlers farms to acquire the money which had replaced the barter. This abandonment of trade of indigenous food crops led to food insecurity (Bernstein,1977).

Most works therefore, present an incomplete history of the economic development of change in the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops and its effects on socio-economic livelihood as women are left out of the study. The purpose of this study is to assess the experiences of African women traders in Nyeri over the period 1902 to 1980. A few other authors indicate that some women traded in Nyeri but a detailed discussion of the operations of these women is lacking. It is not clear who they were, where they came from what they exchanged and where and the impact of their trading activities on their lives and on the economy of Nyeri in general.

There is therefore, a need to answer these vital questions to provide the missing perspective of the economic history of Nyeri from the arrival of the Railway line to the Mau Mau revolt and thereafter. The main concern of this research is to find out how the colonial conditions and policies forced African women into the fringes of the Nyeri urban economy from which they could not be able to trade these indigenous food crops. It delves into the women's survival strategies and tries to highlight the effect of social, political and economic hardships which they had to go through during the colonial period and its impact on food security in Nyeri even up to now. Darko (1989) says that the present food crisis in Africa has its roots in the historical relationship between Africans and the western World and the only solution is for Africans themselves to go back to traditional trade of indigenous food crops which was mainly done by women. Little attention has been paid to the role that women

played in ensuring food security in their community through trade of indigenous food crops. It is against this background that this study sought to analyze the historical context of the transformation of women trade on indigenous food crops from pre-colonial period to post-colonial period.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In many African societies women organized themselves as key participants in the socio-economic development of their societies through trade on different indigenous food crops. In particular, the traditional Agikuyu women of Nyeri were involved in the local trade systems on indigenous crops which enabled them to distribute surplus food crops as a way of improving their economic status and food security in the households. However, with the introduction of colonial economic system new pattern of trade system and strategies emerged particularly in the local trading areas and this trend continued even after independence. These new patterns of the local trade systems led to abandonment of some important aspects of traditional women's local trade on indigenous food crops and others were incorporated in the modern economic system. This alteration may have also undermined women's role in elevating food security in Nyeri County. Despite the existence of partial studies on women trade on indigenous food crops the changes in the Agikuyu women's trade system in indigenous food crops and how it affected food security in the area have had not received historical investigation and documentation. It is for this reason therefore that the research examined and documented these changes overtime on the Agikuyu women's local trade in indigenous crops in Nyeri County and also assessed on how the new pattern of the Agikuyu women's trade in indigenous food crops affected the food security in the area. This makes a key contribution to the economic history of Kenya and also helps us understand the role that women played in enhancing food security in their society.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The study analyzed the history of the Agikuyu women's local trade system in indigenous food crops and its effects on food security in Nyeri county from 1902-1980.

1.4 Specific Objective of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives;

- i. To establish the role of pre-colonial Agikuyu women's local trade in indigenous food Crops on food security in Nyeri County before 1902.
- ii. To analyze the change in the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980
- iii. To assess the effect of emerging trade patterns in women's indigenous food crops on food security from 1902 to 1980

1.5 Research Questions

- i. How did the pre-colonial Agikuyu women's local trade in indigenous food crops influence food security in Nyeri prior to 1902?
- ii. What were the changes that occurred in Agikuyu women's local trade on indigenous food crops from 1902 to 1980?
- iii. How did the emerging pattern of Agikuyu women local trade in indigenous food crops affect food security in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980?

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research work was inspired by academic considerations as well as the quest to conduct historical research on the role of women in trade involving indigenous crops among the Agikuyu of Nyeri County between 1902 and 1980 in mitigating food shortage. This contributes to the economic history of the specific area in Kenya, it also adds more literature on women enterprise studies especially their contributions to the economic development of their societies. Furthermore, the study explores the crucial role of Agikuyu women in local trade systems in enhancing food security in Nyeri County. By so doing, the study recommends to the Ministry of Investment, Trade and Industry to come up with deliberate measures that will integrate women's local trade into the Kenya's economic policies and practices. The ministry of Agriculture should also consider integrating women's local trade in the food crop distribution practices to assist in mitigating food shortage and ensuring eradication of extreme poverty and hunger. This goes a long way in helping the government to achieve sustainable development goal on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and also it addresses the issue of gender equality as stipulated in the vision 2030.

1.7 Scope of the Study

The study covered the period between 1902 and 1980. The year 1902 was the year when the British government established its colonial presence in Nyeri, Richard Meinertzhagen marched a strong military column meeting spirited resistance from the native Kikuyu warriors led by Wangombe Wa Ihura. The Kikuyu were eventually defeated. After Meinertzhagen's victory, a decision was reached to site a British post close to a little hill on the slopes of Mt. Kenya. On 18th December 1902, Nyeri was founded. Shortly after the establishment of the post a trickle of European settlers and missionaries and Indian merchants began to migrate into Nyeri and the surrounding areas. The city soon burgeoned into a trading Centre for white settler farmers who produced cattle, wheat and coffee. This disrupted the local trade because large tracks of land were alienated and used for cash crops. Although 1902 is indicated as the earliest starting point of the study it remains flexible. This is because a detailed discussion before 1902 is done to interrogate the women trade on indigenous crops before colonialism. This lays down the foundation on which the changes in Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crop was identified.

The year 1980 is viewed as suitable time to fold this study because there were major changes in this period which were introduced and affected the whole trading activities among the Agikuyu women of Nyeri. These changes included introduction of Structural adjustment programs (SAPs) which consisted of loans (Structural Adjustment Loans; SALs) provided by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) to countries that experience economic crises, Kenya being one of them. The purpose was to adjust the country's economic structure, improve international competitiveness, and restore its balance of Trade. This required the implementation of free market programmes and policy. The liberalization of trade, privatization, and the reduction of barriers to foreign capital allowed increased investment, production, and trade, boosting the recipient country's economy. These changes had a strong effect on the Women trade in indigenous food crops among the women of Nyeri. It was a paradigm shift in the field of trade because new forms of trade practices emerged which demands for another separate study. Though the study captures the pre and post-colonial period, the scope of the study widens up to post-colonial period that is up to 1980. Even after Kenya gained independence, the

economic activities and policies on trade that were there during the colonial period continued up to 1980, when structural adjustment was introduced.

1.8 Limitation of the Study

The study had limitations in the sense that the political, social and economic landscape of Nyeri County has transformed for several years resulting from western culture and cross-community relationships. The number of key potential informants who witnessed the British colonial rule in Nyeri County may have reduced over the years due to death. Also some potential informants were suspicious and its natural with human beings hence they were holding some information. They were assured of the research confidentiality and it was explained to them that the research would solely be used for academic purpose. Through this assurance they became free and responded positively during the interview session. Some informants were not remembering the exact dates of historical period enquired. This forced the researcher to corroborate their responses with other sources. Lastly, some informants gave biased information concerning a particular event to suit their view and on few occasions, the identified informants were not able to speak due to old age or sickness.

1.9 Assumptions of the Study

The study was guided by the following assumptions;

- i. The Agikuyu women of Nyeri participated in local trade in indigenous food crops to enhance their social-economic status and improve on food security
- ii. The introduction of the European commercial trade disrupted and marginalized the women's trade in indigenous food crops in Nyeri County
- iii. The new pattern of women trade in indigenous food crops during the colonial period led to decline of food security in Nyeri County.

1.10 Operational Definition of Terms.

- Colonial Economy:** Economic legacy during the period of political control by a more powerful country. In the study, it refers to the economic activities that were introduced by the colonial government and how it affected trade of indigenous food crops
- Colonial Policies:** The system or policy of a nation seeking to extend or retain its authority over other people or territories this study it refers to how the British policies in Kenya affected the indigenous trade of food crops
- Contributions** Refers to how introduction of colonial policies in Kenya affected the women trade of indigenous food crops
- History:** Study of man past events its used to explain the economic activities of women in the past mainly the trading activities
- Food Security:** A situation that exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. In this situation, it refers to how trade f indigenous food crop by women ensured food security
- Indigenous Community:** Refers to people who belong to and have occupied an area for generations, and who to great extent still follow their traditional lifestyles and ways of knowing, or at least are well knowledgeable about it.
- Indigenous Food Crops:** This refers to the crops that are native to a particular region and have been cultivated by local communities for generations. It reflects the direct relationship these communities have with their environment, encompassing the knowledge and skills possessed by women that facilitated their trade in indigenous food crops.
- Influence:** Qualitative change in form, shape or appearance. In relation to this study, it involves a process that improves or worsens a particular situation. In this case, it explains how colonialism affected food security by interfering with women trade on indigenous food crops.

Post-colonial economy: According to this study it refers to economy legacies of colonialism and imperialism focusing on economic exploitation of the colonized people and their land.

Pre-colonial economy: It refers to the economic activities Africans were involved in before the colonial period. They included hunting and gathering and practice of simple food crop production such as millet, sorghum among others for local or family use. However, the surplus was exchanged in form of barter with what the particular communities did not produce.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Influence of Pre-Colonial Women's Local Trade in Indigenous Food Crops on Food Security in their Society

Before colonialism, farmers grew a diverse range of local food crops that provided balanced diets and enabled them to feed their families and manage risks. The surplus would be used for trade and investment to cater for other needs which mostly was done by women. According to Rosberg and Nottingham (1996), a number of works investigate Africa's colonial past, but largely evade a discussion on women involvement in economic development of their societies in both pre and post-colonial era. These studies are important sources on the colonial climate within which women operated. They also make useful references to the transformational journey that women had to undertake so that they could fit in the two era economy.

According to Clift (2004), traders among the pre-colonial community were linked by social and religious bonds that enabled complex and flexible trading strategies with property rights and contract enforcement provided by group solidarity rather than formal rules. He continues to assert that religious beliefs and affiliations played a key role among groups. Contract fulfillment and information exchange was achieved through kinship networks that accounted for the bonds of trust, norms and enforcement mechanisms without formal documentation taking place. Clift fails to explain the role that women played in enhancing food security in their community through trade of indigenous food crops.

In Native communities across North America, women were responsible for cultivation. It is common knowledge that this means women were responsible for growing, harvesting, and cooking the majority of the food that nourished Native communities. But this also means that women were the leaders in crop development. Experimentation was necessary for invention of new, better crops but the role that women played in trade on indigenous food crops is not captured (Udel, Lisa 2001).

Rasheed et al (2020) indicated that throughout the history of Asia, women have played significant roles in the cultivation, trade, and preservation of indigenous food crops. Their contributions have often been essential for local economies and food

security. From ancient times to the modern era, women have been the custodians of traditional knowledge and have been actively involved in the trade of indigenous crops. Rice is a staple crop in Vietnam and has been cultivated for thousands of years. Women have traditionally played a crucial role in various aspects of rice cultivation, including seed selection, transplanting, weeding, and harvesting. They have been involved in local rice markets, where they sell surplus rice produced by their families. Women have also been part of self-help groups and cooperatives focused on rice production and trade, which has empowered them economically and socially. Similarly, women in Africa ensured there was food security through engaging in various economic activities. However my research looked into how traditional women ensured food security through trade of indigenous food crops.

Research on women trade in indigenous food crops practices among Africans during the pre-colonial period is still a virgin field which relies on scanty work largely revived over other periods. According to Hopkins (1976), trade was widespread in most societies in West Africa during the pre-colonial period. He argues that trade was an inaugural component of traditional commercial activities that contributed to the development of local markets where most people exchanged goods and services (Kitching,1980). His study indicates that during the pre-colonial period, trading centers existed in West Africa for exchanging goods however the role of the women in trade is not mentioned.

Adedeji (1985) affirms that the state of food crisis in Africa has made the economic history of the continent a subject of great concern. Scholars from different disciplines have studied different aspects of the continent's economy from the pre-colonial period to the present. Tempany (1958) and Jones (1984) dismiss any sense of dynamism in the pre-colonial economy of Africa. Tempany argues that trade in Africa prior to colonialism consisted mainly of primitive forms of exchange. In the same vein, Jones asserts that trading systems in Africa were not only 'backward' but also 'static' and showed negligible dynamic qualities. However, this view has been questioned by numerous studies. Brett (1973) contends that Africa's pre-colonial trade was indeed dynamic. They argue that there existed a wide range of trading commodities in pre-colonial Africa. This micro-study takes a similar position and highlights the trade

systems that existed in Nyeri before colonialism. Van Zwanenberg and King (1975) argue that Kenya developed at a higher pace than their neighboring countries because trade among communities which encouraged flow of capital. This study however, focuses more specifically on the role of women in trade of indigenous crops and how they secured food security.

It is evident that one of the most lucrative economic activities that engaged the attention of the women folk in pre-colonial was trading. This was also one of the important forms of economic activities of the women class in pre-colonial Yoruba land. Trading has remained the main occupation for the women folk in every part of contemporary Nigeria. The specific forms of trading practiced by the women included the long-distance trading, short distance trading, domestic trading, wholesale and retail trading, and hawking or street trading. Most trading activities were often conducted in the major market centers at Oja-Oba, Gambari market, Oja-Gbooro and other indigenous markets in pre-colonial Clarke (1972). The articles of trade were house-hold goods, farm produce, imported items, jewelries, implements and other products of the blacksmithing industry, woven cloths, plates, craft works, oil, fish and vegetables. However, this research deals with women trade of indigenous food crops in Nyeri County.

Afigbo (1985) asserts that in West African rural markets, the reputation of the 'market queens' has deep historical roots that can be traced back to pre-colonial times. These influential women played a pivotal role in the region's trade networks, acting as intermediaries between rural producers and urban consumers. They were renowned for their astute business acumen, extensive knowledge of local products, and remarkable negotiation skills. Their prominence continued through the colonial era and into the post-independence period where they adapted to changing economic landscapes and maintained their status as key figures in local economies. Thus "Market Queens" in West Africa have not only been economic agents but also social and political actors, serving as custodians of tradition and culture while simultaneously navigating the complexities of modernization. These rural markets ensured that there was always food security; however, my research is more specific

because it is dealing with women trade in indigenous food crops and how it enhanced food security.

Before colonialism, there was a group of women in Gusii who specialized in production for exchange though strictly speaking they combined this with cultivation for domestic consumption. They were called "part-time specialists" who engaged in iron-making hide preparation, medicinal treatment and so on. Black-smiths combined their trade with agriculture. One informant remarked that the blacksmiths relied on their trade full-time and often suffered from food shortages Mongare (1988). As Sherriff (1985) generalizes about Kenya: "The smiths were not full-time craftsmen but depended to some extent also on their own cultivation or cattle." But trade on indigenous food crops by women is not captured among the Gusii.

In pre-colonial Siaya, Trade and exchange catered for important goods that could not be obtained in an area. For instance, chieno (tassel for married women) came from Sakwa where it could be purchased for a goat, or iron goods (hoes, bangles, matchets, etc.). Iron goods came mainly from Samia and Yimbo. In the nineteenth century, there was an increase in this trade with almost set market places. The people from near the lake (Asembo, Yimbo, etc.) brought various types of fish, reed mats and salts in exchange for sorghum and finger millet. There were periodic market places situated along the borders. Markets were highly respected places and mostly active during famine. Since wives came from different clans and lineages, they became the common trade links between these groups within a community. There were individuals who specialised in various skills and regularly exchanged their goods with other members of the community. These skills were often inherited and were secrets of the family members (Butterman, 1975). The chief specialists were blacksmiths, leather workers, harpists, singers, basket makers, potters and teeth extractors. Most of these services were exchanged locally often in response to a request and the main players were women. Trade established links between communities beyond their clans and ethnicity. This gave rise to acculturation due to intermarriages between the people of Siaya and their neighbours. Though the people of Siaya conducted trade before colonialism, the role of the women in trade of indigenous food crops and how it enhanced food security is not captured.

The Akamba, women, together with their children, collected firewood, water, and products from the garden. There was also a division of labour by gender concerning industries. Some men were ironsmiths manufacturing for the community such things as knives, arrowheads, bracelets, axes, hammers, spears, and other utilitarian tools. Only women were potters. Pottery provided for household needs and, for the better part, pottery was the source of marketing exchanges to obtain foods and material objects that always ensured food security in their community. There is a well-known proverb that characterizes the best potters who may be in a good position for valued exchanges as “the good potter cooks with broken pots.” Women also excelled in making baskets, and men tended to specialize in skin tanning. All this ensured there was food security in this community (EdsJackson, 1972).

According to Wambugu, S.K (2005.), there was, in the past, a very strong division of labour by gender. Nevertheless, men and women worked together as well as separately in tasks that complemented each other. Agikuyu parents raised boys and girls very differently. The girls were raised to work in farming and the boys usually worked with the animals. Each woman had her own plots of land where she cultivated the crops such as sweet potatoes, millet, maize, and beans. The excess yield was traded among families or various communities to acquire what was missing in the family and this was mostly done by women and thus how they ensured food security in their families. Men were responsible for heavy labour such as clearing the land and cutting down trees.

Household tasks for Agikuyu women involved maintaining her own granary and supervising the feeding of sheep, goats, and cows that were kept at the homestead. A polygamous husband had his own hut apart from his wives. The girls also had the responsibility of taking care of a baby brother or sister and also helping the mother out with household chores. Each woman had her own plots of land where she cultivated the crops such as sweet potatoes, millet, maize, and beans. A woman cultivated her land and had the freedom to do as she pleased with its produce beyond providing food for her children and husband who ate with friends or his children and was served food by his wives Kamau (2010). It was the sole responsibility of the women to ensure there was food security in their families. However, my research

looks at how the trade of indigenous food crops conducted by women ensured food security.

In a similar study, Uzoigwe (1975) observes that intra and inter-community markets existed among the Central Region of Kenya and barter trade was the mode of exchange in these markets. This also applies to the Agikuyu of Nyeri who exchanged different commodities at intra- and inter-community markets during the pre-colonial period. In these markets, barter was the main mode of exchanging goods. Zwanenberg and King (1975) observe that African daily needs during the nineteenth century depended mainly on subsistence production which supplemented their economy. Their work is important in understanding the pre-colonial economy of the women of Nyeri who practiced subsistence production and only exchanged their produce when they had surplus. This exchange ensured there was food security among this community.

Barter trade In Indigenous food crops existed in pre-colonial Nyeri and the bulk of the trade items consisted of foodstuffs, iron implements, pots and baskets, poisons, livestock and later slaves. He noted that trade links also existed between the Akamba, Aembu, maasai and Ameru women with the Agikuyu women. The Agikuyu obtained iron ornaments including bangles, legirings, armbands and earrings, ugeke (bananas) and salt in exchange with indigenous crops such as cassava yams, sweet potatoes stinging nettle and pumpkins this trade among the Agikuyu and other communities ensured there was plenty of food during the pre-colonial communities hence food security in the community Mwangi (1974).

According to Meillassoux (1972), under various circumstances, women's contributions to the welfare of their families were very significant their active involvement in subsistence farming and wage activities. Their critical presence in marketing, food distribution networks and their continued responsibilities as wives and mothers combined played a role in the survival of the families and the community as whole.

2.2 The History of Women's Trade in Indigenous Food Crops during Colonial and Early Post-Colonial Period

The colonial studies such as those of Wolf and Brettv (2013), concentrate on the changes colonialism forced on African societies and impact it have in current societal set-up. Though the study is considered useful it lack a focus on African women with the entire focus being expended on male counter-parts. Equally, Zwanenberg (1975), provide a general review of the role of women on trade and economic conditions throughout the colonial period. They also briefly discuss small scale traders and their problems within the colonial set up. This provides useful material but the present study goes further to attempt to fit women within the history of this trade. It also tries to demonstrate how the small-scale traders operated not in society as a whole in two durations which are pre-colonial and post-colonial but also concentrates to unearth the effect of transformation in the trade setup on livelihood in the current setup.

Omwoyo (2015) poss that studies concerning barter Trade that was practiced in Africa in Pre-colonial era has become a major concern for contemporary scholars because Africa has been experiencing a state of economic crisis. The genesis of this crisis in Africa related with economic performance can be traced back to the colonial era and is, therefore a legacy inbred by the continent from the colonial regime. This state of post-colonial crisis is to a large extent an outcome of processes and changes imposed on African economic set up by colonial economic policies. Evidently, the pre-colonial economy of the continent was harshly integrated into the colonial economic system. However, this study explores how colonialism affected the trade of indigenous food crops that was done by women.

In 1895 during the colonial periods, the colonists adopted a divide and rule strategy based on religious, cultural and ethnic alignment. This therefore enhanced conflict and tensions within families, communities and the country at large. This strategy is in use even today stressing both gender and ethnic identities (Francin., et al., 2018). The presence of European missionaries, traders, and officials increased throughout the 16th to 19th centuries, with many women losing power and economic autonomy with the arrival of cash crops, while continuing their work of ensuring food security in their families (Robertson, 2016).

Osiru (2006) asserts that in Uganda, it was reported that before 1953, in Central Uganda communities depended on matooke (cooked bananas) as the main food and also consumed indigenous vegetables such as bitter berries and African eggplant and pulses such as cowpeas and Bambara nuts. However, after colonization communities were forced to diversify their food production into other root tubers like sweet potatoes, cassava and yams to reduce food deficits. This was the beginning of the introduction of modern foods. The communities started engaging in trade and foods that were initially for home consumption were now being sold leaving very little for families to consume due to land alienation and taxations introduced during the colonial period. This led to a reduction in the production and consumption of indigenous foods. My research looks at how women trade on indigenous food crops were affected by colonialism leading to food insecurity.

Due to the drive for profits, and government policy promotion of exotic crops, many farmers started producing exotic crops that were much faster maturing. Some regions in Uganda lost their agro bio-diversity more quickly. In Kabale, some traditional crop varieties are no longer available. A number of varieties disappeared especially varieties of sweet potato, bean and field pea (Pelum, 2011). My research is different because it looks at the role that women played in trade of indigenous food crops and how they maintained food security in their society.

Swainson (1980), study highlights the background to the economy of the colony between 1918 and 1939 showing that colonialist marketed considerable units of produce. This provides a lucid study on the development of trade and business especially among the Colonial and Asia Merchants from pre-colonial times. The authors examine the social, economic and historical circumstances that enabled the businessmen to emerge. He also examines the organization of African traders and their successes and failures. The study is a useful reference for this study but it mainly focuses on men. This study provided a vital part of the missing dimension on women traders.

What existed in pre-colonial Kenya were wealthy, successful and independent farmers who had enough food supply including surplus to exchange in order to satisfy the basic needs of their household. According to him the peasants as an analytical

category were the creation of colonialism and that the peasants in Kenya emerged at the same time as the African worker. Historically therefore, the creation of the peasantry is synonymous with the transition from a cultivating and herding non-capitalist, domestic economy to colonial, racial and capitalist economic system (Atieno-Odhiambo, 1972). This study tests his thesis to prove its national applicability though she does not mention the role that women played in the pre-colonial wealthy Kenya.

Njonjo (1981) argues that women farmers in Kenya were turned into workers rather than reproduced as peasants and that majority of them were no longer living in households that were largely self-sufficient as they were but had become labourers with patches of land. He asserts that the transformation of the majority of women farmers into the proletariat class went hand in glove with the emergence of landed bourgeoisie who owned relatively big portions of land. This affected women because land was alienated hence production and trade in indigenous food crops was disrupted. Also new commodities of trade were introduced because of introduction of cash crops. This was especially the case with Rift Valley Province where Njonjo concentrates his study on.

Labour migration impacted severely on the whole system of Luo society and especially women. He asserts that the first step in the establishment of the colonial economy was provided by the imposition of tax which became effective by 1900 and forced people either to sell their surplus food and cattle or produce cash crops or to go out of their localities to seek employment. Women trade on indigenous food crops was also disrupted because there was introduction of cash economy, taxation and new breeds of crops i.e. cash crops (Whisson, 1964). The choice was an economic one, but the response had important social and political implications for the community. However he does not give detailed economic implications it had in their society especially on the women.

According to Buttermann (1979) he observed that the primary purpose of the colonial state was to affect a transfer of surplus from the local economies to the metropolitan sector. She contends that since the transfer occurred through bending the institutions

and roles of the then existing social organization it led to strain, accommodation, and contradictions. The British incorporated the pre-colonial economy into the colonial economy in steps. First, they established a strong political monopoly in the colony. Second, production for export was established. Third, chiefs were appointed whose function was to ensure that local people obeyed government orders. Finally, infrastructure like transport network and markets were introduced to facilitate the transfer of produce from the 'Reserves'. Butterman's work gives insight into the situation in the colonial 'Reserves' in Nyanza especially the fate of women but not their role trade of indigenous food crops.

Note that in colonial era gender inequities were evident in the distribution of trade opportunities. Colonial masters mainly sought male labour at the exclusion of females. Some cultural setbacks, especially with regard to married women, reinforced this position. Yet women, even those living with working husbands, needed extra income, as male wages were too low to support even a bachelor, let alone a family, hence women were forced to participate in other economic activities mainly providing waged labour in the colonial government to supplement what their husbands were earning. However, the effects on trade among the women during the colonial period are not well articulated.

Similarly, Kanogo (1987) revealed that the colonial capitalist economic policies marginalized women through land alienation, forced labour regulations and cash crop production. She further stated that the decline of world prices during the 1929 -1932 economic depression affected African producers and also women trade. Both African and European producers suffered from the declined prices of African commodities especially of sesame, beans, hides, skins, ghee, coffee and maize. By 1931 there was a continued negligence of African traditional exchange systems. For instance, most Africans surplus food crop production was directed to internal market where the prices were very low and not sufficient to feed African labourers in the reserves. The current study however concentrates on exchange of indigenous food crops among the women and how it was affected by colonial policies.

Kangogo further analyses the women's role as traders in period between 1940 at the height of colonial era in Kenya. He argues that even as entrepreneurs, women continued to be marginalized. For instance, they were excluded from obtaining official credit, and as part of the African mass their activities were restricted in many aspects, especially in the 1940s. There was also the impact of colonial local laws and regulations on the trading activities of women. According to the author, it took a great resilience for African women to persist as traders during colonial era and argues that in spite of colonial control, they grew in number. Some flourished, and they made a significant impact on the economy Abdalla (2013). My research deals with the changes that were introduced during the colonial period and how it impacted women who participated in trade of indigenous food crop.

The colonizers' idea of women's role was influenced by the Victorian concept of a woman's place being at home where she was well protected and provided for by the husband. In African cultures a woman was her husband's worker. But there were also values and norms defining women's roles as complementing or equivalent to those of men. These latter values were eroded following the meeting of African and European cultures. The culture that became dominant defining the woman's place as a mother and a wife, leaving her little chance of being considered for formal recognition in trade. At the same time the economy brought new constraints on men and made it difficult for them to support.

To elucidate that change in cultures it is also evident in the women's use of their proceeds from trade. While men use proceeds of trade for wealth accumulation, women were known to prioritize support of families either own or extended family members and also investing some of their returns to ensure there was food security. This is a manifestation of the old kinship support networks and an attachment to areas of origin. Nonetheless, much of the profit went into the formal education of children, which was quite a departure from the old tradition of giving children informal education Susan (2010).

Citing Whyte (1978), she suggests that in many indigenous African societies, women and men occupied different domains; the domestic and the public one. These should not be understood in terms of ranking but rather as equally important and mostly

overlapping. Sudarkasa (1986) stresses that it was the market economy introduced at the onset of colonization that created conditions for increasingly defining females and males as unitary distinct categories that were compared one against the other and, therefore, hierarchically related to one another.

Under capitalism, land, the basic means of production was owned by men. "The situation of African women was negatively influenced by colonialism." Where land ownership traditionally fell to the elders, it would appear that colonial government failed to appreciate the importance of this system that often gave land ownership to males as heads of households rather than to women who worked and were frequently de facto heads of households. This affected the role of women in production and trade of indigenous food crops. It's worth noting that the lives of African women have been conditioned by the discriminatory practices from pre-colonial to colonial period (Malineo 1981).

Women studies have remained a backwater for a long time. Much of the existing historiography of the colonial period is mainly studies of the male roles in society. Men are the social, political and economic luminaries. The place of women is forgotten this and this lacuna is particularly evident in the writings on Nyeri. Most scholars are content with a mere mention or very brief explanations of what women did in Nyeri colonial past especially the role of women in the struggle for independence. Most works therefore present an incomplete history of the economic development and the role of women has been left out of the study. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to assess the experiences of Agikuyu women traders on indigenous food crops in Nyeri over the period 1902 to 1980.

2.3 The Emerging pattern and their Influence on Women Trade on Indigenous food crops and food security in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980

Under colonial rule in Africa, Caribbean and Asia many farmers were coerced into growing a few crops for export – such as cotton, wheat, sugar, tobacco and groundnuts, for which they received low prices. Roads and railways were built – such as the Kenya-Uganda railway built by the East Africa Company that linked Mombasa at the coast with Lake Victoria. This enabled the export of these products to European

countries, bringing economic benefits to the colonial powers. This focus on a limited number of export crops resulted in serious food shortages as trade was redirected away from diverse crops and meeting local needs Wakefield (1980).

The key task of states is to guarantee adequate food for its citizens. Food is recognized as a basic need and a human right. It is enshrined in various international resolutions and in the constitutions of many countries. But despite the renewed global commitment to fight hunger in the last decade, massive technological developments worldwide, and relative progress in achieving the first Millennium Development Goal (MDG) in many regions, especially Asia and Africa food insecurity persists as a challenge for the international community. Overcoming food insecurity remains a dream that never seems to materialize for many food insecure households and national governments.

More renewed commitments by states on food security have been made during the Rome Declaration of 1975, among other international gatherings of states (FAO, 1997). There are important country-level actions mentioned by Heisman (1984), including setting up of strong food security and nutrition approaches policies and programmes which are coordinated at high levels of government. This also includes consolidation of these policies in national law, multi-sectoral involvement, rolling out and implementation at local levels for improved implementation, evaluation and monitoring of strategies, legislation, policies and programmers. Finally, long term engagement of public and private stakeholders for economic development as required by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 1997).

According to FAO (2020), women across the globe are disproportionately affected by food insecurity, with the gender gap in accessing food continuing to increase, particularly in Latin America and Africa. These inequalities are grounded in complex economic, social, cultural, and political conditions. The far-reaching ramifications of gender inequality for food insecurity are well recognized and the extant evidence indicates that a reduction in gender inequality is associated with improvements in global hunger and food insecurity (Clement et al., 2019). In the broader context of gender equality, enhancing women's autonomy broadly defined as “a woman's ability

to have control or influence over choices that affect herself and her family within her own particular context underscores the role of women in trade of indigenous food crops and how it can influence food security is not discussed.

Since the 1980s, there has been an increase in research writings about food security and its relation to policy MacRae (2016). In the year 2000, the Millennium Development Goals aimed to reduce hunger in the world. In September 2008 the United Nations member states made a commitment to end hunger achieve food security, improve nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 (FAO, 2016). But there are very few policies that touch on the role of trade in indigenous food crops and the role it played in curbing food shortage in Africa.

Despite these findings, scholars do not fully understand the pathways linking women's autonomy and food security. The uncertainty is partly due to the difficulty of defining and measuring women's autonomy, a highly contextual and culturally specific trait and the lack of representation of marginal populations within the field. To date, there is no universally agreed upon definition and the varying degrees of attention across global regions has largely neglected majority populations Carlson (2015). This exclusion is problematic given that women are far from a homogenous demographic group and the generalizability and transferability of the extant research findings are limited.

For a better response to global challenges, states and international organizations are also committed to additional global funding to the regional and country levels through specific and integrated methods that ensure global food security. These methodologies have included the adoption of country-led strategic and programmatic strategies (WFP, 2016). Another approach is the technical collaboration that amplifies synergies including institutional capacity expansion and transfer of skill and knowledge and growth of productivity (Wakefield, 1980).

Colonialism pushed women into cash crop production and other non- income-generating activities as a means of raising cash for purchase of food. For instance, apart from owning more than half of the staple food and vegetable farm, women in

Ghana own one-third to one-fourth of the cash crop farms (Clark,1985). United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (1996) recorded that women provided 73 percent of the labour force in tea estates in Rwanda while in Cameroon about 90 percent of labour force in tea estates and 50 percent in rubber estates have been predominantly women. Though women earned relatively lesser income than men, even in circumstances where they work more, their additional income serves as proximate determinant of food security. However, this study looks at how women traded indigenous food crops and how they ensured food security in their homestead and the disruptions caused by colonialisms.

Huho and Mugalavai (2010) noted that Kenya had exhibited 28 severe droughts in the last 100 years and the rate is even expected to increase as climate change continues to prevail. As drought incidents increase, the food productivity in Kericho County and other regions of the country continue to decline. The researchers found that over 70% of Kenya's land had succumbed to frequent droughts and it may be unable to produce food sustainably (Huho & Mugalavai, 2010). Their research does not talk about trade of indigenous food crops as a solution to food security in the country.

The current study argues that during the pre-colonial period the Agikuyu women of Nyeri had a regular intra and inter-community trade network with their neighbors involving exchange of different items of trade in various designated places. The mode of exchange was mainly barter trade. However, the advent of colonialism and the inauguration of economic structures affected the nature of trade by restructuring and modifying the pre-existing trade patterns and exchange to align with the new mode. New needs especially European merchandise was created as new market systems based on monetarized exchange modes were brought forth. These interruptions affected Agikuyu women trade leading to food Insecurity in the region.

After independence, new economic policies such as Africanization of the economy were introduced to enhance economic equilibrium in Kenya. This enabled woman from Nyeri to take advantage of the existing trading opportunities as they started to operate businesses which were initially controlled by non-Africans. However, this

change made them abandon trade of indigenous food crops which always ensured food security in their society.

Women trade in Indigenous food crops is very important part of the development and therefore it must be gathered and documented rationally and systematically. The trading system has not to a larger extent been used, documented and stored in an orderly way and therefore it is in danger of extinction McGregor (2004). The desire to use modern and new technologies is threatening the traditional role that women played especially in the trade of indigenous food crops and how it ensured food security.

The main contribution of this study is two-fold. First, it provides overdue analysis of the significant changes in trade practices which took place among the Agikuyu women of Nyeri over a period of time and its impacts on food security in the community. Second, it is to disclose information about the economic aspects of the Agikuyu women of Nyeri and their reaction towards colonial economic policies during the colonial period. The process of colonialism ushered in the integration of the culture of colonialist and the Africa which led to a process that ushered in the modification, destruction and marginalization of the role of women in trade and trade in Africa (Omwoyo, 2015).

The major gap which arose from a number of relevant literatures reviewed is that most scholars researching on the Agikuyu of Kenya were mainly concerned with their economic organization. Other scholars have also discussed their economy in a more general way by principally focusing on economic changes experienced during different periods. However, this study takes a historical perspective on changes in women trade practices among the Agikuyu of Nyeri from pre-colonial period to post-colonial period. Most studies on economic history focuses on counties, regions, countries or continents but this study takes a different approach by focusing on the role that women played in trade of indigenous food crops. The study is unique in that it focuses on an economic set up covering a smaller geographical area and also women trade as a unit of discussion which has not been given much scholarly attention. This work provided a systematic study in changes in women trade of

indigenous food crops practices among the Agikuyu of Nyeri in the period between 1902 and 1980 cutting across all the periods. In light of the relevant literature reviewed above, there is scanty published research which has been undertaken in this area and specifically in the field of exchange of indigenous food crops by women.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Theories are explanatory devices and none on its own is satisfactory in explaining the same breadth of reality. The study was analyzed within the Marxists feminism theory and Articulation theory to analyze changes and continuity in the Agikuyu women's trade in indigenous food crops, a study of Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980.

2.4.1 Marxist Feminine Theory

The study adopts Marxist feminism whose proponents are Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels which rose in the nineteenth century. Marxist feminism heavily borrows its ideas from Marxist theory of class struggle and capitalists' modes of production and incorporates ideas of feminism that the societies prioritize men and treat men and women unequally. Marxist feminism holds the view that women were oppressed in capitalism and class struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (Marx & Engels, 1848). Engels (1884) observes that gender oppression is reproduced culturally through institutions that promote inequality by privileging men at the expense of women. He further explains that gender division made women to remain in the private domain while men deal with the public sphere.

The theory got critiques. For instance, Lise Vogel points out that Marxist feminism failed to address the issue of women oppression through patriarchy by not interrogating the position of women (Vogel, 1983). In addition, Wright Erik Olin notes that lack of addressing female oppression under patriarchy exposed Marxist feminists to critique taking note that there are other non-class discriminations. This theory failed to reach a complete agreement between the historical relationship of patriarchy and capitalism (Malos, 2007). The Marxists were of the opinion that capitalism was leading to a rise in patriarchy and its elimination was a pre-requisite to eliminating patriarchy.

These critiques are not justified because Engels observes that the social system of a family tends to give prominence to men. Therefore, the study uses the Marxist feminism paradigm to show the place of Agikuyu women as a tool of analysis. The paradigm incorporates the study of both men and women by examining the priorities and the position of men and women in the society. The ideas of Engel on gender inequality can be demonstrated in the institution of patriarchy which existed in most African communities. Such foundations create a system of inequality between men and women in terms of property ownership, inheritance and access to resources. This gender inequality produced a social and power gap between men and women in a society (Davis, 1991; Dewan et al, 2016). These ideas provide an understanding of the patriarchal system among pre-colonial Agikuyu women and how it brought about women's oppression while men got both social and economic fortunes within the society. By addressing such underlying issue, the study empowers women by eliminating one form of discrimination. Colonial capitalism was developed out of the family unit which Engels examines. The spirit of capitalism was promoted in the pre-capitalist societies among family people through dominating elements within the structures of the society. Therefore, European colonialism in Africa reinforced the exploitation that existed in the family.

The family exploitation formed domination between capitalists and the colonial new subjects. As much as some men were privileged, they were beneath the Europeans and both African men and women were classified as racially inferior. Capitalist modes of production and the introduction of oppressive labour laws resulted to the class struggle between those who control the means of production and those who sell their labour power for wages.

Colonialism did not only bring the oppression but also transformed the pre-capitalist gender roles and introduced new practices that shaped both the social and economic realm effecting pre-colonial social relations between men and women. Federici (2009) affirms that Europeans systematically disrupted women farming and trade which guaranteed economic liberty from men when they were compelled to provide labour in cash crop production. This changed relations between men and women. Followers of Marxist feminism like Angela Davis point out that those women tasks

were repetitive and exhausting. She observes that under colonialism women's work increased and became difficult for them to be involved in pre-colonial economy and be able to provide for their families despite the expansion of female labour (Davis, 1981). Such changes aid to demonstrate the transition of Nyeri economy from pre-capitalist to capitalist and its impact on cultural gender roles and relations on women.

As a result, the reproductive labour or the emotional labour in which the women were involved but received no wages was not to be considered. Hence it was believed that the housewives were unproductive which certainly was not the case. They played a vital role in any household and reproductive labour but which was not included in production (Mitchell & Rosazak, 2015). Therefore, it can be concluded that the Marxist Feminist Theory, despite all its drawbacks proved to be vital in igniting a sense of revolt among the women to fight for their rights. It gave a direction to feminist movements and if not all, questioned certain aspects of capitalism to hold the system prevailing at that point of time accountable.

The theory broadly acknowledges that women played vital and undisturbed traditional roles in ensuring sustainability in their communities'. These roles were disturbed upon the arrival of the colonialism and the introduction of capitalism. This study used the theory to analyze the possible resultant implications of capitalism on women of Nyeri and how it affected their local trade of indigenous food crops.

The Marxian Theory was largely economic in nature and focused on commodity production, class exploitation due to industrial labour, and other related aspects. However, it failed to take into consideration the social factors of inequality and discrimination such as race, gender, or sexual autonomy and hence doesn't provide a systematic explanation of these. The labour which is generally not sold to the master or the employer doesn't hold any economic value under Marxist Feminism (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993).

These limitations of the Marxist feminist theory necessitated the study to include another theory to address the gaps to accommodate such changes. Hence while Marxist feminist theory is very much relevant in the current times, the theory helped

to understand, criticize, and correct” how gender operates within our moral beliefs and practice. It also helps to understand that women played a very critical role in economic development of their society. This theory only addresses the economic aspects of the society without looking at the change that occurred in them led to the use of articulation theory.

2.4.2 Articulation Mode of Production Theory

This study employed Articulation Mode of production theory as a tool of analysis in understanding the changes in trade practices of the Agikuyu women of Nyeri between 1902 and 1980. This theory was advanced by scholars such as Meillassoux (1981). According to Berman (1984), “Articulation” is the most distinctive and significant theory to develop from the Marxist critique of Marxist feminist theory.

Hindess and Hirst (1975) define Articulation of Modes of Production as the mode of appropriation of nature. The main argument of this perspective is that, when capitalist mode of production is introduced in a non-capitalist mode or pre-capitalist social formation it does not immediately and automatically displace the existing modes of production. Instead, the capitalist mode of production was gradually aligned with the non-capitalist mode of production and uses them for its own advantage. According to Omwoyo (2015), this theory which entailed the integration of the colonial rule with the indigenous economy, has been applied extensively in analyzing African economic history during the colonial period. The theory is relevant in understanding the dynamics of change because it helps one to pose questions about the relationship between the forces and relations of production, and about the way the material base and superstructure interact which is overlooked by Marxist feminist theory (Ndege, 1987).

Mafeje (1981) argues that when the capitalist mode of production has been gradually established it begins as a process of modification, destruction, marginalization and finally subordinating the non-capitalist modes of production by utilizing them. The continuous process of subordination culminates in the domination of the capitalist mode of production over non capitalist mode (Berman, 1984; Klein, 1985). Taylor (1979) observes that the presence of subordinate pre-capitalist mode of production is

essential for the continued expanded reproduction of capital in the metropole. Ochieng and Maxon (1992) noted that colonization was a period of vigorous innovation with the Africans and Europeans demonstrating their prowess to alter strategies. Pre-colonial modes of production were altered as they were articulated into the new modes of western production which were introduced by the colonial state. Bernstein (1977) defines articulation as the linkage of societies not exemplifying a mode of production in its 'pure' form but each nonetheless dominated by a different development dynamic. Articulation of Modes of Production is also a political relationship in which the dominant groups in the mode of production allied with the capital classes to suppress those whom they both exploited, whether peasants in the sphere of household production or wage laborers.

The African pre-capitalist form of production was opened up to be externally oriented to suit the dynamics of capitalism which had been imposed upon them from the outside hence restructuring the forms of production. This theory points out that pre-capitalist and capitalist economies were achieved with the imposition of colonialism which entailed for participants in the former revolving on change (Cliffe,1977). The Articulation of Modes of Production is an effort to grasp the way in which capitalism preserves and exploits the preceding modes of production particularly within its reach. The tension in the articulation situation lies in the fact that while trying to preserve the preceding modes of production the capitalist sector cannot help but introduce new relations of production.

The concept of Articulation of Modes of Production approach is fairly applicable to this study. The initial break in self-sufficiency of the Agikuyu women of Nyeri during the pre-capitalist production like elsewhere in Africa, was achieved to a considerable extent, by the impact of colonial capitalism which introduced new economic policies and laws in Nyeri County such as migrant-wage labour.

2.5 Conclusion

Though trade of ingenious crops continued even during the colonial period, parpart (1986) illustrated the experience of women in Africa during the period. She argued that colonialism changed the role of women participation in trade of indigenous crops

because most of the women were engaged in colonial forced wage labour and they participated in production of cash crops instead of indigenous crops and their role in participation in trade decreased tremendously. Land alienation by the colonial officers also limited women access to land and land use hence they could not grow the indigenous crops in their farms. The theoretical frame work is important in this study because it helps us to understand the role played by Agikuyu women in trade of indigenous crops. It is also important because it explains how colonialists through their policies and practices undermined, weakened and pushed to the periphery Agikuyu women participation on trade of indigenous crops which created a way for capitalist modes of trade. However, the two modes of trade co-existed together to the benefits of the colonial capitalist mode of trade. This exposure will help the policy maker and the government to lay down policies that promotes women participation on Trade of indigenous food crops which ensured food security in our homestead.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Location of the Study

Nyeri County is located in Central Kenya and shares borders with Laikipia to the North, Meru to the North East, Kirinyaga to the East, Muranga to the South, and Nyandarua to the West. It has six electoral constituencies all in Nyeri County. The county is located in the fertile central highlands meaning that the county is highly productive with high annual rainfall and moderate temperatures. The county is also home to Mount Kenya and Aberdare National Parks which are key tourist attractions. Mount Kenya is the highest mountain in Africa and the second highest in Africa. The administrative centre of the county is Nyeri central, the largest town in the county. The immediate occupants of the area of study currently occupied by the Agikuyu were the Athi and Gumba. The Agikuyu being mixed farmers needed land for cultivating and as such they negotiated with the Athi and Gumba who were hunters and gatherers. The latter two groups exchanged a portion of land with herds of cattle (Muriuki, 1981). The County total area of 3,28 km³ square kilometers, and is a region of considerable topographic, soils, climatic and socio-economic contrasts (KBS, 2019). The altitude varies, on the average, from 1600 m. to 3,000 m. above sea level with Mount Kenya and the Aberdares rising to 5,199m and 3,999 m above sea level respectively. The presence of Mount Kenya to the East and the Aberdare to the West together with their intensive drainage systems, have all influenced the topographic structure of the County. Likewise, the origin of their formation and the morphological changes have had a lot influence on the soil types to be found in this County. The county population during the Kenya Population and Housing Census of 2009 stood at 693,558, but is currently at 759,164 according to Kenya bureau of statistics (KNBS, 2019), comprising of 374,288 males and 384,845 females. The Rainfall in Nyeri county ranges between 75 mm to 1500 mm. The land is hilly and has a number of forests although today most of the forests are being cleared due to the high demand for land and also firewood and charcoal. The Nyeri county neighbors to the east and south-east, an ecological zone characterized by low, unreliable rainfall of between 500 mm and 750 mm per annum and have open grassy plain vegetation. The area of study is part of an ecological zone which contrasts that of the slopes of Mt. Kenya region, the ancestral land of the Agikuyu of Nyeri County an area characterized by

the forest ecological zone and volcanic soils. This area receives a high rainfall ranging between 1,375 mm to 2,250 mm per annum and has an altitude of 1,800 metres up to 2,100 metres above sea level. Its abundant foliage supports such animals as buffaloes, rhinos, elephants, bush babies and Columbus monkeys.

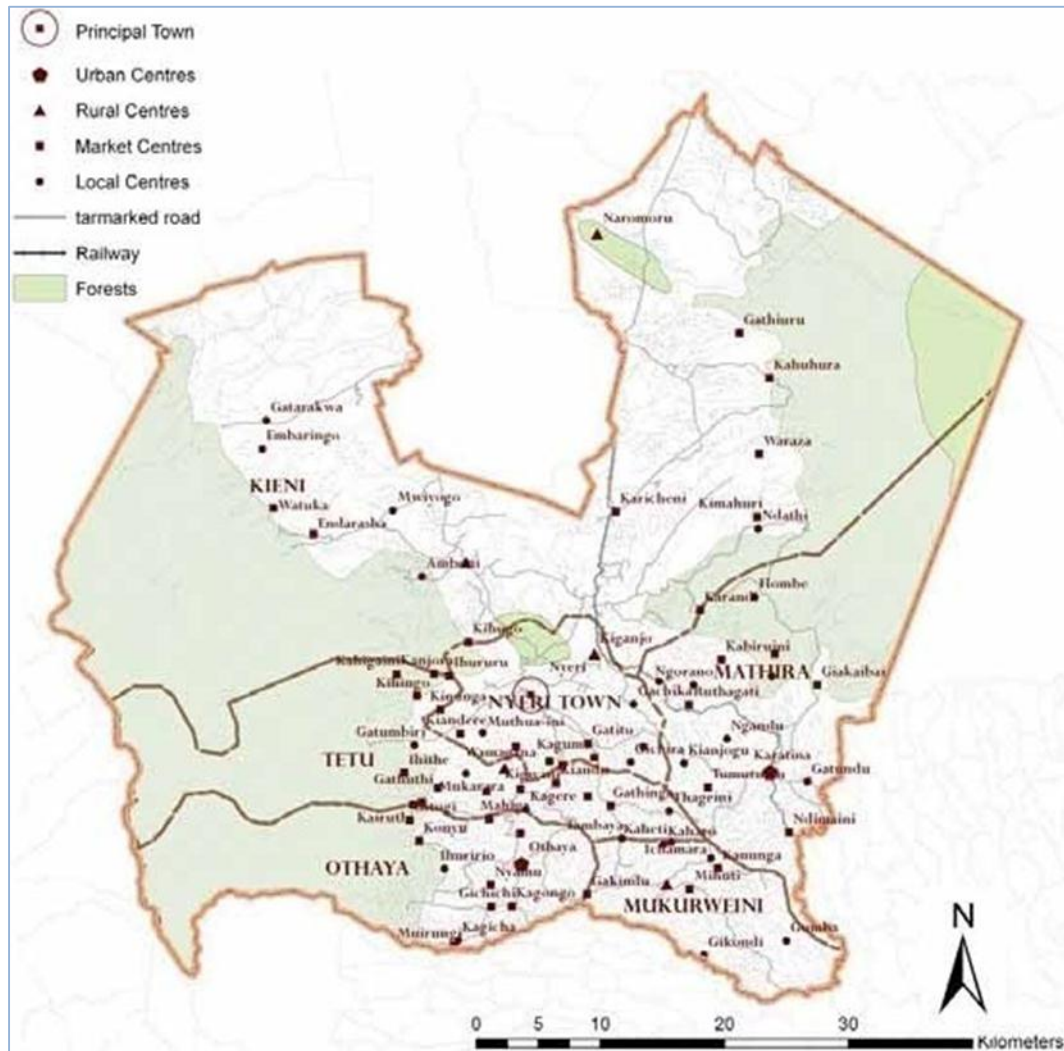


Figure 1: A Map of Nyeri County in Kenya

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, 2019

3.2 Research Design:

This study employed historical research design based on qualitative procedures to examine change in the Agikuyu Women’s local trade in indigenous food crops between 1902 and 1980 in Nyeri County. This study design was useful and it assisted the researcher in collecting data through reaching out key informants in order to come up with well summarized, interpreted and clarified in-depth analysis of the subject. This design was focused on the use of primary and secondary data and was

instrumental in chronologizing of events. The research utilized historical research design which involves collecting, verifying and synthesizing evidence from the past event to establish facts that defend or refute assumptions Creswell (2008). It entails delving into the context and connections between events, as well as the use of primary and secondary historical evidence in the form of writings, objects, and documents. The references were both reliable and authentic. The importance of historical analysis is that it allowed quest for solutions to current issues in the past. Utilizing historical data helped the researcher to trace the history of the Agiikuyu people, undemand the tool of trade and transformative role of women in changing times. This research also utilized social anthropological approach which is concerned with human behavior, norms, values human cultures, societies and language in both present, and past.

3.3 Target Population

The whole of Nyeri County has a population of 759,164 people according to (KNBS, 2019) while the subject of the study was drawn from three sub-counties which includes Kieni East East, Mathira East and Nyeri Central Sub Counties. The informants were drawn from people who were aged 55 years and above, in the three sub-counties. The target population included political, religious leaders, Farmers, traders and former Administrators i.e. the colonial chiefs, headsmen. This group of the population was very important since they were bearing most relevant information to the study.

3.4 Sampling Procedures

The study sampled three sub-counties from Nyeri county, that is Mathira East sub-county, Kieni East East sub-county and Nyeri Central sub-county. The three sub-counties have been sampled purposively on the ground that Mathira East had the largest open-air market in East and central Africa which dates back to the colonial period and most of trade items were local food stuffs. Kieni East East being semi-arid area experiences frequent food shortages since colonial times and women were forced to participate in local trade on Indigenous food crops in order to feed their families while Nyeri central was mainly the administrative centers during the colonial period and even today it's the main administrative and economic center for Nyeri County. In

addition, Nyeri Central and Mathira East sub-counties had a higher colonial penetration compared to the others due to their location in Upper Highland zone which was highly fertile, with plenty of rainfall that was reliable for food crop production. There was high concentration of colonial reserves, Villages and settlement schemes. Nyeri Central was the home of the earliest Consolata Missionaries to arrive in Kenya and they settled at a place called Mathari.

The study used non-probability sampling procedure and techniques which included purposive sampling and snowballing or chain techniques to identify the respondents. Purposive sampling was used to identify respondents 55 years and above, these groups of respondents were senior members of the community and they had directly or indirectly interacted with the colonial period. Hence, they provided first-hand information which was accurate, reliable and relevant to the study. Any informant who was a church leader, political leader or women group leader during the colonial period was purposively sampled because of their rich and reliable information on what used to happen during the colonial period, meaning all the respondents who were interviewed provided most reliable information.

3.5 Sample Size

When conducting historical research that is within a time frame of far past years like the proposed study, what matters most is the quality and reliability of the information given by the respondents. Hence, the respondents were sampled mainly due to their knowledgeable ability of research topic. In view of this, Kathuri and Pals (1993) states that the minimum thresholds of 100 cases in major subgroups and 54 cases in minor subgroups are appropriate sample size. Given that the total population of Nyeri County is 759,164 people and the specific population of the sampled area of the study is 339,239 (KBS, 2019), the study area represents the minor group of Nyeri County. Therefore, the threshold of 54 respondents was used for this study. However, the exact number of the respondents was determined by the concept of data saturation by (Donna, 2013), which states that data saturation is arrived at when all themes have been explored in the oral interviews and Focus group discussion. The information at that point becomes repetitive and therefore conducting more interviews cannot yield new information.

3.6 Research Instruments

3.6.1 Interview Guide

All the interviews were conducted in Gikuyu language which is the language of the catchment area and most comfortable with the informants. The interview was informal as the researcher was not bound to follow the interview schedule strictly. All sampled population were people aged fifty-five years and above and they were asked questions which was open ended in the same interview schedule. This assisted the researcher in probing and recording important data that would not have been easy to come by if close-ended questions were used. Open ended questions assisted the researcher to get greater depth of responses as well as stimulating informants' feelings. Where the respondents were not available to give oral information especially information about the pre-colonial women trade on indigenous food crops activities their response was corroborated with secondary sources. The interview schedule had four sections: section A established the demographic status of the informants; section B had questions on the establishment of the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops. Section C had questions that examined the changes in the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops and Section D had questions on the assessment of the influence of changes in Agikuyu women's trade on food security in Nyeri County (Appendix ii, pg 182).

3.6.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus Group was an interactive session between a group of informants and the researcher. Three focus group were created comprising of six to eight participants from the three sub-counties. The same sampling procedure and technique used to identify the participants and the same interview guide was used for (FGDs). They discussed similar questions on the interview guide and similarity in (FGDs) and individual respondents proved that saturation point is reached (Appendix III, pg188).

3.7 Data Collection Procedures

The data for this study was collected as per the objectives from different sources of history and was categorized as Primary or secondary data.

3.7.1 Primary Data

Primary data was sourced from in-depth oral interviews and archival sources. Primary document was largely and extensively collected from the Kenya National Archives, and Nyeri county Archives. The main documents which were scrutinized included minutes from the Local Native Councils (LNC), colonial government publications, confidential reports, correspondences on matters such as trade, housing, education, intelligence reports, native affairs reports, trade reports, personal letters, handing over reports and diaries. The information obtained from archival sources enhanced fruitful discussions with the informants during in-depth oral interviews. These first hand-records compounded with responses from those who had participated and observed the various events yielded crucial information on women trade in indigenous food crops among the Agikuyu of Nyeri County. Since reports from the archives can be subjective and biased the documents were critically evaluated and counter checked to establish their authenticity and reconcile the information elicited. Therefore, the documents were corroborated with secondary and oral sources to minimize any subjectivity.

Secondly, an Interview schedule was prepared and presented to the informants orally. The interviewees were consulted and interviewed in order to obtain more significant information. Interviews were standardized using interview schedule to ensure comparability of responses. Data from informants was documented through note taking and recorded using a digital voice recorder. Data collection was completed when the informants provided the same response for the same question repeatedly (Saturation point).

3.7.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data included written documents such as books, seminar papers, journals, theses, dissertations and periodicals which were relevant to this study and were obtained from National Library and various university libraries in Kenya. The written materials from these libraries constituted important secondary data for this study. Secondary data was used to complement the primary sources and to fill up some of the information gaps which was not adequately addressed by the primary sources.

3.8 Data Analysis and Interpretation

The aim of data analysis is basically to decipher meanings and understanding from the texts. Data collected from oral source was digitally recorded and transcribed from Agikuyu into English. The similarities and differences in the oral information gathered were noted for easier categorization into themes and sub-themes according to the objectives of the study and the historical period concerned. Similar information from secondary data was subjected to textual criticism to establish their accuracy. Analysis involving interpreting the findings from the themes and sub-themes through description, narration, comparisons and critical evaluations. A relationship between the themes was sought before drawing conclusions. Exploratory reading of all collected material was done. This helped address the initial research problem, whether it still stands the way it was going by the data already collected. The data collected was analyzed at two levels; that is descriptive and thematic due to its qualitative nature and subjected to thorough criticism using appropriate checklists to confirm its authenticity. Data collected was analyzed and interpreted using the historical method. This method is a systematic examination of the past in order to understand the present by depending largely on available data about past events on which one cannot exercise any control. Consequently, the conclusion made was based solely on logical analysis and inferences in terms of consistency and authenticity of the collected data. Data collected from interviews was written in form of a narrative. In addition, necessary quotations from the informants, (the voices), was used to back up the research findings. The theoretical reflection involving parading the historical facts against the theory of Marxist feminism and Articulation of Modes of Production provided a link between the data collected and the set objectives. Oral data collected was corroborated with evidence from both written sources and archival sources to ensure validity and reliability. Finally, data collected was presented as chapters of the study written in continuous prose.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher obtained research authorization from Chuka University (Appendix iv, pg 196&197): Chuka University Introductory Letter National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (Appendix vi, pg198), Ministry of Education State Department for Early Learning and of Basic Education, County Commissioner,

and Nyeri County. The authorization assisted the researcher to carry out research work in Nyeri and other relevant institutions. The researcher sought oral permission from all the informants who participated voluntarily in the interviews. The informants were informed about the purpose of the research being carried out to allay any fears that could have arisen from the exercise. The data they provided was treated with the confidentiality it deserved and their right to privacy was respected too. Any of the sampled informants who declined to offer information was not forced nor tricked to talk. This was instrumental in the acquisition of their genuine opinions, thus strengthening the reliability of data. To observe ethical issues concerning plagiarism and academic fraud, the researcher ensured there was proper citation of various sources while acknowledging the original author.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE ROLE OF PRE-COLONIAL AGIKUYU WOMEN'S LOCAL TRADE ON INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS AND FOOD SECURITY IN NYERI COUNTY BEFORE 1902

4.1 Demographic characteristics of respondents

Table I shows the respondents demographic data that was used in the collection of primary data, based on oral interviews and data was collected to the point of saturation whereby all the themes and subthemes were captured and began to repeat themselves. The study achieved saturation at the 54th respondent. The respondents were grouped as follows.

Table 1: Age of Respondents

Years	Frequency	Percentage %
55-64	09	16.6
65-74	10	18.5
75-84	20	37.2
85 and above	15	27.7
Total	54	100

Source: Field Work, 2024

The ages were categorized into four 55-64 years, 65-74 years, 75-84 years and 85 years and above, the youngest respondent was 55 while the oldest was 97 years. Majority of the respondents were between 70 and 85. While the minorities were below 60 years which was attributed to the fact that respondents were young during the colonial period and could not comprehend what was going on during that time.

The majority of the group were between 70 and 85 years because most of them had vast information that was needed by the researcher and they had interacted directly or indirectly with those that lived during the colonial period in Kenya. However, those of above the age of 85 years gave quality information because of their long interaction with colonialism and also interaction with their relatives that lived prior to colonialism. However, these were not many because majority of them were affected by life expectancy and memory loss.

Table 2: Study Location and Gender of the Respondents

Gender and location	Frequency	Percentage
Male	20	37.03
Female	34	62.97
Interviews conducted	54	100
Mathira East	20	37.03
Nyeri Central	19	35.18
Kieni East East	15	27.7
Total interview	54	100

Source: Field work, 2024

From table 2 above majority of the respondents were female at 34 (62.97) because women were the key actors in the local trade of indigenous food crops while their counterpart males were 20 (37.3). The number of respondents from the three sub-counties of study were evenly distributed with Mathira East at 20 (37.03) followed by Nyeri Central at 19 (35.18) and lastly there was Kieni East East at 15 (27.7). Though Mathira had slightly larger number of respondent because it had the largest open air markets that existed even before colonialism, which was located there and its only women who were allowed to carry up activities of trade up to 1957 (Wanjiru Nduta, O.I 2024).

4.2 Migration and Settlement of Agikuyu in Nyeri

The Agikuyu people settled in the Nyeri area of central Kenya long before the arrival of European colonialism in the late 19th century. According to oral traditions and historical accounts, the Agikuyu migrated into the region in several waves, with some groups moving from the lower Tana River and others from Muranga at Mukuru wa Gathanga. By the early 1600s, the ancestors of the Agikuyu were concentrated at Ithanga, about 80km southeast of Mount Kenya, at the confluence of the Thika and Sagana rivers (Kiagayu, 1978). As the population increased in this area, the Agikuyu began to spread out in different directions, eventually becoming the distinct tribe that exists today. The Agikuyu were known for their prowess and developed sophisticated farming techniques that allowed them to cultivate various crops in the fertile lands around Mount Kenya (Njaramba, 1978). They also traded with neighboring communities and were involved in small-scale industries like bridge building, string making, wire drawing, and iron chain making.

Before the arrival of the British in the late 1800s, the Agikuyu had preserved their geographic and political power from almost all external influence for many generations (Reid, 2020). They had never been subdued and actively resisted attempts by Arab slave traders and their caravans to venture into Agikuyu lands. Agikuyu women in Nyeri played a significant role in occupying and utilizing land to produce the items of trade (Kiagayu, 1978). Kiagayu revealed that,

The Agikuyu people had a strong attachment to the land, seen as a symbol of wealth and status. Agikuyu women gained the right to use land through marriage but could not inherit land directly (Kiagayu, 1978).

The primary land unit was known as the sub-clan holding, which was acquired through the first use rights, defined initially by the exercise of hunting and trapping rights. Agikuyu women were actively involved in activities, cultivating various crops in the fertile lands around Mount Kenya to produce various items of trade (Nyakwaka, 2013). They contributed significantly to the expansion of the Agikuyu people in the early 1900s when the buffer forests between the Agikuyu and the Maasai were cleared for cultivation (Njaramba, 1978). Women were responsible for cultivating indigenous food crops and trading of the same. Agikuyu women had extensive knowledge about local trade, which was passed down through generations. This understanding was crucial for the Agikuyu's success in the pre-colonial period hence ensuring food security.

During the pre-colonial period, the Agikuyu acquired land through various means, including rights of first use, hunting and trapping rights, forest clearance and cultivation, and purchase from other communities like the Dorobo (Ogiek). The basic land unit among the Agikuyu was the sub-clan holding. Land acquisition in the earliest Agikuyu settlements was based on the first use rights, initially defined by the exercise of hunting and trapping rights (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991). Moreover, Okoth-Ogendo states that as the Agikuyu cleared forests and engaged in cultivation, their rights to the land were strengthened. The Agikuyu also acquired land through purchase from the Dorobo (Ogiek) people. They acquired the land from the Athi or Dorobo people through negotiation and in exchange for goats, grains, yams, and

bananas, and by establishing a friendship with them. It is thus they were given the land and also received the right of cultivation (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991).

By Kikuyu law, buying land from non-Kikuyu was a complicated process that involved both parties being adopted into each other's societies through ceremonies supervised by elders. This allowed the Dorobo seller to be protected by Kikuyu law and the Kikuyu buyer to be recognized as the legitimate owner of the land (Kiagayu, 1978). Land acquisitions by individual Kikuyu or partnerships were sometimes substantial, up to 50,000 hectares, and included all the assets, such as trees on the land. The acquired land was known as the new owner's githaka (estate) and became its mwathi (plural athi). Landowners could sell, give away, or pass on all or part of their githaka to other individuals or partnerships. However, the colonial administration's land policies put limits on Agikuyu settlement practices and systems of land tenure, which were fundamentally expansionist. The demarcation of Forest Reserve boundaries in the early 1900s ended further clearance and expansion of Agikuyu areas Nyakwaka, (2013).

4.3 The Pre-colonial Setup of Agikuyu and Origin of Trade in Kikuyuland

The Agikuyu, or Kikuyu (commonly called), form one of the most numerous ethnic groups in Kenya (Odhiambo, 2004). Before the colonization, they remained a society and produced from their land, planting various food crops for sustenance and local trade. They believed in Ngai's supremacy, just like their rich culture. They traded these indigenous food crops with weaved baskets, pottery, and iron tools. In the traditional Agikuyu setting, there was an evident and strict differentiation of duties based on gender. As mukami notes (Grace Mukami, O.I 2024), women were responsible for trading indigenous food crops, including Sorghum Bulrush millet (mwere), foxtail millet (*mukombi*), finger millet (*mugimbi*), legumes such as lablab bean (*njahi*), pigeon or bush pea (*Njugu*), cowpeas (*thoroko*), green gram (*ndegu/Ngina*), navy bean (Noe), kidney bean (mboco); Tubers and root crops such as sweet potatoes (*Ngwaci*), yam (*Gikwa*), arrowroot (*Nduma*), and cassava (mwanga). They also traded pumpkins (*marenge*), and gourds. These were also other crops provided in form of green leaves vegetables (*nyeni*). Such edible vegetables were like terere (*Amawanrthus*), togotia (*Erucrastrumarabicum*), *kigerema* (coccinea

trilobata), thabai (stinging nettle leaves), and *managu* (solanum nigrum). Men also traded various perennial crops such as bananas, sugarcane, yams, cassava, pumpkins, and gourds and edible fruits such as Ngawa, *Matuya* (yellow mulberry), *Ndare* (black berries), *Nathi*, *Thigio* and *marigu ma Gikuyu* (bananas) among others (Ogutu et al., 1968).

The Agikuyu women had understanding about foods produced with less risk of crop failure in other ecological zones (Martha, 2019). This enabled them to provide market with varieties of foods. This knowledge had given them the level of negotiation power that also connected them to the traditional political economies of their societies as production input actors. At the same time, the division of labour according to gender culminated in Agikuyu women's empowerment in terms of economic independence (Mpara et al., 2012). Local trade was previously an essential pillar of the economy of the Agikuyu women before colonialism. In most markets, indigenous food crops were traded for iron, pottery, leather clothes, salt, and red ochre. Naomi Karanja (O. I., 2024) stated that the Kikuyu blacksmiths (*muturi*) made knives and weapons from metal ore that was picked out of the earth and melted down. Making baskets (*kondo*) used to be highly esteemed among women of Agikuyu by their people for as many reasons as those mentioned above, like weaving, snaring, making, repairing calabashes, stringing beads, or storing loads (Onyango et al., 2018).

Elizabeth Mwangi (O.I., 2024) noted that women involved themselves in pottery which was another vital craft. They fashioned pots out of *riumba* (clay), which needed to be excavated from the designated places in their territory. These pots, however, had multiple purposes, which, among others, were cooking, storing grain, carrying water, and for the local trade. The women sat in the shade to make these vessels, which was done the same way as the Kamba people (Nyakwaka, 2013). The Agikuyu people had a wide range of food for local trade and many were drought-tolerant foods that could stay in the market for several days without getting spoiled as it is noted by Gitonga Nancy (O.I., 2024). The Agikuyu women's contribution to food crop production is of utmost importance in determining the family's position in society and the husband's position in society (Njaramba, 1978). In sum, the pre-colonial Agikuyu was a very vibrant trading society where women were essential part of local trade that was going

on, where they applied understanding in every detail to ensure food security through the exchange system. This is in line with Marxist Feminism theory that despite the patriarchal society that Agikuyu women were living in, they were able to carry out trade and sustain their families.

4.4 Influence of Physical Environment in Agikuyu Settlements and Economy

Before colonialism, the physical environment played a significant role in shaping Agikuyu settlements and the economy. The Agikuyu people, residing in areas like Nyeri County, had a deep connection to their land and environment, influencing their practices and economic activities as it is noted by Kamau Wanjiru (O., I 2024). The Agikuyu settlements were strategically located in areas with fertile soils and favorable climatic conditions for crop cultivation (Njaramba, 1978). They practiced mixed farming, keeping livestock and cultivating various indigenous food crops for trade like sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes, cassava, and yams, which were well-suited to their environment. The physical environment also influenced the economic activities of the Agikuyu people. The availability of fertile land and a suitable climate allowed them to engage in cultivation as their primary economic activity hence the items of trade were always available (Nyakwaka, 2013). The convenient systems of the Agikuyu women, who played a crucial role in local trade, were deeply rooted in their understanding of the local weather patterns, soil quality, and traditional farming methods tailored to the specific conditions of their environment. This knowledge ensured sufficient food crop production in their households or even for local trade and it contributed to their economic stability. Moreover, the physical environment determined the distribution of settlements and land use patterns among the Agikuyu people (Belnap, 1993).

Lyndia Ndia (O.I., 2024) explains that Nyeri is located in the central highlands of Kenya. A fertile landscape with rich volcanic soils and a moderate climate characterizes it. These favorable conditions made the region suitable for agronomy and trade, which was the primary occupation of the Agikuyu people. The physical environment influenced settlement patterns, as families and communities tended to establish their homes in areas where the soil was most fertile, and water sources were readily available. The Agikuyu women's daily activities were closely tied to these

settlement patterns (Nyakwak, 2013). Proximity to rivers and streams was particularly important, as water was essential for both household use and crop irrigation. The availability of fertile land enabled women to grow a variety of crops for consumption and also for local trade and this ensured food security. Settlements were typically organized in a dispersed manner, with homesteads surrounded by family-owned farms. This arrangement allowed women to manage their local trade tasks efficiently, as their homes were close to their market areas (Njaramba, 1978). The rich volcanic soils of Nyeri were well-suited for growing various indigenous food crops which acted as items of trade. Naomi Wanjiru (O.I., 2024) explains that women were the primary cultivators, responsible for planting, weeding, harvesting and trading these crops. With its reliable rainfall patterns, the moderate climate supported two main growing seasons, allowing women to have enough supply of trading commodities.

According to Nyakwaka (2013), the climate of Nyeri, with its seasonal variations, profoundly impacted the economic activities of Agikuyu women. During periods of adequate rainfall, productivity was high, resulting in surplus produce that women could sell or trade in local markets. This surplus was crucial for generating income and acquiring other necessary goods. Women often participated in local markets, selling crops, handmade crafts, and other products to support their households. One of the respondents revealed that,

The physical environment provided natural resources that were essential for the local trade handicrafts, another significant aspect of the Agikuyu women's economy. Women collected materials such as clay for pottery, reeds and sisal for basket weaving, and beads for jewelry making. These handicrafts were used within the community and traded in local markets, providing an important source of income this was explained by one of the respondent (David Muchoki, O.I., 2024).

The availability and quality of these natural resources influenced the types and quantities of handicrafts that women could produce. For example, areas with abundant clay deposits supported a thriving pottery industry, while regions with ample vegetation enabled the production of high-quality woven baskets. The skills required

to create these handicrafts were passed down through generations, ensuring that women remained proficient in their craft and could continue contributing to the local trade (Nyakwaka, 2013). Despite the challenges posed by the physical environment, Agikuyu women demonstrated remarkable resilience and adaptability. They employed various strategies to sustain food security such as maximizing on production to ensure constant supply of indigenous food crops for trade. Establishing women's groups and cooperative societies was crucial in adapting to the changing economic landscape. These groups facilitated sharing of resources, knowledge, and support, enabling women to navigate the challenges that were affecting local trade that time. By working together, women could pool their efforts to improve productivity of indigenous food crops, and enhance their overall increase in availability of trading commodities which ensured economic resilience (Gakaria, 2015). The Marxist Feminism theory acknowledges the vital and undisturbed roles in ensuring sustainability in their community.

4.5 Pre-colonial Agikuyu Trade of Indigenous Food Crops

The Agikuyu people of Nyeri County in Kenya had a rich tradition of trading indigenous food crops before the arrival of colonial powers. The trade was characterized by availability of crops such as sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes, cassava, and yams, crops that were well-suited to the local climate and soil conditions and were crucial in mitigating famines during droughts. These crops were always available for exchange as it is noted by Mwaniki Fundi (O.I., 2024). The Agikuyu had mastered the exchange of these crops, which were important for food security and formed the basis of their economic and social systems. In pre-colonial times, the Agikuyu traded with neighboring communities, including the Maasai, for goods such as leather, gourds, and foods that they did not produce themselves. This trade was an important aspect of their economic and social lives, allowing them to access goods and services unavailable locally. Zwanenberg & King (1975) affirm that the Agikuyu also had a system of markets known as *ndunyus*, which dates back to colonial and pre-colonial times. These markets were an important hub for the trade of foodstuffs, fruits, and general merchandise and played a significant role in the local economy. The women were involved in the trade of these crops, with many acting as merchants and traders in the local markets (Zezeza, 1991).

4.6 Pre-colonial Land Tenure Systems that Ensured Availability of Trading Commodities

The Gĩkũyũ landholdings consisted of more than one field system located at various distances from each other (Mwangi Mutugi, O.I., 2024). This was done to ensure sufficient supply of food crop for trade in case one location did not yield due to climate changes or lack of rain. The segmented parcels of land in different ecosystems assured food for trade throughout the year and sustained environment and health. The system guaranteed that a clan could adopt members of the clan's ownership of land, and even the landless as the family members to access land (Kigwe, 2016).

Thus, in any given community, a member of people could each hold a right or bundle of rights expressing a specific range of functions. Each of these functions carried varying degrees of control exercised at different levels of social organization. For example, while cultivation rights were generally allocated and controlled at the extended family level, grazing rights was a matter of concern for a much wider segment of society (Okoth-Ogendo, 1991).



Figure 2: A picture of a Gikuyu women from Mathira in Local Market in Nyeri -A Photo taken from Kenya National Archive on 24th May 2024: KNA/CP/4/29

Gĩkũyũ land tenure is embedded in culture and ecology, and therefore, land to Agĩkũyũ is a gift from Ngai (God) and it embodies spirituality, culture, and nature. As such, families and communities had and still have spiritual associations with plants

and animals (Adrian Mutitu O.I., 2024). Many people have sacred trees, mountains, and hills regarded as sacred and given religious names. According to Mbiti (1970), natural calamities, for instance, epidemics and floods, are beyond human cause or control. They are attributed to God's activity or a spiritual being. For instance, if God is angry at our actions or with our leaders, He may reveal His anger through floods, earthquakes, and the invasions of locusts. Traditionally, culture and ecosystems are integral to the notions of Agĩkũyũ families going back to the commencement of their creation.

The communal land ownership system was a cornerstone of the Agikuyu's food security practices. This system allowed families to share land and resources, fostering a sense of community and mutual support for trade. Land was typically allocated based on family needs and agricultural potential, with each household contributing to the collective well-being (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). This system encouraged cooperative trade practices, where families worked together to maximize market opportunities through shared labour and knowledge. The communal approach to land ownership practices ensured that the community could sustain itself without the need for external assistance, maintaining a robust and resilient food system because they were able exchange and obtain what they were missing as a community (Williams & Holt-Giménez, 2017).

According to Karen Karimi (O.I 2024), cooperative trade practices were essential in the traditional Agikuyu economic system. These practices included the collective marketing and distribution of crops, which maximized efficiency and output. For instance, communal work parties, known as "harambee," were organized to support each other during peak trading seasons. These gatherings were not only practical but also strengthened social bonds within the community. Wanned (2013) argues that the exchange of labour and skills during these activities ensured that all families had the necessary support to participate effectively in local trade, enhancing the overall food security of the community (Altieri et al., 2012). Traditional land management practices further reinforced food security as the Agikuyu employed techniques such as crop rotation, intercropping, and fallowing to maintain soil fertility and reduce pest infestations. These practices were guided by a deep understanding of the natural

environment and the ecological balance. For instance, intercropping different species of crops not only improved soil health but also reduced the risk of crop-specific pests and diseases hence there was always constant supply of trade commodities out of these land management systems.

The fallowing of land allowed soils to recover their fertility, ensuring that the land remained productive to ensure availability of trade commodities. These sustainable practices were integral to the Agikuyu way of life, ensuring that the land remained productive and capable of sustaining food for trade (Kanoto, 1987). Social structures and cultural practices also played a critical role in ensuring food security. The Agikuyu society was organized in a way that promoted cooperation and mutual support. Morgan Murithi (O.I., 2024) explains that elders and community leaders were the custodians of trade best practices and traditional laws that governed land use and resource distribution. These leaders provided guidance and resolved disputes over land and resources, ensuring that the community's trade practices remained sustainable and fair (Akumu et al., 2016). Additionally, rituals and ceremonies tied to planting and harvest seasons reinforced the community's commitment to trade practices and food security, ensuring that these practices were passed down through generations (Nelson, 2008). One of the respondents Munene wa Nyambura (O.I., 2024) explained that,

The Agikuyu traditional land tenure system was also based on the extended family or lineage - Mbari and each family (man and his wife or wives) had its piece of land. Land was a significant means of production of items of trade the Kikuyu and an essential source of livelihood for them.

Kariuki (2015) observes that the written sources indicated that there was also individual acquisition and ownership of land through the exchange, and one could become a client to the patron (Landowner). An example of such patron/client relationship is where an in-law (muthoniwa) could give a landless son-in-law a piece of land to cultivate. Land was also acquired by transfer or force if a particular Mbari could not pay a debt. According to Oyewùmí (2015), the Kikuyu land tenure system was complex and dynamic. This study established how the land was owned and used

during the Agikuyu traditional setup to produce items of trade. According to the respondents, land ownership was grouped into three categories: communal land, sub-clan holdings, and others. It was observed that land ownership during the traditional setup was through sub-clan holding. Karanja Peter (O.I., 2024) additionally stated that before 1902, the land was allocated for the following significant uses: communal land, unoccupied forest or land with trees, garden plots and grazing mainly by the Maasai community or land that was set aside for religious purposes such as shrine and grave sites.

The above information corroborated with Muriuki (1981) who stated that there were spaces used for planting crops by any family member, men, women, and other spaces for private farming by either the women or men. Mostly, the excess crops was used for trade. A family group with enough land to cultivate was considered self-supporting in the subsistence economic unit and that is where items of trade were gotten from (Nyakwaka, 2013). The group worked harmoniously with a view to satisfy their immediate needs and accumulate wealth. In addition, all the respondents observed that before 1902, Agikuyu men had the right to own and use the land, but women had only the right to use it for production of indigenous food crops for trade.

Land ownership rights were not equal for both men and women, which may be attributed to the fact that the land owned by the sub-clans was founded upon male-headed family units as it's noted by (Peris Wanjiku O.I., 2024). However, although the Agikuyu women did not have the right to own land, they had specific crucial economic power and influence in the family and the right to access and use that land to produce indigenous food crops for trade. Musalia (2010) also stated that the Agikuyu women had the right to use land allocated to their husbands or an individual male to produce crops for trade. They also had significant control over food crop production and proper use of understanding and skills on food crop production, such as observation of weather, seed selection, planting, weeding, harvesting, and trading. It is, however, essential to note that most women who were married by men became part of the husband's family, and hence they had a right to use the land to produce food crops for trade (Mies, 1986).

To this extent, women greatly influenced the amount of food supplies in their household through exchange of indigenous food crops they cultivated with their neighboring communities to obtain more food for their families. The respondents' findings corroborated with Sandgren (1976) that men were basically responsible for trading animals and animal products in the community while women were responsible for trading various indigenous food crops that they produced in their farms.

4.7 Methods of Acquiring Trade Commodities

The methods used by Agikuyu women in Nyeri to acquire trade commodities before colonialism was a combination of many factors and to cope with the unpredictable climate and ensure a stable supply of trade commodities the Agikuyu women diversified the types of crops they grew (Nderitu, 2018). They started cultivating a variety of crops, including drought-resistant ones to try and mitigate the risks associated with poor rainfall and prolonged droughts (World Food Program, 2016). This diversification strategy not only improved food security for their families but also provided a wider range of products for trade Nangulu (2001). By having different crops ready for sale at different times, women could maintain a steady presence in the local markets hence ensuring a continuous flow of goods to trade (Swaison, 1976). In addition to indigenous food crops, the Agikuyu women produced handicrafts and home-made goods that were valuable trade commodities. These included pottery, woven baskets, beadwork, and traditional clothing (Uzoigwe, 1975). Women dedicated time to crafting these items and they were in demand both within their communities and beyond (Turner & Katherine, 2006). The trade of these handicrafts provided an important source of income during periods when output was low (The World Bank, 2018). The skills and information required to trade these goods were passed down through generations, ensuring that women remained proficient in trading crafts (Vogel, 1995).

Another method of obtaining trading commodities to supplement indigenous food crops was through gathering and foraging whereby the Agikuyu women collected wild fruits, herbs and other natural resources from their environment (Acker, 1973). These items were often used for medicinal purposes as food supplements or as materials for crafting (Kigwe, 2016). Foraging provided a way to supplement

household resources and offered additional items that could be traded in local markets (Grey & Patel, 2015). This method was particularly useful when production was insufficient to meet the community's needs and Barter was a common method of trade among the Agikuyu women (Nzioki, 2000).

Women exchanged surplus produce with goods or items they needed but did not produce themselves as it is noted by George Maingi (O.I., 2024):

Women built and maintained trade networks within and between communities, facilitating the exchange of goods and ensuring a diverse range of products was available in local markets

Cooperative efforts played a significant role for acquisition of trade commodities because women often worked together in groups to pool their trading resources (Gathigi, 2000). These cooperative groups were sometimes based on family ties or community affiliations and collaborated on larger projects such as preparing fields and harvesting crops (Gakaria, 2015). By working together these women could achieve higher productivity and generate more surplus produce for trade said by (Vivian Kabui O.I., 2024). Cooperative groups also provided a support network that helped women to share knowledge, resources and strategies for improving their economic activities (Wriggley, 1965).

Active participation in local markets was essential for acquiring and trading commodities. Women traveled to local markets regularly to sell indigenous food crops and other goods (Wolff, 1974). These markets were vibrant and economic activity centers where women could interact with traders, exchange goods and acquire new commodities (Kanyinga, 2017). He adds that Market participation facilitated the sale of their products and provided opportunities to learn about new trade items and market trends. Social structures such as clans and age-set systems supported women's efforts in acquiring trade commodities (Wriggley, 1965). These structures organized economic activities ensured that resources were shared fairly within the community and clans provided a sense of identity and mutual support that was crucial for collaborative efforts in trade. The age-set systems grouped individuals into cohorts

that moved through stages of life together reinforcing cooperation and shared responsibilities as stated by (Peris Wanjiku O.I., 2024).

These social frameworks enabled women to access indigenous food crops for trade and the support needed for their economic activities (Wriggley, 1965). Information sharing and education were vital for women to adapt to changing economic conditions and improve their methods of acquiring trade commodities while older women passed down trading techniques, crafting skills and strategies to younger generations (Kilonzo & Akallah, 2021). This transmission of knowledge ensured that women remained capable and innovative in their trading activities (Wriggley, 1965). All these methods of acquiring trade items made women ensure there was food security in their homes.

4.8 Gender Roles in Agikuyu Local Trade

The role of gender in trade among the Agikuyu before colonialism in Nyeri, Kenya, is characterized by the significant participation of women in barter trade, with men serving as escorts to facilitate trade activities. This dynamic highlights women's economic agency and autonomy in the pre-colonial era, where they played a crucial role in the community's economic life (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013).

Gitonga Nancy (O.I., 2024) noted that the fact that women dominated the barter trade and men acted as escorts suggests that women were not only involved in trade but also had a level of control and authority in this sphere which is a testament to their economic power and influence. This means that women dominated the supply chain in the garden products and grains market with some women becoming full time grain market traders and they were referred to as the "big-time grain mamas" (Gitonga Nancy O.I., 2024). The history of women commuter traders in present-day goes back to pre-colonial years when women from Central Kenya especially the Kikuyu developed trading networks Before colonial contact. The Agikuyu engaged in trade with neighboring groups and cattle-herding nomads, such as the Maasai exchanging goods like leather, gourds, and food (Musalia, 1985). Women's participation in local trade was an integral part of the economic life of the Agikuyu women, highlighting their economic agency and influence in the pre-colonial era.

Women played a crucial role in local trade and they were the main traders in local markets selling goods they produced themselves which included indigenous food crops like millet, sorghum. They also sold vegetables and fruits and they were primarily responsible for farming so they had control over these products as noted by (Rachael Wangu O.I., 2024). In addition to food items, women also sold handicrafts, pottery and home-made woven items that were an important source of income for their families (Ochieng, 2014). In the pre-colonial Agikuyu society, women played a central role in local trade and marketing which was a vital part of their community's economy. They were primarily responsible for growing and harvesting crops so they had control over the products that were sold in local markets. These products mainly were indigenous food crops such as millet, sorghum and cassava. Others included vegetables, fruits, and other food items that were essential for the community's daily meals as was explained by one of the respondents (James Kiragu O.I., 2024). Women would take these products to the local markets setting up stalls from where they sold their goods to other community members. In addition to food items, women also produced and sold a variety of handicrafts such as pottery, woven baskets, and beadwork. These items were not only used in everyday life but were also important for cultural and ceremonial purposes (Jane Wokabi O.I., 2024).

The local markets were bustling places where women interacted, exchanged goods, and built social networks. Women's involvement in these markets meant they had significant economic power and they were the primary managers of the household economy and the main providers of food and essential goods for trade (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). This economic role extended to managing surplus production, ensuring that their families had enough to eat and that there was extra to trade or sell and the income generated from these activities helped to support their families and contributed to the community's overall prosperity (Vivian Kabui O.I., 2024). Women's local trade activities also fostered a sense of community and mutual support, as they often collaborated with other women shared resources, and helped each other in times of need. Through their trading activities, women maintained and strengthened social bonds ensuring the stability and cohesion of their community.

Moreover, the markets were spaces where women could gain information, share news, and discuss matters affecting their lives and families. This informal exchange of information and ideas was crucial for the community's social and economic resilience. Women's roles in local trade was supported by the community's social structures, including age-set systems and clans which organized and regulated economic activities (Musalia, 1985). These structures ensured that women's contributions were recognized and valued and the complementary roles of men and women in the economy created a balanced system where both genders played an essential part in sustaining the community Wanjiru Nduta (O.I., 2024) notes that,

While men engaged in long-distance trade to bring in resources from other regions, women's local trade ensured that the community's immediate needs were met and this balance was critical for the Agikuyu's economic stability and growth for food security purposes.

Even though their roles were different the economic activities of men and women were interdependent and both were necessary for the community's well-being. Women's active participation in local trade on indigenous food crops gave them a degree of autonomy and influence within the society. Their ability to generate income and manage resources gave them economic independence and a voice in household and also in community decisions (Ochieng, 2014). This economic empowerment was essential for maintaining gender balance and ensuring women's perspectives and needs were considered in the community's development and it also fostered food security stated (Ng'a Ng'anga wa Karanja, O.I., 2024). Reports that women's roles in local trade and markets were fundamental to the pre-colonial Agikuyu economy and their control over local trade also their ability to produce and sell handicrafts and how they managed their household resources made them key in ensuring food security (Philip, 2013). By actively participating in local markets, women supported their families and contributed to the community's overall prosperity and social cohesion. These economic activities were interwoven with social interactions, fostering a strong sense of community and mutual support (Obiero, 2010). This balance and interdependence between men's and women's roles in trade ensured that the Agikuyu society remained resilient, stable, and prosperous with guaranteed food security.

4.8.1 Pre-Colonial Women Economic Management of Local Trade

Within their households, women managed resources carefully and they ensured their families had enough food and goods for daily use and a surplus to trade. This management extended to local markets where women's economic activities significantly influenced their communities. Women held substantial economic power by controlling the production and sale of certain goods. This influence helped maintain the balance and stability of the community's economy (Felister Wambugu, O.I., 2024).

In pre-colonial Agikuyu society of Nyeri, women played a crucial role in economic management. For their community's sustainability and prosperity, they were the primary managers of household resources, overseeing the production, storage and distribution of food and other essential goods (Brett, 1973). They cultivated indigenous food crops ensuring their families had enough to eat and to sell in local trade and after harvesting women would carefully store surplus produce to prevent spoilage and for use during lean periods explained by (Jane Wokabi O.I., 2024). This careful management of food supplies was essential for the community's survival, particularly during times of drought or poor harvests. In addition to managing food supplies, women were responsible over other household goods and resources. They produced and maintained essential items like cooking utensils, woven baskets, and clothing. Women also engaged in various crafts, creating items such as pottery and beadwork, which they could sell or trade in local markets. This production of goods not only fulfilled the needs of their households but also provided additional sources of income hence continuous food security (Mwangi, 1954).

The income generated from these activities allowed women to purchase items that were not produced locally, such as salt, iron tools, and luxury goods (World Food Program, 2016). By trading surplus indigenous food crops and handmade items, women contributed significantly to the household economy ensuring that their families had the necessary resources to thrive and this economic contribution gave women a degree of economic independence and influence within their households. Women's economic management extended beyond their own families (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013).

They often collaborated with other women in their community, through sharing resources, labour and knowledge especially in the area of trade. This cooperation increased productivity and strengthened social bonds within the community (Gitonga Nancy, O.I., 2024). Moreover, women played a key role in teaching and passing essential economic skills to the next generation. Mothers taught their daughters how to cultivate crops, manage household resources, and produce goods for trade. This transmission of information ensured that economic practices were maintained and adapted over time contributing to the community's long-term sustainability and also food security (Taylor, 1979).

The community's social structures, such as age-set systems and clans supported women's economic management. These structures provided a framework for organizing trading activities and ensuring that resources were fairly distributed as said by one of the respondents (Elizabeth Nyambura O.I., 2024). They also facilitated cooperation and mutual support among community members hence reinforcing the importance of women's roles in economic management. Kamau Wanjiku (O.I., 2024) further notes,

Women's roles in economic management were not only about practical tasks but also involved decision-making. Women often had a say on how household resources were used and how surplus goods were traded or sold. so women familiarity of household needs and local market conditions made them valuable advisors in economic decisions.

This influence extended to community-level discussions where women's voices were important in shaping economic strategies and priorities. Their economic activities were interdependent with those of men. While men engaged in long-distance trade and brought in resources from other regions, women ensured that these resources were effectively utilized and managed within the community (Wasson & Roszak, 1969). This complementary relationship between men's and women's economic roles created a balanced system supporting the community's well-being. Even as colonial influences began to impact Agikuyu society, the foundational principles of women's economic management played a significant role (Dorine Wangui, O.I 2024). Although new economic pressures and opportunities always emerged, the skills and practices

that women had developed over generations remained crucial for adapting to changing circumstances and ensuring food security.

4.9 Mastery of seasons change and its effects on trading commodities.

Kamau Wanjiku (O.I., 2024) states that climate change significantly impacted trading commodities and food security in Nyeri County particularly affecting the indigenous food crops traded by Agikuyu women. Before 1902, the region experienced noticeable shifts in weather patterns including erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts and unpredictable seasons which disrupted trade dynamics. These changes posed substantial challenges to the cultivation, harvesting, and trade of indigenous food crops, which were crucial for local food security. The traditional calendar which was well understood and utilized by Agikuyu women was thrown into disarray by these climatic shifts. The predictability of seasons that once guided planting and harvesting schedules became unreliable leading to frequent crop failures and reduced items of trade (Nderitu, 2018).

Before the colonial era, the Agikuyu women had established a sustainable system of trade that prioritized indigenous food crops. They played a central role in this system, utilizing their knowledge of local environmental conditions and trading practices. They managed the cultivation and trade of various indigenous food crops which were essential for the community's food security (Wriggley, 1965). Their deep understanding of the local climate and seasonal patterns enabled them to optimize trading activities hence ensuring a stable supply of food for their households and the broader community. This intricate knowledge allowed them to anticipate weather changes, select appropriate indigenous food crops for planting, and employ suitable farming techniques, hence ensuring there was constant supply of indigenous food crops for trade (Mwangi, 2014). The local trade practices of the Agikuyu were closely tied to their understanding of climate and weather patterns. Women relied on traditional knowledge to predict weather changes, plan planting seasons and manage crop for trade. This knowledge included observing natural indicators such as wind patterns, cloud movements, the positions of the stars and the moon and the behavior of animals and insects (Turner & Katherine, 2006). These indicators helped them anticipate weather changes and adjust their farming and trading activities accordingly

which was crucial for maintaining food security. By integrating these observations into their trade practices, they could make informed decisions about when to plant, what crops to grow, and how to manage their fields, thereby ensuring constant supply of local food crops for trade (Gathigi, 2000).

4.10 Conclusion

The study affirms that in the traditional setup the, the Agikuyu women had huge responsibility of participating in local trade to ensure food security in their home stead and participated in both local and long-distance trade. They controlled a detailed activity that was going on in trade. They had information on various trading commodities that was to be traded depending on the season. Trade in indigenous food crops was done by women and these food crops were preferred by women because they were resistant to drought, pest and diseases. They were also imperishable and this ensured food security in the society. Women exchanged these food crops with their neighbouring communities to access what they were missing such as salt, iron tools, and luxury goods. This helped them to maintain the stability of the community's economy. Trade among the community was important in the families because the exchange of these food crops helped them to supplement their diets for nutritional needs and to ensure food security. Notably, trade was gendered and there were items of trade for men and for women. It is important to note that local trade was good for social cohesion and the communal bonds were forged through regular market interactions and mutual support systems. Participation in local trade on indigenous food crops gave women a degree of autonomy and influence within the society. Moreover, there was a complementary relationship between men's and women's economic roles that created a balanced system supporting the community's well-being. This balance and interdependence between men's and women's roles in trade ensured that the Agikuyu society remained resilient, stable, and prosperous with guaranteed food security.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DYNAMICS OF THE AGIKUYU WOMEN'S TRADE IN INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS IN NYERI COUNTY FROM 1902 TO 1980

5.1 Colonial Invasion of Nyeri County

The colonial invasion of Nyeri County began in the late 19th century with the British establishing their presence in Kenya. The arrival of colonialists in Nyeri can be traced back to the early 1890s when British explorers and missionaries ventured into the region followed by colonial administrators Muriuki (1969)

In 1902 the British formalized their control over the area, integrating it into the British East Africa Protectorate. This invasion was marked by the establishment of administrative posts, the introduction of new governance structures and the imposition of colonial policies and taxes. The colonial presence profoundly impacted the socio-economic and cultural landscape of Nyeri County leading to significant changes in the traditional way of life for the Agikuyu people especially the women involved in indigenous food crop trade (Ndirangu, 2009).

The colonial period in Kenya brought about significant changes that profoundly impacted the Agikuyu women's local trade system and food security in Nyeri County. The introduction of policies such as taxation, forced labour, land alienation, urbanization, monetization, cash crops, the squatter system, the kipande system, and land subdivision disrupted traditional trade networks (Muriuki, 1969).

Agatha (2010) states that these changes placed immense pressure on Agikuyu women who struggled to maintain their roles in local trade, leading to increased food insecurity. This study aims at examining the specific ways in which colonial policies affected women's trading activities. It highlights the change and adaptability of Agikuyu women in the face of profound challenges. Understanding these historical impacts is crucial for informing contemporary policies and interventions aimed at improving food security and supporting sustainable trade practices in the region.

5.2 Effects of Introduction of Colonial Taxation on local trade in Nyeri

Taxation policies imposed by the colonial government were one of the first significant disruptions to the Agikuyu women's trade system. The introduction of hut and poll taxes forced households to generate cash income, compelling women to engage more in market-oriented activities (Dorine Wangui, O.I., 2024). This shift not only altered traditional trade practices but also placed immense pressure on women trade in indigenous food crops with the need to earn money often leading to reduced food security. The need to pay taxes diverted time and resources away from barter trade and focus on food crops. The women were compelled to grow cash crops instead of indigenous food crops and to seek wage labour, further straining their ability to maintain food security (Jokes, 1990).

According to Burton (2008), the imposition of taxes by the colonial government was a primary tool for exerting control over the indigenous population and extracting economic resources from the colony. The hut and poll taxes introduced by the British in the early 20th century had far-reaching consequences for the Agikuyu women, particularly for women involved in local trade and food production. These taxes were designed to integrate the indigenous economy into the colonial capitalist system by forcing Africans to earn money, thereby facilitating their entry into the cash economy (Swain et al., 2003). The archival sources states that,

The colonial authorities imposed the hut tax on every household and the poll tax on every adult male, compelling the family to find ways to generate the necessary cash to meet these obligations. For the Agikuyu, who traditionally relied on subsistence farming and a barter system, this shift to a cash-based economy represented a profound transformation (KNA/MAI/16/8; 1890-1916).

Women, who played a central role in local trade found their traditional engagement in trade disrupted and they had to adapt to the new economic demands imposed by colonial taxation policies as one of key informant states (Eunice Mukami O.I., 2024).

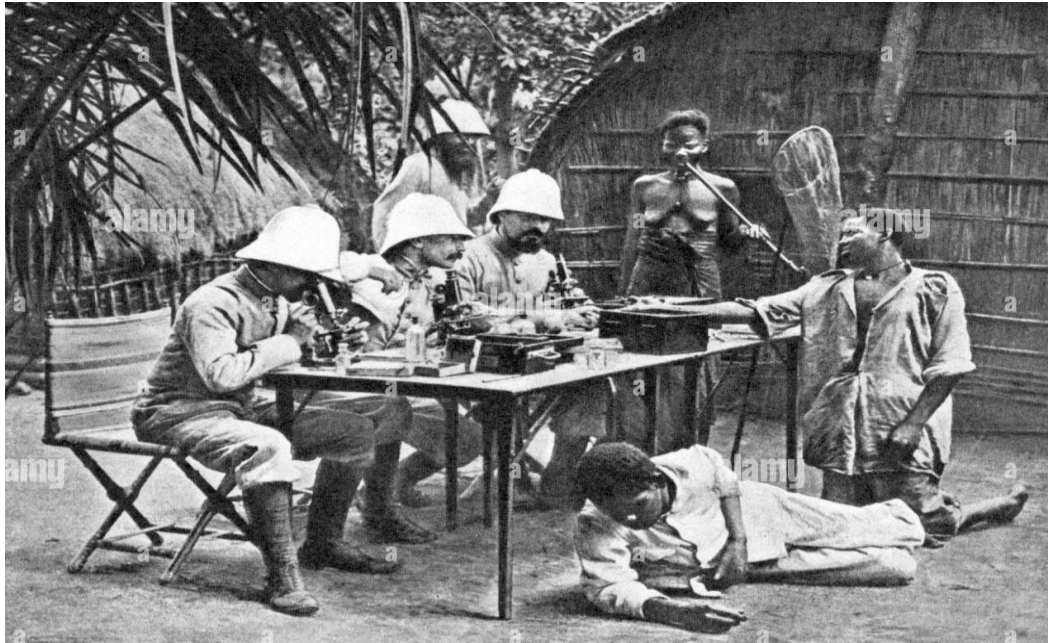


Figure 3: Agikuyu Colonial Taxation processes in Nyeri

Adapted from Kenya National Archives Document (KNA/MAI/16/8; 1940-1950)

The introduction of the hut and poll taxes created significant economic pressures on Agikuyu households fundamentally altering the dynamics of local trade and food security (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). Traditionally Agikuyu women managed both the production and exchange of food crops hence ensuring that their families were well-fed and that surplus produce could be traded in local markets. However, with the need to generate cash to pay taxes, women were increasingly forced to divert their efforts from subsistence farming to activities that could produce immediate cash income (Yuku-angulu, 2018). This often involved selling of indigenous food crops that would otherwise have been consumed by their families, leading to a reduction in food availability and increased food insecurity (O'Brien, 2012). The necessity to engage in cash-earning activities meant that women had less time and resources to devote to traditional trading activities. The shift towards a cash economy disrupted the established social and economic structures within the Agikuyu women, undermining the stability of local trade in indigenous food crops that had previously ensured resilience and sustainability in food security as mentioned by one of the respondents:

The introduction of hut and poll taxes forced many families into economic hardship. Men had to leave their farms to work for cash,

which left women with an overwhelming burden of maintaining both household and trade duties (James Muthee O.I, 2024).

The colonial taxation policies not only compelled the Agikuyu to participate in the cash economy but also facilitated the exploitation of their labour and resources for the benefit of the colonial administration and European settlers (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1910-1920). As families struggled to meet their tax obligations, they often had no choice but to engage in wage labour on European-owned farms and infrastructure projects. This labour demand further strained the farming productivity of the Agikuyu women as men were frequently absent from their farms leaving women to manage both local trade and household responsibilities (Ayieko, 1995).

The increased labour burden on women coupled with the diversion of farming resources towards cash crop production resulted in a decline in the trade of indigenous food crops. The colonial government's focus on integrating the indigenous population into the capitalist economy through taxation thus had a cascading effect on food security exacerbating the challenges faced by Agikuyu women in maintaining their traditional roles in local trade and food production (Gardner, 2012). The colonial taxation system compelled the Agikuyu to prioritize cash generation over barter trade. This scenario fundamentally disrupted the economic and social fabric of their communities hence the trade in indigenous food crops was disrupted leading to a lasting repercussion on food security and livelihoods among the Agikuyu of Nyeri (Naomi Wanjiru O.I, 2024).

5.2.1 Colonial Taxation and Economic Pressures on Households

The introduction of taxation placed significant economic pressure on Agikuyu households fundamentally altering their economic and social structures. Each household was required to pay taxes in cash which was a stark departure from the traditional barter economy that relied on the exchange of goods and services. This shift compelled many households to engage in wage labour or increase their participation in market-based activities to generate the necessary cash to meet tax obligations (Ndegeah, 2015). For the Agikuyu women, who were traditionally agrarian and subsisted on the indigenous food they grew, this new demand for cash

disrupted their way of life (Haugerud, 1989). The necessity to earn cash meant that family members, especially men often had to leave their farms to find wage labour opportunities. This exodus left women with no choice but to adapt quickly to this new economic reality balancing the demands to provide for their families with the need to engage in market activities to earn cash. This brought significant changes in their roles and responsibilities that they played on trade in indigenous food crops (Kiagayu, 1978). One of the participants stated that.

Our traditional methods of trade were severely disrupted we had to sell most of our produce to pay taxes, leaving very little for our families. This change made us more vulnerable to food shortages because even trading commodities were not available (Joan Wachera O.I., 2024)

Phiri (2020) states that for Agikuyu women who were primarily responsible for local trade in indigenous food crops, the economic pressures of colonial taxation introduced a dual burden. Traditionally women played a central role in ensuring household food security by cultivating indigenous food crops and trading surplus produce in local markets. However, demand for cash taxes meant that women now had to find additional ways to generate income often through the sale of food crops that were previously used for household local trade (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980).

This shift not only altered traditional farming practices but also placed immense pressure on women to balance the trade of indigenous food crops with the need to earn money. As a result, women were forced to divert their energy and resources from local trade activities to the one that could produce immediate cash income. This diversion had a direct impact on food security as the reduced focus on trade in indigenous food crops led to decrease in food availability for household consumption, increasing the risk of food insecurity as noted by (John wa Karanja O.I., 2024).

The economic pressures imposed by colonial taxation also had broader implications for the Agikuyu women's social and economic dynamics. The need for cash income drove many households to prioritize cash crops over traditional food crops further undermining food security (Morgan Muriithi O.I., 2024). Women who were central to the trade in indigenous food crops found themselves in a precarious position as they

navigated the demands of the colonial economy. The increased burden of wage labour and market participation often meant that women had less time and resources to devote to local trading practices. Additionally, the focus on generating cash income created new dependencies on colonial economic structures reducing the community's resilience and self-sufficiency (Gakaria, 2015).

The economic pressures of taxation did not only disrupt traditional trading practices but also reshaped the social fabric of Agikuyu households placing women at the forefront of navigating these complex and challenging changes. The shift from a barter economy to a cash-based system under colonial rule fundamentally altered the local trade in indigenous food crops among the women of Agikuyu, and it had a lasting repercussion on their livelihoods (Berhanu, 2016).

To meet the stringent demands of colonial taxation, the Agikuyu women were compelled to reallocate their time and resources towards activities that could generate cash income, which marked a significant shift from their traditional roles centered on local trade (Maina, 1994). Historically, these women were the primary traders of indigenous food crops, a role that ensured the sustenance and nutritional needs of their households were met. However, the imposition of hut and poll taxes necessitated a reorientation of their economic activities towards the selling of cash crops or engaging in other market-oriented enterprises (Agutu, 2009).

This diversion was not merely a change in trade practices but a profound alteration of their daily lives and responsibilities. Women now had to engage in labour-intensive cash crop production such as growing coffee or tea, which required both more time and a higher degree of market engagement. The focus on cash income generation often came at the expense of trading traditional food crops like yams, millet, and cassavas, which were staple food items in their diet and vital for their food security (Lorna Mukami O.I, 2024).



Figure 4: Agikuyu women prioritizing working in cash crops in Nyeri Mathari coffee farm established by Consolata Fathers over trade of food crops due to taxes in 1950s.

Source: Kenya national archive (*KNA/MAI/16/8; 1950*)

The shift from local trade to trade of cash crops fundamentally undermined food security within Agikuyu households. As women diverted labour and land away from the cultivation of indigenous food crops to focus on cash crops, the availability of food for household consumption significantly decreased (Vivian Kabui O.I., 2024). This reallocation of resources meant that less food was being produced for trade, which in turn heightened the vulnerability of households to food shortages and malnutrition. Trade aside, women had to supplement what they were missing by the cultivation of cash crops. Driven by the need to pay taxes, the cash crops required intensive care and specific farming practices often monopolizing the most fertile lands and the labour force (Mitchell & Rosazak, 2015). Consequently, the traditional trade balance which sustained the community for generations was disrupted. Women found themselves in a difficult position struggling to maintain their local trade while meeting the demands of a cash economy imposed by colonial rulers. The reduction in trade of indigenous food crops not only affected immediate food availability but also compromised the long-term trading knowledge and practices that were passed down through generations further endangering future food security (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940).

According to Musalia (2010) the economic pressures of colonial taxation created a new dependency on market conditions and colonial economic structures which were often unstable and exploitative. The push towards cash crop production made Agikuyu households more susceptible to market fluctuations, price volatility and the whims of colonial economic policies (Jayne Chamberlin & Headey, 2014). Women who were traditionally the custodians of food security had to navigate these uncertainties while ensuring that their families had enough to eat. (Dorine Wangui O.I., 2024)

The focus on cash income also led to increased socio-economic disparities within the community as those who could successfully engage in trade of cash crop thrived while others unable to meet the demands fell into deeper poverty. This disparity further exacerbated the challenges of maintaining food security as communal support systems were strained (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1910-1920). The overall impact of diverting from local trade was a compounded difficulty for Agikuyu women who had to balance the immediate need for cash with the fundamental necessity of food often finding them in a precarious and unsustainable situation. The period marked a significant transformation in their economic roles and highlighted the broader implications of colonial policies on women trade of indigenous food crops Miles (1986).

5.2.2 Changing Gender roles, taxation and the effects on Agikuyu local trade:

Colonial taxation policies brought significant changes to gender roles within the Agikuyu society, particularly impacting women who were traditionally responsible for local trade on indigenous food crops. The introduction of hut and poll taxes disrupted this balance, compelling both men and women to engage in new economic activities to generate cash, leading to a renegotiation of roles within households (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013).

Men often migrated for wage labour leaving women to manage domestic duties and local trade resulting in a dual burden. This increased workload strained traditional gender roles and significantly impacted women's physical health and well-being as they struggled to

maintain household food security and participate in cash-earning activities (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024).

The additional burden of colonial taxation policies exacerbated existing gender inequalities and introduced new challenges for Agikuyu women. Balancing household responsibilities with cash income generation often meant longer working hours under stressful conditions, including the cultivation of food and cash crops and participation in wage labour, which was frequently exploitative (Musalia, 2010). This multifaceted workload led to fatigue, malnutrition, and a higher incidence of illness reducing women's capacity to engage effectively in food production and local trade, and jeopardizing household food security (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1910-1920). The colonial economy's demand for cash combined with patriarchal structures deepened gender disparities and hindered women's economic contributions and social status within the community (Ojwang, H. J., 2020).

The long-term economic dependencies created by colonial taxation policies had far-reaching effects on Agikuyu women, fostering cycles of vulnerability and insecurity. Increased reliance on the cash economy exposed women to market fluctuations and external economic policies beyond their control (Jayne Chamberlin & Headey, 2014). This dependency on colonial markets meant that women's livelihoods were at constant risk compromising their ability to maintain stable and secure food systems (Joan Wachera O.I., 2024). The enduring influence of colonial economic structures has entrenched patterns of inequality and vulnerability, particularly among women engaged in local trade, highlighting the need to address these historical legacies to empower Agikuyu women and improve their economic futures (Ndegeah, 2015; Musalia, 2010).

The imposition of colonial taxation necessitated that many Agikuyu women seek wage labour opportunities to generate the cash required to pay these taxes. Traditionally these women were deeply entrenched in local tradings which was essential for their families' nutrition and well-being (Akyeampong and Fofack, 2013). However, the financial pressures introduced by colonial policies forced them to leave their trading activities and seek employment on European settler farms or in

burgeoning urban centers. This shift not only represented a significant departure from their traditional roles but also had profound implications on local trade. As women migrated to seek wage labour the manpower available for cultivating indigenous food crops on family farms dwindled leading to a marked decline in the production of these essential crops for trade (Ndegeah, 2015).

The reduced presence of women who were the primary farming labour force meant that the meticulous care and intensive labour required for maintaining food crop production were no longer adequately met. The low levels of production had a direct impact on trade because most of the trading commodities came from farm and in short there was shortage of indigenous food crops for trade noted by (Dorine Wangui O.I., 2024).

5.3 Forced Labour and Its Impact on Agikuyu Women's Local Trade and Food Security

Forced labour further exacerbated the challenges faced by Agikuyu women. According to (Goheen, 1996), colonial authorities required labour for infrastructure projects and European settler farms, which often meant that men were conscripted, leaving women with the dual burden of managing households and local trading activities. The depletion of labour for food crops impacted the productivity and sustainability of indigenous foods that were needed in the local market for trade, leading to decreased food availability and increased dependency on colonial economies (Grey & Patel, 2015). Mugalavai revealed that,

As men were conscripted for forced labour the labour-intensive tasks of farming fell disproportionately on women. This increased their workload and reduced the efficiency and productivity of trade activities the absence of male labourers also meant that women had to take on additional roles further stretching their capacity to maintain traditional farming practices hence contributing to the decline in trading activities. (Mugalavai, 2019)

The colonial period in Kenya saw the implementation of forced labour policies by the British administration which had a significant impact on the Agikuyu women (Goheen, 1996). Forced labour or "corvée labour" was used by the colonial

government to develop infrastructure work on settler farms and support various colonial enterprises. This system of labour exploitation drastically altered the socio-economic fabric of Agikuyu society affecting women who were integral to local trade and food security. Forced labour policies mandated that a substantial portion of the men population spend extensive periods away from their homes working on roads, railways and European-owned farms (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980). This mass conscription deprived many families of their primary labour force placing an enormous burden on women who were left to manage household responsibilities. One of the respondent in this study states that the absence of men meant that women had to work harder and longer to maintain crop yields and ensure food availability, often with inadequate resources and support.

The colonial administration took away our men for forced labour. The women were left behind struggling to manage their farms, and as a result our food production for trade dropped drastically. (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024)



Figure 5: Forced labour imposed to Agikuyu women from Mathira Nyeri.

Source: British Institute Library, Colonial Africa in Official Photographs, 1920's

The disruption caused by forced labour extended beyond mere physical absence. It also destabilized traditional gender roles and communal labour systems which had previously facilitated efficient trading systems (Gathigi, 2000). The psychological and social strains of forced labour coupled with the physical demands placed on women eroded the community's resilience and capacity to maintain food security (Goheen, 1996). Furthermore, the focus on supporting colonial infrastructure and settler farms

diverted labour and resources away from local food production exacerbating food shortages and making the Agikuyu women more dependent on colonial economic structures (KNA/DC/NYI/1/2; 1960-1970). As a result, the forced labour system not only undermined the economic and social foundations of Agikuyu society but also had long-lasting impacts on the community's ability to sustain itself and maintain food security.

Forced labour policies were primarily aimed at mobilizing the indigenous population for the economic benefit of the colonial administration and European settlers. Agikuyu men and women were compelled to work on public projects such as roads, railways, and settler farms, often under harsh conditions and without adequate compensation (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940).

This exploitation disrupted the traditional economic systems stripping the Agikuyu of their autonomy over labour and resources. Forced labour took men away from their trade duties, placing an overwhelming burden on women to manage both household and trade responsibilities. The diversion of labour from local trade to colonial projects meant that the time and energy necessary for cultivating indigenous crops were significantly reduced hence it had a direct impact on reduction of indigenous crops for trade (Goheen, 1996). Women had to compensate for this loss by working longer hours and taking on additional roles, which strained their capacity to maintain food security for their families and communities.

Women who were traditionally the custodians of trading commodities, found themselves in a precarious situation where they had to balance the demands of forced labour with their responsibilities at home. The dual pressures of fulfilling colonial labour quotas and ensuring that there was enough food for their families created a situation where neither task could be performed adequately. This imbalance was further exacerbated by the harsh conditions and exploitation inherent in the forced labour system, which drained the physical and mental energy of them less capable of to carry out trading activities upon their return (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024).

The loss of autonomy over labour resources had long-lasting impacts on the socio-economic fabric of the Agikuyu women. The traditional barter and trade systems, which were crucial for local food security, were disrupted as more people were forced into wage labour for colonial projects (Ndegeah, 2015). This shift not only reduced the community's self-sufficiency but also made them increasingly dependent on the colonial economy for survival. The forced labour system eroded the social structures that had supported trade activities and food distribution, weakening community bonds and undermining traditional support networks (Mugalavai & Kiptoon, 2019). As a result, the Agikuyu women had to navigate an increasingly challenging landscape, where their roles in food production and local trade were continually undermined by the demands of the colonial labour policies. This economic exploitation and loss of autonomy contributed to a cycle of poverty and food insecurity that had enduring consequences for the Agikuyu women (Ngesa, 2022).

The forced labour system significantly impacted local trade among the Agikuyu, disrupting the intricate balance of labour that underpinned traditional trade practices. With a substantial portion of the male labour force conscripted into colonial projects, women were left to manage the bulk of trade work alongside their existing responsibilities for household management (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). This shift placed immense strain on women's physical and mental capacities, as they were now expected to undertake tasks that traditionally required significant physical strength or were typically performed by men. The absence of men from the homes meant that essential activities such as land preparation, plowing, and construction of irrigation systems were either delayed or abandoned leading to a decline in trading commodities (Kibiti, 1984). Consequently, trade in indigenous food crops which was vital for household food security suffered evidently as women struggled to keep up with the increased workload and the technical demands of these tasks as one of the active respondent reports

With many men working far from home, we the women had to shoulder the full burden of farming. This meant less time for traditional farming practices and a decline in the variety of crops hence reducing trading commodities (Lucy Waithera O.I., 2024).

With fewer hands available to tend the fields women were often forced to prioritize certain crops over others, typically those that were less labour-intensive but also less nutritious or economically valuable hence local trade items decreased significantly. This shift often resulted in a focus on crops that could be harvested quickly or required minimal maintenance at the expense of indigenous food crops that were nutritious staple foods (Bryceson, 2006). The reduced diversity in crop production not only undermined nutritional security but also diminished the availability of these indigenous food crops for trade. (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). These changes had a cascading effect on food security making it increasingly difficult for Agikuyu households to produce sufficient food to meet their needs and maintain their traditional trading activities.

The decline in trading commodities had profound implications on the economic and social stability of the Agikuyu women. Reduced crop yields meant that there was less surplus produce available for trade, which in turn affected women's ability to participate in local markets and barter systems that were crucial for securing additional resources and income (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1910-1920).

The scarcity of staple crops forced many families to rely more heavily on less reliable and more expensive sources of food, increasing their vulnerability to market fluctuations and economic exploitation. Additionally, the physical and emotional toll of balancing forced labour, trade duties, and household responsibilities eroded women's health and well-being, further compromising their ability to sustain their participation on trade it was noted by (Jame Kiragu, O.I 2024). This compounded the cycle of food insecurity and economic dependency as the community struggled to cope with the dual pressures of colonial exploitation. Overall, the forced labour system not only disrupted traditional trading practices but also precipitated a broader socio-economic decline that had lasting repercussions for the Agikuyu people (Ndirangu, 2009).

The forced labour system profoundly disrupted the traditional trade networks that were essential for the exchange and distribution of indigenous food crops within the Agikuyu women. Agikuyu women who had long played a central role in maintaining

these trade systems faced unprecedented challenges due to the colonial demands on their families and communities (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980). As men were conscripted into forced labour for infrastructure projects and European settler farms, women were left with the overwhelming responsibility of managing both household and other increased domestic duties. This shift in labour dynamics severely hindered their ability to participate actively in local markets and maintain the trade networks that were vital for food security and economic stability. The absence of key family members particularly those who provided physical labour and support further compounded the strain on women making it increasingly difficult to uphold their roles in the local trade system (Goheen, 1996).

Ndegeah (2015) observes that increased workload on women, as a result of forced labour, meant that they had less time and energy to dedicate to trade activities. Traditionally, women not only cultivated and harvested crops but also engaged in the barter and sale of surplus produce, thereby ensuring a steady flow of food resources within the community. However, the demands of forced labour diverted their focus and resources away from these essential trade activities. The need to balance trade duties, household responsibilities, and the pressures of providing for family members and engagement in forced labour left little room for women to participate in market exchanges (Obiero, 2010). This disruption led to a significant decline in the availability and distribution of food crops as the intricate network of trade routes and relationships that facilitated the flow of goods was undermined. The breakdown of these networks not only affected the immediate access to food but also weakened the economic resilience of the community as women struggled to sustain their traditional roles in the face of colonial exploitation (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930).

The decline in local trade networks had far-reaching consequences for food security within the Agikuyu women. With fewer women able to participate in trade, the variety and quantity of food crops available in local markets diminished, leading to shortages and increased prices (Maina, 1994). This scarcity affected the entire community, as households that relied on the exchange of food crops to supplement their diets and incomes faced greater difficulty in meeting their nutritional needs. The disruption of trade also weakened social cohesion, as the communal bonds forged through regular

market interactions and mutual support systems were eroded. The forced labour system thus not only disrupted the economic foundations of the Agikuyu but also undermined the social structures that had traditionally supported food security and community well-being. This compounded the adverse effects of colonial policies making it increasingly difficult for the Agikuyu to maintain their livelihoods and sustain their cultural practices in the face of systemic exploitation and economic hardship (KNA/DC/CEN/2/7, 1960-1970).

The forced labour policies imposed by the colonial administration resulted in profound changes to gender roles among the Agikuyu women. Traditionally, trade tasks and responsibilities were distinctly divided along gender lines with men and women each playing a specific role in the cultivation of crops and the maintenance of the household. Men were typically responsible for heavier labour-intensive tasks such as clearing land and ploughing fields, while women managed the planting, carrying colonial masters, weeding, and harvesting of crops, alongside their domestic duties. However, the forced conscription of men into colonial labour projects meant that women had to assume many of the roles and tasks that were previously performed by men (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). This shift not only significantly increased the workload for women but also required them to adapt to new responsibilities that were physically demanding and time-consuming (Joan Wairimu O.I., 2024).



Figure 6: A Colonial master 'Nyapara' (White Supervisor) carried by a Gikuyu woman in a tea plantation Nyeri.

Source: National Archives of Kenya (KNA), 1963

The enforced shift in gender roles brought about by forced labour had a lasting impact on the Agikuyu women. As women took on more responsibilities, they became more involved in aspects of production that were traditionally male-dominated (Ngesa, 1996). This change necessitated a renegotiation of gender norms and practices within the community. Women had to learn and execute tasks such as land clearing, plowing, and other physically strenuous activities, often without the necessary tools or support. The increased burden on women to manage both their traditional duties and these new roles placed immense strain on their physical and mental health (Phiri, E., 2020). However, it also led to a gradual shift in the perception of women's capabilities and roles within the community. The forced adaptation to these new responsibilities meant that women began to play a more central role in trade and other responsibilities which had implications for their social status and family dynamics (Goheen, 1996).

The long-term effects of these altered gender roles due to forced labour extended beyond the immediate colonial period and continued to influence Agikuyu society (Maina, 1994). The necessity for women to take on traditionally male roles during the colonial era paved the way for a re-evaluation of gender dynamics and family structures. Over time, this led to changes in social expectations and the distribution of labour within households. The blurring of gender roles contributed to a more flexible and adaptive approach to trading responsibilities fostering resilience in the face of ongoing economic and social challenges (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). The experience of managing both traditional and new responsibilities during the colonial period empowered women to advocate for greater equality and participation in community and economic activities. This shift in gender roles and the resulting changes in family dynamics and social structures highlights the enduring legacy of colonial forced labour policies on the Agikuyu women and underscores the complex interplay between gender, labour, and societal transformation (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013).

The imposition of forced labour by the colonial administration fundamentally altered the economic landscape for the Agikuyu women creating a deep dependency on the colonial system. As men were conscripted into labour for colonial infrastructure projects and settler farms, their contributions to local farming dwindled. Women were

left to manage both household and carry out trading activities. This overwhelming burden significantly reduced their efficiency and output (Bryceson, 2006). This reallocation of labour resources meant that the community's self-sustaining trade practices were severely compromised. The dependency on the colonial economy not only made the Agikuyu vulnerable to the exploitative practices of colonial employers but also eroded their traditional means of securing food and income (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980). This dependency left the community with little control over their economic future tying their fortunes to the unpredictable and often detrimental colonial policies Nyambura one of the respondents says,

The focus on cash crops like coffee meant that less land was available for growing food. This created a dependency on the colonial economy and made us vulnerable to food insecurity even the role of changed because majority of men were forced to work in colonial projects (Elizabeth Nyambura O.I., 2024)



Figure 7: Agikuyu vulnerable exploitive practices by colonial employers

Source: British Institute Library, Colonial Africa in Official Photographs, 1920s

The integration of the Agikuyu into the colonial economy was accompanied by increased exposure to external markets and sources of income which were characterized by instability and exploitation (Goheen, 1996). The colonial system prioritized the exchange of cash crops and the development of infrastructure beneficial to European settlers, often at the expense of trade of indigenous food crops. This shift necessitated that the Agikuyu engage with market-based economies, which were volatile and subject to colonial economic policies (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). The reliance on cash earnings from forced labour or cash crops exposed the community to price fluctuations and market demands that they had little power to

influence. Consequently, the Agikuyu were forced into a precarious economic situation where their skills in local trade were devalued, and their livelihoods became increasingly unstable. This vulnerability extended to all aspects of their economic life, making it difficult to maintain consistent food production and secure economic stability (Ndegeah, 2015).

The long-term impacts of this economic dependency and vulnerability were profound undermining the Agikuyu women's resilience and ability to adapt to changing conditions. The forced labour policies and the resultant economic shifts disrupted traditional support systems and community structures that were vital for coping with adverse circumstances (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980). As the community became more enmeshed in the colonial economy, their ability to respond to and recover from economic shocks was severely diminished. This dependency on the colonial system created a cycle of economic vulnerability that persisted even after the end of direct colonial rule (Omondi, 2020). The legacy of forced labour and economic exploitation left deep scars on the Agikuyu society affecting their social cohesion and economic practices for generations. Understanding this historical context is crucial for addressing the enduring challenges faced by the Agikuyu women and for developing strategies to rebuild economic resilience and self-sufficiency in the post-colonial era (Belnap, 1993).

The legacy of forced labour inflicted profound and enduring social and economic consequences on the Agikuyu women reverberating long after the colonial era. The disruption of traditional trade networks destabilized the community's food security and economic stability, perpetuating cycles of poverty and vulnerability. The conscription of labourers primarily men into colonial projects depleted the workforce available for essential farming tasks leading to decreased productivity of trading items (Mugalavai & Kiptoon, 2019). As a result, the community became increasingly reliant on external sources of food and income, heightening its susceptibility to market fluctuations and economic shocks. This reliance on external markets perpetuated a cycle of economic dependency, wherein the Agikuyu were compelled to engage in wage labour or cash crop production to meet their basic needs, further eroding their autonomy and self-sufficiency (Gachemi, 2018).

The altered gender roles and increased workload borne by Agikuyu women had profound and lasting effects on family dynamics and social structures. Traditionally responsible for managing household food production and local trade, women were burdened with additional responsibilities due to the absence of men engaged in forced labour. The redistribution of labour within households disrupted established gender norms and power dynamics leading to shifts in family hierarchies and decision-making processes. Consequently, women's roles expanded beyond their traditional spheres challenging entrenched patriarchal structures and reshaping gender relations within the community (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1910-1920). These changes, while indicative of women's resilience and adaptability also underscored the complex interplay between colonial oppression and indigenous agency in shaping social dynamics.

The migration of Agikuyu women to wage labour positions further strained the local trade. The labour shortage on these farms directly impacted the overall output of food crops production as there were fewer hands to tend to the fields, manage the harvest and perform the myriad tasks necessary for successful farming (Maina, 1994). The absence of women from trade disrupted the traditional trade cycles and practices that had been honed over generations to ensure food security. Moreover, the conditions of wage labour that these women encountered were often exploitative and harsh, compounding the physical and emotional toll on them. Working long hours under strenuous conditions on European farms or in urban industries left many women physically depleted and unable to participate in any local trade of indigenous food crops because they were already tired stated by (Kamau Wanjiku O.I., 2024).

The exploitative nature of colonial wage labour had broader socio-economic and health implications for Agikuyu women. The harsh working conditions, low wages, and poor living environments associated with labour on settler farms or in urban areas often led to deteriorating health and wellbeing among these women (Mwangi, 1974). Malnutrition, exposure to diseases and physical exhaustion were common diminishing their capacity to work effectively both in wage labour and participate in local trade. This erosion of health and vitality not only affected their immediate productivity but also had long term consequences for their ability to maintain trading practices

essential for food security (Ossome, 2014). Furthermore, the economic exploitation inherent in these wage labour systems often meant that despite their hard work the financial remuneration was insufficient to significantly improve their household economies or food security status. The combination of these factors created a scenario where the enforced participation in wage labour due to colonial taxation policies perpetuated a cycle of poverty, food insecurity, and diminished trade activities among the Agikuyu women and their communities (Njeru Mbogo O.I., 2024).

The economic dependency fostered by the colonial labour system entrenched the Agikuyu women within external economic frameworks perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization. Forced integration into colonial enterprises and markets subjected the community to exploitative labour practices and unequal economic relationships exacerbating existing inequalities and vulnerabilities (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930). The enduring legacy of forced labour underscores the systemic injustices and inequalities perpetuated by colonialism, highlighting the imperative of addressing historical injustices and promoting economic empowerment and self-determination among indigenous communities (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). Understanding these long-term consequences provides critical insights into the enduring impacts of colonial exploitation on indigenous societies and underscores the ongoing struggle for social justice and economic autonomy in post-colonial contexts (Ndeda, J. 2002).

In conclusion, the forced labour policies implemented by the colonial government had profound and far-reaching effects on Agikuyu women's local trade and food security. The diversion of labour resources disruption of traditional trade networks and increased economic exploitation undermined the community's ability to sustain its trade practices and maintain food security (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980). Forced labour not only depleted the workforce available for essential trade tasks but also disrupted the delicate balance of traditional gender roles burdening women with additional responsibilities and challenges (Maina, 1994). This is well articulated by one of the respondents:

As women struggled to navigate the demands of forced labour while maintaining household food production and local trade their health

well-being and economic autonomy were compromised. The enduring legacy of forced labour underscores the systemic injustices and inequalities perpetuated by colonialism highlighting the imperative of addressing historical injustices and promoting economic empowerment and self-determination among indigenous communities (Morgan Muriithi O.I., 2024).

Despite the resilience and adaptability of Agikuyu women, the structural changes imposed by forced labour created enduring challenges that continued to affect the community long after the colonial period. The economic dependency fostered by the colonial labour system entrenched the Agikuyu women within external economic frameworks perpetuating cycles of poverty and marginalization. Recognizing and addressing these historical impacts is crucial for developing strategies to support the sustainable development and food security of indigenous communities in contemporary Kenya (Musalia, 2010). By acknowledging the legacies of colonial exploitation and promoting initiatives that empower indigenous communities, policymakers and stakeholders can work towards addressing historical injustices and promoting inclusive development that respects the rights, autonomy and dignity of indigenous peoples.

5.4 Land Alienation and Its Impact on Agikuyu Women's Local Trade and Food Security

The colonial period in Kenya was marked by extensive land alienation, a policy where fertile and productive lands were expropriated from indigenous communities and redistributed to European settlers. For the Agikuyu people, this meant losing vast tracts of their ancestral lands which had significant implications for their socio-economic structures, particularly affecting women because the indigenous food crops for local trade came from the land where they were grown (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). The forced displacement and resettlement of the Agikuyu disrupted traditional farming practices and threatened food security. Land was not only a source of livelihood but also a symbol of cultural identity and social cohesion for the Agikuyu women making the loss of land deeply traumatic and destabilizing. The colonial authorities justified land alienation as a means of promoting European settlement and

economic development but in reality, it served to dispossess indigenous communities of their resources and perpetuate colonial domination (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024)

The impact of land alienation on Agikuyu women was particularly severe as they were the primary stewards of the land and responsible for food production to sustain their families and communities. The loss of land not only deprived women of their means of livelihood but also eroded their social status and autonomy within the community. With limited access to land for cultivation women were forced to cultivate smaller and less fertile plots which could not produce enough food for consumption and exchange with their neighboring communities (Musalia, 2010). Moreover, the loss of communal lands disrupted traditional farming practices that were based on collective ownership and cooperative labour further undermining the resilience of the Agikuyu women. As European settlers encroached upon Agikuyu lands, women faced increased competition for resources and economic opportunities exacerbating their vulnerability and marginalization within the colonial socio-economic system (Gachemi, 2018). Gitau a key respondent says that,

The colonial government took away our most fertile lands and gave them to European settlers. This forced us to move to less productive areas, which greatly affected our ability to grow enough food for consumption and trade. (Henry Gitau O.I, 2024)

5.4.1 Displacement and Loss of Farming Land and its impact on local trade

Land alienation resulted in the displacement of the Agikuyu from their fertile lands pushing them into less productive areas. This displacement was not merely a physical relocation but a profound socio-economic dislocation (KNA/DC/NYI/1/2; 1960-1970). Women who were primarily responsible for cultivating the land and managing food production found themselves working on smaller less fertile plots that could not sustain the same level of production for indigenous food crops for trade. This drastic reduction in arable land led to a decrease in crop yields directly impacting on reduced no of trading commodities (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). Furthermore, the loss of farming land undermined the traditional farming practices that were finely attuned to the local ecosystem and soil conditions. As Agikuyu women struggled to adapt to their new farming environment, they faced challenges such as soil degradation, water

scarcity, and limited access to agronomic inputs further compromising their ability to supply of indigenous food crops for local trade Wanjiru narrates that.

We lost not just our land but also our way of farming. The communal farming systems were disrupted and this made it hard for us to maintain our supply of commodities that were needed for trade (Margaret Wanjiru O.I., 2024).

The displacement of the Agikuyu from their ancestral lands also disrupted established social and cultural networks that were integral to local trade. Communities that had coexisted for generations were forcibly separated leading to a breakdown in social cohesion and support systems. Women who relied on collective labour in searching for trading commodities found themselves isolated and vulnerable in unfamiliar territories. This loss of communal lands meant that women had to navigate new land tenure systems and property rights regimes often with limited legal protection and recourse (KNA/LD/NY/2, 1970-1980). This vulnerability exposed them to exploitation and dispossession by more powerful actors exacerbating their marginalization within the colonial economy. Additionally, the displacement of Agikuyu communities disrupted traditional trade routes and markets, further limiting women's ability to engage in local trade and generate income to support their families (Kennedy Muturi O.I, 2024).



The loss of land and displacement of the Agikuyu population had profound intergenerational impacts on food security and economic stability. Children born into displaced communities inherited the legacy of land alienation growing up in environments characterized by poverty, insecurity and limited opportunities for advancement. Women, in particular bore the brunt of this intergenerational cycle of deprivation, as they struggled to provide for their families in the face of ongoing

socio-economic challenges (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). The effects of land alienation persisted long after the colonial period shaping the socio-economic landscape of Nyeri County and influencing patterns of land ownership, trading patterns, and food security (Ngesa, 1996). Recognizing and addressing these historical injustices is essential for promoting sustainable development and equitable access to resources for future generations of Agikuyu and other indigenous communities in Kenya.

The alienation of land had a direct adverse effect on the trade of indigenous food crops. Agikuyu women traditionally traded crops such as millet, sorghum, yams, and various legumes, which were always available. The displacement to less fertile lands, often characterized by poor soil and inadequate rainfall hindered the ability to grow these staple crops (Berhanu, 2016). Consequently, the Agikuyu faced food shortages not just in trade but also leading nutritional deficiencies, as their traditional diet was disrupted by the loss of land suitable for indigenous crops (Kiagayu, 1978). The loss of access to fertile land led to a decline in farming biodiversity as traders were forced to focus on trade of cash crops or other less nutritious alternatives. Indigenous food crops which were adapted to local environmental conditions and provided essential nutrients, were gradually replaced by monoculture cash crops such as coffee and tea which were more profitable but less conducive to food security (KNA/DC/NYI/1/2; 1960-1970). This shift away from indigenous food crops not only compromised the nutritional diversity of the Agikuyu diet but also increased the community's vulnerability to crop failures and market fluctuations.



Figure 8: Some of the indigenous food crops integrated with modern crops at a market in Mathira Photo taken on 25th May 2024.

The above picture indicates that by 1980s the karatina market had a hybrid features, which entailed integration of traditional and modern food crop items as revealed by one of the respondents (Peter Karanja O.I., 2024). The loss of indigenous food crop for trade had broader socio-economic implications for the Agikuyu women. Trade had been the primary source of livelihood and cultural identity for generations, and the decline in trading commodities threatened the sustainability of traditional farming practices and local trade networks. Agikuyu women who were the custodians of local trading skills faced the challenge of preserving their cultural heritage and passing it on to future generations amidst the constraints imposed by land alienation. As a result, the loss of indigenous food crops not only affected food security but also eroded the cultural resilience and self-sufficiency of the Agikuyu women noted by (Susan Nyeri O.I., 2024).

Traditional farming practices among the Agikuyu were deeply intertwined with their cultural and social structures. Land alienation disrupted these practices leading to a breakdown in the social fabric that supported local trade. The communal land management systems, which facilitated cooperation and mutual support among families, were dismantled. Women who relied on these communal networks for labour

and resource sharing found it increasingly difficult to sustain their trading activities (KNA/DC/NYI/1/2; 1960-1970). This disruption undermined the efficiency and productivity of farming further exacerbating food insecurity.

The loss of access to communal land meant that Agikuyu women had to navigate the complexities of individual land ownership which often disadvantaged them due to entrenched patriarchal systems and discriminatory land laws. Women faced challenges in securing land titles and accessing credit and resources for trade investment. This lack of access to land and resources limited their ability to engage in sustainable trading practices and innovate to mitigate the effects of land alienation (Ndegeah, 2015). As a result, women were forced to operate within a system that marginalized their contributions to trade and perpetuated their economic vulnerability. The disruption of local trade systems practices had broader implications for the Agikuyu women beyond food security. Trade was not only a means of livelihood but also a cultural practice that reinforced social cohesion and identity (Akumu et al., 2016). This loss of cultural heritage undermined the resilience of the Agikuyu women, as it weakened the social bonds and shared values that had sustained them for centuries. This disruption of traditional trade practices not only contributed to food insecurity but also eroded the cultural fabric of the Agikuyu society (Maina, 1994).

The figure below is a woman seller of bananas and looks at the photographer with suspicion and the usual Nyeri disdain, *Rĩu ndũngana ici ikaigania kworota andũ na tũnyamũ tũtũ rĩ, mmmmmh? ungĩmoona!*“ this means that the Agikuyu women were not pleased by the whiteman taking their photo while in the market selling their indigenous food crops.



Figure 9: Kikuyu woman selling indigenous food crops in Mathira market in 1936

Source: National Archives of Kenya KNA, 1936

This colonial bias of African women's trade on indigenous and marginalization resulting from land alienation entrenched poverty within the Agikuyu women. As their access to fertile land was curtailed, many families faced declining productivity of indigenous food crops for trade. Women who were integral to local trade in food crops found their economic roles diminished as they struggled to produce enough food crops for trade. This economic marginalization limited their ability to participate in local markets reducing their income and further compromising their food security (Ndegeah, 2015). The impoverishment of the Agikuyu due to land alienation had long-lasting effects, perpetuating cycles of poverty and food insecurity.

Shephard (2006) articulates that the trade marginalization also exacerbated social inequalities within the Agikuyu women. Families that lost access to fertile land faced heightened vulnerability to economic shocks and food shortages deepening existing disparities. Women who were often disproportionately affected by these inequalities bore the brunt of the economic hardships resulting from land alienation. The loss of land and economic opportunities further marginalized women restricting their ability to access education, healthcare, and other essential services. As a result, the economic

marginalization caused by land alienation had intergenerational consequences; perpetuating cycles of poverty and inequality among the Agikuyu because they no longer able to produce indigenous food crops for local trade (Belnap, 1993).

The economic marginalization resulting from land alienation had broader implications for the Agikuyu women's overall development and well-being. Reduced access to land and lack of participation on local trade limited the community's capacity to invest in education, infrastructure, and other development initiatives. This lack of investment hindered the community's ability to break free from the cycle of poverty and food insecurity, perpetuating socio-economic challenges for future generations (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930). Additionally, the economic marginalization resulting from land alienation contributed to social unrest and tensions within the community, as families competed for scarce resources and opportunities.

Also Land alienation not only disrupted trade practices but also had profound social implications. The displacement and economic hardships strained family and community relationships. Traditional gender roles and dynamics were altered as women had to take on increased responsibilities in the face of male labour migration to settler farms or urban areas. This shift placed additional burdens on women who had to manage both household duties and local trade with limited resources (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930). The social disintegration caused by land alienation weakened community cohesion making it harder for women to mobilize collective action for local trade.

Land alienation exacerbated existing gender disparities within the Agikuyu women. Women, who were traditionally responsible for production of indigenous food crops for local trade, faced heightened economic and social vulnerabilities as a result of land loss. The loss of land reduced women's economic autonomy and bargaining power within local trade, leading to increased dependence on male family members or external sources of income (Ndegeah, 2015). This dependence further marginalized women, limiting their decision-making authority and perpetuating gender inequalities. As a result, land alienation reinforced patriarchal structures within the community, undermining women's agency and contributions to food security.

The social disintegration resulting from land alienation and reduced items of trade had intergenerational effects on gender dynamics within the Agikuyu women. The breakdown of traditional trade support networks and community structures diminished opportunities for women to access education, skills training and other resources that could empower them economically (Belnap, 1993). This perpetuated cycles of poverty and dependency among women limiting their ability to break free from traditional gender roles and contribute to broader socio-economic development.

The forced relocation to less fertile lands also led to environmental degradation. Agikuyu women, in their struggle to cultivate these marginal lands, often resorted to unsustainable farming practices such as over-cultivation and deforestation which impacted on availability of items of trade. These practices led to soil erosion, reduced soil fertility and further decline in productivity of indigenous food crops (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). The environmental degradation compounded the challenges of food security, as the land's capacity to support sustainable food for trade diminished over time. The ecological impact of land alienation thus had a direct and adverse effect on the long-term sustainability of practices among the Agikuyu.

The environmental degradation resulting from land alienation had broader implications for ecosystem health and biodiversity (Maina, 1994). The loss of indigenous crops and disruption of natural habitats threatened local flora and fauna, undermining the ecological balance upon which systems relied (KNA/BB/1/14; 1940-1950). As ecosystems became degraded, the resilience of landscapes to environmental shocks such as droughts or pests diminished, making food production of indigenous food for trade. This loss of biodiversity further compounded the challenges faced by Agikuyu women in maintaining food security and sustainable livelihoods.

The legacy of land alienation continues to cast a shadow over the socio-economic conditions of the Agikuyu women, reverberating through generations and shaping contemporary challenges (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930). The historical loss of fertile land forcibly taken away and redistributed to European settlers left deep scars on the landscape and the collective memory of the community because it had direct impact on trade. The repercussions of this dispossession are felt in the present-day

struggles for land rights sustainability and economic empowerment, particularly among Agikuyu women who bear the brunt of the consequences. The disrupted traditional trade practices and social structures have perpetuated enduring challenges that the community still grapples with, underscoring the need for comprehensive and sustainable solutions to address the legacies of colonial injustice.

Understanding the impact of land alienation is paramount for comprehending the root causes of current issues plaguing the Agikuyu women, including land tenure insecurity, landlessness, poverty and food insecurity (KNA/LD/NY/2, 1970-1980). The historical context sheds light on the systemic injustices and structural inequalities that continue to undermine the well-being and resilience of the community.

Moreover, the lessons drawn from the legacy of land alienation offer valuable insights for developing strategies to support sustainable development and resilience within the Agikuyu women especially on trade in indigenous food crops (Belnap, 1993). By acknowledging the interconnectedness of land, livelihoods and trade interventions can be tailored to address the multifaceted challenges facing the community (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930). This entails promoting land rights and tenure security, revitalizing traditional practices, enhancing access to resources and markets, and empowering women as agents of change and guardians of food security. Understanding and embracing sustainable practices coupled with innovative approaches to land management and economic empowerment, can pave the way for a more just and sustainable future for the Agikuyu women and beyond (Akumu et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the effects of land alienation during the colonial period reverberate profoundly through the Agikuyu women particularly impacting the local trade dynamics and food security for women. The forcible displacement from fertile lands coupled with the imposition of cash crop farming and economic marginalization, created a web of challenges that undermined productivity and food self-sufficiency (Maina, 1994). Despite these adversities, Agikuyu women exhibited remarkable resilience and adaptability by devising various strategies to sustain food production and local trade networks amidst oppressive conditions.

5.5 Urbanization and Its Impact on Agikuyu Women's Local Trade and Food Security

Urbanization, driven by colonial economic policies, also played a significant role in transforming the Agikuyu women's local trade system. The growth of urban centers created new markets and trading opportunities but also led to the migration of rural populations, including women to urban areas. This migration reduced the labour force available for trade activities in rural areas and introduced new challenges for women who had to adapt to urban economic environments often at the expense of traditional food production and trade (Kigwe, 2016). As rural populations moved to urban centers in search of employment and better living conditions, the labour available for traditional local trade activities diminished. Women who had remained in rural areas faced increased pressure to sustain food production with fewer resources, while those who migrated had to navigate unfamiliar urban economic systems, often finding themselves in low-paying, unstable jobs.

The colonial era in Kenya brought about a seismic shift in the socio-economic landscape, profoundly impacting indigenous communities such as the Agikuyu (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930). With the establishment of urban centers and administrative hubs by European settlers', indigenous populations were inexorably drawn into these urban areas, either as labourers seeking employment opportunities or as traders and service providers catering to the needs of the burgeoning urban population (Ndegeah, 2015). This influx of people into urban centers heralded a new era of socioeconomic transformation disrupting local trade systems and food security dynamics among the Agikuyu and other indigenous groups across the region. Gitonga a key respondent affirms that-

Many of our young men and women moved to urban areas in search of work. This migration left our rural communities with fewer people to work the farms and for trade activities, further threatening our food security. (Edwin Gitonga O.I., 2024)

Urbanization significantly exacerbated poverty among Agikuyu families with women-headed households and marginalized communities bearing the brunt of this shift. The rapid expansion of urban centers in colonial Kenya brought with it a high cost of

living that many families struggled to meet. Limited employment opportunities, particularly in formal sectors meant that many Agikuyu women were confined to low-paying, unstable jobs in the informal sector (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). The combination of low wages and high living expenses pushed numerous families into poverty, creating a persistent struggle to secure basic necessities such as food, housing and healthcare. This urban poverty was particularly harsh on women who were already dealing with the residual impacts of colonial land alienation and socio-economic marginalization.

As men pursued formal employment opportunities in settler-owned enterprises, administrative roles, and urban industries, women were largely confined to the informal sector. They took on roles in petty trading, domestic work, and small-scale artisanal activities to supplement household income. These informal sector activities which were crucial for the survival of many families were often precarious and poorly compensated compared to formal employment (Bryceson, 2006). Consequently, women had to juggle these economic activities with their traditional roles as local traders and homemakers, which included responsibilities such as childrearing, cooking, and managing household chores. This dual burden placed significant strain on women, who had to navigate the demands of both economic survival and domestic management without adequate support or recognition (Wincate Wanja, O.I., 2024).

Obala (2012) argues that the gendered division of labour in urban settings often resulted in unequal access to resources and opportunities. While men had better access to formal employment, training and career advancement, women were generally excluded from these avenues due to their confinement to the informal sector and domestic responsibilities. The systemic barriers faced by women included limited access to credit, land ownership and formal education which further entrenched their economic marginalization (Ndegeah, 2015). Despite their substantial contributions to the urban economy and household survival, Agikuyu women found themselves at a disadvantage in terms of social mobility and economic empowerment. Their labour although essential was undervalued and overlooked in both the economic and social spheres, perpetuating a cycle of inequality and poverty.

Agikuyu women faced numerous barriers in accessing essential services and resources in urban settings. The colonial administration's focus on developing urban centers primarily for the benefit of European settlers and colonial enterprises meant that infrastructure and services were often inadequate or inaccessible to indigenous populations. Kanyinga (2017) states that women struggled to find affordable housing often ending up in overcrowded informal settlements with poor sanitation. The lack of access to adequate healthcare compounded these challenges as women could not easily seek medical care for themselves or their families. Additionally, the shift to urban living disrupted traditional trade networks leaving many women without the communal assistance that was vital in rural areas. This isolation increased their vulnerability and made it more difficult to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Urban poverty also had a profound impact on food security for Agikuyu women. In rural areas, women could rely on local trade to meet their families' food needs but in urban centers, they had to purchase food from markets often at higher prices. Limited financial resources meant that many women could not afford to buy enough food, leading to malnutrition and food insecurity. The reliance on imported foods and cash crops introduced by European settlers, further strained their budgets and eroded traditional diets. According to Ochieng and Maxon (1992), women were forced to find creative ways to stretch their limited resources often compromising on the quality and quantity of food. This ongoing struggle to ensure food security underpinned the broader challenges of urban poverty highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support Agikuyu women in urban areas.

The rapid urbanization fueled by colonial policies and economic imperatives had multifaceted implications for the Agikuyu women. Traditional agrarian lifestyles once central to their cultural identity and sustenance were gradually supplanted by urban livelihoods characterized by wage labour, commercial activities and service-oriented professions (Akumu et al., 2016).

The transition fundamentally altered the relationship between the Agikuyu and their land as increasing numbers of individuals migrated from rural to urban areas in pursuit of economic opportunities leaving behind ancestral lands and agrarian traditions. Consequently, the traditional rhythms of farming

production, local trade networks, and food consumption patterns underwent profound metamorphoses, as urbanization reshaped the socio-economic fabric of Agikuyu society (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930).

Moreover, the advent of urbanization introduced new dynamics on trade, distribution and consumption within the Agikuyu women. As rural populations migrated to urban centers, the demand for farming produce shifted from subsistence farming for household consumption to market-oriented production for urban markets (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940). This shift necessitated adjustments in trading practices with an emphasis on cash crops and commercial agriculture to meet the demands of urban consumers (Maina, 1994). Consequently, traditional food crops once cultivated for sustenance and local trade gradually gave way to cash crops favored for their market value, further altering the trading landscape and food security dynamics among the Agikuyu during the colonial era.

5.5.1 Displacement from Rural to Urban Areas and its impact on women local trade

The migration of Agikuyu families from rural trading areas to urban centers during the colonial period marked a profound demographic shift within the community (Kimani, 2015). Driven by a confluence of factors such as economic opportunities, employment prospects in settler-owned enterprises and administrative obligations, this migration reshaped the socioeconomic landscape for Agikuyu women in particular. KNA/DC/NYI/1/1 (1930-1940) reports that women who played pivotal roles in local trade in rural settings found themselves abruptly displaced from their customary roles and thrust into the unfamiliar terrain of urban environments. The transition from the agrarian rhythms of rural life to the bustling dynamics of urban living presented formidable challenges for Agikuyu women necessitating a rapid adaptation to new livelihood strategies and market dynamics to ensure the sustenance of their families amidst the urban milieu.

For Agikuyu women, the displacement from rural to urban areas entailed a radical reconfiguration of their socio-economic roles and responsibilities. In rural settings, women were deeply entrenched in local trading activities, managing both subsistence farming for household consumption and local trade in indigenous food crops (Kombo,

2012). However, the shift to urban centers demanded a recalibration of their economic activities, as the traditional agrarian pursuits were supplanted by urban livelihoods reliant on wage labour petty trading and service-oriented occupations (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). This transition placed Agikuyu women in unfamiliar territory where they had to swiftly adapt to the exigencies of urban markets, navigate bureaucratic hurdles, and contend with the complexities of urban living all the while endeavoring to ensure the economic well-being and food security of their families in the face of newfound urban challenges.

The displacement of Agikuyu families from rural to urban areas engendered profound social and cultural dislocations within the community. The rupture from ancestral lands and the communal bonds of rural life severed the traditional ties that had bound Agikuyu families together, precipitating a sense of dislocation and alienation in the unfamiliar urban milieu (Philip, 2013). Women in particular grappled with the loss of communal support structures and the erosion of traditional social networks that had underpinned their roles in local trade. The transition to urban living thus represented not only an economic upheaval but also a profound cultural shift for Agikuyu women who navigated the complexities of urbanization while endeavoring to preserve their cultural identity and community cohesion amidst the upheavals of colonial urban development (Saulter, 2022).

In conclusion, urbanization during the colonial period had deep ramifications for Agikuyu women's local trade and food security. The displacement from rural to urban areas, shift in economic activities dependency on imported food and rise of cash-based economy reshaped the socio-economic landscape of the Agikuyu women. Despite these challenges Agikuyu women demonstrated resilience and adaptability, leveraging their traditional trading skills and social networks to navigate the complexities of urban life though food insecurity in this period increased (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992).

The transition from local trade to urban living precipitated a fundamental reorientation of economic activities for Agikuyu women necessitating a departure from their traditional roles in subsistence farming and local trade. In the rural

hinterlands, women were integral to the trade cycle actively participating in the cultivation of indigenous food crops and engaging in local trade networks to supplement household income (Akumu et al., 2016). However, the constraints of urban living, characterized by limited access to arable land and a shift towards wage labour-driven economies, compelling Agikuyu women to explore alternative avenues for economic sustenance. As such, many women gravitated towards the burgeoning informal sector within urban centers where opportunities for petty trading, domestic work, and artisanal crafts abounded offering a means of livelihood amidst the urban bustle.

The transition to urban economic activities entailed a process of adaptation and skill acquisition for Agikuyu women as they navigated the intricacies of the urban marketplace. Obala (2012) argues that in rural settings the rhythms of farming life had imbued women with a deep understanding of local trade dynamics and farming practices, facilitating their engagement in subsistence farming and barter-based exchange systems.

The exigencies of urban living demanded a diversification of skills and a heightened entrepreneurial acumen to thrive amidst the competitive urban landscape. Agikuyu women, therefore, embarked on a journey of self-reinvention honing their abilities in market negotiation product diversification and customer engagement to carve out niches within the informal sector economy and secure the economic viability of their households in the urban milieu (KNA/DC/NYI/1/1; 1930-1940).

The shift in economic activities for Agikuyu women underscored the resilience and adaptability inherent within the community as women embraced new opportunities for economic empowerment amidst the urbanization process. Despite the challenges posed by the transition from rural trade to urban living, Agikuyu women exhibited a remarkable capacity for innovation and resourcefulness, leveraging their existing skills and cultural capital to navigate the complexities of the urban marketplace (Saulter, 2022). By diversifying their economic pursuits and embracing the dynamics of informal sector entrepreneurship, Agikuyu women not only sustained their families

but also played a pivotal role in shaping the emergent urban economy, contributing to the vibrant tapestry of urban life while preserving their cultural identity amidst the transformative currents of colonial urbanization.

5.5.2 Urbanization and its Impact on Local Trade Networks

Urbanization disrupted the traditional local trade networks that Agikuyu women had long depended on for the distribution and exchange of food. In rural areas, women were pivotal in local markets, trading surplus farm produce and indigenous food crops with neighboring communities. These networks not only facilitated economic exchange but also reinforced social ties and cultural continuity within and across communities. However, KNA/DC/NYI/1/1 (1930-1940) argues that the migration to urban centers imposed by the colonial administration significantly altered these dynamics. Hepburn (2023) argues that in urban settings Agikuyu women found themselves navigating a new and often hostile trading environment where they had to compete with other ethnic groups and burgeoning commercial enterprises. The competition for market access in these urban centers was intense and Agikuyu women who were used to the communal and cooperative nature of rural trade had to adapt quickly to survive as one of the respondents asserts.

With more people in the cities the traditional local markets in the villages started to dwindle. We had fewer opportunities to trade our surplus food which was a crucial part of our food security system. (Kennedy Muturi O.I, 2024)

According to Bryceson (2006) the consolidation of urban markets under colonial rule further marginalized informal traders including Agikuyu women. Colonial authorities often prioritized formal commercial enterprises and regulated urban markets in ways that disadvantaged small-scale and informal traders. Market policies and regulations imposed by the colonial administration favored large-scale, often European-owned businesses, pushing informal traders to the periphery (KNA/DC/KBU/1/8, 1950-1960). Agikuyu women who relied on informal trade to sustain their livelihoods, found it increasingly difficult to secure stable and profitable trading spaces. This marginalization not only affected their economic stability, but also disrupted the traditional modes of food distribution that were essential for maintaining food security within the community. The loss of access to vibrant, informal trade networks in urban

centers meant that Agikuyu women had to contend with diminished trading opportunities and increased economic precarity.

The impact on local trade networks was profound, as Agikuyu women struggled to sustain the economic practices that had been central to their community's food security and social cohesion. The shift from rural to urban environments required them to renegotiate their roles within new and often unsupportive market structures. Despite these challenges, many women exhibited remarkable resilience and adaptability, forming new alliances and leveraging whatever resources they could muster to continue trading. However, according to Kanyinga (2017), the overall disruption to local trade networks had long-lasting implications. It not only undermined the traditional economic practices that supported community welfare but also contributed to the erosion of cultural and social structures that had historically empowered Agikuyu women. Understanding these disruptions is crucial for addressing the ongoing economic and social challenges faced by the Agikuyu and other indigenous communities affected by the colonial legacy of urbanization (KNA/DC/MUR/1/4; 1920-1930).

Urbanization led to an increased reliance on imported food items and cash crops, displacing traditional indigenous food crops from the diets of Agikuyu families. As urban centers expanded, European settlers and commercial enterprises introduced a variety of imported food items such as wheat flour, rice and canned goods into the market (Obala, 2012). These imported foods often marketed for their convenience and perceived modernity began to replace the traditional foodstuffs that Agikuyu women had cultivated and traded for generations. The shift in dietary patterns was not merely a matter of convenience but a reflection of the broader economic and social changes brought about by colonial urbanization. The introduction of these imported goods disrupted local food systems making it harder for Agikuyu women to maintain the trade practices that had historically ensured their community's food security.

The introduction of imported foods into urban markets had significant economic implications for Agikuyu women. These imported foods were often more expensive than locally produced alternatives making them inaccessible to low-income families

who relied on the cultivation and trade in indigenous crops. Agikuyu women, who were integral to local food production and distribution, found themselves facing new economic pressures (Saulter, 2022). The influx of cheaper, imported goods created competition that undermined their ability to sustain trade of local food systems. This economic displacement forced many women to adapt by either purchasing these costly imports or seeking alternative sources of income in urban areas. The reliance on imported foods thus deepened economic vulnerabilities, as families spent a larger portion of their income on food, leaving less for other essential needs and investments.

The increased dependency on imported food items also had profound cultural and health implications for the Agikuyu women. The displacement of traditional food crops from their diets led to a loss of cultural heritage associated with indigenous trade and cuisine. The traditional food which was traded locally was nutritionally balanced and well-suited to the local environment was replaced by imported items that were often less nutritious and culturally alien (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). This shift contributed to nutritional deficiencies and health problems as the community's diet became less diverse and more reliant on processed foods. Furthermore, the erosion of traditional trading practices weakened the community's resilience and self-sufficiency, making them more vulnerable to market fluctuations and economic instability. Understanding the long-term impacts of this dependency is crucial for developing strategies to revive indigenous food systems and promote food security and cultural sustainability in post-colonial Kenya.

5.6 Introduction of Monetary Economy in Nyeri

The shift to urban living initiated a significant transition from subsistence-based livelihoods to a cash-based economy among the Agikuyu. In rural areas barter trade and informal exchange systems were the norm, with indigenous food crops often serving as a primary medium of exchange. This system allowed for a degree of economic flexibility and mutual support within the community (Benjamin, 2024). However, as urban centers developed and expanded, cash transactions became the dominant mode of economic activity. Agikuyu women who were accustomed to the barter economy faced the challenge of adapting to new financial practices. The need

to engage in cash transactions required them to acquire new skills in managing money, budgeting, and navigating the formal market structures that were unfamiliar and often unwelcoming to informal traders(Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013).

The monetization of the economy brought profound changes to the dynamics of local trade. In rural settings, women played a crucial role in local markets, trading surplus farming produce and indigenous food crops. The shift to a cash-based economy meant that women now had to compete in urban markets dominated by commercial enterprises and other ethnic groups. Obala (2012) argues that the competition was often skewed in favor of established businesses that had better access to capital and resources. Agikuyu women had to not only contend with the challenge of sourcing for goods and services in a cash economy but also deal with issues such as pricing, supply chain logistics and market regulations imposed by colonial authorities. This shift often marginalized informal traders making it difficult for Agikuyu women to sustain their traditional roles in local trade networks.

Peter Karanja (O.I., 2024) affirms that the rise of a cash-based economy also had significant social and cultural implications. The transition from a barter system to cash transactions altered the fabric of community interactions and economic relationships. The monetization of the economy introduced a more individualistic approach to economic activity in contrast to the communal and cooperative ethos that characterized traditional Agikuyu society. Women, who were central to maintaining these communal ties through trade and exchange found their roles changing. Ochieng & Maxon (1992) argue that the pressure to earn cash income led to a re-evaluation of traditional gender roles and economic responsibilities within families and communities. The emphasis on cash transactions introduced new forms of economic vulnerability, as fluctuations in cash flow could directly impact household food security and economic stability. Understanding these changes is essential for appreciating the broader impacts of colonial urbanization on indigenous communities and for developing strategies to support economic resilience and cultural sustainability in contemporary Agikuyu society explained by (Phoebby Wangechi O. I., 2024).

The monetarization of the economy, introduced by the colonial government, further altered the dynamics of Agikuyu women's trade. The shift from barter systems to cash-based transactions required women to engage in market activities to earn money (KISUNGI, 2021). This shift increased their dependence on market fluctuations and colonial economic structures reducing their control over food production and local trade. The emphasis on cash crops over subsistence farming also redirected resources away from food crops impacting food security. Joeke (1990) argues that the introduction of a cash economy meant that women had to find ways to generate income to meet their households' financial needs, including paying taxes and purchasing goods. This often involved growing cash crops or engaging in wage labour, both of which diverted time and resources from food crop production (Mugalavai & Kiptoon, 2019). The increased reliance on cash transactions made local trade more volatile and dependent on external economic conditions further complicating women's efforts to ensure food security.

Monetary forms of exchange had profound implications for Agikuyu women's local trade and food security during the colonial period in Kenya. As European colonial powers established control over the economy, they introduced monetary systems and cash-based transactions replacing traditional barter and exchange practices. This transition fundamentally altered the socio-economic landscape reshaping the dynamics of trade, production and consumption among indigenous communities like the Agikuyu. The shift from barter to cash-based transactions disrupted established economic practices, leading to significant changes in how Agikuyu women engaged in trade and managed household food security. This was explained by one of the participants (Dorothy Wawira O.I. 2024).



Figure 10: Colonial monetarization used during colonial era.

Adapted from (Gikūyū gallery of Kenya coins, 2017)

The shift to a cash-based economy not only disrupted traditional trade practices but also reshaped social and economic relations within the Agikuyu women. Women who had previously been central figures in local trade networks now had to navigate the complexities of a market economy that was often biased against them (Lorna Mukami O.I., 2024). The commercialization of trade introduced new challenges such as price fluctuations, competition with colonial traders and the need for capital investment which many women lacked (Musalia, 2010). These challenges marginalized women from the burgeoning cash economy reducing their economic agency and influence within their communities. The focus on earning cash income also led to a decline in the cultivation and exchange of indigenous food crops as more land and labour were diverted towards cash crops and other market-oriented activities (KNA/DC/KBU/1/2; 1910-1920). This shift not only compromised household food security but also eroded the traditional trade knowledge and practices that had been passed down through generations. The commercialization of trade product changed the nature of local markets making them less about community sustenance and more about profit thereby diminishing the role of women in sustaining local food systems (Eunice Mukami O.I., 2024).

For Agikuyu women who were central to local trade, introduction of cash economy presented both opportunities and challenges. Traditionally, women exchanged surplus produce and other goods through barter, which was deeply embedded in their social and cultural practices (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). The introduction of money as a medium of exchange required them to adapt to new economic behaviors and develop financial literacy skills. While this opened up new avenues for engaging in the colonial market economy, it also imposed additional burdens. Women had to find ways to earn cash, often through labour on settler farms or in urban areas to participate in the new monetary system (Bryceson, 2006). The need to generate cash income diverted time and resources away from subsistence farming, undermining food security at the household level.



Figure 11: A farmer and his son buying household items from an Indian shop in Nyeri Town

Source: National Archive, 1953

The broader implications of monetization on Agikuyu society were significant. The emphasis on cash-based transactions and the colonial economy's focus on cash crops like coffee and tea marginalized traditional food crops, which were vital for local food security. As Agikuyu women adjusted to the demands of the cash economy, they faced increased competition and economic exploitation. Ochieng (1992) reports that the reliance on cash also heightened their vulnerability to market fluctuations and colonial economic policies. Despite these challenges, many Agikuyu women displayed resilience by forming cooperatives and mutual aid societies to pool resources and support each other. Kanyinga (2017) states that the long-term impact of this transition underscores the need to understand and address the historical roots of economic challenges faced by indigenous communities in Kenya.

Mburia Wairimu (O.I., 2024) expounds that monetarization resulted in a shift from barter-based economies to cash economies, where goods and services were exchanged for money rather than other commodities. For Agikuyu women who engaged in local trade, this transition necessitated adaptation to new financial practices and market structures. Instead of relying on traditional forms of exchange such as livestock or farm produce, women had to engage in cash transactions to buy and sell goods. This shift introduced a steep learning curve as women had to become adept at handling money, understanding pricing mechanisms and managing financial transactions in a

rapidly changing economic environment. The transition also exposed them to the volatility of cash-based markets where the value of money could fluctuate and economic policies imposed by the colonial administration often disadvantaged indigenous traders (KNA/DC/KBU/1/8, 1950-1960). Agikuyu women had to balance the demands of participating in the cash economy with their traditional roles in subsistence farming and household management, leading to increased workloads and stress.

The shift from barter to a cash economy introduced both challenges and opportunities for Agikuyu women. In this context, monetization allowed for greater flexibility in trade, enabling women to purchase a wider variety of goods and services that were previously inaccessible through barter (Todorova, 2009). This potential for economic diversification could enhance their household's well-being if managed effectively. On the other hand, the dependency on cash transactions made women more vulnerable to market forces and economic exploitation by colonial authorities and settlers. The need to generate cash income often forced women into wage labour or participation in informal economic activities which were typically low-paying and precarious. Despite these hurdles, Agikuyu women exhibited resilience by forming savings groups and cooperatives to pool resources and support each other financially. Kinyanjui (2010) argues that these collective efforts provided a safety net and a means to navigate the challenges of the new cash economy, but they could not fully mitigate the structural disadvantages imposed by the colonial monetarization policies.

5.6.1 Impact of Monetization on Traditional Exchange Systems

The introduction of monetization undermined traditional exchange systems that Agikuyu women relied on for local trade and food security. In pre-colonial societies barter and reciprocal exchange were common forms of economic interaction with indigenous communities trading surplus farm produce and artisanal goods in a system that emphasized mutual support and community cohesion (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). This system allowed Agikuyu women to engage in local trade without the need for money relying instead on the direct exchange of goods and services within their community. The imposition of cash economies by colonial authorities disrupted these traditional exchange networks favoring cash transactions over non-monetary forms of

exchange. This shift marginalized indigenous trading practices and eroded the social cohesion fostered by traditional exchange systems impacting Agikuyu women's ability to access resources and support networks. The replacement of barter with cash transactions led to a loss of communal bonds that were essential for the survival and resilience of the community(Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013).

The erosion of traditional exchange systems had profound implications for Agikuyu women. With the advent of monetization, women found it increasingly difficult to trade their surplus produce for other goods and services, as the new economy required cash for transactions. This change not only disrupted their economic activities but also diminished the social capital that was built through reciprocal exchanges (Bryceson, 2006). The communal support networks that had facilitated mutual aid and resource sharing were weakened, making it harder for women to secure the necessary inputs for trade. The focus on cash transactions introduced competitive market dynamics that favored those with better access to monetary resources often sidelining women who were less integrated into the colonial cash economy. This shift exacerbated economic inequalities and reduced the ability of Agikuyu women to maintain their traditional roles in local trade and food security forcing them to adapt to an economic system that was alien to their established practices and detrimental to their communal way of life (Gathigi, 2000).

Wanjiru wa Muchina (O.I., 2024) explicates that the situation fueled dependency on wage labour among Agikuyu women, as cash became the primary means of acquiring essential goods and services. With the shift to a cash economy, opportunities for formal employment emerged in settler-owned enterprises, urban centers and colonial administration. Many Agikuyu women, facing limited options for subsistence farming and local trade due to land alienation and the disruption of traditional economic systems sought employment as domestic workers, labourers or service providers in urban areas. This migration towards wage labour was often driven by necessity, as earning cash became essential for purchasing food clothing, and other household needs that were previously obtained through barter or local trade networks (Saulter, 2022). The transition to wage labour meant that women had to navigate the formal job

market often accepting low-paying and precarious jobs that offered little security or opportunity for advancement.

The reliance on wage labour shifted women's economic activities from entrepreneurial endeavors to wage-based employment altering their roles and status within the household and community. According to Smalley's (2013), Agikuyu women traditionally played a significant role in local trade and contributed to the household economy through their entrepreneurial activities and management of food resources. However, the shift to wage labour reduced their autonomy and entrepreneurial spirit as they became employees in a colonial economy that valued their labour but not their economic independence (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992).

The impact of the colonial economy on traditional trade networks extended beyond economic changes to affect social and cultural practices. The commercialization of trade and the emphasis on cash crops introduced new social hierarchies and economic disparities disrupting the egalitarian principles that had underpinned traditional Agikuyu society. Women who had been at the heart of food production and trade. Their roles diminished as the market economy prioritized male-dominated cash crop production and wage labour (KNA/DC/MERU/1/10; 1970-1980). This shift not only undermined women's economic contributions but also altered gender dynamics within the community. The reduction in barter trade and the focus on cash transactions weakened the communal ties and mutual support systems that were essential for coping with food shortages and other crises. As women struggled to adapt to the new economic realities, their reduced influence in local trade networks in decision-making further compromised the community's ability to maintain food security. The colonial economic policies transformation of traditional trade practices and marginalizing women's roles had a lasting impact on the social and economic stability of the Agikuyu women (Ndegeah, 2015).

This dependency on wage labour also affected the social dynamics within families as women's earnings became crucial for household survival potentially altering power relations and decision-making processes within the family. Furthermore, the precarious nature of wage labour in the colonial economy meant that Agikuyu women

often faced economic instability and exploitation compounding the challenges of maintaining food security and overall well-being. The long-term impact of this shift continues to influence the economic and social status of Agikuyu women highlighting the enduring effects of colonial monetarization policies.

5.6.2 Monetization and Vulnerability of Women Local Trade

The transition to a cash-based economy increased Agikuyu women's vulnerability to exploitative labour practices and economic exploitation. As monetization took hold many women found themselves working in environments lacking formal labour regulations and protections. Domestic workers, farm labourers and informal traders faced precarious working conditions characterized by long hours, low wages, and a lack of social security. These conditions subjected Agikuyu women to significant economic hardship and social marginalization (Maina, 1994). The absence of legal recourse or formal support systems meant that women had limited means to challenge unfair treatment or improve their working conditions making them particularly susceptible to exploitation by employers who capitalized on their economic desperation. This exploitation extended beyond individual workplaces permeating the broader colonial economy which thrived on cheap, undervalued labour to maximize profits for colonial enterprises and settler interests.

Karen Karimi (O.I., 2024) explains that monetization of the economy reinforced existing gender inequalities further entrenching women's economic vulnerability. Agikuyu women's labour, both in formal and informal sectors was systematically undervalued reflecting deep-seated gender biases within the colonial and capitalist frameworks. The prioritization of exchange of cash crops and colonial enterprises over local trade of indigenous food crops marginalized women's contributions to the local economy relegating them to roles that were often exploitative and poorly compensated. This economic marginalization had far-reaching social implications as women's diminished economic power translated into reduced influence within their households and communities. The exploitation and undervaluation of Agikuyu women's labour thus not only perpetuated cycles of poverty but also reinforced gender hierarchies that limited women's opportunities for economic and social advancement

highlighting the pervasive impact of colonial monetization policies on indigenous communities Ossome (2014).

Despite the challenges posed by monetization, it also facilitated financial inclusion and access to credit for some Agikuyu women (Belnap, 1993). The shift to a cash economy allowed women to engage with formal financial institutions opening opportunities for savings accounts, credit facilities and microfinance services. Access to these financial tools empowered women by providing the means to invest in income-generating activities expand their small businesses and accumulate assets. For many, this financial autonomy marked a significant departure from the traditional economic constraints imposed by colonial rule and patriarchal norms (Akumu et al., 2016). Women who could leverage these financial services often saw improvements in their economic status and household welfare, contributing positively to their communities' economic dynamics (Belnap, 1993). Additionally, microfinance institutions and savings cooperatives tailored specifically for women began to emerge further supporting women's entrepreneurial efforts and fostering a culture of financial independence and economic empowerment among Agikuyu women.

However, financial inclusion was unevenly distributed, leaving many Agikuyu women, particularly those in rural areas, struggling to access formal financial services (Smalley, 2013). Barriers such as lack of collateral, limited financial literacy and institutional biases against women significantly hindered their ability to benefit from the monetized economy. Rural women often found themselves excluded from the formal financial sector due to the stringent requirements for loans and credit which they could not meet. Furthermore, financial institutions often had urban-centric policies that did not cater to the specific needs of rural women thereby perpetuating economic disparities (Saulter, 2022). Despite the potential benefits of monetization for financial inclusion, these systemic barriers highlighted the need for more inclusive financial policies and practices that could bridge the gap between urban and rural access to financial services ensuring that all women could equally benefit from economic opportunities (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992).

Kimani (2015) argues that monetization transformed market dynamics, creating new opportunities and challenges for Agikuyu women engaged in local trade. As cash economies proliferated, urban markets expanded significantly offering a broader array of goods and services to consumers. Agikuyu women who had long been adept at navigating local trade networks sought to capitalize on these opportunities by diversifying their product offerings and expanding their market reach. They began to engage in the sale of a wider variety of goods including both traditional farm products and newly available imported items (Smalley, 2013). This expansion allowed them to tap into the growing urban consumer base, thereby increasing their income and enhancing their economic status. The shift to a cash-based market also meant that women could engage in more predictable and potentially lucrative financial transactions, paving the way for increased economic participation and independence (Chemutai, 2018).

Lyndia wa Ndia (O.I., 2024) an active respondent states that monetization of markets also introduced significant competition from European settlers, Asian traders and large commercial enterprises, which posed substantial challenges to the viability of indigenous trading practices. These new competitors often had better access to capital, larger scale operations, and preferential treatment under colonial policies which marginalized Agikuyu women traders. The influx of imported goods which often sold at lower prices due to economies of scale, further undermined the market for traditional products. Consequently, many Agikuyu women found it increasingly difficult to compete, leading to a decline in their economic autonomy and influence (Akyeampong & Fofack, 2013). The transformation of market dynamics under monetization thus represented a double-edged sword: while it created new opportunities for economic engagement and growth, it also introduced systemic inequalities that disadvantaged indigenous women traders, necessitating adaptive strategies to sustain their livelihoods in an increasingly competitive environment.

Ochieng and Maxon (1992) states that monetization of the economy facilitated the integration of Agikuyu women into cash crop economies where they played critical roles in the production processing, and marketing of cash crops such as coffee, tea, and pyrethrum. As European settlers established large-scale plantations and estates,

they relied heavily on indigenous labour, including women, to cultivate and harvest these crops for export. Agikuyu women, skilled in farm labour became essential contributors to the cash crop economy. Their involvement extended beyond mere labour; they were often involved in the initial processing and local marketing of these products. By participating in the cash crop economy, Agikuyu women earned wages, which, despite being meager, provided a source of income that could be used for household needs and investments (Wanjama et al., 1996). This new economic engagement also offered them a semblance of financial independence and a foothold in the burgeoning market economy.

The integration into cash crop for trade brought with it a host of challenges that undermined the benefits. According to Mwikali et al. (2021), the involvement of Agikuyu women in cash crop economies exposed them to exploitative labour practices, as they were often paid very low wages and subjected to harsh working conditions without adequate legal protection. The focus on cash crops also contributed to environmental degradation as large-scale monoculture practices led to soil depletion, reduced biodiversity and the use of harmful chemicals. These environmental impacts had long-term negative effects on the land's fertility and the overall availability of indigenous food crops for trade in the region. Rachael Kiiru (O.I., 2024) stated that the reliance on volatile commodity markets meant that Agikuyu women were vulnerable to market fluctuations and price drops which could drastically reduce their earnings and economic stability. This dependency on cash crops for income also detracted the Agikuyu women from subsistence farming, leading to a decline in the production of indigenous food crops and exacerbating food insecurity within the community (Smalle'y, 2013). While monetization and the shift to cash crop economies provided new economic opportunities for Agikuyu women, it also introduced significant risks and perpetuated systemic vulnerabilities.

The monetization of the economy had mixed impacts on Agikuyu women's food security, influencing their ability to access produce, and distribute food. While cash economies expanded opportunities for income generation and market participation, they also disrupted traditional food systems and local trade networks (Aluoka, 1999). The shift to cash-based economies altered patterns of trade and consumption among

Agikuyu women, leading to changes in dietary practices and nutritional outcomes. With increased reliance on cash income, many women prioritized purchasing food items from markets rather than relying solely on subsistence farming or traditional food sources (Berry, 1984). This shift contributed to dietary diversification, as women had access to a wider range of food products and imported goods (KNA/HAK/1/14, 1930-1940). However, it also introduced dependencies on external food supplies, making communities vulnerable to market fluctuations, price volatility, and food shortages.

The monetization of the economy led to the commercialization of local trade, as cash crops replaced traditional food crops in many areas. Agikuyu women who previously cultivated indigenous food crops for local trade increasingly shifted their trading practices towards cash crop production to meet market demands and generate income (Nangulu, 2001). While cash crop cultivation offered economic opportunities, it often came at the expense of food security, as land and labour resources were diverted away from food production towards export-oriented farm products. This transition undermined local food systems, reduced dietary self-sufficiency, and heightened dependence on external food sources.

Monetization contributed to changes in food distribution and access, as market mechanisms replaced traditional forms of food exchange and redistribution. Agikuyu women, traditionally responsible for food provisioning and distribution within households and communities faced challenges in accessing and affording food in cash-based markets (Kilonzo & Akallah, 2021). Market prices influenced by supply and demand dynamics, often fluctuated making food affordability a significant concern for vulnerable households. Moreover, the concentration of market power among European settlers, Asian traders and commercial enterprises marginalized indigenous traders, limiting Agikuyu women's access to markets and reducing their bargaining power.

In conclusion, the process of monetization introduced significant changes to Agikuyu women's local trade and food security in colonial Kenya. While it facilitated financial inclusion, market integration, and income generation opportunities, it also exacerbated

vulnerabilities, inequalities and dependencies within indigenous communities (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). The shift from traditional exchange systems to cash economies transformed socio-economic relationships, market dynamics, and food systems reshaping the lived experiences of Agikuyu women and their households. As colonial authorities imposed monetization policies, Agikuyu women navigated complex economic landscapes, adapting their livelihood strategies and coping with the impacts of market-driven changes on their food security and well-being.

5.7 Impact of Cash Crops on Agikuyu Women's Local Trade and Food Security

5.7.1 Introduction of Cash Crops

The promotion of cash crops such as coffee and tea by the colonial administration had significant implications for food security. Women, who were primarily responsible for food crop cultivation especially the indigenous food crops were on the receiving end when more land was allocated to cash crops. The prioritization of cash crops over food crops for trade reduced exchange of these indigenous food crops and increased the community's vulnerability to market fluctuations, further compromising food security. According to Ochieng and Maxon, (1992), the colonial government's focus on cash crop exchange was intended to generate revenue and integrate Kenya into the global economy. However, Bernstein (1977) defines that this focus came at the expense of local food systems. Women were pressured to grow cash crops to meet economic demands, which often meant that less land and labour were available for indigenous food crops hence reduced trade items in the local market. This shift reduced the diversity and quantity of food available for local consumption and trade, exacerbating food insecurity (Jayne Chamberlin & Headey, 2014).

This shift was encouraged through various policies including the allocation of land specifically for cash crop farming, the provision of seeds and technical support and the establishment of marketing boards to facilitate the sale of these crops. For Agikuyu women who had traditionally been engaged in the local trade of indigenous food crops, this marked a profound transformation. Lado (1992) argues that the emphasis on cash crops redirected labour and resources away from food production compelling women to adapt to new farm practices and market dynamics. While some women managed to gain economic opportunities through involvement in the cash

crop economy, this shift also imposed new challenges such as increased labour demands, dependency on volatile global markets and the erosion of traditional trade systems that had sustained their communities for generations. One of the respondents clearly affirmed the dependance that came about.

We were encouraged to grow coffee and tea instead of our traditional food crops that we consumed and traded. This shift made us dependent on the market for our food, which was often expensive and unreliable compared to our local indigenous food that we were used to. (Njeru Mbogo O.I., 2024)



Figure 12: Prominent cash crops such as coffee, tea, and pyrethrum in Nyeri County
Source: National Archives of Kenya, Pyrethrum Cultivation and Processing in 1960s

5.7.2 Economic Incentives and Shifts in Labour and its effects on Women Local Trade

The colonial government provided economic incentives for cash crop cultivation, including access to credit facilities, guaranteed markets, and higher prices compared to indigenous food crops (Kamau-Rutenberg, 2008). These incentives were designed to integrate the local economy with the global market and boost colonial revenues. Consequently, many Agikuyu women, who were integral in the local trade force, increasingly participated in cash crop exchange. The lure of higher incomes and the promise of economic advancement drove this shift as families aimed to improve their economic status through the cultivation and exchange of lucrative crops like coffee, tea, and pyrethrum. This transition was not just a voluntary adaptation but was often a response to the pressures and opportunities created by colonial policies (KNA/DC/CEN/2/7, 1960-1970).

On the other hand, the reallocation of economy towards trade of cash crop had significant implications for food security among the Agikuyu. As more labour and resources were directed towards the cultivation and exchange of cash crops, the time and effort available for growing traditional food crops for trade diminished. This shift meant that less land and fewer resources were devoted to producing staple foods such as millet, sorghum, yams, and legumes which were essential for local trade and also consumption (Ng'ang'a, 2014). The focus on cash crops primarily aimed at export markets, created a dependency on external food supplies and increased vulnerability to market fluctuations and price volatility. This reorientation of farm priorities compromised the ability of Agikuyu families to sustain their traditional local trade diets and maintain food security leading to long-term socio-economic consequences for the community (Smalle'y, 2013).

The cultivation of cash crops required considerable land, leading to significant changes in land use patterns within Nyeri County. Large tracts of fertile land that had been traditionally used for growing indigenous food crops were converted into plantations for coffee, tea and pyrethrum. This transformation was driven by colonial policies that prioritized export-oriented farm products over subsistence farming (Ng'ang'a, 2014). As a result, Agikuyu women who traditionally managed small plots

for food production found themselves increasingly marginalized. The expansion of cash crop cultivation reduced their access to arable land severely impacting their ability to produce sufficient food for their families and communities and also for local trade (Kariuki, 2015). This shift in land use not only undermined the traditional local trade practices that were central to the community's food security but also placed additional burdens on women who had to adapt to the changing economic landscape.

With the shift to cash crop exchange, Agikuyu women became increasingly dependent on market systems for their livelihoods. This dependency was fraught with challenges primarily due to the volatility of global commodity markets. Prices for cash crops such as coffee, tea, and pyrethrum could fluctuate dramatically, influenced by factors such as international demand, trade policies and global economic conditions. These price fluctuations directly impacted the income stability of Agikuyu households. Kanyinga (2017) states that when market prices fell, families that had heavily invested their labour and resources in cash crop production faced significant financial hardships. This instability made it difficult for them to plan for the future or make long-term investments, further entrenching them in a cycle of economic uncertainty and vulnerability.

As European settlers took over the fertile lands, they introduced cash crop farming, prioritizing crops like coffee, tea, and sisal over traditional food crops. This shift had a profound impact on the Agikuyu, particularly women. With prime land now devoted to cash crops, there was less land available for growing of indigenous food crops for local trade. The focus on cash crops also altered labour dynamics as men were often employed on settler farms leaving women with insufficient labour to maintain indigenous food crops for trade (KNA/DC/KBU/1/7;1950-1960). This shift contributed to a decline in food self-sufficiency and increased dependence on market-purchased food, which was often inaccessible due to economic constraints.

The introduction of cash crop farming not only reduced the land available for food production but also disrupted the traditional farming practices that produced local trade items that had sustained the Agikuyu for generations because cash crops require

different cultivation techniques and often deplete the soil of nutrients more rapidly than traditional food crops Belnap states that,

As a result, the soil fertility of the remaining land used for food crops declined further diminishing productivity which had direct impact on trade items. This decline in soil fertility compounded the challenges faced by Agikuyu women in maintaining food security, as they struggled to produce enough food to feed their families and engage in local trade (Belnap, 1993).

The shift towards cash crop farming led to a loss of dietary diversity among the Agikuyu population (KNA/DC/KBU/1/7,1950-1960). Traditional food crops provided a rich array of nutrients essential for a balanced diet, ensuring the health and well-being of the community. However, with the emphasis on cash crops which were primarily grown for export the trade of indigenous food crops dwindled (Ndegeah, 2015). This reduction in dietary diversity increased the risk of malnutrition and food-related health problems among the Agikuyu particularly women and children. Additionally, the reliance on cash crops made the community vulnerable to market fluctuations and economic shocks further exacerbating food insecurity (KNA/BB/1/14; 1940-1950).

To navigate these changes some women started growing cash crops on their own plots of land combining these with traditional food crops and this dual approach allowed them to meet colonial demands while still ensuring food security for their families (Wolff, 1974). The income from selling cash crops provided additional funds that could be used to purchase other necessary commodities (Berhanu, 2016). As it is noted colonial imposition of a cash-based economy significantly disrupted the traditional trade networks among the Agikuyu with profound consequences for community cohesion and food security. Before the advent of colonial rule, Agikuyu women were pivotal in maintaining a barter-based economy that emphasized the exchange of indigenous food crops (Felister Wambui O.I., 2024).

According to Musalia (2010) the trade networks were integral to the community's food security ensuring a steady supply of diverse and nutritious food products through

reciprocal relationships. However, the necessity to generate cash income for taxation purposes forced women to shift their focus from these traditional barter exchanges to engaging in cash-based trade (Mugalavai & Kiptoon, 2019). This transition fundamentally altered the dynamics of local markets as the barter system which facilitated equitable distribution of food resources was gradually supplanted by a market economy driven by monetary transactions. The decline of barter trade meant that the interdependence and mutual support systems that had sustained the Agikuyu women for generations was weakened undermining the social fabric and resilience of these networks (Muriuki, 1981).

The reliance on cash crops also meant that many Agikuyu women were less able to produce their own food for trade hence increasing their dependence on purchased food. As a result, when cash crop prices were low and income was reduced, these households struggled to afford sufficient food, exacerbating food insecurity. This shift away from self-sufficiency in food production to dependency on market purchased food introduced a new layer of vulnerability (Ng'ang'a, 2014). External factors beyond their control— such as market price swings, trade disruptions and even local inflation—could severely affect their economic well-being and access to food. Thus, the dependency on market systems not only made Agikuyu women more vulnerable to economic exploitation but also compromised their ability to ensure food security for their families, highlighting the interconnectedness of economic policies, market dynamics, and everyday survival for indigenous communities during the colonial period (Gitonga Nancy, O.I 2024).

5.7.3 Change and Displacement of Indigenous Food Crops for Trade

The displacement of indigenous food crops by cash crops had profound implications for the nutritional landscape and food security of Agikuyu households. Indigenous food crops, such as millet, sorghum, and yams were not only culturally significant for local trade but also provided essential nutrients needed for a balanced diet. These crops were well adapted to local growing conditions, requiring minimal inputs and often thriving in marginal lands. However, with the introduction of cash crops like coffee, tea, and pyrethrum, farmers were incentivized to replace their traditional food

crops with these commercially lucrative alternatives, hence the commodities for trade also changed (Gobo & Iboroma, 2022).

As a result, the trade perspective shifted towards monocultures of cash crops, leading to a decline and the loss of traditional food crops. This displacement had direct consequences for the nutritional diversity of Agikuyu diets, as the once-rich array of indigenous food crops was replaced by a narrow selection of cash crops primarily grown for export (Smalle'y, 2013). With the loss of indigenous food crops, Agikuyu households became more vulnerable to food shortages and malnutrition particularly during periods of economic hardship or market fluctuations. Furthermore, the reliance on cash crops for income generation meant that Agikuyu families were less able to produce their own food increasing their dependence on market purchased food items which were often less nutritious and more expensive. Overall, the displacement of indigenous food crops by cash crops not only eroded farming diversity but also undermined the food security and nutritional well-being of Agikuyu communities highlighting the complex interplay between economic incentives, trade practices and food systems during the colonial period Swainson, N. (1980).

Dorine Wangui (O.I., 2024) stated that transition to cash crop exchange introduced new dynamics of labour exploitation particularly for Agikuyu women who were already marginalized within patriarchal structures. While men typically controlled access to land and resources, women were expected to contribute to both local trade and cash crop cultivation often with limited decision-making power or access to the proceeds. As a result, women faced increased labour demands and exploitation as they were responsible for the labour-intensive tasks involved in farm production without equitable access to the benefits of cash crop income Omwoyo (2015).

The patriarchal norms prevalent within Agikuyu society reinforced gender disparities in labour exploitation, as women's contributions to local trade and household maintenance were undervalued and often overlooked. Despite their significant roles in both subsistence and local trade, women faced systemic barriers to economic empowerment and autonomy, perpetuating cycles of poverty and gender inequality (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). The shift to cash crop trade exacerbated these dynamics

highlighting the need for gender-sensitive approaches to trade development and economic empowerment within Agikuyu communities.

5.7.4 Cash Crops and Disruption of Traditional Trade Networks

The cultivation and marketing of cash crops led to the decline of traditional trade networks that Agikuyu women had long relied on for local exchange and social interaction. Indigenous food crops had been integral to these networks facilitating reciprocal relationships and community support systems. However, the shift to cash crops altered the dynamics of local trade as women diverted their attention and resources towards the cultivation and marketing of cash crops for export. This change reduced the availability of indigenous food crops in local markets disrupting the traditional exchange systems that had sustained Agikuyu communities for generations (Smalle'y, 2013).

As a result of this disruption, Agikuyu women faced challenges in maintaining their economic independence and social networks. With the decline of traditional trade networks, women had fewer opportunities to engage in local exchange and cooperative arrangements diminishing their access to essential resources and support mechanisms. Additionally, the dominance of cash crop transactions in local markets shifted the balance of power towards wealthier landowners and commercial enterprises, further marginalizing women and small-scale farmers Kimani (2015). The disruption of traditional trade networks thus had far-reaching implications for Agikuyu women's economic autonomy and community resilience, highlighting the need for strategies to revitalize local exchange systems and promote sustainable livelihoods.

Colonial policies and institutional frameworks aimed at promoting cash crop trade favored large-scale production and commercialization, often at the expense of local trade that existed before (KNA/DC/CEN/2/7, 1960-1970). Marketing boards and cooperative societies were established to regulate the production marketing, and pricing of cash crops, but these institutions were predominantly controlled by men and overlooked the contributions of women in trade. As a result, women faced systemic barriers to accessing market opportunities and institutional support limiting

their ability to benefit from cash crop cultivation noted by (Mburia kimani O.I., 2024).

The prioritization of cash crop trade by colonial authorities perpetuated gender inequalities within Agikuyu society. The emphasis on large-scale production favored wealthy landowners and male farmers while marginalizing Agikuyu women who typically engaged in local trade (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). Women's contributions to local trade and household livelihoods were undervalued and overlooked in policy decisions, exacerbating their economic vulnerability and social marginalization (KNA/ED/NY/3, 1960-1970). Addressing these structural inequalities required not only policy reforms but also institutional support systems that recognized and promoted the role of women in cash crop farming and local trade.

Another impact of cash crop farming was on the environment. Such include soil degradation and loss of biodiversity which have had lasting effects on farm productivity and ecosystem resilience in Nyeri County. Monoculture practices, often associated with cash crop cultivation, deplete soil nutrients, increase soil erosion, and leave land vulnerable to degradation. As a result, Agikuyu women faced challenges in maintaining soil fertility and sustaining traditional food crop production, leading to increased reliance on external food sources and reduced food security (Ng'ang'a, 2014).

Peter Kanja (O.I., 2024) states that the social impacts of cash crop trade extended beyond economic changes to affecting community dynamics and cultural traditions. Rural-urban migration was driven by the lure of cash crop income and employment opportunities. The exodus to urban areas disrupted traditional family structures and community cohesion. The migration of younger generations to urban centers diminished the pool of trade labour and eroded the intergenerational transmission of trade knowledge and practices (Nzioki, 2000). This loss of traditional knowledge further weakened the resilience of Agikuyu communities to environmental and economic shocks exacerbating their vulnerability to food insecurity and poverty.

5.8 The Impact of Squatter System and Kipande System on Agikuyu Women's Local Trade and Food Security

The squatter system forced many Agikuyu families to relocate to European-owned farms where they were subjected to exploitative labour conditions and limited access to land for food cultivation (Smalle'y, 2013). This displacement from their ancestral lands disrupted their local trade networks, as they were now dependent on European settlers for both shelter and livelihood. Additionally, the kipande system further exacerbated the challenges faced by Agikuyu women by subjecting them to strict movement restrictions and surveillance making it difficult for them to engage in local trade or seek alternative employment opportunities (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). These systems collectively contributed to the economic marginalization and social disenfranchisement of the Agikuyu women, particularly women who bore the brunt of labour exploitation and restrictions on their freedom of movement.

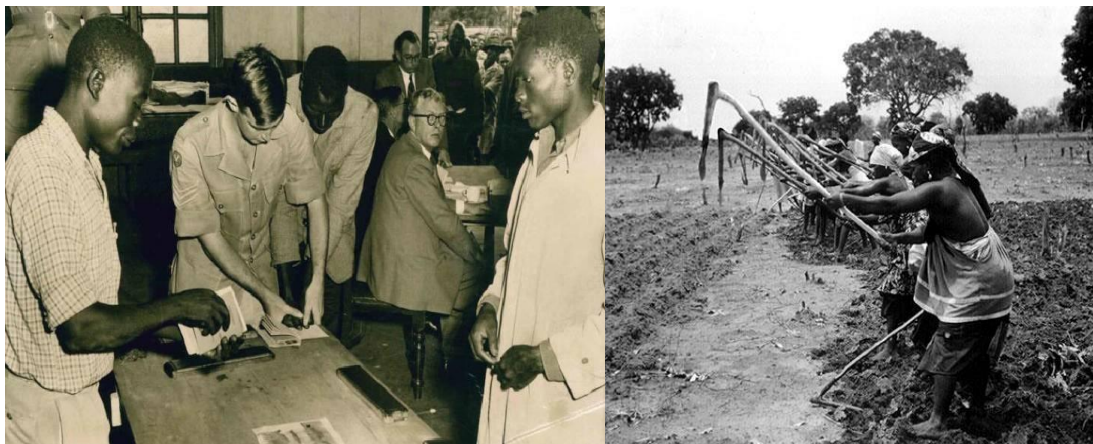


Figure 13: Kipande System on Agikuyu women

Source: National Museums of Kenya, "Kipande System Documentation," 1920

5.8.1 The Squatter System and its impact on Women Local Trade

The squatter system and kipande system introduced by the colonial authorities controlled the movement and labour of the indigenous population. These systems disrupted traditional trade networks. Women in particular, faced increased burdens as they navigated these restrictive systems. The squatter system often meant that families lived and worked on settler farms with limited access to their own land while the kipande system restricted men's mobility, placing additional pressures on women to manage local trade. Fitzhenry (1979) states that the squatter system forced many Agikuyu families to become labourers on European-owned farms with limited rights

and access to their own land. This arrangement disrupted traditional farming practices and reduced the ability of women to maintain production of indigenous food crops for trade. According to Musalia (2010), the kipande system which required men to carry identification passes and restricted their movement further constrained the labour available for traditional trade, increasing the burdens on women to sustain household food security and engage in local trade.

Munene Nyambura (O.I., 2024) notes that squatter system created a cycle of dependency and exploitation, as Agikuyu families became reliant on European-owned farms for both housing and employment. The limited land allocated to them for cultivation forced many families to prioritize cash crop farming over traditional food crops, further disrupting local trading systems. Women who traditionally played a crucial role in local trade found their ability to engage in these activities severely restricted (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). Instead of cultivating indigenous food crops for local consumption and trade, they were compelled to focus on cash crops demanded by European settlers leading to food insecurity within the community.



Figure 14: Former Settler Coffee Estate Workers' Housing in Mathari Nyeri.

Source: National Archives of Kenya, 1934

Moreover, the labour demands imposed by the squatter system placed additional burdens on Agikuyu women who were often responsible for both household chores and local trade. The unequal distribution of labour further marginalized women's economic autonomy and social status within the community. Additionally, the squatter system perpetuated cycles of poverty and vulnerability as Agikuyu families struggled to meet their basic needs while being exploited for their labour on European-owned farms (Kamau-Rutenberg, 2008). Overall, the squatter system had far-reaching

consequences for Agikuyu women's local trade and food security undermining their traditional livelihoods and exacerbating socio-economic inequalities.

Paul Kagema (O.I., 2024) explains that displacement of Agikuyu families onto European-owned farms under the squatter system disrupted the cultivation of indigenous food crops which were essential for local trade and food security. The labour requirements imposed by European settlers prioritized the cultivation of cash crops like coffee and tea over traditional food crops. This shift in farming focus diminished the land available for growing indigenous staples such as millet, sorghum, and yams, which were well-suited to the local climate and soil conditions and these, were the items of trade. As a result, Agikuyu women, who were primarily responsible for local trade found their traditional livelihoods undermined by the demands of the squatter system.

The decline in indigenous food crop cultivation had cascading effects on the local trade network managed by Agikuyu women. With fewer surplus food crops available for trade, the exchange of goods within the community became increasingly limited impacting both the availability and variety of food products (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). Moreover, the reliance on cash crops for income generation shifted the focus away from traditional local trade further marginalizing their cultivation and trade. This disruption in indigenous food crop cultivation not only weakened the resilience of the Agikuyu women but also increased food insecurity as families relied more heavily on cash income to purchase food items, which were often more expensive and less nutritious than locally produced staples.

5.8.2 Labor Exploitation and Gender Dynamics in Squatter System

James Kiragu (O.I., 2024) states that under the squatter system, Agikuyu women faced significant labour exploitation and gender inequalities whereby they were forced to provide labour to European settlers in exchange for meager plots of land. They had to juggle multiple responsibilities, including local trade, household chores and childcare. This dual burden placed immense strain on women limiting their capacity to engage in local trade activities and pursue economic opportunities outside the household (KNA/CP/4/29, 1930-1940). Moreover, the power dynamics inherent in the squatter

system perpetuated gender inequalities as women had limited bargaining power and were often subjected to exploitative labour conditions by settler landowners (Abbott & Arcury, 1977).

The labour exploitation experienced by Agikuyu women under the squatter system not only undermined their economic autonomy but also reinforced traditional gender roles and dynamics within the community (Wriggley, 1965). Women's labour was undervalued and often taken for granted, perpetuating the notion of women as subordinate to men in both the economic and social spheres. Additionally, the lack of legal protection and recourse for labour abuses further marginalized women leaving them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Overall, the squatter system perpetuated gender disparities and reinforced the systemic inequalities that disadvantaged Agikuyu women within colonial society (Fitzhenry, 1979).

5.8.3 The Kipande System and its impact On Women Local Trade

The kipande system not only restricted the mobility of African women but also disrupted traditional trading activities, in which women played a central role. With men required to carry kipandes and often forced to seek employment in distant locations, women were left to manage trade activities and household responsibilities single-handedly (Smalle'y, 2013). This shift placed an additional burden on women who had to navigate the challenges of local trade without the support of male family members.

Furthermore, the kipande system reinforced gender disparities by limiting women's access to resources and economic opportunities as they were excluded from formal employment sectors and faced barriers to mobility imposed by colonial authorities (Ochieng & Maxon, 1992). The kipande system undermined the social fabric of Agikuyu communities by fragmenting families and disrupting traditional kinship networks. The separation of men from their families for extended periods strained familial relationships and weakened community cohesion (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). Women were left to cope with the absence of male relatives both in terms of labour assistance and emotional support further intensifying their vulnerability within colonial society. They could not even get time to carry out trade in indigenous food

crops. Overall, the kipande system had far-reaching implications for Agikuyu women worsening the challenges they faced under colonial rule and perpetuating gender inequalities within the community.

The restrictions imposed by the kipande system severely disrupted the traditional patterns of movement and trade that Agikuyu women relied upon for their livelihoods. With African men confined to specific areas of employment and required to carry their kipandes at all times, women were left with limited support in trading activities and household management (Gachemi, 2018). This situation not only increased the burden on women but also undermined the productivity of local trade as they struggled to cope with the absence of male labour notes (Morgan Muriithi O.I., 2024).

The restrictions on movement imposed by the kipande system hindered the flow of goods and commodities in local trade networks. Traditional trade routes which facilitated the exchange of surplus food crops and essential goods between communities were disrupted, leading to shortages and price fluctuations. Agikuyu women, who played a central role in local trade faced challenges in accessing markets and maintaining their economic activities (Ng'ang'a, 2014). The restrictions on movement and trade imposed by the kipande system thus had profound implications for the food security and economic stability of the Agikuyu women aggravating the challenges already posed by colonial policies and labour exploitation.

In conclusion, economic and social disruptions caused by the squatter and kipande systems extended beyond individual households to the broader community and local economies (KNA/PL/NZA/1, 1980-1990). With men frequently conscripted into forced labour or restricted in their movements by the kipande system, the traditional labour force necessary for local trade was severely depleted. This depletion had cascading effects on local economies, as local trading activities and networks faltered (Maina, 1994). The reliance on cash crops often dictated by European settler's demands further distorted local economies diverting resources and labour away from food crop cultivation essential for local trade.

The erosion of traditional social structures and networks intensified social disintegration within the Agikuyu women. The forced separation of families, the disruption of communal labour practices, and the breakdown of traditional governance systems undermined the cohesion and resilience that had historically sustained the community (Berhanu, M. 2016). Women as primary caregivers and custodians of household economies bore the brunt of these disruptions. They had to contend with the complexities of maintaining households and sustaining livelihoods amidst profound economic and social upheaval. The erosion of social capital and community solidarity worsened vulnerabilities, leaving women and their families increasingly isolated and vulnerable to exploitation (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). Overall, the squatter and kipande systems not only undermined local trade of the Agikuyu women but also eroded its social fabric, perpetuating cycles of poverty, inequality, and vulnerability for generations to come.

5.9 Impact of Land Subdivision on Agikuyu Women's Local Trade and Food Security

5.9.1 Introduction to Land Subdivision

Land subdivision during the colonial period in Nyeri County had far-reaching consequences for the Agikuyu women, particularly in terms of land ownership and socioeconomic dynamics. KNA/LD/NY/2 (1970-1980) reports that the shift from communal land tenure to individual ownership introduced by colonial policies like the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 and subsequent land registration initiatives fundamentally altered the traditional relationships between the Agikuyu people and their land (Shanguhya, 2024). Previously held under customary tenure systems, land was now demarcated into individual plots, subject to registration and ownership by individuals, often men, recognized under colonial law. This transition had significant implications for Agikuyu women who traditionally played central roles in local trade. With the subdivision of land, women's access to and control over trading resources became increasingly restricted as land ownership rights were typically granted to male heads of household. This is well articulated below Maina.

The marginalization of women's land rights not only diminished their economic autonomy but also undermined their ability to engage in local trade of food crops as access to land was intricately linked to participation in

farming activities. Moreover, the fragmentation of land holdings disrupted communal farming practices and resource-sharing networks that had been integral to the Agikuyu social fabric further exacerbating food insecurity and economic disparities within the community (Maina, 1994).



Figure 15: Land subdivision during the colonial period in Nyeri County

Source: National Archive, CO 1069 - Colonial Office Photographic Collection, 1920

5.9.2 Colonial Policies and Land Registration

The Swynnerton Plan of 1954 represented a significant departure from traditional land tenure systems in Kenya, including those practiced by the Agikuyu women. While ostensibly aimed at modernizing trade and stimulating economic development, the plan ultimately reinforced colonial control over land and marginalized local trade that was conducted by the Agikuyu (Karanja, 2024). By promoting individual land ownership and issuing land titles to African farmers, the colonial government sought to impose a Western model of land tenure that prioritized private property rights over communal ownership (KNA/LD/NY/2, 1970-1980). However, the Swynnerton Plan failed to consider the socio-cultural dynamics and customary practices of indigenous communities like the Agikuyu. The imposition of individual land ownership disregarded the collective nature of land use and management among the Agikuyu, undermining the communal bonds and mutual support systems that had long sustained their traditional trading activities (Smalle'y, 2013).

Instead of fostering local trade, the fragmentation of land holdings resulting from land registration disrupted traditional trade practices and hindered cooperative efforts in land utilization and resource management (Kanyinga, 2017). The emphasis on individual land ownership disproportionately benefited male landholders further marginalizing Agikuyu women who traditionally played vital roles in production of items for local trade. By neglecting the gendered dimensions of land ownership and access, colonial policies like the Swynnerton Plan perpetuated inequalities within the Agikuyu women and undermined women's economic empowerment by disrupting the local precedence in an indirect way. Obala (2012) argues that the legacy of these colonial land registration initiatives continues to shape land tenure dynamics and socio-economic disparities in Nyeri County and other parts of Kenya today.

The impact of transitioning from communal to individual land ownership reverberated throughout among the Agikuyu women, profoundly altering its socio-economic fabric. According to Wanende (2013), communal land systems had served as the bedrock of Agikuyu society fostering cooperation, mutual support and collective decision-making in land management and production of items for local trade.

The imposition of individual ownership disrupted these systems fracturing the communal bonds that had sustained the community for generations. With land holdings fragmented into smaller individual plots women struggled to get indigenous food crops for trade that had once ensured food security and economic stability (Mwaniki Fundi O.I., 2024).

For Agikuyu women, who played pivotal roles in local trade, the shift to individual land ownership posed significant challenges. The smaller and less productive plots allocated to women under the new land tenure system constrained their ability to sustain food crop for trade hence they could not effectively participate in local trade networks (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). As women grappled with the limitations of their land holdings, the traditional division of labour within households shifted with increased pressure on women to generate income from alternative sources beyond trade. The erosion of communal land systems that produced items of trade not only undermined women's economic autonomy but also intensified gender disparities

within the Agikuyu women, perpetuating cycles of poverty and food insecurity (Nzioki, 2000).

The reduction in land size resulting from subdivision not only diminished farming productivity but also constrained the ability of Agikuyu families, particularly women to maintain their participation in local trades (Nzioki, 2000). Smaller plots lacked the capacity to support diverse crop cultivation, leading to a decline in both the quantity and variety of indigenous for trade. This decline had ripple effects on household food security and local trade networks.

For Agikuyu women, the shift from communal to individual land ownership meant grappling with the realities of smaller, less productive plots. With limited land available for cultivation, women faced increased pressure to generate income through alternative means, often at the expense of their traditional roles in local trade (Ochieng, 2014). The shift towards cash crops, driven by economic necessity, further marginalized women's contributions to trade, aggravating gender disparities within the community. As land sizes dwindled and economic pressures mounted, Agikuyu women found themselves at the forefront of adapting to the challenges posed by colonial land policies traversing a landscape that increasingly prioritized individual gain over communal well-being Karigi, G. (2015).

5.9.3 Economic Pressures and Shift to Cash Crops

The economic pressures induced by land subdivision forced many Agikuyu families to pivot towards cash crop cultivation as a means of meeting financial obligations and securing income. Cash crops like coffee and tea offered the promise of higher returns compared to traditional food crops, incentivizing farmers to allocate more land and resources to their cultivation (Kanyinga, 2017). However, this shift came at the expense of local food security as cash crops were primarily destined for export markets rather than local for local exchange. Consequently, Agikuyu women who had long been responsible for managing local trade networks and ensuring food availability in their communities found their roles diminished as the focus shifted towards cash crop production Karigi (2015).

The transition to cash crops intensified gender disparities within the Agikuyu women, as women's contributions to local trade were devalued in favor of cash-crop export (Lucy Waithera O.I., 2024). With fewer resources allocated to traditional food crop cultivation, women faced greater challenges in sustaining their livelihoods and supporting their families. The decline in trading commodities not only weakened household food security but also eroded the resilience of local trade networks, which had relied heavily on the surplus production and exchange of indigenous food crops. As a result, Agikuyu women grappled with the dual burden of adapting to economic pressures while also navigating the social and economic upheavals brought about by colonial land policies.

David Muchoki (O.I., 2024) expounds that the process of land subdivision introduced by colonial policies triggered a cascade of social fragmentation and familial discord within the Agikuyu women. As communal land holdings were divided into individual plots, disputes over land boundaries and ownership rights became commonplace, fracturing the once cohesive social networks. These conflicts often escalated into protracted legal battles draining both financial and emotional resources from families and communities. The resulting strain on interpersonal relationships undermined trust and cooperation, disrupting longstanding traditions of communal farming and mutual support networks (Gathigi, 2000).

The breakdown of social cohesion had detrimental effects on Agikuyu women, who relied heavily on communal cooperation and solidarity for their local trade endeavors (Kanyinga, 2017). With the dissolution of cooperative farming practices and communal support systems women found themselves increasingly isolated and unsupported in their efforts to sustain food production and trade. Additionally, the diversion of resources and attention towards resolving land disputes diverted energy away from local trade pursuits, exacerbating food insecurity and perpetuating cycles of poverty within the community. Overall, the social fragmentation stemming from land subdivision posed significant challenges to the resilience and well-being of Agikuyu women and their families noted by (Alice Ngunjiri O.I., 2024).

The enduring consequences of land subdivision reverberated through the fabric of Agikuyu society, leaving indelible marks on local trade, food security and social cohesion (Edwards, 2023). The transition from communal to individual land ownership precipitated a fundamental shift in farming practices with a disproportionate emphasis on cash crops over food crops. This skewed focus created a precarious dependency on volatile markets and external inputs, exposing the community to heightened economic vulnerabilities and instability (Maina, 1994). The marginalization of women in land ownership and trade decision-making processes further aggravated these challenges, perpetuating entrenched gender inequalities that stifled opportunities for sustainable development and progress (Kamau-Rutenberg, 2008).

The long-term implications of land subdivision extended beyond economic realms, eroding the social fabric and cohesion that had once defined the Agikuyu women (Hino et al., 2019). Disputes over land boundaries and ownership rights fostered tensions and discord within families and communities, straining relationships and undermining collective support systems (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). As social fragmentation took root, the collaborative traditions and cooperative farming practices that had sustained the community for generations began to fray leaving a void in the communal resilience once cherished by the Agikuyu (Belnap, 1993). Addressing these long-term implications necessitates a holistic understanding of the historical context and ongoing effects of land subdivision particularly in relation to gender dynamics, practices, and food security. Only through such a nuanced comprehension can meaningful interventions be crafted to foster resilience, equity and sustainable development within the Agikuyu women and beyond.

The ramifications of land subdivision, as dictated by colonial policies, cast a profound shadow over the Agikuyu women's landscape and food security in Nyeri County. The shift from communal land ownership to individual parcels not only disrupted age-old farming practices but also diminished the land available for cultivation, pushing Agikuyu women to the margins of local trade in indigenous food crops. As cash crops took precedence, the once vibrant local trade networks faltered, intensifying food insecurity and economic vulnerabilities within the community (Kanyinga, 2017). Yet

in the midst of these challenges, the resilience of Agikuyu women shined through. Their adaptive strategies and collective endeavors stood as testaments to their enduring strength and determination to sustain their families and communities in the face of adversity.

Recognizing the pivotal role of Agikuyu women in navigating the complexities of land subdivision and its aftermath underscores the imperative of empowering them as agents of change and progress. Addressing the long-term implications of land subdivision demands a comprehensive understanding of its historical context and ongoing effects. By centering the voices and experiences of Agikuyu women, policymakers and stakeholders can chart a course towards equitable solutions that promote sustainable development for gender equity and food security for generations to come (Abbott & Arcury, 1977). Only through collaborative efforts grounded in empathy and solidarity can we pave the way for a brighter more resilient future for the Agikuyu women and beyond.

5.10 Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to examine the establishment of colonial rule and the subsequent integration of the Nyeri economy into colonial capitalism and how this affected the women trade on Indigenous food crops in Nyeri. It has acted as a bridge between the community's pre-colonial trade and the colonial era. Evidence has been adduced to show that the general imposition of colonial rule in Kenya and Nyeri in particular, took place against a background of disastrous breakdown of local trade which not only destroyed the economic mainstay of the community but also led to unprecedented food Insecurity in the County.

The chapter has further attempted to show how the Agikuyu women trade system was progressively incorporated into the world capitalist system over the 1902-1980 periods. Starting with the turbulent 1902 through the imposition of colonial administration at the turn of the century to the First and second World. It is evident that the Agikuyu economic system gradually became part of the world capitalist system through the strategies of the colonial state like introduction of cash crops, forced labour, taxation, land policies among others.

It is also clear from the chapter that from 1902, the Agikuyu lost effective access to about two-thirds of the land they had formerly controlled including their most fertile lands and which was being used to produce various items of trade. This curtailed the movement of women who were the main actors in the local trade. The imposition of Hut and Poll tax by the colonial government coupled with the commercialization of food crops to acquire money that was need to pay various taxes had a negative impact on barter trade that was going on. Furthermore, the introduction of cash crop for export and the colonial labour demands led to the diversion of labour that forced women who were traders to venture into something else was detrimental to the trade in Indigenous food crops.

The chapter has also demonstrated that the outflow of men because of urbanization and forced labour compelled women to take up even the responsibility meant for men which affected their participation in local trade. In response to these shortages, the traditional household division of labour was adjusted. Women increasingly took part in animal husbandry as opposed to the pre-colonial period where they were involved in production and trade of indigenous food crops. This was a new trend in the Nyeri economy which was brought about by the demands of colonial labour. The overall consequence of all these was the relative depletion and decline of the women participation in local trade hence increased food insecurity. It is thus important to underscore the fact that by the end of colonialism, colonial capitalism had started transforming the traditional women economy through integration and dissolution while at the same time, conserving some of its aspects of the trade. These processes continued in the subsequent years of colonial regime. Past-colonialism, this had tremendous effect on women economy and how they safe guarded food security in their community prior to colonialism. The next chapter will delve into an analysis of these changes brought about by colonialism and their effects on various parameters of food security in Nyeri County.

CHAPTER SIX

EFFECTS OF THE EMERGING HYBRID PATTERN OF AGIKUYU WOMEN'S TRADE IN INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS ON FOOD SECURITY FROM 1902 TO 1980

6.1 Conceptualization of Food Security by The Agikuyu people of Nyeri

Traditionally, the Agikuyu women viewed food security through the lens of self-sufficiency and sustainability. Roy (2006) argues that food security was deeply embedded in their local trade practices, which were designed to ensure that every household could meet its nutritional needs throughout the year. Central to this system was the trade in a variety of crops, including staple foods such as maize, beans, yams, millet, and indigenous vegetables (Kamau-Rutenberg, 2008). These crops were carefully selected and traded according to the season, ensuring a continuous supply of food. This diversification was crucial, as it provided a buffer against crop failures due to pests, diseases, or adverse weather conditions, thereby safeguarding the community's food security as one of the respondents from Kieni affirmed.

Food security for us meant having enough to eat from our own farms and for exchange of surplus with what we were missing in our homes. We grew what we needed and also was exchanged what was unavailable, and everyone contributed to ensure there was always food available and mainly they were indigenous food crops (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024)

Women played a critical role in maintaining food security within the Agikuyu society. They were primarily responsible for the trade, storage, and management of food crops (kibiti, 1987). Their knowledge of market conditions, pricing, and trade networks was vast and deeply rooted in cultural traditions. Women also managed the household granaries, where harvested grains and other perishables were stored using traditional preservation techniques like drying, fermenting, and smoking (Maina, 1994). Naomi Nyambura (O.I., 2024) states that these practices were not only ensuring the longevity of food supplies but also maintained the nutritional value of the stored food, crucial for sustaining the household through lean seasons.



Figure 16: Agikuyu women responsible for the cultivation, and harvesting of food crops for trade

Adapted from (Kenya National Museum, Historical Farming Practices Collection, 1950s)

Mamdan (1996) states the traditional Agikuyu view of food security was holistic and deeply connected to their trade, culture, and social structures. It was a system built on diversity, cooperation, and sustainability, ensuring that every household could meet its food needs while maintaining the health of the land and the community. The shift from this traditional trade system to one influenced by colonial policies marked a significant transformation, disrupting the established practices and challenging the community's ability to sustain itself. According to Kamau (2010), understanding this traditional framework is essential for assessing the impact of colonial changes on food security in Nyeri County while highlighting the resilience of Agikuyu women in the face of these challenges.

Under this, various facets of how these emerging trade patterns influenced food security, including changes in market accessibility and consumption patterns, were explored. The chapter also delves into traditional household strategies for maintaining food security and the adaptations made by Agikuyu women in response to colonial economic pressures. Furthermore, it examines the long-term implications of these shifts on the nutritional well-being and economic stability of the community. This chapter seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of changes on Agikuyu women and how food security was affected in Nyeri County. This assessment is essential for appreciating the historical context of food security challenges and the enduring impact of colonial policies on indigenous trade practices.

6.1.1 New Emerging Trade Patterns in Nyeri by 1980

The market dynamics in Nyeri County experienced significant transformations from the early 20th century through to the post-colonial era. These changes were driven by a range of factors, including colonial influence, economic policies, shifts in agricultural practices, and socio-cultural developments. This discussion explores the noticeable changes in the market in terms of items of trade, market structure, medium of exchange, and the participants involved. Additionally, it considers how these changes reflect broader socio-economic shifts in Nyeri County during this period.

One of the most significant changes in the market in Nyeri County was the diversification of items of trade. Traditionally, the Agikuyu people of Nyeri traded primarily in indigenous food crops such as yams, sorghum, millet, and various root vegetables (Ng'endo, P. 2002). These crops were not only staples of the local diet but also formed the basis of barter trade within and between communities. However, with the advent of colonial rule and the introduction of a cash economy, there was a noticeable shift in the types of commodities traded (Felister Wambugu, O.I., 2024).

The introduction of cash crops especially the horticultural products like vegetables and fruits became prominent in the local markets. These commodities were not only grown for local consumption but were also produced for export, driven by the colonial administration's focus on integrating the local economy into the global market (Mwanika, 2021.) The cultivation of these cash crops was encouraged by colonial policies which provided incentives for local farmers to grow crops that could generate revenue through export.

Mwangi Edwin (O.I., 2024) asserts that the market also saw the introduction of new consumer goods, particularly those imported from Europe and India. Items such as textiles, utensils, spices, and processed foods became common in the market. The presence of these goods was indicative of the changing consumer preferences, influenced by the colonial economy and the increasing availability of foreign products. This shift was further supported by the growing network of trade routes and the establishment of trading centers which facilitated the distribution of these new goods.

Mwaniki from mathira, one of the respondents acknowledges that the structure of the markets in Nyeri also underwent significant changes during this period. Prior to colonial rule, markets were often informal gatherings held in open spaces where traders would convene to exchange goods. These markets were deeply rooted in the social and cultural fabric of the community often coinciding with important social events and rituals. He reports that,

With the establishment of colonial rule, there was a push towards formalizing these markets. Permanent market structures began to emerge with designated areas for different types of trade. The colonial administration introduced regulations that dictated where markets could be held, the types of goods that could be sold and the times at which trading could take place. These changes were part of a broader effort to control and tax trade as well as to impose order on what was perceived as chaotic and informal trading practices (Mwaniki Fundi O.I., 2024)

Permanent market buildings complete with stalls and storage facilities were constructed in key trading centers within Nyeri County. These structures not only provided a more organized trading environment but also reflected the increasing commercialization of trade in the region (Goheen, 1996). The establishment of these markets was often accompanied by the development of infrastructure such as roads and railways which facilitated the movement of goods and people to and from the market centers.

Kilonzo (2021) reiterates that the introduction of these permanent structures also changed the spatial dynamics of the markets. Whereas traditional markets were often temporary and could be set up in various locations, the new market structures were fixed leading to the growth of towns and trading centers around these market sites. Nyeri town for example, grew significantly during this period, becoming a key trading hub in the region.

Wairimu a respondent explained that the medium of exchange in the markets of Nyeri underwent a fundamental transformation during the colonial period. Traditionally

trade among the Agikuyu was largely based on barter with goods being exchanged directly for other goods of equivalent value. This system was well-suited to a largely subsistence-based economy where money played a minimal role. The introduction of colonial taxation and the cash economy, however, necessitated the use of currency as the primary medium of exchange. The British colonial administration introduced the East African shilling which became the standard currency for transactions. This shift from barter to cash transactions had far-reaching implications for the local economy (Wairimu Joan O.I., 2024)

Kigwe (2016) acknowledges that the use of money in the market allowed for a greater degree of flexibility and efficiency in trade it enabling traders to buy and sell goods without the need for a direct exchange of products thus expanding the range of possible transactions. This in turn facilitated the growth of a more complex and diversified market economy where a wider variety of goods could be traded. However, the transition to a cash economy also had its challenges. Many people in Nyeri were initially unfamiliar with the concept of money and were resistant to its use. The colonial administration had to implement various measures to encourage the adoption of currency including the imposition of taxes that could only be paid in cash (Jacob Ndung'u O.I., 2024) Over time, people became more accustomed to using money and it became an integral part of the local economy, leading to the gradual decline of barter as a primary means of trade.

Muchoki also explained that another area of change was that the composition of market participants in Nyeri also changed significantly during this period. Traditionally, the market was dominated by local traders primarily women who played a central role in the exchange of food crops and other goods. The market was a social space where people from different communities came together to trade, socialize and maintain social bonds Muchoki David (O.I.,2024) he states that,

With the advent of colonial rule, the market began to attract a more diverse group of participants. One of the most notable changes was the increased presence of Indian traders. The British colonial administration had encouraged the migration of Indian labourers and traders to East Africa and many of them settled in Nyeri. Indian

traders quickly established themselves as key players in the local economy setting up dukas (shops) and trading in a wide range of goods including textiles, spices and manufactured products.

The entry of Indian traders brought about significant changes in the market dynamics. They introduced new goods, currencies like Rupee and new trading practices. Their presence contributed to the commercialization and diversification of the market. The Indian traders also played a crucial role in the development of retail trade in Nyeri moving away from the traditional barter system to a more cash-based economy (Nzioki, 2000).

Ochieng (2014) noted that children also became more active participants in the market particularly in urban areas. As the economy became more commercialized, families increasingly involved their children in trading activities both as a means of supplementing household income and as a way of instilling business skills from a young age. This change reflected the broader shift in the economy where trade was no longer just a means of subsistence but also a commercial enterprise.

Moreover, the role of women in the market also evolved during this period. While women continued to be heavily involved in the trade of food crops, they also began to engage in the sale of cash crops and other commodities. The introduction of colonial taxation and the cash economy forced many women to participate more actively in the market as a means of generating income to meet tax obligations. This dual burden of managing household responsibilities and participating in market trade significantly increased the workload for women but it also expanded their economic role and influence within the community (Jacob Ndung'u O.I., 2024).

There were also change in market regulations and governance. The colonial administration introduced new laws and regulations to control trade including licensing requirements for traders, price controls and measures to ensure the quality of goods sold in the market. These regulations were part of the broader effort to formalize and commercialize the market economy in Nyeri (Benjamin, 2024).

The changes in market dynamics also had cultural and social implications because the market became a space where different cultures and communities interacted leading to the exchange of ideas, practices and goods. These cultural exchanges were facilitated by the presence of diverse market participants including local traders, Indian merchants and colonial officials. The market thus became a microcosm of the broader social and economic changes taking place in Nyeri during this period (Gakaria, 2015).

Peter Kanja (O.I.,2024) states that market in Nyeri County underwent significant transformations from the early 20th century to the post-colonial era reflecting broader socio-economic changes in trade patterns. The diversification of items of trade, the development of permanent market structures, the shift to a cash-based economy, and the changing composition of market participants all contributed to the evolution of the market. These changes were driven by colonial policies, economic pressures, and the integration of Nyeri into the global economy. These changes had a serious effect on various parameters of food security which included accessibility, utilization, sustainability and consumption Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 1996).

6.2 Emerging Pattern on Women's Local Trade and food Accessibility:

David wa Muchoki (O.I., 2024) states that economic landscape resulting from colonial policies had a significant impact on market accessibility for Agikuyu women who engaged in local trade. Prior to colonial intervention, women played a central role in local trade networks, facilitating the exchange of indigenous food crops and other goods within the community. However, colonial policies often prioritized European settlers and their economic activities, leading to the marginalization of local markets that had traditionally been vital for Agikuyu women's livelihoods (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). As European settlers established large-scale plantations and commercial enterprises, they often controlled key market spaces limiting access for local traders, particularly women.

The emphasis on cash crop farming under colonial rule reshaped the composition of local markets, with cash crops such as coffee and tea dominating trade transactions (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). This shift marginalized indigenous food crops as local markets became increasingly focused on the exchange of cash crops for export rather

than indigenous food crops for local consumption. Agikuyu women, who relied on local trade of indigenous food crops to support their families, found themselves marginalized within these transformed market dynamics. A respondent from Nyeri Wanjiku Peris (O.I., 2024) explains that reduced demand for indigenous food crops in local markets further constrained women's economic opportunities and contributed to food insecurity within the community. She further states that.

The limited accessibility of markets posed additional challenges for Agikuyu women in accessing essential goods and services. With local markets marginalized and dominated by cash crops women faced difficulties in procuring basic necessities such as food staples, clothing, and household items (Peris Wanjiku O.I., 2024).

This lack of market accessibility constrained women's ability to diversify their income sources and exacerbated existing economic vulnerabilities, particularly for women-headed households and those with limited access to transportation (Berhanu, 2016). The concentration of economic activities and market spaces in urban centers further intensified market accessibility challenges for rural Agikuyu women. Many women were located in rural areas with limited infrastructure and transportation networks, making it difficult for them to access distant markets to sell their produce or purchase goods. James Muthee (O.I., 2024) explains that lack of adequate transportation infrastructure and high transportation costs further restricted women's mobility and economic opportunities, perpetuating their marginalization within the colonial economy. Muthee further states that-

Colonial policies made it difficult for us to access markets. Our traditional trade networks were disrupted, and women struggled to sell their produce. (James Muthee O.I., 2024)

To summarize, the changing economic landscape under colonial rule significantly impacted market accessibility for Agikuyu women involved in local trade. With colonial policies favoring European settlers and cash crop farming, local markets were marginalized, dominated by cash crops, and inaccessible to many women (Ingabire, 2019). This situation led to economic vulnerability and food insecurity among Agikuyu women, particularly those in rural areas with limited access to urban markets

(Altieri et al., 2012). To address these challenges, there is a need for inclusive economic development initiatives, improved market infrastructure and empowerment programs aimed at enabling women's full participation in local trade networks.

6.3 The Emerging Pattern's of Women Local Trade on Food Consumption

Traditionally, Agikuyu diets were diverse and nutritious, drawing from a wide array of indigenous traded within the community. This diversity in food sources ensured that essential nutrients were readily available contributing to overall health and well-being. Women, as primary caregivers and traders, played a central role in maintaining these traditional consumption patterns (Ng'endo, 2002). They possessed extensive knowledge on trade of indigenous food crops and preservation techniques, ensuring that meals were not only appetizing, but also balanced and nutritious. The traditional practices of the Agikuyu women supported the cultivation of various food crops, including staples like cassava, wheat, maize, yams, and millet alongside a range of vegetables and fruits (Felister Wambui, O.I., 2024).



Figure 17: Agikuyu Women playing a central role in maintaining traditional consumption patterns

Adapted from (Source: National Archives of Kenya (KNA), 1950)

This diversity in food trade translated into diverse meal options, with different crops being harvested and consumed throughout the year. Women were responsible for managing trading activities and ensuring that there was always a sufficient supply of different food items to meet the family's dietary needs wachera acknowledges that.

“Before the colonial period, our diets were diverse and nutritious because it was mainly from indigenous food crops. We relied on a variety of crops that we grew ourselves, which kept us healthy.” (Joan Wachera O.I., 2024)



Figure 18: A modern market at Mathira displaying the market dynamics on trade items

Photo taken on 5th may 1980

SOURCE: Central province Development plan KNA/CP/4/29

Traditional Agikuyu cuisine reflected cultural values and practices with certain foods holding symbolic significance in rituals and ceremonies. Women preserved these culinary traditions passing down recipes and cooking techniques from generation to generation. Food preparation was often a communal activity bringing together women and families to share knowledge, stories and experiences while preparing meals. This communal aspect of food preparation fostered social bonds and reinforced the interconnectedness of the community. Traditional Agikuyu consumption patterns were characterized by diversity, nutritional adequacy, and cultural significance. Kamu Wanjiku (O.I., 2024) states that women's roles were pivotal in preserving these patterns, ensuring that dietary traditions remained central to the community's identity and well-being.

6.3.1 Effects of Emerging Patterns of Women Local Trade on food Nutrition

The transition to cash crop farming brought about significant changes in the traditional consumption patterns of the Agikuyu women (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). With families increasingly prioritizing the cultivation of crops for sale rather than household consumption, the availability of diverse and nutritious food for domestic use declined (Smalle'y, 2013). The shift towards cash crops such as coffee and tea, meant that agricultural land that was previously utilized for growing food crops was now dedicated to cash crop production, reducing the land area available for food production. As a result of this shift, Agikuyu households began to rely more heavily

on purchased food from markets to meet their dietary needs (KNA/HAK/1/14, 1930-1940). However, the food available in markets was often less diverse and nutritious compared to the traditional foods grown and consumed within the community. This change in dietary composition had implications for the overall health and nutritional status of households as they had less access to the vitamins, minerals and dietary fiber provided by indigenous food crops. Gitonga a respondent notes that-

As we focused more on cash crops, the variety of food we consumed decreased which was mainly from indigenous food crops. We started buying food from the market which was not as nutritious compared to our traditional food. (Edwin Gitonga O., 2024)

The economic pressures associated with cash crop farming exacerbated these dietary changes. Families focused on generating cash income to meet financial obligations such as taxes, school fees and household expenses often at the expense of prioritizing food consumption (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). In times of economic hardship, or market fluctuations, households may have even sold their food crops rather than consuming them, further reducing the availability of food for domestic use. The shift towards cash crops also altered the dynamics of food procurement within households. Traditionally, women played a central role in food production and preparation, ensuring that meals were nutritious and culturally significant (Alons'o, 2015). However, with the increased emphasis on cash crop farming, women may have had less time and resources available for food preparation, leading to changes in cooking practices and meal composition (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). Additionally, the reliance on purchased food meant that women had to navigate market conditions and prices to secure the necessary ingredients for meals adding another layer of complexity to food procurement.

Indigenous food crops cultivated by the Agikuyu community in Nyeri County offered a wealth of nutritional benefits that were crucial for maintaining the health and well-being of the population (Altieri et al., 2012). These crops, which were well-adapted to the local climate and soil conditions, provided a diverse array of essential nutrients, including carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins, and minerals. Staple crops such as millet and sorghum were rich sources of carbohydrates, providing energy for daily activities

and supporting metabolic functions. Traditional vegetables like amaranth, cowpeas, and indigenous greens were abundant sources of vitamins A, C, and K, as well as minerals such as iron, calcium, and potassium which were essential for overall health and immune function (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). Women played a central role in the cultivation, harvesting, and trade of indigenous food crops drawing upon their knowledge of agricultural practices and trade traditions to ensure that these crops were utilized to their fullest nutritional potential. Their expertise in selecting and planting seeds, tending to crops throughout the growing season and trading surplus produce for future consumption was instrumental in maintaining the nutritional diversity of the community's diet. Women's culinary skills allowed them to transform raw ingredients into nourishing and flavorful dishes that satisfied both hunger and nutritional needs ensuring that meals were not only nutritious but also culturally meaningful (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). Njeri an active respondentt notes that-

Indigenous crops like millet and yams were highly nutritious and well-suited to our environment. They provided the essential nutrients our families needed but it was not easy to trade because of disruptions from colonial government (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024)

Akinola et al., (2020) states that the nutritional benefits of indigenous food crops extended beyond their direct consumption, as these traded crops were often integrated into traditional food preparation practices and culinary rituals that reinforced social bonds and cultural identity within the community. For example, communal meals prepared with indigenous ingredients served as occasions for social gathering and celebration, strengthening interpersonal relationships and fostering a sense of belonging among community members. Additionally, traditional food preservation techniques such as drying, fermenting, and pickling allowed surplus produce to be stored for extended periods, ensuring a stable food supply throughout the year and mitigating the effects of seasonal fluctuations in crop availability (David Muchoki,O.I., 2024).

Wambugu Bibian, O.I 2024 also explains that growing of indigenous food crops promoted environmental sustainability and resilience within the agricultural ecosystem. Many indigenous crops were well-adapted to local soil and climatic

conditions, requiring minimal input such as water and chemical fertilizers. Their cultivation also supported biodiversity by providing habitats for beneficial insects and microorganisms, enhancing soil fertility, and reducing the risk of pest and disease outbreaks. Additionally, the diverse cropping systems associated with indigenous food production helped to maintain soil structure and prevent erosion mitigating the effects of climate change and supporting long-term agricultural productivity. Muraya (2019) says that Indigenous food crops played a critical role in supporting the nutritional health, cultural heritage, and environmental sustainability of the Agikuyu community in Nyeri County. Women's central role in the cultivation, preparation and preservation of these crops ensured that their nutritional benefits were maximized and that traditional dietary practices were upheld (KNA/HAK/1/14, 1930-1940). However, the transition to cash crop farming and the erosion of traditional agricultural knowledge and practices threatened the continued availability and utilization of indigenous food crops, highlighting the need for concerted efforts to preserve and promote these valuable resources for future generations.

Post-colonization, the shift towards cash crop farming and the decline in the trade of indigenous food crops had profound implications for the nutritional health of the Agikuyu community in Nyeri County (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). With the emphasis on cash crops such as coffee and tea, agricultural land that was previously used for growing diverse food crops was converted to monoculture plantations reducing the availability of nutritious foods for local consumption (Smalle'y, 2013). As a result, the dietary diversity of the community decreased and traditional staples rich in essential nutrients were increasingly replaced by cash crops that were less nutritious and often exported for profit. Gitonga a respondent affirms that,

When we started focusing on exchange of cash crops instead of our indigenous food crops, we witnessed a decline in the variety of foods we consumed. This led to nutritional deficiencies especially among children. (Edwin Gitonga O.I.,2024)

According to Aphane (2002), the decline in the consumption of indigenous food crops had significant health consequences, particularly for vulnerable members of the community such as children, pregnant women, and the elderly. Indigenous crops such

as millet, sorghum, and traditional vegetables were rich sources of vitamins, minerals, and dietary fiber, which were essential for growth, development, and overall health. However, with the decline in their cultivation and consumption, the community's intake of these vital nutrients decreased, leading to an increased risk of malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and related health problems (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). Children, in particular, were susceptible to the adverse effects of the nutritional decline, as their diets lacked the essential vitamins and minerals necessary for healthy growth and development. Malnutrition and stunted growth became more prevalent, impairing children's physical and cognitive development and perpetuating a cycle of poverty and ill health. Additionally, pregnant and lactating women, who had increased nutritional requirements during pregnancy and breastfeeding, faced heightened risks of maternal and infant mortality due to inadequate diets lacking in essential nutrients.

The decline in dietary diversity and nutritional quality weakened the community's overall health and resilience, making them more susceptible to infectious diseases and other health challenges. Without access to a balanced diet that provided the necessary nutrients for immune function and disease resistance, individuals were more vulnerable to illness and less able to recover from infections (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). This compromised health status and further undermined the community's ability to cope with other socio-economic stresses and environmental pressures, perpetuating a cycle of poverty and ill health. The nutritional decline during the post-colonial era underscored the importance of promoting the trade and consumption of indigenous food crops as a means of improving food security and public health in Nyeri County. Reintroducing traditional crops into trading systems, supporting small-scale farmers in diversifying their crops, and promoting the consumption of nutritious indigenous foods can help address the nutritional deficiencies and health challenges faced by the community (Altieri et al., 2012). Additionally, investing in nutrition education, maternal and child health services, and social safety nets can further support efforts to improve the nutritional status and well-being of the population, ensuring a healthier and more resilient future for generations to come (Wawira wa Dorothy, 2024).

6.4 The Emerging Pattern of Women Local Trade and Food Utilization

According to Maina (2015), trade in traditional indigenous food played a crucial role in maximizing the nutritional value of food crops within the Agikuyu community in Nyeri County. Susan Njeri (O.I., 2024) states that women were the primary caregivers and food providers and were responsible for employing these techniques to ensure that meals were not only safe to eat but also nutritious and flavorful. Fermenting, drying, and boiling were among the most commonly used methods, each serving specific purposes in food preservation and enhancement. Fermentation was a traditional method employed to preserve food and enhance its nutritional value (Smalle, 2013). Indigenous foods were fermented to extend their shelf life and increase their digestibility. Fermented foods were rich in probiotics and enzymes, which supported gut health and aided in nutrient absorption. Fermentation increased the bioavailability of certain nutrients, making them more accessible to the body. Women mastered the art of fermentation, using techniques passed down through generations to produce a variety of fermented foods such as sour porridges, fermented vegetables, and yogurt-like dairy products (Hunter, 2008).



Figure 19: Traditional foods such as grains, vegetables, and dairy products dried and fermented for preservation

Adapted from (National Archives of Kenya (KNA), 1950s)

Drying was another widely used method of food preservation and preparation for foods such as millet, cassava and yams. Dried foods could be stored for extended periods without refrigeration, making them valuable assets during times of scarcity or hardship. Shephard (2006) argues that women carefully prepared and dried surplus food crops during harvest seasons and also items obtained through trade, ensuring a steady supply of preserved foods throughout the year. Dried indigenous foods were

versatile ingredients that could be rehydrated and incorporated into various dishes, providing essential nutrients and flavor to meals. Boiling was a fundamental cooking method used to prepare a wide range of foods, from grains and legumes to meats and vegetables (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). Boiling was not only an effective means of cooking food but also helped to retain its nutritional content. Unlike frying or grilling, which could lead to nutrient loss through heat exposure, boiling allowed foods to cook gently in their own juices, preserving their vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients (KNA/CP/4/29, 1940-1950). Women skillfully prepared nutritious meals using boiling techniques, ensuring that the nutritional needs of their families were met. Njeri a respondent states that-

Our traditional methods of preparing and preserving food helped us to make the most of what we had. These practices were essential for our survival and trade, especially during difficult times. (Susan Njeri O.I., 2024)

Susan Njeri (O.I, 2024) states that part from fermentation, drying, and boiling; other traditional food preparation methods were also employed to maximize nutritional benefits. Techniques such as soaking, sprouting, and pounding were used to enhance the digestibility and nutrient content of foods. For example, soaking grains and legumes before cooking helped to reduce anti-nutrients and improve their nutrient bioavailability. Sprouting seeds and grains increased their nutrient density and made them easier to digest. According to Ndirangu, N. (2009), pounding or milling grains into flour allowed for the preparation of nutritious staple foods such as ugali (maize meal), porridge and chapati (flatbread). Traditional food preparation methods were integral to the Agikuyu community's food utilization practices, ensuring that meals were not only safe and palatable but also nutritionally adequate. Women's expertise in these techniques was essential for maintaining the nutritional well-being of their families and communities, contributing to overall health and resilience in the face of socio-economic challenges and environmental constraints.

From the foregoing, the colonial period brought profound changes to the Agikuyu women's conceptualization of food security. The imposition of taxes and the promotion of cash crops disrupted traditional trade practices and increased dependence on market systems for food (Chabeda-Barthe & Haller, 2018). Changes in

land tenure, labour dynamics, and trade techniques further challenged the community's ability to ensure food security. Addressing the long-term implications of these changes requires a nuanced understanding of the historical context and ongoing effects of colonial policies on gender dynamics, trade practices, and food security.

6.5 Conclusion

Before colonialism in Kenya, the Agikuyu women ensured food security in their homesteads. Through trade in indigenous food crops, they had mastered the trade patterns, and commodities of trade were always available. They also had mastered the seasons and various trading commodities associated with each season. These women had good familiarity on local trade dynamics and these skills were passed from one generation to another and it ensured availability of food crops. However, the depletion, disregard and marginalization of the local trade activities by European colonialists led to emerging of new trade patterns like introduction of horticulture crops. In the market, permanent structures were constructed and monetization of the economy was experienced. Consequently, the Agikuyu people in Nyeri experienced severe food insecurity resulting from the lack of enough indigenous food supply in the market. In the long run, this affected the communities' nutrition access and utilization which had been maintained by indigenous food crops.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The period from 1902 to 1980 saw considerable shifts in the Agikuyu women's trade systems, influenced by both internal dynamics and external pressures. The advent of British colonial rule in the early 20th century imposed new economic policies and social structures that disrupted traditional trade systems. Colonialism brought about land alienation, taxation, and the introduction of cash crops for export, which significantly affected local food production and trade. Despite these challenges, Agikuyu women adapted their strategies to navigate the changing landscape. They leveraged new market opportunities while maintaining trade in indigenous crops though food security in their society was affected.

Post-independence, the Kenyan government focused on national development and modernization, which included efforts to revitalize local markets. During this period, there was a renewed emphasis on food security and economic empowerment, particularly for marginalized groups such as women. Agikuyu women continued to play a crucial role in local trade, adapting to new policies and market conditions. They participated in cooperative societies, accessed microfinance, and utilized extension services to enhance their productivity and market reach. This study provides a detailed account of these transitions and their implications on food security in Nyeri County. By examining historical records, oral histories, and existing literature, the research traces the evolution of the Agikuyu women's local trade system and highlights their resilience. The findings underscore the critical role of women in maintaining food security through their trade practices and activities.

The importance of this study lies in its contribution to understanding the intersection of gender, trade, and food security within a historical context. It sheds light on the often overlooked contributions of women to local economies and provides insights into how traditional practices can be integrated with modern economic strategies to enhance food security. Moreover, the study offers valuable lessons for policy-makers and development practitioners seeking to support women's economic empowerment and sustainable practices. In conclusion, the study sets the stage for a comprehensive

exploration of the changes in the Agikuyu women's local trade system and its impact on food security in Nyeri County. It highlights the significance of indigenous food crops as trading commodities, the challenges posed by colonial and post-colonial policies, and the remarkable resilience of Agikuyu women. This chapter provides a foundation for understanding the subsequent discussions on findings, conclusions, and recommendations, emphasizing the need to appreciate and support the spirited role of women in local trade and food security.

7.1 Summary of the Findings of the Study

The research on the history of the Agikuyu women's local trade system on indigenous food crops and its contribution to food security in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980 revealed several key findings that underscore the critical role of these women in maintaining and enhancing food security through their trade practices. Firstly, the study found that Agikuyu women were central to the trade in indigenous food crops, which formed the backbone of food security in Nyeri County prior to colonialism. These crops including yams, millet, sorghum, sweet potatoes, and traditional vegetables, were not only culturally significant for trade but also essential for nutritional security. The women's deep knowledge of exchange of these crops, coupled with their resilience, enabled them to sustain food availability even during periods of economic and social upheaval. This comprehensive involvement ensured that their communities had a steady supply of food, contributing significantly to household and community food security.

The colonial period introduced profound changes that disrupted traditional trade systems. The imposition of British colonial rule brought about land alienation, which displaced many Agikuyu families from their ancestral lands. This displacement had a direct impact on food production for trade activities, as families lost access to the land, they depended on for growing indigenous food crops. Additionally, colonial policies favored the production of cash crops like coffee and tea for export at the expense of indigenous food crops this diverted resources and labour away from trade of indigenous food crops. Despite these challenges, Agikuyu women demonstrated remarkable adaptability. They diversified their trade practices by integrating new crops introduced by the colonial administration while continuing to trade with

indigenous crops. This dual approach allowed them to navigate the colonial economy while ensuring that their communities remained food secure.

At post-independence, Kenya's national development policies aimed at modernizing agriculture and revitalizing local markets. During this period, there was a concerted effort to improve food security and promote economic empowerment, particularly for women. The study found that Agikuyu women were quick to take advantage of these new opportunities. They actively participated in cooperative societies, which provided them with access to credit, inputs, and better market information. These cooperatives played a crucial role in enhancing their productivity and market reach. Additionally, government extension services provided training and support, enabling women to adopt improved farming techniques and increase their yields for trade activities. The post-independence era also saw an emphasis on education, which equipped many Agikuyu women with the skills needed to navigate the evolving market landscape effectively.

A significant finding of the study was the economic empowerment of Agikuyu women through their participation in local trade. By engaging in the trade in indigenous food crops, these women generated income that improved their households' livelihoods. This economic empowerment had a ripple effect on the broader community, as women reinvested their earnings in education, healthcare, and other social services. The increased financial stability also enhanced their bargaining power within the household and the community, leading to greater social and economic autonomy. This empowerment was crucial for the overall development of Nyeri County, as it contributed to poverty reduction and social cohesion. The study also highlighted the adaptability of Agikuyu women in the face of socio-economic challenges. Despite the disruptions caused by colonialism and the pressures of modernization, these women maintained a delicate balance between traditional practices and new economic realities. Their ability to adapt to changing circumstances while preserving indigenous trade knowledge was instrumental in sustaining food security. This resilience was evident in their innovative approaches to trade, such as forming informal networks and associations to support each other, share resources, and collectively market their

produce. These networks provided a support system that enhanced their capacity to withstand economic shocks and maintain food production.

Furthermore, the research underscored the importance of trade on indigenous food crops in ensuring food security. These crops were well-suited to the local climatic conditions and required fewer inputs compared to cash crops. Their cultivation not only provided a reliable food source but also preserved biodiversity and cultural heritage. The study found that promoting the cultivation and trade of indigenous food crops could significantly enhance food security, particularly in the face of climate change and other environmental challenges. In conclusion, the findings of this study illustrate the critical role of Agikuyu women in local trade systems and their substantial contribution to food security in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980. Their resilience, adaptability, and comprehensive involvement in production and trade were critical in navigating the challenges posed by colonial and post-colonial policies. The economic empowerment of these women had far-reaching implications for their communities, contributing to improved livelihoods and social cohesion. The study highlights the need to support and enhance women's roles in local trade to ensure sustainable food security and community development.

7.2 Conclusion

The study on the history of the Agikuyu women's local trade system in indigenous food crops and their contribution to food security in Nyeri County from 1902 to 1980 concludes that these women played an indispensable role in maintaining and enhancing food security through their trade practices. Despite significant disruptions brought about by colonial rule which included land alienation, the imposition of cash crop economies, and various socio-economic upheavals, Agikuyu women demonstrated remarkable resilience though food insecurity increased during this time. They effectively navigated these challenges by diversifying their trade activities and integrating new commodities into their trade practices introduced during the colonial period, while preserving the trade of indigenous food crops. This dual approach not only ensured the availability of food within their communities but also facilitated economic stability and empowerment. The post-independence era brought renewed opportunities through national development policies aimed at modernizing trade and

improving market access. Agikuyu women capitalized on these opportunities by actively participating in cooperative societies and utilizing extension services to enhance their productivity and market reach. This participation was crucial in empowering them economically, improving household livelihoods, and contributing to community resilience though food insecurity has been a thorn issues in this society since the time of colonialism. The economic empowerment of these women had a transformative impact, enabling them to reinvest their earnings in essential services such as education and healthcare, thereby fostering broader social and economic development. Moreover, the study underscores the critical importance of trade in indigenous food crops in ensuring food security. These crops, were well-suited to local climatic conditions. They required fewer inputs hence there was constant supply of trading commodities in the markets. The indigenous foods not only provided a reliable source of nutrition but also preserved biodiversity and cultural heritage. The continued trade in indigenous crops was integral to sustaining food security, particularly in the face of environmental challenges and changing market dynamics. The ability of Agikuyu women to balance traditional trade practices with new economic realities highlights their key role in the community and the broader socio-economic landscape of Nyeri County. The study concludes that supporting and enhancing the role of women in trade of indigenous food crops is essential for sustainable food security and community development. Policies and programs that provide women with access to credit, training, and market information, as well as initiatives that promote the trade of indigenous crops, are vital. The findings underscore the need for a holistic approach that recognizes and strengthens the contributions of women to local economies and food systems. In essence, the study reaffirms that the resilience, adaptability, and economic agency of Agikuyu women were instrumental in navigating the socio-economic transformations of the 20th century, trying to ensure food security in Nyeri County. Their legacy offers valuable lessons for contemporary policy-making and development practices aimed at enhancing food security and women's empowerment.

7.3 Recommendations

- i. The government through the ministry of Public Service, Youth and Gender affairs should document and keep records on women trade in indigenous food crops and how it mitigates food security. The information is easily accessible and it can be passed from one generation to another for proper consumption.
- ii. The study also recommends that the relevance of trade in indigenous food crops should be integrated into the modern exchange pattern. This could go a long way towards realization of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on maintaining food security, Kenya's Vision 2030 and Constitution of Kenya 2010 that guarantee every person right to be free from hunger, and to have adequate food of acceptable quality in the modern society.
- iii. The study recommends that the government should accept and recognize that women are important actors in sustaining socio-economic structures of their community and in mitigating society's challenges such as food scarcities in their society.

7.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Comprehensive research should be conducted on comparative studies on the role of women in local trade systems across different ethnic groups and regions in Kenya. Such research would provide insights into common challenges and successful strategies, offering a broader understanding of how cultural, social, and economic factors influence women's roles in trade and agriculture.

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KNA/DC/KBU/1/8: Nyeri District Records (1950-1960)

KNA/PL/NZA/1: Planning and Development Reports, Central Province (1980-1990)

KNA/DC/NY/1/1: District Commissioner's Annual Reports, Nyeri District (1902-1912)

KNA/AGR/2/15: Policies and Implementation, Central Province (1912-1922)

KNA/LND/4/7: Land Tenure and Ownership Records, Nyeri (1922-1932)

KNA/AR/NY/2/6: Annual Reports, Nyeri District (1932-1942)

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ORAL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Table 3: Oral Sources of Information

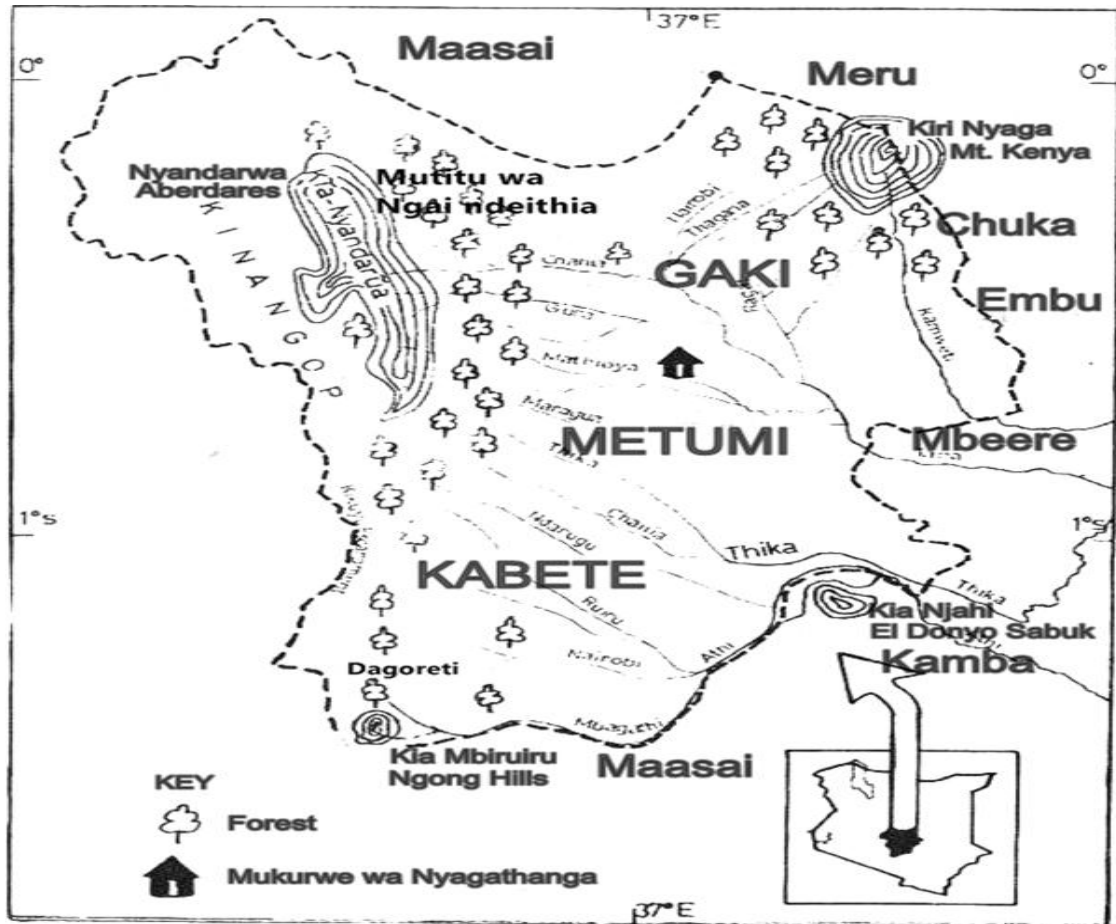
Name	Sub-County	Date	Age	G	Name	Sub-County	Date	age	G
James Muthee	Nyeri central	23 rd May 2024	87	M	Dorothy Wawira	Mathira east	3 rd June 2024	64	F
Joan Wachera	Mathira East	26 th may 2024	77	F	Njeru mbogo	Mathira East	26 th June 2024	81	M
Susan Njeri	Kieni East	6 th MJune 2024	79	F	Bibiana Wamuyu	Nyeri Central	24 th Aug 2024	77	F
Wincate Wanja	Nyeri Central	5 th June 2024	65	F	Phoebby wangechi	Kieni East	20th June 2024	83	F
Lucy Waithera	Mathira East	5 th June 2024	87	F	Adrian mutitu	Nyeri central	21st June 2024	88	M
Alice Ngunjiri	Nyeri central	24 th April 2024	86	F	lorna mukami	Mathira East	24 th May 2024	70	F
Mwaniki fundi	Mathira East	24 th May 2024	81	M	Mwangi edwin mutugi	Nyeri central	27th May 2024	72	M
Eunice mukami	Kieni East	30 th May 2024	90	F	Felister wambugu	Nyeri central	27th May 2024	66	F
Joan wairimu	Nyeri Cental	19 th June 2024	97	F	Racheal Wangu	Mathira East	1st June 2024	70	F
David mucoki	Mathira East	19 th June	60	M	Morgan muriithi	Nyeri Central	2nd May 2024	76	F

		2024							
Jacob Ndung'u	Nyeri central	23 th May 2024	86	F	Recheal Wangu	Kieni East	25 th May 2024	77	F
Immaculate Wachera	Kieni East	28 th June 2024	76	F	Cecilia Karobia	Kieni East	6 th June 2024	80	F
Purity wanjugu	Nyeri Cental	28 th June 2024	77	F	Kalamu robert mukundi	Mathira East	7 th June 2024	65	M
Kamau purity wanjiku	Nyeri central	28 th May 2024	89	F	Brendah kaguri	Mathira	8 th June 2024	88	F
Naomi Wanjiru	Nyeri Central	25 th May 2024	70	F	Wanjiru Duta	Kieni East	23 rd May 2024	85	M
Elizabeth Nyambura	Kieni East	14 th	83	F	Jane wokabi	Mathira East	May 23 rd 2024	82	F
Naomi njeri	Kieni East	26 th June 2024	90	F	Paul kamwaro	Kieni East	27 th May 2024	55	M
Gitonga nancy	Nyeri central	26 th May 2024	88	F	Karen karimi	Mathira East	7 th June 2024	86	F
Lydia ndia	Mathira East	29 th May 2024	78	F	James kiragu	Kieni East	22 ^{4th} May 2024	93	M
Ng`ang`a karanja	Mathira East	29 th May 2024	86	M	Dorine wangui	Nyeri central	11 th June 2024	74	F
Henry gitau	Mathira East	24 th May 2024	84	M	Mburia wairimu	Mathira	22 nd June 2024	82	F
Rachael kiiru	Kieni East	6 th	62	F	Muchina	Kieni	27 th	63	F

		June 2024			bernadette wanjiru	East	May 2024		
Peris wanjiku	Nyeri central	7 th June 2024	71	F	Paul kagama	Mathira East	28 th May 2024	90	M
George mwangi	Mathira East	25 th May 2024	69	M	Mwambui elizabeth	Nyeri central	30 th May 2024	73	F
Grace mukami	Mathira East	9 th June 2024	70	F	Peter Kanja	Mathira	24 th May 2024	72	M
Joan muthee	Mathira	11 th June 024	66	F	Munene elsie nyambura	Nyeri central	11 th June 2024	60	F
Vivian kabui	Nyeri central	11 th June 024	62	F	John Wa Karanja	Mathira East	24 th May 2024	64	M
		024							

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Map of Kikuyuland before 1900



Source: Kenya National Archive

Appendix II: Interview Guide

This interview guide questionnaire was intended to collect data on history of the Agikuyu women's local trade on indigenous food crops and its effects on food security in Nyeri County (1902 - 1980) it had five parts. Respondents were requested to give honest information on each question in all the five sections to the best of their ability.

SECTION A: Demographic Data

1. Name of the respondent _____
2. Gender
Male [] Female []
3. Age
55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []
4. Location
Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []
Others/ specify

5. Occupation _____
6. Leadership position where applicable
Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []
Others

SECTION B: Influence of Pre-colonial Agikuyu Women's Local Trade in Indigenous Food Crops on Food Security in Nyeri.

1. Briefly explain how the traditional trade on food crops conducted was.

- . Where was the trade on indigenous food crops conducted?

2. List at least four items of Trade.
 - i. _____
 - ii. _____
 - iii. _____

iv. _____

3a. who made the decision on items of trade and their value

b. Was it individual role or a collective role?

4a. Were there specific items that women traded on?

If yes list them

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

v. _____

5. Where were the items stored before trading them?

6. Why were women involved in trade of these indigenous food crops?

7. Which were the communities that the Agikuyu women used to trade?

8. Were there specific day for trade

SECTION C: Change of Agikuyu Women's Trade on Indigenous Food Crops in Nyeri County from 1902-1980

1. Can you recall when the white man came to this area?

Yes [] No []

2. If yes, when did they arrive in Nyeri area?

3. Do you recall which European group arrived in Nyeri First?

Missionaries [] White farmers [] Administrator []

Others –specify _____

4. a) How did the Agikuyu of Nyeri perceive the coming of Europeans in this area?

Did the Europeans take your parents or relatives land?

Yes [] No []

b) If yes, which method did this European use to take away the land?

5. Was the traditional land ownership changed by the white settlement in Nyeri?

Yes [] No []

b) If yes, explain how it was affected?

6. Did the Agikuyu women of Nyeri have the right to access land for production of indigenous crops?

7. If yes, explain which rights

8. Did the Agikuyu women had control over the trade of indigenous food crops they produced during the colonial period?

Yes [] No []

If no, explain why?

9. How was the trade of indigenous food crops changed when the Europeans took over their land?

10. Any new trading commodities that were introduced by colonial government?

Yes [] No []

If yes explain how it changed women trade on indigenous food crops.

11. Did the introduction of new trade commodities by the Europeans affect the local market places and location

11. Did the colonial government allow trade of indigenous food crops to continue in Nyeri Area?

Yes [] No []

If no, explain how they restricted the trade.

12. How was the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops changed by the colonial labour system

—
13. How was the Agikuyu women's trade altered by the European commercialisation of products

—
14. Did you notice any emerging new patterns in the Agikuyu women's indigenous trade

Yes No

D

Explain _

15. What happened to the Agikuyu women's trade on Indigenous food Crops immediately after independence?

Yes [] No []

If No why

16. Did the missionaries' activities affect the existing Agikuyu women's on trade of indigenous food crops and ensuring food security in their household?

If yes explain how?

SECTION D: How the emerging pattern of Agikuyu women trade on indigenous food crops influenced various dimensions of food security in Nyeri county from 1902-1980

1. When did you begin to notice new patterns of women's trade in your area?

2. Describe how the new pattern of Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops was in the early colonial period

3. In which ways was food availability affected during the new patterns of women's trade during the war and inter-war period

4. Apart from trade any other new ways Agikuyu women came up with to ensure food availability and access in their household during the colonial period?

Yes [] No []

b) If yes, name them

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

5. Where did you store your indigenous food crops after harvest during the colonial period

6. How did the new ways of storage and preservation of indigenous food crops affect the women's trade and food security in Nyeri?

7. What were the main factors that hindered women participation on trade of indigenous food crops?

8. (a) Are you aware of any strategy or measures that the colonial government provided to improve the local trades on indigenous food crops?

Yes [] No []

If yes, identify them

9. What problems does the family go through when there is less food to go round?

10. a) How did the new pattern of women's local trade affect household consumption of less preferred foods?

b) Did the new pattern of trade influence the quantity of food served to family members in the household?

c) Did you reduce your own consumption of food compared with before colonial period?

11. Did you reduce the quantity of food served in the households before 1980?

f) Did members of the household skip any meal during the day?

12. How do you think the new pattern of women's trade of indigenous food crops influenced the nutritional value of food consumption in the households ?

13. At times of crisis and food shortage did you adopt new rituals of sourcing iyes yeyes food for the house hold

14. Did you get sustainable food supply in the household from the new trade systems ?

15. Were the markets adequately stocked with food sources such as traditional crops & grains that you need?

Yes [] No []

16. Given all that you have shared in this interaction, give your recommendation on how trade of indigenous food crops would ensure food security in this area?

Appendix III: Focus Group Schedule

This focus Group Schedule was intended to collect data on history of the Agikuyu women's local trade on indigenous food crops and its effects on food security in Nyeri County (1902 - 1980) it had five parts. Respondents were Six from each sub county four female and two men they were requested to discuss and give honest information on each question in all the five sections to the best of their ability.

SECTION A:

1. Demographic Data

- i) Name of the respondent 1 _____
- ii) Name of the respondent 2 _____
- iii) Name of the respondent 3 _____
- iv) Name of the respondent 4 _____
- v) Name of the respondent 5 _____
- iv) Name of the respondent 6 _____

2. Gender respectively

- i) Male [] Female [] ii) Male [] Female [] iii) Male [] Female []
- iv) Male [] Female [] v) Male [] Female [] iv) Male [] Female []

3. Age respectively

- i) 55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []
- ii) 55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []
- iii) 55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []
- iv) 55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []
- v) 55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []
- iv) 55yrs -64yrs [] 65yrs-74yrs [] 75yrs-84yrs [] 85yr& above []

4. Location respectively

- i) Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []

- ii) Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []
- iii) Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []
- iv) Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []
- v) Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []
- vi) Nyeri Central [] Mathira Eas [] Kieni East []

Others/ specify

5. Occupation

i) Occupation

ii) Occupation

iii) Occupation

iv) Occupation

v) Occupation

vi) Occupation

6) Leadership position where applicable respectively

i) Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []

Others

ii) Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []

Others

iii) Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []

Others

iv) Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []

Others

v) Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []

Others

vi) Political Leader [] Women leader [] Religious leader []

Others

SECTION B:

Influence of Pre-colonial Agikuyu Women's Local Trade in Indigenous Food Crops on Food Security in Nyeri.

Instructions:- a question of Yes or No pick the views from the majority and their discussions

1. Briefly explain how the traditional trade on food crops conducted was.

. Where was the trade on indigenous food crops conducted?

2. List at least four items of Trade.

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

3a. who made the decision on items of trade and their value

b. Was it individual role or a collective role?

4a. Were there specific items that women traded on?

If yes list them

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

v. _____

5. Where were the items stored before trading them?

6. Why were women involved in trade of these indigenous food crops?

7) Which were the communities that the Agikuyu women used to trade?

8) Were there specific day for trade

SECTION C:

Change of Agikuyu Women's Trade on Indigenous Food Crops in Nyeri County from 1902-1980

1. Can you recall when the white man came to this area?

Yes [] No []

2. If yes, when did they arrive in Nyeri area?

3. Do you recall which European group arrived in Nyeri First?

Missionaries [] White farmers [] Administrator []

Others –specify _____

4. a) How did the Agikuyu of Nyeri perceive the coming of Europeans in this area?

Did the Europeans take your parents or relatives land?

Yes [] No []

b) If yes, which method did this European use to take away the land?

5. Was the traditional land ownership changed by the white settlement in Nyeri?

Yes [] No []

b) If yes, explain how it was affected?

6. Did the Agikuyu women of Nyeri have the right to access land for production of indigenous crops?

7. If yes, explain which rights

8. Did the Agikuyu women had control over the trade of indigenous food crops they produced during the colonial period?

Yes [] No []

If no, explain why?

9. How was the trade of indigenous food crops changed when the Europeans took over their land?

10. Any new trading commodities that were introduced by colonial government?

Yes [] No []

If yes explain how it changed women trade on i indigenous food crops.

11. Did the introduction of new trade commodities by the Europeans affect the local market places and location

12. Did the colonial government allow trade of indigenous food crops to continue in Nyeri Area?

Yes [] No []

If no, explain how they restricted the trade.

13. How was the Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops changed by the colonial labour system

14. How was the Agikuyu women's trade altered by the European commercialisation of products

15. Did you notice any emerging new patterns in the Agikuyu women's indigenous trade

Yes No

D

Explain _

16. What happened to the Agikuyu women's trade on Indigenous food Crops immediately after independence?

Yes [] No []

If No why

17. Did the missionaries' activities affect the existing Agikuyu women's on trade of indigenous food crops and ensuring food security in their household?

If yes explain how?

SECTION D: How the emerging pattern of Agikuyu women trade on indigenous food crops influenced various dimensions of food security in Nyeri county from 1902-1980

1. When did you begin to notice new patterns of women's trade in your area?

2. Describe how the new pattern of Agikuyu women's trade on indigenous food crops was in the early colonial period

3. In which ways was food availability affected during the new patterns of women's trade during the war and inter-war period

4. Apart from trade any other new ways Agikuyu women came up with to ensure food availability and access in their household during the colonial period?

Yes [] No []

b) If yes, name them

i. _____

ii. _____

iii. _____

iv. _____

5. Where did you store your indigenous food crops after harvest during the colonial period

6. How did the new ways of storage and preservation of indigenous food crops affect the women's trade and food security in Nyeri?

7. What were the main factors that hindered women participation on trade of indigenous food crops?

8. (a) Are you aware of any strategy or measures that the colonial government provided to improve the local trades on indigenous food crops?

Yes [] No []

If yes, identify them

9. What problems does the family go through when there is less food to go round?

10. a) How did the new pattern of women's local trade affect household consumption of less preferred foods?

b) Did the new pattern of trade influence the quantity of food served to family members in the household?

c) Did you reduce your own consumption of food compared with before colonial period?

11. Did you reduce the quantity of food served in the households before 1980?

f) Did members of the household skip any meal during the day?

12. How do you think the new pattern of women's trade of indigenous food crops influenced the nutritional value of food consumption in the households ?

13. At times of crisis and food shortage did you adopt new rituals of sourcing iyes yeyes food for the house hold

14. Did you get sustainable food supply in the household from the new trade systems ?

15. Were the markets adequately stocked with food sources such as traditional crops & grains that you need?

Yes [] No []

16. Given all that you have shared in this interaction, give your recommendation on how trade of indigenous food crops would ensure food security in this area?

Appendix IV: Chuka University Introductory Letter



CHUKA UNIVERSITY

Knowledge is Wealth (*Sapientia divitia est*) Akili ni Mali

**OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Telephones: 020-23 10512/18
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P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka
Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

REF: AD14/38436/18

17th April, 2024

**Director
National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation
Off Waiyaki Way, Upper Kabete
P O Box 30623, 00100
Nairobi.**


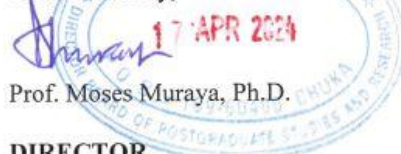
Dear Sir / Madam,

JULIUS MATHENGE GITONGA

The above-named person is a *bona fide* student of Chuka University pursuing PhD in History proposal titled: **Change in the Agikuyu Women's Local Trade System on Indigenous Food Crops and its Contribution to Food Security in Nyeri County (1902-1980)**

Mr. Gitonga has defended at the Faculty level and is now expected to conduct research. Any assistance accorded will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Moses Muraya, Ph.D.

**DIRECTOR
BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Appendix V: Chuka University Ethics Review Letter



CHUKA UNIVERSITY INSTITUTIONAL ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

Telephones: 020-2310512/18

P. O. Box 109-60400, Chuka

Direct Line: 0772894438

Email: info@chuka.ac.ke,

Website: www.chuka.ac.ke

19th March, 2024

REF: CUIERC/ NACOSTI/501

TO: Julius Mathenge Gitonga

RE: Change in the Agikuyu Women's Local Trade System on Indigenous Food Crops and its Contribution to Food Security in Nyeri County (1902 – 1980)

This is to inform you that *Chuka University IERC* has reviewed and approved your above research proposal. Your application approval number is *NACOSTI/NBC/AC-0812*. The approval period is 19th March, 2024 – 19th March, 2025.

This approval is subject to compliance with the following requirements;






- i. Only approved documents including (informed consents, study instruments, MTA) will be used
- ii. All changes including (amendments, deviations, and violations) are submitted for review and approval by *Chuka University IERC*.
- iii. Death and life threatening problems and serious adverse events or unexpected adverse events whether related or unrelated to the study must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours of notification
- iv. Any changes, anticipated or otherwise that may increase the risks or affected safety or welfare of study participants and others or affect the integrity of the research must be reported to *Chuka University IERC* within 72 hours
- v. Clearance for export of biological specimens must be obtained from relevant institutions.
- vi. Submission of a request for renewal of approval at least 60 days prior to expiry of the approval period. Attach a comprehensive progress report to support the renewal.
- vii. Submission of an executive summary report within 90 days upon completion of the study to *Chuka University IERC*.

Prior to commencing your study, you will be expected to obtain a research license from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) <https://oris.nacosti.go.ke> and also obtain other clearances needed.

Yours sincerely

Dr. Benjamin Kanga
SECRETARY

Appendix VI: NACOSTI Authorization

 REPUBLIC OF KENYA	 NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
RefNo: 279475	Date of Issue: 23/May/2024
RESEARCH LICENSE	
	
<p>This is to Certify that Mr.. julius mathenge gitonga of Chuka University, has been licensed to conduct research as per the provision of the Science, Technology and Innovation Act, 2013 (Rev.2014) in Nyeri on the topic: CHANGE IN THE AGIKUYU WOMEN'S LOCAL TRADE SYSTEM ON INDIGENOUS FOOD CROPS AND IT'S CONTRIBUTION TO FOOD SECURITY IN NYERI COUNTY (1902-1980) for the period ending : 23/May/2025.</p>	
License No: NACOSTI/P/24/35642	
279475	
Applicant Identification Number	Director General NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
	Verification QR Code
	
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