

**TRANSFORMATION OF INDIGENOUS COOPERATIVE INITIATIVES IN
GUSILAND, 1904-2002**

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PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE CONFERMENT OF
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN HISTORY, DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
AND HERITAGE STUDIES, KISII UNIVERSITY**

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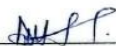
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Mr. John Matogo and my late mother, Mrs. Mary Moraa, who died during the proposal stage of writing this thesis, for being staunch believers in education being the key to success.

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ABSTRACT

This study surveys the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland between 1904 and 2002. It sought to contribute to the efforts of the Abagusii community towards the innovation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland as an initiative for the transformation of livelihoods. The study was guided by the following objectives; to trace the nature and growth of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland, to analyse the effects of colonial policies, culture and practices of European settlement in Gusiiland and to investigate the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives and its impact on the transformation of people's livelihoods in Gusiiland. The research study employed two theories: first, modernization theory which postulates that a break from 'primitive' traditional society is necessary for that society to attain large production status. The other theory used was dependency and underdevelopment which asserts that resources flow from a 'periphery' of poor nations to the 'core' of rich nations and thus enriching the latter at the expense of the former. Consequently, poor economies are integrated into the free market economy; commonly known as world systems. The study was conducted in Gusiiland. The population of the study was sampled from the nine sub-counties of Kisii County using the snowballing sampling technique. Further, internet sources and libraries were widely utilized as secondary materials. In addition, the study used primary sources of data collection which included oral interviews and archival evidence. Descriptive method was used to analyse data collected from the field thereafter. The basis of this study was the rationale for the emergence and sprouting of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland towards transforming livelihoods in the community and the unity of purpose ensured not only food security, but also ensured societal welfare was bound and that relative peace and security was maintained. Further, findings were also evident that indigenous cooperative initiatives created a chain of bond among the Abagusii which still exists to date. However, it was also noted that European settlement in Gusiiland was forthwith occasioned with the introduction of new policies, culture and practices which altogether worked to the destruction of the existing structures. Hence, societal bond among the Abagusii has since grown cold, and the unity of purpose greatly weakened. Nevertheless, a chain of bond still exists amongst the Abagusii; as evidenced in the emergence and mushrooming of social groupings whose aim is to assist one another at all times – something that follows them even to their places of work and residence.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Colonialism	Refers to the restructuring of political, economic, and social systems in Kenya between 1895 and 1963. However, the study utilised the period 1904–1920 in Gusiiland since, despite the protectorate status, colonial policies had not fully undermined existing Gusii structures during the early years.
Development	Refers to a process involving creativity, skills, and material wellbeing within a society. It encompasses changes aimed at improving social and economic welfare as well as individual self-fulfilment. In the context of this study, development was not measured solely through economic growth or rising living standards after independence, but also through the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives in sustaining social cohesion and improving the wellbeing of the Abagusii community.
Gusiiland	Refers to the present-day Kisii and Nyamira Counties. However, the current study focused on Kisii County as a representative of Gusiiland because of geographical and time limitations.
Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives	Refers to self-help groups or collective partnership efforts among the Abagusii in activities such as planting, weeding, and harvesting on a rotational basis. These initiatives were widely practised during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. In contemporary society, they continue in forms such as harambees, merry-go-rounds, women’s groups, and chamas, which are largely money-oriented.

	Refers to indigenous food crops formerly cultivated as primary crops by the
Orphan Crops	Abagusii whose production declined with the coming of settlers. These mainly included finger millet and sorghum.
	Refers to a qualitative change in form, structure, or appearance. In this
Transformation	study, it denotes the shift from collective effort and communal unity to a more individualistic system driven largely by capital and personal interests.

GLOSSARY OF WORDS

Chama	Self-help programes
Egesarate	Cattle boma
Ekee	A bowl-like container made from millet stalks
Ekenyabomo	Individualism
Enchagwa	Weeds
Enyomba	Clan
Matoke	Bananas
Misri (Misiri)	Egypt
Mogisangio	Peer
Ukirimiti	Agreement

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

BSAC	British South African Company
CBO	Community Based Organization
GCE	Gusii Council of Elders
GICI	Gusii Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives
ILO	International Labour Organization
KADU	Kenya African Democratic Union
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KAR	King's African Rifles
KNA	Kenya National Archives
KNLS	Kenya National Library Service
KV2030	Kenya Vision 2030
LNC	Local Native Council
MA	Master of Arts
MHS	Mill Hill Society
MYWO	Maendeleo ya Wanawake Organization
NEMA	National Environmental Management Agency
NTZDC	Nyayo Tea Zones Development Corporation
O. I	Oral Interview

PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SDA	Seventh-day Adventist
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
UNEC	United Nations Economic Community
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNO	United Nations Organization

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Throughout history, cooperatives have been known to drive a majority of people towards transformation. This cooperative spirit has emerged as an embodiment of societal bonds and unity of purpose in the world. Over time, the course of transformation has to some extent shifted the phase of cooperatives to a great extent. Whether positively or negatively was not the intention of this study to focus in that line.¹ However, these social movements have been likened to be the basis of poverty alleviation across communities. The study of the history of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland was therefore worth undertaking to ascertain the extent of Gusii transformation to the present day.² This was informed by the fact that cooperatives have centuries of history behind them; and that Abagusii proved to be among the pioneers of such cooperatives.

The United Nation Organization (UNO) declared 2012 the year of cooperatives and encouraged all its member states and other relevant stakeholders to embrace cooperatives in their respective areas of jurisdictions. This was after the realization that cooperative movements were part and parcel of the thriving economy; and that which directly or indirectly engage every citizen of a country. Ultimately, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), which is the decision-making organ of the UNO, adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a development blue-print globally. This agenda, (commonly known as Agenda 2030) aimed at empowering all countries of the world especially developing ones, so as to grow economically,

¹ Curl, John. *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communism in America*. Oakland: PM Press, 2009

² Robert M. Maxon, *Conflict and accomodation in western Kenya: The Gusii and the British, 1907-1963*. Rutherford u.a.: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Pr., 1989.

socially and in other areas of sustainability.³ The SDGs numbers 1, 2 and 9 addresses the building of a resilient infrastructure and industrialization with agriculture being the key driver in the realization of this agenda.

In South Africa, a country preoccupied with apartheid policy, gained her independence in 1994. Prior to their independence, discrimination of all forms was ripe. Discrimination here was a blessing in disguise as many societies in South Africa grouped together with a common purpose and jointly formed organizations for blacks. They cultivated various crops which could otherwise not have been met by an individual given the higher levels of discrimination.⁴ As Gilliomee and Mbenga⁵ observe, settlers came by 1820 mostly due to Napoleonic wars in Europe which inevitably left Britain inexperienced and much unemployment. These settler artisans settled in urban areas whilst settler farmers settled in rural areas where they planted maize and barley thereby contributing to agricultural growth. South Africa had great potential.⁶ Settlers utilized this agricultural potential to speed up infrastructural growth, economic growth and the thriving initiatives into the formation of today's cooperative movements.

The 2030 development agenda strategically coincides with the Kenya Vision 2030 (KV2030) whose aim was to also alleviate poverty and hunger and to ensuring prosperity in the country. In achieving this agenda, collaboration among countries of the world is fundamental. Kenya, as a developing country, welcomed the 2030 agenda by coining a campaign slogan "leave no one behind" whose intention was to sensitize citizens in the country to partner in realizing prosperity

³ Kenya Vision 2030, Kenya Vision 2030, accessed May 29, 2026, <https://vision2030.go.ke>.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Bernard Giliomee and Hermann H. Mbenga, *New history of South Africa*: Hermann Giliomee, Bernard Mbenga. (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 2007).

⁶ Ibid

for all.⁷ That, in joining hands and resource mobilization, Kenya would attain tremendous growth rate able to compete globally. This would be possible as rural development was fundamental to agrarian revolution.⁸ The call to collaboration among UNO countries by UNGA and the need to prioritize cooperatives establishment ignites interest in this study. Insufficient research in the field of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland also backed interest in the topic.

In relation to this recent developed global agenda, this study therefore sought to contribute to the existing effort of indigenous cooperative initiatives among the Abagusii towards the transformation of majority of people in Gusiiland. Thus, cooperatives are seen as creators of job opportunities, extension of protection and in facilitating youth empowerment, thereby reducing poverty and hunger where the state and individuals fail, as enshrined in the SDGs goal 1 and 2. The study of indigenous cooperative initiatives therefore is vital in a country.⁹ Future generations depend on mechanisms and structures put in place by the current generation or else, there would be a situation of agricultural depression. This is why cooperatives should historically be studied to avoid further experimenting on the origin and transformation of this force behind quality and quantity production.

It was observed further, that Gusiiland, despite being fertile, presented a ‘challenge of unfragmented land holdings from the top of ridges to the bottom valley’.¹⁰ The Abagusii saw this as an opportunity by regrouping with an aim of transforming their livelihoods through cooperative labour.¹¹ The focus was to capitalize on labour resource since there were huge

⁷Kenya Vision 2030, Kenya Vision 2030, accessed May 29, 2026, <https://vision2030.go.ke>.

⁸Anthony Clayton, *The Economic History of East Africa - Hadith 5, Economic and Social History of East Africa*. Edited by Bethwell A. Ogot. (Nairobi: East African Literature, 1960).

⁹ ReGen4Futures, “SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals,” accessed May 29, 2026, <https://regen4futures.org/en/discover-regen/education-with-impact/sdgs-sustainability-knowledge/>.

¹⁰ Victor C. Uchendu and Anthony Kenneth., *Agricultural Change in Kisii District, Kenya; a study of economic, cultural and technical determinants of agricultural change in tropical Africa*. (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975).

¹¹Philip Mayer, *Two studies in Applied Anthropology in Kenya*. (London: H.M.S.O., 1951).

chunks of fertile land, and which could be almost impossible to an individual household to till. The fertile soils and reliable rainfall distribution in the seasons of the year must have influenced the cultivation of crops. Consequently, the cultivation of finger millet, *obori* and sorghum, *amaemba* was introduced and immediately became the staple food; with traditional maize also grown to supplement their diet.¹² Abagusii pioneered cooperative initiatives *egesangio*, *ekebosano* and *risaga* mainly so as to enhance production levels of cash crops and ‘orphan crops.’ These indigenous cooperative initiatives spread in Gusii villages thus boosting food production. Similarly, these initiatives discouraged idleness and laziness among members of society who joined efforts in undertaking work as a group. In this way much was achieved, thereby building an unbreakable bond among members of the group.

According to Maxon, Abagusii were among the early adopters of initiatives aimed at improving their socio-economic wellbeing.¹³ Owing to their strong agricultural base, they continually sought ways of increasing production and enhancing household welfare. This led to the emergence of indigenous cooperative initiatives through which community members organised and pooled labour for collective tasks. These structured forms of cooperation not only enhanced agricultural productivity but also promoted food security, economic stability, and the wellbeing of individual households. Moreover, they laid the foundation for the development and transformation of later cooperative movements.

The coming of the first settler farmers in Gusiiland in 1904 ought to have not rendered the Abagusii their pursued course as the colonial masters had planned. As a result, settlers were

¹²John Sorana Akama, *The Gusii of Kenya: Social, economic, cultural, Political & Judicial perspectives*. (Nairobi: Nsemia Inc. Publishers, 2017).

¹³ Robert Maxon, *Conflict and accomodation in western Kenya: The Gusii and the British, 1907-1963*. (Rutherford, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Pr., 1989).

obliged to use structures initiated by Abagusii for the betterment of their livelihoods.¹⁴ Thus, settlers introduced a cash economy which only expanded the application of indigenous cooperative initiatives to cooperative movements in order to boost the economy. To this, Abagusii's idea of establishing indigenous cooperative initiatives was transformed with the coming of settlers in Gusiiland; a mark that was replicated thereafter by settlers. The study intended to perceive that the current chain of bonds existing among the Abagusii cannot be comprehended without a deeper look at such indigenous cooperative initiatives. Consequently, the study aimed at contributing to the efforts of the Abagusii towards the reinvigoration of indigenous cooperatives in Gusiiland as initiatives for the transformation of the lives of majority of people in Gusiiland at large. It is therefore against this backdrop that this study sought to undertake a historical study of the history and transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

For a long time, academic studies regarding the transformation of indigenous cooperative institutions in Africa have been inadequate, despite an increase in general historical research since independence. Scholars across various disciplines have disproportionately focused on modern, state-sanctioned cooperative movements at the expense of indigenous, grassroots cooperatives structures. Although modern cooperative studies are significant, they offer scanty historical information concerning the origin, evolution, and long-term transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives within Gusiiland. Historically, diverse African communities developed cooperative frameworks to execute demanding communal tasks, including land breaking, tilling, weeding, harvesting, house construction, and livestock herding. Among the

¹⁴ William R. Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990).

Abagusii, indigenous cooperative initiatives played an indispensable role in creating, maintaining, and sustaining a generational social bond. Despite the fact that these systems engendered a cooperative spirit, operational synergy, and a clear unity of purpose throughout Gusiiland, no known comprehensive historical study has focused exclusively on these indigenous cooperative initiatives. This research addresses this gap in historical literature by examining the central role played by indigenous cooperative initiatives in sustaining the socio-communal bonds that still exist among the Abagusii. Furthermore, this study reconstructs the historical foundations of cooperative creations in Gusiiland, demonstrating how grassroots principles of hardwork and mutual accountability remain critical to sustaining communal cohesion across historical eras.

1.3 General Objective

To examine the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland from 1904 to 2002.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The following were the specific objectives of this study;

- i. To trace the nature and growth of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland in the pre-colonial, 1904-1920.
- ii. To analyze the effects of colonial policies, culture, and practices of European settlements on indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland during the colonial period, 1920-1963.
- iii. To investigate the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives and its impact in the transformation of peoples' livelihoods in Gusiiland during the post-colonial period, 1963-2002.

1.5 Research Questions

This study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What were the underlying characteristics of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland during the pre-colonial period, 1904-1920?
- ii. How did the imposition of British colonial policies, culture, and European settlements affect the organization of indigenous cooperative initiatives between 1920 and 1963?
- iii. To what extent did the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives alter the socioeconomic livelihoods of the people of Gusiiland during the post-colonial era, 1963-2002?

1.6 Justification of the Study

The study sought to provide insight into the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland. The choice of this area of study underscored a significant historical research gap that needed to be bridged. The year 1904 was selected as the starting point for this study, as it marked the first British colonial encounter among the Abagusii. The period extending to 1920 also witnessed a catalytic transition for Gusii clans from a protectorate to Crown colony status. The study concludes in 2002, allowing for an assessment of how successive post-independence regimes, guided by national philosophies, negotiated the relationship between African socialism and inherited colonial policies and practices in Gusiiland. The period in between witnessed various transformative activities, which ultimately shaped the phase of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Kenya and more especially Gusiiland. It also should be noted that most research done is centered on modern cooperative movements.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The findings of this research will be of great significance not only to historians but also to anthropologists and the younger generation by contributing to their scholarly work regarding the selection of study areas, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks. In this regard, those who intend to further their studies could find this research to be a foundation for further investigation into the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland. The findings of this research will further equip teachers and learners in schools and colleges where history is taught with relevant knowledge. The knowledge gained will guarantee an appreciation for the study of indigenous cooperative initiatives, such as *ebisangio* and *ebibosano*, while also acting as academic reference material for scholars. Furthermore, policy-makers and the county governments of Kisii and Nyamira will find this study useful in structuring and adopting management strategies that could mitigate food security challenges and growing unemployment in these two counties. By contributing to the objectives of Kenya Vision 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the study provides insights that may inform government policy and strengthen strategies aimed at achieving these goals. Moreover, the research will inform the entire residents of Gusiiland to acknowledging, appreciating and upholding the spirit of mutual assistance even in their work place. With the emergence of counties and hence the Gusii council of elders, this study will also benefit the Abagusii's critical look on their culture vis-à-vis indigenous initiatives. This is because Gusii culture seems to be drained and forgotten by the present generation who partially embrace and express their reservation on culture and its study in equal measure.

1.8 Scope and limitations of the Study

The study focused on the Abagusii of Gusiiland, presently comprising Kisii and Nyamira Counties, but was confined to Kisii County as a representative of the wider region, owing to

geographical and time limitations. It examined the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives between 1904 and 2002, with particular attention to their nature and growth during the early colonial period, the effects of colonial policies, cultural practices, and European settlement during the colonial period, and their contribution to the transformation of livelihoods in the post-colonial era. The year 1904 was selected as the starting point because it marked the establishment of effective colonial administration in Gusiiland and the beginning of significant interactions between indigenous institutions and colonial structures, while 2002 was chosen as the terminal point because it marked the end of the KANU regime and the beginning of a new political dispensation in Kenya. The study specifically focused on indigenous cooperative initiatives and did not examine modern cooperative movements. During fieldwork, the researcher encountered challenges associated with locating knowledgeable informants and collecting reliable historical information. To address these challenges, purposive sampling was employed. In addition, oral evidence was corroborated with archival records and secondary sources. Although similar cooperative practices may have existed elsewhere, the findings of this study were limited to Gusiiland and cannot be generalised to other regions.

1.9 Literature Review

This section is a review of literature related to the study and details relating to the history and transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland, 1904-2002. Most of the reviewed literature focuses more on pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods to form a reliable basis for the argument on these cooperative initiatives. The main aim of reviewing literature is to identify gap, which was quite beneficial to the current study. Also, the literature helped the researcher in placing the problem under review within historical context.

1.9.1 Nature and Growth of Cooperative Initiatives

A number of studies have been done that, at a certain level, mention on traditional cooperatives or joint groupings. Other studies which parallel the current study have a general orientation, especially the abolition of traditional land tenure systems. Whereas all these studies were equally of great importance, there was a need to research on the indigenous cooperative initiatives historically, given their role in Gusiiland and thus avoiding further experimenting on the whole issue of the place of indigenous cooperative initiatives in the transformation of the lives of people especially among the Abagusii. This research therefore, sought to give an historical account of how indigenous cooperative initiatives instilled a form of work ethic, unity of purpose and a chain of bond that has consequently speeded up growth and transformation in Gusiiland. There have been no known studies in the region on the research area to this far. Thus, this research aimed at making a huge historical contribution as it tries to shift focus on over-emphasizing the money-oriented cooperatives to unity-oriented indigenous initiatives which ultimately promoted the growth and transformation of the livelihoods of majority of the people in Gusiiland.

While all these studies have been done, historical studies dealing with indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland in particular are scanty in nature. However, there are a handful of studies on the culture and agriculture of the Abagusii which nonetheless gave some background information to this study. For instance, Akama¹⁵ has an immense contribution to the current study. Although not all studies analyzed here mention exclusively on the Abagusii, the following studies however paralleled this research.

¹⁵ Akama, John S. and Robert M. Maxon. "Ethnography of the Gusii of Western Kenya: a vanishing cultural heritage." (2006).

According to Tabitha Kanogo, writing on cooperatives in colonial era, authoritatively demonstrates how modern cooperatives draws much from traditional ones. She suggests that each pre- colonial Kenyan society must have had the ‘self-help principle’ that otherwise brought together members of the kinship in performing various activities in a merry-go-round nature.¹⁶ Such activities were not limited to construction of houses, primary cultivation, planting, weeding, harvesting, herding, and hunting. Further, Kanogo contrasts traditional and modern cooperatives wherein; traditional ones, people join even if they did not need the service. It was this contrast that informed the opinion held by this research. Although, she generalized the orientation of the traditional cooperatives, the aspect portrayed therein strengthened the Abagusii chain of bond.

Similarly, the studies of grain crops in East Africa have been studied. According to Ochieng, agriculture was premiered in Kenya through the Ethiopian and Sudanic zone whose origin was initially in South- West Asia; with wheat and barley as the originally cultivated crops. Later, *sorghum bicolor*, Sorghum and *eleusine coracana*, finger millet followed soon. The aforementioned food crops were the drivers of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland. These grain crops could slowly but rapidly ‘radiate to other regions of East Africa given the local ecological conditions that suited their sprout.’ Peculiarities of the environment as observed by inhabitants necessitated the acquisition of simple technology such as axes, *pangas* and digging sticks. Such technology was useful especially in understanding the aspect of Abagusii pioneering technology and the place of blacksmiths in the community.¹⁷

¹⁶William R. Ochieng’, *Themes in Kenyan history*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990).

¹⁷ Ibid.

1.9.2 Colonial Policies, Culture and Practices

Curl¹⁸ writes about the cooperative movement in the twenty first century. Curl discussed on the place of cooperative movement in the world today adding that those cooperatives were the first social movements with roots in the beginning of the industrial revolution.¹⁹ He explains of the spontaneous grass root initiative groups that define themselves as social enterprises which were organized, coordinated and backed by non-profit development organizations by governments and communities. To curl, peace, prosperity and social equity in this new century can only be realized through cooperative movement. Curl concluded by appreciating cooperative movements as a means to providing a dignified living for the millions who could otherwise be unemployed and marginalized.²⁰

To date, there exists a constant struggle between the cooperative movement and the government in Uganda. This was documented in a research study carried out in Uganda by a team of scholars who articulated the struggle to be as a result of undefined roles between the cooperative movement and the government. The cooperative movement and the challenge of development is the study's work which critically sought an alternative wealth creation approach in Uganda. To them, various factors contributed to the struggle of Ugandan cooperative movement including ordinary people being snatched off of their land in favor of large commercial farmers. That is, land-loss from the poor to the rich in society.²¹ The current research equates this move as a factor hindering progress in Uganda's rural areas and the economy at large. As a consequence, lack of employment and economic activity led to a state of rural-urban migration. Instead of uplifting the

¹⁸ John, Curl. *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements, and Communism in America*. Oakland: PM Press, 2009.

¹⁹ Highlights on cooperatives and the wider social and ... - ilo.
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/WCMS_483187/lang--en/index.htm.

²⁰ John, Curl. *For All the People: Uncovering the Hidden History of Cooperation, Cooperative Movements*.

²¹ Leonard Okello and Josephine Ahikire, *The cooperative movement and the challenge of development: search for alternative wealth creation and citizen vitality approaches in Uganda*. (Kampala: ACTIONAID Uganda, 2013).

economy by issuing of large-scale commercial farmers with parcels of land, the country's economy went a step down. However, despite their work concentrating more on the post-independence state of cooperative movement in Uganda, the work found its relevance and great significance to the current research given its attempt to revitalize the cooperative movement sector.

Thurston²² discusses the Swynnerton plan of 1954-1959. She writes extensively on this British colonial land policy. The plan was introduced by R.J.M. Swynnerton who was the assistant director of agriculture in colonial Kenya whose report recommended the abolition of the traditional land tenure systems that existed thereof. It also provided for increased extension, processing and marketing services to African farmers. Additionally, the plan aimed at promoting agriculture in rural areas through land consolidation programs and the registration of individual titles. In addition, Maxon argues that the plan was introduced by state to encourage African agriculture to a greater degree with a view to promoting African small farm production.²³ The swynnerton plan led to a dichotomy of conclusion that ultimately formed the central factor in this study: activation of individualism and disunity arising among people especially due to the issuance of land title deeds and land consolidation policies, and also in justifying how the independent government maintained the Swynnerton plan afterwards.

International Labour Organization (ILO) held a meeting in Nairobi- Kenya and deliberated on the role and place of cooperatives in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The organization discussed the domains of economic dimension of cooperatives, its contribution, challenges and strategies toward sustainability. Comparatively, the organization discusses how cooperatives can reduce poverty in instances where the state and individuals fail. Schwettman

²² Anne Thurston, *Smallholder Agriculture in colonial Kenya: The official mind and the Swynnerton Plan*. (Cambridge: African Studies Centre, 1987).

²³ Ibid

explains how cooperatives partners with the government in order to achieve progress, prosperity and sustainability which would consequently lift up societies. Lifting up societies is the goal of SDGs to especially developing countries whose economic base is still in great need. To him, many challenges hinder the ability of cooperatives to effectively contribute to the achievement of the SDGs including, cooperatives being small hence not meeting the economic demands, lack of innovativeness, and the cooperative environment, especially-cooperative laws not being conducive for the growth and sustainability of cooperatives. Thus, ILO recommends the formation of flexible and bigger cooperatives which would adequately meet the market demand and raise income to the marginalized and less privileged in society. In this way therefore, the UN 2030 Development Agenda can be realized.

The ILO's report agrees with the SDGs goals adopted by the United Nations Organization, (UNO). The UN (2015) developed seventeen (17) goals commonly referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals or Development Agenda 2030. The sole objective of devising the development agenda was to strategically position underdeveloped countries, especially those under the UN, and also to put up a basis for development and transformation by the year 2030. Goal number one (1) and goal number two (2) sought to end hunger and alleviate poverty by all means.²⁴ It is these two goals that found space and application in the current research's interest in embracing cooperative movement as a tool to curbing hunger and poverty which were seen as still ravaging third world countries. Comparatively, the government of Kenya adopted KV2030 whose objective was to also drastically transform and modernize Kenya- politically, socially and economically by the year 2030. This was enshrined in the Daily Nation of May 16th, 2016 which extensively explained how the government of Kenya through the agriculture ministry intended to

²⁴U.N.O., *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*, 2015.

promote agriculture in the country in order to bolster economic growth. The agriculture ministry equated low agricultural production to lack of sufficient research in the field. Also, on the 14th of November, 2016, Kenyan devolution ministry expressed the need to launch a roadmap to SDGs in the country, accompanied with a campaign sensitizing Kenyans on the role they should play in achieving those 17 goals.

1.9.3 Cooperative Initiatives and Transformation

Omwoyo²⁵ analyses how the coffee production impacted the Abagusii women of western Kenya was also utilized. He argues that those at the center of Gusii agriculture were women and at some point, girls: who participated from household to communal levels of cooperative labour parties of *ebisangio*, *ebibosano* and *risaga*. He further notes that these were inter-household groups of women and girls who helped each other perform such tasks such as digging, weeding and harvesting in seasons when it was needed. The tasks were done on a rotational basis to each household, and whose output was higher per production ratio. While the work tried to establish the place of women and girls in cooperatives, it did not however, fully address the weighty issue of such indigenous cooperative initiatives: the bond of unity of purpose that existed prior to colonialism, their transformation in Gusiiland and the effect of colonial and post-colonial era on those indigenous initiatives.²⁶ His work was centered on coffee production (a cash crop introduced by settlers and hence serving their purpose and only benefiting them) and its impact on Gusii women. The current research was also partly guided in its interpretation and explanation of *risaga*, *ebisangio* and *ebibosano* which formed a larger part of this research.

Indigenous cooperative initiatives have also been well captured in Gusii indigenous farming systems. Upon settlement in Gusii highlands, cultivation of crops was quickly impressed bearing

²⁵Samson Omwoyo, 'Assessing the impact of coffee production on Abagusii Women in western Kenya: A Historical Analysis 1900-1963': 156- 167, 2008.

²⁶ Ibid

rich soils and reliable rainfall. The Abagusii cultivated *obori* and *amaemba*, giving high yield, and the surplus was exchanged for purposes of protection against risks caused by crop failure. *Risaga* was well captured here as an act of pooling labour resources and thereby ensuring unity of purpose among the Abagusii. The current study has greatly borrowed from this piece of writing to be able to demonstrate the continued existence of a chain of bond in Gusiiland. On how these initiatives transformed Gusiiland upon independence, the current study appreciates the fact that these initiatives were borrowed by the colonial government especially in tree planting exercise, coffee growing and manuring scheme as they involved pooling of resources. The current study bridges the gap by showcasing other indigenous agricultural systems in Gusiiland and further indicating the interdependence aspect.

In conclusion, the history and transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland is a wide and interesting study although much has not been written about them. The current research therefore sought to bridge the existing historical gap and also add knowledge to the field, besides appreciating and exploring on the Abagusii's efforts towards invigorating such initiatives which ensured sufficient food production in Gusiiland.

1.10 Theoretical Framework

There exists a direct link between transformation and colonialism in Africa. On the contrary, development is as a result of the exchange between people in terms of their physical, technological, economic, socio-cultural, and even political spheres.²⁷ For example, the introduction of money-oriented modern cooperatives only worked to the benefit of colonialists. Such, were introduced to counter the efforts of indigenous cooperative initiatives across communities. Consequently, Western scholars during the time applied modernization theory to

²⁷ Ajit Singh, *Should Africa promote stock market capitalism?* Volume 11, Issue 3: 343-365, 1999.

justify the slow pace ‘development-oriented’ actions in Africa. To them, development was nothing to go by in Africa especially, before their coming. The cold war and its aftermath polarized the world majorly into two ideologies: capitalism and communism. Africa was thus, caught in the mix, and seen as prominent actors. It did not take time for Africa to be exposed and exploited to the capitalist nature of ‘faster development and transformation’. The effect was the rush of major European empires that were out on a mission to exploit African resources.

1.10.1 Tenets of Modernization Theory

Modernization theory was advanced by Rostow. The theory suggests that the basis for development of any given society was to break-away from “primitive”²⁸ traditions and norms. He proceeds to suggest that actual development is ‘white’ and that the only way developing countries can develop is to follow the ‘footsteps’ of European countries. For instance, “modernization in agriculture was clearly felt through the introduction of new cash crops, new production methods, and also marketing skills,²⁹ thereby replacing indigenous crops.” Smith echoes Rostow’s sentiments by asserting that modernization was the shift from ‘traditional’ practices with something ‘modern.’³⁰

According to Rostow, the only route towards real economic development and transformation in third world countries was through aid, transfer of experts, and technological exchange programs. These initiatives were primary to propel Gusiiland to modernity. In this way, the more appealing cash crops were introduced that ultimately diminished the cultivation of millet and sorghum. As

²⁸Walt Whitman Rostow, *The stages of economic growth: A non-communist Manifesto*. Cambridge, (U.K.: University Press, 1964).

²⁹Frank Ellis, and Stephen Biggs, *Evolving Themes in Rural Development 1950s-2000s*. *Development Policy Review* 19, no. 4: 437–48, 2001.

³⁰Thomas B. Smith, The Study of Policymaking in Developing Nations. *Policy Studies Journal* 1, no. 4: 244–49, 1973.

such, a chain of bonds and unity of purpose that existed weakened, as individualism and competition was bred.

1.10.2 Criticism of Modernization Theory

Modernization theory received criticism, on both theoretical and empirical grounds. Firstly, opposers of this theory downplays a 'break from traditional and primitive customs' as a way of literary switching-off a people's life in a given community. Secondly, the theory does not support self-reliance as a means of self-establishment,³¹ and which was the basis of this research. Findings could later demonstrate that over-reliance on aid, diminishes the work-ethic among people; thereby, putting-off indigenous production and knowledge systems in a community. Further, 'traditional-modern' concepts lack a basis as given they are intertwined. This is to suggest that indigenous initiatives in Gusiiland can only be understood on the context of Gusiiland.³²

Besides providing market to developed nations and necessitating forceful state of dependency syndrome, developing nations were further weakened economically by the imposition of economic sanctions. Economic sanctions are usually imposed by wealthy- developed nations over poor- developing nations when they resist to 'listening' heeding to developed nations' demands and wishes. Africa, having been integrated in the global market, could not be able to resist forthwith, to avoid denial of aid. The situation brought about by the metropolis resulted to further division even within a nation itself; hence, rendering African continent voiceless: not able to agitate for a common grievance facing them. This thus, gives the metropolis a 'comparative advantage' in the global market, including policies that shape the entire world and even

³¹Maurice Immanuel Wallerstein, *The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: Concepts for Comparative Analysis*, 1970.

³²Walter Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1972).

determining the path of developing nations. Therefore, more clarity was indeed lacking to explain underdevelopment in Africa. Further, tools used for explaining development and its categorization of Africa as poor are unfounded.³³ Substantive works have also pointed that African societies were organized politically, socially and economically before the arrival of Europeans.³⁴ It is this organization that pioneered the development and transformation of a majority of people; hence giving birth to unity of purpose that saw communities thrive. In addition, the narrative put forward regarding underdevelopment in Africa is impractical and thus encourages imperialism. An alternative approach towards explaining and giving clarity on development and transformation in Africa, and hence Gusiiland, was developed by Paul Baran in the 1950s: coupled with a surge on criticism of modernization theory.

1.10.3 Dependency and Underdevelopment Theories

The dependency and underdevelopment theory were adopted by Paul Baran following much heightened deficiency of modernization theory. As a result, the current study employed this theory in its analyses of the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives in the transformation of a majority of people's livelihoods in Gusiiland. The theory is about how developing countries were exposed and integrated to the exploitative capitalist ideology by the developed countries; and their relationships in world systems.³⁵ Dependency theory was developed by Paul Baran in the 1950s, who was the Director of United Nations Economic Community of Latin America (ECLA) for Latin America from the Marxian perspective. Political economy scholars from developing countries applied the theory to castigate Europeans for the unending underdevelopment of especially African economies.³⁶ The theory has established the role played by cooperative

³³ Philip Kilonzo, "The role of non-state actors in the transformation of urban development: a case of UN HABITAT in Kibera, 2014."

³⁴ William Robert Ochieng', pre-colonial history of the Gusii of western Kenya from A.D. 1500 to 1914.

³⁵ Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957).

³⁶ Ibid

movements in weakening, sinking and rendering indigenous cooperative initiatives inactive since the colonial domination of African continent.

African writers such as Samir Amin and Walter Rodney also advanced the dependency theory to a great extent. Following a continued criticism of modernization theory and its perceived irrelevance in Africa, Immanuel Wallerstein, in the 1970s came up with the ‘World Systems theory.’ Wallerstein was an American sociologist at the time and thereby questioned how developing nations were integrated into the world system.³⁷ He further, interrogated the imbalance of economic resources created by modernization theory that led to reliance of foreign aid by a majority of developing countries.

Contributing to the critique of modernisation theory, Raúl Prebisch argued that the global economy is divided into the ‘core’ and the ‘periphery’, with resources flowing from peripheral societies to core economies, thereby perpetuating economic dependence and inequality.³⁸ Hence, developed nations expropriate economic resources from developing nations for their own benefit. It follows that a continued draining of resources from the periphery of nations towards the metropolis led to a state of dependence. This can be experienced in terms of transfer of aid, capital and even technology. Abolishing of food crops for cash crop cultivation has done much turmoil to the satellite nations due to lack of market, price fluctuation culminating to overdependence for food aid from the metropolis. Therefore, colonialism did more harm than good in African continent.³⁹ Consequently, Rodney concludes that the state of underdevelopment

³⁷Immanuel Maurice Wallerstein. *The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: Concepts for Comparative Analysis*, 1970.

³⁸ Joseph Love, 7 Raúl Prebisch and the Origins of the Doctrine of Unequal Exchange. *Latin America's Economic Development*: 99–120, 1995.

³⁹Walter Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1972).

was not the initial state in Africa, rather a product of colonialism and the nature of exploitation that ultimately led to the wealthy of core nations at the expense of poor periphery nations.

1.10.4 Criticism of Dependency and Underdevelopment Theories

Dependency and underdevelopment theories have faced few criticisms. Some scholars have questioned the theory's idealistic nature. For instance, overemphasize on and blaming external factors for the predicaments befalling developing countries, rather than addressing pertinent and exigent internal challenges hindering progress like entrenched corruption and political instability. The colonial state borrowed the concept of self-help groups to rebrand indigenous cooperative initiatives; ideally created to supplement the state's development plans by enabling people to participate in realizing economic development⁴⁰ a calculated move meant to position African continent as producers, at the benefit of a capitalist world; thereby attracting ready market for their produce and enhancing a comparative advantage altogether. The motive behind this move was to make the economy mere sustainable. Contrary, African elites took advantage beginning the colonial rule and thus forged relations⁴¹ with colonialists so as to benefit themselves, at the expense of African farmers. Bayart asserts that the same elites in society were responsible for determining the historical patterns and outcomes of African political economy.⁴²

Matunhu has also down played dependency theory on grounds that it discourages trans-national corporations. It follows that without this teamwork among nations across the political divide they are unlikely to benchmark from each other's technology. Brett opines that change ought not to

⁴⁰William Robert Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990).

⁴¹Jean F. Bayart, "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion." *African Affairs* 99, no. 395: 217–67, 2000.

⁴²Jephias Matunhu, *A Critique of modernization and dependency theories in Africa: Critical assessment*. Volume 3: 65-72, 2011.

occur minus industrialization,⁴³ and that this change may impinge a country's path to progress. Therefore, Africa at the time needed an advanced technology able to spur her economy and sustain progress across villages. He further asserts that in order to ascertain superiority of European technology, the proof lie in the control over scientific revolution, administration, and a robust and expansive economic production compared to African nations. This thus, placed European technology ahead of that of African. As a result, European nations were out to showcase her route to progress. By doing this, African nations would benefit from the borrowed technology. It is true that the act of learning from one another among countries formed the basis of this study whereby the Abagusii realized the futility of single-handedly performing duties. Hence, the adoption of indigenous cooperative initiatives which united the Abagusii into work groups, ultimately sustained their food security.

1.10.5 Relevance of Dependency and Underdevelopment theories

Despite criticism leveled against dependency and underdevelopment theories, dependency theory found its relevance in the current study. The theory provided an insight into a continued struggling and underdevelopment in Gusiiland, with the sudden disruption of indigenous cooperative initiatives by colonial government. In addition, the theory offered a compelling explanation to understand the role played by indigenous cooperative initiatives in the transformation of peoples' livelihoods in Gusiiland. Further, the theory, guided by the Marxian approaches of class struggle, under development and exploitation, helped the current study interrogate how capitalism was integrated into the global market economy.

It follows that the primacy to grow cash crops and convert Gusiiland into an export-oriented economy was meant not only to extinguish indigenous production of grain crops, but also to

⁴³E. A. Brett, *Colonialism and underdevelopment in East Africa; the politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939* by E.A. Brett. (London: Heinemann, 1974).

cushion the consumer (whites). This was done through entrenching cooperative movements in Gusiiland; as was the case in other parts of Kenya and Africa. Hence, the Abagusii were made to believe that indigenous food crops like millet and sorghum had been ‘outdated,’ and the only way was the cultivation of coffee and tea. It is this ambition to generate a perceived enough and sufficient capital that culminated in disunity among people, individualism and lack of peace and security out of an urge to gain an extra shilling.

1.11 Research Methodology

Moulton and Marais⁴⁴ hold that, research methodology is the application of scientific methods when investigating a phenomenon. The selection of methodology was largely based on the nature of the problem. This section comprises sub-sections which include research design, area of study, target population, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures and ethical considerations.

1.11.1 Research Design

Research design is the plan on how the study was conducted. It has been described as the “choreography that establishes the research dance.”⁴⁵ Consequently, the research utilized descriptive research design, as minimal numerical data was compiled during the data collection exercise. Data was collected from two categories of informants: the Gusii Council of Elders (GCE) and other elderly, knowledgeable informants from around Gusiiland. Two complementary sources of information were critical to this research: primary and secondary data. The research utilized secondary sources to develop and contextualize the general background regarding the transformation of indigenous cooperatives initiatives in Gusiiland. The secondary sources

⁴⁴ Moulton, J. and Marais, H. C. *Basic concepts in the Methodology of Social Sciences*. 5th edition. (HSRC Publishers, South Africa, 1996).

⁴⁵ Vibha Pathak, Bijayini Jena, and Sanjay Kalra, “Qualitative Research,” *Perspectives in Clinical Research* 4, no. 3 (2013): 192

included books as the main sources, as well as journals, magazines, newspapers, seminar and conference papers, published and unpublished theses, articles, periodicals among others.

The research also derived a sizeable amount of data from various institutional libraries and the Kenya National Library Services. Data collected from these sources was analyzed qualitatively to minimize subjectivity. On the other hand, primary sources were gathered from the Kenya National Archives and knowledgeable informants across Gusii villages. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted in Gusiiland amongst the selected and knowledgeable Gusii elders on indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland. Finally, focused group discussions were organized and utilized in the due process of this research.

1.11.2 Study Area

The current research was centered in Gusiiland. The area is dominated by the Abagusii, a Bantu-speaking community. The region is divided into two distinct political counties: Kisii and Nyamira, with 9 and 4 constituencies, respectively. Given the geographical size and time limitations, the research focused on Kisii County as a representative of the wider Gusiiland. The 9 constituencies in Kisii County include Bonchari, Bobasi, South Mugirango, Kitutu chache south, Kitutu Chache North, Nyaribari chache, Bomachoge borabu, Bomachoge chache and Nyaribari masaba. Informants from all 9 regions were interviewed. After the inauguration of the 2010 constitution of Kenya, Gusiiland was split into two distinct counties: Kisii and Nyamira Counties. But prior to this, the two counties had existed as independent districts.

1.11.3 Target Population

Members of the Gusii Council of Elders (GCE) constituted the target population for this research. Given the large membership, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select participants. As a result, the principle of saturation was applied once informants began

providing repetitive information already captured. In addition, knowledgeable informants regarding indigenous cooperative initiatives outside of the GCE were also sought. The identified units of analysis were spread across the nine sub-counties of Kisii County, as mentioned in the area of study section. This holds true notwithstanding the fact that the region was one single district before its subdivision into various sub-counties to manage the ever-growing population and to facilitate administration and access to services.

To initiate the research, the names and origins of the Gusii Council of Elders members were obtained from the chairman of the Council, who also assisted in identifying knowledgeable informants from the region who were not council members. This was followed by an in-person approach to the identified members for interviews. To avoid subjectivity and bias, participants were classified by gender and the specific area they represented. Consequently, samples of each group within each constituency were interviewed.

1.11.4 Data Collection Procedure

Given the significance of this research topic, the entire research process was conducted by the researcher, despite time limitations. Various data collection techniques were employed, including interviews with informants and focused group discussion with resource persons. In this regard, frequent visits were made to the Kenya National Archives (KNA) in Nairobi, which complimented the oral interviews conducted among the selected informants in Kisii County. Secondary sources of data were also utilized in this study. These included library materials such as books, journals, articles, published and unpublished theses, and conference and seminar papers, all obtained from the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) and various institutions of higher learning. Data collected from those sources was thoroughly and rigorously analyzed to minimize subjectivity on the entire research.

1.11.5 Data Analysis Procedure

After sampling and collecting information, the data was analyzed through editing and re-reading to ensure accuracy. A careful, logical, and critical examination of data was conducted to ascertain the type of information collected. The collected data was then cataloged and analysed thematically to produce a comprehensive historical research work.

1.11.6 Ethical Considerations

Permit letters were obtained from Kisii University and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI). Information provided by knowledgeable informants was treated with strict confidentiality throughout the exercise. This process was preceded by acknowledging that it was an exercise of informed consent. Consequently, the information relayed was secured and stored in encrypted files to minimize unauthorized access. Furthermore, informants were adequately informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any point without justification.

CHAPTER TWO

NATURE AND GROWTH OF INDIGENOUS COOPERATIVE INITIATIVES IN GUSII LAND, 1904-1920

2.1 Introduction

Indigenous cooperative initiatives played a leading role in influencing the future of Abagusii. These initiatives were instrumental in maintaining a chain of bond that strengthened their unity of purpose. In the traditional Gusii community, such initiatives were the primary mechanism for realizing equality and collective prosperity. Both the weak and the lazy were integrated into the mainstream of agricultural activities by joining efforts with other group members. This chapter focused on the migration, settlement and early history of the Gusii community prior to 1904. It also examined the indigenous institutions that developed among the Abagusii, which required cooperation to achieve food sufficiency.

Before the colonial period, various institutions were in play that either directly or indirectly shaped the transformation of Gusiiland. The research examined deeply how these agricultural activities, through such initiatives led to the sprouting of farming in the community. It therefore, follows that the emergence of farming in Eastern Africa was not merely a technological or economical undertakings; rather, a social phenomenon that shaped the entire spectrum of the community.⁴⁶ The assertion by M'mbogori is supported by Nyagwoka, who suggested that Gusii traditional institutions integrated the community and encouraged harmony as a means of realizing group development.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Freda Nkirete M'Mbogori, *Farming and Herding in Eastern Africa: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History, July 27, 2017.

⁴⁷ O.I., with James Nyagwoka at Bogiakumu Village, on 24/04/2024.

The spirit of cooperation among the Abagusii is the central focus of this research. Through cooperation, not only ensured food security but also maintained a united front against insecurity within the Gusii clans. These indigenous institutions were characterized by mutual goodwill, making the initiatives unique to the Abagusii. Therefore, it was necessary for this research to survey the migration and settlement of the Gusii community before reflecting on these cooperative initiatives.

2.2 Migration, Settlement and of the Abagusii upto 1904

The Abagusii community stands to be one of the most densely populated Bantu groups. After centuries of wandering, the Gusii finally settled in the Gusii highlands between 1760 and 1850. Before their famous dispersal from Egypt (Misri), the Abagusii believed they originated from Canaan. According to tradition, they crossed ekemunto—a junction of two rivers, commonly identified today as the Suez Canal—during their migration. Children born during this crossing were named Kemunto, a name still common among the Abagusii today.

During their migration, the Abagusii sought a conducive environment for settlement, often moving to uninhabited areas to evade conflict.⁴⁸ They settled temporarily in Egypt before proceeding toward Sudan. While the specific reasons for leaving Egypt remain unclear, the community continued their journey, naming children born during their crossing of the *Nalia* (Nile) as *Kwamboka* (crossing).⁴⁹ Moronya suggests that from Sudan, the Abagusii moved to the Congo, where they encountered dense forests and heavy rainfall. Children born there were named *Ombura* (rain), while encounters with snakes led to names like *Ng'iti* or *Nyang'iti* and *Nyanchoka*.

⁴⁸ O.I., with John Mburu at Bokoma Village, on 17/04/2024.

⁴⁹ O.I., with Harrison Moronya at Kenyena, on 20/04/2024.

The Congo was a pivotal location for the Abagusii. It was here that they acquired iron-working skills and technology from neighboring Cushitic groups, which enabled them to manufacture the hoes and machetes necessary for land preparation.⁵⁰ Eventually, the community split into three groups: one migrated toward South Africa, one moved East toward Mount Elgon and the Ruwenzori region, and the third remained in the Congo. The group that remained in Congo is the original Gusii people with rich *ekegusii* language.⁵¹

The group that migrated east eventually reached Lake Victoria. Their stay near Kisumu was cut short by the arrival of the Luo community, who viewed the lake as a prime site for fishing. The migration was led by selected leaders; Mogusii, assisted by his brother Matagaro, led the community until Matagaro's death near Lake Kyoga. Following Mogusii's death during a period of famine, the community split; the Agikuyu and Meru moved toward Mount Kenya, while the Gusii remained behind. Subsequently, the Gusii migrated to the Kano plains during the first half of the 18th century, led by Mogusii's widow, Monchari.

The Kano settlement lasted until approximately 1755, after which the Gusii expanded toward the present-day Gusiiland, specifically Nduru in South Mugirango. By this time, the population had increased, leading to the formation of the seven major Gusii clans: Abanchari, Abagetutu, Abanyaribari, Abamachoge, Ababasi, and Abagirango. Each clan migrated independently.

Following conflict in the Mau region—known as *Osaosao*—the Abagusii sought more peaceful lands, eventually settling in their current territories around 1780. The clans established themselves in regions such as Kenyenyia, Nyakoiba, and Sameta. Although they later faced the challenges of colonialism, the Abagusii remained a predominantly agricultural community. Their

⁵⁰ William Robert Ochieng', Pre-colonial history of the Gusii of western Kenya from A.D.1500 to 1914.

⁵¹ O.I., with James Abai at Nyaora, on 13/04/2024.

deep-seated value for land is rooted in the skills acquired during their time in the Congo, which necessitated the formation of joint working groups to facilitate daily survival.

2.3 Emergency of Gusii Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives (GICI) upto 1904

The adoption of the domestication of both crops and livestock in Gusiiland and the world at large was slow but gradual process. It was a learning experience for those who adopted it. The domestication of plants (crops) and animals existed in Africa many centuries ago. According to available evidence, the domestication of both crops and livestock in East Africa can be traced back to as early as 500 BC. Archaeological evidence of the presence of grindstone and pottery in Ethiopia cannot be ignored.⁵² This is also evidenced by Maxon and Ochieng', whose separate writings show that the earliest populations to practice agriculture in Kenya were known to use stone bowls made of stone for grinding the grains they grew.⁵³ M'Mbogori further notes that the Nubians moved southwards with their goats, sheep, and long-horned cattle beginning mid-3rd millennium BC. The mention of Nubians in Kenya coincides with the role they played during the colonial period; they were recruited by the British under the Kings African Rifles (KAR) to subdue any form of resistance in Gusiiland and to aid in the confiscation of Gusii livestock from cattle bomas.⁵⁴ A collection of archaeological evidence, therefore, serves as a precursor, proving that there indeed existed the domestication of both animal and crops in Gusiiland among the early populations of Kenya.⁵⁵

Upon establishing a sedentary life in Gusii around 1800, the Abagusii embarked on a mission to develop the cultivation skills they had acquired from their motherland. However, the Abagusii

⁵² Freda Nkire M'Mbogori, *Farming and Herding in Eastern Africa: Archaeological and Historical Perspectives*. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History*, July 27, 2017.

⁵³ William R. Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990).

⁵⁴ Balaton- Chrimes S. *Citizen Minus: Rights, Recognition and the Nubians of Kenya*. (Australia: University of Melbourne, 2012)

⁵⁵ John R. Bower, *Early Pottery and Other Finds from Kisii District, Western Kenya*. *Azania: Archaeological Research in Africa* 8, no. 1: 131–40, 1973.

received their fair share of initial challenges as they were few and scattered. The land was large and bushy, which an individual could not manage; this was coupled with the fact that the environment was new to them. Adding to the list of challenges, the Abagusii had not yet mastered the seasons of the year, given the prevailing technological limitations. Clearing large bushes also presented a burden, not to mention the large herds of livestock they had to graze.

The Abagusii, however, were able to turn these challenges into opportunities one by one. The Gusii organized themselves into groups, purposely to aid in times of work,⁵⁶ having realized the adage '*Nguba emo yanya koiri roche*,' literally meaning 'two are better than one'. As Nyamboba posits, these groupings further extended to building a chain of bonds across the clans. While challenges were being turned into opportunities, people's social, economic and political organizations were being realized. Cooperation among the Abagusii, therefore, was not only achieved in the production of indigenous food crops but also in strengthening their social lifestyle. Though gender roles were defined, cooperative production cut across every gender,⁵⁷ including boys and girls. The type of indigenous food crops cultivated was also a factor in the inception of cooperative work. It was not easy to undertake such work as an individual, a factor which therefore called for cooperation and unity of purpose among the Abagusii. The cooperative work also advocated for hard work and alienated itself from laziness which was seen as a hindrance to achieving their objectives. This section, therefore, interrogates such indigenous cooperative initiatives developed among the Abagusii in order to foster production and unity in the community. This, in the long run, was used to determine their role in production prior to the colonial period.

⁵⁶ O.I., with Nyamboba Nyagwoka at Bogiakumu Village on 24/04/2024.

⁵⁷ O.I., with Anna Kemunto at Kiogoro Market, on 16/04/2024.

2.4 Pre-Colonial GICI: Inception and Application

2.4.1 Ebisangio

Ebisangio (plural) or *egesangio* (singular) was a merry-go-round indigenous institution aimed at addressing labour shortages among the Abagusii. Cooperative labour was seen as a driver toward a bumper harvest, and achieving food security. Drawing its basis from an old adage ‘*nguba emo yanya koiri roche*’ (two are better than one); there arose a need to come together and assist one another in doing work. This institution was mostly associated with women given the existence of specialization and clearly defined gender role that placed them at the forefront of agricultural production. This helped ensure they remained in sync with the seasons. Hardworking group members would organize themselves well by ensuring each member’s portion was complete. The group would set a mutually agreed-upon time for the task; if the work involved tilling the land. This was done before the rains began. In some instances, ‘*esinde*’ (measuring rule) was used to regulate and measure the work-rate of group members.⁵⁸ This tool of land appropriation ensured group members tilled a sizeable area that matched the rest.

This partnership program was aimed at alleviating hunger and laziness among people, and ultimately vices such as stealing in the community. Weed ‘*enchagwa*’,⁵⁹ removal was a tedious task that required cooperative labour it is this form of labour system that called for specialization among the Abagusii. For example, slashing was a male dominated activity, which included fence, and bush clearing in preparation for cultivation. In addition, they took livestock to grazing fields, constructed homestead for settlement, and seasonal primary ground-breaking because they were taken to be more energetic than women. Young women were allowed to go with their mothers to be shown how to dig well and also undertook house chores. Women were responsible

⁵⁸ O.I., with Jemima Moraa at Bogitaa Village, on 29/04/2024.

⁵⁹ O.I., with Paulina Osebe at Marani center, on 28/04/2024.

for secondary cultivation, planting, weeding, harvesting and even cooking. Strict adherence to gender roles was highly observed and followed: It is as if they were written down in their mind. As to when this initiative was done, more often was carried out during morning hours allowing time for other duties especially in the afternoon. This made *egesangio* more appealing and attractive across the community.

As agriculture was being intensified through this joint partnership programs, bumper harvest was realized; with labor articulated as the driving force. According to Hakansson, intensification can be explained to be the application of any 'human-derived input that, in turn, increases agricultural yields per unit area and time.'⁶⁰ Consequently, men were called upon to construct or repair *ekiage* (granary), in preparation for the harvest. *Egesangio* therefore aimed to realize the following set-out roles: First, *egesangio* lessened work-ethic and boredom in repeatedly performing a similar task. Even the lazy strived to work faster to catch-up with other group members. Secondly, it invigorated the spirit of hardwork among the Abagusii, for generations, thereby encouraging one another to positively participate in such duties. Thirdly, *egesangio* aimed at producing food, enough to even last for more than four seasons. This was mainly undertaken as a measure to cushion an imminent famine that could strike. At this point, the roles of *egesangio* cannot be overemphasized. They intensified Gusiiland agriculture in a transformative way that ensured both social and food security in the community, thereby fostering a chain of bond.

The practices of *egesangio* ensured continuity, which ultimately impacted the social organization of the community in a number of ways. Young female who performed and portrayed great effort

⁶⁰Thomas Hakansson, "Family Structure, Bridewealth, and Environment in Eastern Africa: A Comparative Study of House-Property Systems." *Ethnology* 28, no. 2: 14, 1989.

could easily attract the attention of unmarried young men;⁶¹ hence a gauge of a potential wife. In such a case, a potential wife could easily be married off by a potential husband. In some instances, potential young men could hide in bushes, either grazing or otherwise, and observe especially those potential females who cultivated well and faster. Consequently, this marked a potential start of a new family structure. Thus, continuity of indigenous initiatives was bred, with a new family set up. This made young women compete in working hard in their various tasks, to increase their chances of getting married. In so doing, indigenous cooperative initiatives could emerge as a prerequisite for identifying a marriage partner. This was followed by a close monitoring of young female's activities by elderly women who ensured they become productive wives upon marriage. Similarly, the informal learning and advice was also given to boys by elderly men grazing fields.⁶²

Despite being applied in other spectrum of life, *egesangio* was instrumental and became a basis for achieving food security. A sense of care and being a 'brother's keeper' slowly but definitely developed among the Abagusii. The spirit of togetherness arose as Abagusii tended and viewed the other as equal to them and equally deserved good in return. They wanted to create a just society for all. Through this spirit, those who were advantaged could be influenced out of empathy to share without coercion. Below is a narration of a couple (James and Nyamboba) who form part of the research's informants.

I was a total orphan at the age of ten. I had three siblings to take care of. My only uncle was a tea plucker in Kericho who never really showed up. We relied on our neighbor for survival, since we were young. I was encouraged to marry, but I was afraid because I could not even afford an animal for dowry. A neighbor paid off my dowry unconditionally, and even offered us one cow to sustain us upon marriage. It was a generous donation; as it was not a debt to repay. That was the society we were: assisting and raising one's *egesaku* (generation) for prosperity. As if that was not enough, my

⁶¹ O.I., with Mary Nyamweya at Mogonga Market, on 15/03/2024.

⁶² O.I., with James and Nyamboba Nyagwoka at Bogiakumu Village, on 24/04/2024.

neighbor could share *amaanoga* (colostrum) whenever his cows sire. Colostrum was liked by the Abagusii and one shared to others to bless his cow in the entire lactation period. James continued narrating that he was added a cow by another neighbor, and that is how he started keeping livestock.⁶³

Egesangio became part and parcel of the community. In fact, it became Abagusii culture. The community was now accustomed to undertake societal work more seriously, as laziness was considered an avenue for poverty and hunger that befell a homestead.

The following chant was thus composed as a way of emphasizing and advocating for co-existence among the Abagusii:

***Mogisangio* (peer)**

Ekegusii version	English version
<i>Mogisangio akoreke ekee,</i>	“Peer moulds a bowl
<i>Ekee nyaboundii</i>	A rounded bowl!
<i>Ekee ekio akeimokie</i>	Carry the bowl
<i>Akagore kagena!</i>	Trade it for an egg
<i>Kagena kangokoo!</i>	An egg hatches a hen
<i>Kagena akwo akaimokie,</i>	then carry the egg
<i>Akagore kabori,</i>	Trade it for a goat
<i>Kabori akwo akaimokie,</i>	Carry the goat
<i>Akagoree ng’ombe!</i>	Trade it for a cow!
<i>Ng’ombe euta rioro</i>	Cow fed well it lives
<i>Ng’ombe eyio ayeimokie</i>	Carry the cow
<i>Ayegore ‘monto’!</i>	Trade it in for a wife.
<i>Monto aibora banaa...</i>	The wife beget children
<i>Abana ebirachwoki,</i>	the children make eucalyptus

⁶³ Ibid.

Birachwoki mbiagita omochie... And the eucalyptus fence the homestead.”⁶⁴

“You are so I am, is the philosophy echoed in the chant above. That, ‘for me and you to thrive, we all get involved and start small.’ *Ekee* (bowl) then lets mould it! Then use it and trade for an egg, then trade the hen for a goat, then trade the goat for a cow and finally trade the cow for a ‘wife’. The wife begets children who would take care of ‘you’ - homestead. ‘*Abagisangio* (age mates)’ pulled resources together to make sure each of them succeeded in life. In so doing, social security was attained through economic empowerment. The long-term objective and mission of *egesangio* was equally realized, people’s living standards transformed drastically, as was the entire community. People of all walks of life cooperated to perform various tasks in the society. Society was at the core for agricultural production because production was centered on cooperatives; hence making the Abagusii to be structured. Out of *egesangio*, other cooperatives initiatives were bred and embraced equally.”

2.4.2 Ekebosano

Ekebosano (singular) or *ebibosano* (plural) is derived from the word *kobosa* which means second tillage of land. Second tillage was meant to remove weeds from the field and maximize production. It was not as frequent as *egesangio* for it was done to weed-out the field. It therefore followed that the same group members who undertook *egesangio*, was also responsible for *ekebosano*. Group members, out of motivation to realize a bumper harvest,⁶⁵ called for *ekebosano* as soon as *enchagwa* (weeds) was noticed. This was only possible and applicable to those who participated in *egesangio*. Group members, out of care and responsibility, raised an

⁶⁴ A Chant Sung by Obino Nyambane in Kisii Town, on 20/02/2024

⁶⁵ O.I., with Banchiri Nyaboke at Itierio center, on 15/04/2024.

alarm over the appearance of weeds in a particular member's field. Consequently, members swiftly cooperated in ensuring the field was weed-free.

Time was of essence in realising *ekebosano*. Group members had to agree a specific time to undertake such because they had prior knowledge of how *enchagwa* lowered the cumulative yield.⁶⁶ Hence, it could therefore force them to suspend any pending activity that could possibly derail this second tillage. Otherwise, afternoon sessions were thus preferred since group members strictly adhered to the structure and organization already established. This act not only solved imminent food crisis, but also espoused a chain of bond and unity of purpose that existed in the community. Such acts, as Teresia posits, invigorated the development of indigenous cooperative initiatives among the Abagusii. Ultimately, the lazy and non-members were equally encouraged and attracted to either be committed or engaged fully in such initiatives. It is this acts that practically made it necessary to at least be in possession of a *panga* and a *jembe*, in preparation for starting a family.⁶⁷ A *panga* and a *jembe* were symbols of readiness for imminent tasks. The tools also made an individual equally and always active in conducting such tasks even in the absence of group members. *Enchagwa* was thus eliminated of on first sight.

The presence of *ekebosano* was marked by conducting *egesangio* first. *Egesangio* came first before it could give way to *ekebosano*. *Egesangio* was mandatory to group member. In their absence, they must have had sufficient reason for that. Girls could replace their mothers in case the mothers did not appear. This made the position and presence of girls in society equally important and could work closely with their mothers as a basis of training them. Once *ekebosano* was done, it was either ready for planting or crops getting at crucial stage. This initiative also made the work of blacksmiths in the community very important in the production process

⁶⁶ O.I., with Teresia Kerubo at Ogembo town, on 02/04/2024.

⁶⁷ O.I., with Nemwel Isaboke at Nyansancha Village, on 20/04/2024.

because one could not engage in them without the tools required like *jembes*, added Florence Nyamusi. Thus, an individual had to ensure that at the beginning of each season of the year cultivation tools were readily available and in good condition.

2.4.3 Risaga

Risaga is derived from the word *gosagana* which mean completing work at once.⁶⁸ *Risaga* is in singular and *amasaga* in plural. In order to meet the season's demands and be at par with group members, one had to 'call' (*goturwa*) a large group of people for the work to be completed at once. Circumstances that called for this initiative stemmed from self: engaging in other activities or taken to be lazy, therefore was accompanied with wages.⁶⁹ This is true as available archival records indicate enough food preparation was mandatory; accompanied with *amarwa* a 'locally distilled brew'.⁷⁰ The brew was consumed by men whose women participated in *risaga*; marking a feast and a sign of togetherness and societal bond in the community. Importantly, it is necessary at this point to mention that *risaga* was not necessarily for specific group members; rather, a call to as many individuals as possible. The mission was to finish the task on that day, to allow for the feast to happen. Given reward was assured upon completion, the owner, to some extent, took it as a 'burden' though; giving way to the adage "*abange nabaya bari kiane naigu bororo*" literally be translating 'a group of people are good though I feel the burden or pinch when they consume my food'.

The practice of calling for labour, though fast, was minimal because of the cost implications, and given the community was actively engaged in *egesangio*. It should be noted that food must have been prepared at night and the woman who called for *risaga* had to equally participate together

⁶⁸ O.I., with samwel Ombasa at Tabaka Center, on 01/05/2024.

⁶⁹ John Sorana Akama, *The Gusii of Kenya: Social, economic, cultural, Political & Judicial Perspectives*. (Nairobi: Nsemia Inc. Publishers, 2017).

⁷⁰ KNA: DC/KSI/1/5. South Kavirondo Kisii, 1978, Annual Report.

with group members.⁷¹ Upon completing the work, *ugali* was brought in *ebiee* - a traditional Gusii plate, and members ate to satisfaction for the good work done. Women and girls took their meal from outside as men sat in *eero* (sitting room). After the meals, only *abagaka* (men) were allowed to consume fermented brew. *Abang'ina* (women) were barred from both drinking and canvassing in the presence of men; only the convener could talk and appreciate the drink.⁷²

Despite paying dearly for the work done, *risaga* had its own fair share of benefits. First, an individual's work which could be done in days could only be done in a single day; hence, was faster. Second to that, one did not have to wait the merry-go-round nature: you only needed to make an alert. The Abagusii, like other communities, became masters in reading signs and patterns in their environment.⁷³ However, one could not easily wait for *risaga* because of its exploitative nature. People therefore found themselves in a state where they had no option but call for *risaga*. Among the reasons why *risaga* had to happen was mainly due to lack of rainfall and hence people had to wait for longer before they could cultivate land.⁷⁴ This was coupled with the fact that some women were not participating in *egesangio*, and in an event death occurred. Nonetheless, *risaga* was crucial and important. It was a means to attaining a fruitful harvest, and supplementing other initiatives in maintaining a chain of bond in the community through cooperative labour.

2.5 Summary

⁷¹ O.I., with Francis Gichana at Nyakoe Market, on 12/04/2024.

⁷² O.I., with Daudi Omori at Nyamache Market, on 10/04/2024.

⁷³ William R. Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990.

⁷⁴ O.I., with Banchiri Nyaboke at Itierio center, on 15/04 2024.

This chapter examined the historical foundations of cooperative labour systems and how it influenced the social well-being of the community among the Abagusii. Early history of the Abagusii was discussed, tracing their migration routes, and how their sedentary lifestyle was informed by cooperative labour. In addition, the rise of indigenous cooperative initiatives was discussed. It was concluded that these indigenous initiatives strengthened a chain of bond and fostered peace and security in the community.

CHAPTER THREE

COLONIAL POLICIES, CULTURE AND PRACTICES IN GUSILAND TO 1963

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the major developments and transformation that occurred right from the entry of colonialists into Gusiiland and the extent Gusii cooperative initiatives were affected. Thus, the coming of colonialists in Gusiiland was marked by the introduction of various policies, cultural practices, new farming methods, and institutional setting. These events ultimately impinged with the existing indigenous institutions and ways of life. The period also coincided with the aftermath of the World War one (WWI) of 1914 - 1919, the great depression of 1929-1934 and the World War two (WWII) of 1939-1945. The war years greatly impacted negatively colonial activities in Gusiiland to the detriment of locals in terms of increased taxation, forced labor, restriction of movement and even forceful evictions. There was perhaps a negative impact on indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives as the Abagusii's unity of purpose started to dismantle, in the name of adhering to colonial policies on their own land.

Moreover, this chapter also analyzes some of the colonial legacies initiated by the colonialists which have since continued to affect the Abagusii. These legacies include; infrastructural development, land alienation, African taxation and forced labor. They remain to be the hardest puzzle both by the government and locals who appear to be visitors, in their own land. The study has critically delved into how the introduction of money led to the restructuring of pre-colonial structures leading to indigenous cooperative initiatives's downfall. Further, the study would also show how the once greatest producers were cut-off from the societal fabric to the periphery. Most notable, also, was the introduction of the Swynnerton plan of 1954-1957 which effect was greatly felt by Gusii cooperative initiatives. The study has delved into the Swynnerton plan and

tried to bring out clearly its role in the transformation of Gusiiland. Technology which was introduced by colonialists has also been captured.

3.2 Colonial policies, culture and practices in Gusiiland up to 1963

Colonial legacies and cultural practices cannot be understood better without a critical look at the concept of colonialism. The roots of colonialism in Africa can be traced back in the Berlin conference of 1884-1885 when European nations sparked a discussion of sharing African continent among themselves. This was to be followed by a series of explorations by Europeans into Africa so as to give a clear map and direction to their mother country. Missionaries had emerged as the first European people to touch down to Africa with the sole aim of spreading Christianity. It should be noted that Africa and its people had their own cultural practices and beliefs that were in place. This meant that the coming of visitors in Africa had a tremendous impact that negatively worked on Africa's development till today (a collision of culture). This section therefore, is about European colonial policies and cultural practices initiated in Africa, especially Gusiiland upon their coming all the way to independence. The role of missionaries in the region and the Swynnerton plan has also been covered in this section.

Colonialism or simply colonial rule ushered in a new structural system that was likened and more appealing than those of pre-colonial African societies. Colonial rule was not a generous political system at all; since the status of the colonized was of great concern and much wanting even after this colonial period.⁷⁵ Adeyeri's sentiments are also echoed by Woddis who, in his clear and simple description, argues that colonialism was 'synonymous to robbery at its best.'⁷⁶ Robbery has been explained better in longhorn dictionary as 'an act of stealing by use of force or violence.' Going by this meaning, it can be argued therefore that colonialism was a system of

⁷⁵ O. Adeyeri and K.D. Adejuwon, "The Implications of British Colonial Economic Policies on Nigeria's Development." *Theoretical Economics Letters*, Vol.4 No 3, 2012.

⁷⁶ Jack Woddis, *An introduction to neo-colonialism*. (New York, 1980).

forceful imposition on Gusii economy for purposes of gaining resources at the detriment of locals. This robbery was experienced on land, labor and exploitation of other natural resources that belonged to locals. Gusii economy was on the receiving end as a result of colonialism; hence prolonging the course of development in the region which is seen today. Colonial activities in Gusiiland slowed down towards the end of 1963 upon Kenya's independence. The period in between witnessed drastic transformations that has widely been captured in this research.

As indicated earlier, the Abagusii were already organized in a way that ensured food sufficiency was realized. This was done through *egesangio*, *ekebosano* and *risaga* which were largely done in form of cooperative work. These initiatives engineered faster growth rate and development in Gusii clans, which eventually resulted to unity of purpose and peace among people. This could be short changed by the coming of colonialists whose aim was to ensure maximum benefit at the expense of the Gusii people. Consequently, Kenya was declared a British colony on grounds that a sufficient number of British subjects had settled in Kenya.⁷⁷ This was to be followed by the adoption of the Devonshire White paper of 1923 which allocated settlers in various highlands of Kenya. Natives who were averaging a population of 200,000 by 1927 were restricted in reserves.⁷⁸ Local Native Council (LNC), as a system of local self-government, was introduced in the same year to monitor natives' movement. At the climax of this policy was the introduction of taxation in 1931, in which natives were to forcefully provide labor as a way of remitting their taxes. In fact, in his letter dated 23rd September, 1926, the then Nyanza provincial commissioner encouraged the recruitment of labor,⁷⁹ which was to facilitate the construction of various projects. Such service has been described as obligatory labour which involved both paid and unpaid labour, depending on the area of service.

⁷⁷Walter Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1972.

⁷⁸ KNA: MSS/48/2. History of Kenya.

⁷⁹ KNA: PC/NZA/3/20/12- Labour Questions.

By 1930, fertile and vast land defined Gusii environment. At this period, colonialists were more focused on giving agricultural services to fellow European settlers in Gusiiland.⁸⁰ The existence of fertile soils as described by Thurston and the cultivation of traditional food crops is a clear indication of the large amount of food production by Abagusii. Food was plenty which resulted to population increase in Gusii clans.⁸¹ The introduction of the Land Carter Commission (LCC) in 1932 therefore, was meant to facilitate easy occupation of such fertile areas by the settlers. The commission was also mandated to define Reserves. Various legislations were enacted allowing for more European settlers in the country. By 1933, the number of Europeans in Kenya had risen from 150,000 to 320,000 by 1943. This number was occasioned by regular legislations by the colonial government allowing their influx.

The colonial government attracted private developers to help them in the smooth running of Gusii's economy by exploiting it. As a result, settlers were given huge chunks of fertile land freely to grow their newly introduced crops.⁸² This was achieved through massive land alienation that left a majority of Abagusii people landlessness. The coming of settlers was thus followed by the adoption of settlers' agricultural production policy that was formulated and launched in Kenya at the start of colonial rule.⁸³ This was done by the colonial government to ensure settlers were enabled to do farming more effectively. Consequently, upon this policy coming into effect, agricultural departments were initiated in the country in 1906 whose aim was to give agricultural support services to European settlers only.⁸⁴ New farming systems were introduced gradually which served as primary production. These crops included maize, sisal, coffee, tea, pyrethrum,

⁸⁰ Anne F. Thurston, *Smallholder Agriculture in colonial Kenya: The official mind and the Swynnerton Plan*. (Cambridge: African Studies Centre, 1987).

⁸¹ O.I., with James Matundura at Kisii Town, on 23/04/2024.

⁸² O.I., with John Omenge at Mosochi Market, on 03/03/2024.

⁸³ Evans Nyamwaka. *Creative Arts and Cultural Dynamism: A Study of Music and Dance among the Abagusii of Kenya*, 2013.

⁸⁴ Samson M. Omwoyo, *The Transformation of Gusii Agriculture up to 1963*. (Nairobi: Kenyatta University, 1992).

wheat and dairy farming.⁸⁵ However, European settlers still demanded for support services such as research centers and stations of certification and grading to ensure agriculture was exploited to maximum through quality incentives. All these services were at this point meant for European farmers and settlers in the country. This was achieved by ensuring that provincial administration looked after African areas to ensure they never cultivated such cash crops in order to avoid competition with those of European settlers.

New systems and European technologies were being introduced geared towards improving settler agriculture in the country. As a result, the ox-drawn plough and European hoe was introduced in Gusiiland in 1909 as shown by Nyamwaka. Such implements were meant to break soil during land tillage. It should be noted that despite Africans in Gusiiland not considered for agricultural extension services, they were required to provide cheap labor in European and settler farms. This was done in total disregard of African agriculture and their sustainability. This made the intensive cooperative work among Abagusii to gradually slowdown in their farms,⁸⁶ which meant that production also greatly decreased. This impacted negatively on indigenous initiatives whose mission was now diverted on the well-being of settlers in the region. Abagusii labor was greatly exploited in-as-much to sustain European crops that had been introduced in the region.

The First World War in 1914 greatly affected the already existing agricultural production in Gusiiland. Following huge war expenses and losses, the colonial government came to the realization of Gusiilands' potential to produce crops. As a result, agricultural services were brought to African areas in 1920. By 1924, African instructors started being trained at Bukura in Nyanza so as to manage agriculture well, added Thurston. It should be noted at this stage that African skills was encouraged in order to compensate the losses incurred during WWI. The

⁸⁵William R. Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990).

⁸⁶ O.I., with Joel Ogutu at Bogiakumu Village, on 05/03/2024.

training was designed to equip Abagusii with advanced technology on how to handle European crops that had been introduced. The training itself failed at inception as those who attended were exclusively men and not women who directly provided labor and did almost all cultivation work as indicates Nyamwaka. As a result of this training, traditional grain crops like sorghum, millet, peas, simsim, and other root crops started to be replaced by the fast-growing European varieties and some cash crops. Such European varieties included sesame seeds, groundnuts, wattle, cotton, tea and coffee and English market vegetables. Despite their introduction, demand for production was still high which made Gusii women labor to be fundamental in the production process.⁸⁷

To this end, settler farming in Gusiiland had far reaching effects since its inception. The female gender did almost all cultivation, both in their land and settlers' farms. The zeal and dedication of only women in cultivation definitely altered gender roles among the Abagusii. Men who could initially engage in land tillage (first breaking of soil) could only be required to go for training geared towards improving agriculture. The grazing of livestock also shifted to women; work that was initially done by boys and men. This meant that women were much contained with a lot of work to undertake. However, women had to multitask so as to ensure they sustain their families.⁸⁸ As a consequence, women had no time to fully engage in *egesangio*, *ekebosano* and *risaga* because of the workload on their back.⁸⁹ The time for *egesangio*, for instance, was early in the morning. This is not bearing the house chores and livestock that needed their attention. The multitasking of women in the colonial period thus, led to a drastic diminishing of these indigenous cooperative initiatives that once united them. Although cooperative work still existed

⁸⁷ O.I., with Florence Bitutu at Kegogi Village, on 26/03/2024.

⁸⁸ O.I., with Paulina Osebe at Marani Center, on 28/04/2024.

⁸⁹ O.I., with Martha Nyaboke at Bogiakumu Village on 11/03/2024.

among Gusii women during this period, it can well be said that their influence in Gusii clans was waning,⁹⁰ given women's other commitments.

As indicated earlier, money was introduced in Gusiiland by 1922 and therefore, exposing the Abagusii into money economy. The introduction of money by the colonial government meant that the economy had to move faster enough to compete in the world market;⁹¹ preceding a derailed period of agricultural technology. Consequently, new cash crops and food crops were introduced in Gusiiland which were market oriented. For instance, maize could grow faster; in two seasons in a year. The maize could be used for subsistence and also sale of surplus produce. Coffee was also introduced in Gusii which culminated to the formation of colonial cooperative movements.⁹² Marketing board was consequently inaugurated as a way of marketing cash crop products. These modern cooperatives largely differed from indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives in many ways: First, modern cooperative movements were geared towards generating money out of farmer's produce. On the other hand, indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives were driven by a voluntary cooperative work aimed at maximizing individual production.⁹³ Secondly, modern cooperative movements received and sold produce on behalf of farmers whereas indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives produced mainly for subsistence. Thirdly, modern cooperative movements are limited to only cash crops, and operated for the benefit of members. In addition, people do not join them unless they require their services. On the other hand, indigenous cooperative initiatives are diverse and people join even if they did not need their services.⁹⁴ These modern cooperatives were also prone to market monopoly.⁹⁵ On the other hand,

⁹⁰ O.I., with Jemima Moraa at Bogitaa Village, on 29/04/2024.

⁹¹ Brett, E. A. *Colonialism and underdevelopment in East Africa; the politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939* by E.A. Brett. (London: Heinemann, 1974).

⁹² O.I., with James Ombati at Gesure Village, on 05/03/2024.

⁹³ O.I., with Paul Otiso Birongo Center, on 30/04/2024.

⁹⁴ William R. Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990.

indigenous Gusii cooperatives initiatives were not affected by monopoly since they involved general work.

Further, modern cooperatives were prone to looting, facing both management and leadership wrangles over control of resources. Indigenous cooperative initiatives did not have any form of structure and advocated for hard work by individual group members.⁹⁶ This made indigenous Gusii cooperatives unique among even the colonialists for their success in the production process. Indigenous Gusii cooperatives initiatives were not only a success in the production of food, but also a source of unity among people unlike the disunity that was characterized by modern cooperatives. These cooperative initiatives had a unity of purpose that was to ensure food security among group members and the community in general. This spirit instilled hard work and discipline among Abagusii which ensured enough food production. They also became a catalyst for building relationships. Modern cooperatives were characterised by robbing of farmers; a factor that partly explains the unending challenges facing such cooperatives till today.

The East African protectorate (Kenya and Uganda mainly) was established by the colonial government to act as an oversea colony for exploiting material resources. The Uganda railway was seen as an important project to expedite transportation of locally produced cash crops majorly. The funding, as already indicated, was to be made by the growth and sale of agricultural produce.⁹⁷ This is the genesis of colonial cooperative movements in Gusii by the colonial government to exploit mainly African farmers. The Uganda railway also ensured easy movement of troops to and from the interior of East Africa so as to ensure maximum administration in the area. This can be true as provincial administrations were established to look after African areas,

⁹⁵ Leonard Okello and Josephine Ahikire, *The cooperative movement and the challenge of development: A search for alternative wealth creation and citizen vitality approaches in Uganda*. (Kampala: ACTIONAID Uganda, 2013).

⁹⁶ O.I., with James Abai at Nyaora Village, on 13/04/2024.

⁹⁷ KNA: DC/KMG/2/2/15. Nyanza Marketing Board.

especially in areas where European varieties had not yet fully been introduced. The railway building thus increased farmer's burden as they started funding for its construction. The building of this railway lines led to land alienation⁹⁸ especially where traditional Gusii cultivation work was done. Alienation of land meant a drastic decline or even withdrawal from cooperative work. Further, the establishment of colonial cooperative movements was destined to compete with the indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives with the introduction of money which was not only appealing to many, but also running the economy.⁹⁹

The Abagusii in the pre-colonial period practiced mixed farming which complimented their economy. Livestock rearing was greatly affected during the colonial period. For instance, a British patrol, in a punitive expedition, confiscated Abagusii herds of cattle numbering 400 in 1905.¹⁰⁰ Frequent patrols could follow that aimed at downsizing Abagusii livestock alleging that Abagusii raided from their neighbors, the Luo. The process was forceful, at times using gunshots to destroy Abagusii livestock. For instance and as earlier discussed, the confiscation of livestock from Kitutu that led to Otenyo - a Gusii warrior speared to death by a British sergeant. However, the confiscation of Abagusii livestock was motivated by the colonial administrator's determination to forcefully introduce Abagusii to money economy. As a result, *ebisarate* were massively attacked and destroyed so as to discourage the Abagusii from livestock rearing for crop domestication.¹⁰¹

During this destruction stage, the young men in charge of *ebisarate* were scared and discouraged, given their inferior weapons. They could not withstand to watch their livestock being destroyed or confiscated frequently hence, they had to give in. This in return affected their daily routine of

⁹⁸ KNA: MSS/48/2, History of Kenya.

⁹⁹ KNA: PC/NZA/2/12/20, Crop Production.

¹⁰⁰ KNA: DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo Kisii, 1978 Annual Report.

¹⁰¹ KNA: DC/KSI/1/6, South Kavirondo Kisii, 1979 Annual Report.

collectively grazing together and acquiring basic knowledge from elders on cooperative sharing in the community.¹⁰² The introduction of hut and poll tax¹⁰³ dealt another blow towards traditional livestock rearing among the Abagusii. The tax was imposed to every hut owned by the Abagusii. Since many huts were built around *ebisarate* where young men stayed taking care of livestock, they were further discouraged as this move meant they had to pay an extra fee for them. Lack of money at this point necessitated the demolition of these huts and *ebisarate* in general, a situation that drastically decreased the numbers of livestock among Abagusii.

As a result, of huge chunks of fertile land left bear, the agriculture department, in support of settlers and colonial governor, transferred services to these areas and took them seriously by 1930. As a result, European farm implements were used by Africans to undertake cultivation of the introduced food and cash crops. However, despite bringing agricultural services closer to Africans, European interests altogether dominated hence; undermining of locals and partly settlers. This was as a result of pressure from within (by then colonial governor sir Joseph Byrne, 1931-1937) and without, for increased African development of agriculture. Land disputes consequently emerged after agriculture was extended to Africans. The grievances of the Kikuyu Central Association (K.C.A), for instance, over land alerted the Carter Land Commission of 1932-1933,¹⁰⁴ which also pressured the colonial government to immediately address the concerns of K.C.A. The massive grabbing of African land for agricultural purposes greatly diminished indigenous cooperative initiatives adopted by pre-colonial Gusii community.

¹⁰² O.I., with Francis Gichana at Nyakoe Market, on 12/04/2024.

¹⁰³ KNA/AB/4/91, Reports and Propaganda.

¹⁰⁴ KNA: MSS/48/2, History of Kenya.

Land activities, which formally brought the Gusii people together, started dividing them apart.¹⁰⁵ This was evidenced by the introduction of land registration and individual ownership (title deeds) which introduced Abagusii to land tussle till today. As a consequence of this tussle in various Gusii communities, settlers took advantage to acquire more and more land which they used to develop a purely cash crop economy.¹⁰⁶ Cash economy was seen as the only means of opening up the interior, apart from aiding the colonial government in running its administrative work. Consequently, the tea ordinance was passed in 1934 which provided for the control of the production of tea in the colony.¹⁰⁷ It was also meant to provide license for those who were to plant tea and aimed at increasing acreage, and hence production. Thus, seeds were distributed as a way of facilitating plantation and production of such cash crops. Three years later, in 1937, the tea cess ordinance was also passed which meant to raise levies collected and paid in respect of all tea manufactured in the colony.¹⁰⁸ This followed therefore, the introduction of tea in Gusiland in 1957 and was first grown at Mokomoni and later at Magombo in East Kitutu location.¹⁰⁹ The spread of tea growing in Gusii villages was received with mixed reactions towards the cultivation of traditional food crops. Where formerly traditional food crops were largely grown was replaced by tea growing, thus leaving locals with no assured food for, consumption.

Until today, tea remains to be Kenya's largest export cash crop, followed by other European varieties such as cotton, pyrethrum and coffee. European varieties today earn the country revenue from the export. Despite these cash crops being the country's primary export, their prices in the world market is still very low. This is notwithstanding the ever price fluctuations of the varieties that has placed the country to the periphery. These cash and other food crops like

¹⁰⁵ O.I., with Joshua Onywoki Mosando Village, on 08/04/2024.

¹⁰⁶ O.I., with Daudi Omori at Nyamache Market, on 10/04/2024.

¹⁰⁷ KNA: AG/2/199- The Tea Ordinance.

¹⁰⁸ KNA: AG/2/200- The Tea Cess Ordinance.

¹⁰⁹ Evans Nyamwaka. *Creative Arts and Cultural Dynamism: A Study of Music and Dance among the Abagusii of Kenya*, 2013.

maize are today mostly and widely cultivated by the Abagusii at the expense of traditional food crops which ensured food security. This has led to a drastic decline of the cultivation of traditional food crops in the region,¹¹⁰ owing to personal gain at the end the day. Consequently, the existence of unity and bond which was the result of cultivation of these traditional food crops out of cooperative work among the Abagusii has greatly declined. The almost absence of these traditional food crops in the scene has led to massive food insecurity, love of many gone down, deteriorating peace and unity among the Abagusii, not mentioning of the rising social stratification in society which never existed before. Traditional food crops brought all Abagusii on board despite their place and position in the community; an indication of lasting unity and togetherness in hard work.

3.3 The missionary work in Gusiiland

According to advanced learner's dictionary, a missionary is a person who travels attempting to spread a religion. In other words, a missionary is a person sent on a mission; especially to foreign land to propagate religious work. Missionary's main aim was to spread Christianity and convert non-Christians to Christians, especially in the African continent.¹¹¹ This was to be realized by setting up mission stations and thereafter churches. They therefore saw it of great need to go out and take 'the good news' to those who had not received it; having the support of their mother countries. Therefore, the coming of European missionaries in Africa and especially Gusiiland had far reaching effects, not only to Christianity but also to indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives on the long run.

Missionaries did not only come to spread Christianity, but to also "civilize" locals by making them read and write. This is evident in the establishment of missionary schools immediately after

¹¹⁰ O.I., with Teresa Nyansarora at Ogembo Village, on 02/04/2024.

¹¹¹ O.I., with Harrison Moronya at Kenyeny village, on 20/04/2024.

setting up first mission stations. The Abagusii had to be taught on how to read and write so as to understand the good news brought by the missionaries. The missionaries encouraged young men and women mostly to become missionaries themselves. These young men and women stayed in these mission stations and were taught so as to help European missionaries to interpret the Bible into local language. It was also a way of assisting the missionaries in their mission work because they were few in number.¹¹² Since people were now devoted to Christianity and others living in mission stations, indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives started diminishing and losing interest among locals. Christianity altered daily duties of people and preached against gender roles that existed before among the Abagusii. Also, missionaries appeared to provide locals with food and other materialistic support, which ultimately diverted their attention from cultivation for long hours in place of receiving the good news.

Christianity started gaining influence in many parts of Gusiiland as locals started to accept, embrace and be followers in certain denomination. Since people were sparsely populated and hence lived apart, the mission stations invited locals to live around these stations so as to be accessed with ease.¹¹³ This made it easy for missionaries to spread Christianity. Further, those who accepted to move and settle around mission stations were taught on how to read and write and apart from being converted; they could be employed as clerks and secretaries in various colonial government positions.¹¹⁴ Consequently, people living around mission stations became the first to receive education and the surrounding areas transformed much faster than the interior regions. Even the social status of these people transformed as they embraced Christianity.

¹¹²Sorobea N. Bogonko, *Christianity and Africanism at the Crossroads in Kenya 1909-1940*. (Nairobi: Kenyatta University College Press, 1988).

¹¹³ O.I., with Zacharia Nyiroria at Bogiakumu Village, on 30/03/2024.

¹¹⁴ O.I., with Eunice Nyiroria at Bogiakumu Village, on 30/03/2024.

Similar sentiments have been echoed by Nyamwaka,¹¹⁵ referring to *abasomi* – readers - as those Abagusii converts who embraced the S.D.A denomination. They were called abasomi because they used to read the bible in detail. The relocation of converts near and around the mission stations consequently led to a drastic diminishing of indigenous cooperative initiatives. A lot of attention was diverted towards receiving and sharing of the good news from missionaries rather than engaging in traditional cooperative work which were now seen as being backward. Further, mission stations acted as a resting place;¹¹⁶ hence many considered it better-off as compared to cooperate work that needed hard work. Hence, mission stations were seen to be embracing idleness to the detriment of hard work that did exist in Gusii clans.

As indicated earlier, the existing unity was brought about by working together and assisting one another; a spirit that grew among people over generations. Since the teachings of gospel taught about unity and oneness, the Abagusii's hearts were consequently won much faster; since it was attractive and appealing, and thus, accelerating the spread of the good news into the interior of Gusiiland. As a result of embracing Abagusii's hard work, European missionaries introduced this fast-growing food crop (maize) and advised locals to cultivate it as it requires less work to manage. Indeed, maize was easier to manage and could be cultivated by an individual or a few people. Missionary's intention was to actually create amble time among people so that the spread of Christianity was fastened. The introduction of maize, thus, resulted in subsequent decrease in the cultivation of traditional food crops such as millet and sorghum that had ensured food security and sustainability.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵ Evans O. Nyamwaka, E. O. "Creative Arts and Cultural Dynamism: A Study of Music and Dance among the Abagusii of Kenya, 2011.

¹¹⁶ O.I., with Alexander Onchera at Suneka Market, on 15/04/2024.

¹¹⁷ O.I., with James Abai at Nyaora Village, on 13/04/2024.

Mission stations were also determined to civilize and introduce a ‘culture of Christianity’ among the Abagusii.¹¹⁸ In so doing, the missionaries wanted to rid-off the Abagusii cultural practices like the indigenous cooperative initiatives which they considered backward - not transformative. Culture identified the Gusii community and in turn the locals were proud of it. The Abagusii believed in a living God who was the giver of life. During this period of spreading the gospel, missionaries took advantage and alienated Gusii land for their benefit. They acquired more and vast land in the name of establishing more churches and schools to cater for people’s needs. To realize this, they appeared to be working with the colonial government to suppress the Gusii’s ambitions and culture. Therefore, the locals were greatly divided on the mission of missionaries. The teachings of unity and oneness taught among people conflicted as they could not match missionary activities and motives.¹¹⁹ Missionaries were thus, seen as direct agents of settlers and colonial government who exerted and changed the community’s dynamism. Land was the basic source of production among the Abagusii and further alienation meant that the cultivation of traditional food crops was most likely to diminish, if not perish. Land alienation turned cultivation to be purely a settlers and missionary affair. This impacted negatively to not only the cultivation of traditional food crops, but also the cooperate work that engineered unity of purpose and togetherness among the Abagusii.

It is true that Christian missionaries succeeded in converting many locals to their respective denominations. The message of good news brought in Gusiiland is today used by locals to reach to places that have not received Christianity. Today, majority of the population in Gusiiland are subscribed to certain denominations. Christians flock to church on Saturdays (for the SDA) and Sundays (for the Roman Catholics). On the contrary, Christian missionaries negatively affected

¹¹⁸ O.I., with Banchiri Nyaboke at Itierio Center, on 15/04/2024.

¹¹⁹ O. I., with John Omenge at Mosochi Market, on 03/03/2024.

Gusii cultural practices, beliefs and even the cultivation of traditional food crops. Towards independence, missionaries did not bother to question the colonial government on the brutal killings against the locals. This made locals to strongly believe that Christian missionaries were meant to make them collaborate and thereafter give in to colonial policies that were forcefully executed.¹²⁰

3.4 Impact of the Swynnerton Plan on indigenous cooperative initiatives up to 1963

The Swynnerton plan of 1954 to 1956 was a British colonial land policy that aimed at controlling villages in terms of productions. Thurston (1987) refers to the plan as a movement off the land into villages. The plan was pioneered by R.J.M Swynnerton, who was the assistant director of agriculture in the former central province. The plan was intended to make villages active in agricultural and livestock production after perceived years of civil strife in the country. The Plan intended to act as a stimulus so as to realize much progress in Kenyan villages, and communal ownership of land among the Gusii had to be abolished. Major land reforms had to take place like individual registration of land titles and land consolidation program. Increased extension services, provision of credit to African farmers and processing and marketing services were also crucial issues in the Plan. In return, this could spur growth and transformation in African villages.

The Swynnerton Plan was to be made successful by establishing and re-invigorating of administrative control in particular villages. As indicated earlier in this chapter, administrative control had been put in place in order to execute various colonial government policies, more especially that of agriculture and land in general. During period of laying down the plan, tight control characterized the former central province unlike in the western part of Kenya. This is

¹²⁰ O.I., with James Ombati at Gesure Village, on 05/03/2024.

notably due to major civil strifes that preceded the region, more especially the Mau Mau uprising which consequently led to the declaration of the state of emergency in Kenya in 1952.¹²¹ Strong administrative posts in the name of fort halls were established in particular regions of former central province so as to easily control and regulate daily activities of people upon implementation of the plan. As a result of strict and tight control in central province, various districts were leading in terms of cash crop and dairy production than other regions in Kenya. This was after involving locals and ensuring that they followed the plan to the letter.

The swynnerton plan was also experienced in Gusii villages. Farmers were provided with free agricultural extension services and also encouraged to plant cash crops and embrace daily farming. Seminars were held at Maseno where only men were allowed to attend so as to adequately learn on the new method of farming.¹²² Apart from the extension services, Abagusii farmers were given seeds freely and advised to plant based on the techniques acquired during the seminar. The seeds and seedlings included those of tea, coffee and maize mainly. Men consequently became in charge of management of agriculture as women emerged as full-time laborers in the cultivation and land tillage. As a result, men were encouraged to uproot traditional food crops in place of the newly introduced food and cash crops. Tea and coffee consequently became rampant in Gusii farms where originally traditional food crops were planted. This drastic shift in gender roles was slowly diminishing indigenous cooperative initiatives¹²³ Colonial cooperative movements were mandated to help Gusii farmers in the sale of their produce after harvest. Improved dairy breeds of animals were also acquired so as to enhance milk production.

The plan had far reaching effects among farmers in Gusiiland. First, new food and cash crops were introduced in Gusii villages. Maize gradually spread, gained dominance and thus preferred

¹²¹William R. Ochieng', *Themes in Kenyan history*. (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya u.a., 1990).

¹²² O.I., with James Nyagwoka at Bogiakumu Village, on 24/04/2024.

¹²³ O.I., with Paul Bogonko at Motonto Market, on 07/03/2024.

for cultivation to the detriment of traditional food crops. Maize was easy to manage and attracted market demand faster. Cash crops were also cultivated in previously traditional food crop fields. Introduction of food and cash crops in Gusii villages ultimately diminished the cultivation of traditional food crops which the locals relied on for food security. Secondly, the introduction of the new food and cash crops meant that work was made easier. This was against work ethic pioneered by such working groups like egesangio, ekebosano and risaga which instilled the spirit of hard work among the Gusii and cultivating a culture of peace and unity in society. The Gusii previously, voluntarily cooperated in doing work and this greatly improved people's relations in society. Members of the neighborhood performed work in a merry-go-round, ensuring that each particular member produced food. The cultivation of newly introduced food and cash crops thus killed the spirit of hard work thus, increasingly causing division among people as they focused on producing their own produce. Continued individual cultivation of newly introduced crops gave birth to the spirit of individualism among people;¹²⁴ a vice that is being cultivated to date. The shift in gender roles affected traditional cooperative work in that it brought disorder and idleness among people, thus diminishing the spirit of hard work.

The Plan introduced seminars for offering Gusii farmers with basic skills on cultivation and rearing of animals, leading to effective execution in the extension services. Many were enrolled to receive education and encouraged their children to go to school. Education equipped the Abagusii with necessary knowledge and skills on daily activities. The introduction of new farm implements like hoe, ox-drawn plough and manure made cultivation of various food and cash crops easy, hence increase in crop yields. Further, field extension service on field management, spacing and the application of pesticides for crops and disease control were fundamental in

¹²⁴ O.I., with John Mburu at Bokoma Village, on 17/04/2024.

ensuring increased food production.¹²⁵ All these developments offered an opportunity for higher crop production.

3.5 Summary

The impact of colonial, cultural practices and European settlement was discussed vividly in this chapter. Such policies, to a great extent, worked against the development of indigenous initiatives in Gusiiland. For example, the introduction of money led to competition for labour force and even transfer of such labour to other areas of European settler farms. The introduction of new cash crops in former fields of indigenous crops diminished the cultivation of these food crops altogether. The chapter further discussed the swynnerton plan; a British colonial policy that breed individualism among the Abagusii. Consequently, cooperative labour became competitive and money-oriented.

¹²⁵ O.I., with Florence Nyamusi at Bogeka Village, on 20/06/2018.

CHAPTER FOUR

ROLE OF INDIGENOUS COOPERATIVE INITIATIVES IN THE TRANSFORMATION OF GUSIILAND, 1963-2002

4.1 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the indigenous cooperative initiatives of Gusiiland were examined during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. This chapter however, has striven to widen the spectrum on the role and contribution of indigenous cooperative initiatives in the transformation of Gusiiland, during the post-colonial period and therefore its effects on gender and employment in Kenya. In this regard therefore, the study was able to establish the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives in the transformation of majority of people's living standards in Gusiiland. The period 1963 to 2002 presents the two administrations that led the country in formulating various policies geared towards improving people's living standards. Further, the two governments were focused on promoting the spirit of unity and hard work among people, with agriculture as the driving force to the realization of equity and political stability in the country.

Relinquishing of political power by the colonial government and the resulting adoption of the independence constitution perhaps was itself a challenge to the young Kenya. Kenyan leaders who took up their leadership positions had to continue implementing colonial government policies at the expense of the countries priorities. However, African elites benefited themselves by forging relations with the colonial masters hence straining the political economy of their countries.¹²⁶ Liberation that was meant to benefit all people equally ended up benefiting few individuals. Creation of jobs, education and changing the country into a money economy; greatly

¹²⁶ Jean F. Bayart, "Africa in the World: A History of Extraversion." *African Affairs* 99, no. 395: 217–67, 2000. <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/99.395.217>.

altered gender roles in society which altogether affected the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland.

4.2 Transformation of GICI during Kenyatta era, 1963-1978

After many decades of colonial domination and economic exploitation in the country, Kenya finally attained self-rule on the 12th December 1963 with Jomo Kenyatta as its first Prime Minister. Self-rule gave Africans in Kenya, an opportunity to be ruled by their own leaders. Kenyans were not only optimistic on their leaders, but also on economic resurgence and regeneration, after years of economic destruction. It should be noted at this point that, major institutions had been set up that incorporated people in terms of education and in employment (casual and permanent). This ultimately changed ways of lives of many people. Upon coming to power therefore, the government had a huge task that was waiting. These challenges included resolving land disputes caused by land alienation during the colonial period and reviving of the diminishing growth of traditional food crops across the country that had paved way for cash and other food crop production.

Aware of the challenges ahead, Jomo Kenyatta rallied people by coining the term ‘Harambee’ whose clarion call was dedication, hard work and unity across the country.¹²⁷ That prosperity and nationhood could only be achieved through hard work. Harambee is a Kiswahili word mooted by the first president of Kenya Jomo Kenyatta. It means to pull together or in simple terms to work together. By coming up with harambee spirit, Jomo Kenyatta was advocating for the pulling together of resources and energy towards developing the country. The pulling together of people and resources enhances unity. The first president was motivated to mobilize people together and building tangible structures necessary for benefiting a mass of people across the country. In his

¹²⁷ O.I., with Jemima Moraa at Bogitaa Village, on 29/04/2024.

foremost speech, Jomo Kenyatta identified three ills that were facing the young nation, that is, disease, poverty and ignorance. Therefore, as a way of eradicating those ills, people had to come together,¹²⁸ by all means, to fight diseases, poverty and ignorance. During this time, poverty and ignorance, was on a high, after years of colonial dominance and exploitation in Kenya.

Etymologically, harambee spirit has its own roots in the pre-colonial Kenyan communities. Before the coming of colonialists in Kenya, various Kenyan communities were organized, purposely for their well-being.¹²⁹ They were organized politically, socially and economically. The Gusii were not left behind either. Upon the British entry into Gusiiland by 1904, the Gusii were unified by the cultivation of traditional food crops. It is this unity that led to peace and prosperity among the Abagusii during pre-colonial period. Consequently, the initiation and adoption of the harambee spirit strengthened further the existing unity among the Abagusii. During this time, Abagusii were motivated to reinvigorate and undertake *egesangio*, *ekebosano* and *risaga* as a way of eradicating poverty among themselves.¹³⁰ As a result, the Abagusii strove for hard work which in turn increased their production and hence increase in population.

As a young nation, Kenya needed a particular and unique philosophy of such a kind in the country; a philosophy that could incorporate every Kenyan irrespective of gender, tribe or age. It is to this regard that the philosophy of African socialism was adopted in Kenya. By African socialism, Kenyan societies were entitled to enjoy political equality, social justice, freedom from conscience, freedom from want, disease and exploitation, equal opportunities and high growth per capita incomes equitably distributed; wrote the paper. Political parties themselves were aligning to African socialization. For instant, Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU)

¹²⁸ O.I., with Paul Otiso at Birongo center, on 30/04/2024.

¹²⁹ O.I., with Joel Ogutu at Bogiakumu Village, on 05/03/2024.

¹³⁰ O.I., with Joshua Onywoki at Mosando Village, on 08/04/2024.

disbanded and voluntarily joined Kenya African National Union (KANU) in 1964.¹³¹ The act was meant to strengthen unity in the country and to avoid a situation where political parties were tribal, but which reflected the image of Kenya. In essence, different societies had to come together and form a government, since an individual or a single entity cannot form a government. Government is itself egesangio that requires synergy by various people, with different minds and the energy but with one focus. Through this philosophy, Kenya was able to initiate, adopt and plan on ways of managing the country.

Independence in Kenya brought freedom, which was a blessing in disguise towards transformation of indigenous Gusii Cooperative initiatives. Choosing and discriminating work was as a result of freedom among people.¹³² People had freedom to choose on what to do and what not to do. The seriousness and hard work initially given to Gusii cooperative initiatives started to decline. As a result, people resorted to a less intensive work ethic that generated money instantly, to cater for their current and daily needs only.

Freedom at this stage seem to have given people alternative shortcuts of life; which alternatives were oriented towards solving only daily needs of people in society. This was a huge loss to cooperative initiatives which required a hardworking and dedicated group of individuals to perform such tasks meant to solve current and future needs of people in the society. Modernity in Africa can be ascribed to the work of missionaries and mainly African missionaries.¹³³ The spirit of doing work did exist prior to the coming of colonialists. Colonialists introduced and imparted to the minds of people the concept of freedom of doing work, which consequently gave birth to laziness among people. Further, cooperative initiative activities were associated with the elderly,

¹³¹ O.I., with Teresia Kerubo at Ogembo market, on 02/04/2024.

¹³² O.I., with Matogo Omete at Ekerore Village, on 25/03/2024.

¹³³ Olufemi Taiwo, *how colonialism preempted modernity in Africa*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

who could not seek for white collar jobs and go elsewhere.¹³⁴ The elderly were becoming weak and defenseless, hence could not be able to produce plenty, required for sustaining them. Also, they could not perform such activities effectively due to their old age.

4.3 Impact of Money Economy

The introduction of money economy during the colonial period greatly affected the effectiveness of indigenous Gusii cooperative initiatives further. Money created a class of wealthy individuals in society who could no longer participate in such indigenous cooperative initiatives. This meant that money was used as a measure of labour. To a great detriment of traditional Gusii indigenous cooperative initiatives was the introduction of tractors, ploughs, seed drills, combine harvesters; which replaced people in undertaking work together. This was occasioned by the rich who sought the services of such farm implements. As a result, the unity and peace brought about by these initiatives in Gusiiland drastically declined leading to jealousy, status quo and hatred among people of same family and clan.¹³⁵ Further, the creation of these two classes of people in society culminated to dependency syndrome among people, societies, towns, cities and countries.¹³⁶ Consequently, our people syndrome (*ekenyabomo*) developed in society leading to control of people by other people across the divide.¹³⁷ *Ekenyabomo* was a word referred to those who belonged or formed a particular class. For instance, the rich and the poor belonged to different classes, each complimenting one another, something that is experienced up to date.

The emergence of such competing groups in society greatly affected cooperative initiatives in many ways: First, the unnecessary competition created jealousy and disunity among people. The amounting jealousy resulted to instability as the less fortunate struggled to make the ends meet.

¹³⁴O.I., with Mary Nyamweya Mogonga Market, on 15/03/2024.

¹³⁵O.I., with Florence Bitutu at Kegogi Village, on 26/03/2024.

¹³⁶Walter Rodney, *How Europe underdeveloped Africa*. (London: Bogle-L'Ouverture, 1972).

¹³⁷ Frank, Andre Gunder. *The development of underdevelopment*, 2005.

Secondly, peoples' trustworthiness weakened since the struggle in society meant that the use of dubious means to achieve anything was possible without hard work. This rekindled the phrase the end justifies the means. Thirdly, it led to the creation of both rural and urban Centres of dwelling. The rural remained for the poor and directly dependent on the urban Centre; whereas the urban was dominated by a few rich who amassed wealth, thanks to the efforts and zeal of the rural areas. The competition between the metropolitan and rural centers created division in society and an eventual exploitation of the manufacturers whose efforts depended on the elderly. As a result, there was struggle in the rural areas itself as the producer's hard work was not sufficient enough to cater for the growing demand of the metropolitan.

In the eve of President Kenyatta's administration, traditional Gusii cooperative initiatives had drastically transformed and viewed differently. The yield and acreage of sorghum for example, had surged from 562ha in 1977 to 620ha in 1978; which was an increase of 58ha. Total yield averaged 11bags/ha.¹³⁸ The yield was significant given the acreage tilled. On the hand, maize remained to be the staple food crop for the Abagusii people. Its husbandry was manageable individually, in comparison with other crops in the district. The table below shows the average acreage maize planted and the final yield in both local and hybrid maize.

Table 1: Local and Hybrid Maize Acreage

Year	Acreage (Ha)	Yield (Local & hybrid)
1977	33, 177	1,257,090
1978	33, 177	1,427,080

Source: KNA

¹³⁸ KNA: DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo Kisii, 1978 Annual Report.

As shown in the table above, the total acreage was 33,177ha of hybrid maize and over 5,000ha under local maize; which was an estimated increase in yield from 1,257,090 bags in 1977 to 1,427,080 bags in 1978. In comparison, at the peak of Kenyatta's reign, maize had already emerged as a dominant food crop in the entire kisii district at the expense of the once dominant indigenous food crops. This is coupled with the introduction of education, influence of money in society and implementation of western practices and civilization. Traditional Gusii cooperative initiatives verbally and structurally became extinct, but laid the foundation in the creation of *chamas* women groups, communal help groups, welfare organizations, merry go round and other development-oriented activities such as fundraising for churches, schools, aiding education of students and the bereaved.¹³⁹ Further, government's involvement in formulating policies of cooperatives weakened these cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland.

4.4 Role of Maendeleo Ya Wanawake Organization (MYWO)

Maendeleo ya wanawake organization (MYWO) is a national welfare agency program whose mandate is to unify, nurture and empower Kenyan women in all spheres of life; to be able to face and solve the challenges they face. The organization not only seeks to bring together women and empower them, but also a voice for the voiceless women in society. History of this organization can be traced back in 1952 during the colonial administration when it was started. During inception, the MYWO was mandated to mobilize women all over the country to step up and work. By 1958, the organization had registered a total of 7,242 members countrywide. The colonial administration used the organization to mobilize women who were needed to work in European farms that spread across the country. The rationale behind the formation of MYWO in Kenya was based on the existing indigenous cooperative groupings, especially in Gusiiland.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ O.I., with John Mburu at Bokoma Village, on 17/04/2024.

¹⁴⁰ O.I., with Paulina Osebe at Marani Center, on 28/04/2024.

Existence of ebisangio, ebibusano and amasaga that brought women together in performing their activities was fundamental to the pioneering of the organization in Kenya. Thus, the sole purpose and objectives of the MYWO were measured based on the indigenous cooperative initiative activities.

During the Kenyatta era, MYWO regained its voice and became powerful in advocating for women rights and role in society. The Kenyatta administration welcomed the role of the organization by elevating it in the category of a welfare agency. This meant that the work of the organization was that of a welfare agency. It also meant that the work of the organization was ratified, supported and encouraged countrywide. As a result, MYWO joined President Kenyatta's clarion call for self-help program which was necessary for development. The organization's role of unifying and empowering women was encouraged because the country was striving for unity that was a key to prosperity. Given the support the organization was granted by the Kenyatta administration, the organization became instrumental in building schools across the country, clinics especially where women could get such services like maternity and involved in other Community Based Organizations (CBO) across the country. The organization believed that empowering a woman is empowering the whole nation. This is because women were not only at the centre of production, but also in ensuring their families were food sufficient.¹⁴¹ The organization was accorded recognition basically through its efforts to advocate for unity and self-help groups across the country. During this time, indigenous Gusii cooperative initiative was boosted as women across the country were encouraged to work hard in their cooperative work in order for them to transform their livelihoods and that of the entire society.

¹⁴¹ O.I., with Joel Ogutu on 05/03/2024.

MYWO's effort in the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiative cannot be overemphasized. However, due to the growing number of women in the country and space of technology advancement in the social, economic and political spheres;¹⁴² coupled with the acquisition of education and the role of religion, MYWO's vision and mission today encompass women's involvement in leadership positions and overemphasize in gender equity across all positions in the country. A result of this diverted move and the organization's involvement in the country's politics, the place of indigenous cooperatives initiative in Gusiiland, has been greatly left at the mercy of its former self. Women, who were the key players behind the development and advocating of such cooperative's initiative in the country, were easily enticed with new advancements in the country leaving agriculture to the uneducated, weak and old in rural areas. Consequently, the rise of the MYWO led to dichotomy of effects: towards advocating for unity of purpose and resulting diminishing of the indigenous cooperatives initiative in Gusiiland during its peak periods. The gradual fall thereby lessened the intense nature of cooperatives initiative in Gusiiland; and thus, declining unity and peace among people in society. Let us discuss about gender gap and unemployment equation in Gusii Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives (GICI).

4.5 Gender gap and unemployment equation in GICI, 1963-2002

Gender played a critical role in the pre-colonial period; with each gender having clearly defined roles. There existed division of labor that cut across each gender and aimed at ensuring not only food sufficiency, but also unity and peaceful co-existence in society. As indicated earlier, in the preceding chapters, women and girls were largely involved in crop production, and house chores, men constructed houses and boys herded livestock. These, among many, involved some of the roles performed and which ensured sustainability and improved standards. In addition, colonial

¹⁴² O.I., with Alexander Onchera on 15/04/2024.

and post-colonial era brought with it a form of civilization and western practices that altered work ethic. As a result, there was a clamor for social equality in the performance of communal work, a factor that culminated to drastic diminishing of hard work devoted to cooperative initiatives.¹⁴³ Further, the clamor for equality has witnessed unnecessary competition and increased social conflicts in society due to food insufficiency. As a result of this there is laxity across both genders, hence diverting attention from land-related issues.

The introduction of money also contributed to a decline of cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland. It thus follows that money economy exposed the periphery of interior of colonized states to the world market order.¹⁴⁴ His assertions are echoed by Maxx's theory of capitalism.¹⁴⁵ It is evident indeed that money attracted many in Gusii societies and the Abagusii got enticed very easily, bearing its power as a value for exchange. Exchange of goods for goods thus was rendered almost invalid as evidenced in rampant provision of labor where one could be paid for work done. This was exacerbated by the introduction of a number of taxes that were mated on every individual and household. During this time, cooperative initiative in Gusiiland was overlooked deliberately since they did not involve exchange of money in the process. Consequently, social evils emerged in society due to the uneven resource distribution like jealousy, robbery, rift among people that truly tested the existing love, unity and peace in the entire Gusii community.

The introduction of various taxes led to a resulting migration of many Gusii people to especially *amasamba* (tea farm) of Kericho so as to earn a living to pay taxes. In kericho conditions of work was very poor yet one was forced to work despite the low pay. Those who came from

¹⁴³Frank Ellis, "Livelihoods, Diversification, and Policies." *Rural Livelihoods and Diversity in Developing Countries*: 231–41, 2000.

¹⁴⁴ Frank, Andre Gunder. *The development of underdevelopment*, 2005.

¹⁴⁵Immanuel M. Wallerstein and Terence K. Hopkins, *Processes of the world-system*. (Beverly Hills, Calif: Sage Publications, 1980).

Kericho after the elapse of *ukirimiti* (agreement) were even poorer than they were. A good number became visitors in their own land,¹⁴⁶ a situation that made them homeless and messengers of their own people.

4.6 Transformation of GICI in the Moi era, 1978-1984

Kenyatta's era could come to a sudden end on the 22nd August 1978 upon his death. The constitution allowed the vice president to take charge in such a situation, after which elections could be held in a period of three months. Hence, a mini-election was held in 1979 and Moi emerged the winner. When Daniel Moi assumed office as Kenya's second president, he adopted the Nyayo philosophy as his economic blue print. Nyayo is a Kiswahili word meaning footsteps. In so doing, Moi vowed to follow the footsteps of his predecessor's legacy and policies across the country. By so doing, a continuity of Harambee spirit's clarion call was to be realized: that of unity, love, peace and stability in the country.

Nyayo philosophy became the center of Moi's administration across the country. Through this spirit of bringing people together; schools, churches, hospitals, sports arena and agricultural zones were created. These facilities were meant to benefit people across the country so as to eradicate the ills that were facing the country at that time. Moi believed through unity and stability, a country was propelled to development. In his Madaraka day speech, Moi emphasized and advocated for unity in the country, authoritatively stating that "love begets unity, unity beget peace and peace is the basis for a country's development." The peace and unity that was being preached to be a foundation of development in the country was based on African socialism – an economic blue print basing its action plan squarely on African spirit of work.¹⁴⁷ It was the same

¹⁴⁶ O.I., with Anna Kemunto at Kiogoro Market, on 16/04/2024.

¹⁴⁷ O.I., with Nemwel Isaboke at Nyansancha Village, on 20/04/2024.

spirit that inspired the Kenyatta era towards transformation of many projects aimed at developing the country.

Through the spirit of Nyayo, president Moi started the Nyayo Tea Zones Development Corporation (NTZDC). The rationale behind the inception of this ambitious project was to enable the country position itself as the main producer and exporter of tea. Further, the project of large scale growing of tea was done near mountains and forests so as to avoid land encroachment by individuals.¹⁴⁸ In so doing, the NTZDC was acting to protect mountains and forested areas which were culpable to been grabbed, and also affect the rules set by the National Environmental and Management Authority (NEMA). Consequently, enough tea was produced mainly for export so as to earn the country revenue. During this time, production of tea was at the centre of agricultural cultivation in the country. More effort and energy were put on cash crop production which was export-oriented. As a result, the cultivation of traditional food crops was discouraged and paved way for tea planting in areas where traditional food crops were cultivated.¹⁴⁹ This drastically diminished the nature of traditional food crops which had ensured food sufficiency and unity among the Abagusii.

In Gusiiland, where the cultivation of export cash crops commenced in 1947, the spread of tea cultivation was fast and rampant. As mentioned earlier, the spread of tea in Gusii villages led to a resulting decrease of traditional food crop production. Not only food insufficiency was becoming rampant but also deteriorating peace and unity among the Abagusii; probably due to idleness and shift of gender roles.¹⁵⁰ Modern cooperative movements on the other hand were strengthened to look for already market for tea and other cash crops. These cooperatives represented a

¹⁴⁸ O.I., with Samwel Ombasa at Tabaka Center, on 01/05/2024.

¹⁴⁹ O.I., with James Abai at Nyaora Village on 13/04/2024.

¹⁵⁰ O.I., with Daudi Omori at Nyamache Market, on 10/04/2024.

government policy of reaching out people to sell their produce as a group.¹⁵¹ To this point, cooperative movements were seen as entities of siphoning money from farmers, a factor which led to the clamor for liberalization of modern cooperative movements across the country.¹⁵² There was also increased mistrust on cooperative leaders and the huge decrease in the value of cash crops in the world market; a situation that culminated to famine in many parts of Gusiland as traditional food crops had been uprooted for cash crop cultivation which in turn did not attract enough money as anticipated.

Moi's philosophy contributed immensely to the growth and transformation of the country's socio-economic and political spheres. Through the Nyayo philosophy, many institutions of learning were built which gave an opportunity to all children access basic education. This was implemented by the introduction of school milk (*Maziwa ya Nyayo*) which ensured that school going children, were healthy and ready to learn.¹⁵³ The milk eased the amount of absenteeism in schools, and thus much focus was on Kenyan child's educational developments. Education shaped and prepared learners to tackle the challenges facing the country at that time. Overemphasize on learners' education thus led to their development in knowledge, skills and competence. Societies got enlightened and were motivated to take their children to school.

During this time, indigenous cooperatives initiative had diminished greatly. In fact, they were only being practiced by few individuals, certainly due to increased advance in technology and also arable land becoming smaller.¹⁵⁴ Increased population could as well have put pressure on indigenous cooperatives initiative. However, the skills and spirit of this initiative has been

¹⁵¹ Silas Kobia, *The co-operative movement in Kenya: Challenges and opportunities*. (Nairobi: Lukiko Consulting Trust, 2011).

¹⁵² Fredrick O. Wanyama, *Surviving liberalization: The Cooperative Movement in Kenya*. (Geneva: ILO, 2009).

¹⁵³ O.I., with Francis Gichana at Nyakoe Market, on 12/04/2024.

¹⁵⁴ O.I., with Alexander Onchera at Suneka Market, on 15/04/2024.

advanced technically today as seen in women *chamas* (groups), merry-go-round groups, C.B.Os, and fundraising for various purposes and many others. In other words, indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland still exists, but experienced to a small extent directly or in other forms as mentioned earlier. That is, we see them from the back.

4.7 Summary

This chapter was about the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in the post-colonial period. National philosophies were adopted immediately after independence as a way of strengthening national unity. It was concluded unequivocally that national philosophies were founded on the basis of indigenous cooperative initiatives.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 Summary

The study examined the history and transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland between 1904 and 2002. Focusing on the Abagusii of present-day Kisii County. It explored the origin, development and role of indigenous cooperative initiatives in shaping livelihoods over time. The study arose from the recognition that, while modern cooperative movements have attracted considerable scholarly attention, indigenous cooperative systems that historically sustained social relations, agricultural production and communal welfare among the Abagusii have remained largely understudied. Guided by a historical research design, the study drew on primary and secondary sources to reconstruct and analyse historical developments.

Chapter One provides the background to the study by examining the place of cooperative initiatives in social and economic transformation. It traces the significance of cooperative activities in promoting mutual assistance, communal welfare, and development across societies. The chapter identifies the gap in existing scholarship regarding indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland and outlines the objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, and methodology that guided the study. It further explains the relevance of the research in contributing to debates on development, social cohesion and community-based initiatives.

Chapter Two discusses the nature and growth of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland at the eve on colonial rule. The chapter demonstrates that migration and settlement of the Abagusii in the fertile Gusii highlands encouraged the development of collective labour arrangements to support agricultural production and other communal activities. Indigenous

cooperative initiatives such as ebisangio, ekebosano and risaga emerged as organised systems through which members of the community pooled labour and resources. These initiatives facilitated cultivation, harvesting, house construction and other communal responsibilities. Beyond their economic role, they strengthened social bonds, encouraged cooperation, promoted discipline, and fostered a sense of collective responsibility among community members.

Chapter Three examines the effects of colonial policies, culture, and practices on indigenous cooperative initiatives between 1920 and 1963. The chapter reveals that colonial taxation, missionary activities, Western education, labour migration, and land reforms significantly altered the social and economic foundations of indigenous cooperation. The introduction of cash-crop agriculture and private land ownership encouraged individual economic advancement and gradually weakened communal forms of production. Colonial policies increasingly integrated the Abagusii into the wider capitalist economy, resulting in changes to traditional systems of cooperation. While some indigenous initiatives survived by adapting to new conditions, many lost their original communal character as social and economic priorities shifted.

Chapter Four explores the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives in the transformation of Gusiiland between 1963 and 2002. The chapter shows that despite the challenges brought about by population growth, land fragmentation, unemployment, commercial agriculture and rural-urban migration, indigenous cooperative values remained influential. Indigenous principles of mutual support and collective responsibility continued through self-help groups, women's organisations, harambees and other community-based associations. Although the structure of indigenous cooperation changed considerably after independence, its underlying principles continued to contribute to economic welfare, social support and community development.

The study concludes that indigenous cooperative initiatives played a central role in shaping the social, economic, and cultural development of Gusiiland. Before colonial rule, they provided an effective mechanism for labour organisation, food production and social cohesion. Colonialism introduced policies and practices that transformed these systems by encouraging individualism and commercial production. Nevertheless, the values of cooperation, mutual assistance and communal responsibility persisted and continue to influence community life among the Abagusii. The study therefore argues that indigenous cooperative initiatives remain an important historical foundation upon which contemporary efforts towards social and economic development can be built.

5.2 Conclusion

The study demonstrates that indigenous cooperative initiatives constituted a fundamental pillar of Abagusii social, economic, and cultural organisation between 1904 and 2002. Although these initiatives had their roots in the pre-colonial period, they continued to influence the lives of the Abagusii throughout the colonial and post-colonial eras. Indigenous cooperative arrangements such as *ebisangio*, *ekebosano*, and *risaga* emerged as practical responses to labour demands within the community. Through these institutions, members of society pooled labour, shared resources, and undertook collective activities such as land preparation, planting, weeding, harvesting, house construction, and other communal responsibilities. Beyond their economic significance, these initiatives nurtured values of reciprocity, solidarity, mutual assistance, and collective responsibility, thereby creating a strong social bond that sustained communal welfare and social stability.

The study further reveals that the growth and expansion of indigenous cooperative initiatives were closely linked to the socio-economic environment of Gusiiland. The fertile highlands,

favourable climatic conditions, and dependence on agriculture necessitated cooperation among households. Consequently, indigenous cooperative initiatives became important institutions through which labour shortages were addressed, productivity enhanced, and social relationships strengthened. Participation in these initiatives was not merely an economic undertaking but also a social obligation that reinforced unity of purpose and communal identity. Through regular interaction in cooperative activities, members of the community cultivated trust, strengthened kinship ties, and ensured the equitable distribution of labour and resources.

The study also establishes that colonial rule introduced profound changes that transformed the structure and operation of indigenous cooperative initiatives. Colonial taxation policies compelled many Abagusii to seek wage employment in order to obtain money for tax payments. Labour migration reduced the availability of labour within villages and weakened traditional systems of collective work. Missionary activities and Western education introduced new values and lifestyles that increasingly shifted people's attention away from indigenous institutions. Furthermore, the expansion of the cash economy encouraged the pursuit of individual economic interests, while land consolidation and registration policies promoted private ownership at the expense of communal practices. The implementation of the Swynnerton Plan accelerated these developments by encouraging commercial agriculture, individual land tenure, and market-oriented production. Collectively, these changes undermined the communal foundations upon which indigenous cooperative initiatives had historically thrived.

Despite these transformations, the study demonstrates that indigenous cooperative initiatives did not disappear. Rather, they adapted to changing historical circumstances and continued to influence social and economic life in Gusiiland. During the post-independence period, traditional forms of cooperation evolved into self-help groups, women's organisations, harambees, rotating

savings schemes, and other community-based associations. Although these institutions operated within a modern socio-economic environment, they retained many of the principles that had characterised indigenous cooperative initiatives, including mutual support, collective action, and communal responsibility. In this regard, the study shows that indigenous cooperative values remained relevant in addressing challenges such as poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and limited access to resources.

The study further reveals that the transformation of indigenous cooperative initiatives reflected broader changes occurring within Abagusii society. Population growth, land fragmentation, urbanisation, formal education, and the increasing monetisation of the economy contributed to the gradual shift from collective production towards individual enterprise. Nevertheless, the persistence of community-based organisations demonstrates that the cooperative spirit that historically characterised Abagusii society continued to survive despite these changes. The emergence of numerous self-help groups and welfare associations illustrates the continued importance of collective action in addressing social and economic needs.

The study therefore concludes that indigenous cooperative initiatives played a central role in the historical transformation of Gusiiland. They provided the foundation for agricultural production, social cohesion, communal welfare, and economic resilience. While colonialism and subsequent socio-economic developments altered their structure and operation, the fundamental values of cooperation, reciprocity, and mutual assistance remained embedded within Abagusii society. The continued existence of these values demonstrates the resilience of indigenous institutions and their capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. Consequently, the study argues that indigenous cooperative initiatives remain an important historical resource whose principles can

contribute significantly to contemporary efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development, social cohesion, and improved livelihoods in Gusiiland.

5.3 Recommendation

- a. The study recommends the revival of indigenous cooperative initiatives among the Abagusii as a means of strengthening social cohesion and improving livelihoods. Community leaders, county governments, and development agencies should encourage collective work programmes founded on the traditional values of mutual assistance, reciprocity, and communal responsibility. Such initiatives would help address contemporary challenges such as unemployment, poverty, and declining social bonds while preserving important aspects of Abagusii cultural heritage.
- b. There is a need to preserve indigenous knowledge relating to cooperative initiatives before it is lost with the passing of older generations. Oral traditions, community experiences, and indigenous practices such as ebisangio, ekebosano, and risaga should be documented and preserved through research, community forums, and cultural programmes. Educational institutions should also promote awareness of indigenous cooperative traditions in order to foster appreciation of their contribution to social organisation and community wellbeing.
- c. The increasing emphasis on individual achievement and commercial interests has contributed to the weakening of communal forms of cooperation. Development programmes should therefore encourage collective participation in addressing social and economic challenges facing local communities. Community projects in agriculture, environmental conservation, youth empowerment, and social welfare should draw upon the principles of cooperation, resource sharing, and mutual support that historically

characterised indigenous cooperative initiatives. Such an approach would strengthen community participation while promoting sustainable development and social harmony.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

- a. Further research could examine the effects of migration on indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland. Particular attention should be given to the impact of rural–urban and rural-rural migration on labour availability, participation in communal activities, and the continuity of indigenous cooperative traditions. Such a study would provide a deeper understanding of how population movements have influenced the transformation of cooperative practices over time.
- b. There is a need for further investigation into the relationship between indigenous cooperative initiatives and environmental management in Gusiiland. Such a study could explore how traditional systems of collective labour and resource sharing contributed to environmental conservation and community resilience during periods of ecological stress and change.
- c. Further research should examine the influence of formal education on indigenous cooperative traditions among the Abagusii. Attention should be directed towards understanding how educational institutions have shaped attitudes towards indigenous systems of cooperation and the extent to which younger generations appreciate and uphold these traditions.
- d. Future studies could investigate the role of indigenous cooperative initiatives in contemporary socio-economic development. Such research would assess how traditional principles of mutual assistance, collective responsibility, and communal participation can be adapted to address present-day challenges while preserving the historical values that sustained community life in Gusiiland.

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Francis Gichana	12/04/2024	86years	Nyakoe
Alexander Onchera	15/04/2024	89years	Suneka
James Matundura	23/04/2024	76years	Bosongo
James Nyagwoka	24/04/2024	93years	Bogiakumu
Nyamboba Nyagwoka	24/04/2024	93years	Bogiakumu
Samwel Ombasa	01/05/2024	92years	Tabaka
Harrison Moronya	20/04/2024	83years	Kenyenya
John Mburu	17/04/2024	85years	Bokoma
Daudi Omori	10/04/2024	86years	Nyamache
James Abai	13/04/2024	75years	Nyaora
Zachary Nyiroria	30/03/2024	86years	Mosisita
Martha Nyaboke	11/03/2024	84years	Bogiakumu
Teresa Nyansarora	02/04/2024	83years	Ogembo
Banchiri Nyaboke	15/04/2024	78years	Itierio
Anna Kemunto	16/04/2024	79years	kiogoro
Teresia Kerubo	02/04/2024	81years	Ogembo
Nemwel Isaboke	20/04/2024	75years	Nyansancha
John Omenge	03/03/2024	69years	Mosocho
Florence Nyamusi	20/03/2024	76years	Bogeka

James Ombati	05/03/2024	80years	Gesure
Paul Bogonko	07/03/2024	81years	Motonto
Matogo Omete	25/03/2024	86years	Bogiakumu
Joel Ogutu	05/03/2024	68years	Mosisita
Daniel Matogo	10/03/2024	72years	Ekerore
Joshua Onywoki	08/04/2024	84years	Mosando
Eunice Nyiroria	30/03/2024	80years	Mosisita
Paul Otiso	30/04/2024	79years	Birongo
Florence Bitutu	26/03/2024	75years	kegogi
Paulina Osebe	28/04/2024	74years	Marani
Mary Nyamweya	15/03/2024	77years	Mogonga
Jemima Moraa	29/04/2024	79years	Bogitaa
Obino Nyambane	20/03/2024	72years	Bosongo

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

SAMPLE GUIDING QUESTIONS

Section A: Background Information

Name of respondent (optional)

Age

Gender

Occupation

Place of residence

Clan/community affiliation

How long have you lived in this area?

Section B

Objective I:

To Trace the Nature and Growth of Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives in Gusiiland during the Early Colonial Period, 1904–1920

What forms of indigenous cooperative initiatives existed among the Abagusii during this period?

What local names were used to refer to these cooperative initiatives?

What activities were commonly undertaken through these cooperative arrangements?

Who participated in indigenous cooperative initiatives?

How were members mobilised to participate in communal work?

What rules governed participation in these initiatives?

What benefits did members derive from participating in indigenous cooperative activities?

How did indigenous cooperative initiatives contribute to agricultural production?

How did these initiatives contribute to social cohesion and communal welfare?

What factors contributed to the growth and expansion of indigenous cooperative initiatives during this period?

Were there differences in participation based on age, gender, clan, or social status? Please explain.

How were disputes arising within cooperative activities resolved?

Objective II:

To Analyse the Effects of Colonial Policies, Culture, and Practices of European Settlement in Gusiiland, 1920-1963

How did colonial rule affect indigenous cooperative initiatives among the Abagusii?

What impact did colonial taxation have on indigenous cooperative activities?

How did labour migration influence participation in indigenous cooperative initiatives?

What effects did missionary activities have on traditional forms of cooperation?

How did Western education influence attitudes towards indigenous cooperative initiatives?

What changes occurred following the introduction of cash-crop farming?

How did land consolidation and land registration affect indigenous cooperative practices?

Were indigenous cooperative initiatives strengthened or weakened during the colonial period? Explain.

How did the introduction of a money economy influence communal labour arrangements?

Did European settlers adopt or influence any indigenous cooperative practices? Explain.

How did the two World Wars affect indigenous cooperative activities in Gusiiland?

What strategies did the Abagusii employ to sustain indigenous cooperative initiatives during the colonial period?

Objective III:

To Investigate the Role of Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives and Their Impact on the Transformation of Livelihoods in Gusiiland, 1963–2002

What forms of indigenous cooperative initiatives continued after independence?

How did indigenous cooperative initiatives contribute to agricultural production during this period?

What role did they play in improving household incomes and livelihoods?

How did indigenous cooperative initiatives contribute to community development projects?

What role did women play in indigenous cooperative initiatives after independence?

How did youth participate in these cooperative activities?

To what extent did indigenous cooperative initiatives influence the formation of self-help groups, harambees, and other community organisations?

How did indigenous cooperative initiatives contribute to social welfare and mutual support?

What changes occurred in indigenous cooperative initiatives between 1963 and 2002?

What factors contributed to the transformation or decline of some indigenous cooperative initiatives?

In what ways did indigenous cooperative initiatives contribute to poverty reduction and community wellbeing?

Which indigenous cooperative values have survived to the present day?

How relevant are indigenous cooperative initiatives in addressing contemporary social and economic challenges?

APPENDIX II: PLATES



Plate 1: Granary, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre



Plate 2: Gourd, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre



Plate 3: Mortar, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre



Plate 4: Bowl, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre



Plate 5: Winnowing pan, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre



Plate 6: Three-legged stool, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre

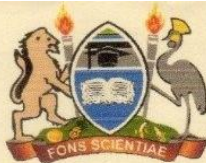


Plate 7: Cooking pot, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre



Plate 8: Mat, *Source:* Kisii Cultural Centre

APPENDIX III: RESEARCH AUTHORIZATION



KISII UNIVERSITY

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KSU/R&E/ 03/5/vol.1/176

DATE: 28th June, 2018

The Head, Research Coordination
National Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)
Utalii House, 8th Floor, Uhuru Highway
P. O. Box 30623 – 00100
NAIROBI - KENYA.

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: MOSETI DENNIS MATOGO REG. NO: MAS11/60149/15

The above mentioned is a student of Kisii University currently pursuing Master Degree of Arts (History) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The topic of the research is, *"History and Transformation of Indigenous Cooperative initiatives in Gusiland, (1904 - 2002)"*.

We are kindly requesting for assistance in acquiring a research permit to enable the student carry out the research.

Thank you.



f Prof. Anakalo Shitandi, PhD
Registrar, Research and Extension
Cc: DVC (ASA)
Registrar (AA)
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AS/sm

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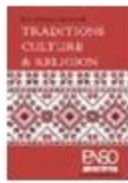
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APPENDIX V: PUBLICATION

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Original Article

Societal Bond: Nature and growth of Indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusii Land

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Date Published: **ABSTRACT**

19 September 2024

Keywords:

Indigenous
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Initiatives,
Abagusii,
Gusii,
Ebisangio,
Ebibosano,
Risaga.

This paper surveys the nature and growth of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusii land before the colonial period. It sought to contribute to the efforts of the Abagusii community towards the innovation of indigenous cooperative initiatives as an initiative for the transformation of the majority of the people in Gusii land. The paper employed the principle of modernization theory which asserts that a break from primitive customs was the basis for the development of any society. To him, development is 'white' and the only way developing countries can develop is to follow the footsteps of European countries. Nevertheless, the paper intentionally utilized the criticism of modernization theory to advance the objective of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiland. The study was done in Kisii County. The population of the study was sampled from the nine sub-counties of Kisii County using the snowballing sampling technique. The study further used primary sources of data collection which included oral interviews and archival evidence. In addition, internet sources and libraries were widely utilized as secondary materials. A descriptive method was used to analyse data collected from the field thereafter. The justification of this study was the rationale for the emergence and sprouting of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusii land. It was concluded therefore that - laziness was considered a disease and hence prohibited in the community and that the unity of purpose ensured not only food security but also ensured love for one another was bound and relative peace and security maintained. Further, findings were also evident that indigenous cooperative initiatives in the long run created a chain of bonds among the Abagusii which still exists to date.

APA CITATION

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APPENDIX VI: PLAGIARISM REPORT



Page 1 of 128 - Cover Page

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TRANSFORMATION OF INDIGENOUS COOPERATIVE INITIATIVES IN GUSIILAND, 1904-2002
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