

# Changes in the Kipsigis Women's Roles and Gender Relations in Bomet Tea Farming Zone from 1924-1975

Alex Kipngetich Kirui (Correspondent Author)

Department of Arts and Humanities, Chuka University

P.O Box 31-20210, Litein, Kenya

Tel: 254-727-453-866 E-mail: [kasseykirui@gmail.com](mailto:kasseykirui@gmail.com)

Dr. Martha W. Muraya

Chuka University

Kenya

E-mail: [mmuraya@chuka.ac.ke](mailto:mmuraya@chuka.ac.ke)

Dr. Lucy Mathai

Chuka University

Kenya

E-mail: [mathaimu2006@gmail.com](mailto:mathaimu2006@gmail.com)

Received: December 2, 2023 Accepted: July 23, 2025 Published: July 27, 2025

doi:10.5296/ijch.v12i2.23042 URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijch.v12i2.23042>

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to analyze the changes in the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations as a result of introduction of tea farming by the British in Bomet County from 1924-1975. Traditionally the Kipsigis women had well defined roles, values and status in agricultural production that clearly defined their jurisdictions within the Kipsigis community. However, this study argues that the introduction of colonial tea farming by the British with intrinsically detrimental colonial policies led to significant changes in the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations to the women's disadvantage. The study

employed descriptive research design and it was guided by Marxist Feminism and Patriarchal theories that showed how the Kipsigis women were subordinated by the existing traditional structures as well as the new capitalist economic structures. The major sources of information were oral interviews, archival and secondary sources. The study found out that the coming of the British and the subsequent introduction of tea farming brought about the intensification of patriarchy and gender relations through capitalist farming practices such as forced labor, large scale crop farming, land alienation and new farming mechanization that were manifested in the tea farming. It also strengthened the existing traditional unequal gender relations and roles in agricultural production which significantly reduced the socio-economic status of women thus making them to be viewed as the secondary and low value participants the tea farming. The Kipsigis women's traditional agricultural land was alienated, agricultural labor exploited and their agricultural skills undermined by the British in tea farming plantations to their detriment. This study recommends that hybrid approaches should be embraced to achieve gender mainstreaming in tea farming zones in Kenya, an approach that will incorporate and recognizes both the traditional women agricultural roles and values and the new farming technology. This study contributes to women's role in agricultural development by documenting the dynamics of the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations since the introduction of tea farming.

**Keywords:** change, women's roles, gender relations, tea farming, colonialism, division of labor

## 1. Introduction

Agriculture has long been regarded by the international development community as a driver of growth and poverty reduction tool in countries where it is the poor's primary profession. Globally and in underdeveloped countries, women make up around 43% of the agricultural workforce, they produce 60-80% of the world's food and account for 20% of the farm labor force making them critical to their families' and communities' food security (Doss, 2011). Prior to 1958, China's gender division of labor in rural families was traditional: women worked mostly within the households caring for children, the elderly, domestic duties and majorly subsistence farming activities (Meng, 2014). Within the traditional setup women were given autonomy and space to cultivate and grow food crops to sustain their families as well as conducting barter trade on the agricultural surplus products. This is what gave women a sense of identity and socio-political space where they were considered to play important roles parallel to those played by men.

In Africa, Agriculture is the economy's mainstay in most of the countries, women are therefore considered to be the leading participants in this field by providing labor with varied magnitude and nature. In Tunisia, rural women play an important role in meeting their family's food and nutritional needs, as well as to ensure key pillars of food sustainability that includes: food production, food security, and economic access to food (Mellouli, 2007). They had well defined roles in subsistence agriculture; weeding, post-harvest storage and processing, small-scale agricultural commercialization, and livestock care (Mehra & Buvinic, 1990).

Agriculture is the hegemony of the Kenyan economy and is often recognized as the most significant industry, accounting for roughly 25% of the country's Gross Domestic Product and engaging 75% of the country's national labor workforce. Women were assigned by their communities a bigger role in food production; they had an important part in agricultural production, accounting for 42 percent to 65 percent of Kenya's agricultural labor force (Onyalo, 2019). The traditional African indigenous knowledge systems (TKS) were used in harmony with the natural world. Women farmers have a crucial role in developing the inputs and expanding the outputs of indigenous knowledge systems that may be applied to agricultural techniques to maximize productivity. African women had an important part in food production for decades, employing indigenous skills such as planting, managing the fields during crop growth, harvesting, storing, and smashing the crops in wooden mortars before grinding it into meal. This clearly posits the agricultural autonomy and space that was given to the women that stood out as their identifiers that earned them equal social status to negotiate for power with the men (Muraya, 2019).

Putting the spotlight on Bomet County a number of the Kipsigis women have been victims of the dilemma that has risen as a result of the numerous obligations and responsibilities that have been placed on their shoulders in the event of the introduction of tea farming. Kipsigis women have been given credit by early scholars like Omwoyo (2000) for the discovery of eleusine grains (famously referred to as *wimbi*) that was accidentally discovered from the elephant's droppings, the grain later on became the staple food grown by women in the Kipsigis community prior to the arrival of the British. *Kelicheck*, *kapsereraiwek* (a dock), *isoik*, *syek* (the bitter silk), *mendeiwet* (a wild rhubarb), *inyonyoek* and *raparapchet* and later on maize were among the crops that were collected and cultivated by the Kipsigis women. The Kipsigis women traditionally played significant roles in agricultural production. They had significant autonomy in agriculture; power to negotiate for social space and to make key decisions in relation to agriculture that went a long way in their empowerment (Omwoyo, 2000).

However, due to population pressure in the event of European colonialism, the establishment of cash crop farming caused a shift to permanent agriculture where women used to dominate (Mellouli, 2007). According to Muraya (2019), African women had an important part in food production for decades, employing various traditional indigenous skills. With the introduction of tea farming, these roles played by women in food production were gradually disregarded since the British considered it to be nonsensical. The introduction of tea farming by the British in Bomet County had significant effects and different meanings on the existing traditional women's roles and gender relations. The new British farming practices and gender discriminative colonial agricultural policies introduced such as; forced labor, large scale crop farming, land alienation new farming mechanization, introduction of western education, crop diversification led to the changes in women's roles and gender relations in agriculture in Bomet county.

The traditional agricultural space and autonomy previously enjoyed by Kipsigis women gradually reduced in the event of tea farming introduction in huge plantations, women had to readjust to fit into the new economy (Makone *et al.*, 2017). The huge loss felt by women was

that of land which they depended upon to manifest their knowledge in crop production. Tea farming required a lot of land, labor, and time, therefore the Kipsigis women ceased growing food crops. This therefore marked the beginning of overburdening and subordination of the Kipsigis women from Bomet County. This subordination of women was also backed with the deeply rooted traditionally accepted norms that intentionally placed women under men that eventually saw a change in the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations. This proves beyond doubt that the changes in women's roles and gender relations as a result of tea farming introduction is a global phenomenon. Despite the attempts from many researchers, the problem has not received adequate analysis from a feminist approach by the scholars who have attempted it. This motivated this study so that suggestions can be generated that can help alleviate the situation.

## 2. Literature Review

Agriculture has been regarded to be the tool that drives the economic growth and a means of poverty reduction globally especially in countries that relies on agriculture. Many countries of the world especially the developing countries according to several literatures have proven to rely heavily on agriculture as the primary economic backbone. Women have been considered to be the key players as they contribute significantly to rural and agricultural economy globally (Doss, 2011). Tracing back to antiquity, women were basically agriculturalist where they dominated in farming without the interference by men, this was the source through which these women assumed central economic roles within their societies. Studies done in Bangladesh established that women had autonomy in farming activities especially in food crop production. The home garden was widely termed as an ecosystem for the conservation of agro-biodiversity. This is the epicenter in monitoring the farming roles that were played by women from Bangladesh. Around 25% of the women worked in both domestic and income-generating farming activities, such as chicken farming, vegetable gardening and crop production as a whole (Akhter *et al.*, 2010). According to Koopman (1992) household food plots were traditionally regarded as a women's field, with women controlling the proceeds from the sale of surplus which enabled them to negotiate for power with men. He therefore concluded that women were in charge of producing all or nearly all staple foods across the African continent. Koopman (1992) asserted that, ignoring the tighter constraints affecting food crop production roles among the women is to disregard dynamics endangering a substantial part of the population's health and well-being. Koopman had intentions of painting out clearly that food crop production is, in fact, nearly all rural African women's traditional main economic identifier. Women make up 52% of the species selection and decision-making for home gardens (Akhter *et al.*, 2010). During the cultivation of the fields, there was a distinct division of work within the traditional setup, with women engaging in labor-intensive seasonal food crop farming and household tasks that ensured their families had enough food. With regard to the traditional knowledge system, women had extensive indigenous knowledge of when, where, and what to plant to ensure sustainability of food production in their homeland (Muraya, 2019). According to Omwoyo (2000), farming became the mainstay within the Kipsigis economy, particularly in the food production. The most important crop grown was the eleusine grain (referred as *wimbi*). Vegetable garden that

was enclosed and near the farmhouse, which mothers and daughters solely cultivated traditionally for a long time, was an exclusive role played by women. Omwoyo heaped praise on the Kipsigis women especially on their phenomenal role in the discovery of grains, several vegetables and their preceding roles played as far as the cultivation of these vegetables was concerned.

Hardwick and Peet (1999) in their work *Theories of Development* made considerable efforts in painting out clearly the extent at which colonialism has affected the role of women in farming globally. With the modernization that was introduced by the colonizers that was inherent in western perspective, the gender division of labor therefore saw a technological advancement being centered on men that witnessed an explicit marginalization and a succeeding reduction of status of women thereby laying the foundation for their subordination to men (Hartwick & Peet, 1999). Most of the western countries are characterized by inherent male domination in the social work as opposed to the domestic work that is believed to be purely a woman's work as a result of agrarian revolution that grabbed off the autonomy that was traditionally exercised by women in farming and placed it at the mercy of men. The colonialists capitalized on the existing African social and cultural trends in gender division of labor by establishing exploitative enterprises that led to glorifying of menial spheres and barring of women from making entry to the new perceived modernization. The existing gender division of labor especially in the rural set-up that was dominated by women in agricultural activities characterized by labor intensive workforce experienced major exploitative scenario on women (Njiro, 1990).

Introduction of tea plantations propagated numerous women's exploitations as well as environmental degradation. Africa as a continent is believed to be rich in the Traditional Knowledge System in crop production especially among the women. Upon the arrival of the colonizers, they embarked on the massive privatization of land right from the time they set foot in the African continent that laid a foundation on the change in gender division of labor (Armstrong, 2020). It was noted that Women were left adrift and were forced to take on responsibilities previously performed by their male counterparts, leaving them overworked and alienated (Nasimiyu, 1985). The introduction of tea farming in Bomet County had a profound effects on the existing TKS since the European engaged on mass consolidation of land. The main aim of the Europeans was to introduce their agricultural knowledge systems that perceived the Africans Traditional Knowledge System (TKS) of crop production as archaic that needed urgent transformation. Introduction of tea farming in the region therefore had profound effects on the existing TKS since the European engaged on mass consolidation of land. The fact that tea farming activity was labor intensive also made the women to abandon their then staggering traditional farming to provide labor in tea farms. This laid a foundation on the gender division of labor where women were left adrift and were forced to take on responsibilities previously performed by their male counterparts, leaving them overworked and alienated (Nasimiyu, 1985; Armstrong, 2020). The coming of the British and the resultant colonialism within the Kenyan territory therefore led to a significant change in the conventional socio-economic sphere that worked to the detriment of the Kipsigis women.

## *2.1 Theoretical Framework*

This study utilized Patriarchal and Marxist Feminist theories to analyze the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations in the event of tea farming introduction in Bomet County. Patriarchal theory emerged as a concerted effort from a number of scholars, the studies of Fishbein (2002) and On (1994) elaborated Aristotle's writings that depicted women as having lower moral, intellectual, and physical standards than men and as being men's property. They maintained that women's responsibility in societal structure according to Aristotle was to procreate and serve males in the private sphere, this led to male dominance over women being regarded as natural and should be accepted by all. Notable contributions of patriarchal theory have been made by a scholar Heidi Hartman, she defined patriarchy as a "set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (Hartman, 1979). Heidi Hartman therefore asserts that capitalism and patriarchy combine to systematically oppress women, she discussed how capitalism and patriarchy work together to produce and perpetuate the oppression of women. On the other hand Walby (1989) coined the definition of patriarchy as "a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women". From this conceptualization the major concern of patriarchy is the domination of men on women's labor surplus. In order for men to maintain this hegemony, women were denied access to necessary productive resources. Here, the theoretical potential was in linking the social institutions that compelled and justified unequal relationships of power with the psychological and cognitive processes that individuals, particularly women, used to accept and justify their places in society (Peet & Hartwick, 1999). Women's labor is exploited by men through the constitutionalization of social structures that disregarded women's work and confining them in the private sphere thus anchoring their subordination in the society. Patriarchal theory was therefore used in this study to complement Marxist Feminism by covering out the aspect of the societal social structures institutionalized through several facets including family, which recognized and legitimized male dominance over females.

Marxist Feminism is a school of thought that was propagated from Marxist theory at around 1800s by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to critically analyze ways through which labor can be exploited in order to grow capital. A class society is one in which one class controls the means of production according to the Marxist definition of capitalism. Profits accrues to this small group since according to Marx they own what they refer to as means of production. On the other hand, the class of workers works on these elements of production in order to harness profit for the benefit of their owners. The common lands were enclosed and reliance on wages alone became the only means of rural existence, women's work in handicrafts, weaving, subsistence farming, livestock farming, as well as other agricultural labor fell by the wayside. Woman took on the role of chief servant within the household and was cut off from the mainstream social production as a result. Men on the other hand took advantage of the women's labor and assumed the public responsibilities that allowed them to participate in income generating activities that yielded women's oppression (Engels, 1942). Therefore, Marxist Feminism's main argument was that the incarceration of women in a relatively less

developed economic sectors (privatization) and the international division of labor as a result of the introduction of colonial laws, institutions, and labor markets decreased the bargaining power of women in their community relative to that of males (Pala, 1981). The theory therefore was used in this study to analyze the possible resultant implications of capitalism through colonialism on the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations in Bomet County. It is for this very reason, the two theories were used in this study to complement each other.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### *3.1 Research Locale*

The study was conducted in Bomet County that was previously under Kericho district during the colonial period. According to the statistics that was released by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics [KNBS] (2019), Bomet County occupies a size of 1,630km. Konoin, Bomet Central, Sotik, Bomet East and Chepalungu are the five sub counties of Bomet County. The statistics that was done by the KNBS in 2019 showed that the county has a population of 875,689 people comprising of 434,287 males, 441,379 females and 23 intersexes (KNBS, 2019). The County borders Kericho, Nakuru, Narok, Kisii and Nyamira Counties. Bomet County was intentionally selected as a research site since it is among the dominant counties in Kenya in tea farming. Konoin Sub County records the highest number of women taking part in the tea farming, additionally, the region also contains red soils and rainfall that varies between 1200 and 1400 mm in a year, and receiving adequate sun during the day that favored the mixed farming which was successively replaced by tea farming in the event of its introduction.

#### *3.2 Research Design*

The research design that was used to inform this study is descriptive design. This involves the process of collecting information from the respondents on their attitudes and opinions in order to explain a given phenomenon (Warsanga, 2021). On the other hand, Kombo and Tromp (2006) suggested that the sole purpose of descriptive design is to gather knowledge about the current occurrence and, if possible, draw logical conclusions from the material discussed. This therefore saw the design suitable to the current study that drew its concepts from interviewing of respondents concerning their feelings and views on the implications of tea farming introduction on the traditional women's roles and gender relations within the Kipsigis community.

#### *3.3 Sampling Procedures*

It was necessary for the study to narrow down the area of study into a manageable research area. Bomet County was selected to be the main area of focus since it receives adequate rainfall that favors mixed farming; British therefore established highlands upon arrival in some section of the County in the event of tea farming introduction. Konoin Sub County was also purposively selected since it records among the highest number of women taking part in the tea farming. The region also is among the areas that experienced tea farming introduction in smallholder farms after the Swynnerton plan of 1954 with reference to Kimulot. The study employed Non-probability sampling procedure that entails the Purposive sampling method

and narrowed down to Snowball sampling procedure to obtain respondents who were relied on to give credible information for the success of this study. The study therefore purposively sampled 50 respondents aged 65 years and above majority of them being women since this is a feminist study

### *3.4 Data Collection Procedure*

The data that was used to inform this study was collected in reference to the objectives of the study. Therefore, oral sources, archival information and the secondary data were all used as the major sources of information to construct this study. The oral information was collected through interviews from all the purposefully sampled respondents. Information from the Oral Source was corroborated with data from the archival sources that was obtained from the Kenya National Archives. Research was embarked on in serious search for archival information related to the phenomenon of the study. The secondary data was obtained through numerous sources that includes; books in the Kenya National Libraries, journals articles, biographies, newspapers and E-books from the internet with an aim of attaining the objectives of the study.

### *3.5 Data Analysis and Interpretation*

After the exercise of data collection, the recorded information captured in Kipsigis language was transcribed and translated to English language, it was also processed so as to narrow down to the most credible information and eliminating the irrelevant information to the field of study. The information was also categorized by coding and tabulation before being saved for analysis; data was then analyzed using the qualitative technique, content analysis, themes and context analysis. Historical trend analysis was as well used to get information in a systematic manner in reference to the events of different epochs in history. The data was then presented with respect to Patriarchal and Marxist Feminism theories that helped in reconstruction of body of knowledge within this framework.

## **4. Findings and Discussions**

The study established that traditionally prior to the arrival of the British there was no private ownership of factors of production in relation to land in Kipsigis community. Land was communally owned and everyone including women could access and cultivate land without any restriction (Cheruiyot Arap Koech O.I, 2022). It was for this reason therefore the study noted that Kipsigis women obtained their social status and powers to negotiate with men through their farm produce that was akin as their identifiers. However, when tea farming was introduced it paved way to western capitalism which only recognized the private ownership of factors of production which led to the erosion of the existing Kipsigis traditional norms in farming. This also perpetuated the existing pre-colonial perceptions that perceived women as men's properties who can be manipulated at any given time for the benefit of men whom the society glorified as being superior to women.

The British capitalized on this and saw women as domestic servants and poor remunerated laborers in farm, this was full of prejudice on African women (Mies, 1986). The gender patterns of production therefore experienced radical changes following the entry of the



British colonialism in the region at the turn of the century as Kipsigis men progressively became more engaged in productive activities. Three factors in the overall process of change appear to have specifically influenced the weakening the roles and organizations that women in the past and in defining their new status in society: The establishment of commercial cash crop cultivation, the curtailing of land ownership, and finally the expansion of wage labor, particularly among males that worked to the detriment of women (Sørensen, 1992). By creating institutions and bureaucracies where women were effectively denied entrance, colonialists reinforced the exploitative social and cultural trends that already existed in Africa that legitimized the subordination of women to men (Rodney, 1972). The study therefore sought information from both men and women on their reaction to British occupation and access to land within the Kipsigis territory.

It was very explicit from the study that the arrival of the British was not received well especially among the Kipsigis women. It was noted by majority of the Kipsigis women respondents that the arrival of the British had a huge setback among the Kipsigis women in land access and ownership (Lucia Kalya O.I, 2023). Colonialism therefore was primarily held responsible for the eradication of traditional African cultural practices. It was evident therefore that cash crop introduction and commercialization of farming that was embarked on by the British was only targeted on men. This agrees with that studies done by Lovett (1989) citing that the colonial government failed to include women, who had historically been in charge of managing cultivated land, in its efforts to promote commercial agriculture. Colonialism gave males the incentives that contributed to denying women a similar status as men by allowing males to become the sole producers of agricultural products in the money economy.

The line separating men's and women's domains has largely disappeared, and the idea of the household as a group of "communal interests," even though it is still governed by the male who serves as the household head, is gradually taking the place of the house property complex that used to empower women. Women's economic reliance on men and increased competition between the sexes for production resources replaced the mutual respect, mutual benefit, and the reciprocal relationship that once existed between them (Von Bülow, 1992). The basis of these spectrum lies entirely on colonialism that led to introduction of cash crop farming that resulted to adoption capitalism that worked to the disadvantage of the Kipsigis women especially in land access and ownership.

Tea farming introduction within Bomet County was done by the British in the early 1900s, this led to considerable effects within the Kipsigis land. The activity was as noted before anchored a fulfilment of men while on the other hand disrupting the major economic activity among the Kipsigis women that pushed them to the periphery economically. The study noted that the introduction of tea farming by the British colonial government affected the traditional land tenure system where land was traditionally owned by the community and its use pattern was gendered.

“The Kipsigis women were relied on heavily to feed the community as they had wide traditional knowledge skills in farming. They were allowed by the

community to access land without restrictions, which was not the case when the British sets in and introduced colonial land policies and crops that only targeted men. Women were forced to surrender their land in favor of cash crop farming” (Lucia Kalya, O.I 2023).

Following the arrival of the colonial government, it led to the introduction of land leasing which led to the loss of the Kipsigis ancestral land to the foreigners. After the Swynnerton plan, women's access to land ended up being reliant on men, especially their husbands, after the legalization of private land ownership when male household managers had already established their claim to almost all land within the Kipsigis reserve (KNA/RN/641/3372, 1976; KNA/GP/305/4, 1978). Due to the lack of available land and the growing transformation of land to commercial cultivation, it was difficult for women to meet the nutritional requirements of their families. This indicated gender disparity in land use and access limited Kenyan women smallholder in subsistence output (Ongile, 1999). African women's traditional roles in food crop cultivation were not given proper attention. Instead, they were viewed as useless, outdated, and backward and were subsequently ignored and shoved out into the shadows (Muraya & Gathungu, 2020).

The study revealed that tea farming introduction led to farm automation and mechanization. The introduction of new machines to be used in tea farming was initially targeted on men as women were termed to be lacking the needed manpower and skills to operate them. Given the fact that women were forced to turn to the tea estates for manual jobs as an alternative way of earning a living. This was the case since their major economic activity of food crop production has been interfered with by forcefully evicting them from the fertile ancestral lands to pave way for tea farming (KNA/DC/KER/1/19, 1946). Mechanization of tea farming therefore replaced their manual labor rendering them jobless. This was felt hugely by women since tea plucking that was dominated by women was purely mechanized.

“..., the British forced us to abandon our main source of livelihood by forcing the entire community out of the fertile lands. When machines were introduced in the tea estates we had nowhere else to turn to. This brought a lot of suffering among the women as they were not given any alternative source of livelihood after they were retrenched” (Bornes Morisin, O.I 2023).

Mechanization additionally impacted negatively on the traditional trade systems engaged on by the Kipsigis women. Tea farming introduction led to the disruption of the traditional trade systems. Following the huge demand for human labor after tea farming introduction in Bomet County, it attracted many people including from the neighboring counties. With the rapid population growth in the tea farming zones, this therefore necessitated steady supply of food where the Kipsigis women were heavily relied on as the main suppliers of food to all laborers working in the tea estates. This therefore went a long way in their empowerment as they were able obtain an alternative way to earn a living by trading on such foodstuffs. With the reduction in the number of workers working in tea multinational companies when machines replaced human labor, traditional trade system among the Kipsigis women was also interfered

with since the demand for food dropped with the decrease in the number of workers working in the tea plantations. This was a double tragedy to the Kipsigis women since it significantly disempowered them as they had no other meaningful alternative economic activity to turn to (Kipchabai Arap Chepkwony, O.I 2023).

The traditional division of labor was additionally hampered by the introduction of tea farming. The Kipsigis women were traditionally obligated to undertake household chores and take part in crop production roles. With the introduction of cash crops and the subsequent contemporary technologies, fields that are traditionally controlled by men have been the focus of modernization initiatives in the Kenyan crop cultivation sector. The demand for masculine labor has consequently declined as a consequence of men's greater productivity, whereas the demand on female workforce has increased as a result of men's preparation of larger land areas and the growth of the quantity of crops. On the other hand the establishments of tea processing industries demanded men's labor as opposed to women's labor, this translated to men leaving women behind to cover them up in performing the tasks such as livestock keeping that were accepted traditionally to be purely men's roles. Tea farming introduction therefore resulted in the disruption of the Kipsigis community's status quo by allocating women new roles that were previously performed by men.

Similarly, tea farming introduction impacted heavily on the traditional crops grown within Kipsigis land. Women grew traditional vegetables such as *isoik*, *nderemek*, *kelichek*, *isagek*, *mborochik*, *chelwanda* and *mogobek*. Lack of time and fertile land to cultivate has reduced women's capacity to raise indigenous food and income crops (Thinkii, 2014).

“Growing of crops continued though in small portions of land even after tea farming introduction. This further declined when land under tea steadily increased depleting the available land that eventually made women to abandon traditional crop production” (Richard Rotich, O.I 2022).

The Kipsigis women were under pressure to find particularly fertile land for the cultivation of food crops. Small-scale farmers left relatively little or no land for vegetable cultivation for sustenance and devoted a large percentage of their land to tea farming (Gakaria, 2015). The security of the Kipsigis people's subsistence was immediately harmed when tea gained prominence as a cash crop since more land was being planted to it, which decreased the amount of the food crop. This therefore led to reducing the ancestral roles of women within conventional crop production that altered the status of women in the Kipsigis community. Women were traditionally relied on in a number of household and farming roles. The seasons of planting and weeding were especially taxing on women's work. Even though these responsibilities remained within their scope, complexity set in due to the evolution in economic, cultural and social fabrics. They then faced demands that exceeded their available time (KNA/GP/308/26762, 1989). Time-allocation analyses revealed that women spend much time than men do by spending up to 90 percent of their time processing and preparing food for the homestead (Doss, 2011). Women's workload increased after the introduction of tea farming. Women were traditionally relied on in household roles, after tea farming introduction more work fell on their shoulders (KNA/GP/308/26762, 1989).

Women became restricted within the household to subsidize their husband's wage in cash crop agriculture, on top of these agricultural production roles women also took part in tedious household tasks (KNA/GP/331/4, 1977). Before providing labor in the tea farms, they must provide home labor first tasks which were demanding in terms of time and magnitude. Industrialization that was brought by tea farming introduction marked male absenteeism within the household since they went to take jobs in the tea processing industries leaving behind women to fill their gaps. This therefore resulted in disruption of the conventional division of labor leading to overburdening of women with increased agricultural role where they had to take up the roles which previously performed by men thereby supplying the highest magnitude of labor.

The study noted that there were significant health complications in the majority of women working in the tea smallholder farms and the tea estates. Women were under a significant amount of stress as a result of shifting economic growth patterns during the liberalization era, which was reflected in their health state. From the study it was extensively noted that there were several diseases directly associated with tea farming introduction. The most vulnerable group that were recoded to be the major victims affected in the study were women and children since they spent much time in tea farms. These diseases were attributed to the following causes by the respondents; chemicals, rains, cold, excess sun, lack of proper clothing, and standing for long hours.

“Women were majorly affected by diseases in tea farming, since they have other household duties at home to do they decide to go to the farm either very early in the morning or in the evening when it is chilly without proper clothing to warm them. Many of them are complaining of a congested chest due to cold and rain” (Eunice Sitonik, O.I 2023).

The most common causative agents were: chemical application, lack of proper clothing, long time exposure to sunlight, rains and colds. Women dealt with major health issues related to their jobs, risks posed by pollutants to adolescent working women, and the negative effects of childbearing on women. Tea plantation employees, particularly women with low earnings, had exceedingly terrible living and working environments (KNA/BY/44/5, 1936-1937). Many of them resided in one-room shacks without basic amenities like drinking water or sanitary facilities. Malnutrition left many families weak and prone to transmissible illnesses. There were problems with the chemicals used on plantation estates that harmed women's health. The study therefore identified the following diseases to have been more prevalent among the Kipsigis women farmers; cancer, common cold, pneumonia, asthma, malnutrition, arthritis, finger distortion and STI's (Charles Chirchir, O.I 2022; Sammy Cheruiyot, O.I 2023; Evaline Koros, O.I 2022).

The study identified that the most prevalent disease of all was common cold. This was attributed to that fact that tea harvesting majorly happened during rainy season that was majorly accompanied by cold. Women worked irregular hours and were not entitled to perks like job security, paid time off for illness, medical coverage, or sick leave. Many did not consumed fruits and veggies as frequently as they ought to, despite the fact that they are

essential for providing vitamins. It is worth noting that these diseases were majorly common among women since they became heavily involved in all tea farming activities immediately after tea was introduced that disrupted their major economic activity by consuming much of their time and land.

## 5. Conclusion

From the above discussions on the changes in the Kipsigis women's roles and gender relations in Bomet tea farming zones, the introduction of tea farming in Bomet County led to the disruption of the traditional status quo resulting to the marginalization of the Kipsigis women. Women were traditionally given the obligations by their community as the key food crop producers. Traditional division of labor therefore worked in favor of the Kipsigis women as they were given the freedom of access and ownership of key factors of production to manifest their traditional knowledge systems in farming to ensure sustainability. However, the introduction of tea farming saw a total overhaul of the traditional status quo within the Kipsigis land. Land alienation in an attempt to consolidate land for growing of tea that was embarked on by the British denied women free access to land meaning they could no longer practice crop production roles like before. This therefore translated to marginalization of women since their main source of livelihood was interfered with, this in the long run saw the reduction of the traditional crops that were reported to be rich in nutrients that boosted human's immunity leading to deterioration of human's health. Additionally, the prevalence of tea farming in the region led to overburdening of women. It was their traditional obligation to perform the household chores, they were also required to proceed to tea farms to attend to the roles that were demanded of them by their husbands. Women's marginalization therefore was chiefly attributed to the introduction of tea farming in the region that came and disrupted the way of life that existed in the pre-colonial period among the Kipsigis community where women were chiefly valued in farming.

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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: Primary Sources

#### *A. Archival Sources (Kenya National Archives, KNA)*

KNA/GP/308/26762, 1989: Women and Food Security in Kenya

KNA/GP/331/4; 1977: Political Record Book- Kericho District

KNA/GP/305/4, 1978: Women's Access to Land and their Role in Agriculture and Decision Making on the farm

KNA/BY/44/5, 1936-1937: Annual Reports Kericho District 1936-1937

KNA/RN/64/3372, 1976: Agricultural Report- Kericho District

KNA/DC/KER/1/19 Annual Report, Kericho District 1946

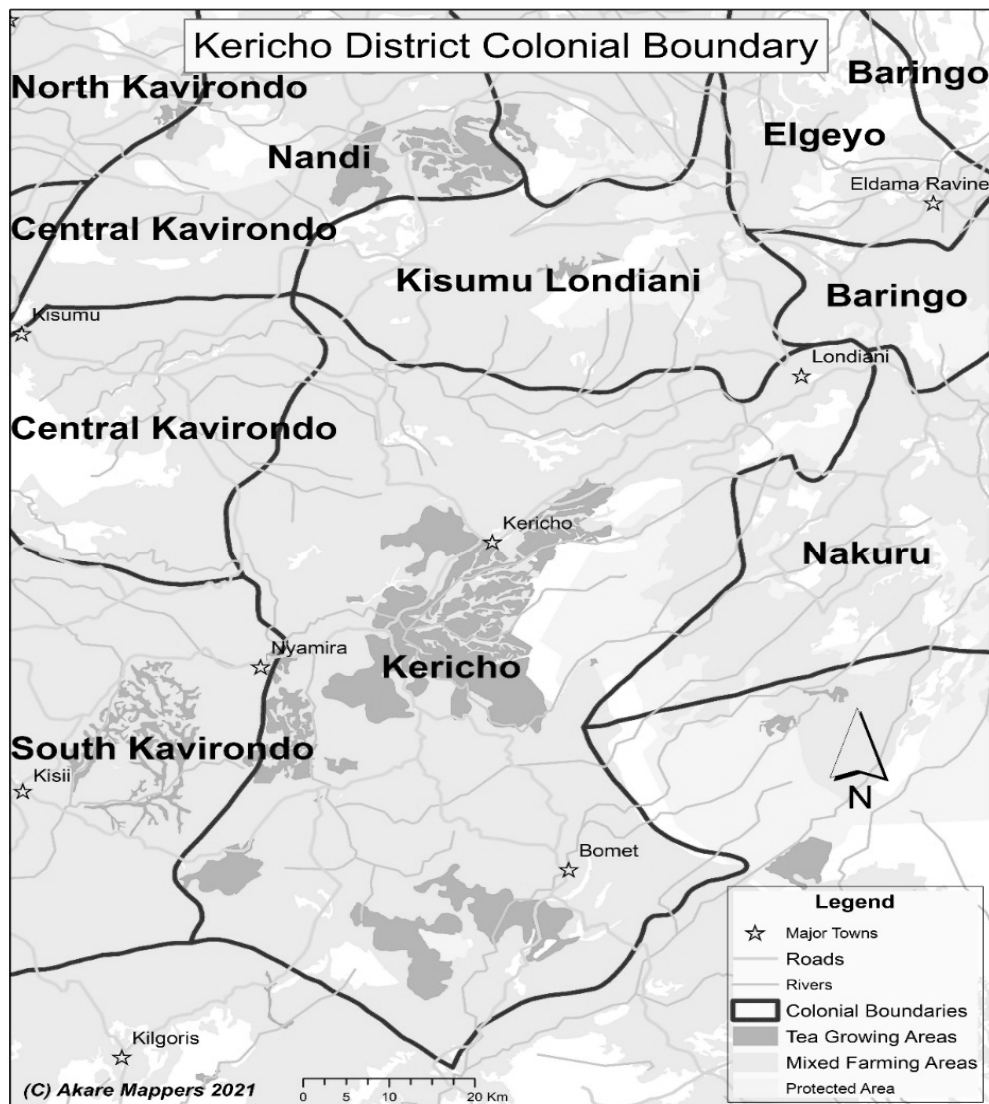
#### *B. Oral Sources of Information*

S/NO	Names	Date	Location	Age	Gender
1	Bornes Chepkorir Morisin	19 <sup>th</sup> Sep 2022	Taboino	96	F
2	Joseph Soi Kiplangat	21 <sup>st</sup> Sep 2022	Taboino	82	M
3	Musa Arap Ngeno	28 <sup>th</sup> Sep 2022	Taboino	98	M
4	Richard Kiplangat Rotich	5 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Aregeriot	84	M
5	Charles Chirchir	6 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Cheptalal	66	M
6	Philip Tesot	14 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Kiptenden	75	M
7	Joel Kimutai Koech	14 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Kiptenden	72	M
8	Cheruiyot Arap Koech	15 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Meswondo	84	M
9	Ludiah Kalya	15 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Kipkoibet	78	F
10	Mary Siele	17 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Kaptebeng'wet	75	F
11	Philemon Rotich	17 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Taboino	84	M
12	Evaline Koros	19 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Koiwa	65	F
13	Esther Bii	21 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2022	Taboino	66	F
14	Daniel Arap Chelogoi	21 <sup>st</sup> Oct 2022	Kipkoibet	75	M
15	Jacob Arap Kalya	22 <sup>nd</sup> Oct 2022	Kipkoibet	81	M
16	Lucia Cheptanui Kalya	25 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Cheptalal	72	F
17	Eunice Sitonik	25 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Taboino	87	F
18	Bornes Tabelgat	26 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Tengecha	70	M
19	Jane Chepkorir Koech	27 <sup>th</sup> Oct 2022	Satiet	65	F
20	Esther Chesang	2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2022	Aregeriot	90	F
21	Mary Busienei	2 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2022	Satiet	90	F
22	Raeli Soi	4 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Satiet	74	F
23	Micah Kipngenh Mastamet	5 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Aregeriot	76	M
24	Sammy Kiprono Cheruiyot	9 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Sotit	68	M
25	Esther Soi	9 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Cheptalal	70	F



26	Eunice Tuiya	10 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Kaptebeng'wet	84	F
27	Tabutany Maina Birir	15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Konoito	90	F
28	Elizabeth Korir	15 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Kitala	70	F
29	Grace Korir	17 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Kitala	80	F
30	Samwel Kibet Rono	18 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Aregeriot	74	M
31	Alice Kerich	22 <sup>nd</sup> Nov 2022	Aregeriot	72	F
32	Mary kosgei	26 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Komirmir	77	F
33	Grace Chepkwony	28 <sup>th</sup> Nov 2022	Kigonor	83	F
34	Grace Chelule	3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2022	Seanin	91	F
35	Esther Birir	3 <sup>rd</sup> Dec 2022	Kugerwet	93	F
36	Tabutany	8 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2022	Satiet	81	F
37	Priscillar Bii	4 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Kigonor	71	F
38	Elizabeth Kalya	5 <sup>th</sup> Jan 223	Satiet	91	F
39	Hannah Chepngeno Moi	5 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Chebang'ang	78	F
40	Kipchabai Arap Chepkwony	7 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Etwe	91	F
41	Alice Tuiya Marisin	7 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Kimulot	79	F
42	Annah Tabutany	10 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Tengecha	83	F
43	Josphine Milgo	10 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Simoti	68	F
44	Martha Pyomto	12 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Bosto	76	F
45	Alice Kitur	14 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Kirimose	65	F
46	Reginah Tabsagat	14 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Kimarwandi	80	F
47	Esther Cherono Tuimising	18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Koiwa	77	F
48	Anthony Arap Siele	18 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Satiet	78	M
49	Ziborah Milgo	20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Etwe	85	F
50	Wilter Tugat	20 <sup>th</sup> Jan 2023	Cheptingting	79	F

Appendix 2: Map of Kericho District



Source: Akare Mappers, 2021

**Acknowledgments**

Special acknowledgement goes to all the Lecturers and colleagues in the History department at Chuka university.

**Authors contributions**

Mr. Kirui Alex was the principle researcher and Dr. Martha Muraya & Dr. Lucy Mathai as the co- researcher and played a mentorship role.

**Funding**

This was a self- funded research.

**Competing interests**

All authors declare that we have no competing financial interest or personal relationships.

**Informed consent**

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Macrothink Institute.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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