

A Gender Analysis of the Influence of Colonial Policies on Access to Land and Agricultural Technology among the Nandi in Kenya, 1895-1954

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Abstract

This paper examines the agricultural practices in pre-colonial Nandi in relation to the gender question. Specifically, the paper explores and highlights the gender differences in access to agricultural resources and control over them. It examines the historical changes in Nandi's economic, political and social institutions and demonstrates how these affected production relations. In particular it looks at gender access to land, division of labour, and technology development and how these affected production. The establishment of colonial rule in the region is also examined in this paper. This, in a way, facilitates the analysis of the effects of British conquest on Nandi pre-colonial gender relations in agriculture. The impact of land alienation, forced labour and new technology is examined and so are their influence on gender relations of production and agricultural production in Nandi. The paper is an outcome of a study that used oral data collected in the field, archival material in Kenya National Archives and secondary data, mostly books and journals on the subject from various libraries. The main findings were that political, social and ideological factors interacted in a complex manner and over time influenced gender access to land, control over labour and, technology. Gender relations are essentially perceived as a notion of inequitable power relations. In the Nandi society, women had less power than men. Consequently, they were unable to control most of the agricultural resources. The strict control over women's access to resources in Nandi was frustrating to some women. Alternatives did exist for strong-minded women who sought to evade the strict control over access to resources. Some of these activities included running away from their marriage to urban centres, engaging in woman to woman marriage, and also engaging in income generating activities without informing their husbands.

Keywords: Gender, Colonial Land Policies, Land Access, Nandi, Kenya

1. Introduction

1.1. Migration and Settlement

Archaeological evidence points out that the earliest inhabitants of Kenya were hunting and gathering communities. Later, the pastoral communities whom linguists generally associate with southern Cushitic speaking people joined them. They were followed by the Bantu and Nilotic groups which are reported to have infiltrated the country at the beginning of the Christian era (Ochieng', 1975, p. 1-19). Linguistic classification places the Nandi among the Highland Nilotes. The ancestor highland Nilotes, according to Ochieng' (1975), had established themselves in Western Kenya by AD 500. They include the Nandi, Kipsigis, Tugen, Keiyo, Marakwet, Pokot, Terik, Sabaot and Bongomek. This group is known as the Kalenjin in present Kenya. The Nandi among them have been the most known because of their ferocity in cattle raids among their neighbours, their hostility towards caravan traders and their resistance to the establishment of colonial rule (Mwanzi, 1977, p. 66). The use of the term Kalenjin for people speaking these related languages is recent. It began during the Second World War. John Arap Chemallan, a Nandi who made vernacular radio broadcasts during the war is credited for coining the term (Oboler, 1985, p. 17-18; Kipkorir, 1978, p. 75; Tanui, 1996, p. 37). The term literally means "I tell you" and it has linked people of common heritage, traditions, culture and language who did not regard themselves as connected in pre-colonial period and before the war. The name Nandi is not of Kalenjin origin. They were originally known as Chem'ngal by their Kalenjin neighbours. The name Nandi is derived from a Swahili word "Mnandi" meaning cormorant used to describe a type of voracious bird which lives near water and feeds on fish. This could be because of their wild acts to caravan traders (Oboler, 1985, p. 18).

However, the name Nandi has been completely accepted by the people. The original name means “people of many words”. It was dropped because it was used by the other Kalenjin neighbours and not the Nandi themselves (Tanui, 1996, p. 37). The Nandi communities do not have a unity of origin (Hollis, 1909; Matson, 1972; Mwanzi, 1977, p. 67). They represent an amalgamation of peoples who found their ways to the present Nandi County in several waves of immigration. Nevertheless, the majority of Nandi trace their origin to Mt. Elgon. The migration of the Kalenjin from the West to East was probably caused by the expansion of the Bantu north-eastwards to the foothills of Mt. Elgon. Ochieng’ (1975) points out that the Pokot appear to have been the first to break away. At a later date, the ancestors of the Endo, Tugen and Marakwet moved away. Later, a major group moved south-wards and established themselves at a place called Tto, near Baringo (Ochieng’, 1975, p. 56). This group formed the ancestors of the Kipsigis, Nandi and Keiyo. The group then embarked on a more determined expansion east-wards and south-wards in early 15th century, assimilating the Cushites and Sirikwa. It was during this period that they increased their stock of cattle and it is possible that at the same time they began to evolve their present day clan and age set system, possibly borrowed from the Sirikwa and Cushites (Ochieng’, 1975, p. 57). They were later dislodged by the Maasai who robbed them of most of their cattle turning them into Dorobo (Okiek) and forcing them to move to the area of present-day Tambach where they settled for some time. Up to this point, the Nandi did not exist as a distinct group. The ancestors of the Nandi and Kipsigis then moved westwards at around mid-15th century, leaving behind a group who evolved into the Keiyo. The Kipsigis and Nandi have a shared common history and are more often considered to have a common ancestry (Omwoyo, 2000, p. 40). The causes for division into Nandi and Kipsigis are not known. One account points at drought, another account postulates that the division was accidental (Ochieng’, 1975, p. 61). The division took place at Kapkeben hill, in present Nandi Sub-County. Ancestors of the Nandi moved and settled at Aldai in the southwest corner of the present Nandi Sub-County. They were led by a man called Kagiboch.

Huntingford (1950, p. 11) sets the date of their settlement at Aldai at about the beginning of the seventeenth century. However, it is believed that they arrived earlier than this (Walter, 1970, p. 13; Matson, 1972, p. 5). Huntingford’s dating was based on a cyclical age-set system consisting of seven sets spanning one hundred and five years, which he assumed remained constant. The Maasai dropped one age-set in early nineteenth century due to their defeat. The section led by Kagiboch must have arrived in Nandi at the beginning of the sixteenth century (Walter, 1970, p. 13). After settling in early sixteenth century, the Nandi attracted many refugees from among the Sabaot, Gusii, Luhya, Keiyo, Tugen, Teriki, Maasai and Luo. They also incorporated the Dorobo and Sirikwa population whom they found in the area. The group managed to remain intact by virtue of their sense of common origin, custom and language. The unity was further enhanced by the presence of a Maasai threat. Those incorporated into the community lost their identity because the Nandi were assimilative. Gradually, the group expanded from South to the northern part of the Sub-County. The area initially settled was small, and was limited to the escarpment (Walter, 1970, p. 14). The area seems to have been chosen primarily for reasons of defence. The escarpment and hills afforded a better view of the surrounding area while heavy shrub vegetation provided substantial cover. In addition, the presence of fairly large caves along the front of the cliffs was an important factor. The Nandi avoided open plains and the cause of this fear is not certain; it may be derived from the time they were migrating when they were subjected to attacks and raids from various plains groups – Maasai, Pokot or Turkana.

After settling, the group was left undisturbed for a time. They were physically isolated, no other groups of any size lived in contact with them. They also had small numbers of cattle which could not attract other communities (Walter, 1970, p. 16). The group thus managed to develop and evolve the basic features of their society. Between late sixteenth century and nineteenth century, clans in Nandi increased in number as new immigrants came. There was no exclusive area set aside for each clan, members of any clan lived wherever they pleased without limits. The clan in Nandi played a small role in terms of spatial distribution. Mwanzi (1977, p. 8-69) points out that Aldai, the place where the proto Nandi settled, means the first place to change. The implication here is that settlers adopted crop cultivation. The presence of many Bantu loan words for Nandi agricultural words and counter exchange from Nandi to Luhya language for certain livestock related terms shows that the Nandi adopted agriculture after settling (Ehret, 1985, p. 9-71). By 1850, the Nandi were good in both crop cultivation and cattle keeping (Walter, 1970, p. 19-20). As the population grew in the originally settled area, some groups broke away and lived in separate areas. As they developed each of these territorial units called pororiosiek, singular pororiet took a specific name. All the members of a single territorial group identified themselves by their name as did their off-spring.

Their numbers increased as new land was incorporated, particularly to the north and east of the original settlement area. Eventually, fifteen of these territorial groups were evolved. Kagiboch was the oldest and was composed of members of the original settlement group and their descendants. The first break away from the original pororiet occurred between late 1500 and 1850 and it is represented by Kabianga, Kapsile, Tiping'ot, Murk'ab Tuk and Cheptol pororiosiek. Cattle by then had increased in numbers. The expansion was thus necessary due to the need for additional grazing land for cattle raided from the Luo and Luhya (Walter, 1970, p. 21). Other pororiosiek which came into being included Kaptumoiis, kapchepkendi, kaptalam, kapsiondoi and kimng'oror. There was also a second kagiboch group which separated from the original group but retained the same name. At a later date came Tugen, kamelilo and kagimno. The last of the groups to develop was koilegei. These groups parcelled out land into individual units, each group taking possession of an exclusive area of land. However, emphasis to the Nandi was on the group and maintenance of the group and not based on territorial occupation (Walter, 1970, p. 22). The second major period of expansion between 1850 and 1905 was characterized by an extension of earlier movements. But it was important due to the amount and kind of land covered (Walter, 1970, p. 23). It was then that the Nandi expanded to open plateaus, places initially avoided due to the fear of Maasai attacks. The declining power of the Maasai and the introduction of the institution of the Orkoiyot, a political innovation from the Maasai, encouraged the Nandi to expand to the plains. As the Nandi made use of the orkoiyot office and talents, raiding became widespread during late 1860s. The Orkoiyot fostered unity among the people and also encouraged raiding by predicting success for the raiders. Expansion to the plateau was, therefore, necessary due to population growth and the need for more grazing area.

The migration and settlement of the Nandi was a slow process which started in the 500 AD. It was halted in 1905 when Europeans established their rule in Nandi. After settling the Nandi began to harness the natural endowments of their environment, basic among them being land. Mwanzi (1977, p. 68-69) points out that Aldai, the place where the proto Nandi settled, means the first place to change. The implication here is that settlers adopted crop cultivation. The presence of many Bantu loan words for Nandi agricultural words and counter change from Nandi adopted agriculture after setting (Erher, 1971, p. 69-71). By 1850, the Nandi were good in both crop cultivation and cattle keeping (Walter, 1970, p. 19-20). As the population grew in the originally settled area, some groups broke away and lived in separate areas. As they developed each of these territorial units called pororiosiek, singular pororiet took a specific name. All the members of a single territorial group identified themselves by their name, as did their offspring. Their numbers increased as new land was incorporated, particularly to the north and east of the original settlement area. Eventually, fifteen of these territorial groups were evolved. Kagiboch was the oldest and was composed of members of the original settlement group and their descendants. The first break away from the original pororiet occurred between late 1500 and 1850 Kabianga, Kapsile, Tipng'ot, Murk'ab Tuk and Cheptol porosiek represent it. Cattle by then had increased in numbers. The expansion was thus necessary due to the need for additional grazing land for cattle raided from the Luo and Luhya (Walter, 1970, p. 21). Other porosiek that came into being included Kaptumoiis, Kapchepkendi, Kaptalam, Kapsiondoi and Kimng'or. There was also a second Kagiboch group, which separated from the original group but retained the same name. At later date came Tugen, Kamelilo.

1.2. Pre-Colonial Land Tenure

The Nandi had no concept of private and permanent ownership of land. Land was not a scarce resource during the pre-colonial period. Land in each kokwet (village) was divided into two, the cultivated section (Oyet) and that which was meant for grazing cattle. The kokwet elders (boisiekab kok) decided on which parts of the kokwet was to be cultivated according to their perception of fertility. Fertility in Nandi was determined by the presence of particular plants for example – Tebeng'wet (sabucus africana). The cultivated fields had to be located on one side of the kokwet. This made easy the task of fencing and protecting crops from being destroyed by cattle, wild animals and birds. Narrow paths separated individual plots (Tanui, 1996, p. 48). Kokwet elders were in charge of the allocation of land to the household. Marriage marked the point in which a man and woman could own a cultivated field (Perisitany, 1939, p. 129; Tanui, 1996, p. 48). For polygamous men, cultivated land was distributed according to the number of wives. It is, therefore, safe to say that each married woman had her own farm which she cultivated. The size of the farm depended on the ability of the person to mobilize labour (Tanui, 1996, p. 43). An individual was therefore free to choose the amount of land to cultivate. Allocation of cultivated land was done annually. However, the old farms could be cultivated for upto three years depending on their fertility.

Thus, each plot holder, at any one time would have three shambas – a new one (kabatutiet), one already harvested from once (roret), and one from which two or more crops had been reaped from (katuriot). In addition to the kokwet allotment, ownership of a house, normally implied a right to a small shamba adjacent to the house (kapungut). The wife who planted vegetables solely worked on the garden. An elderly man could also own his small farm near the homestead in which he planted tobacco. Land once cleared for cultivation, belonged to the person using it. In case of death, the land would be inherited by the sons of the woman who cultivated and their wives (Oboler, 1985, p. 251). Ownership of cultivated land ended when the land was left fallow, it reverted back to communally owned land. The development of a fully conscious idea that land “belonged” to men, in the same sense as cattle, did not develop in pre-colonial Nandi until the colonial period because cultivated land was ideologically associated with women’s activities (ibid.). Apart from cultivated land, there was grazing land. Elders in each kokwet determined where to graze their cattle. There were two types of grazing land. Grazing areas within the kokwet were known as limo. It was possible to return the cows from such grazing fields in the evening for milking. There were pastures far away from the homesteads known as kaptich. Cattle belonging to one village were communally grazed in kaptich. Cattle from various villages (kokwotinwek) could meet in kaptich. The warriors could graze the cattle in such places for several days. Thus grazing land was communally owned. While the principle of usufruct rights governed occupied and cultivated land, from the above it is clear that both genders in the Nandi community had unlimited access to land.

1.3. Agricultural Technology

Crafts and industries supplemented and complemented cultivation and pastoral activities. It included woodworking, iron smithing, pottery and weaving. Wooden implements used in pre-colonial Nandi included the hoe (kiptururit). This was a heavy hoe used by men. It was driven into the soil in four or five places close together and a rod of tangled roots was loosened, prised up and overturned. Women used a lighter wooden hoe (maaiyat) to break the soil. The hoes were made from a special tree known as chebitet (Personal Communication, Stephen Arap Kirwa, 2001). The Maasai introduced iron implements to Nandi. They included marut, a panga which was used for clearing virgin land. There were also two types of axe, kungit was a big axe fixed on a heavy handle to make it capable of cutting big trees. A small axe (kipsipaiyat) was mainly used for fencing the farm. Iron smiths also introduced iron hoes. In Nandi igoret was a big hoe while kisiriot was a small one meant for women. A small knife (kipkeswet) was used for harvesting. Iron working was the task of men, and the knowledge belonged to particular families which monopolised it. Thus the skills associated with the industry became hereditary; they were passed from father to the son. Such families were known as kapkitony. However, iron smiths did not concentrate on iron working only. They also cultivated land and owned livestock like any other Nandi. They worked on iron implements depending on demand. Iron ore was derived from rough red rocky material, which was heated to high temperatures in order to extract the ore. The ore was smelted using leather bellows called kobanda. The blacksmiths were paid for in livestock, or grain, thus they were often wealthy people. Men mainly carried this out. Women did not participate in iron working.

Pottery and weaving of baskets also enhanced agricultural production. Pots were used for carrying, storing and cooking. Baskets served as plates and also for transportation. Pottery was a very skilful art practised by women called chepteren. They used clay to produce pots of various designs and sizes to suit all purposes. Pots were moulded from the bottom to the top by piling rolls of clay over another until the required shape emerged. Pots were used for cooking, fetching water, storing water, storing grain and beer parties (Personal Communication, Kili Sikortuk, 2001; Tanui, 1996, p. 61). Weaving and basketry were woman’s enterprise. They weaved a number of items ranging from all sizes of baskets and mats. They used special sticks and river side reeds. Weaving was done throughout the year but more vigorously during and after harvest when the demand for woven items increased. The Nandi also used gourds to store, milk and the plant from which the gourds were obtained was carefully tended. The gourds were treated with a solution from some plants to remove the bitter tasting coating on the inside. This was a woman’s job; they sewed leather straps on the gourds and made lids out of leather. Each woman was supposed to know how to prepare a gourd. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, gourds were decorated with beads and cowry shells. Milk was kept in gourds to curdle. The small ones were used as cups from which milk was drunk. Milking was also done into the gourds. Leather was also used to manufacture important items among the Nandi. For example, a plate of leather called kisiet was used for serving ugali. From the above discussion, it is evident that there existed dynamic differential gender relations in Nandi agriculture.

Prior to the defeat and continuous threat by the Maasai in the 1880s, the Nandi were mainly a pastoral community. The male members of the community concentrated on cattle keeping while women cultivated small farms in which they grew millet and sorghum. The raids by the Maasai forced the Nandi to lean more towards cultivation of crops, offering much of their labour in all the crop production processes. However, by the second half of the nineteenth century, the Maasai were defeated; male labour reverted back to livestock economy and military campaigns. By the close of the 19th century Nandi women then did most of the cultivation. The surplus was used to purchase livestock, which could belong to the wife as house property but were controlled by the husband.

1.4. Establishment of Colonial Rule in Nandi

Nandi resistance to the establishment of British administration has been dealt with by a number of scholars (Matson, 1972; Ngeny, 1972; Tanui, 1996, p. 77-82). The Nandi resisted the British conquest because they were least affected by the late nineteenth century crisis caused by the Rinderpest epidemic, East-Coast Fever, locust and Small Pox outbreak. It was the groups which were least affected by the disasters which gave strong resistance to British conquest (Lonsdale, 1989, p. 19). However, for both the collaborators and resisters, the eventual result was the surrender of their sovereignty to the British. The Nandi were hostile to strangers or foreigners entering their territory. The Arab-Swahili traders of the early part of the nineteenth century had been repulsed. Their hostility was so great to any foreigner who tried to enter or pass through their country; it was not until 1850s that the coast people tried to cross Nandi territory. Even the caravans who gained entrance to Nandi were liable to attacks, with such constant menace of the Nandi hanging over them they did little in capturing slaves (Huntingford, 1950). The same "welcome" was accorded the Europeans. Early skirmishes with the Europeans occurred in mid 1895 when a British trader, Peter West, was murdered. A punitive expedition led by C. Vandaleur was sent to punish the Nandi. He met a Nandi force at Kimondi where a severe fight ensued. However, Vandaleur did not pursue the fight and he unexpectedly turned eastwards and went to Baringo. This was the first expedition aimed at subduing the Nandi. The Nandi continued to be a threat. In 1897, they raided the Bukusu, Kabras and Tiriki, but no action was taken against them because the British were preoccupied in other fields. In 1899, traders passing through Nandi were attacked. However, a major problem occurred when the railway reached their territory. By 1900, the railway was making its way through the escarpment on its way to Kisumu. The Nandi tampered with its progress (Matson, 1972, p. 146). The presence of telegraph wires, which could be used to make weapons and ornaments, was a great temptation to the Nandi who stole the wire. In May 1890, they attacked Fort Ternan and Kitotos. On 9th June, six members of a transport caravan were killed.

On 14th June, telegraph and bridge repairers were attacked killing one Italian and fourteen porters. The route across Nandi had become quite dangerous and the construction of the railway was being delayed. Thus the 1900 punitive expedition was sent. The Nandi evaded the expedition as they opted for guerrilla warfare. They had learnt from the first punitive expedition that frontal fighting was detrimental. The guerrilla warfare also suited their geographical setting which is mountainous in the southern part of the district. Much of their livestock were captured in an attempt to force them to an open battle but it never worked. Peace was then made with the Nandi to allow the construction of the railway to proceed. The peace lasted for one year. A serious damage was inflicted on the railway line at Kibigori. A punitive expedition was sent, but it did not defeat the Nandi completely (ibid.).

The Nandi were determined to retain their independence at all costs. In 1890, a Nandi Orkoiyot, Kimnyolei Arap Turukat was put to death by clubbing for the failure of one of the fighting units in raiding expeditions. He was blamed because he foretold success which turned out to be a failure. The Orkoiyot is said to have foreseen his death and had instructed his sons, Kipchomber arap Koilegei and Koitalel Arap Samoei, not to accept authority after his death. He also foretold of a foreign people who would come and rule Nandi and that one day there would come a big snake belching fire and smoke, going to quench its thirst in Lake Victoria (Ngeny, 1972, p. 107). The completion of the railway made Kimnyolei's prophecy come true. The Nandi were then scared of the probability of being ruled by foreigners in future. They then rallied behind Koitalel Arap Samoei, the new Orkoiyot, with the intention of remaining independent. Such determination made the British administrative machinery ineffective in Nandi until the last military expedition in 1905 to 1906. The British officers on the spot felt that the Nandi threat had to be wiped off once and for all. On 14th June 1906, Meinertzhagen, the British military administrative officer, noted that the Nandi people were restless. In August, the same year, the Nandi were fined three hundred heads of cattle, payable within three weeks, but this was not heeded. From September 1905, tension mounted between the Nandi and the British officers on the spot.

Meinertzhagen, therefore, requested permission from the Commissioner to send a punitive expedition against the Nandi (Tanui, 1996, p. 80). However, in October 1905 Meinertzhagen killed Koitalel Arap Samoei during a “peace” negotiation. Meinertzhagen aimed at weakening the Nandi who rallied around the Orkoiyot. After his death, the Nandi became demoralised. Meinertzhagen then moved northwards with his large force, killing people and capturing livestock. This marked the end of the Nandi resistance to British rule. After their defeat, Meinertzhagen drafted peace terms, which included the evacuation of the Nandi from the pororiosiek of kapchepkendi and kamelilo near the railway to kabiyet area in the northern part of Nandi (ibid.). In January 1906, Meinertzhagen forcefully moved the Nandi from the south eastern corner of the territory to the northern part of Nandi. In the process, many houses, stores and crops were torched. Several people were also captured and imprisoned. The process of torching houses continued for a whole month. The field force wound up on 26th February 1906 when the Nandi had been evacuated from their land by force.

From the foregoing, it is evident that the British military conquest in Nandi greatly affected the peoples economy. It diverted their labour from normal economic activities. Cattle raids that were carried out from September to January were not effectively undertaken at the time of the resistance. Cultivation was also affected in that the preparation of farms was no longer a priority as they engaged in a fight with the British forces. Apart from diversion of labour, a large number of Nandi people were killed and others captured during the military conquest. This had a long-term effect on gender relations and particularly on agriculture in Nandi. Most of those killed were men, thus many households were headed by women who had to do all the agricultural tasks. The burning of homes and grain stores rendered many homeless and destroyed the food reserves which were to be used for the rest of the year or exchanged for other goods. Worst still, the movement of the Nandi from south to the north made them unable to grow the same varieties of crops which they grew at the southern part which is wetter than the north. Due to the above effects the Nandi continued to passively resist all forms of change introduced by the British. They continued to seek adventure in cattle raiding in western Kenya, however much it was against the colonial law. They also refused to take their children to school and were not enthusiastic to adopt the new agricultural methods brought by British control.

1.5. Statement of the Problem

This study is mainly concerned with three issues, namely gender relations, resource access and agricultural production. Not much has been done on the relationship between these three issues. Agricultural resource access touches on the problems of equity which have been explained in terms of class and ethnicity. Trends in agricultural production have also been explained in terms of factors such as the nature of the world market, drought and resource access to other competing sectors such as industry. Evidently, the place of gender relations in both resource access and agricultural production has hardly been adequately analyzed. The main problem with which the study was concerned is to determine the place of changing gender relations in agricultural resources access and production in Nandi Sub-County between the years 1954 and 2000. It, therefore, concentrated on gender relations of production, the political, cultural and social factors influencing these relations and how they influence agricultural production. Based on the study, this paper specifically attempts to answer the following questions: How were women in Nandi marginalized by traditional practices and legal questions which impacted on decisions affecting gender access and rights to use land? What were the effects of colonial socio-economic policies on gender relations of production? What factors influenced gender access to agricultural technology, extension services and credit facilities in the colonial period, how have the access of these resources influenced gender relations of production in agriculture?

2. Materials and Methods

This study was based on both primary and secondary sources. It also relied on qualitative methods of data collection, specifically archival research, oral interviews and the review of related literature. The archival information used included official reports of the colonial and postcolonial periods. A wide range of opened archival files in the Kenya National Archives were examined. They included Correspondences, District Annual Reports, Quarterly reports and Records of Departments such as Agriculture, Labour and Lands. Government Plans, Reports and Sessional Papers were also consulted. Annual Reports in the Ministry of Agriculture office in the district and national offices were examined. Oral information was heavily depended upon in this study. Oral interviews were carried out in Nandi Sub-County only. Due to time and financial limitations a representative sample of the study was used.

The district was divided into High Agricultural Potential (Aldai, Kaptumo, Kapsabet, Kilibwoni, Nandi Hills and Tinderet) and Medium Agricultural Potential (Kosirai, Kabiyeet and Kipkarren) areas. The high potential divisions are located in the southern part of the Sub-County while the medium potential divisions border Uasin Gishu in the northern part. From the high potential divisions, Kapsabet and Kaptumo were included. These divisions offered a chance to examine the interaction between food crops, livestock keeping and a variety of cash crops. Kapsabet Division also offered a chance to examine the effects of the proximity of an urban centre on gender differential access to agricultural resources and production. Major portions of Nandi Hills have tea owned by multinational companies and other large companies. Tinderet is covered by a forest while major parts of Aldai division are occupied by the Terik who are ethnically distinct from the Nandi. In the Northern part of the Sub-County, Kosirai Division was included because it has a low population density and cultivation is on large scale and mainly mechanized compared to Kabiyeet and Kipkarren Divisions. However, identified informed respondents outside the selected divisions were interviewed. Two research assistants were recruited to assist in conducting of interviews.

Since the study was historical in nature, it concentrated on respondents who were 30 years old and above. Both male and female respondents were interviewed. A total of ninety-six respondents were interviewed, forty-five women and fifty-two men. Respondents who were knowledgeable on the subject of agriculture and labour the assistance of the divisional agricultural officers were sought. However, respondents proposed by agricultural officers were often found to have official bias. To check and avoid such a problem, snowball sampling was employed in selecting respondents. In this way, the initially identified small number grew in successive stage into a large sample. Various methods of data collection were used in this research. All the farmers were interviewed conveniently in the language they understood best. A question guideline with open-ended questions was used. All the interviews were recorded using a tape recorder. Moreover, notes were also taken during the interview. Requisite information in books, journals, seminar papers, District Annual Reports, magazines, newspapers as well as theses and dissertations was harnessed from various research libraries in the country such as Moi Library in Kenyatta University, Margaret Thatcher Library in Moi University, Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library of the University of Nairobi, IFRA Library and Kenya National Library in Eldoret and Nairobi. Secondary sources were also reviewed to give an idea of the nature and extent of the work already done in the field of gender relations and agriculture in Kenya. At the end of the research, all data was subjected to historical analysis. All the data was edited for accuracy, completeness and uniformity. Those which had major response errors were discarded (Peters, 1994, p. 97). Archival and library data were subjected to content analysis of documents. The originator of the data was examined to check whether he/she could have been influenced by circumstances. Obscurity and ambiguities in the data were detected. This procedure was not only empirical but also normative. It called for not only common sense, experience and knowledge about human behaviour but also analytical acumen undertaken with a theoretical consciousness. The analysis of data also required categorization into presentable themes in line with the research objectives. Tape recordings from oral interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Themes were then developed as the researcher read the field notes, transcripts and listened to the tape recordings. From these it was possible to classify and categorize gender differential access to the various resources and how it influenced agricultural production.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Colonial Land Policies and Gender Access to Land 1895-1954

In its enthusiastic encouragement of European settlement, the colonial state paid little attention to the rights of Africans to land. The Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 gave the commissioner of the protectorate power to grant land to European immigrants. Crown land was defined as all public land in East Africa Protectorate which was subjected to the control of the King of the United Kingdom (Londsdale, 1989, p. 19). Thus, during the early colonial period, the colonial state endeavoured to alienate African land for European settlement. The amount of land occupied by Africans was reduced. It also assumed that Africans had no rights to “unoccupied” and “uncultivated” land and that there were much “waste” lands available for European settlement. By asserting that the crown, and not the African people, had original title to some land, the government alienated vast lands from the African societies. Land alienation was undertaken through direct seizure, conquest, pressure on chiefs, trickery, swindling and every other means open to the colonialist (Ochieng’, 1975, p. 100; Tanui, 1996, p. 86). In Nandi’s case, the territory adjacent to the railway was lost after conquest in 1906. The people in the pororiosiek of kapchepkendi and kamelilo in the south east part of the territory were forcefully moved to the northern part of the territory.

Several years later, during the independence struggle, white settlers and other British officials advanced the argument that the land they occupied was empty at the time of their arrival but this did not apply to the southern parts of Nandi (Ngeny, 1972, p. 123; Tanui, 1996, p. 87). The Nandi also lost much land on the Uasin-Gishu plateau in 1906. After the defeat of the Maasai in late nineteenth century a greater part of Uasin-Gishu plateau acted as grazing land (Kaptich) for the Nandi. The plateau was annexed by the government as part of the European white highlands. Meinertzhagen pressurized chief Arap Cheno to map out the boundary of the Nandi reserve, without making him understand that the route he took in going round Nandi territory was to be considered as the boundary. Consequently, large parts of Nandi territory were closed out (Personal Communication, Stephen Arap Kirwa, 2001; Personal Communication, Christopher Arap Koech, 2002; Personal Communication, Sikortuk Arap Kili, 2001). The Nandi who lived in the plateau were moved to the reserve, and strict controls imposed over their movements. Land alienation did not end in 1906. A government treaty of 1907 promised the Nandi that the land within the reserve was theirs forever; however, the promise was broken in 1913 when 31 square Kilometres was taken in Kipkaren, the north western part of the territory. In 1919, the colonial state further alienated 336 square kilometres, one-seventh of the remaining territory, for the settlement of demobilized British soldiers. Ndalat and Kaimosi areas were alienated for this purpose. The Nandi lost much of their land due to its good soils. Middleton (1982) points out that “The smaller pastoral tribes of the Nandi and Kipsigis found themselves in a territory which being fertile was early coveted by European farmers” (p. 344). The Nandi received the alienation of land with a lot of uneasiness. They were scared that they would end up losing all their land (Personal Communication, Simon Simotwo, 2001; Personal Communication, Agnes Chepkwony, 2001; Personal Communication, Solomon Ngeny, 2001).

In 1920, the then Nandi District Commissioner C. S. Hemsted tried to justify the alienation of Nandi land by reporting that “the alienated land from the reserve was not beneficially occupied or required by the Nandi tribe” (DC/NDI/1/2 KNA, 1904-1920). Despite the low population, pressure on land in Nandi became a serious matter in the early colonial days, especially as the Nandi tried to keep the numbers of their cattle to a sufficient level (Oboler, 1985, p. 156). Land alienation led to shortages of land, and this affected the pre-colonial agricultural practices observed in Nandi. Lonsdale (1989, p. 45) points out rightly that the alienation of Nandi and Kipsigis land turned the groups into agricultural peasants. Land alienation is, therefore, central to the understanding of the agricultural changes in Nandi. Due to the shortage of grazing land, some Nandi moved to the white highlands to become squatters. Squatting was a system whereby a European land holder allowed African families to reside and cultivate plots and graze their animals on his land in return for a certain amount of labour each year. Before 1918, payment for using such land was in kind. The Nandi could pay in form of oxen to be used for ploughing settlers’ farms, milk, ghee or labour (Tanui, 1996, p. 89). The Nandi who went to squat in European farms were wealthy people, who needed pasture for their large herds of cattle (ibid.). The alienation of land in Nandi also led to the success of European settlers in acquiring labour. The settlers had demanded that more reserves be created and the size of the existing reserves be reduced, not because they needed land, but because they hoped to force still more Africans into the labour market (Wrigley, 1982, p. 230; Tanui, 1996, p. 90).

The authorities were also convinced that the availability of sufficient land in the reserve was responsible for the low turnout of labour. Hence, by reducing such land, Africans would be compelled to seek employment on European farms. This clearly came out from the Nandi District Commissioners report, after the alienation of land for the Soldier Settlement Scheme: The alienation of land is the direct cause of an increase number of natives looking for fresh pasturage for their herds in European farms on the ground that the latter does not now contain grazing sufficient for their herds (DC/NDI/1/2, KNA, 1919-1920). Land shortages in Nandi led, not only to squatting but also, to the people turning more to crop cultivation. The District Commissioner (ibid.) reported in 1908 that: In 1906 after three punitive expeditions the tribe was subdued and placed in a reserve in which they have since settled down and are rapidly taking to agriculture. Land alienation led to a marked intensification of population pressure upon scarce land in the reserve. African resentment began to grow and there were petitions demanding the return of alienated land. This culminated in the Kenya Land Commission (Carter Commission) between 1932 and 1934. The Nandi who testified before the Carter Commission showed their discontent in losing their land. Chief Elijah Cheruiyot told the Commission at Kapsabet in October 6th 1932 that: All these salt licks were given to the Nandi after fighting and have since been taken away. Why should we pay for that which use to belong to us? Do you consider us as friends or enemies still? Besides the land of the Nandi has been reduced so much that all the growing men have gone out to the shamba (Carter Land Commission, 1934, p. 2077).

The Carter Commission did not solve the land problem but rather formalized the existing land situation (Oboler, 1985, p. 146). In late 1920s and early 1930s, the worldwide economic depression worsened the situation. The colonial government responded to the crisis by encouraging the Africans to intensify their cultivation. This was an attempt to fill the gap left by the decline in European production caused by lowered prices. Increased African production could keep up the level of export of the colony as a whole (ibid. p. 147). Overstocking in the African reserves became a major concern in late 1930s. The outbreak of the Second World War led to the temporary shelving of the soil degradation problem in African reserves. Africans, like white settlers, were encouraged to put every available acre under cultivation of crops (Kitching, 1980, p. 102). The trend did not change after the War; Britain emerged from the War with a weak economy. Between 1945 and 1951, Britain intensified agricultural production in the colonies to meet its economic deficit. However, all the above placed a very severe strain on the African resources (Jalango-Ndeda, 1991, p. 239). In Kenya, it led to the demands for the restoration of alienated land, which was not heeded by the colonial government, culminating in the Mau Mau rebellion in Central Province (Okoth-Ogendo, 1989, p. 69; Migot-Adholla, Place & Oluoch-Korura, 1994, p. 119). The colonial government interpreted the problem facing African areas to be as a result of poor management of soils and not overpopulation. To deal with this problem, the Worthington Plan was enacted in 1946. Land development programme (ALDEV) was formed under the Worthington Plan. Money was directed towards soil conserving projects such as terracing, bush clearing, strip cropping, application of manure systematic culling and destruction of unwanted animals in overstocked areas. Demonstration farms were established in some reserves. In Nandi, such a farm was established at Ndalat in the northern part of the reserve. The Nandi outside the scheme, who adopted the techniques demonstrated at Ndalat, were permitted to claim and enclose land (Tanui, 1996, p. 160). However, ALDEV was unable to solve the problem of overpopulation and soil deterioration in the African reserves. In 1951, attention was shifted to land tenure in African reserves. Governor Sir Philip Mitchel formed the Royal Commission to examine the state of African economy. The Commission was expected to recommend on ways to deal with the pressing and acute problems faced by African reserves to preserve land or achieve yields above subsistence (Harbersson, 1973, p. 28).

The Royal Commission was in operation from 1953-1955. It detailed the modalities of agrarian change through land consolidation, enclosure and registration of titles among other things (Ndege, 2000, p. 107; Kibwana, 1990, p. 236). The Swynnerton Plan of 1954 made recommendations along the same lines. The above measures had adverse effects on gender access to land. It led to individual land ownership in African reserves from late 1920s (Kitching, 1980, p. 280). However, the process of individual land ownership took place at different times in Kenya. This was due to the difference in pre-colonial land tenure, population pressure and the penetration of market forces. The process of individual land ownership in Nandi occurred in the late 1940s. Official encouragement played a major role in changing the land tenure in Nandi reserve. The District Commissioner, H. R. Carver, encouraged male individual enclosure of land in northern part of Nandi from 1943-1945. He argued that land enclosure would improve farming and also be the basis of orderly development of land in Mosop (PC/NKU/3/13/15, KNA, 1931-1951). However, the District Commissioner encouraged individual land enclosure in Nandi reserve in order to forestall the disaster, which would be caused by allowing squatter stock to drift back to the reserve. Nandi Reserve was already showing signs of soil deterioration. Resident labourers in Uasin-Gishu, consisted largely of Nandi squatters who kept large numbers of cattle. There were plans to return all the excess squatters stocks to the reserve (DC/NDI/5/2, KNA, n.d). The process of individual enclosure of land was accelerated by a visit to Kipsigis land by Protestant church leaders from Nandi (Magut, 1969, p. 106; Tanui, 1996, p. 158). Individual male ownership of land had taken place in Kipsigis in 1930s. On their return, Protestant church leaders became the first to enclose large tracts of land. Magut (1969) points out that Chiefs, headmen and Protestant church leaders benefited from initial enclosure of land. Chiefs and headmen used their position to acquire large farms. These leaders abused their positions to acquire for themselves large farms at the expense of the helpless poor members of the community (Berry, 1989, p. 110). In Nandi, for example, respondents from Mutwot village pointed out that Chief Joel Malel acquired a large farm by planting trees at the edge of his farm. However, due to the fact that grazing land was communally used and he did not erect a fence to protect his trees, they could be destroyed by his neighbours' stock. Consequently, he threatened them and demanded compensation. Many of his neighbours moved to new areas to create room for this expansion. As a member of the Protestant church, chief Malel also harassed his neighbours who indulged in alcohol drinking. He repeatedly accused them of making a lot of noise when drunk, thus disturbing his peace. Those who valued their freedom moved to other areas. The chief had also built a primary school and a church in his compound.

When the registration of land commenced, he moved the two to their present location. In the process, part of the land which had been allocated to a widow Mary Kibii and Kipkoech Arap Rotich were repossessed by force to build the two facilities (Personal Communication, David Bett, 2001; Personal Communication, David Kemboi, 2001; Personal Communication, Rijah Tanui, 2001; Personal Communication, Simon Simotwo, 2001). Women in Nandi during this period were not allowed to enclose land with the exception of widows who had male heirs. These served as conduits for the transmission of land to their sons. Individual land enclosure became so popular in Nandi. In 1949, the Nandi Local Native Council passed a resolution restricting enclosure to the following conditions. One was allowed to enclose not more than two acres. The person had to carry out adequate measure of soil conservation, would not interfere with grazing and cultivation rights of other inhabitants, and had to be cleared by the chief and village elders (PC/NKU/3/13/15, KNA, 1949). However, Chiefs, Kokwet elders, members of the Local Native Council and all other prominent people who had enclosed large holdings were allowed to retain them. By late 1940s, land scarcity in the reserve had become a critical economic issue. The issue was so critical that African demands for the return of alienated land had become commonplace. Paul Boit, members of the Nandi Local Native Council, voiced the Nandi request in 1948 by inquiring about “what the government had done about the long standing request the Nandi had made for the return of Kaimosi and Kipkarren farms” (AN/32/54, KNA, 1948). In 1950, Kipkarren and Kaimosi were returned to the Nandi. In the same year, Nandi District Land Tenure Committee chaired by the District Officer was established. Its main task was to encourage soil conservation in the District. In 1952, the Committee passed a resolution denying the Nandi in employment away from the reserve possession of land in Nandi reserve. However, this was not fully implemented, because the presence of women on land served as both a validation and protection of men rights in land. Their presence was seen as critical in a society where the only form of social security most workers had was to be able to return to their rural homes in times of sickness, unemployment and after retirement. However, the Nandi who had moved with their families to the White Highlands as squatters, were unable to acquire land in the reserve. Soil conservation was given a lot of emphasis between 1946 and 1952, but the programme did not provide a solution to the land crisis in African reserves. The problem led to the Mau Mau revolt in Central Province. It then became clear to the colonial government that the land issue could no longer be ignored. The Swynnerton Plan was introduced in 1954 to solve the land crisis. It advocated for individual male ownership of land.

3.2. Gender Access to Agricultural Technology, 1895-1953

The imported hoe was the first agricultural technology introduced during the colonial period. It was readily accepted because it had no much difference with hoes used in pre-colonial Nandi apart from the fact that imported hoes had wider blades. They were also cheaper than those obtained from blacksmiths. One could exchange grain with the hoe, unlike in the pre-colonial period when a blacksmith could ask for a goat or a sheep. Generally the hoes, axes and pangas bought from the shops were relatively cheaper than those locally produced (Personal Communication, Chemiron, 2001; Personal Communication, Kigen, 2001; Personal Communication, Kitur, 2001). The hoes were available in the local Indian shops in the reserve. The hoes, axes and pangas were used by both male and female cultivators; however, the use of these implements led to an increase in the area under cultivation. In 1925, the ox-plough was introduced in Nandi. The initial ploughs were distributed to the chiefs by the colonial administration. This was a move to increase commodity production among the male colonial collaborators, the chiefs. However, the plough was not enthusiastically received by the Nandi; they resisted the use of bullocks for ploughing (Personal Communication, Tisia, 2001; Personal Communication, Sang, 2001; Personal Communication, Bundotich, 2001). Those who accepted the plough were able to clear a large area in which, mainly maize was planted. They were able to sell the maize and get cash, which was needed among the people to pay taxes, and purchase imported goods. The Nandi men who had been employed in settler farms in the white highlands also popularized the ox-plough. The squatters and wage labourers used the plough in settler farms. Some transferred the technology to the reserve (Tanui, 1996, p. 124). The Local Native Council also played an important role in distributing the ploughs to the Nandi. By 1931, the council had adopted a policy of supplying free ploughs to any man who could produce a team of trained oxen. By 1934, the Council was spending at least one thousand shillings in providing a plough as a free gift to any man who could produce a team of six trained oxen. As a result, the number of ploughs in Nandi increased to a total of fifty-one ploughs by 1934 (DC/NDI/1/4, KNA, 1934). The plough was locally known as Eleisi from the initials of local native council – LNC. The use of the plough was a strategy for increasing agricultural production by increasing the area under cultivation in Nandi. Those who used the plough cleared farms ranging from forty to fifty acres per individual.

However, this was not universal; the majority of the Nandi did not grow more than they needed for their own subsistence, because not all people got the plough. It was mainly the chiefs and those who had embraced western education and Christianity who adopted the plough. The plough was also a man's technology. Women's use of the plough was constrained by cultural factors. Women did not own bullocks, or even if they owned them, the husband controlled the use of all livestock. The plough, as already mentioned increased the cultivated areas, thus increasing the amount of weeding and harvesting, often women's tasks. Water mills were also introduced in Nandi in 1926 with the hope of increasing acreage under maize (DC/NDI/1/4, KNA, 1926). The indigenous technology of using two stones to grind millet was time consuming. The introduction of water mills hastened the change from millet to maize as a subsistence crop. During the Second World War, there was a marked expansion of maize mono cropping with the plough in Nandi (Kitching, 1980, p. 102).

The use of the plough led to the expansion of maize production so much, causing fear by the colonial administration that it would lead to soil deterioration. By 1950, campaigns to reduce ploughs and maize production were put in place. In livestock keeping, technologies introduced included a veterinary station established at Baraton in 1932. By 1934, the station had twenty students training in the programme. In 1936, an artificial insemination programme was started in Nandi. The Nandi were encouraged to bring their heifers for cross breeding with Sahiwal bull at Baraton station. Sahiwal breed was superior for its beef and for draught purposes and not better as a milk producer than the indigenous cattle. Dairies were established to buy any surplus milk and there were six such dairies in Nandi by 1936. However, the colonial state was more interested in bullocks. Sahiwal bullock would boost the use of ox-plough and cultivation and not dairy production. Construction of dips commenced in the 1940s in Nandi. The Nandi did not enthusiastically accept dipping. During this period the colonial government was putting in place measures to reduce herds of cattle in Nandi. The Nandi feared that dipping would be used to enforce this measure. In 1947, groups of Nandi at Kilagan, Kaiboi and Kabiyeet locations demonstrated against dipping. They were opposed to the building of dips in their areas. This opposition continued until the DC threatened military intervention (DC/NDI/1//5, KNA, 1947). However, by 1950, dipping had become popular due to its effectiveness in compacting thick-borne diseases (Kitching, 1980, p. 237). The disparity in technological innovation between cultivation of crops and livestock keeping was due to the neglect of livestock keeping by the colonial government compared to maize production. The introduction of new technology led to the intensification of the subordination of women to their husbands as well as loss of control of their own labour. New technologies intensified the labour of women. This was coupled with a loss of decision making power in the realm of production.

3.3. Changes in Gender Relations of Production in Agriculture and its Impact on Production before 1954

In the pre-colonial period Nandi men and women had clearly defined rights to land. These rights entitled women to farm the land, and men to graze their livestock. The right to use land was provided to both men and women by the community elders. Women retained control over the land they used and its products. The colonial policies of land alienation greatly altered gender relations and consequently agricultural production. The Nandi were forced into a reserve, thus they had to contend with limited land compared to what they had previously used for grazing and cultivation. This definitely gradually affected the types and amount of crops grown and the number of livestock kept. The commercialization of agricultural production in Nandi reserve affected gender relations of production in Nandi. In promoting commercial agriculture, the colonial government targeted men leaving out women who were traditionally in charge of cultivated land. The colonial state believed that women were conservative and neither willing nor able to adopt new methods of cultivation (Lovett, 1989, p. 38). Men were provided incentives such as seeds and ox-ploughs. Such state action enabled men to enter the money economy as the only producers of agricultural commodities and aided in denying women similar status (*ibid.* p. 39). Consequently, a pattern was established whereby cash crop production was supervised by and the proceeds thereof controlled by men. The growth of commercial agriculture in the reserves generated new demands for land and shaped peoples strategies to gain access to it (Berry, 1989, p. 107). The exportation of male labour in Nandi also affected gender relations and consequently agricultural production. The impact of male labour out-migration in Nandi was first felt during the First World War when men were forcefully conscripted to serve in the war. Division of labour was altered as the number of men moving out of the reserve gradually increased. By 1940s the number of wage labourers from Nandi had increased tremendously. Women and children who were left in the reserves now mainly undertook duties such as taking care of livestock and breaking the ground, previously done by men.

The low wages given to labourers were not adequate to allow the worker to sustain himself and his family. Wages had to be supplemented with food and other goods and services from the peasant household. The unpaid labour of the rural women subsidized the low wages. Introduction of new agricultural technologies such as the ox-plough altered gender relations of production in Nandi. The colonial government targeted men when introducing such technology. The ox-plough was also not suitable to women due to cultural reasons. Women were not the owners of the bullocks, thus they were unable to make decisions over their use. Thus the ox-plough benefited men and not women farmers. Thus affecting production because they were the majority left behind to work in the farm.

4. Conclusion

This paper has discussed Nandi agricultural production before 1954. It has shown that both feminine and masculine genders had different contribution towards agricultural production and that their various roles have changed with time. The paradigm of feminist political economy perceives gender relations of production as changing due to a complex interaction of economic, political and ideological aspects. In Nandi, these changes were spawned by processes of land alienation, population pressure and the introduction of commodity production leading to scarcity of land. By the 1940s, Nandi men were dividing land into individual plots. In the process, women usufruct rights were ignored and violated. On labour, men found themselves being pushed from the rural areas to seek formal employment. This overburdened the women who were left behind to take care of the dependants and to carry out agricultural duties on the family land. Women agricultural production were also limited by constraints, such as introduction of the plough which favoured men, lack of control over land and their own labour. By 1954, factors inhibiting women agricultural production in Nandi had been entrenched. From late 1930s some Nandi women responded to this situation by running away to urban areas.

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