

COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE AEMBU LAND ACCESS AND LABOUR DIVISION SYSTEMS IN FOOD CROP PRODUCTION FROM 1906- 1963

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Abstract

This study examined the colonial transformation of the Aembu access to land and labour division in food crop production from 1906-1963. Colonial practices and policies undermined the Aembu land and labour systems in food crop production. Methodologically, the study used descriptive research design and Articulation of Modes of Production Theory. The study was conducted in Embu East, Embu West and Embu North sub-counties of Embu. The study targeted a population of 16,144 people based on the 2019 census. Corroborated data was obtained from oral, archival and secondary sources to establish the reliability and validity of the research. The study's findings were that the creation of African reserves to pave way for white settlement and labour supply from Africans led to the abandonment of crop farms since they were far away; the reserves had limited land sizes with poor soils for the production of enough food while most of the food storage facilities were destroyed in the process of migration and that during the political crisis of World Wars and Mau Mau, labour in food crop production was reduced. It concluded that colonialism transformed the Aembu land and labour systems while the co-existence of pre-colonial and colonial access to land and labour systems on the production of food crops exposed the community to famines. The study recommends that policymakers should come up with strategies for promoting traditional forms of access to land and labour to ensure adequate food crop production.

Key terms: Aembu, colonial transformation, food crop production, labour, land.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Indeed, land is an important resource in food crop production across Africa, and the system of its possession may influence food productivity. According to Bryceson (1980), the introduction of commodity production during the colonial period in Tanzania, alongside peasant production of food, destabilised the development of indigenous drought-resistant food crops, which subjected the people to food insufficiencies and colonial famines. The situation could have been so because of the replacement of traditional food crops, which were resistant to drought and pests, with fast-growing and diseases-vulnerable cash crops, which was done by German colonial administrators. Since 1890, Kenyan white settlers had already acquired the individual land tenure system in Kenya colony (Ochieng, 1990). This was followed by an individual land ownership system among Kenyans with the introduction of the 1959 and 1963 Acts on Land Registration. According to the 1902 ordinance, Africans were evicted from their land, and they became occupants of the White lands, while the government could sell, transfer and take away any land at will (Kanyinga, 2008). This marked the establishment of ethnic distinctiveness and separations based on land control.

Leys (1975) holds that the advent of colonialism and the introduction of the monetary economy gradually ushered in individual systems of land ownership, and it spread all over the country. Lambert (1956) was commissioned to examine land ownership as outlined in the 1938 Native Trust Ordinance. His findings were that all the other communities had troops similar to those of the Agikuyu. His work represents a milestone in this study when examining the colonial changes in Aembu land traditional systems, but he failed to investigate the Aembu as a distinctive community bearing its unambiguous land ownership systems and gave a generalised view of communities. Njeru (1978) investigated the effects of land judgements on the social systems of the Ambeere, where he notes that there is an increased disparity and landlessness between the learned and the rest of the community members as a result of a change in the land systems of ownership. Karigi (2015) conducted research on Embu's crop productivity and land ownership systems. According to his research findings, the production of crops has been hampered by ongoing land subdivisions because the small plots of land are only suitable for crops that are intended for the market. This situation necessitated a study on the colonial transformation of the Aembu access to land and labour division in food crop production from 1906-1963.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Ogendo (1991) had a serious assessment of land restructuring in colonial Kenya. His work centred on a probe of whether reforms on land ownership improved agrarian efficiency and other income-generating undertakings or not. To Ogendo, although an individualised system was found necessary for the expected development within the African regions, it was noted that there were more problems to solve than anticipated. The continuous sub-division of land that comes with private ownership becomes insecure for agricultural-related incentives like credit facilities, which indicates that the right to land does not assure increased production of food.

A comprehensive examination of the Agikuyu land entity was conducted by a British government administrator in Kenya's colony by the name Lambert (1956). The study included the Aembu as well. Lambert was commissioned to examine land ownership as outlined in the 1938 Native Trust Ordinance. He carried out his investigation at a time of serious land grievances across the country while the Agikuyu

were the leading ethnic group. His findings were that all the other communities had troops similar to those of the Agikuyu. Nevertheless, the current study analysed the colonial transformation of land and labour access systems in food crop production and the influence of the modifications on food crop productivity among the Aembu community members from 1906-1963.

Njeru (1978) investigated the effects of land judgements on the social systems of the Ambeere, where he notes that there is an increased disparity and landlessness between the learned and the rest of the community members as a result of a change in the land systems of ownership. Further, Njeru observes that the parcels of land owned by some farmers were on the decline in terms of quality. Coincidentally, the study found out that some of the community members had to apportion some of their land and sell it in order to pay for the court proceedings. Njeru's work provides information related to increased cases of conflicts with individual land ownership, which contributes to this study. However, the current study critically examined the Aembu system of land and labour access systems in food crop production and the importance of the systems held in providing sufficient food supply in households.

Gacheru (2005) indicates that the opening of Africa for the settlement of the whites was a significant event in African history. In 1885, Kenya was made a protectorate; in 1920, it was made a colony. The alien land tenure system was then implemented in the colony as a result of the subsequent events, making it easier for the immigrants to purchase land. The railway's upkeep and administrative expenses would be covered through settler farming. However, the two studies are unlike since the current investigation critically analysed the traditional land and labour access systems in food crop production among the Aembu, colonial transformations and the degree to which the co-existence of the two productive systems influenced food supply in Aembu households from 1906-1963.

Individual land ownership system was introduced among settler farmers, according to Ochieng (1990). The customary system was thereafter superseded by African individual land tenure systems through the registered land legislation of 1959. However, the current study examined the Aembu land and labour systems in food crop production, the changes that took place and the influence of the co-existence of pre-colonial and colonial systems on food security.

The origin of the private land tenure system in the nation, according to Wanjara (2000), was the change of the traditional land lease with foreign legislation. After the colonial government had finalised the question of land for the settlers, the question of labour was key and needed to be urgently addressed. Nevertheless, this study went a milestone further in establishing the influence of colonial labour and land regulations on the Aembu production of food crops and its implications for household food supply.

Karigi (2015) conducted research on Embu's crop productivity and land ownership systems. According to his research findings, the production of crops has been hampered by ongoing land subdivisions because the small plots of land are only suitable for crops that are intended for the market. Karigi also provides evidence for the progression of land lease structure since the colonial era. When examining the changes in the traditional system of land ownership among the Aembu during the colonial period, Karigi's work represents a milestone in the current study. While Karigi's study examined crop production from a broad perspective, the current study examined specifically food crop production.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design. Kathuri and Pals (1993) demonstrate that the systematic and scientific nature of the descriptive research design brings valid and reliable outcomes. For Kombo and Tromp (2006), descriptive research is majorly used to describe the state of affairs as it exists, and it allows for both qualitative and quantitative research. A descriptive research design was used in this study as it enabled the researcher to collect, describe, record, analyse, report and present the colonial transformation of the Embu access to land and labour division in food crop production from 1906-1963. The Qualitative Data Analysis method was used to analyse data. The method of qualitative data analysis was utilised to give a detailed description of the changes introduced by the colonialists on land access and labour division in food crop production from 1906-1963. This was influenced by the data obtained from primary sources, archival sources and secondary sources, which were corroborated to meet the reliability and validity of the study. Ethically, the researcher presented an introduction letter to the respondent and with the consent of the respondent, the interview was conducted. A research permit was acquired from the National Council for Science, Technology, and Innovations (NACOSTI). The purpose of the interview was explained to the interviewee, who participated in the interviews wilfully, and where the interviewee sought to remain anonymous.

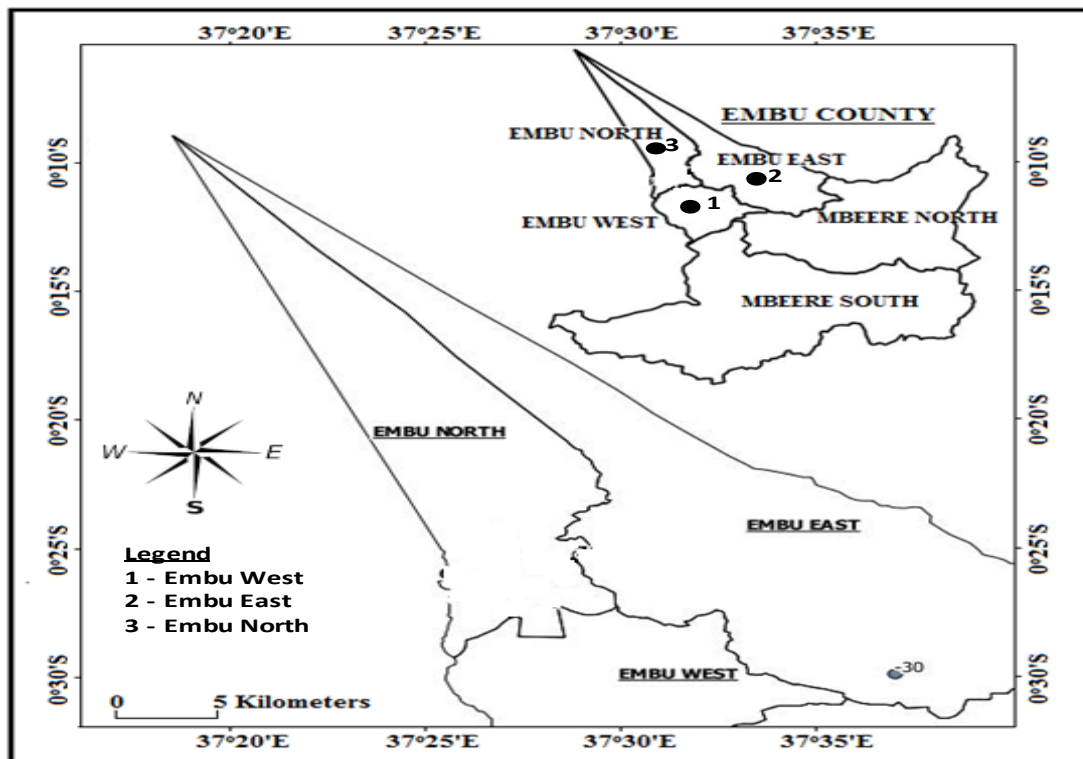


Figure 1: Location of the Study

Source: Source: Embu County Integrated Development Plan

4.0 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

The results in this study are based on the interview schedule data, archive data, and secondary information obtained from currently published pertinent papers, books, and journals. Data from oral sources, archival sources, and secondary sources were corroborated to ensure the reliability and objectivity of the study's findings.

Mungeam (1976) notes that S.L. Hinde, the Sub-Commissioner Kenya Province, made the suggestion that the Embu should be subjugated and occupied on May 23, 1906. Furthermore, the Embu Country served as a haven for anyone escaping the legal system in the remaining parts of the province. Lastly, the Embu thought they were too powerful for the government and would back dissidents because of their immunity from punishment. Captain J.W.O. Maycock, who commanded an expedition against the Embu in June 1906, carried out the recommendations of this report. At this point, the British built Fort Hall at Murang'a (Mbiri) and took control of all the Kikuyu territory. Captain Fredrick Lugard constructed the Fort in 1891 (Tignor, 1976). The Kikuyu had already formed an alliance by this point, and the neighbours from Mbeere, Embu, to the south, had visited Mbiri (Fort Hall) many times to request that the Whiteman build a fort at Mbeere. Thus, in addition to the pressure being exerted by forest concessionaires and settler interests, the collaborators needed an extension of government authority over Embu property. An oral respondent, Nguu (O.I., 2024), confirmed these feelings, stating that the collaborators longed for a piece of the profits if the Embu were conquered, while the colonial government officials desired the fertile land and her riches, which they saw as a possible source of government cash.

Data collected from the conducted interviews revealed that British soldiers led by Mbeere and Kikuyu war commanders carried out the Embu mission in June 1906. Muthuri commanded the party to the south to defend the Mbeere from any attack, while Rumbia wa Ngotho led the warriors in the woodland fringes. Mutabo headed the column in the centre. The majority of sources stated that the Embu warriors had already attacked the Chuka at the time of the invasion. The Whiteman had learned of this knowledge through leaks to the Kikuyu and Mbeere collaborators (Kamwana & Njathika, O.I., 2024).

The British invasion of Embu had a profound impact. The Mbeere and Kikuyu warriors set fire to many of the Embu's possessions after the mission, including cattle and houses (Mungeam, 1979). The Embu District Record Book, an archival report, also documented these feelings;

A punitive expedition on a large scale was sent against the Embu 'tribes' in 1906 owing to their 'truculent' attitude. Large amounts of stock were taken, the majority of which was restored, and many people were slain (KNA/PC/EBU/8/6).

Abiud (O.I., 2024) of Kianjokoma claims that one British contingent established their first camp at Kariari as they continued to conquer Ngandori following the conquest. The next camp was held at Kavutiri at Gitituuri. After Murue was successfully subjugated, this camp was relocated to Muva; therefore, it did not stay here for very long. In the end, the camp was relocated to the current Ngoiri Primary School in Gatituuri (Mungeam, 1979). It is reported that at this point, the Embu ceremoniously gave over their shields and spears to the Whiteman. Additionally, the Whiteman appointed the first Embu leaders in this camp. It is reported that the Embu thought of the largest male when the Whiteman sought to see their leader, *Munene*. Kiriamiti, who was renowned for his enormous stature, was thus called.

In Embu, the colonial-appointed chiefs were responsible for a variety of duties. The chiefs were tasked with selecting headmen to help them with their administrative duties. However, the Embu only adhered to the customary laws established by the community, making it impossible for these newly appointed rulers to govern the people (Mbutei, O.I., 2024). The headmen and chiefs were required under the Whiteman's power to submit to the colonial administration and enforce their people's obedience to all orders, regardless of whether they went against societal norms. As a result, it was challenging for the chiefs and their headmen to combine the two categories of duties in order to fulfil the goal of Whiteman's rule. From then on, in order to get the subjects to follow the rules, the force had to be used against them (Mwaniki, 2010). The newly appointed colonial chiefs had assumed the role of land control, which in the pre-colonial period was in the dock of clan heads, which transformed the land access system among the Aembu. As a result, they were despised by the aboriginal people, who regarded them as agents of colonisation in their homeland, *Njama cia thirikari*, as noted by (Mbogo O.I., 2024).

The development of Embu's agriculture was not the primary goal of the British colonialists' conquest of the country. The colonial masters' goal was to use the natural riches for their own gain, much like in many other previously conquered territories (Omwoyo, 1990). This supports the assertion made by Sorenson (1968) that the region's significance in supplying food to the European caravans made it crucial for Britain to take control of it. Effective local governance was required, and tax measures had to be implemented because the British Crown supported colonisation at a minimal expense. Archival data KNA/PC/EA/8/3 states that new social groups were brought into Embu society with the arrival of colonialism and eventually came to hold positions of great influence. The chiefs who played a key role in the Embu's integration into the colonial capitalist system were the main new centres of authority. By virtue of the 1902 Village Headman Ordinance, they were appointed. The primary goal of the incorporation was to further the capitalist mode of production by providing a labour supply for the administration. In exchange, they received benefits in many forms, as the Native Authority Laws strengthened their authority.

A number of ordinances that allowed the appropriation of African land enabled the settlement of European immigrants in the Kenyan highlands. All of Africa's land was designated as Crown Land by the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 (Mungeam, 1976). As noted by Mwaniki (2010), this would have an impact on the land access system and food crop production in Embu following the British takeover in 1906, when they took the property for the headquarters at Murinduko Hill and then at Nthinthiari. Aside from the proposed Kanja Dairy program, which was abandoned in 1955, it appears that no land was alienated for agricultural production in Embu (KNA/DC/EMBU/1/14; 1955:17). However, the ground was eventually bent to provide room for marketplace chiefs' camps and missions. Despite having a lot of agricultural areas, Embu's topography and distance from the railway line made it unappealing to settlers (Mwaniki, 2010). However, colonial policies and practices ended up transforming the Aembu land access and labour systems in the production of food crops.

In order to undermine traditional food crops, new and saleable crops like maize were introduced. Muchoki (1988) notes that despite the new variety's higher yields, it was opposed because it took longer to mature. But later on, maize gained popularity as the colonial authority fed African labourers with maize meal, or posho, on a regular basis. In the eyes of the government and the settlers, maize meal was the most

affordable and perfect nourishment for the working class. Thus, maize gained more value in money than other traditional Aembu food crops like bulrush millet, which was detrimental to the indigenous food crops.

According to the annual report for 1931 (KNA/PC/EBU/1/2/17/18), there were two seed farms by that year: one at Embu and another at Chuka. Farmers in the surrounding areas were obtaining suitable and high-quality seed from these facilities. Simultaneously, the Agricultural Department had hired three permanent teachers who were touring the reserve and dispensing guidance and instructions. In several sections of Embu, experiments were carried out using beans, potatoes, wattle, wheat, onions, cassava, peas, and pyrethrum. The majority of Embu North and the environs of Kianjokoma were planted with pyrethrum (Abiud, O.I., 2024). While not in every part of the county, the majority of the crops that were tested out proved to be successful. For example, Gituara's administration gave up in 1928 after attempting to introduce new crops but failing. According to the head of the Embu Native Council, many areas of fertile land were utilised, and production in the district was only a portion of what was expected. The tools used were antiquated, and there was no chance of cultivating extremely profitable crops like wheat, groundnuts, simsim, and European beans (KNA/PC/EBU/2/1/2/6/10). The study revealed that the introduction of unfamiliar farming practices and the emergence of new crops and tools undermined the Aembu food crop productivity.

In Embu County, maize and a few types of beans were the most productive crops by 1930. Despite the devastating ravages of locusts, the harvests of all crops had been satisfactory, according to a 1931 report. This led to increased export of maize (KNA/DC/EBU/1/2/1931). This suggests that the maize experiment was successful and that the local population was gradually assimilated into the capitalist mode of production through the manufacture of goods for sale. The 1938 report revealed that;

The Embu Division is seeing a rapid increase in the growth of Boston beans; however, the amount produced thus far has not been adequate for export, and the beans themselves were very small due to draught. As a result, neither Rose Coco nor Canadian Wonder has been able to achieve higher prices for Boston beans. Nonetheless, it seems that locals find them appealing, and there's cause for optimism that they might end up being quite valuable in the future (KNA/DC/EBU/1/2/1938).

This finding shows that the Aembu indigenous food crops were undermined when saleable crops were introduced and the articulation process continued during the colonial era.

In Embu, Mbeere, Ndia, and Gichugu, by 1902, land, labour, and tax policies had already taken hold, and a large number of Africans in these regions had already accepted wage labour both inside and outside of their districts, where they were already employed by the White settlers (Mwaruvie, 1991). There are signs that there was a significant level of labour mobility among Embu residents despite the lack of statistics. More men were leaving the reserves in pursuit of work as a result of the changed socioeconomic conditions, which included tax demands and other financial commitments. The traditional division of labour between men and women broke as a result (Wamai O.I., 2024).

The Village Headman Ordinance of 1902 gave government-appointed representatives the authority to hire labour for village-beneficial public works projects. Therefore, these headmen were mandated to use the

Native Authority Laws of 1910 and 1912 to force Africans to stop producing domestically in order to work on government projects. This implies that all physically fit men and women living in the reserves were compelled to provide labour for government initiatives and not food crop produce. Moreover, African farms had to be abandoned since they were far from the reserves, and African lands were too infertile for meaningful food crop production.

The white man moved to Murinduko Hill, a place that was more central for the supervision of Ndia, Gichugu (former Iria-ini), Mbeere, and Embu after successfully obtaining the Embu's entire submission at Ngoiri. Murinduko got its name from the hill bearing the same name, Kirimari. The planned headquarters had to be relocated from Kirimari, so it took the name with it and sowed "Kirimari" on Embu territory. The place was known locally as "Nthithiari," meaning the place where the bushes known as mithithia grew. Using forced labour, its headquarters was constructed in 1906–07 (Mwaniki, 2010). After the local government deceived the people into travelling to Nthithiari to retrieve their animals, only to find themselves encircled, the first work was completed with just their bare hands (Kanake & James, O.I., 2024). This had implications for the Aembu labour system in food crop production since the construction of the Nthithiari headquarters and the construction of roads not only pushed the Embu into labour outside of their personal realm but various kinds of labourers and porters were required elsewhere, too.

Whenever the white officials travelled over Embu country, the chiefs and headmen were expected to arrange for porters (Mwaniki, 2010). The residents were greatly humiliated by this, especially the former fighters who were constantly coerced into becoming porters for the European safari chairs and hammocks. Since portage was necessary when people were busy weeding or harvesting their products, which interfered with the production cycle. According to Marigu (O.I., 2024), the necessity for porters had a disastrous effect on the food crop production system since they were required during peak periods, either during land preparation, weeding, or harvesting.

In order to construct chiefs' camps, bridges, and roads leading to each chief's quarters, the headmen and chiefs in the area were also expected to arrange for forced labour. The persons who disregarded the rule had to be dealt with brutally. If residents did not provide forced labour for the building of these projects, the chiefs would take their animals and food (Karingi, O.I., 2024). The headmen and leaders took this feature of forced labour very seriously indeed. For instance, it is said that these chiefs gave the order for labourers constructing roads to burn crops in a person's garden if they were absent without permission, an activity that was detrimental to the African food producers (Munyi, O.I., 2024)

Force was employed to enlist Africans as warriors and carriers in WW1 (1914–1918). All over the colony, headmen and leaders carried out this task. This battle had a profound effect on crop output, labour and the land ownership structure. Due to the sudden departure of practically all physically capable men, women, the elderly, and children were forced to perform agricultural labour on both African and white farms. Food shortage resulted from this, particularly in Embu, which hampered food crop output. This conflict is blamed for the 1918 Kithioro famine (Mbutei, O.I., 2024).

Informants claim that the Embu/Chuka road building, which used forced labour at the same time as the conflict, is to blame for this catastrophic famine (Mwereza, O.I., 2024). According to the (KNA/PC1/16/1915) construction of the Meru –Nanyuki railway, almost the entire labour supply was drawn from

Embu and Meru, and this exercise acted as famine relief work for the young men from the affected areas. This could explain the reason behind having more women than men during the conducted census reports. According to (Ireri O.I., 2024), who had taken part in migrant labour, he sadly said the following;

When I went to work outside Embu, I was very young and I had just married with a young child and a wife. On coming back, I found my wife had been married by my brother because he is the one who provided them with food. I also found that my land had been taken away and I ended up landless.

The finding shows that some people resulted to landlessness as a result of colonial capitalist policies. Thus, the individualistic capitalist system had supplanted the pre-colonial social solidarity that was manifested in the moral economy through access and land allocation.

Therefore, the Mau Mau movement emerged, and its leaders saw swearing as a means of reinstating the weakened sense of unity. In Embu, the movement was led by Kubukubu and others (Mwangangi, OI, 2024). The government proclaimed the Mau society to be unlawful in the 1950s when oath-taking reached a peak, and some of the oath-takers were detained (Leakey, 1954). It was discovered that although a large number of people had taken the pledge, it was denounced by the elites, chiefs, and some Christian converts, such as Francis Mwaririe, since it went against their religious beliefs.

Oral testimony from those former urban rebels indicated that they would teach the locals about the necessity of banding together to overthrow British rule. The boys were compelled by their conditions to seek employment in Nairobi. After taking their oaths, they went back to their positions and eventually left for Nairobi. They informed the people of Embu about Dedan Kimathi and his opposition to the loyalists. Embu was aware of notable individuals like Jomo Kenyatta and Field Marshall Dedan Kimathi and their goals for Kenyans.

In rural places, young ladies were left behind to tend to houses, while young boys were supposed to move around in quest of greener pastures. First, because there were few ways to search for them, women of all ages performed crucial roles as couriers (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). Second, they weren't worth worrying about, according to the colonial authority. In addition, the ladies had sidearms, money, and messages (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). Thirdly, women had unrestricted movement and could gather clothing, weapons, and ammo for the combatants in the jungle. Women were left to care for the children while males walked into the wilderness. In rural regions, the majority of Aembu women were forced to perform community labour by excavating ditches. According to Munyi Mburia (O.I., 2024), some women covertly joined the Mau Mau movement and protected their husbands, who had no intention of joining. Some even gave payments to ensure their husbands' survival. The political crisis of Mau Mau and insecurity were detrimental to the Aembu food crop growers since there was limited time for tending to their farms.

According to an archival source, the colonial authorities discussed the Ishiara project in 1929 as a way to interrupt the recurring famine cycles in Embu. After discovering that water was a major cause of starvation in Ishiara, the Embu L.N.C. of 1942-1950 recommended using Thuchi River water for cultivation. The L.N.C. requested that the government study the potential of digging furrows from the Thuchi River to Ishiara. Paddocks were certified as an additional item in 1953. The Ishiara irrigation system was supported by taxes levied in Mbeere Division, just like the Perkerra, Mwea-Tebere, and Hola irrigation works, which required Mau Mau inmates. The Ishiara irrigation project was carried out by Mau Mau inmates under the supervision

of ALDEV, who used a diverse group of Mau Mau detainees, including Kikuyu, Embu, Meru, and Mbeere captives imprisoned at Gathigiriri. Nyaga (O.I., 2024), imprisoned in Ishiara, described his time as a guard in Gathigiriri jail. On September 20, 1955, the Embu Community Development Officer wrote to the Church of Scotland Mission on the whereabouts of detainees, citing the existence of inmates of diverse ethnicities (KNA/DC/EBU/1/14). This impacted overall food crop production since the labour system had slowly been incorporated into the capitalist system.

According to Sorrenson (1967), the colonial government suppressed the Mau Mau War and implemented land tenure modifications in the 1950s. The governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, proclaimed a state of emergency on the evening of October 20, 1952, which crippled the Mau Mau movement. This came following the assassination of the most senior chief, Waruhiu, who was seen as a moderate seeking interracial harmony within the limitations of colonialism. The colonial administration, having determined the need to reform African land tenure, authorised the Department of Agriculture to draft a comprehensive plan for the development of African reserves in light of tenure changes. Roger Swynnerton, the assistant director of agriculture, devised the concept after previously playing a key role in supporting peasant agriculture in Tanganyika. The Swynnerton Plan, or "a Plan to intensify the development of African agriculture policy in Kenya," announced in 1954, marked a significant shift in African agriculture from what the government described as a "circle of subsistence or near-subsistence agriculture" (Lipscomb & Cone, 1972).

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusion: Based on the preceding debate, this chapter finds that on May 23, 1906, S.L. Hinde, Sub-Commissioner Kenya Province, emphasised the necessity to seize and occupy Embu. Also, the Embu Country served as a haven for anyone evading punishment in the rest of the province. As a result, the offices of chiefs and their headmen were created, but they found it difficult to balance the two sorts of tasks in order to achieve the goal of Whiteman's rule. On the Mau Mau issue, the colonial authority was apprehensive of any community linked to the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru. After discovering that water was a major cause of starvation in Ishiara, the Embu L.N.C. of 1942-1950 recommended using Thuci River water for farming. Land reforms in Embu County commenced in 1956, following the suppression of the Mau Mau in the area. The main finding of the study is that colonialism transformed the Aembu land access and labour systems, which negatively impacted food crop production. However, colonialism had a profound negative impact on access to land and labour, which led to low food crop production.

Recommendation: From the study's results and findings, it can be recommended that the government establish proper irrigation methods in order to provide adequate water to semi-arid areas with agricultural potential and enhance food crop production for increased food security.

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