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The Aembu Access to Land and Labour Systems on Food Crop Production and Food Security up to 1906

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Abstract
This study sought to analyse how the pre-colonial Aembu organised their land and labour systems in food crop production for guaranteed household food security up to 1906. The pre-colonial African societies had either matrilineal or patrilineal systems of land ownership, while labour was gender specific. The study employed a descriptive research design. The study was conducted in Embu East, Embu West and Embu North sub-counties of the larger Embu County. Purposive sampling with a snowballing technique was applied to get 50 respondents who were interviewed from a target population of 16,144. The study corroborated data from oral, archival records and secondary sources. The findings were that the pre-colonial Aembu food crop producers had elaborate systems of land rights and land use under clan heads. The land access system accommodated practices like shifting cultivation and intercropping; the pre-colonial division of labour in food crop production combined all household members and those other forms of labour like communal, paid and corporate were sourced from outside the household. The study concluded that the pre-colonial Aembu were food secure in spite of occasional rainfall failure, locust invasion and warfare, while the articulation of pre-colonial and capitalist land and labour systems exposed the society members to food insecurity. The study contributed to the pre-colonial social, political and economic historiography of the Aembu people. The study recommends that the post-colonial government should employ strategies that can be effectively used to mitigate food crop production insecurity by focusing on the adoption of various traditional methods of land and labour access.

Key terms: Access to land, Aembu, food crop production, labour systems, pre-capitalist, pre-colonial.

INTRODUCTION

During the pre-colonial period, most African society's criteria of access to land and the different roles played on the resource determined many aspects of production, which included making decisions concerning the types of tools for farming, types of crops, information required, skills needed and general food crop production (Middleton, 1975). Africans accessed land based on specific personal and communal needs, while labour was organised with the ultimate aim of increasing food production. There was indigenous knowledge that was passed on from one generation to another for assurance of food security and people's well-being, preservation of the environment, appropriate warning against tragedy and management tactics (Mafogoya & Ajay, 2017).

However, food crop production is an imperative activity in the history of most communities in Kenya, from the period of people's settlement to the contemporary period. Food crop production guarantees food safety within households and increased population. However, most of the crops found in various parts of Kenya originated from other parts of the world (Ochieng, 1990). Various versions exist explaining the origin of crop domestication. While some scholars assert that it began in southern Asia, others maintain the practice was first carried out in the Nile valley in Egypt, while others believe in independent theory. However, archaeological evidence demonstrates that domestication of food crops took place in the Rift Valley as early as 3,000 years ago, a practice which could have been borrowed from the Cushitic speakers who came from the Ethiopian highlands. Crop production later spread to other areas, ensuring the movements of both the Bantus and Cushite. The close contact between the two groups led to the advent of food crop-growing societies of Bantu speakers who live in highly potential areas in the highlands of Kenya, which is suitable for food crop production (Maxon, 1992).

The Aembu started the domestication of crops upon the acquisition of iron implements from the Thigagi (Mwaniki, 2010). The Aembu, being a representative of Eastern Bantus, live in an area endowed with regular rainfall and fertile soils that support food crop production throughout the year, and this made food crop production their major occupation. However, the Aembu settlement patterns were closely linked to the quantity of foodstuff produced by the society members.

The pre-capitalist Aembu subsistence farmers had skills and coping mechanisms to ensure food availability. This was effective due to the existing traditional systems characterised by a well-versed criterion of accessing land suitable for certain food crops and labour organisation in food crop production. Moreover, every African community had its own way of ensuring food safety within its limits, and any radical deviations from such traditional systems would cause the society to experience either a food shortage or an increased food supply. However, occasional environmental and natural factors existed that hindered food crop production among the Aembu, leading to dismal yields (Mwaniki, 2010). It is against this background that the study aimed to examine the way the Aembu organised themselves in access to land and labour systems for increased food productivity and assurance of food and nutritional security in the period under review.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prothero (1972) conducted a study on land ownership in Sub-Sahara Africa and asserted that individual land tenure influenced other related activities. The study indicates that individual land tenure has influenced rural areas into townships. The study underlines the value of individual land tenure in regard to the associated activities on the parcel of land, which makes it related to this study. However, the study covers sub-Sahara Africa while this study examined land ownership and the related activities restricted down to a level of the Aembu society.

According to Wanjara (2000), the land ownership systems in Kenya during the pre-colonial era were totally unlike that in Britain, although the system was introduced to Kenya. However, the communal system was the commonest method of land ownership in the majority of Kenyan communities. This indicates that land did not belong to an individual but to the whole community. Moreover, all the community members were stakeholders with the right to access land based on their needs at a specific time. While Wanjara's study was carried out among the Agikuyu, he expounds that the tenure systems differed in characteristics from one

ethnic group to the other across the country. However, Wanjara's work was only limited to the changing system of land ownership while this study explored the Aembu characteristics of land and labour access system in food crop production, the alterations done by the colonialists and also examined how the community's traditional food crop practices were altered by the colonial government policies.

According to Mwaniki (1974), hunting was the earliest form of land ownership in Embu. The technique was used by the first immigrants to Embu, who were unaware of the domestication of crops. Mwaniki emphasises further that clearing the first patch of bush guaranteed land ownership. Clans developed after the Embu settled, and all clan members had legal claim to the land. The texts further contain detailed information on the types of foodstuff, socio-organisation and famine matters. The two studies differ in that this study investigated the colonial changes in the Aembu land and labour system in food crop production and the implications of the articulation of the two productive modes on food security.

Mwaniki (1973) has a detailed analysis of the political history of the Aembu and the Ambeere. The study is concerned with the way the Aembu were politically organised, and this makes it related to this study since land matters are embedded in the political organisation of a community. However, the study leaves a lacuna to be filled on the economic aspect of the Aembu history since the study lacks a critical analysis of matters related to land and labour in relation to food crop production.

According to Karuitha (2016), although Meru clans possessed land, the Njuri councils had complete control over land-related issues since they effectively regulated who needed to own what land and how it was distributed. The study aimed to understand the socio-economic implications of land adjudication in Buuri. This study is significant to the current investigation since it reveals that clan leaders were in charge of deciding who owned and distributed land. However, the study illuminates on the clan system of land ownership when tracing the pre-colonial land access system among the Aembu. As the current study, analysed changes introduced by colonialism on the pre-colonial systems of access to land and labour and further the implication of the coexistence of the pre-colonial and colonial systems on availability of food among the Aembu people.

Muriuki (1974) points out that among the Agikuyu, one could own land by being incorporated into a family, or *muciarua* could marry from the family and was allowed the right to own land within the clan. In relation to this study, Muriuki's work highlights various methods of acquiring land among the Agikuyu, which is a milestone. While Muriuki's study examined the land ownership system among the Agikuyu, it critically assessed the changes introduced by colonialism on the traditional land and labour systems among the Aembu and the extent to which the changes interfered with food security.

A study was conducted on land ownership among the Agikuyu by Lambert (1956). The research work was carried out during the colonial era after the native Land Trust legislation was passed in 1938 when land disputes between the Kenyan people and the colonial administration became more frequent. Lamberts's findings were from the Agikuyu community but were generalised to other communities, including the Aembu. The generalised findings failed to examine communities as isolated with their own systems. Nevertheless, this study will benefit from Lamberts's work when looking at the colonial changes in traditional systems of access to land but differs in that the current research, which analysed colonialism changes in land and labour systems and how the changes influenced the production of food among the Aembu populace.

According to Tignor (1976), during the economic activities in Kikuyu, labour was highly gendered. The study indicates that the different roles in production consequently determine decision-making and division of labour. The study was conducted in Kikuyu land, which is a milestone in this study for giving insight into the labour system. The present study analysed the land and labour access systems that the community held and their significance on the production of food crops within households and the community at large.

Leakey (1977) indicates that farm labour in food crop production was gendered, but flexibility was

exercised. The study shows that men cleared all the land and hoed since the work was considered more strenuous for women. This study is related to the current work of historical enquiry when establishing labour organisations in food crop production. However, the departure point between the two studies is that Leakey's work did not critically analyse the effects of colonial transformations of traditional land and labour systems.

According to Mbiti (1969), in the pre-capitalist Akamba society, women had the authority to utilise resources without proprietorship, and it was accepted that only sons could inherit their father's wealth. The sons were secretaries who enjoyed authority, while the other children were less secretaries with little power. The study provides useful information to the current historical investigation regarding the Aembu system of land and labour during food crop production. However, while the two studies are more concerned with the social systems of the Akamba, this study went the extra mile and established the colonial changes on the traditional land and labour systems and the influence of the changes on food crop productivity among the Aembu.

At the local level, Njoki carried out a detailed investigation of the Aembu women's traditional knowledge of food production (2002). The use of indigenous skills by women was recognised in the study, as the specific crops that men and women grew. Women's crops were millet, sorghum, beans, and black beans, while men's crops included bananas and yams. Njoki's work adds value to this study when analysing the pre-colonial labour organisation, the different crops grown based on gender, and the indigenous knowledge used by women in the production of food crops. However, the point of departure between the two studies is that the current inquiry analysed the pre-colonial land and labour systems in food crop production, examined how colonialism changed the whole system of land and labour and established the influence of the coexistence of the two systems on food crop production and food security.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive research design. Kathuri and Pals (1993) assert that the scientific and systematic nature of the descriptive research design has valid and dependable outcomes. For Kombo and Tromp (2006), descriptive research design allows for both qualitative and quantitative research. The study described, analysed, recorded, reported and presented the findings as they existed without any form of manipulation of the variables. Purposive sampling with snowballing method was employed to select respondents for this study. A sample size of 50 respondents aged 70 years and older was sampled on purpose using the snowballing method. The study described, analysed, recorded, reported and presented the pre-capitalist Aembu land access and labour division systems in food crop production up to 1906. Data was analysed qualitatively. The qualitative data from the interview schedules and focus group discussions were analysed based on content analysis to give a detailed description of the Aembu method of land access and labour division systems in food crop production to 1906. Data from primary, archival and secondary sources was corroborated to enhance the validity and reliability of the study. The researcher requested a letter of recommendation from Chuka University in order to acquire a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The researcher used an introductory letter, which was presented to the respondents, explaining the purpose of the study. The informants were told why the research was being conducted while Private matters were avoided and confidentiality was guaranteed, according to Grinyer (2002).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From 1906, close interaction between the pre-capitalist and capitalist systems began, which transformed the pre-capitalist Aembu land and labour systems in food crop production. The results are based on interview schedules, data from the archives, and secondary data, which were corroborated to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

The Aembu Land Access and Labour Systems in Food Crop Production up to 1906

The researcher sought to establish the pre-colonial Aembu land access systems for food crop production,

and most informants revealed that the primary system of land possession was communal tenure. Economic activities like hunting and fishing were cooperatively undertaken since the land was communally owned and community members had equal rights over the resource (Ochieng, 1990). The interviews conducted in Embu West, Embu East, and Embu North revealed that following a communal system of land access, hunting or trapping rights was the next form of land ownership among the Aembu. The technique was used by the first immigrants, who were unaware of the domestication of crops. According to Mwaniki (2010), clans developed after the Embu settled, and all clan members had legal claim to the land. After the community was organised into clans, which originated from the two original clans, i.e., Irumbi and Igamatau, then the system of land ownership changed from communal to clan ownership. The method of trapping, or *mutego*, was used since the early inhabitants of the Aembu community engaged in hunting and gathering, which involved movement from one area to another. The hunters dug pits in several areas to trap animals on their way to the water points and marked boundaries to identify the areas where they dug holes to trap their animals and laid claim over those areas. According to Wamai (O.I., 2024), demarcation between one hunting area and another was done through the planting of a tree known as *murigi*, and some of the clans that owned land in Embu were gicuku, rwamba, marigu, rukwaro, mukoro, ndiri, kiragua and muthaiga. During this time, clan elders were directly responsible for clan lands. Members lived in confined areas, and clan members were usually people related by blood. Clan heads ensured that every member acquired enough land in different zones, which ensured food security for households.

Further inquiry established that the subsequent method of obtaining land was called, *ngamba ya kuna na kathanua* meaning land first acquired through the use of a chopper or axe (Mwaniki, 2010). This system of land ownership was put in place when the Aembu started the domestication of crops. The groups of early cultivators had formed the Aembu clans, and all the people who had descended from those clans had the right to use the land for the cultivation of crops. However, the fact that one cleared the bush for the first time did not guarantee individual ownership, but the land *ngamba* belonged to the members of the clan. This means that when a member of the lineage cultivated a piece of land, the produce belonged to the individual, but he did not own the earth or *muthetu*, and no payment was required when he or she utilised the resource. Due to increased population, within a lineage, it became necessary that one of the oldest members of the lineage becomes the custodian of the land, *mumenyereri,* who regulated utilisation of the land resource, which was acquired either through the axe or as trapping areas by the first clan members. Thus, the pre-colonial system of land ownership highly influenced food production since members attained land parcels in dissimilar eco-friendly areas, which accommodated different types of crops with different nutritional values; hence, household food security was guaranteed.

Njeru (O.I., 2024) maintains that in case of disputes between clans, all the members were invited, and they contributed food and beer to be feasted on as they settled the dispute. The oath-taking ceremony, *kunya muma*, was also concluded in the ceremony, which showed the seriousness of the ceremony. The political system was structured so that the issue of landlessness was unheard of, which ensured that all households produced enough food.

The researcher aimed to establish whether land could be bought, and most of the informants revealed that land could be accessed through buying, which was referred to in kiembu as, *'mugunda wa kugura'*. The method became common to the latecomers of the land since the population had risen, making the demand higher than the supply, which encouraged land buying. Ngai, O.I. and Mbogo, O.I. (2024) pointed out that land could be bought using an axe, goat, grains, sheep, cattle or even a portion of a slaughtered animal. However, buying and selling land did not take place as one pleased, and one had to inform the immediate family members. When none of the clan members could readily purchase the parcel of land, then the clan members and the buyer could look for a convenient meeting point to agree and conclude the buying process. Other members whose presence was important were the neighbours, *mundu wa mukumbu* and council of elders *athuri a kiama kia muviriga* (Njega, O.I., 2024). The person buying land was expected to provide a he-goat, a she-goat and a witness. After the ceremony, there ensued marking of

the boundary, which was usually done by the witness and a tree called *murigi* was planted. Njogu (O.I., 2024) asserts that land with hardwoods like *Miringa, Mikwego, and Miuu* were more valuable than the others since the hardwoods were used to make important things like pestles and mortar for grounding grains. They were likewise used as poles to support raised food stores, thus hindering the effects of floods on surplus food that was stored for several seasons. Stored food was useful during calamities like rainfall failure or locust invasion, and it guaranteed food security to society members during such circumstances.

After the process of acquiring land through buying *kugura* then, the buyer was free to utilise the land in various ways, and it became personal or private land. However, this did not guarantee the sale of the parcel of land without consultation with his family members. Once the person died, his sons turned out to be the owners of the land, with the first son being the custodian or *mumenyereri,* but mumenjeri was expected to be as wise as the departed father and adhere to land systems and the expected norm of protecting family members from landlessness, which could otherwise result to food insecurity.

According to Ireri (O.I., 2024) fines was another method of acquiring land whereby in case one murdered a person he or she could lose land to the family of the person as a form of compensation for the crime. Young men could as well acquire land from their uncles, *aamamawe* from the mother's side, upon providing a he-goat for people to feed on as they blessed the parcel of land '*ngamba*'.

The researcher sought to understand whether both men and women accessed land for food crop production equally among the Aembu. Mbogo (O.I., 2024) noted that married women in Embu could acquire land for food crop production from their spouses, while unmarried women obtained land through their fathers, brothers or male relatives. Ireri (O. I., 2024) asserts that young men could access land for food crop production immediately after they married so that they could clear the land for their bride. However, people without land did not lack a parcel to grow food crops or to live on since the right of occupancy was a right for everyone. Production of food crops and living on a parcel of land that one did not own required certain protocols so that one does not claim rights in future. The person gave out beer for rent, which was taken by the clansmen who consented to the tenancy. Some tenants who proved to be good enough could be given land on permanent terms. If they gave out a goat and they were ritually born to the family, *guciarua na mburu* in a ceremony, they swore to be loyal to the clan and never to let their secrets out (Mwaniki, 2010). The pre-colonial system of land ownership guaranteed every member rightful access to land for food crop production.

Informants revealed that some people owned more land than others based on their ability to clear vast land for food crops than others based on the fact that the exercise was very strenuous. Aembu practised shifting cultivation, which was made possible by the land ownership system. In case one's land was far away, they abandoned it to improve fertility; one could be a tenant of land from members of another clan. This simply implies that one does not necessarily have to be landless to be a tenant, and the practice of tenancy continued up to the 1900s (Ireri, O.I., 2024). Nonetheless, there existed public land for shrines or sacred places where sacrifices were carried out, livestock watering and licking of salt (Lucia, O.I., 2024).

The researcher sought to find out the crops grown by the pre-capitalist Aembu. Ruguru (O. I., 2024) asserted that after accessing land for food crop production, a *muembu* had to carefully plan the types of food crops to plant in different regions and soil types ranging from a variety of cereals like beans, millet, sorghum, yams, sweet potatoes, bananas, arrowroots and sugarcane. Forty (80%) of the respondents pointed out that some parcels of land accommodated intercropping due to their fertility, which minimised Labour loss during the weeding period. The intercropped species had different maturation periods, and this ensured the provision of food all the time, and the practice reduced overworking during the harvesting period since the process remained continuous throughout the season. Muchoki (1988) resonates with the informant and asserts that planting fast-growing and dawdling crops will help to prevent soil from the detrimental effects of rainwater, and there is maximum utilisation of the present moisture in the soil as well as the nutrients. Planting of crops

bearing different types of leaves was also observed since this could decrease the struggle for light as opposed to when crops of the same type were planted on the same parcel of land. Ireri (O.I., 2024) asserts that intercropping was the most important aspect of Aembu crop farming since it was a sure way of avoiding food shortages because the two crops matured at different intervals, which ensured a continuous supply of food.

Table 1: The Importance of Intercropping among the Pre-Colonial Aembu Food Crop Growers

Importance of intercropping	Frequency	Percentage
Very important due to the sharing of nutrient	45	90%
Relatively important	30	60%
Not necessary	18	36%
Total no. of interviews collected	50	100

The researcher inquired about the types of crops cultivated based on different landscape and soil types. Respondents revealed that some crops did well in the valleys while others were planted on flat land. Naturally, the Aembu land was on three levels, i.e., the flat land near the homestead, then the steep land towards the valley, and the valley bottom. The area was called *Irimba* (plural) *marimba*, and it was usually wet and marshy, suitable for arrowroots. Steep land was utilised for sweet potatoes to cover the ground and prevent soil from erosion during heavy rains since, in most cases, the areas had hips of soil suitable for the root crops Kanyau, Ngai and Ireri (O.I., 2024). Near the homestead, the soil was fertile due to chicken and livestock wastes, and crops like maize and a variety of beans were grown. Other crops planted in this area included millet and sorghum since they required protection from birds before harvesting started (Mbogo, O.I., 2024). Informants further revealed that Yams and cassava were highly valued perennial crops, and the two root crops were regarded as men's crops since it was quite strenuous for women to uproot. Nevertheless, the crops were considered underground food reserves that were useful in cushioning the community against food shortages. Women's crops were fast-growing and labour-intensive. According to Ngai (O.I., 2024), the systems of land access were altered during the articulation process and the coexistence of the pre-colonial and colonial systems.

As stated earlier, labour was a necessity in food crop production since access to land did not guarantee increased food production. The system of labour in a household influences the amount of food the household produces (Ruguru, O I., 2024). Therefore, labour guidelines existed within households to enhance food productivity. The Aembu enjoys two rainy seasons, from the planting to the reaping period. The long rain and the short rains. Short rains take place during the months of October and end around December, while long rains begin in March and end around August. The Aembu food crop growers were busy throughout the year dealing with food-related activities to increase yields. Table 2 shows Aembu food crop activities throughout the year.

Table: 2 Aembu land and Food Crop Related Activities from January to December

English	Work Done
January	Harvesting beans of various varieties
February	Threshing, preservation and storage of food
March	Late harvesting and preparing of gardens
April	Planting of various beans varieties and sorghum
May	Weeding period and protecting crops
June	Guarding crops
July	Harvesting of sorghum
August	Threshing sorghum and peas
September	Preparing farms by burning

October	Planting different types of crops
November	Weeding for the crops
December	Guarding crops against animals and birds

Source: Ireri Kubuta (O.I., 2024).

The respondents revealed that labour was distributed based on age and gender. Planting in the cleared virgin land was done through the broadcasting method which involved scattering of seeds in the whole farm while for the existing farms planting method was different since men dug holes using a long wooden stick while children and women carefully put the seeds in the holes and turned the soil to bury the grains. Table 3 shows responses on the system of planting.

Table 3: Responses on the System of Planting

Method	Frequency	Percentage
Broadcasting	48	96%
Women and children put seeds in the whole and turn the soil	45	90%
Men dug holes	45	90%-
Interviews conducted	50	100%

However, according to Wamai, Ngai, and Marigu (O.I., 2024), a hard-working farmer could clear weeds from his farm many times to ensure no weeds ever existed *gucokia yuka*, while the lazy farmer could be mocked and called *kiguta*. Weeding tools used by women were made from hardwoods like *mikwego, miringa and mivuti* and were called *miro,* while men used a long wooden tool whose end was sharpened.

Muriuki, Njeru, Ruguru and Kanyau (O.I., 2024) respondents revealed that when crops showed signs of maturity, they needed to be protected from animals like monkeys and birds. The informants revealed that they could lay traps, fence the farm or even spend the night on the farm. Men kept watch during the night while children and women were protected in the daytime. Men erected some artificial beds on top of trees or on a platform in the farm called *rutara*, where they sat as they scared the animals and birds away. Labour division between men and women ensured that no food losses took place during harvesting, which could otherwise lower the anticipated produce. Threshing of beans took place outside the homestead, where the ground was swept, and cow dung was used to smear and smoothen it. The smooth ground facilitated collection and avoided grain losses.

The researcher sought to know the various forms of labour used by the Aembu food crop growers. Ireri (O. I., 2024) noted that apart from household labour, there existed other forms of labour such as communal labour, paid labour, and co-operative labour, Mwaniki (2010) and Mwaruvie (1991) support this. This refutes the allegation by most Eurocentric scholars that Africans were purely subsistence producers who only used household labour for their subsistence production. During peak periods, labour was sourced from outside for increased production of food.

A focus group discussion held on 14th May 2024 revealed that shared labour was common among the Aembu, whereby friends formed working groups *rutua* or *marima* with the aim of supporting each other on a rotational basis. Another type of labour that the Aembu utilised was communal labour, which was common among wealthy individuals who had large tracts of land. Similarly, the communal labour system was utilised when demand for labour was at its top, especially during weeding, clearing of new farms and harvesting periods. Those who were very fast at work left others behind *iguta,* and it was required that they had to toil further in order to catch up, which facilitated the tilling of more land for increased food production. To appease the inlaws, the bridegroom *mugurani* could organise with his close friends to go and work for the inlaws during the clearing of new farms, weeding and harvesting periods.

Food for labour was also common, and the agreement demanded that after an individual worked on another

person's farm, then he or she was paid back or compensated. The practice was common during times of food shortage (Ochieng, 1990). People who had surplus production in their food stores *makumbi* utilised the method and exchanged grains with the less fortunate households and communities. Such people had their farm work done early enough in exchange for grains before the rains, which assured them of the opportune timing for another good harvest. For the Aembu food crop producers, the proportions of grains to be bartered were negotiable between the two parties. Muruiki, Mbogo, Marigu and Janet (O.I., 2024) noted that paid labour, which involved the exchange of grains for labour, was mostly common between the Aembu and the Mbeere, whose environment was hostile and rainfall was unreliable.

The researcher inquired whether food crop production brought differentiation in the households, and Ngai (O. I., 2024) asserted that people who produced more food accumulated other forms of property like livestock and land through exchange with food. Further, the researcher wanted to establish whether famine existed among the Aembu. Wamai (O. I., 2024) reported that there were cases of famine occasioned by rain failure or locust invasion, but it is worth noting that the Aembu had granaries *'makumbi'* where they stored surplus food for several seasons, which mitigated the seriousness of the famines. Mwaniki (2010) resonates with the informant and asserts that the Aembu were like a granary of grains for their neighbours, the Ambeere, where they exchanged grains for labour and other leather products.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion: Based on the concluded discussion, this study revealed that the traditional Aembu access to land and labour systems in food crop production was well designed to guarantee the society's food and nutritional security. The labour system within the household was organised to ensure that every member participated in food crop production for increased food production. Labour was gender-specific, but flexibility was accommodated. During peak periods, labour was sourced from the neighbouring communities, who provided food for labour. Aembu had food stores that were raised from the ground for food storage, which lasted for more than three seasons. Aembu grew crops like millet sorghum, banana, sweet potatoes, yams and cassava. Hence, the introduction of capitalism affected Aembu's access to land and labour, which in turn impacted food crop production in the study locale.

Recommendation: The study recommends that the post-colonial government should employ strategies that can be effectively used to mitigate against food crop production insecurity by focusing on the adoption of various traditional methods of land and labour access.

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