

**CHANGING GENDER ROLES IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN HOMA
BAY COUNTY, KENYA 1900 TO 2012: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

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**A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in History of Egerton
University**

EGERTON UNIVERSITY

APRIL, 2017

DECLARATION AND APPROVAL

Declaration

This thesis is my original work and has not been submitted for examination in any other university.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Pastor Joseph Okello and Mama Carren Okello for their unending parental and spiritual support as well as to my beloved husband, Mathew Onyango for his unrelenting moral and financial support since I started this course. His patience and psychological support during the research pushed me through. Finally, to our beloved daughters, Edith, Caren and sons, Cantrell and Hudson for their understanding and support during the vigorous process of the course work and thesis writing when I could not offer them full motherly attention. Lots of love.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Apart from my personal determination and financial sacrifice, this thesis is a product of the joint effort by many people. First and foremost, my sincere gratitude goes to my supervisors, Dr. Damaris Parsitau and Dr. Joshia Osamba for their tireless, sustained and constructive scholarly guidance and assistance towards the completion of this work. They read through the work and provided substantive criticisms which aided in improving its quality.

I am particularly indebted to Prof. Reuben M. Matheka and Dr. Isaac Tarus for their scholarly support that saw the beginning of this work. I also wish to express my gratitude to the teaching staff of the Department of Philosophy, History and Religion of Egerton University for all the pieces of advice that they offered to me right from my course work. I am also grateful to the Archivists at the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi and to the Kenya Marine Fisheries Research Institute in Homa Bay and Kisumu for their assistance.

I owe special gratitude to all the informants for making this study a reality by sharing and exchanging information and offering pieces of advice on the study. In this regard, I wish to mention Jackline Okado for her support with computer processing.

Finally, thanks to my family for their comfort, peaceful atmosphere and the encouragement they accorded me during the entire study.

ABSTRACT

Fishing is one of the oldest occupations of mankind. Studies done on gender roles in the fishing industry in Lake Victoria in Kenya indicate that traditionally, both men and women were involved in fisheries but each performed different roles which were culturally defined. This study focused on the fishing industry in Lake Victoria specifically Kendu Bay and Homa Lime fishing bays located in Homa Bay County of Kenya. The development of fisheries in Homa Bay County is faced with several challenges such as Lake pollution, extinction of certain indigenous species, overfishing, and environmental destruction including the water hyacinth. These problems have been located in the social, economic and political systems that existed in the pre-colonial, colonial and post colonial times from 1900 – 2012. The Luo fishers had their own indigenous techniques of fishing, methods of preservation and systems of management. The objectives of the study were to describe the nature and patterns of the changing gender roles in the fisheries in Homa Bay County, determine the major factors that influence the gender roles and establish the challenges faced by the fishers. The study used the historical method to evaluate and analyse data obtained from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was obtained from the Kenya National Archives and from various Government reports on fisheries development in Kenya. Data was also gathered from oral interviews with relevant respondents including boat crew, engine owners, fishermen, fish traders, retired fisherfolk, kiosk owners and Beach Management Unit officials. Secondary data was obtained from books, journal articles, and the internet and newspaper articles in relation to fisheries. The study employed the theory of feminism to demonstrate how men and women should complement each other in their specific roles in order to achieve their goals since both are users of the fish product. The study established that during the pre-colonial period there was plenty of indigenous fish which was mainly for subsistence. Barter trade was conducted at local and regional markets. The fishing industry witnessed many changes during the colonisation of Kenya such as new fishing nets, motorised boats, new fishing regulations and the introduction of different fish species. The findings of the study are as follows: The small scale fishers continued to struggle to survive commercially yet remained voiceless and marginalised. Lack of capital left most retail fishers poor while the rich fishers prospered. The experiences of the fishers in Homa Bay County as spelt out in this study could be used by policy makers in the fisheries sector to come up with strategies that could include all fishers in order to solve the problems affecting the Lake Victoria fisheries.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration and Approval	ii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgement	v
Abstract	vi
Table of Contents	vii
List of Abbreviations and Acronyms	x
Definition of Key Terms	xi
Glossary of Dholuo Terms	xii
Map of Homa Bay County	xiv
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background to the Study.....	1
1.2 Statement of the Problem.....	5
1.3 Objectives	5
1.4 Research Questions	6
1.5 Justification of the Study	6
1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study	7
1.7 Literature Review.....	7
1.7.2 Nature and Patterns of Gender Roles in the Fishing Industry Globally	8
1.7.3 Nature and Patterns of Gender Roles in the Fishing Industry in East Africa	11
1.8. Theoretical Framework.....	17
1.9. Methodology	19
1.10 Ethical Considerations	22
CHAPTER TWO	23
TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN HOMA BAY COUNTY 1700 – 1900	23
2.1. Overview.....	23
2.2. The Pre- Colonial Background to the People of Homa Bay County	23
2.3. The Development of Political Leadership in South Nyanza During the Pre- Colonial Period, 1700 – 1900	25
2.4. The Social Organisation of the People of South Nyanza, 1700 – 1900.....	27
2.5. Economic Organisation of South Nyanza People from 1700 – 1900	29
2.6. Pastoralism.....	31

2.7. Agricultural Organisation	31
2.8. The Management and Organisation of South Nyanza Fishing Industry, 1700 – 1900.....	32
2.9. Traditional Methods of Handling Fish, 1700 – 1900.....	35
2.10 The Role of Women Fishers in South Nyanza, 1700 – 1900.....	35
2.11 Summary.....	37
CHAPTER THREE	39
THE COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER ROLES UPTO 1945	39
3.1. Overview.....	39
3.2. Resistance of the People of South Nyanza against the British Colonialists	40
3.3 The People of South Nyanza who co-operated with the Colonial Government.....	41
3.4. Colonial Leadership.....	42
3.5. Taxation	45
3.6. The introduction of Cash Crops.....	46
3.7. Wage Labour.....	48
3.8. Education	50
3.9 Colonial Policy on Fishing and the New Gear.....	51
3.10 The Colonial Administration and Fishing.....	52
3.11. The First World War Period and Fishing (1914 – 1919).....	54
3.12. Management of Fisheries by the Colonial State	56
3.13. Summary	58
CHAPTER FOUR.....	59
DECOLONISATION AND CHANGING GENDER ROLES UPTO 1963.....	59
4.1. Overview.....	59
4.2. Overfishing in Lake Victoria	59
4.3. Open and Closed Seasons	61
4.4. The Introduction of Exotic Species.....	63
4.5. Women and the New Technology, 1954 – 1963.....	65
4.6. Summary	68
CHAPTER FIVE	69
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OF GENDER ROLES IN THE INDEPENDENCE	
PERIOD 1963 UPTO 1980.....	69
5.1. Overview.....	69
5.2. Factors Influencing Gender Roles in Fishing from 1963 – 1980.....	69
5.3. The Effects of Education on Fishing, 1963 – 1980	72

5.4. Summary	78
CHAPTER SIX	80
CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD UPTO 2012	80
6.1. Overview	80
6.2. Emerging Issues in Fishing in the Contemporary Period	80
6.3. Social and Cultural Challenges	82
6.4. Sex for Fish	83
6.5. Cultural Beliefs	85
6.6. Fishing as a Man’s Job	86
6.7. The Water Hyacinth Menace	87
6.8. Financial Challenges	88
6.9. Infrastructure	91
6.10. Summary	92
CHAPTER SEVEN	95
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	95
7.1 Overview	95
7.2 Study Findings and Conclusions	95
7.3 Study Recommendations	97
7.4 Recommended Areas for Further Research	98
A) Oral Informants	99
B) Archival Sources	101
C) Official Government Publications	103
D) Dissertations and Theses	104
E) Journal Articles	105
F) Conference Papers and Reports	108
G) Internet Sources and Newspapers	112
H) Books	113
APPENDICES	118
APPENDIX I: Interview Guide	118
APPENDIX II: Interview Schedule /Checklist for BMU Officials	120
APPENDIX III: Letter of Authorisation from Egerton University	121
APPENDIX IV: Permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation	122

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AR	-	Annual Report
BMU	-	Beach Management Units
DSDO	-	District Social Development Officers.
EU	-	European Union
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FGD	-	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	-	Free Primary Education
HIV/AIDS	-	Human Immuno Deficiency Virus /Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome.
KB	-	Kendu Bay
KNA	-	Kenya National Archives
KMFRI	-	Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute
LVFO	-	Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation
LVFS	-	Lake Victoria Fisheries Society
NGO	-	Non Governmental Organisation
NOW	-	National Organisation for Women
OSSREA	-	Organisation for the Social Science Research in Eastern and Southern Africa
SEDAWOG	-	Socio-Economic Data Working Group of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project.
UN	-	United Nations.
USA	-	United States of America

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

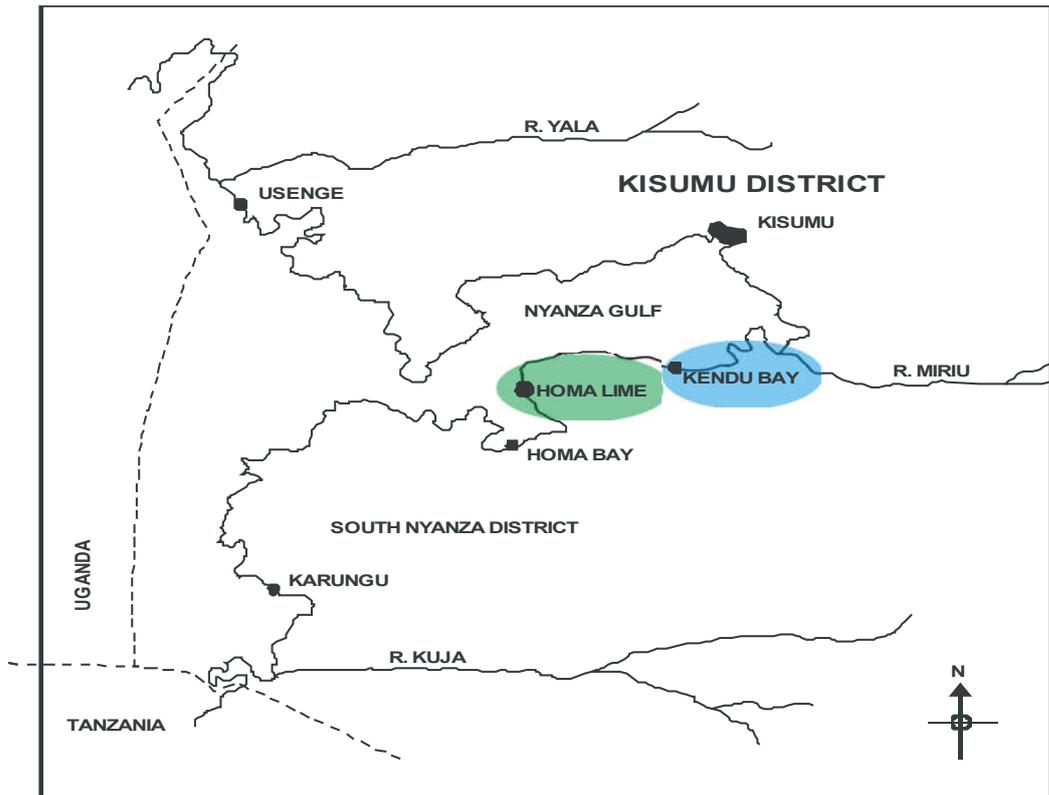
Beach	Is a zone above the water level at a shore which is indicated by a heap of sand, stone or gravel that has been deposited by the waves or tide.
Crustaceans	Creatures with soft bodies that are divided into sections, examples are crabs, lobsters and shrimps.
Culture	Refers to people's way of life.
Development	The gradual growth of something to make it more advanced or stronger : to improve it.
Feminism	Means women fighting for the same rights as men making changes of the traditionally accepted feminine gender role
Feminism Theories	Refers to sets of ideas aimed at defining, establishing and defending equal political, economic, social rights for women
Fishing Industry	A people or activity involved in the production of fish.
Gender	Means a set of characteristics that are considered to distinguish between male and female. It reflects one's biological sex or one's gender identity.
Gender Differentiation	Denotes differences in reference to gender in terms of being male or female for instance he/she man, women.
Gender Roles	Refers to the behaviour and attitude expected of male and female members of a society by that society.
Kiln	A large clay oven used for baking and drying fish.
Modernisation	Refers to the change that was realised by the arrival of better methods of fishing i.e. the use of engine boats and trawlers to replace the basket traps among others.
Mollusc	A creature with a soft body that is not divided into different sections. It has a hard outer shell such as snail and slug.
Roles	Means the function or position that somebody has or is expected to have in a society, organisation or in a relationship, one's area of participation.
Society	Refers to people living together in communities. They may share the same customs and laws.
Technologies	Denotes changes towards development.
Youth	A young adult

GLOSSARY OF DHOLUO TERMS

<i>Abila</i>	Hut/Rental Accommodation for fishing crew
<i>Bilo</i>	charms and strong medicine
<i>Dagaa/Omena</i>	<i>Restriobela argenteus</i>
<i>Duru</i>	Mud fish
<i>Fuani/Odhadho</i>	<i>Barbus Altrialsis</i>
<i>Fulu</i>	Small fish (Haplochromics)
<i>Jabilo</i>	A diviner
<i>Jaboya</i>	A fisherman who provided women traders with fish.
<i>Jodak</i>	A refugee
<i>Kamongo</i>	Lung Fish
<i>Kiboko</i>	Cane /A rhino whip used by Europeans
<i>Kipande</i>	Identity card introduced by colonialists
<i>Likira</i>	A fishing basket, conical in shape
<i>Mbuta</i>	Nile Perch
<i>Misumbini</i>	Slaves
<i>Mutama</i>	Millet
<i>Ngai</i>	Rowing Paddle
<i>Ngege</i>	Tilapia
<i>Ningu</i>	<i>Labeo Victorianus</i>
<i>Nyamami</i>	Nile Tilapia
<i>Nyanza</i>	A name the local communities use to refer to Lake Victoria Referred to a province in the Lake region
<i>Obambla</i>	Split dried tilapia
<i>Okoko</i>	<i>Synodontis Afrofescioides</i>
<i>Olowu</i>	Pole fishing
<i>Orindi</i>	A canoe used for river fishing
<i>Oringi</i>	Bicycle transport
<i>Osadhi</i>	Spear for Fishing
<i>Osero</i>	Papyrus nest
<i>Osero</i>	Woven basket for fishing
<i>Osoga</i>	<i>Alestes</i>
<i>Ounga</i>	Basket trap used to scoop fish
<i>Puoyo Chak</i>	A process of extracting butter from sour milk in a gourd

<i>Piny</i>	State
<i>Rimba</i>	Beach seines
<i>Seu</i>	Cat fish
<i>Simba</i>	A Luo word for a bachelors hut
<i>The Jaluo</i>	The Luo
<i>Thuondi</i>	The Brave
<i>Tong</i>	Spear
<i>Watende</i>	The Kuria as called by the Luo
<i>Wuon dala</i>	The owner of the homestead

MAP OF HOMA BAY COUNTY



KEY

-  HOMALIME
-  KENDU BAY

Source: J. SiwoMbugua, A. Getabu, A. Asila, M. Medard and R. Abila, *Trawling in Lake Victoria: Its History, Status and Effects*. IUCN Eastern Africa Programme Socio-Economics of the Lake Victoria Fisheries Report No. 3, August, 1998.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Fishing generally involves catching fish usually in the wild, using techniques such as hand gathering, spearing, angling and trapping. Fishing may be applied to catching other aquatic animals such as molluscs, cephalopods, crustaceans and echinoderms. The term is not normally applied to catching farmed fish, or to aquatic mammals, such as whales where the term whaling is more appropriate¹. Fishing is an ancient practice that dates back to at least the beginning of the Paleolithic period about 40,000 years ago². Isotopic analysis of the skeletal remains of Tianyuan man, a 40,000 year old modern human from Eastern Asia, has shown that he regularly consumed fresh water fish³. According to Food and Agriculture Organization statistics, the total number of commercial fishermen and fish farmers is estimated to be 38 million⁴. Lake Victoria is one of Africa's largest Lakes. It was named after Queen Victoria by the explorer John Hannington Speke in 1858 while on an expedition to locate the source of river Nile⁵. It is the second fresh water Lake in the World with an area of 69,000 kilometres square⁶. It is second to Lake Superior in Northern America in terms of size.

In the 1880's from the time the Luo who live along the shores of Lake Victoria occupied their present settlements, they have practised fishing as an aspect of their subsistence. In the pre-colonial period, fishing was not only a source of food but also a major economic activity particularly for the communities that lived around the Lake. As an economic activity, fishing led to commercial exchange and interaction between the neighbouring communities. The people living around the Kenyan shores of Lake Victoria from the pre-colonial times have mainly been the Luo-Abasuba, the Luhya of Port Victoria and the Luo ethnic group.

Before the colonial period, fishers gained access to the lake through membership of lineage groups

¹E. Rostlund, *Freshwater Fish and Fishing in Native North America*, University of California Publications in Geography, Volume 9. Berkeley, 1952.

²D. Sahrhageard, J. Lundbeck, *A History of Fishing*, (Los Angeles: Springer, 1992).

³T.D. Smith, *Handbook of Fish Biology and Fisheries. A History of Fisheries and the Science*. Blackwell Publishing, 2002.

⁴Food and Agriculture Organisation. Policy brief of the FAO for the UNFCCC COP-15 in Copenhagen, December, 2009.

⁵Rostlund, *Freshwater Fish and Fishing in Native North America*.

⁶R.N. Omwenga, R. Abila and C. Lwenya, *Fishing and Poverty Levels around Lake Victoria (Kenya)*. Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, Kisumu, 2000, p. 193.

or clans. There was no restriction on the use of Lake Victoria and its resources. The fishers were not strained by the modern nation state boundaries and were free to fish and exchange their catch in any part of the Lake.

Fishing has been one of the many economic activities that the Lake communities engaged in during the pre-colonial time. Acheson points out that, 'the most common strategy used by fishers to adapt to uncertainty is to combine occupation'⁷.

The Luo did not practise fishing in isolation. Acheson asserts that, "fishing is almost always combined with hunting, agriculture or other occupations"⁸. Whenever fishing was low, people survived on cultivation or livestock keeping. In case crops failed, they would depend on fishing and trade. In this study, the fishers can be referred to as peasant farmers although for their livelihood, they depended on Lake fishing rather than the soil. Although Luo fishers were also farmers, they prioritised fishing to farming in areas where the soil was poor. Geheb and Binns note that separating fishers from farmers on the Kenyan shores of Lake Victoria is as difficult to demarcate as that between certain cultivating and pastoral groups in other parts of Africa.⁹ Fisherfolk like their farming counterparts depended on family labour provided by women and children. Sometimes they were hired by canoe owners. The pre- colonial Luo fishers had a nature of subsistence other than that of trade. The household consumed most of their catch instead of exchanging it at the market.

The pre- colonial Lake Victoria fishery was characterised by low technology gears such as reed traps, basket traps, papyrus beach seines and sisal long lines¹⁰. Since the fishing methods were less advanced and the markets were limited by distance and perishability of fish products, the level of exploitation was controlled¹¹.

Men and women among the Lake Victoria fishing communities were traditionally involved in fishing but each performed different roles. The traditional division of labour dictated that the male spent more time fishing than the female. Women tended to fish close to the beaches and

⁷J.M. Acheson, *Anthropology of Fishing in Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 10, 1981, p. 291.

⁸ Acheson, '*Anthropology of Fishing*'.

⁹ K. Geheb and T. Binns, *Fishing Farmers of Farming Fishers? The Quest for Household Income and nutritional Security on the Kenyan Shores of Lake Victoria*; in *African Affairs*, Vol. 96, No. 382 (Jan. 1997) p. 91.

¹⁰ E. Bennet, *Gender Fisheries and Development in Marine Policy*. No. 29 2004. pp. 451-459.

¹¹ R. Abila, *The Development of the Lake Victoria Fishery: A Boom or Bane for Food Security? IUCN Report* No. 8, Nairobi, 2002.

river banks. They dominated post harvest activities such as fish processing and trade while men dominated transportation, fish factory agents and were employed as boat crew.

Men traditionally dominated the fishing sector. As Medard observes, only 3% of women owned boats, nets or both or were hired as crew members. The women were marginalised in decision making although they contributed to the development of the fishing industry by sustaining post harvesting activities¹². Change in fishing was realised during the arrival of the colonial masters. Gordon argues that fishers in Africa have utilised new technologies and developed new forms of resource exploitation without becoming typical capitalist entrepreneurs¹³. Technology is an important measure of change in fishing. This study interrogates how the gender roles changed in the fishing industry between 1900 to 2012. The changes respond to the modern technologies, nets, regulations and policies introduced by colonialism.

During the colonial period, the fishing industry in Kenya began experiencing changes in gender roles since there was growth in trade and markets due to the 'boom' brought by the sale of the Nile Perch, technological changes in fisheries and entry of outside capital. After the Second World War which ended in 1945, the report on Kenya, fisheries of Nairobi indicates that Luo service men returning from the war sought incomes from fishing in the absence of other employment opportunities¹⁴. They had no source of income yet the Lake was a readily available alternative that did not require capital. Entry into the fishing business was sparked off by the need for cash to pay taxes and bride prices. Other reasons for entry into the enterprise included easy access of fish, easy storage, profits earned and low transport costs. As Garrod points out, the number of fishers grew tremendously between 1949 and 1953 from about 35,000 to 60,000¹⁵ this impacted greatly on the fishery.

¹²E. Yongo, B.B. Keizire and H.G. Mbilinyi, *Socio Economic Impacts of Trade. In The State of the Fisheries Resources of Lake Victoria and Their Management*. Proceedings of the Regional Stakeholders Conference. (2005). Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization Secretariat, Jinja Uganda.

¹³D. Gordon, "Growth without Capital: A renascent Fishery in Zambia and Katanga, 1960's to Recent Times in *Journal of South Africa Studies*. Vol. 31, No. 3 September, 2005.

¹⁴ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Report on Kenya fisheries 1960, *Nairobi*, (Government Printer, 1961).

¹⁵D.J. Garrod, "The History of the Fishing Industry of Lake Victoria, East Africa, in relation to the expansion of Marketing facilities, *East African Agricultural and Forestry Journal*, Vol.27, No. 2, 1961, pp. 95 – 99.

According to Greboval and Fryd, the Nile Perch appeared in Kenyan waters in 1954, at 200 tonnes but increased gradually to 4,300 tonnes in 1980¹⁶. The Nile Perch led to increased catch. In the post- colonial period it was mainly sold to fish filleters involved in export market to France, Germany, Israel, Italy and United States of America (USA). Commercialisation of fish grew internationally leading to a steady increase in the number of fishermen. The post- colonial period saw the government manage Lake Victoria through fisheries acts that focused on licensing, taxation, gear regulation and prohibition of fishing in some areas and seasons¹⁷ Even with the fisheries Act, the constraints such as lack of capital, inadequate staff, poor infrastructure and lack of appropriate technologies were experienced. This made management of the fishing industry difficult.

In 1998, Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda teamed up to co-manage Lake Victoria fisheries. After the year 2000, Lake Victoria Fisheries Organisation (LVFO) was funded by the European Development to promote the management plan whose aim was to encourage community participation in fisheries management through formation of Beach Management Units (BMU)¹⁸. The BMU officials were charged with the task of managing of fishing activities at the landing bays. They also selected applicants for fishing and boat licensing. Moreover they confirmed the payment of taxes. Both gender currently buy fishing gears, boats and participate in trade and fishing activities. They trade locally and internationally.

In the overall picture upto 2012, both gender have participated in productive work. Incases where the roles have differed, they have always complemented each other. Development plans should include practical needs and strategic needs of both gender.¹⁹ Gender roles being dynamic, there is need to understand the opportunities, constraints and how the changes have affected both gender. Ogutu and Sandauno²⁰ point out that women occupy a central place in the fishing sector and predominate in Lake Victoria fisheries since they represent between 70% to 87% of fish workers especially in the artisanal fish trade. The National Policy agenda focuses more on the production sector that is dominated by the male rather than the

¹⁶P.P. Bwathondi, J. Ogutu, - Ohwayo and J. Ogari. *Lake Victoria Fisheries Management Plan, L.V. FRP/TECK/01/16*. Technical Document No. 16. I.G. Cowx and K. Crean (eds.), 2001.

¹⁷O. Baumann. *Mafia Island Tanganyika Notes and Records*(46), (reprinted 1957) pp. 1-24.

¹⁸R. Abila, *The Development of Lake Victoria Fishery*.

¹⁹ G.E.M. Ogutu, "The Role of Women and Cooperative Societies in Fish Marketing in Western Kenya." In G.E.M. Ogutu (Ed.) *Artisan Fisheries of Lake Victoria, Kenya; Options for Management, Production and Marketing*. Proceedings of a Workshop held in Kisumu, Kenya, 1988.

²⁰G.E.M. Ogutu, "The Role of Women and Cooperative Societies in Fish Marketing in Western Kenya."

processing sector that is dominated by the women. The policy matters have enhanced the exclusion of women fishers in matters of policy and development. This discrepancy created the need to examine the changing gender roles in the fishing industry in Lake Victoria, Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Studies so far undertaken on fishing in Lake Victoria have largely focused on fisheries management, processing and marketing as well as appropriate technologies in the fishing sector. The few that have been done on gender roles in the fishing industry have tended to lay emphasis on discrimination against women. Most of these studies have shown a clear-cut division of labour differentiated by gender, which is culturally defined. Men play a dominant role in actual fishing (production) while women take a major role in post harvest activities like marketing. These roles are complementary. However, since culture is dynamic, these culturally defined clear-cut divisions of labour that have defined gender roles within the fishing industry in Lake Victoria might have changed to cope with the changing times. Moreover, there are no studies that have captured the nature and patterns of changing roles in the fishing industry across gender over time hence this study.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1.3.1. Overall Objectives

To examine the evolving nature of gender roles among fisher folk in the fisheries sector in Lake Victoria in Homa Bay County.

1.3.2. Specific Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- i. To describe the nature and patterns of the changing gender roles in the fisheries in Homa Bay County during the pre- colonial period;
- ii. To determine the major factors that influenced gender roles in the fishing industry in the Homa Bay County from 1900 to 1963;
- iii. To establish the challenges faced by the fisheries in Homa Bay County in executing their roles in the post- colonial period.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions:

- i. How did gender roles affect fisheries in Homa Bay County during the pre- colonial period?
- ii. What are the major factors that influenced gender roles in the fishing industry in the country from 1900 to 1963?
- iii. What are the challenges faced by the fisheries in Homa Bay County in executing their roles in the post colonial period?

1.5 Justification of the Study

Several studies have been done on the fishing industry around Lake Victoria. These covered the three East African countries of Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda. Most of such studies have mainly focused on the management of fishing, sustainability of fish stocks, fish production, processing and marketing as well as on biological and ecological aspects of the Lake in relation to fishing.

So far, Most of the available literature on fishing in Lake Victoria has been produced by scientists. None of the previous studies on the fishing industry has taken a historical perspective on the changing roles of gender and the challenges facing gender in the fishing industry in Lake Victoria of Kenya, particularly Homa Bay County. There was therefore, need to integrate the government policies, the technological changes, challenges facing the fishers, the development of the fishing industry and the changing roles of gender over time. This study intended to analyse a history of the fishing industry in Homa Bay County by identifying the programmes from 1900 through the period of colonialism upto the post – colonial times.

The three phases including the pre- colonial, colonial and post- colonial were suitable in determining whether and why there was continuity or change over time. The same revealed the major factors that affected the gender roles. This thesis indicates that there was both change and continuity. Homabay County was suitable for this study because it has the largest number of landing bays and registered fishers. This gave a good representation of the other counties. The findings of the study may enable scholars and policy makers to understand the development of the fishing industry and its challenges.

Purposive sampling of the bays in Karachuonyo Constituency was done to select the bays representing the urban and rural bays. Kendu Bay and Homa Lime bays had the highest number of registered fishers which represented the bays in Karachuonyo Constituency in Homa Bay County. The study also made recommendations on the best practices for integrating gender in fishing. Such recommendations could be adopted into policy recommendations by the relevant ministries for enhanced and sustainable fishing performance in the area and in the country as a whole.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The area of the study was Homabay County. It involved the landing bays of Homa Lime and Kendu Bay. The study focused on the factors that influenced the gender roles and the challenges that have affected gender roles in the fishing industry between 1900 - 2012.

The study covered the pre- colonial period. This period experienced less modernised methods of fishing such as basket traps, gathering, spearing, and beach seines although exploitation of fish was controlled. During that period, the Europeans had an interest in Africa and its economic resources such as fishing. Since the colonial period the fishing industry has realised changes and developments in trade, technology and gender roles. The study combined both Homa Bay and Homa Lime to come up with concrete conclusions on the matter. The study was conducted through historical research methods. Different categories and cadres of fishers were interviewed using interview schedules that were prepared.

Since the study was conducted in the two landing bays of Homa Lime and Kendu Bay in Homa Bay County, the localisation of the study to only these two landing bays could reduce its generalisability to other landing bays in the county. The restriction of the study to 1900 – 2012 on the other hand could lower its applicability to other periods. Future studies should consider the limitation of applicability of the study findings to other areas.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 Introduction

This section presented the literature review of the fishing industry in Homa Bay County of Kenya. Several works have been written on matters of fishing in the country. They include works about fishing and poverty levels around Lake Victoria. Other studies have covered the Socio-Economics of Lake Victoria's fisheries by analysing the shifting roles and status of women. The literature has been reviewed with specific attention to the nature, patterns,

challenges and factors that have influenced the gender roles in the fishing industry between 1900 to 2012. The reviewed works made it possible to identify the knowledge gaps.

1.7.2 Nature and Patterns of Gender Roles in the Fishing Industry Globally

In general, fishing involves the exploitation of water resources for social economic benefits²¹. However, others engage in fishing for subsistence. Economic benefits have never been true to both the male and female fishers. In the fisheries sector in Gambia for example, gender roles are a prominent feature both in involvement and participation. According to Isatou²², Gambian men are involved in fishing, fish processing and marketing activities while women are predominantly involved in post harvest activities. Both gender have to play their role in order to succeed. Men take the lead in planning and programming whereas women's role is very limited. Women are left behind in decision making. They need to be involved in order to participate fully. In most villages along the river banks and coastal areas, women are involved in artisanal fishing activities such as unloading of fish from landing canoes, fish processing and marketing that link production and consumption²³.

Garcia²⁴ also concurs that most Gambian women in the fisheries sector have limited education compared to the fishermen, they lack special programmes for training in technological improvements while fishermen have access to credit and finance facilities. For both male and female to benefit economically, they need to be well informed, literate and financially empowered. Similarly Bauman²⁵ observes that unlike the men, women in fisheries enjoy limited attention in terms of expansion of their activities. Generally, in Gambia, fishing is mainly the role of men but women also play a central and crucial role in the fisheries sector. In industrial fisheries, the female predominate the processing lines of fishing companies and provide casual labour or work permanently²⁶. Each gender therefore plays an inevitable role.

²¹H.B.O. Lung'Ayia, A.M. Harzi, M. Tackx, Y.J. Gichuki and J.J. Symoens, Phytoplankton Community Structure and Environment in the Kenyan Waters of Lake Victoria. *Fresh Biology*, Vol. 43, No. 4, pp. 529 – 543. March, 2000.

²² T. Isatou <http://www.fao.org/docrep/x/0205e/x0205e13html>

²³ D. Greboval and Fryd, D., *Inland Fisheries of Eastern/Central Southern Africa: Basic Fisheries Statistics* (Bunjubura: FAO/UNDP, 1993). p. 102.

²⁴V. S. Garcia-Vazquez, *Gender, Subsistence, Fishing and Economic change. A Comparative Study in Southern Veracruz, Mexico*. Department of Rural Development. Colegiode Postgraduados, Mexico Vol. 14, No.1, September, 2006

²⁵Baumann, *Mafia Island Tanganyika Notes and Records*, 1957.

²⁶CIRDAP's Action Program (1989). *Rural Women in Fishing Communities*, Naga, The ICLARM Quarterly, pp. 10-12, April.

Baumann²⁷ indicates that among the Chole of Mafia Island, women made mats, coconut fibre ropes and dried fish while men fished primarily for subsistence and sold a few fish on the side for cash. Fishing was a game and not the serious occupation that it is today. Baumann further notes that in the past, fish were abundant and held no value as a commodity. For example, the Turkana community lived off the shores of Lake Turkana but did not eat fish. In fact, the Turkana asserted that they would rather starve inland than eat fish²⁸. These days, however, most communities feed on fish for protein. Fish provides protein to the communities who live around the Lake and it is a necessity for family health. Alongside other chores, women traditionally dried fish, and also got involved in other post harvest activities such as sorting, cleaning and selling of smoked fish²⁹. Nowadays, current methods like deep frying are used to preserve fish. The earlier methods referred to as traditional methods are also still used though to a limited extent.

Suwanrangsi³⁰ reports that despite their main activity of fishing, the women of Koko in Nigeria take up other types of activities to supplement their income. The males mainly participate in production while female activities vary from fish processing to management of fishing industry through the sale on the roadside. They also sell fresh fish, sun-dried, smoke dried, salted and dried or fried fish, but women can often finance the purchase of fishing equipment. This has enabled them to buy and sell all the catch of migrant fishermen. Other than fishing, both men and women engage in agriculture, commerce, canoe building, carpentry, and masonry³¹. Apart from household chores, women also sell prepared food, agricultural products, produce alcohol and practice animal husbandry. The Koko fisherfolk have tried to empower themselves economically by engaging in fishing and other activities. This has proved useful especially against destructive fishing when fish population is low³².

²⁷Baumann. *Mafia Island Tanganyika Notes and Records*.

²⁸Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, *Report on Kenya Fisheries*.

²⁹Omwenga, Abila and Lwenya, *Fishing and Poverty Levels around Lake Victoria (Kenya)*.

³⁰S. Suwanrangsi, *Technological changes and their implications to women in fisheries*, (eds). M.j. Williams, M.C. Nandeeshe, V.P. Corral, E. Tech, and P.S. Choo. *International Symposium on Women in Asian Fisheries*. 13th, November, 1998, Chiang Mai, (Thailand: The World Fish Centre, Penang, Malaysia, 2001), pp. 63-68.

³¹J. Okidi, *Fishery Resources, their Exploitation, Management and Conservation in Africa, in Development and the East African Environment (IDS Discussion paper No. 6)*.

³²A. Mahfuzuddin, H. Navy, L. Vuthy and M. Tiongeo (1998). *Socio-economic assessment of freshwater capture fisheries of Cambodia: Report on a household survey*, Mekong River Commission, Cambodia, Phnom Penh.

As observed by Madanda, in some places, the capture fishery has been off limits to women for both economic and social reasons³³. Some communities believed that it was bad luck for a man to meet a woman on the way to the lake because it would lead to low catch although Madanda also reports that some women were directly involved in fishing and some of the stereotypes were being challenged by women. In cases where women fish around the lake shore, just like their male counterparts, they have complemented each other well and no bad omen has been witnessed or experienced.

Bennet³⁴ points out that lack of attention to gender issues in fishery management has resulted in policy interventions that do not promote sustainable livelihoods for women, their families and communities. As Lwenya, Abila and Omwenga³⁵ note, gender per se has been left out of studies on Lake Victoria fishery. Gender has culturally been perceived to mean the reduction of powers traditionally held by men, yet issues of gender roles are merely intended to reinforce the fact that times have changed and each gender should complement the other in development. While some women own fishing boats and gears, they still depend on the fishermen for continuous supply of fish.

Dowling concurs that, traditionally, fishing has been constructed as a singular, masculine occupation and although there is reliance on labour from women in family businesses, women's contributions have not been visible³⁶. The exclusion of women from the industry decision making and their marginalisation from ownership status means that even in family fishing business, women are not recognised in the process of the allocation of the rights to resources³⁷, and they are not considered with regard to the social impacts of management decisions³⁸. Times have changed and the managerial skills and roles are played by both male and female in the fishing industry.

³³ A. Madanda, Commercialization and Gender Roles among Lake Victoria Shore Fishing Communities of Uganda. Research Report to the 14th OSSREA Research Competition on Gender Issues. Kampala: Makerere University (2003).

³⁴ Bennet, *Gender Fisheries and Development in Marine*.

³⁵ K.R. Lwenya, C.A. Lwenya, R. Abila and R. Omwenga, *Gender Participation in Fisheries Management of Lake Victoria*, (Kisumu: Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute, 2001), p. 266.

³⁶ J. Dowling, 'Just' a Fisherman's Wife. A Post Structural Feminist Expose' of Australian Commercial Fishing Women's Contributions and Knowledge, 'Sustainability' and 'Crisis' Knowledge', 'Sustainability and Crisis. Cambridge Scholar. 2006. p. 13.

³⁷ A. Goetz, Introduction: Getting institutions right for women in development, In Anne Marie Goetz (ed.) *Getting institutions right for women in development*, (London: Zed Books), 1997.

³⁸ S. Suwanrangsi, Technological changes and their implications to women in fisheries.

There have also been destructive fishing practices as pointed out by Ntiba, Kudoja and Mukasa³⁹. Fishermen have used mosquito seines and beach seines that were sometimes banned. In addition, destructive fishing practices such as deploying illegal fishing gear like castnets, fish poison and wires have also been used by fishermen to improve catches. The harvesting of fish has not been supplemented by other sources of income which could be used to allow fish seasons to breed⁴⁰. As Bwathondi, Ogutu-Ohwayo and Ogari⁴¹ point out, unrestricted status of the Lake and lack of enforcement of existing legislation has led to increasing and crippling fishing effort. Most fisherfolk are not aware of the short and long term consequences of the destructive fishing methods that they apply. Failure to monitor and enforce bans has led to continuous use of beach seines in Kenya.

1.7.3 Nature and Patterns of Gender Roles in the Fishing Industry in East Africa

Lake Victoria is the second largest fresh water lake in the world. It covers 69,000 km square⁴². R.S. Herring, notes that the people who live around the Kenyan shores of Lake Victoria are mainly of the Luo ethnic group, whose ancestors migrated from South Sudan. Presently, the Lake shores are inhabited by fishers from many communities in Kenya. Fishing has become an international business which people venture into due to commercialisation of fish and its products.

Fishery in Lake Victoria during the pre-colonial period before 1900 was characterised by low technology gear such as reed traps, papyrus beach seines and sisal long lines which controlled the level of exploitation since they were not very effective. The appearance of most advanced gears such as engine boats and trawlers during the colonial period however, brought in exploitation of the fish by harvesting fish in large numbers including the young fish and interfering with the breeding points. Sustainability of fish species has been a challenge due to these factors.

³⁹ M.J. Ntiba, W.M. Kudoja and C.T. Mukasa Management *Issues in the Lake Victoria Water Shed*. Lakes Reservoirs; Research and Management Vol. 6, No. 27, (2001). pp. 211-126.

⁴⁰ Suwanrangsri, Technological changes and their implications to women in fisheries. pp 63 – 68.

⁴¹ Bwathondi, Ogutu - Ohwayo and Ogari, 2001. *Lake Victoria Fisheries Management Plan*. L.V. frp/teck/01/16. Technical Document No. 16. Edited by Cowx and K. Crean.

⁴² R.S. Herring (1979). The influence of climate on the Migrations of the Central and Southern Luo in B.A. Ogot, Hadith 7, B.A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo*. Vol 1: Migrations and Settlement (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967).

Okidi points out that the first flax gill net was introduced in 1905 followed by the beach seine⁴³. These led to greatly expanded markets while the coming of the railway line from Mombasa and Nairobi to Kisumu in 1901 generated rapid growth and development in the fishing industry. Fish was harvested in large amounts and could not be handled by locals alone hence exportation to regional and international markets. This, however, did not mean that there was no trade. Initially, trade was conducted at regional and local markets. As Abila notes, fishing developed more rapidly as there was more demand for cash incomes by indigenous Kenyans after the colonial government introduced hut tax in 1900 and poll tax in 1910. The people had to get employed somehow to cope with the change. More fisherfolk entered the fishery particularly around 1945 at the end of the Second World War. This generated additional cash income for indigenous Kenyans⁴⁴. Unfortunately, the large numbers of the fishers led to great exploitation of fish hence extinction of certain species.

Yongo⁴⁵ has noted that reduced income from fishery has led to the clearance of wetlands in order to facilitate the growth of horticultural cash crops in order to supplement fishing. This has interfered with the sustainability of the entire lake ecosystem. Furthermore, he contends that artisanal fishery which mainly provided subsistence requirements upto the 1970s was converted into a multimillion-dollar commercial fishery. The fishing communities have to practice other income generating activities such as crop cultivation.

Geheb⁴⁶ observes that Lake Victoria supports a valuable artisanal and commercial fishery and is a source of domestic and industrial water supply. The Lake is also a major transport route within the region. Currently, only cargo transport is available. The transport business collapsed and therefore no transportation takes place in Lake Victoria (Kenya) apart from private ferries to Kisumu and Mbita. As Bokea and Ikiara⁴⁷ assert, the Lake is also a source of employment, food and income to Lake shore communities. The devolved government should revive the dormant cargo transport through the Lake to enhance the fishing business.

⁴³Okidi, Fishery Resources, No. 6.

⁴⁴Greboval and Fryd, *Inland Fisheries of Eastern/Central Southern Africa*.

⁴⁵Yongo, Keizire and Mbilinyi. *Socio Economic Impacts of Trade in the State of Fisheries Resources of Lake Victoria and their Management*.

⁴⁶Geheb, *The Regulators and the Regulated*.

⁴⁷Bokea and Ikiara, *The Macro Economy of the Export Fishing Industry in Lake Victoria*.

Lake Victoria supports a rapidly growing human population estimated to be about 30 million people. But as Dobbs points out, the Lake has had dramatic ecological changes associated with physical and biological processes, while environmental degradation, exotic introduction and increasing pressure on fishing have led to a decline in the fish catches⁴⁸. However, most communities around the Lake depend on fishing alone while a few engage in agricultural activities⁴⁹. After fishing, the male left the female to sort, wash, dry by smoking, since storage facilities were scarce. Currently, cold storage is used while transporting the fish to other countries. Others are fried for sale by the women at the local markets.

According to Dobbs and Geheb⁵⁰, the pre-colonial fisheries of Lake Victoria were characterised by a high degree of sustainability. They argue that the types of technology used were fairly inefficient. Neither boats nor sails were used for fishing and the Lake side was less densely populated. Although fishing was mainly for subsistence, there was remote or limited trade of fish away from the Lake side. In barter trade, fish was exchanged for other required items from other localities. However lack of modern technology ensured sustainability of the fisherfolk.

Dobbs⁵¹ posits that the first colonial legislation to cover Lake Victoria was the Fish Protection Ordinance of 1908. This introduced licensing and boat registration rules for “non-native Africans. With the Nile Perch boom, the harvesting, processing and marketing sectors experienced major transformations. Many new jobs were created in the processing industries and trade sectors. Fishers and their dependants increased from about 480,000 to almost three million by the year 1980⁵². Trade also affected the building sector, air industry, fishnet manufacturing and packaging industries. The British colonial authorities then introduced regulatory measures in the Kenyan waters of Lake Victoria. These included a closed season

⁴⁸C.M. Dobbs, “Fishing in the Kavirondo Gulf,” *Journal of the East Africa and Uganda. Natural History Society*, 30 (July, 1929), pp 97-109.

⁴⁹Garrod, “ *The History of the Fishing Industry of Lake Victoria*.”

⁵⁰Geheb, *The Regulators and the Regulated*.

⁵¹Dobbs, “*Fishing in the Kavirondo Gulf*.”

⁵²Greboval and Fryd, *Inland Fisheries of Eastern/Central Southern Africa*.

and netmesh size restrictions, but the measures failed to curb the intensity of fishing and exotic species were introduced to complement the existing stocks⁵³.

Lung'ayia⁵⁴ observes that the Lake has experienced great deterioration in its water quality between 1945 and 1965. This is due to eutrophication by increased nutrient input, or the Lake has been dominated by unpalatable toxic cyanobacteria. Measures to protect the Lake therefore need to be put in place and be adhered to by all the user groups.

Greboval and Fryd⁵⁵ concur that this has led to Lake Victoria producing the toxin microcystin, which is toxic to fish and human. Prices of fish have remained rather high since the fish are scarce. This has led to malnutrition among the fishing communities along the shores of Lake Victoria. They further observe that during the pre-Nile Perch period, small-scale operators dominated the fish processing and trading sub- sectors. These traders were mostly women from the communities surrounding the Lake who sold fresh fish and processed the surplus by smoking, salting and sun drying. Regulatory measures need to be adopted to control the prices of fish and its products in order to assist the communities who live around the Lake to survive.

Mann⁵⁶ explains that Lake Victoria Fisheries Service (LVFS) was consequently created. It had three patrol boats and a staff of six officers deployed to control the Lake, however, LVFS did not succeed as efforts to stem overfishing were thwarted. There was inadequate personnel and few patrol boats. Since the fishing populations is large, adequate facilities need to be purchased and used to control overfishing.

Fearn⁵⁷ posits that between 1946 and 1947, the service men returning from the war invested their earnings in the fisheries. She further contends that the 1940s experienced great

⁵³Ntiba, Kudoja and Mukasa. *Management, Issues in the Lake Victoria Watershed*.

⁵⁴Lung'ayia, Harzi, Tackx, Gichuki and Symoens, *Phytoplankton Community Structure and Environment in the Kenyan Waters of Lake Victoria*, pp. 529 – 543.

⁵⁵Greboval and Fryd, *Inland Fisheries of Eastern/Central Southern Africa*.

⁵⁶M.J. Mann, *A resume of the Evolution of The Tilapia Fisheries upto the year 1960* In. EAFFRO. Annual Report 1969, Appendix b, East African Fresh water Fisheries Research Organization, Jinja, pp. 21 – 27.

⁵⁷H. Fearn, *An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1961).

economic growth. Although exploitation of the Lake increased greatly, each development posed a new problem. This study heralded the idea that the economy improves if regulatory measures are taken.

Ineichen⁵⁸ noted that overfishing in the Kavirondo(Nyanza) Bay area drove many Luo from their homes. For example, in 1965, half the canoes registered at Jinja were owned by the Luo. They realised economic growth in the fisheries though exploitation could not be avoided. Their greed meant economic power. On the other hand, Harris⁵⁹ observes that the increase in Nile Perch landings coincided with escalating demand for high quality white fish in global markets. A new problem was posed in Kenya due to lack of facilities for filleting and processing. The colonial masters, however, ought to have worked out modalities on production, processing and consumption of the fish before introducing the new species.

Ikiara⁶⁰ posits that filleting and processing capacity was first developed in Kenya in the 1980s. In Kenya, exports of fish grew from 784 tonnes in 1980 to 14,412 tonnes in 1996. The fisheries were stuck due to poor infrastructure. A lot of fish could not leave the inland waters to the markets and towns easily. Fish was therefore cheap and affordable to the Lake communities in the early nineties. The study captured the challenges the fishers faced amidst their efforts to develop their fishing activities.

The Socio Economic Data Working Group of Lake Victoria and Southern Africa (SEDAWOG)⁶¹, observes that the average size of fish landed had declined. The use of illegal fishing techniques increased. This could not be curbed due to lack of funds and personnel to monitor the activities of the fisherfolk. They mainly operated at night. Due to overfishing by illegal means, harvesting of underage fish led to the extinction of certain species of fish. Although SEDAWOG asserts that the declines in stock was due to pollution or the presence of the water hyacinth, the fact on the ground is that the water hyacinth brought many

⁵⁸ B. Ineichen Bugoto: A Fishing Community on Mc Donald Bay. *Busoga. Uganda Journal* , Vol. 31, No. 2, 1967, pp. 201 – 305.

⁵⁹ C.K. Harris, D.S. Wiley and D.C. Wilson, Socio Economic Impacts of Introduces Species in Lake Victoria Fisheries, in T.J. Pitcher, P.J.B. Hert, (eds). *The Impact of Species Change in African Lakes*, (London: Chapman and Hall, 1995), pp. 215 – 245.

⁶⁰ M.M. Ikiara, *Sustainability, Livelihoods, Production and Effort Supply in Declining Fishery: The Case of Kenya's Lake Victoria Fishery*, PhD Thesis, University of Amsterdam.

⁶¹ SEDAWOG, *Results of the LVFRP Management Survey* .In K Geheb, K. Crean, R.O. Abila (eds). LVFRP technical Document No. 9, Socio Economic Data Working Group of Lake Victoria Fisheries Research Project, Jinja (2000).

indigenous fish species that had disappeared following the introduction of the Nile Perch. The main problem is non observance of the regulations which are generally ignored. The Lake management policies should be observed and improved to enable the sustainability of fish species of Lake Victoria.

Along the same line, Bwathondi, Ogutu- Ohwayo and Ogari⁶² point out that, with time, the local people have been gradually driven out of fish production, pricing, marketing and processing activities, and the traditional fish trading and processing sectors for Nile Perch and its products which was the activity of women are now controlled tightly by the fish factories and their agents. This, they argue, has in turn led to inequitable distribution of income from the fishery sector and greatly disadvantaged the local communities, as they have been reduced to processing and trading of the Nile Perch skeletons to the fish meal factories.

In the fishing communities, exchange of sexual services by female fish processors and mongers known as ‘fish for sex’ has been a common practice. In their research in Kenya, Kwena *et al*⁶³ established that female traders did not have the bargaining power to refuse such-exchanges as of fish for sex. However, currently, the fishers have formed self support groups that take loans to improve their fishing activities without engaging in ‘fish for sex’ exchange. Both gender are able to borrow and service the loans over a period of time. They have been empowered by the fishing groups and welfare associations.

Tarzan, Karanja and Ng’weshemi⁶⁴ contend that the HIV and AIDS infection rate among the fishing communities is high up to 43%. The physically weak fishers use illegal fishing gear near the shore, but at night, they fish in shallow areas which are the breeding and nursery areas for most Lake fish. This leads to reduction of fish thereby deepening the crisis of resources that threaten the livelihoods of local fishing.

⁶²Bwathondi, Ogutu - Ohwayo and Ogari, 2001.*Lake Victoria Fisheries Management Plan*.

⁶³ Z.A.E. Kwena, E. Bukisi, M. Omondi, M. Ng’ayo and K.K. Holmes, Transactional Sex in Fishing Communities along Lake Victoria Kenya: A catalyst for the spread of HIV” *African Journal of AIDS Research* 11. No. 1, (2012), pp. 9 – 15.

⁶⁴Tarzan, Karanja and Ng’weshemi, *Challenges of HIV/AIDS and Other Communicable Diseases among fishing communities*.

Obiero⁶⁵ points out that because of trawling and other large-scale fishing techniques, the processing plants deplete the Lake of fish leaving the local communities with less fish to trade in. As supported by Bokea and Ikiara,⁶⁶ after weakening the livelihoods of many fisherfolk, the processing plants introduced cooking and selling of Nile Perch frames that are discarded by the processing plants after filleting. But today, even the skeletons are sold to the grinders for fishmeal leading to further reduction of business for the local fisherfolk. This development has seen many fishers engage in motorcycle trade to transport clients. Workable policies should be administered by the managers in order to improve this industry.

The literature review has shown that a number of studies have been done on management of fishing, sustainability of fish stocks, fish production, processing and marketing. Other studies have included biological and ecological aspects of the Lake as it relates to the fishing industry. The studies done on Lake Victoria however, have not taken any historical perspective to analyse the factors that affect the changing gender roles, to describe the nature, patterns and challenges the fisherfolk have faced in the fishing industry in Homa Bay County especially in Kendu Bay and Homa Lime from 1900 to 2012. The study also aimed at revealing the marginalised voices of the fisherfolk in their endeavour to improve the economy.

1.8. Theoretical Framework

Historical studies are largely undertaken within the confines of theories whose application and analysis are instrumental in constructing past knowledge. In order to account for the changing gender roles in the fishing industry, this study adopted the theory of feminism. Feminism theory states that men and women should be equal politically, economically and socially⁶⁷. Culturally, women have been viewed as different from men, and that women are gentler than men. The Cultural Feminism theory supports the idea that there are biological differences between men and women, but also recognising that women have special qualities and experiences⁶⁸.

⁶⁵ O. Obiero, *Poverty and Wealth of Fisherfolks in the Lake Victoria Basin of Kenya*. (KenduBay : African Herald Publishers, House, 2002).

⁶⁶Bokea and Ikiara, *The Macro Economy of the Export Fishing Industry in Lake Victoria Kenya*.

⁶⁷J. Ezeilo and F. Adamu, Module 5: African Feminism <http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~sokoto/pdfs/module5.pdf>.

⁶⁸N. Fraser and L. Nicholson, *Social Criticism without Philosophy*, (London: Routledge. 1990).

According to Ezeilo and Adamu⁶⁹, feminism is a struggle to effect change, fight for women's rights and follow women's agenda. Feminist activists campaign for women's rights for example in contract law, property and voting while also promoting bodily integrity, autonomy and reproductive rights for women. As pointed out by Echols⁷⁰, feminists work to protect women and girls from domestic violence, sexual harassment and sexual assault. They are concerned with women's rights in the work place and any forms of discrimination.

In the 21st century, both gender have become educated and both occupy leadership positions in different countries, institutions and families⁷¹. The roles that only men traditionally played are now females' roles too. The fishing industry should therefore embrace this fact. Western feminism in its more radical forms, focuses on issues of sexuality and sexual pleasure, but such issues are often not central to the lives of most African women who see poverty, for example, as a much more important factor⁷². As Aidoo⁷³ notes, women should be viewed as partners in the struggle. This study argues that both gender complement each other therefore each should work alongside the other. They differ yet they need each other to produce and market their resources as each complements the other.

In African feminism, change cannot be effected without collaborating with men, but in Western feminism, men are excluded. In any industry, however, both gender must be involved to benefit economically. In the fishing industry, men catch the fish which has always been rated a man's job. Women, on the other hand, perform tasks such as smoking of fish and selling which stem from post harvest activities⁷⁴. The roles played by each gender therefore complement each other. As pointed out by Agger⁷⁵, it is important to recognise how differential experiences of the world are framed by discourse/practices that constitute the experience of being a woman or a person of colour at a given historical moment.

⁶⁹Ezeilo and Adamu, Module 5.

⁷⁰ A. Echols(1989),*Daring to be Bad: Radical Feminism in America, 1967 – 1975*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 416.

⁷¹C. Mohanty. "Under the Western eyes; Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses" *In Third World Women and the politics of Feminism*, T. Mohanty, A. Russo, and L.Torres, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁷²Ezeilo and Adamu, Module 5.

⁷³A. Aidoo, African Feminism.

⁷⁴Mohanty, Under the Western Eyes.

⁷⁵ B. Agger, *Beyond the End of Ideology; Marxism, Critical Theory, Post Modernism*. (Evanste: North Western University Press, 1991)

In the 19th century, the material feminists' movement revolved around taking the "burden" of women concerning housework, cooking and other female domestic chores. But the main focus should be individual autonomy, rights, liberty, independence and diversity. Bennet⁷⁶ contends that both gender can be equal if women are granted some special privileges and men are not made the central issue or barrier in feminism. The theory suggests the need to offer special privileges to women with the aim of making women equal to men. Women are as physically capable as men. Gender role stereotypes and discrimination against women based on assumptions that women are weak and physically helpless have no empirical basis, and both men and women have important roles to play in the fishing industry⁷⁷. Therefore, as feminism theory holds, the differences and similarities between men and women should not be the focus, and should be excluded from furthering worthy causes where possible⁷⁸. This study should be informed by the theory of feminism that both gender complement each other in performing various roles in the fishing industry. They need to be empowered economically to benefit from the roles they play in this industry. Both gender should therefore be given an equal opportunity to participate in the various sectors in the fishing industry.

1.9. Methodology

This section discusses the methodology used to conduct the study on the changing gender roles in the fishing industry in Homa Bay County of Kenya from 1900 to 2012. It examined the evolving nature of gender roles among fisherfolk in the fisheries sector in Lake Victoria in Homa Bay County. The study was based on historical research design. It involved an examination of oral, archival and secondary sources. Walliman asserts that historical research is the systematic and objective location, evaluation and synthesis of evidence in order to establish facts and draw conclusions about past events.⁷⁹ It includes explaining and exploring the meaning and relationships of events.

According to Kothari and Garg, historical research is that which utilises historical sources like documents, remains, in order to study events or ideas of the past, including the

⁷⁶ E. Bennet, *Gender Fisheries and Development in Marine Policy*.

⁷⁷ Echols, *Daring to be Bad*

⁷⁸ Ezeilo and Adamu, Module 5.

⁷⁹ N. Walliman, *Your Research Project: Designing and Planning Your Work* (3rd Edition), (London: Sage Publication, 2011), p. 9.

philosophy of persons and groups at any remote point in time.⁸⁰ Qualitative research methods are best suited generally for social sciences and especially historical inquiries.⁸¹ This study used qualitative methods of research. It aimed at gathering in-depth information on the changing gender roles in the fishing industry.

The study determined the major factors that influenced the gender roles, described the nature and patterns of changing gender roles and the challenges faced by the fisherfolk in the fishing industry. The study traced the changes and challenges from the pre - colonial period to the post- colonial time. It established how government policies have affected the fishing industry to the present time. The qualitative method was more suitable since the study involved the understanding of the relationships between the stakeholders of the fishing industry such as the fisherfolk and the government.

This study was conducted in Kendu Bay and Homa Lime landing bays. Both study sites are situated in Homa Bay County. Homa Bay County was more suitable for this study because it had a large number of beaches and landing bays. The fish from the area was produced in large volumes. More striking was the population of the registered fishers. Kendu Bay and Homa Lime alone had 586 and 498 registered members respectively totaling to 1084. The two bays with the highest number of fisherfolk represented the rest of the bays. The two would provide a good basis for understanding the changing nature of gender roles in the fishing business in the Lake and to act as pointers to the status of gender roles in other landing bays in the Lake.

The two landing bays are situated about 21 kilometers apart. Kendu Bay represents urban while Homa Lime represents rural bays. The main inhabitants of the area are mainly the Luo speaking community. The other communities living around the Kenyan shores of Lake Victoria include the Luhya of Port Victoria in Busia County who engage in fishing although they also keep cattle and grow crops for subsistence. Lake Victoria has a surface area of 68,800 kilometers square. It is the second largest fresh water lake in the world and the largest in Africa.

⁸⁰ C.R. Kothari and G. Garg. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. (3rd Edition) (India: New Age International Publishers, 2014), p. 4

⁸¹ J.W. Creswel, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*, (London: Sage Publications, 1998), p. 152.

The study included data collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected from interviews, Beach Management Units and from KNA, KEMFRI in Kisumu. Secondary data was gathered from books, newspaper articles, journals and internet sources. The data collected provided information on the history of the changes in the fishing industry.

Fifty eight respondents were included in this study after sampling. The respondents were sampled and selected through non-random purposive sampling and snow balling techniques. Included among the respondents were the fisherfolk engaged in various activities of fishing. They gave information concerning their roles and challenges in the industry. Amongst the sample were: The people living around the beaches of Kendu Bay and Homa Lime, the Beach Management Unit (BMU) officials who managed the beaches, cooks who had kiosks at the shores and male and female fishers who were selected on the basis of age. Lastly were the retired fisher folk who lived between 1900 and 1950. The old were targeted for their wealth of experience and knowledge in matters pertaining to fishing.

The study used individual interviews as well as group discussions as a research instrument while interview schedules guided the interviewing process. This study included two interview schedules to enable a proper understanding of the information required by the researcher and by the respondents. Generally, the interview method was used to enable the researcher to capture the stories behind the respondents' experiences by probing to get in-depth data on issues of interest.⁸² This was made possible by the flexibility of the interview method. Interview method also allowed on spot improvements, explanations, adjustments and variations to be introduced at various stages in the data collection process.⁸³ It enabled the researcher to follow the respondents' incidental comments using facial and bodily expressions, tone of involvement, gestures, reactions and feelings to obtain the feelings behind their words.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD) were useful as they widened the scope of the information gathered. An interview guide was prepared to facilitate this. The relevant data collected was used in the study. These included the changes in fishing, the major factors that influenced the gender roles and the challenges faced by the fisherfolk in the fishing industry in Homa Bay

⁸² J.S. Touliatos, and N. H. Compton, *Research Methods in Human Ecology/Home Economics*, (USA: Iowa State Publishers, 1988).

⁸³ J.W. Creswell, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*.

County. The data was interpreted within the confines of the objectives of the study. The data was processed and presented in a descriptive manner. The analysis included different perspectives and the views of various respondents that were captured by the study.

1.10 Ethical Considerations

After the proposal was defended and approved by the Board of Postgraduate Studies, the researcher embarked on data collection. With the university recommendation, the researcher sought and obtained a study permit from the DC's office and NACOSTI to enable her access the individual beaches. The researcher ensured that all ethical concerns related to permits were obeyed at all stages of data collection. The researcher further sought permission from the management of each landing bay to collect data. In particular, the researcher briefed all beach leaders and fisherfolk of the purpose and methodologies of the study and obtained their informed consent so that they participated out of their own volition. The researcher worked in a transparent and honest way.

The researcher assured study participants of confidentiality and anonymity in all the stages of the study. The researcher assured all respondents that they would be anonymous and all information provided would be private and confidential. The names of respondents were not included in the questionnaires and interview schedules. Respondents' participation was voluntary. They had a right to withdraw as participants and could decline to take part in a particular aspect of the study. The researcher respected the participants' right to privacy. Throughout the study, the researcher remained within the aims and scope of the study as agreed with the participants. The researcher ensured that data was collected accurately and fully by avoiding subjective selectivity of what was recorded. The researcher did not highlight anything disproportionately to its true existence.

CHAPTER TWO

TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN HOMA BAY COUNTY 1700 – 1900

2.1. Overview

This chapter discusses the historical background of the people of Homa Bay County. It traces their migration and settlement to their current areas of occupation. The section discusses the people of Homa Bay County in relation to their political, social and economic activities during the pre-colonial period. It focuses on the people of Homa Bay in reference to Kendu Bay and Homa Lime. Emphasis is laid on the mechanisms of fishing, its management, preservation and marketing in a bid to expose the nature and patterns of changing gender roles in the fishing industry in Homa Bay County.

2.2. The Pre- Colonial Background to the People of Homa Bay County

Homa Bay County is located in South Western Kenya along Lake Victoria. It covers an area of 7,778 square kilometers, (5,714sq. km. land area and 2,046 sq. km. water).¹ The Luo of Homa Bay County form a section of the Luo people, a river Lake Nilotic speaking people who migrated from Bahr-el-Ghazel region in the present Sudan. Unlike the East African Bantu speakers whose economy was agriculture oriented, and who therefore occupied high grounds with adequate rainfall where they practised hoe agriculture, the river Lake Nilotic speakers showed preference for short grassland or Savannah woodland areas suitable for a mixed economy of seed culture and livestock keeping.²

Ogot estimated that the Luo arrived in Nyanza province between 1490 and 1600 A.D³. The earlier settlers of the province were Bantus, the Highland Nilotic and Plains Nilotic speakers. The mingling of the Luo with the earlier occupants of Nyanza led to assimilation of other occupants by the Luo. The Luo who settled in South Nyanza had crossed Winam Gulf from Uyoma probably between AD 1739 and AD. 1960. Ogot further indicates that the Luo occupation of South Nyanza did not take place all at once; It occurred over a period of time⁴.

¹ South Nyanza Development Plan, 1984-1988, Nairobi: Ministry of Planning and National Development, 1988, pp, 1 – 2.

² C.W. Hobley, 'Anthropological Studies in Kavirondo and Nandi, *The Journal of Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 33, 1903, p. 326.

³ B.A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo; Migration and Settlement*, (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967), pp. 135 – 153.

⁴ B.A. Ogot, *History of Southern Luo*, p. 192, W.R. Ochieng, *An Outline History of Nyanza Province upto 1914*, (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974), p. 29.

They occupied South Nyanza arriving at different times from diverse places. The sentiments of Ogot that the people moved in different groups and settled at different times were confirmed by Ayany. He presents the history of the Luo settlement in the Lake region as the invasion of the area by the twelve Luo Sub tribes who, arriving as a unit, conquered the former inhabitants in a series of battles.

Ayot observes that by AD 1700, the Luo had begun to expand their settlements to South Nyanza⁵. Several Bantu speaking groups had been to the area for trading purposes. Others were there in search of settlement. The interests of the Bantu in this area influenced others to come to South Nyanza. The groups included the Buganda, Busoga, the Islands of Victoria and Tanzania. Some of the Luo groups crossed over to South Nyanza as hunters while others did it for adventure. Ayot further observes that within about five generations, Central Nyanza appeared over populated to the Luo. Clan feuds increased until finally a section of the Luo decided to adopt the remedy their forefathers had always employed in such circumstances⁶. The land feuds compelled more communities to migrate to South Nyanza.

Ogot asserts that the three major divisions of the Luo people to South Nyanza included; the Joka Jok, the Luo groups such as Gem, Kochia and Sakwa who did not belong to Joka Jok and finally the large heterogeneous division usually referred to as the Suba⁷. One of the large pre-Luo groups of South Nyanza were the Kuria called “watende’ by the Luo. They separated from the Gusii and Maragoli around the Nandi hills. Ogutu, one of the informants explained that the Gusii later settled on the Kisii Highlands in South Nyanza⁸.

Before the settlements of the Luo speaking groups in South Nyanza from Southern Sudan, in their movement up the Nile, they interacted with the people they encountered on the way. They learned and acquired new techniques of agriculture, livestock keeping and fishing. Ehret states that by 1800, Western Kenya was beginning to take on the ethnic and linguistic appearance of the present⁹. The Luo settled along the Lake shore due to their interest in lowlands. They included fishing among their economic activities alongside cultivation and

⁵ T.O. Ayot, *A History of the Luo of Western Kenya, 1590 – 1930*, Nairobi, Educational Research and Publications Limited. (ERAP), 1987, p. 95.

⁶ Ayot, *A History of the Luo. Western Kenya*, p. 95

⁷ B.A. Ogot, *Peoples of East Africa: History of the Southern Luo*, Vol.1, Migration and Settlement 1500 – 1900, (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1967), p. 192.

⁸ Ogutu, (OI), 30th August, 2013.

⁹ C. Ehret, ‘Aspects of Social and Economic Change in Western Kenya, A-D 500 – 1800’ In B.A. Ogot, *Kenya before 1900*, (Nairobi: EAPH, 1986), p. 8.

cattle keeping. It is important to note the nature of the social, economic and political organisation among the Luo fisherfolk.

2.3. The Development of Political Leadership in South Nyanza During the Pre- Colonial Period, 1700 – 1900

Ayot asserts that the first Luo groups reached South Nyanza between A.D. 1690 and 1700¹⁰. The following are some of the Luo people who had established themselves in South Nyanza. The JoKarachuonyo, Kanyadoto, Karungu, Kagan, Jo Chula, Kabwoch, Jo Kogelo and Kamagambo among others. The Luo groups settled in different areas called states. Each state had its own leader who exercised autonomous power. The Luo had no one paramount ruler (chief or king) but each sub- ethnic group had its own chief who administered his people independently¹¹. Several villages or homesteads formed sub- clans which grouped to form clans.

According to Ayot, the Luo of South Nyanza had ‘village democracy’ whereby the emergence of a leader was dictated by the prevailing political conditions at that given moment¹². One’s ability to fight, control and manage both external and internal forces that threatened the lives of the people qualified him to be a leader. In case of matters affecting the community, the clan elders consulted the leaders. They instilled law and order in the society. The chiefs were very powerful leaders with large families made up of a number of wives. The large number of wives was a sign of wealth and status. The chiefs were respected because they were also *Jobilo* (Diviners), they were able to foretell the future. In South Nyanza, the states depended on the ability and talent of its leaders.

The pre – colonial chiefs held three major positions of governance including political, religious and military responsibilities. The leaders protected the area through the use of *bilo* of bravery. *Bilo* (Charm) could be inherited or purchased from other places. People paid bulls to acquire *bilo*. *Bilo* could also be possessed by individuals for protection. These were not necessarily leaders. Ouma notes that in the cases of war between the states as was experienced in the traditional lives of Jo Karachuonyo and Kochia, peace was made by giving

¹⁰ T.O. Ayot “South Nyanza Historical Texts”, Vol. 1, pp. 160 – 171.

¹¹ V.J.P. Farler, (Archdeacon) ‘ Nature Routes in East Africa from Pangani to the Maasai County: Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, p. 744.

¹² H.O. Ayot, *A History of the Luo Abasuba of Western Kenya from A.D. 1760-1940*, (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1979), p. 133.

a beautiful daughter to the warring community in marriage. This strategy aided in ending the war and making peace. At times the war could involve two or more communities whereby one's defence and defeat depended on the powerful *bilo* of the state or community. Most times, the leaders consulted *jabilo* for more powerful medicine. This indicates that among the Luo of South Nyanza, one would become a leader owing to his power of *bilo*.

The role played by the leader, however, was undermined by the fact that his main duty was a spiritual function. The political power was only put in action where there was danger or war. This discussion affirms that no particular group governed the whole of South Nyanza. Each community therefore had a leader, elders, *Jobilo* and *Thuondi* (the brave). The Luo lived in scattered homes hence peace. In case the Maasai threatened them, they moved closer to each other in order to consolidate their strength.

Ochieng observes that when the whole society was threatened by an external force, the leader sought audience with the elders from each clan. The state was '*piny*' referring to world body composed of many territories¹³. The leaders and elders looked after the political and spiritual well being of the people. They advised from time to time. There were often wrangles among neighbours who lived along the border lines. Ochieng notes that the numbers of the Luo had increased immensely so that their military strength doubled¹⁴. He further explains that most areas in South Nyanza such as Karachuonyo and Kanyamwa developed their own political institutions which meant that they governed themselves. Each state had clans which developed their own political systems without any barrier.

There were cases where residents of two different areas combined forces to fight and drive away a common enemy. This is confirmed by Ayot. An example is given when the Kabondo were aided by the Abagusii to drive the Kipsigis beyond Minyore hills past the present day Sondu¹⁵. The strength and victory of each group depended on the preparation done by the *Jabilo* of that group. More powerful *Jobilo* were sought and consulted from distant areas. This led to the formation of alliances with the other states and enabled them to discover what others were capable of. These revealed how strong they were and whatever commodities they

¹³ W.R. Ochieng, *A History of the Kadimo Chiefdom of Yimbo in Western Kenya*, (Nairobi : EAPH, 1975), p. 38

¹⁴ W.R. Ochieng, *A Pre Colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya C.A.D. 1500– 1914* (Nairobi: E.A.L.B. 1976), p. 41. .

¹⁵ Ayot, *A History of the Luo of Western Kenya*, p. 137.

traded in and had for exchange. This discussion can be summed up by noting that, in South Nyanza, the use of *bilo* was one of the factors which led to the formation of states and defence systems.

Women who were recognised by the society could give elderly advice. The leaders held meetings to discuss matters concerning land disputes, wars and famines which affected their states. There were clan, sub-clans and family meetings which were held regularly. The women who acted as mid-wives and could prescribe medicine for children were also considered for leadership.

2.4. The Social Organisation of the People of South Nyanza, 1700 – 1900

In pre- colonial South Nyanza, the household was a basic unit of social organisation. The unit had a composition of husband, wife or wives and children. Each household formed part of the larger homestead that consisted of several households depending on the number of wives a man had.¹⁶ Traditionally, the wife owned the house although the husband built it. The homestead belonged to the husband who was referred to as the owner of the homestead (*wuondala*)¹⁷. Each wife managed her piece of land as allocated by the husband or father in law.

There was a clan elder who was consulted during the time of cultivation, planting weeding and harvesting. In each clan as cited by Ayot,¹⁸ the customary law of the society required the elder to spend the night in the house of his first wife. She would cultivate, weed, harvest and eat the produce before others did. Livestock were also allocated to the wives although they all belonged to the husband.

The pre- colonial Luo homestead was headed by a married man. In cases where the husband died, the widow was inherited by a close kinsman. Despite all these, the homestead still belonged to the deceased. Any children born after the death of a husband belonged to their father who had died. They would never be taken away even when the kinsman left. All wives had their own houses built in order of seniority of the wives. As observed by Butterman, the more the people who lived in a homestead, the better they could defend themselves when

¹⁶Hay, *Economic Change in Luo Land*, p. 24 , and Butterman, ‘ *Luo Social Formation in Change* ‘ p. 31.

¹⁷Okulo, (OI), 29th August, 2012.

¹⁸Ayot, *A History of the Luo Abasuba*, p. 103 .

attacked by an enemy¹⁹. During the pre- colonial period, South Nyanza just like neighbouring regions had a state of flux, slave raids, cattle raids and raids to acquire more land were common²⁰. As a strategy for survival, the large number of people in every family was vital.

Clans were formed from groups of related family members. They were separated from each other by free land. This was no man's land. Among the Luo of South Nyanza, the leader cared about the spiritual well being of his people and not the economic gains. The society had to agree with the ancestors for social and spiritual well being. The ancestors mediated between man and god. When a Luo family set up to put up a home, the ceremony involved carrying animal's skin, a stool and fire accompanied by his first born son. For peace and prosperity, the village elders offered sacrifices and assisted the leaders.

There were holy shrines where the community showed respect to the dead. Each family had a way of worshipping their gods. The dead were able to protect their people from harm. They could revenge against those who made their lives miserable while alive.

In the Luo Community were *Jodak* who either acquired land by marrying from a family by befriending or by just settling in an area where others settled earlier. *Jodak* displayed unquestionable loyalty and provided both political and military support to the land owners. For marriage and dowry, each person had his own cattle to offer. Odinga asserts that the less fortunate members of the society were taken care of by the relatives who took it as their responsibility to find a wife for them²¹. *Jodak* worked harder than the indigenous people. They were more prosperous where they dwelt. This caused the rest of the society to envy and even hate them. Because of village democracy that existed among the Luo, no leader could impose him/herself on the people. In case a family was aggrieved, they migrated and started life in a different place. People normally helped one another to erect houses. The settlers migrated at will. They (settlers) owned land and had no obligation to pay any land rent. Most of them practised agriculture and pastoralism.

¹⁹ Butterman, *Luo Social Formation in Change*, p. 32.

²⁰ Juma, (OI), 24th July, 2013.

²¹ O. Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, The Autobiography of Oginga Odinga (Portsmouth, US: Heinemann, 1967), p. 13.

2.5. Economic Organisation of South Nyanza People from 1700 – 1900

The people of South Nyanza practised trading activities although Hay argues that “it is meaningless to speak of traditional economy”²². Butterman on the other hand was bold enough to state that, “there were no markets in pre-colonial Karachuonyo”²³. She proposed the exchange consisting of items such as pots, fish, iron implements and weapons, medicine and dresses which were exchanged through barter trade. Despite the arguments, there were markets in pre- colonial South Nyanza although they were less developed.

The economy of households in South Nyanza and the Luo generally during the pre-colonial era was primarily a mixed economy consisting of livestock keeping, crop production, trade and fishing. Trading activities developed into the establishment of markets.

The traders came from the regions around. They adopted the barter system of exchange in which goods from certain communities were exchanged with the required ones from the neighbours. The market places enabled traders from different areas to meet. The people of South Nyanza also engaged in hunting, gathering, iron manufacture and handicrafts. Access to the means of production was gained through membership in the social unit. The distribution of resources was marked by exploitation patterns and the way in which the relations of production were produced.²⁴ For consumption, food was derived from land through cultivation of crops as well as grazing land for livestock.

Writing on the Abasuba, Ayot explains that when Luo women were married among the Abasuba, they always insisted that all the marriage ceremonies must be performed in Dholuo.²⁵ Women went far to trade and search for food especially during famine. The women exchanged salt and fish with grains. They played a unifying role in the society. They traded and linked Luo land with the outside world through cultural assimilation. Other items of trade at the Lake region included salt traded by the Uvinza Salt network. They traded from the islands to the mainland areas. More items of trade included iron implements such as hoes,

²² M. J. Hay, *Economic Change in Luo Land: Kowe 1900 – 1945*. PhD Thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 91.

²³ J. Butterman, “Pre colonial Economy of Karachuonyo”, University of Nairobi, Department of History, 1976 – 1977, p. 5.

²⁴ J.M. Butterman, *Luo Social Formation in Change: Karachuonyo and Kanyamkago 1800-1945*, Ph.D Thesis, Syracuse University, 1979.

²⁵ Ayot, *A History of the Luo Abasuba*, p. 169.

spears, spearheads, bracelets and earrings. These items originated from Buganda, Rwanda and Bunyore. The same items reached and were found in South Nyanza markets such as Sindo and Sori received traders from Central Nyanza, Tanzania and Uganda.

Hobley argues that the principal occupations of the Kavironondo were cultivation, cattle rearing and trading.²⁶ The trade enabled the households in South Nyanza to supplement their food requirements. Through trade, the people acquired other properties such as livestock, agricultural products and agricultural implements. According to Otieno and Opiyo who were interviewed, trade was more active during periods of famine.²⁷ As noted by Speke, trade between the occupants of the Eastern shores of Lake Victoria (South Nyanza) and the Arabs and Swahili as well as the salt trade between the Baganda and the people of South Nyanza pointed to the fact that trade was common in Luo land.²⁸ He further asserts that barter trade as a mode of exchange co-existed with the use of iron or beads as currency.²⁹ Informants noted that there were two forms of trade in pre-colonial south Nyanza, internal trade where the people traded amongst themselves and external trade where the people of South Nyanza traded with the adjacent communities such as the Abagusi in exchange of livestock, milk and fish for finger millet and sorghum. Ochieng pointed out that the pre-colonial Luo land trade on Lake Victoria was for a long time connected primarily with the fishing industry.³⁰ He noted that the trade items brought by the fishermen from Buganda to the Luo included ornaments like bangles, leg rings and earrings. Other items included bananas, salt and fish. In return the Baganda received fish, goats and sheep.

It is argued by Onduru that the Arab and Swahili coastal traders had for a long time engaged in human and ivory trade with the people of South Nyanza and the Luo up to the time of the abolition of slave trade and slavery in East Africa at the turn of the nineteenth century.³¹ This study indicates that the pre-colonial economy of South Nyanza was dynamic and not static.

²⁶Hobley, Kavironondo, *The Geographical Journal*, p. 369.

²⁷Otieno, (OI), 27th July, 2013 and Opiyo (OI), 27th July, 2013.

²⁸J.H. Speke, The Upper Basin of the Nile from Inspection and Information, *The Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. 33, 1863, pp. 326 – 327, 330.

²⁹Speke, *The Upper Basin of the Nile*, p. 322.

³⁰Ochieng, *An Outline History of Nyanza*, p 58.

³¹T.A. Onduru, ' Globalisation of a rural Economy: Case study of South Nyanza, Kenya, 1870 – 1920, A paper presented at an International Conference: Re thinking Worlds of Labour; Southern Africa Labour History in International Context at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 28th – 31st July, 2006, pp. 21 – 8.

2.6. Pastoralism

Majority of respondents agreed that in the past, pastoralism was superior to agriculture in South Nyanza.³² Pastoralism was a primary economic activity of the Luo who considered it superior to crop production.³³ Cattle were important as the medium of exchange and as a standard of value. The people of South Nyanza derived products such as meat, milk and blood from livestock. All these formed their diet although they could not slaughter animals for food without specific reasons. Slaughtering could only be done if an animal was sick, too old and if there was an important visitor or as a sacrifice to the ancestors to appease and receive blessings from them.

Cattle manure was used in plastering huts while cattle urine was used to preserve milk. Animal skins and hides were used as bedding, sandals and clothing. Cattle were regarded as a sign of wealth. One who had a large herd of cattle was respected in the community. He was regarded as a rich person. One who had no cattle could not pay dowry for his sons who in some cases ended up as bachelors.

Ochieng asserts that the people of South Nyanza exchanged livestock for Abagusii grain particularly finger millet and iron products such as spears, axes and arrows³⁴. Herding of the cattle was done alternately among the male members of the homestead. This was done on any free pasture without any restrictions since land was the property of the community. The role of women in relation to livestock was preparation of milk products such as *puoyochak* (a process of extracting butter from sour milk in a gourd). The butter was used as cooking fat as well as body cream.

2.7. Agricultural Organisation

By the 1870s agricultural production had become the dominant economic activity in South Nyanza. Most studies on Nyanza including those of Butterman, Ndege and Francis have attributed the shift to the outbreak of cattle epidemics of the 1880s and 1890s. The epidemics led to the shift from pastoralism to crop production.

The change in economy from pastoralism to crop production as an economic activity saw the women whose labour was initially underutilised become involved in crop production. Both

³²Juma, (OI), 23rd July, 2013

³³Muga, (OI), 23rd July, 2013

³⁴Ochieng "The Gusii before 1900 in B.A. Ogot, (ed) *Kenya before 1900*, pp. 101 – 102.

sexes were involved in agricultural work. However, women undertook more agricultural work than men.

Writing in the next decade on agricultural production among the Kavirondo (The Luo) Johnston observed:

Among the Kavirondo, both sexes work in the fields in a state of complete nudity
..... jalu(aluo) lives much by agriculture. They cultivate sorghum, sweet potatoes,
peas, eleusine, pumpkins, tobacco and hemp.³⁵

During the pre- colonial period, cultivation was done communally at no fee. Only food and traditional drinks were provided. One farm would be cultivated for a few years then left fallow for a period in order to regain fertility. Manure and sophisticated methods of farming were not used then.

2.8. The Management and Organisation of South Nyanza Fishing Industry, 1700 – 1900

The Luo of South Nyanza who lived near Lake Victoria during the pre- colonial time were expert fishermen. Commenting on the diet of the Luo, Johnston also noted that besides the flesh of fowls, cattle, sheep and goats, the Luo ate large quantities of fish which they obtained from rivers and above all from Lake Victoria³⁶. Fishing methods used included fish basket trap known as *ounga*. It was mainly used by women along the shores. It did not involve going into the deep waters of the Lake. While fishing in rivers, and ponds women also used this method.

The fish caught mainly supplemented the diet while the surplus was exchanged in trade. The fish caught included tilapia, barbel and catfish to less popular ones known as *okoko*, *fulu*, *ningu* and *omena*.³⁷ The Luo households participated in hunting and gathering as well to supplement their diet.

Before the colonial government set in place, the Luo practised various methods of fishing and resource management. Ochieng asserts that by 1850, the Lake region had a rich culture based on fishing. There was also simple crop production and increased craft specialisation³⁸. Lake Victoria has played a crucial role in the livelihood of many people. During the migration of the Luo into their current settlement in HomaBay County, their assimilation with Bantu

³⁵ H. Johnston, *The Uganda Protectorate*, Vol. 2. (London: Hutchinson and Company, 1902), p. 787.

³⁶ C.W. Hopley, 'Kavirondo'. *The Geographical Journal* pp. 365 – 366.

³⁷ Onyango, (OI), 24th July, 2013

³⁸ W.R. Ochieng. *A History of Kenya*, (London : Macmillan, 1985), p. 16.

civilisation which was based on fishing, influenced the Luo near the Lake. Bokea and Ikiara state that the fishing community had traditional and territorial rules and regulations which ensured that the fishery was exploited in a sustainable manner. Their argument was that the use of traditional fishing technology such as traps and spears exerted little fishing pressure on the resources.

They had rules that governed the use of nets, hooks, baits and canoes. The rules regulated and sustained the use of the Lake and fish resources. During the pre-colonial period, fishing was mainly done for subsistence. One interviewee, Otieno, points out that there were few market places where barter trade was done. Fish was exchanged with salt and grains from other communities.³⁹ Access to the Lake was restricted by clan elders although anyone participating in fisheries had to register according to traditional customs and laws. Ogotu confirms that only authorised persons were traditionally registered by the authorities (clan elders) to fish.⁴⁰

There were closed seasons when no one could fish. The clan elders controlled access to the Lake during closed season. This enabled fish to breed and the young ones grew to the desired sizes. Canoes were forbidden from going a certain distance into the Lake. Opira asserts that during the closed season, mainly February to June, fishers turned to crop farming.⁴¹ They needed to cultivate grains instead of waiting for open fishing season. The elders punished those who failed to recognise the closed season by banning them from fishing for many months. Odera observes that a total ban on fishing at certain times of the year was practised to protect heavily fished grounds and to enable heavily fished species to reproduce.

The Luo of South Nyanza controlled the methods of fishing so that a certain number of fish could be caught. The mesh size had to be approved by elders. Jansen agrees that the closed season and other restrictions allowed the resources to reproduce ensuring abundant catches.⁴² The fishers were skilled in terms of technology. They used the basket traps known as *likira*, *osadhi* or *ounga*, *tong* for spearing, *orindi* and *olowu* (pole fishing) as listed by Jansen.⁴³ The

³⁹Otieno, (OI), 19th June, 2013.

⁴⁰Otieno, (OI), 25th June, 2013.

⁴¹Otieno, (OI), 23rd March, 2013.

⁴²Odera, (OI), 28th August, 2012.

⁴³E. Jansen, Rich Fisheries, - Poor Fisherfolk Some preliminary observation about effects of trade and aid in The Lake Victoria Fisheries, (Nairobi, IUCN, 2000), p. 3.

fishing basket traps made from papyrus reeds were used to scoop and draw fish from the Lake.

Jonyo and Odhiambo argued that *tong* (spearing) was used as a fishing method. Iron smiths and carpenters made spears using steel and row hardwood pegs of various sizes⁴⁴. The steel and wood spears are known as *tong* and *bidhi* in the local language. This method was commonly used as night time fishing gear in Lake Victoria since 1802 as observed by Okeyo. The Luo fishers 'owned' the beaches around their homelands. There were no boundaries hindering movement on the Lake. As noted by Apiyo, fishers roamed freely catching fish because after all, the Lake belonged to God. She further explained that the people of the Lake moved freely upto the time the colonialists appeared⁴⁵. For night fishing as noted by Okeyo, light was required

The fishers used *otati* (herbs) which were dried and burnt to provide flames to light the fishing ground. They acted as torches. The flame was located a distance away from the fishing ground to avoid scaring the fish away. Incases where the fishing crafts moved at night without light, accidents occurred. As recorded by the Kenya National Archives on the 2nd of November, 1953, a collision occurred between a vessel and a fishing craft No. K.32C⁴⁶. It was a dark overcast night and the fishing craft was showing no light. This kind of act endangered the lives of the fishermen lying at anchor without any light.

Ogoye⁴⁷ asserts that fishing took place during late afternoon and at night because the herring fish (*dagaa*) and other indigenous species of fish were attracted by light at night⁴⁸. Some of the fish species in the Luo Lake fishery included: - *fuani, ningu, soga, okoko, suma and mumi*. To get deep into the Lake, canoes were used although they were few. Omondi states that one canoe could be used by upto seven people while each had his own net.⁴⁹ The fishers had their customs which guided them on sharing. Apart from canoes, the fishers shared their catches, they set the nets on the canoe together as a group. Pre- colonial fishing basically served the purpose of subsistence for those who lived near the shores of the Lake. However, marketing was done on the beach where buyers gathered from nearby villages. Each person

⁴⁴ Jonyo, (OI), 22nd June, 2013 and Odhiambo, (OI), 21st June, 2013.

⁴⁵ Apiyo, (OI), 22nd July, 2013.

⁴⁶ KNA DC/ KSM/1/25/2

⁴⁷ Ogoye, (OI), 29th August, 2012.

⁴⁸ KNA DC/KSM/1/25/2

⁴⁹ Omondi, (OI), 22nd August, 2012.

sold his or her fish. Since most trading centres were near the beaches, women played an active role in the fish trade. Apart from the trade, women had domestic chores as well as child rearing to handle.

2.9. Traditional Methods of Handling Fish, 1700 – 1900

Due to perishability of fish, it was necessary to either share a large catch or preserve it. The traditional methods used for preservation of fish are still used to date. Akeyo notes that for preservation, fish was split immediately and sundried into *obambla* (dried fish)⁵⁰. Other methods used were smoking, sun drying/salting. Osano asserts that preservation was done immediately the fish arrived at the beach⁵¹. As soon as the fish landed, they were removed from the canoe and handed over to the women to sort out, clean and scale out. This would be followed by any of the desired preservation methods. Dried fish survived for future consumption and aided the community in times of famine this was particularly done by women. Ogotu states that men assisted women in carrying logs of firewood and in felling big trees used for smoking fish⁵². In order to reach the market places, the traders walked to local and distant markets.

In cases where the markets were too far, the men took the fish to the markets on behalf of the women. The fishers organised themselves along households and kinship ties within the clan. Since the Luo settled along the Lake region, they learnt fishing from their neighbouring communities. The Gusii and Samia were farmers while the Luo were fishers. The neighbours traded with one another in exchange of fish for farm produce. The women were the basic fish traders who traded around their homes. They were compelled not to go far because of the nature of their duties and responsibilities in the homestead.

2.10 The Role of Women Fishers in South Nyanza, 1700 – 1900

Among the Luo of South Nyanza, the fishing culture was exclusively male. Ladies were forbidden from entering any canoe to go fishing. The women were protected due to physical demands, dangers and discomforts of Lake fishing. They had reproduction responsibilities of

⁵⁰ Akeyo, (OI), 20th June, 2012

⁵¹ Osano, (OI), 28th September, 2012

⁵² Osano, (OI), 28th September, 2012

child bearing, taboos against men and women working together as fishers since the fishermen often worked naked.

Women worked in the spheres of processing and sale of fish. Madanda asserted about neighbouring Uganda that ‘women were engaged mainly in the subsistence farming and household work and fish smoking was the core of women’s role’. This particularly involved small species like *omena* and *fulu*⁵³. Otieno an interviewee asserts that women were not allowed to go fishing. However, their role was in the preparation of fish. After landing, splitting, cleaning, scaling and sun drying, the women took the fish to the markets to trade. The women could only go to the shore after performing other household chores.

The labour roles were clearly defined for the men, women and the youth. Each had roles prescribed by the society. The women were forbidden from getting into the canoes during menstrual periods because they were considered unclean. According to Anyango, the women were considered dirty during this time of the month. They could get into the canoe only when the period was over⁵⁴. In a group interview, the male Luo fishers had a long list of don’ts (taboos) against women.

*Women boarding a fishing canoe could make the catch low. They could not touch Ngai (rowing paddle) since it brought misfortune. Women could not be naked while at the lake*⁵⁵

It was a taboo for men to have sex with their wives while going to fish. They were not allowed to greet women by shaking their hands if already set to go fishing as this was believed to cause a bad omen. Women were not allowed near the Lake during the loss of a husband or during pregnancy. All these taboos interfered with the economic status of the women particularly the widowed and pregnant who stayed indoors for upto one year. Women on the other hand feared crocodiles, hippos and dead bodies of human beings. In a situation where one died in the Lake, the body was buried at the shore. Whoever found the dead body got a reward of a goat and he/she had to go through a cleansing ceremony. In certain cases, the interviewees known as Alala and Adera argued that the taboos held no meaning. They pointed at the fact that women often went fishing. Where a family had no sons, both mothers

⁵³ M. Medard and D. Wilson, Changing Economic Problems for Women in the Nile Perch Fishing Communities of Lake Victoria. *Anthropologica*. Vol. 38. No. 2, 1996 pp 149 – 172.

⁵⁴ Opira, (OI), 27th August, 2013

⁵⁵ Oyundi, Ogol and Kojunju, (OI), 30th August, 2013.

and their daughters went fishing, smoked fish and took to the market⁵⁶. The women, however, fished near the shore using baskets. The male fishers who owned canoes had 10% profits from the catch. The women, on the other hand, were paid a standard weight in fish (one kilo) by every canoe they attended daily. The distribution of the catch created inequality between canoe owners and crew, men and women. The fishers therefore never benefited equally.

2.11 Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that the pre-colonial economy of South Nyanza was dynamic with noticeable changes. It was not static. It captured the evolution of indigenous technology, the role of kinship in relation to production, preservation methods and the role of women in pre-colonial fishing among the Luo. The homestead was the basic unit of production during this period. There was an outbreak of cattle epidemics which killed large herds of cattle in South Nyanza and Luoland in general. The outbreak led to a drastic shift in the economy of South Nyanza Luo. They replaced cattle keeping with crop production as their primary economic activity. It was noted that in most segmentary lineage organisations, were refugees (*Jodak*) and slaves (*misumbni*). In most cases, their labour was utilised by their hosts in fulfilling their economic activities. The elders controlled the surplus labour of the junior men in both agricultural production and cattle keeping.

The pre-colonial chiefs in South Nyanza were polygamous. Their large number of wives was a sign of wealth. The women promoted the growth of reproduction which impacted positively on production. The larger the number of people in a family, the more they were utilised in agricultural production. The strong chiefs controlled the neighbouring weak clans that became their subjects. The chief of the dominant clan easily exploited their labour.

The Luo migrated to the Lake region where they settled and some learnt fishing activities from their neighbours. The fishers had regulations and management skills that they employed before the coming of colonialism. Trade developed between the Luo fishers and the Gusii and Samia farmers. Since the trade did not involve travelling far from home, women played key role in fish trade. The Luo were skilled fishers who used basket traps, spears, lines, hooks, traps and nets. They got this technology from the Baganda neighbours. A clear cut division of labour among the men and women stipulated that while men went far into the Lake, the

⁵⁶ Alala and Adera, (OI), 24th August, 2012.

women waited for fish to be brought to the shore /landing bay for them to split, clean, dry, salt and smoke. The Luo fishers did sun drying, splitting and smoking as the main methods of fish preservation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE COLONIAL TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER ROLES UPTO 1945

3.1. Overview

The beginning of July 1895, marked the onset of the British colonial administration of Kenya. It was then known as the East Africa Protectorate. In June 1894, as indicated by Ochieng, the British declared a protectorate over Buganda and this was intended to include what was called Kisumu and Naivasha Districts¹. In 1901, the Uganda railway reached Kisumu while in 1902, the Eastern Province of Uganda was transferred to the East Africa Protectorate. This area included the regions that currently form Western, Nyanza and Rift Valley. The protectorate's Commissioner Sir Charles Elliot argued that Africans had not yet accepted colonial rule and Matson observes that between 1900 and 1908, punitive expeditions were carried out against communities that resisted British rule such as the Nandi, Embu, Abagusii, Kipsigis, Bukusu and Kabras².

By 1903, South Nyanza and Kisii along with all the areas that had been amalgamated to form the Eastern Province of Uganda were placed under British East Africa Protectorate, later called Kenya³. The rest of Luoland had been brought under British colonial rule as early as 1900. The pre-colonial characteristics of the people of South Nyanza which included migration and pastoral ways of life had to be converted into an administrative system of a settled agricultural population. As pointed out by Ogot, the colonial government imposed on the people of South Nyanza a centralised system of rule. This new system jarred against the pre-colonial segmentary political system.⁴ This chapter illustrates how the imposition of British colonial rule on the people of South Nyanza partly incorporated their pre-colonial economy into colonial capitalism. This idea took effect when the colonial government introduced taxation for households in South Nyanza. They paid through cash crop production, sale of livestock or wage (forced) labour. The British conquest of South Nyanza however could be described as having been peaceful.

¹Ochieng, *History of the Gusii* p. 221.

²A.T. Matson, Uganda's Old Eastern Province and East Africa's Federal Capital, *Uganda Journal*. XXII, 1958, pp. 46 – 47.

³W.R. Ochieng, *History of the Gusii*, p. 221.

⁴B.A. Ogot, *British Administration in Central Nyanza*, p. 253.

3.2. Resistance of the People of South Nyanza against the British Colonialists

The first Europeans to visit South Nyanza were Henry Morton Stanley in 1877 and Colonel George Maney. Their visit faced great hostility from the local people although they managed to pave the way for others to follow. As recorded in the DCs report, Boughton Knight's visit to Karungu in August, 1903, was designated to his being the Acting District Commissioner of South Nyanza known in those days as South Kavirono District⁵. The people of Karungu had organised to resist the colonial masters from invading their land. The Karungu kept resisting the Europeans until about eight of them were killed.

Although Ochieng claims that the Karungu people in South Nyanza resisted the British occupation, there is no colonial administrative record corroborating this⁶. The only form of resistance was rejecting the British colonial administrators. The people who had negative attitude towards them refused to co-operate with the colonialists on matters of Christianity, Western education and the new agricultural methods which the colonial government introduced. All communities that neglected the changes brought by the colonial administrators lagged behind while those that co-operated made tremendous changes in terms of development.

Hobley notes that the only consistent division of opinion with regard to war and peace that the British colonial administration observed in Nyanza societies was between the generations. Elders were prone to pass the blame for conflict on the impetuosity of their warriors⁷. In South Nyanza, the elders' opinion different from the youth during the occupation by the British hence the division. Lonsdale, however, viewed the blame games as excuses⁸. The Kadem and Kanyamkago also opposed the interference by the colonial rulers. They fought the Europeans but could not match the sophisticated weapons by the white man.

In 1904, Horne was appointed the District Commissioner after the death of Knight. He made contracts with the German representatives of Tanzania and together they reaffirmed the

⁵ KNA DC/KSI/3/2/1907- 1924

⁶ Ochieng, *An outline History of Nyanza*, p. 85.

⁷ KNA DC/KSI/3/4, 1930 – 1940

⁸ J. Lonsdale, and B. Berman. Coping with Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895 – 1914, *Journal of African History*. Vol. 20. No. 4 1979 pp. 487 – 506.

Anglo German border by drawing an “artificial line”.⁹ Their interest in Kenya was driven by the common border they shared with Tanzania.

3.3 The People of South Nyanza who co-operated with the Colonial Government

In South Nyanza, the *Jobilo*, diviners and prophets foretold of the coming of the whites way before the ‘red strangers’ (as they referred to them) arrived in Luoland. The strangers, as prophesied, would come from the sea. The *Jobilo* (diviners) warned that once these ‘strangers’ (whites) arrived, people would never try to fight them because they had superior weapons in contrast to the ones that the Luo possessed”. Most communities co-operated with the British colonialists and never engaged them in futile armed resistance because after all they had no rifles and guns to match them.

Hodges remarked:”if the prophecy and advice had been passed upon reports from the early Arabs and Swahili traders from the Coast, this may have meant that the *jobilo* thought resistance was inadvisable towards people of apparently incalculable powers¹⁰. This indicates that the Luo had diviners who could foretell the future. Johnson observed that chief Odua, when a young man, had prophesied about the coming of a white man, and that this prophecy was uttered at a time when no white man had entered the country¹¹. Gor Ogalo being a very popular diviner in South Nyanza warned people against fighting the whites. Hopley notes that he was appointed the first colonial chief of Kanyamwa and later one of the paramount chiefs of South Nyanza¹². Several *jobilo* of the time, warned against confrontations of war against the British. After realising that the Europeans were there to stay, most leaders in South Nyanza benefited by co-operating with the colonial government. The chiefs took advantage of the whites.

Ezekiel Kasuku of Gwasi for example co-operated with the colonial government. He was appointed as a court interpreter in 1907¹³. He translated Luo language into English at the

⁹C.W. Hopley, to H.M. Commissioner, 15th February, 1896: E.S.A, a 4/4/ Same to Same 3rd August, 1898 (a 4/12); and April 1900 (a 4/28) cited in Lonsdale, J.M. ‘The Politics of Conquest: pp. 853 – 854

¹⁰ Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, p. 1.

¹¹ G.W.T. Hodges; *African Response to European Role in Kenya to 1914*; in Ogot, B.A. (Ed.) *Hyadith 3*; (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), p. 89

¹² C.W.Hopley, *Anthropological Studies in Kavirondo and Nandi*; *The Journal of Anthropological Institute of South Kavirondo District Annual Report*, DC/KSI/1/2, 1913 – 1923, 14 – 4 1914, p. 5.

¹³ KNA South Kavirondo District; *Character of Chiefs*, DC/KSI/3/1, 199 2 = 1937, 24 – 11 – 1937, p. 17.

District Headquarters in Kisii¹⁴. In 1926, Kasuku stated that he had over 1,000 heads of cattle. He ran South Kavirondo and practically nothing could be done in the district without his approval. All chiefs were under his influence and were said to pay him a retaining fee¹⁵. Kasuku did well as a chief recruiter. He earned up to five rupees per recruit. In South Nyanza, the leaders appointed as chiefs acquired more powers, status and wealth in the new political system

3.4. Colonial Leadership

In order to administer the wide area, the British colonial government divided Kenya into provinces. They had expatriate Provincial Commissioners who governed each province. The provinces were divided into districts which were headed by District Commissioners. Districts were further subdivided into divisions and lastly the divisions into locations under the leadership of African chiefs.

In July, 1894, a protectorate was declared over Uganda. The region to the east of Lake Victoria as far as Naivasha was formally brought under British colonial rule. The region was known as the Eastern Province of Uganda protectorate, to which South Nyanza belonged. The province was divided into four districts of Nandi, Mau, Baringo and Suk. South Nyanza fell within Nandi District. Matson notes that the district comprised three divisions; Nandi proper, South Kavirondo and Ugaya¹⁶. Although the divisions were made, the colonial administrators had little contact with the people of South Nyanza between 1894 and 1903. The nearest administrative station was the provincial headquarters at Kisumu.

The British colonial administration of South Nyanza effectively commenced in January, 1903. Karungu was made the district headquarters. Lonsdale asserts that the Karungu became very hostile although they were defeated. This led to the appointment of the first colonial chief of the area known as Omuga.¹⁷ The Karungu people reacted negatively to the European colonial rule. However, the headquarters built at Karungu enabled the white man to tour the area from which they acquired land and the required labourers by force.

¹⁴ KNA, South Kavirondo District Annual Report: Early Days in Kisii, DC/KSI/3/7, 1912, p. 5.

¹⁵ KNA South Kavirondo District Annual Report: Early Days in Kisii DC/KSI/3/7, 1912, pp. 5 – 6: Van Zwanberg, R.M.A. Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya, p. 111.

¹⁶ Tignore, *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya* pp. 64 – 65.

¹⁷ Lonsdale, The Politics of Conquest, *The Historical Journal*. pp. 853 – 854.

An acting District Commissioner, Knight, was posted to Karungu in August 1903 as the District Commissioner for South Kavirondo.¹⁸ The Karungu station was established to check on German encroachment of South Nyanza.¹⁹ The Germans, by then had colonised the current Republic of Tanzania which shared borders with South Nyanza, an area that the British had yet to bring under their political control. The locations of South Nyanza were part of Kisumu District until 1908 when the three locations were transferred to South Nyanza District. The Europeans expected Karungu to be a watch tower which would safeguard their interests in the area. The British realised that Karungu was not strategically placed to enable administration of the area since it was not centrally located. Northcote, an assistant collector in-charge of Karungu from October 1904 to September 1906 observed:

Karungu (Then district headquarter for Ugaya) is extremely ill adapted for a trade centre: the reason for its position is its vicinity to the German border. Again it is difficult to work the district from the station, more especially as the part (Kisii) which requires the most supervision is almost furthest removed.²⁰

The British colonial administrators wanted to be close to the Abagusii (the Kisii) as they continued resisting colonial rule. The British aimed at defeating them. The district headquarters was therefore transferred from Karungu to Kisii in 1907. Kisii was also centrally located. Maxon points out that the Abagusii raided daily the Kavirondo (Luo of South Nyanza) along their borders²¹. The British could not ignore regular attacks on the people who were under their protection. In 1907, the site for the district headquarters was identified in Kisii and construction work started under the supervision of the District Commissioner, Northcote²². The Abagusii of Kitutu continued with their cattle raids. The District Commissioner Northcote was speared by an Abagusii man, Otenyo who had stolen money from Swahili traders. During investigation by the DC, Northcote got struck. This led to a British military expedition against the Abagusii. The Abagusii killed two policemen, an Indian trader and two Luo porters.

¹⁸ KNA, Nyanza Province, PC/NZA.1910-1911, p. 12: South Kavirondo Annual Report, Kisii/Ugaya District: DC/KSI/1/1, 1908 – 1912.

¹⁹ KNA, South Kavirondo District: DC/KSI/3/2: Histories and Customs of Kisii and Luo Between 1911 – 1924

²⁰ KNA, Report on the Province of Kisumu for the year 1903 – 1906 pp. 15 – 16: Maxon . R.M. *Conflict and Accommodation in Western Kenya: The Gusii and the British, 1907 – 1963*(London: Associated University Press, 1989), p. 30.

²¹ Maxon, *Conflict and Accommodation in Western Kenya*, 1989, p. 30.

²² Wipper, *Rural Rebels*, p. 26.

The Abagusii were defeated and this marked the end of Abagusii armed resistance against British colonial rule. Chiefs were appointed to link the local population and the colonial administration. They were the direct agents of the government in the locations. They maintained the spirit of loyalty to the British crown and to inculcate such spirit to see that all lawful orders were obeyed by the African inhabitants of his location. KNA Ordinance of 1912 reports that, It was the chief's duty to collect tax in his location... He must take a continuous personal interest in the collection of tax²³.

To maintain order, the chiefs could employ others to assist them. They restricted the brewing of liquor, planting of poisonous plants and guarded against the carrying of arms. The chiefs mainly maintained order, they kept the roads in their locations clear and made sure there were no riots. Chiefs had power to recruit labour for various purposes. Failure to take orders from a chief resulted in a fine not exceeding 75 rupees or two months in prison²⁴. The labour was forced and free with no pay. Since the population of South Nyanza people was large, the local administration included the "native tribunal and the local native councils". These bodies were employed on the strength of having governed the African people before colonial rule.

The 1897 Native Court Ordinance enjoined the government to supervise the judicial activities of tribunal authorities, allowing them to employ customary law, subject to the restriction that punishment was not to be inhumane or convictions obtained through witchcraft, torture or "barbarious" practices.²⁵ As in the pre-colonial times, the council of elders that arbitrated and the Luo chiefs were often more powerful than the colonial chiefs.²⁶ Hopley made this observation which threatened the colonial administrators.

The colonial administrators disarmed the youth who engaged in fights, wars and hostilities. They turned to migrant wage labour after the establishment of colonial rule. Other youths participated in economic activities such as trade, livestock and cash-crop production. The colonial government faced hostile reactions hence their reinforced power to support the

²³ KNA, Ordinance to Make Provision in Regard to Powers and Duties of Native Chiefs, No. 22, October 16, 1912, Pro Co. 633 /3/

²⁴ KNA, Ordinance No. 22 October, 1912, PRO Co. 633 /3.

²⁵ KNA, Ordinance No. 22, October, 16, 1912, PRO Co. 633/3

²⁶ C.W. Hopley, "British East Africa' Anthropological Studies of Kavirondo and Nandi", *The Journal of Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 332.

elders. The chiefs and elders who had worked hand in hand in setting their respective jurisdiction in the pre-colonial period got marginalised by the established colonial rule. Being illiterate, the elders could not fit in the new administration system. Their positions were therefore occupied by the youth who had acquired a bit of Western Education and European cultures. The power held by the pre- colonial chiefs was minimal.

Hobley noted that chiefs were often more powerful in pre-colonial times as a result of multiple marriages and the ability to deploy armed force.²⁷ In the colonial government, chiefs were appointed to the government as opposed to the pre- colonial period where chieftancy was inherited. Chiefs were answerable to their employer. The powers they held during pre-colonial times were reduced although the report records that the colonial government opted to revive the powers of the elders on the tribunal.²⁸ Chiefs earned no respect from their subjects because they exploited them and were imposed on the people of South Nyanza by the British colonialists.

3.5. Taxation

In 1900, the hut tax regulation was passed. Hay observes that in Kenya, the British colonial government introduced taxation as a means of generating revenue to run the colonial state. It also aimed at forcing Africans to leave their rural homes to seek wage employment²⁹. The colonial government used colonial taxation to mobilize workers without engaging force. In order to pay their taxes, the local people had to provide labour other than their traditional economy. The hut tax was instituted under the Native Administration Ordinance of 1900. Hut tax was prompted by the construction of the Uganda Railway which reached Kisumu in 1901 as recorded in the DC's report³⁰. The tax was to make the colonised people pay for the maintenance of the railway and to make the colony self reliant. It had to benefit the whole country. Most studies on Nyanza have erroneously pointed out that taxes were first levied in Nyanza in 1900.³¹ Homes in South Nyanza paid hut tax from 1903 when the area was colonised.

²⁷ Hobley, "British East Africa", p. 332.

²⁸ KNA, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, DC/KSI/1/1, 1908, - 1912, p. 158.

²⁹ Hay, *Economic Change in Luo Land*, p. 161.

³⁰ KNA DC 5 KSI /3/3 1903-1911

³¹ Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, p. 18.

In 1910, a new tax was added, a poll tax, which was aimed at adult males who were not hut owners³². These payers of poll tax were the “warrior class” who were mainly the youth. Ordinance 40 of 1915 raised the rate to 5 rupees and the general rate jumped to 10 rupees in 1920 – almost double an unskilled worker’s monthly wage³³. Although households paid hut taxes, the people of South Nyanza evaded the tax payment either by burning the huts that were not needed or by removing grass from the roofs which they repaired as soon as the collection of tax ended³⁴.

In the Annual Report for 1912, Crampton notes that the natives have reduced the numbers of “*simba*” (a Luo word for bachelor’s hut). They formerly had several huts in each village, but they have now realised that it costs them less to have only one large one³⁵. The DC further explained how different ethnic groups such as the Kuria, Maasai among others evaded paying taxes by crossing the border to stay with their relatives during tax collection period³⁶. All huts were levied as women also paid tax. Whenever tax payment failed, the husband was jailed. The hardships faced in the payment of hut tax made the introduction of agricultural crops inevitable.

3.6. The introduction of Cash Crops

The production of cash crops introduced by the colonialists impacted greatly on the local people. It promoted agrarian commercialisation. Most of the households in the colonised societies of South Nyanza earned their living from cash crop production. As Ndege observes, the colonial authorities introduced new seeds, iron hoes and ploughs, mills for the grinding of maize and separators for the preparation of ghee³⁷. The establishment of colonial administration in South Nyanza promoted vast agricultural production in the area. The people of South Nyanza had to meet the new colonial demands including taxation, purchasing of imported goods and western education.

³² KNA, East Africa Protectorate: DC/KSI/5/5, 1910, p. 6, Memoranda for Provincial and District Commissioners.

³³ Hay, *Economic Change in Luo Land*, p. 161.

³⁴ Omolo, (OI), 28th September, 2013.

³⁵ KNA, South Kavirondo Annual Report, Kisii /Ngaya District, DC/KSI/1/1, 1908 – 1912, p. 6.

³⁶ Otero, (OI), 14th September, 2013.

³⁷ P. Ndege, ‘Struggles for the Market: The Political Economy of Commodity Production and Trade in Western Kenya, 1929-1939. (PhD Thesis, West Virginia University, 1993). pp 292 – 306.

By 1900, cotton and groundnut seeds had been circulated to the people of South Nyanza such as the Kanyada, Karachuonyo and Kanyamwa. Simsim and rice were grown in Lambwe valley³⁸. As stated in the DC's report, there were no agricultural officials to supervise the experiments on agricultural products. For example, an irrigation scheme had been proposed for River Awach for the purpose of producing large quantities of groundnuts for export³⁹. The Scheme never got off the ground. In South Nyanza, by 1911, the cash crop that was cultivated and had the best market value was sesame (sim – sim). From 1907 upto the outbreak of the First World War, sesame was the main agricultural produce from South Nyanza. It was exported to Marseilles and other European ports. It was used to manufacture soap and edible fat⁴⁰.

Households in South Nyanza embraced the production of sesame to meet the tax expenses rather than sell their livestock to pay the taxes. According to Omondi an interviewee, the local people treasured livestock which manifested wealth⁴¹. The seeds were provided to the chiefs and headmen to distribute to the people within their administrative areas. Most crops such as cotton and groundnuts were grown by the people of South Nyanza. However, they faced many challenges. The colonial administrators lacked knowledge about the suitability of the climate that would favour the production of the new crops introduced. There was shortage of rainfall and lack of roads. They never understood the quality of soil suitable for cultivation of different crops. Therefore, they could not advise the local people accordingly. Upto the First World War, only one assistant agricultural officer had been appointed for the whole province. The lone assistant from the economic plant section served in South Nyanza District, an area that was too vast for one agricultural official.⁴²

The three main trading parts in South Nyanza District were Homa Bay, Kendu Bay and Karungu Bay between 1909 and 1912. The whole export trade was controlled by the two firms run by Alidina Visram and Max Klenin. These firms bought up all the produce from other traders at Homabay and exported it.⁴³

³⁸ KNA DC 5 KSI/3/3 1903 – 1911

³⁹ Ibid

⁴⁰ KNA, Kisumu Province, AR, December, 1908, Sum 2801.

⁴¹ Omondi, (IO), 14th July, 2013.

⁴² KNA, Nyanza Province, East Africa Protectorate, PC/NZA/1/5,/910, p. 34.

⁴³ KNAdc/ksi/1/11911-1912.

Homa Bay was the most productive of the three ports. Upto 1912, it continued to export hides and calf skins, goat skins, sheep skins, simsim, groundnuts, maize, *mutama*, *wimbi*, *mung* (*choroko*), *kunde*, beans, wheat, ghee and tobacco. The trading centres which developed were Rangwe, Oyugis, Migori and Riana trading centres.⁴⁴ Indians dominated the trade in South Nyanza. Some items were imported for sale to the people. These included singlets from Germany, *kaniki* and *thread* from Bombay. All kinds of items were imported though the luxuries did not benefit the people who did not gain much from their product. Most of it went into hut taxation.

The trade advanced during the colonial period where traders resorted to modern means of transport unlike the transportation of goods by carrying on their heads. Pearse noted that the people of South Nyanza failed to see the value of cash economy, what they produced did not in any way offer them significant economic changes and so they chose “to cling to subsistence agriculture for security.”⁴⁵

To boost agricultural production in South Nyanza, the colonial administration instituted an agricultural school at Kisii by 1914. Bulls were trained to plough the land. This enhanced ploughing of large areas of farms although the owners of the bulls felt that the bulls were mistreated. Despite the challenges and changes, in the DC’s report of 1910, Hemestead noted that cultivated produce was considerable on the increase when compared with the previous year, and business in this connection had generally been quite satisfactory.⁴⁶

3.7. Wage Labour

As this study indicates, South Nyanza never adopted production of a cash crop upon which households could rely as a major source of income. Cooper argues that in parts of Africa, colonisation drove rural dwellers into deepening poverty sometimes as a deliberate policy to create “labour reserves” where people had little alternative to selling their labour cheaply. Sometimes, as a result of actions, this made difficult ecosystems worse⁴⁷. The colonial rule in South Nyanza therefore established a new economic activity in South Nyanza. As Hay notes,

⁴⁴ KNA, South Kavirondo District Annual Report DC/KSI/1/2, 1913 – 1923, Annual Report, 10 – 4 – 1915, p. 6.

⁴⁵ A. Pearse, “Metropolis and Peasant: Expansion of the Urban Industrial Complex and the changing Rural Structure in Peasants and Peasant Societies, T/ Shanin (Baltimore: Penguin Education, 1971), p. 73.

⁴⁶ KNA, Nyanza Province Annual Report, PC/NZA, 1/5, 1910, p. 6.

⁴⁷ Cooper, Africa since 1940. p. 21.

the British colonial government in Kenya wanted to create a “White man’s Country”⁴⁸ hence the introduction of migrant wage labour.

Hay further explains that after 1908, the development of labour intensive plantation agriculture in the highlands, road and railway construction, and the increasing number of sportsmen who needed porters, led to increased demands for labour. To achieve their objective, the European settlers reduced the land the locals cultivated, increased taxation for Africans, engaged in contract labour with penalty for infringement and the government supported a policy that forced the Africans to engage in wage labour.

After colonising South Nyanza, there were great demands for labour to construct the roads which could aid the transportation of commodities from the interior to the towns. The first road constructed in South Nyanza was from Kisii to Kendu Bay, which was completed in 1909⁴⁹. Since the infrastructure had not been established to connect South Nyanza to Kisumu, the wage labour provided on the railway was by the people from Kisumu and North Kavirondo districts who could reach Kisumu. The employment figures show that by 1906, the railway employed 650 and the Public Works Department 1,450⁵⁰. None was from South Nyanza however, Northcote, the DC of South Kavirondo observed that:

*The Jaluo (the Luo) are now employed as soldiers, sailors, sawyers, police, masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, gardeners, and boys. The last five to six years, they have shown great progress.*⁵¹

During the rainy seasons, however, the people preferred to do family cultivation rather than leave their own country. The 1913 Nyanza Province Annual Report noted that “Native” labour “has had many nasty knocks when employed down country”. The death cases discouraged the labourers. They suffered from climatic changes, lack of adequate local foods and lack of language for communication.

⁴⁸ Hay, *Economic Change in Luo Land*, Kowe, p. 159.

⁴⁹ KNA, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, DC/KSI/1/1, 5TH October, 1908, p. 5.

⁵⁰ KNA Report on the Province of Kisumu for the year 1903 – 1906, p. 18.

⁵¹ G.A.S. Northcote, The Nilotic Kavirondo, *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 66.

3.8. Education

By the year 1906, western education had been introduced in South Nyanza. It was introduced by the Christian Missionaries who established mission stations in various places in the area. The Seventh Day Adventists (SDA)⁵² were the first missionaries in this area. Adventism was founded by Pastor A.A. Carscallen at Gendia Mission Station in Karachuonyo Location. Apart from erecting a church, they also built a school, which by 1912 had enrolled 91 pupils, 79 boys and 12 girls.⁵³ The aim of the church was to convert or do evangelistic work through education followed by industrial training.

The SDA Church taught reading, writing, arithmetic and geography. This was done in the Luo language. By 1913, the mission had translated St. Mathews into the local language, Dholuo. Those who got educated at Gendia served in the local administration as clerks, market masters, teachers and chiefs among others. The church emphasised agriculture to improve cultivation. The local people would do this at home as opposed to the colonial administration that wanted people to go out on migrant wage labour.

Just as the SDA Christians, Hay argues that from the start, the Church Missionary Society (CMS) school at Maseno emphasised the virtues of hard work and agricultural training as well as religious instruction⁵⁴. In other areas, the CMS did not discourage its converts from engaging in wage labour. The other mission in South Nyanza was the Roman Catholic Mill Hill Fathers who established a mission station at Nyabururu in Kisii in 1911⁵⁵. Like the CMS and SDA the Catholic Fathers also engaged in converting the local population to Christianity and spreading western education. By 1915, the Roman Catholic and Seventh Day Adventists had opened more stations (missions) and schools. Christianity had their converts dress decently. It preached against cultural practices such as polygamy, wife inheritance and anti-Christian practices.

In South Nyanza, the people did not rise up in arms against the British but they responded negatively in rejection to most of the new policies. The Nomiya Luo Mission and the cult of Mumbo (Mumboism) arose in protest to what the locals termed “punishment”. These

⁵² KNA, DC/KSI/3/4

⁵³ KNA, Pastor A. A. Carscallen, *History of Seventh Day Adventist*, KSI/2

⁵⁴ J.M. Hay, Luo Women and Economic Change during the colonial Period in Hafkin J.N and Bay, E. (eds), *Women in Africa: Studies in Social and Economic change* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 99.

⁵⁵ KNA, *History of South Kavirondo District*, Kisii

movements are normally viewed as early forms of nationalism. The converts rejected the “European look”. The Karachuonyo people who rejected the colonial rule and were accused of being in the cult of Mumboism were forced to provide labour on the Homa Bay- Kendu Bay road.

3.9 Colonial Policy on Fishing and the New Gear

The period from 1902 onwards witnessed the consolidation of colonial administration through the establishment of a provincial administration that marked the control of African productivity including the fisheries. The British Office encouraged the Kenyan protectorate to be self reliant. The British treasury wanted ways of recovering 5 ½ million pounds it had sunk into the Kenya–Uganda Railway. After the protectorate and the Kenya -Uganda Railway paid; there was no freight for the railway to carry. The number of European farmers increased in order to control tax, labour and land. Eventually, they managed the fishing industry.

The flaxgill net was introduced for use in Lake Victoria by a Scandinavian researcher P.M. Aarup who had been commissioned by the British Government⁵⁶. This technological transformation followed several experiments between 1905 and 1908. *The East African (EA) Standard* reported that Aarup went on with the experiment on different sizes of mesh and different thickness and colours of twine until he arrived at the 5 – inch flax gillnet⁵⁷. The net caught the ‘prime fishes’ only and not the juvenile fish. The new net saw an influx of more fishermen to the industry. This net is still used to date. An interviewee indicates that the flax gillnet made fishing easier. It enabled them to catch lots of fish within a short time⁵⁸. More gillnets of different sizes were three inches, 2.5, and one inch mesh nets. The new net and the railway line enabled the trade in fresh fish in Nairobi. As usual, the colonial administration forced the fishers to use the new nets. The indigenous nets used earlier never exploited the fish. They caught fish in minimal numbers as compared to the quantity caught by the flax gillnets.

The African ‘papyrus nest (*osero*) were still used alongside the five inch gill net which was commonly used by the Indian businessmen. According to one interviewee Oyugi, before the

⁵⁶ The East African Standard of 10th November, 1927 Reports that Aarup, was a well known researcher.

⁵⁷ The East African Standard, 10th November, 1927

⁵⁸ Opira, (IO), 14th August, 2013.

new nets appeared, the Luo had their own nets made of reeds and papyrus. He explains that they never caught underage fish. Theirs was majorly fish for subsistence. Fish provides protein to the communities surrounding the Lake and is a necessity for family health. Otieno, an interviewee, notes that their local nets caught bigger fish such as *okoko* and *ningu*. They took a short time catching fish as they returned smaller ones to the lake.

Okidi points out that the first flaxgill net was followed by the beach seine.⁵⁹ It led to greatly expanded markets while the coming of the railway line from Mombasa and Nairobi to Kisumu in 1901 generated rapid growth and development in the fishing industry. Fish was harvested in large amounts and could not be handled by locals alone hence exportation to regional and international markets. Abila notes that fishing developed more rapidly as there was more demand for cash incomes by indigenous Kenyans after the colonial government introduced hut taxes in 1900 and poll taxes in 1910. The people had to get employed somehow to cope with the change.

As more fishers adopted the new gear, it soon became clear to policy makers that the use of the five inches net would impact negatively on the resource. Aseto and Ong'ang'a assert that the resident European provincial administrators began to realise that the supply of fish in the Lake town of Kisumu and its environs was no longer sufficient due to the new flaxgill net⁶⁰. The crocodiles and hippos also interfered with the nets.

3.10 The Colonial Administration and Fishing

The British Colonial government established more restrictive fishing policies and programmes. The orders came from the colonial office in London to Kenya. The delay in communication between the London office and the colonial state led to “contradiction of articulation” as observed by Berman and Lonsdale⁶¹. This disabled the development of both peasant and settler economies. Pim notes that the colonial policies were intended to serve the declared aim of raising the standards of income and that of living of the colonial people. Since the colonial state preferred their own systems, Pim further contends that peasant farmers could be encouraged to enhance their productivity by receiving training, scientific

⁵⁹ Okidi, Fishery Resources

⁶⁰ O. Aseto, and O. Ongong'a, Lake Victoria (Kenya) and its Environs Resources, Opportunities and challenges. OSIENALA (Friends of Lake Victoria), Kisumu, Kenya. 2003.

⁶¹ B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa*, Book two (London: James Currey), p. 104.

assistance, adequate security of tenure and credit facilities. This could raise their standard of production to a level comparable with that in more advanced agricultural countries.⁶²

In Kenya, however, one of the policies was the improvement of crop and fish varieties. The new policy included the introduction of new varieties of crops and animals to replace the local ones the Africans had used earlier. In the effort to support small farmers by introducing new species and products the trout (small) fish species were introduced into Kenyan rivers and Lakes. The first British settlers believed that trout could do better in Kenya due to climatic conditions that prevailed in the central Kenyan highlands that were similar to those in the United Kingdom. The first and earliest successful stocking was done on the River Gura in Central Kenya⁶³. A new species of rainbow trout was brought to Kenya in 1912. The fish did well in central Kenya but not in the climatic conditions of the Lake Victoria region. The Kenyan fishers preferred the indigenous fish species to trout.

Although Ainsworth placed a high priority on economic development⁶⁴, he only encouraged the introduction of Indian and European settlers. In sidelining the African peasant farmers, no substantial assistance was given to African fishers due to lack of interest in the development of fishing resources in the Lake region.

According to Kalule and Ohwayo, by 1916, the new nets and fishing skills, coupled with growth of a few urban centres and improved communication around the Lake shore, led to the commercialization of fishing on the Lake shore⁶⁵. Wilson asserts that, as a result of the railroad, fish from the Lake became an important source of food for railway workers⁶⁶. By 1920, the fish stores had been placed at Port Victoria. Long distance trade also began to expand. The Indians introduced the use of currency (rupee), the dukas (shops) and promoted high demand for fish and other commodities. The use of the rupee transited the barter trade to currency trade.

⁶² A. Pim, *Colonial Agricultural Production* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946).

⁶³ KNA, KP/8/22 Trout Committee Report of 1937. Nairobi.

⁶⁴ R.M. Maxon and A. John, *The Making of Kenya* (USA: University Press of America Inc. 1980), pp. 186-265.

⁶⁵ N. Kalule and O. Ohwayo, *Conservation and improvement of the stocks of the originally most important Lake Victoria Tilapia in LVEMP*, knowledge and experiences gained from Managing the Lake Victoria Ecosystems, (Nairobi and Kampala: World Bank, 2005). p. 287.

⁶⁶ D. Wilson, *The Global in the Local: The Environmental State and the Management of the Nile Perch Fishery on Lake Victoria* "In *The Environmental State under Pressure*, Vol. 10, p. 171 – 192.

One informant, Oluoch of Kendu Bay, pointed out that the Indians monopolised trade in fishing nets and acted as middlemen and exploited Luo fishers. In Nyanza, taxation forced more fishers to join the cash economy by selling fish. More people engaged in fishing due to pressure for cash and migration from the villages to the beaches. Nyamwari notes that the new nets led to overfishing and competition hence marginalisation of women from fishing due to expensive nets. They could not match the rich Indians and Africans⁶⁷. Ogol, however challenges Nyamwari arguing that the new nets were better for hauling large quantities of fish within a short time⁶⁸. At the time, there was plenty of fish. More traders on bicycles competed for large fish to sell in the interior. For along time, the Wildlife Department managed the fishing sector. The colonial state had done very little to promote the fisheries by 1920.

3.11. The First World War Period and Fishing (1914 – 1919)

The First World War witnessed total control by the colonial administration. Following the introduction of the nets and hooks, the provincial administration became more vigilant in matters of fishing. As argued by Overton, the role of the colonial state was of critical importance⁶⁹. This followed the impact of the war on African economies. This period witnessed great demand for fish to feed the soldiers and prisoners of war. The colonial administration took charge of recruitment of wartime labour from the interior (villages). During the war, the colonial government formed policies to control African produce, labour, livestock and fisheries. Following the fish protection ordinance of 1908, the colonial state issued the Victoria Nyanza Fish Protection Rules that regulated all fishers to be registered and controlled⁷⁰. The colonial administrator then controlled fishing by registering boats and fishers, issuing licences to regulate the times for fishing such as 6.00 pm. to 6.00 am, that is, night time fishing.

The nets of less than an inch were outlawed. Apart from the ban, trawling was not allowed near the Lake shore. The new rules and regulations led to a decrease in food production. Since the demand was high, the fishers were forced to work harder to feed their households and to sell the bulk to meet the state requirements. To be employed by the fishing industry as traders, the fishers had to be registered under new regulations on fishing. The government

⁶⁷ Nyamwari, (OI), 23rd July, 2014.

⁶⁸ Ogol, (OI), 21st August, 2013.

⁶⁹ J. Overton “War and Economic Under development? State exploitation and African Response 1914 – 1919 in the International Journal of African Historical Studies Vol. 22, No. 2, (1989), p. 203.

⁷⁰ KNA, KP/4/7 Fish Protection Ordinance File: Nairobi.

controlled the migration of people to the beaches and issued orders indicating the fishers and areas where fishing was allowed. Due to demand for food by the soldiers, the African peasant economy choked as compared to the pre-war time. The demand for food saw great increase in prices for fish and other agricultural products. One colonial administrator noted that:

*The Africans living in Central and South Kavirondo, closer to the shores, spent large parts of their time fishing. It was estimated that between 2000 and 3000 people in each of these districts were more or less permanently employed in this work (fishing) and there were probably 1,000 canoes in each district*⁷¹.

Mackenzie observes that during the war, “the native is being asked to do the impossible- feed himself and all his dependants, produce for export and at the same time keep all the European Estates going to the satisfaction of their owners”⁷². While the peasant farmers struggled, the settler economy was comfortable during the war. For provision of labour, the administrators relied on the colonial chiefs. Lonsdale asserts that officials and chiefs colluded in getting African labour and that chiefs were chosen for their ability to get things done without question⁷³. The colonial government employed its political power in determining the trading structure for their crops hence the benefit by the settlers against the peasant Africans.

Bundy argues that the colonial state had favoured the white settlers in the provision of technical advice, transport network, credit facilities and the drain on human labour⁷⁴. Apart from the drain by migrant labour, the African was denied health facilities, welfare and education.

In the case of fishing, the needs of the fishers were overlooked. There was poor infrastructure and lack of support by the colonial state. All these challenges hindered sufficient production by the fishers. The production and income of the fishers was affected by the new regulations. According to Atieno- Odhiambo, more people could have been driven to fishing by the various policies which came into effect with the coming of colonisation and later, the World

⁷¹ KNA, KP/4/7: Fish Protection Ordinance File.

⁷² A.F.D. Mackenzie, Betterment and the Gendered Politics of Maize Production, Muranga District, Central Province, Kenya 1880 – 1952”, *In Canadian Journal of African Studies*. 1999. Vol. 33, No. 1, p. 64 – 97.

⁷³ Lonsdale, *The Conquest of Kenya, 1895 – 1905*, p. 37.

⁷⁴ C. Bundy, *The Emergence and Decline of South African Peasantry*. In G. Maddox and T Welliver, (eds). *Colonialism and Nationalism in Africa*: (New York and London, Garland Publishers, 1993), p. 387 – 388.

War. He further points out that just before the war, African producers had experienced some economic development when they adopted new varieties of crops and new gear and fishing techniques⁷⁵. Both the war and new policies and regulations saw the economies deteriorate.

3.12. Management of Fisheries by the Colonial State

The colonial administrators upto the 1920s cared less for the fishers. However, they introduced new management methods which included fishing rules, new nets and registration of members. Since the nets were expensive they were afforded by the Indian boat owners only. The government did not involve all the stakeholders such as the resource users and the community in the fish trade. Ostrom argues that good institutions with the right political support lead to effective management of resources⁷⁶. To control the fishers from exploitation of the Lake Victoria resources, the colonial state included gear restrictions, closed areas and seasons and licensing. One informant, Akinyi of Kotieno beach affirmed that

*“during closed seasons, fishing could be done at night (illegally) as the government officials slept”*⁷⁷

Although many policies were employed to manage the fisheries, the colonial government ignored the fishers. They were not consulted. Among others, Heck asserts that in the colonial days, the government used to manage fisheries without direct involvement of fishing communities⁷⁸.

The 1908 Fish Protection Ordinance introduced some order that regulated the fishing industry. The rules governing the use of Lake Victoria fisheries applied to all aliens such as Indians. The rules demanded that all persons fishing for sale were to register yearly at a fee of Kenya shillings 3,000 for all non- natives of Africa⁷⁹. All boats and nets were registered. An informant, Opiyo, observed that, the Luo fishers continued to use their indigenous techniques together with the new nets. There were consequences for not using the new nets. The gear

⁷⁵ E.S. Atieno Odhiambo, *The Rise and Decline of the Kenyan Peasant, 1888 – 1922*, in Peter Gud Kind and Peter Waterman, *African Social Studies : A Radical Reader* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977), pp. 233 - 240.

⁷⁶ E. Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 2

⁷⁷ Akinyi, (OI), 10th July, 2013.

⁷⁸ S. Heck, C.T. Kirema – Mukasa, B. Nyandat and J.P. Owino (Eds). *The International Workshop on Community Participation in Fisheries Management on Lake Victoria: Beach Management Units (BMU) On Lake Victoria: NORAD /World Conservation Union. (2004).*

⁷⁹ Opiyo, (OI), 14th July, 2012.

could be confiscated and fishers were fined⁸⁰. The indigenous fishing gear thus protected the fish from exploitation.

Upto 1920, the indigenous methods for fishing included fish basket traps known as *likira*, *osadhi*, or *ounga*, *tong for spearing* and *orindi*. These basket traps were made from papyrus reeds. The baskets were used to scoop and draw fish from the Lake. The fish were *omena* and lung fish *Kamongo*⁸¹. The new nets were available at Kisumu Bazaar by 1927 for Kenya shillings 17/= to 18/= for a 100 yards long net, with five inch mesh, 26 meshes deep, 35 twine 3 ply⁸². Most new nets led to overfishing as opposed to the local ones. The nets and boats used by then were not durable. They had a short life span. Mangat observes that, Indians who could mobilize funds to purchase them owned most of the boats⁸³. The Indians participated actively in the commercial sector in Kenya and the East African region⁸⁴ and by 1921, overfishing was minimal.

As already noted, the new rules and policies were introduced without involving the Luo fishers of Lake Victoria. Most fishers were unable to compete the rich Indians and the British who dominated production and trade of fish. The fishers were marginalised since the colonial chiefs and the colonial administrators were more powerful. They failed to form all policies to govern the fisheries hence the expensive prices of fish. Since the rulers ignored the Luo fishers, they always had conflict. On the whole, the fishers did not like the new rules and regulations on the size of nets. By rejecting the nets that the British referred to as modern, the Luo fishers used their nets at night. The wrangles rose because the Luo fishers were expected to provide wage labour as well as fish.

The nets from Ireland were promoted for fishing while the state prohibited private persons from setting up a factory for nets in the territories⁸⁵. The fishers also rejected the new nets because they were used deep in the lake meaning far from the shore. They fished for longer

⁸⁰ Colony of Kenya, Government Officials Gazette No. 123 of 1914 on Victoria Nyanza Fish Protection Rules KNA, KP. 4/7

⁸¹ KNA, KP/4/7: 1927, Survey on Lake Victoria Fisheries.

⁸² KNA, KP/4/7 Report on Survey.

⁸³ Mangat, A. History of Asians in East Africa, p. 32.

⁸⁴ J.S. Mangat, *A History of the Asians in East Africa, 1886 – 1945* (London: OUP 1969), p. 72.

⁸⁵ KNA AG/4/3

hours and harvested both juvenile and mature fish as noted by Onyango⁸⁶. Furthermore, the fishers realised depletion in the long run hence the loss of revenue by the colonial state.

3.13. Summary

Great change is evident in South Nyanza due to the establishment of colonial rule; the pre-colonial period already had progress although the changes were brought by the colonial policies of crop production, taxation, migrant wage labour and christianity. Between 1903 and 1914, there were economic changes characterised by the introduction of cash crops such as groundnuts, cotton and sesame (sim sim). Wage labour (migrant) and trade were sources of income at the time. However, colonialism impacted greatly on the fishers. They employed the new gill nets, were forced to follow the regulations and policies that had advantages and disadvantages. Due to the First World War, women engaged in farming and household management as more men were recruited into the British colonial army.

⁸⁶ Onyango, (OI), 23rd July, 2012.

CHAPTER FOUR

DECOLONISATION AND CHANGING GENDER ROLES UPTO 1963

4.1. Overview

The struggle by the colonial government to implement policies on fishing became very challenging to both the Europeans and the Luo fishers who resisted the new methods of fishing. Berman and Lonsdale contend that throughout British Africa, new institutions and policies managed the development effort marked by rural development programmes, commodity marketing boards, investment incentive schemes for industrial capital and industrial and labour policies¹. The challenges forced the colonial state to adopt new management strategies. They established African Development Councils (ADCs) to instil regulatory mechanisms as local centres of power. Since the colonialists were more interested in industrial fishing and profit for the markets abroad, they introduced newnets, new fishing technology with no regards to the local fishers and traders who continually operated on their indigenous rules and regulations.

The fishers worked for longer hours to meet the colonial demands for taxation and forced labour. The colonial state, on the other hand, worked towards expanding fish production and selling the surplus. The fishing industry was affected greatly by the Second World War. The government had to provide food for the soldiers and prisoners of war. The ADCs managed the fishers by controlling the number of fishers and modern technology.

4.2. Overfishing in Lake Victoria

The modern gear introduced by the colonial government encouraged overfishing. Although the government directed the use of fishing gear and the sizes of the gill nets, the report on Lake Victoria fisheries as noted by the colonial state indicated that “the fish industry is in the hands of Indians” who own the boats which are manned by the Africans. In addition to their pay, these African fishers got a few of the fish caught².

The Luo fishers resisted the transformations on fisheries based on the facts that they could not compete the Asian traders and were never consulted by the colonial managers on matters of policy. The government favoured the Indian and European traders (Middlemen) by

¹ B. Berman and J. Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley* Conflict in Kenya and Africa, Book Two, (London: James Currey, 1992), p. 166.

² KNA, KP/4/7, *Dangers of Overfishing* by Michael Graham in the East African Standard on 1/1/1929.

barring the Luo traders from moving freely in the trading region. One of the fishing Ordinance had rules that “All fishing boats and canoes should be registered and licence fees paid”³. In addition all nets for fishing were to be registered, the nets had to be of 1” by 1” mesh, fishing was to be done using hooks, nets, stakes or creels and no poisonous substances were to be used for fishing. The number of fishing crew in each boat were registered and their names painted on the boat or canoe. Finally, the ordinance declared that “any court which convicts a person of an offence of using an appliance for the capture or destruction of fish forbidden by these rules may, in addition to any penalty imposed on such conviction, confiscate the appliances unlawfully used.”⁴

In the East African Standard newspaper of first January, 1929, Graham reports that there was glaring evidence of overfishing following the use of the new gear. There was ‘theft of nets’ among the Luo fishers. Therefore patrol units were introduced to protect the fishing materials which mainly belonged to the Indian fishers. The patrols enabled the fishers to increase the number of nets. The fishers used motorised boats that were not very fast⁵. A boat had a lantern sail and a crew of at least five men. Trawling as a method of fishing was banned by the government because it caused overfishing. Trawlers harvested premature fish since they dragged behind a vessel catching the fish at the bottom of the waters. In 1949, the fishery department was created⁶. The game department looked into fisheries and other wildlife. The fishers resorted to violence at times since the fishery officers had no time for them.

The payment of poll and hut taxes to the colonial government, forced the South Nyanza people to join the labour market. Berman posits that the Africans were coerced by the local chiefs to work. Infrastructure such as roads and public buildings were built by gangs of unpaid labour⁷. The fishers mainly worked on the beaches and not on the colonial farms. The people had a need to raise money therefore they opted to fish. Unlike for farmers on the other hand, the state instilled forced labour and *kipande* (identity card) was introduced to retain the workers. On the settler farms, defying labourers got *kiboko* (cane).

³ KNA, AG /4/3 1928 – 1929)

⁴ KNA, KP/4/7

⁵ KNA, /KP/4/7

⁶ KNA, KP./4/9

⁷ B. Berman, *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya, The dialectic of Domination*, (London: James Currey, 1990), p. 53.

Otieno,⁸ an informant, points out that the fishers on the beaches mainly came from the interior (far from the Lake). Fishing as an activity was mainly for subsistence. Most local people viewed it as “a poor man’s job therefore they sought labour in towns and settler farms. The local people resorted to migrant wage labour. They could multi task. They provided labour on the settler farms as well as fishes and traded on fish for more income to meet their needs.

4.3. Open and Closed Seasons

The seasons were mainly to control overfishing and to protect the juvenile fish. The closed season was in the month of April and August during which the restriction to access fish enabled the fish to breed. Another informant, Omolo observed that too many people joined the fisheries during the open (unrestricted seasons). He further asserted that the many fishers harvested the eggs and the young fish as well because they used illegal nets⁹. The smaller mesh size nets spared no size of fish. The closed season assured the fishers of continuous supply of fish, sustainability of fish was guaranteed since the juvenile fish were protected upto their maturity.

The colonial government introduced laws about the land adjacent to the Lake (shore), this was made public land. Any fisherman could pay rates in order to use the water around his land. This law was received negatively since the Luo fishers of Nyanza managed and controlled the Lake freely. They believed that the Lake belonged to all men but God was the owner. Ochieng asserts that “fish was a (free) common commodity for trade¹⁰. The people could not pay for the use of “their” Lake. Culturally, it was not possible. In rebellion to the new laws, the fishers fought the patrolling scouts whose guns they took. The poor local fishers preferred free access to the Lake and not payment for private beach usage.

The Local Native Councils (LNC) that had been organised in the 1920s changed to African District Councils (ADC). This change was made by the colonial masters soon after the Second World War. The councils were formed by the colonial chiefs and headmen. They were to represent the interests of the Africans and to collect revenue in terms of poll and hut taxes. Generally, the voice of the Africans still remained marginalised. In the agricultural

⁸ Otieno, (OI), 16th July, 2012

⁹ Omollo, (OI), 24th August, 2013.

¹⁰ Ochieng, *An Outline History of Nyanza*, p. 68.

sector, the ADC's assisted in the construction of dairies, maize mills and shelters for drying hides and skins.

The ADC's provided loans to the traders. As Kitching observes, such loans were managed and very little is known about the method of applying for such credit facilities, which, in most cases, favoured the farmers more than the fishers¹¹. Abila notes that money provided by local councils could also be used for buying bicycles for transporting fish and other merchandise to the commercial centres around the Lake¹².

Chirwa points out that after the Second World War, new fishing regulations were proposed, which introduced licences for African Commercial fishers¹³. The licences regulated the number of ex-soldiers and other people who joined fishing. The Africans became negative to the practice hence their migration from beach to beach in search of the non controlled areas. The licences were for the canoes and nets. An informant, Onyango, asserted that the licences discouraged fishing since they had to labour to purchase the licences together with payment of taxes¹⁴.

Apart from the Local Councils, the British colonial Africa statutory bodies were introduced to look into the quality of the produce. They aimed at raising the standards of production. The African farmers and fishers, however, remained voiceless in these forums. Some of the boards included Lake Victoria Fisheries Board (LVFS) among others. These were good ideas but realised little success due to marginalisation of the actual African fishers. Most of the regulatory efforts by these boards were that they stressed the size of nets as the primary method of control¹⁵.

The statutory boards ignored the voice of the African fishers. Although they were to control the mesh sizes and instil the laws and regulations, they also failed because they marginalised the African producers and labourers. They neglected and ignored the key stakeholders.

¹¹Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, p. 189

¹²Abila, *Impacts of International Fish Trade*, p. 48 – 49.

¹³Chirwa, *Fishing Rights, Ecology and Conservative along Southern Lake Malawi, 1920 – 1964*, p. 371.

¹⁴Onyango, (IO), 14th August, 2013.

¹⁵KNA, KP/8/9

4.4. The Introduction of Exotic Species

By the end of the 1940s, the market for fish was under pressure. More stock was required for transport to the Coast and other cities. This demand grew since the railways were available to transport the fish. As a remedy, the British authorities introduced exotic species including tilapia and Nile Perch. Arunga observes that the Nile Perch was introduced into Lake Kyoga by Alexander, Rhodes and Stonman of the Uganda Fisheries Department between February, 1954 and October, 1955. When it was found in Lake Victoria, a few years later, steps were taken to allow it to flourish there¹⁶. Before the exotic fish were introduced, the most common indigenous fish in Lake Victoria were the haplochromis(*fulu*). These were abundant but were of less commercial value.

The intention of the colonial government to introduce bigger fish was to replace the *fulu* with marketable fish. The fishers expanded their markets from beach based hut selling to the "oringi" bicycle transport and to the frozen and ice-chilled lorry and from domestic to international export market that still persists today. Abila asserts that the result has been varied and even more revolutionary as the Nile Perch (*mbuta*) today comprises more than two – thirds of all fish exports from the Lake region. Its coming also heralded a change in government strategy and participation in the fisheries sector¹⁷. The Fisheries Act of 1953 empowered the Fishery Department to be more vigilant in the areas of net control, levies, licensing, beach patrols and enforcement of government regulations.

As pointed out by Madanda, regulatory measures required shifts in the production techniques such as stringent quality control measures¹⁸. Since the fishers were not involved in the formulation of the new fishing rules and acts, they disapproved of the policies as illegitimate and refused to abide by them. Although the introduction of the new species turned out to be a boost to commerce and export of fish, it was a decision that was made without informing or consulting the local community.

The Nile Perch boom impacted greatly on Lake Victoria. Auma, an informant, who has been an active fisherfolk for over fifty years notes that the introduction of the Nile Perch led to the

¹⁶ J.O. Arunga, A case study of the Lake Victoria Nile Perch, Late Niloticus in Aquatic Resources of Kenya' (Nairobi Workshop, 1981).

¹⁷ Abila, *Impacts of International Fish*, p. 46.

¹⁸ A. Madanda, *Commercialization and Gender Roles Among Fishers* p. 7

extinction of some fish varieties. Indigenous fish like *osoga* have been eaten by *mbuta*¹⁹. The Nile Perch had advantages too. It boosted fish production and gave the fishers higher income. Abila, on the other hand, views *mbuta* as responsible for the disappearance of indigenous species²⁰. The tilapia grew tremendously and its rapid growth and reproduction made it a commercial target. To encourage the species to spread throughout the Lake, the government employed the services of LVFB. They tried out new methods of fishing in order to support the fishers.

The government did very little consultation with the local fishers concerning the new types of fish hence their little interest in the new fish. An informant Okeyo, stated that even though *mbuta* was introduced in the late 1950s, it became an important fish in the Lake fishery by the 1980's. As stated in the Graham report, tilapia (*ngege*) was recognised as the most important food fish of the Lake region, whether for native or non- native consumption²¹. Graham argues that no other fish equaled the tilapia in its quality of flesh. It exceeded all the other species in economic importance. Jensen examined the effects of the new species by dividing the developments in fishery into phases such as the pre- Nile Perch and the Nile Perch periods²². He argues that the introduction of the Nile Perch subsequently led to an increase in capital investment hence gear deployed in fishery. While in the Pre- Nile Perch era very few canoe owners possessed more than one canoe or more gill nets, the Nile Perch enabled fishers to compete aggressively by using more powerful canoes and better nets such as seine nets and trawlers. They produced fish according to market demand. The fish wholesalers increased in numbers as agents and middlemen supervised the trade by supporting the traders financially.

The coming of the new species, particularly the Nile Perch among others, led to commercialisation of the fishery. With the use of the new gear, catches increased hence sale to traders who paid the highest wholesale price. This change contrasted the pre-colonial trade where fishers only sold fish to the traders with whom they had relationships. More foreign capital entered the Lake region as the government also intervened. Ogol, an informant, points out that the small scale fishers suffered in the management of the trade by the middle men and the bicycle 'boys' who exploited the trade by liaising with the big company agents

¹⁹ Auma, (OI), 20th August, 2013

²⁰ R. Abila, *Impacts of International Fish Trade*. p. 14.

²¹ Okeyo, (OI), 14th August, 2012

²² E.G.Jansen, *The Fishing Population in the Kenyan Part of Lake Victoria*. A Report on the East African Fresh Water Fisheries Research Organization (NORAD: University of Bergen, 1973), p. 203.

from Nairobi²³. The use of the trawlers, foreign investment and new fish species led to great increase in fish production.

On'gang'a argues that commercial fishing picked up in the 1950's but fishing by the Luo remained predominantly artisanal²⁴. According to Tvedten and Hersoug, the many points of articulation between industrial and artisanal fisheries cannot be ignored. The fishers were classified into the poor who continued processing in the traditional way and selling to the middlemen. They could not afford the new demands of fishing. The rich on the other hand coped with the changes of nets, new fishing gear and traded internationally. The demand for commercial and service provision to fishers led to the growth of the beaches. Beaches had cafes, bars, hotels and hostels for accommodation.

As observed by Bokea and Ikiara, the 1960's saw the local fishers begin to lose control over the means of production, pricing and marketing of fish to the new investors particularly Indians²⁵. More fishers joined the business and introduced many boats and new gear. They joined the harvesting sector with modernised technologies such as trawlers and hired more fishing crew.

Since the motorboats landed on the Islands within the Lake and collected all the fish before it was taken to the beach, the small (retail) fish holders were denied fish for marketing as it went to Nairobi. The Luo fishers hence became victims of their credit providers. They could not compete with the rich boat and gear owners who lived in main towns but employed the locals to fish for them. With the colonial changes, the local fishers lost control over the means of production. Since they lacked storage facilities, the high perishable state of fish and lack of capital led to their loss of control in pricing.

4.5. Women and the New Technology, 1954 – 1963

In the fishing sector, both gender participate in various ways that complement each other. Ogutu and Sandauno state that, women occupy a central place in the fishing sector. They predominate the Lake Victoria fisheries representing 70% to 87% of fish workers involved in

²³ Ogol (OI) 12th July, 2013

²⁴ O. Ong'ang'a, *Lake Victoria and Its Environs*, Resources, Opportunities and Challenges, (Kisumu: Osienala, Africa Herald Publishing House, 2005), p. 67.

²⁵ Bokea and Ikiara, *The Micro economy of the Export fishing Industry*. p. 107.

this activity especially in the artisanal fish trade²⁶. Women participation in fisheries has been guided by cultural, social, economic and political factors. Many joined the fishing market or trade to accomplish the requirements due to the colonial government since people had to pay taxes, bride price and to purchase clothing. Others joined the trade because fish was easy to access and store.

The capital required to access fish for trade was manageable and the profit margin was good. Many relied on fishing for their income. The women participated in the sale of dagaa which they stored easily in their homes. It was easy to sell due to high demand by the consumers. Owiyo notes that, the fish trade requires little capital to start yet the profits are instant²⁷. The women barter traded fish for other food stuffs during dry seasons in order to feed their families.

The coming of new technology and increased commercialisation changed the social relationships among the Lake region communities. Although Owith²⁸, an informant, argues that commercialisation helped by bringing money for fees, building houses and other items, there was a glaring difference between the poor and the rich. Women lacked capital to compete with the male fishers therefore they participated in post harvesting activities such as processing and preparing fish for the markets. Most women were pushed out of the business by big lorries that collected and transported all the fish to the towns and even outside the country. Tension mounted amongst owners of modern technology particularly net owners, boat owners and boat crew together with the fish factory employees.

The net and boat owners exploited the small fishers who felt displaced. Wilson asserts that boat owners operating along the beach allocated a higher percentage of the catch to themselves and less to their crew²⁹. Wilson argues that the actual fishing was done by the crew who did not own any boat or gear. Their aim was to maximise their profits. In other words, they short changed the boat owners. Commercialisation threatened the sustainability

²⁶ E.M. Ogotu, *The Role of Women and Cooperative Societies in Fish Marketing in Western Kenya*, in G.M.A. Ogotu (ed.) *Artisanal Fisheries of Lake Victoria, Kenya: Options for Management, Production and Marketing*. Proceeding of Workshop held in Kisumu. Kenya, (Nairobi: Shirisho Publishers, 1988), pp. 113-117.

²⁷ Owiyo (OI) 14th July, 2013

²⁸ Owith (OI) 23th August, 2016

²⁹ D.C. Wilson, M. Modesta, K.H. Craig and S.W. David, *The Implication for Participatory Fisheries Management of Intensified Commercialization on Lake Victoria*, *In Rural Sociology*, Vol. 64, No. 4 1999, pp. 554-572.

of fish production since the fishers harvested even premature fish. Onyango, an informant, states that the coming of new capital and technology sought to produce for sale rather than consumption unlike the pre- colonial period where fish was readily available as a cheap source of protein. In the long run, greed for cash led to export of fish hence less fish for household consumption. Increased food insecurity affected women and children more.

Due to stiff competition and the rising need for cash income, a large number of traders have joined the fisheries. Loaning and banking facilities among women groups have enabled both men and women to invest in their own boats and gear. They secure enough supply of fish. Competition however can get so stiff that female traders may engage in prostitution with fishers in order to cope in the business. Abila has observed that the local communities around Lake Victoria can be characterised as being very insecure in regard to food³⁰. The unrestricted fish trade has contributed to this food insecurity. The traders take substantial quantities of fish to global markets thereby compromising populations' nutritional status. After the mature Nile Perch have been taken to factories for processing, only the juvenile Nile Perch and skeletons are left for the local people to consume. The female fishers who trade in skeletons of the Nile perch, however, get rendered jobless after the skeletons have been taken to factories to be ground as fishmeal. An informant, Owiti argues that, even where fish is available for purchase, local households have no purchasing power to compete with factories³¹.

The process of commercialisation from the 1980s in Lake Victoria completely changed the nature of the Lake's fishing communities. The activities of women in fish trading underwent transformation. The fishmeal factories have overtaken the business of selling the Nile Perch skeletons by the local people. The women fish traders have resorted to the sale of *dagaa* which is not as valuable as bigger fish such as Nile Perch and tilapia. This means that trade in *dagaa* is not economical. Upto 2012, the factories have invaded '*dagaa*' for fishmeal therefore less *dagaa* is available for women fish traders and for local consumption. The women suffer because of the development of the fishmeal factories.

³⁰ R. Abila, The Development of the Lake Victoria Fishery: A boom or bane for food security? *IUCN Report* No. 8, Nairobi, 2002.

³¹ Owiti, (OI), 14th July, 2013.

Women are taking up new roles in order to gain economic stability. A few women own boats and gear as a strategy of gaining socio-economic status in the traditional set up, only men fisherfolk were allowed to own boats. The non- governmental organisations and governmental organisations have aided women to purchase their boats. For example, Akeyo, an informant at Doho beach, pointed out that since women are not allowed to harvest fish, they have to hire men to fish in their boats yet they have no means of supervising fishing activities³². In most cases, the male fishers return only small portions of the daily catch to the women boat owners. According to Adoyo, an informant, women own the boats but they do not have control over the boats.³³. The women fishers therefore feel marginalised to some extent. To empower themselves, they have formed many self help women groups from where they borrow money to provide means of survival.

4.6. Summary

The British rulers came up with new regulations and policies to govern the fisheries. They were interested in cash crop plantations and commercial farming. The colonial administrators forced the local population to pay tax and provide labour. In order to comply with the new rules, the Luo fishers had to drop most of their pre colonial systems and adopt to new ways of responding to the demands of the colonial state. The introduction of the new fishing gear and new fish species such as *mbuta* and tilapia took the fishing business to high levels of commercialisation. Overfishing cropped in as the colonialists introduced licensing, closed seasons and the numbering of boats. Stiff competition between the European, Asian and African traders developed. The poor traders remained poorer as the rich fishers acquired more wealth.

³² Akeyo, (OI), 13th August, 2012.

³³ Adoyo, (OI), 10th August, 2013.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONTINUITY AND CHANGE OF GENDER ROLES IN THE INDEPENDENCE
PERIOD 1963 UPTO 1980

5.1. Overview

From the pre-colonial period upto the independence period, many changes have taken place in terms of fishing policies, Acts and regulations. Colonialists introduced new fishing gear, boats, engines and trawlers. Unlike the pre-colonial era when the Luo fishers concentrated on fishing for subsistence and local trade through barter, the post-colonial period experienced more changes.

The introduction of new fishing nets, motorised boats, monetary medium of exchange for trade, the influx of ex-Second World War soldiers into the industry led to the development in fishery from subsistence to commercial fishing. This chapter traces the factors influencing the gender roles at the time.

5.2. Factors Influencing Gender Roles in Fishing from 1963 – 1980

The introduction of new fishing technology created an impact in the fisheries. Goldschmidt explains that the new technology brought by the colonialists was meant to expand the fishing industry with new projects such as the fishmeal factory and the building of trawlers in mind¹. The colonial government consolidated their efforts in economic gains. Their main interest in commerce was profit making. As observed by Bokea and Ikiara, the advent of new technology negatively affected food security among Lake communities². Fish which was readily available and a cheap source of protein became an attraction for sale rather than consumption.

At independence, the government assessed the fishing industry under the leadership of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta in 1963. The government was more interested in the lack of infrastructure, markets for trade and conservation of the fish species. More effort was put in safeguarding future production. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Wildlife stated that conservation was part of their plans for the future development of the fishery³. The government expanded markets both locally and internationally. However, poor infrastructure hampered the

¹Gold Schmidt, *Darwin's Dreampond*, p. 4.

²Bokea and Ikiara, *The Micro – Economy of the Export Fishing Industry*.

³ KNA, KL/24/10, Development of Kenya Fishing.

development. As in the FAO report, in 1965, independent Kenya pledged to give priority in fishery to the provision of markets, roads and suitable transportation facilities⁴.

FAO, fish marketing experts, recommended a ban on the use of poisonous substances in fishing. They proposed to the Kenyan government to ensure the use of minimum mesh size nets⁵. To educate the fishers, the government initiated unions along the beaches. New directives were given by the government at a workshop attended in Kisumu by a representative from each community. The new regulatory policies reviewed matters of licensing and taxation. Due to an increase in demand and competition, instead of the fishers dealing with the agents or middlemen to obtain their supply for fish, the fishmongers established links with potential buyers. The Luo fishers now worked under contract to deliver to the purchasing agents of the factories who could afford to pay them a higher price than the fish mongers and the local markets⁶.

Since the colonial government had more interest in agricultural produce, they had neglected the fisheries. This impacted greatly on the small fish mongers of Lake Victoria who were marginalised. According to Madanda, most fishers abandoned fishing as a result of constraints. They moved to urban centres to engage in businesses such as tailoring, carpentry, labourers and technicians. In conformity with the new changes by the government on licensing, they formed self help groups to strengthen them. They could borrow money and return with interest to boost their commercial activities. Madanda asserts that women fishmongers reacted similarly to the new challenges by pooling resources, forming groups to fight for their rights and borrowing money from the agents /middlemen to cope with the demands of increased fish supply by hiring more fishers⁷.

On the other hand, Omollo an informant, asserts that commercialisation turned fishers into poor folk⁸. The middle men and bicycle transporters exploited them. The price of fish therefore increased unbearably. The small scale fishers sold only to the middlemen who owned lorries and also determined prices. The agents, however, became richer since they

⁴ FAO, *Report to The Government of Kenya on Fisheries Development: 1965* at www.fao.org/docrep/005/41449eoo.htm as at 24/20/2014

⁵ FAO Report to the Government of Kenya, 1965.

⁶ Jansen, Rich Fishers – Poor Fisher folk, p. 9.

⁷ Madanda, Commercialiation and Gender Roles, p. 10.

⁸ Omollo, (OI), 24th August, 2013.

determined the prices. Despite the establishment of colonial rule, the indigenous modes of fish production persisted alongside the motorised boats and modern gear. The Luo fishers incorporated fishing with crop cultivation while other fishers bought lorries for transportation. Some of the boat crew members were able to purchase their own nets and boats. Due to lack of capital and transport, the fishers relied on their farming for consumption and on fishing as a major source of income.

Madanda has observed that women used methods like pooling resources and forming women groups to fight for their rights or help access credit facilities from the middlemen⁹. She further argues that in some places, the capture fishery has been off limits to women for both economic and social reasons. In some communities, it was believed that it was bad luck to meet a woman on the way to the Lake because it would lead to low catch. Furthermore, Madanda affirms that some women were directly involved in fishing and some of the stereotypes were being challenged by women. In cases where, like their male counterparts, women have fished around the lakeshore, they have complemented each other and no bad omen has occurred.

Normally after fishing, the male left the female to sort, wash, smoke and deep fry for storage since storage facilities were scarce. Apart from post harvesting activities, other women traded in fish types which were not in high demand by other commercial traders. They dealt in *omena* and *fulu* (small fish) which were consumed by the poor who could not afford the expensive tilapia and Nile Perch. Boat owners employed crew members since they were able to increase their income. Oketch, an interviewee posited that when the motorised boats arrived, they could go deeper into the Lake and catch or harvest more fish.

Fisheries comprised boat owners, boat crew, net owners, engine owners, traders, bicycle and lorry transporters. Other fishers acted as agents and fish mongers. Ogutu, an interviewee, explains that the role of messengers is to take fish to recognised customers while agents acted mostly for women to enable them get their supply of fish from their male counterparts¹⁰. The fishers graduated from one stage to another. Finally they ended up as middlemen who

⁹ Madanda, *Commercialization and Gender Roles*, p. 7

¹⁰ Ogutu, (OI), 27th June, 2012.

purchased fish from other fishers and sold it to Indian middleman who transported the fish to towns such as Kisumu and Nairobi because they had refrigerated lorries.

For income and nutritional security, Geheb and Binns assert that ‘the livelihood’ systems among the Luo Lake-side communities generally retain considerable diversity, but notably have three important elements of fishing, farming and livestock herding¹¹. This meant a fall in fishing during farming seasons. The fishing industry provided all kinds of opportunities for labour (odd jobs). In the absence of job opportunities, the Luo ex-war soldiers sought refuge in the fisheries. They were favoured by lack of many requirements to join the industry.

To cope with the increasing demand for fish, by 1965, the construction of a multipurpose factory for the manufacture of fishing gear began. The complex included a cold storage, ice factories, canning factory, packaging factory, boat building and repairing workshop, fish unloading plants, dry freezing and smokery¹². The factory was to make the industry reliant by producing and providing its own needs. The fishing boats were very few in every community by this time. Very few women owned boats and gear which were most of the time hired out to the male fishers who, in return, paid a rental fee.

5.3. The Effects of Education on Fishing, 1963 – 1980

The post-colonial government of Kenya intended to develop the fisheries but faced great challenges inherited from the socio-economic trends of the colonial government. Although the country achieved its independence in 1963, the fishing policies were similar to those of the colonial government. The government aimed at empowering the fisheries department in order to raise the living standards of the fisherfolk and the fish traders.

The Sessional Paper no. 10 of 1965, on Kenyan economic transformation stated that:

under colonialism, the people of Kenya had no voice in government;

the nation’s resources were organised and developed mainly for the benefit of non- Africans; and the nation’s human resources remain largely uneducated, inexperienced and unbenefited by the growth of the economy¹³

¹¹ K. Geheb, and T. Binns, *Fishing Farmers or Farming Fishers. The Quest for Household and Nutritional Security*, p. 76.

¹² KP/2/10

¹³ Republic of Kenya, *Sessional Paper No 10. African Socialism and its Application*, p. 1.

Most fishers in Kenya upto the post independence period were uneducated. The government therefore had plans to train the fishers in various skills such as boat building. Education and skills would enable the fishers to compete with non- African fishers and to increase foreign exchange through export of fish. The government intended to protect the African traders from the foreign competitors. The Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Wildlife and Tourism stated in 1966 that the objective of the state was to support the development of agriculture and fisheries by providing marketing and processing facilities¹⁴.

The fishers were challenged by their lack of proper education. Ikiara asserts that by the beginning of the post- colonial era most fishers were generally poorly educated¹⁵. Due to cultural patterns, a few women pursued education beyond primary school level. Lack of proper education disadvantaged and affected the direction of their lives and limited their opportunities.

Medard¹⁶ argues that lack of education mostly affects women. In this study, education was a key influencing factor determining their roles in the society. Medard further observes that where fisher groups exist, lack of education has been cited as a source of stagnation in the group's business endeavours, limiting their communication to the outside world. Most fishers have remained untrained in crucial areas such as book – keeping and food processing.

Since 1980, a number of boys and girls' living around Lake Victoria dropped out of school. Some have joined child labour particularly the boys who do not see the need of education after gaining economically from the fisheries. The girls, on the other hand, engage in early marriage. Without education, both gender have been unable to participate effectively in decision making and could not seek alternative employment other than fishing.

To cope with the economic challenges since independence, more fishers have joined the fisheries. They have embraced studies hence have become more educated fisherfolk. The increasing level of education has opened the eyes of women and men who have therefore

¹⁴ PC/NZA/2/17/11: Fishing in Nyanza 1969.

¹⁵ M. M. Ikiara, Sustainability, Livelihoods, production and effort supply in declining fishery, The case of Kenya's Lake Victoria Fisheries, PhD Thesis, University of Amsterdam. 1999.

¹⁶ M. Medard, F. Sobo, T. Ngatunga, and S. Chirua, Women and Gender Participation in the Fisheries Sector in Lake Victoria. The World Fish Centre, Working Paper No. 26255, 2002.

understood their rights of equality. Due to education, both gender are able to enter the fishing sector once they get permits just like any other Kenyan. This has led to many women owning fishing gear and boats. These findings concur with the views of Sanzidur and Kabir¹⁷ who investigated the role of tribal women in reservoir fisheries in Bangladesh and concluded that more educated than non- educated women are joining full fishing practice.

The second important factor identified as having influenced the changing gender roles is the changing family roles. This finding is consistent with the views of Bennet,¹⁸ who argued that while women were supposed to be dependent on men, this has changed and there are now single mothers who run whole families, or families with men but headed by women. In other words, women have also become breadwinners in some families. Such women do not have respect for the cultural norms and have gone ahead and ventured into fishing roles that were not meant for women.

Unlike their traditional roles of family care, they have aggressively joined and taken up roles in the fishing sector. The women over time have also been employed in offices. Some are in managerial positions in the industries and in the beach management units as officials. This has led other women to follow up and do the same. As a result, the fishing industry opened up the market to both gender so is also the view of FAO¹⁹. FAO investigated the role of women in agriculture and rural development in the Philippines, and concluded that family roles have changed across the world including in the Philippines and women can now do any job to earn a decent living.

The third factor identified as having caused changing gender role is Human Immuno Deficiency Virus /Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). The decade 1980 upto 2012 not only experienced economic hardships but heralded the HIV/AIDS scourge that greatly impacted the gender roles in the fishing industry as more women were forced to fend for themselves and their families. With industrialisation and commercialisation of Lake Victoria fishery sector, due to poverty in Kendu Bay and Homa Lime zones of Homa Bay

¹⁷ A. Khan, S. Rahman and M.A. Kabir Chowdury, Role of Tribal Women in Reservoir Fisheries of Bangladesh, *Aquaculture Asia*, January – March Vol. IV No. 1, 1999, pp. 12 – 15.

¹⁸ Bennet, *Gender Fisheries and Development in Marine Policy*.

¹⁹ FAO *Women, agriculture and rural development: National sectoral report for the Philippines*, prepared under the auspices of FAO's programme of assistance in support of rural women in preparation of the Fourth World Conference of Women, (Rome:FAO, 1995).

County, women traders began to compete for favours from the fishermen from whom they could purchase fish.

Scarcity of fish was experienced due to the presence of processing plants. Due to the decreased supply of fish, women fish traders started engaging in sexual relationships with the fishermen in order to obtain daily supply of fish. A fisherman called *jabo* supply fish to the woman or multiple women in exchange for sexual relationship. Women respondents stated that on the beaches, the use of condoms reduce the 'cost' of the woman. On the other hand, unprotected sex earns more money or fish in return. At the beaches and landing bays, there is a serious cycle of HIV infection. Many informants report that the lives lost to HIV/AIDS has impacted greatly on the economic status of the fishing communities.

This was also the view of Tarzan, Karanja and Ng'weshemi²⁰. While investigating the challenges of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases among fishing communities along Lake Victoria, they concluded that HIV/AIDS has contributed greatly to the changing gender roles in fishing across the three East African countries. Just as three researchers established, most respondents in this study also argued that most women have been left with HIV/AIDS orphaned children and that this has forced them to get into odd jobs to meet the double roles. As a result, such women find themselves venturing into actual fishing that was reserved for men only. This has caused change in gender roles.

The other factor that has influenced change in gender roles is the deterioration of cultural values. Since the onset of fishing in the pre- colonial period, the gender roles in the fishing industry in Lake Victoria were defined by culture. There was a clear cut division of labour although the roles complemented one another. According to traditional Luo beliefs, women belong to men as property. This is evidenced by payment of dowry and wife inheritance. During this period upto 1900, culturally, women were married off to the wealthy at the tender age of 15.

During the colonial period, formal education included a number of girls and boys although gender roles in the fisheries were maintained. In the Luo traditions, menstruating women

²⁰N. Tarzan, D. Karanja and J. Ngweshemi, *Challenges of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases among fishing communities*. In the State of the Fisheries Resources of Lake Victoria and their Management, proceedings of the Regional Stakeholders Conference (2008) Lake Victoria Fisheries Organization Secretariat, Jinja, Uganda pp 150 – 158.

would not go near the Lake and would not board the boats. As observed by Ochieng, Moth, Ogotu and Sombe,²¹ bereaved women are purportedly disallowed from touching a boat until they have been inherited. The presence of women would also bring bad omen to the fishermen. The traditional belief was backed up by the fact that responsibilities of home life could not allow women to harvest fish.

The cultural and socio-economic challenges in the contemporary period upto 1980 have forced women to participate in buying and selling of fish from the beaches. They purchase fish from the fishers on arrival for resale. They carry the fish to local markets after frying, smoking or sun drying it. From 1980 upto 2012, commercialisation of fish changed the nature of the Lake's fishing communities. Both gender have equal rights of participation. They can be employed in the factories, at the BMUs, both can own engine boats, nets and participate in the fishing trade business upto international levels.

A significant number of respondents argued that deteriorating cultural values have opened up new spaces and roles for females partly because the young generation do not understand their traditional roles or they just do not respect them. This study finding also concurs with the view of Geheb²² that people and their environment and the relationships have changed and these have necessitated the changing gender roles. As a result, women have ended up doing exactly the same jobs as men. This has led to changing gender roles in the fishing sector. Other factors that have influenced changing roles were identified as women empowerment through Non Governmental Organisations (NGO) (64.8%), changed attitude towards the girl child (58.3%) and the New Constitution (49.8%). Some 64.8% of the respondents argued that women have been taught uncultured behaviour by some women NGOs that have sought to convince women that they can do the same jobs as men. In fact, this is exactly how Mohanty²³ had pointed out. As a result, and in agreement with the views of Mohanty, some women have been convinced and have actually ventured into fishing just like men.

Some of the NGOs have gone ahead to provide women with fishing gears and money so that they can venture into the fishing business. This, the respondents feel, has greatly influenced

²¹ M. Ochieng, E. Moth, O. Ogotu and M. Sombe, *Educational Needs Assessment Report. Women in Fishing Industry Project*, 15, July, 2002, p. 22.

²²K. Geheb, *Exploring People – Environment Relationships: The changing Nature of the Small Scale fishery in the Kenyan Sector of Lake Victoria*. (Chichester, UK.: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 1995).

²³Mohanty, *Under the Western eyes*.

the changing gender roles in the fishing sector in Lake Victoria. But some 58.3% of the respondents asserted that the Luo community are slowly changing their attitude towards the girl child and are beginning to see a child as a child. This finding supports the contention of Abila²⁴ that views of the local communities have changed in many areas. This has also been a result of NGO influence. Now families are giving the same attention to the female child as to the male child. The new constitution has also led to some changing gender roles but only 49.8% of the respondents identified it.

The last factor identified as having influenced changing gender roles in the fishing sector were grouped as 'other' factors and were actually suggested by 38.3% of the respondents. However, it did not indicate what these "other factors" represented. There are some 38.6% of the fisherfolk who feel that gender roles have changed, and are changing due to some factors other than the seven identified.

The Government of Kenya invited British investors to build a fishnet manufacturing company in order to ensure provision of nets. This was done in 1970²⁵. The intention of the government to open fishing factories could have been established by the Lakeside towns but instead were placed in Nairobi, far from the Lakes. Finally, the government recommended that fishing factories be located somewhere in Western Kenya preferably in Kisumu²⁶. In the 70s there were experienced personnel working in the fishery in Kisumu and the Lake Region. The government stressed the need to regulate the mesh sizes to enhance rational and efficient management of the industry²⁷. Fishing regulation and management was therefore made mandatory to all fishers. One informant, Ouma stated that the theft of fishing nets persisted.²⁸ He noted that the solution to the problem of theft was the establishment of a fishnet industry.

The government increased mechanical boats in Nyanza so the fishers could increase the catches to improve on its export. According to Atieno, an informant, the boats were too expensive. The poor Luo fishers could not purchase them. The cost of engine maintenance was unbearable. Very few afforded the boats since there was no financial assistance. Only the

²⁴ Abila, *The Development of the Lake Victoria Fishery*.

²⁵ KNA XZ /5/145

²⁶ KNA NZ/5/145

²⁷ K.P. /6/1 of 1974-1979

²⁸ Ouma, (OI), 10th July, 2013

Indian fishers and the rich business men purchased the boats. According to several informants, by the 1970s very few female fishers owned boats.

Apart from few mechanised boats, a questionnaire about premises inspection at Homa Bay in 1973 /31/3 reported that private sailing boats brought smoked fish from Tanzania. The fish were reported as as having been ferried without any cover. Hygienically there was no running water, no lights, no toilets or drainage available. The stores were untidy as the floors also needed to be renovated.

Along Lake Victoria in HomaBay County, women play a major role in exploiting the natural resources to promote the fishery industry. One informant, Juma, states that the Sindo women Multipurpose Self Help Group ²⁹has existed since 1977. The women live in Kaksingri location in South Nyanza. They engage in agriculture to supplement their income from fishing. In 1987, they formed Sindo women fish processing and distribution project. Funding was provided by the United Nations Development Programme at US\$ 240,000 as a grant. The group buys and sells fish on a small scale with money accumulated from their own efforts. A report at the KNA states that in October, 1987, registered women groups increased from 25 to 28.³⁰

5.4. Summary

This chapter has presented the changes in the fisheries from 1963 to 1980. It has pointed out that from the independence period, (1963), radical changes took place among the fishers. These included the fishing policies, fishing regulations, the use of right nets, gear and the second world war. The major factors that influenced the changing roles include education, cultural values and the changing family roles.

The crucial need for cash income to clear taxes and to care for family needs has led a large number of traders to join the fishing sector. To compete in the business, both gender have developed coping methods. Consequently, women also invested in their own boats and gears. Those who had no boats made special arrangements with the fishers to get their daily supply of fish. At times, the female traders have sexual relations with the male fishers in order to

²⁹ Juma, (OI), 9th July, 2019.

³⁰ KNA Misc /25/

obtain favours. The low prices and daily supply of fish often result from prostitution. NGOs campaigning against ‘Sex for fish’ as the magazine from the counties assert that ³¹ The Turkish government donated 15 fishing boats to women in the Lake region as an effort to combat the HIV/AIDS menace. Five boats went to Kisumu County women. These boats are expected to eliminate the rogue culture of women giving their bodies to fishermen in exchange for fish.

³¹ J. Omoro, Campaign Against ‘Sex for Fish’ Homa Bay County. *The East African Standard* 23rd July, 2013, p.10.

CHAPTER SIX

CULTURAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHALLENGES IN THE CONTEMPORARY PERIOD UPTO 2012

6.1. Overview

This chapter focuses on the socio-economic challenges facing fisherfolk in the contemporary period. It looks at the social and cultural challenges arising from the physical endowment of women, traditional beliefs, taboos and the traditional role of labour provision. The sexual exploitation of women by men in exchange for supply of fish also comes to the fore as a major challenge. Environmental issues especially the water hyacinth and its effect on fishing is also outlined. Fisherfolk face a lot of financial challenges that puts them at a disadvantage when competing amongst the sexes and also with other more financially endowed actors. Finally lack of proper storage facilities and other infrastructure including transport play a big role taking into account the perishability of fish as a product.

6.2. Emerging Issues in Fishing in the Contemporary Period

In Kenya, the Lake Victoria waters mainly lie within Nyanza Province (Kisumu, Homa Bay and Migori Counties) whose occupants are mainly of the Luo ethnic group. Presently, the Lake shores are invaded by fishers from all communities in Kenya. A report by one of the Beach Management Unit officers indicate that historically, upto 1900, the fishery in Lake Victoria was not recognised by the Government of Kenya. Therefore, no attention was given to it¹. As a resource, it was not utilised as one of the foreign exchange earners.

In Kenya, fisheries resource management has been based on the top-down centralised approach since the colonial days². The fishers have not been involved in decision making concerning management. The government has tended to own and manage the fisheries resources amidst various challenges. The management system has lacked adequate staff, technology and facilitation, the cost of monitoring the stock and the capacity to enforce regulations among others.

¹ Alala, (OI), 14th July, 2013.

² C. Lwenya and R.O. Abila, Co-Management in the Lake Victoria Fishery, Realities Constraints and Opportunities in Kenya. Kenya Marine and Fisheries Research Institute.

Although the population of the fisherfolk was considerably low and fishing activity was also low in the pre-colonial 1900s, different species of fish were in plenty. As a result, the people had enough for subsistence hence food security. One informant, Ouma, notes that people used *orindi* canoes to move into the water³. He asserts that they did not travel far - deep because there was plenty fish near the shore. Less modernised fishing methods such as basket - trapping and spearing were employed successfully.

During the pre-colonial period, among the Luo, only men did actual fishing since most communities considered women the weaker sex. In most cases, women waited at the landing bays to meet their husbands to carry fish home, to prepare and cook for their families. The men as heads of the family had the opportunity to own both fishing boats and fishing gear. Women were believed to be poor in economic management. Therefore, they were not allowed to play any role apart from reproduction and family chores such as cooking. A few women were allowed to keep the cash from fishing activity but could not use the money without their men's consent. During this era, more advanced methods of fishing were used. They included gill nets, hook lines, beach seines (*rimba*) among others. Apart from canoes, boats were introduced to transport fish to and from distant waters. During this period, a few women joined the fishing industry. The major roles of women were to process and preserve fish. They sorted, aired, smoked, dried and fried fish in order to preserve them. The women participated in fish trade by carrying fish to local and distant markets. However, they were limited by the distance they could walk and by the perishability of fish and its products.

In the colonial era, hut taxes and poll taxes were introduced by the colonial government in 1900 and 1910 respectively. These necessitated the generation of additional cash incomes by all indigenous Kenyans. With new production technology and expansion of markets, fishing developed rapidly. The number of fishermen entering the fishery rose steadily, notably after the Second World War, as many Luo service men returning from the war sought incomes from fishing in the absence of other employment opportunities⁴. The fisheries graduated to advanced commercialisation by 1980.

³ Ouma, (OI), 24th July, 2012

⁴ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Report on Kenya fisheries 1960. Nairobi, Government Printer, 1961.

In the same year, the new system of catching herring fish *dagaa* or *omena* was introduced. It involved the use of pressure lamps. The fishing community realised economic growth which drastically influenced both gender into great trade. Due to the fishing ‘boom’ following the introduction of the Nile Perch, the government ventured into international trade. She opened foreign markets for fish and its products. The markets included Europe, Israel, Britain and Dubai among others. Fish factories were established in Nairobi and Kisumu to process the fish.

In the year 2004, the government introduced a Beach Management Unit System (BMU) which involved both men and women in the management of the resources and finances⁵. The BMUs managed the beaches by registering the fishers, creating peace and order and licensing the fishers. There has always been high demand for fish products yet requirements for entering the fishery are few. In this case, lack of experience is not a barrier to employment. Once a boat owner provides a fishing license which is the main requirement, he or she provides accommodation in the form of *abila* or rooms to be rented by the fishers (employees). The boat and gear owners employed workers such as a minimum crew size of four per boat. The fishers migrated from bay to bay in search of more fish.

6.3. Social and Cultural Challenges

As earlier discussed, fishing activities included both gender. During the pre-colonial period, both gender participated in fisheries by performing clearly defined roles. The culturally defined roles complemented each other. The male fishers did the actual catching of fish while the female fishers were not allowed into the water to catch fish. They participated mainly in the post harvesting activities such as fish processing and trading.

Lyn observes that, traditionally, men have fished offshore while women have concentrated on inshore activities through the collecting or gleaning of different species from the rest and other inshore areas⁶. Anyango,⁷ an informant, affirmed that women actively participated in fishing in Lake Victoria at the beaches. Since most fishing was done at night from 6.00 pm to

⁵Opira, (OI), 21st August, 2013.

⁶L. Lyn, *What is fishing? Gender, Globalisation and Fisheries Workshop*. St. Johns N.F. 1999, 6 – 12 May, 2000.

⁷Anyango, (OI), 14th August, 2012

6.00 am. It has predominantly been men's work due to their traditional roles of child bearing and household chores.

Both Agono and Adera, informants, argued that most women did not participate in offshore fishing activity because it required a lot of time, energy and had a lot of risks. The two fishers also confirmed that women and men were not barred from fishing⁸. There were no taboos, religious or traditional beliefs to that effect. In cases where women caught fish, it was done in the shallow waters at the shore. As noted by Geheb, women are seen as a source of labour for fishing in Lake Victoria. Most fishers therefore marry as many women as possible to provide enough labour for their fishing business. The women caught 'dagaa' which were found readily at the shore. They were small and not as profitable as the big fish. At times, fishers migrate. The men particularly move to other parts of the Lake (beaches) in search of more fish. Others seek other job opportunities in urban centres leaving women to play roles that were traditionally reserved for men.

This study identified challenges that have prevented the fishers from running their business as they should. The factors have been grouped into four main categories namely; personal, cultural, financial and infrastructural. Whenever it is off season for fishing activities, the Lake gets under control. The male therefore move from one beach to the next in search of fish. The female fish traders however remain at one beach permanently.

6.4. Sex for Fish

Awino and Ogolla,⁹ both informants, argue that most women fish traders are widowed, single or divorced. As such, they join fisheries as a means of survival. Due to poverty, more women have moved and settled at the beaches. With industrialisation and commercialisation of fish and its products, fishing has become very challenging to them. As a result of more demand for fish, the women fish traders began to engage in "Sex for fish". According to Auma,¹⁰ an informant, the women at times engaged in sex with more than one sex partner.

⁸ K. Geheb. The regulation and regulated; Fisheries Management options and dynamics in Kenya's Lake Victoria Fisheries, PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, U.K, 1997.

⁹ Awino and Ogolla, (OI), 29th September, 2012

¹⁰ Auma, (OI), 29th September, 2012

The women had sexual relationships with the fishermen in order to be sure of their daily catch. A fisherman called *jaboya* supplies one or more women traders with fish daily on condition that sexual relations are maintained. According to Ang'ienda, these relationships first developed on unconscious and unofficial basis but became institutionalised within beach communities in 2001.¹¹ One of the slogans common to the beaches is 'no sex, no fish'. The practice which is largely due to poverty has encouraged immorality among the fisherfolk. Apart from 'sex for fish', there is loose sexual behaviour and prostitution which have given rise to sexually transmitted diseases such as gonorrea, syphilis and HIV/AIDS.

Sexual exchange for fish at the beaches is not limited to *jaboya* only. After fishing the whole night, an informant, Jonyo,¹² notes that, the men convene in a communal house called *abila* or a hut to rest. This is a place for consultation. In *abila* there is one woman who cooks for and sleeps with the employees of the boat owners. The women fishers of *Doho* beach indicated that it was difficult for women to get fish from the fishermen if they had no sexual relations with them. According to a report from Homa Bay County written by Omoro in the Daily Nation page 10, Omoro writes that a campaign against "Sex for fish" has been launched where the Turkish Government has donated 15 fishing boats in the Lake region in an effort to combat the practice. Five boats went to Homa Bay County while ten were for Kisumu County women. The boats are expected to minimise the rogue culture of women giving their bodies to fishermen in exchange for fish.

In a focus group discussion at Homa Lime, both gender asserted that prostitution is a major challenge to the fishers¹³. Most of the fishing folk live from hand to mouth because of the money they get easily each day. They spend the money mostly on drinking and prostitution. Oluoch, an informant, states that "after hard work, one relaxes at the bar drinking and entertaining young girls"¹⁴. This practice has led to many youth dropping out of school as they target the readily available cash.

¹¹ G. Ang'ienda, *Study on the Gender dimensions of Poverty in Communities, Around the Lake Victoria*. Lake Victoria Centre for Research Development, Dunga Beach, (Kisumu: Osienala, 2003).

¹² Jonyo, (OI), 22nd July, 2016

¹³ F. G. D. Held at Homa Lime on 23/7/2013.

¹⁴ Oluoch, (OI), 22nd July, 2013

The situation is similar to what CIRDAP established among the rural women in fishing communities in Naga¹⁵. With fishermen migrating from one beach to the other and having sexual relationships with multiple women, HIV/AIDS has been rampant at the beaches. This has caused a dangerous cycle of HIV infection which has left many fishers weak as the rate of death is also high. Many families have therefore remained with orphaned children. Most children attend school up to standard four. Omondi,¹⁶ an informant, observed that poverty forces the elderly siblings to join fisheries as the girls prostitute to take care of their younger siblings.

Since most fishers never schooled properly by 1963, they could not be employed in sectors with white collar jobs. Atieno,¹⁷ an informant contends that, the fishing communities have lagged behind in health facilities which are only based at the town centres. The dispensaries at the beaches are never equipped with medicine.¹⁸ Hygiene has been a problem because of lack of running tap water, electricity, one or no toilets, poor drainage systems and unkempt stores. Lack of proper hygiene has led to ‘cholera’ a disease that sweeps many fishers at the Lake side seasonally. This concurs with the findings of the study by Tarzan, Karanja and Ng’weshemi in Jinja.¹⁹

6.5. Cultural Beliefs

The Luo fishing communities by the Lake side have the ‘do’s and don’ts in areas including bereavement, menstruation, fishing as a man’s job and pregnancy among others. There are cultural beliefs and practices associated with bereavement that bind women and keep them closed to the outside world for long periods. For example, a woman should not go to the Lake or greet a fisherman by hand if her husband has died. Ogutu, an informant, pointed out that, it is believed that her husband’s spirit will follow her to the Lake and cause her to drown or her presence will hinder proper catch of fish and the fishing boat could capsize. Until cleansing ceremonies are carried out, the bereaved woman is barred from roles in the fishing business.

¹⁵ CIRDAP’s Action Program Rural Women in Fishing Communities, *Naga: The ICLARM Quarterly*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1989, pp. 10 – 12.

¹⁶ Omondi, (OI), 27th August, 2013

¹⁷ Atieno, (OI), 28th August, 2013

¹⁸ Ogutu, (OI), 25th June, 2013.

¹⁹ N. Tarzan, D. Karanja and J. Ngweshemi, Challenges of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases among fishing communities. pp 150 – 158.

6.6. Fishing as a Man's Job

Among the Luo fishers, the attitudinal view that fishing is a man's job is still very strong. Culturally, women are meant to be housekeepers who reproduce and take care of children. Although women fear the Lake naturally and fishing is mostly done at night which is difficult for them, women in the contemporary times have ventured into actual fishing. They own boats but hire men to fish using their boats. Such business lacks transparency since the women cannot supervise how the male counterparts manage their boats in terms of income. Dowling argues that women's contribution, knowledge and other aspects that are necessary for sustainability of the fishing business and for elimination of crisis work just as men also do.²⁰ The men row boats but culturally women are prohibited from rowing boats. Generally, culture viewed women as cause of bad omen in fishing.

According to Otieno,²¹ a 72 year old informant, the following are some of the divergent but interesting perspectives as regards cultural beliefs. That men should not meet women on the way to the Lake as it leads to poor catch and brings about bad omen. Times have changed and contemporarily, both gender participate in fisheries. The female, just as the male, do actual fishing but at the shores of the Lake and very few get into the deep waters.

Owiti, an informant of K'Otieno beach in Kendu Bay, states that women have taboos regarding fishing. They have not been allowed to go to the Lake during menstruation. It was believed that it would make the boat disappear.²² This belief keeps the women away from the business for upto seven days each month. The whole idea affects them psychologically. One beach leader, Ogol, argued that if menstruating women got into the water, the boat would capsize²³. Culturally, during pregnancy, the women are prohibited from fishing.²⁴ This forces a pregnant woman to keep off active fishing for a period of nine months. Since the duration is lengthy, it affects the women both economically and psychologically. During such times, most women have no alternative businesses to supplement their income. Other cultural taboos include no whistling while fishing, no sex while going to fish and no pointing at anything in the Lake.

²⁰ Dowling 'Just' a fisherman's wife; a post structured Feminist expose of Australian Commercial Fishing Women's Contributions and Knowledge' sustainability and crisis. (Cambridge: Scholars, 2006).

²¹ Otieno, (OI), 19th June, 2013.

²² Owiti, (OI), 23rd August, 2016.

²³ Ogol, (OI), 21st August, 2013.

²⁴ Oketch, (OI), 25th July, 2012.

In case one dies in the Lake, no fishing goes on until the body is recovered and cleansing is done. Madanda asserts that many cultural beliefs and social norms prevent women from engaging in fishing on Lake Victoria. She further observes that, it was widely believed to be bad luck to meet a woman on the way to the Lake. However, Madanda contends that some women were directly involved in fishing and that some of the stereotypes were being challenged by the women fishers themselves²⁵.

According to informants in an FGD, the modern fisherfolk do not understand the cultural beliefs. After 1980, the educated of fishers have quoted modern religions and education to have eradicated the cultural practices which the religious no longer follow. They mainly identify with Islam and Christianity. On the onset to the Lake, they prayed and sought God's intervention for plenty of fish and good luck. Although cultural practices are diminishing, they are meant to promote good fish catch rather than witchhunt any community member.

6.7. The Water Hyacinth Menace

The hyacinth is scientifically known as *Eichhornia Crassipes*. It is an aquatic weed that has invaded Lake Victoria. Thielke observes that the hyacinth was introduced by Belgian colonists to Rwanda. It was meant to make their holdings beautiful although it advanced by natural means to Lake Victoria where it was first sighted in 1988.²⁶ It became an ecological plague by forming thick mats of vegetation. This plant grows into a thick bed of waxy leaves and violet flowers that cover the surface of the Lake. The mottled water hyacinth weevil *Neochetina eichhorniae* was bred and released into the Lake with good results. However, Juma an informant, asserts that in the late 1990's the weevils did their work and the surface area covered by the water hyacinth reduced dramatically²⁷. It is possible that lack of consistency in the production of the weevils has led to the increased hyacinth in Lake Victoria. The Kenyan side of the Lake around the Gulf of Winam, Kisumu Bay and Nyakach Bay are covered by the plant.

²⁵ A. Madanda, Commercialization and Gender Roles among Lake Victoria Shore fishing Communities and Uganda. Research Report on the 14th OSSREA Research Competition on Gender Issues. Kampala; Makerere University 2003.

²⁶ T. Thielke, *Kenia; Die Grune Pest (Kenya: They Green Plague)*'' ([htt://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/o,1518,534060,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/o,1518,534060,00.html)). In German Der Spiegel. [Htt://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/o,1518,534060,00.html](http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/o,1518,534060,00.html):retrieved October,11,2010.

²⁷ Juma, (OI), 14th December, 2012

Kaluoch observes that, fishmongers in Homabay County have raised concerns over the invasion of Lake Victoria by large swathes of hyacinth²⁸. The traders complained of the weed paralysing their business. The fish stocks have reduced drastically causing panic that the price of fish will sky-rocket because of dwindling stocks from local beaches that have been covered by the weed as Oloo, a fisherman observes²⁹. The weed suffocates and chokes the Lake by diminishing the fish reservoir thereby hurting the local economies. Its thick vegetation hinders transportation by boats, interferes with hydroelectric power generation and drinking water supply. It affects water circulation in the Lake hence becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes that spread malaria.

One fish trader, Atieno as reported in the Nation Newspaper stated that most of the women who sell fish at the Homa Bay market have been forced to source their produce from as far as beaches in Mbita³⁰. Since the fishermen are unable to penetrate the thick blanket of the weed, they have been forced to abandon their boats along the beaches. Other fishers fear being trapped in the Lake at night during their fishing hours. Oloo recalled how he was at one time trapped in the Lake for several hours until he had to be rescued by a chopper.³¹ He ruled out going back to the Lake until the weed was eradicated. Apart from the fisheries suffering from the hyacinth, Homa Bay Water Services Company normally experiences water shortages whenever the intake points suck in the weeds. Generally, the water hyacinth in Lake Victoria chokes the fish business and is a major challenge.

6.8. Financial Challenges

The financial factor includes credit facilities, cooperative societies and banking services. An informant, Ogira, states that, historically upto the year 1900, the fishery in Lake Victoria was not recognised by the government of Kenya³². The population of the fisher folk was considerably low and fishing activity was low although there was plenty of fish which was used as protein food by the communities living around the Lake.

²⁸ M. Kaluoch, Hyacinth in Lake Victoria Chokes fish Business, *Daily Nation*, Homabay County, 9th August, 2012, p. 4.

²⁹ Oloo, (OI), 9th August, 2016.

³⁰ Atieno, (OI), 9th August, 2016.

³¹ Oloo, (OI), 9th August, 2016.

³² Ogira, (OI), 24th July, 2013

The trade in the pre-colonial era consisted of barter trade in which money was not used as currency for exchange. Trade was done amongst the local communities and regions where the traders transported the fish by walking and later used donkeys. At the markets, fish was exchanged with other items such as salt, hoes and pots among others.

The first use of real currency in Kenya was during slave trade. This was carried out along the Kenyan Coast between 1800 – 1850. Thaler was an Austrian coin named after Maria Theresa Thaler the Austrian ruler then ³³. During the construction of the railway line, the Indian Rupee was the first currency that penetrated the interior of Kenya. Other currencies came up and the agora.com observes that by 1966, the Kenyan shilling was established as the official currency.

After Kenya got independence, companies found in Britain, Scandinavia and Japan were interested in trading with Kenya. They wanted to provide the Kenyan government with funds and technological know-how to develop the fishery. Their efforts were thwarted by their lack of finances and technology. The Kenyan government instituted programmes to develop the fisheries in the Lake Region and Coastal Kenya. As quoted in the East African Standard in February, 1974, the government had embarked on programmes to improve the Lake fisheries. The Director of Fisheries, Odera, reported that boat building yards had been set up at Lake Turkana, Victoria as well as Mombasa at the Coast ³⁴. The prices of the boats varied from those that used gill nets and the trawl boats. Most of the fish caught around independence period went to the domestic market.

By 1974, the demand for Lake fish by the European Union was still minimal. The gill net fishing did not produce enough fish for export markets. This necessitated the use of the trawling gear, which was capable of landing 200 kilogrammes of fish per hour or one ton in a day.³⁵ Since *Haplochromis (fulu)* were the dominant species caught, the fish meal production plant to process the species was to be built. The government had programmes to stock all the dams in the country with tilapia to ensure that local demand was satisfied.³⁶ The fish ponds in central Kenya and dams in the Lake region were to be developed. Since the *Haplochromis*

³³ W.W.W The Agora. Com Evaluation of Currency in Kenya, Jan. 30th, 2015.

³⁴ KNA XZ /5/145. *East African Standard*, Nairobi, 23/2/1974.

³⁵ East African Standard, Nairobi , 23/2/1974.

³⁶ Zx/5/183

were small and bony, they were processed as fish meal. The meal is used as a food supplement for domestic animals. It enables the animals to produce more meat, milk and eggs.

One challenge the government had to deal with was lack of trained local experts and fishers who could participate in the new projects and industries. The Kenyan fishers had not been trained for offshore fishing and could not stay in the Lake for long periods like fishers from countries such as Japan who could stay even for three months. Most fishers expected that after independence in 1963, the fisheries would get effective support from the government. This never happened as Kitching points out, “the production of fish products for domestic consumption and export remained much the same difficult business that it had been.”³⁷ It was therefore difficult to secure foreign financial support from development partners.

Fishing in Lake Victoria was dominated by Asians and a few Europeans with African fishers playing a marginal role. The fishers’ major challenge was the management of cash from their businesses. One informant, Auma, states that the fishers lived from hand to mouth³⁸ because they never saved their income. She indicated that lack of banking facilities hindered them from saving money. Most banks were situated in towns for example, Homa Bay, Kisii, and Kisumu which were far from the fishing regions. Going to the bank was cumbersome therefore the money was squandered daily as the fishers looked forward to the income of the following day.

There were no cooperative societies from which the fishers could acquire credit and loan facilities to expand and manage their businesses. The available cooperative societies were few, local and poorly managed. The fisherfolk needed well established cooperative societies of equivalence to those of teachers and other professionals. One fisher, Ogutu, asserts that around 1980, to cope with the constraints of commercial fishing, both gender formed financial groups (merry go round) where borrowing of money could be done.³⁹ The fishers pooled their money together then loaned it out to members. These were known as self help groups. The members of each group borrowed money, traded with it and returned it with profit. Table banking has also been practised whereby members are given loans to run their

³⁷ G. Kitching, *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, p. 315.

³⁸ Auma, (OI), 14th July, 2013

³⁹ Ogutu, (OI), 13th July, 2013.

businesses for a whole month. At the end of every month, the loans are returned with profit on each table banking day.

These findings are in agreement with the view of Bokea and Ikiara⁴⁰ as well as Ogutu⁴¹. They put a strong case for macro economy of the export fishing industry in Lake Victoria. They contend that credit facilities should be availed at affordable rates to the fisherfolk. They argue that women need specific women cooperative societies in the fish market. Most fishers argued that they could not do good business due to lack of capital and lack of flexible credit facilities. Upto the year 2012, sources of credit facilities included NGOs, fishermen cooperatives, micro finance institutions, related groups, fish factory agents, friends and women groups. The available credit facilities have enabled both gender to acquire their own boats, engines, nets, trucks and lorries for transportation.

Omwenga, Abila and Lwenya contend that fishers of Lake Victoria were isolated from most facilities that were found in the urban centres. This is because the fishers mainly lived in homes situated near markets or beaches. The fishers could not access vital knowledge and communication. Some informants, Atieno and Opira stressed the fact that they needed to be informed about HIV and AIDS⁴². Their area, K'Otieno in Kendu Bay, had not been sensitised enough. This was confirmed by most fishers.

6.9. Infrastructure

The fishers were also challenged by poor infrastructure. This included storage facilities and roads. In the pre-colonial period trade was localised within the regions where fishing was done. An informant, Auma, pointed out that women carried goods for trade on their heads and walked long distances on foot to the market places⁴³. Some markets were in the other regions. Due to high perishability of fish, the fishers, particularly women smoked and sundried fish in order to preserve them. They however lacked freezers and cold storage for the fish.

⁴⁰Bokea and Ikiara, *The Macro Economy of the Export Fishing Industry In Lake Victoria Kenya*.

⁴¹Ogutu, *The role of women and Cooperative Societies in Fish Marketing in Western Kenya*.

⁴²Atieno and Opira, (OI), 29th August, 2013

⁴³Auma, (OI), 14th July, 2012

After 1963, the railway lines, passable roads and air transport improved the situation of the traders who could access markets locally, regionally and abroad. Fish reached international markets in France, Britain and European countries. There were big trucks with cold rooms which enabled the transportation of fresh fish.

From 1980, more modernised storage facilities have been used. There is a lot of transportation of fresh fish to towns such as Nairobi by trucks with freezers. Other products reach countries abroad through air transport. The fishing economy has improved due to the large fishing business facilities and improved roads. However, some of the landing bays in the interior can not be accessed easily due to impassable roads and inadequate trucks with cold rooms. As confirmed by the informants that lack of storage facilities and poor road network is a challenge to the fishers, the study thus concurs with Geheb.⁴⁴ He argues that there are significant relationships between the people, the environment and success of small scale fishery in the Kenyan sector of Lake Victoria.

Similarly Garrod concluded that there is a relationship between marketing facilities and fishing success⁴⁵. Both Geheb and Garrod observed that infrastructure has been a serious obstacle to the fishing in Lake Victoria. Fish being a highly perishable commodity needs good infrastructure. The economic hardships experienced between 1980 to 2012, heralded the practice of fish farming that has greatly competed with Lake fishing. Both gender have participated in fish farming which they do mainly in fishponds on their farms. Fish farming done on a large scale adequately supplements the fish from the Lake. Most of the farm fish is exported abroad. The fishing roles have consequently changed since both gender participate in fish growing, harvesting and feeding. This has improved the economic status of both gender in the fishing industry.

6.10. Summary

This chapter investigated the challenges facing the fisher folk in Lake Victoria with specific reference to Kendu Bay and Homa Lime. Several factors that hindered proper growth in the fishing industry have been identified. Activities of both gender are discussed at length. During the pre-colonial period, the fishing activities were governed by traditional laws. Because the fishing methods used then were less modernised, there was no exploitation of

⁴⁴ Geheb, *Exploring People – Environment Relationships*.

⁴⁵ Garrod, *The History of Fishing Industry of Lake Victoria*.

fish. There was plenty of indigenous fish which was for subsistence. Fish was traded locally and regionally using the system of barter trade.

Colonisation of Kenya saw the arrival of new fishing nets and motorised boats. New laws and regulations were introduced to govern the fisheries. The laws managed overfishing to some extent. The introduction of new fishing technology during the colonial era was mainly to expand the fishing industry. Colonialism brought new species of fish particularly the Nile Perch and Tilapia. The introduction of *mbuta* (Nile Perch) greatly improved trade and financial security. Wilson observes that with the increased number of factories along the beaches, less fish remained for household consumption and this increased food insecurity in the long run⁴⁶. Most fish ended up in the export market. The indigenous fish got extinct due to their consumption by *mbuta*. While Yongo asserts that the introduction of *mbuta* gave the fishers a higher income,⁴⁷ Abila argues that *mbuta* is responsible for the disappearance of indigenous species.⁴⁸

The existing beaches increased in size, population and in terms of fish landed and fish traders. In developing, some beaches had cafes, bars and small hotels. Many fishers moved to the shopping centres in search of jobs. Prostitution and “sex for fish” cropped up due to poverty. Girls and boys dropped out of school to make easy money while the female fishers prostituted with *jaboya* in order to get daily provision of fish to trade. Promiscuity led to diseases such as syphilis and HIV and AIDS. Many children became orphans.

The Luo cultural beliefs hindered development of the fishers. The belief that only men were allowed to do actual fishing left most women poor. During periods of menstruation, bereavement and pregnancy the women could not participate in fishing activities. They therefore got derailed economically.

The fishers have faced the challenge of lack of capital to compete in the fish market trade. The poor fishers participated in small scale businesses while the rich fisherfolk trade at international levels. The fishers lack cooperative societies that are well established. The absence of banking facilities around the landing bays has left the fishers poor. Most of them

⁴⁶ D. Wilson. *The Global in the Local*

⁴⁷ Yongo, (OI), 14th August, 2013

⁴⁸ Abila, *Impacts of International Fish Trade* P. 14.

live from hand to mouth. In the communities far from cities where banks are located, the fishers spend all the cash and hope for more each day.

The roads along the Lake region were in a poor state. There were no reliable markets for fish and fish factories which were located in Nairobi far from the Lake region. There has been lack of modernised storage facilities such as cold rooms. For export, transporting fish from the interior of the Lake region has been challenging due to poor roads and infrastructure in general.

Although the colonial period was dominated by consolidation and expansion of British and American business in Kenya, there was very little foreign investment that went directly into the fishing sector. They favoured agricultural produce such as tea, coffee, mineral and sisal sectors. On the whole, the local community of the Lake region has been left in poverty due to trade liberalisation, industrialisation and lack of capital.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Overview

Fishing has been an occupation of the Lake side people of Kenya since the ancient time. Both gender have been involved in the fisheries from its origin. No one was restricted from the use of Lake Victoria and its resources during the pre-colonial period. Both genders have participated in fishing activities with their roles culturally defined. The female mainly did post- harvesting activities as the male majored in production (actual fishing).

7.2 Study Findings and Conclusions

The study was based on three important objectives that have been examined. It aimed at examining the evolving nature of gender roles among fisherfolk in the fisheries sector of Lake Victoria in Homa Bay County. The first objective was to describe the nature and patterns of the changing gender roles in the fisheries in Homa Bay County during the pre-colonial period. The second intention was to determine the major factors that influenced gender roles in the fishing industry in the county from 1900 to 1963. Lastly, this study set out to establish the challenges faced by the fishers in Homa Bay County in executing their roles in the post- colonial period.

The study made it possible to indicate the impact of the interaction between the pre-colonial fishing culture with the colonial and post-colonial systems and to examine the indigenous fishing techniques and management systems. New fishing policies and programmes were initiated by colonial administrators. These were discussed in collaboration with the pre-colonial fishing practices that existed alongside the colonial fishing policies. Most of the indigenous fishing practices have persisted to the contemporary period.

The Luo economic activity was greatly influenced by the environment. The water bodies such as Lake Victoria, rivers and swamps sustained their livestock keeping, farming and fishing activities which they possessed as economic activities for subsistence and trade. Due to challenges such as famine and drought, fishing remained an important economic activity. Ocholla – Ayayo observes that the Luo preferred settling on the territories bordering Lake Victoria (Nyanza) because this gave them an opportunity to take part in the fishing activity. The elders passed on fishing skills to the following generations. While the men went fishing,

the women cleaned, smoked and marketed the fish. They also took care of their families. Pre-colonial Lake Victoria fishery was characterised by the low technology gears such as reed traps, basket traps, papyrus beach seines and sisal long lines. The fishing methods being less advanced, the level of exploitation of fish was controlled. Markets were limited by distance and perishability of fish. Men dominated the fisheries since the women rarely owned boats and nets.

Fishing was a major economic activity among the Luo of South Nyanza. The fishing methods were less advanced compared to the contemporary times where sophisticated methods have led to extinction of certain species of fish. Kenya imports fish from China yet if the resources are managed well, the production of fish would be sustainable. The indigenous fish included *omena*, *ningu*, *okoko* and *fulu*. They existed in plenty and were affordable. The commercialisation of fish after the introduction of exotic varieties of tilapia and Nile perch have left most fishers poor and starved due to high prices of fish. The traditional methods used for preservation of fish have persisted to date. They included; fish smoking, sun drying, and salting which was in the domain of women as fish processors and traders.

Chapter three discussed the issues such as the arrival of colonial rule and the introduction of the new fishing policies and fishing gear. It includes the fishers' responses to new fishing technology in conjunction with the result of imposition of colonial administration. In comparison to the indigenous methods of fishing, the new gill nets introduced by colonisation led to overfishing which threatened sustainability and utilisation of the fishery.

Western education was introduced in South Nyanza by the Christian Missionaries. They introduced Church schools that have remained key sources of education to date. Commercialisation affected the Luo fishers greatly. Gradually, it brought new fish species, money, bicycles, and motorised boats. The fishers did not own boats or fishing gear yet they depended on income from fishing. The coming of species such as Nile Perch and tilapia boosted the commercial value of the Lake but marginalised the ordinary fishers. Very little change in the fisheries has been realised after independence. The government therefore should assist the small scale fishers to cope with commercialisation.

The fishers and the fishing communities have experienced various challenges namely; personal and cultural challenges which include sex for fish and prostitution. Other challenges

are experienced during bereavement, pregnancy and the fact that fishing is viewed as a man's job. Due to more demand for fish, the women fish traders engage in "sex for fish". This guarantees assurance for fish provision. At the beaches, prostitution and adultery are on the rise. This has led to HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases. These practices have rendered many families orphaned. As a remedy, the government needs to sensitise the fishing communities about the results of the vice. The fishers need financial support to boost their small scale trade. The fishers need to be educated on matters concerning financial management, loans and credit facilities.

The Ministry responsible for gender issues and the Ministry for social services should take an active part in ensuring that both men and women join the fisheries. Most cultural beliefs among the Luo fishers affect the women and children. During the periods when women are locked away from active fishing, the children suffer the consequences such as lack of food, school fees, and clothing among others. The community needs to be educated that scientifically there is no connection between fishing activities and the beliefs.

The introduction of the fish factories and grinding meals has disadvantaged the fishers. Poor fishers can only obtain the remains of fish which the factory agents reject. Unfortunately, the remains are taken for fish meals. The small scale fish traders therefore lose their trade and food for their families. The poor fishers live in poor conditions as the lake shores lack adequate medical facilities and have poor sanitation hence the spread of diseases such as cholera.

7.3 Study Recommendations

Very strong policies and regulations need to be put in place to control the exploitation of the fishers by the rich large scale traders. The fishers need to be empowered and encouraged to take more active roles in the fishing industry.

The County governments should support the fisheries by providing good medical and sanitation facilities. The young girls and boys who drop out of school to join the fishing business need to be counselled and encouraged by local administrators to return to school.

On financial management, the major banks should consider opening branches in the communities at the fishing points. This would enable fishers to obtain credit facilities and increase the flow of capital.

Improvement of knowledge information services and management in the fishing industry for small scale fishers is very important. This should be reinforced with efforts in raising public awareness on the importance of fishing communities on the overall health and well-being of the country.

7.4 Recommended Areas for Further Research

This study was limited to two landing bays in Homa Bay County, yet the researcher is aware there are many more other landing bays in the County. This localisation could have lowered the generalisability of the study. The researcher therefore recommends that another study could be done on a larger scale to cover all the landing bays in the County.

The study only identified the factors influencing changing gender roles, but did not determine the actual effect of those factors on gender roles. The researcher recommends that this study be used as a basis of an experimental study that can determine the actual effect of each factor identified here, on changing gender roles.

A) Oral Informants

S/No	Name	Age	Occupation/ Details	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
1	Jean Adoyo	20	Fish Trader	Doho Beach	10.8.13
2	Grace Akinyi	70	Basket Seller	Old Doho Beach	10.7.13
3	Marion Akeyo	36	Fish Trader	Doho Beach	10.8.13
4	Phoebe Akeyo	52	Kiosk Owner	Old Doho Beach	20.6.12
5	Grace Akinyi	70	Basket Seller	Old Doho Beach	1.7.13.
6	Mary Alala	29	Fish Trader	K'Otieno Beach	24.8.12
7	Lilian Apiyo	24	Fish Trader	K'Otieno Beach	22.7.13
8	Norah Auma	30	Dagaa Dealer	Doho Beach	20.8.13
9	Kennedy Jonyo	55	Fisherman	Old Doho Beach	22.6.13
10	Juma Okeyo	73	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	9.7.13
11	Joseph Juma	40	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	23/7/13
12	Peter K'ojunju	37	Boat Repairer	K'Otieno Beach	20.6.16
13	Jane Muga	100	Retired Trader	Doho Beach	23/7/13
14	Elizabeth Nyamwari	60	Fish Trader	K'Otieno Beach	23.7.12
15	Kennedy Odera	41	Chairman BMU	Old Doho BMU	28.8.12
16	John Odhiambo	60	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	21.6.2017
17	Nelly Oketch	36	Kiosk Owner	K'Otieno Beach	14.7.12.
18	Bruno Ogol	50	Fisherman	Doho Beach	12.7.13
19	Peter Ogol	43	Fisherman	Old Doho Beach	21.8.13
20	Nelly Oketch	36	Kiosk Owner	K'Otieno Beach	25.7.12
21	Alice Okeyo	68	Fish Trader	Doho Beach	14.8.13
22	John Okula	60	Net Repairer	Homa Lime	29.8.12
23	James Ogutu	98	Retired Fisherman	Old Doho BMU	23.8.13
24	Wyclife Ogutu	28	Boat Crew	K'Otieno Beach	30.8.13
25	Samwel Ouma	92	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	27.6.13
26	Juma Opira	55	Fish Trader	Doho BMU	23.8.13
27	Benter Otieno	65	BMU Official	Doho BMU	18.6.13
28	Mary Opiyo	32	Fish Trader	Kendu Bay	27.7.13

29	Joyce Onyango	53	Fish Soking	Old Doho BMU	24.7.13
30	Walter Otieno	72	Fisherman	Old Doho BMU	19.6.13
31	Tabitha Opira	50	Treasurer BMU	K'Otieno Beach	23.8.13
32	David Ogoye	38	Fisherman	Old Doho Beach	29.8.12
33	Daniel Omondi	42	Truck Driver	Homabay	22.7.13
34	Seth Osano	79	Tax Collector	K'otieno Beach	20.6.12
35	Justus Ogutu	60	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	22.7.12
36	Joshua Oyundi	40	Fisherman	Old Doho Beach	30.8.13
37	Opira Odoyo	58	Boat Repair	Old Doho Beach	27.8.13
38	Joash Omollo	49	Farmer	Kendu Bay	28.9.13
39	Chris Odera	67	Kiosk Owner	Old Doho Beach	14.9.13
40	Charity Omondi	40	Fish Trader	Old Doho Beach	14.7.13
41	Grace Opira	43	Fish Trader	K'Otieno Beach	4.8.12
42	Ann Oyuga	62	Fish Trader	K'Otieno Beach	6.8.12
43	Henry Opiyo	45	Fisherman	K'otieno Beach	14.7.12
44	Benta Onyango	61	Fish Trader	K'Otieno Beach	23.7.12
45	Silas Otieno	60	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	16.7.12
46	James Omollo	80	Net Repair	K'Otieno Beach	24.8.13
47	Onyango Okeyo	33	Truck Driver	Homabay	14.8.13
48	Harison Owiyo	44	Boat Crew	K'Otieno	14.7.13
49	Owiti Ozero	43	Fisherman	K'Otieno	23.8.12
50	Clinton Owiti	43	Fish Trader	Doho Beach	14.8.12
.51	Justus Omollo	72	Net Repairer	K'Otieno Beach	14.7.12
52	George Ogutu	66	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	27.6.12
53	Sarah Ouma	50	Fish Trader	Old Doho Beach	10.7.13
54	Juma Okeyo	73	Fisherman	K'Otieno Beach	9.7.13
.55	Festo Opira	67	Fish Weighing	Doho Beach	21.8.13
56	Gregory Oluoch	43	Bar Owner	K'Otieno Beach	20.7.13
57	Joseph Ogira	58	Loaner	Doho Beach	24.7.13
58	Elijah Yogo	40	Policeman	Kendu Bay	14.7.13.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: Interview Guide

Interview Guide for Fishers and other stakeholders

Part 1:

1. Please identify yourself (Name, Age and Occupation)
2. When did you join the fisheries?
3. How did you join?
4. What role did you play then?
5. Did you undergo any training before becoming a fisherman /Fisherwoman?
6. From where did most fishers come? Nearby villages or far places?
7. What types of fish species did you catch during the pre colonial period?
8. Which type of nets did you use?
9. What types of fishing gear did you use?
10. Are you employed elsewhere?
11. Give advantages and disadvantages of each type of fishing gear used in the pre colonial era.

Part II

1. Who gets into the Lake to catch fish? Men/women. Explain.
2. At what time is fishing done?
3. What tools have been used for catching fish after 1963 /after 1980?
4. Who was in control of fishery and the territory along the beaches?
5. Where did you sell the fish?
6. What was the mode of payment?
7. Who sold the fish?
8. What was used in transporting fish to the markets/
9. How was the fish preserved?
10. Did the fishing business affect school goes in any way? Explain.

Part III:

1. What was the source of capital for your business?
2. Which projects did you undertake after selling fish?
3. Which of the fish you sold earned you more profit?
4. What problems did you face in your business?
5. Are both gender allowed into the lake to fish?
6. What are the cultural beliefs relating to men/women in fishing among the Luo?
7. Do women/men own fishing boats and gear?
8. What changes did the colonialists initiate in fishing industry?
9. How were the fishers affected by the open and closed seasons?
10. What measures were used to control fishing?
11. How did you cope with the new methods of fishing?
12. How did the introduction of the Nile perch affect the trade?

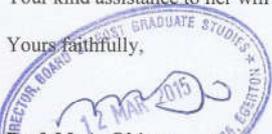
Part IV:

1. What challenges have the fishers faced? (men and women)
2. How have both gender responded to the challenges?
3. What advice can you give to the upcoming fisherfolk?
4. What is your comment about the fishing industry in Homalime /Kendu Bay?
5. What should the government do to improve Homalime landing bay?
6. How can the government of Kenya improve Kendu Bay beach?
7. What changes should be put in place to improve the fishing industry in general?

APPENDIX II: Interview Schedule /Checklist for BMU Officials.

1. Please identify yourself (Name, age and occupation)
2. What is the purpose of BMU?
3. What role do you play at the BMU?
4. How many BMU officials are female/male?
5. For how long have you worked for you department at Kendu Bay/Homalime?
6. What role do the male/female fishers play?
7. Do the women do actual fishing?
8. What challenges do you face as BMU leaders?
9. How does the fishing community benefit from the fishing activities?
10. Do traders pay taxes to the revenue department? If yes what is it used for?
11. Are there non registered fisherfolk?
12. If yes, why do they evade registration?
13. Does your office keep all records of fish entering and leaving the BMU?
14. How do BMU leaders benefit from the trade?
15. What is your view on the management of the fishing industry?
16. Suggest what can be done to improve the fishing sector
17. What can be done to minimize poverty among the Lake Communities?

APPENDIX III: Letter of Authorisation from Egerton University

<p>EGERTON Tel. Pilot: 254-51-2217620 254-51-2217877 254-51-2217631 Dir. line/Fax: 254-51-2217847 Cell Phone</p>		<p>UNIVERSITY P.O. Box 536 - 20115 Egerton, Njoro, Kenya Email: bpgs@egerton.ac.ke www.egerton.ac.ke</p>
<p>OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR GRADUATE SCHOOL</p>		
Ref:..... AM11/2633/10		Date:..... 5th March; 2015
<p>The Secretary, National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation, P. O. Box 30623-00100 <u>NAIROBI.</u></p>		
<p>Dear Sir,</p>		
<p>RE: REQUEST FOR RESEARCH PERMIT – MS. EUNICE ADHIAMBO OKELLO – REG. NO. AM11/2633/10</p>		
<p>This is to introduce and confirm to you that the above named student is in the Department of Philosophy History & Religious Studies, Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences.</p>		
<p>She is a bona-fide registered M.A. student in this University. Her research topic is “Changing Gender Roles in the Fishing Industry in South Nyanza District, Kenya 1900 – 2012”</p>		
<p>She is at the stage of collecting field data. Please issue her with a research permit to enable her undertake the studies.</p>		
<p>Your kind assistance to her will be highly appreciated.</p>		
<p>Yours faithfully,</p>		
<p> Prof. M. A. Okiror DIRECTOR, BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES</p>		
<p>MAO/vk</p>		
<hr/> <p><i>Transforming Lives Through Quality Education</i> <i>Egerton University is ISO 9001:2008 Certified</i></p>		

APPENDIX IV: Permit from National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

CONDITIONS

- 1. You must report to the County Commissioner and the County Education Officer of the area before embarking on your research. Failure to do that may lead to the cancellation of your permit**
- 2. Government Officers will not be interviewed without prior appointment.**
- 3. No questionnaire will be used unless it has been approved.**
- 4. Excavation, filming and collection of biological specimens are subject to further permission from the relevant Government Ministries.**
- 5. You are required to submit at least two(2) hard copies and one(1) soft copy of your final report.**
- 6. The Government of Kenya reserves the right to modify the conditions of this permit including its cancellation without notice**

Heles



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation

RESEARCH CLEARANCE PERMIT

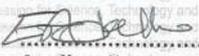
Serial No. A 4958

CONDITIONS: see back page

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT:
MS. EUNICE ADHIAMBO OKELLO
of EGERTON UNIVERSITY, 84-40100
Kisumu,has been permitted to conduct
research in Homabay County

on the topic: CHANGING GENDER ROLES
IN THE FISHING INDUSTRY IN SOUTH
NYANZA DISTRICT, KENYA 1900 TO 2012

for the period ending:
30th August,2015


Applicant's
Signature



Director General
National Commission for Science,
Technology & Innovation

Permit No : NACOSTI/P/15/8943/5561
Date Of Issue : 21st April,2015
Fee Received :Ksh 1,000