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Societal Bond: Nature and growth of Indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusii Land

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This paper surveys the nature and growth of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusii land before the colonial period. It sought to contribute to the efforts of the Abagusii community towards the innovation of indigenous cooperative initiatives as an initiative for the transformation of the majority of the people in Gusii land. The paper employed the principle of modernization theory which asserts that a break from primitive customs was the basis for the development of any society. To him, development is 'white' and the only way developing countries can develop is to follow the footsteps of European countries. Nevertheless, the paper intentionally utilized the criticism of modernization theory to advance the objective of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiland. The study was done in Kisii County. The population of the study was sampled from the nine sub-counties of Kisii County using the snowballing sampling technique. The study further used primary sources of data collection which included oral interviews and archival evidence. In addition, internet sources and libraries were widely utilized as secondary materials. A descriptive method was used to analyse data collected from the field thereafter. The justification of this study was the rationale for the emergence and sprouting of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusii land. It was concluded therefore that - laziness was considered a disease and hence prohibited in the community and that the unity of purpose ensured not only food security but also ensured love for one another was bound and relative peace and security maintained. Further, findings were also evident that indigenous cooperative initiatives in the long run created a chain of bonds among the Abagusii which still exists to date.

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INTRODUCTION

Today's cooperatives have centuries of history behind it, dating back to migration and settlement. It is also recorded that the Gusii highlands, (occupied by the Abagusii) despite being fertile, presented a 'challenge' of unfragmented land holdings from the top of ridges to the bottom valley (Uchendu et al. 1975). It is this new challenge-turned- opportunity that culminated to regrouping with the purpose to pooling their labour resources, and thus transforming the Abagusii's livelihoods (Mayer, 1951). The aim was to capitalize on labour resources since there were vast tracts of land, and which could be a challenge to an individual household to till. The fertile soils and reliable rainfall distribution in the seasons of the year must have impacted on the cultivation of crops. Consequently, the cultivation of obori (millet) and amaemba(sorghum) was introduced and immediately became the staple food; with traditional multi-coloured maize also grown to supplement their diet (Akama, 2017). Abagusii pioneered cooperative initiatives –egesangio, ekebosano and risaga mainly- to enhance production levels of cash crops and 'orphan crops'. These indigenous cooperative initiatives spread in Gusii villages thus boosting food production. In addition, the initiatives discouraged idleness and laziness among members of society who now joined efforts in undertaking work as a group. In this way, much work was made easier and faster, and thereby building an unbreakable bond among members of the group.

Geographically, Gusiiland lies squarely in the Western part of Kenya with the Abagusii as the dominant community. According to Maxon (1989), the Gusii people were the pioneers of various programs geared towards modernization. Given the Abagusii had a comparative advantage in agriculture; they looked for a means to maximize production. It is this desire (to enhance production) that bred agricultural indigenous cooperative initiatives amongst them. This was done in every member of the group's farm on a rotational basis. It is these organized and structured groupings that laid the basis for the development and transformation of the now cooperative movements. This was done to not only maximize labour but also ensure food security, and economic and political security in each homestead.

Statement of the problem

For a long time, the Abagusii people had indigenous cooperatives: ebisangio, ebibosano, and amasaga which they used to carry out various communal tasks, such as cultivating, harvesting, building houses, and herding. These Indigenous cooperative initiatives played an important role in the creation, maintenance and sustenance of what would become, for generations, a chain of bond among the Abagusii. Despite the fact that this engendered a cooperative spirit, synergy and unity of purpose in Gusiiland, no known studies has been done on these indigenous cooperative initiatives. This paper therefore focused on the historical study of indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland in the pre-colonial period in an attempt to analyze their role in the transformation of Gusiiland and the

livelihoods of her people. By analyzing this, the research intends to shed light on the central role played by indigenous cooperative initiatives in sustaining a chain of bonds that still exists among the Abagusii. Such a bond will not only bridge the huge historical study gap but also be reminiscent of the basis for the creation of indigenous cooperative initiatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The UN (2015) developed seventeen (17) goals commonly referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals or Development Agenda 2030. The sole objective of devising the Development Agenda was to strategically position underdeveloped countries, especially those under the UN, and also to put up a basis for development and transformation by the year 2030. Goal number one (1) and goal number two (2) sought to end hunger and alleviate poverty by all means. It is these two goals that found space and application in the current research's interest in embracing cooperative movement as a tool to curbing hunger and poverty which were seen as still ravaging third world countries. Comparatively, the government of Kenya adopted the Kenya Vision 2030 (KV2030) whose objective was to also drastically transform and modernize Kenya- politically, socially and economically by the year 2030. This was enshrined in the Daily Nation of May 16th, 2016 which extensively explained how the government of Kenya through the agriculture ministry intended to promote agriculture in the country to bolster economic growth. The agriculture ministry equated low agricultural production to a lack of sufficient research in the field.

A historical analysis of how coffee production impacted the Abagusii women of western Kenya was also examined. It enunciates that those at the centre of Gusii agriculture are women and at some point, girls: who participated from household to communal levels of cooperative labour parties of *ebisangio*, *ebibosano* and *risaga* (Omwoyo, 1992).

In addition, these were inter-household groups of women and girls who helped each other perform such tasks like digging, weeding and harvesting in seasons when it was needed. The tasks were done on a rotational basis to each household, and whose output was higher per production ratio. While the work tried to establish the place of women and girls in cooperatives, it did not however, fully address the weighty issue of such indigenous cooperative initiatives: the bond of unity of purpose that existed prior to colonialism in Kenya.

Indigenous cooperative initiatives have also been well captured in Gusii indigenous farming systems. According to Akama (2017), upon settlement in Gusii highlands, the cultivation of crops was quickly adopted bearing rich soils and reliable rainfall. The Abagusii cultivated *obori* and *amaemba*, giving high yields, and the surplus was exchanged for purposes of protection against risks caused by crop failure. *Risaga* was well captured here as an act of pooling labour resources and thereby ensuring unity of purpose among the Abagusii. The current paper has greatly borrowed from this piece of writing to be able to demonstrate the continued existence of a chain of bond in Gusiiland. The paper bridges the gap by showcasing other indigenous agricultural systems in Gusiiland and further indicating the interdependence aspect.

In a book edited by Robert William Ochieng', Tabitha Kanogo takes on a theme: cooperatives where she delves much on the origin and development of cooperatives, especially during the colonial period. Kanogo succeeds in arguing how modern cooperatives find their basis in traditional forms of cooperatives. She enunciates how each pre-colonial Kenyan society portrayed the self-help principle that brought together members of the kinship to perform various tasks in a rotational basis (Ochieng, 1990). Such activities included house building, landbreaking, planting, weeding, harvesting, herding and hunting. Further, Kanogo draws a contrast between traditional and modern cooperatives wherein traditional one people join

even if they did not need the service. It is this contrast that forms the central position held by the current paper. In the same book, Ochieng' writes on the origin of various grain crops in East Africa. He establishes that agriculture was first introduced in Kenya through the Ethiopian and Sudanic zones whose origin was initially in South-West Asia; with wheat and barley as the original cultivated crops. Later, Sorghum (*Sorghum bicolor*) and finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) followed soon. The mention of the latter ignited interest in the study as the crops formed a basis for indigenous cooperative initiatives. Ochieng' postulates how the grain crops radiated to other regions of East Africa given the local ecological conditions that suited their sprout. Peculiarities of the environment as observed by inhabitants necessitated the acquisition of simple technology such as axes, pangas and digging sticks. Such technology was useful, especially in understanding the aspect of Abagusii pioneering technology and the place of blacksmiths in society.

Theoretical Framework

Transformation is closely associated with colonialism in Africa. On the other hand, development is the outcome of the exchange between people in terms of physical, technological, economic, social, cultural and political spheres. Colonialists, for instance, introduced cooperative movements in Africa which was money oriented and which directly benefited them. This was done in order to counter the efforts of indigenous cooperative initiatives that were geared not only towards strengthening the food basket but also sustaining a strong bond among the Abagusii. European writers during the time applied modernization theory as a justification of their slow-paced 'development-oriented' actions in Africa. Modernization theorists argued that before the coming of colonialists in Africa, development never existed in the continent of Africa. After the WWII, and especially during the cold war, there emerged Third World countries which were ultimately seen as prominent actors in world politics. Hence, Africa

was introduced and exposed to the capitalist nature of 'faster development and transformation'. It then followed the disintegration of major European empires that were out on a mission to exploit African resources. Consequently, modernization theory was advanced by European scholars to explain and apply societal change from a perceived traditional to a modern status. That is, how African nations could as a result develop all their spheres from traditional to modern societies.

Modernization theory as advanced by Rostow asserts that a break from "primitive" customs was the basis for the development of any society (Rostow, 1964). To him, development is 'white' and the only way developing countries can develop is to follow the 'footsteps' of European countries. For instance, modernization in agriculture was felt through the introduction of new crops and cash crops new production methods and also marketing skills in Gusiiland thereby replacing indigenous crops (Frank, & Biggs, 2001). Similar sentiments have been echoed by Smith who notes that modernization was about reverting from 'traditional' agricultural practices to something 'modern' (Smith, 1973). These transformations were seen as necessary and exigent to drive African societies to the perceived modern status. The theory postulates that the only route to real economic development and transformation among developing nations is through the transfer of aid, expertise and exchange of technology. And this would channel African nations towards development. The introduction of cash crops thus swept away and subsequently lessened the cultivation of food crops which was central to strong bonds among the Abagusii. Ultimately, this deteriorated the chain of bond and unity of purpose that existed in Gusiiland.

Modernization theory, however, has received its fair share of criticism, on both theoretical and empirical grounds. A break from traditional and primitive customs is simply trying to put off the life of the people in a given society. Secondly, the theory discourages self-reliance: which was the backbone

of the current study (Wallerstein, 1970). Findings, were evident that over-reliance on foreign aid renders a country unable to promote work- ethic among people; thus, extinguishing their indigenous production and knowledge systems within a nation. Further, the application of traditional-modern terms lacks clarity as they are intertwined. Thus, development can only be understood on the context of a society under study (Rodney, 1972).

Indeed, it's true that more clarity is needed to juxtapose underdevelopment in Africa. Therefore, indices for measuring development and its categorization of Africa as poor and underdeveloped are unfounded (Kilonzo, 2014). Various studies have also indicated that African societies were organized politically, socially and economically even before the coming of colonialists (Ochieng', 1986). It is this organization that premiered the development and transformation of a majority of people; hence giving birth to a unity of purpose that saw communities thrive. In addition, the narrative put forward regarding underdevelopment in Africa is impractical and thus encourages imperialism.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Being an historical study, the paper was descriptive as minimal numerical data was utilized in the data collection exercise. In addition, qualitative research was employed and data was collected using key informants from two categories: the Gusii Council of Elders (GCE) and other elderly and knowledgeable informants from around Gusiiland. Two complementary sources of information were critical in this study, that is, primary and secondary sources of data. Data collected from these sources was analyzed qualitatively to minimize subjectivity. In addition, in-depth interviews were conducted in Gusiiland amongst the selected and knowledgeable Gusii elders on indigenous cooperative initiatives. Finally, focused group discussions were organized and utilized in the due process of this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Emergence of Indigenous Cooperative Initiatives in Gusiiland

Prior to the colonial period in Kenya, there existed various institutions which indirectly contributed to the evolution and further transformation of Gusiiland. In assessing the surge of agricultural activities in Gusiiland, the study undertook to critically analyze these institutions that were essential for the growth and expansion of agricultural farming in Gusii region. It therefore follows that apart from inception of farming in Eastern Africa being a technological and economic event, it also served as a social event that transformed relations, ideologies and modes of life (M'Mbogori, 2017). These traditional institutions integrated people and strengthened bond as a way of realizing group development and transformation.

Ebisangio

Ebisangio (plural) or simply *egesangio* (singular) was a joint partnership program among the Abagusii that involved assisting one another to perform specific work on a rotational basis. The history of *ebisangio* can be traced back to when Abagusii started the art of cultivation. According to Abagusii belief, (*nguba emo yanya koiri roche*) an individual cannot perform well like many. Hence, there was a need to come together and assist each other, especially in work-related duties. Since cultivated lands were large and the number of people scarce, the Abagusii thought it was wise to help one another in a merry-go-round. *Ebisangio* were a group of people (mostly women) who worked together so as to make their work easier. This is because they realized it was hard for one to undertake work alone. This was to ensure they were at the bar with the seasons of the year. A group of strong people organized themselves for a particular job, and they could do it until each member of the group's work is done. The group could set a particular time which they agreed on. This was before rains started if the work was tilling the land. At times, *esinde* (a measuring rule) was used when some group

members appeared lazy (Mburu, O.I., 17/04/2024). *Esinde* was meant to ensure that all members tilled an equal portion of the land.

The rationale behind the inception of *egesangio* was entirely based on its long-term objective – to strengthen bond among people and ultimately eradicate such vices like stealing and laziness in society. The removal of *enchagwa* (weeds) from millets - main food crop was a tedious exercise notwithstanding -other chores that required their attention (Osebe, O.I., 28/04/2024). This is why *ebisangio* were mainly associated with women and girls more than men and boys. At this point, it should be noted that there existed *ebisangio* in both genders with each gender performing a particular work. For example, men and boys could slash before cultivation is undertaken. They could also graze and take care of livestock, build houses and at times did first digging because it entailed breaking the soil, given they were stronger compared to the other gender. Girls could be allowed to go with their mothers to be shown how to dig well and perform house chores. Women did the digging, especially secondary cultivation, planting, weeding, harvesting and even cooking. Each gender knew its role and respected each other's role in the production process. *Egesangio* was normally done early in the morning to allow time in the afternoon for each group member to undertake his or her work. This was done to allow women to prepare lunch for their families. This made *egesangio* more liked and effective among group members and thus encouraged in Gusii clans.

Agriculture among the Abagusii was being intensified. This is chiefly through work partnership programs that were initiated by the Abagusii themselves. In fact, the intensification of farming was directly proportional to production. This was mainly realized due to the readily available work input. Intensification is the application of any humanly derived input that in turn increases agricultural yields per unit area and time (Hakansson, 1989). Going by Hakansson's

definition, Abagusii inputs included and not limited to frequent cultivation in the form of *ebisangio*. As a result, men built larger and more stores to cater for the ever-increasing production. *Ebisangio* were advocated and embraced in Gusii clans because of their great benefits in the production process for the following reasons: First *ebisangio* made work easier and more effective to undertake. Work that could take one person very many days could be done and completed in one day or few days. Secondly, *ebisangio* promoted the spirit of hard work among people including the lazy ones. At times the lazy could be mixed with the hardworking people to motivate them and could later be mixed with other group members towards the end. The introduction of *esinde* in land tillage was one way of making the lazy do their work faster; lest they risked having their area not cultivated on time. Thirdly, *ebisangio* ensured enough and more food production to sustain their families in more than even four seasons. This was mainly done to combat any famine that could occur in the period in between. Individuals could only dig small portions of land thus amounting to lesser production. To this stage, the benefits of *ebisangio* cannot be overemphasized. They intensified Gusii agriculture in a broad and transformative way that not only ensured food security, but also influenced young men and boys against engaging in raiding activities, thus bolstering unity and social cohesion among surrounding Abagusii communities.

The practice of *ebisangio* led to further agricultural intensification which ultimately affected the social organization of the Abagusii in several ways. Girls who showed great effort and performed well in *egesangio* could easily attract the attention of unmarried young men, hence a gauge of a potential wife (Nyamweya, O.I., 15/04/2024). In such a case, the potential wife could easily be married off by a potential husband. Young men about to marry could hide in bushes and watch keenly those young women who dug well and faster. In so doing, those young men would then pick the most hardworking

one. This made young women compete working hard to increase their chances of getting married. This also meant that the practice of indigenous cooperative initiatives was a prerequisite for choosing a marriage partner. This made work to be done faster and increased production levels upon harvesting. Further, egesangio emerged to be a place of sharing ideas among women and also a learning experience for girls. As women and girls went digging together, women could use the opportunity to advise girls on how they should work better and behave around men. The close monitoring of young women's activities by elderly women was to ensure they become productive wives upon marriage. Similar informal learning was also given to boys while grazing (Nyagwoka, O.I., 24/04/2024).

Despite being applied in other spectrums of life, ebisangio remained focused on its objective of ensuring societal bonds. A sense of love for one another developed among the Abagusii. One saw others -as equal to them and deserved good in return. The Abagusii wanted to avoid a situation where there were the haves and have. They wanted to create a just society for all. Through this spirit, those who seem to have could be influenced out of empathy to share without coercion. Below is a narration of a couple (James and Nyamboba) who form part of the study's respondents.

I was a total orphan at the age of ten. I had three siblings to take care of. My only uncle was a tea plucker in Kericho who never really showed up. We relied on our neighbor for survival, since we were young. I was encouraged to marry, but I was afraid because I could not even afford an animal for dowry. My neighbor paid off my dowry unconditionally and even offered us one cow to sustain us upon marriage. It was a

generous donation, as it was not a debt to repay. That was the society we were; assisting and raising one's generation (egesaku) for prosperity. As if that was not enough, my neighbor could share his cattle's colostrum (amaanoga) whenever his cows sire. Amaanoga was liked by the Abagusii and one shared with others to bless his cow in the entire lactation period. James continued narrating that he was added a cow by neighbor, and that is how he started keeping livestock (Nyagwoka & Nyamboba, O.I., 24/04/2024).

People drastically increased in number and their health was stable all through. Agricultural intensification was brought about by among others, iron working technology; a skill the Abagusii learned while they were in Congo. The Abagusii could make *eketuba* (a piece of specialized digging equipment) made from a specific type of tree and also cutting and slashing equipment (Onchera, O.I., 16/04/2024). There were *abaturi* (black smiths) who were specialized in making these tools. As a result, *ebiage* (produce stores) were constructed, big enough to hold the harvest. An individual could possess even up to four produce stores. This is in readiness for a bumper harvest. Since enough food was produced, the surplus was used to exchange for other goods with their neighbouring communities like the Luo (Ochieng', 1992).

Ebisangio became a culture among Abagusii. The whole community was now accustomed to undertaking societal work seriously as laziness and reluctance in *egesangio* resulted to calling for *risaga* (regarded as punishment accompanied with a cost). The following chant was thus composed to emphasize and advocate for co-existence amongst the Abagusii:

Mogisangio (peer)**Ekegusii version****English version***Mogisangio akoreke ekee,*

peer mould the bowl

Ekee nyaboundii!

A rounded bowl!

Ekee ekio akeimokie

. carry the bowl

Akagore kagena!

Trade it in for an egg

Kagena kangokoo!

An egg hatches a hen

Kagena akwo akaimokie

carry the egg

Akagore kabori

trade it in for a goat

Kabori akwo akaimokie,

carry the goat

Akagoree ng'ombe!

Trade it in for a cow!

Ng'ombe euta rioro

cow fed well it lives

Ng'ombe eyio ayeimokie

carry the cow

Ayegore 'monto'!

Trade it in for a wife.

Monto aibora banaa...

the wife beget children

Abana ebirachwoki

the children make eucalyptus

Birachwoki mbiagita omochie... and the eucalyptus fence the homestead (Nyambane, O.I., 10/04/ 2024)

The fundamental issue echoed by the above chant is the philosophy of 'you are so I am'. That for me and you to thrive we all get involved and start small; *ekee* (bowl), then let's mould it! Then use it and trade for an egg, then trade the hen for a goat, then trade the goat for a cow and finally trade the cow for a 'wife'. The wife begets children who will take care of 'you' (homestead). *Abagisangio* (age mates) pulled resources together to make sure each of them succeeded in life. In so doing, social security was attained through economic empowerment. The long-term objective and mission of *ebisangio* were equally realized, and people's living standards transformed drastically, as did the entire community. People of all walks of life cooperated to perform various tasks in the society. Society was at the core of agricultural production because production was centred on cooperatives; hence

making the *Omogusii* to be structured. Out of *ebisangio*, other cooperative initiatives were bred and embraced equally.

Ekebosano

Ekebosano (singular) or *ebibosano* (plural) comes from the word *kobosa* meaning second tillage of land. *Ekebosano* was meant to remove weeds from a particular land. It was not done always like *egesangio*. *Ekebosano* was done to weed out weeds. Therefore, the group of people that did *egesangio* in that field could come and conduct *ekebosano* (digging to remove weeds). *Ekebosano* was not done more frequently compared to *egesangio* because it could only be done when many weeds appeared in the field. The group members, out of motivation to realize a bumper harvest, could call for *ekebosano* (Nyaboke, O.I., 09/04/2024). Only

those who are in egesangio and participated in it could be assisted. People could cooperate and raise the alarm of the appearance of weeds in a particular member's field. Ekebosano was specifically performed in the field and not elsewhere, unlike egesangio where people cooperated to do various activities that were seen hectic to an individual.

Time was of the essence in realising ekebosano. If the group members were engaged in other activities, both home and in the community, they had to agree on specific time to work. In case the group were overburdened with other activities, afternoon session was then preferred. Further, the group had to cut short their activities if they had any at the time and come for ekebosano because they knew how weeds affected yield in the field (Kerubo, O.I., 11/04/2024). The removal of weeds was thus necessary because production was measured by how weed-free the field was, added Kerubo. Though not conducted often, it was a phase where weeds could compete with millet and sorghum in the field after planting. If weeds occurred before planting, they could be removed altogether to avoid unnecessary competition with the yield and was normally done at midday.

Ekebosano was a big motivation for the community. The lazy were motivated and could later join. It is also evident that the lazier one was, the less the harvest in stores. The motivation came because one could not raise a family without food. Further, the community discouraged individualism which was viewed as an excuse for being lazy. Also, one could not always borrow from others yet land was available for cultivation. This made it so minimal to find an individual in society not engaged in group work, because out of these joint partnership groups bumper harvest was realized. Ekebosano was being liked by many as it was seen as a sign of love and care for others; as are the teachings from The Holy Bible. Love for others created a sense of belief. This made it mandatory that when starting a new family, one had to ensure he owned a panga and a jembe (Moronya, O.I., 20/04/2024). A panga and a jembe

was an indication that one was ready for the task ahead. It also meant that an individual did not have to wait for ekebosano to take place because once a weed was noticed; the owner would remove it using the tools.

Risaga

Risaga (singular) or *amasaga* (plural) comes from the word *gosagana* which means doing work at once (Ombasa, O.I., 01/05/2024). *Risaga* occurred when an individual was late to cultivate the field on time. To meet the season's demands and be at par with the rest of the group members, one had to call (*goturwa*) for many people so as to do the work at once. Since in *risaga* you must have been left behind in cultivating your land due to laziness and unavoidable circumstances like being engaged in other activities, an individual had to pay dearly for *risaga* (Akama, 2017). It is evidenced elsewhere that one had to prepare food enough for this function together with locally distilled *amarwa* (brew) (KNA/DC/KSI/1/5). *Amarwa* was specifically meant for men whose women participated in *risaga*. Also, this initiative involved many people who did not necessarily belong in a particular egesangio. And since *risaga* involved a reward upon completion, (food and fermented brews), those who called for *risaga* saw it as a burden on the other side; which led to the saying "*abange nabaya bari kiane naigu bororo*" which can be translated as a group of people are good though I feel the burden or pinch when they consume my food.

Risaga was rare as many people were engaged and actively participated in egesangio. Therefore, *risaga* was seen as a consequence one had to bear for not preparing the field during egesangio. Women were requested to come in large numbers and once they came, they had to make sure they finish cultivating the field in that particular day. After they had finished possibly in the afternoon, the owner of *risaga* must have prepared food for them. It should be noted that the food was prepared at night and the woman who called for *risaga* had to participate

together with the other women in cultivating. You could not call for risaga and fail to participate with the other participants (Gichana, O.I., 12/04/2024). Ugali was brought in *ebiee* - a traditional Gusii plate specifically for ugali, and people could eat to satisfaction for the good work done, added Gichana. Women and girls were only allowed to eat outside the house to allow men sit in *eero*, sitting room. After eating, only *abagaka* (men) were allowed to take the fermented brews. Not even *abang'ina* (women) could get where men were drinking and talking, only the woman owner of risaga could talk and appreciate the drink. As a sign of love and cooperation, *abagaka* shared the drink using one cup – which according to them symbolized love for group work.

The practice of risaga was one of those indigenous cooperative initiatives that brought the Gusii people together to undertake a certain activity. Despite paying dearly for the work done, risaga had its fair share of benefits. First, an individual's work which could be done in days could only be done in a single day; hence, was faster. Secondly, one did not have to wait for the merry-go-round nature of *egesangio*, you only needed to alert people and they came immediately. Risaga was seen to be faster and timely. However, one could not easily wait for risaga because of its demanding and expensive nature. People therefore found themselves in a state where they had no option but call for risaga. Among the reasons why risaga had to happen was mainly due to lack of rainfall and hence people had to wait for longer before they could cultivate land. This is coupled with the fact that some women were not participating in *ebisangio* and maybe death at times disrupted their daily routine. The Abagusii, like other communities, became masters in monitoring signs and trends in their environment throughout the year (Ochieng', 1990). Despite its cooperative work, one could not prepare for risaga. Nevertheless, risaga was crucial. It was a shortcut to attaining a fruitful harvest and supplementing *ekebosano*'s effort of maintaining and sustaining a

chain of bonds among the Abagusii. Thus, risaga was done out of that inner care and love for others to produce their food. This was seen as a way of ensuring majority, through cooperative work, produced their own yields able to sustain their families.

CONCLUSION

Indigenous cooperative initiatives were not only geared towards food production but also helped realize lasting peace and security across Gusii societies: a move that maintained a chain of bond among people to date. Raiding, an economic activity during that time, and which threatened people's peace and security across villages, declined rapidly as much focus was on agriculture. Dispute settlement among elders also ensured that peace and security prevailed. The coming together in joint partnerships among the Abagusii bred love and unity of purpose: a sense of care for one another. This surge in humanity among people made work even easier. This was extended to marriage as *chisigani* (go-between) played a great role in choosing the hardworking to ensure generational sustainability. In addition, individuals who did not possess livestock, for instance, were assisted unconditionally during dowry settlement. Hence, the study concluded that love and brotherhood among the Abagusii grew steadily out of such work groupings.

RECOMMENDATION

The study recommends that both the national and county governments should formulate policies geared toward re-engineering the primary product in Gusiiland for real development and transformation to be realized. As such, the two governments should concentrate more on the historical upbringing of Gusiiland. It therefore follows that in order to revamp indigenous cooperative initiatives in Gusiiland; county governments should escalate the growing of sorghum, millet and even *matoke* (bananas) in order to avoid unnecessary competition from other food and cash crops producing regions.

Hence, by doing this, faster industrial transformation and development of indigenous food crops will be realized; apart from altogether maintaining the identity of Gusiland. This is in line with Kenya Vision 2030 blueprint and Sustainable Development Goals. Further, the Abagusii should go back to the teachings of the Bible since love among people has grown cold. This will inculcate and reinvigorate the ideals of indigenous cooperative initiatives.

Further Research

Based on the findings of the study, this paper recommends further research on related studies done on the role of cottage industry in the growth of modern industry in Kenya, since 2002. Given indigenous cooperative initiatives have become obsolete, and that the government is focused on modernizing the country through industries, a historical study on the role cottage industries are playing towards the transformation of people will help bridge a huge historical study gap.

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