

**REDEFINING THE SOCIETAL ROLE OF WOMEN
AMONG THE BUKUSU COMMUNITY OF BUNGOMA COUNTY
IN WESTERN KENYA (1945-1923)**

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Abstract

This text delves into the redefinition of the role of women among the Bukusu of Bungoma County in western Kenya from the year 1945 to 1923. The paper's main objective is to investigate the origin of the change of roles of women among the Bukusu people. The research holds the hypothesis that there is an origin for the prevailing transformations of roles of women among the Bukusu. It makes use of existing literature such as books, journals, articles, magazines, and newspapers, and existing observations. This research is significant in adding new knowledge to the anthropological studies of women with a particular focus on the Bukusu women of Bungoma County in Kenya. The research design employed in the article is historical methods with the utilization of books, journals, and research works as secondary sources that will back and complement the author's observations. The article establishes that changes in the roles of women in the Bukusu community emanate from missionary activities, colonialism especially the colonial cash crop economy, and political modernization in the region.

Keyword: Bukusu people, the role of women, Kenya

Diszipline: Cultural Anthropology, Ethnography

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Absztrakt:

A NŐK TÁRSADALMI SZEREPÉNEK ÚJRADEFINIÁLÁSA A NYUGAT-KENYAI BUNGOMA MEGYE BUKUSU KÖZÖSSÉGÉBEN (1923-1945).

A tanulmány a nők szerepének újradefiniálását vizsgálja a nyugat-kenyai Bungoma megye, bukusui közösségének körében, 1923 és 1945 között. A kutatás során könyvek, folyóiratok, cikkek és újságok felhasználására került sor, valamint megfigyelésekre is támaszkodik. A tanulmány új ismeretekkel gazdagítja a nőkről szóló antropológiai tanulmányokat, különös tekintettel a kenyai Bungoma megye bukusui asszonyaira. Összességében megállapítható, hogy a bukusu közösségben a nők szerepében bekövetkezett változások a missziós tevékenységekből, a gyarmatosításból, különösen a gyarmati pénztermelő gazdaságból és a politikai modernizációból erednek a régióban.

Kulcsszó: Bukusu nép, a nők szerepe, Kenya

Diszciplína: Néprajz, kulturális antropológia,

Introduction

The Bukusu people, the second largest tribe of the Luhya ethnic community in Bungoma County in western Kenya, have been known in Kenya to have stringent cultural practices such as vigorous male circumcision, wife inheritance, polygyny, and funeral taboos, among others. However, there have been noticeable changes in the recent past in the decline in these cultural practices. Women's roles in the Bukusu community have undergone significant changes since the 19th century, with several social, economic, political, and cultural developments influencing these shifts. Women's roles are cultural constructions of the community; what women are socialized into are the communities' expectations of women. There are overarching trends that demonstrate the transformation of Bukusu women's roles, such as a historical perspective that looks through the lens of traditional roles. Such roles include childrearing, household responsibilities, and caregiving to the family and community. Bukusu women play roles as breadwinners, engaging in political activities and no longer staying at home; instead, they attend schools and take up professional jobs. They are also constantly changing gender norms through shifting attitudes and media

representation due to their exposure to global information, ideas, and influential ideologies.

The once explicitly defined and practiced roles of Bukusu women have been experiencing a myriad of shifts. Women's roles have significantly transformed in globalized Kenya which is more exposed to the world in social, economic, political, and technological aspects.

Transformation in this effect denotes the change in the whole community or an individualized level. In addition, it requires a shift in mindset, skills, and desire to embrace the selected traditions and convictions involved in changing their position in the community. Bukusu women are breaking the glass ceiling by going far beyond Bukusu's fixed norms to adopt postmodern characteristics geared towards human diversity and multiplicity of perspectives. For example, more Bukusu women occupy public spaces like their male counterparts; they provide for and sustain their families. Feeling that they are no longer subjected to the traditional role of managing the welfare of the extended family and community, they are pre-occupied with nuclear family welfare and primarily children, from arranged marriages for Bukusu women to choosing their spouses.

Traditionally, Bukusu women belonged to the clan (Satai, Koyi and Mukangai, 2021). A Bukusu woman was required to be given instructions by her husband and any other communications from the clan members. The author recounts her late dad's quarrels with her mother when she would visit her parents or invite her relatives to their homes without her father's knowledge. He always said her mother bypassed his rule as the head of the family.

There are plenty of studies on women, especially with the establishment of the anthropology of women. The discipline has become diverse in the sense that women are no longer studied in isolation; rather, men, as their opposite counterparts, are studied concurrently. Even with that, anthropological scholarly works on Bukusu women have a dearth representation. Despite the peak in women's studies, works on Bukusu women are scarce and fragmented. When they exist, they are often studied alongside the general Bukusu community, if not the Luhya community at large. The traces of women in gender studies in Bukusu are rarely exclusive. The topic is significant in the current era, where the anthropology of women has attained diverse attention from intellectual scholars and activists. As an anthropologist, the author focuses on the social science concerned with unearthing the changes in women's roles.

The article begs to answer the question about the origin of the change in the societal role of a woman in the Bukusu community of Bungoma County in western Kenya. It aims to ascertain the origin of the transformation by holding an assumption that there are factors underpinning the position of a woman in the Bukusu community. It also brings the hitherto intricacies of Bukusu women's studies, focusing on their roles. It also seeks to redefine the societal role of Bukusu women of Bungoma County in western Kenya by taking a central interest in the origin of the changes in women's roles in the Bukusu community. It presents the inception

of changes in women's roles, pointing out the factors that contributed to the changes in various African communities, tracing this from precolonial times of the missionaries, colonial times, independence, and globalized Africa. The discussions address the transitions of women's roles and views on the phenomena and the implications of the changes in contemporary communities with a theoretical overview that explores the empirical developments in the Bukusu community. This paper hopes to significantly contribute to the fast-growing anthropological women's studies in the not-so-delved Bukusu community. It has been emphasized that the seasons of life regarding women have not received adequate attention in many African cultures, particularly Kenya (Barasa, Akama, and Gutwa, 2023).

Research Method

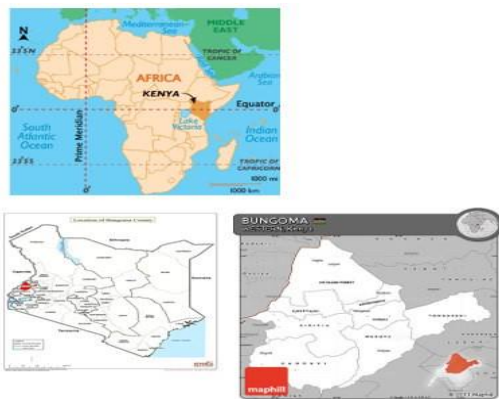
The article assumes a systematic literature review where relevant texts related to the topic of discourse are consulted and critically examined. The texts reviewed are relevant to the deliberation on the roles of women in the Bukusu community. In addition, the author's observation complements the literature review. Thus, an autoethnography, a study of one's own culture has been applied through the revelation of the author's reflections on the natives' understanding of the changes (Adams, Jones, and Ellis, 2015). In this autoethnography, narrations by the author about her observations on the natives the past and present convey the findings.

The article describes the textual unobservable as well as observable contextual understanding of the traditional roles of Bukusu women and their corresponding changes over time. In so doing, different models of women's roles as a culture have been applied—cultural relativism-, to understand the Bukusu community as a unique culture in its context. Different kinds of literature and observations evoke divergent perceptions of the change

of roles of women. This combination of literature and observation enables cognizance of the numerous components of society including economic, political, and social systems that underpin the roles of women and their current manifestations.

The basic approach to cultural anthropology is identifying the problem and choosing the field site (Bonvillain, 2010). In this regard, the geographic focus is Bungoma County, formerly Bungoma District, a town in the former western region of Kenya, near the Kenya-Uganda border. It is the headquarters of Kenya's Bungoma County. The specific spots include Kimilili, Kanduyi, Kabuchai, and Sirisia sub-counties which are predominantly Bukusu-inhabited.

Figure 1. The map below exhibits the geographical spot of Bungoma County in Kenya. The map of Kenya is indicated on the map of Africa and subsequent depiction of the geographical spot of Bungoma County in Kenya.



This paper relies on related literature and emic observations about the Bukusu community. Tracing lineage in the Bukusu community, the researcher deliberates on her understanding of women in Bukusu. More data emanates from random observations of several Bukusu women talking about their feelings, attitudes, and perceptions with the author.

Textual and content analysis has been applied in this text owing to its reliance on observation and textual materials. Texts have been subjected to critical analysis to ascertain their applicability. Secondary data of the literature has also been backed with observable data.

Literature Study, Observation, and Interpretation

This section of the paper contains a review of the related literature and the author's observation of the community on the topic from a general perspective in Africa to the specific case of the Bukusu community in Kenya. Christianity, colonialism, wars, modernization, and independence have acted as catalysts for the shifts. Before delving into the sequence of women's role changes, discussing the initial and almost fixed gender roles of women is crucial in this undertaking. It lays the fundamental basis for understanding the past before transiting into the interplays of the activities that shaped the roles that are continuously changing to date.

Overview of Change in Roles in Some Women in African Communities

Women played critical roles in pre-colonial Africa. They were active drivers of social cohesion, decision-makers in homes, and stakeholders in economic resources from land to food (Saungweme, 2021). For instance, the Yoruba of Nigeria were active long-distance traders. However, colonialism brought new terms and policies and their cultural perception that influenced African traditional social, economic, cultural, and religious roles. At the onset of colonialism, men's and women's roles were significantly changed. That marked the beginning of the transformations of present-day changes in African communities.

Change in society is prompted by diverse factors according to the study findings in Ethiopia and Uganda. It was established that the main drivers of norm changes by pointing out economic develop-

ment, political mobilization, law and policies, demographic change, urbanization and migration, conflict and displacement, education, and information (Marcus, 2015). Accordingly, factors informing changes in women's roles in the community are like those that informed the changes in the roles of Bukusu women.

A study on gender role changes in an African household establishes that women empowerment is growing in South African communities (KhosaNkatini, Buqa, and Machimana, 2023). Women are in executive positions that often require time away from home. The author adds that gone are the days when women were told they belonged to the kitchen. Women empowerment in Kenya has been observed in Kenyan communities as is the case in the Agikuyu community of central Kenya. Examining the Bukusu community gender roles through the lens of household management helps understand the practical aspects of the changes in women's roles and relate them to the factors that contribute to the changes in domestic roles.

Precolonial Traditional Roles of Bukusu Women

In the late 19th century before the arrival of the first missionaries in Kenya in 1844, Bukusu community culture was inherent in its members. Men and women executed roles in the community as the culture fixed them. One of the notable roles of women was to bear children in large numbers was a traditional desire and societal expectation of a woman. Most women have about 7 children as this was one of the qualities required for an ideal woman and wife for that matter (Plucknett, and Smith, 1989). Bearing many children was a role that women were required to play as children were seen as sources of labor for the family and community because farm activities such as planting, weeding, and harvesting were the duty of women and children (Precious, and Onyango, 2020). Children were

also believed to protect families and clans and ensure support for aging parents.

Bukusu women were active participants in various community positions, such as in the community's political, economic, and social practices. The article adopts a sequential discussion of women's roles in the Bukusu community and their transitive pattern. In the pre-colonial economy, Bukusu women played a critical role in the community's food production. They actively participated in planting crops, weeding, harvesting, food processing, preservation, and processing, preparation for sale, and cooking for consumption. This role was a considerable contribution to household resources. This implies that Bukusu women were active contributors to the community's economy through the sale of surplus food produce and individual household resources. They had an active role in economic growth and, thus, were depended on by the community and households for food security. For instance, women were in control of the agricultural produce of families and communities because women and children tilled farms to ensure food security (Nasimiyu, 1984).

Other economic roles of Bukusu women particularly those who were beyond childbearing age included pottery. Women within the childbearing age bracket were restricted by Bukusu cultural taboos that considered them impure to practice an almost sacred associated practice (Simiyu, 1991). It is further noted that the art of pottery not only served subsistence needs such as water preservation and traditional liquor "*Chang'aa*" and "*Busaa*" but also led to the exchange of other goods with other Luhya and non-Luhya communities. They would trade their pots for goods such as fish, iron hoes, and ornaments in traditional markets. To further demonstrate the division of labor between men and women in the Bukusu community in pre-colonial Kenya, women practiced horticulture. While land clearing was done by men, women pre-

pared soils, planted, weeded, and harvested crops. They had the responsibility to take care of trees planted by men. This analogy could imply that the caretaking responsibility was vested in Bukusu women (Luyia, 2024).

Like their counterparts in other Luhya communities, Bukusu women had a salient responsibility in the traditional housebuilding among the Bukusu. While men prepared the thatching materials and did the roofing, women repaired walls and floors by flattening them with mad and cow dung (Muleka, and Okoth, 2022). However, this was different from other non-Luhya communities like Kikuyu where women thatched houses, a role that was and still is a taboo in the Bukusu Community where women are forbidden from climbing the roof of a house.

Christianity in Modernizing the Bukusu Women

Missionary activities in Africa, Kenya, and Bukusiland in Bungoma precede colonialism. The Friends African Mission, the Mill Hill Mission, the Church of God, and the Church Missionary Society (Anglican) were established in the western regions of Bungoma, Kakamega, and Busia between 1902 and 1906. Faced with numerous challenges such as resistance, illiteracy, diseases, and poverty, the missionaries introduced Mission schools and hospitals. By 2016, the missionary centers had mushroomed in Bungoma as will later be discussed in the successive paragraphs.

Due to high levels of poverty, women, children, and the poor in African communities became ardent followers of Christianity (Kasomo, 2010). They sought refuge and solace in the church's ideologies of equality. The majority of Bukusu men resented Christianity as it was disparaging the African traditional cultures, yet they were the custodians of the traditions. From the sociocultural phenomena preservations recorded tales, Bukusu men who rallied against Christianity joined the

traditional religious sect such as the *Dini ya Musambwa*. Since majority of women and children were poor, they were easily converted to Christianity by being provided with monetary support, food, and clothing. The mentality that the church was rich attracted more Bukusu women. The majority of Bukusu women are Christians and are highly devoted to the Church and many have leadership positions. Sometimes this role of women in church does not settle well with Bukusu women who accuse their spouses of infidelity and family neglect. A bizarre occurrence ensued during her short sabbatical, the author's neighbor found church women congregants in his home and chased them away saying they had made her wife obstinate.

Missionaries paved the way for colonialism in that the introduction of Western was designed to "civilize and "uplift" African women by installing Western European ideologies (Adawo et al., 2011). A case in point is the advocacy of the nuclear family model instead of the African traditional extended family model. With Western religion and culture, Africans were influenced to denounce their traditions as backward, primitive, and destructive (Segueda, 2015). Christianity led to the Bukusu community discarding some of their cultural practices, such as polygyny, which was initially a cultural prerogative of a Bukusu man to decide whether to marry more wives. More Bukusu women enrolled in schools, vocational institutions, and training colleges such as nursing and education; women were no longer confined to domestic duties as they worked away from home and increased their household income with their husbands, who also worked as professionals. The missionary ideals enlightened Bukusu women to shun the idea of their husbands marrying an extra wife. Thus, women gained a voice to change the tradition of Bukusu polygyny a traditional practice that was a source of prestige leadership, and wealth This position was well-pronounced by Christian women who believed in one-man-one-wife Christian

teachings. This also implies that divorce became a choice for Bukusu women who could not accept sharing a husband with co-wives. Bukusu women assumed an active role in declaring their position in marriage, unlike in the traditional setting, where husbands made decisions solely.

Further, education and empowerment of women and girls in various parts of Africa, as in Kenya and Bungoma in western Kenya, increased female literacy and skills. This led to African girls entering professions such as teaching, clerical, and nursing. Other literate women were employed in cities, establishing new female elites that were instrumental drivers of change. This has been confirmed that upon overcoming the Bukusu resistance, Christianity, mainly Catholicism and Protestantism in Bukusuland thrived in setting up churches, schools, technical colleges, clinics, and hospitals in places like Kibabii, Misikhu, Kimilili to name but a few which transformed the economy, and cultural changes of Bukusu people. The two denominations impacted the Bukusu people relatively in equal measure as their mission was not only to evangelize but also to modernize the Bukusu people (Wasike, Lilechi, and Moindi, 2021). The far-reaching effects of Christianity included early Bukusu women who worked as nurses in mission hospitals and teachers as the main skilled careers, sparking a shift in the perspective among Bukusu people who traditionally perceived women as homemakers.

Colonial Roles of Women in the Bukusu Community

The colonial period in Kenya from 1920 to 1964 saw significant roles among the Bukusu people of Bungoma County. Women who previously held custodianship of domestic roles such as being caretakers of children and properties in homesteads started active engagements in diverse roles both domestic and those hitherto culturally meant for men. For instance, women traditionally, Bukusu

men milked cattle however, this role is reversed in the contemporary Bukusuland, as women often do it (Wasike, Lilechi, and Moindi, 2021). This was perhaps inversed when men left home for urban-based jobs occasioning women to step into spaces of men in domestic responsibilities. Women were also forced to work extra on chores that children performed and were now going to school. With the trend of men's absence in homes, it can be posited that women's dependence on men started to gradually reduce and turn to self-reliance. Several reasons justify the increased responsibilities for Bukusu women during the colonial time in Kenya as will be examined in the subsequent discourses.

Unlike other Luhya communities such as the Wanga who collaborated, the Bukusu resisted British colonialism, especially during the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway. Bukusu men went to fight the Britons on the slopes of Che-tambe Hills in Bungoma West and Mt. Elgon in northern Bungoma. In the participation of the war, men left their homes under the care of women. Of lacking sophisticated weaponry, many Bukusu lost their lives as compared to women who for unknown reasons were only captured and later released as the war came to an end (Scully, 1974). These accounts are reflections of the destabilization of the community's traditional way of life. Women majority of war survivors became family and community breadwinners. In essence, women were rendered with more responsibilities in the homes and on farms.

Traditionally, it was the prerogative of Bukusu women to distribute and supply traditional foods harvested to the families and community at large. However, this role was reversed at the onset of cash crop farming was introduced along with modern farming methods and new markets by colonial masters. Men became sole custodians of cash crop farm produce and the sale of the surplus. This does not mean that cash crop farming stopped women from working on farms, rather Bukusu continued

to supply labor on cash crop plantations. In addition, cash crops did not abruptly stop traditional farming of food crops such as millet, sorghum, and cassava, as women continued with food crop farming, albeit on garden-like portions. It can be postulated that with the colonial introduction of the cash crop economy, Bukusu women's agricultural responsibilities involved a balance between working on both cash crops and food crops farms, therefore claiming that women's responsibilities increased on one hand and lost some entitlements on the other is sufficient.

Additionally, Africa's female farmers seemed to live analogous to woman-the-gatherer women's original and massive contribution to the productive economy (Di Leonardo, 1991). Pointing out Engels' classic that women's relegated roles were due to the rise of private property and the state. This is especially evident because communal land ownership in Bukusuland did not stand the test of time. Women who had a rightful share of the operation on the land became the only providers of labor to the pieces of land. Men decided what should be planted and how much should be sold from the produce as they were registered landowners.

Change and Continuity of Roles of Bukusu Women in Colonial Kenya

With the advent of colonialism in Kenya, economic patterns changed from substance farming to a commercial economy with extensive farming of cash crops such as cotton, coffee, sisal, and tea for export. Bukusu women lost their cultural role during the introduction of cash crops in western Kenya and Bungoma District in the 1960s. The cash crop economy was a shift from the traditional economy where men and women alike had an equal share in the domestic sphere roles (Hepburn, 2023). These changes in economic production trickled the value of the economic role of women in the community and household. With the high demand for labor by the colonial masters, men

moved to cities and towns to work in production factories and farms, and women's roles and rules were doubled as they took up the roles of men to fend for families. To necessitate the availability of more land for commercial agriculture, the British introduced the Land Consolidation and Registration Plan (Swynnerton Plan) which gave land rights exclusively to men. From the author's observations in the villages and people's narratives, there are families whose husbands have never been home since they left to take up jobs in the towns. Wives are always fending for their families by themselves through small-scale farming on the pieces of land that they do not have exclusive rights to.

Bukusu women's roles in the colonial economy shifted and diversified into trading activities such as petty selling of farm produce, beer brewing, and poultry products. Women left alone with children and entire families to take care of resorted to all responsibilities initially played by men, such as herding animals and repairing granaries. Women ensured the total welfare of the entire household since husbands worked far away from home and occasionally visited families. These sentiments are evident in many families in rural and urban Bungoma County, which encounter a surge in women as the head of the household. From the preserved tales of the author's descendants in taped records, a peculiar trend in Lukhuna village of the Kimilili sub-county is women who constantly fend for their families despite having their husbands in formal employment. They do manual jobs and brew beer to get money to buy food for their families, including their husbands. The inclination of women's role as heads of households changed to the extent that even Bukusu men rarely participate in economic activities such as working on farms; instead, they act as supervisors.

Globalization on Bukusu Women

Globalization in anthropology denotes the intensification of global interconnectedness, insinuating

a world of movement and mixture, contact and linkages, and incessant cultural interaction and exchange (Inda, and Rosaldo, 2002). In addition to other factors that cause cultural dynamics, globalization too influences interconnections and subsequent changes. As is the case in Kenya, globalization entails the exposure of communities to global culture through mainly exposure to pervasive media culture. Media culture illustrates the conveyance of information and ideas to consumers through mass media such as through media outlets comprising television, radio, newspaper, and the internet (Browne, 2004). In this context, media and popular culture are instrumental in appealing to women around the world. For instance, the discourses on women's empowerment and the formation of women's movements have won a large section of women around the world.

Popular and mass culture plays an essential role in the construction of exclusive ideas on perceptions, gender relations, and masculinity and femininity (Tiwari, K. 2019). For instance, they influence the changing cultural perceptions in society about gender roles and stereotypes. As such, the two have blurred the boundaries between virtual and physical realities, creating new parameters in identity construction and fashion and the apparent realignment of gender identities. Touching on the contemporary as well as globalized country, the advances made in digitalized media, and movements propelled in popular culture, the article taps into the plausible influence of media culture on the Bukusu community's traditional cultures regarding the changing roles of women. Resonating with the ideals spread by media culture, Bukusu women practice westernized values fed by the media which appear to be at odds with the traditional values of Bukusu. A casual discussion with Bukusu men pointed out their dissatisfaction with the overexposure to media that influences them to negotiate their roles in the family such as babysitting, and cooking. They expressed concern over the

waning tradition of women's active role in the domestic space.

From the author's observations, women in the contemporary Bukusu community are at liberty to choose from a variety of marriage options such as the traditional bride-wealth system, Christian marriage with or without bride-wealth, elopement, and single parenthood. Many of the Bukusu households are now headed by women due to the long-term male wage-labor migration. It has been observable that youthful marriages are negotiated between partners, and it is upon the couple to mutually agree on their type of marriage without family or relatives' interference. This trend overrides the traditional norm of parents' and clansmen's frontline involvement in arranged marriages for their daughters. It was established that upon reaching puberty, a Bukusu girl was expected to get married as the culture valued marriage. In this case, a woman had the responsibility to get married to perpetuate her lineage and bestow her social status as a woman in the community (Wandiba, 2003).

The author has often observed two neighbors selling the farm produce without involving their wives and claiming the produce came from their land, and they decide what to do with what comes out of it. This right was in retrospect vested in men when communal land ownership came to an end. While it is an option, land inheritance is minimally practiced due to the existing patrilineal land inheritance of the community and because the traditionally communally owned land is now under private ownership. The buying or selling of land is an individual affair hence, Bukusu women are now permitted to inherit land as it is in contemporary Kenya. Nonetheless, Bukusu women commonly acquire land through purchase.

In the current Bukusu community, a continuous shift in the economic and education of women is evident. Women's enlightenment through national and local forums has paced the rate at which women define their status in the community. An

umbrella of women groups around the country such as the National Council of Women of Kenya, Kenya Girl Guides, and Mother's Union gained momentum to push women to improve their livelihoods. This has been replicated in the villages where women have group formations "*chamas*" or rather unions in which they pull resources through table banking resulting in their economic elevations. This was also reiterated by the reports that *chama* women are now and community organizations that hitherto supported male leaders have changed the view on women as leaders (Kimeu, 2022). These are some of the enablers of their independence offering a reprieve for women who yearn for economic independence.

The Kenyan government has gradually expanded women's rights and opportunities in education, employment, and political participation. Kenya has signed on to various global agreements that promote women's emancipation (Kenyatta, 2023). Women's role in politics has been an essential discourse since the promulgation of the 2010 Constitution, which has seen increased women's representation in Kenyan politics. The competition between women against men in political contestations is almost at par. Bukusu women have taken active roles in national politics and government positions, such as heading ministries. At county levels and grassroots levels, women are taking leadership responsibilities a change that is gradually taking due to the underlying Bukusu cultural references. Reiterating the slow-paced change was the current Bungoma County Deputy Governor who during an interview with United Nations Women Africa (UNWA) asserted "In 2013, I wanted to become the Deputy governor but because of the cultural aspect, people in my community said it was not time to be given leadership". Her desire to be in leadership was realized in the 2022 Kenya general election when she was picked by Ken Lusaka, Bungoma County governor as his deputy. There has been additional representation of women in the

county assembly of Bungoma signifying a historical, cultural transformation of Bukusu women from domestic to public realms.

In this globalized world era, the Bukusu community's roles of women roles are shifting due to the emphasis placed on the nuclear family alienating the extended family. Women are no longer held responsible for the community's welfare. This has also seen a decrease in several childbirths per Bukusu woman. Women are responsible for the number of children they desire to bear without being bound by their husbands or the community's expectations (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane, 2014). In a friendly talk with Joseline, a Bukusu friend, she asserts that she is personally content with having only one child as she can only comfortably take care of one. Citing her personal choice to have one child, she notes that motherhood, wifely, and career responsibilities are too demanding. She further stresses that the increasing cost of living makes her choice more justifiable. Her perception points out the direct and indirect high cost of living to Bukusu women reduction in childbirths.

To date, it is uncommon to see a polygamous family despite the Kenyan government legalizing polygamy in 2014, a reversal of the colonial laws that had criminalized it (Stefano, Davis, and Corsane, 2014). When it happens, it leads to divorce, and separation as witnessed when a childhood neighbor separated from her husband when he married a second wife. Such occurrences were uncouth and only connoted the woman's disrespect not only to the husband but also to the entire relatives. With family and cultural influence on women fast declining, it depicts an aberration from the traditional Bukusu role of women to be deferential in marriage.

Conclusions

From the literature review carried out in this article, it can be deduced that as the world continuously undergoes social, economic, and political

changes, societies around the globe are significantly changing. African societies have assumed a fast pace in the transformations since their colonial time to date, which has had significant implications on cultures. These changes are enforced by the emancipation of women in societies worldwide. For this work, a comparative perspective has been undertaken based on specific institutions and communities in Africa and Kenya.

Likened to other Kenyan communities where the changing roles of the Gikuyu women and family structure are caused by dual-income families, education, religion, new economic opportunities and economic autonomy and attitude change towards de facto men inevitably make women family breadwinners (Ng'endo, 2002). The article establishes that various factors inform the changing Bukusu women's roles. The Bukusu women's roles are dynamic and not fixed as they were traditionally. Bukusu women are constantly shifting their positions in the community and society at large thereby redefining and reconstructing a new identity different from the Bukusu culture. They are entering new spaces away from domestic spaces, becoming empowered, and independent in decision-making. The Bukusu community is largely accommodative and compliant, enabling the changes to ensue.

The missionary activities in Bungoma had a significant influence on the role of women in the family and community at large. For instance, denouncing some cultural practices, such as the introduction of education, eventually led women into professional jobs away from the domestic sphere. Colonialism also serves as the origin of the changes in women's roles among the Bukusu. This was witnessed in the establishment of the colonial economy, whereby Bukusu men were recruited into commercial agriculture, and women were left pre-occupied with roles initially carried out by men. Women's responsibility to take care of children and the general welfare of the community increased. With that, we can attest that changes in the

culturally instituted roles of Bukusu women are traced back to colonial times and Christian missions in Kenya and Bungoma County.

Globalization has had far-reaching influence through movements such as media culture, spreading information and ideas, changing perceptions and attitudes of Bukusu women, and shifting their place in society. The stringent Bukusu cultural expectations of women do not tie them. There are emerging associations of women in the villages and towns, empowering women to redefine their roles in the community. Through such, the text unravels the conundrum that women in the Bukusu community are modernized and urbanized, and their roles are increasingly becoming negotiated and mediated. From the mentioned observations by the author, this article assists with the nuances of the community's interpretation and perceptions of women's role changes in the Bukusu community context. It demonstrates how Bukusu women's roles have been changing since pre-colonial times. From their roles being confined to being a wife through arranged marriage, childbearing, and nuclear and extended family welfare, to food production, and distribution, Bukusu women's roles have transformed into personal roles in choosing a spouse, decision to bear children, education, entering workforce and politics.

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