HAL
open science

COMMODITY PRODUCTION, TEA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERICHO, KENYA. 1895-1963

Sally Jemngietich Kosgei

To cite this version:

Sally Jemngietich Kosgei. COMMODITY PRODUCTION, TEA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERICHO, KENYA. 1895-1963. Geography. A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUD/ES OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, 1981. English. NNT : . tel-01256534

HAL Id: tel-01256534

https://shs.hal.science/tel-01256534v1

Submitted on 15 Jan 2016

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

COMMODITY PRODUCTION, TEA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERICHO, KENYA, 1895-1963

KOSGEI, SALLY JEMNGETICH

DEGREE DATE: 1981

UMI Dissertation Services

22.03.05

I. F. R. A.
P. O. Box [illegible]
Nairobi Kenya

IFRA

IFRA004616

No. d'inventaire
Date 09.01.98
Cote KOS 338.1

This is an authorized facsimile, made from the microfilm master copy of the original dissertation or master thesis published by UMI.

The bibliographic information for this thesis is contained in UMI's Dissertation Abstracts database, the only central source for accessing almost every doctoral dissertation accepted in North America since 1861.

UMI Dissertation Services

A Bell & Howell Company

300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106
1-800-521-0600 313-761-4700

Printed in 1997 by xerographic process
on acid-free paper

DPGT

I. F. R. A.
P. O. Box 52480
Nairobi Kenya

18

INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted you will find a target note listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB RD., ANN ARBOR, MI 48106

8214635

Kosgei, Sally Jemngetich

COMMODITY PRODUCTION, TEA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERICHO, KENYA, 1895-1963

Stanford University PH.D. 1981

University
Microfilms
International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1981
by
Kosgei, Sally Jemngetich
All Rights Reserved

COMMODITY PRODUCTION, TEA AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN KERICHO, KENYA, 1895-1963

A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

AND THE COMMITTEE ON GRADUATE STUDIES

OF STANFORD UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Sally Jemng'etich Kosgei

June 1981

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

(Principal Adviser)

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

I certify that I have read this thesis and that in my opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Approved for the University Committee on Graduate Studies:

Dean of Graduate Studies and Research

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people and institutions helped in different ways in the preparation of this thesis. I thank them all. Special thanks go to my principal supervisor Professor Kennell A. Jackson of Stanford University for encouragement and kindness. I also thank my second supervisor Professor Paul Irwin of Stanford University for his valuable advice.

I am grateful to Ms. Sara-Jane Too and Ms. Gratia Too Ruto for hospitality and friendship while living in Kericho. My informants graciously gave their time without which this dissertation would not have been written.

I acknowledge with gratitude the support of my friends: Ms. Debra A. Smith for reading the manuscript and offering her suggestions, Ms. Cora A. Presley for sharing her time and knowledge, and my good friend Dr. Yusuf A. Nzibo for his support.

Many thanks also to my mother, Ms. Rebecca Chepkasi, who has been such a tremendous source of inspiration throughout my academic life, and I wish to show my appreciation by dedicating this thesis to her.

The financial burden for the research and production of this work was borne by Stanford University, Center for Research in International Studies at Stanford, the Comparative Studies for the Americas, and the Weter Foundation also of Stanford. The Aggrey Memorial Fund, Eastern Africa Branch, also assisted. I am happy to acknowledge the support given by these institutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
LIST OF FIGURES	vii
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Colonialism in Kenya	5
Kericho District: The Land and the People	11
Population	17
The Research Process	18
Chapter Outline	23
II. THE MONETIZATION OF THE KIPSIGIS ECONOMY	24
Pre-Capitalist Kipsigis Society	26
The Penetration of Capitalism: First Phase	31
The Penetration of Capitalism: Second Phase	39
The Land Tenure System	41
Alienation of Kipsigis Land	46
Squatters	49
Further Developments of This Era	53
III. PLANTATION TEA AND THE KIPSIGIS PEOPLE	59
Labor on the Kericho Tea Plantations	63
Plantation Tea and the Kipsigis People	72
Conclusion	74
IV. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALLHOLDER TEA PRODUCTION IN KERICHO DISTRICT	76
Economic Background of the Development of Smallholder Tea Farms	78
Political and Social Precursors to the Development of Tea Production	85
The Process of Setting Up a Tea Farm	90
The Role of the Kenya Tea Development Authority	98

Table of Contents--Continued

Chapter		Page
V.	THE ORGANIZATION OF LABOR ON SMALLHOLDER TEA FARMS .	105
	History of Kipsigis Labor Organization	106
	Family-Owned Small-Scale Tea Farms	113
	Smallholder Tea Employees	121
	Conclusion	124
VI.	KIPSIGIS WOMEN AND THE COLONIAL ECONOMY	126
VII.	CONCLUSION	153
	Colonial Capitalism and the Rural Kipsigis Social Structure	155
SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY		175
APPENDIX: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR SMALL-SCALE TEA GROWERS .		192

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure		Page
1.	Location Map	12
2.	Population Distribution Map of Kericho District (1969)	19
3.	Population Density Map of Kericho District (1969) . .	20

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation is a study of the Kipsigis society in the colonial period. The Kipsigis live in the Kericho district of Kenya which was under British colonial rule from 1895 to 1963. Although the district has three divisions--Sot, Buret, and Belgut--only Buret and Belgut have been studied, largely because together they form an agreeable entity and had similar experiences during the colonial period. The focus has been on the process of interaction between colonial capitalism and a rural non-capitalist society. This has been done by examining the development of a monetized economy, the introduction of new marketable agricultural products, and the rise of differentiation in the area as a result of new sources of revenue, such as wage labor on plantations and "native" farmer participation in tea growing, set in motion by the advent of colonialism. The study has been carried out as a contribution to the understanding of the present-day economic and social conditions of the poorer countries of the world, particularly those areas that were formally colonised.

In economic terms, the world is today divided into the developed capitalist countries of Northern Europe, U.S.A. and Canada; the developed socialist countries; and what has come to be known as the Third World, sometimes called underdeveloped or less developed economies of Latin America, Asia and Africa. Kenya fits into this

last category. Development is uneven in individual developed capitalist countries and underdeveloped countries, but the most significant disparity is that existing between the developed world as a whole and the underdeveloped countries as a block. When various indices of economic development are used to compare the levels of development of countries, the underdeveloped countries are found to be lagging far behind the developed world. For example, while an average developed country would have about 840 people to a doctor, an average underdeveloped country would have about 12,000 people to a doctor. Another example is that of the per capita national income. An average developed country has a per capita national income of $1,365 per year while an average underdeveloped one has $250 per year.[1]

Underdeveloped economies are characterised by low productivity of labor, low technology, low per capita income, underdeveloped social services, such as education, medical facilities, communications and so on. In a word, poverty. A large section of the income of most of the underdeveloped countries comes from agriculture where most of the population is employed, yet most of these countries import food. This, together with the fact that some of these countries are largely monocrop, producing crops such as tea, sugar and coffee for the world market, make their economies particularly vulnerable to the vagaries of world agricultural prices. In some situations, some of the crops produced in the underdeveloped countries are controlled at the

---

[1]Pierre Jalee, The Third World in World Economy (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969), pp. 91-101.

production level by international companies. The more usual situation is control of the market by international companies. The underdeveloped countries often have to buy practically all of their industrial requirements from the developed world so that their economies are largely dependent upon the changing fortunes of the developed countries.

The developed capitalist countries are said to have industrialised after a class of people who could save and invest for further development emerged. In the underdeveloped countries today, a vicious cycle of poverty exists. The resulting pattern of low saving and low investment leads to very little, if any, economic growth. There is no easy escape from this cycle because surplus which could be reinvested in the underdeveloped world is repatriated to the developed capitalist countries, among other things. Now, how did this situation develop? Many historians, economists and political scientists studying this problem have come to the conclusion that the development of underdevelopment is one side of a coin, whose other side is the development of industrial capitalism.[2] Indeed, as Geoffrey Kay correctly asserts, "The foundations of modern development and underdevelopment were laid at the same time and by the same process."[3]

---

[2]See Celso Furtado, Development and Underdevelopment (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale, Vol. 1 (New York: International Publishers, 1963); Walter Rodney, How Europe Underdeveloped Africa (London: Bogle-L'Ouveture Publishers, 1972).

[3]Geoffrey Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis (London: The MacMillan Press, 1975), p. 96.

One aspect of the underdeveloped economies, whose roots can be traced to the point of contact between them and the now developed world, is that of dependence on the part of underdeveloped countries on the developed ones. Today, the underdeveloped world is dependent upon industrial countries for a wide range of manufactured goods. The availability of these goods and their supporting industries in some of the underdeveloped countries make it uneconomic for local entrepreneurs to set up similar industry. It is also true that prices for manufactured goods are controlled by the manufacturers in the developed world. To buy manufactured goods, underdeveloped countries usually have to sell agricultural products to the developed countries. To a large extent these are not food crops so that, although engaged in crop production an underdeveloped country may experience famine. While internationally marketable crops are dependent upon the requirements of that market, it is invariably true to say that most of these crops were introduced at the point of contact between industrial capitalism and the less developed economy. Those underdeveloped countries engaged in mineral production usually have to sell these to the developed world unprocessed at quite a low price. In most instances, in fact, the production and marketing of minerals is controlled by a foreign company resulting in a reduction in profit to the producing country. Paul Baran documents the case of India and Britain where at the point of contact, India produced cloth.[4] This was at a time when

---

[4]See Paul Baran, The Political Economy of Growth (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957).

Britain was going through her industrial revolution whose backbone was the textile industry. Britain sold her factory-manufactured cloth to India at cheaper prices than was economically possible from the Indian cottage industry. Eventually, the low price of British cloth destroyed the need for Indians to continue manufacturing their own cloth. This made India dependent on the industrial west for cloth.

The relationship between the developed capitalist countries and the underdeveloped ones pre-dates formal colonialism. This at least is the case for Africa. The pre-colonial contacts were characterised by plunder and trade, but with colonialism the complete subordination of internal production took place when a more direct political and economic control was set up. In the case of Kenya, colonialism meant a foreign government, white settlers, plantation agriculture, production for the market by the local people in order to pay taxes and so on. It is with these new relationships that this study is concerned.

Colonialism in Kenya

The peoples of what was to become the East African Protectorate, later Kenya, had made contacts with the outside world mainly through trade and, more specifically, the slave and ivory trade, before formal colonization in 1895, when the East African Protectorate was declared. Soon after that, the British government borrowed funds from its national treasury to build a railway, running from the shores of the Indian Ocean to Lake Victoria. This railway was intended to secure effective British control of the Nile Valley, something that

the British valued at the time. In any case, the railway needed to be economically viable so as to finance the administration. The British population was not expected to continue financing these activities. Rather, it was expected that the revenue would be obtained from East Africa. How this was to be done then became the problem. M. P. K. Sorrenson argues convincingly that although the problem was ultimately resolved in favor of settling white immigrants in Kenya, the administration tried a range of possibilities and the settler solution predominated only because, upon their arrival in Kenya, the settlers tried to set up a "white man's country" to the exclusion of Indians who also had been considered a possible source of revenue if settled as farmers along the railway line.[5] The African producers as a source of this required revenue were evidently also defeated by the domination of the settlers.

The white settlers who came to Kenya had some of the best land reserved for them. This was what came to be known as the White Highlands and was located near the railway line for easy transportation. It is thought that about 18 percent of Kenya's best land was alienated for the use of between 1000 and 35000 European farmers up to 1963.[6] In 1897 when the question of issuing land to settlers and companies was raised, a 27-year renewable lease was passed. In 1902 this time was

---

[5]See M. P. K. Sorrenson, European Settlement in Kenya (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968).

[6]Roger M. A. Van Zwanenberg, Colonial Capitalism and Labor in Kenya, 1919-1939 (Kampala: East African Literature Bureau, 1975), p. 30.

extended 99 years and later to 999 years. Not only was land set aside for white settlers, but boundaries were drawn to limit Africans to what were called "reserves."[7] This was only one manifestation of the intervention of the colonial state on behalf of the settler interests.

State power was used to alienate land for white settlement. To guarantee the security for this land tenure as well, several strategies were also adopted by the state to guarantee labor for the settler farms. By limiting the amount of land available for Africans, the state created a land shortage which forced some people out of their homes to find employment and therefore to survive. These displaced people often ended up on settler farms as squatters, i.e. "permanent" labor on settler farms. The Hut and Poll taxes forced Africans to look for employment too. Further, the state had a tax system that favored settler agriculture. As early as 1904, the state had reduced export taxes on likely European exports to make it more profitable for Kenyan European farmers to farm. Especially low rates of taxation were levied on imported agricultural implements to be used by white farmers. Government services, including extension services, agricultural advice and training, transportation networks, etc., were all limited to white settled areas, although the Africans contributed to the payment of each of these services through taxation. The state further protected European farmers from competition from African farmers by forbidding Africans to grow some of the marketable

---

[7] Roger M. A. Van Zwanenberg and Anne King, An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, 1800-1970 (London: The MacMillan Press, 1975), p. 34.

crops. It was illegal for Africans to grow coffee, tea, pyrethrum, etc. Furthermore, Africans were not allowed to cross-breed cattle for many years.[8] Only occasionally, when world prices for any of these crops were particularly low, were Africans allowed to grow them; and then they, too, were discouraged by the low prices.[9] It is also true that in times of hardship, the state came to the rescue of the white farmers. In the 1930s, for example, when world prices were low as a result of the depression, the government put $1,000,000 into the white farms to save them from collapse.[10] It is also notable that the only cash crops that Africans were allowed to grow were cotton wattle trees, and clearly because their prices were so low that settlers were not interested in them. Not only were white settler farms protected at the production level in terms of what could be grown by Africans and the various forms of assistance from the state, but they were also protected at the marketing level. The Kenya Farmers Association, which was formed in 1919, was set up to distribute seeds, fertilizers and agricultural tools in the country. More important, for our purposes, was the fact that the Association was the sole buyer of cash crops from farmers and the seller to the outside world. African-produced crops, such as maize, did get rejected from time to time by

---

[8] E. A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939 (New York: NOK Publishers Ltd., 1973), p. 205.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Van Zwanenberg and King, Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, p. 39.

the Association on the grounds that they were of low quality and the Africans had to be dependent upon the local market. What was more serious was the fact that even if the Africans had chosen to grow some of the crops that were exclusively meant for European production (e.g. coffee), they would not be able to sell them because the market was overseas and the buyers made purchases through the Kenya Farmers Association.

Government support for the settler farms was justified at the time on the grounds that Africans were too ignorant and would not be expected to produce the commodities needed for selling outside to pay for the railway and to keep the administrative machinery operative. In spite of all the support, settler contribution to the actual physical crop output in Kenya was insignificant except in situations where the production and marketing were reserved for them. The settlers on average demanded a higher standard of living than their production could pay for and were assisted in paying for this by African producers as well as the whole state system.[11]

Tea production being a labor-intensive business required a large work force. This meant two things for the Africans. One, labor had to leave the African "reserves" for the plantations, thus reducing the labor force for African production. Two, the work force concentrated on the tea estates had to be fed, especially as the tea estates

---

[11]Colin Leys, Underdevelopment in Kenya (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 39.

in Kericho did not grow any food. The Kipsigis in Belgut and Buret became food producers for the tea estates.

Merchant capital had an important role to play in changing the Kenyan social structure in the colonial period. Trade with the outside world was in existence in East Africa long before colonialism, and of course, Africans traded with each other. The conditions set up by colonialism, however, intensified this trade. For one thing, a whole trading community was brought into Kenya from India with the construction of the railway. While at first many people were cautious about buying some of the goods available from these merchants, it did not take them too long to be dependent on the merchants for things they also began to rely on as essentials. Some of these articles were blankets, cloth, salt, farm implements, and many other items. This involved Africans in a money economy, especially in Kericho district where barter trade was the practice before colonialism. Being involved in a money economy forced people either to go out in search of salaried employment or to grow and sell crops from their farms.

The introduction of merchant goods and government taxes forced the Africans to raise money and to enter into a money economy. In the first two decades of colonialism in Kenya, there were three principal areas from which the Kipsigis could draw money: the settler farms, the tea plantations and their own crop production. Often they had to sell their animals, too, to obtain money. A few people got government jobs and a few more made their way to urban areas although this was later in the colonial period. Many Kipsigis people attempted to become

traders but were frustrated by the economic dominance of the Indian merchants. The Indian merchants also controlled the marketing of crops and the transportation system. When the Kipsigis attempted to form a trading co-operative in the 1930s, the government sought to control them. After about two decades of colonialism, some African traders emerged in the rural areas wishing to trade in food crops. This led to serious competition with Indians. The government then appointed government administrators to head these African co-operatives. These government leaders tried and succeeded to a large extent in making these co-operatives appendages of already established, settler-run co-operatives. The Kipsigis never emerged as dominant traders and their co-operatives never got off the ground. The Kenya National Archives District Commissioner's Report of 1930-1938 reports these attempts and failures.[12]

Kericho District: The Land and the People

The Land

Kericho district (Fig. 1, district #17) has an altitude range of 1,500 meters to 2,000 with the higher sections on the northern side. The high altitude results in low temperatures in the area in spite of its closeness to the Equator. The altitude also affects the amount of rainfall in the district.

The rainfall in Kericho district is reliable and well distributed, making it possible for agriculture to be practised with more certainty. For most years the rain received ranges from 1,525 mm to

[12] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930-1938.

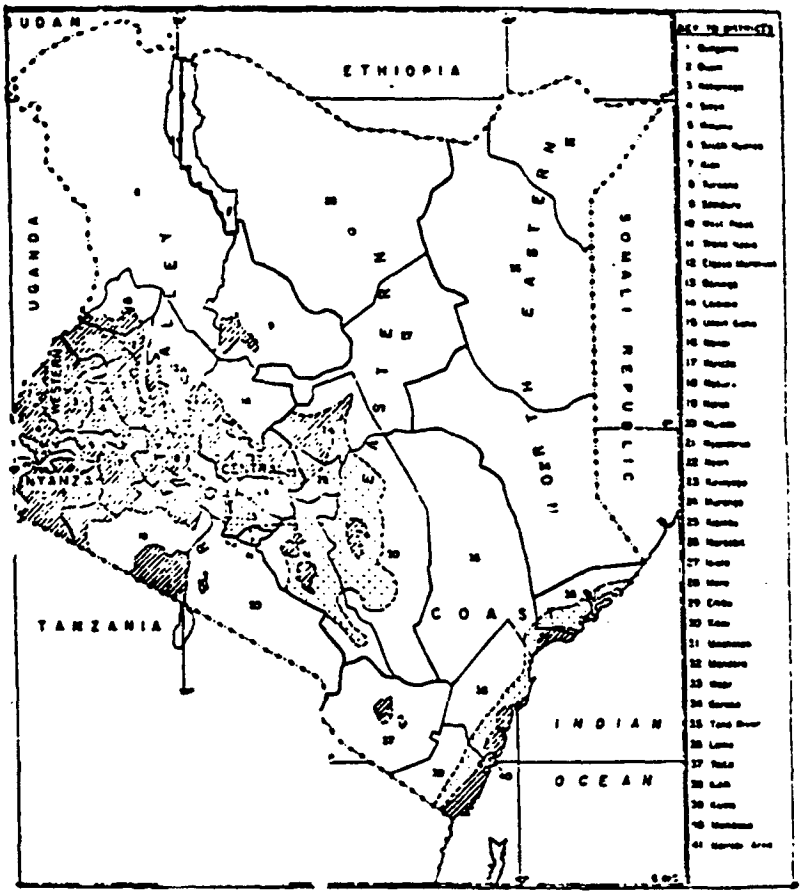

Fig. 1.--Location Map

over 2,000 mm with the higher figures falling in Belgut and Buret and lower figures in Sot. Kericho district hardly ever receives less than 1,000 mm of rainfall per year and the changes of rainfall below 1,000 mm per year are one in ten.[13] This makes Kericho district one of the three leading high rainfall areas in Kenya. The other two areas are the Kakamega forest and the slopes of Mount Kenya. Kericho has a dry season lasting from January to February which is extremely short compared to most of the country. There are two rainfall seasons, one running from February to May and the other, October to December. Other months have some rain, too.

Most of the district is covered by weathered volcanic soils. These are rich red soils. The drainage, especially in Belgut and Buret, is good. High reliable rainfall, rich red well-drained soils, together with low range temperatures, make Kericho district a high potential agricultural land.

The People

Kericho district is inhabited mainly by the Kipsigis people who speak a Kalenjin language. Others who speak a similar language include the Nandi, Tugen, Elgeiyo, Terik, Marakwet, Pokot, Bok, Endo, Sebei and Bongomek. Apart from the linguistic similarity, there is also a cultural linkage among the Kalenjin speakers, such as the circumcision of boys and the clitoridectomy of girls, marriage laws

---

[13] Richard S. Odingo, A Study of Agrarian Change in Kenya with Special Reference to Kericho District (Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations Study, Nairobi, June 1973), p. 54.

and so on. For this reason, many historians have linked the development of the Kipsigis people to that of other Kalenjin speakers. The Kalenjin speakers along with the Tatoga of Tanzania are classified as Highland Nilotes in the linguistic classifications of East Africa.[14]

Historians and other students of the Kipsigis have not yet agreed on what the origins of the Kipsigis are nor for that matter those of the Kalenjin in general. There is a general suggestion by most historians, linguists, archaeologists and anthropologists that the Kalenjin travelled in a north-south direction from a place in the south of Sudan, separated somewhere in the course of the journey into the various communities that they are today. C. W. Hobley, among others, suggested that the Kalenjin dispersed around Mount Elgon and travelled in different directions. J. G. Peristiany and G. W. Huntingford, on the other hand, fix the dispersal point at the area around Lake Rudolf. What is common to all these people is that they accept the theory of a southward movement of the Kalenjin people to their present homes.[15]

Henry Mwanzi in a more recent study of the Kipsigis does not accept the north-south migration of the Kipsigis. He boldly contends that "the Kipsigis as such have not come from anywhere. They have

---

[14]Studies on this topic are compiled by B. A. Ogot and J. A. Kieran, Zamani: A Survey of East African History (Nairobi: Longmans, 1968).

[15]C. W. Hobley, "Anthropological Studies in Kavirondo and Nandi," Journal of Anthropological Institute, 1903; J. G. Peristiany, The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964); and G. W. Huntingford, The Southern Nilo-Hamites (London: International African Institute, 1953).

evolved where they are today from various ethnic interactions." The ethnic groups that he suggests as having "given birth" to the Kipsigis are the Okiek, who he says are of Nilotic origin, and the Sirikwa speakers, whom he classifies as Bantu-speaking.[16] Mwanzi goes on to say that the Gusii, Maasai, and Nandi contributed in significant ways to the development of the Kipsigis as a group. He cites cultural, linguistic, technological and food similarities that the Kipsigis appear to have borrowed from these other ethnic groups and adapted to their own needs. Mwanzi is concerned with correcting the impression created by migration histories of East Africa that portray groups of people moving and settling in new places as almost homogeneous entities. These histories do not appear to take into account the fact that moving people interact with others and this with changing ecological zones affect the character of a people in important ways. Mwanzi, however, dismisses the migration theory surrounding the Kipsigis altogether, and if we have to take him seriously, there is a need to explain why the Kipsigis are closer to the Kony or Sabot of Mount Elgon linguistically and culturally and so different from their immediate neighbors, the Luo and Gusii, in those same aspects of life. It would appear that to explain this phenomenon, one would have to accept that the Kalenjin were one group of people at some point in the past and after their split, the various groups have interacted with other people and evolved their own distinctive characteristics in the

---

[16] Henry A. Mwanzi, A History of the Kipsigis (Nairobi: African Literature Bureau, 1977), pp. vii and 38.

process. All these will remain speculations until more research and especially archaeological research is done.

When the Kipsigis actually appeared as a distinctive group has not been conclusively determined by anyone to date. Gideon Were suggests the long period of time between 1490 and 1706 as the time when the present homes of the Kalenjin speakers were settled.[17] I. Orchardson gives 1780 as the time when the Kalenjin dispersal took place somewhere to the north of their present homes, but does not say anything about actual settlement in their present homes.[18] G. W. Huntingford, in The Southern Nilo-Hamites, submits the 17th century as the time of dispersal from the Lake Rudolph area. Henry Mwanzi gives the 18th and 19th centuries as the period in which the Kipsigis emerged as a recognisable group. This issue too has to await further research.

Whether the Kipsigis were wholly pastoralist and learned to till land later or vice versa is another issue on which students of the Kipsigis' past are not agreed. What is in agreement, however, is that by the 19th century the Kipsigis were involved in both cattle keeping and in tilling land. According to Mwanzi, and oral reports support this, cattle keeping was on the increase in the second part of the 19th century. At this time also there is evidence of trade

---

[17] Gideon S. Were, A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1967), pp. 47-50.

[18] I. Orchardson, The Kipsigis (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1961).

between the Kipsigis and their neighbors and also among themselves. The Swahili-Arab traders and their intermediaries were trading around Lake Victoria at this time, so that it is reasonable to believe that the Kipsigis came into contact with and may even have traded with them. The traders would have had to cross Kipsigis country or neighboring territories to get to the shores of Lake Victoria and the assumption is that they traded with the Kipsigis, if only to obtain food for their caravans.

Under British colonial rule the Kipsigis were ruled as an ethnic entity in one district, Kericho district. For many years this was a district within the Nyanza province but, true to British colonial policy of keeping ethnic groups separate, Kericho district was later transferred into the Rift Valley province which was predominantly Kalenjin-speaking.

Population

The earliest available population figures of the Kipsigis date from the early 1920s. In 1921 it was estimated that there were 61,409 Kipsigis people in Kericho district. It is not clear how this figure was obtained, although the practice then was to count the number of houses and multiply them by an estimated number of people resident in each house. This method is open to inaccuracies mainly because an estimated number of residents is not an accurate presentation of who actually lived in those houses. In 1921 also, there were 635 other people listed as foreigners in the district bringing the

total population to 75,044. This figure rose to 77,187 people by 1932, of whom 236 were listed as Europeans and 514 as Asians, giving a total figure of 76,410 Kipsigis people resident in the district at that time. In 1942, it was estimated that there were 108,184 Kipsigis, 500 Europeans and 1,000 Asians in Kericho district, giving a total population of 109,684 in the district that year.

The first head count in the district took place in 1948. This revealed that there were 212,608 people living in Kericho district. This figure had risen to 391,263 by the 1962 census. Between the 1948 and 1969 census, the Kipsigis population more than doubled. The census of 1969 showed that there were 471,459 people living in the district. Figure 2 shows the distribution of the 1969 population in the district, and Figure 3 indicates the density of that population. By this time there were areas in Kenya such as areas of Meragoli and Nyen that had a density of up to 400 people per square kilometre, making the Kericho population density less pressed for land availability.[19]

The Research Process

Research for this dissertation started in the Stanford libraries though the major part of the research took place in Kenya over a period of twelve months. A period of four months was spent in the Kenya National Archives: two months at the start of the research, one month at the half-way point and one month at the end of the

---

[19] Odingo, Study of Agrarian Change in Kenya, p. 80.

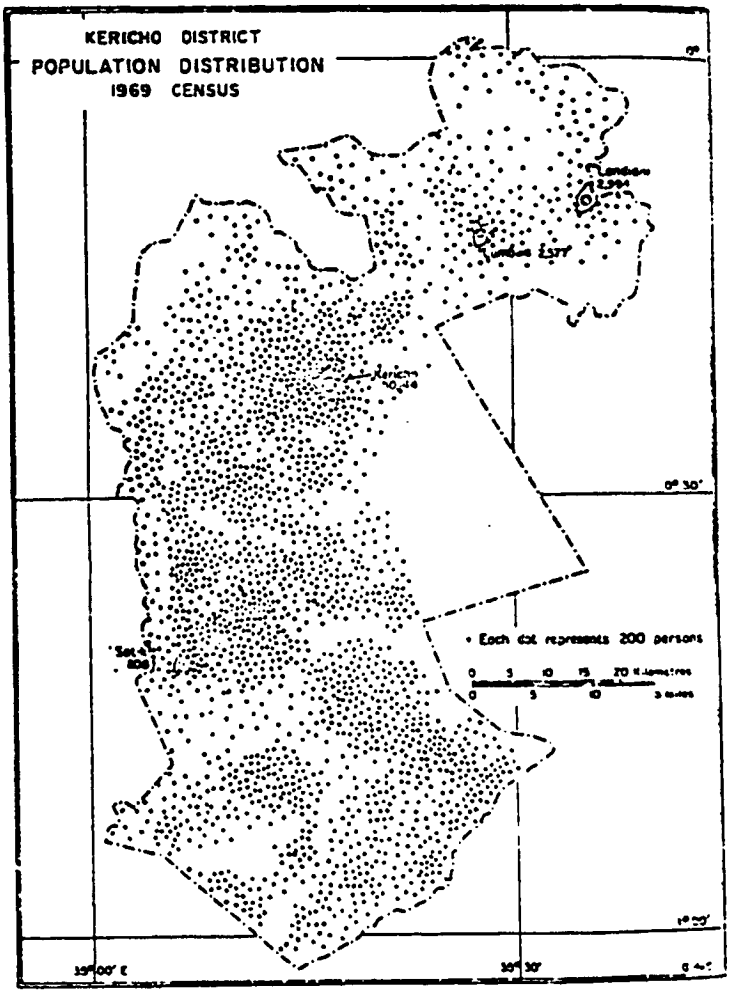

Fig. 2.--Population Distribution Map of Kericho District (1969)

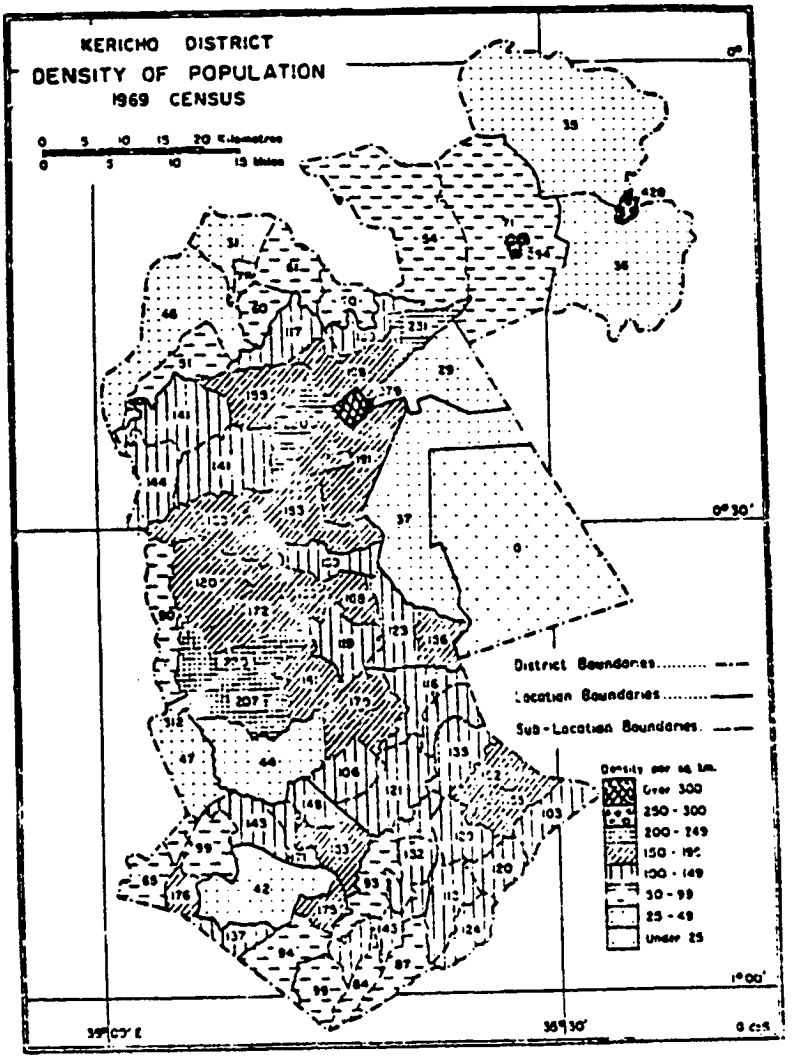

Fig. 3.--Population Density Map of Kericho District (1969)

field research. The eight months of actual field research were divided equally between Belgut and Buret locations.

The people interviewed were generally over the age of fifty although some of the smallholder tea growers were below that age. Both men and women producers were interviewed. The Kipsigis language was used for conducting the interviews except in a few cases in Belgut where non-Kipsigis speakers stil living and working on the tea estates were interviewed. In such cases Kiswahili was used. As the researcher speaks both languages, it was not necessary to employ a translator. In all, eighty people were interviewed.[20] A questionnaire was prepared before the beginning of the field research but was used, if at all, only as a guide. When interviewing smallholder tea growers, however, it was possible to use parts of the questionnaire because some of the information sought was specific--for example, how much tea was planted and when or how much money was spent buying the seedlings. This type of information was necessary for assessing the economic standing of tea growers and their advancement. Most of the tea growers had specific information as they had been involved in tea production for

---

[20]The group of small-scale farmers interviewed was chosen at random although attempts were made to obtain a representative sample from relatively wealthy farmers and those not so wealthy, farmers employed outside the home and those resident at home with no outside employment. What political position the farmer held in the colonial government was also taken into consideration. Finally, interviewees included farmers who once were employed by the colonial government and those who were not. These factors and others were investigated in an attempt to get a representative picture of small-scale tea growers. The tea growers interviewed made up about 40 percent of the total number of tea growers in the two locations. Tea growers in the area as a whole represent roughly 30 percent of the total population.

less than twenty-five years. It had been important for them to keep records because the Kenya Tea Development Authority required the farmers to do this for easy marketing and for paying back loans owed to the Authority.

An attempt has been made to base analysis of various phenomena on the information given, but in some instances the researcher's interpretations have differed from those of some of the informants. This is particularly so in talking about the political problems of the colonial period and the position of women in the colonial system. Many informants sounded as though they had been more "progressive" or more nationalistic about their situation in the colonial period than would be expected for this area in the colonial period. The influence of the Christian church seems to have affected people's perceptions of their traditional past. Some of the people influenced by this argue that there was more drinking in the pre-colonial period. Available evidence, however, suggests that alcoholism was on the increase in the colonial period. An attempt has therefore been made to understand the informants and their social and material condition in arriving at any conclusion.

Colonial capitalism manifested itself in Kenya in various ways. Some of these were settler agriculture, foreign-owner plantation agriculture and merchant trade. The Belgut and Buret locations of Kericho district have been chosen as an example of the effects of colonial capitalism on rural production because this area was affected by these three forms of colonial capitalism.

Chapter Outline

The evidence from the research has been arranged into six chapters. Chapter II traces the introduction of maize by the colonial government to the point where the Kipsigis were well oriented towards a market economy. The third chapter deals with the introduction of plantation tea by foreign-owned firms and the effects of these on the Kipsigis, especially in drawing them into a money economy. Being neighbors of the plantations, the Kipsigis supplied food as well as labor to the plantations. Chapter IV is devoted to the development of small-scale tea growing by the Kipsigis in an effort to improve their economic conditions. Chapter V examines the organization of labor in the Kipsigis countryside as a result of crops being introduced and the new labor demands placed on the traditional family labor. Chapter VI continues with the question of labor in the context of the changing roles of women as a result of the new labor organisations of various families. In conclusion, Chapter VII sums up the findings and includes an attempt to analyse the rise of a peasant community and its economic progress in the colonial period.

CHAPTER II

THE MONETIZATION OF THE KIPSIGIS ECONOMY

At the start of the colonial period, the Kipsigis society had a low-level commodity production with a limited division of labor and exchange in comparison to what was to take place during colonialism. Colonialism as an expression of capitalist expansion forced the Kipsigis into a higher level of commodity production, increased the division of labor and also ushered in the use of money for exchange as opposed to the barter system of the pre-colonial era. The purpose of this chapter is to examine the transition between these two eras. First will be examined the methods used to break down the pre-capitalist system to allow for the use of money, and then the ways in which the Kipsigis tried to cope with the new monetized economy will be discussed.[1] In this regard, the changing land tenure system and the rise of squatters, in particular, will be examined as responses to the colonial system.

The monetization of the Kipsigis economy and society or the contact of pre-capitalist Kipsigis society with capitalism did not lead to the transformation of the society to a capitalist one.

---

[1]Pre-capitalist refers to that type of economic structure in existence before interaction with capitalism. This is sometimes called traditional. It must be stressed, however, that the interaction does not lead to the development of capitalism. The Kipsigis society is not a capitalist one today. What actually emerges is a peripheral-capitalist type of economy.

Normally this type of interaction leads to the development of "peripheral" capitalism.[2] The structural conditions of peripheral capitalism among other things include the following: a) links with international capitalism where the international division of labor usually assigns the role of raw material production to the country on the periphery of capitalism, while heavy industrial manufacturing is dominated by the advanced capitalist country. This division of labor leads to unequal exchange relations in favor of the advanced capitalist countries because of the high value of industrial products in comparison to the international monetary value of agricultural products. b) Internally, countries on the periphery of capitalism are characterised by uneven control of resources. Technological advancement, presence of schools, hospitals, type of diet and how much wealth individuals control are characterised by unevenness. These characteristics and others that define peripheral capitalism may not be too varied from one peripheral capitalist country to another. The methods by which a pre-capitalist economy is transformed to a peripheral capitalist one may also be similar, but the historical specificity of each society needs to be studied for that society to be understood. In studying the mechanisms by which the pre-capitalist Kipsigis society was attached to the world capitalist system in the early years of

---

[2]Peripheral capitalism is usually linked to international capitalism through trade. What is produced at the local level also changes significantly from the traditional era but peripheral capitalism does not automatically lead to the development of capitalism.

colonialism, we shall first take a brief look at the pre-capitalist Kipsigis society in order to understand what was being transformed.

Pre-Capitalist Kipsigis Society

Only the period immediately before the colonization of Kenya will be discussed as this is the era for which data are available. These data cannot be used to generalise on the very distant past of the Kipsigis people for the obvious reason that this would be ahistorical. Although capitalism had had contact with the Kipsigis society at the level of trade by the 19th century, the Kipsigis, in the period immediately before colonization, had basically a subsistence economy with limited exchange. In many parts of Africa well-developed, commodity-producing societies were in existence by the 19th century.

At the level of production, the Kipsigis economy of the pre-colonial era was largely undifferentiated because what was produced varied only slightly from one household to the next. Wimbi,[3] which was planted and harvested mainly by women, was the chief food product along with vegetables. The other major source of subsistence was animal products, such as milk and meat. Cattle keeping, which was on the whole a male monopoly, involved, among other things, protecting animals from raiders, herding with the help of young boys, taking animals from home to salt licks and greener pastures and, of course, going on raids to increase the stocks.

---

[3] Wimbi, sometimes called Eleusine corn or finger millet, is a small-grained brownish grain whose stalk grows to the height of up to seven feet. When the grain is ground, the flour is used to make thick porridge.

Labor for farm work and cattle keeping came from the household as well as from the larger geographical community, kokwet. In the case of farm labor, when more labor was required than could be supplied by the household, the regular practice was to get some help from neighbors and entertain them after work with food and drinks. This type of help is based on good neighborly understanding and the favor is generally returned. The labor required for cattle at the level of the household involved mainly herding and milking, but it was essential to organize at a kokwet (immediate neighbors) or bororiet (larger geographical setting) to increase the stock by raiding or to protect the animals from raiding neighbors. It was unsafe for anyone to take their animals to salt licks on their own and here, again, the communities had to organise. When expert labor was required, such as tha[illegible] thatchers or smiths, payment was made in beer or grain and, on [illegible]re occasions, in animals.

The patterns of trade of the pre-colonial Kipsigis society reflect a limited division of labor largely because of the kinds of things they used for exchange. Among themselves the Kipsigis were involved in barter. One wishing to increase his stock would exchange several goats for a cow or bulls for a heifer. Animals were exchanged for grain and tools, but since practically every household grew the same staple crop, wimbi, and kept cattle, goats and sheep, exchange was not vital for the internal reproduction of the society except in times of famine.

It is not clear how much trade existed between the Kipsigis and their neighbors (Gusii, Nandi, Luo and Maasai), nor how much the "long distance trade" from the East African coast affected them. We learn from Manners that the Kipsigis acquired most of their iron implements from their neighbors, especially the Gusii and the Nandi, partly because iron was not readily available in the Kipsigis country and partly because their own smiths were inferior to those of the neighbors.[4] In exchange for these items the Kipsigis gave grain, goats, sheep and honey. In times of famine, when trade was intensified, the Kipsigis exchanged animals for grain, especially with the Gusii. The Kipsigis are said to have traded their children for grain with the Gusii but it is not known how widespread this practice was. Grain, animals and children further attest to a limited division of labor within the society. Although the extent of Kipsigis involvement in long-distance trade is not known, it is evident that before the arrival of the Indians in the period 1900-1907, the Kipsigis had beads and copper wire which are thought to have been some of the articles that the Arab-Swahili traders carried into the interior. In fact, the Kipsigis are said to have collected tribute from the coastal traders

---

[4]Although research on various aspects of Kipsigis life has been done in recent years, the area of trade remains largely neglected, so that the latest research in this area continues to be that of Robert Manners, "Land Use, Labour, and the Growth of a Market Economy in Kipsigis Country," in Markets in Africa, ed. Paul Bohannon and George Dalton (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962), p. 497.

at a place near Kipsonoi River where the Kipsigis are also said to have traded ivory for clothes, iron wires and beads.[5]

The Kipsigis political system of the pre-colonial era was what anthropologists have called "stateless" in that there was no central authority. Political power in Kipsigis land was collectively held by elders. Disputes were brought before the elders of the kokwet to be discussed and settled. Disputants were bound to accept the final decisions of the council of elders. Unwillingness to accept such judgment on any form of dissent was punished by temporary or even permanent ostracism for the party concerned. People were expected to co-operate over such important activities as circumcision, cattle raids and general work as well as defense. The elders had a leader, boiyotab kokwet, who acted as the overall decision maker in the community. His position was not hereditary. Over large issues such as raiding or defense, the elders of various villages, okwatinwek, met and discussed.

Important in the political structure of the Kipsigis by the 19th century was the institution of the orkoiyot. This is thought to have originated from the agricultural Maasai and came to the Kipsigis by way of the Nandi. How and why the orkoiyot clan, the talai, moved from one group to another are questions surrounded by stories of succession disputes. Arap Magut suggests that the orkoiyot became established in Kipsigis country at about 1900, but this is doubtful

---

[5]Mwanzi, History of the Kipsigis, p. 158.

considering how their influence had penetrated Kipsigis life by the time the British were trying to effect colonialism, i.e., by about 1905.[6] The orkoiyot was basically a spiritual leader who influenced the activities of the community in such matters as when to set out for raids, what to carry on the raids, where to go, and other decisions connected with raiding. He also sanctioned the planting of crops and acted as a general medicine man. For example, barren women would look to him for help. He was expected to control the amount and timing of the rains. He was thought to be supernatural and people feared this to the extent that no one would mention his name in general conversation. The orkoiyot had representatives among the people who carried forth his word and brought back messages. Closer to him and fewer in number were the maotik and working below these were the mestowek. The community gave the orkoiyot and his family "gifts" that made them wealthier than other people.

The British administration in Kericho district at first tried to use the administration of the orkoiyot for its own purposes. This was in keeping with Lord Lugard's policy of indirect rule. Koilegei, the reigning orkoiyot, was made a paramount chief and his mestowek became subchiefs. Koilegei accepted this arrangement even though he appeared to have distrusted the British administration. An example is given where he sent two of his trusted people to the mission station

---

[6] P. K. Arap Magut, "The Rise and Fall of the Nandi Orkoiyot," in Ngano: Nairobi Historical Studies 1: Studies in Traditional Modern East African History (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969).

as spies. These two refused to become Christians on the grounds that they could not give up alcohol, and they continued to report to Koilegei. The missionaries became very suspicious of Koilegei.[7] On one occasion, the District Commissioner invited Koilegei for consultation and he accepted, but he sent an imposter resembling him and dressed like him to the British administrator.[8] The interests of the British government, however, soon clashed with those of the orkoiyot because the British found out that he was advising his people against giving up any of their traditions, including raiding. He was consequently deported to Nyeri in 1913 and later moved to Meru where he died. This did not end the problems of the British with the orkoiyot because the institution had permeated all features of Kipsigis life. His clan continued to direct activities that were respected by the community. For this reason the British finally deported the whole clan in 1938 to Gwassi in South Nyanza, which broke up their influence in the area.[9]

The Penetration of Capitalism: First Phase

According to Barbara Brandby, capitalism destroys a pre-capitalist structure in three different ways: by force, by exchange, and by state intervention in introducing such things as taxation. She

---

[7] Mwanzi, History of the Kipsigis, p. 148.

[8] Ibid., p. 149.

[9] Efforts to remove the orkoiyot clan commenced in 1933 and were completed in 1938. See KNA.DC/KE41/3. 1933 and KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1938.

goes on to say that force is normally used when the other two methods on their own are found to be too slow to generate the raw materials and labor force that capitalism may require.[10] Further to this, she says that

> What form the articulation of pre-capitalist society with capitalism takes depends upon, first and foremost, the requirements of capitalism and secondly on the internal structure of the pre-capitalist society.[11]

What capitalism required from the Kipsigis society was not essentially different from what it needed from other parts of Kenya--raw materials, labor and a market for industrial goods. Kericho district, unlike many other parts of the country, was expected to meet the three requirements.[12] The presence of tea plantation companies required food production from the Kipsigis and to some extent, labor, while the white settlers in Sotik and the areas around Londiani-Kipkelyon-Fort Ternana used Kipsigis labor more intensely in the form of squatters. The settlers needed the squatters because they paid them less than they paid the regular employees; the Kipsigis became squatters in large numbers principally because their cattle lacked adequate grazing land after land alienation. Merchant capital,

---

[10] Barbara Brandby, "Agriculture and Capitalism," in Agricultural Growth in Third World (Ann Arbor, 1983), p. 144.

[11] Ibid., p. 138.

[12] Although roles were not clear-cut, it was generally understood that Nyanza province including North Nyanza (now Western Province) was a labor reservoir. Kikuyu area was for settler farming, although the Kikuyu were to provide the labor too. None of these areas was expected to combine all three requirements.

especially run by Indian traders, drew the Kipsigis into buying industrial goods, which were first viewed as "curiosities" and later became essential to the Kipsigis people. As observed above, the Kipsigis economy of the pre-colonial days was primarily geared towards self-sufficiency; capitalism, in its various manifestations, had to break up this structure to suit its own needs.

To break up the Kipsigis pre-capitalist structure, all three methods mentioned above were employed. To begin with, chiefs and their assistants, alien to the Kipsigis political structure, were appointed to force people to pay taxes, grow new crops and provide labor on European farms and public works, especially on roads which were needed for the operation of the capitalist-colonialist machinery. They were simply the local aides to the colonial state in the process of intervening to establish a colonial-capitalist society. Neither the chiefs nor their assistants were necessarily drawn from the traditional leadership, the kokwet, elders or the orkoiyot, and were, as a result, confronted with the opposition from time to time in trying to implement government directives.[13] The traditional leadership was for all practical purposes ignored, except on special occasions when it was felt that the approval of community elders for some government action was required for purposes of legitimising the action, such as the alienation of land or inoculation of cattle. In most cases, the

---

[13] Attempts to use the administration of the orkoiyot were abandoned within the first decade of colonial establishment in the district.

government failed to get the approval of these elders because, as the elders often argued, they were not qualified to alienate community land or to make decisions about what was to happen to other people's animals.[14] Government officials would not believe this. They often complained of the unwillingness of the elders to cooperate with the government and that the elders always presented a united front which none of them would challenge individually.[15] The Kipsigis themselves, forced to comply with the regulations of the new government, ceased to make use of their pre-colonial political institutions, except on some limited occasions, so that although these institutions were not officially removed, they were no longer effective.

The most decisive change in terms of people's occupations came with the shift from growing wimbi for subsistence only and mainly by women producers to the growing of maize at first for sale only and then later for subsistence too and by most of the population. The government's official reason for the introduction of maize into Kericho district was that the Kipsigis, who depended on wimbi for their grain and who suffered from famine periodically because the production of wimbi was time-consuming and low-yielding, needed a more productive crop. Maize was, in effect, introduced to many parts of Kenya at this time and, as Bowles points out, maize did not diffuse into Kenya but

---

[14] The District Commissioner for Kericho in 1935 took note of this attitude in his annual report. KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1935.

[15] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1936.

came in "as a colonial phenomenon and . . . illustrates regression in techniques."[16]

Prior to the introduction of maize, shifting cultivation, a method which allowed land to remain fallow for a period of time to regain fertility, had been abandoned. The Kipsigis found that maize would continue to yield a crop year after year on the same piece of land and by the time it became apparent that it was necessary to let the land lie fallow or add manure to it, the land had lost fertility to a considerable extent. Maize was grown primarily for the market, where it was taken immediately after it was harvested. Methods developed for storing wimbi, which included building special stores of straw cemented with cow dung to protect the crop from weevils, were discontinued. Other farming techniques were also abandoned with the coming of maize.

The colonial government was at this time trying to introduce crops to Kenya that could be exported to pay for the newly built railway. Later, maize in particular, and especially in the Kericho district, was further encouraged to feed the labor force on the tea plantations in the district and in the other parts of the country. In any event, when maize was introduced into Kericho district in 1913, the Kipsigis refused to grow it. They boiled the seeds distributed to them by the government before planting them and later reported the failure of the maize to germinate. The District

---

[16] B. D. Bowles, "The Underdevelopment of Agriculture in Colonial Kenya," Kenya Historical Association Conference, 1975.

Commissioner proceeded to plant maize on his own farm and, of course, it germinated. He then collected all the chiefs and gave them seeds and askaries. The chiefs with the help of askaries rounded up men and women and forced them to plant maize on model farms near chiefs' homes. The people were charged with maintaining the farms, including feeding the askaries. When the maize was ready, the seeds were distributed to many people whose names were registered. Those whose maize did not grow were whipped and fined. This forced many people to grow maize and by about 1930 practicall, everyone was growing maize.[17]

The Kipsigis resisted growing maize for two main reasons. The orkoiyot urged them not to grow maize because, he warned, it would grow in their stomachs and come off their heads causing them to die. This was part of the propaganda mounted by this clan to try to stop government influence over the Kipsigis because the orkoiyot clan was afraid of losing its source of wealth and political power to the government. The Kipsigis were accustomed to obeying the orkoiyot whose supernatural powers they feared, so it took a great deal of enforcement to get the Kipsigis to disobey the orkoiyot. The confrontation between the orkoiik (plural of orkoiyot) and the British government was to take until 1938 when the whole clan was removed from the district. The attempts to make the Kipsigis grow maize came

---

[17]This story of how maize was introduced into Kericho district is quite common among the Kipsigis people, as evidenced by the consistency in the reports of the interviewees.

at a time when the Kipsigis were being forced to do many other things that they did not like, such as providing labor for public works, putting up with government chiefs, being made to abandon some of their customs, such as the one concerning what to do with illegitimate children of uncircumcised women. They, therefore, resisted everything that the government initiated without even trying it, as they felt that their way of life was threatened.

By the 1930s, maize production was able to expand because the demand for maize increased with the increased labor force on the tea estates and the settler farms. The Kipsigis had also developed needs for money to pay government taxes, police levies and to buy the new commodities on the market. The entrance of ploughs and grinding mills into the district further extended the production of maize.[18]

Regular trade as we know it in a commodity-producing society was ushered in by the colonial era. With the railway in 1900 came the Indians with their trade goods, British government taxation and police levies; so that not only were the Kipsigis forced to produce agricultural goods to pay for these things, but they were also introduced to the new commodities, such as white salt, sugar, tea, household goods and so on. Production ceased to be for the household only and there was certainly more to exchange. It is worth remembering, however, that

---

[18]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. In 1927 there were 65 ploughs and 35 flour mills in Kericho District. These made possible the expansion of maize production.

> the real reason the authorities tried to persuade the Africans to want money and what money can buy was not that trade goods would do them any appreciable good. The object aimed at was to induce Africans to become wage earners.[19]

When the Indians first arrived, they did not sell a wide range of goods. Among other things, they sold cloth, white salt, beads, copper wire, and salad oil, udo, which was used as a pomade. Only two examples of how the Kipsigis were introduced to some of these foreign goods will be given. One of the earliest of these was white salt for which little persuasion was needed to get the Kipsigis to buy as it only meant substituting one kind of salt for another. Prior to the arrival of the white salt, the Kipsigis obtained their salt from burning a particular type of weed, soaking the ash and then straining the wet ash to get the liquid salt which was then used for seasoning. The white salt was easier to obtain and all that was required in exchange at first was firewood. In later years money had to be used in exchange for salt. (These days the Kipsigis say that the weed has completely vanished.)

Sugar was one commodity that the Kipsigis were not interested in when it appeared in their exchange markets, and great persuasion had to be used to lure them into buying it. The story is that the Indian shopkeepers would give it to people for free to taste each time they went into the shops or as gifts whenever one carried luggage for them or bought things from their stores. Tea was also made with sugar

---

[19] Manners, "Land Use, Labour, and Growth of a Market Economy," p. 494.

and given to people to drink whenever they visited the shops and eventually, people got used to sugar and started buying it to make their own tea or to put into porridge.[20]

The Penetration of Capitalism: Second Phase

The first phase of capitalist penetration into Kericho district, by means of the usual mechanisms--force, as apparent in the introduction of maize and the provision of labor for public works, and persuasion, especially in introducing new merchandise into the community--was on the decline by the late 1920s. Taxation as a method for drawing people into a monetary economy and financially supporting the colonial state persisted right through the colonial period. All types of goods were available on the market by the late 1920s that had become sufficiently desirable to the Kipsigis to make them seek ways of earning money to pay for them. The commodities ranged from household utensils to ornaments, hoes and ploughs to cloth and so on. To pay for these things and also to pay taxes, many people sold maize, their animals or went out to seek employment. As maize did not seem to earn enough money for all these things and people were reluctant to sell their animals, many people sought employment on the tea plantations in the district and on settler farms in the district and in the rest of the country.

To be employed on settler farms or on plantations, people were to register and were issued identification cards. As early as

[20] Interview with Tiongik Arap Mangesoi, Litein, Belgut, 4 May 1978.

1920, the District Commissioner for Kericho reported that there were 1,832 Kipsigis males registered and working on settler farms plus 1,646 others working on settler farms as "squatters."[21] In 1930, the tea companies in Kericho alone employed 13,000 people, none of them Kipsigis.[22] In fact, any Kipsigis people employed by the Kericho tea estates were thrown out in 1930. The District Commissioner's explanation for this was

> The large tea estates and many dispense with Lumbwa labor, who have no idea of working, a week of work and two at home is their principle, and with tea which must be plucked day after day, such labor is useless.[23]

Actually, it was usual practice in colonial Africa to employ labor from far off places because labor from neighboring communities was prone to desertion. For this reason, Kipsigis people wishing to be wage laborers had to resort to working on settler farms in Sotik or other areas that did not pay as well as the tea estates.

What (for purposes of convenience) is called the second phase of capitalist penetration is, therefore, characterised by the search for money either by wage employment or by exploitation of one's own farm. Characteristic of this period also were problems created by the alienation of Kipsigis land for settler farming and plantation agriculture as well as by the new methods of land use, for example, maize farming. Both limited the amount of land available, especially for

---

[21] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1920. [22] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930.

[23] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1928.

grazing, which caused problems for the Kipsigis and led to a change in the land tenure system, protests from the Kipsigis over alienated land and a movement of people from the Kipsigis "reserve" to settler farms to work as squatters.

The Land Tenure System

Before the coming of settlers, plantations, maize and the colonial government, land ownership among the Kipsigis was communal. According to Orchardson, it was understood among the Kipsigis that "All land is the property of the tribe as a whole, and that which grows naturally upon it is common property."[24] He goes on to tell us that all grazing land was public property just as were any trees growing there. If one wished to cultivate, however, he/she could do so, so long as it was not land set aside for public purposes such as salt licks or public paths. The elders usually gave their consent before one could go ahead to cultivate so that some control over land use was maintained. While the piece of land was under cultivation, it belonged to the person and his family. This was usually for a period of one year because the crop grown then, wimbi, was thought to do better if it was grown on virgin land or on land that had been fallow.[25]

This system changed with the coming of maize and the general monetization of the economy. For one thing, there was less land

---

[24] Orchardson, Report of the Kenya Land Commission (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1934), 2426.

[25] Ibid.

available especially for grazing, as a result of land alienation, thereby forcing the Kipsigis to come to grips seriously with the fact that they had a problem. This in itself made some people wish to have their own pieces of land. For a community largely involved in pastoralism, there had to be some way to protect growing crops from the animals. The practice was for each owner to worry about his own crops. Thus "every field, or usually group of fields must be fenced, for there is no redress for the trespass of stock in crops. It is the duty of the cultivator to protect his crops against stock."[26] Further, "all fences are temporary: they do not give a man a right to the land within, which is determined solely by his continued cultivation of land."[27] Maize, unlike wimbi, could be and was grown on the same piece of land for years; and traditional practice allowed that if a piece of land was in use, it belonged to the individual using it. But the people growing maize put up fences that were not at all temporary. They used Mauritius thorn, chepkomon, which spread and formed strong fences. Over the years, people claimed these fenced areas as their own.

This drive to "enclose" land started around Litein Mission area around 1930,[28] an area with fertile soil and enough rainfall to guarantee high yields of maize. More important was the trading center of Litein, which attracted people into trade, and also the encouragement

---

[26]Ibid., 2465. [27]Ibid., 2454.

[28]Odingo, Study of Agrarian Change in Kenya, p. 87.

of the Mission Station whose first missionary, Mr. Earl Anderson, has been described as "much an evangelist of agriculture and craftsmanship as he was of Christianity."[29] He urged people to enclose land.

After 1945 the process of enclosing land that had started was given legal sanction when the Appointed African Courts were set up to hear land dispute cases. These courts were appointed by the colonial administration. In any case, because these courts settled the cases in favor of private land ownership, more people in the community, being afraid of losing out on land ownership, went ahead to claim land. Thus from 1945 to 1952 there were 1,266 land cases in Belgut and 1,151 cases in Buret.[30] Further, the upholding of the decisions made by these courts by the District Officers' courts gave the approval of the administration to what started off an an ad hoc movement by individuals to enclose land.

The individuals who sought to enclose land did not do so from a purely selfish position. By the 1930s, the need for money in Kipsigis country had expanded beyond a need for cash for paying government taxes and buying tools, cotton clothes (previously skin dress was the regular clothing) and such commodities as oil, sugar and salt. This resulted from the acquisition of new tastes as well as the change from being self-reliant for such things as salt and cloth to being dependent upon the market for them and whatever else it could offer.

---

[29] J. W. Pilgrim, p. 8.

[30] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1953.

Some of these things which could now only be obtained from the market had become necessities. Principal foodstuffs and housing were. of course, still produced from household labor for most people right through the colonial period, although in some limited instances people were employing labor for some of these activities by the 1940s and 1950s.

The enclosure movement that started around Litein was, for all practical purposes, completed by 1945 so that the purpose of the "native" courts was to mediate between conflicting claimants. The Swynnerton Plan, which recommended land consolidation to the Kenya government in the early 1950s, therefore, came into a district where the enclosure of land had already taken place. What this enclosure did not do and what the Native Courts or the District Officer's Courts similarly failed to do was to give title deeds to the new owners. As a result, the land could not be used to borrow money from any institution for its development. In fact, the process of consolidating started only in 1955.[31]

The enclosure of land in Kipsigis country led to differentiation in land ownership in the society. In the first instance, at the time of enclosure there were many Kipsigis people who had moved to European farms (alienated land), mainly as squatters who needed pasture for their animals. Most of these missed out on the land "grabbing" and were turned landless. While some of these squatters who had moved

---

[31]Odingo, Study of Agrarian Change in Kenya, p. 87.

from the "reserve" missed out on the land, some were able later to go back to their homes and get small pieces of land from their relatives. One group of squatters could not do this, however, and were now completely landless and dependent upon their European employers and their landless stocks. These were the people who lived on the alienated land before alienation and did not move out with alienation but stayed on to provide labor in return for pasture.

The way in which enclosure was introduced into Kipsigis society led to unequal distribution of land precisely because some people took too long to claim land as their own and, therefore, later got only small acreages. These people were usually the ones more interested in stock keeping who felt that it was more worthwhile to have communal grazing land which, in any case, was the traditional practice.

By the late 1940s, it was evident that a social stratification based on land ownership had taken place. Land had also come to be regarded as a wealth-producing asset not only from the point of view of producing food and keeping animals, as was the case in earlier days, but it had also now acquired the property of producing goods that went to a cash market.

What the enclosure of land did to the Kipsigis community as a whole was to force people to reduce the number of animals they owned for several reasons: a) because of limited grazing land, b) because more land was now taken up by farming and c) because those who lacked larger acreages had to give up some of their animals as they lacked

pasture. Land for pasture was, of course, also limited by the fact that the Kipsigis had lost land to plantation companies and to settlers. It was government policy, in any case, to limit African-owned stock.

Alienation of Kipsigis Land

Land was alienated from the Kipsigis for white settlement as well as for plantation companies while some of it was alienated as crown land. The Kipsigis were not allowed to own land in any of these areas. The areas involved were around Kipkelyon (Kumbwa), Londiani, Muhoroni, Fort Tennan, Kericho, Sotik and Chepalungu, in the south, as crown land. Commenting on the effects of alienated land on the Kipsigis, Dobbs, the District Commissioner for the area, said in 1920:

> The Lumbwa have far more land per head of population than any other tribe in the country, and far more than they can make use of for generations. On the other hand, practically all the grazing land has been taken away from the Buret and Sotik sections and given to farmers. . . . As things are, they have to become serfs to the Europeans if they want to get necessary grass and salt for their cattle.[32]

Land alienation was carried out without any consideration of what the various sections contained for the Africans. Lack of grazing land was the major but not the only problem caused the Kipsigis by land alienation. The areas around Buret and Belgut were cut off from the forest zone and, therefore, from certain essential products from the forest, such as timber for building, creepers for baskets and also

[32] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1920.

roots and berries for food and medicine. Salt-licks were to become a long-standing problem between the Kipsigis on the one hand, and the settlers, plantation companies and the colonial state on the other hand.[33] Remarking on the question of salt-licks, one Kipsigis elder in 1933 said, "We must have salt for our cattle, so we have to steal it, which leads us into trouble."[34] The Chematum salt-lick in Muhoroni in particular caused a tremendous amount of resentment from the Kipsigis. The Carter Land Commission noted the government's admission of the mistake made in alienating land containing this salt-lick. Other inconveniences caused by land alienation are best summed up in the words of a Kipsigis man who said:

> our land is so cut up by farms that you have to go out of the reserve to get from point to point, this and the cattle straying on the farms causes trouble. Major Webb's farm is empty and unoccupied by a European, an empty farm is like a trap, our cattle stray over, and we get fined.[35]

The alienation of land caused many Kipsigis people to turn to squatting on European farms. It also created resentments manifested in protests that were still going on by 1954 (The Kumulot Muddles). Protests against land alienation took various forms in Kipsigis land. Some people simply moved out of the district and went mainly to Maasai land and Nandi while most of them ended up as squatters on European

---

[33] Salt-licks were areas of salty, heavy clay soil which the Kipsigis fed their cattle on every once a week or so in the belief that this helped them stay healthy.

[34] Report of the Kenya Land Commission, 2459.

[35] Ibid., 2460.

land. In most instances, the Kipsigis tried to ignore the fact of land alienation by grazing their animals on European farms especially in cases where the owners of the land were absent. Cases of organized armed confrontation with settlers or government agents rarely took place, although one incident deserves mention. In this instance, the Kipsigis, annoyed at the possibility of losing any more land, were so enraged by the attempt to alienate land at Kapkatet for a shopping center that they organized to resist the alienation. They were afraid that this would lead to widespread land alienation in the area. In any event, they hired lorries and transported people, especially women, to the home of Chief Tengecha, who not only sympathised with the colonial policies he was employed to implement, but who was also considered arrogant by his subjects. The women were set on pulling down his house but were stopped by armed police. Some of the men were arrested and locked up as well. Women pulling down a man's house was an outrageously insulting act upon a man.[36]

The Kipsigis registered some of their protests with the Carter Land Commission in 1933 and the upshot of their arguments was that they wanted the alienated crown land in Chepalungu (extreme southern part of the district) for grazing their animals in return for the land they had lost to the Europeans in other areas. One of the old men who gave evidence to the Commission, Kibirir Arap Chemwa from Buret, had this to say:

---

[36]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1937.

> We have no land to graze our cattle because this land has been taken from us. When Bwana Kipleldiondo [probably Captain Monkton 1907] came, government burnt our huts and sent us where we are now. It seems right to ask for Chepalungu, our country which is empty. Our strength has gone as the Europeans have our land.[37]

Yet another old man, Kobiro Arap Temurin, also of Buret, complained that:

> I am very old now and on both sides of my country are now farms. I asked why I was moved away from the forest because I was never asked. I am willing to help fishermen on the Kiptiget, but want the land back up there. We wish to stay on our land on the forest fringe, we are not cattlemen. Who got the profit of the farms sold, without our knowing? I wish to know before I die.[38]

The Kipsigis protests against land alienation with all the problems thus created continued right through the colonial period and were part of the nationalist politics of the 1950s. Meanwhile, squatters continued to trek to settler farms and those left in the "reserves" tried to adjust to the new situation created by less land and other forms of earning a living.

Squatters

Van Zwanenberg defines a squatter as "an African permitted by an European farmer to reside on his land under conditions, the main one being that a squatter worked for the landowner in return for the use of a portion of land owners acreage."[39] This situation came about

---

[37] Report on the Kenya Land Commission, 2459.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Van Zwanenberg, Colonial Capitalism and Labor in Kenya, p. 212.

mainly because of various factors, such as the alienation of land from Africans which reduced the amount of land available to the Africans for their use. Although the Kipsigis were involved in tilling land long before the Europeans came, they were still keepers of large herds of cattle, and land alienation took away their grazing land as well as their salt-licks. As one African elder, Ezekiel Arap Roranya of Buret, expressed it, "We have no room for cattle, as Europeans have farms with grazing. Our men have become squatters for cattle grazing and wander about while those left behind suffer."[40] Yet another elder, Chebore Arap Chengecha of Sotik, complained that "ex-sergeants have to go on farms as squatters, like children at Shs. 6 per month, to get grazing."[41]

While shortage of grazing land was caused by alienated land, it was also true that with the introduction of maize movement of animals in search of pasture was limited. The growing of maize and the introduction of ploughs and fences also led to the private ownership of land. People wishing to keep large stocks of animals had to move them out of the "reserve" areas and the settler lands absorbed them. The land set aside for European farmers was usually larger than they themselves made use of and, therefore, they were able to provide extra land for squatters. In Sotik, for example, where about

---

[40] Land Commission Evidence (1934), 2460.

[41] Ibid.

107,000 acres of land were alienated, only 6,000 acres or six percent was in use by Europeans; therefore, the bulk of the land was left to be taken up by squatters.[42] The squatters, being resident, provided the "permanent" labor which the settlers needed; also, the settlers, by allowing the squatters to graze their animals on settler land, made profit from their surplus land. Profits from squatters were also made in other ways. In some cases, squatters sold their crops to the settler-landowner who then resold the crops at a profit. Another method of extracting "payment" from squatters was reported by Dobbs: "natives have actually offered farmers presents of stock to have the privilege of working as squatters on their farm."[43]

Deserving mention as a cause for the rise of squatters from Kipsigis country is the fact that for many years the Government imposed a collective fine on the Kipsigis as a punishment for cattle theft which was usually paid for in cattle. During the second world war, the Kipsigis also lost enormous numbers of animals to the "war effort." Many people, to escape from both of these, took off to settler farms with their animals because the animals were safer there.

Just how far the Kipsigis took to squatting can be observed by comparing the numbers of Kipsigis squatters to those of other peoples in the country. In 1945, it is reported, there were in Kenya:

---

[42] Van Zwanenberg, Colonial Capitalism and Labor in Kenya, p. 212.

[43] Report of the Kenya Land Commission (1934), 3448.

14,658	Kavirondo
12,450	Kipsigis
22,979	Nandi
12,181	Kikuyu
18,809	Kamba
11,697	Others[44]

The number of the Kipsigis and Nandi squatters is higher on average than that of other ethnic groups when compared to the actual total populations. Although the Kipsigis and Nandi reserves were large in contrast to that of the Kikuyu, in comparison to the population, the Kipsigis and Nandi were affected by the alienation in an adverse way. This is because they were highly involved in animal keeping which they were forced to cut back as a result of land alienation, consequently reducing their real wealth.

The position of the squatter was very precarious. The Kenya Land Commission report noted that

> as squatters, contracts can be determined at any time on due notice given; there is at any time a possibility that a return of squatters might take place to an extent which would be embarrassing to the reserve. We have evidence that the Sotik farmers are taking to mixed farming to some extent and, therefore, the return of some of their squatters is likely to eventuate in the near future.[45]

Here, once more, the "embarrassment" to the reserve would not occur from the people moving back there primarily but rather mainly from

---

[44] Van Zwanenberg, Colonial Capitalism and Labor in Kenya, p. 219.

[45] Ibid.

the animals they would take back there. It was estimated that there were 35,000 head of cattle owned by the Kipsigis on the settler farms and 2,500 households on these farms in the early 1930s.[46] A return of the herds and people to the reserve would have caused a crisis in grazing facilities.

The threat of having to move to the reserve if the settlers wanted them to do so was the main source of insecurity in the lives of the squatters. As can be imagined, they would therefore accept whatever terms the settlers offered, and the use of their labor in particular was at the mercy of the settlers. This was labor that could have been used in creating surplus for the Kipsigis reserve. The long-term consequences for the "illegal tenants" of the settler farms were that they, on the whole, ended up being the landless people in Kipsigis country, because the sharing of land took place while they were away as squatters, and the land was divided on the basis of who occupied it at the time of the division. When and if a settler left, his land was not taken up by squatters. It was sold to people who could pay the high prices that squatters could not afford.

Further Developments of This Era

Although force had been employed in getting the Kipsigis to grow maize, the growing of maize had become quite widespread by the 1920s. Apart from the seeds and *askaries* provided to force or persuade the Kipsigis to grow maize, there was no agricultural training provided

---

[46] *Report of the Kenya Land Commission*, 2456.

for them until the late 1940s and even then only for a handful of farmers. In 1923, the District Commissioner for Kericho said in his report:

> It is hoped with the present policy of stimulating native industries that good seed of more suitable crops may be issued free which will add some mitigation for the collection of a tax for which at present, the Lumbwa expect little and obtain less.[47]

The District Commissioner in 1932 lamented that "no Agricultural Officer visits this District."[48]

By the 1930s, in spite of no government support in growing maize, the Kipsigis maize production had expanded enough to give rise to a class of maize traders in the district. By the 1930s maize trade was monopolized by Indians who had entered the district with the coming of the railway. They involved themselves in buying maize from the Kipsigis growers and selling it to the tea estates or to other parts of the country. They also made a profit from setting up maize-grinding mills, from buying ploughs and later tractors that maize growers paid to use and also from controlling the transportation of maize from the district. The Kipsigis challenged this monopoly from the early 1920s by setting up petty trading. A symbol of this competition was the building of the first Kipsigis-owned shop in 1925-26 at Chemosit.[49] Many more Kipsigis people bought ploughs and grinding mills in competition with the Indians. When they could not compete

---

[47] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1923.

[48] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1932.

[49] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1926.

with Indians favorably over the tea plantation market and in the trading centers, the Kipsigis traders sold their maize across their borders to Gusii, Nyanza and Maasai and also among themselves.

The competition between Kipsigis and Indian traders was complicated and intensified by settler interest in the marketing of crops. The Kipsigis, who lacked large sums of money, decided to form the Kipsigis Traders Co-operative Society in the 1940s to transport maize as well as to buy and sell goods in the reserve. Their aim was to control trade in the trading centers and to drive the Indians to the towns.[50] The settlers, with the blessings of the government, then sought to control the Kipsigis Society with the excuse that this would make the running of the Society more efficient. A government official, Mr. Howe, resigned from the government to manage the affairs of the Kipsigis Co-operative Society,[51] but European involvement in the Society did not solve the problem of competition with Indians. In fact, the Society was going bankrupt by 1958 when the government and the settler leadership in the Co-operative Society decided to hand over its management to the United Africa Company, in the hope that this would make the Society more efficient. By 1960, when the United Africa Company gave up the Kipsigis Traders Co-operative Society to Dalgety and Company Limited, it was nearly bankrupt.[52] Apart from trying to influence and direct the affairs of Kipsigis traders, settler unions

---

[50] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1949.

[51] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1960.

[52] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1960.

also encouraged the well-to-do Kipsigis farmers and traders to join their union. In spite of this, Indian traders remained supreme in the Kipsigis trading centers throughout the colonial period, although individual Kipsigis traders emerged.

While some Kipsigis people sought to improve their conditions by involving themselves in trade, many more tried to farm more effectively. They struggled with the government and the settlers to be allowed to grow those crops that were exclusively for the white settlers, such as tea, coffee and pyrethrum, and to keep more productive grade cattle. Permission to grow these crops and to keep grade cattle came only in the last decade of colonialism. By this time a new social differentiation had emerged in the countryside so that the better-off farmers were those who went beyond maize production to growing these other crops, and who kept grade cows and employed some labor. This had originally happened because those who bought ploughs and grinding-mills made profit from these as well as being able to plough larger acreages of their own and, therefore, expanding their maize production. The government position towards the Kipsigis was to advance the economic position of the few; as reported by the District Commissioner in 1955, "the general policy in Kipsigis is to lead and encourage the comparatively small number of farmers by loans, cash crops, improved stock, flattery and every means."[53] On the lower side of the social ladder were those who had lost land or who had acquired only small pieces of land in the rush to private ownership.

---

[53] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1955.

Many aspects of Kipsigis society were affected in various ways by the introduction of colonialism and capitalism in its various forms. Cattle, which in the pre-capitalist Kipsigis society played a major role of supplying food and wealth, suffered retrogression in the colonial period. In the first instance the Kipsigis method of increasing their stocks by raiding was stopped by the colonial government right at the beginning of colonization. Then followed a systematic reduction of stocks that continued right through the colonial period, especially through taxation, which at first was paid in cows, goats and sheep. In the early years of colonization there were many individual fines, such as the one imposed on failure to supply labor for public works. The fines were usually paid through the sale of animals or the animals were simply seized by the government. The alienation of land for settler or plantation agriculture in Kericho district, together with the individualization of land ownership as a result of maize cropping, led to a shortage of grazing land for the Kipsigis, which resulted in many reducing their stocks out of necessity. The Kipsigis lost cattle during the two world wars, when chiefs were asked to round up animals from their people. No figures are available for the animals lost in the First World War, but data for the Second World War show that the Kipsigis lost 2,062 (1941), 1,502 (1942), and 4,804 (1944). There are no figures available for the other war years. Only a negligible number came from settler farms; for example, of the 2,062 animals rounded up in 1941, only 55 came from settler farms, 20 from a tea company and the rest from Kipsigis

people.[54] The District Commissioner for Kericho in 1941 summed up the situation when he wrote that

> the main effect of the war in the Reserve has been the supply of cattle to the Supply Board Control. The prices paid were definitely below the native market prices and the cattle were in effect commanded by the Native authorities, otherwise probably none would have been obtained.[55]

For these reasons, and because for many years the Kipsigis were made to pay a collective fine for stock thefts which was paid in animals rounded up by the police, the wealth of the Kipsigis was reduced. It was also government policy to reduce the number of cattle owned by the Kipsigis because, it was argued, the herds were too large and unhealthy. What the government did not do was introduce better breeds of cattle or even devise a method of improving Kipsigis methods of cattle keeping. When the Kipsigis were eventually allowed to keep grade cattle, in the late 1940s, this was limited to the well-to-do farmers.

---

[54] KNA.DC/KER/1/3.

[55] KNA.DC/KER/1/3/

CHAPTER III

PLANTATION TEA AND THE KIPSIGIS PEOPLE

The purpose of this chapter is to relate the introduction of plantation tea, with international capital and local labor, to the development of the Kipsigis society. To do this, the history of the coming of plantation tea to Kericho district will be examined, including a survey of who contributed tea estates and how the existence of the tea estates affected food production processes among the Kipsigis who contributed to the feeding of the labor force on the tea estates.

Tea, which is thought to have originated in China, is an evergreen tree which if left to grow freely would grow to heights of up to thirty feet. Tea is, however, usually pruned to heights of about three to four feet to facilitate easy picking and also to allow for a table of leaves to grow. It is grown mainly in the unindustrialised countries of the world with Sri Lanka, India and Malaysia being the leading producers. In the industrialised world, Japan and the Soviet Union produce tea, although tea is a popular drink in practically all parts of the world in modern times.

There are three types of tea made in the world today: black, green and oolong. The difference results from the method used in processing the tea. Green tea is not fermented, oolong tea is fermented only partially while black tea has the leaves withered and fermented before it is dried. Black tea dominates the world market,

followed by green tea; oolong tea is less popular. Black tea is mainly produced by large plantation estates and mainly by commercial farms while green tea is usually grown on small-scale farms by individuals who also grow other crops.

Tea is thought to have been first grown in Kenya in 1903 by an individual who obtained seeds from India and planted them in Limuru, which is Central Kenya. After this other people also experimented with tea growing but it did not pick up momentum as a major crop in the Kenyan economy until the early and mid-1920s when commercial companies undertook its production. The two companies that came to dominate tea production in Kenya were Brooke Bond and James Finlay, locally called Kenya Tea and African Highlands Produce Company, respectively. Until the 1920s Brooke Bond was involved only in marketing tea internationally, but the company was not comfortable about being dependent upon other companies for its tea. Brooke Bond, therefore, chose to grow tea in Kenya in order to have some control over its source of tea. James Finlay was already a tea producing company in India and Sri Lanka so that growing tea in Kenya was only an expansion of assets. Although individuals and other private companies in Kenya have been involved in the growing of tea at the plantation level, from time to time Brooke Bond and James Finlay have dominated production of tea in Kenya.[1] For a variety of reasons

[1]Others involved in the growing of tea were Buret Tea Company, Jamji Estate, G. J. Grant, E. C. Brayne, I. Q. Orchardson and Mathews. Most of these, especially the last four, sold out to Brooke Bond and African Highlands by the 1930s.

(discussed under "Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya"), Africans were legally excluded from the growing of tea until the 1950s. Although the world economic depression of the late 1920s and the International Tea Regulation scheme put a check on the expansion of tea production in Kenya, tea has for a long time been Kenya's second largest export crop.[2]

Tea grown in Kenya and owned by British companies was marketed in Britain and Europe and other parts of the world. Very little of the tea was consumed locally. Britain controlled the marketing of Kenyan tea not only because the tea firms were British but also because Britain from the 19th century dominated the production, manufacture and distribution of tea. Even the blending of tea, which is usually done before tea is marketed, was handled in London by British firms, with about four firms dominating the field. By 1951, in fact, Britain alone absorbed about half of the world tea exports and controlled its distribution to other countries as well.[3] The situation is best summed up in the words of V. D. Wickizer, who concludes that "it was

---

[2]The International Tea Regulation Scheme which was first signed in 1933 by all the leading tea producers had its origins in the world depression of the early 1930s. It was an attempt to controlling production to avoid falling prices. The regulation of tea production was not peculiar at this time as attempts were being made internationally to regulate the production of all the leading crops of the world, though it is believed that the Tea Regulation Scheme was the most successful. The Agreement signed in 1933 was to be effective for five years but was renewed periodically. East African producers opted out of the scheme in 1947. (See V. D. Wickizer, Coffee, Tea and Cocoa [Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951], pp. 190-99.)

[3]Wickizer, Coffee, Tea and Cocoa, p. 195.

natural for the 'world price' of tea to be made in London."[4] What this meant in the context of Kericho district and Kenya in general was that, in fact, prices of tea were controlled from elsewhere. The seriousness of this can be further appreciated when it is remembered that by the 1940s tea had become the second largest export crop in the agriculturally dependent Kenyan economy.

Although tea was first planted in Limuru, Kericho soon took over as the leading producer in Kenya. Available figures reveal that by 1944 Kericho had significantly taken up the lead with 12,877 acres under tea cultivation in comparison with Limuru's 1,567 acres. By 1958, when Kericho planted 21,766 acres, Limuru had only 1,837.[5] Other areas that became involved in tea production were Nandi, Sotik, Kakamega and Nyeri. Kericho district has become the leading producer of tea in the country for a variety of reasons, the most outstanding one being its climate. Tea requires high reliable rainfall for which the Buret and Belgut tea producing locations of Kericho district are best known. The rainfall which ranges from 1,525 to more than 2,000 mm per year is also well-distributed, making it possible for tea to be plucked almost all year round.[6] The reddish rich volcanic soils of the area, the high altitude of 1,900 to 2,400 meters and the low temperature range further make the area ideal for tea production.

---

[4]Ibid., p. 196.

[5]Odingo, Study of Agrarian Change in Kenya, p. 54.

[6]Ibid., p. 55.

Labor on the Kericho Tea Plantations

Although the firms that established tea plantations in Kericho brought their own capical into the country to set the plantations, they had to rely on the local people for labor. This labor was first utilized to clean up the land and to plant the tea. In later years the work expanded to include tending the tea farms as well as plucking and processing the tea. Each of these required a large labor force as tea is a labor-intensive crop. It has, in fact, been estimated that 50 percent of the total cost of producing tea goes to labor.[7] The tea estates in Kericho in which 4,125 acres of tea had been planted by 1928, employed about 13,000 laborers.[8] Once the plucking of tea begins, the labor force must remain constant because each tea bush should be plucked at least once every week; and once plucked, the tea must arrive at the factory for processing within six hours, otherwise it goes to waste. It is significant to note that, although the tea estates required a large labor force, they usually obtained whatever labor was needed, even though settler farmers and government officials constantly complained in the 1920s and 1930s that there was a perpetual shortage of labor in the country.[9]

One reason for the availability of labor on the tea plantations can be attributed to the methods of recruiting labor. From as

---

[7]Wickizer, Coffee, Tea and Cocoa, p. 198.

[8]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930.

[9]Van Zwanenberg, Colonial Capitalism and Labor in Kenya; M. R. Dilley, British Policy in Kenya Colony (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966).

early as 1925, the Highlands Produce Company (James Finlay) preferred to recruit labor directly from the African rural areas because its policy of using permanent resident labor (squatters) had failed.[10] The company hired labor officers who, in turn, hired Africans who were sent to the rural areas to get the laborers. In the 1920s and early 1930s, these recruiters went to the rural areas to persuade people to return with them to the tea estates with the promise of good salaries and then they took charge of food and shelter for the newly recruited laborers as they walked with them back to the tea estates in Kericho. By the late 1930s, however, motor transportation had become available so the recruiters hired lorries and went to the rural areas, filled the lorries with people and drove them to Kericho. African Highlands also financed tours by rural chiefs to the tea estates. The aim of these tours was to try and impress upon the chiefs the "good" conditions of work on the tea estates and the other developments there so that the chiefs would return home and, it was hoped, convince people to go to work on the tea estates. The first of such visits took place in 1927 and there were about four more before the 1930s.[11]

The Kenya Tea Company (Brooke Bond), on the other hand, chose to utilize the already hired labor to recruit more people. Some of

---

[10] At this time settler farmers and other employers of labor in the country relied on private groups that organized themselves into recruiters of labor for anyone that needed laborers. These groups were sometimes unreliable and sometimes they charged too much for the laborers they recruited.

[11] H. O. Thomas, "A Brief History of the African Highlands Produce Company" (unpublished), p. 18.

the laborers were selected, financed and asked to go to their home areas to recruit their neighbors and friends. These recruiters were also promised promotions based upon how many people they could bring. Usually a successful recruiter was made to supervise the people he had recruited.[12] How he recruited the people was his business but evidently persuasion appears to have been the main tactic. The companies in later years used additional methods such as organising soccer teams and sending them to rural areas with the purpose of encouraging those interested in soccer and other games to go and work on the tea estates.[13]

The people who went to the tea estates to work had a variety of reasons for doing so, but the predominant cause for working on the tea estates appears to have been to earn money. By the 1920s money was needed to pay government taxes or to buy the commodities available on the market such as salt, sugar, blankets, cotton cloth, household utensils, hoes and so on. Most of these things had traditional equivalents, but people were increasingly relying on the market as it appeared easier to obtain these things from there. This was particularly the case by the 1930s.[14] Young men who were reluctant to get any cows from relatives to pay bride price or who would not do so for one reason or another preferred to seek employment in the hope of saving

---

[12]Interview with Okello Onyango, 13 April 1978.

[13]Interview with Mariko Nyarunda, Kericho, 15 June 1978.

[14]Interview with Joseph Osewe, Kericho, 5 April 1978.

enough to buy their own cows and goats.[15] Although people could find jobs on settler farms or get government jobs, the tea estates were preferred because the wages paid by the tea estates were higher than those paid in many parts of the country. In the 1920s, the usual salary for an adult was 14 shillings per month, while children were paid six to ten shillings per month. A large section of the employers in the country at this time paid their adult workers eight to ten shillings per month.[16] Indeed, by 1928 the District Commissioner for Kericho noted that "There was no more talk of labor shortage. There is a super abundance of labor."[17] His comment was based on statistics given to him by the tea estates. The only advantage settler farmers offered to labor over the tea estates was that the settlers provided land to those employees who needed grazing land for their animals. The tea estates refused to accept labor accompanied by animals.

Starting from the 1920s, the tea estates employed mainly boys younger than 18 to pluck the tea. The estates justified hiring minors because their smaller fingers supposedly made them more efficient at plucking tea.[18] The fact that minors earned about half of what adults were paid plus the fact that they were easier to discipline made minors an attractive source of labor. To attract child labor, the tea estates offered to send the children to school, and

---

[15]Interview with Joel Aluda, Kericho, 3 July 1978.

[16]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930. [17]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1928.

[18]Interview with Joseph Osewe, Kericho, 5 April 1978.

schools were soon established on the tea estates. They operated between five and eight o'clock in the evening. Although missionaries were offering education in many parts of the country at this time, their schools were still so scattered that in many areas there was no school. In addition, some parents did not favor letting their children go to school, so that their children might choose to go to the tea estates for an education as well as a job.[19] Unfortunately, the tea estate schools do not appear to have been very successful. Few participants in these schools became completely literate in the sense of being able to read and write. Most people could read the Bible but could not write. Also indicative of the low level of education offered by the tea estates is the fact that after independence, when the new government insisted that Africans be employed as assistant managers on the tea estates, the firms had to look for such people outside their employees because the people they had did not possess sufficient literary skills to do any office work. Before independence, those people with such skills were of European origin. In fact, in the history of tea estates in Kericho, only one person who had once been a tea picker has ever risen to become a manager; and this is partly because, while he worked on the tea estates, he studied through correspondence courses to the level of taking the lowest national examination (8th grade).[20]

---

[19] Interview with Oluoch Omolo, Kericho, 4 August 1978.

[20] This individual, Arap San, still worked for African Highlands Produce Company in 1979.

The labor obtained by the tea estates was largely unskilled, with little if any chance of social mobility, i.e., in terms of a better salary or type of job within the tea estates. Most people entered the tea estates to do the menial jobs of picking tea, ploughing land, tending tea seedlings and other tasks connected with working outside on the tea farms. Some of them worked at the equally tiring job of carrying tea in and out of factories. There was no training given for these types of jobs and most people simply learned by observing others at work. Promotion from any of these jobs led one to the position of being a nyapara (overseer). Such a person supervised others at work with the aim of making them work as much as possible. An overseer was allowed to whip lazy workers. How one rose to such a position is exemplified by Joseph Osewe's rise to being a nyapara. In his own words he says:

> A European came to our group while working one day and asked us whether anyone of us could get him a six foot tall stick. The older ones remained silent and the others too, so I said I could try. I then went and cut a stick and measured with my thumb and small finger because I knew the space between them should be about six inches and I just counted. I brought the stick back and after it was measured and found to be nearly correct I was made an overseer.[21]

There could be only one overseer for about forty people, which meant that such positions were limited. Skilled jobs, such as carpentry and building, were also limited.

On the average people worked from half past six in the morning to three o'clock in the afternoon without a break. Food rations were

---

[21] Interview with Joseph Osewe, Kericho, 14 April 1978.

given to them on a weekly basis and they did their own cooking in communal kitchens. The food consisted mainly of maize meal and dry beans with meat being supplied occasionally. The tea estates housed their laborers in structures built from poles and mud with thatched roofs. These buildings were divided into rooms, with six people to a room. After 1940, smaller rooms were provided for those who brought their families to the tea estates. In the early years, the tea estates employed only men who were not allowed to live there with their families. Although colonial officials hailed these living conditions as being good and held them up as an example to both the government and other employers of labor, these colonial officials nevertheless found reasons to complain about the living conditions of the workers on the tea estates. The District Commissioner for Kericho in his annual report of 1935 noted that the labor officer was not satisfied with the housing and diet on the tea estates.[22] The outbreak of various types of meningitis throughout the 1930s also demonstrated that the living conditions were inadequate. Cases of cerebral meningitis were reported from African Highlands Produce Company in 1933. In the following year, 14 cases of cerebro-spinal meningitis, all fatal, occurred on the tea estates. It is significant to note that there was not a single case of this disease reported from the "reserve" at this time. In 1935, when 97 people died from the same disease, most of them worked on the

---

[22]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1935.

tea estates.[23] Meningitis is thought to have been caused by crowded living conditions on the tea estates.

Lacking on the tea estates and in the district in general for most of the colonial period were adequate medical facilities. Kenya Tea, one of the two largest tea companies with 2,669 laborers in 1932, had no hospital accommodation and hired only one part-time doctor and some dressers. The other company, African Highlands, had a hospital but only one doctor.[24] The District Commissioner in 1923 lamented that the average time spent on attending to the sick at the medical center in that district amounted to an average of one-half to one hour daily.[25] Subsequent yearly reports continued to record dismal medical facilities in the district.

On a more positive note, the tea estates organised football matches between estates to keep the work force in good health. What percentage of the employed took part in these matches, of course, cannot be determined. By the 1950s, the tea estates also arranged for cinema shows for the workers' recreation.

Plantations, largely because of their large capital input, are usually thought of as capitalist-organised; but the conditions of plantations in general and the tea estates in particular do not reveal capitalist relations of production. Up to 1963, the employees of the tea estates could not subsist on their salaries alone and

---

[23] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1933, 1934, 1935, 1937, 1939.

[24] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1932.

[25] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1923.

became dependent on their homes for additional food. The laborers do not appear to have become permanent wage earners. On the whole they worked on the tea estates for several years and then returned to their homes as rural dwellers.

Plantation Tea and the Kipsigis People

The first encounter of the Kipsigis with plantation tea was not one that the Kipsigis favored or distinguished from any other government activity of the early years of colonialism in their country. This was largely because the government was alienating land for the tea estates from the Kipsigis in the same way it was alienating their lands for European settlers or for government use. The fight to regain some of the land was to continue into the Kymulot land cases of the 1950s. The presence of the tea estates, however, speeded up the involvement of the Kipsigis people in a market economy, first as a market for agricultural products and later as a source of cash.

The tea estates from the start had a large labor force yet none of the tea estates produced any food for the laborers. This is the standard case of a mono-crop. As the laborers spent almost all their time working on the tea estates, they did not grow their own food. They, in fact, were not encouraged to do so. The tea companies, therefore, supplied these workers with all the food they needed. This raised the demand for maize and beans in the neighboring area. The Kipsigis had entered into maize production before the 1920s, and the tea estates provided a ready market for the maize. The colonial

officials from an early time noted the importance of the tea estates to the maize trade. A district commissioner as early as 1928 commented that "the trade in maize has been better than usual partly owing to increased production and partly to increased demand on estates."[26] Indeed, when the world economic depression of the late 1920s set in, Kericho district did relatively better because maize, its most important marketable product, continued to have a ready market on the tea estates.[27] This situation was, however, not to last because by the early 1940s this ready market had to be shared with settler farmers who planted maize in the district. The Kipsigis maize production had also increased tremendously and they resorted to selling the maize across their borders to the Maasai and other parts of Nyanza Province.

The Kipsigis were not so fortunate in obtaining work on the tea estates because of a general prejudice against them as laborers. It was argued that the Kipsigis had no idea of going to work regularly and would go to their homes whenever they wished to do so, returning whenever it suited them, which was not in keeping with the requirements of tea production. It is understandable that, living so close to the tea estates, the Kipsigis would find it easy to go to their homes more often than, say, the Luo or Luhyia who had to travel long distances to get from the tea estates to their homes. In any event, as a result of this prejudice those Kipsigis people who wished to earn money as laborers had to work on settler farms. The settler farms did

---

[26] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1928.

[27] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1939.

not pay as well as the tea estates, although the settlers often allowed their workers to bring their animals with them to graze on the employers' farms.

There do not appear to have been any links between the tea estates and the neighboring areas apart from the sale of food crops, which was usually done through middlemen. This is what has led many people to talk of dual economies where the estates are seen as enclaves of development in areas of "traditional" or less developed areas. E. A. Brett, among others, has gone to great lengths to explain the dualism of the traditional and modern economies of colonial East Africa.[28] It is erroneous, however, to regard the two sections of the economy as being separate because although they may seem separate, the presence of the tea estates affects the economy of the Kipsigis people in very fundamental ways. This is particularly the case if the tea plantations are regarded as part of the incoming foreign capital. The presence of foreign capital changed lifestyles considerably. For one thing the Kipsigis had to adjust to a market economy and for a long time, this market was in the tea estates. The involvement in maize production forced the Kipsigis into a money economy from which they never escaped. This was encouraged by the demand for maize in the tea estates. When the Kipsigis became heavily involved in a money economy and when maize production, the principal cash earner in that district,

---

[28] E. A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939 (New York: NOK Publishers, 1973).

became inadequate, the Kipsigis sought to engage in the production of tea, for the tea estates seemed wealthy. As the government, together with the tea estates, resisted attempts by the Kipsigis to grow tea, the question became a political one. African nationalists fought for independence over several issues, one of which was permission to grow cash crops, primarily tea, especially in Kericho district.

Conclusion

Plantation tea represents one form of capitalist intrusion into Kenya. In the early years of colonialism other forms of capitalist intrusion included merchant capital, government-oriented projects, such as the building of the Mombasa-Kisumu railway, and settler farming. The commercial firms that established tea plantations in Kericho had parent companies headquartered in Britain which enabled them to enter Kenya with their own capital. This provided a sharp contrast to the settler farms in Kericho district and other parts of the country which constantly lacked capital and had to be subsidized by the state. Government officials from time to time applauded the ability of the tea estates to pay their workers better salaries and given them better housing than the mixed individual settler farms in the district. Of course, the fact that the tea estates paid better salaries and provided better housing than the settler farms tells one nothing about the real salaries and living conditions of the laborers on the tea estates. An important result of the international nature of the tea firms, however, was in connecting the economy of the district to international capitalism.

The tea firms had to import machinery into Kenya for the processing of tea because tea must be processed immediately after plucking. This dependence on Britain for machinery which began when the plantations were established in the 1920s was still continuing by 1963. The tea estates also imported all the managerial staff who were hired to work in Kenya but who were expected to return to Britain on completion of their contracts. A foreign managerial staff, dependence on foreign machinery, foreign ownership and control of the marketing from the metropole subverted Kenyan economic development. No profits were re-invested in Kenya for further development which would have been the case had the tea estates been locally owned. Just how much surplus was repatriated in various forms each year is difficult to determine, although we can point to the lack of local investment by the tea companies as an indication of their lack of involvement in the local economic development. In Kericho, apart from paying the workers, expanding the tea acreage and the number of factories, and building roads within the tea estates and fancy houses for managers, little else is obvious. Of course, the companies were taxed and in this way contributed to the overall economy of the country, but taxation and employment were the only contribution the tea estates made. This pattern set up in the 1920s was no different at the time of independence in 1963. The structural conditions established were reproduced over the years.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALLHOLDER TEA PRODUCTION IN KERICHO DISTRICT[1]

In this chapter an attempt is made to explain the rise of smallholder tea production in the Kipsigis countryside and the actual setting up of the tea farms by the Kipsigis. Although tea growing started in the 1920s in the district, it was limited to the area around Kericho town and on large tea estates going into thousands of acres in tea grown and processed by commercial firms. By as early as 1928, the commercial firms had a total of 4,125 acres in tea. They were also exporting up to 8,502 pounds of tea by that date and expected major expansions to take place.[2] Production of tea on small scale farms and by the Kipsigis themselves did not start until the 1950s. There were political reasons which prevented the Kipsigis from growing tea at an earlier date although some of the explanations have to be sought from the economic developments in the Kipsigis rural areas. After being forced to grow maize, pay taxes and change their life styles in other major ways for the purpose of earning money, the Kipsigis continued in the quest for self-improvement or survival in

---

[1]Smallholder tea farms in Kericho district range from a third of an acre to just over ten acres. Most of the farms are between three and five acres.

[2]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1928.

the new colonial economic system. They had to pay for new commodity goods that quickly became necessities, such as cotton cloth; they paid school fees for their children, taxes and so on. To meet their new expenses, practically all people living in Belgut and Buret sections of the district became involved in maize production or entered into trade, among other things. Entry into tea production has to be understood, therefore, in the context of attempts at self-improvement by the Kipsigis.

The political explanations for the long delay in the involvement of the Kipsigis in tea production revolve around the fact that tea was reserved for large commercial firms by the Kenya government. In Kenya during the colonial period, tea-growing--as with coffee, cross-bred cattle, and pyrethrum--was an exclusive preserve of the white people. The colonial state believed that to make Kenya self-sufficient so as to pay for the administration of the colony, settler agriculture had to be encouraged, and one way to do this was to ensure a ready supply of labor to the settler farmers. The settlers and the government had problems of labor shortage from the period of colonial settlement up to the 1940s. Allowing Africans to grow the exportable cash crops would have encouraged more Africans to work on their own farms to earn the necessary cash instead of going out to work as laborers. This would have limited the labor available to settler farmers, commercial plantation firms and government institutions. Africans growing some of these crops, such as tea and coffee, would have employed their own labor which would have meant competition for

available labor with settler farmers, plantation owners and the government. Of course, this was to be prevented at all costs.[3]

Economic Background of the Development of Smallholder Tea Farms

Although the Kipsigis were legally prevented by the colonial government from growing crops reserved for white farmers, the level of economic development in the Kipsigis countryside did not actually cause them to press for tea production until the period after the second world war. Judging from the Kipsigis reception of maize production, it can be safely concluded that had tea been introduced to them in the first decade of colonialism. they would have resisted it in the same way that they resisted maize production.[4] As explained in the introductory chapter, the Kipsigis economic structure in the colonial period was oriented towards production for subsistence and barter whenever necessary, as in the case of famine when they traded with neighbors. Among themselves they engaged in exchange of food crops or animals. There is no evidence to show that trade was vital to the Kipsigis in the pre-colonial period except in times of famine. With colonization, market goods--such as beads, copper wire, household utensils--which

---

[3]See Van Zwanenberg, Colonial Capitalism and Labor in Kenya, 1919-1939. The colonial government actively prevented the Kipsigis from producing tea primarily because of the competition for labor. This policy was practised all over Kenya as the government was anxious to use the available labor for settler farming. The growing of tea, coffee, and pyrethrum and the keeping of cross-breed cattle were legally restricted to European settlers, and any African who attempted these activities was prosecuted.

[4]The resistance of the Kipsigis to maize production is discussed in Chapter III, above.

had started to arrive in the pre-colonial period through "long distance" traders, increased to include farm implements such as hoes, salt, sugar and other goods that quickly became important in the daily lives of the Kipsigis. One of the reasons for the increase in the available market commodities was the fact that the colonial government brought Indians into Kenya. These Indians first arrived as workers on the construction of the railway between Mombasa and Kisumu but later became traders, setting up trade stations in rural areas and thus making direct contact with rural people. In the case of Kericho district, it is remembered that the Indians arrived by 1914 and set up stores in the local areas.[5] The store areas later developed to centers of trade. These centers drew more people into trading than had been the case in the pre-colonial era of long distance traders who were itinerant or whose merchandise arrived after having passed through many hands. The desire to have Indian-sold merchandise, together with the need to pay government taxes and other evolving costs such as school fees, forced the Kipsigis to change their economic structure in order to earn money. A large section of the population was growing maize for sale by the mid-1920s, only a decade after its introduction. Some Kipsigis growing up in the 1920s recall that they still ate wimbi as the basic cereal while maize was for sale.[6] By the 1930s, however, they recall many more people were substituting maize for wimbi. Maize was becoming more popular as a market crop because there was a ready

[5]Interview with Amos Arap Chemaner, Litein, Belgut, 1 April 1978.

[6]Interview with Tiongik Arap Mangesoi, Buret, 3 June 1978.

market for it in the tea plantations in the district and on settler farms in the district, or elsewhere. With the introduction of flour mills into the district, it became easier to obtain maize flour than it was to grind wimbi into flour in the age-old method of using two stones; hence the shift to maize flour.[7]

The production of maize was not the only way in which the Kipsigis earned cash to meet the monetary requirements of the time. Some families tried to cope with their monetary requirements by simply selling off some of their cattle whenever the need arose, such as when government taxes had to be paid.[8] Cheborge Arap Korir is representative of another group of people, mainly the younger men, who sought employment on settler farms to assist in the monetary requirements of their families.[9] This group of people depended on those relatives remaining behind in the home areas to supply them with flour for their daily food. Normally they grew their own vegetables on the farms of the settlers for use with Ugali, the heavy porridge that is the basic food of the Kipsigis as it is that of many other Kenyan people. Some of the people employed on settler farms kept their own cattle and provided their milk requirements while those who did not do so usually

---

[7]Although we do not know when the first flour mill was installed in the district, we do know from the report of the district commissioner of 1927 that there were 33 Kipsigis-owned mills by that date and the Indians owned a few more.

[8]Interview with Chuma Arap Tegutwa, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 March 1978.

[9]Interview with Cheborge Arap Korir, Sitotwet, Belgut, 12 July 1978.

managed to get some milk from the cows of the settler farmers. The settler farmers usually made their workers build houses for themselves. The upshot of all this was that except for their clothes, the laborers hardly spent the money they earned on their daily upkeep. This money went back to their homes to pay for the monetary requirements there.[10]

By the mid-1930s, the production of maize in Belgut and Buret had expanded and so had the number of people going out to seek employment. People were becoming reluctant to sell their cattle because the old method of increasing their stocks by raiding neighbors had been abolished by the colonial government. The Kipsigis also lost cattle as a result of collective fines imposed upon them as punishment for cattle theft reported by their neighbors. Usually cattle were commandeered from people who did not show up to work on government-instituted jobs, such as roads or bridges, for which the public was expected to give free labor. During the two world wars, the Kipsigis also "donated" cattle to the war effort. This made them sensitive to reducing their stocks any further by selling them, so they sought alternative methods by which they could obtain the money they required. As mentioned in Chapter III, the neighboring tea plantations were reluctant to employ the Kipsigis.

Maize production expanded with the introduction of ploughs and grinding-mills. In 1927, the Kipsigis owned 65 ploughs and 33 flour mills in the Kericho district. But by 1930, these had increased

---

[10]Interview with Arap Maswai, Sotik, Buret, 10 March 1978.

to 400 ploughs and 73 flour mills, making the production of maize easier.[11] Maize as a viable source of cash, however, was becoming less promising by the 1930s. One of the reasons for this was that the tea plantation estates' market which had originally provided such an encouragement to the production of maize, was becoming limited by the 1930s as a result of the involvement of more people in maize production. The settler farmers were also in competition with the Kipsigis for the tea estates' maize market. The district commissioner for Kericho reported low maize prices in 1932 which worsened by 1934.[12] The economic conditions were so bad as a result of the fall in maize prices that the Indian traders, who were at that time the middlemen in the maize trade, experienced stagnation in their trade and some bankruptcies.[13] The situation worsened so much that by 1935 the District Commissioner in his annual report noted that "Maize was unsaleable and great quantities were turned into beer."[14] This was the case in spite of efforts by the Kipsigis to find alternative markets from the tea plantations, including the selling of maize across their borders to the Maasai, Luo, and Gusii by using donkeys to transport it.[15] By the 1940s, the government was suggesting to the Kipsigis that they reduce their maize production to ensure better prices, but the

---

[11] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1927, KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930.

[12] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1932, KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1934.

[13] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1934. [14] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1935.

[15] Ibid.

Kipsigis, faced with no reasonable methods of earning money other than selling their cattle, would not even consider this. The District Commissioner, not understanding the economic reason for this refusal, concluded that "It is part of the make up of the Kipsigis in the first place to automatically refuse everything."[16]

The Kipsigis, however, did make attempts at other cash ventures. Those who bought ploughs ploughed for other people to make extra money. The flour mills also made considerable profits for their owners. In this regard, those who had done particularly well in maize production went ahead and bought tractors to plough land for themselves and for other people in the hope that this would guarantee them a sizeable income. The tractors turned out to be a near failure because they were so expensive that the owners charged higher rates for their use than many people could afford. This, in turn, meant that the tractor owners could not make enough money to maintain the tractors.

By the early 1930s quite a few Kipsigis people attempted to improve their economic conditions by trading primarily in the rural areas because the Indians dominated the trading centers. The Kipsigis resented the Indian domination in trade and sought to get them out of the reserves. An example of an attempt to get the Indians out of Kipsigis country came in 1934 when the Kipsigis attacked Indian stores at Kipsonoi trading territory center and looted the

---

[16]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1944.

shop of Mr. Hariclass Chaniganlal, an Indian trader.[17] By the late 1940s the animosity over trade between African traders and the Indians had become more widespread although to the colonial administration this was a race war.[18] The Kipsigis efforts to involve themselves in trade ranged from petty trade to building shops and buying transportation lorries in order to compete more effectively in the trade. Between 1944 and 1946, the Kipsigis built 28 markets.[19] They also bought their own lorries to carry supplies to these markets in an effort to make themselves independent of Indian middlemen. Although trade had become so widespread by the 1940s that the District Commissioner was forced to comment that "The Kipsigis have taken to trade as the proverbial duck takes to water,"[20] it is true to say that the number of people involved were only a handful of the total population, while the rest have to continue to be producers. For this reason, the Kipsigis largely continued to depend on maize production, although attempts to grow beans, potatoes and wattle trees were made with limited success. By the late 1940s, therefore, the Kipsigis were clamoring for permission to grow tea and to keep grade cows as alternatives to and alongside maize production in order to cope with the changed economic conditions.

---

[17] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1934.

[18] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1949.

[19] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1945.

[20] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1946.

Political and Social Precursors to the Development of Tea Production

The Kipsigis were interested in growing tea in an effort to improve their economic conditions for a variety of reasons. There were those who were disturbed by the instability of maize prices and by the fact that maize has to be replanted every year and is harvested at the end of about eight to nine months. For these people, tea seemed more economical because, once planted and pruned, it became a "permanent" crop, and also because there was no talk of the market for tea being saturated at that time. Those who knew a bit more about tea from observing it growing on the Kericho tea plantations knew that if for any reason they could not look after their tea, the tea could be neglected and later pruned and weeded into a good crop.[21] The presence of tea plantations in Kericho no doubt influenced the Kipsigis into wanting to plant tea. There were also people in the district who, from a purely nationalistic point of view like many other African people in Kenya, wished to grow those crops they were prevented from growing for racial reasons. As one Kipsigis elder expressed it:

> The black people were the ones that actually produced the tea on those white tea estates. We planted it, plucked it, processed it in their factories and packed it so that they could sell it in England, and yet when we wanted to plant it in our gardens we were told that we were dirty and could not manage to grow tea properly.

---

[21] Interview with Rasto Arap Njeny, Boito, Buret, 16 May 1978.

[22] Interview with Isaiah Arap Mangesoi, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 April 1978.

The "struggle for tea" was fought at two levels by the Kipsigis. They used the available political institutions, and especially the legislative council, by inviting the African representatives there to meetings in their area and explaining to them what their grievances were. These people were then expected to inform the government of the wishes of Kipsigis people. B. A. Ohanga and Eliud Mathu, the two representatives in the Legislative Council, were to make several visits to Kericho district to discuss this problem with the Kipsigis in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Local politicians, like Arap Chemalal from Nandi district, also addressed several meetings in Belgut and Buret in the late 1940s and 1950s. While the government administrators could tolerate these types of people, they were extremely shocked when the Kipsigis invited Jomo Kenyatta, along with other nationalists, to address meetings in Kericho district in August 1952. This was a time of general unrest in the country, especially in central Kenya where there were incidents of political violence with which Kenyatta became associated. In any case, the government moved quickly and banned the meetings scheduled in Kericho district for August 1952.[23] While political agitation was in progress, some Kipsigis people took it upon themselves to plant tea and keep grade cows illegally. Some Kipsigis people, mainly from the Chebangang area, stole tea seedlings from the Kericho tea estates and planted

---

[23]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1952.

them in their gardens in the early 1950s.[24] This was only a few years before they were legally able to plant tea so that it is difficult to speculate on what they would have done with the tea upon its maturation since they had no factories of their own in which to process the tea. The tea plantation firms in Kericho, with the help of government officials, tried to trace these people for the purpose of prosecuting those found in possession of tea in the reserve. They had little success, however, because the chiefs and sub-chiefs who were expected to lead the search for the offenders were themselves interested in growing tea or were fed up with the government restricting what Africans could and could not grow.[25] In the case of the grade cows kept illegally by the Kipsigis, settler farmers went around the villages and shot any grade cows on sight and castrated the bulls.[26] These things were still going on in Kericho district in the early 1950s although other African people in central Kenya had been granted permission to plant coffee and keep grade cows. The Kipsigis knew this and felt particularly resentful because they thought that they had cooperated more with the government than had the Kikuyu in central Kenya, who were involved in the Mau Mau "rebellion" from about 1950.

The agitation of the Kipsigis, together with that of other Kenyans, may have forced the government to give in to some of the

---

[24]Interview with Isaiah Arap Mangesoi, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 April 1978.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Interview with Josiah Arap Konir, Litein, Buret, 31 May 1978.

demands of the Africans. In 1954 a report, the Swynertton Plan was released which recommended to the government that Africans be allowed to grow the crops--including tea--that had been legally kept away from them. As far as the planting of tea by Africans was concerned, two marketing boards were set up to organize the production of the tea. These were the Central Province African Grown Tea Marketing Board and the Nyanza and Rift Valley Provinces Tea Marketing Board. Kericho district fell under the latter. These two marketing boards were in operation until 1961 when a national board responsible for the African production of tea was set up to replace them. This was the Special Crops Development Authority. This nationwide tea marketing board was set up at the recommendation of the Commonwealth Development Corporation which gave loans to the Kenya government for the promotion of smallholder tea production. In 1964, the Special Crops Development Authority changed its name to the Kenya Tea Development Authority; it is still in operation today.

The necessity of a board to coordinate the production of tea by small-scale farmers lies in the nature of tea as a cash crop. Tea is ideally suited to large estates because of the expensive machinery needed for its processing, among other things. It is estimated that the cost of constructing a modern tea processing plant in Kenya is over half a million dollars.[27] The small-scale farmer needed to be in a co-operative to be able to do this. Since the people allowed to grow

---

[27]Manners, "Land Use and the Growth of a Market Economy," p. 497.

tea in the 1950s and 1960s were few, they could not afford to set up factories. Consequently a board had to be set up on their behalf to negotiate for loans from local and international bodies to set up the factories. Tea has to be processed within six hours after it is plucked otherwise it does not make good tea. For this reason an efficient transportation system was needed to collect all the tea from the scattered farms so that it could be processed within the limited time required. There was also a need to organize for packaging and marketing the processed tea. For these and other reasons, a marketing board was vital to the development and growth of smallholder tea in Kenya.

In Kericho district, plans for the growing of tea by Africans got underway in 1955 with the setting up of tea nurseries in nearby Kimulot. Here, for the first time, the Kipsigis were able to plant tea without being prosecuted.[28] Only a selected 106 Kipsigis farmers in the Kimulot area were allowed to plant the tea in 1957, and even they were allowed only a third of an acre, although there were plans to allow them another one-third of an acre each year.[29] The reasoning behind this restriction was that tea is a labor-intensive crop and only the fairly wealthy Kipsigis people who could affird to hire labor would successfully grow tea. By 1959 only 126 Kipsigis people had been allowed to plant tea, although the government administrators in the district reported that the cry to be allowed to grow tea in the district had become deafening.[30] The growing of smallholder tea in

---

[28] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1955.

[29] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1957.

[30] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1960.

the district spread faster in the mid-1960s, although by the late 1970s the percentage of those growing tea compared to the rest of the population averaged ten people in every one hundred people.[31]

The Process of Setting Up a Tea Farm

After the government removed the laws banning Africans from planting tea in 1955, many Kipsigis people wanted to plant tea but the number of those alowed to do so was small. Without an organized system of processing and marketing the tea from various farmers, it was thought that it would be unwise to allow many people to be involved. The tea planted in 1957 in Kericho district was planned to be processed by African Highlands Produce Company, a commercial tea firm involved in planting and processing its own tea. Just how keen such an organization would be to promote other producers' goods is not altogether clear.[32] Government administrators took it upon themselves to select those who would be allowed to plant tea. The district agricultural officer with his assistants visited the homes of those who sought permission to plant tea to inspect the suitability of the land to the growing of tea and also to assess whether the particular applicant was economically capable of planting and tending a tea farm.[33] The policy of the government in this district was to encourage those farmers who

[31]This statistic is computed from 7 random samples of villages in Belgut and Buret in September 1978.

[32]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1955.

[33]Interview with Edwin Munai, Chebangang, Belgut, September 1978.

were wealthier than the average farmer because, it was believed, these would rise to be large-scale farmers capable of sustaining the economic growth of the country. Commenting on this issue, the District Commissioner for Kericho district in 1955 wrote in his annual report that

> The general policy in Kipsigis is to lead and encourage the comparatively small number of good farmers by loans, cash crops, improved stock, flattery and every means. The large unwieldy mass of reasonable farmers will follow their lead and eventually reach their standard. The lazy, stupid and ignorant at the other end of the line are given a chance to get going and then have orders served on them. Absentee landowners and women farmers are two difficult types to deal with as are old men who can't move with the times. Those classes of people are left to die in peace hoping the sons will be more enlightened.[34]

By the 1950s it was possible to notice on the Kipsigis countryside that some type of social stratification had occurred. The differentiation was observable in terms of how much land one had and the size and quality of one's livestock, which was sometimes translated into how much milk a family produced every day and therefore how much money was made from the milk. An index of one's social standing was also determined by how much maize one was able to sell. Land had become individually owned starting from the 1930s (see Chapter II), and in the process of dividing up the land, some people had come to own as much as one hundred or more acres of land while most of the people owned about ten to twenty acres, with some owning even less than ten acres of land. Since the Kipsigis were traditionally concerned with keeping cattle, those who had small pieces of land were reluctant to grow

---

[34]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1955.

maize as a cash crop on any large scale because this would have limited the land available for grazing. Those with larger acreages, however, managed to do both, and over the years some of these were able to save money from their larger maize farms which they used to buy ploughs and enough oxen to further extend the maize farms. Once such a trend started, some people did better than others.

The number of cattle one owned also helped to cause some differentiation because cattle could be sold to buy ploughs or to put up flour mills. Some people managed to sell milk to earn extra money. Those who bought flour mills charged those who came to grind their maize, and payment was often made by giving a portion of the maize brought in for grinding. There were only 62 flour mills in the whole district in 1930. Yet by this time, practically everyone was living on the maize flour ground at these mills, making the owners of the mills relatively wealthier than the average person.[35] Kibor Arap Chuma of Buret, who first purchased a flour mill in 1943, was able to buy extra cows, build a brick house and buy up extra land which expanded his total land ownership from thirty-four to eighty-six acres.[36] Similar situations occurred with the ownership of ploughs.

Local government administrators, especially the chiefs and sub-chiefs, used their positions to better their economic conditions. Ex-chief Arap Tengecha used some of his salary to buy extra cows and

---

[35] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930.

[36] Interview with Kibor Arap Chuma, Kericho, Buret, August 1978.

ploughs, but he also expanded the amount of land he owned after being made a chief at the expense of his neighbors, who did not complain. As the chief Arap Tengecha quite often had to keep people arrested for various offenses at his house before moving them to areas where they were expected to labor on public works. While these people were at his house, they worked on his land without payment.[37] Other chiefs and their sub-chiefs had these powers in the colonial days too. Those employed by the government as teachers or in other capacities were also able to invest some of the money earned on their farms.[38] The larger part of the population produced food for subsistence, although at harvest time they would sell a little maize. They usually sold a cow or so whenever taxes had to be paid or whenever extra money was needed for any reason. The economic divisions between the people were not sharp by the 1950s, but it was true that some people owned more land, had more animals, farmed larger acreages and could afford more consumer goods (such as blankets, clothes, utensils and farm implements) than the other households.

Although the government restricted the amount of tea which could be planted in 1957, when Africans in Kericho district grew it for the first time, many more people wanted to plant tea. Some of these people wanted to plant tea once the legal restriction was removed because in earlier years it could only be grown by white people. Thus,

---

[37] Interview with Ex-senior Chief Arap Tengecha, Kapkalet, Buret, 5 March 1978.

[38] Interview with John Arap Belsoi, Kericho, Belgut, 14 July 1978.

when legislation allowing Africans to grow tea was passed, they thought that they should plant it "to get even with Europeans." Those who were involved in any way in nationalist politics felt that they ought to grow tea because they had fought to get this right. Some government officials, especially the chiefs, the sub-chiefs and others involved in the administration, thought that tea represented a higher stage in the development of the people and that they, as leaders, should plant it as an example to the rest of the population. Some of these administrators, of course, were interested in tea because they thought it meant economic advancement for them.

Of those who got involved in the production of tea, a very small group came from those who had been employed to work on the tea plantations in Kericho in one capacity or another.[39] These people argue that they got involved in tea production because while working on the tea estates in Kericho, they noticed that the estates made a lot of money from tea, and while they themselves did not expect to make anything near what the tea estates made, they expected to get wealthier than they were before planting tea.[40] In any event, the restriction of those who could plant tea to the better-off farmers was relaxed after 1960, and after factories, set up for small-scale tea farmers, were built in the mid-1960s these restrictions were completely removed and more people planted tea.

---

[39] About ten percent of the tea planters interviewed had worked on the tea plantations in Kericho.

[40] Interview with Cheborge Arap Maina, Boito, Bureti, 16 March 1978.

The technicalities of planting tea were not too numerous. It was necessary to have cleared and ploughed clean land from which tree stumps had been removed. This did not constitute a great problem for the Kipsigis farmers, because practically all of them chose to plant their tea on land that had been used for other crops such as maize. Of the eighty tea growers interviewed in Belgut and Buret, seventy-four had planted tea on land that had had other crops on it. Preparing such cultivated land for tea was a simple matter since the soil was already broken. However, it meant clearing other areas to plant the crops normally grown by the family for their subsistence and for sale. After land was cleared, holes about two feet deep and nine to twelve inches wide were dug for planting the tea. These holes were five by three feet apart.[41] Once this was done, either district agricultural officers (pre-1964) or Kenya Tea Development Authority officials (post-1964) inspected the farm; if they were satisfied, they gave permission to plant tea. There was no way to avoid this official inspection because the supply of seedlings had to come from nurseries that they controlled. This system, which began in 1957 and was organized by agricultural officials on behalf of the Nyanza and Rift Valley Provinces Tea Marketing Board, was continued by Special Crops Development Authority and eventually perfected by the Kenya Tea Development Authority.

The amount of tea one could plant was limited to one thousand seedlings with plans to increase in later years. One thousand

---

[41] Dan M. Etherington, Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya (Nairobi: African Literature Bureau, 1973), p. 10.

seedlings covered one-third of an acre, and cost the farmers 300 shillings (23 dollars). The farmers were actually given more than one thousand seedlings in case some of them did not grow. The 300 shillings paid by the farmers did not represent the total cost of the one thousand seedlings. A seedling only cost the farmers twelve cents apiece although the actual price for each seedling was thirty cents. The Kenya Tea Development Authority and the two previous boards paid the eighteen cents difference for the farmers as a loan to the farmers. The majority of the Kipsigis farmers, however, did not understand this arrangement; many did not even know about it until after their tea was ready for sale about four years later, and the Authority expected them to start repaying the loan. One Kipsigis tea grower in Buret, who planted his tea in 1962 and was not aware of the loan system, was angry when he found out about the loan three years later, because he realized he could not decide to abandon the tea if he felt like doing so, for the Kenya Tea Development Authority officials would expect him to pay back the loan. He did not want to be indebted to anyone because at the time he planted his tea, he had had enought money to buy his tea at the full cost, but because no one had informed him of the fact that he was sold the tea at less than the full cost, he was not given that option and now was expected to pay the difference. Arap Mangesoi was further angered at learning that he had been given an extra 800 seedlings for which he still had to pay the full cost. As a result. he said, "I was very angry and wanted to take the Kenya Tea Development Authority to court for cheating me, but I was told that I could not win

since it was part of the government, so I gave up. I had a debt that I had not even known about and had to look after the tea very carefully to try and pay off this debt."[42] His feelings were shared by many tea farmers.

The Kipsigis tea farmers used different methods to raise the money owed for the seedlings and other necessary things like hoes, if they did not have enough of these, or extra labor, if it was not available. Only five out of the eighty farmers interviewed had the money in savings; the rest had to raise it in one way or another. Amos Arap Chemaner of Litein in Buret sold three cows to buy seedlings and two extra hoes. His family provided all the labor for clearing the land and planting the tea.[43] David Arap Langat of Belgut sold some chickens, goats, and maize to pay for seedlings, for ploughing the land and for digging the holes in which to plant the tea.[44] Isaiah Arap Mangesoi had enough money saved from working for the government as a subheadman for many years which he used to pay for his tea. He, however, provided

---

[42]Interview with Isaiah Arap Mangesoi, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 April 1978. The loan was recovered from the farmers by KTDA whenever the farmers brought in their tea for sale. The loan was deducted from the amount of money due to the farmers from the sale of tea. In spite of popular dissatisfaction with the loan plan, the government maintained it and the farmers continued to pay because the market for tea was a monopoly of KTDA. The only way to avoid paying the loan was to abandon the tea farm, but farmers were reluctant to do so as they had already invested their money and labor and hoped that the situation would improve. Abandoned farms can be found in the area, although they do not amount to 10 percent of the tea farms.

[43]Interview with Amos Arap Chemaner, Litein, Buret, 1 April 1978.

[44]Interview with David Arap Langat, Sitotwet, Belgut, 10 June 1978.

all the labor needed to set up the tea farm with the help of his family.[45] Other tea farmers in the district had varying ways of raising money for setting up the tea farms, but none of the methods used was radically different from these three.

The Role of the Kenya Tea Development Authority

The relationship of those farmers who got into tea production before 1964 with the Nyanza and Rift Valley Provinces Tea Marketing Board or the Special Crops Development Authority was similar to the relationship of farmers who planted tea after 1964 with the Kenya Tea Development Authority. This later relationship will be used as representative of all three because of this similarity but also because more than three-quarters of the tea growers interviewed in Belgut and Buret started planting tea just before or shortly after the Kenya Tea Development Authority took over the organization of small-scale tea growing.[46]

At the level of production, KTDA took charge of supplying seedlings to tea farmers. First of all, the farmers were to register with KTDA as members. There was no fee required for this. After clearing his land and digging the holes for planting tea, the farmer then got the tea seedlings from KTDA. These were grown at nurseries and supplied to farmers. There was no way of growing tea without going through this organization because no one else could supply the

---

[45] Interview with Isaiah Arap Mangesoi, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 April 1978.

[46] The Kenya Tea Development Authority will hereafter be referred to as KTDA.

seedlings. KTDA supplied about 1,000 seedlings or a third of an acre to each farmer that chose to plant tea. One was therefore not free to plant as much as he or she wanted. The rationale was that if people were allowed to plant more, they could not afford to look after them successfully. There was no concession made for those who felt that they could afford to plant more than just over one thousand seedlings.

When the planter felt that his tea was ready for the first picking (called "tipping") he let the KTDA officials know so that they could come and inspect the tea to give official approval for the tipping. After another year or two, the tea was ready for plucking. The planter plucked the tea and took it to collection centers (sheds) built by KTDA. Here KTDA officials inspected the tea, weighed it and gave a receipt to the planter. The tea was then packed off in KTDA lorries and sent to the factory for processing.

The services of inspection, weighing and transporting the tea to factories were paid for by the farmers. This money was recovered from the growers when they received payment for tea delivered. The farmer was paid 40 cents for every pound of green leaf tea, while KTDA retained 17 cents of this for the services. Although tea farmers are aware of the fact that they pay for KTDA services, they are not aware of the amount. When asked, "Do you pay KTDA for transporting your tea to the factory?" the general attitude is, "KTDA removes whatever is theirs. We tea growers don't know much about it."[47]

---

[47] Interview with Josiah Arap Korir, Litein, Buret, 31 May 1978.

KTDA withholds these funds from the farmers to pay for the services, improve the roads and also to pay for the loans that KTDA obtained to set up the factories and the whole organization in the initial years. KTDA has built all-weather murram roads in most tea areas for which they expect to receive compensation from the Ministry of Works of the Central Government, though the general complaint has been that KTDA gets less than it spends on these roads. It is essential to have all-weather roads because tea, to be of good quality, has to be processed within six hours of plucking. The individual tea farmer has either benefited or not from this road network, depending upon how far he or she lives from these roads. In 1978, fourteen years after he had been growing tea, one farmer responded as follows to the question as to whether his road to the tea shed was good or not: "The road is so bad that I have to carry my bicycle on the road although after the tea shed, the road has been improved."[48] There is no doubt that KTDA has subsidised and certainly initiated the building of all-weather roads in the area, which are superior to those in non-tea growing areas. The tea farmers, of course, have paid for these without their knowledge or consent.

KTDA, after a decade of being involved in tea production, has been able to pay bonuses to tea growers from accumulated funds. This means only that KTDA has operated like most marketing boards, such as the Ghanaian Cocoa Marketing Board, in withholding funds from farmers

---

[48] Interview with Joel Arap Tegutwo, Kapkatet, Buret, 29 March 1978.

either for establishing an infrastructure or for attempting to stabilize the farmers' incomes, especially in times of low world prices for the crop, when the board can use stored-up funds to pay the farmers the higher prices to which they are accustomed. In any event, it is worth mentioning here that after the first years of production, people produced tea at a loss and several farmers gave up the production of tea.[49] The early monthly payments for tea averaged about 30 cents.[50] The disappointment to the farmers was even greater when it is remembered that they had had to wait for an average of four years, which is the length of time it takes for tea to be ready for plucking. It is no wonder, therefore, that some farmers gave up their tea farms altogether and allowed them to grow into bushes. The reason many

---

[49] There are a few tea farms abandoned in Belgut and Buret and the owners claim that what they earned from the tea was too little. Some people abandoned their farms for a while but went back to them. Abandoned tea farms are more numerous in other districts such as is the case in Nandi district. Kericho district is one of the most successful areas of smallholder tea production in the country.

[50] The amount of money farmers made from the tea in the first two years after plucking started was very little. It was common to earn about 30 cents for all the tea sold in a month. This was partly because of the small amount of tea picked in the initial years and partly because the amount of money the farmers should have earned was cut drastically by transportation costs and loan payments to KTDA. The situation improved over the years so that at the time of research in 1978, tea farmers were awarded supplementary payments from savings made in more successful years when the KTDA paid farmers somewhat less than the full market value for their crops. For the first four years of tea cultivation, farmers do not make profits from the tea, considering labor and other costs. After about ten years they do begin to show a profit, although the amount of money being earned as profit is difficult to assess, as labor is still largely from the household. Resources from other family economic activities such as tools for cultivating other crops also go into supporting tea.

farmers did not do this seems to be because of the debt owed KTDA as a result of having received tea seedlings on loan and the tax that was imposed on every tea grower. The farmers had registered with KTDA to obtain the tea seedlings and KTDA officials made it known to the farmers that they would be sued if they neglected their tea farms. It turned out that a handful of farmers overlooked the threats and neglected their farms. The majority of farmers had to find ways and means of supporting themselves and of paying any hired labor, at least over the first ten years of tea production.

To process the tea, KTDA bought factories mainly through loans from the Commonwealth Development Corporation and also from commercial tea firms.[51] The commercial tea firms acted as managing agents for the factory. Commonwealth Development Corporation and KTDA were the initial shareholders in the factories with 50 percent ownership each. The managing agent was paid a fee and a commission and, after loans and dividends to shareholders, surplus was to go to KTDA who passed this to tea growers.[52] These factories operated independent of each other, produced different qualities of tea and auctioned their tea in Nairobi and England. Each factory was therefore responsible for the marketing of the tea it produced.

There is no doubt that KTDA, together with tea-organizing bodies it took over from, have made it possible for small-scale tea

---

[51] N. H. Stern, An Appraisal of Tea Production in Kenya: An Experiment with the Little Mirrilees Method (Paris: Development Centre of OECD, 1972), p. 16.

[52] Ibid.

farms to succeed. In large measure this is due to the organizational capacity of the Authority, which supplies seedlings, inspects the crop, collects the leaf from each farmer, and ensures that it gets to the factory promptly. Through its various autonomous factories, KTDA also markets the tea, pays the farmers, and handles the administrative machinery of the authority. KTDA remains, however, in the words of Dan Etherington, "an all-powerful autocratic organization; it is both monopolistic and monopsonist."[53] KTDA is legally protected so that no other person or organization may engage in its activities. Needless to say, in this situation the tea growers have no way of bargaining effectively for higher payments or for more favorable credit terms. Rather, they are dependent upon the goodwill of the KTDA to respond to their needs. Of course, since KTDA was a government parastatel body, the growers hoped that the government would intervene, if necessary, on their behalf. It is, in any case, difficult to see how the numerous individual farmers could have engaged in tea production without a centralizing body, especially when one takes into account the fact that loans were needed initially to pay for seedlings, to educate farmers on proper methods of tea production, and also to build factories and buy machinery and vehicles. The risks involved in granting such loans to groups of isolated farmers were so high that no organization would have provided the necessary credit.

---

[53]Etherington, Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya, p. 2.

If the amount of tea which has been grown through the organization of KTDA and its predecessors is to be used as a yardstick for measuring the KTDA's success, and therefore the success of smallholder tea production in Kericho and the whole country, then it is true that there has been successful expansion of small-scale tea production in Kenya. The plan was to have a total of 12,000 acres of tea grown by 1968, but by 1968 KTDA in fact had 25,614 acres of tea, and expansion continues.[54] The success of KTDA in expanding tea production, however, should not obscure the fact that having a monopoly over the supply of seedlings, factories and the marketing arrangements necessarily forced the tea farmers to be less independent and at the mercy of KTDA decisions.

---

[54]Stern, Appraisal of Tea Production in Kenya, p. 12.

CHAPTER V

THE ORGANIZATION OF LABOR ON SMALLHOLDER TEA FARMS

The manner in which labor is organized in a community is often used to evaluate the level of development of a particular society. Capitalist social relations involve both employers and employees. One is either an owner of capital, in which case he employs, or one is not an owner of capital and therefore has to work for others. Pre-capitalist social formations, on the other hand, have no employers and no employees. Land was the basic means of production in the pre-capitalist social formations. It was communally owned and people worked on an individual basis, as part of a family or clan, or with neighbors to produce their material conditions. Capitalism with its mechanised and market-oriented economy does represent a higher level of development than a traditional economy where production is largely for subsistence among other things. These two systems are at the two ends of a spectrum with many variations in between. Social formations on the periphery of capitalism contain contradictions between labor and capital but only to the extent to which they are involved in capitalist production.

In this chapter, an attempt is made to trace the changing system of the organization of labor from the period of colonial intrusion to the 1960s. Small-scale tea farms are used as an example of the highest level of peripheral capitalism in rural Kericho district

by the end of the colonial era. In special areas of the district, such as the area of the commercial tea plantations, the relations of production are near capitalist in the sense that here there are workers and employers; but the employees do not become proletarianised because they work on the plantations and return home to become "peasant" farmers, and even while they work, they visit their homes to get additional food supplies. They are not wholly subsistent on their labor. The impression given by plantation tea laborers is that they work on the plantations to earn money for a particular purpose and then go back to their rural homes, although some stay on these estates for years with only occasional visits to their homes.

History of Kipsigis
Labor Organization

The pre-capitalist Kipsigis society of the pre-colonial era had a labor system organised around the family for the reproduction of a fairly self-sufficient production system. The Kipsigis depended on farm products and specifically on wimbi, a grain which was ground to flour to be cooked into a heavy porridge. This was eaten with vegetables of many varieties grown in the gardens, although some wild vegetables were also used. Also important to the Kipsigis diet were animal products. Milk, as well as cattle blood, was a major part of the Kipsigis diet.[1] Meat was generally obtained from goats, sheep and

[1]The Kipsigis did not drink blood in the way they drank milk. The preparation of blood for consumption was a tedious process which involved stirring the blood into a thick paste and then seasoning and cooking it to a stew.

wild animals such as antelopes. For the farm products, the labor was usually family-centered. The men cleared land while the women dug it up and planted wimbi and vegetables. Women also looked after the crops and harvested them, according to most of the informants interviewed. If for any reason--in anticipation of an initiation ceremony of the children, for example--a particular family wanted to plant a larger area than the labor within the household could handle, extra labor was sought from the neighbors. The practice was for the mother of the family to set a date and ask her friends to come and help work on the farm. The father of the family or whoever took care of the organization of the family went out also and informed his peers of the work and date. Once a few people were informed, word got around and people showed up to work. The family was required to provide the food for the day. Beer was also provided at the end of the day. If the work was not over in one day, another day was set up and people came back to finish what had been started.[2] This was a time-honored way of obtaining labor, and families invited to work made efforts to send two or more people unless there was a difficulty that everyone in the community understood. Every family needed this type of labor from time to time. Thus, no family would ignore a call for collective labor for fear of being quietly ostracized by the community.

Collective labor was extended beyond farm labor requirements to areas such as the building of houses. Sometimes only men or only

---

[2]Interview with Cheres Arap Ngeno, Kericho, Belgut, 9 October 1978.

women were called to work, depending upon the nature of the work involved. The labor required for cattle-keeping went beyond the daily family labor of milking, herding and watering the animals to taking them to salt licks and also to protecting them against raiders. These duties were a collective responsibility of a whole community, especially the men. How much a community got involved in any of these activities depended on the job requirements.[3] For example, taking cattle to salt licks might involve only four or five families, while defending the village against raiders could involve most of the community. If there was a large invasion, women stood on hills and raised a cry which was picked up in neighboring villages. If this cry was sustained, able-bodied males would pick up arms and run toward the problem area. This was considered a war threat, and every man was expected to participate. When the Kipsigis themselves organized raids, only a few neighbors participated. Frequent forays into the territories of the other ethnic groups proved to be a fast means of increasing family livestock.[4] For specialized jobs, such as those of medicinemen, smiths and others, families paid in kind. In return for their services, these people were presented with chickens, goats or cows, depending upon the importance of the job done. A person repairing a broken hoe was likely to get a chicken, while a

---

[3]Interview with Josiah Arap Maritim, Litein, 28 March 1978.

[4]Interview with Kiplangat Arap Kilel, Sosiet, Belgut, 11 October 1978.

medicineman who healed a very sick person was likely to get a cow or several goats.[5]

The colonial period witnessed tendencies towards a breakdown in these traditional labor systems. The reasons for the change are to be found in the new methods of labor and land use resulting from the adjustment to a market economy and the requirements of colonialism. Chapter II of this dissertation discusses in length the changes in land use as a result of colonialism. Due to land alienation for settler farming and commercial tea plantations, the Kipsigis faced a shortage of land, especially for grazing cattle. This led some people into settler areas in order to have pasture for their animals, while the rest were forced by the shortage of grazing land to limit their stocks. The introduction of maize in the period 1914-1918 forced a large section of the population to enclose land in order to protect their crops, but this also put a limit on the number of animals a household could keep unless the family was able to enclose large areas--an often impractical option since one could not enclose areas inhabited by other people. The government's efforts and success in stopping the cattle raids by the Kipsigis also made it impossible for them to use this old method of boosting their stocks. Cattle represented the observable material wealth of the Kipsigis as well as being a source of food. In the early years of colonialism and at least up to the early 1930s, people normally sold off a cow whenever government

---

[5]Interview with Cheres Arap Ngasura, Litein, Buret, 2 March 1978.

taxes had to be paid. Alternative sources of money had to be found, however, because people were reluctant to use up what to them was their permanent wealth and security, especially as ways of increasing this wealth were not limited to natural reproduction and purchasing.[6] In an effort to raise the necessary money, some people went out of the district to get jobs or worked on their farms to produce marketable crops, while others tried to be traders. Some of these activities, such as wage employment, destroyed the method of working as a group of neighbors. As far as livestock keeping was concerned, people could continue to take cows to the salt licks together; but when raiding was stopped, collective labor for cattle raiding stopped as well.[7] Cessation of raiding was not immediate, as evidenced by the fact that the colonial government was still imposing collective fines on the Kipsigis for cattle raids in the 1930s.[8] The raids had to be kept secret, however, because of the fear of arrest and imprisonment, so that any organization for this had to be limited. In the pre-colonial period, men used to practice the use of weapons and other activities related to warfare or used in raiding. These, too, were broken up under colonialism, thus cutting down on the necessity for cooperation in the community.

---

[6] Interview with Kiplangat Arap Too, Kosumek, Buret, 4 March 1978.

[7] The practice of taking cows to salt licks was on the decline by the 1950s as people bought cattle salt from shops. By the 1970s no trips to salt licks were reported.

[8] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1938.

The changes in the organization of labor for crop production were slower and less obvious. The practice of inviting neighbors to work whenever extra labor was demanded was still in existence by the early 1950s, although less common than it was a decade or so earlier. With the intrusion of maize as a cash crop and with most families getting involved in maize production due to the increased need for money, it would be expected that the practice of inviting neighbors would be more widespread; but it appears from oral evidence that most people preferred to get into working groups and work for each other in turns.[9] The groups usually had five to twenty people from the same neighborhood formed mainly on the basis of geographical convenience. By the early 1940s church groups had also emerged that worked together in turns. When ploughs made entry into Kipsigis land, only a few people could afford to own them. Although this remained the case throughout the colonial period, owners of ploughs sometimes needed extra oxen to work on the ploughs. Normally, one plough needed four oxen to pull it. If an owner of a plough did not have enough oxen, he got into working groups with those who had oxen and worked for one another in turns. The use of ploughs and oxen, however, was one way in which paid labor developed. After ploughing their own lands, people who had enough oxen and a plough often went out and ploughed for neighbors in return for a goat, some chickens or farm produce, and by the early 1950s people were paying money for these services. As most people still

---

[9]Most of those interviewed say that more preferred to work in groups when they grew maize than in the period before maize.

used their own families to plough their farms by the 1970s, it can only be assumed that hired ploughs were limited to a small section of the Kipsigis population.

In the pre-colonial era, the Kipsigis paid for specialized labor in kind. An example of this is the payment of farm produce or animals to blacksmiths, people who made cloth from skin, specialized house thatchers, and medicinemen. Some of these people who provided these services for the Kipsigis were replaced by merchant traders in the colonial period. As blacksmiths were replaced by the availability of utensils and tools in Indian shops, so were makers of skin cloth by the availability of cotton cloth from industrial Europe through merchant capitalists. Other specialized activities, such as local medicine, were not replaced to any significant level even by the end of formal colonization, partly because of the Kipsigis belief in their own medicine and partly because of the inadequacy of medical services in the district for most of the colonial period.[10] Except for a few isolated incidents of people who became wealthy enough to build brick and iron-roofed houses, the Kipsigis continued to work with each other without payment whenever they needed new buildings. The practice was for a family to collect the building materials necessary and invite neighbors to work, with food as payment. Some times while collecting the material, neighbors would be invited to work if it was necessary to cut down big trees to obtain building poles or carry materials to building sites. It was usually the duty of women to cut the grass

[10]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1940.

needed for thatching the roofs. They worked collectively with other women to cut and transport the grass to building areas. The only payment was a meal while working and the hope of future help.[11] Departure from this traditional practice was evidenced in the later years of colonialism as houses being built by some of these people required specialized labor. Not just anyone could build a brick house or put up a corrugated iron roof. Specialized labor had to be obtained for this. The Belyon brothers of Cheborge, Buret, built their brick houses in the 1940s and used hired labor for both the transport of building materials and all the building process.[12] It is also true that the people engaged in the building of "modern" houses of the 1950s and 1960s were relatively better off than the average Kipsigis and could afford to pay for the labor required for their houses. These people and a few others were also hiring additional labor for their farms and other activities which was a definite departure from the practice of the pre-colonial era and belonged clearly to the era of a market-oriented economy.

Family-Owned Small-Scale Tea Farms

The changes in the use of labor, especially the introduction of hired labor in the Kipsigis countryside, were brought into focus by the introduction of smallholder tea into the district in the later period of colonialism. Entry into tea production put pressure on the

[11] Interview with Taprandich Kurgat, Sosiot, Belgut, 12 September 1978.

[12] Elijah Arap Belyon, Cheborge, Buret, 2 April 1978.

labor resources of the farmers. They were asked to clear land of all the stumps and to break up the soil smoothly. To minimize the labor requirements for this, many farmers chose to plant their tea on land that had been in use before. Even then they had to re-dig the land as they would have done in preparation for other crops, only more thoroughly this time. Once this was done, they had to dig the holes for planting the tea. Once the tea was planted it had to be weeded often to enable it to grow properly. When it was ready for plucking three to four years later, each tea bush had to be plucked at least once a week, which also put pressure on the labor resources of the farmers. Although many farmers cut down on the crops previously grown--such as maize, beans, potatoes and other vegetables--tea could not serve as a substitute for these food crops. Even as a cash crop, tea could not be an immediate replacement, since it takes about four years from the time of planting before tea can be sold and up to six years for the tea to be mature enough to be economically worthwhile. For the Kipsigis tea farmers, the period of waiting for cash returns was often eight years or more because of loan payments on the seedlings. How various farmers coped with the pressure on their labor resources depended on what other resources they had available, such as the ability to pay for labor, the sizes of their families, whether they had salaried jobs and so on, as illustrated by the following cases.

Kiptonui Arap Kenduiwa, a seventy-year-old man who had once worked as a tea picker at Jamji tea plantation in Kericho, first planted his own tea in 1960. He ploughed up the land previously used

for maize-growing to plant the tea. The maize was shifted to a new area which had been part of the area reserved for grazing cattle. Although this land had to be cleared, the tree stumps did not have to be removed as that is not necessary for maize to grow. Grazing land, however, was limited by this extension, but Arap Kenduiwa planned to cut down trees in other parts of his land to allow grass to grow for his cattle. The amount of maize grown by the family that year was reduced, but only slightly because the family had to have food and some of it had to be sold to obtain money for other necessities, such as paying school fees for the children and buying clothes. Arap Kenduiwa together with his wife and their five children dug up the piece of land for maize and planted it. After the weeding was done everyone dug up the land and smoothed the soil in preparation for the tea. The digging of the holes for the tea was done by Arap Kensuiwa and his two sons while the daughters and their mother looked after the maize, the vegetables, and the cows, as well as doing the usual household jobs. Usually the sons and the father took care of the cattle. When the tea seedlings were brought for planting, Arap Kenduiwa got his neighbor Arap Terer to help him and his family plant the tea. Together they finished planting in only two days. Earlier, Arap Kenduiwa had assisted Arap Terer in planting his own tea. No other neighbors or relatives came to help because they were not asked to do so. Arap Kensuiwa said that he did not ask for help because he did not think that he would have the time to help them in turn when they needed his help.

Arap Kenduiwa increased his tea farm by a third of an acre in 1961 and again in 1962. For planting the final one-third of an acre he hired a man to help in the planting because one of his sons had gone away to look for a job in the city, and his wife and the other children were needed for growing maize as well as for other family activities. This man, who was a Kipsigis from the Litein area, was given a hut to live in by Arap Kenduiwa, and he had his meals with Arap Kenduiwa's family. He was paid thirty shillings (four and a half dollars) at the end of each month. This worker helped Arap Kenduiwa plant some of the tea, and then he weeded the tea from time to time. When the tea was ready for plucking, the Kenduiwa family as a whole together with their hired worker plucked the tea once a week. Then the worker carried the tea to collection centers where it was weighed and collected and taken in the Kenya Tea Development Authority lorries to the factory for processing. The laborer did not have any set working hours. He went to work every morning as did the rest of the family and stopped working whenever he got tired. He also assisted in looking after the cattle, although the milking was done by Arap Kenduiwa's wife and daughters. For the wages of the worker, Arap Kenduiwa sold maize.

Kiptonui, Arap Kenduiwa's first worker, stayed for five months and then went back to look after his own land. A second worker was hired who stayed for three months. This one had also come from the neighborhood. When he left, another worker from the area was

hired and he stayed for seven months. This has continued to be the pattern for this tea growing farmer.[13]

Jonathan Arap Ngeno planted his first tea in 1961 on virgin land, unlike most other people. He also did not work on the tea farm nor did his family; instead he hired two men to do the work of clearing the land and planting the tea. His own family continued to cultivate maize and to look after the cattle and other family duties. His children could help only on Saturdays and vacations because they were all in school when tea was first grown. Arap Ngeno himself did not have the time to work on the tea farm, except during the actual planting of the tea because he sold groceries at his shop at the shopping center. The two men who were hired by Arap Ngeno came from Luoland and were resident on his farm. They were paid thirty shillings apiece at the end of every month. Although they were provided with maize for their flour by Arap Ngeno, they cooked their own food and they usually picked vegetables from Arap Ngeno's farm. Arap Ngeno's first two workers stayed for about a year. When they left, he replaced them with others and this pattern has continued for him. His workers' main responsibility was the tea although they helped in grinding maize either on the family land grinder or at one of the flour mills near Arap Ngeno's house. They also helped in milking the cows and in any building work that was needed. They were paid from the money obtained

---

[13]Interview with Kiptonui Arap Kenduiwa, Litein, Buret, 17 March 1978.

from the grocery store business.[14] Arap Ngeno's method of obtaining labor was not common because most of the informants appear not to have had as much money.

Joseph Arap Tegutwo, who started planting tea in 1961, planted his tea on land initially under maize and transferred the maize to another piece of land that was less used and therefore needed more work. Owning over one hundred acres of land, he did not need to cut down on either the crops grown before tea or the cattle kept. Arap Tegutwo, who had his own oxen-drawn plough and oxen as far back as 1938, was able to employ labor on his farm about ten years before he started planting tea. He normally had two people working on his farm throughout the year doing various things, including seeing that the fences were up. The two resident workers, one from Luoland and the other from Luhyialand, did the work necessary for the planting of tea, but three years later when the tea was ready, he hired two more people to cope with the increased labor requirements. Arap Tegutwo's children were either away at boarding schools or working at salaried jobs outside the home. His wife worked on her vegetable gardens and looked after their cement-floored, brick house built in 1953. Although Arap Tegutwo supervised the people employed to work for him, he spent most of his time organising the marketing of his other crops. Arap Tegutwo paid his workers (both before and after he planted tea) from money obtained from selling maize, potatoes or beans which he had been

---

[14]Interview with Jonathan Arap Ngeno, Kapkarin, Buret, 17 May 1978.

selling since the early 1930s. He started keeping grade cows in 1960, however, so that milk, too, could be sold to pay his employees.[15] Arap Tegutwo represents the upper group of wealthier farmers who emerged in the district.

Kipkirui Arap Chapkwony, who first planted tea in 1959, did not have any money set aside for either additional labor or the tea seedlings and had to sell two oxen to buy the tea seedlings. He planted his tea on land that usually took up the maize crop and shifted the maize to another area. His wife took care of the maize production with the help of their two children. As there was no money to hire labor, Arap Chapkwony asked relatives and neighbors to come and help him prepare the land for the tea cultivation. His wife prepared meals, and he brewed beer for the men. Once the tea was planted, he and his family did all the weeding and the first plucking. Then he hired one Luo man to live on his farm to look after the tea, pluck it and carry it to the collecting station. The worker was paid twenty shillings at the end of every month in addition to being provided with a house, utensils and maize for his flour. He came with his wife who, Arap Chepkwony insists, cooked only for her husband and did no farm work except to grow her own vegetables. To pay the worker, Arap Chapkwony sold chicken or goats and sometimes he obtained money by selling maize. Arap Chepkwony did not have one steady source of

---

[15] Interview with Joseph Arap Tegutwo, Kericho, Belgut, 14 September 1978.

money for this or for other family requirements.[16] His case illustrates the use of "traditional" as well as modern methods as a result of his limited financial resources.

Although the methods adopted by Kipsigis tea farmers for coping with the pressure imposed upon their labor resources by their entry into tea production varied according to the conditions of each farmer, there were some general tendencies. A rather prevalent method of dealing with increased demand for labor was that of hiring casual labor for clearing, digging and planting. Subsequent to these, the farmers generally prefer to utilize family labor for farm maintenance. Up to 60 percent of the farmers interviewed employed one or two people on a daily basis during this period. A smaller group of farmers, about 20 percent of those interviewed, resorted to the age-old method of obtaining labor at the peak period of clearing land, digging holes and planting the tea.[17] They invited neighbors and relative to help and cooked food and sometimes brewed beer to entertain them. Cash payment was not part of the deal. A similar method that seems to have evolved out of maize growing, involved a group of neighbors who worked for each other in turns. This had come about because in many instances people could not afford to have all the oxen they needed plus an ox-drawn plough. So someone would buy a plough and others would each

---

[16] Interview with Kipkirui Arap Chepkwony, Sitotwet, Belgut, 12 September 1978.

[17] The percentages given in this section are taken from calculations made from field interviews.

contribute an ox, and they would go around to each other's farm and plough the land. On some occasions they also worked together in weeding the maize farms. As some of the people who got into tea production were members of these groups, they utilized such cooperative labor arrangements for their tea requirements.

Fifty percent of the farmers interviewed hired mainly casual labor at the beginning of the tea planting season. More permanent labor was hired during the plucking period because these workers were expected to work for six months to two years before moving on. During this latter stage, up to 90 percent of the tea growers had at least one employee. This was mainly because after waiting about four years for the tea to mature, it has to be plucked and transported to the factory for processing within six hours if good quality tea is to be obtained. The need for intensive labor during harvest put pressure on the supply available within the household, especially in the mornings when the tea had to be plucked. Practically all the households involved in tea production are also involved in cattle-keeping and would need to pluck their tea and milk their cows at the same time. And so a situation arises whereby they would have to hire a full-time laborer to help.

Smallholder Tea Employees

The origins of the people hired by small-scale tea growers varied. About 50 percent of those hired in the early stages of the tea-growing period were from the neighboring communities and were therefore Kipsigis, most of whom had worked on the tea estates in

Kericho at one time or another. These people lived in their own homes and came to work every day. Asked whether they fed these people, most of the farmers answered: "if mealtime found these people at their place of work, then they ate with the family." When a resident worker was hired, the practice was for the employer to provide him with a house and maize meal, but the employee would get his own vegetables, which usually came from the employer's garden. The employee then cooked his own food. For this reason, some of the workers (they were usually men) brought their wives from their homes. Most of these resident workers came from Nyanza and the Western Province. The farmers have, however, stressed the point that these women did not work for them. Evidently, the Kipsigis preferred to hire people from other ethnic communities because the local taboos over what was considered male or female work could be ignored.

The employees on the small-scale tea farms were paid in the early 1960s an average of 30 shillings a month, even if food and housing were provided. The non-resident workers were paid on the same scale. The finances for paying the workers came from similar sources to those used for setting up the tea farms, i.e., selling maize, goats, or chickens or (in the case of those that are employed) paying with money obtained from a salary. In the first ten years or so of tea production, the tea farms were so unprofitable that they could not even pay for this labor and other ways and means had to be employed. Sometimes, though rarely, some people paid their workers in kind, such as by giving them maize to take to their homes.

The relationship between the employer and the employed was different from that of an industrial setting or even from that obtainable on the tea plantations in the same district where relations were organized in a near-capitalist manner. The relationship on the smallholder tea farms was different partly because the numbers of employees on the farms was very small. There were usually one or two employees and although they were provided with houses and food, they lived close to the employer and sometimes did not observe strict hours of work. Very often, lunch was taken with the employer's family. The duties of the employee also extended beyond the tea farm to looking after the animals and sometimes going to grinding maize at grinding mills or going to the store for the family. Although the employee would normally not be expected to help in the kitchen, he usually helped in jobs generally reserved for the womenfolk or the younger members of the family, such as taking maize to the grinding mills or grinding maize on man-powered mills at home. In Kipsigis society women milk cows. For how long this had been the practice is not known, but by the time tea was grown by the Kipsigis, it had become a woman's job. Yet the resident employees, who are usually non-Kipsigis, were also expected to help in milking the cows. It was understood that everyone went to work in the morning, but there were no rigid working hours, especially regarding closing time in the afternoons. In general, the employer-labor relations were neither capitalistic nor traditional and have been characterized as peripheral capitalist.

Conclusion

The entry of the Kipsigis into small-scale tea production was viewed by themselves as a move towards greater prosperity. People put their "savings" and labor into tea production because tea represented some type of steady income in the sense that they hoped for a monthly return once the tea matured. The first ten years of tea production were hard years for the Kipsigis farmers because tea-growing required sizeable investment in money and labor and did not always generate enough profit to offset costs. Since tea was a "non-food" crop, food production was also cut down with unknown consequences. When maize was the primary cash crop, lots of people benefited from trading on maize as well as other crops. The only problem they had to deal with was competition, and sometimes a clash of interest with the Indian traders. This became a common feature of the commercial life of the Kipsigis in the 1940s through the 1960s. Tea, however, came in with a marketing arrangement that did not allow for the rise of the middle-man. KTDA monopolized the distribution of tea seedlings and the selling of tea. In a way, it can be argued that tea was forcing people back to the land as peasants, dependent on the market.

The involvement in tea production did not lead to new methods of production, especially where tools were concerned. At the onset of colonialism, the Kipsigis had iron hoes and some type of panga. They were able to buy larger pangas and hoes from the Indians after the Indians came. Oxen-drawn ploughs were the biggest move forward of the colonial period in this society. Bigger areas of land could

be ploughed but the weeding and harvesting had no new technology. Tractors were around by the 1950s, but only a few people could afford to hire them to plough their lands. Most people concentrated on oxen and ploughs. Those who had their own made profits from working for others on hire. Tea did not necessitate or lead to a change of the farm implements available. The existing tools were used to plough the land, and then the farms were weeded periodically. At the level of the small farmer, no new machinery was introduced. This, too, has tended to follow the pattern of other colonial economies where the system of production and especially the technology remain highly "traditional" despite the moneterization of the economy.

The production of tea by the Kipsigis and other Kenyan people was a welcome move to the independent government because tea was the country's main export and the biggest foreign exchange earner. The Kipsigis farmers before this grew maize and vegetables which were marketed in the country, but they expected an economic advancement from planting tea. Eventually, being involved in the production of a crop marketed outside of the country exposed the farmers to the problems that followed from the price fluctuations of the international economy. In this way connections with international capital and the dependence on a foreign market were extended to the rural areas.

CHAPTER VI

KIPSIGIS WOMEN AND THE COLONIAL ECONOMY

In most contemporary societies the status of women is inferior to that of men. Political and economic control is generally in the hands of men. Just how this situation has evolved has been the subject of much study. Quite often women's inferior status is dismissed off-handedly by attributing it to their "weaker" physical condition. It is argued that the burden of child-bearing and rearing plus being physically weaker than men has caused women to be subordinated to men. Frederick Engels attempted to give a materialist explanation to the problem by tracing the subordination of women to the emergence of private property.[1] According to Engels, private property first came through private ownership of animals, a male domain, while women continued to be preoccupied with agriculture. With time, women became subordinated to men (in an economic sense, at any rate) because they became economically dependent upon men. The emergence of private property and the practice of property inheritance through males led to children belonging to the father. Their labor was therefore the fathers' property. This Engels calls "The World Historical Defeat of Women."

---

[1]See Frederick Engels, Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State (Chicago: C. H. Kerr and Co., 1902).

Peter Aaby convincingly challenged Engels' explanation for the subordination of women by arguing that in fact, the domestication of animals took place at the same time as the cultivation of crops. He therefore questions why animals became more important than crop production. In Aaby's view, women became subordinated because of men's desire to control labor. Women as the producers of children, and therefore of labor, could not go in search of people to produce laborers for them. This was left to the men and hence their eventual control of women in the attempt to control labor for the reproduction of material conditions. Aaby argues that this control was done by social groups which wished to expand their labor resources rather than by individuals, and as the object of the expansion women ended by being controlled as the result of seeking protection.[2] Neither Engels nor Aaby adequately explain exactly how women lost power or when this happened. Essentially, their explanation is ahistorical. The question of the origins of women's subordination therefore continues to be raised and discussed. It is sufficient to note here that this question is a dynamic one and varies from place to place over time; for this reason, it is imperative that the status of women be placed in context, which in our case is that of Kipsigis women in the colonial period.

The problem of women in a colonial structure, and of African women in particular, is one that has been raised time and again.

---

[2]Peter Aaby, Critique of Anthropology, Special Issue on Women, 1977.

Missionaries and their followers, plus colonial apologists, maintain that colonialism not only raised the standard of living of Africans but was particularly helpful for the African woman because it liberated her from cultural taboos such as circumcision, among other things. This view was supported by some field interviews, especially when some of the people interviewed were heavily influenced by the Christian church in the area. In this chapter, an attempt will be made to show that the material conditions of a person are a better index of that individual's status in society than his or per perceived position. The opinion of some of the more recent studies of African women in the colonial period depict a situation in which the economic status of women deteriorates as a result of colonialism. Hafkin and Bay in their introduction to their edited study entitled Women in Africa assert very boldly, "Colonialism actually had a retarding effect on African women; they experienced a substantial loss in their economic status."[3] Another essay in this study on the position of women in Accra's Ga-section in the colonial period shows that economic conditions worsened for women who in the pre-colonial period controlled the financial resources of their families. In this trading community, men and women customarily worked together at the production level, especially at fishing, but the women took the goods to the markets and gave their men what they thought was their share and used the rest to supply family needs; but "in the current situation where men are

---

[3]Nancy J. Hafkin and Edna G. Bay, eds., Women in Africa (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976), p. 15.

bringing in salaries whose size they often hide from their wives, the women are often wholly ignorant of the market value of their husbands skilled labor or literate skills, so they have no way of estimating the men's income."[4]

In a study of Kowe women in Western Kenya, Margaret Hay tells us that in this community, in the colonial period, men went out as migrant laborers and the women were left to support themselves, their families and the men whose salaries were too low to meet their subsistence requirements at the work place. According to Hay, these women coped well by experimenting with new labor-saving techniques and new crops, such as maize, to keep their families alive.[5] The burden placed upon their shoulders cannot be overestimated as only their labor was available to support families who in the pre-colonial period were supported by the labor of both men and women in the society.

Any conclusion about what happened to Kipsigis women in the colonial period requires that their conditions in the pre-colonial period be examined in order to provide a basis for comparison. The Kipsigis economy of the pre-colonial period was based on self-sufficient family production without much involvement in production for exchange. By the time the "long distance trade" was in evidence among the Kipsigis in the 19th century, the Kipsigis were largely concerned with barter trade and this only periodically. In fact, after colonialism had set in and Indian traders had set up stores in

---

[4]Ibid., p. 122.

[5]Ibid.

Kipsigis areas around 1917, the Kipsigis used barter trade. When they brought salt and other commodities from Indian shops in the period before 1920, they exchanged firewood for salt or other things such as sugar.[6] The self-sufficient pre-colonial mode of production of the Kipsigis was based mainly on the family farm production of grain and vegetables but also of animal products.

There is a difference of opinion among the Kipsigis about how much farm work was performed by men in the pre-colonial period. One opinion is that men did no farm work unless they were little boys or old men who could not participate in herding the cattle, defending the community or going out to raid neighbors for more animals.[7] According to this opinion, men's labor time was taken up by raiding, defending the community, and herding; and when they were not busy at these activities, men were busy practicing for these activities since they required extreme physical fitness. The practice called Kambaget was some type of sports competition with activities like throwing knives and spears over trees. There was a lot of singing and dancing during these occasions and Kipsigis male dancing consisted of jumping up and down, which in itself was a tiring physical fitness exercise.[8] An alternative viewpoint is that men cleared the land and women ploughed,

---

[6]Interview with Kiplang'at Arap Too, Kosimek, Buret, 3 July 1978.

[7]Interview with Josiah Arap Korir, Litein, Buret, 31 March 1978.

[8]Interview with Kiplangat Arap Kogo, Kericho, Belgut, 4 July 1978.

planted and did the rest of the work (including the harvesting) on their own.[9] Yet another viewpoint is that some families kept two separate gardens for food crops. In this case, a man did all the clearing of the land and then he ploughed, planted, weeded and harvested his own section while his wife and children worked on a different piece. The man's farm was called imbaretab mosop, while the woman's or the family farm was called kabungut. It was generally accepted that the crop from the man's farm would be used for brewing beer to entertain his friends and for family festivities.[10] In effect, it was a crop stored for emergency purposes in case the crop from the family store ran out. This was particularly useful in polygamous families as the husband's crop was under his control, and he could give it to whichever wife needed help without causing a quarrel among the wives, as would be the case if all the crop had been stored together.[11] Quite often the crop from the man's garden was not used up before the next harvest; in such a situation, this crop was exchanged for a cow, goat or chickens, depending upon the size of the harvest left at the harvest season of another crop. The woman's harvest was primarily for the family subsistence. If there was a surplus, the woman disposed of it as she wished. If she chose to give it away to relatives and friends, she usually could do so

---

[9] Interview with Kiptoo Arap Kirui, Sotik, Buret, 3 March 1978.

[10] Interview with Tolonyi Arap Koske, Chebang'ang', Belgut, 8 March 1978.

[11] This seems to be the view of the majority of those interviewed.

without any consultation with her husband, provided that she did not go to him later to complain that she had run out of food for herself and her children. Sometimes women used the surplus crop to buy animals, and here we find a difference of opinion on how much control women had over animals acquired in this manner. Some people maintain that animals bought from the surplus crop of a woman's harvest belonged to her. She bought them on her own and she could dispose of them in any way without any consultation with the husband.[12] A more prevalent view, however, is that no matter how a woman acquired her animals before or after marriage, she could not dispose of these animals without the consent of her husband because a man was supposed to be in control of all the animals of the household. If a man needed to dispose of any of the woman's animals, she had to agree to this before he could do so, otherwise her family and sometimes his family would intervene on her behalf. A man raising problems about the disposal of his wife's animals usually lost respect among his friends and neighbors, which most men wanted to avoid.

As land was not scarce in pre-colonial Kipsigis society, even the division of land between a husband and wife or wives still left enough land for the animals to graze on. A man acquired land for himself and his family simply by clearing it or by building a house on a piece of land with the consent of the elders in the area. After this the land belonged to him for as long as he used it. When land was not

---

[12]Interview with Julia Tapkurkoi, Cheborge, Buret, 28 April 1978.

in use, it belonged to a community as a whole and anyone from that community was allowed to use it for any purposes. With the onset of colonialism, the division of farming land between a man and his wife or wives tended to disappear. One of the problems raised was that of the shortage of land. Land in the district was alienated for settler farming and for commercial tea firms as well as that which was designated Crown Land. This put pressure on land availability and especially on land for cattle grazing. Individual ownership of land had become common among the Kipsigis by the 1930s, long before the individualization of land ownership arose in many other parts of Kenya.[13] Indeed, many Kipsigis people were forced to move to settler farms as squatters in order to find pasture for their animals. As land was now owned by individual men, women were made dependent upon them for land to farm. It is true that before this, the women had depended on the men for land to farm because the men cleared the land and therefore owned it, but in this early era land was plentiful and its value not so high as to make one dependent upon the "owner" of it. More important than the individualization of land in favor of men, therefore giving them more economic power over women, were the relationships resulting from new uses of land.

One of the new uses of land that developed from the intrusion of colonialism, one which significantly altered not only the relationships between men and women but also those existent in the whole

---

[13] See Chapter II.

Kipsigis society, was the introduction of maize production. Maize, arbitrarily introduced into the district, became a crop grown by both men and women, unlike the pre-colonial period food production which was usually in the hands of women. Maize production was, however, controlled by men from the start. Maize was grown only as a cash crop until about the middle of the 1920s, and the money obtained from its sale normally went to pay taxes in this early part of the colonial period. In these early years of the colonial era, also, the men marketed the maize crop to Indians at trading centers or across Kipsigis borders, although women sometimes helped to carry the maize to the trading centers. By the 1930s and particularly in the later part of that decade when the Kipsigis had begun to eat maize meal, a man planted his own farm of maize primarily for sale while the woman produced the family crop in keeping with tradition. Being the one also responsible for the cooking and preparation of food, it became her problem to see that she had enough food in storage to last to the next harvest season.[14] As maize assumed an important market and subsistence value in Kipsigis households, especially in monogamous families which were the commonest type in the community, one major farm for the whole family tended to develop. This trend arose out of the fact that men needed extra labor to produce enough maize to sell for all the needs that arose out of the new market economy of the colonial era. Also, as the community increased its range of

---

[14]Interview with Kipkorir Arap Maswai, Boita, Buret, 15 May 1978.

purchasable goods, the demand for more labor increased accordingly. It became more important to control the family labor than it had been in the pre-colonial days. For example, although at harvest time the crop was divided into the man's store and that of his wife, she ceased to have the right to dispose of any food crop not used up by the family by the beginning of another harvest season. It appears that the crop was divided into the different stores in an effort to ensure an adequate food supply for the family. As demands for money expanded and as maize continued to be the basic marketable commodity (aside from animals, which many were reluctant to sell), even the surplus food crop from the woman's store went to the market and the man kept and controlled this money on behalf of the whole family. The women's one method of acquiring property, i.e., in terms of animals which they bought in exchange for surplus farm produce in the pre-colonial years, was no longer possible.

As the whole family became involved in earning money for various activities, as well as producing for their own subsistence, men came to control both the labor of the family and the money they earned. Very little time was left for the wife to be involved in activities that could earn her an independent income. Even in such traditionally male-oriented areas as cattle-tending, the labor was now shared almost equally by women. In the pre-colonial era when the animals were allowed to wander far and wide in the care of the men and boys, even milking was done by men. With the limitation and individualization of land and therefore restriction of animals

to the owner's land, women took over the milking of cattle; they locked these animals up in the evenings and it was their responsibility to feed the boys who looked after cattle during the day. Milk became a cash commodity over which the men had control. In most families the morning milk was for the husband (that is, for sale), while the evening milk--usually less than half the earlier quantity--was for the wife and family. If the wife saved any of this milk she could sell it, although there was seldom enough left to be sold. Even when some milk could be sold, it did not lead to any financial independence on the part of the wife as this money would be used to buy the household consumer goods such as refined white salt, sugar, paraffin, etc., that were quickly becoming necessities. This loss of economic power by Kipsigis women, first felt over maize in the colonial period, continued as the society became more and more involved in a market economy where money was quickly becoming essential to the survival of the community. Wattle trees, whose barks were used for tanning leather, and grade cows when they were introduced became male controlled. Vegetables on the whole remained under the control of the women, but the market for these was lacking throughout the colonial period as evidenced by the complaints of district commissioners over the absence of such a market.[15] The problem for the Kipsigis was that their labor was being channelled into market production and as this happened, there was a need to control the labor at the household level

---

[15] KNA.DC/KER/1/3.

effectively in order to satisfy the market and also to ensure that subsistence production was maintained. An example of this can be found in the organization of the family labor when smallholder tea production was introduced in the late 1950s and the 1960s.

As observed in Chapter V above, the labor of the whole family was mobilized for the regular production of marketable goods, subsistence and for the production of tea in those families where tea was grown. Most of the tea growers did not have sufficient labor within their households so they hired people either on a day-to-day basis or on a monthly arrangement. Where the laborers were casual, the wives were expected both to cook for them and to work on the maize farms as well as perform other household duties. Where the laborer or laborers were resident and cooked for themselves, the wives were expected to give them their food rations. Although hired laborers sometimes helped in such "female" chores as milking cows or taking maize to grinding mills, women in these households were basically overworked.[16] It is significant to note that tea production arrived in Kipsigis households as a male-owned crop. It was generally understood that the man in the household was owner of the tea farm and that he devoted his energy there while his wife and children did the support work to keep the family alive. The significance lies in the fact that tea was a cash crop only and the money from this crop would naturally go into the control of the man, the owner of the crop. This trend, set in

---

[16] Interview with Josiah Arap Korir, Litein, Buret, 31 March 1978.

motion by the introduction of maize and a money-oriented economy that came with colonialism, was strengthened as the society became more market-oriented (in the sense that more household goods were being obtained from the market as opposed to being made at home). Cloth, salt, hoes and household utensils, among other things, were practically all being bought from the stores by the 1940s.[17] For women, this meant dependence on the menfolk for almost all of their material goods as men controlled the sources of money for the household. This was a definite change from the colonial period when women provided these things for themselves and men had no direct responsibility for how they were obtained or in what quantities.

Apart from the control of cash crops, the land and the market by men in the colonial period, there were other developments during this period that caused women to be less competitive in the colonial economy. This was particularly true in the case of education. When Western education was introduced into Kenya, women were not the first to be allowed the "privilege" of going to school. The enrollment of Kipsigis boys and girls in schools in the district in the colonial period shows that there were very few girls in the schools compared to boys. In 1920, for example, there were 14 missionary schools in Kericho district with a total enrollment of 286 boys and only 70 girls.[18] This disparity did not alter much

---

[17] Interview with Amos Chemaner, Litein, Buret, 1 April 1978.

[18] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1946.

during the colonial period. In fact, while a government-run elementary school for boys was opened in 1926, there was none for girls in the whole district until 1946.[19] The major purpose of educating Africans in the colonial period was to train a clerical group that would man the administration, and there were enough men for this. The Kipsigis themselves, however, have their own explanations for why girls did not go to school in as large numbers as the boys.

It is argued that boys were sent to school in earlier years and not girls because it was expected that the boys would be employed outside their homes after being educated. Parents feared that if girls were educated, they would go away from home to work and would not return to be married and be like other women in the society.[20] It was also felt that since girls would eventually be married, their education would not benefit the parents since once married these girls and all their activities "belonged" to their husbands and the families of the husbands. For this reason, it was better to invest in educating boys as they did not leave their homes as a result of marriage.[21] It has to be understood that any salaried employment was supposed to benefit the whole family and not only the person working and earning this money. The day-to-day duties of a woman--fetching fuel, water and vegetables, grinding wimbi into flour, cooking for the family and

---

[19] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1946.

[20] Interview with Solomon Arap Rote, Lalagik, Buret, 22 May 1978.

[21] Interview with Kipkimi Arap Kenduiwa, Kapkatet, Buret, 5 July 1978.

looking after young children, along with other jobs like working on the farm, preparing gourds for the storage of milk or making skin cloth for herself and her children--took a lot of time, and women who had daughters expected help with these duties. For this reason, girls were kept at home rather than sent to school.[22] Education for women therefore lagged behind that for men. What this meant for women was that they were kept out of salaried employment, thus reducing their chances of earning money of their own. The wives of educated men had no control over their husband's income.

Women in colonial Kipsigis society became dependent upon men for their material necessities while their labor became more controlled by men. This in itself brought a deterioration in their economic status.[23] What about other aspects of Kipsigis women's lives? A question is raised as to whether quality of (or lack of) access to the means of production necessarily correlates with social equality between sexes.[24] In examining the status of women, Mullings notes that

---

[22]Interview with Jane Rono, Sosiot, Belgut, 10 July 1978.

[23]"Economic status" is used here to refer to the economic position of women in relation to their husbands and to men in general. Although Kipsigis women were not economically independent in the pre-colonial period, in the sense that they worked with their families to maintain households, they had control over some aspects of their economic lives, and this control was lost during the colonial period. It had been possible for women to acquire clothing, utensils and even goats or cows by working in teams with other women and using farm products in exchange for these things. In the colonial period some of the ways in which women could acquire possessions and most household goods had to come from the market. Money then came and left households through men, making women dependent on men.

[24]Esther Mullings, in Hafkin and Bay, Women in Africa.

although there were in pre-colonial African societies situations where women had equal access to the means of production, men still dominated in status and political roles. She defines this lack of political and social equality as asymmetry.[25] There is evidence of asymmetry both in pre-colonial and colonial Kipsigis society.

Although women in the pre-colonial period had more access to the means of production and land, and had more control over their products in the sense that they could dispose of the products of their labor (such as food crops or any animals they themselves bought), they had less political power in the community as a whole. They also were given inferior social status. Local communities were governed by the decisions of the elders of those communities called Kokwet elders. The elders were all men and when public meetings were held for discussions and everyone was allowed to air their views, women were usually constrained by the fact that they were treated as outsiders to the whole scene. Women were allowed to speak, but usually without raising their voices or standing. Usually a man would then tell the whole gathering what the woman was trying to say.[26] It is no wonder then that women hardly spoke at such meetings. Of course, not being represented on the council of elders, they took no part in the decision making. The institution of the orkoiyot which governed Kipsigis political life in the 19th century was all male. The orkoiyot, along

---

[25] Ibid.

[26] Interview with Jona Arap Kirui, Belgut, 20 July 1978.

with male members of his clan, was supposed to have supernatural powers, while women from those clans had none. There also were taboos which restricted women's activities. Women were not allowed to eat with men in case they started to imagine that they were equal, although the real reason may have to be sought beyond this. Women were not allowed to drink alcohol. They prepared the beer for the men and supplied them with warm water to pour into the beer as men sat around beer pots to drink, but they could not sit and drink with them. If anyone felt like giving them any of the beer, they were supposed to take it to their houses with them and after cooking and feeding the children, they would drink it just before going to sleep. Unless a woman was directly involved in preparing the beer, she was not allowed anywhere near the scene of drinking unless she was particularly old.[27] Social pressure ensured that this practice was maintained. In the pre-colonial era a woman meeting a man walking had to be careful to walk on his left-hand side. A man was allowed to beat a woman disobeying this rule. The reason for this was that men usually walked around armed with spears or bows and arrows in their right hands. Because most of the weapons had poisoned ends which needed only to scratch a person to cause death, it was dangerous for women and children to be close to these weapons.[28] In order to avoid accidents, therefore, women were to walk on a man's left. This

---

[27] Interview with Tolonyi Arap Kenduiwa, Cheborge, Buret, 19 March 1978.

[28] Interview with Josiah Arap Korir, Litein, Belgut, 31 March 1978.

practice disappeared during colonialism, mainly because no one was allowed to carry weapons. There was less restriction regarding what type of food women could eat in the pre-colonial era, but women were permitted to eat only meat from the backbone of any animals slaughtered, while men ate meat from the legs and thighs. The rationale for this was that men used a lot more energy than women. Whether men were practicing for raiding, actually defending the communities or raiding neighbors, it was felt they needed to eat the more fatty meat in order to gain extra energy which was not thought necessary for women's "lighter" duties of working on farms and domestic work.[29] It is not clear, however, how far such a rule could be observed as women did the actual cooking of the food, although most Kipsigis people insist that this was treated as a taboo and needed no enforcement. It was understood and obeyed.

Most of the political and social practices that kept women inferior to men in the colonial period disappeared gradually. There were certainly many more women drinking by the 1950s. The restriction over what type of meat women could eat also disappeared. Evidently, as the number of animals a family owned decreased due to the various economic demands of the colonial period, fewer households slaughtered their own animals for personal consumption. Rather, the tendency was to buy meat from meat stores which were built at trading centers. Thus, whatever piece of meat was bought was shared by the family

---

[29] Interview with Tapkili Lang'at, Belgut, 1 September 1978.

because the luxury of having a whole goat or cow to pick and choose what section of the meat to eat had disappeared. The political powers of the Kokwet elders and the orkoiyot were replaced by colonial administrators who were also all men. There were no women chiefs, sub-chiefs or subheadmen in the whole district throughout the colonial era. One political power group was therefore replaced by another, but a less familiar one as far as the women were concerned. In the nationalist politics of the 1950s and 1960s, women in the district ran for no political office, thus emphasizing the point that political decisions were not in the control of women either in the pre-colonial period or during colonialism. Those families who were associated with the church developed the habit of eating with their wives and families, and this gradually spread to other people in the community. This apparent family equality did not necessarily arise out of any church doctrine. It seems to have arisen out of the culture of the Europeans who ate together as a family.

A rather curious aspect of the male-female relationship of the Kipsigis people in the colonial period was the exodus of Kipsigis women to towns unaccompanied by their husbands. Some of these women are to be found in Kericho while some are still living in Nairobi. In fact these women abandoned their husbands and went to live in towns, apparently without any plans of returning to their husbands. It appears that the worsening economic conditions for women in the rural areas as a result of colonialism drove these women out of their homes. Land was becoming less available; their labor was controlled more and

more by their husbands; and to buy the things they needed for the stores, they had to rely on their husbands for money. Most of these women who went into towns sought jobs, bought clothes and utensils, then returned to their homes and bought cows that they kept with their relatives, which seems to lend credence to the view that these women were attempting to improve their own material conditions by going away to look for salaried jobs. The Kipsigis, however, have their own explanations for the exodus of their women to the towns in the colonial period.

One view is that the exodus of Kipsigis women to the towns in the colonial period was not new and has continued to the post-colonial era. What was peculiar to the colonial years was that the process was more intensified than in the years before. According to this explanation, women ran away from their husbands and went to the towns because they were ill-treated by their husbands or because of misunderstandings in the families. Before the emergence of towns in the colonial era, these women ran away to the Maasai and Gusii, but after the appearance of towns they chose to go there because they expected to get jobs. This was more promising than going off to the Maasai or the Gusii where one ended up as a wife with no certainty that life would be better there than at home.[30] Yet another reason for the exodus of women to the towns, some Kipsigis people maintain, lay in the fact that colonialism brought cotton cloth and other attractive goods to the

---

[30]Interview with Martha Kurgat, Belgut, 21 September 1978.

towns: because some women wanted these goods but could not earn the money to purchase these things while at home, they went to the towns to try and earn this money.[31] Kipsigis marriage arrangements have also been blamed for causing women to leave home. Often marriage partners were selected by parents of the girl. In fact there were a few cases where a very young girl of below marriage age was traditionally married to a man in return for some material goods as bride price. Such a girl stayed with her parents until she was old enough to be married and then she was taken to her husband. The Kipsigis call this practice kibworeito lakwet. It is felt that some of the women in such arrangements ran away because they disliked their husbands.[32]

Husbands whose wives ran away to towns could demand return of the bride price given to the woman's parents. Whether the bride price was to be returned, however, depended on the situation of each individual case. If a woman had children with her husband, the bride price was not refunded. There is no evidence of children taken to towns by deserting wives. Sometimes if the family of the woman and that of her husband were friendly, in spite of the marriage breakdown, they still considered themselves relatives and hoped that the women would one day return and in that case no bride price was refunded. To get back the bride price, a deserted husband and his family had to

---

[31]Interview with Tuiya Korir, Belgut, 12 August 1978.

[32]Interview with Toroitich Chuma, Buret, 6 March 1978.

call elders together, discuss the case and let the elders decide whether or not he should have his bride price back.[33] In fact, some of these women who returned to their home areas after several years in the towns went back to their husbands and took whatever property they brought from the towns with them to their husbands' homes.[34] Any children born in towns out of other unions returned with their mothers to the matrimonial homes of these women and were entitled to the same privileges as those of other children in the home, including being provided with pieces of land to farm and build houses on, in the case of boys. Girls born in towns and returning with their mothers to the mother's husband were later married with the dowry going to these men just as if they were their own children.[35]

Some practices of pre-colonial Kipsigis life seem to have declined in the colonial period even though there is no obvious reason for this. One of these is the practice of wealthy old women getting themselves female spouses. If a woman owned large herds of cattle and her husband died before they had any children and she could not have any children because of any physical disability or age, she was allowed to "marry" a young women who could have children. Bride price was paid, as in any other marriage, but although the "wife" woman was expected to have children with relatives of the dead man, there was

---

[33]Interview with Taplelei Kurgat, Boito Buret, 1- March 1978.

[34]Interview with Kipruto Suge, Kericho, Belgut, 18 July 1978.

[35]Interview with Kositarny Munai, Chang'koi, Belgut, 19 July 1978.

no attempt to enforce this. The children then inherited the cattle and any other property of the "husband" woman and her dead husband. If a family had only daughters and wanted heirs, usually one of the girls and often the youngest was not allowed to get married but was expected to have children who were considered to be her parents' children.[36]

These practices no doubt still exist although apparently at a much more reduced level judging from the fact that in 1978 in Belgut and Buret, people said that these practices existed although they could not remember when they had last heard of them. Most people knew people born out of these types of arrangements, but most of them were adults in their forties or fifties. There was, however, one marriage between a woman and another woman for the purposes of getting an heir in Buret in 1977.

The "husband" of this marriage is Taprandich, a woman who was born and raised in Buret. According to her, she got pregnant before she was ready to get married in the sense that she was still uncircumcised at the onset of pregnancy. This was about 1920 and in those days the incidence of pregnancy before marriage was very rare; society usually ostracized such a woman and she had a hard time getting a husband. Even the one that made her pregnant was not allowed to marry her. If the girl happened also to be uncircumcised, this was then considered to be a violation of some taboo and the child was killed at

---

[36] Interview with Cheborge Turgut, Kapkatet, Buret, 5 June 1978.

birth or given away before the mother saw it. Taprandich's baby girl, who should have been killed according to tradition, did not get killed because Taprandich went to the nearby mission hospital and had the baby there and then left the child with the missionaries to look after while she went back to her parents. The missionaries insisted on keeping this child to save it from certain death that faced it had Taprandich taken it back to her parents. Taprandich herself was afraid of taking the child to her parents and since the missionaries had other children collected for the same reasons as hers, she decided to leave her baby there. She could have stayed at the mission, too, but she felt that she had already upset her parents by her pregnancy and hoped to make amends by staying with them and finding someone to marry her to give her parents a bride price.

After two years, however, Taprandich could not find a husband although she had gone through circumcision during this period and all the cleansing rites necessary to rid her of the evil of giving birth before being initiated. She was told by her parents and other people that while her child stayed alive no one would marry her and she was advised to kill the child. She went to the mission station with the poison given to her and, after staying with the child for two days, she fed her the poison and left, expecting her to die. The child later vomited the poison and did not die. Taprandich, however, eventually got married to Arap Chapkwony as his first wife, and he paid the necessary bride price. After many years with her, however, he married a second woman and then a third, because Taprandich could not

have children. The two later wives had children. Taprandich still lived with her husband and should have felt childless because her husband had these other children from the two later marriages. Taprandich's child left at the mission had also grown up, married and had children of her own whom Taprandich visited and related to as a grandmother. Her daughter gave her whatever material goods she needed. In any case Taprandich had her own cattle and felt that she needed children of her own to give the cattle to, so she decided to get a wife. Traditionally this would not have been permitted because she lived with a husband who had children, but because of the relaxation of social pressure over such matters as a result of the infrequency of such marriages, Taprandich was able to get a wife. Her husband approved and they all lived on Taprandich's husband's land. Taprandich's wife had one child by 1978, the time of the interview, and expected to have more.[37] This tradition and perhaps many others are no longer commonly practiced, apparently because of new customs and attitudes that came in with colonialism, the Christian church and Western thought. There is no evidence that anyone has deliberately tried to destroy these traditions.

In summary, with the coming of a monetarized economy in which men came to control the crops for sale as well as the marketing arrangements, women became dependent upon their husbands. This dependence increased as more household goods and other necessities such as

---

[37] Interview with Taprandich Cheres, Litein, Buret, 30 March 1978.

hoes became obtainable only from the marketplace on payment of cash. It is true that by the 1940s Kipsigis women were selling agricultural goods at the market, but these were usually vegetables that earned very little money compared to what their husbands could earn through the sale of milk, maize and tea in later years. Wage labor also was a male domain and when men participated in migrant labor, which in the case of the Kipsigis took the form of squatter labor, the women took over the burden of getting food for their families at home, and sometimes for those men who were away. The wages of a migrant laborer were not sufficient for his subsistence, especially as his wages were also needed to pay for those household goods that could be obtained only from the market as well as to pay taxes and school fees for the children. This in itself drives home the point that capitalism in a colonial economy is more exploitative than in a full-fledged capitalist economy: in the latter case, capitalist wages may not be sufficient to pay for the household labor of the wife but they can buy other daily necessities like clothes, food and so on, whereas in colonial capitalism, the wages are so low as to make a salaried laborer unable to pay for his subsistence, let alone that of his family. Instead, the family has to contribute to his upkeep. It may seem uneconomic for the laborer to continue work, but this is understood only by considering the fact that there are so few avenues for getting cash that people would work for low wages just to be able to buy some of the things they need and to pay taxes and school fees. While the economic changes of the colonial period are more fundamental and seem

to have affected women in adverse ways, there are other aspects of life that changed whose positive or negative value in the lives of the Kipsigis is difficult to assess but which do represent a departure from an earlier era.

CHAPTER VII

THE IMPACT OF CAPITALIST PENETRATION ON THE KIPSIGIS SOCIAL STRUCTURE

This chapter is a conclusion to the study of the penetration of capitalism in its various forms into the Kipsigis country in the colonial period. The focus of the study has been the linkages evolving out of the interaction of colonial capitalism with the Kipsigis social structures of the colonial period. The study has also examined the changing social relations among the Kipsigis as a result of colonial capitalism. The central thesis of the dissertation is that the coming of colonialism in its varied manifestations caused some changes in the Kipsigis social structure. Central among these changes was the development of a market-oriented rural group of producers. Not only did the crops grown by rural dwellers change with colonialism in order to meet the market requirements, but the producers themselves became differentiated as they became more involved in the monetary economy ushered in by colonialism. This chapter will attempt to analyze the social differentiation that developed in the Kipsigis countryside in the colonial period by first looking at the effects of colonial capitalism on the Kipsigis people in general and then by examining the development of social differentiation.

The Kipsigis of Belgut and Buret areas chosen for this study were relatively unaffected by pre-colonial merchant capital when

compared to some other East African peoples, such as the Kamba of Kenya, Nyamwezi of Tanzania or Baganda of Uganda, who were more extensively involved in the "long distance trade" of the pre-colonial period. Although merchant capital had entered Belgut and Buret by the time of colonization in 1895, its effects were comparatively insignificant. An example of this is the fact that goods sold by merchants, such as cotton cloth, beads, copper wire, and so on, were still regarded as ornaments by the Kipsigis as late as 1917 when the colonial administration was making attempts to force the Kipsigis into a monetary economy. As discussed in Chapter II, the colonial government employed extra-economic methods to force the Buret-Belgut Kipsigis people to be involved in a monetary economy. Taxation, corporal punishment, fines, imprisonment and threats were used by colonial officials to varying extents in the earlier years of colonialism. It was necessary to involve the Kipsigis in a money-oriented economy because only by doing so could the Kipsigis be made to contribute their labor or farm surplus to the colonial process. The imposition of colonial rule in Kenya brought with it a white settler farming community, foreign owned plantations, and an influx of merchants. The Kipsigis were affected by all these.

White settlement in Kericho district on the onset of colonialism caused land to be alienated from the Kipsigis in favor of the settlers. The result was a land shortage for the Kipsigis, especially for the grazing of animals. The shortage of land for individual family use, which by the 1940s had developed into a crisis as evidenced

by the numerous court cases by claimants of various land acreages, forced the Kipsigis to enclose land for individual family use in an attempt to overcome the consequences of the shortage of land. Plantation agriculture also caused alienation of land, further aggravating the shortage of land for the Kipsigis. However, the plantations also employed large numbers of people from outside the Kipsigis area. As the plantations grew only tea and no food crops, they had to rely on the Kipsigis for food supplies, which encouraged the maize production forced upon the Kipsigis by the colonial government. The shift to maize production from wimbi involved large sectors of Kipsigis society in a market economy. The merchants who entered Kipsigis country at the same time as colonialism further accentuated this involvement in a monetary economy by bringing goods that the Kipsigis became accustomed to buying and which later totally replaced their own "traditional" products such as clothing, household utensils, tools, and so on.

Colonial Capitalism and the Rural Kipsigis Social Structure

At the advent of colonialism, Kipsigis society was largely undifferentiated but the market-oriented economy of the colonial period led to the development of a differentiated rural society. In pre-colonial (or pre-capitalist) Kipsigis society, people produced goods essentially for their own use and exchanged only periodically, such as in times of famine or when they needed things they did not produce themselves, such as hoes. External exchange was not essential

for their existence and neither was accumulation, wherever it occurred, for purposes of investment. The mode of existence of the pre-colonial Kipsigis people did not yield classes that were not involved in agricultural production for their own existence. It is true to say that the orkoik did not on the whole do agricultural work. Although they received animals and sometimes grain from other rural dwellers, their families worked and lived like other people in the community. They did not form a class. The contention here is that the pre-colonial Kipsigis society was classless although there could be found people who commanded more political and/or spiritual powers, such as the orkoik who were relatively wealthier, especially in terms of how many animals they owned. With more animals, a man could marry more wives whose labor he could control so as to get more surplus from farming. As pointed out in Chapter VI, however, men were not completely free to dispose of women's surplus.

The practice of lending cattle to relatives or friends who had fewer cattle further reduced the number of animals that one actually had in his keeping. Cattle lent to relatives, friends or neighbors were looked after by those people for the benefit of the milk and blood obtainable from these animals. If the owner of the cattle wanted them back for any reason, it was customary that he leave at least one cow or calf with the person he lent the cattle to in appreciation for his work of herding the cattle.[1] It was unusual for

---

[1]Interview with Julia Tapkurkoi, Buret, 28 April 1978.

the owner to collect his animals without leaving any behind. In this way, those who did not have any animals of their own were assisted in accumulating some. Even if cattle were to be thought of as accumulated wealth, their owners would be different from capitalist accumulators because capitalist accumulators, to accumulate, use the labor of other people who, in turn, become dependent on this labor for their livelihood. This relationship has to persist for capitalism to survive. A similar relationship did not ordinarily develop between cattle keepers and other people in the community, especially those who were lent animals to herd, because very little labor was required to increase herds as they naturally reproduced. Where increasing of herds was to be done by raiding or by exchanging with food crops, the owners were personally responsible. Raiding, for example, was dangerous because of the fighting involved and meant that only those directly interested in acquiring animals would be involved. No class of laborers could be expected to develop for the sole purpose of looking after cattle. As farm work was organised around the family and collective labor (see Chapter VI) whenever extra labor was necessary, differentiation was limited.

With the coming of colonialism a peasantry became differentiated in the Kipsigis countryside. Although the characteristics of the peasantry vary from place to place, "small farming families" in Africa are not so dissimilar from "peasants" elsewhere that they deserve a special term any more than African peoples and cultural

groups warrant the term "tribes."[2] Teodor Shanin, in defining a peasantry, focuses on three major areas that he considers crucial in understanding any peasantry. He considers the relationship of the peasantry to other social groups in the society, their relationship to land and to the use and regulation of labor within the household.[3] In his own words:

> The peasantry consists of small agricultural producers who, with the help of simple equipment and the labour of their families, produce mainly for the fulfilment of obligations to the holders of political and economic power. . . . The profit and accumulation motives rarely appear in their pure and simple form, which makes the neat conceptual models of maximization of income, normal in a market economy, of most doubtful applicability to a peasant economy.[4]

Although peasants are usually dependent upon family labor for their own existence, they also produce for other social groups.[5] The surplus that is produced by the peasantry is passed on to other social groups through various mechanisms, such as the market, tithes, rents, or some form of taxation. For this to take place, there has to be some form of control over the peasants. The Kipsigis did not have a central political power before colonialism. Their political system has been classified as stateless where political decisions were made

---

[2]Lionel Cliffe, "General Observations on the Penetration of Capitalism," Department of Sociology, University of Dar es Salaam.

[3]Teodor, Shanin, "Peasantry as a Political Factor," in Teodor Shanin, ed., Peasant Societies (Harmondsworth: Hazell Watson and Viney, 1971), p. 240.

[4]Ibid.

[5]Interview with Josiah Arap Korir, Litein, 31 March, 1978.

collectively by elders of a geographical setting. Tribute was periodically paid to the orkoik, the spiritual leaders, and often, beer was brewed for elders whenever they sat to settle disputes between individuals or groups of people. The warring parties contribute this beer, and the guilty party was sometimes made to forfeit a goat or a cow, depending upon the magnitude of the crime to the elders. These animals were usually slaughtered and eaten collectively.[6] These were institutions that allowed the community to function, but there was no state system as we know it in the modern sense. There was no tax system, for example, to extract surplus from the rural dwellers or a developed market system to do this. Families remained self-sufficient to a large extent. Colonialism brought with it an alien state system whose local representatives, the chiefs, sub-chiefs and the administrative police, helped in extracting labor and surplus from rural dwellers by force or taxes. The introduction of new commodities on the market also led to a market exchange situation where surplus was extracted from rural dwellers through the market.

One of the characteristics of the peasantry given by Shanin is that of producing for other social groups as well as for their own families. This characteristic developed in Kericho district in response to the conditions brought about by colonialism. Colonialism in Kenya brought with it white settler farmers who had a stronger economic base than the rural African dwellers of the time and who were

---

[6] Ibid.

expected to farm on large-scale farms. If they did not have the capital, the state bailed them out. Land was alienated on their behalf from Africans and sold to them at cheap prices. White settler farmers, because of the extensive tracts of land available to them, were able to hire labor more cheaply than was the case for, say, the plantation farms. This was because they allowed the people they hired to make use of the extra land to graze their animals in return for work. In Kericho district, many Kipsigis people formed part of this cheap labor as a result of losing land through alienation. The Kipsigis in the rural areas also produced food and sold it to settler farmers to feed their employees. The tea plantation companies in Kericho further relied on the Kipsigis rural areas to produce surplus food to enable them to feed the laborers on these tea estates. Administrators for the colonial government also formed a "class" or stratum in the Kipsigis areas that, through various means, was able to accumulate property. Some of these administrators used the labor recruited for public works on their own farms from which they sold maize to improve their own economic conditions.[7] Over the years, this group has been joined and increased by others whose formal Western education enabled them to get jobs that made it possible for them to earn money and to own more property than was available to the average rural dwellers. Taxation, producing food for the market, and the vital role of money in Kipsigis society all came with colonialism and for this

---

[7] Interview with Ex-Chief Arap Tengecha, Kapkatet, Buret, August 1978.

reason we join Atieno-Odhiambo in saying, "The peasantry as an analytical category was a creation of colonialism."[8]

When Samir Amin first published his article in 1964 entitled "Class Struggle in Africa," it was anonymous, because in those days no one dared suggest that there were classes in Africa, let alone class struggle.[9] The fifteen years since Samir Amin's article have witnessed a substantial change of attitude to the point where many would concede to the existence of strata if not classes in the African society, although many people would still not accept the possibility of there being any class struggles in Africa. It is even more difficult for many people to accept that differentiation has taken place in rural Africa, although available evidence indicates that the rural dwellers in Africa are more than just a "bag of potatoes." In explaining how there was no peasantry in the Belgut-Buret area in the pre-colonial period, it has also become evident that there was no economic differentiation in the pre-colonial period in this area. There were people in the pre-colonial period who occupied special positions, such as the smiths, medicinemen and the orkoik, but their positions did not carry with them any economic or political power that they could use to control the labor or property of other people in the society.

---

[8] Atieno-Odhiambo, The Paradox of Collaboration and Other Essays (Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974), p. 94.

[9] Samir Amin, "Class Struggle in Africa," New Left Review, 1964.

them found out that they could sell it to make money for taxes and other things. To some people this made more sense than selling their cows to pay taxes as they did not want to lose all their wealth through taxation. In fact, many families for a long time lived on wimbi while they planted maize for sale. With the development of tea plantations around Kericho town, a ready market for maize was guaranteed for Kipsigis maize growers. By the 1940s, the Kipsigis were growing more maize than they could sell through the Kenya Farmers Association to the tea plantations and other parts of the country. This caused those who owned donkeys to sell their maize across their borders to Nyanza and to Maasailand. The Kipsigis had always traded with these neighbors. The ownership of a donkey therefore improved one's economic position because of increasing one's range of markets plus the fact that the donkey could be hired out. Some farmers eventually owned up to ten donkeys from which they made money transporting maize for other farmers.[10]

Another area related to maize production which led to some people being economically better off than others was ownership of oxen and ploughs. Before maize growing, wimbi, the staple grain crop, was planted on small pieces of land. Maize required large areas, particularly when grown for sale. People had to find ways of expanding the ploughed land. Family labor was utilised, but when ploughs could be bought which could be pulled by oxen, some people sought to own them.

---

[10]Interview with Chuma Arap Tegutwa, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 March 1978.

The money for buying ploughs was obtained mainly from selling cows, and was sometimes supplemented by money saved from selling maize.[11] Many more people than actually bought ploughs could have afforded to buy ploughs by selling their cattle, but this was a risk many people were unwilling to take, since it was not certain that one could make enough money from selling the maize to replace the cows sold.[12] As many of them also realised, money obtained from selling maize could quite easily be used for other necessities without ever replacing the cattle sold. The result was that not many people bought ploughs, but those who did became fairly well-off because they ploughed larger acreages of maize and therefore sold more, and also because they hired out their ploughs to neighbors who paid them. The arrival of grinding mills in the district had an identical effect on the economy of the people as that of ploughs, both in terms of how people acquired them and how they used them to own more. The Kipsigis were buying ploughs and flour mills as early as 1930.[13]

Trading in maize as middlemen would have allowed still more differentiation in rural Belgut-Buret area, but this role was dominated by the Indian traders. The Indians who set up shops in the trading centres at first waited for people to take the maize to their shops where they bought it and transported it to other parts of the

---

[11] Interview with Arap Maswai, Sotik, Buret, 10 March 1978.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Interview with Easto Arap Ng'eny, Boito, Buret, 16 May 1978.

country. In later years, they sent people with donkeys to buy maize directly from the growers, then loaded it on lorries and sold it elsewhere.[14] The would-be Kipsigis traders found this monopoly difficult to compete with and sought to throw Indians out of the villages though this did not remove the competition at trading centres.[15] Maize being a heavy and therefore expensive commodity to transport, together with the Indian competition, limited the number of Kipsigis people who could successfully be involved in it. In the 1950s, the Kipsigis of Buret attempted to form a cooperative whose purpose, among others, was to buy and sell maize, but this was controlled by the settler community through the Kenya Farmers Association. This was discussed more extensively in Chapter II.

People who got government jobs usually had access to extra money from salaries that they could invest in their farms to better their economic conditions. Among these were the chiefs, sub-chiefs, administrative police, and in later years, clerks of all grades. Teachers and agricultural officers also joined this group. This later group usually had some formal Western education that enabled them to get the jobs and allowed them a higher salary than, say, squatters on European farms or tea pickers on the tea estates. They moreover had the advantage of living off their own farms (in most cases) and earning a salary to supplement farm family production.

---

[14] Interview with Isaiah Arap Mang'esoi, Kapkatet, Buret, 15 April 1978.

[15] Interview with Edwin Munai, Chebang'ang', Belgut, September 1978.

The church, though it did not give people salaries, had an influence on how people organised their production on their farms. The mission station at Litein under Earl Anderson had often been cited as being as much involved in agricultural activities as it was in spiritual matters.[16] A few of the people who went into mission stations learned some trade such as carpentry, but most of them worked on mission farms.[17] What was important was not being taught how to farm, because no major farming skill was taught and people could farm without any of the training that missions might have had. What was important was the attitudes that people acquired through the church. The Christian ethic of "working hard" and being successful was ingrained, and those who took this seriously did manage to advance considerably in the rural economy of Belgut and Buret.

A major source of differentiation in Belgut and Buret came from the sharing of land. Land in the pre-colonial period was not scarce and was not owned by individuals. With colonialism, however, some land was alienated for European settlement, plantation tea firms, and also as Crown land, all of which cut down on the amount of land available to the Kipsigis. What eventually led to the individualization of land, however, was the growing of maize. There was at first the need to protect the maize crop from the cattle and other animals, so people set up fences around their crops. Most of these fences

---

[16] Interview with John Arap Bolsoi, Kericho, Belgut, 14 July 1978.

[17] Interview with Kibor Arap Chuma, Kericho, Buret, August 1978.

later became permanent and cut down on grazing land in particular. Those who did not enclose land for maize or were away as squatters while this enclosing was taking place were to lose greatly when the enclosed land was legally recognised in the 1940s. Those with abundant land were then able to grow as much maize as they wanted and still keep animals. Those who lost out or had only small pieces of land left had only limited chances of economic mobility through agricultural production.

Through maize production and ownership of ploughs and flour mills, trade, salaried employment differentiation on the Kipsigis countryside evolved with colonialism. By the early 1940s in Belgut and Buret, land ownership ranged from about ten acres per family to over one hundred acres for the better-off families.[18] The employment of labor to supplement family labor had developed by the early 1950s where people farming large acreages of land needed extra labor for which they could afford to pay. The employment of labor by those peasants who were able to pay for it became more widespread with the introduction of small-scale tea in the last decade of colonialism. Most of the tea growers interviewed employed casual labor at the time of planting tea though many more hired labor which was relatively permanent when the tea was ready for plucking three to four years later. The labor hired by tea growers was usually limited to one person and additional labor on a daily basis whenever the work load demanded it.

---

[18] This statistic is computed from random samples of villages in Buret and Belgut.

The employees were given cash payments in most cases although some of them got paid in kind such as being given maize in part payment for their labor. The employees usually worked closely with members of the family, especially the wives and whatever children were not in school. If the husbands, the owners of the tea, were not out seeking money elsewhere, they also worked with their employees on the farm.

It must be mentioned, however, that a tiny group, in fact a handful of individuals who got into tea production could be called capitalist farmers if the amount of labor employed is to be used as a yardstick. These people employed up to ten workers and in most cases lived away from their farms working at well-paying jobs elsewhere in the country. While the average tea grower has about one acre of tea, some of these wealthier farmers had about ten or more acres of tea. The employees on these farms tended to work on their own with a supervisor. Their interaction with the employers was limited and there were cases where a manager was employed to run the farm on behalf of the owner. There was one such farm in Koiwa of thirteen acres of tea and another one in Buret with thirty-five acres.[19] This category of farmers belongs more to the 1970s than to the colonial period and has been mentioned here to illustrate that the trend in the rural Kipsigis area seems to be towards more land enclosure and more employment of labor although at a very limited level as evidenced by the scarcity of such farms in the area.

---

[19] The farm in Koiwa belonged to a District Commissioner while the other belonged to an even higher government official.

Although it is the tea growers who have mainly been involved in employing labor, it is also true that some others have also employed labor. This has been the case for those who grow large acreages of maize or those who keep dairy cattle of the high-breed stock and who hire labor for milking the cows and distributing the milk.[20] In any event, for analytical purposes, one question needs to be asked: when does a peasant cease to be a peasant to become a capitalist farmer? In answer to this we join Alpers in saying of peasants:

> On the one hand, they are the largest single exploited group in relation to the capitalist system; on the other hand, through their tendency to employ labor in order to increase production for sale, they embody a strong potential, which in some areas has already been realised, for developing into a class of rural capitalist farmers. Until a rural cultivator has actually reached that stage, however, I think we must consider him still a peasant whatever the high degree of exploitation he is himself practicing. Within the process of peasantization then, we should expect to find almost at once the development of rich, middle, and poor peasants according to the degree of labor employed in relation to the labor input of themselves and their own families.[21]

The development of capitalism is a higher level of material development and with the intrusion of capitalism into the Kipsigis rural area, one would expect a development of the forces of production, the proletarization of the economy and a general rise in the material conditions of the people. To begin with, there was some

---

[20] Interview with David Arap Lang'at, Sitotwet, Belgut, 10 June 1978.

[21] Edward A. Alpers, "Peasantization and Differentiation in Eastern Tanzania During the Nineteenth Century: An Aspect of Rural Class Formation," History Seminar, University of Dar es Salaam, August 2, 1973.

proletarization mainly of people moving from their rural homes to urban areas or to settler farms, but because of the failure of the urban areas to develop an industrial sector that could absorb these people economically, the movement was limited. In fact, most of the urban employed relied on rural areas for food which they collected periodically. They on their part helped provide some of the much-needed cash to the rural areas. In the final analysis the rural people had to settle down to a life of a peasantry with limited avenues for advancement. Growing and selling crops was not an especially well-paying exercise. Kericho district was not one of the areas designated as labor reservoirs in Kenya, and the Kipsigis people had a hard time trying to get salaried work as there had developed a myth that they were inefficient labor.[22] The Kipsigis, as a result, found it easier to obtain jobs as squatters on settler farms because the settlers paid lower salaries and would take any labor they could get.

Being a squatter on settler land was very precarious, for the squatter could be asked to leave for any number of reasons. As a consequence the squatters were insecure. What is important for our purposes here is to note that squatter labor was not proletarianized labor, for the squatters usually returned to a rural life in their homes. In fact, by the 1950s, most of these squatters were returning to the Kipsigis countryside, because the "Mau Mau" uprising so frightened the settlers that a lot of them got rid of their labor in

---

[22]KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1930.

preparation for departure from the country. Most of the squatters who returned to their old homes got only small pieces of land or none at all because land had been shared out in their absence.[23] In fact, some had to migrate to Narok district or Nandi where land was still plentiful.[24] In the final analysis, then, the intrusion of capitalism into rural Kericho district led to the development of a peasantry producing surplus to run the state machinery, while this peasantry became differentiated with time.

This dissertation has attempted to show that the fairly self-sufficient, family-oriented production of the pre-colonial Kipsigis economy was transformed by the coming of colonialism to an economy that produced for the market. A colonial government was formally established in Kenya in 1895, and, during the decade that followed, colonial officials were sent to Kericho district and the recruitment of local colonial officials followed. These officials helped the government to force the Kipsigis into growing maize which was the single most important cause for the Kipsigis' involvement in a market economy. Although force and threats were used to get the Kipsigis to grow maize in the initial period, taxes and other monetary requirements soon forced them to grow maize voluntarily. The introduction of plantation tea into the district which hired many people provided a market for Kipsigis maize producers and also a salary for those

---

[23] Interview with Tuiya Korir, Belgut, 12 August 1978.

[24] Interview with Kositang Munai, Belgut, 19 July 1978.

Kipsigis people who were able to get jobs on the tea estates. The coming of white settler farmers into Kericho district was also a creation of the colonial government. The settlers together with the plantation tea firms reduced the amount of land available to the Kipsigis and this caused the Kipsigis to cut down on cattle keeping, their only apparent wealth. The presence of the settlers and the tea plantations as employers of labor, further hastened the transformation of the Kipsigis into a market-oriented economy in the sense that some of the Kipsigis people were able to earn money from these areas.

Indian traders came into Kenya with the building of the Mombasa-Kisumu railway which was started in 1895 and completed in 1901. These traders penetrated the rural areas and were in Kipsigis country before 1901. Their role in transforming the economic structure of the Kipsigis lay in the fact that they introduced goods into the area that caused the Kipsigis to seek money in order to purchase them. The Indians also bought farm produce from the Kipsigis. While at first they sold a limited range of goods such as blankets, beads, salt, sugar and a few other things, by the 1930s they sold a wider variety of goods, including practically all household utensils, hoes, cloth and so on. These things soon became necessities to the Kipsigis. As demands for money rose, maize was not a sufficient source of income and people tried growing other crops such as wattle trees, potatoes, beans and other vegetables, but none of these was satisfactory, mainly because the market was limited. Africans were not allowed to grow coffee or tea or to keep high-grade cattle in the colonial period,

and this frustrated their attempts to earn more money to pay for their day-to-day necessities. A peasant had indeed been created who depended on the family labor mainly, but produced for a market to supplement his income and to enable him to pay taxes. Although a small portion of the peasantry was able to employ labor in the last decade or two in the colonial period, it appears that the larger majority of that society still had to rely on their cattle to pay for the basic expenses. Commenting on this situation, the district commissioner for Kericho district in his annual report in 1958 said, "In African areas the lack of cash crops continues to be a basic defect in the economy of the average Kipsigis family. Many a farmer still has to sell capital (usually in the form of cattle) to obtain ready cash to pay his taxes and recurrent expenses."[25] It should, of course, be remembered that the Kipsigis had already lost a lot of animals in order to pay collective fines for cattle theft and also to the "war effort" during the two world wars.

The development of capitalism in Britain led to the destruction of the peasantry because land became enclosed for more intensive farming while the peasants were ejected into the emerging industries as a proletariat. In Kericho district, the intrusion of capitalism from outside created a peasantry where there was none and then failed to transform this into a proletariat by the end of the colonial period. The trend since then does not suggest any movement towards a

---

[25] KNA.DC/KER/1/3. 1958.

proletariat. The explanations for this lie largely in the nature of colonial capitalism. Colonial capitalism had its roots in an industrialised developed world. For this reason, it sought raw materials and markets in the outside world. Tea plantation firms in Kericho were owned and controlled in Britain. In fact, their important tea marketing took place there. Profits made by these plantations therefore stayed in the mother country and did not return to Kipsigis country for investment in other areas of development. White settler farmers also repatriated surplus to their mother country. The colony became a market for industrial goods which in the case of Kericho district and the whole country in general were marketed by Indian traders. These goods destroyed possibilities for local production and led to dependence on the industrialised world for manufactured goods. The Kipsigis peasantry became directly connected with international capitalism through its role as a producer of food crops to support the plantation farms, the settler farms and also the colonial state. By being involved in buying commercial goods, the peasantry also became directly involved in the operation of industrial capitalism by buying industrial goods and therefore in repatriating surplus from the colonised economy to the developed world. This structural relationship did not necessarily end with the removal of colonialism, as capitalism is so well entrenched as to function after formal independence is achieved. This has remained the case in Kericho district.

SOURCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

List of Interviewees

Kiplang'at Arap Too. Kosumek, Buret.

Tiongik Arap Mang'esoi. Litein, Buret.

Okello Onyango. Kericho town, Belgut

Mariko Nyarunda. Kericho town, Belgut.

Joseph Osewe. Kericho town, Belgut.

Joel Aluda. Kericho town, Belgut

Oluoch Omolo. Kericho town, Belgut.

Amos Chemaner. Litein, Buret.

Chuma Arap Tegutwa. Kapkatet, Buret.

Cheborge Arap Korir. Sitotwet, Belgut.

Arap Maswai. Sitotwet, Buret.

Rasto Arap Ng'eny. Boito, Buret.

Isaiah Arap Mang'esoi. Kapkatet, Buret.

Josiah Arap Korir. Litein, Buret.

Edwin Munai. Chabang'ang', Belgut.

Kibor Arap Chuma. Kericho town, Belgut.

Arap Tengecha. Kapkatet, Buret.

John Arap Belsoi. Kericho town, Belgut.

Cheborge Arap Maina. Boito, Buret.

David Arap Lang'at. Sitotwet, Belgut.

Joel Arap Tegutwo. Kapkatet, Buret.

Cheres Arap Ng'eno. Kericho town, Belgut.

Josiah Arap Maritim. Litein, Buret.

Kiplang'at Arap Kilel. Sosiot, Belgut.

Cheres Arap Ng'asura. Litein, Buret.

Chepkemoi Kilel. Kapkygerwet, Belgut.

Isaiah Arap Mibei. Samuget, Buret.

Paulo Arap Maswai. Kosumek, Buret.

Tolonyi Arap Chepkwony. Litein, Buret.

Chuma Arap Yepoi. Litein, Buret.

Kipkoske Arap Tegutwo. Chemoiben, Buret.

Joseph Arap Terer. Chagaik, Belgut.

Kiptoo Arap Mosong'. Kamolong', Buret.

Kiplang'at Arap Tegutwa. Kericho town, Belgut.

Joseph Arap Keino. Kosumek, buret.

Lelgo Arap Kirui. Kapsigiroi, Belgut.

Tiong'ik Arap Kogo. Kapkugerwet, Belgut.

Kipkorir Arap Chirchir. Kapsigiroi, Belgut.

Kibet Arap Moset. Kibianga, Belgut.

Cheptoo Kurgat. Kapsoit, Belgut.

Kimunai Arap Too. Kapsigiroi, Belgut.

Cheboo Chepkwony. Kabianga, Belgut.

Grace Birech. Kapsoit, Belgut.

Samuel Arap Chumba. Roret, Buret.

Jeremiah Arap Sang'. Kapsigiroi, Belgut.

Kigen Arap Laboso. Kapkugerwet, Belgut.

Chelimo Tangus. Kapsoit, Belgut.

Chelang'at Korir. Roret, Buret.

Lana Laboso. Kapsigiroi, Belgut.

John Arap Marta. Kabianga, Belgut.

Mariko Arap Chuma. Samuget, Buret.

Joel Arap Limo. Kapkugerwet, Buret.

Kipketer Arap Yegon. Kabianga, Belgut.

Kipng'eno Arap Lelei. Samuget, Buret.

Taprandich Kurgat. Sosiot, Belgut.

Elijah Arap Belyon. Cheborge, Buret.

Kiptonui Arap Kenduiwa. Litein, Buret.

Jonathan Arap Ng'eno. Kapkarin, Buret.

Joseph Arap Tegutwo. Kericho town, Belgut.

Kipkirui Arap Chepkwony. Sitotwet, Belgut.

Kiplang'at Arap Kogo. Kericho town, Belgut.

Kiptoo Arap Kirui. Sotik, Buret.

Tolonyi Arap Koske. Chebang'ang', Belgut.

Julia Tapkurkoi. Cheborge, Buret.

Kipkorir Arap Maswai. Boito, Buret.

Solomon Arap Rote. Lalagik', Buret.

Kipkirui Arap Kenduiwa. Kapkatet, Buret.

Jane Rono. Sosiot, Belgut.

Jona Arap Kimi. Sitotwet, Belgut.

Tolonyi Arap Kenduiwa. Cheborge, Buret.

Tapkili Lang'at. Kericho town, Belgut.

Martha Kurgat. Kericho town, Belgut.

Tuiya Korir. Chagaik, Belgut.

Toroitich Chuma. Litein, Buret.

Taplelei Kurgat. Boito, Buret.

Kipruto Arap Suge. Kericho town, Belgut.

Kositany Munai. Chang'koi, Belgut.

Cheborge Turgut. Kepkatet, Buret.

Taprandich Cheres. Litein, Buret.

Kipkoech Arap Too. Kapsoit, Belgut.

Archival Sources

Nyanza Province, Annual Reports. 1907-1960.

Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports. 1907-1960.

Rift Valley Province, Annual Reports. 1907-1960.

Kericho District, Annual Reports. 1907-1960.

Books

Alpers, E. A. Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa. Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1975.

Altrincham, Lord. Kenya's Opportunity: Memories, Hopes, and Ideas. London: Faber and Faber, 1955.

Amin, Samir. Neo-Colonialism in West Africa. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973.

_____. Accumulation on a World Scale. Vol. 1. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Arrighi, Giovanni and Saul, John S. Essays on the Political Economy of Africa. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973.

Asad, Talal, ed. Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter. London: Ithaca Press, 1973.

Atieno, Odhiambo, E. S. The Paradox of Collaboration and Other Essays. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974.

Bach, Eve. The Youngest Lion: Early Farming Days in Kenya. London, 1934.

Balandier, Georges. The Sociology of Black Africa. New York: Praeger, 1970.

Baran, Paul A. The Political Economy of Growth. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1957.

Bennett, George. Kenya: A Political History; The Colonial Period. London: Oxford University Press, 1963.

Bernstein, Henry, ed. Underdevelopment and Development. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin, 1973.

Bienen, Henry. Kenya: The Politics of Participation and Control. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

Blixen, Karen. Out of Africa. New York: Random House, 1938.

Braverman, Harry. Labour and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Brett, E. A. Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1919-1939. New York: NOK Publishers, 1973.

Brown, L. H. Agricultural Change in Kenya, 1945-1960. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1968.

Clayton, Anthony and Savage, Donald C. Government and Labour in Kenya, 1895-1963. London: Frank Cass, 1974.

Collins, Robert O., ed. Problems in the History of Colonial Africa, 1860-1960. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1970.

Cox, Oliver. Capitalism as a System. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1964.

Cranworth, Lord. A Colony in the Making. London: Macmillan, 1912.

_____. Kenya Chronicles. London: Macmillan, 1939.

Crowder, Michael. West Africa Under Colonial Rule. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

Davidson, Basil. Africa in History. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Davis, A. and Robertson, H. G. Chronicles of Kenya. London: Cecil Palmer, 1928.

Dilley, Marjorie R. British Policy in Kenya. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.

Dobb, Maurice. Studies in the Development of Capitalism. New York: International Publishers, 1963.

Eliot, Sir Charles. The East African Protectorate. 3rd ed. New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966.

Engels, Frederick. Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State. Chicago: C. H. Kerr and Co., 1902.

Etherington, Dan M. Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973.

Fage, J. D. An Atlas of African History. London: E. Arnold, 1958.

Fanon, Frantz. The Wretched of the Earth. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

_____. Black Skins, White Masks. New York: Grove Press, 1967.

_____. Towards the African Revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967.

Fern, Hugh. An African Economy. London: Oxford University Press, 1961.

Fieldhouse, D. K. The Colonial Empires. New York: Delacorte Press, 1966.

Frank, Andre G., ed. Underdevelopment or Revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Furtado, Celso. Development and Underdevelopment. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

Gann, L. H. and Duignan, Peter. The Burden of Empire. New York: Praeger, 1967.

Gill, Richard T. Economic Development Past and Present. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, 1967.

Gluckman, M. Politics, Law and Ritual in Tribal Society. London: Oxford University Press, 1967.

Godelier, Maurice. Rationality and Irrationality in Economics. London: NLB, 1972.

Goody, Jack. Technology, Tradition and the State in Africa. London: Oxford University Press, 1971.

_____. Production and Reproduction: A Comparative Study of the Domestic Domain. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.

Gray, Richard and Birmingham, David, eds. Pre-Colonial African Trade: Essays on Trade in Central and Eastern Africa before 1900. London: Oxford University Press, 1970.

Gregory, J. W. The Great Rift Valley. London: John Murray, 1896.

Gutkind, P. and Wallerstein, I., eds. The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976.

Hafkin, Nancy J. and Bay, Edna G., eds. Women in Africa. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

Harles, C. R. The Culture and Marketing of Tea. London: Oxford University Press, 1974.

_____. Tea Growing. London: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Heyer, Judith; Maitha, J. D.; and Senga, W. M. Agricultural Development in Kenya. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1976.

Hill, M. F. Permanent Way. Vol. 1: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway. Nairobi: East African Railways and Harbors, 1950.

Hill, Polly. The Migrant Coco-Farmers of Southern Ghana: A Study in Rural Capitalism. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963.

Hindess, Barry and Hirst, Q. Paul. Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1975.

Hobley, C. W. From Chartered Company to Crown Colony. London: Witherby, 1929.

Hollis, A. C. The Nandi. London: Oxford University Press, 1909.

Hopkins, A. G. An Economic History of West Africa. London: Longman, 1973.

Huntingford, G. W. B. The Southern Nilo-Hamites. London: International African Institute, 1953.

_____. The Nandi of Kenya: Tribal Control in a Pastoral Society. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1953.

Huxley, Elspeth. White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya. London: Mcmillan, 1935.

_____. Settlers of Kenya. Nairobi: Highway Press, 1948.

Iliffe, John. A Modern History of Tanganyika. London: Cambridge University Press, 1979.

Ingham, Kenneth. A History of East Africa. London: Longmans, 1963.

Jackson, Sir Frederick. Early Days in East Africa. 2nd ed. London: Dawson, 1969.

Jalee, Piere. The Third World in World Economy. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1969.

Kay, Geoffrey. Development and Underdevelopment: A Marxist Analysis. London: The MacMillan Press, 1975.

Kenya Government. National Atlas of Kenya. 3rd ed. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1970.

Kilson, Martin. Political Change in a West African State: A Study of the Modernization Process in Sierra Leone. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Krapf, J. L. Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labours, during an Eighteen Years Residence in Eastern Africa. London: Trübner, 1860.

Labouret, Henri. Africa Before the White Man. New York: Walker and Co., 1962.

La Fontaine, S. H. and Mower, J. H. Local Government in Kenya. Nairobi: Eagle Press, 1955.

Leys, Colin. Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism. London: Heinemann, 1975.

Leys, Norman. Kenya. London: The Hogarth Press, 1924.

Low, D. A. Lion Rampant: Essays in the Study of British Imperialism. London: Frank Cass, 1973.

Lugard, Lord. The Diaries of Lord Lugard. Vol. 1. Edited by Margery Perham. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1959.

_____. The Rise of Our East African Empire. Vol. 1. London: Blackwood, 1893.

MacDonald, J. R. L. Soldiering and Surveying in British East Africa. London: Arnold, 1897.

MacGillivray, Sir D. Report on the Organisation of Agriculture. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1958.

Mamdani, Mahmood. Politics and Class Formation in Uganda. London: Heinemann, 1976.

Marris, P. and Sommerset, A. African Businessmen. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971.

Matson, A. T. Nandi Resistance to British Rule, 1890-1906. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972.

McDermott, P. L. British East Africa or IREA. London: Chapman and Hall, 1893.

McLoughlin, Peter F. M. Research on Agricultural Development in East Africa. New York: Agricultural Development, 1967.

Meinertzhagen, R. Kenya Diary, 1902-1906. Edinburgh: Oliver and Bond, 1957.

Mungeam, G. H. British Rule in Kenya, 1895-1912. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966.

Munro, J. F. Africa and the International Economy, 1800-1960: An Introduction to the Modern Economic History of Africa South of the Sahara. London: J. M. Dent, 1976.

_____. Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands, 1889-1939. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975.

Mwanzi, Henry A. A History of the Kipsigis. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1977.

Nkrumah, Kwame. Neo-Colonialism: The Last Stage of Imperialism. London: Nelson, 1965.

_____. Africa Must Unite. New York: International Publishers, 1970.

Nurkse, Ragnar. Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953.

Ochieng, William R. An Outline History of Nyanza up to A.D. 1914. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1974.

_____. An Outline History of the Rift Valley up to A.D. 1900. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975.

O'Connor, A. M. An Economic Geography of East Africa. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1971.

Odingo, Richard S. The Kenya Highlands: Land Use and Agricultural Development. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971.

_____. A Study of Agrarian Change in Kenya with Special Reference to Kericho District. Nairobi: Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations Study, 1973.

Ogot, B. A. A History of the Southern Luo. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967.

Ogot, B. A. and Kieran, J. A. Zamani: A Survey of East African History. Nairobi: Longmans, 1968.

Ominde, S. H. Land and Population Movement in Kenya. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1968.

Orchardson, I. The Kipsigis. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1961.

Padmore, George. Africa: How Britain Rules Africa. London: Wishart Books, 1936.

Paige, Jeffrey. Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World. New York: The Free Press, 1975.

Peristiany, J. C. The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964.

Pim, Sir Alan. Colonial Agricultural Production. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1957.

Reed, Evelyn. Problems of Women's Liberation. New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970.

Rhodes, Robert I., ed. Underdevelopment and Revolution. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1970.

Richards, Audrey. East African Chiefs. New York: Praeger, 1960.

Robinson, Ronald; Gallagher, John; and Denny, Alice. Africa and the Victorians. New York: Doubleday, 1968.

Rodney, Walter. How Europe Underdeveloped Africa. London: Bogle-L'Ouveture Publishers, 1972.

Ross, W. McGregor. Kenya From Within. 2nd ed. London: Frank Cass, 1968.

Sandbrook, R. Proletarians and African Capitalism: The Kenya Case, 1960-1972. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975.

Sarkar, G. K. The World Tea Economy. London: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Saul, John S. The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1979.

Shanin, Teodor. The Awkward Class: Political Sociology of a Peasantry in a Developing Society, 1910-1925. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971.

_____, ed. Peasants and Peasant Societies. Bucks: Hazell Watson and Viney, 1971.

Shivji, Issa G. Tanzania: The Silent Class Struggle. Dar es Salaam: Tanzania Publishing House, 1973.

Sorrenson, M. P. K. Origins of European Settlement in Kenya. Oxford: University Press, 1968.

Stern, N. H. An Appraisal of Tea Production in Kenya: An Experiment with the Little Mirrilees Method. Paris: Development Centre of OECD, 1972.

Sweezy, P. M. The Theory of Capitalist Development. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1956.

Swynnerton, R. J. M. A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya. Nairobi: Government Printer, 1954.

Szentes, Tamás. The Political Economy of Underdevelopment. Budapest: Center for Afro-Asian Research of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 1971.

Terray, E. Marxism and Primitive Societies. London: Monthly Review Press, 1972.

Tignor, Robert. The Colonial Transformation of Kenya. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Ukers, William H. All About Tea. New York: The London Tea and Coffee Trade Journal Company, 1935.

Van Zwanenberg, R. M. Colonial Capitalism and Labour in Kenya, 1919-1939. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1975.

Van Zwanenberg, R. M. A. and King, Anne. An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, 1800-1970. London: Macmillan Press, 1975.

Vansina, Jan. Kingdoms of the Savanna. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1966.

Wickizer, V. D. Coffee, Tea and Cocoa. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1951.

Were, Gideon S. A History of the Abaluyia of Western Kenya. Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House, 1967.

Williams, Eric. Capitalism and Slavery. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1974.

Woodis, Jack. An Introduction to Neo-Colonialism. New York: International Publishers, 1967.

_____. Africa, the Roots of Revolt. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960.

Wolff, Richard D. The Economics of Colonialism: Britain in Kenya. London: Heinemann, 1974.

Articles

Alavi, Hamza. "Peasant Classes and Primordial Loyalties." The Journal of Peasant Studies (October, 1973).

_____. "Imperialism Old and New." Socialist Register (1964): 104-26.

Alpers, E. A. "Rethinking African Economic History." Kenya Historical Review 2 (1973).

Amin, Samir. "The Class Struggle in Africa." Revolution 1 (January 1964): 23-47.

_____. "Modes of Production and Social Formations." Ufahamu 4 (1974).

Balandier, Georges. "The Colonial Situation: A Theoretical Approach." In Social Change: The Colonial Situation. Edited by Immanuel Wallerstein. New York: Wiley, 1966.

Barton, C. J. J. T. "Notes on the Kipsigis or Lumbwa Tribe of Kenya Colony." Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute 53 (1923): 42-78.

Barwell, C. W. "A Note on Some Changes in the Economy of the Kipsigis Tribe (Kenya)." Journal of African Administration 8 (April 1956): 95-101.

Bohannan, P. "The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy." Journal of Economic History 19 (1959).

Clayton, E. "A Note on the Alien Enclave and Economic Development." East African Economic Review 10 (June 1963).

Cliffe, Lionel. "Rural Class Formation in East Africa." Journal of Peasant Studies 4 (January 1977).

Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine. "Research into an African Mode of Production." In Perspectives on the African Past. Edited by M. Klein and G. W. Johnson. Boston: Little Brown, 1972.

Deere, Carmen Diana. "Rural Women's Subsistence Production in the Capitalist Periphery." Review of Radical Political Economics 8 (1976): 1-8.

Depelchin, Jacques. "A Contribution to the Study of Pre-Capitalist Modes of Production: Uvira Zone (Eastern Zaire), c. 1800-1937." African Economic History Review 2 (Spring 1975): 1-6.

Dos Santos, Theotonio. "The Concept of Social Classes." Science and Society 34 (1972).

Ehret, C. "Cattle-Keeping and Milking in Eastern and Southern African History: The Linguistic Evidence." Journal of African History 8 (1967).

Fallers, Lloyd. "Can African Cultivators Be Called Peasants?" Current Anthropology 2 (1961).

Feder, Ernest. "The New World Bank Programme for the Self-Liquidation of the Third World Peasantry." Journal of Peasant Studies 3 (April 1976): 343-54.

Foster-Carter, Aidan. "The Modes of Production Controversy." New Left Review 107 (1978): 47-77.

_____. "Neo-Marxist Approaches to Development." In Sociology and Development. Edited by E. De Kadt and G. Williams. London: Tavistock Publications, 1974.

Good, Kenneth. "Settler Colonialism: Economic Development and Class Formation." Journal of Modern African Studies 14 (1976): 4.

Goody, Jack. "Feudalism in Africa." Journal of African History 4 (1963): 1-18.

Hay, Margaret. "Local Trade and Ethnicity in Western Kenya." African Economic History Review 2 (Spring 1975): 7-13.

Hobley, C. W. "Anthropological Studies in Kavirondo and Nandi." Journal of Anthropological Institute (1903).

Jones, W. O. "Economic Man in Africa." Food Research Institute Studies, Stanford 1 (1960): 107-34.

Klein, Martin. "African Social History." African Studies Review 15 (April 1972).

Lang'at, S C. "Some Aspects of Kipsigis History Before 1914." In Ngano: Nairobi Historical Studies 1: Studies in Traditional Modern East African History. Edited by Brian G. McIntosh. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969.

Leitner, Kerstin. "On Kenyan Agricultural Workers." Review of African Political Economy 6 ( ): 34-54.

Magubane, B. "Crisis in African Sociology." East African Journal 5 (1968): 21-40.

Magut, P. K. Arap. "The Rise and Fall of the Nanci Orkoiyot." In Ngano: Nairobi Historical Studies 1: Studies in Traditional Modern East African History. Edited by Brian G. McIntosh. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969.

Manners, R. A. "Land Use, Labour and the Growth of a Market Economy in Kipsigis Country." In Markets in Africa. Edited by Paul J. Bohannon and George Dalton. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1962.

_____. "The Kipsigis Culture Change in a 'Model' East African Tribe." In Contemporary Change in Traditional Societies. Edited by J. H. Steward. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967.

Manning, Patrick. "Analyzing the Costs and Benefits of Colonialism." African Economic History Review 1 (1974): 15-22.

Mason, M. 'Captive and Client Labour and the Economy of Bida Emirate: 1857-1901." Journal of African History 14 (1973).

McWilliam, W. D. "The Kenya Tea Industry." The East African Economics Review 6 (July 1959).

Meillassoux, C. "From Reproduction to Production." Economy and Society 1 (1972): 93-105.

Ng'ang'a, Mukaru D. "Cash Crops and Class Formation: The Case of the Gatanga Coffee Growers' Co-operative Society." Journal of Eastern African Research and Development 6 (1976).

Ogot, B. A. "Kenya Under the British, 1895-1963." In Zamani: A Survey of East African History. Edited by B. A. Ogot and J. A. Kieran. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969.

O'Laughlin, Bridget. "Production and Reproduction: Meillassoux's Femmes, Graniers et Capitaux." Critique of Anthropology 8 (1977): 3-32.

Oruku, H. "Marxism and African History." Kenya Historical Review 2 (1973).

Poulantzas, Nicos. "On Social Classes." New Left Review 78 (March-April 1973).

_____. "Internationalization of Capitalist Relations and the Nation State." Economy and Society 3 (1972): 145-79.

Rey, P. "The Lineage Mode of Production." Critique of Anthropology 3 (1975): 27-79.

Rimmer, Douglas. "The Economics of Colonialism." Journal of African History 19 (1978).

Saul, J. "African Peasants and Revolution." Review of African Political Economy 1 (1974): 41-68.

Skinner, E. P. "Labour Migration and Its Relationship to Socio-Cultural Change in Mossi Society." Africa 30 (1960): 375-401.

Smith, M. G. "On Segmentary Lineage Systems." Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute 86 (1956).

Tignor, R. L. "Colonial Chiefs in Chiefless Societies." Journal of Modern African Studies 9 (1971).

Tosh, J. "Stateless Society: A Case Study from Northern Uganda." Journal of African History 14 (1973).

Uzoigwe, G. N. "The Mombasa-Victoria Railway, 1890-1902: Imperial Necessity, Humanitarian Venture or Economic Imperialism?" Kenya Historical Review 4 (1976).

Vansina, Jan. "Long-distance Trade Routes in Central Africa." Journal of African History 4 (1962).

Wallerstein, I. "The Three Stages of African Involvement in World Economy." In The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa. Edited by P. Gutkind and I. Wallerstein. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1976.

Wickizer, V. D. "Plantation Crops in Tropical Agriculture." Tropical Agriculture (July 1958).

_____. "The Smallholder in Tropical Export-crop Production." Food Research Institute Studies, Stanford 1 (1960): 49-99.

_____. "The Plantation System in the Development of Tropical Economies." Journal of Farm Economics (February 1951).

Wrigley, C. C. "Kenya: The Patterns of Economic Life, 1902-1945." In History of East Africa. Edited by V. T. Harlow and E. M. Chilver. Vol. 2. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965.

Yoshida, M. "The Protected Development of European Agriculture in Kenya before the Second World War." Journal of Rural Development (1971).

Dissertations and Theses

Londsdale, J. M. "A Political History of Nyanza, 1883-1945." Ph.D., Cambridge, 1963.

McWilliam, W. D. "The East African Tea Industry, 1920-1956: A Case Study in the Development of a Plantation Industry." B. Phil., Oxford, 1957.

Mononik, Arap Korir. "The Plantation Economy in Kericho District and Related Phenomena to c. 1960." B.A., University of Nairobi, 1976.

Unpublished Papers

Bernstein, Henry. "Capital and Peasantry in the Epoch of Imperialism." Paper presented at the Economic Research Bureau Seminar, University of Dar es Salaam, November 1976.

Bowles, B. D. "The Underdevelopment of Agriculture in Colonial Kenya." Kenya Historical Association Conference, 1975.

_____. "Marxism and African History: Endre Sik and His Critics." Seminar paper, University of Dar es Salaam, November 1975.

Gottlieb, M. "The Process of Differentiation in Tanzanian Agriculture and Rural Society." Paper presented at the Economic Research Bureau Seminar, University of Dar es Salaam, October 1972.

Lamb, G. R. "Peasants, Capitalists and Agricultural Development in Kenya." Paper presented at the East African Universities Social Science Conference, Nairobi, December 1972.

Londsdale, John and Berman, Bruce. "Coping with the Contradictions: The Development of the Colonial State in Kenya, 1895-1914." Paper presented at the Annual Conference, Historical Association of Kenya, 1979.

Mbilinyi, Marjorie. "The Status of African Women." Paper presented at the Conference on Women and Development, Maseru, Lesotho, April 1977.

Shivji, Issa G. "Tanzania: The Class Struggle Continues." Development Studies paper, University of Dar es Salaam, 1973.

Stitchter, Sharon. "The Response of Pre-Capitalist Societies in Kenya to Wage Labor, 1895-1903." Paper presented at the Annual Conference, Historical Association of Kenya, 1979.

Thomas, H. O. "A Brief History of the African Highlands Produce Company." Unpublished Report in the Archives of the History Department, University of Nairobi.

Towett, T. A. "Traditional History of the Kipsigis." Manuscript in the author's keeping.

Varga, I. "An African Mode of Production: A Research Hypothesis." Paper presented at the Universities of Eastern Africa Social Science Conference, Dar es Salaam, December 1971.

Wright, Marcia. "Societies and Economics in Kenya." Paper presented at the History Teachers' Conference, Morogoro, Tanzania, June 1975.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDELINE FOR SMALL-SCALE TEA GROWERS

Name _____ Age ___ Location _____ Village _____

How old are you?

1. a) When did you first plant tea?

   b) (i) How many acres did you first plant?
      (ii) How many acres do you have now?
      (iii) How often have you increased the acreage?
      (iv) How many acres did you have planted by Independence (1963)?

2. a) Did you have to clear virgin land to grow the tea?

   b) If not, and the piece of land had been under use before, where did you plant the crops that were grown on it earlier?

   c) Did you have to cut down on production of other crops?

3. a) Where did labour come from at the initial stage (preparation of land and planting tea)?

   b) If it was hired:

      (i) Where did the labourers come from?
      (ii) Where did you get their wages?
      (iii) Did you pay them in money or in kind?
      (iv) Did they come in every day or did they live on your farm?
      (v) How did they find their food?
      (vi) Did they have to contract for a definite period?
      (vii) What was the general length of time that these people stayed?

   c) Did members of your family provide labour or financial support in setting up the tea farm?

4. a) Where did you get the seedlings from?

   b) Did you get a loan to set up the farm?

   c) If yes: Did you have to satisfy any conditions?

   d) If not: Where did you get the money from?

5. a) When did you start picking the tea for sale?

   b) Did you have to have more people at work then than before or did you keep the same number of workers?

   c) (i) How often was the tea picked?
      (ii) How did you make sure that it got to the factory on time?
      (iii) How were the roads to the banda?

   d) What help did you get from the Government in setting up your tea farm?

6. a) Why did you decide to plant tea?

   b) Did you or any of your relatives ever work on the Tea Estates in Kericho?

   c) Has the presence of the Tea Estates in Kericho helped or retarded the progress of tea growing by Africans?

   d) Did you have to be a member of an Organisation to grow the tea?

   e) Did you have to get permission from anyone to grow the tea?

7. a) What crops did you grow before starting to grow tea?

   b) (i) Were any of these for sale?
      (ii) If so, where were they sold?
      (iii) Did you get money or other commodities in return?

   c) Did you continue to grow all these crops after introducing tea?

8. a) How long have you lived in your present area of residence?

   b) Where did you come from and why?

   c) How did you acquire your land?

   d) How big (acres) was your land when you got your first tea and how big is it now?

9. a) When you started growing tea, do you think your size of land was bigger than that of most people in the area?

   b) What about since starting to grow tea?

10. Do you know of other people who started growing tea and their crop failed?

11. a) Who are the most important people in this community?

    b) Do they grow tea?

12. a) Do you think you are economically better off now than when you started growing tea?

    b) Do you think it is because of tea?

13. a) Did you go to School?

    b) How many years?

    c) Have other members of the family been to School?

    d) How long?

14. a) How much help did you get from Government Officials in setting up the tea farm?

    b) What did they teach you?

15. a) Do you keep any animals?

    b) How many?

16. a) Has stock increased or reduced since planting tea?

    b) Do you make money from the animals?
       (ii) How much and how often?

17. a) What is the size of your family?
       (ii) How big was it when you entered tea growing?
       (iii) How big was it at Independence?

18. a) Were you or any of your people in Government (Politics) before you entered tea growing?

    b) What about after?

19. Do you think those people who own tea are more important socially, in the eyes of the Community?

    b) Do you think those who don't have tea consider those who have tea wealthy? Why?

20. a) What equipment did you have for ploughing land and planting tea?

    b) Were these bought for this purpose or were they in the household already?

    c) Did you have to rent any?

21. The crops produced for sale before production of tea -

    a) Were they sold at a market or at home?

    b) Were they sold in exchange for other goods or money?

22. I would like to ask you a few questions about the Kipsigis' past which have nothing to do with tea.

    a) In the old days, what kinds of jobs did men do?

    b) What did women do?

    c) Did women own any property?

    d) Could the women dispose of this property without the consent of the husbands?

    e) Were there things that women were not allowed to do?

23. How old were girls when they got married?

24. When Schools first appeared, did the girls and boys all go to School equally?

25. a) Why is it that there are many old Kipsigis women living in towns without husbands?

    b) What happened to the dowry already paid if a wife left the husband?

26. a) When did Indians come to this area?

    b) What did they sell to you and what did you sell to them?

27. a) What did the Kipsigis sell to each other before the Indians came?

    b) What did they trade in by the time of the second World War?

28. I have heard that the Kipsigis used to sell children too. Is that true?

29. It is also said that the Kipsigis suffered from famine a lot in the old days. Why?

30. a) When did maize come here?

    b) How did people accept it?

31. Why are some Kipsigis people so much better off than others?