



# Agricultural history of the Abakuria of Kenya from the end of the nineteenth century to the mid 1970's

Babere Kerata Chacha

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# **EGERTON UNIVERSITY**

**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES  
HISTORY DEPARTMENT**

## **AGRICULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ABAKURIA OF KENYA FROM THE END OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY TO THE MID 1970S**

**BY  
CHACHA BABERE KERATA  
A25/0119/95**

**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL IN  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (HISTORY) OF  
EGERTON UNIVERSITY**

**AUGUST, 1999**

## DECLARATION


This is my original work and has not been submitted for a degree in any other University

**BABERE KERATA CHACHA**

Sign 

Date 31/08/99

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This thesis has been submitted for examination with my knowledge as University Supervisor

**DR. K. MOSONIK arap KORIR**

Sign 

Date 31/08/99

## **DEDICATION**

**To my grandfather, Joel Chacha Kerata**



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## GLOSSARY

Abakuria	- The people of Bukuria.
Bukuria	- The land of the Abakuria.
Emao	- Drought or hunger in the Kuria language.
Ibiaro	- Name for clans in Kuria society.
Kuria	- Word used by the colonialist to refer to Bukuria or Abakuria. It is also used in the text as an adjective.
Uiregi	- Bwiregi as it was known during the colonial period.
Ukiria	- Bukuria as it was known during the colonial period.
Utende	- Bugumbe as it was known during the colonial period.

-Translations of Kuria names for vegetables, fruits, mushrooms, shrubs, trees, animals and diseases are provided in the text.

## ABBREVIATIONS

E.A.P.H.	East African Publishing House.
E.A.E.P.	East African Educational Publishers.
E.A.L.B.	East Africa Literature Bureau.
E.R.A.P.	Educational Research and Publications.
K.N.A.	Kenya National Archives.
D.C.	District Commissioner.
P.C.	Provincial Commissioner.
KSI	Kisii.
H.B.	Homa Bay.
NZA	Nyanza.
L.N.C.	Local Native Council.
A.D.C.	African District Council.

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## **ABSTRACT**

**Agricultural history is a significant aspect of the study of the African past. The theme, inter alia, compels the historian to pay attention to African physical geography. This in turn, should be welcome in view of the profound influence that geographical factors have had on African history.**

**Growing populations are severely taxing food resources and, to provide enough food for each citizen, most nations must increase agricultural output year after year. And with agriculture at the heart of more than two-thirds of the world's national economies, promoting agricultural growth has become a subject of the highest priority.**

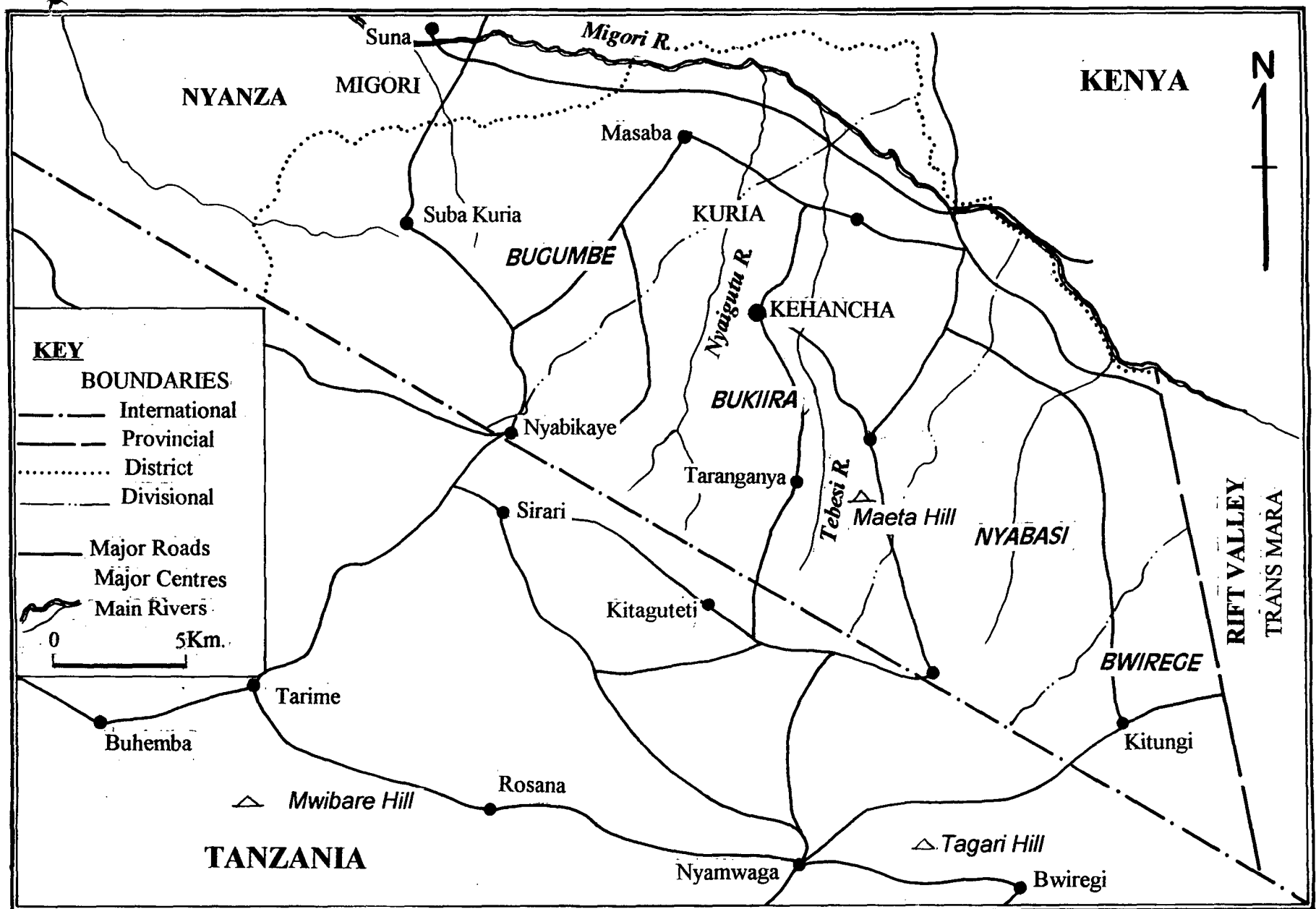
**Even though the essential conditions of any one historical experience can never be exactly replicated, the past can still provide much valuable guidance in the determination of development schemes, programmes and policies for the future. A knowledge of the past successes and failures can be useful in that past experiences can raise a whole range of issues- physical, economic and social- that must be carefully considered in any appraisal of development possibilities. It should also be useful in indicating directions or types of development activity, which ought to receive emphasis in the future.**

**There is a small body of general historical literature on the Abakuria of Kenya. However, no comprehensive attempt has yet been made to study their agricultural history. The present study is therefore intended to fill this void in Kuria historiography.**

**The study seeks to assess the evolution and development of Kuria agricultural from the late nineteenth century to the mid-1970s. It is assumed in the study that Kuria agriculture was dynamic, productive and largely self-sustaining before colonial rule. Further, the view is taken that colonial capitalism weakened this indigenous agricultural system, resulting in stagnation and land degradation. A major factor affecting this agricultural transformation was the migrant labour system and cash crop production.**

**This study is informed by two theoretical perspectives: dependency and underdevelopment theory, and the articulation of modes of production theory. The ecological aspects of the development of Kuria agriculture from precolonial times to the late years of Kenya's independence are also closely considered.**

**The methodology of the study involved data collection on a systematic basis beginning with secondary source in libraries, and then proceeding to the collection of primary source materials in archives and through field research.**



MAP I: POSITION OF BUKURIA

SOURCE: Various combination of Sources. (Geography Department, Egerton University)

## INTRODUCTION

### I. CONTEXT OF THE PROBLEM

"Serious experimentation with agrarian history at area level is of paramount importance.... Local agrarian research of this type is now giving a new dimension to historical studies...."<sup>1</sup>

Agricultural history is an important aspect in the study of the African past, and its reconstruction compels the historian to pay more attention to physical geography which has had a profound influence on African history.<sup>2</sup> The study of agricultural history entails examination and discussion of the evolution and development of crop production and animal husbandry in the context of land, labour, patterns of production, and terms of exchange.<sup>3</sup> In fact, present agricultural developments can only be interpreted and understood if they are studied in their historical perspective.

The Abakuria of Kenya, whose agricultural history forms the subject of this study, inhabit the Kuria District of Nyanza Province. They are divided into segments or clans called ibiaro; these are Bukiira, Bugumbe, Bwirege and Nyabasi. Their neighbours are the Maasai, the Kipsigis, the Luo and the Abasuba. In Tanzania, the Abakuria occupy the expansive districts of Tarime, Serengeti and Musoma.

Undulating hills cover most of Kuria District with a few stretches of flat land. Two major hills are found in the district: Renchoka (1592 m) in Mabera division; and Maeta

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1. Isaria Kimambo, speech, quoted in T. O. Ranger, Historical Studies of Rural Development in Tanzania (Dar es Salaam, 1976):48.
  2. B. A. Ogot, "The Role of the Pastoralist and the Agriculturalist in African History," in T. O. Ranger (ed), Emerging Themes of African History (Nairobi, 1968):125.
  3. Robin Palmer, "Agricultural History of Rhodesia," in Robin Palmer and Neil Persons (eds), The Roots of Rural Poverty (London, 1977):398.

(1600 m) in Kegonga division.<sup>4</sup> The district has an inland equatorial climate modified by the effects of altitude, relief and the influence of the large body of water of Lake Victoria. The high temperatures of the lake converge with rain causing westerly winds to bring heavy showers. The area is intersected by numerous rivers that are generally seasonal. The exception is River Migori which threads through Bukuria, and finally emptying into Lake Victoria.<sup>5</sup> The rainy season comes in April, when fields, meadows and forest present a blanket of greenery. During the month of September the grass dries up owing to the relative absence of rain; however, in general, rain falls in almost every month of the year.

The Abakuria are Bantu speakers whose language and historical traditions place them close to the Abagusii. The migration and settlement legends of the latter shed further light on Kuria origins. However, an abundance of conflicting views, based largely on unscientifically collected oral tradition, produces only the most tenuous thread of continuity to Kuria history. For instance, there is disagreement as to the routes and times of migration and, indeed, about the historical connection of the Abakuria with other Bantu speaking people of western Kenya. The Abakuria possess elaborate legends to explain their origins and migration into their present homeland of Bukuria.<sup>6</sup> Though these vary in details, the commonest is about an exodus from an original home, "Mbwa na Mbiriri",<sup>7</sup> near a large body of water. The Abakuria are then said to have migrated along the south of Lake Victoria through Uganda before settling around Mt. Elgon.<sup>8</sup> From here, they came to Gusiland

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4. Migori District Development Plan, 1994-1996 (Nairobi, 1994):1.

5. Ibid:16.

6. Gabriel Chacha, Historia (Dar es Salaam, 1960):5.

7. Ibid :7.

8. Paul Asaka Abuso, A Traditional History, (Nairobi, 1980): 35.

where they stayed for a while before moving to Gutuura and Tagoota.<sup>9</sup> In the latter two places, they interacted with the Maasai, the Kipsigis and Dorobo. The migration stretched over many generations-from about the sixteenth century-and by the end of the nineteenth century, they had settled in present-day Bukuria.

The Abakuria were not completely isolated in the years before the European contact; they were clearly a part of the broad pattern of East African history in this period. They had evolved a unique agricultural system involving skilled crop and animal production, and they enjoyed a degree of prosperity. However, this system was never entirely secure; in fact, the Abakuria were vulnerable to periodic "emao" or drought disasters<sup>10</sup> and famine.

The Kuria cultivator produced a wide variety of crops which they traded to the Kipsigis<sup>11</sup>, the Luo and the Abasuba. The basic grain staples were finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) and sorghum. These staples were supplemented by fruits and vegetables. Livestock such as cattle, sheep and goats, together with poultry, served as an important insurance against drought. Both their earlier agricultural skills and their vulnerability in the face of the ecological disasters of the late nineteenth century explain the eagerness and rapidity with which the Abakuria were to become peasant producers under colonial rule(cf. Chapter I).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The understanding of the agricultural history of the Abakuria in the colonial period is greatly handicapped by lack of special studies. The few works extant, as will be shown

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9. Ibid., 39. Gutuura and Tagoota are places situated at the border between Bukuria and Maasailand.

10. Chacha:5.

11 H. A. Mwanzi, A History of the Kipsigis (Nairobi, 1977):161.

in the sequel, are not directly concerned with agricultural history. However, they contain useful though scattered data for the reconstruction of such a history.

G. Chacha,<sup>12</sup> who pioneered the study of Kuria society, traces in some detail how the Abakuria migrated into, and settled in, their present land. He also examines the spatial diffusion of major crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes from Unyamwezi in Tanzania, and Busuba, respectively. In stressing the importance of agriculture as the basis of the Kuria economy in the precolonial period, he mentions the limitations of other branches of this economy, ranging from hunting to iron-working. Even so, as he indicates, in some instances, these branches of production involved sophisticated techniques. In respect to agriculture in precolonial times, Chacha contends that in some periods it suffered from serious inadequacies; this was particularly so in the period of ecological disasters in the years between 1890 - 1895.<sup>13</sup>

Perhaps the most important contribution to the historiography of the Abakuria of Tanzania is the work of E.S. Gesare<sup>14</sup>. He examines agricultural change in terms of the system of land use, agrarian relations of production and labour. Further, the greater part of his study discusses the development of productive forces and the production process in their inter-relationship. Gesare presents a coherent picture of agricultural change in Tarime District, taking into account the political context in which it took place. He states that the economy of the Abakuria of this region was predominantly based on agriculture. He contends that the land was mostly owned in common by the village communities, and private property was limited. And he concludes that, until the beginning of German rule, the different

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12. Chacha: 5.

13. Ibid.

14. E. S. Gesare, "Agricultural Change in Eastern Tarime" M. A. Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1976.

functional groups within the village maintained an unchanging division of labour. This work has provided useful insights for the study of the agricultural history of the Abakuria of Kenya.

M.S. Seba's<sup>15</sup> study of the material culture of the Abakuria of Kenya and the impact of imported technology upon their agriculture is also a useful source. He rather curiously portrays the Abakuria as "passive" participants in the process of economic change. He observes, *inter alia*, that the introduction of ox-ploughing in 1916 to replace digging sticks signified a major agricultural transformation in Bukuria. On the other hand, P.A. Abuso<sup>16</sup> writes that, although the Abakuria were agriculturalists first and foremost-with many crops and centuries of experience with their environment-the problems they encountered with grain storage meant that the agricultural base of the economy was not secure. He looks at the patterns of climatic change in Bukuria and the ways in which the Abakuria handled these changes in relation to ecology, disease, population growth and the process of migration and settlement. Abuso contends that after the coming of colonialism, Bukuria was little affected by European expansion until 1910 when an administrative division was created to cater for the Luo and Abakuria. Further, he makes a controversial claim that, whereas the Abagusii and the Luo were quick to change to Western ways of life, the Abakuria remained conservative until independence.<sup>17</sup>

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15. M. S. Seba, "Some Aspects of Kuria Material Culture in MILA, Vol.6, No.1 Nairobi, 1979.

16. Abuso: A Traditional History, *passim*.

17. Compare this view with that of other authors who stress that the Kuria community was changing during the colonial period. See, for example, D. Khayota, *et al*, The Abakuria of Kenya: (Nairobi, 1989).

S. Friedlsberg<sup>18</sup> focuses on the range of variation displayed by the Kuria agropastoral economy and the complexity of the social and historical factors that conditioned its development. He argues that the intensification of Kuria agriculture during the colonial period was seldom based on major technological innovations, and the techniques used were practised in less intensified systems as well. He goes on to state that, although careful ecological analysis of African systems of production is an indispensable step for those involved in the formulation of development plans, full understanding of agricultural and pastoral ecologies cannot be achieved without viewing them in their historical, political and economic contexts.

The historiography of the communities that neighbour the Abakuria suggests that these neighbours had a significant role in moulding the Kuria economy. For example, B.A. Ogot<sup>19</sup> argues that, in the course of their migration, the Luo interacted with the Abakuria. As a consequence, the Abakuria who lived around River Migori adopted fishing from the Luo. He also points out that the Abagumbe clan of the Abakuria migrated from the Chepalungu hills in Kipsigis country to the area of their present settlement.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, W.R. Ochieng<sup>21</sup> shows that the Abakuria and the Abagusii once lived together and had a common ancestor. He further writes that today there are Gusii clans in Bukuria and these are the Abanyabasi, Abanchari, Abasweta, and Abahiri-igembe<sup>22</sup>. In writing about the Kipsigis, H.A. Mwanzi<sup>23</sup> points out that the Kaparangwek clan of the Kipsigis who settled in Belgut must have come from Bukuria. The Kipsigis traded with the latter and obtained "wimbi" to supplement white sorghum for their "imbaret" or land. The Kipsigis and the Abakuria-

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18. S. Friedlsberg, "Changing Values in Kuria Agropastoralism," mimeo, Yale University, 1987.
  19. B. A. Ogot, History of the Southern Luo (Nairobi, 1967):196.
  20. This idea has been supported by Mwanzi:49.
  21. William R. Ochieng, A Precolonial History of the Gusii (Nairobi, 1974):13.
  22. See also Abuso:49.
  23. Mwanzi:49.



together with the Abagusii-share age sets (Maina, Chuma and Korongoro) and vegetable names such as "isagek" and "nderemek"<sup>24</sup>. The Abasuba<sup>25</sup> and the Maasai<sup>26</sup> also interacted with the Abakuria in various ways.

In summary, then, general historical studies on the Abakuria are rather scanty, and those on their agricultural history in particular even scantier. However, several studies on the agricultural history of other Kenyan communities or districts have been completed. These include works on the Meru,<sup>27</sup> Luo,<sup>28</sup> Gusii,<sup>29</sup> Kamba,<sup>30</sup> Kikuyu,<sup>31</sup> and Tugen<sup>32</sup>. These studies have proved useful from a comparative perspective for the reconstruction of Kuria agricultural history.

General works on the agricultural history of Kenya, it should be observed, are numerous. The subject is either treated in works devoted to it solely<sup>33</sup> or as parts of some

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24. See, for example, Omwoyo S. Moenga, "The Colonial Transformation" M. A. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990.
  25. H. O. Ayot, A History of the Luo-Abasuba of Western Kenya from A.D. (Nairobi, 1979).
  26. T. Spear and R. Waller (eds), Being Maasai: Ethnicity and Identity (Nairobi, 1993).
  27. F. E. Bernard, East of Mount Kenya: (Munchen, 1972).
  28. M. J. Hay, "Economic Change in Late 19th Century Kowe, Western Kenya." in B. A. Ogot (ed), Hadith 5: Economic and Social History of East Africa (Nairobi, 1979).
  29. See for example, Omwoyo.
  30. Reuben M. Matheka, "The Political Economy of Famine: Ecology and History in Machakos District During the Colonial Period," M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1992.
  31. F. M. Muchoki, "Organisation and Development of Kikuyu Agriculture, 1800- 1920," M.A. Thesis, Kenyatta University, 1990.
  32. Daniel R. Kandagor, "The Economic Transformation of the Tugen of Kenya, 1895-1963," M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1993.
  33. See, for example, L.H. Brown, "Agricultural Change in Kenya, 1945-1960," in Stanford Food Research Institute Bulletin, Vol. 8, No. 1, 1968; Roger van Zwanenberg, Agricultural History of Kenya up to 1939 (Nairobi, 1972); L.W. Cone and J. F. Lipscomb, The History of Kenya Agriculture (Nairobi, 1972). For several articles on Kenya agricultural history, see also W.R. Ochieng and R.M. Maxon (eds), An Economic History of Kenya

wider study.<sup>34</sup> These general studies provided useful leads in the attempt to set Kuria agricultural history in the wider context of the agricultural history of Kenya. Lastly, as regards works on the agricultural history of other African countries, mention may be made of those by J. Iliffe,<sup>35</sup> T.O. Ranger,<sup>36</sup> R. Palmer,<sup>37</sup> L. van Horn,<sup>38</sup> and M. Chanok,<sup>39</sup> among others.

### III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Growing populations are severely tasking food resources, and to provide enough food for each citizen, most nations must increase agricultural output year after year. With

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(Nairobi, 1992).

34. See e.g. R. A. Remole, "White Settlers or the Foundation of European Agricultural Settlement in Kenya," Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1959; S. S. Heyer, "The Development of Agriculture and the Land System in Kenya," M.Sc. Thesis, London University, 1960; Eric Clayton, Agrarian Development (London, 1964); Richard Sandbrook, Proletarians and African Capitalism: The Kenya Case, 1960-1972 (Cambridge, 1975); M. P. K. Sorrenson, Origins of European Settlement in Kenya (Nairobi, 1968); R.D. Wolff, Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The Economics of Colonialism (Nairobi, 1974); E. A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change, 1918-1939 (London, 1974); Gavin Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of African Petite Bourgeoisie, 1905-1970 (New Haven, Conn., 1980); J. D. Overton, "Spatial Differentiation in the Colonial Economy of Kenya: Africans, Settlers and the State, 1900-1920," Ph.D. Dissertation, Cambridge University, 1983; W. R. Ochieng (ed), A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980 (Nairobi, 1989); Bruce Berman, Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination (London, etc, 1990).
35. John Iliffe, Agricultural Change in Modern Tanganyika (Nairobi, 1971).
36. T. O. Ranger, The Agricultural History of Zambia (Lusaka, 1971).
37. Robin Palmer, "Agricultural History of Rhodesia," in Palmer and Persons (eds.):170-290.
38. Laurel van Horn, "The Agricultural History of Barotseland, 1840-1964," Ibid.:144-170.
39. Martin Chanok, "Agricultural Change and Continuity in Malawi:396-409.

agriculture at the heart of more than two-thirds of the world's national economies, promoting agricultural growth has become a subject of the highest priority.

Even though the essential conditions of any one historical experience can never be exactly replicated, the past can still provide much valuable guidance in the determination of development schemes, programmes and policies for the future. A knowledge of the past successes and failures can be useful in that past experiences can raise a whole range of issues - physical, economic and social - that must be carefully considered in any appraisal of development possibilities. It should also be useful in indicating directions or types of development activities which ought to receive emphasis in the future. Unfortunately, no serious, full-length attempt has yet been made to study the agricultural history of the Abakuria. Issues relating to the state of Kuria agriculture on the eve of the colonial conquest and how it had evolved over time have not been addressed before in any substantive manner. More specifically for our purposes here, research has not been done into the agricultural development of Bukuria under colonial rule, and how Kuria agriculture responded to articulation with capitalism in the colonial context. Furthermore, agricultural developments in Bukuria in the first years of independence have not been the subject of any specialized historical study.

#### **IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

This study is a detailed account of the agricultural history of the Abakuria in the colonial period. The specific objectives of the study are:

- (i) To give a background account of the state of Kuria agriculture on the eve of colonial conquest in respect to land use, nature and method of cultivation, indigenous

agricultural technology, range of crops that were grown, and the agrarian relations of production emphasizing ecological factors that either promoted or hindered it.

- (ii) To examine the changes that occurred under the impact of colonialism in terms of land tenure, technological innovations, farming techniques, cultivation practices and labour.
- (iii) To trace the further development of Kuria agriculture from the year of independence to the mid-1970s in regard to government policies, financing, marketing, processing, land consolidation and extension, adoption crops, and so on.

## **V. RESEARCH PREMISES**

This study proceeds from the following assumptions:

- (i) That, in precolonial times, Kuria agriculture was dynamic and it adequately catered for the subsistence and exchange needs of the population.
- (ii) That, the Kuria agricultural system maintained resilience in the early colonial period but was increasingly drawn into a relationship of dependence in the inter-war period through the immediate post-Second World War years which marked the high point of articulation with capitalism in the colonial context.
- (iii) That, the process of agricultural reorganisation in Bukuria from the mid-1950s saw the introduction of exotic breeds of livestock, new crops, agricultural implements and farming techniques which continued into the mid-1970s.

## VI. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

The present study is concerned with the agricultural history of Bukuria. It examines the nature, process and impact of agricultural change under colonial rule. The District provides a case study illustrating change which a society exhibits when brought into contact with a colonially created economy. It should be possible to derive insights from this experience which may be useful in meeting the exigent pressures in present-day Kenya for agricultural growth.

## VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For the purposes of this study two theories have been employed: the dependency and underdevelopment theory; and the articulation of modes of production theory. Also, the relationship between ecology and history is examined to determine the question of Kuria control over their ecology from the late precolonial period through the early years of colonial and post colonial era. Further, the ecological factors impinging upon Kuria agriculture are considered for the whole period of colonial rule.<sup>40</sup>

Basically, African ecology viewed from a historical perspective should deal with the story of man's effort to adapt himself to his environment and his environment to himself. Diseases, famine and other natural catastrophes which were widespread phenomena in the 1890s caused and affected the movement and action of many people<sup>41</sup>. Even so, as H. Kjekshus<sup>42</sup> shows, East African man had maintained an ecological control system throughout the nineteenth century in spite of inter-ethnic warfare and slave raiding. On the other hand,

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40. Cf. H. Kjekshus, Ecology Control (Nairobi, 1977).

41. See for example: J. Kuponen, "War, Famine" in International Journal of African Historical Studies. Vol. 21, 1988: 637-636; and, H. H. Lamb, Climate: Present, Past and Future, Vol.2 (London, 1977).

42. Ecology Control.

colonial policies were to aggravate the ecological control situation, and economic development was adversely affected.

A review of related literature<sup>43</sup> shows that careful ecological analysis of Africa systems of production is an indispensable step for those involved in the formulation of development policies. However, understanding of these systems cannot be achieved without viewing them in their historical and politico-economic context. Ultimately, such an approach is best able to reveal the reasons for the poor performance of many African societies during the colonial and post-colonial eras in developing their agricultural potential.

Dependency and underdevelopment theory<sup>44</sup> shows that developing countries do not move along the same developmental path that developed nations took. Instead, they have had a qualitatively different historical experience in which growth does not lead to development. More generally, we may define underdevelopment with Samir Amin<sup>45</sup> as the transition from

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43. See, for example, J. Ford, The Role of Trypanosomias (London, 1971); P.F. Nayenga, "Busoga in the Era of Catastrophes, 1889-1911," in B. A. Ogot (ed), Ecology and History (Nairobi, 1979); I. Sindiga, "European Perception as a Factor in Degrading Maasai Ecology," M.A. Thesis, Ohio University, 1981; P. Richards, "Ecological Changes and the Politics of African Land Use," Africa Studies Review, vol.26, No.2, 1983; C. Odegi-Awuondo, Life in the Balance: Ecological Sociology of Turkana Nomads (Nairobi, 1990); G. O. Ndege, "History of Pastoralism in Kenya, 1895-1970," in W. R. Ochieng and R. M. Maxon (eds).
44. For lucid discussions of the underdevelopment and dependency theory, see C. Leys, Underdevelopment in Kenya (London, 1975); E. A. Brett, Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa (London, 1972); B. D. Bowles, "Peasant Production and Underdevelopment: the Case of Colonial Kenya," The African Review, vol.6, No.2, 1976; Walter Rodney, How Europe underdeveloped Africa (Nairobi, 1985). For earlier critiques of this theory from a Latin America perspective, see E. Laclau, "Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America," New Left Review, Vol.67, 1971: 19-38; F. H. Cardoso, ibid, vol.68, 1971:83-95.
45. Samir Amin, Accumulation on a World Scale, Vol. 1 (New York, 1974):28, 142-156, 390-391. idem, "Underdevelopment and Dependency - Origins and Contemporary Forms," in Journal of Modern African Studies, Vol.10, 1972:503-524.

pre-capitalist social formations to the social formations of peripheral capitalism. In other words, underdevelopment may be understood as the transition from a pre-capitalist mode of production in the special circumstances of the imposition of uni-directional and unequal linkages as a result of aggression by external capitalist forces.

The literature on the topic has recognized the dominant place of agriculture in the underdeveloped areas. For example, van Zwanenberg looks at underdevelopment as a process under which agricultural production remains backward in terms of technology and productivity. He argues that the penetration of capitalism into the agricultural sector in the colonial periphery and the extent to which the direct producers are dispossessed of their means of production lead to the formation of a surplus population or labour reserve. On the other hand, B.D. Bowles<sup>46</sup> points out that the introduction of new crops such as maize was a symptom of underdevelopment. This is because maize is not as nutritive as indigenous foods like sorghum and millet; furthermore it is protein deficient, and it lacks calcium, iron and niacin<sup>47</sup>. Also, it is likely to cause soil erosion because of its shallow root growth<sup>48</sup>.

As already indicated, the articulation of modes of production theory is applied in the study. Articulation is a process by which the capitalist mode of production establishes dominion over the precapitalist modes. The theory has been applied extensively in analysing Africa's economic history during the colonial period. It explains the processes of penetration, interaction and conflict between two or more modes of production. In brief, the introduction of the capitalist mode of production did not eliminate precapitalist modes of production but rather reshaped them. The preservation of domestic production was necessitated by the fact

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46. B.D. Bowles, "Underdevelopment in Agriculture in Colonial Kenya" in B.A. Ogot (ed), Ecology and History:197.

47. Ibid: 203.

48. Ibid., also Matheka:175-186.

that the wages of migrant labour and the prices for marketed commodities were insufficient for the reproduction of the worker/farmer or his family. Articulation resulted in the subjugation and exploitation of peasant labour on the basis of the partial reconstruction preservation of pre-capitalist forms with a minimum of capital investment<sup>49</sup>.

The involvement of the colonial state in the contradictions of articulation shaped the development of its forms through its steadily increasing intervention in the management of the conditions of production, labour and trade. It provided the conditions for external limits in its operation. It partially destroyed and restructured indigenous social forms, but also moved to prop up and sustain them; it encouraged internal accumulation and transition to capitalism, but also blocked its full development and consolidation <sup>50</sup>.

From a theoretical perspective, then, this is how the agricultural history of the Abakuria will be undertaken.

## VIII. METHODOLOGY

This study involved data collection on a systematic basis beginning with the secondary sources and then proceeding to primary sources. In search for secondary materials, the following libraries were utilized: the Egerton University Library; the Jomo Kenyatta Memorial Library of the University of Nairobi; the Moi Library of Kenyatta University; and the Macmillan Library of the City Council of Nairobi. In visits to these libraries, relevant historical data were gathered from journals, periodicals and books. Similarly, a search was made into newspaper materials.

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49. Geoffrey Kay, Development and Underdevelopment: (London, 1975): 95-105.

50. Bruce Berman: 34-43.



Primary data was obtained from archival and oral sources. This involved visiting the Kenya National Archives in search for the central government records and reports and documentary materials emanating from Nyanza Province. These colonial archival sources were cross-checked with, and supplemented by, data from oral interviews.

The interviews<sup>51</sup> required the purchase of field equipment, enlisting research assistants, and visiting local administrators to apprise them about the research project. During fieldwork, oral traditions and histories, testimonies and evidence, as well as eyewitness accounts<sup>52</sup>, were collected. In this connection, a set of sample questions was formulated to guide the research assistants in the collection of data. The informants and respondents were carefully selected so that they are representative of all the clans of the Abakuria as previously and currently settled in the territory and knowledgeable of all the periods to be researched into for the study. The chronology of the history of South Nyanza as reconstructed by Abuso, Ayot, and Ogot were critically used. Further, the whole body of traditions of the society under study was placed within the framework of the periodization of the history of the broader western Kenya region. Besides recording the historical information through interviewing, the observation method<sup>53</sup> was used. This particularly helped in the study of Kuria material culture within Bukuria and as preserved at the National Museums of Kenya in Nairobi and its branch in Kisumu.

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51. cf. David Henige, Oral Historiography (London, 1982) for the preparation required of a field researcher. See also Paul Thompson, Voices of the Past (Oxford, 1978).
52. Further reading on the interpretation and definitions of oral sources would include the works of J. Vansina: "Oral Tradition and its Methodology," in J. Ki-Zerbo (ed), General History of Africa vol.1 Methodology and African Prehistory (California, 1981), pp.142-156; Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology (London, 1965), and Oral Tradition as History (Nairobi, 1985).
53. Observation is a method of data collection in which the researcher and his assistants record information as they witness events, objects and situations during the study period. Cf. C. Lin, Foundation of Social Research (New York, 1976).

## CHAPTER I

### KURIA SOCIETY AND AGRICULTURE ON THE EVE OF THE COLONIAL RULE

#### I. SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS ORGANISATION

"Intelligent but highly strong temperamentally ... they crave for excitement finding life tedious without it, if they cannot alley their restlessness by making war on their neighbours or stealing cattle, they must find some outlet for their energies.(sic)"<sup>54</sup>

The Kuria social universe was made up of units of increasing size and inclusiveness, ranging from the nuclear and polygynous family to the ethnic unit embracing all the Abakuria. As a people, the Abakuria were integrated by two interrelated principles: they recognized a common patrilineal ancestor; and they occupied a common territory. Both factors not only helped to provide them with a focus of socio-political differentiation but tended to shape their world view.

As already indicated, Kuria traditions and migration patterns in the distant past linked them with the Abagusii with whom they are linguistically closely related. Even so, in much of their culture and social organisation, they may also be compared with the Agikuyu, Embu, and Meru.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the Abagusii lack five of the eight names of the generation cycles, which are of fundamental importance to the Abakuria. Five of the eight names of the generation cycles are found in cognate form amongst the Nandi and the Kipsigis;<sup>56</sup> And at

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54. J.P. Moffet, A Handbook of Tanganyika (Dar es Salaam, 1958) :16, describing the character of the Abakuria.

55. This discussion is based on Ruel's argument and the analysis of Kuria language and ethnography See, M.J. Ruel "The Problem of Cultural Origins: The Kuria Case", Institute of African studies, University of Nairobi mimeo, 1973: 1-6.

56. Cf., Mwanzi, A History of the Kipsigis: 15. See, also J.G. Peristiany, The Social Institutions of the Kipsigis, (London, 1939): 421; and J.E.G Sutton, "The Archaeology and Early Peoples of the Highlands of Kenya

least two of these common names are also found in the generations of the Agikuyu, Meru and Embu<sup>57</sup>.

The above and other historical evidence relating to the origin of the Abakuria suggest that they were a mixture of Bantu and Highland Nilotic peoples.<sup>58</sup> In fact, it would seem that the Abakuria were not the original inhabitants of their present territory.<sup>59</sup> Writing in 1950, Cory suggested that the Abakuria were a splinter group of the Maasai who "migrated to their present habitat many generations ago"<sup>60</sup> He stressed that they still had the Maasai "spirit" which manifested itself in the love for cattle and great zeal in acquiring them.<sup>61</sup>

The manner of dress and weaponry were perhaps the most tangible assimilations from the Maasai culture. Descriptions of the Kuria warrior of the late nineteenth century reveal the striking similarities with the Maasai.<sup>62</sup> More particularly, their Physical location may

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and Northern Tanzania", in Azania Vol. 1, 1966. A section of the Abaluyia use four names which appear also in the Kuria generation cycles, see R.A. Levine and Sangria, W.H. "The Diffusion of Age-Group Organisation in East Africa" in Africa Vol.32 No. 2: 97-109.

57. The Agikuyu for example use cycle names such as "Chuma" and Maina" which appear in Kuria cycles. See, H.E. Lambert, The Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, (London, 1965).

58. J.E.G. Sutton, "The Settlement of East Africa" In B.A. Ogot and Kieran, J.A. (eds) Zamani: A survey of East African History (Nairobi, 1969): 177-196 and Christopher Ehret "Cushites of the Highland and the Plains Nilotes" in Ibid: 175.

59. G.S. Were, "in ibid Zamani. Also, Chacha, Historia: 1-6.

60. Hans Cory, "The people of Lake Vistoria Region" in T.N.R. Vol. 33: 22-29.

61. Ibid

62. See, K.A.E.R.A., Ibicha bi Igikuria Kurua ko Mooka 1904 (Nairobi, 1989):3 for Pictures taken by then

have exposed them to political influences from the Maasai. They thus developed a politico-military system which was partly desired and partly developed from their own indigenous institutions<sup>63</sup>.

As already mentioned\* the Abakuria were divided into clans or ibiario which were the main political units. These clans were in the first place a unit of defence and of military strategy. Open to attack from other clans but also and especially from the Maasai in the east, the members of a clan (ichika: i.e., "homes") built their houses in fortified settlements on the craggy of hill sides known as obogwe which were easy to defend. All male members of a clan were entitled to attend the clan assembly (iritongo). The discussions taking place in such meetings were directed by a small number of individuals of exceptional esteem, whose advice was vital to the clan. These were known as abarooti (prophets) and they were publicly recognized owing to their personal qualities in supervising the state of affairs in their clans.<sup>64</sup>

In addition to the clan assembly, the Kuria political organisation comprised secret councils (abagaka bi inchaama), composed of elders from various extended families. There were also a few young men in order to secure continuity. The members of a council supervised discipline and morality and were authorized to impose sanctions on anyone who threatened to endanger the well-being of the clan.

A clan had its own overall leader known as omogambi. This was usually an elder who presided over and sanctioned socio-religious and political affairs. However, he had to make decisions with the consent and support of the elders who jointly formed an elders

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63. Ruel, "The Problem of Cultural Origins" : 3

\* See Chapter one, pp 1-3.

64. Johanna Gaati, handwritten stories and facts on the Abakuria found in the KNA, Gusii Cultural Centre Collection.

council called inchaama. In the event of two political units being involved, a joint elders' council had to be constituted; elders from a neutral clan were then requested to arbitrate.

Each clan was subdivided into a number of sections known as ibisaku, within which people were recognized by kinship bonds. These sections were further divided into small segments called amagiha, within which people related to each other more specifically through kinship. At the lowest level of these segments were lineages (eka) of various sizes, the most basic one being composed of a father and his son.<sup>65</sup>

The family was the smallest unit within Kuria society, and it was composed of a man, his wife or wives and their children. The household was called umugi. Each wife with her children had her own 'house' (inyumba). When her children got ready for circumcision, they moved into a small hut next to their mother's called isiiga<sup>66</sup>.

The generation classes (amakora) embodied a systematic pattern of relationships which served to determine the status of any individual persons vis-a-vis others. There were two major parallel cycles of classes in Bukuria: Monyasaai and Monyachuuma. The Monyasaai consisted of four sub-cycles: Abasaai, Abanyamburiti, Abagamunyeri and Abamaina; while the Monyachuuma major cycle consisted of the Abagorongoro,<sup>67</sup> Abagini, Abanyangi and Abachuuma, respectively. The children of the men of any one class belonged to the named class next succeeding it. In turn, the children of the latter belonged to the next class, and so on, in recurring four class cycles.

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65. Oral sources for the Kuria social organisation include the following interviews: Marare Mwita Kohego, 16/4/97; Matinde Mutiti, Kuguyi, 19/5/97 and Maroa Manga, Matare, 19/5/97.

66. O.I. Soko Mwita, Bukumburi, 14/5/97.

67. In some clans (e.g Bukuria, Buiirege) Abagorongoro were known by the alternative name Abamairabe. O.I., Michael Roswe, Ntimaru, 26/5/97.

In Kuria social behaviour the two major cycles were not opposed to each other, but tended either to be regarded independently or to be merged. Although their members are presently intermingled, Kuria legend describes how at one time the two cycles lived in separate areas. Two "twin-like" hills in Nyamongo of present-day Tanzania called "the hill of Saai" and "the hill of Chuuma" are pointed to in support of the legend.<sup>68</sup>

Each cycle performed its own series of class ceremonies separately and, on these occasions, members of the other cycle were debarred from attending. However, the cycle effects in relation to individual behaviour were most obvious. They ascribed certain status to every individual person which in different ways at different times of his life and indifferent contexts would guide his relationships with others<sup>69</sup>

In their religious life, the Abakuria stressed that without the guidance and assistance of Enokwi (god) they would have perished at the hands of either their enemies or from the natural calamities they frequently experienced in the course of their migrations. Enokwi was always associated with the sun (irioba) in the sky, although the Kuria term for the sun is wider in reference than its English translation. Irioba refers, firstly, to the sun but also the sky and in a general sense the "above". Statements about the sun as a divinity are made analogically by reference to the sun in the sky. Thus, the sun is said to be single and all pervasive. The same sun shone on all people and communities.

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68. O.I. Chacha Ikwege, Bogesia, 13/4/97.

69. See, the extended discussion of Kuria generation classes in M.J. Ruel, "The Kuria Generation Classes" in Africa Vol. 32, 1962:14-36.

Enokwi created the universe - the earth, the moon, the stars and all the operative in them. Thus, according to the Abakuria, Enokwi was the original progenitor (Umusimuri) and source of prosperity and life.<sup>70</sup>

## II. HUNTING AND GATHERING

Hunting and gathering played a very significant role in the Kuria precolonial economy. They were, inter alia, a major way through which the Abakuria dealt with an unfriendly and hazardous environment.

The Abakuria hunted various types of animals, especially of the antelopes family, the gazelle (ibimune), eland (amango), and the hertebeast (ibiwere), buffalo (ichingera), elephant (inchugu) and rhino (ihuburyo) were always a source of meat to the strong, and daring hunters commonly referred to as the Abagundia (literally "daring hunters").<sup>71</sup> The leopard (ingwi) and lion (indwi) were hunted to provide skins for the political leaders. Those who killed them were recognised and respected.

Both small and large birds were trapped. Large birds were caught by the use of a glue made from the sap of such trees as esebe (*Capensis thumb*), omoko (*Ficus sp*) ikirigiri (*Notonia sp*) and engoto (*Euphorbia sp*).<sup>72</sup> The sap mixture was spread on tree branches

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70 For further exploration of Kuria religion see, for example, P.A. Abuso, "The Religion of the Kuria" mimeo, (Limuru, 1974); M.J. Ruel, "Religion Among the Kuria of East Africa." in Africa vol. 35, no. 3, 1965. pp. 295-306 and R.M Angogo, "Religion and Witchcraft in Traditional Kuria Society" in Mila No. 3, University of Nairobi, 1972.

71. S.M. Seba discusses the importance and techniques of hunting in "Some Aspects of Kuria Material Culture: 62-70.

72. This information was provided by Mwita Nyabongaini, Taranganya, 20/4/97; Lukas Rioba, 16/5/97 and Nelson Wangubo, Ntimaru, 20/4/97. Botanical names identified

which were then hoisted to the top of trees and secured. When birds came into contact with the glue they stuck hard.

Generally, hunting was carried out in three different ways. First, a group of men would organise themselves and invade a dense forest with bows and arrows and sometimes with spears and clubs (irigwima ria mata). They would kill animals and share amongst themselves; this type of hunt was known as irirari. In this type of hunt, the hunters carried along with them millet or sorghum flour and cooking pots, and would set up temporary structures from which to operate. The other method involved trapping of animals using emetana (snares) or ematachukio (twigs) formed by tying a strong cord to the end of a stout but pliable branch of a tree. The ends of the branch were fixed to the ground by means of a slip-knot tied to a stake. A large loop was made at the end of the cord and spread over an animal trail. The snares was covered with grass, leaves and earth in order to hide them. When the animal stepped into the loop of rope, the knot was released and the branch swung back upright hanging the animal victim. Alternatively, large pits called ibirima were dug mainly to target big game like elephants and rhino. The pits were about four metres deep and would be covered with twigs and sharp pointed sticks made from hard wood which were embedded in the bottom of the pit so that when animals fell on them they were impaled.<sup>73</sup> Sometimes the animals would be chased in the direction of the pits and eventually got trapped. Once hunters captured the animals, they skinned and roasted them and placed the meat to dry under the sun. A ceremony known as okorea oboronda would be organised to

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by the Herbarium staff of the Kenya National Museums.

74. This discussion is based on oral evidence collected especially from Masaaba, Nyanchabo and Bongebo in Bugumbe.



bring good luck (igisyo ikiya) to the hunters. At times when there were few animals especially in drought years, the hunters survived by moving into fresh hunting areas.

A certain amount of food was gathered from the forest; however, this was an activity pursued by women and children only. The vegetables collected were ekerema (*Basela alba*), ichinsaga (*Cynadropsis spp.*), ekeboga (*Amaranthus spp.*), irikangirai (*Commelina bengalensis*) and iritambu (*Sesamum andustifolium*).<sup>74</sup> All these with many others were obtained by women foraging in forests in search for the fresh and the best.

These indigenous vegetables were eaten for a variety of reasons. Some of the vegetables were highly regarded for having medicinal value. For example, inchinsaga (*Cynadropsis spp.*) treated and healed both stomach ache and ulcers.<sup>75</sup> Other vegetables were eaten during prolonged dry season. This is because such vegetables were the only type that could survive drought conditions. An example was the ekererema bataka (or the vegetable of the poor).

The principal fruits gathered were berries of different species known as ibinyabotati, ichinoome, amataaburo, ichimange, and obosangora.<sup>76</sup> Though wild roots appear to have been gathered on a small scale, women healers would collect some, mostly for treating diseases. Mushrooms like amanyageswa (*Lepiola leucothites*), amanyankorobiti (*Tricholoma ustale*) and ibitogose (*Tricholoma cingulatum*) were very much appreciated as a relish; mainly, they were gathered by young girls (abasagane) and children. One of the mushrooms

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74. Cf. Omwoyo, "The Colonial Transformation of the Gusii": 45-48 for their Gusii equivalents.

75. For economic and medical value of this vegetable variety, see for example, D.N. Ngugi and et. al. East African Agriculture, (London, 1978): 59-61.

76. O.I., Maroa Nyamohanga, 24/4/97, Bongebo; Chacha Mangera, 20/4/97 and Soko Mwita both from Bukumburi.

gathered - iriugu or irinyansaka (*Clitocybe gigantea*) - produced giant specimens rising one metre above the ground and measuring 30cm from edge to edge.

The onset of torrential rains produced flash of moisture stimulating the growth of mushrooms and vegetables and ripening of fruits. Likewise, in times of famine, the importance of gathering increased dramatically and people relied almost exclusively on fruits and roots since vegetables and mushrooms disappeared. This was particularly true in the late nineteenth century in Bugumbe and Bwirege.<sup>77</sup>

Honey was obtained by placing honey barrels (emetana) or pots in the branches of some trees. Species of trees with strong branches were selected; these were the emetembe and imiriba which ramified in such a way that the honey barrels could easily be deposited in their crowns and remain in position even when exposed to strong winds and rainstorms. Honey barrels were made exclusively by specialists; the customary payment for one being a fowl or a goat. The woodcarver's job was not finished when he had made the barrel for his client; he would go with him to the tree and place the omotana (singular) in position, whilst "cursing" anyone who would try to steal it<sup>78</sup>. To harvest the honey, the top of the barrel was lifted and the content scraped out with the bare hands which had been smeared with previously harvested honey as protection against being stung. Sometimes, grass was lit with fire and inserted into the barrel and the bees were smoked out and killed to facilitate the harvesting.

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77. P.A. Abuso, "South Nyanza Historical Texts". Field Texts for the Thesis on "A Traditional History of the Abakuria" : 20-39.

78. Cases of honey theft are recorded in oral narratives, see for example, Samson Mwita Maroa, Nehanchere Ekegambo Goito: Amagano Gi-Igikuria (Nairobi, 1989).

### III. LAND TENURE

Kuria land tenure has been an issue of considerable interest and controversy among scholars. The main argument has been over the issues of Kuria ancestry and occupation: that is whether they were pure pastoralist, or agro-pastoralist.<sup>79</sup> To Cory, for example, Kuria land tenure was probably a comparatively young institution - the reason for this being that the ancestors of the Kuria were Maasai who immigrated into the empty country.<sup>80</sup>

Initially, land was acquired on a ridge (omogei) basis, with each pioneering group settling on its own ridge. Thus, the basic tenet of land acquisition was based on first come, first served basis and the first activity carried out in exploiting the natural resources in time came to be accepted as the basis of land ownership. Later, however, land was communally owned and cultivated by the clan inhabiting a geographically defined area (igunguri). Each homestead had a family land (irrerema retata omokoro).<sup>81</sup>

Land use continued to alter according to the emerging needs wrought by environmental change. For example, a family or eka began to live together in an area known as Oreberi or Urugumba. Characteristically, such areas were occupied by the members of an extended family and was encircled by a wall of stones and boulders known as obogwe.

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79. B.A. Rwezaura makes this point succinctly in his book, Family Law and Change in Northern Tanzania (Baden-Baden, 1985):7.

80. Hons Cory "The people of the Lake Victoria Region" in Tanzania Notes Records Vol. 33, 1952 : 22-29.

81. The most complete record of the classifications and the development of land tenure in Bukuria is found in S.M Seba, "Inheritance Laws Among the Abakuria". Institute of African Studies, Seminar Paper No. 69, University of Nairobi 1976. See also Appendix II

However, small pieces of land were left uncultivated to separate one family's land from the other. Cultivated land was fenced with ibinyara (*Euphorbia tiricalii*) plants <sup>82</sup>.

Despite environmental changes, Kuria land tenure maintained a considerable stability throughout the nineteenth century. Several factors contributed to this stability. First, since there was no shortage of land, there was no need for developing a system of individual family tenure. Secondly, because technology was undoubtedly relatively simple, the demand for land was kept in line with the population size. In case of new comers, uncultivated land was abundant and its allocation to strangers wholly depended on whether the applicants were considered suitable for acceptance into the community. New comers had at first to make friends with a number of the people in the omoge in which they wished to settle.

Another factor which encouraged stability in communal land rights was that land was basically for subsistence production. Such production in Bukuria was characterised by what Kitching calls "the under-utilization of labour time"<sup>83</sup> in the precapitalist societies. Some family members, particularly the warrior grades, spent their times herding and defending their cattle. On the other hand, older men were pre-occupied with clans affairs, rituals and other non-agricultural duties, leaving most of cultivation work to women and girls.

It is important to note that the Abakuria had their own way of land surveying. They estimated the 'adequacy' of land under cultivation in terms of labour capacity and subsistence requirements. Briefly, one ekorobo (pl. ibirobo) was the extent of land covered by throwing a small hand-hoe (ekebaayi) in different directions from a central point. Two ibirobo

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82. O.I., Maroa Magera, 30/3/97, Sorore.

83. Gavin Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya (Nairobi, 1980): 202.

amounted to irisata and four ibirobo equalled one intui.<sup>84</sup> These measurements were widely used, especially in solving land disputes and determining farm layouts.

#### IV. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

Animal husbandry was the most lucrative enterprise in precolonial Bukuria. Kuria cattle were hardy beasts capable of withstanding serious water shortages, poor forage and a considerable number of debilitating diseases. Though they were chiefly short-horned zebu, there is evidence that long-horned cattle were also kept before the devastating rinderpest epidemics of the 1890's.<sup>85</sup>

The Abakuria kept large herds of cattle, not because they suffered from the "Cattle Complex"<sup>86</sup> of anthropological folklore, but because cattle played so many different roles. Not only did livestock serve as a medium of exchange and store of value; it was also important as prestige goods and objects of mystification articulated within a social and ideological system.

The basic value of cattle was reflected in the many roles they played in Kuria social organization. In marriage, for example, they became an issue in formal bridewealth payment; during the isubo (elderhood ceremony), a number of between six and twelve head of cattle were given to the brothers of the elder's wives and some cattle required as offerings

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84. O.I., Gekone Nyamboha, 20/4/98, Getaisara. See also, Eva Tobbison, Family Dynamics Among the Kuria Agro-pastoralist in Northern Tanzania (Sweden, 1986):77-78.

85. Read the account of German explorer Max Weiss, "Die Bukulia" in Die Volkerstamme Norden Deutsch - Ostafrikas (Berlin, 1910):241-316. KNA, Gosi Cultural Centre Collection. I am greatly indebted to Bret Shadle for translation of this text.

86. M.J. Herskovits, "The Cattle Complex in East Africa" in An American Anthropologist Vol. 28:230-272, 1926.

to the ancestors. In initiation ceremonies (esaro for example), when the girl recovered from the physical operation the mother's brother was expected to slaughter an ox for her. If he did so, he would receive four to eight cattle on the day the girl got married.

In an ear piercing ceremony, known as the ebotora matwe, one or two bulls were slaughtered to seal the ceremony. Similarly, in the ekebete or child marriage ceremony which was arranged to help the father of the girl out of a serious economic difficulty, cattle exceeding those of normal marriage were required to be paid. This also applied to basino marriage (that is when a elderly woman married young woman to bear for her children). Even when married a young woman was caught in an act of adultery, she would be required to bring her husband three cows from her father's home. And if she decided to divorce, her new lover paid the husband the whole bride price that had been paid for her. These, among many others, formed the whole complex phenomenon of cattle interdependence in the life of the Abakuria.

To illustrate how important cattle were to the Abakuria, one may note how many times cattle are mentioned in songs and poems. An example is given below:

"This is Rioba of the Abahirimatara who came from the lineages of the bulls who kept Kimwamu\* and Kiburuha\* bulls ...the bulls that who chased Nyansamu\* while milk dripped from its udders... My father is Rioba of the stocky bulls. Even last night our bull did not sleep, it sniffed the cows till dawn, trying to find those without calf in the womb"<sup>87</sup>

Therefore, cattle were affectionately looked after, readily identified with, and elaborately discussed. The wealth of an individual was measured in cattle units, and cattle fulfilled crucial ritual functions and obligations.

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87. Suzette Healed, Praise Poems of the Abakuria (Nairobi, 1997) : 19.

\* These are names given to cattle in Bukuria. See for example, E. Whitely, "Cattle Terminology in Kuria" mimeo

The Abakuria increased their stocks mainly by raiding their neighbours.<sup>88</sup> Further more raiding was a requirement for the Kuria youth to demonstrate courage after initiation. Whether in raiding or warfare, a warrior displayed his courage by capturing cattle or killing an enemy. Raiding was also offered as a means of obtaining bridewealth cattle. This is demonstrated in a popular beer party song, "Nyagorio we 'ngoombe, sobokera omokari, nawe nakurusiria egoorio". This may be translated as "You who long for a woman make more cows, it is women who will remove your desire"(sic)<sup>89</sup>

Cattle were carefully grazed and at the same time guarded from rustlers. Cattle belonging to close lineage members drawn mainly from one eka (homestead) were grazed together by a team of armed boys (abarisia). They bore marking distinguishing them from cattle belonging to distant relatives; the marking helped establish ownership of stray cattle or those retrieved from raiders.

Oral evidence suggests that when the ancestors of the Abakuria moved from South West with their herds (see, introduction) and settled in their present homeland, rinderpest epidemics decimated their herds and they to build up their stock again. Rinderpest is well remembered among the Abakuria; the elders call it ekehaha<sup>90</sup> and say it killed most of the cattle, leaving only a few called ibitama or remnants.<sup>91</sup> Apart from the rinderpest epidemic,

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88. See, P.A. Abuso. "South Nyanza Historical Text," pp. 301-360 and Christopher Ehret, "The Maasai and Their Neighbours" in Richard Glay (ed) The Cambridge History of Africa Vol. 4: From c. 1600 to c. 1890 (Cambridge, 1974):302.

89. O.I., Bwiru Sabora, Nyabikaaye. 18/4/97.

90. See also, Chacha, Historia : 30

91. For lucid discussion of cattle diseases see for example, P.A. Abuso, "South Nyanza historical Texts"; KNA/DC/KSI/3/3, Cattle Diseases in South Kavirondo with particular Reference to Utende".

the Abakuria faced other problems associated with pastoralism: the invasion of locust (amakagaita) destroyed pasture land; while drought devastated their farming activities. Sheep and goats were less important in Kuria animal husbandry; even so, they were key elements in conflict, resolution and religious rituals. Fowl ducks, cats and dogs were equally domesticated.

## V. FISHING

Fishing as an economic activity in Bukuria was only confined to areas near rivers Migori, Mori and Mara. However, in small streams such as Nyangoto, Nyabasoti, Nyakwana and Nyanchabo, fishing was done on a small scale. Various methods of catching fish were employed: first, iroko (a herb solution made from a plant of the Crotalaria agatiflora species) was put into the river and its effect paralysed small fish making them float on the water.<sup>92</sup> Groups of women would then wait down stream and catch the drowsy fish. This technique was referred to as okohomana. Secondly, hooks attached to long strings and a stick (ichindobo) would be used to catch fish; this was done by small boys. Also, large nets and baskets<sup>93</sup> were placed in strategic places in the river and the fish would be trapped inside.

## VI. CROP PRODUCTION

As already indicated, apart from being skilled animal keepers, the Abakuria were also reputed cultivators. Cropping was achieved by an assemblage of techniques that included

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92. For Economic importance of this herb, see for example, G.W. Ivens, East African Weeds and Their Control (Nairobi, 1989): 15

93. The Abakuria bought fishing nets and baskets from the Luo Cf. B.A. Ogot, History of the Southern Luo:196.



frequent tilling, crop mixing, intercropping, rotational grazing, soil control and heavy application of manure obtained from livestock dung as well as plant residues.<sup>94</sup> Finger millet (*Eleusine coracana*) and sorghum were the principal crops grown; the production of finger millet was especially central to Kuria economic and social relations. Finger millet constituted the main food of the household to which milk, meat and vegetables were added. Also, a non-alcoholic drink called obosara was made from finger millet; this was a refreshing beverage which was taken regularly by both the household members and guests. The Kuria beer (amaroa) was a major social drink taken by elders only and served essentially in all ceremonies; it, too, was made from finger millet.<sup>95</sup>

The production of large quantities of finger millet was regarded as a sign of prosperity. Its significance in the Kuria precolonial agriculture is demonstrated by the division of the Kuria agricultural year. For example, the month of April was called Kimwamu, that is "darkness" arising from the growth of millet shoots and the manner in which they covered the fields. June was known as iheta, meaning to pass by. In June, the millet crop was half-ripe and people passing by could pick millet ears and eat them raw. It was in Mabehe (cold) or July when sharpening of knives in readiness for harvest took place. August was the month of harvest, when women were often seen carrying baskets of grain heading for their homes. This month was therefore called Nyansahi or "baskets". In September, when all the crop had been harvested, people were often heard complaining

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94. This statement is based on oral interviews carried out in Bukira, Nyabasi and Buirege between 19/4/97 and 21/5/97.

95. O.I., Mwita Owandwi, 15/54/97, Kurutiange.

perhaps in mock irony that they did not harvest sufficient grain. This month was called Kuri-masariro, which means complaining or crying.<sup>96</sup>

Agricultural activity therefore had a strong bearing on the naming of the months of the year, attesting to the importance of agriculture among the Abakuria. The agricultural year comprised of two cultivation cycles: one major and the other minor - that is, ommoka omonene and omoobo, respectively.<sup>97</sup>

Preparation of land commenced in November and was completed in December. In January the land was left and the sun burned the weeds and dried. February was the month for sowing. This was followed by heavy rains in April. Weeding commenced in May, and in August harvesting was done.

TABLE I: THE KURIA AGRICULTURAL CALENDAR

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>KURIA NAME</u>
NOVEMBER	Itiria nke
DECEMBER	Kenyariri
JANUARY	Itabarari
FEBRUARY	Getaruri
MARCH	Maatui
APRIL	Kimwamu
MAY	Kerabu
JUNE	Iheta
JULY	Mabeho
AUGUST	Nyansahi
SEPTEMBER	Kuri-Masariro
OCTOBER	Itiria nene

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96. This classification of the agricultural year is based on Chacha, Historia : 40 and my own oral interviews conducted in Bukuria.

97. Cf. S.M. Seba, "Inheritance Laws" for extended discussion of cropping patterns and millet production.

Besides the food crops already mentioned, useful plants grown by the Abakuria included different types of ornamentals such as engoto (*Opuntia exaltata*) used for fencing or hedging and partitioning of the farms; ibinyara (*Euphorbia turicali*) which was also grown for the same use; and ekehemba kia abarisia (*Lantana camara*), which provided shades and hedges. Vegetables which were found growing in the wild could also be planted. These included ichinswega (*Solanum nigrum*), ichinderema (*Basella alba*), and iritiambu (*sesamum angustifolium*). Though mostly gathered, fruits were also domesticated; the common one was a species of passion fruit which was grown along the cowshed or spread on the hedges (amasancho). Spices and condiments were rare in Bukuria, but small chillis (*Capsicum spp.*) were grown by women in their small gardens called ikibumburio.<sup>98</sup>

The methods of growing crops were variants of shifting cultivation or the slash-burn technique - general terms are commonly applied to agricultural systems based on cultivating land only a few years, then returning it to natural vegetation several years to restore fertility.<sup>99</sup> Through these systems and crop rotation, land fertility was maintained. This was possible because land was relatively plentiful. It was also aided by the grazing of cattle on the fallow land.

The period when land lay fallow was more than twice as long as when cropped and, not infrequently, much longer. Under this system, some fields were cleared each year and some abandoned. When the distance between the homestead and fields became intolerable, land around the old homestead (iritongo), especially areas that had been clinched by the accumulation of household wastes continued to be cultivated for several seasons.

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98. O.I. Mokami Gekondo, 13/4/97, Wangirabose.

99. Cf. E.S. Gesase, "Agricultural Change in Eastern Tarime District During the Colonial Rule 1900-1961" M.A. Thesis, University of Dar es Salam, 1976.

Intercropping as a manner of crop production suited the needs of the Abakuria and their fragile environment in many ways. First, if deep soil was left bare, it would be washed away by the heavy torrents of the region. Constant cover of the ground by some crops therefore preserved the soil by preventing soil erosion. Secondly, soil fertility was maintained through multiple cropping. The available soil moisture and plant nutrients were fully used because different plants had different and complementary requirements and were rooted at depths. Thirdly, the spread of pests and diseases was arrested since the neighbouring plants were less likely to be of the same species. Lastly, adequate food security and self reliance were ensured by the cultivation of a variety of crops. Besides, intercropping maximized on labour which was scarcer than land.<sup>100</sup>

In times of ecological crisis, the Abakuria kept moving between two major points vital to their survival: Taragwiti and Ikorongo in the Musoma District of Tanzania. In the course of these movements new plants were brought and sometimes different attitudes towards work and new food habits and farming systems were introduced.<sup>101</sup> In this way yams, cassava<sup>102</sup> and sweet potatoes<sup>103</sup> were introduced to Bukuria in the late precolonial period.

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100. These arguments are developed in Tiyaambe Zeleza, A Modern Economic History of Africa Vol. I The Nineteenth Century, (Dakar, 1993).

101. for the impact of population Movements on agriculture, see for example, Jan Vansina, "Population movement" in B.A. Ogot, (ed) Unesco General History of Africa Vol. 5 (Paris, 1992).

102. Cassava according to Chacha, Historia : 5, came after the famine of Sese around 1890 from the Islands of Ukwere, Sese and Unyamwezi.

103. Ibid, Sweet potatoes were imported from Bosoba and Suna after the similar famine.

\* See Appendix III

The Abakuria produced a wide variety of agricultural implements prior to colonial rule\*. With the help of resourceful inventors (abaturi),<sup>104</sup> they were able to get implements for all kinds of work performed in the household. Progress was mostly achieved on a trial and error basis by enthusiasts whose efforts, perhaps over half a lifetime, were lost unless they could persuade neighbours into adopting the improvements.

The tools used for land preparation included inkuro made from buffalo rib, which was used for digging, and a wooden hoe (ichihande) made by a craftman from a hardwood known as egekamiri (*Toddliopsis zanzibarensis*) and Ekerrwe (*Teclea nobilis*). One end was made narrow, like that of the iron hoes; while the blade itself was wider. Its root was tied to the wooden handle by a sisal rope or skin. The blade was treated with cow fat (igitinya) and warmed up over a fire to harden the sharp ends so that it could be driven into the soil without breaking. The Abakuria acquired iron from the Maasai from which they made ekehayi, an iron hoe with a wooden handle that was used for weeding finger millet fields<sup>105</sup>. (See appendix VII).

Harvesting was done amidst celebration, especially if the harvest was plenty. Tools used included the ubuturano, ichinkoberro,<sup>106</sup> ibikebi (knives) made from iron ore for harvesting finger millet, and the irikanga (basket) or ensahi and ibitonga were used to transport harvested millet from the field. The skin bag called irigonge or egetunsa was used

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104. Abaturi came to Bukuria as a separate lineage from the Ngurueme and were assimilated as a subclan of the blacksmiths. They were usually poor but were specialist in this field of technology.

105. O.I., Chacha Kerata Nyabikaye, 24/4/97. Iron ore were dug from Maasailand and smelted by the Abakuria

106. The ubuturano and ichinkobero were very small sharp tools often worn on the fingers skillfully made to pick finger millets.

to store sorghum millet. Storage structures employed provided many features that were conducive to good preservation and were inexpensive, as they were made of local natural materials. The design and capacity of these facilities were determined by the type of foodstuff and the size of the crop. Some families stored their crops suspended on platforms outside the house or inside the dwellings. For example, bunches of sorghum were suspended in sheaves using a rope or plant material from the branches of trees or from the top of poles driven into the ground, either in the fields or close to the village. The grain thus dried in the air and the sun until it was gradually consumed by the farmer and his family. Gourds (*Legenaris vulgaris*) were extensively used for preserving seeds. The openings of the gourd openings was blocked up with clay or cow dung.

Crop production was not without problems, and times farming was remarkably fragile. Weeds, pests, diseases and drought sometime combined to cause famine. Also, pests such as army worms, locust, and shout flies were common in grain crops. In such adversities, the Abakuria sometimes resorted to occult phenomena in the hope that they could thus protect their crops. For example, they used charm and magic against wild game and alleged witches in many places, especially Bugumbe<sup>107</sup>. In case of rain shortage, rainmakers (*abagiimbi*) were often approached with presents and expected to intercede on behalf of the victims. Likewise, rainmakers performed specific rites that marked major phases of the annual millet cultivation cycle.<sup>108</sup> According to oral narratives, the Abakuria may have acquired the rain making skills from the Abahirinyagetebe clan of Bokenye.<sup>109</sup> At each step of production-

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107. Cf. R.M. Angogo, "Religion and Witchcraft in Kuria Traditional Society." in *Mila* No. 3, Institute of African Studies, University of Nairobi, 1972.

108. See, particularly, Chacha, *Historia*:4.

109. *Ibid* : 5 Abakenye of Tanzania just like the Abagusii are linguistically related to the Abakuria.

from planting to harvesting labour to perform the work involved was needed. However, the Abakuria had only six working days. On the seventh day all agricultural work ceased. Kuria tradition had the seventh day of the week as a rest day when men performed weekly agricultural rituals in honour of God the creator.<sup>110</sup>

## VII. FAMILY, WORK AND LABOUR ORGANISATION

Since land in precolonial Kuria was freely available, as already shown, property and security depended essentially on access to and control over labour. The richest men were therefore those who could command the resources of labour necessary to open new fields for cultivation, watch over large herds, protect their settlements and engage in trading and raids. Men built their base of wealth first by expanding their families a fact that was illustrated in a popular aphorism "ukuibora mboome", meaning "bearing of children is a sign of wealth."<sup>111</sup>

A fundamental principle that guided the division of labour in the Kuria household was that of sex. The allocation of tasks to men and women was not primarily a matter of which tasks men and women were actually able to perform; rather, it was which task they were acknowledged to perform by the society. Women were chiefly responsible for the performance of crop production tasks, while the men were preoccupied with animal

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110. Many Africans rested on the seventh day - the day or figure "7" regarded as either holy or evil. In either case work stopped and people rested. Compare these views with, K. Owusu-mensa, The Akan God of Saturday (Accra, 1990):45-56. See also, Isaac Okeyo, Adventism in Kenya (Kendu-Bay, 1989): 30.

111. Personal communication with the late S. Waitoge in Sirari 23/4/97.

husbandry<sup>112</sup>. As to farming work, the division of labour between men and women was not rigid; and some tasks were assigned to men and others to women. Men could perform "female" tasks without losing prestige.<sup>113</sup> Conversely, women could also do men's work.

In principle, however, men were responsible for the clearing of land before cultivation, including such work as cutting trees and uprooting bushes and grass. Men and women cooperated in cultivation; while women carried out planting, weeding and harvesting tasks, with minor assistance from men. Most of tasks carried out within or in the vicinity of the homestead were the responsibility of women, including fetching water, collecting firewood, threshing, grinding, preparing food and cleaning the house.

The assignment of varied tasks to men and women in the Kuria household was paralleled by a division of work based on age. For example, some tasks were carried out by older women, while others were reserved for unmarried girls. Some of these tasks presumed knowledge and skills which were communicated to the individual at specific points in the life cycle such as initiation, marriage, and entry into elderhood (*isubo*). Work was either carried out individually by members of a single household or cooperatively.<sup>114</sup> In the latter case, work teams consisted participants recruited from a number of households according to some specified criterion such as age, sex, kinship, friendship, and so on.

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112. Cf. H. Baumann, "The Division of work According to sex in African Hoe Culture" in Africa Vol.1 No. 3, 1928 : 289.

113. Eva Tobisson, "Women, Work, Food and Nutrition in Nyamwigura Village, Mara Region, Tanganyika", Dar es Salaam Tanzania Food and Nutrition Committee Report No. 548, 1980:31.

114. See, inter-alia, R.R. Matango, "Peasants and Socialism in Tarime District," M.A. Thesis, University of Dar es Salaam, 1976 : 20-25.



The commonest work team of a permanent nature was the iriika which was organised on the basis of sex and age. For example, young girls from between four or seven neighbouring households would collaborate in the collection of firewood. Each day, they supplied the household of one of the members with enough firewood for about one week. Another iriika would be composed of young men who continually cooperated in herding. The isiri work team was composed of around thirty unmarried young people of both sexes who shared an agricultural task: weeding, harvesting, and so on; these members were always recruited among kinsmen and families in the neighbourhood. After completion of work, food would be served and dancing arranged<sup>115</sup>. The ikigingira was composed of men and women belonging to the same age-class, and their tasks were those that were particularly labour intensive such as weeding. Food was served to them upon completion of the task. The ekebotorro team was made up of around forty persons of both sexes. The team was subdivided into age and sex specific subsections which worked separately, sometimes performing different tasks<sup>116</sup>. The irisaga was composed of a small number of senior men who assisted one another in agricultural work, including maintenance of cattle enclosures and construction of granaries. They would be provided with food and beer in the household attended during the day. Members of a homestead joined different aid teams which included irimugai (a group of about fifteen persons who did such labour intensive work as cutting trees), egesangerero (a group of between four to ten persons organised to do any work around the homestead), egesorio (consisting of four to twenty married old men and their wives), and

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115. O.I Mwita Maroa Mwita, 20/3/97, Kegonga.

116. This statement is based on evidence drawn from a wide range of sources, a partial listing of which may be found in Magige Tatu "Handwritten Notes on the Abakuria", Kumumwamu, 1982.

emoobo (or members of the same family drawn together to assist in different ichinyumba or houses of co-wives).<sup>117</sup>

Kuria co-operation in agricultural work reflected patterns of existing social relationships within the neighbourhood community. As work teams were formed from extant social institutions, this meant that co-operation in agriculture was just one activity among a number which were performed by the members of that group. Since these members were united by more valued forms of relationship, as in the case of circumcision set, co-operation in agriculture served to consolidate their unity. To this extent, production was integrated into the whole network of social relationships.<sup>118</sup>

Looking at the compensation given to these teams for their work, it may be seen that co-operation in agriculture offered an opportunity for the group to express their mutual loyalties. Borrowing from Meillassoux's research among the Guro, such an occasion may be described as the "collective meal" where:

"Food products are redistributed to all the members of the community: the collective meal is the end result of the process of agricultural co-operation. Everyone's labour is blended and each participates in the product for the other's labour..."<sup>119</sup>

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117. S.M. Seba, "Inheritance Laws" : 7.

118. Cf. J.C. Bryson "Women and Agriculture in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for Development An Exploratory Study" in The Journal of Development Studies. Vol.17, No. 3, 1981: pp.29-49.

119. C. Meillassaux, "Kinship Relations of Production" in D. Seddon, (ed) Relation of Production : Marxist Approaches to Economic Anthropology (London, 1978):292.

## VIII. LOCAL AND REGIONAL TRADE

The Kuria precolonial economy was multi-centric, that it almost any item or goods that any individual desired for everyday living could be fabricated or locally produced. Each family provided most of its own food needs and utensils: calabashes, for example, were made from gourds (ibirandi) which were cultivated widely.<sup>120</sup> The same was generally true of house and granary construction, clothing, the preparation of stools, string basketry and agricultural implements.

However, even though people looked largely to their own plots and herds to meet basic needs, no family was entirely self-sufficient. And even with the subtle gradations in elevation, topography, vegetation and soils, some areas would be better suited than others for the production of particular crops or livestock. Furthermore, variations of timing of harvest for different crops, fluctuations in the size of harvest from farm to farm and the presence of more or less successful farmers created discontinuities in production. The existence of such inequalities meant that in any season a large proportion of people regularly bought or sold ordinary foodstuffs and other consumer goods.

It is difficult to identify the different phases of precolonial Kuria trade on the basis of geographical scale or the commodities involved. However, there is remarkably little to suggest that village to village trade was restricted to local products.<sup>121</sup> For examples, the beads that were traded in this manner came from as far as Maasailand.<sup>122</sup> Following

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120. O.I., Mwita Wandwi, Kehancha, 25/6/97. See also, Kuria Material Culture in Kenya National Museum in Kisumu.

121. Cf. J. Vansina, "Long-Distance Trade-Routes in Cultural Africa" in Journal of African History Vol.3 No.1, 1962 : 375-90.

122. Chacha, Historia : 5.

Meillassoux<sup>123</sup> and Richard Hull<sup>124</sup> such trade could be defined as "subsistence oriented" meaning that trade remained closely associated with subsistence agricultural production and was subservient to the local kinship system.

The Abakuria exchanged cattle, sheep and goats, either against grain or the craftsmanship objects. One proverb would testify to this fact: "Abasi bano bagorre emoori obosongo, egatema nchera ekabiara na bosongo botaraita; hano buguita bogaita mokoro wa tienyi nyamaiso monankomorio"<sup>125</sup> This translates: "the Abaasi (a section of the Abakuria) exchanged a calf for an arrow poison but the calf grew and reproduced before the arrow poison had killed an animal". Oral traditions give evidence of an old custom of lending out grain against the payment of interest (ogotonda) where cattle were involved. In this way, cattle owners were insured against the adverse effects of a bad harvest or even famine. Thus, ekegoterro was a binding agreement under which:

"If a man had a cow which he did not want to use in exchange but still needed to obtain grain, he would give the cow to the grain owner, under the agreement that if, the cow bore a calf, the grain owner would keep the calf, and return the cow to its original owner."<sup>126</sup>

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123. C. Meillassoux, "Essai d'interpretation du phenomene Economoque dans les societes traditionnelles d'autosubsistence", Cahiers d'Etudes Africanines, Vol 4, 1960 : 38-67. Cited in Richard Gray and David Birmingham (eds) Precolonial African Trade: Essay on Trade in Central and Eastern African Before 1900 (New York, Nairobi, 1970):3

124. Richard W. Hull, Munyakare: African Civilization Before the Baturee, (London, New York, etc, 1972):7.

125. O.I., Wambura Monanka, Isibania, 24/4/97.

126. Quoted in David Chacha and Arne Lexander, "Migori Kuria Special Rural Development Project: Cattle in Kuria Economy" Sociological Survey of Bukihence No. 11, 1970:10-11.

In such transactions, a witness and a surety were required, and both were given grain in recognition of their role in an arrangement referred to as ekebotora iguri.

Cattle provided a means of accumulating wealth and owing their increase through natural reproduction were an attractive piece of investment. In fact, those who exchanged grain for cattle were always at an advantage. As Kitching generally notes about precolonial Kenyan communities: "the rates of exchange between the livestock, food crops... and artisan products were generally in favour of the livestock owner."<sup>127</sup> This was because the volume of millet which was exchanged for one cow or goat was normally a product of more labour than that expended on rearing livestock.<sup>128</sup> This may explain why the Abakuria were most reluctant to exchange their cattle for grain and why they were so eager to recover them when the harvest was good. The cattle traded back in this manner were known as ichingombe chio omogongo, which translates as "the cattle of the backbone" implying that they were product of hard farm work.<sup>129</sup>

Apart from this cattle trade, there were a few specialized goods that were produced in limited places thus generating transactions and contacts. The major ones of these commodities exchanged were objects of craftsmanship manufactured by such specialists as the abaturi (blacksmith) who produced spears, arrows, knives and hoe blades. In exchange for their services, the blacksmiths were paid, in grain and stock according to recognized rates of

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127. Gavin Kitching, Class and Economic change: 203.

128. P. Bohannon, "The Impact of Money on an African Subsistence Economy" in Journal of Economic History Vol. 19, 1985 : 419-503.

129. Rwezaura, Family Law and Change: 26-28.

payment. For example, women who made cooking utensils were compensated by the amount of millet or sorghum that would go into an average pot.<sup>130</sup>

Salt was an essential commodity in precolonial Bukuria and there were different ways of obtaining it. One was to burn the plant *inkurwa* (*Corchorus olitorius*) and *ichinkunyinyi* (*vigna senesis*) put their salty ashes in water, filter the ashes and produce crystals by evaporating in specially made pots. The most common method used in salt making was the evaporation on the saline earths that formed around saline springs (*engenyi*) especially those that were found at Kurutiange and Naora.<sup>131</sup> However, this method was usually more laborious, and the salt obtained was often impure or unpalatable.

It was only in a few places that it was possible to produce enough salt to meet more than immediate local demands. Consequently, in the later nineteenth century, the Abakuria began obtaining salt by trading with the Abasuba who produced it in large quantities. There were numerous springs at Gwasi in Lake Victoria which yielded a plentiful supply of brine. This only needed to be evaporated to produce an exceptionally pure salt.<sup>132</sup>

At the regional level, then, the Abakuria traded with the Abasuba for supply of salt and other commodities such as pots and mats. Similarly, in spite of frequent cattle raiding, there is every reason to believe that a considerable amount of trade occurred between the Abakuria and the Maasai groups.<sup>133</sup> Old narratives reveal that the Maasai would come to

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130. Oral Interview with elders from the Bukira clan, 15/4/97.

131. O.I. Isasinge Babere, Kurutiange, 10/4/97.

133. See for example, Michael Kenny, "Pre-colonial Trade in Eastern Lake Victoria" in *Azania*: vol. 15, 1979 :100-107.

134. Cf. John Bernstein, "The Maasai and their Neighbours: Variables in Interaction" in *African Economic History* vol. 2 1976.

stay in Bukuria for several days and were given a lot of food. Coming in a caravan of between thirty to sixty persons referred to by the Abakuria as abotobia, they brought with them beads and other valuables like imikune or spears. To be sure, the essentially semi agricultural way of the Abakuria and pastoral life of the Maasai encouraged complementarity and co-operation.<sup>134</sup> So, whenever the two communities differed or fought, their leaders would call reconciliation meetings; and these meetings were known as okorea ikinyabotati (eating so as to make peace).<sup>135</sup> Both sides needed the material goods and techniques of the other. Therefore, although their relations were profoundly ambivalent there was mutual dependence created by the iron-working industry in Maasailand and the availability of grain in Bukuria.<sup>136</sup>

Oral evidence suggests that in Bukuria, as in other parts of Nyanza, iron was a relatively scarce commodity. Its scarcity was aggravated by the fact that the iron smelting was practiced only by certain families who transmitted the necessary technical and magical skills. It is remarkable that in Bukuria for example, the ore was extracted and smelted, not by the local people, but by the Maasai craftsmen who sold it to the Abahirinyagetebe from Bokenye. The scarcity of iron was naturally a major stimulant to trade, since it was a high valued commodity. It was needed for hoe-blades for cultivation; as knife-blades and axe-heads for building and other crafts; and as spear-blades and arrow heads for hunting and fighting. The

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134. J.E.G. Sutton, in B.A. Ogot and J.A. Kieran (eds) 1968:73.

135. Oral accounts generally emphasize the violent elements of the contacts between the Abakuria and Maasai. The Maasai sometimes teamed up with the Kipsigis to launch massive cattle raids on the Abakuria see for example, C. Chesaina, Oral Literature of the Kipsigis (Nairobi, 1991):38-41.

136. Max Weis, "Die Bukulia" : 241-316.

trade in iron fostered the direct contacts between the Abakuria and Maasai.<sup>137</sup> The Abakuria therefore made trips to Maasailand to procure ore, and men from the two communities cemented ties through marriages.<sup>138</sup> Though casual and spasmodic, this trade encouraged Kuria interest in the donkey, a domesticated animal they acquired from the Maasai and first raised in Bwirege.<sup>139</sup>

Thus, the greater portion of Kuria trade in basic commodities such as millet and sorghum moved through networks to link them with the Luo, Abasuba, Abagusii and even the Kipsigis who were hidden behind the corridor through Maasailand. In fact, on the eve of colonial rule, the Kipsigis increasingly became regular buyers and consumers of Kuria millet which they obtained from Bwirege.<sup>140</sup> A poet recalls this:

I am the warrior of Rumbasi of the house of Getangita Gibewa. I have a long spear of the Rumbwa (Kipsigis) who hebena (eat raw) millet like porcupines. As I was going to Rumbwa, I passed by the men with braided hair (Maasai) I found a leopard circumcising, a monkey singing and shaking gourds...<sup>141</sup>

The Kipsigis exchanged their long spears and shields for Kuria millet which was later cultivated widely in Chepalungu and Buret.<sup>142</sup>

Although it is difficult to appraise the extent to which inhabitants to the east of Lake Victoria were affected by the expansion of Arab trade, oral tradition suggests the importance of Ukerewe island for the trading network; this may have had some implication for the

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137. John Bernstein, "The Maasai and Their Neighbours".

139. Cf. Christopher Ehret, "The Maasai and Their Neighbours" 1974:302.

139. O.I., Boniface Rioba, 20/4/97, Ntimaru.

140. See also, Mwanzi, History of the Kipsigis:161.

141. Suzette Hoald, Praise Poems of the Kuria (Nairobi, 1997) :19.

142. Mwanzi, : 161.



Abakuria and their neighbours.<sup>143</sup> Ruel indicates that one or two ivory trade caravans entered Bukuria immediately before the German and British occupation<sup>144</sup> At the turn of the century, Kollman<sup>145</sup> wrote that the "Washashi" (by which he signified a wide range of people living South of Bukuria) often fell upon and massacred whole caravans crossing their territory on their way to Luo areas to purchase ivory. Wakefields;<sup>146</sup> description of caravan routes between the Coast and the interior also suggests that Bantu-speaking people living south-west of Bukuria were involved in ivory trade in the 1870s.

Kuria oral traditions suggest that families experiencing famine in the nineteenth century often had no choice but to barter their children for food.<sup>147</sup> Legends relate that grain was brought to the mouth of Mara River by "slave hunting" people who were skilled agriculturalists who knew how to make rain. This description fits the Kerewe<sup>148</sup> people; and, incidentally, the Kuria legends supported the Kerewe oral tradition which describes how

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143. Cf. Eva Tobisson, Family Dynamics : 12

144. M.J. Ruel, "The Social Organisation of the Kuria" A fieldwork report, 1973:148.

145. P. Kollman, The Victoria Nyanza: The Land, the Races and Their Customs (London, 1899) : 177.

146. T. Wakefield, "Notes on the Geography of East Africa" in Journal of the Royal Geographical Society Vol. 49, 1870, cited in Tobisson, Family Dynamics : 13

147 G.W. Hartwig, "The Victoria Nyanza as a Trade Route in the Nineteenth Century" in Journal of African History Vol. 2 No.4 : 535-552, 1979. The Pawning or sale of people during famine was widespread in East Africa. See, for example, J.C. Miller, "Drought, Diseases, Famine" in Journal of African History Vol. 23, 1982: 17-61. Hopkins has pointed out to the need for further examination of Pawnship in A.G. Hopkins, An Economic History of West Africa (London, 1973) : 27.

148. G.W. Hartwig, "A Cultural History of the Kerewe of Tanzania to 1895". Ph.D. Thesis, Indiana University, 1971.

Kwaya children were bartered in a similar fashion.<sup>149</sup> Precolonial Kuria, then, was characterised by a dynamic and enterprising local and regional trade. There were well-established trade links and a commercial network that opened the area to many regions in East Africa.

#### **VIII. DROUGHT, FAMINE, DISEASES AND ECOLOGY CONTROL.**

In the 1890s the Abakuria, like other Kenyan communities, experienced drought which rendered farming and animal production precarious and hazardous occupations. Despite this, however, the Abakuria changed their general landscape and gradually modified their environment to suit the hard times. The three main rivers in Bukuria Migori, Mori and Mara, with minor ones such as Nyangoto, Nyakwana, Tebesi and Nyabasoti played significant roles in the ecosystem of Bukuria. In times of insufficient rainfall, various clans competed and sometimes fought each other in their efforts to occupy the banks of these rivers. Bukuria was drastically affected by the pattern of climate oscillations represented by the changing patterns of the lake level. Both the lake and land configuration had a critical influence on climate and consequently, on agricultural potential. General climate changes caused drought and hence famine resulting from lack of pasture. A decade of natural catastrophe opened when rinderpest entered western Kenya and northern Tanganyika from North Africa in the early 1890s. The disease devastated livestock and many game species. Bukuria was struck by the epidemic apparently in unprecedented proportions. Kuria oral traditions commemorate this event clearly.<sup>150</sup> They tell of cattle, sheep and goat skeletons strewn in great quantities

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149. G.W. Hartwig, The Art of Survival in East Africa: The Kerewe and Long Distance Trade (New York, 1976).

150. See, for example, Samson Mwita Maroa, Nehanchere Ekegambo Geito; Amatonio Gi Igikuria (Nairobi, 1989):4-16.

throughout the region. Some informants claim that before this the Abakuria possessed a hundred times more cattle than after the epizootic. To a limited extent, written reports substantiate these claims. Cory and Ruel<sup>151</sup> show that there were so few cattle, and a German explorer Marx Weiss wrote that even milk was uncommon beverage.(sic)<sup>152</sup> In more graphic language Iliffe writes that "the epidemic was fatal to livestock... killing ninety percent of the cattle ... every bull in Bukuria save one delighted animal..."<sup>153</sup> The surviving animals were given the little available water collected from emergency dug holes known as the egoonyi chacha. Women continued to make a cry known as ekerarati as cattle died one by one. Marriages were not conducted owing to lack of livestock for bride price which, in many case, dropped significantly from 10-12 heads of cattle to 2-4.<sup>154</sup>

The consequences of rinderpest extended far beyond immediate hunger and death. For one, competition for the few surviving cattle intensified interclan warfare the most serious ones being between the Bukira and Bugumbe clans who fought each other over cattle disputes. This fighting occurred in Nyambacho in about 1892.<sup>155</sup>

These catastrophes were accompanied by famines; one of the severest, Inchara ya sese (the famine of sese), occurred around 1893. According to informants in Bukiira, this was the famine that wiped out the Abamoncha subclan of the Abasuba who had settled at the foot

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151. Cory, "The people of Lake Victoria Region": 22-29; M.Ruel, "Social Organization of the Abakuria":320 respectively.

152. Marx Weiss, "Die Bukulia": 249.

153. Iliffe,

154. Marx, op cit : 245.

155. O.I., Personal Interview with selected elders from the four Kuria clans viz: Bukiira, Nyabasi, Buirege and Bugumbe between, 19/4/97 and 24/5/97.

of Taragwiti mountains in the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>156</sup> The famine spread across the Nyanza region up to Maasailand and northern Tanganyika. Many areas suffered repeated food shortages but in Bukuria, it provoked a crisis that lasted many years. Stunted crops withered in the fields, households rapidly exhausted their food stocks and hunger became pervasive. Consequently, the Abakuria sold their children to Ikoma, Ukara and Sese in exchange for food.<sup>157</sup>

The Gitura-maho famine<sup>158</sup> of 1896 came with much force and created enormous hardships. Families began cutting hides onces used as mats and bedding, softening them with water and milk (where any could be found) and turning them into a "devastating" meal because they died after eating the food. Kuria refugees (Abatebia) with their small herds of livestock (ibitama) headed south across the Migori and Mori Rivers.<sup>159</sup> Skirting settled areas they made their way towards Mugumu and Ikorongo. Weak from persistent hunger, they faced not only a physically arduous journey across rough country, but the threat of attack from raiders such as the Warutu, Warongo, and Mbugwe.<sup>160</sup>

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156. The Abamamoncha who are now extinct, were culturally and linguistically linked with the Abasuba. This clan was presumably wiped out by the famine and some incorporated into the subclans of Abahirimahando and Abahirigetende. See also Chacha, Historia :14.

157. G.W. Harthwig, "The Victoria Nyanza" : 536-552.

158. The word "Gitura-maho" means soaking the dry hides into water and milk.

159. Cf. P.A. Abuso, A Traditional History of The Abakuria : 5-16.

160. O.I, Wangubo Maroa, Nyabohanse, 16/4/94. The Warutu, and Mbugwe were perennial enemies of the Abakuria see, for example, R.F. Gray, "The Mbugwe Tribe: Origin and Development in Tanganyika Notes and Records No. 38, 1955.

At the same time human diseases continued to have devastating impact on the Abakuria. Malaria especially decimated the young, those who survived however became sufficiently immune to be productive. A few hunters and gatherers known as the Abatogo remained in the forest and enjoyed a remarkable freedom from the disease. However, a slight modification and minor degree of disturbance of the forest ecosystem could result in an intensification of malaria endemicity. Cholera (ikinyamanche) was another of the infectious maladies that beset the Abakuria. Jiggers (ichimbonde or ichinkara) appeared in Bukuria in the middle of the Gitura-maho famine, and the pest quietly spread across the land, burrowing into the feet of unsuspecting victims and resulting in appalling injuries. The jiggers plague undermined people's mobility and work effort and threatened their ability to maintain the local economy. To be more specific, according to Anacleiti, it caused "a famine of the legs" (egecha ya amagoro) because the Abakuria could not walk to Sese and Sukuma lands to obtain food.<sup>161</sup> If the sores of the pest remained unattended to, they caused further infection and, consequently, gangrene (amagenge) and crippling. Thus, jiggers added to the number of tragic events which in the 1890s abounded in Bukuria<sup>162</sup>

By the close of the 1890s the combined effect of starvation and disease had killed many thousands of people. Men and women found themselves engaged in grim and often lonely struggles for existence as depopulation weakened community bonds. When relatives

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161. Cited in B.A. Ogot, (ed) Ecology and History in East Africa (Nairobi, 1969): 5.

162 The arrival of Jiggers is noted in numerous oral interviews in Bukuria. See, for example, P.A. Abuso, "South Nyanza Historical Texts" : 243 and Chacha, Historia : 5-12. For detailed effect of the Pest in East African communities see for example, Helge Kjekshus, Ecology control : 134-136 and Charles, H. Ambler, Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century (New Haven and London, ):125.

died or fled, the remaining husbands, wives and children were often defenceless and in desperate straits.

## **X      CONCLUSION**

The precolonial era was a period of overlapping successes and failures of the Abakuria in their effort to manipulate their physical environment in order to distribute the goods needed. They therefore produced tools, cleaned forests and practised shifting agriculture and careful stock management, among others. These technical developments were of great importance because they allowed many people to exist on a given piece of land. However, despite the developments, the community's ability to produce the dynamics of change and growth were still clearly tied to the rhythm of nature.

For the Abakuria, trade was a means to diversify and (thereby) strengthen their animal husbandry. It brought added wealth to the society in normal years, provided cushions against the effects of drought and, perhaps most important, compensated them to some extent for the animals killed in major droughts. As a result, trade helped to integrate the diverse Kuria population and to create a reasonably stable society which was self sufficient.

Land was very vital to the Kuria economy and social relations. Fundamentally, land was the main resource base for crop production and animal husbandry. Generally, it was divided for various uses and classified further according to the nature and texture of the soil. Different types of crops were grown. These included food crops and spices, ornamentals, horticultural crops, and many others. Shifting agriculture was practised not because the Abakuria were not able to conserve soil, but because they believed that under the system, land could be to regain its fertility under natural vegetation regrowth.

Whereas in the precolonial period, they relied heavily on animal husbandry, cattle were central to Kuria life. They were a principal source of food, supplementing agricultural products with milk, meat and blood. Thus, the Abakuria were innovative, dynamic and enterprising agro-pastoralists.

## CHAPTER II

### AGRICULTURAL CHANGES OF THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD, c. 1905-1920

#### I. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COLONIAL RULE IN BUKURIA

"Chabia inguba ko manche, irisasi terragambe he". ("Soak your shield in water and the white man's bullet will not kill you").<sup>163</sup>

For the Abakuria, the gradual establishment of colonial hegemony and the accompanying European influences represented the most profound cause of economic transformation at the turn of the twentieth century. In 1877, during his circumnavigation of Lake Victoria in a steamer called 'Lady Alice', H.M. Stanley had named Nyanza Province "Ugaya"<sup>164</sup> This was an area which the British thought was threatened with permanent alienation by the Germans. The British East Africa Company championing British interests had worked feverishly to convert this "influence" into practical power. In 1890, as one of the terms of the Anglo-German Treaty, a border which skirted the northern slopes of Mt. Kilimanjaro and ran forth in a straight line to a point on the eastern shore of Lake Victoria and (therefore) through Bukuria was drawn. In 1903, a small port on the east shore of Lake Victoria known as Karungu was opened. Karungu was selected mainly because it was a strategic base from which to establish control over the area threatened by German encroachment. This event marked the beginning of permanent British occupation in Nyanza.

In 1904, Bukuria was at the centre of the Anglo-German struggle over the international boundary which, when later demarcated, divided the hitherto united Abakuria

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163. These are the words which were sung by Kuria warriors in their futile attempt to fight the Germans O.I., Maroa Goasiani, 14/4/97, Isibania.

164. "Ugaya" is a Kuria word meaning Luoland. H.M. Stanley passed Bukuria and learnt this name before proceeding to Luoland. See, Report by P. Gordon in KNA/DC/KSI/3/1, History of the District 1898-1945:20.



thus complicating their identity and loyalty.<sup>165</sup> The Abakuria of German East Africa were placed under the Lake Province with its headquarters at Shirati, while those of British East Africa were placed under the South Kavirondo District of Nyanza Province. The latter, was administered in four locations: Ukiria, Utende, Nyabasi, and Uregi.<sup>166</sup>

Once the rules and regulations governing the Anglo-German border were defined, the Abakuria were subjected to them. The impact of this arrangement was almost immediate and, as one British administrator wrote:

"The boundary being artificial has cut certain clans into half, those members who remained on our side are prevented from visiting their relatives claiming their debts or inter-marrying within the clans among whom it has been their custom to wed<sup>167</sup>" (sic).

In 1906, restrictions were made forbidding the growing of crops 100 yards from the border<sup>168</sup> and, later in the year, Chief Makanga was given orders to prohibit people from building huts close to it. However, some individuals from Bukira-namely, Mangera Nyachumwa, Maguti Nyagerio, Mwitai Kaisari and Rioba Kinyenga-defied these orders and went ahead to put up huts along the border. For this, they were charged and sentenced to four months in jail with hard labour and ten lashes of the cane each.<sup>169</sup>

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165. Cf. O.A. Anacleiti, "Cultural Integration in Tanzania": 3.

166. The names of these locations were curved from the existing Kuria clans see for example, KNA/DC/KSI/7/1, "Histories and Customs", 1908

167. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 31/12/07.

168. KNA/PC/NZA/13/7/1, - 1906 (no title)

169. See, Miroslava Prazak, "Cultural Expressions of Socioeconomic Differentiation Among the Kuria of Kenya" Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 1992:63.

Between 1907 and 1910, the construction of roads and bridges became one of the major preoccupations of both German and British colonial governments.<sup>170</sup> Roads were seen as pre-requisites for opening up trade and for restructuring indigenous economies to meet the needs of the colonialists. When a road reached the Utende location in 1907<sup>171</sup>, the British were surprised to discover that Bukuria had already been occupied by the Germans. The coming of the German was thought, as M.J. Ruel reported, to be the climax to a series of cosmic events, either foreboding misfortune or embodying it: an eclipse, rinderpest, bovine pleuro-pneumonia, small-pox and famine.<sup>172</sup> The Germans stationed at Shirati had organised military expeditions on the Abakenye and Abasweta clans in their territory; they also crossed over into Kenya where they raided the Abakira and the Abagumbe clans and captured young men who were taken to work at Shirati.

The German presence in Bugumbe was met with bitter opposition. The Abagumbe armed themselves ready to fight, and they believed that soaking shields in the water of Ragana River would prevent the Germans' bullets from killing them.<sup>173</sup> However, this belief proved unfounded, and the Abagumbe were defeated and many captured. Once the Germans had broken this initial Kuria resistance, they appointed chiefs and village headmen to help to extract labour and taxes. These chiefs were to be retained by the British administration upon border demarcation. By October 1905, the British administration had

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170. Cf. Iliffe, A Modern History:135 and E.A. Brett, Colonialism: 92-99.

171. Utende is the present day Mabera in Bugumbe location. See, KNA/DC/KSI/3/4. Histories and Customs of the Natives.

172. M.J Ruel, "The Social Organisation of the Kuria": 105. O.I. Gekone Nyamboha, 24/4/97, Nyabohanse, gave support to the claim.

173. For the religious significance of this act, see, for example, Ruel "Religion and Society" : 295-306.

collected a total of Rs.781 from Utende and Ukeria locations<sup>174</sup>. Thus, Abakuria came to be separated from German East Africa by the border, and Renchoka, Bukira, Bwirege and Nyabasi fell under Karungu administration on the British side.

In 1908, Chacha Machucha was appointed the chief of Suna Location, which comprised both the Luo and the Abakuria. He was recognized by the colonial government as the only paramount chief in the whole area. For administrative purposes, Bukuria was divided into four locations, namely: Ukeria, Utende, Nyabasi, and Uregi.<sup>175</sup> By the year 1911, there were two chiefs in Ukeria (also known as Location No.210): Maroa Mangera and Chacha Matiko, who were described by the District Commissioner as very weak and were not recognised by the people.<sup>176</sup> Kerario was appointed chief of Utende, but he was too old and his son Mahengi had to act on his behalf. In the same year, the "quiet and industrious" chief Chacha Nyasoko was appointed to head the Nyabasi location; while Mokono was appointed chief of Uiregi- although he was described as "hot headed".<sup>177</sup> As these chiefs owed their office to the British, they were readily punished or removed when disobedient.<sup>178</sup> Those who survived, in the view of the colonial government, would facilitate economic transformation in Bukuria.

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174. KNA/DC/KSI/7/1, Agricultural Reports, 1905-1909.

175. KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1909.

176. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1909.

177. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1909

178. Chief Chacha of Ukeria was for example, fined for failing to assemble elders to meet the P.C., Chief Makanga got deported to North Kavirondo for fighting Chief Robi and he died there, Chacha Osinda, a Nyabasi Chief, was jailed for concealing crimes and turning them to his own advantage. See, for example, KNA/PC/NZA/3/7/1, Political Record Book, 1910-1914:29. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/3/1, Chief and Headmen, 1920

There were no permanent British settlement farms in Bukuria. The colonialists were interested only in extracting labour, agricultural produce, cattle and ghee - all of which could easily be obtained through the chiefs. Perhaps the factors that discouraged them from settling and possibly acquiring the fertile Kuria land were the long distance from the administrative headquarters and Kuria hostility.

## II. TAXATION

The prime manifestation of the colonial presence in Bukuria during the early years was the sporadic collection of taxes by the chiefs. Ostensibly, taxation was introduced in order to meet the cost of colonial administration, but it was also used effectively to push people into wage employment. Tax collection reduced the surplus generated within the Kuria economy, thus enabling settlers and the colonial administration to obtain labour.

The imposition of taxes first took the form of Hut Tax which had to be paid in cash. In Bukuria, as elsewhere in South Kavirondo District, Hut Tax was first collected in 1905.<sup>179</sup> Three rupees were charged per house<sup>180</sup>, and the Abakuria were forced to sell their animals to obtain such money. They could not pay the sums required at one go; they paid in instalments which made them almost perpetually indebted to the chiefs.

As livestock owners whose herds expanded at a rapid rate, the Abakuria initially found it easier to pay the Hut and Poll Tax through the sale of cattle and goats than seeking wage

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179. KNA/DC/KSI/7/1 South Kavirondo District, Agricultural Reports 1910-1913. Before the British collected taxes in Bukuria, Germans had already done it and tax defaulters were taken to work in Tanga and Kigoma railway projects between 1903 and 1906. See for example, Rwezaura:34, Iliffe:135 and Musoma District, Books

180. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3/4, Ainsworth Miscellaneous Record Book 1908 - 1915. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/7/1, Agricultural Reports 1910 - 1913

labour. Later on, they were compelled to cultivate more land than previously since, with increased produce, they were more likely to get enough money for their tax requirements.<sup>181</sup> Tax was usually collected from September to the following March. This was because the big harvests during these months meant that considerable amounts of tax money could be realized.<sup>182</sup>

By 1907 chiefs could collect tribute in the form of produce or money as they thought fit. The District Commissioner would travel from Kisii to Bukuria and in particular Utende, to which all chiefs from the rest of the locations would bring the tax money collected. Upon arrival, the D.C. would pitch a tent and stay for the next two or three days before returning to Kisii. Tax defaulters were arrested and forced to labour in public works at Kisii.<sup>183</sup> Persistent defaulters were imprisoned or their animals confiscated, and the Abakuria were prohibited from moving from one area to another without the permission of the colonial administration. An order issued to chiefs stated that they were to check unauthorized migration of people from one location to another; and that if such movement proved necessary for example in periods of food scarcity, this was only to be done with the knowledge of the D.C.<sup>184</sup> These restrictions did not apply in the case of migrant labourers who had to work in other parts of the colony. The reaction of the Abakuria to the

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181. KNA/PC/NZA/1/4, Intelligence Reports, 1905-1909

182. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3/4, Intelligence Report, 1905-1909, also, O.I., Mogendi Sabora, 26/4/97, Nyamaharaga.

183. O.I., Mokoro Babere, 29/4/97, Kohego. For those who tried to evade tax, Chiefs would seize property worthy the value of the tax. If the owner did not redeem the property by paying tax, it was auctioned.

184. KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1909

introduction of taxation varied from acquiescence to passive resistance and armed opposition; sometimes, they would move to German East Africa to evade taxation.<sup>185</sup>

In 1909, Chief Nyangoko was rejected by the Abagumbe clan and was not allowed to officiate over circumcision ceremonies. This was because he would confiscate the clan's cattle and keep them in his herd on the pretext that the people concerned evaded tax payment.<sup>186</sup> The colonial government was eventually compelled to allow the Bugumbe<sup>187</sup> to choose a ceremonial chief for purely Kuria affairs. For a long period, Kuria hostility and mobility in the vastness of the area, as well as British inability to administer it properly, combined to hinder proper tax collection.

In 1910, while in Bukuria to collect taxes, the District Commissioner C.E. Spencer was attacked and about Rs. 14,000 taken by people from Ukeria location.<sup>188</sup> This hostility perhaps stemmed from the tax increment or the imprisonment of fellow Abakuria by the British. In April 1912, headman Mkono Chogo reported that there were about 200 persons

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185. See, for example, Criminal Case No. 87 of 1911 in the second class Court at Kisii dated 19/9/1911. KNA/PC/NZA/3/7/1, Political Record Book, 1911 Many people were charged with crossing the boundary to evade tax payment. See also, Miroslava Prazak, "Cultural Expression" : 63-64.

186. KNA/DC/KSI/3/2, South Kavirondo District, Histories and customs 1911 - 1924.

187. The inhabitants of Utende (Bugumbe) were at this time called the Watende. The name "Tende" derives from the name of a major descent section of the Abarenchoka. Ruel suggest that when the Germans first came to Bukuria, this was the name given when a Kuria man who was asked where he was from (Ruel, "Social Organisation of the Kuria:211). "Watende" became widespread as a name for the Abakuria as a whole and was widely used in official reports, published ethnography and so on.

188. KNA/DC/KSI/3/2, Histories and Customs, 1910. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, Annual Report March, 1910-11.

who had moved from Uregi to German East Africa to evade tax payment. In August of the same year, the colonial government embarked on measures to prevent this problem from recurring. First, it imposed a levy of Rs. 20 for anyone moving to the German territory. Secondly, it put up tight security at the borders of Uregi and Ukeria. In explaining the need for these measures, the D.C. wrote:

"I would... say that our difficulty is not with regard to criminals, but the people who, in order to escape debt, taxation, or anything else to which they object, move across the border and settle in German territory or vice-versa." <sup>189</sup>

Despite these measures, however, the colonial government had only managed to collect 1644, 2514, 1119, and 941 rupees from Ukeria, Utende, Nyabasi and Uregi locations, respectively, by the end of the year.<sup>190</sup> Even so, the colonial government was determined to raise as much money as possible through taxation. In 1914, therefore, the Provincial Commissioner John Ainsworth encouraged the people of South Nyanza to grow new crops such as cotton and simsim which could be a source of money for tax.<sup>191</sup> However, the Abakuria grew only simsim in large quantities. The figures on tax collection for 1916 were 2100, 5017, 2319, 1818 rupees in Ukeria, Utende, Nyabasi and Uregi, respectively.<sup>192</sup>

By 1919 all tax payments in kind were abolished and the Abakuria started to volunteer labour for the European and Indian farms at Muhoroni, Songhor and Koru in order to obtain money to pay tax. As recorded in the Kisumu District Annual Report for 1919:

"The Muhoroni, Songhor and Koru farms depend on squatters for a lot of their labour but employ about 500 on regular contracts and these are obtained from Kisii, Butende and Kano locations which have been reserved for supply of labour for District farms." <sup>193</sup>

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189. KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District, Annual Report March, 1912.

190. KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District, Annual Report, 1911.

191. KNA/PC/NZA/3/7/1, Political Record Book, 1912.

192. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1913:25.

193. KNA/DC/CN/1/5/2, Kisumu District Annual Report, 1919:28.

By 1920, some of the Abakuria had already been reduced to squatters and were not able to farm their own land because, as noted above, the Kuria locations had been designated to provide labour for the European farmers.

### III. CHANGES IN ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The most notable change in animal husbandry during the early colonial period was a steady gain in the size of herds. Part of the increase may be explained by natural recovery from the devastating outbreak of disease earlier mentioned. Even more significant in this respect, however, was the continuing impact of European administration.

The agents of the colonial government who came into contact with the Abakuria as early as 1904 were astonished to find a community with numerous healthy Zebu cattle roaming about in an extremely fertile land. In fact, in 1905, District Commissioner R. Hemsted of South Nyanza described Kuria cattle as "the best in the Province."<sup>194</sup> In 1908, however, natural disasters struck, and epidemics of bovine pleuro pneumonia and rinderpest reduced Kuria herds to a negligible size R.W. Hemsted reported:

"Of the diseases which have attacked cattle in this area (Bukuria) there seem to have come in an epidemic form, namely pleuro-pneumonia, gastroenterities and rinderpest. With rinderpest, a whole herd of 50 to 100 head (of cattle) could be wiped in a day..."<sup>195</sup>

Loss of cattle made it more difficult for families to compensate for inadequate harvests, since they would have fewer animals to barter. This disaster was followed in 1910 by a drought

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194. KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1913.

195. KNA/DC/KSI/3/3, "Cattle Diseases in South Kavirondo with particular Reference to Utende" 1906-1909".



interspersed with plagues of locust<sup>196</sup> which culminated in the terrible famine known as inchara ya Boongeresa that is, the "famine of the English". Oral testimonies provide repeated and similarly stark substantiation of death occurring on an appalling scale.<sup>197</sup> The British were forced to distribute relief food to Suna and Mabera.<sup>198</sup>

The British administration considered Kuria cattle a main hinderance to the successful implementation of their policies. Not only were the Abakuria at certain periods held to possess too many herds of cattle; they also devoted extensive time and efforts to cattle-oriented activities. The administration associated many problems with Kuria stocks: for example, the problems of soil erosion and cattle theft resulting from high bride price<sup>199</sup> were both associated with overstocking.<sup>200</sup> The British therefore realized that the Abakuria had to be transformed in order to achieve development goals both inside and outside the cattle sector. This they did through directly or indirectly induced changes. Directly induced changes comprised actions like the control of cattle numbers and their movements, introduction of grade cattle, marketing, and combating cattle raiding. Indirectly induced changes were aimed at breaking the hegemonic position of cattle by monetising the bride price.

Before the British could embark on the implementation of these measures, however, bubonic plague, gastro-enteritis and rinderpest again ravaged the Kuria animals and reduced

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196. O.I, Sophia Gati, 10/4/97, Keborui, Mboto matiko 16/5/97, Mtiniti and Robi mutiba, 26/5/97, Mogabiri.

197. See for example, Chacha, Historia, :13.

198. H.B. Partington, Acting Provincial Commissioner Nyanza to R.W. Hemsted in KNA/DC/NZA/7/1, Nyanza Provincial Annual Report, 1908-1910.

199. Brideprice between 1910-1920 was between 11-15 heads of cattle C.f. Lexander and David Chacha, "Sociological survey":14.

200. KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/1, Nyanza Province Veterinary Report, 1911-1913.

their number. This was in 1912. By the beginning of 1913, rinderpest was still very severe and about 10,000 cattle had died in Bukuria.<sup>201</sup> Quarantine posts were placed at Sirari along the border to prevent the further spread of these diseases because rinderpest, especially, had spread from Tanganyika.<sup>202</sup> Likewise, the Veterinary Department of Nyanza Province established, quarantine control station at Suna during the same year.

Animal diseases decimated the cattle population in Bukuria; this-combined with the forcible seizure of cattle during the war and especially between 1915 and 1917 resulted in cattle rustling. Once again, men engaged the Luo and the Maasai in a series of raids intended to get more cattle to rebuild stock<sup>203</sup>. In 1918, the colonial government felt that a factor which encouraged cattle rustling was the high brideprice prevalent in Bukuria. Therefore, it decided to limit the brideprice in order to check and control this problem.

In October 1919, the principal goal of the colonial officials was to transform the Abakuria into pure cultivators. In pursuit of this objective, the colonialists sought to promote crop production while undermining the pastoral component of the Kuria economy through taxation, destocking, and forced cattle sales.<sup>204</sup> Also, they introduced drought resistant crops to forestall Kuria withdrawal from cash-crop production in the wake of periodic drought; they made cash earnings mandatory for the Abakuria through the imposition of fines and taxes; and they deliberately fostered their dependence on manufactured goods.

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201.KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/1, Veterinary Report, 1911-1913.

202. South Kavirondo District Annual Report,1918.

203. See for example, P.A. Abuso, A Traditional History of the Abakuria (Nairobi,1980):113

204. Michael L. Fleisher, "Kuria Cattle Raiding, mimeo, University of Michigan, 1997.

Further, cattle raiding was criminalized as a means of forestalling the "kind of turmoil that might jeopardize the dependability of cash-crop production."<sup>205</sup>

Nevertheless, cattle raiding continued unabated and soon came to be regarded by the British as their primary administrative problem in the area. In December 1919, the British began confronting the raiding groups that operated across a vast area and which would divide up herds that had been taken from one place and mix them with animals from other herds to reduce the possibility of their being identified<sup>206</sup>. The Kuria raiders pastured the stolen animals in secluded valleys while awaiting opportunities to market them. Alternatively, they moved cattle effortlessly back and forth across the porous Tanganyika - Kenya border in response to price fluctuations and shifts in the laws of supply and demand.<sup>207</sup> In subsequent negotiations with Kuria chiefs over this issue, the British conceded the importance of potential Kuria recalcitrance. Therefore, they agreed to allow the mobility of cattle owners by creating a limited area through which the Abakuria could cross the border during specific times of the year.

The border problem persisted, however, and as one colonial official observed in 1919: "the Kenya-Tanganyika border is arbitrary and meaningless, running as it does through the middle of no where for a hell of a long way"(sic)<sup>208</sup>. The border divided the grazing areas of the Kuria subclans, especially those of Bukira and Bwirege. It ignored the fact that during the dry season, these clans could not depend on finding water anywhere on the Kenya

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205. "Kuria Cattle Raiding":7

206. R.E. Turner, "Cattle Theft in Kuria" in KNA/PC/NZA/1/2/4, Safari Report, 1920.

207. Cf. David Anderson, "Stock Theft and Moral Economy in Colonial Kenya." in Africa Vol. 56 No. 4, 1985:399-415.

207. Quoted in KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1919:27.

side. Consequently, clans ignored the existence of the boundary, and their movement in and out of Sirari in search of cattle lick and water is illustrative of their opposition to it.

Just like farming, livestock keeping did not escape exploitation in the early years of colonial rule. The Abakuria who were unable to pay taxes in cash, as already discussed, had their livestock confiscated and resold at higher prices, and the owner would not be given the balance. This exploitation was extended to livestock products such as ghee, milk, hides and skins.

#### IV. CHANGES IN CROP PRODUCTION AND TECHNOLOGY

Of the many attractions Bukuria offered the colonial government, one of the greatest was the abundance of fertile land. Furthermore, early British officials described the Abakuria as "extremely industrious and excellent cultivators."<sup>209</sup> This convinced them that Bukuria was destined to be a major agricultural centre in Nyanza Province. The Province was one of the three in which African cultivators received early attention in terms of extension coverage and advisory services: the others were the Rift Valley and Central Provinces. In fact Nyanza was for a long time regarded by the British as the "granary" of the rest of the colony.<sup>210</sup> The demand for grain, especially millet, sorghum and maize in places which experienced food deficit in Kenya stimulated the grain output in Bukuria and elsewhere in the Province.

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209. See. R.W. Hemsted and D.R. Crampton Reports for the years 1906, 1907 and 1908 KNA/DC/KSI/1/1. Annual Reports.

210. Victor C. Uchendu and K.R.M. Anthony, Agricultural Change in Kisii District, Kenya (Nairobi, 1975):34. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/2, Annual Report, March, 1918.

In Bukuria, as elsewhere in South Kavirondo, the desire to enhance agricultural productivity was motivated primarily by the need to raise taxes to support the colony and its freshly built and highly uneconomic railway road. Another underlying cause was the metropolitan industrial demand for raw materials. Unlike other regions in Kenya in which European settlement occurred, the task of raising agricultural production in Bukuria fell completely upon the Abakuria themselves. In facing this task, the government immediately began to create structures for extending its influence over the populace and encouraging them to become "fiscally responsible citizens."<sup>211</sup>

In mid 1907, an attempt was made to establish a farm for growing simsim in Utende. However, the project did not really succeed, even though a number of people from Nyamosense and Kugitura began growing the crop.<sup>212</sup> Being so sensitive to different types of soil and climatic conditions, simsim growing needed close supervision. Consequently, chiefs in Bukuria were given opportunity in 1912 to send their children to the government farm at Kibos to learn to grow this, among other food crops. But only two chiefs, Chacha Nyasoko and Mokono Chogo, responded positively by sending their sons.<sup>213</sup>

Simsim was introduced as a commercial crop because it was valued on account of the high oil content it has. The oil was used for culinary purposes and also as a basis for perfumes, while the residue after the oil had been extracted formed a valuable cattle feed. In Bukuria, simsim production increased at a steady rate, so that the District Commissioner's

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211. KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1907-1908:18

212. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1907-1908:37

213. *Precis of Annual Report 1913* :49 Mwita Omema from Ukiria and Mwita Ogauka from Uregi went to Kibos Government School. See also, *South Kavirondo District History Record Book-Kisii*, 1935.

Annual Report for 1910 indicated that it was the main export crop for the District. During his safari tour in the same year, the DC reported having seen a very good simsim crop in the Ukeria and Utende Locations.<sup>214</sup> And one informant recalled how people in Bukuria used to plant large farms of simsim which was sold to the Indian traders.<sup>215</sup>

In November 1910, groundnuts of the Arachis hypogea variety were introduced to Bukuria. The colonial government thought the crop would eventually become an important articles for export. Despite the colonial effort to develop it, however, it did not feature as an important item in the list of crops in Bukuria by 1919.<sup>216</sup> There were two major reasons for this: first, the crop was vulnerable to diseases such as Chloris rosette; secondly, the crop had been "cursed" by the Kuria elders who associated it with colonialism and claimed it would bring misfortune to those who grew it<sup>217</sup>. A more plausible explanation for the Kuria lack of interest may be that the crop in that region was, for a variety of reasons, simply not lucrative enough to justify the expense and effort necessary for its cultivation.<sup>218</sup>

In 1912, a new variety of cassava<sup>219</sup> was planted in the Ukeria Location and from there it spread into most parts of Bukuria including in German East Africa. This was a long - season variety that took at least a year, and often more, to mature and could be left in the ground for periods up to four years without serious deterioration. Owing to the fact that the

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214. KNA/DC/KSI/1/1, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1908-1912.

215. O.I, Gekone Nyamboha, Nyamosense, 26/4/97

216. See, for example, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1919, see also Appendix VI.

217. See, Chacha, Historia:32.

218 Cf. Tobbison, Family Dynamics : 1.

219. Precis of Annual Report, 1910-1911:4. This cassava variety was different from the one discussed in chapter one.

Abakuria had previously grown casava, it was easily accepted. The crop was most valuable because it was drought resistant and was eaten in times of severe food shortages. It was cooked either by boiling or roasting, in the latter case, the unpeeled tubers were cooked whole and eaten either hot or cold. Cassava flour was prepared by peeling the tubers, cutting them into slices and drying them in the sun, after which they would be pounded; this flour was then mixed with millet flour and cooked to make porridge or ugali.

Indian farmers brought a number of citrus, mango and other varieties of fruit to Kisii in 1915.<sup>220</sup> These were later distributed to the chiefs attending the meetings there. Chiefs Makanga Sirare of Utende, for example, brought these to Mabera where they were grown for the first time in 1918. Later, in 1920, vegetables like cabbage, tomatoes and onions, and fruits such as guava, mango and lemon were added to crops already introduced to Bukuria.<sup>221</sup>

The most significant change in agricultural technology in Bukuria was the rapid and widespread adoption of a succession of new hoe types. By 1905, most Abakuria were still using inchihande or wooden blades to till their land. However, a few wealthy men such as Monanka Mwita Nyangoko of the Bukira clan maintained contact with the Maasai from whom they obtained emohoro or iron blades fitted to wooden handles.<sup>222</sup> A major success in the realm of agricultural technology was the introduction and diffusion of the steel hoe (jembe). Its diffusion was partially the result of a priority programme to increase lands under cultivation which involved an enthusiastic promotional campaign by British-appointed

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220. South Kavirondo District, Annual Report, 1915:31.

221. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1920:30

222. Cf. S.M. Seba, "Some Aspects of Kuria Material Culture and Impact of Imported Technology Upon Kuria Agriculture" : 63.

headmen.<sup>223</sup> In 1910, several jembes were reportedly being used along the border by Mwita Chacha, Binagi Chacha and Matiko Mokami at Kegonga.<sup>224</sup> By the end of the First World War, jembes were alternatively and mainly obtained from Indian traders in Suna and Kisii.<sup>225</sup>

European ploughs were brought to Kisumu in 1913 and to Kisii<sup>226</sup> in 1914. In 1916, Chief Makanga of Utende was given a plough by the District Commissioner, South Kavirondo, who reported that he had "lately sent one plough and oxen to Chief Makanga living on the Anglo-German border."<sup>227</sup> Soon, Chief Makanga demonstrated the use of this plough to Abagumbe at Mabera Trading Centre, and many Abakuria came to witness this, including from German East Africa. By 1918, about 30 ploughs had been bought in Utende alone.<sup>228</sup> The spread of ploughs in Bukuria mean that larger acreages were put under cultivation. Also, this shift from hoe to plough cultivation increased the demand for labour, and<sup>229</sup> women were involved in more work because of the larger areas to be put under cultivation.

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223. Kenya Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1909 - 1910:37

224. See Chief Chegesi Mwita's report to the D.C. South Nyanza in KNA/NZA/3/7/1 also D.C. C.M. Dobbs' report on "Death of Serunga Native" in 1910. KNA/DC/KSI/3/2, Histories and Customs, 1911.

225. H.H. Holder, in Department of Agriculture, Annual Report 1914-1915: 37.

226. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1914 : 40

227. W.E.G. Campbell Report on 31/3/16 KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1916.

228. H.H. Holder, in Kenya Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1917-1918.

229. Cf.. J.C. Buyson, "Women and Agricultura in Subsahara Africa" : 29-46.



Kuria men began to appreciate the advantages of plough cultivation when they found out that the new technique implied less work on their part. On the pretext of attending demonstrations, training oxen and learning how to handle the plough, men were thus able to withdraw from some of their other responsibilities in subsistence agriculture leaving such responsibilities to the women.<sup>230</sup>

The introduction of the plough undoubtedly increased areas under cultivation and also yields and encouraged the Abakuria to accept the growing of cash crops as already mentioned. Also, use of the plough led to the Kuria farmers' bringing more land under cultivation; this practice did much harm to the Kuria environment. In particular, the colonial insistence on deep ploughing and crop rotation rather than fallow had disastrous ecological effects, resulting in inferior yields in subsequent years.<sup>231</sup> The soils of Bukuria did not have the chemical proportions to sustain continued cultivation, and deep ploughing was responsible for turning the soils into sun-baked powder. Hence, more fertile areas such as the Kegonga escarpment in Nyabasi where farmers readily abandoned the hoe and adopted the plough were subject to erosion, especially after the war.<sup>232</sup>

While the colonial administrators played an important role in introducing crops and tools which were completely new to the Abakuria, their influence was often marginal in the actual decision to accept or reject. This was due to the inadequate resources in funds and personnel. Other factors which limited their ability to bring about improved agricultural

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230. Tobisson, Family Dynamics:24.

231. KNA/DC/NZA/3/26/4, "Station Dairy for July, 1920, D.C's Office South Kavirondo. See also T. Zeleza, An Economics History of Africa : 39 for the impact of deep ploughing on soils.

232. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1920:22.

production included lack of knowledge about the area itself, the climate, types of soil and patterns of rainfall which are vital to agricultural production. In fact, a British official admitted as much when he wrote:

"We are still in the experimental stage, and the problem of rains is still puzzling us. Even now, owing to the difficulty in sparing officers to travel, we do not know much... about the soil and the climate."<sup>233</sup>

In addition to these technological and personnel problems, the chiefs appointed by the colonial government also lacked political legitimacy and authority in their localities. This made it impossible for them to effectively supervise crop production. On the other hand, the power of the council of elders (inchaama) and the lineage heads had not been completely destroyed. Operating in a somewhat clandestine manner, most of these elders had effectively remained in control of various rituals, and circumcision and other matters important to the community. They also influenced methods of farming.

## VI CHANGES IN LAND TENURE

The establishment of colonial rule in Bukuria had a powerful effect in undermining the existing authorities through which land was acquired, allocated and passed on to the next generation. Although no land alienation took place, colonial policy was of major consequence. For example, the appointment of colonial chiefs affected land tenure in that the clan representatives who had previously handled all land related issues were soon deprived of their significance and power. The position of the council of elders, for example, was taken over by the chiefs. Also, the chiefs were now allocating the iririsi or grazing land.<sup>234</sup> This

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233. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1919:16.

234. H. Cory, "Kuria Laws and Customs," Manuscript re-edited by E.B. Dobson, 1952, in The Cory Collection University of Dar es Salaam : 4. Available in

development caused fragmentation of land into family holdings (irrema retata omokoro). Probably, as a result chiefs could take bribes and allocate the most fertile land to the families of their choice. Each man's holding was definitely worked and his right to the land would be upheld as long as he occupied it; in addition, a man would ask the chief to keep his land for him during absence of more than two years. Alternatively, if he had a piece of land which he did not use regularly, no one could claim it, and he would rent it to his friends or even strangers.<sup>235</sup>

## VI TRADE AND EXCHANGE

The early years of colonial rule in Bukuria saw new developments in trade and exchange facilitated by the introduction of money, construction of roads and emergence of new market centres. In October 1907, District Commissioner R.W. Hemstead reported that "the watende bring large quantity of ghee for sale"<sup>236</sup>(sic) at Suna and Mabera. Hides, skins and cattle themselves were sold at lower prices in Bukuria than elsewhere in South Kavirondo District. For example, bulls were sold at prices between Rs. 20 and Rs.30 while heifers went for Rs.35<sup>237</sup> as compared to Suna where a bull was sold at Rs.35 and heifers Rs.42.<sup>238</sup> The only cereal mentioned to have been sold at this time was millet sold at Rs.4.

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the Kenya National Archives.

235. For more details regarding the impact of colonialism on Land tenure in South Kavirondo Reserve, See, Report of the Committee on Native Land Tenure in South Kavirondo Reserve, 1920, (Nairobi, 1921).

236. Precise of Annual Report, South Kavirondo District, 1907.

237. Precise of Annual Report, 1911:20

238. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1911:10

Local commodities were now exchanged more often using the new currency introduced by the colonial government. And in trade between the Abakuria, Maasai and Luo money was increasingly used while bartering of commodities was dying out slowly. As recorded in the Annual Report:

"These natives now usually sell their produce for cash and pay for imported goods or goods from their neighbours for cash. Sales of produce for trade goods direct are dying out nearly everywhere and soon there will be no such methods of trading."<sup>239</sup>

In 1910, sites were granted to Indian traders who for the first time sold such commodities as cotton, shawls, kerosene lamps and salt.<sup>240</sup> A few wealthy Kuria men such as Matiko Maalimu, Bubuya Kitembani and Chegosi Mwitwa were among the first to buy these items. Later, many Abakuria bought the items in quantities as, in the words of the D.C:

"The demand for imported goods is continually increasing and will eventually become most important. These people are daily finding fresh wants and local Indian traders are endeavouring to meet them."<sup>241</sup>

The colonial government was eager to enhance the value of trade. This was strengthened when the Abakuria were sometimes forced to sell their products such as cattle, millet and cassava in order to raise taxes. While attending a chief's meeting in Kisii in 1912, Chief Makanga Sirare of Utende bought a bicycle, and together with other purchasers from Gusii, Luoland and Busuba, were given special training in riding at the District headquarters. Afterwards, a number of the Abakuria bought many bicycles. As the DC reported:

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239. South Kavirondo District, Precise of Annual Reports, 1907.

240. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1911:36, See also, KNA/DC/KSI/3/2, Histories and Customs, 1911-1912.

241. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1910-1911:33.

"A feature worthy of notice is the considerable large number of bicycles bought by these natives. This is in itself some evidence that these natives appreciate luxuries." <sup>242</sup>

At the end of 1912, the Abakuria began trading in cattle which were in demand at Suna Trading Centre. The traders were able to obtain more cattle for sale because prices in Tanganyika were 30% lower than Kenya. As the D.C wrote:

"Cattle trade seems to be concentrated on the German side where prices are considerably less... without doubt, a great deal of cattle is bought and also smuggled from German East Africa either with or without the cognizance of the buyer..."<sup>243</sup>

With large profits thus made from the cattle trade, the Abakuria bought hoes which were brought to Kisii from 1913, by two firms: the British East Africa Corporation, and Boustead Clarke Limited. At the end of the year, it was recorded that 15,000 hoes had been sold in Kisii, some of which had found their way to Bukuria.<sup>244</sup>

It was reported in 1914 that the war seriously interfered with the general produce and trade. However, owing to the military demand for animal transport, the prices of cattle, especially bulls, went up considerably. Consequently, Kuria traders sold their animals in large numbers at Suna before this centre was closed down for "military reasons" in 1916.<sup>245</sup> The Abakuria men preferred to sell their cattle and, consequently, buy some of the imported goods. In 1917, Captain Hannington of the East African Veterinary Commission arrived in the area to purchase cattle, and Kuria traders from Mabera and Nyamonsense defied the

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242. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1911-1912:45.

243. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1911-1913:45

244. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1911-1913:53

245. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1918:3

boundary regulations and crossed over to Tanganyika from where they smuggled large numbers of cattle which they sold to Hannington. In total, 12,265 head of cattle were sold to Hannington and other purchasers in that year alone.<sup>246</sup>

By the year 1919, an epidemic of bovine pleuro-pneumonia and rinderpest had reduced Kuria herds and none of their cattle could now be sold, either locally or regionally. Trade in hides and skins was also closed down. This prohibition, which remained in force until the late 1920s, utterly destroyed the Kuria economy. Even so, the decline in cattle trade was accompanied by a rise in Kuria engagement in small-scale shopping activities. As the Annual Report for 1920 reads:

"Intelligent natives are opening up small shops in their villages. This has the effect of pushing imported goods further to the natives and causing the demand to increase."<sup>247</sup>

## **VI CHANGE IN LABOUR PATTERNS**

The continuous development of migratory wage labour and the establishment of simple commodity production linked the Abakuria to European capital and drew Kuria households into the reproductive circuit of colonial capitalism. It initiated and later reinforced a series of interconnected and uneven changes in social relations, culminating in the subsumption of Kuria agriculture within capitalist relations in the sense of its subordination to the principles determining the operations of the Kenya colonial economy as a whole. The result, as it will

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246. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1918:32

247. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report:1920.

be shown, was that there occurred the partial destruction of previous social bases of cooperation\* and the formation of new work groups known as Amachomba.<sup>248</sup>

The first evidence of early Kuria involvement in labour supply is from 1905 when the border conflict intensified between the Germans and the British over the ownership of the land occupied by the Abakuria. Kuria men from the British side were forced to stay and guard the border as scouts in order to prevent German encroachment.<sup>249</sup> In the same year, the Germans crossed the border and captured some Abakuria from Ukiria and took them to work on railway construction at Tabora.<sup>250</sup> In 1907, chiefs and headmen were empowered under the Village Headman Ordinance of 1902 to use forced labour for the construction and maintenance of roads, bridges and government stations.<sup>251</sup> Consequently, the Abakuria were forced to work on various road projects in Nyanza: for example, the roads from Kisii to Suna, Karungu to HomaBay, and from Sotik to Gelegele and the Kuja Bridge.<sup>252</sup> Some were later paid in kind from the cattle seized after the 1908 Gusii revolt in which the Provincial Commissioner Northcote was speared by a man from the Kitutu clans.<sup>253</sup> Although labour

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\* See Chapter I, p.19.

248. Amachomba are migrant labourers or people who stay away from home. Chomba (singular) refers to all that is "modern" non Kuria or non-African or an area or place of "development": Nairobi, Mombasa, Kisii or Kericho. It is where the Europeans came from and where labour migrants got to originally. The term also applied to the first Arabs and was later used for Indians, Arabs and Europeans who came to Bukuria.

249. KNA/DC/KSI/3/1, History of the District 1898-1945.

250. Cf. Iliffe:135 and Rwezaura:34

251. Cf. Gordon : 5

252. Gordon : 5

253. Cf.W.R. Ochieng, A Precolonial History of the Gusii : 236.

for the construction of roads was usually compulsorily extracted from the Abakuria, several informants<sup>254</sup> stated that some of the men turned out to work voluntarily. Those anxious to earn money or buy new imported commodities volunteered to labour for wages. Furthermore, there was mounting pressure to obtain money for tax purposes. In 1910, the colonial government passed the Roads Reserve Ordinance. According to the Ordinance, men of a locality could be called at any time to provide labour in the construction of roads.<sup>255</sup> They were to work for not more than six days a week. But it was only men who were involved in the construction of roads that passed through their locality; women, too were mobilized.<sup>256</sup> Once such roads were constructed, it was the duty of the chiefs and headmen to maintain them by using the same local labour.

In 1912, there were about 100 men from Bukuria working at Kisii.<sup>257</sup> Another 750 or so were registered for works on the Magadi railway and Mombasa water works, while others worked in the then newly built Mumias road and at Muhoroni.<sup>258</sup> Those who turned out to work, especially in Kisii, were initially paid in kind; as already indicated, a cow was

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254. O.I., Ikombe Mwita; Motabo Sabora; Mokenya Gesabo, 3/5/97, Kurutiange.

255. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3/4, Ainsworth Miscellaneous Record Book 1908 - 1915.

256. O.I., Gicheria Machomba, 24/4/97, Muchebe

257. KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1913:19.

258. Gordon, History of the District. District Commissioner reports between 1912-1913 allude to recruitment of Kuria men for labour but most of these were for service in the district on projects or for the carrier corps during First World War.



equivalent to a three months' salary.<sup>259</sup> On the other hand, those who did not turn out were required to pay cattle in lieu of their labour.<sup>260</sup>

Sometimes, private employers who needed labour would send a recruiting agent to obtain a note of authorization from the local D.C. The recruiter would then enter the reserve and present his credentials to the chief or headman, who in turn would be responsible for providing him with the required number of men.<sup>261</sup> It is therefore evident that even in the years before the war, migrant labour among the Abakuria was rapidly increasing. However, it is difficult to determine the numbers because there was many Kuria labourers in the previous years who were not registered in the official colonial records.<sup>262</sup>

## **VII. THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND ITS IMPACT ON KURIA AGRICULTURE.**

Being in between German East Africa and British East Africa, Bukuria can be said to have been at the centre of the First World War. Consequently, the Abakuria experienced a more intense impact of the war than probably the Maasai or even the Luo. On 14th August, 1914 the Assistant District Commissioner Dent commenced patrols along the Anglo - German border with a small police force supported by numerous Kuria Scouts<sup>263</sup> and some Luo men from Maseno. But in a surprise move, German force of 33 Europeans, 353 African scouts

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259. Gordon, :4

260. KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1914:16.

261. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3, Ainsworth on Native Labour Committee, 1912-1913.

262. The Provincial Commissioner expressed concern over the unregistered Kuria labourers in Nyanza in his report, KNA/PC/NZA/2/3, Nyanza Provincial Annual Report, 1912-1913.

263. Gordon :40

and several hundred spearmen entered the British territory at Isibania. In the words of Ruel, they, "plundered, fired and raided Kuria homesteads."<sup>264</sup> Within a few hours, they had reached and captured Kisii centre.<sup>265</sup> The war thus began at the border. The Abakuria were placed under military command and a camp was built on the Renchoka hill. In 1915, Germans columns took authoritative steps to confiscate cattle and flour from the Abakuria, resulting in the Abakuria moving north of River Migori to escape from these raids.

The war had far-reaching effects upon Kuria agriculture. For one, to win the war, the British government tightened control over the Abakuria and increased labour and related demands on them. In 1916, tax was increased considerably to meet the cost of the war,<sup>266</sup> and cattle were seized for the purpose of military transportation and food supply.<sup>267</sup>

Famine was one enduring collective memory of the war for the Abakuria. Early in the campaign, food was in short supply in market centres as imports ceased, military requirements grew, prices rose and agricultural conditions deteriorated. As the demand for fighters grew, so did labour supplies to cultivate land decrease. Generally, administrators lamented the fact that South Nyanza was becoming a labour pool for the entire colony; and that the area was being "drained of the best of its youthful cultivators"<sup>268</sup>. \*

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264. M.J. Ruel, "Kuria Social Organisation" :151

265. Ruel, "Kuria Social Organisation":153.

266. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1916.

267. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1916:4

268. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report 1918: 32.

\* See, table reflecting recruitment in Nyanza between 1914-1917. p.

Famine and other pestilences followed hard on the heels of war. In August and September 1918, excessive rainfall destroyed most crops in the field and, at the end of the year, the short rains (omoobo) failed to come. Millet, simsim and beans thus suffered. Then, in December 1918, Bukuria was once again in the grip of a famine; this one was called inchara ya Keha (the Famine of the War).<sup>269</sup> For the whole of 1919, Bukuria was still in the grip of famine. The then Provincial Commisioner, C.R.W. Lane, wrote in his Annual Report:

"Owing to the shortage of food throughout the year, very little native produce was sold, the only principal article of export has been hides because East Coast Fever and rinderpest has taken toll of cattle throughout the year"<sup>270</sup>(sic).

By the end of the year, however, the Abakuria gradually began to recover from the disorganization of the war. In the early 1920s, they were reported as having made good advances economically and, although they did not have any outstanding harvest, money for taxes were obtained with ease by trading stock, earned wages and the sale of flour.<sup>271</sup> Moreover, more men began to go out in large numbers in search of work outside. And, at the same time several Kuria men served in the Kenya Police.<sup>272</sup> Consequently, this growing export of labour from Bukuria increased the burden of labour on the women.

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269. KNA/DC/KSI/2/3, History Record Book, Kisii, 1939.

270. KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District, Annual Report, March, 1918.

271. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report March, 1921.

272. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1919-1920, :20

**TABLE 3: LABOUR RECRUITMENT IN SOUTH NYANZA, 1914 - 1917<sup>273</sup>**

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>CARRIER CORPS</u>	<u>OTHER LABOUR</u>
1914 - 1915	18, 169	26, 245
1915 - 1916	24, 184	17, 138
1916 - 1917	21, 900	18, 577

From 1920, Bukuria experienced two years of famine. The impact was made worse by the already existing rinderpest and pleuro-pneumonia.

## **IX CONCLUSION**

The period between 1905 and 1920 witnessed the establishment and consolidation of colonial rule in Bukuria. Despite being subject to this powerful force of transformation, the Kuria agricultural system maintained resilience in this early colonial period, and the precolonial legacies which were carried forth into the colonial periods were to prove influential in their response to colonial rule.

The establishment of colonial rule saw the gradual implementation of the colonial policies: these were taxation, cash crop production, and forced labour that were to be influential in the process of the transformation of Kuria agriculture.

The first task of the colonial government in Bukuria was to appoint chiefs and headmen to help them institute a form of government they could control. The chiefs were to become British agents expected to facilitate economic transformation in Bukuria.

The initial articulation of the colonial government with the Kuria indigenous society resulted in the exploitation of the later, firstly, through taxation. Taxation transformed some

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273. Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1918. A total of 42,990 people were recruited for labour in South Nyanza between 1914 and 1917 see, also, KNA/DC/KSI/1/2, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1908-1911

Abakuria into wage labourers and squatters and also forced them to engage in unfair trade that they sold their cattle at low prices in order to obtain cash to meet their tax obligations. Secondly, the Abakuria suffered the impact of colonial rule through the policy of stock reduction where herders were forced to sell and even monetize brideprice in order to reduce their herds. Consequently, these policies encouraged cattle raiding between the Abakuria and their neighbours, thus encouraging regional hostility. Finally, cash crop production, trade and labour policies altered the pre-existing balances of production and, as this created migrant labourers, who during times of ecological disasters i.e cattle diseases floods or famine, Bukuria was subjected to hunger, low production and consequent economic deterioration. Thus, the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya initiated the exploitation of the Abakuria as well. Viewed structurally against in the background of the internal economy of Bukuria and as well as the subordination of the regional economy to the capitalist economy, it is clear that underdevelopment and not progress was the distinct feature of production in the early colonial period. Thus the existence of the Abakuria was increasingly influenced by economy beyond their control.

## CHAPTER III

### KURIA AGRICULTURE FROM THE END OF THE FIRST WORLD WAR TO THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, c. 1921-1945

#### A. AGRICULTURAL CHANGES OF THE INTER-WAR YEARS.

"Our cattle are our father, our mother, and our children. Would you make me kill my mother because she was old? Would you make me slaughter some of my children because they are many? The answer is no. And neither would I expect you to sell your mother for money when you want a new blanket or to slaughter a son when you have a wedding. Do you castrate your children?"

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#### I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The years between 1921-1945 mark the second major phase of development in Kuria agriculture under colonial rule. Generally, these were times of prosperity; but then came the Great Depression beginning in 1929, accompanied by a severe locust infestation. After this, however, there followed a recovery which brought new patterns of agriculture, and Bukuria further slowly entered the exchange economy. Even so, Kuria agriculture remained at the stage of subsistence production, and whatever expansion occurred was only an increase in the subsistence crops. The impact of the Great Depression, locust infestation and the Second World War combined to adversely affect attempts at cash crop production.

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274. Words of a man from Bukuria charged in a colonial court in 1940 with the offence of failing to sell, reduce and castrate part of his herd. Cited in Tobisson, Family Dynamics : 28. See also C. Winnington-Ingram, "Survey of Land Utilization Problems in North Mara" in Mara District Annual Reports, Musoma 1940-1950.

A major factor militating against progress was the total inadequacy of agricultural staff.<sup>275</sup> For example, it was not until 1932 that a veterinary officer was posted to the area.<sup>276</sup> Furthermore, although the Local Native Council was strengthened, it took many years before it sufficiently advanced to be of any assistance to the government in the agricultural sector. In fact, the District Commissioners complained bitterly of the additional burdens which this office involved.<sup>277</sup> Thus, it is clear that expansion in agriculture was more a consequence of Kuria initiative and response to the money market than the result of outright government support.

## II. CHANGES IN CROPS AND AGRICULTURAL TECHNOLOGY

Attempts to introduce new crops to Bukuria had been hampered by the First World War. However, by 1922, the colonial government had realized that Bukuria was "eminently suitable for growing cotton, although there was little incentive to do so at the time owing to the difficulty of marketing it"<sup>278</sup>. After the long rains of 1923, cotton was introduced to Mabera in Bugumbe.<sup>279</sup> Initially, this crop was welcomed by the Abakuria because its planting season coincided with that of finger-millet thus making it possible for the two crops

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275. A list of agricultural staff in South Kavirondo between 1920 and 1939 is found in KNA/PC/NZA/2/12/33, Training of Africans, 1922-1950.

276. KNA/DC/KSII/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1933:10.

277. See, for example, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports for the years 1927, 1931, 1936 and 1938.

278. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1923: 15.

279. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, : 35

to be planted and harvested almost at the same time.<sup>280</sup> However, the chiefs who distributed the seed forced their people to cultivate the crop on their (chiefs') own plots. Furthermore, when the harvest was successful, the cash obtained went to the chiefs. Such blatant misuse of power, where it occurred, upset early attempts to grow cotton.<sup>281</sup>

Despite the fact that the Tanganyika Government established a cotton ginnery in 1926 at Mugango in the Lake Province and allowed the Abakuria from Kenya to sell their cotton to the ginnery,<sup>282</sup> cotton did not achieve maximum success in Bukuria. For one, the crop was labour-intensive and fetched very low prices. And even later when the prices rose, cotton production in Bukuria as elsewhere in Kenya - was not as popular as it was, for instance, in Central Nyanza.<sup>283</sup>

In 1927, the Director of Agriculture distributed maize, wheat, beans, peas, sunflower, groundnut, rice and cotton seeds to the inhabitants of Nyanza Province. Later, the District Commissioner for South Kavirondo sold to the Local Native Councils,<sup>284</sup> which were encouraged to increase their annual budget for the purchase of more seeds. As a consequence,

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280. For detailed description of cotton and its planting mechanisms see for example, KNA/PC/NZA/3/3/12, Cotton-Cultivation and Crop, 1924-1928.

281. Cf. Friedsberg, "Changing Values in Kuria Agropastoralism", p.15 and Rwezaura, Family Law and Changes : 37. See also, KNA/DC/1/3, Annual Report, December, 1925, and PC/NZA/3/32/2, Chiefs and Headman, South Kavirondo, 1926.

282. A decade before this year, the Abakuria had already been introduced to the crop but first in Tanganyika and it was reported that "Sultans have made their hurry to cultivate large cotton plots" see, also Iliffe, Modern History of Tanganyika : 155.

283. Cf. R.M.A. Van Zwanenberg and Anne King, An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda (London, 1975):40.

284. Bukuria was represented in the Bakoria-Kisii Native Council comprising of both the Abakuria and the Abagusii members.



the Department of Agriculture declined in importance as the source of seeds while the Local Native Council seed farms increased their financial contribution and seed supply functions.

(See table 4 below)

**TABLE 4: SEED ISSUE TO FARMERS IN NYANZA PROVINCE 1928-1938**

Seed Type	Source of Seeds Issued (2,000 lb, Units)						
	1928 (a)	1928 (b)	1934 (a)	1934 (b)	1934 (c)	1938 (a)	1939 (b)
Maize	46	3.0	0.8	8.0	2.0	0.4	35.4
Wheat	0.2	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sorghum	1.8	-	-	-	-	1.4	10.8
Mawale	1.4	-	-	-	-	-	-
Beans	9.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
Peas	0.48	-	4.8	-	-	-	-
Sunflower	1.08	6.0	-	5.6	-	6	-
Groundnuts	7.2	1.0	-	-	-	6.2	-
Rice	-	-	-	-	-	-	10.2
Potatoes	-	-	-	12.2	1.4	-	-

a) Department of Agriculture

b) Local Native Council votes

c) Council Seed Farms

Source: Kenya Department of Agriculture Annual Reports for 1928, 1934 and 1938.

In November 1927, "owing to the construction of a motor road as far as the Migori River"<sup>285</sup>, the District Commissioner reported that it had become possible for the agricultural staff to make several visits to see the progress the Abakuria were making with

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285. See extract of the letter from the District Commissioner to the Provincial Commissioner dated 12/12/28 in KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1928.

new crops. Later, he noted that the Abakuria were very enthusiastic and hardworking after receiving the seeds. He wrote:

"The Abakuria have a meeting twice a year called "nchama" it is confined to elders, headmen and Nyapara of Milango (subclan)... It is interesting to note that the chief subject of debate is planting of new seeds... it seems that these people can do better without much guidance" (sic).<sup>286</sup>

It can be seen, then, that this policy of "improving" the productivity of Kuria agriculture through the simple provision of "superior seeds" had an early pay off. In fact, in his Annual Report for 1928, the Provincial Agricultural Officer remarked:

"No crops have improved more in quality during the last five years than sorghum, sunflower, and peas..... there is a steady desire to improve and many natives are now seeing that yields per acre can be improved by good seeds."<sup>287</sup>

In October 1928, more chiefs from all the Kuria clans were incorporated into the Local Native Council. These were Makanga Sirare, Chacha Mangera, Magabe Mwita and Nyakimori Makori.<sup>288</sup> Their inclusion was meant to strengthen agricultural work in Bukuria. In fact, unlike in the past when seeds were distributed in Bugumbe and Bukira, the seeds were now given to the L.N.C. representatives from Bwirege and Nyabasi.

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286. KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/9, Communication from the District Commissioner to the Provincial Commission, letter dated 31/12/1927.

287. KNA/PC/NZA/3/28/1, Nyanza Province: Agricultural Report, 1928:35.

288. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1928. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/3/31/8/2, Anthropology of Natives 1926-1929

\*. Gold had been discovered in Lolgorien in the Maasai District and the Colonialist sought food from as far as Bukuria. As a result, they introduced maize to Bukuria with the intention of using it (maize) for feeding the mine workers. KNA/DC/NZA/4/5/1, Monthly Intelligence Reports, 1930 - 1936.

A major transformation in Kuria agriculture was the introduction of maize which became the most successful food crop of colonial times. But the remoteness of the area, combined with poor transport facilities, did not favour the large-scale cultivation of maize as an export crop. So, in addition to the enforced cultivation of drought resistant crops such as cassava and a limited production of groundnuts and cotton, the Abakuria were preoccupied with the cultivation of indigenous staples and the practice of animal husbandry. However, the colonialists did not look upon the indigenous Kuria staples as "proper" food. Also, they did not seek to encourage the Kuria farmers to market either maize or these indigenous staples for the benefit of the developing mining industry in the neighbouring Maasailand\* on an economic basis. On the contrary, all male taxpayers were compelled to attend demonstrations at agricultural stations. When many farmers refused to co-operate, a law was passed obliging every family to cultivate one acre of the crop per season. Those who refused to obey were punished and imprisoned, but this use of force contributed to the initial unpopularity of maize. Also, the cultivation of maize, like that of groundnuts and cotton, impinged upon the production of indigenous staples.

It should be noted further that maize was introduced to the Abakuria purely as a commercial crop. They therefore did not know at this time that maize could be consumed as part of the ordinary family diet. In fact, as Tobisson writes:

"The colonial authorities had deliberately concealed this fact since the object of promoting maize in the area was not to increase the availability of food for local consumption."<sup>289</sup>

In 1933, Captain Humphrey, otherwise known as "Manamba"<sup>290</sup>, was transferred by the

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289. Tobisson, Family Dynamics : 22.

290. "Manamba" is word which stands for numbers or in Kiswahili "namba" a nickname given to Humphrey, because when people brought maize to sell to him at Kogetontira, he assigned them with numbers so that

government from Kisii to Sirari to supervise the production of maize.<sup>291</sup> He installed a kerosene posho mill to grind the maize into flour as a way of encouraging the Abakuria to plant the crop. The grinding was done free of charge.<sup>292</sup>

As already mentioned, the development of gold mining helped to boost the popularity of maize, both directly and indirectly. The employees of the gold mining company received regular rations of maize flour, and their numbers steadily increased. A large number of Kuria men from Bukira and Bugumbe who had not previously left the District for work were employed in the mines, and when their contracts ended many moved to other jobs in towns like Kericho, Kisii and Kisumu.<sup>293</sup> Mine labourers usually developed a taste for maize during the course of their employment, and they carried their new preferences back to the homestead. Consequently, an increase in the size of the labour force was often followed by an increase in maize consumption.

### III. KURIA AGRICULTURE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE GREAT DEPRESSION, 1929-1939.

The Great Depression of 1929 affected the farmers, traders and cattle keepers of Bukuria. As the Annual Report for 1929 reads:

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they could be paid later in that order.

291. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1934.

292. O.I., Chacha Kerata, Nyabikaaye, 18/4/97

293. See for example, KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/1-7 Monthly Intelligence Reports between the years 1930-1939.

About the end of October following the sudden fall in prices in Europe ... a general slump occurred in the District, the commodities principally affected maize, hides, groundnuts and sim-sim"(sic)<sup>294</sup>

The Depression specifically affected the Kuria economy in that the prices of hides, ghee, beans and simsim fell drastically; these were major trade items in Bukuria. Also, the newly introduced crops were adversely affected, and there was a general decline in the production of cash and food crops. By reducing the demand for African labour and cutting wages, the economic crisis also affected the well-being of the Abakuria.

Additionally, the period witnessed considerable difficulties in the collection of taxes throughout the South Kavirondo.<sup>295</sup> In fact, this annual exercise was taking so much of the time of the colonial officials to the detriment of other duties that the administration decided to shift responsibility for tax collection to the chiefs. It should be noted, however, that there may have been some tax evasion. And it seems likely that many Abakuria had difficulty in obtaining money to pay their taxes. This interpretation is consistent with statements made in the many meetings of the District Commissioner of Nyanza Province that the Abakuria were offering themselves for labour but were being turned away, and that they entered occupations such as sisal cutting which they had once shunned.<sup>296</sup>

While the Depression was taking its toll, the Kuria economy was further affected by a locust invasion. In 1928, for instance, Bukuria was ravaged by locusts locally called

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294. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1929, See also, Tabitha Kanogo, "Kenya and The Depression 1929-1939" in W.R. Ochieng (ed) A Modern History of Kenya 1895-1980 : 112, for a wide interpretation of the Great Depression in Kenya.

295. See for example, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, for the yearts 1930, 1931 and 1932.

296. KNA/PC/NZA/2/1435, Minutes of District Commissioners meeting 1928-1939.

amakagaita-kaguri (big locusts).<sup>297</sup> The invasion agitated the Local Native Council, which consequently demanded that the colonial government take up measures to curb the problem.<sup>298</sup> In 1931, there was a poor harvest of food crops because of the locust problem, and Bukuria was once again in the grip of a famine.<sup>299</sup>

In respect to this crisis, the Governor wrote to the District Commissioner urging him to get the Local Native Council "to discuss the imminent danger of a locust infestation of the South Kavirondo District in common with the rest of the Districts."<sup>300</sup> The District Commissioner S.O.V. Hodge therefore demanded that a famine relief fund be established for the purchase of food. In this connection the Local Native Council debated whether the food should be sold or given freely to the "community". Eventually, it resolved that, "if the famine relief fund is instituted, then food should be given freely to the people".<sup>301</sup> In 1933, Chief Kisu Wambura reported an outbreak of pleuro-pneumonia in Bwirege which was believed to have spread from the Maasai reserve and killed many cattle.<sup>302</sup> The ravages of consecutive years of natural disasters and the growing weight of taxation combined to produce a new social stratum consisting of families without food or cattle.

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297. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1929, Oral interviews also accounted to locust infestation at the same time. O.I., Wambura Mwita, Ikerege, 24/4/97.

298. KNA/PC/NZA/3/23/8/18, Minutes of Kisii-Bakoria Local Native Council, 1931.

299. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/3/3/17, Food Shortages 1921-1934

300. KNA/PC/NZA/3/23/17, Kisii-Bakoria Local Native Council Minutes, 1931.

301. KNA/PC/NZA/13/3/15, Tender for foodstuffs, 1929-1932. See also, Democrat Newspaper August 2, 1932.

302. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1933 : 39.

The resulting hardships forced the colonial government to encourage the cultivation of cassava from late 1933. The crops ability to withstand locust and drought earned it the reputation of being a drought resistant food.<sup>303</sup>

In September 1934, Jagat Singh, an Indian from Kisii, established shops at Mabera and Nyamtiro where he sold more than 115 ox ploughs<sup>304</sup> to the Abakuria. This increased sale of ox ploughs gave rise to the aphorism: "Tkombe resukwa motera regatantania Abagaka,"<sup>305</sup> meaning: "the plough has been put in the shop and has excited the elders". The Abakuria adopted the new implement because it made tilling the soil much easier than it had been with either the locally-made or British hoe which they had used previously. Ploughs, then, made it easier for the British to achieve the call for the Abakuria to intensify crop production and cultivate larger plots.

In 1934 also, the colonial government continued its campaign to encourage the production of maize, and Government agents installed two maize mills at Nyabohanse and Nyamtiro. This measure meant that families could now convert the commercial crop into

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303. Cf. Debera Bryceson's argument in "Peasant Food Production and Supply in Relation to the Historical Development of Commodity Production in Precolonial and Colonial Tanganyika," BRALUP service paper No. 7813, 1978, that to ensure commodity production, the colonial government dispensed famine relief food or encouraged the growing of anti-famine crops like cassava. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/57, Native Land Trust Board 1933-1952.

304. KNA/PC/NZA/33/8/1/9, Nyanza Province, Agricultural Report 1935.

305. Ox ploughing techniques were demonstrated more often to small groups of farmers who were reputed to be innovative and hardworking. Ploughs spread rapidly to Bukuria in both Kenya and Tanganyika. Merchants from Kisii sold about 1200 ploughs in the neighbouring District of Tarime. A wealthy man known as Magoge Magucha from Sirati bought forty ploughs. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1934.

flour. Towards the end of the year, Captain Humphrey, who has been mentioned earlier\*, brought hybrid maize<sup>306</sup> and distributed it in the area. He set out to promote and enforce the cultivation of the crop. Further, he bought maize from Indians traders who had established temporary posts at Nyabohanse, Nyabikongori, Ntimaru and Nyamtiro. The Indians purchased a debe of shelled maize at fifty cents from the growers and resold to Humphrey at one shilling.

In 1935, a different agricultural problem arose as of elephants and other wild game were reported to have invaded at Kehancha and destroyed crops.<sup>307</sup> As a result, it was suggested by the District Commissioner that an "elephant ditch" be dug stretching from the Bwirege border between the Abagusii and Maasai at around Nyangusu.<sup>308</sup> The two communities were supposed to participate in the digging of the trench when it reached their land. The trench measured four metres deep and four metres wide, and it was dug using forced labour. Sultan Magabe, the Chief of Bukira, mobilised people to live and work near the ditch. Labour organisation peculiar to precolonial times was seen in the way the Abakuria organised themselves in digging this trench: there was emoobo, for example, which comprised of members of a single household working on digging the trench.\*

The trench was dug for a total of four years from 1935 to 1939. Those who refused to participate in the digging were forced to surrender two heifers to the then District

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\* See p. 102.

306. Cf. J.D. Gerhat, "The Diffusion of Maize" : 22

307. In an L.N.C, meeting Chief Nyakimori of Bwirege had questioned what the government was doing in connection to the destruction of crops by elephants. See, KNA/PC/NZA/3/33/8/20, Local Native Council Minutes, 1935.

308. KNA/PC/NZA/3/33/820, Local Native Council Minutes, 1935.



Commissioner, C.M. Dobbs, who thus came to be nicknamed Bwana Habiri meaning "Mr. Heifer". The ditch then helped a great deal in preventing wild animals from destroying food crops. However, it also denied the Abakuria their daily hunt in times when food crops failed due to poor weather conditions. During the digging, much Kuria labour especially around Kurutiange - was removed from the cultivation of, and attention to, land.

Also important during this period was the renewed government policy to improve the production of cash crops in Nyanza. One issue that concerned the colonial administration was the loss of soil fertility in Bukuria. This concern was first recorded in the 1935 Annual Report where it was described as "the main problem with regard to the Bakoria (sic) agriculture".<sup>309</sup> In a programme of work, it was declared that soil control, care and improvement should be given precedence throughout the Province.

In the case of Bukuria, agricultural officials were encouraged to sensitize farmers to adopt the following measures: stone terracing; contour lines of grass; live hedges on boundary; ditches; and planting Napier grass. However, the Provincial Office in Kisumu lacked the resources and personnel to put this programme into effect; and, given the degree to which the programme called for extensive changes in local agricultural and animal husbandry practices, it required a large resource base. In 1936, a senior agricultural officer was to observe that the programme was still at its initial stages.<sup>310</sup> And, on the whole, little was to be done about soil control in Bukuria until after the Second World War.

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309. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, Annual Report, 1935 : 23. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/7, South Kavirondo District Intelligence Report, 1936.

\* See Chapter one pp. 45-46

310. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Report, 1936 : 40. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/4/2/1, Native Land Tenure, 1931-1944.

The period between 1929 and 1939, then was a terribly demoralizing one for the Abakuria in many ways. At this time, they had become so dependent on wage-labour that they suffered the shocks of the Great Depression. Paid employment both in South Kavirondo and outside the District became increasingly scarce, and the recruiting agencies shut their doors in 1930. What little had been achieved in Kuria economy was further adversely affected by a series of natural disasters. Drought and locusts destroyed successive crops, and pleuro-pneumonia, anthrax and foot-and-mouth disease drastically affected the cattle trade and the small export trade in skins. Famine, unemployment, and imprisonment or compulsory manual labour for non-payment of poll tax characterised the life of the average inhabitant of Bukuria during most of the decade.

#### IV. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY

The inter-war years were a period of stress for animal husbandry in Bukuria. This was so because, firstly, the colonial policies - especially those relating to cattle movement and quarantines, trade, labour and taxation - were now felt more effectively; secondly, and more importantly, Bukuria was affected by recurrent cattle diseases.

In 1923, the colonial government sought to improve the livestock industry and put it into "economic" use.<sup>311</sup> In addition to introducing the ox plough and recommending to the farmers to use manure from cow dung on their cotton and maize fields, the government encouraged the production of ghee. Complaints were often raised in colonial records - for example between 1924-1927<sup>312</sup> regarding the problem of overstocking which, it was

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311. For measures taken to trade Kuria cattle as well as the rest in the District see, for example, KNA/DC/NZA/3/49/5-6, Cattle Trade, 1923-1927.

312. See, for example, South Kavirondo District Annual Reports, for the years 1924, 1926, 1927 and 1930.

considered, militated against development efforts in agriculture and soil conservation. In this connection, the government expected the Abakuria to market their livestock in order to obtain money for tax payment; but, instead, the latter preferred to retain their stock while deriving the necessary cash income from the sale of crops and wage employment. Otherwise, they evaded paying taxes by moving to and settling in Tanganyika during periods of tax collection. An instance of this latter phenomenon was reported by the Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza Province, as follows:

"The administrative officer from Kisii lately met the Assistant District Officer North Mara (Tanganyika) on the subject of numerous natives from Bukira who have moved just over the boundary presumably in order to evade payment of Hut and Poll tax in Kenya... it is reported that in some cases they have moved with their cattle but graze them in Kenya everyday." <sup>313</sup>

When in 1928 the government discovered that the Abakuria did not volunteer to market their stock, it sought to impose measures aimed at reduction of the stock. One such measure was the (unsuccessful) restriction of bride-wealth to 3 head of cattle, 1 bullock and 6 goats as Musa Nyandusi proposed in the Local Native Council. This proposal was opposed by the Kuria members who asserted that, according to custom, the limit should be nine head of cattle and one bull. Consequently, a resolution was passed that the maximum brideprice in the Kisii locations be limited to six cows, one bull and ten goats, and in the Kuria locations nine cows and one bull. It was also resolved that payment of dowry in excess

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313. The Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza letter to Provincial Commissioner Lake Province-Mwanza Tanganyika dated 7<sup>th</sup> September, 1928 referenced Adm/5/3/29 in KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/49, Provincial Annual Report, 1928.

of these limits would be a punishable offence.<sup>314</sup> The colonial government considered that this measure would also reduce the stock theft which was rampant in the area.<sup>315</sup>

In practice, however, the Abakuria had many options to evade the rule-not least because chiefs and headmen could be bribed into keeping silent about the actual number of stock handed over at marriage. By 1929 it was being reported that "hardly a single marriage is performed at which legal brideprice is paid"<sup>316</sup>. The Abakuria thus made enforcement of the bridewealth law nearly impossible. In 1929 also, there was a fresh attempt by the colonial government to enforce payment of brideprice in cash.<sup>317</sup> The government managed to convince the council of elders (inchaama) to agree to this arrangement. Consequently, young men were compelled to go out and earn money by selling their labour-power outside Bukuria.

In further attempts to control and check the spread of diseases such as rinderpest and the foot-and-mouth disease, the government often resorted to quarantines - a practice that went back to 1917.\* These measures entailed the restriction of movement of cattle to and from Bukuria and sometimes in South Kavirondo as a whole. To enforce the quarantine regulations, Veterinary Scouts were deployed in December 1929.<sup>318</sup> Administration officials

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314. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3/22, Local Native Council Minutes Resolutions No. 6/27 1928.

315. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3/22, Local Native Council Minutes, 1929.

316. O.I., Maroa Mwita, Nguku-mahando, 17/3/97. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1929.

317. KNA/DC/KSI/1/6, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1929.

\* See, Chapter I, p.73

318. KNA/PC/NZA/3/49/6, Nyanza Provincial Annual Report. Correspondence from Provincial Commissioner Nyanza to Chief Veterinary Officer dated 23/9/29.

were also under strict instruction not to allow any movement of cattle outside their areas of jurisdiction during such periods.<sup>319</sup> Even so, the colonial officials in South Kavirondo were skeptical about success in enforcing these regulations. For example, the District Commissioner expressed pessimism about the regulations when he noted:

"It is admitted by you (Chief Veterinary Officer) that cattle meant to be traded within the reserve by natives for slaughter purposes and payment of dowries cannot be restricted... this I entirely agree. But in the view of this fact, I do not see how one can discourage movement of stock"<sup>320</sup>

Sometimes, however, the effectiveness of the quarantine regulations was frustrated by the colonial officials themselves. For one, while prohibiting the movement of cattle to neighbouring locations and districts, the administration was at the same time encouraging and advising settlers to come and purchase Kuria cattle.<sup>321</sup> These arrangements made it possible for the settlers to dictate the cattle prices. The Abakuria thus came to suspect that the quarantine measures were intended to benefit the settlers. One result was that Kuria cattle traders tried to exploit loopholes in the quarantine regulations and conduct cattle transactions with the Luo and the Maasai.<sup>322</sup>

Correspondence from 1930 indicates that such transactions extended even further. In that year, the District Commissioner rebuked a Veterinary Officer for failing to enforce quarantine regulations in the following words:

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319. KNA/PC/NZA/3/49/4, on Movement of Cattle 1925-1929.

320. See, e.g. KNA/PC/NZA/3/49/14, Movements of Cattle, 1925

321. KNA/PC/NZA/2/8/6, Livestock Trade, 1930-150.

322. KNA/PC/NZA/3/5/31, Kisii District Political Record Book, 1930 - 1940. See also, George Oduor Ndege, "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division, South Nyanza 1900-1960." M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1989.

"I am given to understand that there is a considerable amount of surreptitious cattle trading between the natives to Utende (Bukuria), Sakwa and Maasai... there is supposed to be a rigid quarantine so far as Kuria cattle are concerned".<sup>323</sup>

In order to prevent circumvention of the quarantine regulations, the administration introduced tougher measures. For example, exchange or purchase of cattle between individuals of different locations was proscribed, and cattle had to be sold or bought only in the official markets. The new regulation stated:

"no native... should within the foresaid locations purchase cattle for cash or barter from a native of another tribe or location other than his own elsewhere than at a market authorised."<sup>324</sup>

By adopting such measures, the colonial government ensured that cattle transactions took place at gazetted markets; this, in turn, meant restructuring village-based barter trade. In this context, Nyabikongori market was recognized in 1931 as the sole registered cattle trading centre for the whole of Bukuria.

In 1932, the authorities launched a vaccination campaign against the cattle diseases prevalent in the District: East Coast Fever, rinderpest, and the foot-and-mouth disease. However, the campaign faced problems from its inception: it lacked staff who would carry out the exercise; and, since the Abakuria believed that vaccinations were aimed at reducing their stock, they took their animals to Ikorongo in Musoma District of Tanganyika.<sup>325</sup> Branding was always done during the vaccination campaigns. This was intended for identification of animals; to minimize cattle theft; and to prevent illegal cattle movement from

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323. See correspondence dated 23/3/30 in KNA/PC/NZA/2/8/6 Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1930.

324. KNA/PC/NZA/3/11/49, On movement of Cattle, 1931.

325. O.I., Boniface Rioba, and Chacha Kerata. Interviewed 24/3/97 and 20/5/97 respectively.

one district to another. Moreover, branded cattle could easily be identified and monitored when quarantines were in force. The measure helped to minimize the spread of diseases resulting from stock movement from one district to another.

Cattle owners who did not heed these measures, especially those in Bukira, and Bugumbe were persistently harassed by the government. This encouraged migration into areas less susceptible to government interference, and a large number of the Abakuria thus crossed into Tanganyika and settled there permanently.<sup>326</sup> Nonetheless, the movement across the boundary continued and the administration came to realize that no measure would be effective in completely stopping movement of the Abakuria across the common border. Therefore, arrangements were made with the Tanganyika territory administration for the return of the Abakuria who had moved there.

In 1933, prices of cattle dropped not only in Bukuria but Nyanza as a whole. As Kitching generally observes about Kenya during this time:

"Though the money prices of food crops fell continuously from the late 1929 to 1934, the prices of cattle fell even more drastically during the same period. This was more due to a series of drought and locusts infestation... which affected pastoral areas particularly badly"<sup>327</sup>.

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326. See for example, KNA/PC/NZA/3/7/2/3, East Africa Uganda and Tanganyika Boundary 1929-1935. The idea of redrawing the interterritorial border had been voiced to check the unauthorized movements but difficulties involved in adding a bit of a colony (Kenya) to a mandated territory (Tanganyika) appeared to be unsurmountable. See, KNA/PC/NZA/3/26/4-2, Station Diary for July, 1926, District Commissioner's Office South Kavirondo. Also, see KNA/PC/NZA/3/26/2, July Safari to Bukuria, 1926.

327. Gavin Kitching, Class and Economic Change : 159. for the impacts of the low prices in South Kavirondo., See, for example, KNA/PC/NZA/3/49/7, Cattle Trade 1927-1934.

The prices fell after the locust infestation and its aftermath effects but, still, the government decided to build buying shades in Bukuria (see table 5 below). In 1934, such shades were built at Ntimaru, Kegonga, Nyabikongori and Motemorabu to facilitate the buying of hides and skin. And it was reported that five other more bandas were to be built by July of the same year. In spite of the depressed state of the hide market, the government reported that the Abakuria were very keen and willing to build more bandas in each location.<sup>328</sup>

**TABLE 5 : PRICES OF CATTLE IN SOUTH NYANZA BETWEEN 1931 AND 1934**

**IN Rs**

LOCATION	HEIFER	COW	BULLOCK
KENDU BAY	30	28	20
KARUNGU	25	40	35
SUNA	30	60	21
BUTENDE (BUKURIA)	30	50	24
KAMAGAMBO	30	40	30
KANYAMKAGO	30	40	40

Source: KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/3, Tours and Diaries of South Kavirondo District, 1931-1934.

## **V. STRUCTURAL CHANGES IN THE LABOUR FORCE**

During the inter-war years, the Abakuria as well as other people in South Kavirondo began to be dependent on migrant labour and the number of people registering for work kept increasing steadily (see table 6).

Employment outside the reserve was now the only means a large number of people relied on for money for tax. In fact, in 1922, it was reported that the Abakuria were offering

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328. KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/7, Veterinary Report, 1934.



themselves freely for all kinds of wage employment and were "beginning to realise the sensibility (sic) of bringing most of their earnings back to their reserve...."<sup>329</sup>

In the same year, a number of European private firms had been established in Suna to extract both Kuria and Luo labour. One such firm was owned by John Riddoch, who was represented in the District by R. Gethin.<sup>330</sup> Gethin appointed Chacha Mwita Matango to recruit people from Mabera and Suna<sup>331</sup>. Some other Europeans temporarily lived at Nyamosense in Bugumbe between 1924 and 1929 to recruit men to work in Kisumu<sup>332</sup>. The most notorious was nicknamed Nyakagoro, meaning "small one-legged person." He was very aggressive and harsh in the recruitment exercise, and he had married an African woman called Cecilia who recommended which males should be taken to Kisumu. He sometimes recruited young uncircumcised boys.<sup>333</sup> The juveniles were taken to labour as far away as in Thika and other parts of what is now the Central Province. Informants often explained that some old men left their villages to go and get the boys to return for circumcision. An oral proverb testifies to this: "Hare ngatara bakuure Nkyomanche na Nyamsibwe hare abaiya basereye" meaning "Where I go to look for them (in towns) they will cry, the young handsome ones got lost there."<sup>334</sup> The employment of the juveniles was also noted in the colonial records:

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329. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1923 : 22

330. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, Annual Report 1923:22

331. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, Annual report, 1923

332. KNA/DC/KSI/3/5, Kisii District Political Record Book, Kisii 1924-1935.

333. O.I. Jones Nkonya, 20/5/97, Nyamosense. The boys who were ready for circumcision in 1925 from the circumcision set of Ngimeria were forcibly recruited.

334. O.I., Joel Chacha Kerata, Nyabikaye, 13/4/97.

"an increasing number of Kavirondo juveniles are employed on the sisal estates in Thika, Donyo Sabouk and Fort Hall District... also in fuel ballast camps on the main line... The number of immature boys on the Thika, Nyeri constructions, main line camps and sisal plantations appears to be steadily increasing."<sup>335</sup>

Kuria men were also recruited and taken to work in the Kericho tea plantations and other plantations in Kibwezi, Rongai and Voi.<sup>336</sup> A number of them ended up working in wheat farms in Njoro.<sup>337</sup> and others in various works in Mombasa<sup>338</sup>

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335. KNA/PC/NZA/3/10/19/17, P.V. Alen correspondence to the Provincial Commissioner Nyanza dated 28/7/1925. For the number or a list of Kuria migrant labourers and juveniles, see also Native Affairs Department Annual Reports between 1925-1939, and KNA/PC/NZA/3/48/1, Correspondence from the District Commissioner South Kavirondo to the Provincial Commissioner Nyanza dated 13.8.25.

336. See, for example KNA/PC/NZA/3/26/4/1, Safari Diaries, Diary of R.W. Homsted, P.C. Nyanza, entry for 17/12/24.

337. A part from harvesting in Njoro, the Abakuria were also involved in construction of houses and bridges for the settlers. Perhaps, the common Kuria proverb proves it: Masongo Bagita wa nchoro ekahangoka wiki bakahoroa meaning, the Abamesongo (a circumcision set) constructed houses and bridges in Njoro which collapsed and got reconstructed once again. I.O., Jones, Nkonya.

338. Cf. K.K. Janmohammed, "African Labourers in Mombasa C. 1895-1940," in B.A Ogot (ed) Hadith: 5 Economic and Social History of East Africa (Nairobi, 1976) : 165. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/3/5/30, Political Record Book, 1924-1940. The Democrat Newspaper, Saturday 2, August, 1924:6 reported food shortages in Bukuria that many Kuria had left for towns especially Mombasa.

**TABLE 6: LABOUR RECRUITMENT IN SOUTH NYANZA DISTRICT 1919-1929**

Year	Outside the District	Inside the District	On their own - D.Cs Estimates
1919/20	234	322	5,000
1920-21	3,148	141	3,000
1922	6,837	187	1,000
1923	5,421	105	3,000
1924	2,397	550	10,000
1925	1,294	112	10,000
1926	4,010	3	n.a
1927	8,494	6	78,500
1928	6,710	-	6,000
1929	7,910	-	n.a

**Source:** KNA/DC/KSI/1/1-3, Annual Report for various years.

As a consequence of this out migration in search of wage employment, by 1924, the Kuria male population was smaller than the female as compared to the immediate years after the First World War as Table 7 shows.<sup>339</sup>

**TABLE 7: NATIVE POPULATION IN SOUTH NYANZA 1924**

LOCATION	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	TOTAL
KISII	20,844	30,978	27,350	79,172
LUO	41,844	48,510	41,237	131,591
ABAKURIA	4,910	5,200	5,288	15,398
TOTAL	66,598	84,688	73,875	226,161

**Source:** KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, Annual Report, South Kavirondo District, 1924.

In 1928, it was reported that "the Bakuria has been brought (sic) within a day and half's journey from Kisii"<sup>340</sup> with the improvement of the road when the Suna bridge was

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339. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1928 : 19.

340. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4 South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1928 : 19

constructed. This enabled many Kuria men to travel to Kisii and beyond in search of wage employment. As a result of the increase in labour demand, some Kuria men decided to take with them their wives to the workplace.<sup>341</sup> This led to the Provincial Commissioner Hedges expressing fear that "women are traditionally cultivators and soon, villages will remain uncultivated"<sup>342</sup>. Even so, heavy recruitment continued in Bukuria, whilst the Principal Labour Officer informed all District Commissioners in the colony that they were to "... use all means possible at their disposal to make labour prospects and direct natives when there was work..."<sup>343</sup>

However, migrant labour from Bukuria was checked during the years of the Great Depression. The turning point was 1932 when a sharp drop was recorded in the number of workers registered to work compared to the previous year. The problem this time was the inability of the settlers to take more labour owing to the hard economic times. This worked to increase the number of Abakuria working in the digging of the elephant ditch which marked the Maasai-Kuria border and was intended to prevent wildlife crossing from the South Kavirondo District to destroy crops in the Rift Valley Provinces.

During these years, Kuria men entered Masurura and Sagegi in Maasailand, and many of them married Maasai women and took up farming land, usually with the approval of individual Maasai families. Periodically, the Maasai L.N.C. passed resolutions condemning

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341. Mwita Omahe for example took his wife Wangenyi Boke to Kericho in 1929 but the wife was returned back. O.I., Maroa Nyakiha, 24/6/97, Kehancha.

342. KNA/PC/NZA/3/17/3 P.C. Nyanza Communication to all D.C. to ensure women do not accompany their husbands, in workplace dated 2/6/1928.

343. KNA/PC/3/20/4/2, Province Labour Officer to P.C. Nyanza, and D.C. Kisii to P.C Nyanza dated 7/11/1929.

this influx, and from time to time the administration expelled the Kuria families. However, this remained a lasting problem between the two ethnic groups.<sup>344</sup>

In 1940, the Abairege asked for an extension of boundaries eastward into the Maasai Reserve, claiming that there were no Maasai between the boundary of the District and the Mara escarpment. However, the D.C. admonished the petitioners saying: "If the Maasai had now left the area, it was due to Baregi (Abairege) being such bad neighbours."<sup>345</sup> This intrusion of the Abakuria into Maasailand caused considerable consternation in the administrative bodies of both provinces.

## **VI. DISCOVERY OF GOLD MINING AT KEHANCHA**

British prospectors discovered gold at Kehancha in Bukuria in 1930 and, as Jean Hay puts it, "the gold rush was on."<sup>346</sup> Hoping to save themselves from the financial ruin created by the Great Depression, crowds of Europeans left their farms and shops and hurried to stake out claims in South Kavirondo. Major Webb, who was stationed at Sotik, left his farm temporarily and opened gold mines at Lolgorien and Kilgoris in Maasailand. In 1930, he opened a mine at Kehancha. He established two more mines at Karos<sup>347</sup> and Kurutiange, where he hired people from Ikerege and Gwikonge to work. The Maasai were also employed to guard the mines as watchmen. In the evenings, Webb would organise wrestling matches,

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344. KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/401, Monthly Intelligence South Kavirondo District Report, January, 1940.

345. KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/437, Safari Diary of Mr. D. Storrs Fox, District Commissioner Kisii, from 17-24th February, 1940.

346. M.J. Hay, "Economic Change in Luo Land, Kowe, 1880-1945," Ph.D. Thesis, University of Winsconsin, 1972 : 219.

347. According to informants in Kehancha, the Karos village was named after a miner called Carlos.

and he offered a bull to a consistent winner as a way of motivating the miners to work.<sup>348</sup>

Prior to Webb's coming to Kehancha, the Germans had crossed the border and begun mining in the area in 1925.<sup>349</sup> Bwana Mkono<sup>350</sup> had come to Kehancha with Ikizu, Nyamwezi and Haya miners from Nyarugusu mines. These miners from Tanganyika trained Kurutiange and Kehancha locals in mining techniques.

Gold mining, then, provide critical job and trading opportunities after the years of famine and economic depression; and as the District Commissioner reported in 1932: "Economically, the Bakoria (sic) are certainly profiting by the activities of these mines..."<sup>351</sup> Even so, there were bitter complaints by the Abakuria about the dust emanating from the mines which they considered was destroying their crops. The Abakuria also expressed fear that the colonial government intended to dispossess them of their land. This insecurity about land greatly increased when large numbers of miners entered Bukuria in 1933. At one point, a European was speared to death by one Mwita Maroa from Kehancha when he found the former in his compound surveying it as a possible mining place.<sup>352</sup> Subsequently, the colonial government tightened security in the area and, in 1935, Provincial Commissioner K.L. Hunter reported as follows:

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348. O.I., Mohabe Mokenya, 26/4/97, Kurutiange.

349. O.I. Isasinge Babere, Gisiri Wandwi, Sirma and Mohabe Mwita Interviewed 24/4/97, Kurutiange.

350. Bwana Mkono was a German miner who trained the Kuria men in mining techniques.

351. KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/7, Monthly Intelligence Report, 1934

352. O.I., Gisiri Wandwi, 2/5/97, Kurutiange.

"I made a tour of the four mines in the month. Law and order has improved at Watende (sic) mines. The European manager now has four askari and there are less acts of lawlessness."<sup>353</sup>

The Ngiga Mining Company took over from Major Webb in 1937.<sup>354</sup> It constructed bridges on rivers Tobesi, Kibunchiki, Naora and Nyabasoti along the Migori-Kehancha road to facilitate quicker transportation to and from the mining areas. The company also erected permanent houses at Kehancha. In 1938, it bought and installed a stone grinding machine at Kehancha.

For many Abakuria, especially those of Kurutiange, the mining industry was the first experience of wage labour. The wages were quite good; much higher, in fact, than those available on the European farms at Kericho and Sotik. From Table 8 below, it can be seen that between 1935 and 1939, mining, was paying the highest in the Province:

**TABLE 8: WAGES EARNED IN NYANZA PROVINCE 1935-1939**

NATURE OF WORK	NO. OF EMPLOYED ADULTS	JUVENILES	WAGES IN SHILLINGS	
			ADULT	JUVENILE
MINING	8,870	1,700	12	8
TEA	7,000	5,256	10	6
SISAL	1,100	-	9	-
SUGAR	2,400	700	10	5
MIXED FARMING	5,300	-	9	0
BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY	1,370	-	10	-
DOMESTIC	980	140	11	7

353. KN/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1935. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/8 Monthly Intelligence Report Kisii 1937.

354. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1937 : 47.

Sisal and mixed farming, where most of the Abakuria were employed, were paying the lowest wages. Consequently, the European settlers in Kisii and Muhoroni had to raise these wages in order to attract back many of their employees who were deserting to seek employment at the gold mines.

The gold mine at Kurutiange also provided a new market for goods and services of various kinds. According to informants in the area, the women in particular seized the opportunities for selling milk, fruit, vegetables, chicken and different foods to the mine workers. Trips to Kurutiange and Kehancha at mid-morning and the late afternoon became a regular part of the day for many Kuria women who had not previously engaged in trading activity.<sup>355</sup> A few women came to earn money from the mining employees as prostitutes. In fact, reports from the Kuria Health Centre indicate that there were many cases of syphilis (kaswende) between 1935 and 1939.<sup>356</sup>

In August 1938, the District Commissioner commented on the "overwhelming opportunities" the mining industry offered to the Abakuria:

"The opportunities afforded by the Kehancha (sic) mines for wage labour and marketing of produce has been of great assistance in the development of Bakuria (sic). The mining has provided... labour recruiters and elephant hunters a contact between the Abakuria and a new civilization."<sup>357</sup>

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355. In his second trip to Bukuria, the Provincial Commissioner K.L. Hunter reported that he saw many Kuria women at the mines. See for example, KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/9, Monthly Intelligence Report, Kisii, 1938.

356. See for example Health Reports from Utende Health Centre in the periods between 1939-1945 in KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/363, Confidential Reports 1935-1939.

357. See for example KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/22, Monthly Intelligence Report, 1938 : 6.



In late 1938, a mine labourer earned between 8 and 16 shillings a month. At this time, the counterparts on the European farms mentioned above were getting 6-10 shillings each.<sup>358</sup> The opening up of gold mines in Bukuria thus made it possible for some men to return and work at home.

Generally, the discovery of gold in Bukuria shifted the attention of the Kuria farmers from agriculture to wage labour. Often, farms were abandoned and stock left unattended. Apart from this, diseases spread and killed mine workers; and, sometimes, men were disfigured in accidents involving collapsing mines.<sup>359</sup> At Karos, the effects of gold mining were far-reaching, as the mines were established on fertile land which was thus permanently destroyed. In fact, up to the present it has not been possible to turn such land to agricultural use.

Gold is, of course, an exhaustible resource. Therefore, when the European mined up all the gold, they left Bukuria with only a vast landscape full of hollow caves. So, by the end of 1939, Bukuria was the most undeveloped part of the South Kavirondo region.

## **VII. TRADE AND MARKETING**

The interwar years saw the expansion of trade in cattle and related products. The period also witnessed active government intervention in the sphere of trade and marketing, as well as in agriculture. The administration hoped to improve the quality of the crops marketed, to regulate the status of the markets and trading centres, and to limit the transactions which could take place. However, these hopes were frustrated by the Great Depression during which prices of commodities fell drastically.

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358. KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/22, Monthly Intelligence Report: 3.

359. O.I, Mwita Wandwi, Kurutiange, 22/4/97.

The increased participation of the Abakuria in trade was due to two main factors. First, the government's encouragement of local entrepreneurship enabled some of the Abakuria to venture into trade. Secondly, and even more significantly, those who had served in the First World War were back with war savings which enabled them to enter into partnership with non-local traders. However, a major handicap was the long distance of Bukuria from the main trading centres of South Kavirondo. This was noted in the Annual Report for 1921:

"The Bakoria (sic) would readily advance economically with greater facilities, but their distance from a market is a tremendous handicap on anything but stock trade<sup>360</sup>.

The District Commissioner was however optimistic that, regardless of this problem of distance, the Abakuria would still be able to participate in trade because they had many good cattle and were willing to enter into trade in cattle related products. Thus in 1922, he further reported:

"They (Abakuria) by dint of using a trading instinct coupled with a year of little if any stock mortality and self sufficient food supply, are now at a period when with energy and initiatives... they will be able to attain prosperity and wealth"<sup>361</sup>.

In 1927, an Indian businessman, Gulamali Mohammed, and a European, Brook Mortas, settled at Nyabohanse and Mabera, respectively, to do business.<sup>362</sup> They established shops and sold clothes, ox ploughs and kerosene which were bought in large quantities. On the other hand, they bought ghee and butter from Kuria traders which they resold in Kisii.

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360. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1921 : 16.

361. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1922 : 17.

362. See, KNA/PC/NZA/3/33/8/19, Kisii-Bakoria Local Native Council Minutes, 1928.

In 1928, Suna, Nyabisawa and Mabera were officially opened and gazetted as trading centres.<sup>363</sup> As a result, more Indians like Didarali Jadausi applied to open shops in the said areas.

Late in 1928, a Marketing Board was established by the colonial administration in South Kavirondo, and six members of the Kuria Local Native Council were selected into it.<sup>364</sup> The objectives of the Board included the improvement of the quality of crops grown by the locals so that they could compete with similar produce grown in other areas. Also, it was hoped that the Board would ensure that the locals would receive a fair price for their produce. The first step the Marketing Board took was to make it easier for the grower to sell his crops. This was done by establishing markets in the centres of the main growing areas and in fairly close proximity to one another. The next step was to improve the quality of the produce which the government agents thought was very difficult because, allegedly:

"The Kuria man is inherently lazy, and although, he was told that a good clean seed would fetch more money than a dirty one, it was always too much trouble for him to clean his sample..."<sup>365</sup>

In this respect several methods were adopted to improve the "native" produce, the two most important being seed selection and inspection of produce by the Marketing Board. From 1930, small trading centres were established in Bukira and Bwirege, and the L.N.C passed resolutions controlling markets and marketing. For example, it was ruled that "all

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363. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1923 :39.

364. KNA/PC/NZA/3/33/8/20, Kisii-Bokoria Local Native Council Minutes 1929.

365. KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/59, South Kavirondo Marketing Board minutes, 1928-1937 see also, Annual Report for 1929.

produce, cattle, sheep and goats must be bought and sold at a market; no wet, unripe, mouldy or dirty produce may be purchased...<sup>366</sup>

As already indicated, there was increased participation in the cattle trade in Bukuria. This was organised at three levels. First, there was local trade which was essentially a carry-over from the precolonial period - the only change being the increased use of money in transaction, though bartering was still dominant. At the second level, traders bought cattle from the owners in villages and took them to Nyabikongori,<sup>367</sup> where all Kuria cattle were traded. The cattle purchased were then sold to large-scale traders at a profit. As opposed to the local trade where plain bartering was an accepted practice of the new transactions, at this level, transactions were conducted purely in cash. At the third level, cattle were purchased and walked for marketing to other trading centres away from Bukuria, especially Maasailand or Rongo in Luoland.<sup>368</sup>

Kuria cattle traders also bought cattle from Tanganyika, where prices were quite low, walked them to Suna and hence Ahero and finally to Kisumu. The Abakuria sometimes smuggled cattle from Tanganyika and resold them to Lolgorien in Maasailand.<sup>369</sup> However, the Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza thought that if this practice continued, it would bring strange diseases to South Kavirondo and therefore imposed tough measures to curb the problem in accordance with the by-law which stated:

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366. KNA/PC/NZA/3/33/8/20, Kisii-Bukoria Local Native Council Minutes, 1929

367. Nyabikongori was the only registered cattle trading centre in Bukuria between 1920 and 1949.

368. Arne Lexander "Sociological Survey" :11 also cf. S. Friedsberg, "changing values" and George Oduor Ndege, "Transformation of Cattle Economy."

369. Cf. Michael Fleisher, "Kuria Cattle raiding", P.10.

"No cattle, sheep, or goats shall be imported from Tanganyika territory except in accordance with such conditions as the Chief Veterinary Officer may, from time to time, prescribe and notify by publication in the gazette."<sup>370</sup>

Commensurate with this development was an increasing interest on the part of Kuria farmers in obtaining greater returns from animal husbandry. Part of the output from this industry were hides and skins as well as dairy products. It was reported that the Abakuria produced hides and skins, and that these made up an important segment of Nyanza's export economy before the beginning of the Great Depression.<sup>371</sup> In 1930, the Department of Agriculture's principal aim for this industry was to change the practices used in drying.<sup>372</sup> The Abakuria used the sun drying technique to prepare their hides for sale, although the sun-dried hides had less market value in South Kavirondo.<sup>373</sup>

During 1931 and 1932, trade suffered the ravages of locusts and the Great Depression. Thus, the prices of produce, including those of hides and skins, fell heavily with the result that the purchasing power of the local people was greatly decreased.<sup>374</sup> Despite these difficulties, however, the colonial government was still considering a programme for improving the quality of hides and skins. The programme included the construction of bandas or sheds through the Local Native Council. It was designed to provide a price inducement to Kuria farmers for the better prepared hides. Consequently, in 1934, the

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370. KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/49, On cattle trade, 1929.

371. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1929, p. 39, See also, Kenya Department of Agriculture, Annual Report 1930 : 116-7.

372. KNA/PC/NZA/1/14/59, Nyanza Provincial Agricultural Report, 1930.

373. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4, Annual Report, South Kavirondo District 1931 : 39.

374. Kenya Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1933 : 117.

L.N.C erected several hide drying bandas at Kegonga, Ntimaru, Kebarisia, Kebaroti, Ngukumahando, and Nyamosense marketing centres. And the chiefs instructed farmers that all hides were to be shade-dried.<sup>375</sup>

In 1937, however, only little progress was recorded in Bugumbe, where only two shade drying bandas had been erected. The neighbouring Bukira clan had begun shade drying in response to the prices that the Abagumbe were getting.<sup>376</sup> Simultaneously, the manufacture and sale of ghee and clarified butter continued although only at the local level. The Europeans and Indians were not interested in Kuria ghee because they thought it was not prepared to the required standards.

From the money earned through the sale of agricultural produce and livestock and from wage labour, a group of wealthy Abakuria was emerging. They used their accumulated wealth in various ways. Some of them invested in the small shops which were springing up. Others, for example Masese and Maroba, bought the first cars in Bukuria; this was in 1939.<sup>377</sup>

## **B. KURIA AGRICULTURE IN THE YEARS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

### **VIII. INTRODUCTION**

Before the shockwaves of the Great Depression had completely subsided, the people of Bukuria were once again plunged into another world catastrophe: the outbreak of the Second World War. The impending war was already noticeable in August 1939, when

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375. KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/52, Kisii-Bokoria Local Native Council, 1937.

376. KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/52, Kisii-Bakoria LNC, 1937.

377. KNA/DC/KSI/5/3, Native Affairs Department, South Kavirondo District, 1939.

roadblocks were set and manned by the Kenya Defence Force near the Tanganyika boundary and at various other points in the District. Also, the Kenya Tribal Police were held in readiness to proceed immediately to reinforce any threatened point. The Abakuria gave considerable help and co-operation to the Defence Force as scouts, and they were specially commended by the District Commandant for their efforts. The news of the outbreak of the war reached Kisii on September 1939. The war was to have far-reaching social, political and economic effects on the Abakuria. A large number of them were conscripted, and the colonial government once again ordered compulsory sale of cattle to the Military Supply Board.

Tensions had developed in the South Kavirondo District from the early months of 1939. Rumours were fortified by recruiting for the Police and the Pioneer Corps. Many Abakuria ran away into the bush to hide; and those outside started streaming back home in fear of being conscripted. They also feared that the Maasai would take advantage of the outbreak of the war to launch large-scale raids on them. In attempting to explain this fear, the District Commissioner wrote:

"It appears that in the last war the young men were caught and sent whole-sale to the Carrier Corps, where overwork, undernourishment and disease killed a large proportion of them, and they now greatly dread a possible repetition of this experience."<sup>378</sup>

However, this fear soon subsided and many people returned to their work. The Mesongo, Ngimeria, Karamu and Kehanga circumcision sets were the first to be drafted into the army.

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378. KNA/DC/KSI/1/4 South Kavirondo District, Annual Report, 1939.

## IX. CROP PRODUCTION

Basic changes were achieved in crop production during the war period. Certain developments had set the stage for these changes, including population increase (see Table 9), soil depletion and erosion, inadequacy of agricultural land in some areas, participation in the cash economy, and cash crop production. These factors interacted to bring changes in land tenure and agricultural practices as well as the social mores and customs of the Abakuria.

**TABLE 9: NATIVE POPULATION 1944**

TRIBE	MEN	WOMEN	CHILDREN	TOTAL
LUO	67149	69526	80269	216944
KISII	41930	45715	51474	139119
KURIA	5479	5127	6229	16835
OTHERS	1072	1163	1313	3548
TOTAL	115630	121531	139285	376446

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/7, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1944: 23.

In January 1940, the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner and the Senior Agricultural Officer together with the South Kavirondo District Commissioner toured Bukuria and the rest of the District. They organised barazas in which they exhorted local inhabitants to treble the cultivation and sale of food crops without any delay.<sup>379</sup> Apparently, their efforts were successful because there was increased production of maize and millet. Faced with an

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379. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1941.



unprecedented demand for food supply, administrative officials called for increased production. Maize and sorghum were particularly needed for shipment to the Middle East and other areas in fulfilment of British wartime commitments (see Table 10).

**TABLE 10: PRODUCE BUYING FIGURES FOR SOUTH NYANZA DISTRICT, 1942-1946**

ITEMS	1942	1943	1944	1945	1946
BAGS	BAGS	BAGS	BAGS	BAGS	BAGS
Maize	69,657	87,550	105,427	77,509	144,595
Wimbi	18,399	9,266	8,412	21,534	38,594
Beans	10,316	160	52	349	-
Chikoro	989	183	211	946	1,151
Simsim	10,892	998	894	2,472	337
Potatoes	434	2,952	5,743	4,528	1,497
Mtama	19,411	34,651	28,215	2,334	19,946
Rice	52	273	406	2	-
Wheat	-	1,300	1,675	1,143	1,993
Kunde	-	-	-	3,122	2,793

Source: KNA/KSM/1/03 Agriculture Department Annual Report, 1946

Under emergency powers, the colonial government established a Maize and Produce Control Board in 1942 which had an effective monopoly over both the sale and purchase of African grown maize. The prices paid to the Kuria growers increased steadily during the war and were fixed in advance for each season by the Maize Board.<sup>380</sup> The volume of maize exports from Nyanza Province increased from 246,767 bags in 1937 to about 640,550 bags by the end of the war.

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380. KNA/PC/NZA//3/33/7/2, South Kavirondo Marketing and Control Board 1939-1945.

Indeed, the agricultural efforts in South Kavirondo District during the war years were geared towards maximum production of food staples and, in particular, cereals. This was in keeping with the wider colonial policy of producing enough food for the war effort.<sup>381</sup>

By 1944, soil depletion had become evident and the Agricultural Officer A.W. Thompson was sent to Mabera to assess the situation.<sup>382</sup> He carried out intensive campaigns for soil conservation, especially at Nyabohanse and Mabera, and encouraged the use of trash lines to conserve the soil. Provincial agricultural reports for 1945 show that the agricultural staff "had the pleasure of seeing their soil erosion efforts bear fruit".<sup>383</sup> Tree planting campaigns continued throughout the war and in mid 1945, the Local Native Council passed a resolution compelling all adult male land holders to plant sixteen trees each. This objective was achieved to a large extent through the issuing of seedlings.<sup>384</sup>

It may be argued, however, that the call to produce more food during the war was responsible for the soil erosion in most areas of Bukuria.<sup>385</sup> In this sense, the role of the agricultural officers in the conservation measures may be viewed not so much as a way of improving agriculture in the area, but as a means of satisfying the colonial need for the surplus production of food. Although the Abakuria who had participated in the war brought

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381. For the calls made to the 'Natives' of South Nyanza to treble production, see, South Kavirondo Annual Reports for the years 1941, 1942, 1943.

382. KNA/DC/KSI/1/7, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1944

383. KNA/AGR/KSM/1/803 - Agricultural Department, Kisumu District, Annual Report, 1942-45.

384. KNA/PC/NZA/3/1/18B Resolution No. 3 of 1th August, 1945, presided by D.C.W.A. Perreau Esq. Proposed by Paul Mboya.

385. Cf. L.H. Brown, "Agricultural Change in Kenya" and B.D. Bowles "Underdevelopment in Agriculture" : 97.

with them more ox ploughs, lack of capital and farming on small plots of land was to hinder agricultural development in Bukuria after the war.

## **X. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY**

A major effect of the war on animal husbandry in Bukuria was the considerable loss of cattle through forced sale. In 1940, for example, the Abakuria complained through the Local Native Council that their animals were being bought at very low prices.<sup>386</sup> Without using force, however, the district's annual quota during the war could not have been met since prices paid by Livestock Control were too low. In fact, in the same year, the district had failed to produce the number of cattle ordered.<sup>387</sup> Added to ruthless taxation, this pressure considerably reduced the cattle population in Bukuria.

In 1941, rinderpest broke out in South Kavirondo. The disease reached Bukuria in October the same year, and in the space of a few devastating months the disease destroyed a lot of the Kuria cattle. The Abakuria attempted to recoup their losses by intensifying raiding, but they found the neighbouring communities as badly hit as they were.<sup>388</sup>

In October 1941, the government intervened by supplying limited veterinary services. Although these were to be provided throughout the war, they were limited to vaccinations and inoculation in Bukuria<sup>389</sup> as Table 11 shows:

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386. See for Example, KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/52 - Kisii-Bakoria Local Native Council Minutes, 1940.

387. Gordon, A History of the District

388. O.I., Boniface Rioba, 24/4/97, Ntimaru

389. KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/2, South Kavirondo District Veterinary Report 1944.

**TABLE 11: VETERINARY VACCINATION AND INOCULATION IN SOUTH  
NYANZA 1943-1945**

<u>TREATMENT</u>	<u>1943</u>	<u>1944</u>	<u>1945</u>
PLEURO-	41,012	129,238	116,940
PNEUMONIA	111,604	83,250	135,394
RINDERPEST	4,645	16,013	57,634
BLACKQUARTER	528	764	2,955
TRYPANOSOMIASIS	7,78	11,667	9,905
ANTHRAX	11,534	10,744	6,733
CATRATIONS			

Source: KNA/DC/KSI/1/3/2 Veterinary Reports 1943  
1944, 1945 Cited in Omwoyo.

The major diseases targeted included rinderpest and pleuro-pneumonia. However, these veterinary services were not offered free; actually, the Veterinary Department charged exorbitant fees for them. Those who owned as many as 500 herds of cattle, for example, were unable to have their entire herd inoculated.

In 1943, the Local Native Council asked the government to construct cattle dips in Bukuria to control the East Coast Fever and other diseases.<sup>390</sup> And, subsequently, three cattle dips were constructed at Kiomakebe, Ikerege, and Chinato in 1944. But for reasons not indicated in the documents, Kuria herders grew disenchanted and, by 1945, many had taken an oath not to use the dips.<sup>391</sup> Perhaps their opposition stemmed from the belief that the colonial government was using vaccination and inoculation to kill or sterilise their animals.<sup>392</sup>

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390. KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/53, Local Native Council Minutes 1944.

391. See the Veterinary Officer Reports in DC/KSI/1/6, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1944.

392. A number of oral informants in Bukuria said that these cattle dips contained poisonous chemicals which killed their animals.

## **XI. TRADE AND MARKETING**

As already indicated, the Second World War produced major changes in the economic relations of Bukuria. Despite the existence of expanding markets, the economic changes did not lead to measurable progress for the Abakuria. Markets were there; the will of people to take full advantage of them was also there; but the operational framework with vested interests elsewhere imposed serious constraints. Up to 1940, the colonial government had continued to use force in order to make the Abakuria produce surpluses for the market.<sup>393</sup>

The provincial agricultural report for 1943 indicated that the Abakuria (as well as the Luo and the Abagusii) displayed no interest in marketing their produce and, in some locations, this was totally rejected. Indeed, some people in Bukuria recall having sold their grain in Tanganyika in order to avoid the low control prices obtainable locally.

In 1943, also, a number of Indian traders established shops in various trading centres of Bukuria. It was then reported that "half of this grain (maize) is being bought by an Indian called "Tito" from Sirari."<sup>394</sup> However, at the beginning of 1945, the Indians began to leave Bukuria. This was due to restrictions on external markets and falling prices which were made worse by poor weather conditions. The market for cattle also collapsed due to the spread of the East Coast Fever and other diseases.

In October 1945, the Agricultural Betterment Fund was created to ensure that growers in Bukuria as well as other parts of the Nyanza Province received guaranteed prices for each bag of grain exported from their locations. Since a single producer price ruled throughout

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393. KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/7, Monthly Intelligence Reports, 1940.

394. KNA/DC/KSI/1/6, South Kavirondo District Annual Report 1944:28. See also, KNA/PC/NZA/4/5/9, Monthly Intelligence Report for the month of May, 1944. "Tito" otherwise known as Didarali Jadausi was a prominent maize trader at Sirari.

the district, the overcropping which prevailed around marketing centres and railhead points was progressively eliminated. The cost of this single price system was the difference between the grower price and the railhead value of the produce. The Kuria producer gained from this market arrangement since he was far from the railhead and other marketing centres.<sup>395</sup>

At the end of the war, ex-soldiers of the Nesongo, Ngimeria Karamu and Kehanga circumcission sets began to return home and establish business enterprises. They operated bars, butcheries, clubs, slaughterhouses and hotels. They were particularly active in such business activities at Nyamaharaga, Kegonga, Ntimaru, Mabera and Chinato.<sup>396</sup>

## XII. CONCLUSION

The period between 1919 and 1945 represents the second major phase in development of Kuria agriculture under colonial rule. The period witnessed numerous changes in almost all spheres of agriculture. However, the Great Depression starting in 1929, accompanied by a severe locust infestation, as well as outbreak of the Second World War, combined to adversely affect attempts at the development of Kuria agriculture.

In the sphere of crop production, the interwar years saw the introduction of new cash crops. These included cotton, beans, sunflower and rice, for which the Local Native Council acted as a source and distributor of seeds. In this respect, a major transformation in Kuria agriculture was the introduction of maize in 1929. Both the per capita consumption and acreage of the crop increased steadily at the expense of sorghum, millet and cassava. And,

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395. Cf. Victor C. Uchendu and K.R.M. Anthony, Agricultural Change in Kisii District : 36.

396. KNA/PC/NZA/2/1/54. Local Native Council Minutes 1946.

accompanying this, important changes were taking place in food crop production in general.

For animal husbandry, the interwar years were a period of stress. This was so because, the colonial policies - especially those relating to cattle movement and quarantines, trade, labour and taxation - were now felt more severely. Secondly, and more importantly, Bukuria was affected by recurrent cattle diseases and epidemics.

The interwar years also saw continued Kuria dependence on migrant labour, and the number of people registering for work increased steadily. For the first time, juveniles were taken to labour as far away as in Thika and Mombasa. However, with the opening of the Kehancha gold mines and better remuneration offered to the miners, many migrant Kuria labourers returned to stake out claims at home. This "gold rush" saw the flowering of Kuria trade and marketing because of the opportunities and contacts it brought to them. However, it also laid the seeds of future underdevelopment when many capitalist prospectors obsessed with money entered Kehancha and dug up all the gold and exported it to Europe.

## CHAPTER IV

### AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE END OF SECOND WORLD WAR TO INDEPENDENCE

"... Few Kuria (sic) so far have intention of following improved agricultural methods, and many have not enclosed their land... Certainly, the Agricultural Department does not yet know the best methods of improving agriculture in the marginal areas of Kuria country."<sup>397</sup>

#### I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

As the Second World War drew to a close, the colonial administration started a gradual agricultural reorganisation in Bukuria. In this respect, the government extended and, in some cases, intensified programmes that had been started before the war.<sup>398</sup> The production of maize was particularly increased, and indigenous food crops like sorghum, eleusine and others were grown for sale. Notably also, in the mid 1950s, permission was granted to the Abakuria to grow coffee.

Besides the government, missions were also highly visible and active in the attempts to transform Kuria agriculture. The missions had a relatively early start in this field in the interwar period, but their activities then were extremely limited. In fact, the Abakuria were generally suspicious of, and resistant to, all mission programmes including in education and evangelization. Perhaps the missions' most important impact on agriculture was their continued promotion of coffee through experimental farms on their property. Both Maranatha Mission of Kenya and the Catholic Church were instrumental in convincing the government to permit coffee growing in Bukuria.<sup>399</sup> On the other hand, the Seventh-Day Adventist

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397. KNA/DC/HB/4/14/36 Secretary, South Nyanza District Council to the District Commissioner South Nyanza, letter dated 3/3/50.

398. KNA/PC/NZA/2/3/61, History of the War, 1939-1948.

399. KNA/DC/KSI/1/15, South Nyanza District, Annual Report 1955.



Church was opposed to the large-scale growing and consumption of coffee and tea<sup>400</sup>; it only encouraged gardening and emphasized vegetarianism.<sup>401</sup> It seems certain that many European fruits and vegetables found their way onto Kuria farms through the missionary nicknamed "Father Bokore" of the Isibania Catholic Mission in 1946.<sup>402</sup>

## II. CROP PRODUCTION, 1946-1963

The early postwar years saw little real progress in crop production, with "persuasion and demonstration" plots being no more successful than in the pre-war years. Consequently, new approaches were taken to encourage extension services, including the introduction of incentives and "group farming"<sup>403</sup>. Besides, the government policy of maximum production was being carried out more fully. Price incentives gave added force to exhortation, while a skeleton force of field officials remained at Kehancha to supervise crop production. These factors, together with continued population increase, led to unprecedented overcropping of the land and an incalculable loss of soil fertility. To foster general agricultural progress and

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400. According to Adventist beliefs and practices, consumption of coffee and tea is forbidden for "health reasons". They contain caffeine which is an addictive element. Cf. W.B. Anderson, The Church in East Africa 1840-1974 (Dodoma, 1977): 63-71. See also, G.N. Amayo, "A History of the Adventist Education in Kenya, 1906-1963" Ph.D. Thesis, Howard University, 1974.

401. Amayo, "A history of the Adventist."

402. Father 'Bokore' nicknamed so (bokore means tilled land) brought citrus and mango seedling and planted them at Isibania, he praised himself and said "Bokore bwigaranchoye ni mbura eretwa botendwe" meaning he is like tilled land that is awaiting rains to be harrowed.

403. "Incentive" for better farming was first applied in Nyanza Province. See for example, Clayton, Agrarian Development : 17.

address related questions of both a long and short-term nature, the government had to draw development plans for Bukuria and Nyanza Province as a whole.<sup>404</sup>

1946 was a year of good fortune because, except for an outbreak of virulent malaria, Bukuria was spared suffering from famine and blessed with good harvest. The year also saw the commencement of new agricultural activities. In September, for example, the Ministry of Agriculture sent John Sandiur, an Assistant Agricultural Officer, to Chinato and Ntimaro to meet chiefs and agricultural instructors over the introduction of coffee growing in the area.<sup>405</sup> He brought with him seedlings and leased a three acre piece of land at Chinato for experimentation in coffee planting.

In October of the same year, the government began constructing dams. The first such dams were constructed at Gosebe, Kohego and Kiomakebe.<sup>406</sup> Likewise, soil control and conservation received a major emphasis in agricultural extension work under the policy of "group farming" mentioned earlier. Every effort was also made to encourage Kuria farmers to manure or compost their fields, to plant grass leys, and to terrace the steep slopes of land irrespective of individual holdings.<sup>407</sup> This was a continuation of earlier attempts at soil erosion control which had taken the form of narrow-based terraces.<sup>408</sup>

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404. KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/57, Native Land Trust board, South Kavirondo District, 1937-1951.

405. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8 South Nyanza, District, Annual Report, 1946.

406. O.I., Chacha Kerata, Nyabikaye, 24/4/97.

407. Considerable enthusiasm for planned group farming in Bukuria apparently succeeded but two years later, it was seen that much of the early success was due to entirely free financing of the group farms in the form of free labour and cash. See for example, KNA/PC/NZA/4/2/7, Agricultural Gazetteer of South Nyanza 1956.

408. See chapter 3.

In 1948, "trash lines" were introduced after the use of "live wash stops" of Mexican sunflower (chiroko) was given up. This was because the latter plant spread quickly to cultivated land and became difficult to eradicate.<sup>409</sup> Furthermore, the "trash lines" were less labour demanding and proved quite popular with cultivators. So, by the end of 1948, most of the cultivated land especially in the Kegonga escarpment where there were serious problems with soil depletion were partially protected. It should be noted here that the government policy of encouraging maximum food production after the war had in one way or the other hastened the deterioration of soil in Bukuria. This was partly due to the fact that the continuous use of land without the application of fertilizer led to soil infertility and consequent erosion.<sup>410</sup>

In 1950, the agricultural extension staff encouraged the Abakuria to manure their farms as part of a scheme to improve the soil. The Abakuria initially resisted this scheme, although they were eventually forced to accept it by the chiefs. This was because in Kuria culture, it was forbidden to use cow dung. In early times manure would only to be piled up in front of the cattle enclosure as a status symbol (*isikai*) indicating the size of the herd held in the household.<sup>411</sup> Furthermore, it was believed that removing manure from the homestead

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409. Cf. Department of Agriculture, Annual Report 1948 : 79.

410. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Experience with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa, Kenya 1966 : 13.

411. See for example, Agricultural Officers' report in KNA/DC/KSI/1/10, South Nyanza District, Annual Report 1950.

would bring death to the head of the household or one of his family members.<sup>412</sup> By the 1950s the Abakuria were more interest in how to receive the government's permission to grow high priced cash crops like coffee and tea than with the problem of soil conservation. However, the government was not so keen to permit such cash crop production; rather, it continued with its soil conservation programmes.

In 1953, the government began to encourage small-holder farming.<sup>413</sup> This system comprised farm units averaging about eight acres per holding. Under the system, the existence of scattered parcels of land owned by one man would be reduced.<sup>414</sup> In order to achieve its objectives, the government spread awareness through training Kuria farmers. In October of the same year, farm institutes were inaugurated at Kisii and Oyani (Suna), and a few selected farmers were sent there to train.<sup>415</sup> Secondly, tours were organised by the Ministry of Agriculture to enable Kuria farmers to view small-holdings in Kericho and also to study rice growing at the Kano Plains in Central Nyanza.<sup>416</sup> Lastly, in 1954, an agricultural show was held at Butende (later, Mabera); this was the first time such a show had been organised in Bukuria.

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412. Agricultural officials in North Mara District a neighbouring Kuria District of Tanzania experienced similar problems with regard to manure application. See for example, I.C.R.A., "An Analysis of Farming System in the Tarime Highlands, Tanzania: Implications For Research and Development." (Mogabiri, 1989):39

413. DC/KSI/1/14, South Nyanza District, Annual Report, 1953.

414. South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1953

415. KNA/DC/KSI/1/15, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1954.

416. Cf. Timothy Ayieko Onduru, "Some Aspects of Economic Change in Kano, Kenya, 1850-1963" M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1992.

Models of small-holdings were demonstrated at the show which was attended by an estimated 5,000 people. In his report for 1954, the District Commissioner wrote:<sup>417</sup>

"Enclosure of land proceeded at a great pace as a result of small-holder campaigns in the Kuria locations, although acute economic problems had arisen. It would seem that this policy will lead to the appearance of a landless class".<sup>418</sup>

This statement suggests that the enclosure of land had its shortcomings; and, in fact, the majority of Kuria farmers refused to enclose their lands-perhaps fearing that part of their land would be allocated to other people. In this connection, the District Commissioner further reported:

"...Few Kuria so far have intention of following improved agricultural methods, and many have not enclosed their lands... certainly, the Agricultural Department does not yet know the best methods of improving agriculture in the marginal areas of Kuria country."<sup>419</sup>

With the campaign to introduce smallholder agriculture and chiefs forcing many farmers to adopt it, the Abakuria of Kehancha and Kurutiange began emigrating into Maasailand.<sup>420</sup> This encroachment precipitated the survey of the boundary to ascertain how far the Abakuria had infiltrated Maasailand. The boundary was demarcated with beacons and sisal from the Tanganyika border in the south to the Migori River in the north-east in November 1955.<sup>421</sup>

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417. KNA/DC/KSI/1/15, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1954.

418. KNA/DC/KSI/1/15, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1954

419. KNA/DC/KSI/1/5, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1955.

420. KNA/DC/HB/4/1, Bukuria/Maasai Boundary Survey - 1955, for a file containing details of land problems between the Abakuria and Maasai.

421. See also, DC/HB/2/1/50, Butende/Kuria/North Mara Border Committee, 1955-1965.

As we have seen, the first experimental farm for coffee had been established at Chinato in 1946. However, it was not very successful due to lack of staff. Consequently, two more experimental farms were set up, one at Mabera and the other at Mahuntutu. These were under the supervision of the Agricultural Officer based at Suna. Coffee became popular, and the chiefs and a significant number of the early educated members of Kuria society were among the first growers. These innovators were motivated by the high profitability of the crop and because of the ease of establishing new plots for growers through the assistance of a co-operative society. Coffee growing thus extended to Gwikonge, Nyabosongo, Nyabikondo and Gutunigi in Bwirege,<sup>422</sup> and by the end of 1956, a total of 38 acres owned by 20 growers had been planted in the whole of Bukuria.<sup>423</sup>

However, the Abakuria later became dissatisfied with coffee growing for two reasons. First, the period of care before yields were obtained was too long. Secondly, the colonial administration had insisted that coffee be grown only on a co-operative basis in order to control the quality of the crop and prevent disease. Unfortunately, this policy reduced the farmers personal commitment, and they therefore tended their coffee plots irregularly. Despite these considerable odds, however, coffee survived through the 1950s albeit only on a very small scale.

A major attempt at changing agricultural technology in Bukuria began with the introduction of a tractor hire from the Ministry of Agriculture in 1957. The Abakuria were encouraged to hire it for ploughing at a price of 40 shillings per acre. The Annual Report for the year indicated that there was "a growing demand for mechanisation in the form of

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422. KNA/DC/1/15, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1955.

423. KNA/DC/KSI/1/16, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1956.

tractor ploughing..." However, very few Kuria farmers managed to use the tractor because the hiring charges were too high. This, then, marked the inauspicious beginning of mechanised farming in Bukuria.

As regards the government's programme to develop new food crops, only a few crops had any major impact. Some of these crops spread rapidly because of intense government propaganda and distribution of seeds. For example, maize seed was distributed at no cost to the people living in the vicinity of the agricultural centres; that is why by 1958, maize was listed among the most common of the crops grown in Bukuria.<sup>424</sup> Later, as a result of continued government research and seed distribution, maize continued to spread rapidly. The centres of its diffusion were the Butende seed farm, Chinato in eastern Nyabasi and Nyabohanse in Bugumbe. In many of the lowland areas-particularly Buhiri-Monono which surrounds Kehancha - maize strongly competed with millet as the staple food. This change not only established the foundation for a new staple food economy; it also altered a number of agricultural practices associated with former staples. Though none had the impact of maize, a number of other new crops diffused throughout Bukuria in late 1959.<sup>425</sup> New varieties of bean-for example the Canadian wonder and Rose coco- were being given to cultivators in large quantities and Canadian Wonder and Rose Coco bean varieties began to be grown.<sup>426</sup> And, although, they had no indigenous complement, the cultivation of newly introduced vegetables such as carrots, tomatoes and cabbages near homesteads in the lowlands evidently was similar enough to indigenous root crop tillage that they succeeded in many

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424. KNA/DC/HB/1/1, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1959.

425. KNA/DC/KSI/2/2/10, Agricultural Extension Services, Farm Planning, Farm Institutes and DEMonstrations, 1960-1961.

426. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/10, Agricultural Extension, 1960-1961.

areas near Kehancha. In 1961, the District Commissioner wrote that, although vegetable growing was a new venture in Bukuria, he was impressed with the willing acceptance of the campaign in the District.<sup>427</sup> By 1962, migrant labourers had introduced different varieties of banana which were given new names in Bukuria. For example, the bokoba variety was introduced by those who laboured in Bukoba, Tanganyika; switi from Gusiiland; malende from Malindi; and boganda from Uganda.<sup>428</sup>

### III. LAND TENURE AND LAND CONSOLIDATION, 1946-1963

In the immediate postwar years, the Kuria population was increasing and land becoming relatively densely populated. By 1947, migrant labourers had begun returning home, mainly because of the unemployment crisis immediately following the war.\* Also, war veterans and others began to apply for land in the newly established Areas "A" and "B" settlement schemes established by the African Land Development Organisation, popularly known as ALDEV, in Transmara.<sup>429</sup>

By 1950, the Abakuria had begun enclosing their land. The land surrounding a homestead would have its boundaries marked by sisal, and it would be recognized to belong to the head of the homestead and was known as oboroti, meaning a 'plot'. Similarly, the

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427. KNA/DC/HB/1/3, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1961.

428. Chacha Kerata, "Handwritten Family Records' 1939-1972.

\* See p.162 under sub topic "Labour and Population Movements, 1946-19763

429. Areas 'A' and 'B' known to the Abakuria as "Eribi" were settlements established to settle the landless people (from Nyanza) in Transmara. See for example, KNA/PC/NZA/4/14, African Settlement Schemes: Land Tenure and Control, 1959-1962.



cultivated field would be fenced off and identified as belonging to a homestead.<sup>430</sup> In 1950, also the colonial government decided that Kuria farmers would manage their land better if it were consolidated and individually owned. The District Commissioner's Annual Report had this to say in support of the introduction of land consolidation:

"It is obviously unnecessarily arduous for a man and his family to walk miles in one direction on one day and miles on other day (sic). It is quite impossible to manure land miles from the cattle shade."<sup>431</sup>

Further, the government wanted to end the interminable land disputes which were extremely rampant during this time. It saw the disputes as stemming from indigenous land tenure practices, though the blame could more accurately have been attributed to the usurpation of land allocation responsibilities. In any case, the government believed that formalizing land rights would stop most disagreements arising. It also believed that such changes, along with increased technical and economic assistance, would create a class of relatively affluent Kuria farmers supportive of it<sup>432</sup>

Meanwhile, the rapid development of the money economy had brought about innovation and change in the customs and social behaviour of the Abakuria, thus weakening their clan links. This, in turn, tended to disturb indigenous land tenure arrangements, and to force the Abakuria to consolidate their land. Another factor which encouraged land

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430. KNA/HB/2/14/36, Land General Correspondence 1950-1965

431. KNA/DC/KSU/1/19, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1950.

431. Cf. J. Heyer, "The Origins of Regional Inequalities in Smallholder Agriculture in Kenya, 1920-1973." in Journal of Rural Development, Vol. 2 1974 : 171.

consolidation was the introduction of cash crops. This was especially true of coffee, because its growing encouraged individual ownership.<sup>433</sup>

In 1954, land consolidation was speeded up by an enthusiastic agricultural officer called Templer.<sup>434</sup> He conducted surveys of selected areas and took several elders on an education tour to Kericho to study land consolidation there. The tour arose from his conviction that the system of land enclosure in Kericho had proceeded with excellent results.<sup>435</sup>

The Swynnerton Plan of 1955, inter-alia, proposed that high quality African land be surveyed and enclosed. It was responsible for fundamentally altering the direction of agricultural policy in South Nyanza. Under it, customary land tenure rules were reformed in three stages: adjudication; consolidation; and registration.<sup>436</sup> First, the government would determine how much land a farmer owned according to previous allocations. Then this land, usually composed of scattered parcels, would be consolidated into a single holding. When the farmer's property had been defined by location and size in a state-maintained register, the farmer would be issued with a title granting "absolute proprietorship" over that land.<sup>437</sup>

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433. The growing of cash crops which involves heavy investment of labour makes individual ownership of land inevitable. Cf. Ida Greaves, Modern Production Among Backward Peoples (London, 1935) cited in Cone and Lipscomb, A History of Kenya Agriculture : 111.

434. KNA/DC/KSI/1/14, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1954.

435. See Cory collection, pamphlets on land consolidation KNA/LIB/91/974, Gosi Cultural Centre Books".

436. Cf. R.J.M. Swynnerton, A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya (Nairobi, 1954)

437. H. Fearn, An African Economy: A study of Economic Development in Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953 (Nairobi, 1961).

In Bukuria, land consolidation was sanctioned by the inchaama which was called upon to decide on boundaries and to settle disputes arising from them. Once started, enclosure proceeded relatively quickly, leaving a few unfortunate Abakuria who had been working away from home during the enclosure with no land at all. Thus it came to be that in 1956, it was being reported that "in Butende (Mabera) there were at least some serious signs of land shortage where considerable consolidation of land has been done."<sup>438</sup>

It is important at this point to mention that the practice of dividing holdings among the male descendants of each household (inyumba) had greatly contributed to land fragmentation among the Abakuria. There was the division of holdings between the male head of the household, who retained the usufruct of the portion known as oboroti, and his wife or wives. The land tilled by each wife was further sub-divided among her married sons; the oboroti was to be subdivided among the sons upon the death of the holder.

The introduction of land consolidation greatly affected animal husbandry. Previously, one could herd on any open grazing land; now herding was becoming restricted to each person's land, and trespassing was not allowed. The formerly open spaces were divided into individual holdings, and there was no longer communal grazing. Consolidation also limited the number of cattle one could keep depending on the amount of land one had. Further, land consolidation made necessary the transformation of farming techniques from shifting to continuous cultivation, thus readily causing a decline in land productivity.<sup>439</sup>

The extent to which individual rights over land had developed varied from one location to another. On the whole, however, the right to dispose land was still circumscribed

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438. KNA/DC/KSI/1/15, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1956

439. Cf. Y.M. Ivanov, Agrarian Reforms and Hired Labour in Africa (Moscow, 1979) : 6

to varying degrees by community control or exercised in some cases by the head of the extended family. Thus, the head of the extended family (eka) had the right to veto the alienation of land to strangers or admission of tenants to the family land (irirema re tata omokoro). These arrangements were necessitated by the massive migration of the Maragoli into Taragwiti and Nyamaharaga areas in 1957<sup>440</sup>. Some of these Maragoli bought land with cash; others gave their daughters to Kuria men in exchange for land.<sup>441</sup> But the right to sell land had gradually been accepted among the Abakuria, although this right was subject to redemption. This is to say that the person who sold the land had the right to redeem it on return of the original consideration for which he parted with his land.<sup>442</sup>

In 1961, a special committee of the Kuria Local Council was appointed to oversee the consolidation process and the problems arising from it. The committee members were specially trained to resolve grazing disputes and stock theft and trespass cases.<sup>443</sup> In order to motivate the Kuria farmers to consolidate and "improve" their farms, the colonial government introduced the title of a "better farmer" to be competed for. One informant who had been an agricultural instructor recalled that whoever was declared a "better farmer" would be given prizes such as an ox-drawn plough in appreciation of good agricultural work done.<sup>444</sup>

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440 KNA/DC/KSI/1/19, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1957.

441. O.I., Isabella Aguyi, Kakrao-Migori, 20/6/97.

442. O.I., Ikwabe Machugu, 2/5/97, Masura-Bugumbe.

443. KNA/DC/HB/2/13/9, Kuria Local Council Minutes Dated 14th December, 1961.

444. O.I., Samson Kerario, 23/4/97, Komomange-Kehancha

#### IV. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY, 1946-1963

Bukuria experienced continued growth in its cattle population in the immediate postwar years. An anthropologist conducting research there at the beginning of this period remarked that the "cattle population [had] grown to outnumber the human population by the ratio of 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1..<sup>445</sup> This increase in livestock meant more government intervention measures in vaccination, branding and the restriction of cattle movement. Other efforts were focused on the improvement of grass cover, the regulation of grazing within settled areas, control of cattle numbers, and the introduction of better animal breeds.<sup>446</sup> Underlying these measures was the assumption that Kuria cattle were largely unproductive and excessive in number compared to available grazing fields.

The control of cattle numbers was also sought by efforts to stimulate marketing.<sup>447</sup> By the end of the Second World War, virtually all such government control and regulations had collapsed. However, in 1946, the South Nyanza District Commissioner and the Agricultural Officer from Tanganyika met with other officials to initiate measures to control cattle movements and disease and to attempt to curb the spread of boundary conflicts.<sup>448</sup> In their meeting, they agreed in principle to lay out strategies to curb overstocking, especially at the border.

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445. M.J. Ruel, "Generation Classes": 1

446. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1946.

447. KNA/PC/NZA/2/8/40, Veterinary Report, Nyanza Province, 1945.

448. South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1946.

Even so, in September 1946, the chiefs of Bwirege and Nyabasi reported alarming signs of overstocking in their locations.<sup>449</sup> The district administration countered this problem by seeking bride-price reduction<sup>450</sup> in emulation of Tanganyika where such a policy worked effectively. As the District Commissioner wrote:

"Bride price had resulted into social difficulties arising between Kenya and Tanganyika section of the tribe (sic). The Bukuria Native Authority in Tanganyika [has] restricted brideprice in a manner which was reported to be effective under powers contained in Tanganyika Native Authority which do not exist in Kenya."<sup>451</sup>

Following these considerations, a baraza of elders from Bwirege and Nyabasi was held at Chinato Centre in 1947 where brideprice was reduced despite the fact that the practice was affirmed as being in accordance with Kuria law and customs.<sup>452</sup>

Livestock numbers increased in Bukuria for several reasons. First, the government had managed to control some cattle diseases, especially in Bwirege and Nyabasi. Secondly, the Abakuria could now sell cash crops and get money to purchase more cattle. Also, opportunities for wage employment in the Kericho tea estates and other places made it possible for some of the Abakuria to obtain money with which they purchased livestock.

In 1949, a number of measures continued to be directed at limiting bridewealth rates. First, the chiefs were used to trace the offenders, and the chiefs' courts to punish them. In October, for example, the South Nyanza administration issued an order reducing bridewealth

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449. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1946.

450. When the ichaama increased brideprice, the Kuria men raided their neighbours or bought many cattle to meet the new rises in bridewealth. This innavoidably led to overstocking within given household.

451. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8, South Kavirondo District Annual Report, 1946.

452. Veterinary Report, 1945.

transfers in Bukira and Bugumbe to 15 cattle from the figure of 25 in 1946.<sup>453</sup> This measure was agreed to at a baraza of chiefs from all Kuria clans held in 1950 at Ikerege hall in Bukira.<sup>454</sup> Further, marriages across the border were restricted while the Tanganyika administration resorted to punishing those who offered their daughters to men in Kenya. Even then, in December 1950, the Chief of Utimbaru in Tanganyika complained that many women from his area were being lost to the Kenyans. He therefore sought support from Kuria chiefs in Kenya in ending the practice. Also, an order abolishing the marriage of women to Kenyans was given legal sanction and its breach made punishable. However, Tanganyika archival records surviving on a criminal case deriving from a breach of this restriction was the case of Wantaigo Sinyo who was found guilty of the offence of giving his daughter in marriage to one Mwitwa Burure of Renchocka in Kenya.<sup>455</sup>

In 1952, a section of the Abakuria from Kurutiange began to graze their cattle in Maasailand without permission from the Maasai chiefs. The District Commissioner reported that when an attempt was made to stop them by the police, they fought back and wounded the latter.<sup>456</sup> In November, the secretary of the South Nyanza District Council visited the border between the Abakuria and Maasai at Sagegi and reported that the two communities

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453. KNA/DC/KSI/1/10, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1949 :36

454. See also, Lexander and Chacha, "Cattle in Kuria Economy" : 14.

455. TNA/NYA/Nyamwigura, Chiefs Court Register 1950, Native Authority Baraza Vs. Wantaigo s/o Sinyo and Anor case no 389/49 and Native Authority Baraza Incharge Vs Gake, Criminal case no 405/49. Gake was charged with the offence of having married another daughter to a Kenyan husband, for which offence he had earlier been fined.

456 See for example, the Kenya Police Report, at Kehancha Police Post Contained in KNA/DC/KSI/1/16, South Nyanza District Annual Report 1952 : 40.

were fighting and many people had been killed.<sup>457</sup> This prompted the Hon. Member of African Interests B.A. Ohanga to take immediate action in urging the District Commissioner to find ways of resolving the dispute.<sup>458</sup> Ohanga's intervention led to a series of measures being taken by the D.C. towards reconciliation of the warring communities.

In 1954, the Narok authorities agreed with Kuria chiefs and the Inspector of Police at Kilgoris that Kuria herders would pay fifty (50) cents per herd whenever they took their animals for grazing in Maasailand. This practice was stopped with the publication of the Pinney report in 1955<sup>459</sup> by which the government introduced controlled grazing schemes in Maasailand and Ikwabe-re-Kuria near Kehancha. This entailed carving up the grazing land into blocks of various sizes, with strict controls being imposed over herd movement and animal numbers within the blocks. Large tracts of land were also entirely closed off to permit regeneration.<sup>460</sup> The schemes were successful in regulating grazing and controlling stock numbers in the designated areas though at the cost of increasing the pressure on pastures elsewhere and they were gradually expanded to Bugumbe and Bukira.

The introduction of these grazing schemes together with the ongoing land consolidation activities led to some migrant labourers and government workers returning to Bukuria to guard their lands. Those who did not return immediately could lose their land.

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457. KNA/DC/HB/4/1, South Nyanza, District Council (ADC) Secretary's report, 1952.

458. KNA/DC/KSI/1/17, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1953:23

459 C.f. J. Helland, "Group Ranch Development Among the Maasai in Kenya." in East Africa Pastoralism: Anthropological Perspectives and Development Needs (Addis Ababa, 1977) : 93-109. See also, KNA/DC/KSI/1/18, South Nyanza District Annual Report 1954 : 16.

460. See for example, KNA/PC/NZA/4/6/9, Nyanza District Council: Copies of Correspondence 1951-1953.



This can be illustrated from the case of three policemen who worked in Athi River and wrote a letter of complaint to the District Land Board saying, inter-alia:

"We are working here at Athi-River as Police Officers. When we went home for our annual leave, our cattle did not have enough grazing land because we had been displaced and our land taken (sic) that is why we are applying to be resettled at Kemaina and Kenyamanyori location of the Maasai (sic) near Chief Getangenyi's location. Our headman is Chegere Kehongo." <sup>461</sup>

Hostility intensified between the Abakuria and the Maasa, and in 1958 the Abakuria raided the Maasai again and took cattle estimated at 850. This led to the formation of a boundary committee to deal with cattle theft between the Maasai and Kuria locations. Later in the year, the D.C. travelled to Sagegi following which he observed:

"I am quite ready to agree in theory that [it is not] necessary for the Kuria to graze their cattle over the boundary. In practice, however, I do not see how daily trespass in search of grazing can be stopped nor do I see any harm that can come of it." <sup>462</sup>

He spent two days at Kehancha and Lolgorien where he witnessed several herds of Kuria cattle trespassing to a distance of a mile into Maasailand. When he talked to the Kuria chief concerned, however, he was told that the Abakuria had an agreement with the Maasai on grazing on the latter's land. In this connexion, the D.C. further reported:

"Chief Getangenyi Gichichi (of Bukuria) told me that for about the last year [he had] understanding with a Maasai chief that daily trespass for grazing Kuria cattle did not matter, but that Kuria should not go more than 10 miles into Maasailand." <sup>463</sup>

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461. KNA/DC/HB/4/, South Nyanza District Council Land Board Minutes, 1955. A letter addressed to the council dated 15/6/55 signed by Moseti Mugeni, Nyakerario Magige and Maroa Chacha.

462. KNA/DC/KSI/1/17, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1953 : 32

463 South Kavirondo District, Annual Report, 1953:46

Grazing control had increasingly become difficult and in 1959, the Abakuria continued with the illegal grazing in Maasailand, and the Tribal Police confiscated a large number of their cattle. This prompted the Kuria Locational Council to complain to the D.C:

"The old men of the Kuria Local Council have seen that they are not treated fairly with regards to our cattle which are held in Maasailand with claim of being stolen."<sup>464</sup>

A major shortcoming of the whole grazing control scheme of this period was that it interfered with what the Abakuria regarded as their inalienable right to graze their livestock wherever they wanted. The Kuria herders did not see any advantage in changing their herd management practices to allow for increased commercialization.

## V. LABOUR AND POPULATION MOVEMENTS, 1946-1963

The immediate postwar period was characterised by structural changes in the labour force as evidenced in a major breakdown in the migrant labour system.<sup>465</sup> Two factors contributed to these changes. The first, was the establishment of the African Land Development Organisation (ALDEV) which had tended to ease population pressure by moving large numbers of people into unoccupied land thus redressing ecological imbalances.<sup>466</sup> Secondly, the postwar economic boom created more job opportunities, thereby causing a rural-urban imbalance. Consequently, more and more people left the reserves in search of employment in towns and settler farms<sup>467</sup>.

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464. KNA/DC/HB/2/13/19, Minutes Local Council, dated 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1959.

465. Cf. S. Stitcher, Migrant Labour in Kenya: 25-27.

466. For activities carried out at by ALDEV in Kuria/Maasai areas see, African Land Development in Kenya: 1946-1955. (Nairobi, 1956) : 156-157.

467. Cf Timothy Onduru, "Some Aspects of economic Change in Kano" :148.

During this time the population of Bukuria increased consistently, and in November 1949 the Butende location consisting of Bukira and Bugumbe had a total of 18, 761, people; while the Bukuria Location comprising Nyabasi and Bwirege had 8,631 people.<sup>468</sup> These figures were much higher than those for the previous years, and the District Commissioner commented in this connexion:

"Cases of population increase and shortage of labour continued in 1949... high prices of food crops, lack of objects to buy with plentiful money available were some of the problems here..."<sup>469</sup>

Furthermore, some Maragoli were reported to have migrated from Vihiga and Gambogi and settled in South Nyanza. In respect to this, the District Commissioner wrote:

"There is a constant unauthorised movement of the Maragoli into Oyani area of Kanyamkago and in Mabera in Bukuria... there were signs of friction developing between them and the local communities."<sup>470</sup>

The Maragoli moved fast and further into Bukuria and married off their daughters to rich Kuria men in exchange for land. In 1950, some one hundred Luo families move into, and settled in Isibania. This population influx would inevitably affect Kuria agriculture a point noted by the District Agricultural Officer when he wrote:

"If such unrestricted immigration is allowed to continue, it would be but a few years before Bukuria is like Kadem and Muhoro [in being overpopulated with fragmented land]"<sup>471</sup>

In response to this population increase in South Nyanza, ALDEV founded Areas "A" and "B" at the Kuria-Maasai border to settle the landless from the local population of South

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468. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1948 : 32.

469. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1948:33.

470. KNA/DC/KSI/1/8, South Nyanza District Annual Report 1948:35.

434. KNA/DC/HB/3/3, Agricultural Report, South Nyanza District, 1950.

Nyanza together with the Maragoli who had increased in number in the region. Applications were invited from those who wished to be settled<sup>472</sup>, and the amachomba (that is, the rural elites) were among the first applicants. Others were ex-servicemen, policemen and even individuals seeking to spread the gospel. Among the last named was one Nahashon Nyakoba who in his application wrote:

"Mr. District Commissioner, I am a preacher and I am applying to be allocated land in area "B" at Sagegi. I would also wish to be given extra land to put up a church so that I can preach the Gospel to the new people who are settling here."<sup>473</sup>

The above cases and the massive application for resettlement illustrate the acute problem of land shortage caused by population pressure as already explained. However, the outbreak of Mau Mau and the consequent withdrawal of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (K.E.M) from the labour market between 1953 and 1956 led to an increased demand for labour from the Abakuria, Luo and Abagusii for settler farms, the police force and other government services.<sup>474</sup> Even in the period from 1956 to 1962, many from the K.E.M. were repatriated in massive security operations that were conducted in South Nyanza. This eased the pressure on land in Bukuria.<sup>475</sup>

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472. A register of the Applicants and their details is found in KNA/DC/HB/2/4, on Population Movement, 1955. See also KNA/DC/HB/3/1, District Settlement Schemes, 1950-1958

473. Ibid, See also reply letter of Nyakoba to the District Commissioner referenced LND/1/1/2/IV/6 in KNA/DC/NZA/3/14/57, National Land Trust Board, Nyanza 1937-1951.

474. KNA/DC/HB/2/21/9, Nyanza Regional Gazette, 1958.

475. African Affairs Department, Annual Report, 1956 : 76. See also, D. Gupta, "A Brief Economic History of the Akamba with Reference to Labour Supplies," in Journal of Eastern Africa Research Development Vol. 3 No. 1, 1973 : 65-85.

## VI. TRADE AND MARKETING, 1946 -1963.

The postwar period witnessed further expansion in the volume of trade in Bukuria because of the rapid increase in the number of markets. In addition to this, the licensing of more traders stimulated trading activities. This expansion of trade and marketing could also be attributed to the fact that cash was increasingly in circulation. The availability of cash in turn meant that the local people were able to buy goods such as sugar, clothes, paraffin and cooking fat. Also, although men worked and harvested agricultural produce such as millet and cassava, these food crops were now sold for cash.

The number of markets rose 20 to about 32 in 1940, and there was great demand for trading licences everywhere.<sup>476</sup> The main source of cash income for the Abakuria was the sale of agricultural produce and the wages of skilled and unskilled labour. It is estimated that Nyabohanse trading centre alone was selling 2,000 bags of maize, 500 bags of wimbi and 3000 bags of sorghum in 1946.<sup>477</sup> In fact, by the end of the year, the D.C could proudly report that: "in Bukuria, farmers feed a big population and the export of agricultural produce is very considerable indeed..."<sup>478</sup>

The large number of markets in Bukuria boosted trading activities because traders were able to set up shops at such places. At the same time, those who had agricultural and livestock produce to sell took advantage of the existing trading centres and markets. In 1947 a trade committee was formed by the Local Native Council with representatives from each

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476. Kenya Colony and Protectorate, Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 1945 : 21.

477. KNA/DC/KSI//1/8, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1946

478. Annual Report, 1946.

of the major markets of Bukuria.<sup>479</sup> The role of the committee was to watch over the development of trade in the locations; it also acted as a link between the District Development team and the Council. To co-ordinate these activities, John Mangare was appointed Secretary to the committee.

In 1949, the colonial administration responded positively to the Kuria initiatives in trade by sending a Produce Inspector to relieve agricultural officers of the trading tasks they had to undertake hitherto. The Produce Inspector was assigned to inspect the quality of the farm produce sold in all markets in Bukuria. He also distributed gunny bags to maize and millet traders and purchasers.<sup>480</sup>

In 1951, maize prices rose significantly in South Nyanza thereby creating high demand for continuous cultivation of the crop.<sup>481</sup> Asians like Gulamali Mohamed and M.S. Lakha left Suna and Nyabohanse and settled at the Suba-Kuria\* (Mabera) trading centre so that they could cheaply purchase maize brought from Bukira and even Remagwe and Sirari in Tanganyika. An informant recalled that groups of women from Tanganyika would carry maize in debes daily across the porous border to sell to these Indians.<sup>482</sup> Because this market

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479. KNA/PC/NZA/2/11/53, Local Native Council Minutes, 1947.

480. KNA/DC/KSI/7/2, Marketing of Native Produce Produce, South Nyanza District, 1949.

481. KNA/DC/KSI/1/11, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1951

\* The name Suba-Kuria was given to Mabera trading centre because of the tribunal Court establish a tthe centre to cater for both the Kuria and Suba people.

482. O.I. Maroa Mwita Magau, 20/6/97, Kumumwamu. As a result of concentration of trading activities at Suba-Kuria, Nyabohanse Centre was closed down. Indians had vacuated the town and even some buildings demolished, See, KNA/PC/NZA/3/14/52, Trading Centres Ordinance Nyabohanse Trading Centre, 1952.

for maize existed and was expanding constantly, the Abakuria drastically reduced the production of other cereals they had previously cultivated. This choice had in effect been determined by the colonial market for maize. The Kuria farmers therefore came to depend on the continuation of this market. However, when in 1953 as the prices for maize went down the Abakuria were offered derisory prices. This led to their refusal to sell maize. Instead they chose to produce it only for consumption.

After 1952, trading markets were permanently established in Bukuria and commercial activities became a popular past-time. The shops, which had originally been constructed of temporary materials were eventually built from permanent materials after 1953.<sup>483</sup> At the same time, the Abakuria were ready to apply for loans to expand their businesses. In 1954, the South Nyanza Joint Board started to advance loans to African traders; however, records show that very little of this money went to traders in Bukuria. In fact, the board members often accused the Abakuria of having "excessive generosity and little trading skills" to warrant loan advancement.<sup>484</sup> Generally, Kuria traders made huge losses and were unable to obtain loans like their Luo counterparts.<sup>485</sup> On the other hand, Asian merchants were able to succeed in trade in Bukuria and the rest of the District in contrast to Africans because of the support from the colonial administration. Perhaps, as in the rest of colonial Kenya, they

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483. KNA/DC/KSI/2/24, Traders Licencing Ordinance-Nyanza Region, 1953.

484. KNA/PC/NZA/4/14/1, South Nyanza Joint board Minutes, 1954.

485. Cf. Dorothy A. Nyakwaka, "Agricultural Change in Rongo Divison, Migori District, 1850-1963." M. Phil Thesis, Moi University, 1997.

were regarded as "valuable agents in monetization and the capitalist penetration of the indigenous economy."<sup>486</sup>

In 1957, a group of traders from Kisii started travelling to Bukuria in lorries in order to purchase cattle for sale to the Kenya Meat Commission (K.M.C) abattoir at Athi River.<sup>487</sup> However, this trade suffered from the inadequacy of roads which were impassable during the rainy seasons. This was particularly true for the road running from Migori to Kehancha.<sup>488</sup>

In 1959, Maasai Maroa, who was Chairman of the Kuria Local Council permitted the establishment of ~~night~~ clubs, bars and hotels at Kehancha and Isibania. Previously the Council had refused to license such ventures.<sup>489</sup> The system of trade licensing was designed specifically to provide the colonial administration with the power of economic patronage.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The period between 1946 and 1963, then, witnessed the systematic integration of Bukuria into the colonial economy of Kenya. Money flowed into the hands of both Kuria farmers and wage workers. New cash crops were introduced - including coffee. The period also saw the establishment of the Agricultural Betterment Fund Schemes which provided bonuses for good farming and animal husbandry. Land consolidation began with the publication of the Swynnerton Plan. This resulted in unprecedented land shortage and

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486. P.O. Ndege, "Internal Trade in Kenya" in Maxon and Ochieng (eds) Economic History : 207.

487. Lexander and Chacha, "Cattle in Kuria Economy" : 11.

488. Kenya Meat Commission, Annual Report 1957-1958 : 5

489. KNA/DC/HB/4/3, Kuria Local Council Minutes, 1959. See also the KNA/DC/HB/2/2/35, Minutes of the African District Council South Nyanza, 1959-60.



increased cases of litigation over land in Bukuria. There was also the problem of soil depletion in many areas.

Most deleterious impact of intensive agricultural production was accelerated soil erosion. This continued to be the most widespread man induced environmental problem up to independence.

The post-war period further saw Kuria migrant labourers being repatriated from various towns. This resulted in population increase which complicated the issue of land ownership that had been precipitated by consolidation. Conversely, Kuria herders entered Maasailand in search of grazing fields, and this caused inter-ethnic tension. The coming in large numbers of the Maragoli into Bukuria intensified the land problem.

Arising from the new market opportunities there evolved a social stratum in Kuria-the amachomba - who may be considered a rural elite. This groups appropriated local resources, including land and cattle, and it served as a link between the Abakuria and the capitalist world. The majority of the Abakuria were now dependent on the colonial capitalist market system.

## CHAPTER V

### AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS AFTER INDEPENDENCE, c. 1963-1975

"It has been common thing with the colonial government to neglect the Kuria people for nearly everything particularly in agriculture... When we look at our own government, we see as it is following the same thing... the Kuria people work so hard but receive no support...(sic)"<sup>490</sup>

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The years after independence were important in the transformation of Kuria agriculture as well as that of Nyanza Province as a whole. Prior to this, the various stimuli to which labour migration exposed the Abakuria may have resulted in increasing interest in education; and, often, school fees were paid from the remittances of labour migrants. Thus, Kuria exposure to formal education as well as the manifold experiences of labour migration combined to make them politically conscious. In 1961, the Bukuria Political Union had been formed under Samson Mwita Maroa as the Chairman and Maisori Itumbo, Gibore Machera and Nchama Sagati as members.<sup>491</sup>

In the first years of independence, the Abakuria began to address problems pertaining to employment, education and agriculture that had been inherited from the period of colonial rule. However, only a few infrastructural changes such as the expansion of roads and the market sector were effected.<sup>492</sup> Even so, by the end of the 1960s, a firm foundation had been laid for meeting the problems of agricultural growth in Bukuria.

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490. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/20, memorandum submitted to the District Agricultural Officer, South Nyanza District, 1964 by Honourable Kuria member of Parliament.

491. See for example, KNA/DC/HB/2/13/9, Political Parties, 1962-1963.

492. KNA/DC/HB/2/1/53, KIH/ADM/2/13, Transport and Communication, Kehancha Division, 1963.

## II. CROP PRODUCTION, 1963-1969

After independence, one of the most serious problems facing Kuria agriculture was soil erosion. Just a few months before the government embarked on a programme to control the erosion in 1964, heavy rains began throughout Bukuria. These rains accelerated the problem and destroyed crops in fields. In the same year, the Luo were experiencing a famine known as Obero, and the Abakuria were requested by the government to contribute some food as part of the famine relief.<sup>493</sup> However, rains made it impossible to collect the relief food, and as the Chief Thomas Wankwe explained:

"In answer to your request for famine relief, I have to put forward the contrary request... Since the heavy rain began falling, I have never held chief's usual Monday barazas due to continuous floods. The Hibwa and Tebesi rivers have drowned over 10 head of cattle... In fact, Nyabasoti and Tebesi are menacingly impassable... I suggest our famine relief be collected after the bridges have been repaired."<sup>494</sup>

These, heavy rains, which Kuria informants called imbura yu ubuhuru (rains of independence), delayed the soil control exercises which had begun from Kegonga in form of construction of terraces and planting of grass.<sup>495</sup> Any further efforts were greatly handicapped by the poor, loose-surfaced roads which had been destroyed by the floods. In fact, agricultural extension services could not reach Bukuria at all.

As already indicated, a rising political awareness characterised the emergence of a group of radical Kuria thinkers who challenged the continued underdevelopment of agriculture

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493. Cf. Ochieng, "Colonial Famines" p. 21

494. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/11, Famine Relief, 1963-64 A letter from Thomas Wankwe Chief of Bukira to the Regional Government Officer in Homa Bay dated 8<sup>th</sup> June, 1964.

495. KNA/DC/HB/2/21/22, Kehancha Division Monthly Report, January, 1964.

in Bukuria. One example is the Kuria Member of Parliament, Samson Mwita Maroa, who in 1964 wrote to the District Agricultural Officer as follows:

"... when visitors come to see places where rice can be grown they are taken to other parts of Nyanza but not Bukuria. We are fed up being neglected in this manner".<sup>496</sup>

In the same year, Farmers Training Centres had been built in several places in South Nyanza by the Department of Agriculture, however, Bukuria was neglected.<sup>497</sup> In this connection Hon. Samson Mwita's memorandum further stated:

"... We feel dissatisfied with the Agriculture Department in the way it has distributed Farmers Training Centres in South Nyanza. If the government is to build one centre in Homabay (Luoland), it should build one in Kehancha (Bukuria), why should it be build at Oyani? (Luoland)?"<sup>498</sup>

As earlier discussed (see p. 168), the colonial government had denied loans to Kuria farmers and traders arguing that they made no profit. This practice continued even after independence.<sup>499</sup> The memorandum touched this issue as it read:

"We would like to be given loan like other people for the development of our agricultural industry... we here in Bukuria work so hard but we are not known for any support... Our people cultivate more land than any other people in Nyanza but we are not given any help even when we ask for it".<sup>500</sup>

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496. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/20, Memorandum Submitted to The District Agricultural Officer, Homa Bay, 1964.

497. For the list of Agricultural Training Centres, See for example, KNA/DC/HB/2/2/10, Agricultural Extension Services, Farm Planning, Farm Institutes, Demonstrations Holdings and Agricultural Institutions 1961-1965.

498. Ibid, Memorandum

499. A list of Kuria loan applicants and the approved Loans could be found in KNA/DC/NZA/2/6/27, Minutes of the South Nyanza District Agricultural Committee Dated October, 27<sup>th</sup>, 1964.

500. op.cit, Memorandum

The Kuria Local Council also played a vital role in post-independence Kuria agriculture. From time to time, the council sought to have men trained so that they could take up positions as extension officials. These efforts yielded results, especially when the Ministry of Agriculture sent a circular to the Kuria ADC, stating:

"... After many years of hand-cultivation and use of ox-ploughs, it has become increasingly clear that these methods (Ox-ploughs) will not permit the full utilization of the potential of this District... You are therefore, invited to attend a seminar on mechanisation at Homabay on 24th July, 1964."<sup>501</sup>

Following the circular, the council sent a special agricultural committee of four persons representing the four Kuria Locations to attend the seminar. Thereafter, two tractors were sent to the Kehancha Divisional Headquarters and the four individuals were employed on return as Field Officers to aid people on tractor hire services and to encourage the use of tractors<sup>502</sup>

1965 was a very difficult year for all sectors of agriculture in Bukuria. Nearly all areas had insufficient rain and the shortages almost reached drought proportions.<sup>503</sup> The consequence of this was a marked fall in the output of subsistence food crops and a significant decrease in the output of nearly all major cash enterprises, notably coffee and dairy products. However, a few coffee nurseries were established at Nyabohanse in Nyabasi, Mahuntuntu in Bukira and Kwigancha in Bugumbe close to the rivers which had survived the dry period.<sup>504</sup> Further demonstrations on coffee growing techniques were organised,

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501. KNA/DC/HB/2/6/27, Department of Agriculture, Minutes of South Nyanza District Agricultural Committee, 1962-1964.

502. KNA/DC/HB/2/13/9, Kuria Local District Minutes 10<sup>th</sup> June, 1965.

503. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/3, Agricultural Safari Reports, 1964

504. KNA/DC/2/2/49, Divisional Agricultural Committee Minutes 1962-1965

especially at Nyabosongo. Four more people, E. Munemi, Saulo Munyoro, Benedicto Machera and James Wankye were taken by the Ministry of Agriculture for a training course on coffee growing at Kisii Farmers Training Centre. They were later assigned to manage and supervise coffee growing in Bukuria.

However, coffee growing continued to face various problems. The most serious one was the coffee berry disease, an anthracnose organism which causes lesions and fruit shrinkage.<sup>505</sup> Although this disease had earlier been successfully controlled in many areas by spraying, in the later years it was still severely reducing production, especially in Bwirege. At worst, it could diminish a crop by as much as ninety percent. Another problem affecting coffee growing was quality control. With a relatively small number of growers all cultivating young trees, staff funds were cut, factory management at Nyabosongo deteriorated and quality dipped.<sup>506</sup> In 1964/65, only 26.30 percent of the total crop was in the top three classes and less than 0.2 per cent was in class 1.<sup>507</sup>

In terms of weather conditions, the year 1966 was more favourable than 1965. The long rains were extremely good and provided almost ideal conditions during the cereal growing season. After the crop had been harvested, food supplies were abundant. Output and sales of almost every enterprise exceeded the 1965 level to such an extent that there was an overall annual increase of 23.1% in the total value of market production.<sup>508</sup>

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505. C.f. F.L. Wellman, Coffee: Botany, Cultivation and utilization (London, 1961).

506. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/20, Ministry of Cooperatives and Marketing Monthly Report, June 1963 - May 1965.

507. Ibid

508. KNA/DC/HB/2/236, South Nyanza District Council Minutes, Dated 5<sup>th</sup> December, 1965.

In 1967, soil conservation was the heart of the programme, through the construction of narrow based terraces and bench terraces.<sup>509</sup> This was considered vitally important not only to prevent the washing away of the top soil; above all, it was to conserve every bit of moisture in areas suffering deficient and irregular rainfall, especially at Kegonga. Therefore, 16 grass 'filter' strips running to about 136 metres were made at Kegonga and a total of 1,175 metres in Bugumbe, Nyabasi and Bwirege.<sup>510</sup>

The most striking change in land use and crop production during the post-independence period had been the move towards individual holdings supported by documentary title. In 1967, for example, the demand for land consolidation and issues of titles increased. This was perhaps prompted by the fear that Bukuria would be left behind the rest of South Nyanza and hope that the titles would automatically mean government loans. In Bugumbe, 16 plots totalling to about 171 hectares were surveyed, while several farm enclosures of 16 farms totalling 320 hectares in Kehancha and between 300-620 hectares in Bwisaboka were surveyed.<sup>511</sup>

In 1968, the Ministry of Agriculture carried out agricultural demonstrations on various farms in Bukuria. One such was done on the farm of John Nyamohanga on planting hybrid maize; another one was done at Komotobo on the farms of Yako Maisori, Ben Machera and Machera Nyamboha; and on a  $\frac{1}{4}$  acre farm belonging to Francis Wangubo.<sup>512</sup> The chiefs

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509. KNA/DC/HB/2/14/36, Land General Correspondence, 1965-1969

510. Ibid

511. KNA/DC/HB/21/7/23, Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1967.

512. KNA/DC/HB/21/24, Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1968

continued to be used by the government to mobilise people to attend the demonstrations in large numbers.

The year 1969 saw the peak of introduction of crops into Bukuria. At the end of the year, cash crops such as sugarcane, rice, sunflower, simsim, and groundnuts; pulses such as rose-coco, beans, cowpeas and green grams; food crops and sweet potatoes; Horticultural crops such as citrus, banana, pineapple; vegetables such as cabbages, onions and tomatoes- all these were widely grown and sold in various markets in Kenya.

### III. TRADE AND MARKETING, 1963 - 1969\*

The pressure to enter trade as a potentially profitable venture was so great in post-independence Bukuria that large numbers of people entered with the result that opportunities soon became limited. Even with the coming of independence, however, the basic situation of a large number of small-scale businesses with a preponderance of Asian traders in towns continued unaltered. As before, Asians owned wholesale businesses from which the Kuria small-scale traders often got their stocks.

In 1964, the Kuria ADC approved the establishment of many more trading centres. These included Masangora, Nyamosense, Kugitimo, Kogetontira, Masebe and Nyametaburo.<sup>513</sup> At the same time, the Nyanza Provincial Marketing Board continued to increase its activities in Bukuria. As was stated in the Boards statutes:

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513. KNA/DC/HB/2/13/9, Kuria Local Council Minutes, 1964

\* For the years 1970-1975, issues discussed under this are under "Animal Husbandry and Marketing." See pp.191-203.



"...a system of organised marketing boards can perform a very important development function in providing the means whereby a large scattered peasant population can sell crop surpluses no matter what small quantity."<sup>514</sup>

The Board provided crop inspection services, gunny bags, and transport services to Kuria traders.

In October 1964, Maisori Itumbo became the agent of the Marketing Board in Bukuria and was given 1,500 gunny bags for the storage of maize and other grain.<sup>515</sup> In August 1965, the Board bought a total of 495,515 bags of maize from African growers in South Nyanza, the largest share coming from the "South Nyanza border market" (referring to Bukuria).<sup>516</sup>

The price of millet was shs 20/= per bag higher than in 1960/61, and 5193 bags were bought by the Board from Bukuria. Sorghum purchases were just over 15,000 bags despite prices being 7/= per bag higher than the previous year. This stagnation in supply was due in part to growers retaining their crops for domestic use. On the other hand, the bean crop suffered particularly badly because of the wet conditions; the total purchase was only 431 bags-this being the lowest for many years.<sup>517</sup>

In December 1965, the government offered hides and skins improvement services to the Kuria traders. It posted Raphael Seke, a hides and skins instructor, to Kehancha to supervise production. Seke later reported that month:

"A lot of improvement has been seen in the location as far as preparation of hides and skins are concerned (sic). Some good dried hides and skins have

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514. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/5, Nyanza Provincial Marketing Board's Statutes, 1965 - 1969.

515. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/5, Nyanza Province Marketing Board Annual Report, 1965.

516. Ibid

517. Ibid

been received particularly in Nyamtiro and Ntimaru Markets... Most people here still do not know the use of hides and skins (sic)...<sup>518</sup>

Later Benedicto Mwitwa opened several stores at Kehancha for buying hides and skins from butcheries and slaughter houses which had been established at the centre. However, in 1966, an outbreak of the Foot and Mouth Disease caused a temporary closure of these stores.

A major factor that enhanced Kuria participation in trade after independence was the need for money for education of their children. By this time, many Kuria families looked upon education as the most important economic alternative to agriculture. consequently, cattle and grain were sold, mainly to meet the school fees expenditure. The table below<sup>519</sup> show factors that caused the Abakuria to sell their cattle at Bukihenche village in Bwirege in 1967:

#### **CASES OF SELLING CATTLE TO MEET DIFFERENT TYPES OF EXPENDITURE**

	<u>NO</u>	<u>SHS</u>
G.T.P	7	564
Court Fees	1	150
Hospital Fees	5	1,953
School Fees	16	5,108
Clothing	2	734
Transportation	1	250
Others uses	1	250

**Source: Laxander and Chacha, p. 28**

In 1968, the relationship between the Abakuria and the Maasai became hostile. This resulted in the closure of the trading centres of Lolgorien, Angata Baragoi and Masurura

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518. KNA/DC/HB/2/1/53, Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1965. Letter Ref. Kih/Adm/2/13 addressed to the District Commissioner dated 2/12/1965.

519. Cited in Laxander and Chacha, p.28

which had hitherto provided opportunities for cattle trading for both communities.<sup>520</sup> As a consequence of the hostile relationship, prominent cattle traders in Bugumbe and Bukira - namely, Bwiro Sabora, Chacha Kerata, Simion Robi and Mwitira Rasimi - changed their Maasai trading partners and began selling their cattle in Kisumu. This they did by walking cattle, stopping at Oyugis, Ahero and Sondu to purchase more cattle from the Luo, and subsequently selling them at a profit in Kisumu. On coming back, they would buy paraffin, books and stationery for sale in Bukuria.<sup>521</sup>

In 1969 Abdi Hassan, a Somali trader at Nyamtiro, bought a lorry for transport of maize bought in Bukuria to Kisumu.<sup>522</sup> Later, Maisori Itumbo bought two more lorries, and another one was bought by the Bugumbe Farmers Cooperative Society. All this made it easier for maize, millet and sorghum to be transported and sold in Kisumu where prices were higher than those at Suna. Similarly, Singira Itumbo, Getangenyi Gichichi and Cleophas Chacha from Nyabasi established contacts with Kisii traders who had lorries; they were thus able to use the lorries to transport their maize to as far as Nakuru and Njoro. Meanwhile, the B.A.T. Company began installing tobacco buying sheds at Ntimaru, Kegonga and Taranganya for receiving and grading tobacco which had been planted for the first time early in 1969.

The economic growth of Bukuria with the markets as a focal point can best be measured by the investment into which the traders ploughed their profits. Of the 13 most

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520. O.I. Simion Robi, 24/6/97, Isibania and Mara Gosiani, Nyamwini 16/4/97.

521. O.I. Mokoro Range, Bukumburi, 4/4/97 see also, KNA/DC/HB/2/20, Ministry of Cooperative and Marketing Monthly Reports, South Nyanza, 1968

522. KNA/DC/HB/2/31/48, Land General Correspondence 1961-1969.

successful businessmen in Bukuria, four had carefully invested in motor vehicles totalling some Shs. 100,000/=; seven invested in land amounting to Shs. 30,000/=; and two built for themselves permanent houses at a cost of almost Shs. 80,000. Thus, between 1963 and 1969, some prominent businessmen had made a profit of and invested over Shs. 250,000/=.<sup>523</sup>

Despite the introduction of cash crops and supposedly better methods of farming, not all areas of Bukuria witnessed a significant changes in production during these years. Most former traders interviewed agreed that the worst years had been those immediately after independence. The production was low at that time, because few people really got involved in the cultivation of land. This, of course, meant that there was relatively little money in circulation. This meant low purchasing power for traders who in turn returned to the land for subsistence.

#### IV. THE CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT 1963-1969

As already indicated\*, African Co-operative Societies had played an increasingly prominent role particularly in marketing and processing, in the late 1950s. In Bukuria, the growth of the co-operative movement was greatly aided by the insistence of the colonial government that all potential growers join co-operative societies before obtaining permission to plant coffee. However, as also already discussed\*\*, the idea of co-operation in production was not a new feature to the Abakuria. As already seen in both precolonial and colonial times, they were organised in accordance with sex, age, kinship and friendship to perform various household tasks and other forms of production.

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523. Figures calculated from Kehancha Monthly Reports and Estimates and Finances of Kuria ADC, 1968-1969.

\* See chapter III

Kuria farmers joined co-operative societies in order to obtain credit and invest savings; provide themselves with tools or implements; and process and market their produce. In 1963, the Bugumbe Farmers Co-operative Society was formed by Joseph Magige, the Chief of Bugumbe Location.<sup>524</sup> Farmers came together and, through collective bargaining, they could earn more from the sale of coffee. Later, other societies were formed in the coffee growing areas of Gitungi, Nyabikondo, Mahuntutu and Nyabosongo.

In 1964, officers of the Ministry of Labour visited the Bugumbe Farmers Co-operative Society to advise and teach co-operative management skills.<sup>525</sup> Later, the members of the Society chose six of themselves to train in Kisumu under the sponsorship of the Ministry.<sup>526</sup> At the same time, the Minister for Labour and Social Services, Tom Mboya, visited Taranganya and Ntimaro to check on the development of the co-operative societies and self-help groups of the area. In late 1964, he visited the Masaba, Tebesi, Isibania, Ikerege and Nyabohanse self help groups.<sup>527</sup>

Politicians played a significant role in support of these co-operative groups. For example, Maisori Itumbo assisted the Bwirege Co-operative Society to obtain £1,000, being

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524. DC/HB/2/2/20, Agricultural Cooperative Societies, 1961-1965

\*\* See Chapter I

525. KNA/DC/HB/4/1, South Nyanza African District Council Minutes, 1964.

526. KNA/DC/HB/2/1/53, Kehancha Divisional Monthly Report, 1967.

527. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/3, Agricultural Safari Reports. Letter from the Agriculture Department to Bukuria Coffee co-operative Society at Taranganya dated 12<sup>th</sup> October, 1964.

a loan from the government for the construction of a health centre at Ntimaru.<sup>528</sup> On the whole, farmers' Co-operatives played an important role in facilitating the transition to a more commercial or market-oriented agriculture. They provided the marketing link between individual farmers and the national marketing organisations.

The Bugumbe Farmers Co-operative Society was crucial to the economic success and rapid diffusion of Kuria coffee. It had supervised the planting, cultivation, processing, transportation and marketing of all coffee grown in Bukuria since 1955. Commencing as a loose co-operative comprising three factories and 350 growers, it eventually expanded to six constituent societies. As a powerful economic force in Bukuria, the society opened the doors of a new office building and general headquarters at Mabera in 1967. However, this and other societies faced many problems since most Abakuria were inexperienced in the management of Co-operatives. Indeed, Abakuria were driven by the desire to control their own affairs and their economic destiny. However, they faced officials from the Ministry of Agriculture with whom they differed occasionally.<sup>529</sup> Despite management problems and considerable internal conflicts, however, it may still be said that without the power and organisation of these societies, the production of coffee would not have been a success in Bukuria.

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528. KNA/DC/HB/2/216, Ministry of Labour and Social Services District Reports, 1965. See also, KNA/DC/HB/2/20, Ministry of Cooperative and Marketing, South Nyanza District, Monthly Reports, 1964.

529. Some of the problems of the cooperatives were taken to court. See for example, KNA/DC/2/1/70, African District Court-Mabera 1960-1968.

## V. LAND ADJUDICATION, CONSOLIDATION AND REGISTRATION.

### 1963 - 1969

Kuria attention had for a long time been riveted mainly to the problem of land tenure and change wrought by population increase. After independence, the Abakuria began to focus on land reforms which had already been implemented in a number of other areas of Kenya. These reforms were to represent a promise of security of tenure through a title which could be used as collateral in securing agricultural loans.

In 1963, enclosures continued to spread fast in Bukuria in response to land scarcity. This was accelerated when the agricultural Officials provided sisal plants for hedging. Not being edible by stock, sisal could form an excellent fence against straying cattle and also sometimes serve as an erosion barrier. Besides this, the plant produces poles which could be used for building and fencing and as fibre for weaving; this was undoubtedly appreciated by the Abakuria.<sup>530</sup>

In March 1963, the Assistant Regional Government Agent in charge of community development in Migori reported that 497 farms had been enclosed with a total size of approximately 2,983 hectares. Also, over 36 access roads had been marked out with sisal plants,<sup>531</sup> with the government using self-help groups as the unit for initiating consolidation and enclosure. As the Assistant Regional Government Agent wrote:

Self help (irrika) groups are involved in this work. Each group having average of thirty members. Planting of sisal plants along the boundaries has been greatly encouraged... Farm layout as a follow up on consolidated land

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530. KNA/DC/HB/2/31/47, Land Consolidation and General Correspondence, 1961-1965.

531. Ibid

is progressing rapidly and the demand from farmers is greater than the staff available here."<sup>532</sup>

The use of such groups was a novel feature in Bukuria although it had been practised in other places in Kenya.

In 1964, the Abakuria were reported to be very "enthusiastic and stimulated" regarding land consolidation. However, the exercise was greatly hindered by lack of local leaders skilled in matters of land consolidation. The Kisii Farmers' Training Centre, which trained such personnel, was far from Bukuria or trained only a few.<sup>533</sup> Other problems included inadequacy of funds needed to carry out the exercise, transport problems, and lack of supervisory staff-there being only one surveyor for the whole of Bukuria. Therefore, in May the government appointed Cristantus Mwita, Protas M. Gibitere, Chacha Gisiri and James Rioba to supervise land consolidation together with the surveyor.<sup>534</sup>

In 1965, there were still many Abakuria resisting land consolidation. When this was reported to the Divisional Agricultural Committee, the latter recommended that the government force people to consolidate their farms since this was "obviously to their advantage".<sup>535</sup> The committee also passed a resolution that no loans would be given to people who had not consolidated their holdings.

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532. KNA/DC/HB/2/31/47, Land Consolidation and General Correspondence, 1961-1965. Letter addressed to Community Development Office from the Assistant Regional Government Agent, South Nyanza dated 9/12/1963.

533. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/49, Divisional Agricultural Committee Minutes, 1962-1965.

534. O.I., Maroa Marigo, 20/4/97, Kurutiange. See also Ibid

535. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/49, Divisional Agricultural Committee Minutes, 1962-1965 See also KNA/DC/HB/2/51, South Nyanza African District Council (Land usage) by-laws 1964.



The anticipation of consolidation and registration created an unprecedented amount of litigation over land, as lineages attempted to maximise their holding at the expense of others. For example, the majority of the 200 civil cases (including land, divorce and theft) heard in the Suba-Kuria District Court in the period from March to October 1967<sup>536</sup> were cases of land disputes between family members.<sup>537</sup> The value of land was constantly rising, and it was becoming a commodity just like labour which could be bought for money. Land consolidation made farming management more efficient; it facilitated the use of animal manure for improvement of crops and disease control; and, it opened new sources of credit from private banks.<sup>538</sup>

In July 1967, the Agriculture Department in Homa Bay conducted a farm survey in Bukuria as a follow up on the land consolidation. This effort stemmed from awareness that the Ministry needed to understand the problems of the small farmers so as to protect their economic status.<sup>539</sup> Meetings were held at various administrative centres to explain to the

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536. KNA/DC/HB/2/1/70, Civil cases, Suba Kuria District Court, 1967. A list of defaulters is found in the Civil cases books. Between 1963 and 1969 90% of the case in the Court were related to land and land disputes. See for example, KNA/HB/2/14/9, Land Complaints 1961 - 1963.

537. *Ibid*, See for example, the case of Kerariu Chacha Vs Magige Chacha, Merengo Sangai Nyamerea Vs Mwita Sangai. Also see, Suba Kuria District Court Case No. 27/56 of Chacha Samini Wambura Vs Maroa Nyamohanga in Ibid. See also, KNA/DC/HB/14/9, Land General Correspondence, 1965-1968

538. KNSA/DC/HB/2/256; Agriculture General Committee Minutes and Loans, 1967-1968 Cf. M.P.K. Serrenson, Land Reform in the Kikuyu Country (Nairobi, 1967).

539. KNA/DC/HB/2/20, Monthly Reports, Kehancha Division 1967-1968.

interested parties the nature of survey. Also, chiefs were asked to help by listing the names of small farmers living within the areas of their jurisdiction.<sup>540</sup>

In 1968, Manga Maroa, Sasi Kabaka, Mwita Monanka, Muhiri Mwita and Tingo Kemwita-all from Bwirege and Nyabasi locations -were reported by the supervisor of the farm survey to have refused to have their farms visited as part of the survey.<sup>541</sup> The refusal of these and other farmers to allow the surveyors on their farms delayed the exercise. Consequently, they were punished by being imprisoned.

In early 1969, the Mabera sub-location of Bugumbe location was declared on adjudication section<sup>542</sup> with boundaries running from Ragana bridge, ascending westwards towards Renchoka hill and curving northwards to the Kwigancha stream. Under this declaration, all land within the said boundaries was to be consolidated and enclosed, and titles obtained as proof of ownership.<sup>543</sup>

In October of the same year, the Land Adjudication Officer appointed the Land Adjudication Committee whose Chairman was Joram Mosoba and Vice-Chairman John M.

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540. KNA/DC/HB/14/36, Land General Correspondence, 1965-1968

541. KNA/DC/HB/2/14/10, Land Complaints, 1965-1969

542. Cf. Kenya Laws (1959a) The Native Land Registration Ordinance (the title of this law was changed to the land Registration (Special Areas) Ordinance and the registration parts were later replaced by the Land Act, 1963. Although the sections around Mabera were among the first to accept the idea of land consolidation, they were among the last to complete it. The barriers of intense fragmentation and coffee reparation all resulting in entangled litigation. Slowed the progress. O.I., Chacha Kerata, Nyabikayo, 6/4/97

543. KNA/DC/HB/2/14/36, Land General Correspondence 1965-1968, Letter from the Land Adjudication Board to all Chiefs in Bugumbe Location dated 16/6/69.

Wang'ang'a with Kombo Mwita as member.<sup>544</sup> The purpose of the Committee was to advise on the consolidation process. By way of promoting land reforms in Bukuria, the then Minister for Economic Planning and Development, T.J. Mboya, visited Kehancha and spent several days in Bugumbe and Bukira. He toured selected enclosed farms in the two locations and gave remuneration for good work done.<sup>545</sup>

Late in December, a large number of Maragoli, Kikuyu and Abagusii began migrating into Bukuria-especially to Isibania, Nyamtiro and Masaba areas.<sup>546</sup> They bought farms and obtained titles to the land. Others leased land for a period of time at a cost.<sup>547</sup> Similarly, some Somali came-although they were mainly interested in trade and business-and they settled at Nyamtiro.<sup>548</sup> As a result the Abakuria soon became painfully aware of the finality of land registration which was completed with the issuance of title deeds.

Any casual visitor to Bukuria at the end of the 1960s could not help but recognize the profound changes in the landscape which came in the wake of consolidation. The land was bared by the removal of trees, and an incongruous symmetry evolved as farms were demarcated with hedges, roads cut out, and new species of trees for windbreak planted. Changes in housing and settlement patterns were also stimulated by land consolidation. The

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544. KNA/DC/HB/2/14/36B, Land General Correspondence, 1968-1969.

545. KNA/DC/HB/2/21/22, Monthly Reports, Kehancha Division, 1968-1970.

546. O.I., Chacha Hinda, 17/6/97, Masaba See also, Ibid See for example, letter Referenced KIH/LND/16/1/288 by the District Officer settling land disputes between Maroa Mwita and Samwel Mbugua (a Kikuyu tenant at Kehancha) in Ibid.

547. Ibid

548. See a letter referenced L & C/S/4/2/163 KNA/DC/HB/2/1/7, on Control of Movements of Somalis, in 1969.

indigenous cylindrical or conical houses were being replaced by rectangular ones with corrugated iron roofs, Construction of the latter was actively encouraged by government health authorities. Throughout the consolidated areas, angularization of plots led to the disintegration of the indigenous settlement patterns. And, under the new system of land use, animals were kept in separate sheds rather than in the circular animal compounds located between the houses as had been the practice in earlier times. Another significant change was that, instead of each farming unit occupying several ecological zones, individual farms were now restricted to one zone. Consequently, regional specialisation began to occur. This was especially the case with most cash crops which usually grew in the upper altitudes.

Lastly, new relations of agrarian production emerged on the consolidated farms. Farm task now shifted increasingly to the male as he became an active participant in all stages of crop production. Undoubtedly, such participation was facilitated by having the entire farm located together in one place.

## **VI. ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND MARKETING, 1963-1975**

Just before independence, the colonial government's attempts to deal with livestock problems of Bukuria had generally been unsuccessful. Basically, these efforts had focused on improvement of grass cover and regulation of grazing within the settled areas; provision of rotational grazing control of cattle numbers; and attempts at introduction of what were considered better breeds and the general improvement of animal husbandry. Underlying these measures were assumptions that existing cattle were largely unproductive and excessive in number in comparison to available grazing land.

After 1963, the government of newly independent Kenya confined its activities largely to rather fruitless attempts to introduce improved stock. Therefore, the period between 1964

and 1975 was characterised by increased livestock population, except for the year 1963 when there was a sharp decrease.<sup>549</sup> Along with these characteristics were the introduction of new livestock production practices such as construction of crushes, and cattle dips, and exotic breeds. As the number of cattle increased, brideprice also rose significantly. The progress is shown in tabular form below:

**TABLE 12: KURIA BRIDEPRICE 1913-1971**

PERIOD	BRIDEPRICE IN CATTLE
1913 - 1920	10 - 15
1920 - 1927	20 - 25
1928 - 1960	25 - 35
1961 - 1971	26 - 50

**Source: Lexander and Chacha, p. 14**

Brideprice was increased by the elders of the inchaama, and the new brideprice was effected in 1964. It was followed by an oath which the Abakuria took swearing that nobody would

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549. By 1963, many Kuria families had moved to Tanzania upon its Independence in 1961 with large number of Cattle, they thought that since Nyerere belong to the Kuria community (the Zanaki are part of the large Kuria ethnic group to be sure, see for example, Kamal Mustafa, "Concept of Authority and Study of Colonial History" in Kenya Historical Review vol. 3, No.1 1975. pp. 67-83) and so they were likely to be treated better and probably given jobs. However, they were disappointed and began returning to Kenya in 1964 with even more herd of cattle than they had taken there. See for example, R.R. Matango, "Operation Mara" The Paradox of Democracy" in Maji Maji Vol. 20, 1975. pp.33-67. For livestock census between 1964 and 1975 See KNA/DC/HB/2/1/53, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry-stock census, 1967, 1969 and 1975.

pay brideprice below 26 head of cattle. The ADC was forced to approve the recommendation by the inchaama at a sitting in Ikerege.<sup>550</sup>

From oral interviews conducted in Bukuria, it could be safely concluded that the shortage or unavailability of credit was one of the most serious obstacle to both the livestock and crop sectors during the post-independence period. For example, when the South Nyanza District Agricultural Committee granted loans to farmers in November 1964, only four Kuria farmers were given loans totalling about 30,000 Kenya shillings<sup>551</sup> to enable them to purchase grade cows and crushes. In Bugumbe, very few of the ploughs in use were bought on credit. Also, expansion of crops such as coffee and pyrethrum had not been significantly assisted with the provision of credit facilities.

In 1965, however, the Nyanza Provincial Agricultural Officer, Falkner, approved loan applications from ten Kuria farmers for the purchase of grade cattle. Even so, he was doubtful about success as expressed in his report:

"Quite frankly, I do not feel that these tribe (sic) have yet reached the stage where they could buy grade cattle. [Therefore] these applicants must fence their farms, maintain and give proof that they will feed the cows well and have all their bull calves castrated before they can be allowed to purchase the grade cows".<sup>552</sup>

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550. O.I., Samson Mwita Maroa, Ikerege, 20/6/97, see also KNA/DC/HB/2/13/9, Kuria Local District Council Minutes, 1964

551. KNA/HB/2/6/27, Department of Agriculture, Minutes of the South Nyanza District Agricultural Committee, 1964. See also, KNA/DC/HB/2/2/56, Agriculture General Committee, Minutes and Loans 1965.

552. KNA/PC/NZA/2/8/40, Provincial Agricultural Reports, 1964 - 1966. Falkner had compelled the District Agricultural Committee to give 10 more Kuria applicants loan for the purchase of grade cows.

The progress to improve both local and exotic breed in Bukuria was extremely slow, and by 1966 there were only 30 Sahiwal, Sahiwal crosses and Ayshire exotic breeds.<sup>553</sup> Disease control was largely neglected by the owners, and about ten grade cattle were reported to have died in the same year, most of them from the East Coast Fever. Although some Abakuria had previously worked on European dairy farms in Kericho, Sotik and Naivasha and were thus familiar with the management of grade cattle, their proportion in the total population was small.

A factor hindering the effective introduction of grade cattle was the failure of the government to provide loans to Kuria farmers to purchase fencing wire to enclose their farms. Unless farms with appurtenant grazing land were fenced with wire or cattle-proof hedges, other cattle could not be kept out and diseases would become difficult to control. Also, indigenous cattle were very many and sometimes mixed with the exotic ones. Hence disease spread quickly, killing mainly grade cattle.

In 1967 the government, in conjunction with the inchaama and perhaps due to the problem of overstocking, encouraged the practice of ogosagaria or lending out cattle to friends or relatives.<sup>554</sup> This practice was quickly accepted by the Abakuria. This was because many of them feared that, if they kept all their cattle in one place, they would be stolen; and, in case of epidemics, they risked losing all of them. Also, lack of adequate grazing areas compelled farmers to send their animals to suitable grazing areas. The practice helped to reduce the stock population thus minimizing the problem of overstocking and overgrazing. However, it frustrated the efforts of the livestock officials who had been posted

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553. KNA/DC/HB/21/21, Monthly Reports, Kehancha Division  
1966 - 1967

554. O.I., Nchama Sagati Mwita, Kohego, 16/4/94. See also, KNA/DC/HB/2/1/54, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal husbandry Migori Sub District, 1967

to the area to control the spread of cattle disease.<sup>555</sup> Table 13 below is a summary of the domestic animal population of Bukuria in 1967:

**TABLE 13: KEHANCHA DIVISION LIVESTOCK CENSUS, 1967**

LOCATION	CATTLE	SHEEP	GOATS	DONKEYS	CATS	DOGS	FOWLS
BWIREGE	14050	2240	2454	231	610	33	14178
NYABASI	16100	2440	3565	129	721	344	16067
BUKIRA	30175	4790	5120	47	349	349	11606
BUGUMBE	15174	1073	2608	191	237	237	27617
TOTAL	162761	25104	25145	1818	3301	1937	188830

Source: KNA/DC/HB/2/1/53, Ministry of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry - Migori Sub-District, 1967.

In 1969, Kuria farmers in Nyabasi bought exotic chicken on loan basis from Kisii.<sup>556</sup> This was the first case of exotic poultry farming in Bukuria. The individuals concerned were Maisori Itumbo,<sup>557</sup> Nicholas Mahende, Joseph Muhingira and Gitwekere Chacha, among others. Although there was thus a reported increase of poultry products, there was no ready market in Bukuria as many people still preferred indigenous eggs.

By the beginning of the year 1970, there were increasing signs of interest in grade cattle, especially in Nyabasi. Past experience with so-called poor cattle management had caused the Ministry of Agriculture to insist on such rigid requirements that, apparently, few farmers could comply with them. Nearly all farmers, for example, required loans for the

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555. O.I., Samson Kerario, Ikerege, 16/4/97

556. KNA/DC/HB/2/21/22, Kehancha Division Monthly Report, 1969

557. Maisori Itumbo was a founder member of Bukuria Political Union. Later in the 1970s he became the second Kuria Member of Parliament.



acquisition of grade cattle, construction of cattle sheds and dips, dairy equipment and so on.<sup>558</sup> However, under the loan regulations laid down by the Ministry, no farmer could even be considered for a loan without complying with a whole series of requirements which in themselves necessitated considerable investment.<sup>559</sup> Consequently, it was only a number of tobacco farmers who were able to buy grade cattle from the savings from the sale of tobacco.<sup>560</sup>

Although reliable data on the number of livestock are lacking, there were estimated to be 272,000 cattle, 250,000 sheep and 150,000 goats in 1970. The cattle kept required a lot of land for grazing. Oral interviews indicate, however, that cattle were not regularly marketed; they were evidently sold when there was particular need for cash such as for school fees, which could not otherwise be met. In this connexion, Lexander and Chacha have written:

"A mukuria (sic) only sells his animals when he needs money for paying school fees, hospital fees, taxes, fines and sometimes when he needs to buy himself clothes... in addition he may also sell cattle to buy corrugated iron sheet or radio."<sup>561</sup>

In substantiation of their assertion, Lexander and Chacha provide the following table on the numbers and value of cattle sold for different expenditures in the Bukihenge location of Bwirege for 1970/1971:

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558. See for example, KNA/DC/HB/2/21/23, Monthly Reports, Kehancha Division, 1970 see also KNA/DC/HB/.3/21, Ministry of Cooperative and Marketing Monthly Reports 1970.

559. Monthly Reports, 1970 in Ibid.

560. For a list of the names of these farmers who bought grade cattle see, the Monthly Reports of Kehancha Division for the years 1971-1975.

561. Lexander and Chacha "Cattle in the Kuria Economy" p. 10.

**TABLE 14: FARMERS EXPENDITURE OF BUKIHENCHE LOCATION**

Expenditure	NO. 1970		NO. 1971	
	<u>Value (Kshs)</u>		<u>Value (Kshs)</u>	
G.P.T	4	564	5	714
Court Fees	1	150	1	290
Hospital Fees	11	1,953	9	1,680
School Fees	28	5,108	14	3,251
Clothing	4	734	2	295
Transport	1	250	3	525
Other Uses	1	250	2	190
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>9,009</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6,945</b>

Source: "Lexander and Chacha", p.12

In the period under survey, very few farmers utilized the official market places. When selling or buying cattle and sheep or goats, most transactions were conducted on the farms to avoid the levy tax imposed by the ADC.<sup>562</sup> The prices for cattle fluctuated seasonally; for example, they would often sharply rise when farmers had sold tobacco to the B.A.T Company and therefore had extra liquid cash.<sup>563</sup>

The information about purchase of animals shows that most of the people who bought cattle at this time already had quite big herds. During 1971, for example, ten households in Kehancha bought 20 head of cattle for a total of Kshs. 2,692/=; of these six households already had between 9 and 44 cattle.<sup>564</sup> This confirms that cattle were used not only for capital accumulation but also as a substitute for share of investment.

In 1972, the production of milk dropped owing to the incidence of disease and a high mortality rate among cattle. Oral interviews revealed a large number of cattle deaths caused

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562. Official Livestock Report Kehancha Division 1970-1973.  
(found in Homa Bay District library).

563. Livestock Report, 1970-1973.

564. Livestock Report, in *Ibid*.

by tick borne disease, liver fluke, trypanosomiasis and other undiagnosed ailments. Poor disease control was not primarily due to the undoubted shortage of staff, but to the disinclination of conservative cattle keepers to submit their animals to inoculations and vaccinations until there was an actual or serious outbreak of disease.<sup>565</sup>

In April 1972, the government anticipated significant advance in livestock production in Bukuria given the security of tenure following the reforms in land tenure that had taken place. Land holdings of a sufficient size made possible the rapid improvement in the efficiency of livestock production.<sup>566</sup> Grade cattle were introduced to more farmers: these were Solomon Menge, Samson Kerario, Magige Tatu, Man'gare Mwita, and Samwel Ndege.<sup>567</sup> However, on the whole, the vast majority of the Abakuria retained the indigenous Zebu cattle whose productivity in terms of beef and milk remained low.

In 1973, cattle prices in Kenya fell drastically leading to a shortfall in the number of cattle available for slaughter by the Kenya Meat Commission. "We can't slaughter cattle we haven't got" was the Kenya Meat Commission's comment on the resultant meat shortage.<sup>568</sup> As a consequence of this fall in prices, Kuria traders shifted their trading activities and took their cattle to markets in Tanzania. This was reported in the August 1973 issue of the Kenya Farmer:

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565. See for example, H.K. Ngeno, "Dairy Production Activities in Nyanza: Review of livestock production and Constraints in South West Kenya" in A Review of Agricultural Practices in South West Kenya (Kisii, 1995): 155.

566. Cf. East African Livestock Survey Vol. 1: Development Requirement, U.N.D.P. Programme, 1967 : 33.

567. O.I. Samwel Ndege, Isibania, 24/6/98.

568. Kenya Farmer, August, 1973.

"In the border areas (of Bukuria) the producers and cattle dealers are supplying our neighbours in Tanzania where meat commands a better price."<sup>569</sup>

During this time, also the K.M.C. abattoir insisted on compulsory inoculation before animals could be accepted for slaughter. Furthermore, a trader would have to accumulate a supply of 50 or so head of cattle before being permitted to trade them with K.M.C. This requirement led to Kuria traders taking their cattle to Tarime in Tanzania from where they found their way to Musoma. In Musoma, a ship known as M.V. Ngombe carried about 8,255 Kuria cattle to Bukoba in less than a half a year for slaughter.<sup>570</sup> Centres around the border-Kegonga, Ntimaru Nyamaharaga, and Kumumwamu-exported numerous cattle to Tanzania, especially in 1973 and 1974.

In 1975, export of cattle to Tanzania ceased after several grade cattle died from outbreak of a severe rinderpest.<sup>571</sup> The quarantine measures in Tanzania restricted further cattle trade across the border. In that year, there were only 7 grade cattle in Kehancha Division as Bukuria was known from 1974 and all except one were kept by one farmer.<sup>572</sup> Similarly, exotic chicken, whose number was 227 in 1969, dropped to only 189<sup>573</sup> in 1975. For the first time, Taranganya Secondary School bought nine piglets, seven of them sows and two bears for the school farm. These were the only pigs in Bukuria. Livestock for slaughter other than pigs were sold to local butcheries at prices based on cold dressed weight fixed by the Ministry of Agriculture as shown below:

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569. Kenya Farmer, 1973.

570. See for example, Annual Report of the Department of Veterinary services, 1971, 1973 and 1974.

571. Kenya Farmer, February, 1974.

572. KNA/DC/HB/1/17, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1975 :59

573. Annual Report, 1975

**TABLE 15: MEAT PRODUCTION IN BUKURIA, 1975**

Month	Cattle Slaughtered	Revenue	Goats Slaugh.	Revenue	Sheep Slaugh	Revenue
January	-	131,600.00	-	-	-	-
February	329	-	30	2,400	18	900.00
March	-	-	-	-	-	-
April	290	-	35	-	12	-
June	-	150,500.00	-	-	-	-
July	361	139,361.20	33	2,838	20	1,400.00
August	307	217,112.00	43	3,300	37	1,780.00
September	518	173,108.00	120	8,500	50	2,800.00
October	416	77,120.00	121	7,270	21	1,200.00
November	123	150,922.00	14	1,130	30	2,300.00
December	352	-	23	2,050	11	1,100.00
	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,696</b>	<b>1,038,823.20</b>	<b>419</b>	<b>27,538</b>	<b>199</b>	<b>11,480.00</b>

Similary, hides and skins were extensively traded. The official statistics of hides, especially those sold in Bwirege, show a great discrepancy in relation to animals officially slaughtered or dead. Sometimes, about three times more hides and skins were sold than the number of beasts killed. The reason for this discrepancy may be defects in the recording system; but there is also evidence that both hides and skins came across the border from Tanzania to be marketed in South Nyanza.<sup>574</sup>

In 1975, 62.9% of the hides were sold; 34.8% were kept by the households for home use; but for the remaining 2.3% information is not available, although probably some of these were waste. The average price obtained during the year was Kshs. 9/70, while the average during the last quarter of 1975 was Kshs. 10/70. In the preceeding quarter, 40.8% of the hides were sold.<sup>575</sup>

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574. KNA/DC/HB/1/17, South Nyanza District, Annual Report, 1975 see also, Lexander and Chacha:9.

575. Figures obtained form Annual Report, 1975.

**TABLE 16: HIDES AND SKINS SOLD IN 1975**

	Grade I	Grade II	Grade III	Grade IV
Cattle	5,988	4,144	1,926	1,744
Sheep	2,793	1,942	1,398	771
Goats	8,440	6,028	3,570	158
Total				

Source: KNA/DC/HB/1/17, Annual Report, South Nyanza District, 1975.

At this time, however, Bukuria felt the inflation that had affected the country as well as the whole world. The increase in the prices of petroleum products led to an increase in consumer goods and costs of transportation.<sup>576</sup> Later in the year (1975) the Kenyan shilling was devalued.<sup>577</sup> This meant that manufacturers raised production costs while the consumers had to pay more for services.

At the same time, demand for both agricultural trade loans increased in Bukuria. About six hundred farmers applied for loans, but only 50 were successful in obtaining loans totalling 204,000 shillings. Markets were more organised compared to previous years, and there was a total of 4,000 traders registered in the Division including hawkers.<sup>578</sup> Anicent Mang'are represented Kehancha Division in the Joint Loans Board of the South Nyanza District.<sup>579</sup>

Bitter complaints arose, however, regarding the issuance of hawking licences by the County Council. Traders complained that the licences had denied them opportunities as they

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576. KNA/DC/HB/1/17, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1975: 109.

577. Annual Report, 1975:112

578. Annual Report, 1975: 118

579. Councillor Mang'are represented the Division for a period of five years from 1975-1980. See, Minutes of the Joint Loans board, South Nyanza District in Ibid.

were required to trade in everything, unlike before when the requirement for licensing was restricted to second-hand clothes only. An appeal by traders who were choosing to quash the licences failed since hawkers sold their merchandise cheaply.<sup>580</sup> During the year, Barclays Bank opened a fulltime branch in Homa Bay and served traders who previously had to seek such services in Kisii.<sup>581</sup> Up to the end of the period of our study, there were no banks in Bukuria.

## VII. TOBACCO PRODUCTION, 1969 - 1975

The introduction of tobacco in 1969 was a major development in the agricultural history of the Abakuria. Prior to this, initiatives to grow tobacco in Nyanza had been made outside Bukuria - around the townships of Rongo, Oyugis, Rangwe and Kisii. However, the soils were not very suitable, and the crop suffered severe hail risk. Further, especially in Kisii, there was competition with other crops-particularly tea and pyrethrum.<sup>582</sup>

Tobacco production in Bukuria was begun under the aegis of the British American Tobacco Company Ltd.(B.A.T.) on 13<sup>th</sup> October, 1969 when a group of B.A.T. officials toured the area to select pilot farmers. The first three were: Joseph Tunai of Bukira; Boniface Rioba of Bwirege; and Nyaichowa Mwita of Nyabasi. Later, the District Officer was able to report:

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580. KNA/DC/HB/1/17, South Nyanza District Annual Report, 1975 :120

581. Annual Report, 1975 : 122

582. Suzette Heald, "Short Report on Patterns of Small Investment in Smallholder Agriculture, A Kenyan Case Study" Mimeo, 1987.

"About ten farmers have been selected to grow tobacco, this is ~~the~~ the first step B.A.T. is extending tobacco farms to the District. There are government agricultural instructors attached to this project" <sup>583</sup>(sic).

Stimulated by spectacular expansion in the consumption of blended cigarettes in Kenya, the B.A.T. intensified its advertising campaigns in Bukuria and it also established nurseries at Taranganya which employed a number of school leavers as Leaf Technicians. In the same year, Mabera and Taranganya were selected as suitable places for the establishment of leaf centres. Taranganya subsequently became the headquarters of the B.A.T. Company in Bukuria.<sup>584</sup>

There were two varieties of tobacco grown in Bukuria: the flue-and fire-cured varieties; both required heavy fertilizer application. The flue-cured variety mainly uses heat passed through aluminium pipes inside a stuffed house. A lot of wood therefore is needed to provide fire and heat. Furthermore, heat and humidity control are extremely crucial. This means a 24-hour watch over the whole process involving regular checking and adjustment to the furnaces on an hourly basis.<sup>585</sup> It is only after curing that tobacco is graded. Farmers are paid better for grade one than for grade two. On the other hand, for the fire-cured variety, heavy smoke is brought into direct contact with the leaves, which turn dark brown. The smoke from burning leaves and green wood gives the tobacco a pungent flavour and distinctive aroma as well as improving its preserving qualities. Both fire-and flue-cured tobacco leaves are harvested when fully ripe, and are then hung in tiers in a barn and allowed to yellow for about seven days before curing takes place.

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583. KNA/DC/HB/2/21/22, Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1969.

584. KNA/DC/HB/2/2/22, Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1969 See also, KNA/TR/1/125, History to Tobacco in Kenya to the year 1970

585. See for example, KNA/BV/7/7, Tobacco, 1965-1985



After an initial year of difficulty, the Abakuria had mastered the techniques of organisation and production of tobacco. Substantial help was obtained from government sources in terms of extension, while the B.A.T Company provided credit facilities.<sup>586</sup> Farmers were responsible for growing, harvesting and curing their own crop, but these activities and the acreage were strictly controlled by the B.A.T. management. The latter had the authority to recruit and discipline individual farmers - even barring undesirable ones from continued farming activities.<sup>587</sup> According to an informant in Bukira, the nurseries for the tobacco seedlings and mechanical land preparation were sometimes organised by the B.A.T. management on a centralised basis.<sup>588</sup>

The year 1970 saw a steady expansion of tobacco in terms of acreage of the crop. Also, the number of tobacco farmers increased dramatically: for example, the number rose for both flue-cured and fire-cured tobacco from three in 1969 to 24 in 1970 in Bwirege. In Bukira, the corresponding figures were 5 and 3 in 1969 and 60 and 32 in 1970 respectively.<sup>589</sup> This expansion was perhaps the consequence of rising tobacco prices and the enthusiasm of energetic agricultural officers.

In the early stages, registration as a tobacco farmer had been based simply on the ownership of land. However, because of the pressure on land in some parts of Bukuria and the subdivision of plots, this later changed to registration based on individuals' opening

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586. KNA/AE/22/216, British American Tobacco Kenya Limited, 1956-1971

587. British American Tobacco, 1956-1971.

588. O.I., Maroa Sangai, Kohego 24/7/98. In later years only tobacco seedlings were provided by the B.A.T.

589. See, District Agricultural Officer's correspondence to the Head of Crop Production Division Nairobi in KNA/BV/9/31, Tobacco Farming 1970-1980.

accounts with the B.A.T.<sup>590</sup> The B.A.T. would sometimes contract women when the husbands were not interested. And, in the absence of the husband or his death, the wife was permitted to run his account.<sup>591</sup>

In 1970, harvest of the crop took place between March and June, and a total of 4,164 kilogrammes was sold during the month of July at an average price of Shs. 2/59 per kilogramme.<sup>592</sup> The delayed onset of the long rains that year and late transplanting had resulted in only 12 hectares of fire-cured tobacco being planted as against the B.A.T. target of 175 hectares. Seedbeds had similarly been sown late, owing to lack of seeds.

The Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) that was launched in Migori and Bukuria<sup>593</sup> in October was to become a major stimulant to tobacco farming in Bukuria. Later in the year, the fire-cured tobacco harvested increased dramatically to an estimated 16,000 kilogrammes for December.<sup>594</sup> At the end of the year, it was reported that tobacco had been harvested in plenty at Taranganya and that marketing of the fire-cured variety of the crop resulting in a total of 4,163 kilogrammes being sold in the area at an average of Shs. 2.59 per kilogramme.<sup>595</sup>

In 1971, there were problems in the production of tobacco-including leaves getting burnt during curing, and hail damage. Despite these difficulties, however, potentially

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590. KNA/TR/1/125, History of Tobacco in Kenya, 1970

591. O.I., Chacha Mwita Matango, 18/6/98 Kurutiange.

592. Economic Review Vol. 2 No. 2, 1972

593. Ministry of Economic Planning, Economic Review of Agriculture Vol. 2 No.2, 1970. See also, Development Plan for the years 1970-1974.

594. Economic Review Vol. 2 No. 2, 1972

595. Economic Review Vol. 2 No. 3, 1970: 30.

excellent tobacco was brought to different markets by large numbers of farmers.<sup>596</sup> But the curing process itself was not well known to the farmers even though the B.A.T. carried out highly organised extension work.

In 1972, as a result of the poor prices paid and other grievances against the B.A.T., Kuria farmers established the Kuria Omogango Tobacco Co-operative Society<sup>597</sup> consisting of about 30 members. The society assisted members to secure 2,050 seedlings from Oyani in Migori. Also, it achieved a price increase of one shilling per kilogramme for both flue and fire-cured tobacco. And it saw to the establishment of four more buying centres at Nyabohanse, Kebaroti, Ntimaru and Gwikonge.<sup>598</sup> During the first quarter of 1973, several more markets for fire-cured tobacco were opened. Deliveries at the Tarangaya buying centre totalled 1,293 kilogrammes.<sup>599</sup>

Between January and March 1975, the B.A.T Company reported that 600.4 hectares had been planted with flue-cured tobacco in South Nyanza. For all tobacco growing areas, the largest was Bukuria where 400 hectares were planted.<sup>600</sup> Unfortunately, the report contains no figures for fire-cured tobacco. During the quarter from April to June, 18,825 kg of fire-cured tobacco were purchased from Bukuria, while the purchase for the quarter from July to September was 23,601 kilogrammes.<sup>601</sup>

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596. KNA/DC/HB/2/21/22, Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1970 see also, Economic Review Vol. 2 No.3: 30.

597. See for example, D.A.O. South Nyanza Correspondence to the crop production Division Nairobi in KNA/BV/9/31, tobacco Farming 1971-1980.

598. KNA/BV/9/31, Tobacco Farming, 1971-1980

599. Economic Review of Agriculture Vol. 3 No.3 1972: 39.

600. KNA/BV/9/31, Tobacco Farming, 1971-1980.

601. Economic Review Vol.5 No.2: 29.

By August 1975, at least one out of three homesteads in Bukuria was growing tobacco.<sup>602</sup> In one curing period, an average of 60 indigenous trees were cut down to provide fuel for curing tobacco. That means that the 300 tobacco farmers then active in Bukuria were cutting down over 18,000 indigenous trees per year.<sup>603</sup> Therefore, by the end of the year 1975, about 100,000 indigenous trees would have been destroyed. On the other hand, B.A.T. tree nurseries had been established at Taranganya and Nyabohanse Leaf Centres, mainly for growing the eucalyptus and blue gum species. About 150 seedlings of these two species were to be distributed to each farmer every year. The instructions were that the species be planted on the banks of rivers. Unfortunately, these exotic trees are known to drain water from the soil, thus reducing the rivers to seasonal streams.

During his visit to Bukuria in October 1975, Aggrey Luseno, B.A.T. Marketing Director, predicted that Kenya would be self-sufficient in tobacco by 1985.<sup>604</sup> He then launched an intensive campaign to promote the growing of tobacco in Bukuria. According to an informant, new farmers were given incentives like free ploughing and tobacco seedlings.<sup>605</sup> Similarly, eucalyptus seedlings were distributed to farmers to meet the demand for firewood. Nevertheless, the local B.A.T officials continued to encourage the use of indigenous trees for curing purposes on the understanding that:

"the smoke from these fires determines the aroma of the final cured leaf and it is therefore essential that certain varieties of sources of fuel such as

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602. KNA/AE/22/218, British American Tobacco Kenya 1968-1979

603. The figures were derived from the oral interviews carried out on the tobacco growers of the specified period. see also, KNA/BV/9/31 Tobacco Farming 1971 - 1980.

604. Aggrey Luseno, "Tobacco Imports to Stop Soon" in Daily Nation 27/10/75: 6.

605. O.I., Makare Mogaya, Taragwiti, 26/7/98.

eucalyptus, cypress, pine etc which give unwanted smell must never be used. Recommended sources of fuel are green grass or banana leaves and local African fig trees.<sup>606</sup>

In December 1975, it was reported that "Kuria has a tobacco boom", and that tobacco was a growing industry in the Division where many hectares of land had been put under the crop. Murphy Chemicals (E.A.) Limited continued to supply powerful chemicals and fumigants to Bukuria to facilitate increased yield.<sup>607</sup> However, these chemicals - especially ethane - were extremely dangerous to both humans and livestock, and many cases of death were reported.<sup>608</sup> Also, the chemicals destroyed the soils' ability to withstand continuous cultivation. And, following the heavy fertilizer application at the rate of one hundred and fifty pounds per acre immediately after planting,<sup>609</sup> other crops could not do well where tobacco had grown for two seasons or more.

During these years, feeder roads were constructed to connect all tobacco growing areas of Bukuria. These were intended to facilitate the transportation of cured tobacco to Leaf Centres, especially Nyabohanse and Taranganya.

In concluding this discussion, it may justly be said that no other innovation in Kuria agriculture in the post-independence period had a greater impact than the development of tobacco as a cash crop. The issues of quality management, standards of cultivation, transport, marketing and the curing of the crop clearly show that tobacco is a labour-intensive crop. Its introduction to Bukuria enhanced the participation of men in crop production rather

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606. Economic Review of Agriculture Vol.5 No.2, 1975.

607. KNA/BV/7/7, Tobacco, 1965-1985

608. O.I. John Isasinge Chacha, a former public health worker at Kehancha Health Centre interviewed on 22/6/98, at Nyabikaye.

609. Economic Review of Agriculture, Vol. 5 No. 2, 1975: 45

than animal husbandry as was the case hitherto.<sup>610</sup> This change altered the indigenous Kuria farming practices under which women were the cultivators.

Given the enormity of work, however, Kuria men drafted their wives to assist them in the production of tobacco. Sometimes, they even stopped their own children from attending school so that the latter could assist on the farm.<sup>611</sup> Tobacco growing also affected the production of maize in two ways. First, people paid less attention to maize cultivation since they were making better money from tobacco. Secondly, tobacco growing, as already mentioned, exhausted the soils because of constant and heavy application of dangerous fertilizers and chemicals. Fields previously planted with tobacco could therefore not withstand the cultivation of maize and other food crops like sorghum and millet. This decrease in maize production had a negative impact on the food situation. It may therefore be safely concluded that the introduction of tobacco to Bukuria underdeveloped the area through environmental degradation.

As already indicated also, an equally insidious effect resulted from the cutting down of indigenous trees to facilitate agricultural expansion. Consequently, there were many cases of disastrous soil erosion. In due course, the permanent streams of Nyangoto and Kwigancha, which had been the main source of water for both people and livestock became intermittent. In other places, the streams, even when they continued to flow, became silt laden.<sup>612</sup>

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610. Cf. Suzette Heald, "Working Paper No. 4 South Nyanza Tobacco Division: Data Profile," University of Lancaster, 1984: 1-3.

611. See also, W. Lacey, "Survey: Kehancha Division." mimeo, Integrated Rural Development Programme, FAO, Rome, 1970.

612. O.I. Solomon Menge, Bukumburi, 24/6/98 See also, Kenya Farmer, June, 1976 : 16.

Despite these setbacks, however, the cultivation of tobacco also brought about a number of positive changes to Bukuria. For one, it produced a rich class of people who bought cars and lorries; others installed grain grinding machines and bought grade cattle. These individuals included Gesabo Mwita, Maisori Itumbo, Mwita Nyagakende and Maroa Wantera, to mention a few. The Abakuria used the money obtained from the sale of tobacco to purchase ploughs and other farm inputs. In other words, tobacco production brought about technological and technical innovations in the crop production. In this respect, the B.A.T. Company funded farmers, who in turn bought tractors and different ploughing implements.<sup>613</sup> Lastly, it should be noted that the coming of tobacco to Bukuria did not diminish enthusiasm for coffee growing - though this latter crop was not as remunerative as tobacco.<sup>614</sup>

## **VIII. CONCLUSION**

Between 1963 and 1975, Bukuria went through changes in social and economic relations, together with infrastructural transformations in expanded road networks, increased cash crop production and education. With the introduction of tobacco growing at the end of the 1960s, the articulation of Bukuria into the wider capitalist economy intensified. The coming of the multinational tobacco corporation, the British American Tobacco Company Ltd., meant that Bukuria was more broadly and tightly integrated into the world capitalist economic system than it had ever been before. Kuria society was thus transformed through a complex process which may be conceived abstractly as a transition from one mode of production to another. However, the transformation was not total, as remnants of precolonial relations of production persisted.

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613. O.I., Chacha Kerata, Nyabikaaye 20/6/98.

614. Kenya Farmer, December 1973 p.14 For rice growing during these years, see e.g KNA/DC/HB/2/224-24 Kehancha Division Monthly Reports, 1963-75.

## **CONCLUSION**

The foregoing study has been an attempt at analysis of the changes that took place in Kuria agriculture from the late precolonial times to about 1975. The eve of colonial rule was included in the study to provide a background understanding for the agricultural changes that were to take place during the colonial period and the first decade of independence. The theoretical framework used to explain these changes is a combination of the articulation of modes of production theory and the dependency and underdevelopment theory. The ecological aspects of the development of Kuria agriculture were also considered where applicable.

The precolonial background has been studied in its varied aspects: land use; labour; trade; agrarian relations of production, and so on. In precolonial times, land in Bukuria was owned communally. However, individual rights of cultivation were recognized and protected. The Kuria cultivators had developed a high sensitivity to their land and environment. They practised fallow agriculture as a method of soil conservation.

Hunting and gathering played a significant role in the procurement of food. They were a major means through which the Abakuria were able to secure a livelihood in an otherwise unfriendly and hazardous environment. The Abakuria attached a high value to livestock and its acquisition. However, when epidemics struck, they could always fall back on hunting and gathering - not to mention crop farming.

The Abakuria had developed a sophisticated calendar that guided agricultural operations: sowing, weeding, harvesting, and so on. They grew a wide variety of food crops, and condiments were widely known. They were skillful and resourceful inventors and produced wooden agricultural tools which were later replaced by iron implements acquired through trade



with the Maasai. Furthermore, a regional trade network in agricultural produce, animal products and other commodities was established encompassing different Kuria clans on the one hand and the Maasai, Kipsigis and Luo on the other hand. Such exchange helped to mitigate the effects of the recurrent natural calamities such as cattle and human epidemic and drought.

The establishment of colonial rule in Bukuria brought about further agricultural changes. For instance, cash crops were introduced. These changes, in turn, gradually transformed the Abakuria from a predominantly subsistence society to participants in the colonial cash economy.

In order to further monetize relations of production, the colonialists devised the migrant labour system in which Kuria men were forced to work for wages in order, *inter alia*, to be able to pay the taxes imposed on them. Once employed, however, the migrant workers faced the problem of low wages. This forced many of them to get subsidies in form of flour, beans and maize from their rural homes. In turn, the Abakuria who were involved in agricultural production had to contend with low prices paid for their produce. Those who opened shops were exploited by Indian wholesalers. The establishment of a road network and trading centres was aimed at enhancing the colonial penetration of Bukuria, and it extended the dependence of the Abakuria on colonial goods.

Although Bukuria was integrated into the colonial economy, however, it is important to point out that elements of the precolonial mode(s) of production persisted throughout the colonial period. For instance, the Abakuria continued to cultivate some of their indigenous crops such as sorghum, millet and pumpkins. Infact, indigenous Kuria agriculture demonstrated particular resilience up to the years of the First World War.

During the inter-war years, the Abakuria responded positively to the colonial state policies by increasing maize production. However, this was at the expense of the indigenous food crops. These years were also critical for animal husbandry. The colonial government considered that Kuria cattle were a major hindrance to the successful implementation of its policies, since the Abakuria devoted too much time to cattle-oriented activities. Attempts to break the hegemonic position of indigenous livestock took the form of forced sales, reductions of bride price and quarantines. In this period also, Bukuria was adversely affected by famines, recurrent cattle diseases, and locust invasions.

Gold was mined in Bukuria from 1930, and the mineral was exhausted by 1945. The mining areas like Kurutiange, Karos, Kehancha and Naora were destroyed permanently and could not revert to agricultural production. That is one reason why, Bukuria was one of the most backward areas of Nyanza Province by the end of the colonial rule.

The period between 1945 and 1963 marked a major breakthrough in the agriculture and economic organisation of the Abakuria. Agricultural officers were sent to Bukuria, and the work of land consolidation commenced. This process was accelerated through policies introduced by the celebrated Swynnerton Plan. The Kuria population increased and, as consolidation activities went on, many Kuria families became landless. The African Land Development Organisation (ALDEV) sponsored settlement schemes in Nyanza, but it neglected the majority of applicants from Bukuria and denied the Abakuria the opportunity to settle and graze their cattle among the Maasai through the introduction of the inadequate grazing schemes.

In the period between 1963 and 1975, agricultural services and experimental farms were set up in Luoland, but not in Bukuria. For these reasons, some Abakuria moved to

Tanzania ~~hoping~~ to get better economic opportunities. However, they were unsuccessful; and, instead, they were repatriated to Kenya.

In the late 1960s, tobacco was introduced to Bukuria and South Nyanza as a whole. Tobacco is a labour intensive crop, and its production led to men drafting their wives and even their school - going children as labour. In many areas, the acreage taken by tobacco production and the relatively high prices the crop fetched led to a reduction in the production of food crops such as maize, sorghum, millet and cassava thereby leading to recurrent food shortages. Also, many indigenous trees were cut down to be used as fuel in the curing of tobacco. This, in turn, accelerated soil erosion.

It is hoped that the above historical study will serve as a basis for understanding the present state of Kuria agriculture. In formulating policies for the further development of agriculture in Bukuria - and, indeed, other aspects of the economy - a knowledge of the past successes and failures as outlined in this study could be of value. That, at any rate, is the author's sincere hope.

## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I

#### SAMPLE QUESTIONS

NAME.....SEX.....  
AGE.....  
ADDRESS.....  
CLAN.....PLACE OF  
INTERVIEW.....  
DATE OF INTERVIEW.....  
BACKGROUND.....

#### A. PRECOLONIAL AGRICULTURE

1. How did the Abakuria acquire land before the coming of the white man? Was the land divided into sections for each individual?
2. How did they allocate land for various types of use e.g. grazing, cultivation and hunting? Who allocated the land? Were there land disputes that cropped up as a result?
3. What crops did the Abakuria grow? What food items did they gather from the forests? Did they have a calendar or any record of seasons? How did they store agricultural produce?
4. What were the problems encountered by the farmers? What were the causes? What measures did they take to curb the problem?
5. Was there specific work for men, women, boys and girls? If so, who was supposed to do what?

6. Did the Abakuria trade their products to the neighbouring communities or buy from them? If so, with whom and in what commodities? What was the medium of such exchange? Were there groups of people specialised in trade?

#### B. THE EARLY COLONIAL PERIOD

1. When did white men first come to Bukuria? Where did they settle? Who gave them land?
2. What agricultural changes did the white man bring? How did such change affect Kuria land ownership and usage?
3. How did the introduction of new crops affect Kuria agriculture? Who grew these crops and where? How and where did the Abakuria sell these crops?
4. Did white men have their own farms in Bukuria? If so, what farming activities were they involved in? Did they force or request some people to go and work in their farms or elsewhere?
5. How did the First World War affect the Abakuria? How did it affect Kuria agriculture? What role did the women play during this period?
6. What happened to Kuria agriculture after the First World War, the great drought of 1919, and in the years before the Second World War?

#### C. AGRICULTURAL CHANGE IN THE INTER-WAR YEARS

1. How did the introduction of taxes and "kipande" affect the Abakuria? How did they respond to the introduction of taxes and compulsory labour

regulations? How did they pay their taxes? What effect did this have on agriculture? Did they form any organisations in protest against these problems?

2. Who among the Abakuria fought in the Second World War? How did the war affect agricultural production? Were new crops introduced? If so, where did these crops come from? What was the impact of the war on Kuria agriculture?

3. What changes did the men who fought in the Second World War bring into Kuria agricultural practice?

D. DEVELOPMENTS FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR TO THE FIRST YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

1. Were there any political or social movements in Bukuria just after the Second World War which sought improvements in local agricultural practices?

2. What did the white man do to improve food production after the war?

3. What changes occurred in governmental policy for Bukuria in the years of Mau Mau and after?

4. Did the Abakuria participate in the struggle for independence? What impact did this have on agriculture? Did the missionaries or colonialists move from Bukuria upon independence?

5. In general, what was the impact of colonial rule on the Kuria way of life?

6. Tell me about the changes in Kuria agriculture in the first years of independence compared to the

colonial period.

E. AGRICULTURAL TRANSFORMATION FROM 1963 TO 1975

1. What were the crops and livestock introduced to Bukuria immediately after independence?
2. What type of implements that were introduced after independence?
3. Are there measures the government took to control soil erosion in Bukuria.
4. State projects that were initiated in Bukuria during this period.
5. When was tobacco growing begun in Bukuria.
6. Who were first farmers to grow the crop?
7. What changes did the tobacco industry bring to the
  - a) Abakuria
  - b) Kuria environment
  - c) Economy
8. In general, compare independence era and colonial era in Bukuria.

## APPENDIX II

### CLASSIFICATION OF LAND\*

igunguli : Land that is inhabited by a single clan

oroheri: Land set aside for houses or living

ikirisirio: land for herding livestock

ubuhi, Umuvuvi or Ibikonge:land for grazing goats

ibiturate: Pasture not for cultivation

ebibiniti: Salty soil, not usable

ingenyi: Soil close to wet springs for cattle lick.

ibikerege: Poor soil of many colour variation, only useful for  
grazing sheep and goats

irrirema: all arable land

iritiribi: Blackish heavy soil, often found in higher slopes for  
growing crops such as sorghum and millet.

egesense: Reddish black soil with infrequent small patches of  
gravel, often on lower slopes.

omcsaro: Like egesense but with coarse gravel.

ichinguku: Soil of many colour variations on top of flat hills.

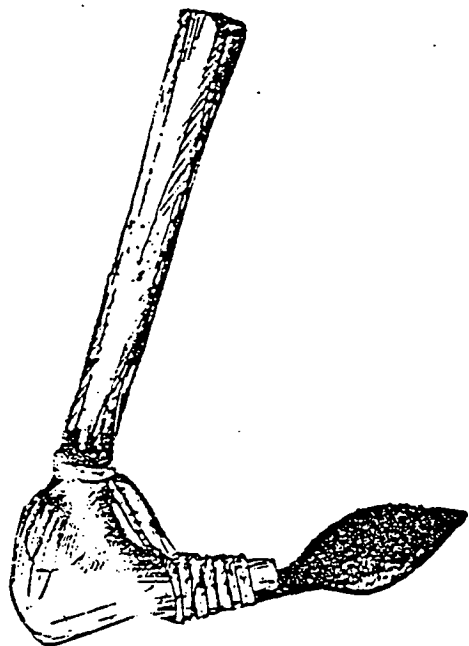
ekebose: Sandy soil of very light colour useful for house  
decorations.

amatongo: Plots which have been inhabited and left, it's soil is  
rich because of cattle kraals.

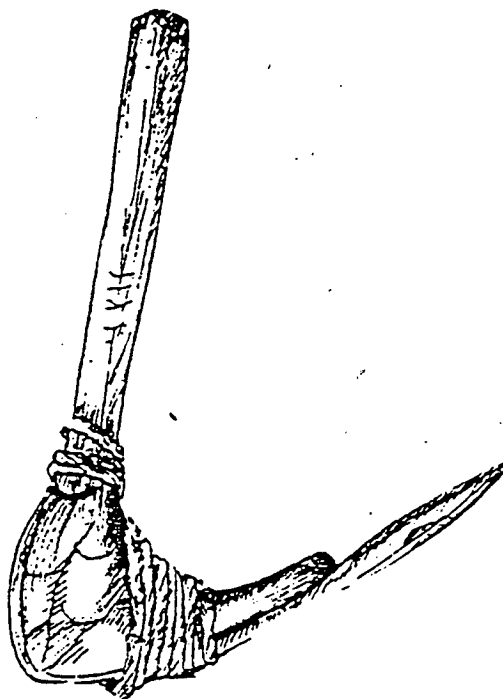
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\*Most of the classifications have been done by Cory, "Land Tenure":70-74, others by S.M. Seba, "Inheritance Laws" and the rest from various informants viz: Chacha Kerata (79) Nyabikaye; Boniface Rioba (72) Ntimaru; and Chegere Munyancha (85) Kegonga representing all Bukuria clans, interviewed between 8/4/97 and 24/5/97.

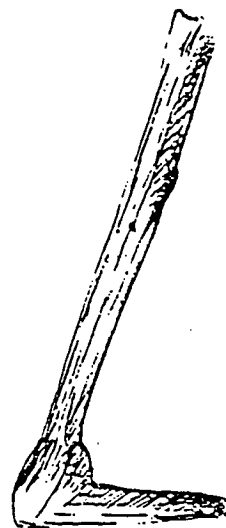




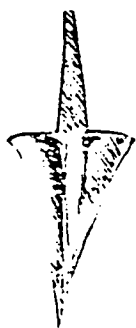
EKEBAYI



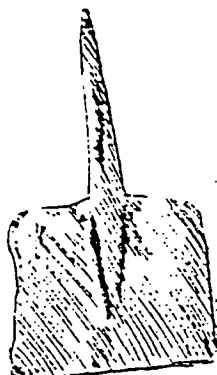
EHANDI



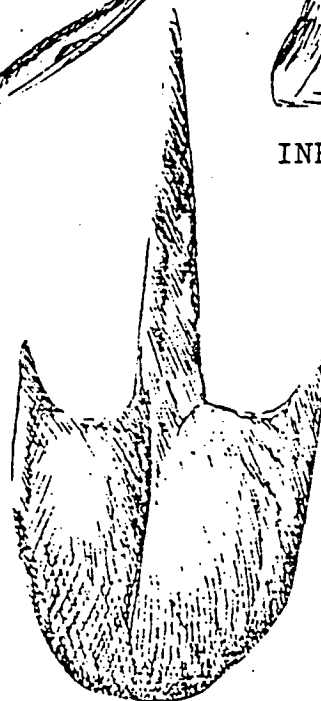
INKURO



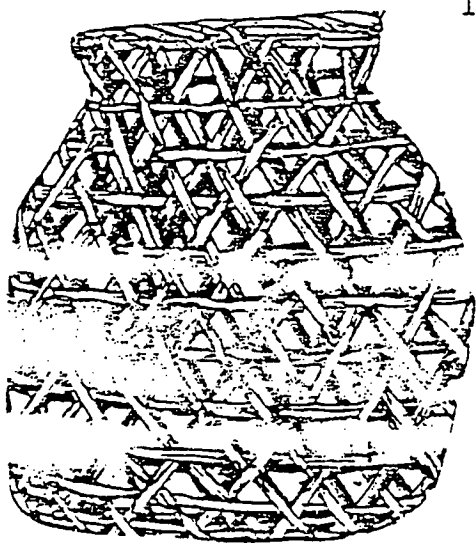
EKEBAYI



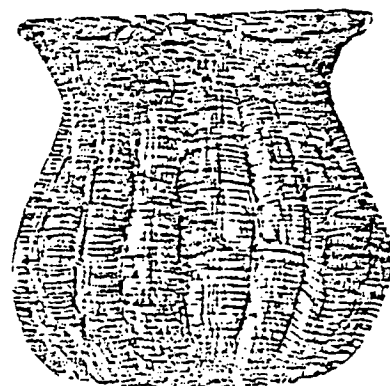
IRITAKAMA



ESERO



IRIKANGA



EGETONGA



EMOHOHO

# APPENDIX IV

## PRODUCE MARKETED IN SOUTH NYANZA, 1943 - 1948

COMMODITY	1943/44	1944/45	1945/46	1946/47	1947/48
MAIZE	92,921	140,078	77,392	149,115	76,178
MTAMA	30,846	15,000	11,387	14,875	4,229
WIMBI	11,438	3,274	40,808	33,298	10,897
WIMBI BLACK	-	-	-	-	-
GROUNDNUTS	12,153	10,427	8,953	12,648	19,957
SIMSIM	540	2,709	350	61	438
WHITE HARICOT	-	-	-	-	-
CANADIAN WONDER	-	-	-	-	-
ROSE COCO	-	-	-	-	-
MIXED	8	408	96	79	574
GREEN GRAM	99	948	1,151	1,600	2,449
CASSAVA	-	-	-	5,985	-
COW PEAS	-	3,143	2,792	-	3,580
D.F. PEAS	-	-	-	-	34
PURE PADDY	436	208	-	-	-
WHEAT	1,874	1,419	1,531	2,255	-
SUNFLOWER	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL PRODUCE	57,394	37,536	66,868	70,801	42,167
TOTAL MAIZE & PRODUCE	149,515	177,614	144,260	219,916	118,345

APPENDIX IV (continued)

COMMODITY	1948/49	1949/50	1950/51	1951/52	1952/53
MAIZE	205,533	442,924	169,442	187,970	217,273
MTAMA	9,397	9,064	536	75	-
WIMBI	13,425	21,362	24,210	2,040	18,925
WIMBI BLACK	-	-	-	-	94
GROUNDNUTS	15,234	21,2386	21,486	10,729	10,487
SIMSIM	189	378	140	937	772
WHITE HARICOT	-	-	1	4	1
CANADIAN WONDER	7	-	37	19	-
ROSE COCO	-	-	-	-	-
MIXED	-	-	4	459	536
GREEN GRAM	4,248	4,953	2,955	4,207	2,672
CASSAVA	-	-	25	-	-
COW PEAS	2,482	30	7	1,226	799
D.F. PEAS	128	187	128	17	-
PURE PADDY	-	55	-	89	-
WHEAT	-	-	-	-	405
SUNFLOWER	-	-	-	-	4
TOTAL PRODUCE	45,120	57,267	49,529	19,802	34,695
TOTAL MAIZE & PRODUCE	250,653	500,191	218,971	207,772	251,968

APPENDIX IV (continued)

COMMODITY	1953/54	1954/55
MAIZE	377,780	311,322
MTAMA	1,132	1,081
WIMBI	13,099	80,286
WIMBI BLACK	-	-
GROUNDNUTS	5,371	18,949
SIMSIM	1,742	3,649
WHITE HARICOT	1	-
CANADIAN WONDER	-	-
ROSE COCO	-	-
MIXED	594	366
GREEN GRAM	4,237	837
CASSAVA	-	-
COW PEAS	3,242	90
D.F. PEAS	12	34
PURE PADDY	-	228
WHEAT	286	166
SUNFLOWER	-	-
TOTAL PRODUCE	29,716	105,686
TOTAL MAIZE & PRODUCE	407,496	417,008

SOURCE: KNA/DC/KSI/15, South  
Nyanza District Annual  
Report, 1955.

# APPENDIX V

## LAND USAGE (ANIMAL HUSBANDRY) 1955

<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>TOTAL AREA IN ACRES</u>	<u>T O T A L     A R E A</u> <u>UNSUITABLE     FOR</u> <u>ARABLE BUT SUITED TO</u> <u>GRAZING</u>
Majoge	56,960	3,470
Kitutu	99,200	5,980
Nyaribari	76,160	8,822
North Mugirango	115,200	16,200
Bassi	61,440	3,780
South Mugirango	31,360	1,000
Wanjare	35,200	2,600
N. Nyakoi	38,400	2,080
E. Nyakoi	113,280	3,490
E. Konyango	133,760	15,752
W. Konyango	145,920	17,180
Gem	30,720	1,190
W. Nyakoi	58,240	3,960
Kasingunga	65,280	9,000
Kasingiri	74,240	8,100
Karachuonyo	120,320	10,040
E. Kasipul)	131,200	6,900
W. Kasipul)		
Mfangano Island	16,640	1,320
Rusinga Island	10,240	1,360
Kanyadoto	45,440	2,000
Kanyamkago	69,120	3,820
Suna	185,600	9,400
Mohuru	14,080	1,720
Gwasssi	74,240	11,200
Butende	33,280	2,684
Bukuria	108,160	15,000

**APPENDIX VI**  
**LAND USAGE (CROP PRODUCTION 1955)**

<u>LOCATION</u>	TOTAL AREA NOT SUITABLE FOR ANY AGRICULTURAL PURPOSE	TOTAL ARE WITH ADEQUATE SOIL CONTROL	TOTAL AREA UNDER SOUND LAND USE
Majogge	8,120 acres	40,570	1,468
Kitutu	11,000 "	75,870	2,060
Nyaribari	9,200 "	53,700	1,490
N. Mugirango	12,600 "	74,100	1,438
Bassi	8,500 "	44,200	950
S. Mugirango	6,840 "	20,160	925
Wanjare	5,400 "	25,480	713
N. Nyakol	5,600 "	23,200	NIL
E. Nyakol	10,500 "	85,010	326
E. Konyango	11,000 "	96,310	290
W. Konyango	12,500 "	58,400	NIL
Gem	3,400 "	17,530	35
W. Nyakol	5,600 "	37,440	15
Kasingunga	17,000 "	47,710	NIL
Kaksingiri	19,000 "	51,000	NIL
Karachuonyo	20,040 "	45,300	90
E. Kasipul)	12,500 "	96,460	320
W. Kasipul)		(including Koderia)	
Mfangano	7,000 "	6,400	NIL
Rusinga	2,050 "	4,610	NIL
Kanyada	7,800 "	32,930	60
Kanyamkago	10,100 "	47,980	129
Suna	37,100	92,600	130
Mohuru	1,800 "	3,910	NIL
Gwasssi	18,510 "	34,200	NIL
Butende	7,300 "	22,180	321
Bukuria	17,000 "	63,210	400
	(Lambwe Valley Farm Inst.)		420

SOURCE: ANNUAL REPORT, 1955

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The Africa Review: Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs

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Kiongozi

Target

### INFORMANTS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLACE OF INTERVIEW</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>CLAN</u>
1. Mogendi Sabora	M	26/4/97	Nyamaharaga	67	Bukira
2. Mosabi Botondoye	M	20/4/97	Isibania	60	Bukira
3. Gekone Nyamboha	M	26/4/97	Nyamosense	76	Bugumbe
4. Mokoro Range	F	18/4/97	Kohego	69	Bukira
5. Maroa Wantera	M	12/5/97	Kumumwamu	80	Bugumbe
6. Nyakaira Mwita	M	12/5/97	Komotobo	70	Nyabasi
7. Robi Masubo	F	3/5/97	Komotobo	70	Nyabasi
8. Ikombe Mwita	M	3/5/97	Komotobo	60	Nyabasi
9. Motabu Sabora	M	3/5/97	Kurutiangwe	60	Bukira
10. Mokenya Gesabo	M	3/5/97	Kurutiangwe	70	Bukira
11. Gichoria Machoba	M	24/4/97	Muchebe	86	Bwirege
12. Motongori Kerandi	M	14/7/96	Muchebe	86	Bwirege
13. Chacha Kerata	M	14/7/96	Nyabikaaye	79	Bukira
14. Mwita Sabure	M	22/6/97	Tagare	80	Bwirege
15. Isabella Aguyi	F	20/7/97	Kakrao	69	—
16. Ikwabe Machugu	M	2/7/96	Masura	80	Bwirege
17. Solomon Menge	M	15/7/96	Nyamaharaga	80	Bukira
18. <u>Samson</u> Kerario	M	12/12/97	Komomange	80	Bukira
19. Moherai Makahe	M	11/11/97	Kohego	76	”
20. Simon Mokono	M	4/2/98	Makararangwe	77	”
21. Simion Robi	M	24/6/97	Isibania	69	”

# INFORMANTS

<u>NAME</u>	<u>SEX</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>PLACE OF INTERVIEW</u>	<u>AGE</u>	<u>CLAN</u>
22. Wambura Monanka	M	24/4/97	Sorore	70	"
23. Maraoa Mangera	M	24/4/97	Bongebo	71	Bugumbe
24. Maraoa Nyamohanga	M	24/4/97	Kohego	80	"
25. Benjamin Sangai	M	26/4/97	Nyamwini	70	Bugumbe
26. Benedeto Gibikoye	M	2/5/95	Kurutiaage	60	Bukira
27. Mwita Wandwi	M	24/4/97	Kurutiaange	90	Bukira
28. Wambura Nyaite	M	24/4/97	Gokoharaka	86	Bukira
29. Johannes Nkonya	M	20/5/97	Nyamosense	70	Bugumbe
30. Mohabe Mokenya	M	26/4/97	Kurutiaange	70	Bukira
31. Isasinge Babure	M	2/5/97	Kurutiaange	55	Bukira
32. Boniface Rioba	M	24/4/97	Ntimaru	81	Bwirege
33. Rioba Mwita Chacha	M	24/3/97	Makarangwe	82	Bwirege
34. Anania Moronya	M	17/5/97	Mtiniti	80	Bwirege
35. Gisiri Chacha	M	26/5/97	Mogabiri	76	Butimbaru
36. Robi Mutiba	F	26/5/97	Mogabiri	70	Butimbaru
37. Nahason Monanka	M	20/4/97	Mabera	86	Bugumbe
38. Jackson Maroa	M	15/5/97	Kengori	70	Bwirege
39. Samwel Chacha	M	20/4/97	Nyabikaaye	67	Bukira
40. Benson Matiko	M	14/5/97	Sorore	80	Bukira
41. Mangera Chacha	M	12/4/97	Nyaigena	80	Bugumbe
42. Mogosi Sabayo	M	10/4/97	Gesiora	81	Bugumbe
43. Soko Mwita	M	10/4/97	Keborui	69	Bukira
44. Moseti Matiko	M	20/5/97	Kibumaaye	90	Butimbaro