COTTON-GROWING IN CENTRAL NYANZA PROVINCE, KENYA 1901-1939: AN APPRAISAL OF AFRICAN REACTIONS TO IMPOSED GOVERNMENT POLICY

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ABSTRACT

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By

Harry A. Reed

In 1901 commercial cotton cultivation was introduced into Kenya's Nyanza Province by the British Government. It was expected that cotton production there would produce results similar to the cotton industry in Uganda. However, during the period 1901 to 1923, it became clear that Kenya Africans had not enthusiastically embraced cotton growing and that it would not become the major cash crop of Nyanza Province. Most historians have attributed this failure to the lack of African initiative; the high value indigenous people placed on leisure time; to a lack of character, competence or economic sense; and to a rigid adherence to traditional systems of agriculture.

The present study challenges the above judgements by clarifying the motivations and the actions of the growers not only in terms of archival data but also through oral evidence. Both sources reveal that the Luo were more interested in maintaining the integrity of their society than responding to government dictates. Moreover, the blame for failure to achieve startling results must be shared by the British Government: they lacked a rational plan for developing the industry. A comparison of the Kenya and Uganda experiences also will help to explain the different results.

Moreover, this dissertation examines the failure of the early political activists during 1922-1928 to assist the farmers in redressing their grievances with the colonial government. Without allies and without understanding, Nyanza cotton farmers maintained their traditional farming methods and political structure to ameliorate the impact of imposed colonial policy.

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CHAPTER I

LUOLAND: ECOLOGY AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

History, inherently posits a relationship between two or more groups. Too often, however, the public record has read more like a monologue, enunciating the trials and accomplishments of the super-ordinate power. Since the subordinate group seldom was able to publicize its problems and anxieties the elite's view invariably prevailed. For the European it was necessary to justify the colonial presence in terms of progress. Most often, and on all levels, the imperium was treated as benefiting African society.

Due to the presence of European settlers, Kenya, perhaps more than other East Africa territories, was effected by the idea that Europeans provided direction toward modernization.[1] Any deviations or attempts to moderate European activities or innovations were interpreted as negative responses and as significant defects in African character.

The present study will illustrate that the colonial period encompassed a dialogue, an interaction where the participants were more or less equal, and where each had legitimate reasons for following their own pathways to accomplishment.

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[1]Lord Frederick Lugard, The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922); Elspeth Huxley, White Man's Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya 2 vols. (London: Chatto and Windus, 1953), and No Easy Way: A History of the Kenya Farmers Association and Unga Limited (Nairobi: Kenya Farmers Association, 1957).

It will be necessary when developing this thesis to avoid special pleading for African interests. As with any revisionist history it will necessitate specifying weaknesses in existing scholarship; the purpose always being not to access blame but to achieve a more correct analysis. It is not the intention here to build models. What is most important is to record and interpret events in light of how Kenya Africans justified their reactions to the government's cotton policy.

To set this study in a proper framework requires an examination of Central Nyanza's geography and Luo society. Central Nyanza Province includes the districts of Nyando, Nyahera, Maseno, Boro, Bondo and Ukwala and stretches south and northwest around the Kavirondo Gulf, the eastern-most extremity of Lake Victoria. European travelers and historians took note of the geographical diversity of the region upon first contact. The ecology was both a blessing and a curse because not all zones could support cotton cultivation. Since most Europeans, and certainly those outside the agricultural department, knew little about the region's ecology, they treated the entire area as one and attempted cotton husbandry throughout.

Within Central Nyanza's 1760 square miles there are four principal zones of settlement,[2] corresponding roughly to the different ecological features. The first, and largest of these locations is the Kano Plain or the Lake Shore Savanna (Kano Type). Ranging from 3700 feet to

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[2]John C. deWilde, Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa: The Case Studies, vol. II, (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1967), pp. 122-23.

4,000 feet in altitude the area is characterized by deep alluvial soils. Although the soils are more fertile than in other parts of Central Nyanza, they are difficult to drain and work. Moreover, the area, particularly the east Kano Plain, is susceptible to flooding from the Nyando escarpment.

A second zone of occupation, the lakeside communities or Lake Shore Savanna type, is confined principally to a narrow ten mile strip running along the lakeshore. The Lake Shore Savanna complex, which lies north of the lake, has soils with a high lateritic content and are generally of poor quality. Those portions on the east side of the Lake, particularly around Kusa, however, contain some of the district's best cotton soil.[3] Rainfall, as in the Lake Shore Savanna (Kano Type), is irregular, averaging 30 to 40 inches. In addition this enclave has been subjected to periodic droughts.

The foothill communities of the Star Grass zone comprises the third settlement pattern in Central Nyanza. Situated at 4,500 to 5,000 feet, with soils of variable quality and with a fairly reliable rainfall of about 60 inches annually this zone has probably the most attractive ecological features. It is therefore the area of greatest population density in Central Nyanza.[4]

A final ecological niche, the plateau community areas, on the Higher Rainfall Savanna, has a more reliable rainfall pattern than zone one, but the soils here tend to be less fertile than those of

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[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., p. 124.

the Lake Shore Savanna. Thus, the natural conditions in Central Nyanza did not offer attractive opportunities for cash cropping.

Indigenous appraisals of the fertility of Nyanza's soils were culture-bound and pre-scientific but sophisticated and correct. Before European contact the Luo had named the principal soil varieties.[5] The first of these was called "anywang," a fine black soil found mostly around the lake. A second type, "Iwala," is the red earth soil generally found farther back from the lake. "Kwoyo," or sandy soil, the third variety, could be found, especially near granite out-croppings. Murram, called "Gu" when solid, and "Ge," when disintegrated, comprised the fourth soil category. Finally, stony soil requiring heavy labor was called "Kite." All of the soil types could be found in one location, and all knowledgeable farmers could identify them by sight.

Beyond identifying the soil types, the Luo had also devised methods appropriate for working each. Moreover they had schematized the land as to its crop producing capabilities.[6] In the precolonial Luo frame of reference each of the soils had some positive qualities, and farmers naturally related their economic pursuits with the predominant soil type in his locale.

In Kano, although all soil varieties exist, the area was considered better suited for grazing than for major cultivation. That the Luo preferred cattle keeping to farming is without question, but the

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[5]Archdeacon W.E. Owen, "Food Production and Kindred Matters Amongst the Luo," The Journal of the East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society, 49-50 (April-July 1933), p. 235.

[6]R.B. Dakeyne, "The Patterns of Settlement in Central Nyanza, Kenya," The Austrailian Geographer, VIII (March 1962) pp. 188-89.

dichotomy between cattle keepers and cultivators has remained strong.[7] Usually, in times of disaster, it was argued that, "cattle keepers did not have to go to their neighbors for sustenance."[8] During inclement weather, when crops might totally be destroyed, livestock could be moved to higher ground. Thus, the herdsman could protect his wealth and food supply, but large scale farming was a precarious undertaking. The emphasis on herding and the negative weather conditions did not prevent cultivation in Kano, but they limited the scope of all farming. Farmers clearly sought to achieve marginal returns from a variety of crops rather than to attempt large returns from a limited number of specific crops; the emphasis was always on food crops, and farmers concentrated on a relatively large food crop as an insurance against hunger. With the additional pressure of human and cattle populations there existed only a very limited margin for cash cropping or later expansion.

Before the establishment of European cash crops, the land-use factor in most parts of Kano had reached critical proportions.[9] To reverse the pressure on land would have necessitated heavy government expenditures and probably created grave conflicts for the Luo. First, to suggest that the Luo cull their herds or move them to less favorable locations would have embroiled the administration in an endless

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[7]Yare Okoth, personal interview, Kajulu, 19 November 1973 and Augustinus Orembo, personal interview, Usonga, 13 November 1973.

[8]Walter Odede, "Luo Customs with Regard to Animals (With particular Reference to Cattle)," Journal of East Africa and Uganda Natural History Society, XVI (February, 1942), p. 130.

[9]William Allan The African Husbandman (London: Oliver and Boyd, 1965) p. 351.

series of litigations. It also may possible have touched off a more acute debate among the Luo themselves concerning the merits of cattle keeping and farming.

Second, government had to depend on indigenous farming knowledge and hope that some cotton would be planted. The traditional system of scattered farm-sites made it possible for farmers to cultivate in a variety of soils. In theory this meant that every farmer, in a section where good soils did not predominate, would have equal access to fertile land. Left to their own devices, farmers used all available land to its fullest capacity for food.

The lakeside area had other disabilities. Its isolation made it almost impossible to organize inspection and transport for cash crops. In summary, although the lakeside communities possessed outstanding ecological attributes, they could not be turned to the government's advantage for cash cropping.

In the plateau communities of Central Nyanza conditions were not conducive to cotton growing. Nevertheless cultivation was attempted in a number of areas, with predictably unsuccessful results. Even today small-scale cotton farming is being pursued in areas around Nyabondo.[10] The most serious detriment to establishing the crop in areas such as Nyabondo and the Kajulu Plateau was the high altitude and its accompanying low temperatures.

On the other hand a favorable index, high and reliable rainfall, was present on the plateau. The Luo responded to this circumstance by

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[10]Caleb Abayo Migele, Cotton Officer Kisumu District, personal interview, Kisumu, 18 June 1973.

a general concentration on food crops. In all areas, when favorable growing circumstances were present the Luo immediately responded by increasing food crop acreage,[11] to provide insurance against hunger. The result was that little choice land remained for cash crop development, and the Luo could not understand European reasons for setting aside land for apparently non-productive pursuits such as cotton cultivation.

Even uncultivatable land in plateau communities was used. Swamp land and other undesirable territory were reclaimed and used for communal grazing. When the colonial government requested land for cash crops, these areas of marginal value invariably would be donated. In this way the farmer was saved from disturbing his own acreage. Moreover government initially would be satisfied, and several seasons might pass before the unsuitability of the land was discovered.

Of all the environments in Central Nyanza, the foothill communities, of which Kajulu is the best example, had, on the surface, the ideal conditions for cotton cultivation. Yet these attributes were perceived differently by the Luo and the government. The very attractiveness of the area's ecological features acted to its detriment in the matter of cash cropping. High and reliable rainfall and soils of generally good to excellent quality attracted a sizeable human and animal population. Consequently foothill area residents subjected the land to intensive usage, and this effected yields. The soils were good but generations of overuse had reduced their fertility,[12] and given

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[11] Dakeyne, "Patterns of Settlement," p. 189.

[12] Ezekiel Majon, personal interview, Kajulu, 10 July 1973.

population pressure they could not be taken out of production very easily to lie fallow.

Because of human pressure on the land and the variety of soils, crops in the foothill locations were more varied than in other Central Nyanza communities. Yet this variety was limited to traditional food crops,[13] and farmers were conscious of the risk involved in growing non-food items. In short even those ecological zones that held out the possibility of successful cash-cropping were overburdened by food production before the colonial period.

In 1884, when Europeans first entered Luo-land, they encountered a non-Bantu speaking population of highly mobile and extremely independent cattle-keepers. These Nilotes had migrated from a nuclear area in the Bahr-el-Gezal on the Upper Nile, and had pushed their way into Central Nyanza. There are significantly different interpretations of the motivations for the migrations, the patterns of movement, and the structure of society.[14] However, three facts can generally be discerned. One, precolonial Luo-land had numerous small, politically autonomous units. Two, politics was fluid, complex, and reciprocity and responsibility existed between leaders and their constituents.

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[13]Hugh Fearn, An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of the Nyanza Province of Kenya 1903-1953 (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), p. 168.

[14]J.P. Crazzolara, The Lwoo, 3 vols. (Verona: Missioni Africane, 1950-4); "The Lwoo People," The Uganda Journal, (July 1937); E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Luo Tribes and Clans," Rhodes-Livingstone Journal 7 (1949); Bethwell A. Ogot, Peoples of East Africa: History of the Southern Luo: Migration and Settlement 1500-1900, vol. 1(Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967); Michael G. Whisson, "The Rise of Asembo and the Curse of Kakia," Conference Papers, East African Institute of Social Research (Kampala: Makerere University College, 1961); and "The Journeys' of the Jo Ramogi," Conference Papers, East African Institute of Social Research (Kampala: Makerere University College, 1962).

Three, Luo society was being transformed from a society of mobile cattle herders to sedentary, cattle-keeping farmers.

The relative position of farming in precolonial Luo society was reflected in work patterns and tools. Farming was organized on a family group basis, with the bulk of ongoing cultivation left to women. Farming implements usually included a digging stick, a small wooden plow and the hands.[15]

Traditional Luo economy, like most peasant economic systems, was characterized by barter and reciprocity, and the standard of economic value was the cow.[16] Since cows could not be exchanged or bought into every transaction the Luo worked out a system of using specified measures of traditional food crops as a standard economic unit.

Reciprocity and communal responsibility were also major factors in precolonial Luo economic thinking. Major projects such as building houses or clearing large tracts of land generally required a community effort. Feasts, beer parties and, occasionally, gifts of livestock or fowl constituted payment for services. Social pressure required that payment for services had to be commensurate with the task performed and with the owner's status.[17] Stinting on rations or beer would be severely criticized, and it might jeopardize future projects. Moreover, once an individual had done communal labor and participated in a feast,

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[15]Philip Obonyo, personal interview, Usonga, 13 November 1973.

[16]Michael G. Whisson, Change and Challenge: A Study of the Social and Economic Changes Among the Kenya Luo (Nairobi: The Christian Council of Kenya, 1964), p. 92.

[17]Ex-Chief Simeon Otiende, personal interview, Kajulu, 24 August 1973.

the host was then under obligation for requests of labor from those who had assisted him. In short, the Luo economic structure was flexible enough to allow for an exchange of goods and services and to distribute the wealth of society on a fairly equitable basis through socially conducted economic operations.

Even chiefs and local leaders had to provide acceptable compensation for community projects. Seldom was a request for public works participation ignored because the projects encompassed understandable objectives. Maintaining paths and roads to favorite grazing spots and interlocational markets enhanced the social cohesiveness. Moreover, self-interest motivated participants in community tasks; exploitation was minimal, and work could be viewed as meeting an individual's responsibility for community service. Most important, the leader could demonstrate his magnaminity in the lavishness of his rewards and compensations. Thus his power and influence were enhanced.

Other economic pursuits involving community work served to increase the chief's hegemony and sometimes even increased the wealth of individual participants. When stolen or strayed cattle and livestock had to be recovered the rewards could be substantial,[18] according to the status of the owner. Gifts and favors would be distributed among the coworkers with the explicit but unspoken understanding that the chief or leader would be expecting future support. Thus political control and distribution of wealth were closely related factors in precolonial Luo society.

There has been no investigation of market periodicity and the

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[18]Michael G. Whisson, "The Rise of Asembo and the Curse of Kakia," Conference Papers East African Institute of Social Research (Kampala: Makerere University College, 1961), p. 7.

place of the market in Luo economic life. Markets were, if they existed at all, a minor detail. A rational explanation would suggest that the material level of the society was such that few products were available whose distribution and acquisition would be assisted by some form of public sale or exchange. Moreover, the Luo adherence to cattle-keeping significantly limited the need for markets. Since the number and not the quality of cattle mattered, Luo herders seldom ever slaughtered their cows. Once an animal was slaughtered, and this mostly occurred on ritual occasions, every conceivable part was utilized.[19]

Even though cattle were the most obvious form of wealth, their acquisition was severely restricted. Cattle could be increased legitimately by reproduction, inheritance and theft, the last of which was the most widely practiced means, particularly in adjacent non-Luo areas.[20] Cattle theft required organization and the ability to coordinate tasks and political benefits. In short, the internal features of Luo society, its system of wealth distribution and rewards, the low level of material desires and the particularistic ideation about cattle eliminated the need for the formal system of exchange represented by markets.

After cattle the other consuming interest of precolonial Luo was local level politics. It is extremely important to establish that political activity was local and restricted, and that no large scale, integrative political structures were available.

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[19]Odede, "Luo Customs," p. 130.

[20]Whisson, "Asembo," p. 8.

Yet even with its restricted territorial focus, Luo politics had a complexity that requires a detailed explanation. Of singular importance was the stratification of society in the clan and subclan segments. A major requisite for power was membership in a dominant clan or subclan in the area of residence. In practical terms this meant that leaders could present a powerful and unified front initially composed of his clanmates.[21] An ability to rally one's own clan, while not assuring success, was an important factor in gaining other allies.

Even though political power was closely correlated to dominant clan membership, a man had to possess ability in war. This talent, during times of peace, was used to maintain law and order within the clan area. Another factor of leadership was the ability to rally support, initially among clan members, and sometimes by extending to other locations that wished to combine against a common enemy.

One other factor points up the asset of membership in a dominant clan. Peace makers within the clan were automatically the senior members of each group. These individuals also served as envoys on peace keeping missions among the various locales. Within their own districts the elders acted as an advisory council to the location leader.[22]

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[21] Ibid.

[22] Some confusion surrounds the designation of local rulers. The Luo term Ruoth has been translated by most commentators as chief. Yet many elderly Luo assert their were no chiefs before the Europeans came. Whisson, "Asembo," suggests that despite the controversy over interpreting the term, the tenure of office belonging to the position and even the vagueness of whom at any given time the leader might be, the functions performed by the Ruoth quality him to be designated as chief.

Attracting support was also dependent upon the prospective leader's wealth, which he utilized to pay his supporters by providing feasts, beer celebrations, bridewealth and endowment for wives. Since land was not scarce, wealth for political organization was equated in terms of cattle and crops.

A final prerequisite for leadership and wealth was the possession of magic or the support of a diviner. Magic, ghostly vengence and witchcraft were major factors in Luo religion.[23] Moreover they have their expressions in political life. The "Jabilo," or magician, not only forecast the outcome of combat and cattle raids but also provided supernatural powers to overcome the leader's enemies. Magic in local political affairs persisted late into the twentieth century.[24]

By acquiring prestige and wealth as a warrior and leader in a strong clan or subclan and enhancing these with magic any well-placed man could gain the chieftancy. An outstanding man could possibly overcome less favorable birth if he attracted followers, enforced some of his political decisions and gained support for his political decisions. In short, ability to get tasks done was more important than any single factor.

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[23]On traditional Luo religion, its structural complexity and transformation during the colonial period see: E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Ghostly Vengence Among the Luo of Kenya," Man, 50 (1950), 86-87; Robert A. Levine, "Witchcraft and Co-Wife Proximity in Southwestern Kenya," Ethnology 1 (1962), 39-45; Audrey Wipper "The Cult of Mumbo," Conference Papers East African Institute of Social Research (Kampala: Makerere University College, 1966); Nyangweso, "The Cult of Mumbo in Central and South Kavirondo," Journal of East African and Uganda Natural History Society, 10 (1930), 13-17 and Frederick B. Welbourn and Bethwell A. Ogot, A Place to Feel at Home: A Study of Two Independent Churches in Western Kenya (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

[24]Whisson, "Asembo," p. 9.

Clearly the prerequisites for political leadership point up the dynamism of the precolonial Luo political system. Moreover, within its restricted territorial focus, political development was complex and widespread. Chiefs, once they had obtained leadership, bolstered their power by creating a local hierarchy. Each gweng, or settlement had a subchief appointed by the Ruoth, and each subchief was assisted by council of advisors and a police force.[25] If for any reason the Ruoth lost control of his area, his supportive hierarchy would be dismantled or transformed to meet the new leader's needs.

Clearly the Luo concentration on local area politics had provided the means for full community participation. Since the structure was geared to selecting leaders on the basis of general community need, responsibilities were clearly apparent. Moreover, objective criteria existed by which constituents could judge the leader's performance. Every leader in effect had a mandate from the people to deal with pressing community needs. Once this mandate had been completed, for example threat from outside forces, if the leader possessed none of the skills required for peace time administration an orderly transfer of power could be arranged by his council of elders.[26]

Beyond the council of elders there existed several other avenues for community feedback. The administrative hierarchy provided direct access to the chief's representatives in the precolonial structure. It was expected that subchiefs would put forth and support the grievances of his local people even those who because of seniority were unable to

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[25]Aidan Southall, "Lineage Formation Among the Luo," Memoranda of the International African Institute, 26 (1952), p. 27.

[26]E.E. Evans-Pritchard, "Luo Tribes and Customs," p. 32.

attend barazas could feel certain their petition would receive a hearing.

Not all men in the locations could attend barazas. Attendance at the sub-locational level was dependent on maturity, which in this case was equated with marriage and the maintenance of family responsibilities.[27] At this lower level baraza, participants would choose representatives who would accompany the subchief to the chief's baraza. Consequently the system allowed participation for adult males and provided a check on the subchief's ability to represent his constituents.

Although political competition was intense on the local levels no Pan-Luo political structure existed. Fortunately for the colonial government this meant the system would not present insurmountable problems for the application of indirect rule. On the other hand, colonial administrators misunderstood the complexity of the precolonial structure and tended to force local political competition into new directions and the structure itself into a new mold.[28]

Under the colonial government the traditional political system therefore maintained a good deal of its dynamism. However, several substantive changes were apparent: the British government became the final arbiter in selecting and confirming the chief, and he became a colonial civil servant subject to administrative control and dismissal. For all practical purposes any degree of social control over the chief's performance was removed from the people.

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[27]Gordon M. Wilson The Luo Homestead and Family (Elgon Nyanza District)(Nairobi: Government Archives, 1965), p. 17.

[28]Bethwell A. Ogot, "British Administration in the Central Nyanza District of Kenya, 1900-60," Journal of African History, 4 (1963) p. 262.

Although wealth remained a criteria for leadership, the access to wealth changed considerably. No longer were magic and cattle theft the major means of obtaining wealth. They were replaced by education, foreign language skill and the ability to function within the new government. Not only was the acquisition of wealth changed but also the chief's function as the major distributor of wealth was transformed. Since tenure of office depended more on colonial administrative approval than meeting constituents' demands, feasts became less elaborate and less frequent.[29] The "income" loss from prohibited cattle raids, court fees and social obligations were more than overcome through manipulation of the new money economy as chiefs became entrepreneurs.[30]

Other features of political leadership also changed under the colonial impact. For example, younger men became chiefs, and this led to the anomoly of having the baraza conducted by a man who, in the traditional system, would not even be allowed to attend because of his youth.[31] Probably the most important alteration was the creation of a new reservoir of potential leadership. Previously location leadership encompassed the chief, his advisors and his hierarchy. Under the British, appointed chiefs had to accomodate themselves to the fact that

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[29]Chief Charles Onyango, personal interview, Kajulu, 16 October 1973.

[30]Barnarbus Nyangor, personal interview, Ndere, 9 November 1973. Chiefs became the leading consumers of western goods. In 1935, Mr. Nyangor said, Chief Amoth of Alego became the first African in the area to purchase a motor car. Other chiefs reportedly opened bars, market stalls, and one even financed a house building company.

[31]Whisson, "Asembo," p. 17.

the elders, formerly advisors to the chief, maintained a high degree of political influence[32] through direct contact with European administrators.

The viability of precolonial Luo politics therefore survived, throughout the colonial period for two basic reasons. One, the adjusted system continued to respond to traditional political problems such as security, law and order, maintaining the standard of living and providing a mechanism for distributing wealth and services. Second, the system was flexible enough to allow for changes and the colonial administration's restrictions were not greatly at variance with pre-European practices.

In summary, the Luo area of settlement presented a host of political and ecological problems that would severely restrict the establishment of an African-based cotton industry without massive inputs of men, money and material. Moreover, the Luo had successfully adapted to the geographical limitations of Central Nyanza.

But the precolonial Luo political structure, with its absence of widespread integration did facilitate the colonial government. The focus on local level problems and administration made the system adaptable to British concepts of indirect rule. It therefore maintained its viability so that Luo political energies continued to have essential outlets.

While adapting to the imposition of the new integrative structure the political/social system provided a format for change. The

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[32]John M. Lonsdale A Political History of Nyanza 1883-1945, Unpubl. Ph.D. diss. (Trinity College, Cambridge University, 1964), p. 26.

ambivalences of the Luo problem are immediately apparent. The thesis to be developed in this study is that the Luo political/social constructs eased the inevitable change brought about by colonialism. More importantly the Luo assessment of the inherent value of their particular system dictated the speeds, the direction and the level at which they responded to the colonial system.

CHAPTER II

THE RATIONALE FOR CASH CROPPING AND THE PROBLEMS INHERENT IN ESTABLISHING THE KENYA COTTON INDUSTRY, 1901-1915

One of the problems that faced the British Government in the administration of the East African Protectorate, was how to shift the costs of railway maintenance, military pacification, and general administration from the imperial exchequer to the protectorate.[1] In other colonies or protectorates, especially in Uganda, a system of agricultural cash cropping had served to generate the needed revenues. Cash cropping, it was argued, would have the advantage of producing a taxable income for the local population while allowing it to pursue its customary vocation of farming. A money income would eliminate in-kind tax payments and would allow the colonial people to purchase British products. Therefore, both colonizer and colonized would reap the benefits of the new economic system.

It will be argued here that the above premises constituted little more than general policy guidelines. While they allowed for freedom of action, they were ineffective as administrative operating procedures.

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[1] Richard D. Wolff, "Economic Aspects of British Colonialism in Kenya, 1895 to 1930," The Journal of Economic History, xxx (1970), p. 275.

Clearly stated goals were lacking. For example, in relation to cotton, the ability of the land in Nyanza to sustain the crop's growth was unknown, and no provisions were made to ascertain the carrying capacity of the land. Moreover it will be shown that the guidelines failed to provide a framework for coordinating the various groups interested in establishing the cotton industry. The agricultural department, railroad officials and British businessmen seldom supported the others' plans. The result was, in the years 1901 to 1915, an *ad hoc* approach to and the limited success of cotton cash cropping.

In the early twentieth century the British textile industry needed the fiber from its colonial territories because demand for the product considerably exceeded America's supply ability. Therefore it appeared as if cotton would be a marketable and profitable commodity. Further beneficial effects would possibly accrue to Britain from the establishment of a commercial sector within the East African Protectorate. Since Africans had not acquired the requisite entrepreneurial skills, this expertise must perforce come from settler population, from other colonies, or the metropole.

The tentative beginnings of European economic planning for Western Kenya can be seen in the efforts of District Commissioner H.B. Partington. One of the pioneer staff persons in the protectorate, Partington, without benefit of a definite administrative policy, conceived of setting in motion those processes that would stimulate economic and political development. In 1901, he distributed cotton, vegetable, and oil seeds to people living in Kisumu and around the Kibos River. The Kibos River scheme merits special attention since it contains several

of the elements involved in transforming territories into viable economic entities.

Around 1900, a group of Indians, formerly laborers on or in some capacity connected with the building of the railroad, were settled by the British government along the banks of the Kibos River. This settlement had two purposes: one, to provide a military buffer between the victorious Luo who occupied Kajulu location and their defeated Nandi neighbors. The Asians, who were armed by the protectorate government, were employed to deter any Nandi attempts to reopen hostilities and regain their lost territory. Secondly, the community was to engage in farming and in irrigating the areas around the Kibos River. They, it was envisioned, would be innovators, ostensibly introducing new crops and techniques and thereby creating an impetus for change in the surrounding African communities.[2] The colonial government felt they had guaranteed the Asian communitys' enthusiastic participation by giving them homesteads, seeds, and preferential treatment. The reasoning from the government's point of view appeared sound. In the Asian Kibos settlement, the administration had a western-oriented, homogeneous community with some familiarity in peasant farming techniques.

Any blame for the failure of the Kibos scheme to generate economic development within the surrounding African communities must be shared equally by the government and the local farmer: Nairobi's paternalism lacked clear cut goals and failed to provide clear economic incentives. The African farmers, on the other hand, disrespected the agricultural

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[2]C.O. 544, E.A.P., Dept. of Agriculture, B.E.A. Annual Administration Reports (1903-1904), p. 6.

innovations introduced by the new community, since they were distrustful of foreigners and felt that indigenous farming techniques did not require changes, particularly those generated by foreigners.

Even in Kisumu, where there were no foreign innovators, some of the same reservations prevented Africans from enthusiastically pursuing cotton cash cropping. In Kisumu the government was even more lax in their paternalism. No records exist detailing where, to whom and how much seed was distributed; of more importance in the failure of those two efforts is the fact that Africans did show an interest in modernization.

A progressive tendency can clearly be discerned in the schemes of Wadegu, Chief of E. Seme location, who volunteered workmen as laborers to the railroad. The impetus may have come from wishing to familiarize the community with this new force, to gain a money income or to appease the new government, or to keep the Europeans from penetrating the interior and distrubing community life; or to insure that E. Seme be given some preferential recognition should the government move into the area. The last possibility must be given serious consideration when evaluating African motivations since the Luo of Seme were one of the few Central Nyanza communities with direct knowledge of European fire power. Wadegu might have been willing, therefore, to employ placatory methods rather than confront the new government. Even if British occupation could not be delayed by such ingratiating acts, the chief was hopeful of becoming government's acknowledged representative. In short, Wadegu showed himself ready to adapt to the political realities.[3]

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[3]Otieno Otite, personal interview, East Seme, 15 August 1973.

Nevertheless, the low status of money in the African value system is evident in this and subsequent activities in E. Seme. The railroad workers returned to the location, but their experiences and their rewards did not stimulate any sizable influx of people into Kisumu to pursue wage labor; nor did the workers spread the ideas of growing cotton. To the consternation of C.W. Hobley and Partington, they apparently never even noticed the new farms or the new crops.[4] Moreover, government had not provided the necessary economic infrastructure to aid the farmer in this new venture, and they had failed to offer real economic incentives to the farmer. No roads had been built, nor had any attention been given to constructing a purchasing center in proximity to the growing areas. In addition, no attempt had been made by government to teach the proper techniques for the planting and care of cotton. As a result the crop was picked, but left to rot in storage, when the farmers refused to head load it twenty-six miles into Kisumu.[5] Without substantial financial assistance, the peasant farmer withheld his cooperation in order to retain his autonomy. Since Nairobi had neither finances nor direction it was unable to interest the farmer or London in a cotton campaign. Consequently assistance was sought from private sources.

In 1905, Sir Donald Stewart, Commissioner of the Protectorate, corresponded with members of the British Cotton Growing Association concerning the possibilities for growing the crop in the territory;

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[4] C.O. 544, Ibid, p. 7.

[5] Zekayo Ongeso, personal interview, Kombewa, 26 July 1973.

he wondered if the association would be interested in joining the government in the maintenance and administration of an experimental farm at Malindi.[6] Stewart's proposal represented the beginning of the period of businessmen's influence in the protectorate. Stewart sought their assistance because he lacked confidence in the abilities of the settlers as well as the African farmers.[7] Responding to Stewart's invitation, British businessmen, particularly those associated with the British Cotton Growing Association, commenced a program of lobbying that gave them the initiative for planning the cotton industry in the East Africa Protectorate.

An opening movement was initiated by Joseph Foulkes, President, B.C.G.A., in his correspondence with Lord Elgin, the Under-Secretary of State for Colonies. In 1905, Foulkes requested a land grant of twenty to forty thousand acres of prime land for cotton cultivation and asked that B.C.G.A. be given a monopoly in the development of the crop.[8] The letter specified no particular area, but it was understood by all parties that the land would be in the coastal areas because of the existing facility at Malindi and the proximity of dependable transport. Foulkes' request was transmitted to Commissioner J. Sadler Hayes, who had assumed the position after Stewart's death. Hayes responded with a favorable evaluation of cotton prospects in the

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[6]C.O. 533, Stewart to British Cotton Growing Association, Mombasa, 3 April 1905, E.A.P., Commissioners Dispatches (1905), p. 280.

[7]G.H. Mungeam, British Rule in Kenya 1895-1912: The Establishment of Administration in the East Africa Protectorate (Oxford, at The Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 116.

[8]C.O. 533, Foulkes to Lord Elgin, London, 26 May 1905, E.A.P., Individual Dispatches, 1905 (Vol. 10) p. 281.

protectorate. He also suggested the suitability of widespread cultivation in the Kavirondo District, an area not previously mentioned. He intimated, however, that government could handle development of the crop.[9] For his assertion Hayes received a mild reprimand concerning his lack of sensitivity to the association's public spirit. Hayes therefore was forced to state he would be happy to leave the commercial development of cotton to the British concern.

With this mild impediment out of the way, the businessmen moved to develop the industry as they wished. Late in 1906, Arthur Bolton, Vice Chairman of the B.C.G.A., escalated the pressure on the colonial secretary. This time the association also requested approval of plans to establish their own seed farm.[10] Bolton further suggested that government assign a cotton expert to the protectorate who would work closely with the association; and that an annual grant of £ 1500, for three years, should be given as government's share in the undertaking. It was broadly hinted that the enterprise would provide employment for Africans, would ensure that quality control standards in seed distribution be maintained, and that instruction and also some missionary work would be commenced among workers in the areas.

Government approved only one of the association's requests. It was granted £ 1000 per year for three years. Such modest government support, however, did not demonstrate the real or potential influence of the British entrepreneur. His importance can be more readily seen

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[9] C.O. 533, Hayes to Lord Elgin, Nairobi, 10 May 1906, E.A.P., Commissioner's Despatches, 1906 (Vol. 14) p. 281.

[10] C.O. 533, Bolton to Lord Elgin, London, 14 March 1906, E.A.P., Original Correspondences (Miscellaneous Individuals A-C) (Vol. 24) 1906, p. 117.

in the reorganization of the Protectorate's Agriculture Department, which coincided with the agitation of the B.C.G.A., and which allowed for the inclusion of the views of the commercial sector. The changes suggest that entrepreneurial interests were strong enough to influence governmental decision-making. Further it points up the close relationship between government and commercial interests, a factor that was not lost on settler businessmen at a later date.

B.C.G.A. did become involved with the government's Kibos experimental farms. Its major contribution was in the field of experimental cotton techniques and production studies. In 1908 the association found that, with proper husbandry, rainfall, and seed variety, one acre could produce 610 pounds of seed cotton.[11] After the 1908 experiments, the association's role in Nyanza became minimal in part because the periodic flooding in the province had negated much of the pioneering work commenced by the corporation.

Later in 1912, at a time when African agriculture was sadly neglected because of government's policy of developing the settler areas only, John Ainsworth, the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza, introduced major agricultural schemes.[12] Among these were sim sim, maize, groundnut and cotton, the last not as a new crop but significantly extended in cultivation. Ainsworth realized that the potential for development lay with the African farmer. Ecological conditions,

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[11]Kenya National Archives, Nairobi, Nyanza Province Annual Report 1907-1908, p. 22.

[12]Bethwell A. Ogot "British Administration in the Central Nyanza District of Kenya, 1900-60," Journal of African History, IV (1963), p. 255.

he suggested, would militate against a large settler population in Kavirondo. Moreover, if real economic development were to be accomplished, then Nyanza Province could not be viewed as a labor reservoir for settlers. Though Ainsworth was to change his perceptions about settler labor requirements, his early attempt to limit wage labor migration from Nyanza meant that the area would not be drained of manpower, its most vital resource. At the time, Ainsworth was strongly condemned by many of his European colleagues as being pro-African.

The new crops introduced by Ainsworth generally were not successful. Groundnuts became extensively cultivated only on the Nyakach Plateau, and even there it was not accepted fully until the middle 1920's. Much of the crop's final success must be assigned to the efforts of local leaders such as Andrea Okal and Mathayo Otieno, who used their own personal influence and lobbied among farmers for a united effort to request a more stable governmental program for the crop. More importantly, by the mid 1920's the farmers were more interested in pursuing a money income, and peanuts required fewer man hours than did cotton, a fact not lost on the cultivator. More significantly, other cash crops were also food crops that could have been worked into the daily diet had the Luo been so inclined. The slow African response to crops more attractive than cotton should have alerted government to the continuing problems that cotton cultivation would have to endure. Ainsworth, however, may be credited for the enlightened manner in which he attempted to stimulate the economic growth of the province.

Among the administrative devices introduced by Ainsworth, none was more important than the assignment of administrative personnel to assist agricultural department members in their daily responsibilities. In the period 1908 through 1920, the Agricultural Department in Nyanza was woefully understaffed, and if the program of introducing cotton as a cash crop were to be successful, manpower would be required, even if lacking agricultural expertise. Of the more pressing needs, none was more important, in the early years, than maintaining liason with local Africans, if only to ensure that the crop would be planted at all.

However, it was not always possible to coordinate the comings and goings of extension workers with the availability of the provincial officers. It was possible for campaign schedules to become lost in bureaucratic mismanagement with the result being that an extension worker could appear at a location to find the farmers uninformed about any scheduled meeting and his administrative counterparts absent. In such cases it was only possible for the extension worker to continue his rounds unassisted and with little or no cooperation from farmers in the locations. Having faced the unpreparedness of the farmer alone, the situation was exacerbated when the extension worker returned to the administrative center. There he would be met with reprimands about encroaching on administrative prerogatives by independently touring the locations and with complaints about disregarding schedules and with wasting valuable government time.

Nor was the problem of lack of manpower resolved even with the permanent assignment to Kibos, in 1904, of Mr. H.H. Holder, to work as an agricultural inspector and teacher among the Nyanza farmers.

Although delighted by Holder's appointment, the district commissioner stressed that "the country is, however, large enough for the employment of half a dozen such men, . . . one man's progress is very slow."[13] As a Trinidadian, Holder had been chosen not only because he had been trained in tropical agriculture but also because he was black. It was felt that the African farmer would respond more readily to a black man and because "climatic conditions were such [in Kibos] that Europeans cannot be employed all the year round."[14] Although Holder's assignment at Kibos can be seen as part of a positive effort to implement economic proposals, it brought into sharper focus the problems of the manpower shortage. From the beginning it was obvious in some quarters that successful economic development would depend largely on African participation. However, trained African personnel was not available to serve as local level administrators. The provincial staff,therefore, welcomed the opening of missionary schools in Nyanza, in anticipation of having a trained group of indigenous people to relieve the strain of administration.

In 1902, the American Friends located their mission at Kaimosi, slightly to the northwest of Kisumu, in Abaluyia country. Although located outside of Luo, its successful establishment set the precedent for missions in Central Nyanza proper. With the attendent favorable publicity about Kaimosi, in 1904, the Mill Hill Fathers found ready acceptance when they opened their mission and schbol at Kisumu. Probably the most successful of the mission enterprises was the Church Missionary

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[13] K.N.A., Nyanza Province Annual Report 1909, p. 14.

[14] C.O. 544, E.A.P., Dept. Agriculture B.E.A., Annual Administration Reports 1907-1908, p. 2.

Society School at Maseno. Opened in 1906 under the directorship of Bishop J.J. Willis, Maseno immediately attracted a fair-sized student body composed of the sons of chiefs and other prominent men from neighboring communities.

In addition to preparing Africans for the civil service, the Mission schools also sought to develop a European work ethic among their pupils. Along with reading, writing, and numbers, punctuality, accurateness and cleanliness were taught. Protectorate authorities viewed this training as conditioning the Luo to accept the European presence and fostering their active participation in the process. Moreover, entry level clerks were seen as invaluable adjuncts to the local indigenous authorities. Through these clerks it would be possible to institute record keeping procedures and to have close at hand, in local affairs, an African owing loyalties not to the area chief but to the colonial government. The benefits of a trained African staff is readily apparent in the following assessment of the ability of traditional rulers to meet the needs of modern administration.

> In a very few instances it is found possible to make use of the more intelligent chiefs and headmen in the administration of the country. Unfortunately, however, such chiefs are extremely few in number. We have in actuality no reliable native administration to assist us in this Province, the consequence being that nearly every matter of importance and indeed many matters of very small importance, required to be enquired into by an officer of the administration. 15

The importance of mission education was underlined by the 1912 promulgation of the Native Authority Ordinance, which outlined working

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[15] K.N.A., "Report on the Progress and Condition of the Kisumu Province for 1907-08 (ending 31 March 1908)," Nyanza Province Annual Report 1907-1908, p. iv.

orders for chiefs, with direct supervision by the district commissioner. Not only was the chief's responsibility made clear, but his power was also institutionalized and thereby enhanced. As he was allowed to create his own local administrative hierarchy and have it recognized, if not totally accepted by government, the chief was able to consolidate his leadership to a degree that was unattainable in precolonial Luo society. As he could now only be removed by Naitobi, the democratic participation of the community was eliminated more through colonial administrative needs than through the desires of the people.

The ordinance did not create new areas of responsibility for chiefs, it simply codified already established practices. Five areas of primary responsibility were contained in the statute. First, and probably among the most important, was the task of tax collection. Chiefs had been given this responsibility early on, and in 1908, they had been instructed by Ainsworth to use a portion of the hut tax collection to purchase seeds to grow export commodities.

Second, the construction and maintenance of roads in the reserve was a major responsibility which entailed the organization and supervision of working parties composed of all available able-bodied adults. The third requirement was directly tied to number two, since chiefs were expected to encourage men in the reserve and, to a lesser extent, outside the reserve, to undertake wage labor, particularly on government work projects such as railroad maintenance and civil and municipal construction.

In the long run the fourth responsibility, the supervision of the planting of cash crops, was probably the most important. As the

reluctance to pursue cotton growing manifested itself, supervision eventually occupied a major portion of the chief's energy and time. Most chiefs continued their own demonstration plots, sometimes of considerable acreage, on which they utilized unpaid community labor. It appears that the British administrative staff was not aware of this mechanism, but it seems doubtful that they would have rushed to eliminate the practice. Nothing in the ordinance forbade chiefs to use communal working parties or to have their own cash cropping plots. Furthermore, demonstration plots were welcomed for teaching purposes, and no doubt were encouraged by government as long as complaints and malpractices did not manifest themselves.

Finally, chiefs conducted arrests and trials for misdemeanors, and even this legal chore directly contributed to the economic development of Central Nyanza. It was possible to discipline malingerers and others who objected too strenously to the introduction of cotton and other cash crops. Acting with swiftness and using public corporal punishment, a chief could minimize objections while demonstrating to his constituents that he had the authority to enforce his pronouncements.

In order to administer more efficiently, chiefs found it necessary to recruit local level administrators. Among these functionaries were the chief's clerk and the headmen of location subdivisions. Every headman in turn had his own helpers which made for a simple, but widespread network of control. The clerk's position was more ceremonial than powerful. However, because the clerk was present at all functions and operated at the seat of power he enjoyed much prestige and influence.

The system did not, however, fully meet the requirements of the British Government. Theoretically local government should have eased the burdens of the short-handed provincial staff. Instead the burgeoning local structure created new problems because a significant number of local administrators had priorities that conflicted with protectorate aims.[16] The problem of supervision was more acute than it had been before the ordinance. One compensating factor for the colonial authorities was the fact that some chiefs ambitiously pursued their responsibilities, and in the case of Owiti in Kano his diligence was producing cotton and creating an atmosphere for the introduction of other cash crops.

Thus, during the years 1901-1912, a piecemeal approach to the introduction of cotton was utilized by all the principals involved, the Protectorate Government, the African peasant farmer and the European business community. Because of various contradictions, each group hesitated fully to promote or accept the crop. Although the primary direction of economic development was government's responsibility it was forced into facillating, nonproductive action. Nairobi lacked a rational development plan and did not have the requisite finances nor manpower for economic development. During this period the most positive economic inputs came from John Ainsworth, who, beginning in 1908, saw the necessity of protecting Nyanza's labor force from European encroachments. In order to protect the province's population, Ainsworth introduced export crops, including cotton. He

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[16]Allois Laja, personal interview, Nyakach, 18 September 1973. Mr. Laja, a respected elder in his location reported that chiefs were diligent in the collection of taxes but generally ignored other duties that required time-consuming work: cash cropping policy was only adhered to when authorities had easy access to an area.

must be given full credit for conceptualizing a program that might have stimulated economic growth in the province, and his failure to achieve his aims cannot detract from his extraordinary vision.

From the perspective of the European business community, Nyanza offered great but untested potential. Rather than plunge ahead, British entrepreneurs lobbied successfully for partial government financial support. However, government grants were no guarantee of establishing a cotton industry. As it developed, the British Cotton Growing Association had little more than a desire to contribute to the territory's financial development. Initially requesting an enormous land grant, a yearly operations grant, and the use of the government facility at Mazeras Experimental Farm, the corporation ended by accepting a lower yearly grant and a working arrangement with the recently established Kibos experimental farm. Since they did not have the expertise available for developing the industry, much of their activity was given over to publicizing the social welfare aspects of their program. A more business-like approach would have focused on potential yields, the increase in foreign exchange, and the future successful economic development of the country.

With the other principals displaying varying degrees of reluctance about the establishment of a cotton industry, the African farmers' unwillingness to adopt cotton growing is put in context. In terms of their subsistence economy, many farmers seemed to be arguing that they were wealthy enough, and that physical exertion in pursuit of an exotic crop within an unknown structure, the money economy, seemed unnecessary, if not foolish. None of the African arguments, however, was to prevail. Essential to the continued pursuit of establishing

the Kenyan cotton industry was the fact that by 1912 the outlines of the potential success of Uganda's cotton experiment were being discerned. Not only did this stimulate the efforts in Kenya, but it also affected, years later, the interpretation and comparisons of the Kenya and Uganda industries.

CHAPTER III

THE UGANDA CASE

As stated previously, current comparisons of the Uganda and Kenya cotton industries are misleading because they uncritically designate the Uganda case as the more successful experiment. While valid, this conclusion has been determined without considering the socio-political perceptions of the participating peasants.[1]

The economic indices, yield per acre, total acreage, the supportive infrastructure, acquisition of capital and consumer goods, increased government revenues and the growth of foreign earnings are important. They do not, however, explain differential responses to basically the same stimulus. When assessing peasant reaction to imposed government policy, it is important to understand how the new ideas were perceived, how the cultivators intended to use the produce, and how they fitted into a transitional society.

There were a number of preconditions in Buganda which allowed for greater acceptance of cotton. There was a centralized state with a

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[1] C.C. Wrigley's outstanding work on the precolonial Buganda economy does not include an appraisal of the Baganda personality. For a discussion of the Baganda character see John Allen Rowe, Revolution in Buganda 1856-1890 Part One: The Reign of Kabaka Mukabya Mutesa 1856-1884, unpubl. Ph.D. diss. (University of Wisconsin, 1966), pp. 26-32; John Roscoe, "Further Notes on the Manners and Customs of the Baganda," Journal of the Anthropological Institute, xxxii (1902), pp. 46-48; and Martin Southwold, "Ganda," in James L. Gibbs, ed., Peoples of Africa (New York, 1965).

responsive civil service that quickly and efficiently could be mobilized; and there existed a desire and an aptitude for modernization and a rudimentary money economy. Another factor was the intense Baganda political and social consciousness operating within an acquisitive and highly material society. Since all of these conditions were absent in Nyanza, the Luo responded more slowly to cotton cash cropping. Hopefully this comparative analysis will clarify the Kenya situation for future researchers.

In the early fifteenth century a governing structure began evolving in the area that later became Buganda.[2] At that time, Kintu, legendary founder and first kabaka, attempted to exert hegemony over the dispersed Bantu-speaking agriculturalists. Although unsuccessful, he began the process whereby the monarchy and centralization became the most important features of the Baganda state.

Governmental activities were organized through a hierarchy of appointive territorial officials. Three basic units comprised the civil service, the bakunga (saza or county chiefs), the batongole (the king's personal liason to the bakunga) and the bataka (clan heads). The bakunga, ten in all, one for each county, remained in residence in the capital.[3] It was, therefore, possible to issue clear and concise orders to functionaries at the same time, thus minimizing, if not eliminating, different and conflicting interpretations. The

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[2]Sir Apolo Kagwa, The Customs of the Baganda, translated by Ernest B. Kalibala and edited by May Mandelbaum Edel. (New York, 1934), p. 18.

[3]P.C.W. Gutkind, "Notes on the Kibuga of Buganda," The Uganda Journal, 24 (1960), p. 30.

structure provided easy access to leaders, dissemination of information and a system of checks and balances.[4]

The centralization of Buganda significantly aided the acceptance of cash cropping. From 1901 to 1903 European commercial interests benefitted from using this structure. Mr. Kenneth Borup, an industrial missionary of the Church Missionary Society, held extensive discussions with the chief ministers of Buganda about the possibility of introducing commercial cotton-growing. Because of these discussions, it appeared to peasant farmers that the power constellations - the kabaka, the lukiiko (Buganda's parliament), the British Government and the missionaries - had all approved of cotton cultivation.

Unlike the trial and error process in Kenya, cotton's introduction in Uganda proceeded in a rational, businesslike manner. In 1903 Borup imported sixty-two bags of cotton seed donated by British businessmen.[5] Seed was distributed to selected farmers for planting, and the trials proved so successful that government in 1905 issued a ton of Black Rattler seed in Buganda, Busoga, Bunyord and Ankole.

Borup's judicious planning lessened the idea that the Baganda were faced with a *fait accompli*. Moreover, the lukiiko's cooperation was assured. Not only were the parliament's ideas accepted but it also was allowed to disseminate the completed plans to the selected areas. This created the impression favored and fostered by the Baganda that

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[4]Elizabeth Colson, "The Role of Bureaucratic Norms in African Political Structures," Systems of Political Control and Bureaucracy in Human Societies, Verne F. Ray, ed. (Seattle, 1958), p. 47.

[5]H.B. Thomas and R. Scott, Uganda (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), p. 127.

they were the leading force in the campaign to establish cotton as a cash crop. In turn this propaganda worked to assure the fullest compliance at the local level and to deter negative responses because proclamations emanating from Kampala were difficult to ignore. Since traditional civil servants could be removed at the pleasure of the king, it behooved them to respond positively to his suggestions.[6] Thus Borup's decision to distribute suggestions via the indigenous government's communication system was inspired.

Utilization of the Baganda communications network meant that only a small number of European civil servants were required. On the other hand, the decentralized nature of Luo polities in Kenya necessitated not only large numbers of colonial supervisors, but also a variety of approaches to meet local, particular needs. The multiplicity of plans resulted in a correspondingly higher level of resistance and failure than was encountered in Uganda. Not only was there an absence of an overall responsible political structure, but also local political rivalries were more significant than compliance with colonial government directives.

Unlike the Buganda case, where colonials took on a semi-official status[7], Europeans entering Luo society were regarded as foreigners, and they remained outsiders. Far from absorbing colonials into their political structure, the Luo mostly tried to ignore the newcomers'

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[6]J.H.M. Beattie, "Checks on the Abuse of Political Power in Some African States: A Preliminary Framework for Analysis," Sociologus 9 (1959), p. 101.

[7]Alexina Harrison, editor, A.M. MacKay, Pioneer Missionary of the Church Missionary Society to Uganda (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1892), p. 80.

presence. For example, even though C.W. Hobley was the personal friend of several important local leaders around the Kano Plain,[8] this relationship did not give him status with chiefs around the Seme area. Hobley was faced with the necessity of cultivating each local administrator whose territory he reached. This task was made more complex by the *ad hoc* nature of Luo community leadership. The existing Luo political structure did not provide immediately easy entry for Europeans nor did it appear on its own to be readily adaptable to colonial administrative manipulation.[9] To be effective, most colonial policy required the presence of European supervisory staff.

Some Luo areas around the lake engaged in active military confrontation with the British. Typical of these brief but sharp and decisive skirmishes was the fight at Southeast Kano around 1889. The British advance party led by Hobley was accompanied by Swahili Askaris acting as interpreters and guides. In December 1889 several askari entered one of the villages on the southeast border of Chief Kitoto's territory. The facts are sufficiently confused to make it impossible to determine if these men were acting under orders or simply under their own authority. They began rounding up fowl, eggs, goats and other consumable items. There was, of course, some hostility but nothing serious, until one askari attempted to appropriate a cow belonging to Abougi, a community war leader who had a reputation as an able fighter.[10] An

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[8] C.W. Hobley Kenya: From Charted Company to Crown Colony, 2nd edition, (London: Frank Cass and Company Ltd, 1970), p. 127.

[9] Ibid., p. 129.

[10] Hezron Onganjo, personal interview, West Kano, 10 September 1973. Mr. Onganjo's grandfather, Chore, took part in this fight.

argument developed over the askari's right to the cow, which quickly accelerated into a general confrontation over the soldier's right of appropriation. A pushing match started, a shot was fired, and in the ensuing melee one askari was speared to death and another seriously wounded. His companions beat a hasty retreat.

Quickly realizing the magnitude of the event, the community mobilized for war. Women, children and cows were packed off to the swamps, and the men awaited the return of the soldiers. Meanwhile, the deafeated troops had returned to Kisumu and reported the incident. C.W. Hobley organized a small expedition which contained fewer than twenty-five men, only three of whom were Europeans. Their movements were observed, and upon reaching the village, they sighted Luo warriors drawn up and seemingly ready for battle. Since both sides appeared reluctant to initiate hostilities, Hobley decided that the guilty party, and this was believed to be Abougi, should be turned over to him.

From this point on the sequence of events is unclear. It seems, however, that the villagers continued to press their idea of the illegality of the askari's search and seizure tactics. Also as a warrior, Abougi was interested in matching his skills against newcomers. Tempers grew heated, and the two groups separated. Finally the Luo rushed forward to launch spears, only to be met by rifle fire. Never before had the villagers faced gunfire, and its effect was devastating, not only physically, but also psychologically. Overwhelmed by the noise and the ease with which the soldiers could administer pain and death the Luo broke and chaotically retreated towards the swamps. The deadly accuracy of gunfire is still a vivid memory to surviving eyewitnesses: "They were far away and yet the noise killed

Abougi and my grandfather. The noise made everybody run."[11]

Several months later in February 1890, a second sharp encounter took place at another village northwest of Kano. In this clash, the circumstances leading to hostilities differed but the conclusions were the same. A messenger from South East Kano has been selected by Hobley to act as his guide in exploring the remainder of Luo country up to the Tanganyika border. Upon reaching Seme the guide refused to accompany the British any farther, and he was aided in this insubordination by warriors from a village in West Seme.[12] Once the opposing sides had arranged themselves and negotiations seemed at an impasse the Luo launched their spears. The sharp retort resulted in two deaths, the wounding of several others and the scattering of Luo forces.

For all practical purposes these two conflicts represented the pacification of Luo land. The defeats signaled to both the Luo and the British that major adjustments would have to be accomplished on both sides in order to affect an orderly transition to colonial government. Moreover, the defeats pointed up the segmented nature of Luo society and its inability to mobilize in an integrated fashion to repell the British. Finally these two encounters demonstrated the inability of the Luo political system, unlike that of Buganda, to adapt to new conditions.

Closely associated with the centralized political structure and increasingly important to the positive response to cotton cultivation

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[11]Andrew Awuor Ngoya, personal interview, West Kano, 7 August 1973.

[12]Josha Anya, personal interview, West Seme, 14 August 1973.

is what David Apter described as the Bagandas' aptitude for modernization.[13] Nowhere is the trait more clearly demonstrated than in the Baganda response to a money economy. They not only accepted the idea of purchasing goods with money, but also began quickly to extend beyond mere exchange into other economic exercises. Most notably the Baganda began to hire labor and pay money wages. In fact the wages they paid compared favorably with settler wages in Kenya. Other economic pursuits rapidly followed, and the sale of land was accelerated.

Although real estate had not previously been an economic entity in Buganda, land speculation grew enormously between 1908 and 1923. Proceeds from land sales extended the economic opportunities of Baganda individuals. For example, monies gained from land contracts were used to extend acreage under cultivation, to increase the size of the work force, to buy capital equipment, and to make investments.[14] Eventually the money initially gained in land speculation provided the economic basis for some Baganda to agitate against their exclusion from the processing and marketing of cotton.

In 1929, Yusufu Bamuta, a former clerk in the colonial service, attempted unsuccessfully to buy a cotton gin. Representing a group of Africans that had acquired enough investment money to buy a gin, Bamuta applied to the colonial government for a license. To say that the colonial business establishment was stunned is an understatement. Through their influence, the question of Bamuta's application reached

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[13] David E. Apter, The Political Kingdom in Uganda: A Study in Bureaucratic Nationalism (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), p. 8.

[14] O.K. Okereke, "Co-operative Development in Uganda 1900-1939," East African Journal of Rural Development, 1 (1968), p. 65.

the legislative council (legco), and feelings ran high against granting a license to an African group.

It was not the first time that Bamuta had occupied the attention of legco. As early as 1922 he had submitted a petition asking for equality of housing grants for African staff.[15] Initially government responded favorably, but several members of legco took the opportunity to criticize Africans, in general, and African civil service personnel, in particular, for their pretensions to equal status. The governor then stipulated that the law should be modified so that the dual benefits scale be retained and that its duality be more clearly stated. Before Bamuta's request could be granted, legco met again, and decided to rescind the earlier approval because there were rumors that other African civil servants were going to follow Bamuta's example.[16] His earlier brush with the settlers and the colonial administrative staff may have prejudiced his chances in 1929.

Eventually Bamuta was forced to go to London, where for several months he lobbied with members of parliament to bring pressure on the protectorate government. The parliamentarians, however, were unable to force the colonial government to reopen the issue. Apparently London was satisfied with Entebbe's assertion that the country had reached its ginning capacity and let the matter drop.

The racist attitudes that were partly responsible for the denial of Bamuta's application are beyond the scope of this work. Only two

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[15]Colonial Office 429 Uganda Reports, Minutes of Legislative Council 1922, p. 157.

[16]Ibid., p. 217.

arguments are made here: one, that Bagandan's adapted positively to the newly-imposed economic system. Indeed they exhibited a remarkable talent for manipulating the new money economy far beyond the desires or expectations of the colonial business community. Two, the charge that Africans possessed neither the entrepreneural skills nor the resources[17] to enter the financial side of the industry is not sustained by an examination of the Yusufu Bamuta case. Another and final indication of African response to the European economic system is that Bamuta had the capital and the desire to invest in a business venture just when the depression began manifesting itself to the international business community.

Clearly Luo society did not respond so rapidly nor so positively to the imposed economic structure as did the Baganda. During the colonial period no Luo individual or organization came forward to challenge the economic position of the settler business community. Indeed in the mid-1920's, when problems of a business nature did arise, the Luo community in Central Nyanza organized itself along lines similar to the European business community's institutions.

Organized in 1925 by John Paul Olola, the Native Chamber of Commerce[18] not only channeled Luo business aspirations away from a confrontation with European interests, but also weakened the thrust

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[17]Cyril Ehrlich, The Marketing of Cotton in Uganda, 1900-1950: A Study of Colonial Government Economic Policy, unpubl. Ph.D. diss. (University of London, 1958), p. 181. And Walter Elkan, "A Half Century of Cotton Marketing in Uganda," Indian Journal of Economics, XXXVIII (1958), p. 227.

[18]Oginga Odinga, Not Yet Uhuru, (London: Heinemann, 1968), p. 67.

of the growing political movement.[19] Although Olola was intimate with the details and the leaders of early Luo opposition he chose to establish his own organization. The new group siphoned off potential members from the early political activists, and also facilitated Nairobi's schemes to undercut political agitation. Government let it be known that questions of concern to the community, so long as they were not of a political nature, should be debated within Local Native Councils, and that questions pertaining to business should properly be dealt with through N.C.C.[20] Moreover, the Native Chamber of Commerce did not agitate for substantive changes in the settler economic thinking and advocated channeling African business aspirations only within the confines of the African community.

As late as 1931, even though some Africans became paid agents of the Kenya Farmers Association (K.F.A.) and bought cotton from the growers without exploitation, this shift was a settler concession, not a fundamental economic change. The agents were given only the responsibility of buying and were never hired as permanent K.F.A. staff.[21] Compared to Bamuta, the Luo challenge to European economic dominance was limited and conservative.

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[19]My informants displayed a grudging admiration for Olola because of his personal bravery in confronting government staff. Olola appears to have been motivated by self-interest and never fully supported the Young Kavirondo Association or the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association (see chapter 6), but he was not adverse to being identified as a member of those groups. For example, many farmers thought Olola was a founder of YKA, but all the officers of the association denied he even had membership until 1935.

[20]C.O. 544, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Native Affairs Department Annual Report 1924-25,p. 34.

[21]Zablon Aduo, personal interview, Kisumu, 15 October 1973.

Unlike the Luo, the Baganda enjoyed a natural political consciousness. While the Luo found it difficult to accept cash cropping, the Baganda accepted cotton growing as much for political motives as for economic gain.[22] Some Buganda minor civil servants donated their farm as demonstration plots. From this action they gained not only agricultural experience, but also influence within their particular locales. They were perceived as interpretors of government policy as well as individuals with power, influence and knowledge of how to manipulate the system.[23] Simultaneously government was using the more ambitious civil servants to staff positions that were nominally the posts of Europeans. Unlike the Central Nyanza case where a non-indigenous black man had to be assigned the task of agricultural extension worker, more than enough Baganda were available and willing to accept such a job.

In early twentieth century Buganda, any western accoutrement could be used for political advantage. Among the benefits accuring to politically-conscious and innovative chiefs were freehold titles to all land brought under cultivation and political dominion over those who worked the land. Moreover, the Uganda Company assisted this process by granting written contracts to certain leading chiefs.[24]

Among the first of these was Chief Samuel Makasa of Bulemezi.

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[22]Lucy P. Mair, An African People in the Twentieth Century (London: Routledge, 1934), p. 96.

[23]Kenneth J. King "The Young Baganda Association: Some Notes on the Internationalism of Early African Politics in Buganda," Journal of African and Asian Studies (Autumn 1969), p. 2.

[24]C.C. Wrigley, "Buganda: An Outline Economic History," Economic History Review, 4 (1956), p. 75.

In 1904 he was given a contract to plant and deliver cotton to the company for processing and export. Even as late as the middle 1920's the reforms brought about by the Bataka Movement[25] did not significantly diminish the chief's ability to manipulate the government emphasis on cotton for his own political ends. Even though land was being redistributed, the chiefs maintained control over uncultivated/unallocated land and could utilize this acreage to extend political power bases. In short, in the 1920's the highly charged atmosphere made the political position of cotton crystal clear. The importance was demonstrated not only in the Bataka movement and the manipulation of the chiefs, but also in Yusufu Bamuta's reaction to government's denial of his request to purchase a ginnery. Bamuta traveled to England and attempted to use parliament as leverage against the colonial government. After failing in London, Bamuta returned to Buganda and became an active member of the Young Baganda Association. Among several nationalist groups that grew up in the wake of World War I, the Y.B.A. advocated not only economic, but also political independence.[26]

Unlike the Baganda case, in Kenya, even during a period of intense nationalism, cotton remained an irritating but minor political/economic problem. In the early 1920's, Luo nationalists concentrated on constitutional issues, even demanding a separate Luo legislature and a paramount chief. Another resolution requested that Kenya retain

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[25]C.C. Wrigley, Crops and Wealth in Buganda (Kampala: East African Institute Social Research, 1959), p. 18.

[26]King, "The Young Baganda Association," p. 4.

its protectorate status rather than become a colony. At the time economic issues could be listed under the rubric of wages because European employers had successfully reduced African pay.[27] Two demands were made for better salaries; one sought increased wages for chiefs and another for workers. Unfortunately, Luo political awareness, unlike the Baganda, was not combined with economic ambition.

Even the question of land did not assume significant economic interest in Western Kenya because it was seen in political and not economic terms. The overriding concern of most of the Luo leaders was to protect the land from European encroachement. Nevertheless, there was considerable opposition among the activists themselves how this best could be done. An overwhelming number felt that individual titles to land would be the most secure method of retaining the land.

Other influential Luo, like Jairo Owino, however, agitated against individual land titles. In 1923, Owino was the senior African Civil Servant in Nyanza Province. He had been employed in 1902 as clerk and interpretor by the provincial commissioner's office. Owino took the tack of appealing to the elderly and suggested that title deeds were contrary to Luo custom and would severely limit a farmer's control over his own land. Since the nationalists were uncertain of the level of support coming from the elderly Luo community, the issue over land titles never was intensively exploited.

Perhaps a clear indication of the reasons for the differential responses to cotton cash cropping can be discerned by contrasting

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[27]George Bennett, "The Development of Political Organizations in Kenya," Political Studies, v. 20, (June 1957) p. 27.

the material level of the precolonial societies. In Buganda, there existed an acquisitive, highly material culture prior to the coming of the European. Within Buganda a large range of consumer items were in existence, among them household utensils, ceramic containers, a variety of sizes and shaped mallets for working barkcloth, wooden chests, bracelets and other items of jewelry.[28] During the precolonial period many craftsmen traditionally were non-Baganda, with the Banyoro being especially appreciated as iron workers and smiths.

The material level of pre-colonial Luo society was not so impressive as that of Baganda society. Prior to the European presence, luxury items, with the single exception of animal skin robes for certain classes of community leaders, were not in evidence, nor were iron utensils available except in the form of spears. Soon after the coming of the European, the jembe, a short-handled iron hoe was introduced. Before then, the Luo carried out farming operations with a wooden digging stick. An explanation for the lack of material wealth in Luo society derives from the desire to maintain all at a common level.[30] Items of conspicuous consumption, with the exception of cattle, whose consumption was rigorously controlled, were simply not present in precolonial Luo society.

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[28]Margaret Trowell, "Some Royal Craftsmen of Buganda," The Uganda Journal, VIII (January, 1941) p. 47.

[29]C.C. Wrigley, "The Changing Economic Structure of Buganda," The King's Men: Leadership and Status in Buganda on the Eve of Independence, edited by L.A. Fallers (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 25.

[30]Michael G. Whisson, Change and Challenge, p. 45.

Whether the Luo were as ambitious, as modern, as acquisitive, as politically conscious as the Baganda are not important factors. What has been demonstrated here is that the two groups were motivated by different cultural constructs that significantly determined the way in which they responded to the European economic system. In the Luo case, these included an adherence to local, politically autonomous units, a low level of material acquisitions, an economic system based on barter and exchange which was slow to change, a preference for cattle keeping over agriculture, a reluctance to take on foreign accoutrements, and a sense that Luo society was wealthy and complete without imposed European standards. Within this conclusion, the Luo achievement, modest though it was in comparative terms, was remarkable. The Luo, it seemed, more than the Baganda, appreciated their traditional society and resisted changing it to conform to European ideas. Many Luo farmers spoke of feeling themselves wealthy enough in traditional terms. They needed a European system of exchange only to pay taxes and to purchase manufactured goods. The prevailing attitude among the Luo seemed to be that some ways of changing society were going to be destructive rather than progressive. Further, the Luo farmer seemed content to examine the ideas introduced by the colonials before supporting any particular program. Contrary to existing scholarship, which weighs only economic indicators, the modest achievements of the Kenya cotton industry can be attributed to socio-political factors, not lack of eocnomic sense.

In short, the Baganda cultural constellations, its centralized government, the high level of precolonial material possessions, the

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[31] Lucy Mair An African People, p. 23.

aptitude for modernization and their extreme political consciousness provided a more flexible situation than did Kenya for the introduction of cotton cash cropping. Although these same characteristics were absent in Kenya, the Luo did adapt to cotton cash cropping. Certainly the process was slower and more difficult than in Uganda, but the differences can be attributed to the Luo desire to maintain as much of the integrity of his own society than to his lack of economic sense. Buganda was a special case, for the reasons suggested above, and future comparisons of the Kenya achievement should be seen in this light. Bearing in mind the sophisticated and lengthy introduction procedures of Mr. Borup in Buganda, it should be profitable to examine in detail the process of introducing cotton in Kenya to see how both the government and the peasant farmer contributed to the difficulty of establishing the crop in Kenya.

CHAPTER IV

THE SHARED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE LIMITED SUCCESS OF THE COTTON INDUSTRY IN CENTRAL NYANZA, 1901-1923

During the years 1901-1908, the British Government attempted in a variety of ways to introduce cotton cash cropping. Most of these attempts had limited success, and the African farmer generally received most of the blame. Indigenous peoples, it was argued, placed a high value on leisure time, and their tastes were confined by tradition or ignorance largely to the goods they could provide for themselves.[1] While some of this assessment is apparently true, it presents an incomplete picture. A fuller explanation should include the ways in which lack of government insight and planning were also to blame. An attempt to delineate the shared responsibility of the government and the farmer will be made here.

In 1901 the Partington Plan (See above Chapter II) failed miserably to stimulate African interest in growing cotton. Instead of meeting directly with representatives of the various African communities, Partington decided to utilize the small Asian enclaves

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[1] Hugh Fearn, "Cotton Production in the Nyanza Province of Kenya Colony, 1908-1954," The Empire Cotton Growing Review, 33 (1956), pp. 126-127. See also K.D. Frederick, "The Role of Market Forces and Planning in Uganda's Economic Development, 1900-1938," Eastern Africa Economic Review, 1 (June, 1956), p. 47.

as agricultural innovators. His reasoning, while sound at one level, that Asians were more western in both their economic and agricultural orientations, displays a distinct lack of confidence in the ability of the African to adapt to cash cropping. Six years later, in 1907, the Partington Plan became official, though shortlived, policy.

> We are locating small colonies of agricultural Swahilis and Indians at different points where small areas of land area available. These people agree to plant economic products. As they do so they will be an object lesson for the different natives near them, and the influence will spread. 2

Since African farmers around Kibos had not been approached directly they felt under no real obligation to follow the new practices of the Asian community. Seldom did Africans even inquire about or go to observe the new techniques or crops. "We were," stated one African informant, "too busy trying to reestablish our own community to pay attention to what the Indians or British were doing. Besides, they were both intruders."[3] Moreover, the government failed to meet individually with the two communities and take them into its confidence. Such a plan might have interested the farmers and thereby provided a network for exchanging ideas.

Actually the Luo and Asian communities did meet over an issue introduced by the British Government, but it had little to do with the exchange of agricultural information. Some Luo were forced to seek employment with Asians to acquire hut tax money. Such contact was neither intimate nor long enough to establish ties and create a basis for stimulating the African farmer.

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[2] Nyanza Province Annual Report 1907-1908, p. xxxii.

[3] Daniel Omer, personal interview, Kadero, Kajulu, 30 July 1973.

While Partington's insight and initiative are commendable, the plan lacked any rational methodology to insure its success. Even though he was correct in his determination about the entrepreneurial ability of the Asian community, he miscalculated in thinking the settlements would take total direction from the government. Instead the Asian enclaves began to act on their own. They grew not only for their own needs but also in terms of the large Kisumu market.

Originally the Asians had been settled along the Kibos as a peace-keeping force.[4] The circumstances surrounding this need will demonstrate the fragmented nature of African polities in Western Kenya and give further clues to problems underlying the establishment of the cotton industry. In 1885, while on a hunting expedition, C.W. Hobley discovered abandoned farms and homesteads encompassing an area from the Kibos River to the Nandi foothills. When he asked about the deserted villages and their vanished inhabitants the following story emerged.

As early as the 1850's, Kajulu covered all of the present expanse of Kisumu east of Kisian Market,[5] and western boundary with the Kano Plain followed the present Nairobi Road. Peoples from other parts of Kenya intruded, absorbed the Kajulians and incorporated large portions of Kajulu territory. Eventually in the early 1870's a serious quarrel developed between the Kajulians and the neighboring Luo on the Kano Plain. While the causes of the war are not very clear, the Kajulians lost. Not only was their leading fighter, Omer, killed, but the

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[4] See below section on Kano-Kajulu and Kajulu-Nandi Wars.

[5] Gideon Siru, personal interview, Kamsunga, Kajulu, 3 August 1973.

Kajulians were also scattered. Many sought refuge in other parts of the widespread territory under Kajulian control. They, however, were subjected to ridicule because of their defeat.

One enterprising group of refugees sought sanctuary with the Nandi, who occupied what is now the present site of Kajulu location.[6] Smarting from their defeat and Nandi discrimination the Luo soon began to agitate. The particular issue which led to war was a theft of cattle from one of the Luo leaders. Such acts had happened before, but they had never reached serious proportions. An important factor escalating this incident into war may have been the desire to avenge the death of Omer. His son, Okal, was the victim of the cattle theft, and he seems to have acted precipitously in inciting others to attack the Nandi.

Apparently the Nandi were not without some feelings of Kajulu duplicity and had established relations with other Luo communities with an eye toward possibly having to fight the Kajulians. Unknown to Okal, several communities awaited the Nandi call for assistance. In the first engagement Okal was killed, whereupon most of the remaining Kajulians tried to sue for peace. But the Nandi allies, having been activated, wanted to fight, and the Kajulians were forced to flee.[7] On this occasion, in late 1884, the Kajulians returned to live in their former homes in the Kano Plain.

In 1885, the Kajulians were still living there when Hobley

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[6]Musa Midigo, personal interview, Kadero, Kajulu, 12 July 1973.

[7]Samwel Ada, personal interview, Nyabongo, Kajula, 10 July 1973. Although Okal was killed in the first encounter, the Kajulians apparently fought well enough to drive the Nandi to the Hills behind the location.

discovered their old, deserted homesteads. The Nandi had not returned since the war, but continued to occupy the hills. Chief Kitoto of Kano, with whom Hobley had established good relations, took the responsibility of rounding up the Kajulians to hear Hobley's proposals for their return home. Not everyone shared Kitoto's enlightened view. Only the stature of Kitoto and Hobley made it possible for the Kajulians to begin to return. Even so it took almost three months of rounding up Kajulians and convincing them that it was safe to return to their community in the Nandi foothills. Among the Kano hierarchy, however, were individuals such as Okwach, who hoped to keep the Kajulians captive on the Kano Plain.

Even after the Kajulians received a safe conduct from Kitoto they were trailed by Okwach's armed band. Hurling insults and occasionally beating up stragglers, they followed the group until it reached Wathorego, site of the present market. While the Kajulian leader, Wayamba, prepared to make the fire celebrating the first night in the new homestead several fights broke out. The remainder of the night passed without incident. Unfortunately, the the morning Okwach pushed his claim that the Kajulians were his slaves. Hostilities flamed again in which Wayamba was struck on the head. He did not retaliate, but suggested that Hobley should come to arbitrate the dispute. In three days Hobley arrived, whereupon the matter was settled and the Kano people withdrew.

Later in 1911, the antagonisms created by the above events surfaced again. In that year, the Kajulians seemingly enthusiastically embraced cotton growing. Clearly part of this new enthusiasm had to do with developing cotton on unoccupied and uncultivated border areas

between Kano and Kajulu. Using the new lands meant that the Kajulu farmer did not have to disturb his community acreage. It meant in effect, that his food crop was secure and that he could comply with government directives with a minimum of problems. Actually the Kano, particularly Okwach, had no intention of letting Kajulians cultivate that area. With several hundred followers he confronted the Kajulians at the present Kibos Road. Chastened by their earlier defeats and since they were unarmed the Kajulians withdrew. Apparently Okwach had gained considerable local autonomy since Kitoto had died and Owiti, his successor, took more and more interest in cotton as a cash crop.

Clearly the historical animosities between neighboring Luo communities had prevented an exchange of information about cash-cropping cotton, just as had the differences between the Luo and Asian communities. Actually some Luo in close proximity to the Kibos Asian settlements began to plant cotton, but it took two years before they voluntarily took up the Asian example. In 1903, however, government lacked the initiative and the personnel for follow-up. In short, a series of unfortunate and crippling incidents, among these the government's own lack of direction, prevented the smooth acceptance of the introduction of cotton.

During 1901 to 1903 another disabling factor in establishing the cotton industry in Western Kenya was the absence of a non-governmental agency to promote the enterprise. Unlike Uganda, where the Uganda Company combined with government and the missionaries to propagandize the African community, in Kenya British entrepreneurs were conspicuous

by their absence. Such activities as did take place between European businessmen and government could be interpreted more properly as the machinations of lobbyists rather than the deliberations of serious businessmen. Since preferential treatment and a paternalistic government seem to be necessary ingredients in establishing colonial agriculture the wisdom of their lobbying cannot be criticized. What is apparent, however, is that British businessmen such as Joseph Foulkes only had selfish dimensions to their plan. When the government failed to give the requested grant-in-aid and the large land grant, the colonial businessmen played no other role in getting the industry started.

Eventually two factors introduced by government, the Kibos experimental farm and Mr. H.H. Holder, did directly benefit the African farmer. In 1903 the Kibos experimental farm was opened principally to serve as a series of demonstration plots for farmers to view. Seldom were large numbers of Africans present, however, to observe new agricultural procedures, and the value of Kibos was not fully exploited until the advent of Mr. H.H. Holder.

He arrived at Kibos in 1907. His primary responsibility was to instruct African farmers in new agricultural practices for the cash crops, among which cotton was given a very high priority. The first of Holder's tasks was to meet chiefs and local personalities. His home, situated on the border between Kano and Kajulu,[9] gave Holder quick access to two of the friendlier chiefs in the area. Chief

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[9]Holder's home still exists, although it has been abandoned for many years. A portion of his former large farm is now the site of the Salvation Army School for the Blind.

Awuor Otiende of Kajulu was not only amiable toward the British, but he also worked to persuade his people to follow his example. During the years 1905-1935, Awuor kept good relations with the British. He provided a positive atmosphere for the introduction of cotton, and also gave Holder full access to the location.

Holder was also busy getting to know Chiefs Kitoto and Owiti of Kano. Kitoto, whose reign ended about 1908, already had demonstrated his openness to the British in his relations with C.W. Hobley. When Holder arrived, Kitoto was old and not the outstanding figure he had been. Wisely Holder began cultivating the friendship of Owiti, who seemed to be Kitoto's logical successor. Even though Owiti served only briefly from 1908 to 1913, he gave dynamic leadership to Kano.[10] Before his death, Owiti, with Holder's assistance, had set the future pattern for cotton in Kano.

Holder also gained the confidence of the people by soliciting the sons of chiefs and other prominent community leaders for the purpose of education. Among those who first reported to Holder for schooling were Simeon Otiende, the son of Chief Awuor, and Samwel Ada. In 1935, Simeon Otiende succeeded his father and served as Kajulu's Chief for twenty-five years. Samwel Ada served for a period of time with the agricultural department and became a respected elder. Beyond academic work in writing and arithmetic, Holder also gave his pupils language training in English and Swahili.[11] Moreover, he taught them the rudiments of western farming. For example, the use of the iron hoe

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[10] Kisumu District Annual Report, 1913, p. 3.

[11] Musa Midigo, personal interview, Kadero, Kajulu, 12 July 1973.

and a technique for planting in straight and spaced rows was demonstrated. Such procedures as banking soils, to reduce root soakage and soil runoff, were also shown, as was the proper husbandry of cotton. It was hoped that this training would perpetuate itself when Ada and Otiende returned to the location to teach others. This recycling did not occur.

Both Ada and Otiende were teenagers who did not feel they could simply begin teaching or talking about their training to the community-at-large. They had to await the invitation of the elders to share their knowledge. Such an invitation was not forthcoming because a significant number of elders were opposed to any changes in traditional farming practices.[12] Furthermore, the younger element also resisted the new learning. In face of such general opposition, Otiende and Ada practically ceased using the new techniques. Instead they concentrated on learning and using the rudimentary academic training provided by Holder.

While busy with his teaching and his program of meeting chiefs, Holder did not neglect the entire community whose fullest energies he hoped to involve. Soon after arriving in Kibos he began attending barazas, where, accompanied by an administrative staff member, he attempted to persuade farmers to pursue cotton cash cropping. Holder would demonstrate new growing techniques, and he would speak to the issue of acquiring money to purchase clothes, pay school fees and meet tax requirements. Usually barazas at which Holder appeared were

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[12] T.T. Kennedy, "Study of Economic Motivation Involved in Peasant Cultivation of Cotton," East African Institute of Social Research Conference Proceedings (January, 1964), p. 6.

well attended. This may have been due as much to his personality which was open and friendly as to the novelty of seeing a black man not only in a position of authority but also riding a horse and speaking several foreign languages.[13] Seldom, however, did participants at the Baraza demonstrate great enthusiasm for pursuing Holder's suggestions.

Unlike the Uganda case, where great enthusiasm and a fully staffed agricultural department existed, Holder's problems were compounded, by the small number of men assigned to African agriculture. All efforts to get cotton introduced in Central Nyanza rested with Holder, and though he was energetic and responsible, his effort alone was not sifficient. In 1913, six years after his arrival, Holder was still struggling, alone, to make cotton a viable cash crop for Central Nyanza.

> A certain amount of success has resulted but not what we wish to see. Our difficulty in this connection is that we have no staff available to continually keep the native cultivations interested in the crop. The Agricultural Department has loaned to the administration a West Indian instructor. His services, however, are only available for limited periods. The one man cannot under any circumstances influence any large areas. 14

There was, however, some progress in the Kano Plain development.

In December 1911, Holder happily reported to the district commissioner that he had inspected plots belonging to Chief Owiti and his headmen, Athembo, Moga, Ondiek, Ajumbo, Agolo and Ogada.

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[13] Daniel Omer, Ex-Chief Simeon Otiende, Samwel Ada and others spoke of their amazement at Holder's ability with languages. Holder became quite a legend. He is remembered as a Zulu, a Nusu-Nusu (Swahili, mixed racial heritage) or an Egyptian.

[14] Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1913, p. 50.

He described them as being in a fairly clean condition generally and as the result of the favorable growing weather ". . . the plants had made strong healthy growth."[15] Picking had already commenced at the time of Holder's visit, but some problems were apparent. He reported seeing dirty cotton stored in the granaries, and he noted a high percentage of weak fibers among the stored cotton as compared with strong white cotton growing in the fields. Holder continued, "I took the opportunity of instructing the people into the proper methods of picking and particularly pointed out to them the importance of keeping the clean and stained cotton separate."[16]

Holder was so concerned about quality control that he sent one of the "trained boys" from Kibos to aid in proper picking methods. Further to stimulate the farmer's interest in bringing a clean crop to market, Holder took several samples into the Kisumu Ginnery. There, Mr. Pannett of the British East Africa Corporation assured him that top prices would be paid for all cotton as good as the sample.

Another circumstance leading to poor quality cotton was revealed by Holder's letter. He found that a high percentage of stained cotton resulted from poor storage facilities and from pre-harvest exposure to rain. On a more positive note, Holder calculated that the thirty acres planted should yield approximately 350 to 400 pounds of seed cotton per acre.

Comparatively speaking the Kano yields were not so impressive as those achieved early by B.C.G.A. at the Kibos experimental farm. In

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[15] Kisumu District Quarterly Report, December 31, 1911, p. 23.

[16] Ibid.

1908, the association's intensive efforts produced 610 pounds of seed cotton per acre.[17] But as noted by Holder, the Kano figures were remarkable on three accounts. First, the Kano people did less cultivation in their area in comparison to some of the communities closer to the lake and the hills. Second, the less favorable climatic conditions of the plains made even traditional farming very risky. Third, the difficult nature of Kano's soil was a major deterrent to the introduction of new crops.

Holder's letter, therefore, concluded that great possibilities existed for the industry in Kano, a consideration reflected by the fact that the harvest was even better than his estimates.

> . . . The Kano people [produced] about 18,000 pounds of seed cotton. This is the first time that the natives have made any real move in the matter of cotton growing. The results are for a start quite promising. 18

This achievement can be directly attributed to the leadership of Chief Owiti. Most of his time during that growing season was spent encouraging his followers to plant and follow proper husbandry. Apparently unknown to the British, Owiti was using forced labor, which might account for the high yields and the good condition of the crop. Supervision of the work force was more intensive than could be achieved by government. Additionally, on the part of the workers, some degree of self-interest was operating: they were associated with an experiment that government had sanctioned and in which the community was interested. Nairobi probably would not have prevented his resort

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[17] Annual Administrative Reports 1907-1908, p. 113.

[18] Nyanza Province Annual Report 1912 and the Kisumu District Annual Report, p. 35..

to forced labor since they condoned its usage in road maintenance, bridge-construction and the making of shambas.[19] Utilizing forced labor does not detract from Owiti's accomplishment, but it may explain in part why such high yield figures were not attained in other locales. A case-in-point are the disappointingly low yields from all areas in Central Nyanza at a later date. In 1917-1918, cotton growth reportedly did not fulfill expectations. Although some damage was done by excessive rain, only fourteen tons were harvested from 200 acres. The 200 pounds per acre yield was described as "a low figure even for native cotton."[20]

In fact low returns may have had little to do with forced labor and probably more to do with a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the government and farmers. Whenever the experimental stage of local introduction was completed problems immediately occurred. Of most importance were the procedural discrepancies surrounding actual seed distribution. Most people came to the distribution area with a container of some sort. Many carried old sacks, homemade baskets, water jugs and some had discarded pieces of clothing to wrap the seed in.

On the other hand, the government was equally lax. No written records were ever kept; nor were guidelines of amounts to be distributed correlated to actual acreage to be planted, and no civil servant took the responsibility to see how much of the seed was actually planted. Clearly without such checks and supervision the results were

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[19] Kisumu District Annual Report 1914, p. 9.

[20] Kisumu District Annual Report 1917-1918, p. 6.

going to be far from desirable.

Another device used by government after the experimental stage was equally flawed. If the community did not seem ready for individual planting, group plots were initiated. At first the location elders were asked to donate available community land for cultivation. Many who responded to this request were themselves opposed to cotton-growing. They,therefore, offered swamp land or some other uncultivatible areas. Seldom did an administrator examine this land, and, by the time the situation could be rectified, the growing season was over.[21] Apparently as in the Gem case, there was a hint of collusion to defraud the government between the elders and some local headmen. In early 1917, Onduso,[22] the probationary headman in Gem, resigned and his place was taken by Ndeda, a former headman and native agent. There were strong hints that Ondoso generally had not been careful in discharging his duties, and that he had not examined plots volunteered for communal farms.

In the event that farmers failed to offer voluntary plots, then it was left to Holder to select areas for planting. During these selection tours, Holder would confer more with the local headmen than with the farmers whose plots he was subdividing. Among the criteria for choosing a particular plot was ease of supervision.

Throughout the first twenty years of establishing cotton in Central Nyanza the idea of crop supervision had been uppermost in the

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[21] Kisumu District Annual Report 1917-1918, p. 5.

[22] John M. Lonsdale, A Political History of Nyanza 1883-1945, Unpubl. Ph.D. diss. (Cambridge University), p. 179. Onduso, along with Daniel Odindo and several others, were the first pupils at CMS Maseno in 1906.

government's mind. In 1917 a special scheme of roadside planting was organized by Mr. Pedraza, the Assistant District Commissioner of Kisumu. Under this plan, sixty-five two acre plots were planted along the Kisumu-Nyakach Road,[23] but the flooding of the Kibigori River and the overflow of the lake destroyed 30 percent of the cotton planted. Padraza, sadly, but correctly, concluded that "this misfortune added to the natives' genuine dislike for the crop [and] is likely to be increased when no monetary return is obtained for the labor they have spent on the crop."[24] Finally, as late as 1928, crop supervision was still a major problem for the administration. Reporting on the Northern Kavirondo District, a senior member of the agricultural department reported that "On May 23rd, I arrived in the Malikisi area where I was joined by Mr. Norman, Assistant District Commissioner. We found that in the area between Jairo's and Mwinjaro's that nothing had been done since we left a month before."[25] No amount of coordination, it seems, was really sufficient to provide continuous supervision.

As a last resort the government tried in various ways to build a supervisory element into cotton cultivation. In 1921, the following was suggested as a method of coping with low yields and supervision problems.

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[23]C.O. 544, E.A.P., Dept. of Agriculture, Annual Administration Reports 1917-1918, p. 28.

[24]Ibid.

[25]K.N.A. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, "Nyanza Cotton: Cultivation and Crop," Senior Commissioner's Report 1925, p. 1.

> "To succeed in affecting a substantial improvement in native agricultural practice and in increasing production a large number of instructors will be required. Native instructors are likely to succeed where Europeans would fail, and the cost would be incomparably much smaller with the use of the farmer, but it will doubtless be found necessary to have European supervisors directing the efforts of native instructors." 26

Quite aside from supervision the problems manifested in African agriculture were two, lack of monetary return from cotton cultivation and the government's emphasis on European farming. Any clear economic gain to the African farmer was limited after Ainsworth's policy of encouraging peasant farming lapsed. With the onset of World War I Ainsworth's energies were directed elsewhere. Following the war, in 1921, a growing disinclination on the part of the Nyanza farmer to plant cotton was reported. Anger and resentment came principally because of "low prices that have prevailed for a considerable period."[27] A further complication derived from the fact that "bad seasons require a greater area be used for the production of food and the total area of production [had] declined during the war."

Prices paid for cotton were hardly calculated to stimulate Africans to grow the crop. During the eight seasons, 1923-24 to 1930-31, the price paid to the grower dropped about 66 percent from 30 cents per pound in 1923-24, to 10 1/2 cents per pound in 1930-31.[28]

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[26] C.O. 544, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Dept. of Agriculture, Annual Report 1930-31, p. 27.

[27] Ibid., p. 30.

[28] Hugh Fearn, An African Economy, p. 168.

Since Ainsworth's policy of stimulating Nyanza's agricultural economy was never national policy, it did not effect the manpower allocations of the agricultural department. Although important, staff allocation was only part of the larger consideration of the government's preferential treatment of European agriculture. The administration's and settlers' interests coincided in most facets of economic development, particularly concerning Africans.

Since the Nyanza administrators could expect little help from government, they had to provide their own solutions to the vexing manpower shortage. Almost immediately, existing chiefs were tapped to supply local level administrations. The tactic itself had viability at least in the eyes of Nairobi. It was after all logical, that when government personnel were not available, to institute some form of indirect rule. In Nyanza, however, during the first cotton phase, 1910-1923, the results of indirect rule were far from satisfactory. Only in those cases where chiefs were as strong and motivated as Owiti of Kano, Nyangaga of Seme and Kere of Nyakach did the system work well. Even in the case of Owiti, during his great growing season of 1911-1912, abuses occurred.

As chiefs established their local hierarchies they sometimes tended to terrorize their constituency. For the victims of strong arm tactics seldom was redress of grievances available. "When my stepfather, Orony, was an Mlango he held meetings in our home to tell people about cotton."[30] The farmer continued, "This was around 1922-

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[29]Roger M.A. Van Zwanenberg, The Agricultural History of Kenya to 1939 (Nairobi: East African Printing House, 1972), p. 28.

[30]Simeon Oyare, personal interview, South East Kano, 19 July 1973.

1923 and if anyone complained about cotton he was caned and sometimes given extra work to do." Protests were stifled on the spot and few men were courageous enough after punishment to persist in carrying a grievance to higher authority.

Without sufficient guidelines for selecting working parties, local leaders generally rounded up all available ambulatory adults and children to work community plots. Not only did work on cotton plots require a considerable adjustment to the male way of life, but it also involved men in community group planting which was anathema to Luo farming practices.[31] Moreover the continued use of forced labor caused the Nyanza farmer to associate cash cropping cotton with the dreaded work of community road building and maintenance. Several things stand out about community forced labor.

One, in the matter of road building, even children and pregnant women were made to work. In most cases few tools were supplied by the administration. This meant that road building, like cotton husbandry, was labor intensive. The exploitation of women and children in roadwork aroused Luo communities more than did other kinds of forced labor. There seemed to be a realization that better roads could lead to more British personnel and therefore increased exploitation.[32] In 1923, ironically, road building on a community basis was discontinued due to nationalist political pressure. But forced work on communal cotton plots continued until the post-World War II period.

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[31]Hugh Fearn, An African Economy, p. 77.

[32]Bishop Simeon Nyende, personal interview, Gem, 25 September 1973.

Two, community forced labor meant that government investment in creating the necessary economic infrastructure for African agriculture was minimal. In contrast, a rational system of road development was pursued in European agricultural areas. Payment for roads in these areas was met by the colonial government, but roads built in African locations were paid for by taxes raised locally and by labor forcibly supplied by local people.[33] The lack of expenditure on roads points up an unwillingness to assist the African farmer in real economic terms and also indicates the intimate relationship between the settlers' economic aspirations and those of the colonial government.

Moreover, the close association of settlers and government imposed severe economic constraints on African farmers. In the 1930's the machinations of the Kenya Farmers Association, which forced legislation to set up control of African maize production and sale, were not lost on Nyanza farmers. When KFA realized that African growers were not only supplying the domestic maize market but also realizing greater returns than were being obtained on the international market, they acted. By 1936 a new marketing law forced Africans to sell their maize to accredited government agents (K.F.A. representatives). Then, all African maize was graded and a portion sold on the international market. This circumlocution, of course, allowed European maize to be sold on the higher priced domestic market.[34] The African producer felt that cotton's price derived from a conspiracy between the buyers and government.

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[33] van Zwanenberg, Agricultural History of Kenya, p. 26.

[34] Ibid., p. 21.

One incident will suffice to illustrate how easily suspicions could be aroused and seemingly confirmed. In 1912, farmers in the Sio area experienced a tremedous drop in cotton prices. A rumor spread that buyers were cheating farmers and if the cotton could be sold outside the territory a better price could be realized. Several farmers in the area held back their crop and formulated plans to sell it at the Uganda port of Mijanji. There they found the same price, but they sold their produce in disgust, and refused to replant in the following season.[35]

Far from stimulating African interest in cotton-growing, the settler-administration constellation left the actual supervision of the crop to the elements least likely to affect positive responses. Not only did the local hierarchies lack expertise about cotton, but they also had lost a measure of prestige within the location. After becoming government functionaries it was no longer necessary for chiefs and headmen to pay close attention to the needs and grievances of their constituency. Moreover, once a chief had received administrative approval, it was practically impossible to remove him from office. In the pre-colonial decentralized Luo polities the system of office-holding and leadership had been inherently democratic. Any leader's security of tenure-in-office depended upon his ability to meet the needs of the community. With the removal of power from the people to the colonial government, it was nearly impossible to check

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[35]Hugh Fearn, "Cotton Production in the Nyanza Province of Kenya Colony 1908-1954," The Empire Cotton Growing Review, 33 (1956), p. 124.

the abuse of power by some chiefs.

Among the most frequent abuses were forced labor at the government experimental farm, Kibos. Some confusion surrounds these charges. For example, an interviewee remembered that in 1918 he was taken to Kibos every morning, weather permitting, to work on the cotton plots.[36] No wages were received for this employment. According to Mr. Oloya, however, chiefs and milango received funds for supplying and supervising workers. But the information of Apiyo Gari Agumba conflicts with that of Janes Oloya. As a young man prior to World War I, Mr. Agumba recalled working in Kibos and receiving five shillings per month in wages.[37] Young people, according to this informant, were put to work weeding, pulling out dead plants and, in general, keeping the plot clean. The wage scale for adults was slightly higher and there was no physical abuse involved in obtaining people for work.[38] Even in the confusion one fact stands out: the system and government direction was sufficiently flexible to allow a chief to manipulate it for his own ends.

Protests that did occur against chiefs were usually met by resort to corporal punishment. Seldon did the colonial government seem to be aware of the nature of local inducements. And when incidents were brought to the administration's attention, they were treated lightly

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[36]Janes Oloya, personal interview, Kawuonda, West Kano.

[37]Apiyo Gari Agumba, personal interview, Kapiyo, West Kano, 11 September 1973.

[38]The discrepancies in the two interviews may be explained as follows: Although both men identified the work site as Kibos Experimental Farm, it is probably that Apiyo Gari Agumba was working on H.H. Holder's private farm which was located in close proximity to the government farm. Holder's association with both may have caused problems in identification.

as "an overzealous pursuit of the duties of office."[39] During the period 1903 to 1923, the most often used form of compulsion was caning. Farmers would be caned for a variety of offences, particularly when they refused to grow cotton or to maintain the crop.

Failure to report to the communal work plots seems to have been considered a minor offense, probably because milango would accept small bribes in lieu of punishment. Once having been corrected by public caning, most farmers curtailed their opposition to cotton policy. For those who persisted in opposing government's agricultural plans local leaders would resort to threats and social ostracism. Apparently being publically labeled "jalundha," or traitor, was a sufficient deterrent to continued refusal to cooperate.[40] Moreover farmers seemed incapable or unwilling to organize themselves to protest cotton policy or the local African administrators' abuse of power.

In short, the period from 1901 to 1923 was a time of experimentation in trying to start an African cotton industry in Nyanza Province. Characterized by a lack of direction and clearly stated goals the government program fed into the reluctance of the Luo farmer to pursue a new, non-food crop. Within this disoriented framework, the government seemed to work at cross purposes. There was an acknowledged lack of technical and supervisory personnel for African agriculture. Moreover government expenditures to meet the requisite

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[39] K.N.A., Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, "Nyanza Cotton," Senior Commissioner's Report 1925, p. 12.

[40] Mathayo Orego, personal interview, Kamenya, Kajulu, 30 August 1973.

needs of establishing the industry were inadequate. Culpability for the failure to establish a viable cotton industry in the years 1903-1923 must be shared by government and the farmers.

CHAPTER V

FARMER'S REACTIONS AND MOTIVATIONS

As has been demonstrated both government and African farmers probably share responsiblity in the failure of the Kenya cotton industry. In the government case lack of direction toward establishing a viable industry is the outstanding criticism. Included under the heading would be failure to allocate sufficient agricultural department personnel for African farming. In addition, extreme parsimony seemed to dictate the government's distribution of funds to construct a workable infrastructure for the new enterprise. And, finally, the government was haunted by its own appraisals of the African's inability to respond positively to a new economic stimulus. Thus, in the years 1901 to 1923, the government's assistance and leadership of the cotton industry was characterized by piece-meal trial and error. It remains then to deduce the African farmers' response to Nairobi's attempts to establish the new industry.

Their initial reaction to the new crop was suspicion. This chapter will describe the manifestations of this suspicion. After the farmers' reactions have been thoroughly discussed, an attempt will be made to illuminate peasants motivations for resisting the introduction of cotton.

It was found that a pattern of reaction and *sub rosa* resistance, not mentioned in existing research,[1] could be discerned and categorized. It became clear from documentary sources and field interviews that levels of participation could be judged. Maximum response has the connotation that most adult males planted enough cotton to deter negative administrative measures. Minimum participation denotes significant problems for local and colonial administrators. Three patterns of reactions were noted.

One, there were areas of maximum compliance. This positive reaction seemed correlated to a number of variables. Proximity of the location to an administrative center seemed important, as did control by chiefs who concentrated on cash-cropping directives without using unnecessary force. In locations where good relations existed between British administrators and local people, satisfactory results were obtained. And finally high compliance was achieved in locations where farmers did not wish to jeopardize their traditional wealth by opposing governmental orders.

Two, negligent responses to government's cotton policy also occurred. These reactions occurred primarily in areas where chiefs and milango used extreme force in getting the crop planted. Negligence of cotton husbandry was experienced also in places where natural conditions were not conducive to maintaining the crop. Lack of

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[1]None of the general works in Kenya Agriculture have utilized field interviews. Thus the pattern of African resistance has not been thoroughly researched. See L. Winston Cone and T.F. Lipscomb, eds., The History of Kenya Agriculture (Nairobi: University Press of Africa, 1972). The same criticism must be made of all Hugh Fearn's work on Western Kenya. Even the Marxist historian Roger M.A. van Zwanenberg, The Agricultural History of Kenya to 1939 (Nairobi: East African Printing House, 1972), focuses principally on the farming activities of non-Africans in Kenya.

attention to the crop occurred also in locations where minimum surplus land was available, but where money for taxes could be raised by selling excess food crops.

Three, absolute refusal to grow did occur but in a minimum number of locations. Such rejections correlated with legitimate grievances. For example, in the years 1921 to 1935, even Nairobi recognized that buying facilities were too far from growing sites for Alego farmers. Accordingly no penalties were inflicted when farmers in the area stopped growing cotton. In 1935, however, when the discrepancy had been corrected, government insisted that cotton be grown.[2] Some farmers refused to grow cotton in locales where the possibility of pursuing non-farming alternatives existed: in lakeside communities, it was possible to engage in commercial fishing to raise necessary money. Finally, in at least one sub-area, the refusal to grow cotton can be attributed to the presence of a strong community leader. It must be noted, however, that the initial thrust of leadership was political agitation, not objection to cotton policy. Further, the leader's effect was severely restricted in the case cited; only the Regea area of Gem location successfully boycotted growing cotton for a number of years.

Suffice it to say that farmers let their self-interest dictate their level of response to government cotton-growing directives. Moreover the initial decision was not necessarily binding on the individual or the location over the longer run. Certainly most farmers fluctuated between compliance and negligence depending upon their

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[2]Benjamin Owuor Gumba, personal interview, East Seme, 8 August 1973, and Golam Husein, personal interview, Ndere Ginnery, 5 November 1973.

expectation of government retaliation or dissatisfaction over prices. This checkerboard response, however, can only be clearly understood by detailing particular cases.

Without a doubt, compliance, at least initially, seems directly correlated to the proximity of an administrative office and therefore supervision. Kano and Kajulu figure prominently in the early cotton plans precisely because they were familiar to administrators, and campaigns there could be mounted with a minimum of interdepartmental coordination. Indeed by 1912, the round trip to Kajulu, Kano, Kibos, and Kibigori could be accomplished in a single day. Consequently these areas saw a disproportionate number of administrators and became the focal point for a variety of schemes to stimulate the industry.

Low profile criticism was often made of the continuing presence of colonial civil servants in the locations.[3] In 1913, during the political infighting to oust the successor to Chief Owiti, Amimo was grudgingly admired for his ability to seek amicable relations with the British. But he was also saddled with the responsibility for their overwhelming presence. Ironically the opponents of Amimo accused the incumbent, Akwama, of failing to maintain good relations with the British.[4]

Unlike Amimo who was motivated by his own self-interest, Akwama's supporters responded out of ignorance when the British were coming to the location. Clearly, Akwama's supporters rationalized that even

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[3]Norman Anyumba, personal interview, Masogo, West Kano, 28 August 1973.

[4]Mirasi Cheroli see Central Kavirondo District Political Records Ex-Chiefs and Headmen 1911-1915, "Kano Political Records," p.2.

feigned adherence to cotton policy meant that government had a less disruptive effect on community life.[5] In short, farmers in those areas easily accessible to government servants made an effort to comply with cotton directives. It was, they felt, easier to plant an eighth of an acre and keep it clean than risk reprisals.

Similarly acceptance of orders to grow cotton were experienced in areas where people did not wish to jeopardize their traditional forms of wealth by opposing government. Some farmers in West Kano, among them Jacobo Jakoyo, were debating as late as 1923 their opposition to cotton. They reasoned as follows: "Before the European came we had land, cattle, women and food. We were wealthy enough and did not need their money for growing cotton."[6] Even though verbally placing himself in defiance of government policies, Mr. Jakoyo nonetheless grew cotton. He, in fact, reported that his clan, Kanyambok, continued to grow cotton in group plots from 1929 through 1945.

Mr. Jakoyo's paradoxical response derived from the threat of collective fines of cattle, goats and poultry that could be levied for refusal to adhere to cotton policy. Such a system of reprisals meant in effect that Mr. Jakoyo and his clanmates might have lost their store of traditional wealth. Chiefs eventually suggested to the authorities a method of maintaining fines while foregoing cattle confiscation. By 1914 fines were apportioned in terms of goats and poultry, if not

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[5]Andrew Awuor Ngoya, personal interview, Masogo, West Kano, 8 July 1973.

[6]Jacobo Jakoyo, personal interview, West Kano, 6 September 1973

levied in cash. Government also had its own reasons for not levying cattle fines against the Luo.

During 1886-1905, the period of pacification in Western Kenya, collective fines, usually of cattle and other livestock, were levied on recalcitrant groups to pay for the cost of military operations. John Ainsworth, who had the responsibility for directing Central Nyanza's early economic development, did not wish to attach the stigma of conquered peoples to the Luo, and he argued persuasively against taking cattle as fines.[8] In short, the colonial administration, for reasons of its own, also acted to protect traditional forms of wealth.

Unlike Jakoyo's opposition in West Kano, some areas in Central Nyanza responded negatively to government by first planting the crop and then neglecting its husbandry, as was the case in South East Kano.[9] In 1914, the area under the Headman Juombo had the worst production of any location under Chief Amimo. Most of Juombo's problems stemmed from his temper and frequent resort to the cane.[10] Several young but influential men in the community who were caned by Juombo conspired to effect his dismissal. Wade, the brother of Stevan Okelo, Otieno Gaka and Oduongo Omolu were caned for refusing to carry out the necessary operations to achieve a good yield. They had tried to explain to Juombo that experience had shown that the return of the crop in the form of better yield was not large enough to justify weeding the plots twice. "Seldom", they pointed out, "did anyone in the location even

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[8] C.O. 544, E.A.P., Minutes of the Executive Council 1908, p. 17.

[9] A recent designation; until 1965 this area was a part of West Kano proper.

[10] Stevan Okelo, personal interview, South East Kano, 18 July 1973.

do a competent first weeding."[11] Juombo was not swayed by this practical farming approach and applied the cane. Unfortunately for Juombo, the three young men had voluntarily organized community road building, which had increased the stature of Chief Amimo with the administration. Within months Juombo was demoted and later was shipped off to the Carrier Corps.

Apparently the device of planting but not maintaining the crop became standard procedure in South East Kano. As late as 1942, Stevan Okelo, made use of the practice. Before his subterfuge was discovered he had given all indications of following the recommendations of the cotton campaign for that season. First, he appeared at the seed distribution and was given his allocation. Next, he turned his land over but never planted. By the time his duplicity was discovered he had already been appointed a locational judge for land disputes and thus was saved from punishment.[12]

Between the years 1928 and 1937 Chief Opiyo of Nyakach attempted unsuccessfully to deal with crop neglect. Succeeding the amiable and popular Chief Kere would have created problems for any administrator, but certainly for one of Opiyo's temperament. He began his tenure first by purging Kere's staff, and then announced that cotton would be tried again in the area. Apparently he attributed the failure of the first introduction to the community's laxity and to its ability to manipulate Kere. From 1913 through 1919 cotton was planted in Kere's area, but achieved poor yields. Many members of the community,

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[11] Ibid.

[12] Silphano Osoro, personal interview, at Ahero Multi-purpose Center, South East Kano, July 19, 1973.

including Kere, stated that the area was too chilly to be good for the plant.[13]

Meanwhile the government's experiments at Sango near Kusa, close to the lake, were proving successful. At last in 1919, government discontinued the attempts at Kere's and concentrated on their success at Sango. Even the fact that government had tired of trying to grow cotton successfully on the plateau did not deter Opiyo.

Yet Opiyo's determination was not enough to establish the crop. By 1930 Kere's old staff had combined with some of the more political members of the community to offer an alternative to government. Among the suggestions was one for growing coffee on the plateau. Another option called for the intensification of a ground nut scheme that had been started as early as 1919.[14] In short, Opiyo was opposed by three forces that he could not overcome. One, the organizational ability and popularity of former Chief Kere's aides and relations. Two, his own temperament and the harsh attempts he had made to reestablish cotton growing. And three, the government's reluctance to push hard for the industry in an area that seemed unsuitable for the crop.

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[13]Johanna Ogodo, personal interview, South Nyakach, 24 October 1973. Mr. Ogodo served as Clerk to Chief Kere throughout his entire reign, 1908-1928. Chief Owuor, the first Chief of South Nyakach and the father of Kere, was also Ogodo's grandfather. He was among the first of Kere's staff to be removed by Opiyo.

[14]Wilfred Achila, personal interview, Nyakach, 5 November 1973. A nephew of Chief Kere, Mr. Achila implied that the coffee plan was a scheme for getting government to accede to groundnut. He stated that people were aware that coffee was a "European" crop and only Kissi had been given special compensation to grow it. Achila and his group reasoned that if they approached government solely about groundnuts a great deal of foot-dragging could be expected. Making it look as though they were ready to mobilize politically for a coffee scheme forced the administration to act with dispatch.

Refusal to grow cotton did occur in a minimum number of locations. Two patterns of refusal can be seen, one geared to the existence of strong community leaders opposing cotton, and a second occurred when the conditions of the industry were so poor that farmers could make and adhere to a collective decision.

In 1922, at the height of nationalist agitation, Rev. Simeon Nyende[15] of Gem, Regea, was persuaded to grow cotton for an exhibit at the 1923 Maseno Show. For his crop he received twenty shillings, and like others, Nyende was incensed by the poor returns of the crop. A community leader by virtue of his position within the church and by his political activities, he was looked to by farmers for direction.[16] In this instance he counselled that the location should refuse to plant cotton in the coming season.

Actually, and this fact escaped Rev. Nyende's immediate attention, the farmers were concerned more specifically about the price than about a general boycott against cotton.[17] The boycott, however, remained in effect, not in the whole of Gem but only in Nyende's location, Regea. Only part of its success could be attributed to Nyende's leadership. The farmers in Gem, Regea, had intense personal loyalty to Rev. Nyende and for a period they dominated the Local Native Council, and forestalled government reprisals. Until 1935

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[15] Rev. Nyende's nationalist political activity will be more fully developed in Chapter VI.

[16] Rev. Simeon Nyende, personal interviews, Gem, 25 September 1973 and 29 October 1973.

[17] Ibid.

Nairobi refused to directly confront Regea farmers on their rejection of cotton. In that year, however, agricultural staff persuaded farmers in the location, including Nyende, to replant on the basis of an expected price rise.

An important consideration in Nairobi's decision to pressure Regea was the waning influence of Nyende's leadership. In 1934 he became embroiled in a dispute with Chief Ogada over the rights to a shamba in Marenyu.[18] Not only did the conflict siphon off some of Nyende's followers, but it also revealed the declining influence of the early nationalists. At this point government decided to propagandize his location once again.

In short, a favorable set of circumstances for the farmer in Gem; the presence of Nyende's leadership; a critical attitude on the part of farmers; a willingness to air their grievances; and, a hands off attitude by government set the conditions for a successful boycott.

Simultaneously with the Gem boycott, farmers in Alego were also successfully ignoring government cotton policies. Their recalcitrance had little to do with the rise of a strong community leader. From about 1911 to 1922 cotton growing in Alego moved along unsteadily. There were many complaints about the chiefs and milango exploiting the farmer. During the first three years of cotton's introduction, when planting was done in groups, farmers received no proceeds from growing the crop.[19]

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[18] K.N.A., E.A.P. Central Kavirondo District Political Records 1935, p. 7.

[19] Barnabas Nyangor, personal interview, Ndere Ginnery, 9 November 1973.

It was rumored, however, that Chief Oganda was receiving money for having the crop planted in the location. The process of growing, harvesting, storing and selling cotton during those years in Alego was sufficiently confusing to make it difficult to determine whether the chief was selling the cotton himself and keeping the proceeds; or, as was rumored, he was being given incentive bonuses by ginnery owners. And finally there were accusations that Holder, who came to inspect the harvest and provided transport for the crop, was paying the chief.

Whatever the truth of the stories they had enough credibility to be taken seriously by Alego cotton farmers. Before the colonial government prohibited the practice, some chiefs did force community people to grow cotton without remuneration. And ginnery owners found very early that it was to their advantage to provide chiefs with "production presents."[20] The story with the least basis in fact is that Holder was paying the chief for the cotton. How this came about can be illustrated by describing the peculiar system of selling cotton at that period in Alego.

Before 1935, since there was no ginnery closer than a fifty-mile round-trip, buyers would bring portable scales to the location and purchase cotton on the spot. Since all the cotton was stored at the chief's house, buying was a simple process and did not require the presence of the growers. In the years 1911-1914, Holder, it seems, was present checking the quality and quantity of the harvest. Since he was also involved in the organization of headload transport to the

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[20]Golam Husein, personal interview, Ndere Ginnery, 5 November 1973.

ginnery, he was included by the farmers in the chain of exploitation.[21] There is, however, no reason to believe that Holder was personally profiting from cotton. Nonetheless, he doubtlessly knew about incentive bonuses to chiefs and milango because the practice was widespread and condoned by government.

After 1914 group planting, limited to the chief's and milango shambas, was discontinued. Threatened by the resentment being expressed by farmers, Oganda instituted a new growing design. Group planting was continued,[22] but individual plots were emphasized. However, because of the adverse publicity attached to the earlier selling process each man was permitted to sell his cotton to the buyers. The process of weighing and paying for yields from numerous 1/4 and 1/8 acre plots was cumbersome, time consuming and did not justify the expense of on-the-spot buying. Instead cotton-growers had to head-load their harvest twenty-five miles to Victoria Ujuanga near Mumias.

Prior to 1935 the location of the ginnery was the most important prohibitive factor in growing cotton in Alego. Depending on weather conditions, the trip sometimes required three days, and often payments were delayed.[23] By 1922 cotton growing in Alego had virtually ceased. A few hardy souls seldom grew more than 1/2 an acre per season.

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[21]Agabitus Muyama, personal interview, Siaya, West Alego, 12 November 1973.

[22]There are several advantages to group planting. Most important, a farmer did not have to disturb his food crop acreage if he planted on donated community land.

[23]Lutt Odhiambo Ademson, personal interview, Central Alego, 14 November 1973. Mr. Ademson stated that his father, Isiah Adem, continued to grow cotton from 1914 to 1917. It was a losing proposition because for two seasons he was unable to transport his crop to Victoria Ujuanga and it rotted in his granary. Finally in 1918, the last year he sold, the proceeds were so low that he did not return to cotton-growing until 1936.

Actually the establishment of the Ndere ginnery brought about conditions in which the people of Alego suffered some land appropriations. In 1934 Mr. Metha of the Uganda Sugar Company, Jinja began looking in Alego for land to open a ginnery. There was no crown land available to be purchased, and Metha had to think of purchasing or otherwise obtaining a site. There were no farmers eager to donate any land, and after four months of reconnoitering the area without convincing anyone to sell, Metha decided on the site he desired and opened direct negotiations for the land with Chief Amoth.

The chief had been in office only three years and was well liked by the British but generally feared by his constituents.[24] Within two months, by a variety of threats and promises, Amoth had convinced the farmers to give up some of their land for the ginnery. William Oyugi's mother was persuaded to exchange her land for a promise of an equal amount in another section of the location.[25] Oyugi claims that his mother thus was given undesirable land and some people received no land at all. Amoth promised the ginnery would make it possible for everyone to make money growing cotton, and those who objected to giving up their land were sometimes personally caned by the chief. Some were forced to concede their land by a whispering campaign that accused them of being "fitina" (politicians) and not having the good

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[24]Following the death of Chief Nunga in 1929, Ahenda became Chief of Alego. About 1930, Alego was divided into East and West sections, with Amoth becoming Chief of West Alego. At Ahenda's death in 1931, the district was reconsolidated, and Amoth became Chief of all Alego.

[25]William Oyugi, personal interview, West Alego, 12 November 1973.

of the community at heart.[26] Eventually the land was obtained, and Ndere Ginnery opened. Since it was no longer necessary to make that fifty mile round trip to sell, people enthusiastically returned to growing cotton.

Unlike the Ndere example, enthusiasm for cotton was not characteristic of the farmers' response. Ironically during the early years of cotton's introduction there were no areas of total defiance or total compliance. Reasons for this, in addition to the already discussed patterns of response, can be discerned by revealing the farmer's rationales for opposing cotton policy.

Farmers seemed to be motivated negatively toward cotton growing for the following reasons. One, low price accounted for most resistance to cotton growing. Two, cotton was a non-edible agricultural product and this severely limited its acceptance. Three, the method of introducing cotton in Central Nyanza was, from the farmers' point of view, cruel and contrary to traditional farming practices. Four, in addition to low prices being paid for cotton, farmers also felt they were being exploited in a variety of ways at buying centers. Five, cotton required greater labor inputs than did traditional food crops. Six, in the early years of cotton cash cropping, there seemed to be little incentive or need for farmers to acquire money.

"We never received a proper price for our cotton and so we stopped growing. The government did not do anything but that may have been because of the War."[27] Everywhere farmers were dissatisfied with the

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[26]Lutt Odhiambo Ademson, personal interview, Central Alego, 14 November 1973, and Jacobo Halowe, personal interview, Central Alego, 14 November 1973.

[27]Norman Anyumba, personal interview, West Kano, 28 August 1973.

low monetary returns from cotton. While few farmers, if any, kept written records they were aware that other products were bringing a better return. Leon Adus Ondondi, a mlango in West Kisumu under Chief Johanno Ouko, vividly remembered that, in 1926, people in the location rejected cotton because of better prices for maize. Mr. Ondondi, who approved of the use of force to get cash crops planted, reported "the people were not against cash cropping, but wanted to plant the best one [in terms of salebility]."[28] He, however, did cane those who wished to substitute maize for cotton because Chief Ouko ordered it and because both believed that European ideas were progressive.

The British government was aware that cotton had the least attractive price of all the products being grown by Nyanza farmers. In 1925 the price for the best seed cotton varied, over the buying season, from 19 to 25 cents. The low prices paid resulted in the planting of much smaller acreage in 1926.[29]

Government could observe the burgeoning shift to maize. For a few months in 1929, the maize requirements for almost the whole colony were supplied by the Kavirondo Reserves; "a considerable profit must have accrued to the native agriculturalists."[30] The uncertainty expressed by government over the profit margin of African maize was understandable. Never had the administration paid particular attention

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[28]Leon Adus Ondondi, personal interview, West Kisumu, 14 August 1973.

[29]C.O. 544, Kenya Departmental Reports, Department of Agriculture Annual Report 1926, p. 19.

[30]C.O. 544, Kenya Departmental Reports, Native Affairs Department Annual Report 1929, p. 18.

to African crops whose use was limited to the domestic market. When, in the 1930's prices for domestic maize exceeded those of European maize being sold on the international market, then government and settler farmers became interested.

Certainly Africans reacted rationally to fluctuations in cotton prices. In 1929, following the record harvest of 1928, prices dropped drastically. During 1928, the harvest totalled 2,256,497 pounds of seed cotton, and prices ranged from 17 to 18 cents throughout the buying period.[31] The following year, however, prices were a disappointing 13 cents at ginneries and 12 cents at buying posts. Towards the end of the buying season the price rose slightly, to 15 cents and 13 cents respectively.[32] By 1930 dissatisfaction with 1929 prices had led to a dramatic reduction in cotton acreage.

Earlier, in 1920, the manager of Kibos experimental station reported a growing disinclination on the part of the Kavirondo to produce cotton. His assessment was that "the low prices which have prevailed for a considerable period are almost certainly the reason."[33] Bureaucratic optimism, however, prevailed, and campaigns to keep farmers planting cotton were accentuated. The abnormally high prices for raw materials paid during World War I had created false hopes that prices would remain high, and a number of new settlers had arrived to

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[31] Ibid., p. 61

[32] C.O. 544, Kenya Departmental Reports, Department of Agriculture Annual Report 1930, p. 41.

[33] C.O. 544, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Dept. of Agriculture, Annual Administration Report 1921, p. 30.

take up agricultural holdings. Under the Discharged Soldiers Settlement Ordinance it was hoped that new capital would be introduced.[34]

In spite of government's optimism and increased pressure on cotton, Nyanza farmers continued to hold back as long as low prices prevailed. Ex-Chief Simeon Otiende of Kajulu expressed the dilemma of government and the farmer in the following terms:

> In the 1930's the greatest dissatisfaction was low price. But the British Government could never insist that only cotton be grown or that considerably larger areas of cotton be cultivated. They stressed it but were also concerned about famine after Omodho [1931] so they urged that food crops be continued. 35

Omola Ojuka, whose first cotton crop was planted in 1925, remembered 1931 with mixed feelings. It gave him, he said, the opportunity to leave cotton growing without government reprisals. In the six growing seasons before the famine he never planted more than a 1/4 acre plot nor received more than 105 shillings for his crop,[36] and that amount was received the first growing season. By 1927 the steadily dropping price of cotton had reduced his annual proceeds from the crop to 30 shillings. After the 1927 harvest, Mr. Ojuka had considered expanding his acreage, but his return was so low that he looked for the earliest opportunity to stop growing the crop.[37]

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[34] Ibid., pp. 10-11.

[35] Ex-Chief Simeon Otiende, personal interview, Kajulu, 24 August 1973.

[36] Omola Ojuka, personal interview, Kajula, 23 August 1973.

[37] Ibid.

Omodho presented such an opportunity and he took employment as a common laborer working on a section of Kakemega road. The terms of employment were unusual. Only supervisory personnel were paid wages, and all common laborers were paid in weekly provisions of flour, meat and sometimes vegetables. The work therefore amounted to a form of famine relief. From 1932 to 1935 Mr. Ojuka was a laborer for 12 shillings a month on a European farm in Muhuroni.

The second most frequently heard but least understood complaint against cotton was that it was non-edible. Many western academicians have used this point to demonstrate the non-economic nature of African thinking. Contrary to these interpretations, African reaction was based firmly in economic evaluations. In peasant societies dependent on subsistence agriculture, the response to new food products may be very slow, and non-food crops may be rejected very strenously. Moreover, non-edible crops in marginal areas involved considerably more risk than any knowledgeable peasant would care to face. Minimizing the risk of a short-fall food crop is more important and equally valid to peasant cultivators as is the European emphasis on maximizing profit.[38]

Actually Nyanza farmers had to achieve a delicate balance between their own traditional economic concepts and those being imposed by the colonial government. In areas where there existed enough indices that the farmer could understand he actually did pursue profits. For

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[38]Daryll Forde and Mary Douglas "Primitive Economics," Tribal and Peasant Economies: Reading in Economic Anthropology, Edited by George Dalton (Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1967), p. 27.

example, if the crop were familiar and its uses known to the farmer, it would be planted primarily for sale. And if the final stage in the exchange process could be understood, then the farmer displayed little hesitation in growing for the market.[39]

Certainly the British Government was aware, even though belatedly, in the case of maize in the 1930's that Nyanza farmers were interested in profit. Practically the only point raised at any baraza was that of the market price, in some cases with people pointing out that cotton compared unfavorably with sim-sim as a profit yielding crop.[40] In 1925, Nyanza's provincial commissioner reported that, "the trading, agricultural and commercial intelligence shown by many natives was surprising."[41] Even earlier, in 1912, the then Director of Agriculture, A.C. MacDonald, understood that one of the greatest obstacles to the enthusiastic growing of cotton was low price.

When caught between the farmers' sophisticated economic reasoning and the government's needs, British administrators were instructed to "instill into the native mind the economic value of cotton to the empire."[42] In short, the ability of the Nyanza farmer to make rational economic decisions was never lost on the colonial government, but the farmer was forced to give precedence to Nairobi's need for foreign exchange.

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[39]George Dalton "Traditional Production in Primitive African Economies," Ibid., p. 76.

[40]K.N.A., Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Senior Commissioner's Report 1925, p. 15.

[41]Ibid.

[42]Ibid., p. 17.

The fact remained that farmers knew and understood that the monetary returns on cotton did not justify their whole-hearted adoption of the crop. It was clear to cotton cultivators that if cotton was economically viable Europeans also would have been involved in growing the crop. In 1920 the report from the Kibos government experimental farm, stated "heretofore cotton was not considered a suitable crop for European cultivation in the Province, owing to the very low prices . . . but at present prices -- 15 to 18 cents per pound for clean unginned cotton -- the cultivation of this crop in suitable parts would appear to have become worthy of close attention."[43]

This optimism continued the following year when the new Director of Agriculture, Alex Holm, included in his annual report an observation that high prices in 1919 and early 1920 would induce European farmers to plant the crop. Apparently they knew better or were certainly very cautious about the crop's potential. Not only did established European farmers continue to ignore cotton, but also none of the new settlers under the Settlement Scheme seriously considered its cultivation.

A third major item of resistance to cotton growing was the African farmers' objection to the method of the crop's introduction. Not only was it cruel but it was also contrary to traditional farming practices. In peasant agriculture where family holdings not communal plots, were the norm, immediate issues of confrontation arose. Caning and other forms of corporal punishment accompanied the government's efforts to introduce cotton. Finally, all people, including women,

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[43]C.O. 544, Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Dept. of Agriculture, Annual Administration Report 1920, p. 122.

children, and the ill but ambulatory, were sometimes forced to grow in group plots. Only after World War II did government reduce the use of forced cotton planting.

In addition to other economic consideration, a fourth factor around which Nyanza farmers responded negatively was the perceived exploitation at the buying centers. They were so organized as to be structured unfairly. Of greatest importance was the fact that the buyers were Asian. Until Zablon Aduo was employed by the Kenya Farmers Association in 1937, no Africans were licensed to purchase cotton from growers. Even if Asians had not constituted a despised minority, their sharp business practices would have caused at least negative comments. Seldom were receipts issued, and when they were, they simply contained the amount of money given the farmer.[44]

Immediately upon cotton's introduction a fifth negative factor about the crop was articulated by the farmer. It was, they stated, a crop that required greater labor than did traditional food crops. Such an assertion was easily demonstrated.[45] Extensive preparation of the land was required before cotton could be planted. The field had to be turned over and cleaned, and then the plot had to be harrowed smooth and large stones removed. And in areas where mounds were utilized, these could be built during the second preparatory step. Next came the planting. Instructions were to plant in straight rows a specified number of feet apart, not only between the rows but also

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[44]Hezron Onganjo, personal interview, West Kano, 10 September 1973, and Zablon Aduo, personal interview, Kibos-Kakamega Junction, 12 October and 17 October 1973.

[45]T.J. Kennedy,"Study of Economic Motivation Involved in Peasant Cultivation of Cotton," East African Institute of Social Research Proceedings (January 1964), p. 9.

between the plants. Once planting had been accomplished, continuing husbandry necessitated weeding at the proper times.

Proper harvesting required as precise a method as had preparation and planting. Further problems were created by the need to store cotton until it could be sold. Finally when harvesting was completed, farmers had to chop down and burn cotton stalks. Usually farmers met the extra labor requirement of cotton by utilizing all hands, particularly for major operations.

A sixth and final negative consideration turned the Nyanza farmer against cotton planting. In the years 1901 to 1939, there seemed to be little incentive or need for farmers to acquire money through cash cropping. His low annual money expenditures were spread out over the year. Small cash outlays for taxes, school fees, and equipment replacement did not call for major fund-raising efforts. And almost every extended family had at least one member skilled in making baskets, household utensils and stools from materials which were close at hand.

Contributing significantly to the Luo attitude to money was the fact that money and material were not values in precolonial society. Barter remained in existence many years. Even in 1939, on the eve of World War II, it was possible for farmers in Nyanza to pay for many services, which in an industrialized nation required money, by an exchange of produce or items from family industries. Among the services that could still be acquired through barter were payments to traditional doctors[48], partial remuneration to skilled craftsmen, hiring of draft

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[48]Josef Omodhi Chadha, personal interview, Kajulu, 27 July 1973. Mr. Chadha is a traditional medical practitioner, world traveler and a musician of considerable talent.

animals and transportation.

Clearly the above ideas illustrate the farmers' reasons for resisting government's cotton policy. Overall, the peasant cultivators of Central Nyanza met the demands of the British Government's directives to plant cotton. Even in those areas where the conditions seemed present for sustained and successful resistance, some farmers continued to grow cotton. The major and continuing form of defiance of government policy by the farmer was to plant the minimum acreage in cotton. Modifying standard cotton husbandry enabled the farmer to satisfy the authorities while leaving some time free for other economic and leisure pursuits.

The resistance of farmers mostly can be attributed to peasant economic views that scarcely meshed with western industrial thinking. Although farmers had, in their terms, strong economic reasons for resisting cotton as a cash crop, they were never successful in organizing or finding allies to support their cause. We will next examine the rise of the nationalist movement in Nyanza and try to discern if there were any connections between the farmers' grievances and nationalist agitation.

CHAPTER VI

POLITICAL ACTIVITY IN CENTRAL NYANZA 1921-1940: A FAILURE TO REDRESS FARMER'S GRIEVANCES AND THE FARMER'S MODUS VIVENDI

A review of the first two decades of African cotton cultivation in Central Nyanza reveals three distinct facts. One, individual farmers were highly critical of the crop itself and of the British Government's insistence that cotton be grown. Two, individual resentment never crystalized into a cohesive opposition to Nairobi's agricultural policy. Three, no farmers' organization arose during the period that was either broadly or narrowly representative of the farmers' interests. This lack of organized defiance of the colonial government may be traced to the decentralized, self-sufficient and wholly autonomous nature of local polities in pre-colonial Luo society. The fact remains, however, that there did exist in Western Kenya an issue, cotton growing, around which general resentment was widespread and around which a potentially large membership for an anti-government organization could be organized.

Despite their peasant farming origins, the early nationalists never succeeded fully in organizing the farmers' discontent. The farmers mostly did not rush to seek membership in the movement, even though they were attracted by the symbols of opposition. Nor did they present their ideas to be molded into a program by the new

political leaders. Not only was there a failure by both groups to support each other, but also there were specific points at which very strong antagonisms were revealed. This chapter will examine the political activities of the early nationalists and their failure to achieve a redress of the cotton farmers' grievances.

In 1921, despite the farmer's continuing economic problems, the impetus for establishing a mass-based political organization came from another quarter. During November and December, the Church Missionary Society School at Maseno (hereafter C.M.S. Maseno) was the scene of unusual agitation. Like several other missionary schools in Nyanza, C.M.S. Maseno had been designed to train readers and low-grade clerks for the local civil service.[1] During the agitation in 1921, it was obvious at least in the case of Maseno that the system had created an educated elite which could organize an opposition to government. It was in fact the members of the first class in 1906, now faculty members, who were inciting the agitation. Among these were Jonathan Okwirri of Uyoma, Simeon Nyende of Gem Regea, Benjamin Owour Gumba (hereafter Benjamin Owour) of Seme, Reuben Omulo of Gem Marenyo, Ezekiel Apindi of South Nyanza, George Samwel Okoth of Alego, Joel Meshak Omino of Kisumu, Mathayo Otieno and Michael Were. Three of the participants, Jonathan Okwirri, Simeon Nyende and Benjamin Owour later formed the nucleus of early political leadership in Nyanza.

Jonathan Okwirri, who, in 1921 was undergoing teacher training at C.M.S. Maseno, became Chairman of the Young Kavirondo Association,

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[1]K.M. Okaro-Kojwang,"Origins and Establishment of the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association," Ngano (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969), p. 112.

(hereafter YKA) the pioneer Luo political party. Much confusion surrounds Okwirri's tenure of office. He claims to have been given the position for twenty years, but voluntarily left the organization in 1933.[2] Simeon Nyende on the other hand contends, and the record seems to bear him out, that Okwirri left the office in 1923 to become a teacher at C.M.S. Maseno. In 1939 Okwirri became chief of Uyoma and was commended by government in 1946. At age 92, Jaduong[3] Okwirri is retired but maintains an interest in Kenya politics and is even informed about black Americans.

In 1921, Simeon Nyende was also undergoing teacher training. Like Okwirri, he had been a student with Benjamin Owuor at C.M.S. Maseno earlier. He became the first treasurer of YKA. As late as 1963, Rev. (now Bishop) Nyende's criticism of the colonial government caused him to be censured by the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza.

By 1921, Benjamin Owuor had completed eight years of study at C.M.S. Maseno. Leaving Maseno in 1916, he had secured immediate employment as a clerk in the office of Provincial Commissioner John Ainsworth. In 1917, when Ainsworth left Nyanza for military duty, he secured a position for Owuor as a clerk in the Carrier Corps. Demobilized in 1918, Owuor spent two years as a medical trainee in Nyanza General Hospital Kisumu. In 1921 he was working as a foreman at a sisal plantation near Maseno that served as the site for the secret meetings. He became the first Secretary of YKA and remained in that position in the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association until

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[2]Jonathan Okwirri, personal interview, Uyoma, 27 September 1973.

[3]A Luo term of respect for elders.

1927. Aster 1927 he held no offices in the association and left active public life in 1935 due to poor health.[4]

In 1921, at a sisal plantation near Maseno, Okwirri, Nyende and Owuor organized a series of secret meetings to discuss assertions made by Daudi Bassude,[5] a politically conscious Baganda employed at the school. He had reported that impending legislation concerning identity cards (Kipande) and Kenya's change of status from protectorate to colony meant the ascendency of settler politics and the more complete exploitation of Kenya Africans.

The first item of business at the secret meetings was the creation of the Young Kavirondo Association.[6] The group became better known as Piny Owacho, a Luo phrase whose exact meaning is difficult to pin down. For some people it meant the "World Says," in contrast to the government's formal heading on directives, "Serikal nasema" (the

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[4]Partially blind now, Jaduong Owuor lives in retirement in East Seme. Because of his delicate health and the esteem with which he is held by his people, the whole community seems engaged in protecting his privacy. He was the most difficult of the early activists to find. But once he granted the interview he was informative, animated and altogether charming. Despite his poor health, Mr. Owuor maintains an active interest in Kenyan and African politics.

[5]Daudi Bassude was a telegraph operator at Maseno from 1918 to 1922. He was also editor of a vernacular newspaper, Sekanyolyo, and a founder of the National (Buganda) Federation of Bataka, a group of farmers agitating against the property distribution of the 1900 Uganda Agreement. His criticism of British policy was discovered and he was fired by school officials. Apparently the Bassude dismissal was handled so skillfully that none of the faculty members whom he had turned into agitators were aware that the administrators knew of his role.

[6]Some confusion surrounds this designation. Jonathan Okwirri, the first president of the organization, insisted that it was never called Young Kavirondo Association, but always Piny Owacho. Neither Simeon Nyende nor Benjamin Owuor agreed with Okwirri. The designation is, however, the one used by scholars and will be used hereafter in this work.

government says). To others it meant "the people say," or the "Voice of the People,"[7] the latter claimed by Okwirri and Nyende. It was, they said, a way of making government feel that the association had a mass base and reflected the will of the people. Equally it kept officialdom from learning the name of the leaders and taking reprisals. Benjamin Owuor, however, contended the meaning of Piny Owacho was the "World Says," but his reasoning is similar to that of Okwirri and Nyende. Not only was the will of the people being expressed but also the right of a foreign dictatorial government was being challenged by a greater force. "Serakal would tremble when confronted by the World." Whatever the case, the phrase was meant to legitimize the movement, elicit support from the masses and probably also to keep the leaders' identities secret.

Eventually the meetings led to a petition of grievances scheduled to be presented publically at a mass meeting on 23 December 1921. This gathering hopefully would crystalize support for the criticisms and, more importantly, put government on notice that the people desired change. The full bill of particulars was not publicized until the actual meeting. But the general outline of the petition was distributed to prominent community leaders as far away as South Nyanza. Excatly how people were notified is not precisely clear but informants report that messages were carried to elders, whose support was solicited. Benjamin Owuor and Simeon Nyende contend that students were requested to submit names of potential leaders in their community

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[7] See Bethwell A. Ogot,"British Administration in the Central Nyanza District of Kenya, 1900-60," Journal of African History, (1963), p. 7.

[8] Benjamin Owuor, personal interview, East Seme, 8 August 1973.

who could be used to publicize the meeting as well as to indicate their responses to the items on the petition. All who were involved in the sisal plantation meetings knew the importance of the support of the elders.

Thus selected students would return to their locales carrying by word-of-mouth particular articles of opposition and asking the old men to foster community support for the plan. Jonathan Okwirri, however, stated that no student was given such responsibilities, and claimed that he never sought the support of people in his location. His version is that chiefs were contacted and then asked to spread the word to their respective locations. Because the chiefs themselves were vulnerable they were told to pass the message as quickly and quietly as possible and not to take a leading role in the public meeting.[9]

Clearly the organizational ability and the secrecy maintained during this early stage are outstanding. Although government was aware of the impending meeting they had no idea of the particulars or the scope of the organization's appeal. Government obtained its information about the Lundha meeting from at least two sources. One, Chief Muganda wished to ingratiate himself with government, hoping it would in turn support him in acquiring and maintaining a hegemony over his area similar to that held for so many years by Mumia. A second lead of the association's plan can be attributed to Jairo Owino, an interpretor in the provincial commissioner's office. Owino, in point of service and rank, was the senior African official in

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[9]Jonathan Okwirri, personal interview, Uyoma, 27 September 1973.

Nyanza. His dictatorial and officious personality made him unpopular with other Luo. But his language and administrative abilities, not to mention his loyalty made him a favorite with British administrators.

Always in a position to know, through his judicious use of patronage, the currents of the community, Owino vaguely understood that some opposition to government was planned. He erroneously informed provincial headquarters that a major military confrontation was about to take place. A brief clash between the small government force and participants at the meeting did take place. The Luo objected to government's presence and especially to the armed police. A few harsh words were exchanged and things seemed on the verge of hostilities when Mr. Montgomery, D.C. for North Nyanza, intervened. Well-liked by the residents of North and Central Nyanza, Montgomery ascertained from the meeting's organizers that no violence was anticipated and then effected the withdrawal of the British personnel. Jairo Owino was left as an observer.

On 23 December 1921, the attendants of the Lundha meeting, who have been estimated variously at 8,000 to 40,000[10] participants, discussed the full range of grievances and charges against government. Acting in his capacity as chairman, Jonathan Okwirri led the discussion that resulted in a ten point memorandum to be presented to government. The following demands were drawn up:

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[10]Okaro-Kojwang, "Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association," p. 115, quotes Rev. Reuben Omulo, a participant, as having calculated the lower number. Jonathan Okwirri, in his interview on 27 September 1973, used the higher figure. Government used an even lower figure than Omulo, citing 1000 persons, mostly young and mission trained.

(1) Establishment of a separate legislature for Nyanza as an autonomous administrative unit, with an elected African president at its head, so as to avoid the reasons and abuses of direct administration.

(2) Abolition of the kipande (identity card) which was regarded as a denial of freedom of movement, thereby tying people to undesirable jobs on European farms.

(3) Reduction of the hut and poll taxes with a view toward excluding women from taxation.

(4) Building of a government school in Central Nyanza, and the general improvement of educational facilities in the whole province.

(5) Revocation of the crown colony status, with Kenya to remain a protectorate.

(6) Increase of wages for Africans in general, and for chiefs in particular.

(7) Abolition of indiscriminate forced labor, especially among women, children and old people.

(8) Dissolution of the labor camps which had been set up at Nyahera, Rabour, Yala and Pap Onditi -- these being the source of much hardship and the reason for frequent raids into villages by government officials in search of workers and free food, with resulting corporal punishment.

(9) Granting of individual title-deeds to land to allay the fear of possible European settlement in Nyanza, some Nyanza land having been alienated for settlement at Muhoroni.

(10) Creation of a paramount chief for the Central Nyanza and South Nyanza Districts, similar to Mumia in North Nyanza. 11

The meeting had two immediate objectives: to organize the community and to elicit a response from government. The desired scenario

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[11]There is no existing copy of the ten point memorandum. The above has been constructed from personal interviews, government documents and most importantly, Okaro-Kojwang's "Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association." Also a short list of "complaints" are contained in the Central Kavirondo District Annual Report for Kisumu, 1922, p. 4.

foresaw an invitation from Nairobi to Piny Owacho's leadership to discuss the proposals. Such an eventuality, however, was not immediately forthcoming.

Certain aspects of the Lundha meeting are worthy of more detailed investigation. None of the resolutions directly concerned cotton farmers' problems. All of Piny Owacho's organizers had had less than favorable experiences with cotton and should have been cognizant of farmers' dissatisfactions. In explanation, Jonathan Okwirri asserted: "We knew all about problems with cotton and we were going to do something about them. But they weren't the most important problems." Moreover, according to Okwirri, if the Luo could have successfully extablished a separate legislature, many positive initiatives could have taken, among them a redirection of agricultural priorities. The overemphasis on settler agriculture to the detriment of African agriculture would have been reversed through the political process. In this assessment Okwirri received at least partial support from Benjamin Owuor, whose father had had early distasteful experiences with cotton.

Owuor conceived of Piny Owacho as a direct political challenge to settler politicians, such as William Grogan and Lord Delamere. Consequently the farmers' most pressing issue had to defer to political considerations. Another and even more candid justification was given by Rev. Simeon Nyende. He claimed everyone was aware of the farmers' plight, but those who participated in the secret meetings were workers, like Owuor, or teachers and students. The lack of a farmers' representative meant that their views were not included in

the resolutions. Nyende also suggested that at the meeting, the farmers themselves were swept along by the political issues and never stated their own particular concerns.

Perhaps the very attention to the political issues is a mark of the degree of alienation of Piny Owacho's leadership from their constituents. It appears therefore that concentration on abstract political considerations rather than on concrete local issues may have impeded the organization's impact. Actually the enthusiasm of the Lundha meeting indicated strong agreement with the association's aims. But inherent contradictions between the organization and its largely peasant constituency would manifest itself during the political struggle.

While the consensus lasted the leadership accelerated their attack. Shortly after the Lundha meeting, a delegation headed by Benjamin Owuor met with Provincial Commissioner H.R. Tate, and demanded that the governor meet with them to discuss ways of implementing the resolutions. Tate had ideas on his own about the resolutions and attempted to dissuage the group from seeking a direct confrontation with Nairobi. Since the point would not be dropped tate suggested a mass meeting at which some agreements could be worked out. Owuor's impression was that the proposed meeting would work out the details as well as a tentative agenda for the audience with Governor Northey.[12]

On 7 February 1922, much to the consternation of the assembled Africans, P.C. Tate continued his attempt to negotiate the demands and to assure the Luo that their problems were being brought to the

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[12]Benjamin Owuor, personal interview, East Seme, 8 August 1973.

government's attention. This meeting convinced Tate that the African leadership was indeed determined to continue its agitation. "The attitude of the natives," it was reported, "was not all together respectful."[13] In spite of the disgruntled feelings on both sides, one positive result was accomplished. Nairobi not only received a copy of the Lundha meeting resolutions, but also heard lengthy African feelings about the important issues. Assertions were made that the Luo "were being treated as dogs" when forced to wear the kipande.[14] There were also accusations that the colonial government's system on taxation was unfair and that chiefs were paid such poor wages that they were in danger of losing prestige among their people.

By 11 March 1922, when no further word was received from Tate, an executive committee, again headed by Benjamin Owuor, drafted a letter to the p.c. insisting on meeting with the governor. The administration, however, wished to try one more placatory gesture, and a third mass meeting was scheduled for Nyahera. At the 25 May 1922 meeting, the Chief Native Commissioner met with the leaders and several thousand Africans. His attempts to assure the gathering that his department was concerned and was the proper avenue for their complaints was greeted with derision. In general tone the meeting was respectful, but the Luo were no longer deferential in their public behavior towards high-ranking British officials. Immediately after the 25 May meeting, Piny Owacho held a series of strategic meetings with full publicity to apprise Central Nyanza that the

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[13] Central Kavirondo District Annual Report for Kisumu (1922), p.2.

[14] Daniel Omer, personal interview, Kajulu, 30 July 1973.

governor was ignoring their just demands. Such was the nature of public meetings at Lundha, Yala and Maseno during the month of June 1922. Central Nyanza was a beehive of political activity.

Simultaneously, selected young chiefs continued their political activity. In late 1921, Chief Paul Moyi of Uyoma allegedly advised his men to evade the payment of hut tax. It was later established that he had only failed to assist in collecting the hut-tax. Another chief, Mugenya of South Ugenya, reportedly was collecting fees to engage a firm of advocates to represent his claims in regard to a boundary question. By so doing he had ignored the proper channels provided by the District Commissioner's Office. Finally Chief Daniel Odindo of Asembo had conducted a series of secret night meetings with other chiefs in his area. Coinciding as it did with the emergence of Piny Owacho, the chief's machinations made it appear as if the administration would soon come under concerted attack. "It is notable that these . . . are among the younger chiefs and Mission boys."[15] And it could have been added that these men derived from the same elements that constituted Piny Owacho's leadership. The outward appearance of consensus represented by the Association's seemingly inexhaustible ability to organize mass meetings; the aggressive demeanour of the crowds and their vociferous advocacy of the resolution; the total dedication of the leadership to the necessity of presenting their grievances to the highest level of the colonial government; the manifestation of growing political consciousness on the part of some African administrators who could be seen as potential allies to the

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[15] Kisumu District Annual Report (1921), p. 6.

opposition, caused the colonial administration to reconsider its decision of not having the governor appear before the group.

Eventually, on 8 July 1922, at Nyahera, Governor Sir Edward Northey convened a meeting with the association's leadership and thousands of supporters, some from as far away as Karachwonyo in South Nyanza. For ten hours, broken only for the governor's lunch break of slightly more than an hour, the resolutions and government's intended actions were debated. At the outset the governor indicated his willingness to deal with all save two issues. He claimed he did not have the authority to alter Kenya's current status as a crown colony, nor could he change the method of issuing title deeds. Those issues would have to be handled by the home government in London.

Once the meeting got down to specifics, it became clear that the consensus obtained by Piny Owacho was ephemeral. Around the issue of paramount chief, the various undercurrents in the Luo community arose. Ultimately the issue became so exasperating that it allowed the governor to close the meeting before substantive changes could be agreed on. Subsequently, and as a direct consequence of animosities revealed in the meeting, every shade of opinion in opposition to the association was aired publically.

In particular the chiefs' caution gave away to their individual political ambitions. In the confused and often acrimonious debates which ensued it was revealed that almost every senior chief had made representations to P.C. Tate concerning his own competence to fill the position. Among these, Chief Amimo seems to have been the most active prior to the meeting and the most aggressive during its

proceedings. Amimo asserted that he was the greatest of the Luo Chiefs and should be given the position. By so doing, he had broken a cardinal Luo political rule: those desiring political appointments and advancement were expected to be more circumspect about revealing such ambitions. Amimo's candidacy was therefore hooted down, accompanied by the derisive ritualized chanting of "Amimo is Dead." Not silenced, however, by the rebuke, Amimo proposed that Central Nyanza be given two paramount chiefs. He, of course, nominated himself for the proposed western division and Chief Ogada of Uyoma for the eastern portion.[16]

Unfortunately Amimo's outburst did not end the discussion before further debilitating exchanges occurred. Among these was the hostility unleashed toward the choice of Benjamin Owuor as paramount chief. Owuor's name had been suggested by the governor as a compromise when his first candidate, Ogutu Gor, was rejected by the assembly. Owuor was rejected for three reasons. First, the chiefs objected to his youth and the fact that he was not royalty, meaning that neither Owuor's father nor grandfather had been important chiefs. Second, he was not a well known and prominent personality. This was really an omnibus criticism that also encompassed the fact that he had not entered the traditional political structure of elders and advisors

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[16]Even interviewees who had not attended the 8 July 1922 Nyahena meeting rembered stories of Amimo's embarrassing conduct there. The account of the meeting contained here was drawn in the main from interviews with the following:

Abrahim Kayi, personal interview, West Kano, 21 August 1973; Benjamin Owuor, personal interview, E. Seme, 8 August 1973; Rev. Simeon Nyende, personal interview, Gem Uyoma, 25 September 1973; Barnabas Nyangor, personal interview, Ndere, 9 November 1973.

to chiefs. And finally large numbers of Luo were suspicious of Owuor's and, indeed, the whole of the Piny Owacho leaderships' western education.

Behind all of the objections to Owuor can be discerned the political anxieties in the Luo community resulting from the imported system of indirect rule. Traditional political leaders, elders, counselors and advisors generally had, been relegated to a ceremonial position by British-appointed chiefs. The latter, in turn, had constructed their own hierarchy which, in most instances, ignored traditional office holders. Already sufficiently isolated in their contacts with the colonial government the elders saw no reason to offer the "new men" entree into the political structure.[17] In the period between the first Lundha meeting on 23 December 1921, and the 8 July 1922 meeting, an intense whisper campaign had been mounted against the possible nomination of any Piny Owacho official for paramount chief. Like the organization's inability to articulate the cotton farmers grievances, its failure to provide a consensus candidate for this sensitive position exhibited its lack of political integration. The association's leaders were victims of the Luo political heritage and a lack of western political sophistication. On the one hand the inherently democratic Luo traditional political structure allowed for long, exhaustive public discussions and negotiations involving the whole community before an issue was resolved. Western practice, on the other hand, had little patience with "palaver" and its accompanying excitability, violent gestures and ad hominem

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[17]John M. Lonsdale, A Political History of Nyanza 1883-1945, Unpubl. Ph.D. Diss. (Trinity College, Cambridge University, 1964), p. 118.

arguments. Luo political practices could encompass these lengthy practices, but the meeting with Governor Northey was not timed for Luo political techniques.

At least one other issue surfaced during the meeting that turned out to be detrimental to Piny Owacho's intentions. Around the item of title deeds further splits developed, with Jairo Owino again causing considerable problems. Capitalizing on the fear of change that he knew most farmers felt, Owino suggested that title deeds would destroy the fabric of Luo society. It would be, he asserted, impossible for a man to use his property in any way he saw fit. Further, consolidation would involve endless litigation resulting from exploitation in exchanging land with one's neighbor. Although the leadership understood that title deeds were basically insurance against settler expropriation, they let the issue drop in the face of objection by the older farmers. Simeon Nyende reasoned that the farmers could see that Europeans did not seem to be that interested in acquiring land in Nyanza and therefore were not very excited by the resolution.[18] Significantly the 8 July 1922 meeting represents a watershed in Piny Owacho's authority. Not only did they lose publicly and for the first time to government but also questions arose concerning their ability to lead the Luo community.

Thereafter slow descent of Piny Owacho began, but it had accomplished much in its brief life. In the space of eight months a group of individuals with no previous political experience had conducted an organized campaign that had resulted in an open air confrontation with

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[18]Rev. Simeon Nyende, personal interview, Gem Regea, 29 October 1973.

the highest official in the colonial administration. They had displayed a dedication and singleness of purpose to which the group would never be able to return. Not only did they turn aside ploys such as discussions with P.C. Tate and the Chief Native Commissioner, but they also maintained their solidarity even when government pressured them. For example, Benjamin Owuor, Simeon Nyende and Jonathan Okwirri were all threatened with arrest. In fact, warrants for their arrest were being held by local authorities but were never executed.

The early nationalists won concessions on two of the more visible colonial oppressions. By the second meeting with P.C. Tate, labor camps had been abandoned; those already in existence were to be turned to other uses, and those scheduled for construction like Rabour were simply discontinued. The camps represented the immediate threat from government and symbolized its omnipresent authority. As annoying as the camps, and resulting from them, was the practice of the administration and construction crews of appropriating all materials, even those currently in use. Particularly galling was the confiscation of gate posts, which resulted in the loss of livestock.[19] Chickens, vegetables, and local products such as baskets and cooking and storage utensils were also likely articles for appropriation. Thus, causing the abandonment of the labor camps was a major accomplishment.

Beyond ending the labor camps, compulsory labor was abolished in law, if not completely abandoned until 1945. No longer could women, children and the ill be required to work at road maintenance or on

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[19]Okwaka Wadakaya, personal interview, Usonga, 13 November 1973.

other government-inspired community work projects. Ironically the one area in which forced labor was continued was cotton-growing. The reasons for this are complex and will be discussed below. Suffice it to say that the association's leaders were ambivalent about cotton, which apparently they accepted as a desirable westernism while simultaneously resisting its method of introduction and the continuing low price.

Possible the most important concession won from government was the restructuring of the tax system. Taxes were reduced, with women receiving total exemptions. The importance of securing a tax reduction is thrown into sharper perspective when it is remembered that in the 1920's African wages were cut by one-third to one-half.[20] Such a clear cut victory, however, was no assurance of continuing support for the association. As it developed most constituents, because of the attendant publicity on such issues as kipande, were not aware that Piny Owacho had achieved a more equitable standard of taxation. Most Luo assumed that government benevolence, in conjunction with their lowered wages, just naturally brought about the lowered taxes. Again the association's lack of political expertise was demonstrated: at no point were they able to capitalize on their triumphs. Indeed there seemed to be little effort at publicizing its successes, instead, according to one local representative, "we had to use all of our energies to get people to continue fighting kipande."[21]

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[20]Roger M.A. vanZwanenberg, The Agricultural History of Kenya to 1939 (Nairobi: East African Printing House, 1972), p. 25.

[21]Janes Oloya, personal interview, West Kano, 31 August 1973.

Unfortunately Piny Owacho's leadership was unable to build a sustained, politically active organization. By failing to identify the day-to-day issues, particularly with regard to farmers and cotton policy, the organization dissipated its energies trying to resolve complex political/constitutional issues. A central focus around which the majority of the community could coalesce was missing, and a few years later the organization's leadership scattered around the country. Several of the better leaders were coopted into government service as representatives of the local native councils, thus causing them to be alienated from the community. The elders who had opposed them as Piny Owacho's leaders now viewed the young politicians as opportunists. Similarly, as representatives of government their credibility as critics of the administration was severely compromised.

In July 1923, they approached Archdeacon Owen of C.M.S. Maseno with an offer to become Life President and Guardian of the Association. Owen had impressed the association's leaders by his sympathetic response to their cause and also because as a European he understood the government and was not subject to the same restrictions as Africans. For example, in the 1920's, few Africans possessed bank accounts and Owen arranged for an organizational account with his name as a sponsor.[22] By September, Owen had accepted the position and was ready to create major changes in the organization's focus and activities. Immediately the association's name was changed. In keeping with Owen's ideas of a loyal opposition and his assessment of the needs of the Luo community

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[22]Jonathan Okwirri, personal interview, Uyoma, 27 September 1973 and Rev. Simeon Nyende, personal interview, Gem, 29 October 1973.

it became the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association. Owen suggested the name would point to them as law-abiding citizens who were interested in assisting the government to be more rational and equitable in its approach. If any politics at all were contemplated, it would be accomplished through Archdeacon Owen's lobbying efforts with the administration and public officials. For all practical purposes KTWA would have the dual function of making community representations to government, while advising the community in matters of thrift, hygiene, home management and dietary education. In 1926, even though later the colonial government became seriously concerned about Owen and, by implication, all missionaries, he was given a commendation by the Nyanza Province administration. By 1928, the administrators could report that due to domestic rivalries and internal dissentions, "the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association . . . would seem to be almost moribund."[23]

Earlier, in the years 1924 through 1927, a tremendous period of factionalization ensued which further dissipated the political energies of the Luo community. In 1924, the Native Catholic Union was formed with the same policies as the KTWA. The rationale for this duplication of organizations can be attributed to Catholic feelings of being excluded from decision-making positions in KTWA.[24] A full discussion of the Native Catholic Union is not within the scope of the work. Its organization, however, signaled a splintering trend away from the

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[23]C.O. 544, Native Affairs Department Annual Report 1928, p. 3.

[24]Jacobo Jakoyo, personal interview, West Kano, 6 September 1973.

earlier, if limited, consensus established by Piny Owacho. Between 1925 and 1927, other organizations, some substantial, some rather ephemeral, continued to draw support away from KTWA. Such factionalization allowed every shade of personal and political opinion to surface and be expressed.

Even when KTWA had established a meaningful set of operational procedures and a staff for its implementation, personal, ethnic and locational animosities interferred. During its existence, the KTWA offi-e of inspector succumbed to intra-tribalism. Created in early 1923 the office of inspector had the responsibility for visiting and coordinating all the district and locational committees. Due to government attempts to limit the influence of the organization this officer was the only African leader with the right to visit all locations.

His efforts were relentlessly resisted by Luo farmers. Shadrack Osewe, of Alego, the only person to hold office of inspector, was continually thwarted in his efforts to exercise one of his primary tasks, laison with cotton farmers. Osewe, in the company of John Paul Olola, at the time senior African agricultural staff member, was to listen to and coordinate farmers' complaints about cotton. But he was also to instruct the barmers in basic husbandry to improve their yield and thereby increase their income. His efforts generally met with derision and indignant suggestions that he return to Alego and teach his own location how to deal with its "jungle."[25] By 1926, according to Simeon Nyende, then President of KTWA, Osewe was so disheartened

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[25]Rev. Simeon Nyende, personal interview, Gem Uyoma, 29 October 1973.

by his continuing failure to work with cotton farmers, then he asked to be relieved of his duties, and the position was quietly discontinued. Thus ended the only substantive effort by the early nationalists to assist cotton farmers. Ironically its failure had not been achieved by government but by the lack of responsiveness on the farmers' part. With the discontinuance of Osewe's office the one link that the organization had with the larger Luo community was broken. The disruption meant that the organization's effective power resided in Archdeacon Owen and that its influence was generally confined to the immediate area of Maseno and its environs.

Without Osewe's office, there was no control or coordination of the local representatives. Always a sore point, because of dissatisfactions over duties and remuneration, after 1926 the local representatives' structure ceased to function.[26] Many agents expected to be paid for their services, and when salaries were not forthcoming, they ceased their duties but maintained the office. Structurally, weak the KTWA could not deal with disaffection and therefore limited its protests to petitions to the Chief Native Commissioner in Nairobi.

As late as the mid-1930's, even the energetic Zablon Aduo could not reverse the trend. Aduo began serving as KTWA President in 1955, an office he still holds with the organization. In the 30's, he must have been one of the most widely-traveled individuals in Nyanza

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[26]This controversy was reliably reported by Arahim Kayi, Janes Oloya and Jacobo Jakoyo, all of West Kano. Bishop Simeon Nyende, long time Chairman of KTWA, affirmed their accounts. But Jonathan Okwirri stated the problem did not occur over salaries but because of religious differences. He acknowledged, however, that the local representatives were seldom effective.

Province. He was Secretary of KTWA, the first African agent of the Kenya Farmers' Association, a prominent member of the Nyanza branch of the African Chamber of Commerce and a businessman; his various positions and interests allowed him to travel extensively without government restriction. He was known throughout Nyanza in the African, European and Asian communities. Yet he was unable to reverse the apathy of the organization's local leadership. "People were," he said, "afraid of political activity, especially outside their location."[27] He might even have added that most people in the locations by the mid-1930's, had a variety of political organizations to choose from. This made it particularly difficult to achieve a consensus on any sensitive issue. Moreover, people outside the urban-administrative areas had difficulty keeping the various organizations separate in their minds. Ironically the memory of Piny Owacho remained strong, at least in terms of rhetorical attractiveness, if not because of its program. Further this memory did little to orient the Luo community toward KTWA, the direct descendent of Piny Owacho.

In summary, between 1921-1923, although Piny Owacho captured the imagination of the community, some Luo, particularly older farmers, avoided strongly identifying with the movement. The reasons seem to be that the association attacked political/constitutional issues with more vigor than they attacked everyday economic problems. Moreover, the new nationalists were an unknown quantity and their challenge to existing leadership was not welcomed. Because of their youth, western education and new religious ideas they generated resentment, particularly

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[27]Zablon Aduo, personal interview, Kisumu, 12 October 1973.

from chiefs serving the colonial government and from locational elders who were nominally community leaders. Equally detrimental to the organization's aspiration was the lack of political sophistication of the early leadership. Almost immediately some leaders were coopted into government positions. Simultaneously the organization began to rely on outside advice. Once dependent on the advice of liberal Europeans, the leaders accepted a change in the group's orientation. By September 1923 the priorities of the association were social rather than political in nature. Finally around 1925, the association's deterioration was hastened by the factionalization of the nationalists into rival groups. In short, the farmer was left to devise his own method of resisting government policy without incurring government wrath.

Without benefit of allies and lacking a rational direction from government, the Nyanza farmer without seeming to oppose cotton directives, had to construct his own system of dealing with government's demands. Essentially the cultivator presented the illusion of meeting administrative requirements while remaining free to pursue his own designs.

Certainly he relied on his own cultural norms in regard to cotton. First, and most important, he continued to use traditional farming practices. Second, his major forum for complaint was a ritualized demonstration at buying centers. Third, farmers dealt with African functionaries and just another intragroup rival. A fourth, and final device involved cooperating with nationalist agitators but on specific local issues.

Once the farmer understood that government would respond favorably to appearances the rest seemed easy. Moreover, planting cotton with other crops assured that government pressure would subside because the crop had been planted. Beyond that, the idea provided its own rational support system. It meant not only using the broadcast method of planting but also interplanting cotton with food crops; relegating cotton husbandry to indigenous schemes completed the process. The method assured a minimum of government contacts. "They were interested in cotton being grown and would show us the right way time after time. But if you did not plant at all, they caned you."[28] During the years 1919 to 1934, Mathayo Odindo satisfied government by cultivating cotton using the broadcast method. Even in 1938, when he became an agricultural extension worker, he continued its use.

Sowing seed broadcast was the traditional method of planting.[29] Seed would be scattered about, and covered, hopefully, well enough for germination. Some cotton could always be germinated by this technique. Although the resultant spacing contributed to low yield, this too was to the farmer's advantage since he could spend less time on the crop.

Beyond the savings in time spent to harvest the crop, broadcasting eliminated the time-consuming specifics of proper planting, but it used seed at a faster rate and was wasteful by design.[30] Most of the

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[28]Mathayo Odindo, personal interview, West Kano, 20 November 1973.

[29]Archdeacon W.E. Owen,"Food Production and Kindred Matters Amongst the Luo," Journal of the East African and Uganda Natural History Society, 49-50, (April-July, 1933), p. 237.

[30]Okelo Oluoch, personal interview, Nyakach, 31 October 1973.

seed would be scattered as quickly as possible without concern for its growing. That the wastage was purposeful is evidenced by the fact that all farmers could recite proper spacing and planting techniques, but few were seriously enough attached to growing cotton to pursue proper procedures.

Not only were the labor requirements of cash cropping more extensive and intensive than established practices but also the value of increased labor inputs had little meaning for African farmers. Working extra man-hours on maize or sim-sim, particularly following a disaster, has some utility: to stave off starvation. Growing cotton for export made little social or economic sense.[31] It did not produce food as insurance against locusts or drought, and cotton could not be used to fulfill social obligations. It was, in short, equated with labor for Europeans with few benefits accruing to the farmer.[32]

Seldom, although they had been instructed otherwise, did farmers refrain from interplanting cotton with food crops. It made no sense to most Luo farmers to let the land "go to waste."[33] Even when government threatened, and sometimes carried out the threat, to uproot food crops the practice never has been fully discontinued.

Possibly interplanting cotton and food crops was the most frustrating experience for African field workers. "In 1932," Jacobo Halowe reported, "I selected one of the best farmers in the area

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[31]George Dalton,"Traditional Production," Economic Anthropology, p. 76.

[32]Andrea Okal, personal interview, Nyakach, 31 October 1973.

[33]Gilbert Ngige, personal interview, Kajulu, 12 July 1973.

[Alego] to help me demonstrate the way to grow cotton."[34] Later when making an inspection tour with his supervisor, Halowe was dismayed to find his demonstrator had planted maize between cotton rows. Only when threatened with physical punishment did the farmer consent to uproot the maize.

Several explanations for the continuing practice can be suggested. Combining cultivation in one field meant that maintenance for both food and cash crops could be done simultaneously. Invariably farmers would adhere to the schedule of sim-sim, or maize, and do cotton with that crop since traditional food crops seldom required more than one weeding.

Probably the most important reason for mixing cotton with another crop was the fear of famine. Historically Central Nyanza experienced recurrent natural disasters, which resulted in some degree of malnutrition. From the precolonial period, several older respondents remembered flooding, drought and locusts,[35] and during the early colonial period other catastrophies occurred. All resulted in a number of deaths, and all consequently effected agricultural output.

In April 1907 an acute food shortage provided the impetus for a four day conference in Kisumu. Under discussion were methods for handling future problems of communicable diseases and food scarcity.[36]

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[35]Daniel Omer, personal interview, Kajulu, 30 July 1973; Yare Okoth, personal interview, Kajulu, 19 November 1973; Elijah Nam, personal interview, West Kano, 12 September 1973; and Josha Anya, personal interview, West Seme, 14 August 1973.

[36]K.N.A., Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1907, p.

Those attending included C.W. Hobley, H.B. Partington and M.R. McClellan, the Acting Provincial Commissioner. Of the pressing problems none was more important than ensuring that the year's cotton crop would be planted. However, none of those attending was optimistic about significantly increasing cotton acreage that year.

In 1908, the following year, bubonic plague struct Central Nyanza District, necessitating quarantine restrictions for four and a half months.[37] In 1912, the plague was even more devastating.

> The outbreak of plague has shown no signs of abatement. Besides the cases in the township, there is little doubt that there are a considerable number of deaths in the Reserve. The natives, however, conceal these last to the best of their ability. 38

By 1915 better health services controlled the dimensions of the epidemics, but natural disasters continued to decrease crop output. The peasant responded in a rational manner since his actions were motivated more toward survival than the high cotton yields which maximized profits.[39] Even if the farmer had been oriented toward profits, frequent catastrophies forced him to neglect cash crops.

The Nyanza cotton farmer registered his disinterest in the crop by the variety of ways in which he simply ignored cotton maintenance. Few if any farmers admitted doing two preparations of the ground.

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[37] K.N.A., Nairobi, Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1909, p. 12.

[38] K.N.A., Kisumu District Quarterly Report, (Ending 30 September 1912), p. 101.

[39] See William O. Jones,"Economic Man in Africa," Food Research Institute Studies, 1, 2, (May 1960), passim; T.J. Kennedy "Study of Economic Motivation Involved in Peasant Cultivation of Cotton," East African Institute of Social Research Conference Proceedings (Kampala: East African Institute on Social Research, 1964), passim.

Moreover, even the most advanced farmers seldom weeded at the proper time without coercion. Also the correct number of weedings were neglected. But the most hated task was the requirement to burn and destroy all cotton residue after the harvest. This procedure entailed extra work and diminished, in the farmer's eyes, the crop's value. The residue of traditional food crops were always utilized for building material or livestock fodder.

The second major method opposing government entailed demonstrations at buying centers. These usually took the form of ritualized yelling and threats to the Asian buyers. The impetus for the disturbances were of course low prices and unfair treatment at the centers.

To understand the last charge it is necessary to detail the selling procedures in Central Nyanza. Between 1916 and 1923 Samwel Ada headloaded his cotton into Kisumu for sale. There he saw hundreds of farmers milling about, gesturing, talking, and complaining. In the open square were several scales, beside each were an Asian buyer and an African worker. The buyer would weigh the cotton and give each man a slip of paper to be taken to the cashier for payment. The African worker would haul the purchased cotton off for storage. He would also, when directed by the buyer, pull out several handsfull of cotton for inspection.

If it were discovered that several grades of cotton were in the same container the farmer was ordered to separate them. This involved taking the cotton to a special area. There the bag was spilled onto empty mats, and under the watchful eye of the buyer's assistant, the contents that farmers consciously mixed the grades in an attempt to

get more money for their crop.[40]

Farmers disliked regrading their cotton, but their major criticism focused around price and the practices involved in payment. First farmers were never told how many pounds of cotton they had and at what price it was being purchased. Secondly, receipts were seldom issued. For example during the years 1918 through 1943, Johanna Otiro claims never to have received a receipt.[41] If vouchers were given they simply told how many shillings were to be paid by the paymaster.

Usually the paymaster's station was a scene of confusion. Here disgruntled farmers would vent their anger over the system. Curses, name calling and threats were made. While there is no record of actual violence at buying centers, demonstrations would sometimes last several hours.

In retrospect this action was least likely to produce needed change. As long as cotton was being sold, government would probably not respond to such disorganized protests. Moreover, government was assisted in its laissez faire attitude by the farmers themselves. The demonstrations had no long term effects because once the farmers left the buying center their protests ended. And never were farmers criticized for their behavior by either European or African officials.

Apparently government looked on the demonstrations as legitimate safety valves for the farmers' resentment. Beyond stationing a few police at strategic centers, no other action was anticipated or taken. In short, buying center agitation was a finely choreographed exercise

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[41]Johanna Otiro, personal interview, Siaya, 6 November 1973.

in which the farmer clearly understood his range of action.

Eventually some Asian buyers did respond to complaints. For example, Musa Ramji, part-owner of the Kisumu Cooperative Ginnery, made several tours of locations trying to explain the nature of cotton pricing, and in 1936 he appeared at a baraza in West Kisumu to discuss prices for the next season.[42] Ramji's actions, however, were not duplicated by other buyers.

Beyond treating cotton as a traditional crop and demonstrating at buying centers, the farmers tried other means of resisting cotton policy. In a third method of achieving his modus vivendi the farmer devised a way of neutralizing the power of local officials, who occasionally were more aggressive than the colonials, but who were also more open to compromise.

Most farmers admitted that a system of small but judicious bribery was practiced in the reserve. So long as the practice did not become blatant and a reasonable work standard was maintained, higher authorities, it seemed, ignored the bribes.

Some farmers used physical assault or the threat of violence to moderate the power of local officials. While never a widespread practice, beatings seemed to be a particularly effective weapon against staff who worked outside their residential area. Such assaults seemed to have the tacit consent of the area chief.[43] After an attack, extension workers seldom found it difficult to transfer to new

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[42]Otieno Otite, personal interview, West Kisumu, 15 September 1973.

[43]Leo Ajumba Asewe, personal interview, West Kisumu, 9 August 1973.

assignments. Most assaults took place at night so that assailants were not readily identifiable. Sometimes the intended victim would be invited to participate in a beer party,[44] once inebriated he would be set upon by farmers.

Although not substantiated, homicides against African agricultural agents were reported. There were many rumors of poisonings, and at least one worker, Augustinus Angwech, reported being threatened with poisoning.

Among other devices for controlling African officials, farmers made public accusations. Most Luo desired to avoid being charged partly because it meant the whole community could criticize the individual. Whether the charges could be proven or not hardly seems to have mattered. ". . . in some 20 cases heard and dismissed it was proved that either the charges were without foundation of the cattle claimed had been taken by headmen in carrying out the judgements of the Native Tribunals."[45] What mattered was that administrative staff members' competence had been ridiculed.

Not even chiefs were exempt from accusation. In 1923 and 1924 a large number of cases were heard in Central Kavirondo District courts charging chiefs with malfeasance of office. As late as 1937 Simeon Otiende was accused by one of his constituents of not requiring Kajulu farmers to plant more cotton.[46] Clearly the itent was to embarass Otiende before the British authorities.

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[44]Augustinus Orembo, personal interview, Usonga, 13 November 1973.

[45]K.N.A., Annual Report Central Kavirondo District 1924, p. 2.

[46]Misak Okwirri, personal interview, Kajulu, 7 November 1973.

Usually as a last resort farmers planted the minimum acreage possible. Without adequate supervisory personnel, government could do little more than to accept farmers actions in this regard. While trying to carry out his duties even to the extent of physically punishing farmers, Gideon Siru admitted that government was fighting a losing battle. Interestingly enough Mr. Siru asserted that most agricultural workers knew that the cotton farmer was being exploited, but, as government employees they had to carry out policy.[47] In the years 1935 to 1949, when Siru was a locational headman in Kajulu, his goal was to get everyone to plant some cotton. After this had been done Siru claimed to have relaxed his surveilance.

Beyond manipulating African staff and taking advantage of the shortage of supervisory personnel, farmers frequently combined with the nationalists in more organized protest. In 1938 Zablon Aduo, then General Secretary of the Kavirondo Taxpayers Welfare Association, worked with farmers from West Kisumu to prevent abuses at Kisian Market. C.G. Punjani, an Asian buyer, had acquired the reputation for short-weighting farmers. Aduo convinced Major Campbell, District Officer, West Kisumu, that the charges were serious enough to warrant action. Campbell acted in part out of his close friendship with Aduo and Yonah Orao, who became Chief of West Kisumu in 1940.

Before the sale Aduo and Campbell weighed all cotton. After the sale they compared receipts with their own figures and confronted Punjani.[48] He was later reported to the provincial commissioner, and

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[47]Gideon Siru, personal interview, Kajulu, 3 August 1973.

[48]Jaoko Elisha Wagude, personal interview, West Kisumu, 9 August 1973.

his license was revoked.

Unfortunately the success of this venture had limited effects. The government considered the Punjani affair a minor detail. A brief motion of the case appeared in the first quarterly report for 1938, but no notice was taken of the incident in the annual report for Kisumu District or Central Nyanza Province.

Unfortunately, the farmers also seemed unimpressed. None of the principals involved, with the exception of Zablon Aduo, attempted to organize subsequent actions, and he achieved limited success for his efforts. A partial explanation for this failure may be the waning power of all the nationalist organizations after 1930. A farmer in Nyakach added the following observations.

> In 1938 Nyangweso [locusts] destroyed cotton and people were afraid to plant. I did not plant in 1936 and 1937. In 1938 I planted a half acre because I needed the money. I heard about Piny Owacho but it was a long time ago. The only man helping us in 1938 was Chief Issak Ogoma, I did not see anyone else. [49]

The nationalist political structure was defunct, and Aduo's ability to organize was restricted to those with whom he had personal relationships.

In conclusion, the Nyanza peasant farmer shrewdly appeared to be meeting government regulations. In reality he was maintaining his conservative agricultural practices. This analysis in no way suggests that cultivators were stagnant, unchanging or unable to adapt to new conditions. Their adjustments, however, were dictated more by their own needs than by the desires of the British Government

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[49] Pancraseus Onduru, personal interview, South Nyakach, 29 October 1973.

or the machinations of the international commodity market.

During the years 1922 to 1939, after the nationalists failed to pursue a strong program of ameliorating the farmers' situation, the growers devised their own system of interacting with government. Essential to the scheme was a transformation of the whole structure surrounding cotton. Cotton was subjected to peasant agricultural techniques, giving work on the crop a degree of relevance, but not so much that its maintenance could not be relegated to food crop husbandry. Although farmers disliked the crop they adjusted to its presence and simultaneously maintained some of the integrity of their social structure. And two, their modus vivendi did significantly limit the frequency of government and protected the farmer from open confrontation.

Seen in this light the farmers' response to cotton must be adjudged rational and legitimate. Given this level of technology and low economic requirements, the Nyanza farmer opted for his own preferences over those of the imperial government.

CONCLUSION

In a recent article, D. Anthony Low characterized a new approach in African history as a "view from the other side of the hill or lower colonialism, colonialism at the grass-roots level."[1] This revisionary idea argues for a new synthesis that concerns itself more with African social and economic history than with European activities during the same period. It sees a necessity to understand colonialism and its impact by explaining the reactions, adjustments, and accomodations made by Africans to an alien hegemony and administration, a view strongly argued by J.F.A. Ajayi in "Colonialism An Apisode in African History," in L.H. Gann and Peter Guignan, eds., Colonialism in Africa, 1870-1960, The History and Politics of Colonialism 1870-1914, Vol. I (Cambridge, 1969).

My study of the Nyanza cotton industry hasstressed the new approach, and therefore, provides a more viable synthesis than Hugh Fearn's "Cotton Production in the Nyanza Province of Kenya Colony, 1908-1954," The Empire Cotton Growing Review, 33 (1956), and An African Economy: A Study of the Economic Development of Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-33 (London, 1961); and L. Winston Cone and J.F. Lipscomb, ed., The History of Kenya Agriculture (Nairobi, 1972).

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[1] D. Anthony Low, "Middle Colonialism," Journal of African History, xii, 1 (1971), p. 160.

All three studies are important contributions to African history, but they suffer from serious weaknesses.

Fearn's work provides favorable appraisals of African efforts on the most basic level of agricultural production. No attention is given, however, to African political agitation and its effect on the farmers' response to growing cotton. The impression is conveyed of a faceless mass of humanity content with limited economic responsibility and limited financial returns.

Cone and Lipscomb's study suffers from three major faults. First, its principal focus is the activity of non-Africans in Kenya. Second, the analysis minimizes African efforts by failing to discuss the effect of African activity on economic policy. The third serious difficulty stems from the editors unwillingness to deal realistically with racism in Kenyan agriculture.

Other publications about Kenya portray the African in paternalistic terms or view him as a non-economic man. Such stances are basically anti-intellectual and reveal a variety of fundamental racism. The present study, however, has appraised African activities in more objective terms and challenges other misconceptions found in Hugh Fearn's "The Diverse Pattern of African Agriculture in the Nyanza Province of Kenya," Natural Resources, Food and Population in Inter-Tropical Africa, L. Dudley Stamp, ed. (London, 1955); in A.M. O'Connor, An Economic Geography of East Africa (London, 1966); and C.N. French, Report on the Cotton Growing Industry in Uganda, Kenya and the Mwanza District of Tanganyika (London, 1925).

The years 1901 to 1930 were characterized by extreme ambivalence

toward the Nyanza cotton industry by government and the farmers. Neither of these groups could organize a rational plan for achieving their goals. Nairobi could not coordinate the men, money or material to construct the required economic infrastructure to support the new enterprise. The farmers exhibited an equal uncertainty about accepting or rejecting the crop. Initially, the farmers' resistance seemed little more than peasant suspicion and conservatism toward new innovations. Upon closer examination it appears that the farmers' rejection of cotton was more complex and was founded on a very real difference of perceptions between their needs and the government's economic reasoning.

Unlike the Europeans, Luo farmers were more a-tuned to minimizing the risk of starvation than by considerations of finance. Luo farmers concentrated on food crops, and the normal surplus was utilized in ways sanctioned by society. While the excess could be used to barter for other products it could not be used to achieve a material advantage over clanmates. Goods and services in traditional society depended not on an individual's wealth but on the distributive network within a given clan or polity. Status and class stratification were evident in Luo society, but chiefs and prominent people were forced to share their wealth. Thus, a money economy had little attraction for Nyanza farmers. Moreover, as several informants indicated, money was introduced by Europeans to pay for innovations (taxes, school fees, licenses, etc.) introduced by Europeans.

Even if Luo farmers had responded positively to money, they did not have enough fertile land to waste it on a non-food crop. Whenever

land of high carrying capacity was discovered, the Luo utilized it to the fullest. The pattern of settlement and the classification of soils as to type and workability suggests that Luo farmers made a better assessment and use of their land than is generally acknowledged. The traditional system of land distribution and ownership took cognizance of the lack of uniformity in Nyanza's soils. Like the distribution of wealth, farm sites were spread among the different soils in the area, thus assuring that all farmers theoretically had equal access to good soil. Strip farming, however, was not conducive to cash-cropping, particularly cotton. Moreover, Nyanza farmers demonstrated an extreme reluctance to change their system of land holding.

Similarly traditional agricultural techniques did not allow for the easy introduction of cotton. Food crop technology was geared to achieving small returns from a variety of crops. To this end planting and husbandry practices were neither so demanding nor so time consuming as for cash crops. Not only did food crops require less work but also its residue, stalks, branches, and seeds were valuable. Cotton plants, on the other hand, had to be burned after harvest, considerably adding to work.

When group planting was introduced, partly to insure that the necessary husbandry would be maintained, farmers inaugurated methods of counteracting Nairobi's wishes. Initially farmers gave the appearance of compliance but tended to neglect cotton as much as possible. Contrary to the findings of existing scholarship, the farmers knew that, given their level of technology, cotton was not

economically viable. The greatest percentage of informants complained about low prices for cotton and their concern is reflected in government documents. Yet government continued to push for more cotton production. Caught between Nairobi's insistence on establishing the cotton industry and his own observations about cotton, the farmer opted to placate government but to slow the pace of inevitable change.

Although the early political activist failed to achieve a redress of the farmers' grievances they did, ironically, both preserve and transform traditional society. Despite their opposition to Nairobi the activists were also the first large segment of society to use western political techniques. Their opposition forced them to organize, and in the attempt to unify Nyanza they adapted a new political style. Establishing a politically oriented association and presenting petitions of grievances to the colonial government went significantly beyond the old political practices. The African opposition had to utilize writing, oratory and parliamentary procedure, in other words, those skills introduced by the colonialst..

Not only did the early political activity legitimize the British Government, but also it revitalized the political awareness of the Luo. The colonial government generally was considered an irritating but inevitable imposition; most farmers, at least, attempted to ignore British presence as much as possible. Even the local administrative hierarchy, whose alligence was to Nairobi and not to the people, did not fundamentally alter the old ways. Incompetent or over-zealous African functionaries were either tolerated or dealt with as another intragroup rival. The elders, who enjoyed real influence in traditional society, were still the effective community force in the early

years of indirect rule. When, however, Piny Owacho challenged the colonial regime, the traditional elements mobilized as much to protect their own power as to oppose the British.

As the young western educated leaders began cutting across regional and class lines, the elders reasserted themselves. They were opposed to two vital issues of the association: land consolidation and titles and the position of paramount chief. Shortly after the elders demonstrated their rejection of the new leaders, political activity in Luoland rapidly developed. While the proliferation of political and business associations indicated the weakness of Piny Owacho, it also demonstrated the vitality of Luo political energy.

Faced with the intense political activity, the colonial government was forced to accomodate Luo political aspirations. Local Native Councils and the Native Affairs Department were quickly established to provide legitimate channels for the new activity. The major transformation in Luo society under the impact of colonialism was therefore in the political and social spheres but not in the economic section. Politics encompassed not only new regional boundaries but also included non-traditional groups. The larger political arena, paradoxically, was the result of both opposition and accomodation to the imperial government.

Simultaneously, some measure of control was returned to the Luo rank and file as the result of the change in politics. Prior to 1922, and the early opposition, the chief, who functioned as a civil servant, was beyond traditional sanctions and could act with impunity in matters of local concern. After 1925, however, with the variety

of politically oriented associations and government councils chiefs had to be more circumspect in their exercise of authority. In short, the Luo maintained some measure of traditional values in a new context; and the renewed vitality can be attributed, at least partially, to the European imposition.

In the perspective of current research concerning the impact of colonialism on African societies this study is an investigation of micro-level interactions between Africans and Europeans. The concentration has been on Central Nyanza Province, and only concerns the cotton industry. Other studies of this nature are Margaret Hay's "Luo Women and Economic Change During the Colonial Period,"[2] and Carolyn Barnes' current research on "The Socio-Economic History of Coffee Growing Among the Gusii of Kenya." These works focus on the innovations of African participants in an imposed and restrictive economic system.

Important areas for future research revealed by this study are the need for economic historics of the development of selected communities in Central Nyanza. For example, Kajulu, because of its proximity to the colonial administrative headquarters and its long periods of rule under stable chiefs, would provide extensive materials for a case study of socio-economic change during colonial rule. At least one of the chiefs, Simeon Otiende, would be an excellent subject for a biographical treatment. Otiende was one of the first young men in Central Nyanza to receive estern teachings, prior to the establishment

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[2]Margaret J. Hay, "Luo Women and Economic Change During the Colonial Period," paper given at the African Economic History Workshop, University of Wisconsin, Madison (Summer 1974).

of mission education in the area. Research on his tutor, H.H. Holder, would also provide an opportunity to study a little known colonial phenomenon: a black man, also of colonial background, with expertise, functioning in a position usually reserved for whites. Of special interest in the Holder case would be the fact that he had been given a position of more trust, authority and high visibility than he could possibly have attained in his native Trinidad. These proposed research topics would add, considerably, to the more positive approach which has already been tested successfully in some non-historical studies: Margret Katzin, "The Role of the Small Entrepreneur," in M.J. Herskovits and M. Harwitz, ed., Economic Transition in Africa (London, 1964); Polly Hill "A Plea for Indigenous Economics: The West African Experience," in Economic Development and Social Change (1966); and William O. Jones' "Economic Man in Africa," Food Research Institute Studies, 1, 2 (May, 1960).

The present study provides an overdue analysis of the significant initial stages of economic and political agitation in Kenya. It also has disclosed information about the economic aspects of African reaction to colonial policies which limited indigenous opportunities. By so doing, this project attempts to fill a definite need. It furnishes documented evidence of African attempts to adjust to an imposed economic system. It also supplies insights into African attempts to compete in a limited industrial economic system and still maintain the integrity of their traditional structures.

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