

5. KANDUTI: A CASESTUDY

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THE AREA - Kanduti is a sublocation of Nzambani Location. Its location in the district is shown in Map. E.5

The Southern end of Kanduti area is bordered by the dramatic Mbitini hill whose sheer rock face is a constant illustration in many geology books. The Kitendeu hill borders Kanduti to the east and to the north the Kisio river as it turns East to flow into the Thua. To the West the land rises gradually towards Nthangathi (sandy soil). Within these boundaries an area roughly twenty square miles forms Kanduti.

The drainage is dominated by the Kisio River arising in Mbitini and flowing North and East to join the Thua. The main tributaries of the Kisio, Nzokani and Kyangaa are important and flow quickly from Mbitini hill. Slightly to the northeast of Mbitini hill is the break in drainage where Ngungani tributaries flow south and east around Kitendeu to join the Thua later. The Ngungani tributaries are not an important source of water since they flow very fast along very rocky ground.

Within this area soils range from the sandy (Nthangathi) to the west, to patches of red soils in the middle of the area but the more desired soils are the mud flats (Matiko) of the bottom land particularly those of the Kisio river basin. Kanduti probably receives between 25 and 35 inches of rainfall in the two annual seasons. Sources of water are many and varied. On top of most of the hills there is water trapped in the rocky hollows. Some are permanent as on top of Mbitini where local superstition holds that if one went to see the more than 100 feet deep hollow holding water all year round, one would never return alive. In drought years e.g. 1973-76, superstition gives way to need and water is drawn. Other rock outcrops scattered in the middle of the area hold seepages which oral tradition states never used to dry but which have dried in recent past. Probably the most important is Syokutena, three yards off the western bank of Kyangaa and about half a mile to the southwest of Kanduti trading center. On the bottom of the northeast slope of Mbitini hill there used to be see-page from the rocks. This was dammed in the early fifties as part of the Kelly dams. It is now silted but provides water for about eight months of the year. The most important source of water is not the rock see pages or the dam on the bottom of Mbitini hill. It is the sand



river wells particularly on the Kisio river. All along this river wells are dug with the most important concentration of wells being around Mavavaini (where papaws grow) in the upper reaches and silingi itatu (Three shillings describing the fact that all adult males had to contribute three shillings each during the Kelly years for the construction of these wells) in the lower reaches as the Kisio turns east to join the Thua. The wells at silingi itatu never dry even during the driest years.

The distribution of water has been a factor in settlement and land use patterns. At the higher southern parts (around Mbitini and Kitendu to the east) has in general been grazing land. In the middle from Kanduti to silingi itatu has been cropland in the bottom lands and below that is grazing land. During the dry months when water is only available at silingi itatu all cattle and goats trek all the way to silingi itatu sometimes even from Mbitini Trading Centre environs - 15 miles to the southwest for watering. As they trek they forage on cropland. Up to 1974 there was not a clearly demarcated road connecting Mbitini and Kitho and Inyuu to the north. Trekking was all over the land. Some of the tracks became gullies since the land slopes from the south, west and east towards silingi itatu in the north.

#### LAND USE IN HISTORICAL SETTING

Kanduti is one of the many 'valleys' around the Central Kitui which follow the southeast-northwest alignment of the central hill massif. Through its northern opening it joins the Thua valley before the latter turns east and continues northward to the Thua/Mui/Ikoo lowlands. This area up to a hundred or so years ago was an area abundant with wildlife with elephants and the feline species dominant. The first families to settle around the present Kanduti T.C. (in proximity to the Kyangai ) were hunter families. In fact the descendants argue that they settled because of the rich hunting potential. The area was not considered a good farming area because of the problems with wild game. Neither was it considered a good stock area. It did not have the characteristics of the plains - where sweet species of grass grew and temperatures were warmer. Here there was a tendency to have Mbwea (Panicum Maximum ) which was too rich and which local tradition has it, made cattle sick. Probably said this is based on the ticks being harboured in the luxurious growth. However, to the south especially on the slopes of the rock outcrops and to the far northeast goats were kept from the earlier times.



I have not been able to establish definitely the sequence of population influx from the earliest time to the present but one thing is clear, most people came from the Voo side in 1929-1932 when the Voo area to the east became desiccated and there was a drought. In fact oral tradition has it that since the establishment of the hunter families some cattle used to come for dry season grazing from the Voo side (to the east) from around 1900. The bulk of the population of Kanduti are people from Voo area. The second major source of population influx are people from Kisasi to the southwest. These are recent immigrants who came between 1949 and 1954 when the Mbitini area was put under the Kelly enclosure system as part of Aldev development program and the population of Mbitini was displaced.

All the land in Kanduti is part of Maei - meaning that it has been slashed and burned at one time or other in the last fifty years or so. The fact that it has been slashed and burned means that all the land has legal owners in terms of traditional land holding system. On any land slashed and burnt someone established use rights for the family. Given the other basic Kamba institution governing land use - i.e. when a person dies in homestead the homestead must be relocated - we find that all the land has claimants since previous homesteads are also part of the family patrimony. Up to the last ten years this tradition was extremely powerful but now with the construction of semi-permanent and permanent homesteads (mud-sticks and corrugated iron sheet roof, unburned brick-corrugated iron roof, burned brick and corrugated iron roof) the tradition is being killed by the costs. Some families have relocated 10-20 times and thus one finds claims of twenty to sixty pieces of land over the area by the average family. It is these which are being sold as the advance shock wave of adjudication reaches Kanduti.

The last years of the nineteenth century saw Kanduti land being used basically by wild animals. Land use was dominated basically by elephants who grazed the valley on their migration from Kanziko-Tsavo area to Mumoni-Meru area. Hunters, the oral tradition has it, waylaid the migrating elephants in the Kitendeu/Mbitini gap. Most hunters at this time were living on the Voo side of Kitendeu since that region was considered a better hunting ground. It was a better hunting ground since the larger elephant herds followed that route so as to water at the then semi-permanent Thua waterholes. Those who were hunters were also stock keepers and lived on the Voo side which represented better grazing land. It was Weu-savannah - open grazing as opposed to the



woodland of the Kanduti area with its rich grass and cattle diseases. The other first migrants into the area were honey collectors. Honey collectors are unique in their land use in the sense that they never really use the land. All they did was leave their hives (myatu) and seasonally come around collecting. Thus at the turn of the century (periodized by the Yua ya Muvunga-Famine of Rice 1896) the land was hardly exploited at all.

The famine of rice 1896-99 led to extensive deaths and extensive depopulating of Voo and the Mbitini area with people of Voo crossing through Ikutha and Kanziko into Kibwezi area of Machakos and the people of Mbitini moving back into the hill areas of Mutonguni Changwithya and Mibambani Locations. Thus between 1900 and 1920 there were hardly any people in Kanduti. When the first administrative/military track was being cut during World War I to pass from Kitui, through Mbitini and Kanduti to Zombe there were only three families in the area. However the 1928 famine and the 1934 famine saw the re-peopling of the area for several reasons. First the livestock which was in the Voo Weu had to be moved into the less exploited hill valleys of Kanduti. Secondly those who were close to administrative tracks could get some famine relief. Thirdly the River Thua seems to have changed its basic character. The earliest report shows this river not reaching the Tana River in 1911 but a report in 1932 shows it reaching the Tana River. There are possibly two explanations for its extension of its course. Possibly there could have been extensive periods of rain in its catchment area forcing it to channel its way into the Tana. There is not oral tradition and/or rainfall data collaborating this. The other plausible explanation is that the upper reaches of the Thua and its main branches Mui and Ikoo were over used as the populations grew naturally in the settled hills and its lower reaches (from Inyuu downstream for the Thua, Mutito Mui locations for the Mui/Ikoo branches of the Thua) were locally desertified as slash and burn agriculture and livestock congregated on its banks. Administrative reports of 1920s and 1930 constantly refer to over grazing of Zombe, Voo, Matha region all dependent on the Thua for permanent stock watering. Thus we infer that riverbank desertification led to the Thua river system increasing its flow rate and thus extending its channel to reaching the Tana. The consequence was relatively fast flow and greater proportion of the water draining out with the result that there was relatively less water retained in the sand. The population could therefore get little water from the sand wells in its course. They thus migrated back to the hills.

Ironically the moving back to the hills would have led to more localized desertification particularly of the hill slopes but this to some extent was ameliorated by the 1940s-50s colonial practices of forcing people not to slash and burn the steep hillsides and the river channels. These practices were ruthlessly enforced and up to the <sup>early</sup> sixties no cropping of riverbanks or hillslopes could be done. This is no longer the case.

When the 1930's wave moved into Kanduti they settled on the gentle valleys of the center of the sublocation. The land exploitation technology was very crude. It consisted essentially of fire, the muo (digging stick), the panga (machete) the ngomo (adze) bows and arrows, kikutha (sling) and steel wire. With the machete one cut the bush during the dry season, the fire burned the new garden, the muo planted. The adze made beehives; machete one cut the bush during the dry season, the fire burned the new garden, the muo planted. The adze made beehives; steel wire was used for trapping wild game; bows and arrows were used for hunting. The sling was used in scarring away birds in the gardens. The basic crops were millets (finger and bulrush). Beans and maize were incidental. The basic livestock were goats and sheep. Cattle died too often may be from East Coast Fever but the oral tradition attributes it to the extra-rich and lush grass compared to the grass in the Weu. They were kept with relatives between Mbitini Hill and Mutomo, or southeast at Voo or northeast at Zombe. Although there are none growing now <sup>at the bottom of the hills,</sup> I was told that sugarcane grew in most of the valleys then.

There aren't statistics on population growth of Kanduti but the natural process did take place. Increasingly, more areas were slashed and burned so much so that there are few areas which are not Maei i.e. (previously burned areas). These are identified by the secondary growth of the various accacias. The local people also identify the areas by the previous owners and the marks on the boundary tree (nango). As the millet productivity of previously exploited gardens deteriorated people shifted more and more to maize and beans. Colonial agriculture stressed maize and beans. The latter two were also less labour intensive and one did not have to stay there keeping the birds away (kuia). If you trapped and banded the garden then you could release the Kuia labour. This was important as more and more able bodied men started emigrating particularly to the Kibwezi plantations, Dwa especially, to earn tax money.

Other than the disappearance of the Muo and its replacement by the Digo



jembe no new technology for landuse is introduced. The plough, ploughing oxen, terracing, paddocking and or rotational grazing, dipping cattle inoculation by pass Kanduti. In fact up to 1970s (1973-1976) study period) the only new land use technology practiced by less than 1% of the population is ploughing, plough oxen and only one farm is terraced. Thus Kanduti which is only 30 miles from the district capital has been completely by passed by all the planned agricultural innovations. Among the new crops grams have become an important

crop not because there was agricultural extension but since people of latter migration from Kisasi side came with them. Castor seed and sunflower were planted by four families each season between 1973 and 1976. One of them was the subchief, two were his relatives and the other was a new immigrant from Machakos district.

The most important change in land use pattern is not the scale of operations but the relative crowding which has led to slashing and burning all areas with disastrous erosion results. As a result the Kisio and Ngungani rivers are now channelling at a fantastic rate with their water retaining capacity in the sand impaired. The author motored across the two rivers in 1971 and 1972 in a preliminary survey of the District but now (1976) across both rivers there are gorges of 15-20 feet which make the channels impassable. In the current November rains not enough water was left in the sand of the Kyangaa and Nzokani branches of the Kisio to allow sand river wells to be made in the upper reaches (south of the Kanduti T.C. Nthangathi road). The future looks dismal if new land use systems are not evolved. This pessimistic interpretation is based on the fact that even the bottom lands did not produce crops to support families in the last ten seasons 1972-1976 something unheard of

in the history of Kanduti. Nobody has had to buy the basic food staples even in the worst famines but since 1972 to now Kanduti people are buying food eight months out of twelve as reported by traders. Given the new land acquisition by outsiders (locals are selling to buy food) the region will become completely dependent on famine relief in the near future.

Before concluding this section on land use it is important to stress that although each piece of land had an owner people had access to land from two points of view. First you could ask anybody to give you land to cultivate (kutema). You could also ask anybody to give land to settle (kutusya). Once you established your rights by Kutua and Kutema (to settle and cultivate



respectively) you could not be evicted. If fortune smiled on you you (essentially getting right medicine to ward off the evil eye and thus prosper in crop productivity and livestock numbers) you could expand your land holdings by the same process. Usually the 'price' for a place to settle or cultivate permanently was one goat which was within the reach of most people. It is not until the sixties specifically 1968 that the first piece of land was sold.

The second important conclusion is that although all land had specific individual owners livestock used land collectively. Infact livestock ran the range. Nobody specifically looked after cattle and goats. The practice to date is for them to run wherever they can and come home in the evening. This fact was important in evening out incomes. A poor man from a landholding point of view could still be wealthy from a stock point of view since he had access to other peoples land for grazing. The enclosure system triggered in the upper parts of Nzambani by the ALDEV grazing and range management system did not affect Kanduti inspite of the fact that the implimentation came to within four miles of the sublocation, in the adjacent Mbitini area.

The third conclusion refers to the continuation of traditional land use by the new land accumulators who basically are inerested in ranching. To open up the woodland into grassland they allow the poorer peasants to slash and burn their newly bought land, to farm it for one season and then leave the maei to grow grass. This is a very cheap and therefore exploitative way of deriving high return out of land for the new accumulators. It is comparable to the use of squatters in the White Highlands in the twenties and thirties.

#### LANDSELLING

The earliest case of market land selling (as opposed to traditional acquisition of land) was reported in 1968. The buyer was a grain speculator who had created Kanduti Trading Center by building a shop there earlier. The shop existed mainly for the purpose of buying grain from Kanduti. The seller of the land was a member of the family of the present day (1976) subchief which needed school fees for the second son - the first son's education (the present subchief) it is said had consumed the livestock wealth of the family. They had therefore to result to land selling. In this case we should note that it was a fairly well off family (they were the second family to educate their children in Kanduti) which get into landselling for the first time. They sold so as to educate the



family. For them one can argue selling land was a transfer of resources to other resources and did not involve relative impoverishment as we shall argue is the case in subsequent land sales.

The grain speculator has remained the major land buyer and has become the largest landholder in Kanduti. Between 1968 and 1974 he was the major buyer and was able therefore to create his own uniquely personal land speculation system utilizing his shop credit as the control. Interestingly enough the second buyer was a small scale trader but from Machakos district. He had established himself at Nthangathi Trading Center at the western periphery of Kanduti initially as a medicine man but later as a trader. These were the two land buyers between 1968 and 1974. The later was not a land speculator but rather started exploiting his small holding and kept expanding it as he generated income out of it. He only bought contiguous pieces as neighbours sought to sell.

The system of land speculation was essentially developed by Trader One. It was out of manipulating credit his shop at Kanduti trading shop that many came to depend on him. Beyond the credit there was also the possibility that a peasant's grain would be rejected for one reason or other if the peasant interfered with the land buying of Trader One. The transactions were handled by a local agent whose duty it was to identify who wanted to sell, convey that information to Trader One's wife who ran the shop. The wife would then negotiate but if she or Trader one felt that the price was too high then it was the agent's business to go and beat the price down. Trader one never slept in Kanduti, he always showed up with stock and a gun and left the same day. As a busy man he could not be tramping all over looking for pieces of land and haggling! What haggling had to be done was the intermediary who was paid Sh.40/= ( 5 U.S. Dollars) for a deal properly concluded. Trader One would then show up for a cursory look at the boundaries. In his opinion Trader one bought about 4 thousand acres this way. The average price paid was roughly 6 shillings per acre (US 0.75 dollars). Trader One sold in 1975 about two thousand acres at the average rate of Sh. 320 per acre (US 40 dollars) this getting a profit of 5234 % over five years. These two thousand acres were sold to seven members of the tribal elite from outside the location. Two are Nairobi based bureaucrats from Changwithya location, two are Nairobi based members of the tribal elite

from Machakos district and the other three are traders from Matinyani Location, Another buyer is a foreign Volunteer. It is the activity of Trader One in manipulating land sales which triggered the land market in Kanduti. He recruited all the foreign buyers and has sold seven of them at least one piece. Another four disagreed on his high prices but were able to make other local contacts which led to their buying in the area at lower rates.

During 1975 and 1976 four other foreigners have bought roughly another four thousand or so acres in Kanduti. Some sellers have been aware of Trader One's selling prices of approximately Sh. 320 but they have not been able to get them since there has been a famine and there are more sellers than buyers. The activity of one of the new buyers - a chief of an adjacent location, are most interesting of the new buyers. Usually he buys a piece and is shown a Nango boundary. When it comes to fencing he usually fences ten to fifty yards beyond the agreed boundary and therefore forces the seller to have agree to sell the already fenced area at next to nothing prices! If he does not agree to sell the foreign chief threatens him through the local chief. Since he is a chief and presumably powerful he has been getting away with it. He again has been able to utilize his shop, at Mbitini Trading Center outside the area, to give the sellers credit and therefore commit them. Invariably he never pays in cash but always pays in trading goods particularly foodstuffs and goats when the prices drop. In 1975 he paid for most land by goats when their prices dropped from Sh.80/- to Sh.18/-. There has been instances when free famine relief disappears officially only to emerge at the homes of land sellers! This Chief/Trader basically has not been buying land for himself. He is allied with one of the major factions of tribes political leadership and is an agent for members of that group. In fact a better description is that he is an agent who identifies a piece of land, buys it for next to nothing and then sells it for a profit. It has not been possible to calculate his buying and/or selling rates.

Two teachers have bought land for cash, accumulating about a thousand acres each. They have usually bought the land in cash directly negotiating with the owners.

What has been the impact of the land buying? This must be seen in terms of changing the landholding and land use pattern. It must also be seen in terms of heightening conflict in the society. And finally it must be seen



as modifying the available technology.

The most important landholding effect of the new land buying is the fact that relatively better land is bought by the foreigners. For the locals land is classified into miunda (agricultural land) and kitheka (land for grazing). Usually the miunda are less stony and sandy and the most productive are bottom land (matiko) or gentle slopes. The new land buyers have concentrated on buying miunda although most are going to ranch it. Thus we have two effects of the land buying system, the better cropland is being transferred into livestock production basically since the new buyers are not particularly interested in subsistence crop production. The second effect is that the old settlers are being pushed slowly into the steeper slopes where the production of subsistence crop is harder. Given their farming techniques there will be heightened ecological decay as the soil is transported down to the bottom land. If the foreigner farmers practice good soil conservation at the bottom lands they can also take advantage of this transported top soil thereby increasing their benefits more, ironically.

The important sociological effect of the land buying system is the heightening of social conflict among the old settlers. This is seen in terms of the number of medicine men who have set shop in Kanduti. Before 1970 there was never a report of a mundu mue (medicine man) from outside the region setting shop in Kanduti. From 1970 to 1976 there has been 10 mundu awe (medicine men) setting shop in Kanduti. Four have been from Machakos, five from Northern Kitui and Tharaka and one from Kilifi. Other than these external awe, four Kanduti young men have become awe and 8 women have started the Kathambi cult. Before 1970 there were only four reputed local awe. It is hard to know exactly how many people consult medicine men and whether there is an increase but in field interviews people keep talking of times of troubles and the need to always be prepared by the mundu mue to confront the troubles.

The above data on increase in the activities of andu awe is presented to show the backdrop of conflict in land and the insecurity selling brings about. Previously we mentioned that individual families would have between twenty and sixty pieces of land scattered all over the area. We also mentioned that Trader One had stated the institution of a land agent. We should also point out that up to the beginning of an active land market, within the families (not clans) allotment of specific pieces to individual family members was rare. We even

had many anomolous situations where married daughters had been allowed to cultivate and even settle in land belonging to their original families... Conflict over land comes therefore at the following levels (a) to clear married daughters out of family land (b) to divide among the male family members the family's land patrimony (c) intra and inter clan claims (inter-family) and finally (d) in competing to sell to a particular foreigner. In my opinion this is the rising order of conflict over land selling among the people of Kanduti.

a. Clearing Married Daughters of Family Land

Kamba tradition is very clear about the ownership of family land by a married daughter. They are not entitled to it. It has therefore been relatively easy kicking them out and selling whatever land they were occupying. There has been though two sensational cases where married daughters refused to move. The sister of Ngavi had settled in family land next to silingi itatu because she argued her in laws were bewitching her. She herself was reputed to be a mundu mue. Since her practice was lucrative she did very well. 'Her' land was very productive being bottom land. She was one of the few people with a maize crusher. Her elder brother sold 'her' land to one of the foreigners. At that time the older brother (Ngavu) was the local village elder (Mutumia wa Utui) and was a relatively prosperous farmer who had ploughing oxen and a plough (there are only four more in the area). Soon after he sold the land, he was fired by the subchief for reasons of conflicting with village population. A month later their father died. Since she had been seen with assorted foreign andu awe (particularly the one from Kilifi) and given her reputation everybody, including the brother, believes she killed the father, made Ngavis loose the job and is planning to kill him. Thus he has sold more land to travel first to Northern Kitui (specifically Kimangau) for consultations with the most reputed tribal medicine man. After consultations there which will cost him probably Sh.4,000/- (US 500 dollars) he plans to travel to Tanga in Tanzania - the ultimate in medicine as far as Kambas are concerned.

The second sensational case of a daughter refusing to move from family land involves a formerly christianized daughter of Musomba. Her father had acquired the name Musomba (Mr. European) since he was a cook for a local administrator and learned to dress like Europeans early. Musomba's daughter was a local beauty. She aspired to marry outside the area but everytime she married a transient labourer she ultimately found that he was poor and could not afford a European dowry i.e. a respectable dowry in keeping with her father's reputation. She came back <sup>to her family</sup> four times. Meanwhile she had collected four male sons. Her



father sold 'her' land in 1975. She then convinced, by offering reputed rewards of Sh.400/- (US 50 dollars) some clan elders, that the sons were her father's and that he had always sent her away to deliver. Since this was abomination it unhinged the father who now spends all his time consulting andu awe. She was able though to get the clan leaders to allocate her four sons contiguous land taken out of her father's land. She has now become the high priestess of the Kathambi cult.

These in brief are ~~two of the most sensational cases of conflict~~ coming out of daughters holding family land. My guess estimate is that there has been about one thousand cases of similar nature between 1972-1976. The married daughters unlike these two invariably loose the land. Most of them get settled at the family elders level with very few ever getting to the clan elders level, or the utui village elder's level which is the lowest administrative level of government and justice! Even these two sensational case did not get to the sub-chief level.

b. Family Patrimony Division Among Males

Probably between 1972-1976 there has been as many as 10,000 cases of dividing up family land among the male sons at the family elders level, about 8,000 at the clan elders level and the utui elders level and 5,000 at the sub-chief level. The total number of cases is not an addition of these because most cases have very circuitous existence so much that they are heard up to 20 times at all levels. A case may be as simple as two family elders and their son coming together to divide up the land but usually the cases are complicated by nyumba rivalries.

Most families are polygamous in Kanduti. Kamba tradition has had it that the house holds (nyumba) of the separate wives compete. Whereas this institutionalised rivalry is useful in normal times as a prod towards achievement under stress it disintegrates into open rivalry. This is what has fundamentally led to the intra family conflict in terms of dividing up land among the male family members. Historically a Kamba male on marrying had to establish a separate household for each wife, each wife had also to have a separate (mbee) cropland. Usually the household combined their livestock herds and sent them to the weu. Historically also the households (nyumba) were grouped together at the same place and the various mbee surrounded a unified mbee. What is puzzling in the Kanduti household settlement pattern is the scattering of the

various nyumba. Most wives on a polygamous family have their households (nyumba) in quite separated piece of land. This is even true of the oldest settlers. Perhaps this is reflective of conflict over land occupation in the past but I have not found oral or written explanation. Probing about it during field interviews only elicits the general comment that this is the way it has always been in Kanduti.

Usually the conflict among males in a family does not touch on these pieces where they are homesteaded now (the mother and the sons) but it comes over pieces of land which had been cultivated by the different nyumba over many different times and the places where the nyumba had homes and had to relocate because somebody died there. The third variation is where nyumba now argue the principle of size as entitling them to more land. Traditionally this was not a factor.

To illustrate the complexity of the conflict lets discuss cases in the Wa Kiala family. Kiala was one of the two original settlers in Kanduti. He was a hunter and honey collector. He came to Kanduti before the famine of rice (i.e. 1896-99). Historically those who became hunters, honey collectors lived away from society for long times and although there does not seem to have been stigma attached to these professions they do not seem to have either accumulated a lot of wealth which also seems to have impaired their bridewealth paying capacity. At the same time it appears as if they tended to marry late since the peak of their professional competence was in the years of youth up to middle age. Kiala married late. It is said that Kiala married (was able to pay dowry) when his contemporaries had circumcised three sons. He married only one wife who gave him one son and many daughters. His son is Wa Kiala.

Wa Kiala grew up and was taught to become a professional hunter and honey collector. He has passed these skills to all his sons but he still remains the dominant honey collector in Kanduti. He has two wives. The households (nyumba) are now separated being about half a mile apart. The Senior wife's nyumba has two sons and the Junior nyumba has six sons. Since Wa Kiala inherited a lot of land from his father, one of the original settlers, the homesteads of his two



wives have been relocated many times. The two households have cultivated the same plots many times. This then is the background to the conflict in dividing up the land among the sons.

The first case arose since a road was bullozed in 1974 (as a vote getting trick in the National elections) right through Wa Kiala's land. It separated the two households but it cut across the homestead plots which ran

on an East/West axis. The road runs North South. This forced Wa Kiala to have to exchange between the households those pieces demarcated by the road.

The complaints by the sons of household No. 2 was that to be allocated land which faces the west is to get inferior land since it is backed by the afternoon sun. They therefore argued they should get other pieces not within this contiguous area. Interesting this was agreed within the family in 1974

and household No. 2 (second wives') was allocated other pieces. Case number two arose when the two sons of household No. 1 (first senior wife's) argued that a portion of the land allocated to household No. 2 to the west of the road

should be allocated to them to give a place to build near permanent water at Syok itena well. They based their claim on the body of a brother buried there. This was granted but at the family level and they sold it immediately to one

of the foreigners! It was now household No. 2 turn to open again the question of patrimony by arguing in case number three that since they were six sons they were entitled to more land than household No. 1 which had only two sons. They claimed a portion of household No. 1 land allotment to the east of the road.

They got it and sold a piece to the west of the road to the same foreigner who had bought from household No.1. The foreigner was only buying contiguous

pieces and the piece they sold to him touched the piece sold by household No. 1. It is clear then that in cases 2 and 3 that the real reason for reallocating land among household is to meet the buying demands of the foreigner.

Case No. 4 refers to the intra-household No. 2 allocation in 1975.

The eldest son argued that since traditional obligations of supporting his younger brothers would force him to spend a lot of money on fees etc, he should get the lions share of the household land. He got a favourable ruling from the family elders and the clan elders on appeal by the other brothers but the utui (village) elders and the subchief levels overturned the decisions arguing equitable distribution. The eldest son found out that the five brothers ganging on him were too many and initiated case number five. Given the fact that four were contributing towards the education of the last born who was in Harombee school he convinced the four that the last born's share should be divided among them. This was so ruled by the family elders, clan elders, utui elders but overruled by the subchief. In November 1976 the first son was contemplating initiating case number six to argue case five all over again but with the variation that he should have use rights (kutama) over the youngest brother's land until the latter marries and has his family. The youngest brother in turn is contemplating marrying and blocking this appropriation of his patrinomy. Conflict continues.

This endless intra-family cases cost the Wa Kiala family a lot of money relatively. They also have had five other cases, two concerning evicting married daughters which they won. Three concerning people they had allowed to settle (Kutusya) which they lost all way up to the subchief level but they argue they will look for a lawyer when adjudication reaches Kanduti. It is not possible to specify costs but a relative notion of what the cases have cost the Wa Kiala family is the comment by one of their inlaws that two out of the nine Wa Kiala family males are in a case at least two full days a week. The same informant also argues that they have not hunted or collected honey in the last two years because of cases. Finally, all the males have sold more than half of their goats to finance the endless cases. Thus conflict over ownership leads to impoverishment of families, to the ending of a family as a production



unit and to nucleation of the family so as to stake claims to the pieces.

c. Intra and Inter Clan (Mbaa) Land Claims

Intra and Inter clan land claims are really based on large family "mbaa" claims. In general 'mbaa' are smaller than clans in the sense that clans are uniform across the tribe. Some historians e.g. Jackson have confused the mbaa with clans. The second introductory remark is that as far as I have been able to gather there has never been separated <sup>clan</sup> settlement in one continuous area in Ukambani but there has been separate Mbaa settlements. In Kanduti even the mbaa have been intermixed in settlement. The cases arise out of some mbaa trying to establish that some contiguous areas were theirs. They therefore want relocation of the other clansmen or clans. The most notorious mbaa are Mbaa Kimanzi. They have had 30 cases with clansmen and 68 with other clans claiming land. They have utilized the office of a clansman who is a Mutui (Elder of the Village) in this process. The irony of the situation is the fact that they are relatively newcomers from Voo to the area. People however argue that the Kimanzis have been able to expand rapidly since they brought a lot of cattle from Voo and established syengo all over Kanduti. It is these syengo they now argue <sup>which</sup> were homesteads. Of course on top of this is the usual explanation of potent medicine. In my opinion it is the cattle wealth base which gave them a hedge in the land accumulation process.

However from 1976 we may see the decline of the Kimanzis since intra-mbaa conflict has factionalized them. The two significant aspects of intra-mbaa conflict are first, the fact that different brothers are now agents for different foreign buyers. Rather than this leading to better prices for the Mbaa seller it has been utilized by the buyers to buy Mbaa Kimanzi land at less than the average prices. The local popular explanation of course is that the Mbaa Kimanzi are selling at next to nothing prices because they have stolen the land and rather than graze or cultivate it with dire kithitu

consequences they are unloading the land!

Mbaa land cases are well financed and usually start at the Utui Elder level. They constitute the bulk of the Village Elder and subchief level cases. No doubt they will constitute the bulk of the cases during the process of adjudication. I estimate that there has been about a thousand cases both at the Village Elder and Subchief level between 1972 and 1976. respectively.

d. Competition to Sell to Particular Foreigner

Conflict over selling to a particular foreigner arises out of the fact that some foreigners have reputations for low prices. Trader One has not been able to buy new pieces since 1975. His agents have started intensive harrassing of landsellers, usually by threatening them with muti (medicine). Those threatened have to take countermeasures against the agents since Trader One is unreachable.

Conflict also arise out of attempts to sell first. 1974 and 1975 have been particularly bad crop years. Individual sellers are very much aware of how much specific foreigners usually spend on buying. At Kanduti Trading Centre everyday there are incidents of landsellers trying to fix rival landsellers with muti so that they can be looked on favourably by the land agents or the specific land buyers. This conflict even effects members of the same family who are pressed to sell at a particular time to feed the families goats and sheep were sold out between 1970 and 1974.

The third level of conflict arises where family (mbaa) leadership is allied with one buyer but the seller can get a better price from another foreigner. Threats by Mbaa-leadership have to date been effective but as more buyers get into the market they will probably loose their effectiveness.

Finally there is the fourth situation where some foreigners buy and surround some sellers who at that point are not willing to sell. Land agents press for sale at times. At other times land agents attempt to exchange those pieces



and sell later but in 1976 it looks as if the future pattern will be for the individual owner to be squeezed further by the land agent and the landbuyer. This is particularly noticeable where landbuyers want contiguous land and pieces surrounded or adjacent do not form the basic minimum adjudicateable land (five acres).

This fourth category of conflict does not easily lead to prosecution but tends to stay at the muti level.

#### EXISTING TECHNOLOGY

##### a. Crop Agriculture

Basically Kanduti agricultural production up to now has not been limited by land. Thus it has relied on opening new land, slashing and burning it. However it is important to note that the frequency of a particular piece being used has increased in the last 10 years or so. In fact for the future, given the natural population growth and the landbuying by foreigners cropping of permanent areas will become the norm rather than the exception.

At the beginning of the study year there was only one family which had terraced its permanent cropland. This is out of a possible total of more than 8,000 households (nyumba the household of one of the wives in a polygamous family). By November 1976 there were another four terraced croplands, one belonging to the chief/trader of the neighbouring location, the third and fourth belonging to two original settlers.

In the study years it appears as if it is only the terracers who utilized animal manure. For the rest of the population the livestock bomas (ituu) were never swept or manure taken out. They were relocated and old ones were used to grow tobacco for local consumption.

The technology for seedbed preparation and weeding is basically traditional. After slashing and burning usually the crops are planted without

any further seedbed preparation. A newly burned field is never weeded the first season. It may be weeded the second season and then abandoned. After that it is left to revert to *ici*. The four ploughs have begun to intrude into seed bed preparation in the permanent farms. Yet the ploughing technique is undeveloped and is from an erosion point of view very dangerous. The only ameliorating factor is that it really is scratching not ploughing. Since the oxen are not well trained ploughing tends to be down and uphill and zigzag thus encouraging water erosion. No ploughing is done as part of weeding, this technique not being in use. Planting in rows is non-existent. Mixed crop planting is the norm.

The important tools are the *digo jembe* and the *panga*. The latter is used both for cutting the bush, planting and weeding. The *digo jembe* is used for weeding. The hoe is slowly making inroads into the agricultural practices but it is seen as too heavy and therefore undesired.

On the crops the primary crops in the last 10 years have been maize pigeon peas cow peas and beans but it is interesting that as the land deteriorates (not enough following after slashing and burning and erosion) people are reverting to millets and grams which they argue are drought resistant. In the ten seasons covered by the study only six people planted Katumani maize, the green revolution dry zone maize. The grams are planted by some people particularly the ones with bottom land which can be cropped all seasons.

Although many agricultural studies in Kenya now make a distinction between cash crops and subsistence crops I would like to point out that in the view of Kanduti people all the above crops are both for subsistence and cash. In fact, they argue that they mix crops so as to maximize their cash opportunity during bad years. However two cash crops planned for the district - sunflower and castor seed oil are only planted haphazardly, sometimes in grazing land by the majority other than the families with ploughs who plant them also with the other



crops) and do not constitute an important crop. They are viewed as if they were wild products which might bring you an income in abnormal situations.

Pawpaws, oranges and mangoes seem to do very well but they are not extensively planted.

Finally nobody uses fertilizer or sprays crops.

b. Livestock Technology

The Kanduti is not cattle country under traditional technology. We pointed out earlier that people argued that cattle died because of the too rich grass and further that probably the real reason was East Coast Fever. Some families like the Kimanzi family have kept large herds. A member of the family Muthoka had 250 Boran cattle in 1973 but by November 1976 he had only 15, remaining most having died. The majority of the families do not even have the characteristic milk cow. There are no cattle dips, no veterinary services and not even individuals injecting cattle illegally. Even compulsory cattle inoculations (munanda) are avoided since communication is so poor and most officers have never heard of, forget about visiting Kanduti.

Goats are popular and even the poorest family has some. In fact Kanduti people when receiving dowry insist on being paid in goats rather than cattle. When dowry is paid in cattle they are immediately sold. Goats are handy and other than some pleuropneumonia type disease (mavui) there aren't many diseases which kill them. There are traditional cures and specialists for most goat diseases.

Sheep die frequently in Kanduti and very few are kept..

Sheep, goats and cattle run the range. There aren't systematic herding techniques as O'Leary argues for Eastern Kitui. It is a puzzle about Kanduti (and perhaps indicative of some kind of social malaise) that there are no herders for livestock. During the study period everytime one visited the area he met two or three people each day looking for their goats. This running the range leads to losses by wild animals and stealing. Obviously with the foreigners fencing their land this management technique will have to change. Already one foreigner has prosecuted an old settler for having found the latter's cattle on his land. The fine was Sh.80 (US 10 Dollars)!

No extra feed is fed to livestock, no modern drugs are available, no dipping, spraying inoculation or injections takes place. Even the more educated do not rely on the modern techniques. They however claim to have elaborate traditional cures - which is an area requiring urgent research by veterinarians.

c. Water Technology

Other than Kavindu dam - off Mbitini Hill, all the Kanduti water comes out of river bed sand wells (Mivuko) with the exception of Trader Two and one overseas volunteer who have wells dug on the riverbanks. During the rainy season seepages and rock catchments pools are important sources. There are no rain catchment tanks, subsurface dams - technologies which have existed in the drier parts of the district for now more than forty years. Perhaps the explanation lies in the previous good <sup>endowment</sup> of the area with spring water. Before the extensive denudation springs and seepages were abundant and most of the river basins could provide water easily. Yet now most springs, and seepages have dried up since surface run off has increased with ecological decay. New technologies will have to be generated to provide for water.

Of the new technologies introduced by foreigners in Kanduti well digging is probably the most important. Yet the technology can be inappropriate. Trader One's well is square and lined up with concrete. Thus it allows for very little seepage into the well thereby cutting its productivity. Also this well's lining has burst several times since the force of water downslope has been too strong for the square concrete.

Water is drawn by women and girls with gourds and both plastic and metal containers. Probably women spend as much as 50% of their time during the dry season on water drawing activity.

d. Other Technologies

Transportation is essentially human. There are only four bicycles (same people with ploughs). There are no ox-carts or wheelbarrows. Any transportation of heavy goods is usually done by a large piece of a tree (kitingi) where the goods are piled and then this is dragged by oxen. There are no donkeys.

Bicycles and (kitingi) are hired at the rate of five shillings a day.



Food Technology. One of the most surprising technologies in Kanduti is the introduction of baking of scones and bread. Three wood fired earth bakeries have sprung up at Kanduti Trading Center and they are a constant source of food (commercial) for the people attending the 'town'. They should be seen though for what they are - competing with women who sell gruel, milk at the Trading Center to suppliment their income. Thus the introduction of baking technology by youngmen undercuts women traders.

#### ACCESS TO GOVERNMENT SERVICES

No District Commissioner has visited Kanduti since 1952. No District Veterinary, Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Cooperative or Planning Officer has visited Kanduti. No Member of Parliament has been there since 1969. The Chief's office is twenty miles away at Kyuluni, (Kwa Kinyai) and until the present chief became a land buyer in 1975 no chief had visited Kanduti since 1959.

The nearest hospital is 15 miles away at Mbitini Trading Center. The nearest school, up to five years ago was at Nthangath - five miles from Kanduti Trading Center.

The district capital is about 25 miles away by footpaths 30 by motor road. Thus one can categorically state that Kanduti people have no access to government services. This can be illustrated by the case of a farmer who wanted to terrace his land but who since 1972 (to November 1976) has has been waiting for the locational agricultural assistant to come to survey them. One in Kanduti quickly learns that government is remote and alien and unserving. The only contact is the local subchief. Yet a local subchief is a creature of the society and cannot really be expected to act as an effective communicator of all aspects of government. He is limited by his involvement in the local society whatever his training.

No farmers have been to Farmer Training Centres. No traders either. It is ironic that such a potentially good agricultural region has not had access to any governmental extension. Perhaps a new road (planned for 1977) connecting Inyuu, Kitho, Kanduti and Mbitini will make it possible for officers and politicians to pass through Kanduti. It may lead to some services.

## 6. Some Planning Alternatives for Kitui

The discipline of planning or policy sciences has been based too heavily on quantitative measure without paying too much attention to the ecological and sociological parameters. For districts like Kitui there are basic parameters which any type of planning or policy must take account of. These are water, livestock and the socio-politics structure. In this chapter we shall discuss some of these within the ecodevelopment framework critiqued in chapter 1.

### Water

From the earliest colonial records it seems that the basic problem in Kitui was availability of water. Given scarce rainfall and poor extraction technology, Kitui people settled the hills first and followed the rivers. The technology was bound to sandriver wells. This did untold damage to riverine forests and led to the fast flowing, non water retaining rivers of the present time. Earlier on we mentioned the Kelly revolution. What made it a revolution was the plan by D.C. Kelly who was in Kitui between 1948 and 1952 to build dams all over Kitui. These dams were to be built with communal labour basically but some of the large ones like Masingwa were machine made. Between 1950 approximately 50 dams were built every year and the ultimate plan was to build 200 dams a year by the late 1950s. It was envisaged that in 20 years most of the small rivers and valleys (tulusi and syanda) respectively would be dammed and no families would be more than half a mile from permanent water. The argument was not that families would be less than half a mile from a dam but rather that dams would replenish the underground watersystem and therefore natural watersprings would be habilitated.

Construction of dams was done simultaneously with stringent control of riverbank and mountainside cultivation and forced bush clearing as well as closing of overgrazed areas (mang'alata). Thus from a physical environment point of view there was an integrated conception. Yet from an ecodevelopment point of view there was fragmented thinking since the social structure was not taken account of. There were several obvious problems. (These are a) the structure of communal labour b) the emergent social structure. Communal labour was a way of forcing the poor to labour. There is no doubt the labour was productive from a physical environment point of view but it occupied the time of the poor in pursuits which deepened their poverty. By 1940 most Asoni families were sending their children to school and paying in cash since each family was supposed to contribute a body for two days every week. Thus most of their



children were not available for the dancing groups which were the basic unit for dam building. Each chief was required to produce a work-gang of young men (aanake) and girls (eitu) to do communal dam work. They would camp at the site for days. They were fed and allowed to hold dances. This was the catch. Supposedly traditional dances were to be continued for their entertainment but we should note that the traditional kituto (dancing ground) and its socialization process had been mutated. You danced a dance of labour. There is also evidence that by mid 1950's most young men were refusing communal dam labour and were running away to look for jobs in the plantations and in Mombasa. Thus girls and women became dominant in communal labour. (See DCKTI AnnRpts 1952-63). This means that the daughters of the non-asomi were kept out of school. Thus communal labour became the arena of the poor women whose husbands had to run away to the so called modern sector to become labour also.

On the emergent social structure we should note that the old socialization patterns of the kituto for the young men and women was discontinued because of communal labour. Whereas we can argue that the young of the asomi had their kituto in school but the young of the poor had their kituto as labour. It was garbled in terms of functions although the colonial records show it as community service.

For me part of the explanation of the unstable marriages (measured in terms of uendo - married daughters returning to their original families) of places like Kanduti and the subsequent conflict can only be explained by the peculiar socialization of the communal labour kituto.

On the emergent social structure we should further note that it was the chiefs who detailed families for communal labour. Chiefs used the patronage of not doing communal labour not just for their individual accumulation but also for consolidating the asomi class. Thus sharper distinctions were enforced between the asomi and non-asomi. The former either paid for their share of communal labor or bribed their way out of communal labour obligations. The later laboured. Furthermore the asomi class was in a position to accumulate the benefits of communal labour more than the non-asomi. Their herds utilized the water and the reclaimed land. They also got the new technologies for example growing of tobacco.

From a detailed technical dam construction point of view we should note that the Kelly revolution was a failure. Dams were marked by any officer. Sites and techniques were poor and most of the dams have been washed away. When they washed away the accelerated soil erosion. Yet it contributed new techniques for harnessing water i.e. rock catchment dams, earth dams and sand river dams.

We can therefore argue that from a systematic ecodevelopment point of view water became a fragmenting rather than an integrating factor in the society. Historically people migrated together in search of water ( and grazing) now they fragmented building dams and utilizing them.

What then are current alternatives which would be in the ecodevelopment framework? First we should note that some of the stringent physical environmental limitations e.g. cultivating riverbanks, and mountainsides, closing or overgrazing areas and bush clearing were discontinued in the euphoria of independence. These were colonialist activities! Secondly we should note that Harambee has continued to exploit the poor in manner similar to colonial communal labor.

We should note that the earth dam technique has come to be regarded by most people as the superior technique for getting water. Thus ground-water potential has never been systematically explored. Neither has the cheaper and no maintenance sand river dam technique been emphasized in research or implementation.

Finally with much greater individuation of property particularly land pressure has built up for techniques producing water for individuals.

It is in this context that the basic alternatives in planning water are a) conservation of riverbank and mountain land. b) exploration of ground-water potential. c) development of cheap ground water extraction systems within the reach of the poor.

#### Livestock.

We have argued that goats represent a kind of currency/insurance even for the poorest. They are ably adapted to the ecological parameters as well as the disease parameters. Thus they are an evenly distributed resource. Livestock on the other hand do very well only in the wet areas of Kitui. In the highland areas they are not adapted to the disease parameters. Thus cattle have



been a more important accumulation source for the asomi who were able to move them around. It is these factors which have to shape any alternatives in the future.

Colonial agriculture was extremely biased against goats. It was argued that they destroyed the range. Yet where bush was cleared so as to allow growth of grass for cattle goats could have thrived. To clear bush for cattle meant transferring resources from non-asomi as we argued before. There still is a residual argument that goats destroy range by tracking and compacting. Yet it appears to me that the sequence of ecological destruction is that cattle overgraze and as the range becomes unsuitable for cattle usually goats are put in to forage on bush. As the land deteriorates further the goats are blamed for destruction whose sequence started before they were even around. Even if this interpretation is proved wrong there still is clear evidence from Hellers work that the traditional mixed grazing of goats, sheep and cattle is most efficient since each feeds in different ways. (Heller unpublished grazing reports -Pamburi Portland Cement Farm Mombasa.)

The important nexus is the interaction of the distribution of goats, the increased demand for goats in the national market (and its related national demand as opposed to international demand of beef) and finally their adaptability to the physical ecological parameters.

Alternatives for the future clearly must include emphasizing breeding of goats, stabilizing goat prices and finding technical solutions to goat carrying capacities. Cattle would still be important in wet areas but as individuation of land ownership has continued clearly the movement of cattle between dry plains (for wet weather grazing) and the mountains (for dry weather grazing) will become more and more unrealistic. Besides, breaking the disease parameters of cattle keeping in a district like Kitui will cost more than doing the same for goats.

#### Socio-political Structure.

Planning access to the socio-political structure should be of importance in the ecodevelopment approach. Yet most plans do not even mention this in their targets. When they do they talk about spillover effects of some services like education. Yet in a district like Kitui one can argue that all previous development and extraction processes have served to consolidate the asomi class

at the local level. Thus one is now confronted with a society where access to resources is leading to greater differentiation. One is particularly thinking of access to land and cattle. It seems to this writer that one of the unexplored areas in development literature is the relationship between scales of technology and access to it by different classes. To illustrate, the farmer with two cows can keep watering them at a Muvukuo ( sand river well) but the large scale farmer with 3,000 cattle needs permanent dams or boreholes to water the cattle. The consumption of technology seems to vary with class. As more and more government development planning becomes more large scale it continues to sharpen social differentiation blocking access for the poor who do not either have the economic base, information or capacity to a consume large scale technology.

This problem of scale of technology and its relationship to social structure is not just solved by arguments for political participation since access to the instrumentalities is denied by both spatial variables and class variables. Participation by the non-asomi where the state is the basic accumulation factor by the asomi is a contradiction. It is in this sense that the ecodevelopment approach can only be implimented by a revolutionary state!