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## Food security and coping mechanisms in marginal areas: the case of West Pokot, Kenya, 1920-1995

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### Citation

Nangulu, A. K. (2009). *Food security and coping mechanisms in marginal areas: the case of West Pokot, Kenya, 1920-1995*. Leiden: African Studies Centre. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/13788>

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# Food security and coping mechanisms in marginal areas



African Studies Centre  
African Studies Collection, vol. 15

# Food security and coping mechanisms in marginal areas.

The case of West Pokot, Kenya, 1920-1995

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Published by:

African Studies Centre  
P.O. Box 9555  
2300 RB Leiden  
The Netherlands  
[asc@ascleiden.nl](mailto:asc@ascleiden.nl)  
<http://www.ascleiden.nl>

Cover design: Heike Slingerland

Printed by PrintPartners Ipkamp BV, Enschede

ISSN: 1876-018X  
ISBN: 978-90-5448-085-3

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# Contents

List of tables *viii*

List of maps *ix*

List of abbreviations *x*

Preface *xii*

## 1 INTRODUCTION *1*

The study area *3*

The study *5*

Conceptual framework *8*

Literature review *11*

Methodology *17*

Conclusion *18*

## 2 ADMINISTRATION, POPULATION TRENDS AND LAND TENURE *21*

Introduction *21*

Administrative history *22*

Taxation *27*

History of population development *30*

The land *35*

Conclusion *43*

## 3 FURROW IRRIGATION AND FOOD PRODUCTION IN COLONIAL WEST POKOT, 1920-1963 *45*

Introduction *45*

Furrow irrigation, labour and seasonality *46*

Agricultural activities in the colonial period, 1920-1939 *52*

Agricultural activities, 1939-1963 *63*

Conclusion *70*

<b>4 STRIVING FOR FOOD SECURITY: CROP DEVELOPMENT IN POST-COLONIAL WEST POKOT, 1963-1995</b>	<b>73</b>
Introduction	73
Crop development: The case of hybrid maize	76
Crop development: Provision of credit to farmers to enhance production	83
Grains, legumes, tubers and other crops	91
Soil conservation measures	95
Conclusion	96
<b>5 LIVESTOCK KEEPING, HUNTING AND GATHERING AS COPING MECHANISMS, 1920-1995</b>	<b>99</b>
Introduction	99
Livestock keeping: Grazing, labour management and social networks	100
Livestock keeping and the impact of colonialism: The case of destocking, 1920-1963	105
Livestock keeping and the impact of colonialism: Grazing schemes, 1930-1963	110
Livestock insecurity: Drought, diseases and cattle raids, 1920-1963	115
Grazing schemes, grade and cross breed stock in the post-colonial period, 1963-1995	119
Livestock insecurity: Disease and prevention measures, 1963-1995	127
Livestock insecurity: Border clashes and cattle raids, 1963-1995	132
Hunting and gathering as coping mechanisms	137
Conclusion	141
<b>6 TRADE, WAGE LABOUR, MINING, AND THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO FOOD SECURITY</b>	<b>143</b>
Introduction	143
Trade in the colonial period, 1920-1935	145
Trade in the post-depression and World War II period, 1935-1945	148
Trade in the post-World war II period, 1945-1963	153
Trade in livestock and livestock products in the post-colonial period, 1963-1995	163
Trade in farm produce, <i>miraa</i> and beer, 1963-1995	168
Wage labour as a coping mechanism in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot	177
Mining as a coping mechanism in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot	186
Conclusion	191

<b>7 EXTERNAL INTERVENTION: GOVERNMENT/DONOR INTERVENTIONS WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO IRRIGATION AND FAMINE RELIEF, AND THEIR IMPACT ON FOOD SECURITY</b>	<b>193</b>
Introduction	193
Irrigation projects	195
Demerits of irrigation projects and lessons to be learned	206
Famine relief	213
Conclusion	226
<b>8 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</b>	<b>229</b>
Summary	229
Conclusion and lessons to be learned	233
<b>Annex: Maps</b>	<b>237</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>243</b>

## List of tables

1.1	Rainfall pattern in West Pokot, 1982-1992	5
2.1	Annual hut tax collection from 1915/16 to 1922 (rupees)	28
2.2	Annual hut tax collection from 1922 to 1926 (shillings)	28
2.3	West Pokot population estimates, 1924-1943	30
2.4	West Pokot population trends, 1948 to 1989	32
2.5	Sabot, Nandi and Bukusu human and livestock population in Mnagei location, 1947	33
2.6	West Pokot population projections by division	34
2.7	West Pokot population density by division, 1979-1994	34
3.1	Demonstration plots in West Pokot, 1935	61
3.2	Seed issues in West Pokot, 1936	62
3.3	Beans and root crop production in West Pokot, 1955	69
4.1	Maize planting in West Pokot, 1970	80
4.2	Maize planting in West Pokot, 1972	81
4.3	Maize planting in West Pokot, 1975-1976	81
4.4	Maize planting in West Pokot, 1978-1979	81
4.5	Fertilizer used in West Pokot, 1976	83
4.6	Co-operative society loans granted and recovery process in West Pokot, 1979	88
4.7	IADP loan recovery through co-operative societies, 1978/79	89
4.8	Seasonal credit scheme co-operative society loans, 1980	90
4.9	Estimates of potato production in West Pokot, 1973-1981	94
4.10	Soil conservation measures in Kapenguria, Sigor and Chepareria divisions, 1976	95
4.11	Soil conservation measures undertaken in West Pokot, 1981	96
5.1	The four block, four month rotation grazing adopted as the answer for the recovery of semi-arid areas (sequence for development in West Pokot)	112
5.2	Grazing schemes converted into group ranches, 1972-1975	122
5.3	Members of respective group ranches by end of 1975	122
5.4	Adjudicated group ranches in West Pokot, 1983	123
5.5	Number of dairy cattle (grade/cross breed) and milk sold, 1973-1976	126
5.6	Livestock population: estimated number of stock, 1973-1976	126
5.7	Position of SRDP incorporated ranches in West Pokot, 1976	127
5.8	Cases of tick-borne diseases confirmed by laboratory examination, 1966-1969	128
5.9	Selected dipping figures, 1970	129
5.10	Occurrence of diseases (general), 1971-1975	130
5.11	Estimated number of dips in operation, under construction and not operating, 1972-1976	131
5.12	Number of quarantines imposed on West Pokot, 1973-1976	131
5.13	Incidents of cattle raids between the Pokot and their neighbours, 1969	132
6.1	Sheep and goats sold by West Pokot traders, 1927-31	147
6.2	Details of trading licences issued, 1931-33	148
6.3	Trade centers and distribution of business, 1936	148
6.4	Stock sales, 1965-1969	163
6.5	Holding grounds in West Pokot, 1971	164
6.6	Slaughter and non-slaughter livestock sold within and outside West Pokot, 1971	165
6.7	Slaughter livestock sold within and outside West Pokot, 1969-1976	166
6.8	Hides and skins operations, 1967-1975	166
6.9	Revenue collected from hides and skins, 1967-1975	167
6.10	Hides and skins trade: Suspended and ground dried, 1975-1976	167
6.11	Milk and wool sold from West Pokot, 1971, 1974 and 1975	168

6.12	Quantity and value of crop production, 1966-1969	169
6.13	Farm produce sales, 1970 and 1971	170
6.14	Crop sales, 1975-1976	170
6.15	Sorghum and finger millet production, 1967-1976	172
6.16	Potatoes, cassava and banana production, 1970-1971	173
6.17	African labour registered for work outside and within West Pokot, 1924	180
6.18	Gold produced in West Pokot by J.F. van Wyck between 1955 and 1963	189

## List of maps

1	Location of West Pokot district in Kenya	237
2	West Suk/West Pokot district headquarters, 1910-83	238
3	West Suk/West Pokot administrative divisions, 1957-83	239
4	Administrative boundaries, West Pokot district, 1983	240
5	Administrative boundaries, 1995	241
6	Irrigation in West Pokot, 1985	242

## List of abbreviations

AADAR	African Affairs Department Annual Report
AAO	Assistant Agricultural Officer
ACCK	Associated Christian Churches of Kenya
ACTS	African Center for Technology Studies
ADA	Assistant Director of Agriculture
ADC	African District Council
AFC	Agricultural Finance Corporation
ALDEV	African Land Development
ALMO	African Livestock Marketing Organization
ASAL	Arid and Semi-Arid Lands
CLSMB	Cotton Lint and Seed Marketing Board
CO	Colonial Office
CPK	Church Province of Kenya
C&PKAR	Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual Report
DAO	District Agricultural Officer
DC	District Commissioner
DFC	District Food Committee
DIU	District Irrigation Unit
DLO	District Land Officer
DO	District Officer
DFRD	District Focus for Rural Development
EEC	European Economic Community
ENDA	Environmental Development Action
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FCS	Farmers Co-operative Society
FFW	Food For Work
GK	Government of Kenya
GP	Government Printer
GSU	General Service Unit
HMSO	His/Her Majesty's Stationary Office
IADP	Integrated Agricultural Development Programme
IAS	Institute of African Studies
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IRD	Integrated Rural Development
KAR	King's African Rifles
KAU	Kenya African Union
KCC	Kenya Co-operative Creameries
KFA	Kenya Farmers Association
KFFHC	Kenya Freedom from Hunger Council
KGCU	Kenya Grain Growers Co-operative Union
KMC	Kenya Meat Commission
KNAA	Kenya National Archives
KPCU	Kenya Planters Co-operative Union
KRDF	Kenya Rural Development Fund

KSC	Kenya Seed Company
KSFS	Kenya School Feeding Scheme
KVDA	Kerio Valley Development Authority
LNC	Local Native Council
MCD	Ministry of Co-operative Development
MCH	Maternal and Child Health
MGDAR	Mines and Geological Department Annual Report
MMB	Meat Marketing Board
MOA	Ministry of Agriculture
MPMB	Maize and Produce Marketing Board
NADAR	Native Affairs Department Annual Report
NCPB	National Cereals and Produce Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NYS	National Youth Service
PBK	Pyrethrum Board of Kenya
PC	Provincial Commissioner
RDR	Regional Development Research
RNA	Report of Native Affairs
RVP	Rift Valley Province
SCIP	Smallholder Coffee Improvement Project
SFP	School Feeding Programmes
SFRC	Sigor Food Review Committee
SPLA	Sudanese People's Liberation Army
SRDP	Special Rural Development Programme
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Education Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WFP	World Food Programme
WP	West Pokot
WPDAR	West Pokot District Annual Report
WSDAR	West Suk District Annual Report

## Preface

This study analyzes food security and coping mechanisms in semi-arid West Pokot between 1920 and 1995. Kenya became a British colony in 1920 and achieved independence in 1963. Based on a wide array of archival, oral traditions, government publications and secondary sources, the study analyzes the historical role of indigenous irrigation, specifically Pokot furrow irrigation, rain-fed farming, livestock keeping, hunting, gathering, trade and related activities, and their contribution to food security among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. Furthermore, since the colonial period, income from labour and mining activities (for example gold panning in the area), however limited, has been utilized by a number of Pokot households, to purchase food and other necessities from time to time. Besides, in years characterized by prolonged drought and famine, a number of Pokot families have relied on famine relief from the government/donor community for survival in this part of the country. However, famine relief is a short-term solution that fails to deal with issues of long-term food insecurity in the area. Nonetheless, as shown in this study, over the years, most Pokot have learned not to rely of one, but multiple coping mechanisms all complementing each other to survive in a harsh environment.

At the same time, there has been government intervention in the Pokot economy since the colonial period. Specifically, government intervention in the period under review included: introduction of new crops, for example maize and cassava, forced soil conservation measures, intervention in marketing of livestock and livestock products, establishment of large-scale irrigation projects, and provision of relief food during droughts and famine, among other socio-economic activities in the area. However, government intervention/investments in the study area failed to transform West Pokot farming or livestock keeping activities, or fundamentally integrate the Pokot economy within the national economy. Thus, to a large extent, government intervention interfered with Pokot coping mechanisms utilized over the years for survival in a harsh environment.

In sum, West Pokot is a marginal area, characterized by inadequate and erratic rainfall in weak soils. Droughts and famines are thus two severe and widespread interrelated phenomena in West Pokot district. In addition to aridity and resultant famine, crop and livestock diseases, as well as occasional human and cattle raids (for example from the Pokot neighbours the Marakwet and Turkana) have made the environment very insecure. Thus, environmental stress and border conflicts/raids have in one way or another hampered the area's socio-economic development and the area inhabitants' efforts in striving for food security in this part of Kenya.

It should also be noted here that apart from aridity, West Pokot district is also characterized by numerous mountains, hills and valleys, and the broken nature of the land has to some extent hindered the development of transportation network in this part of the Kenya. Therefore, most areas of West Pokot district are inaccessible and isolated from the rest of the country. Moreover, given West Pokot's harsh environment/low productivity, the area has suffered from state marginalization in terms of allocation of meaningful resources/investments to enhance socio-economic development since the colonial period.

As a matter of fact, West Pokot lags behind in socio-economic development compared to the country's high potential and more accessible areas that have at least benefited more from state investments and continue to offer quick economic gains to the state and related interest groups, for example, parts of Central, Rift Valley and Western provinces of Kenya. On the whole, no major towns/business centers, industries and large-scale farming activities were found in the in the study area in the period under review. Economic activities, in particular agricultural production was mainly for subsistence as opposed to commercial purposes. Before the construction of Kitale-Lodwar road that passes through the district, long after independence West Pokot remained a "closed district," which was a colonial legacy. Thus, the study area is still regarded as an outlying district and it is yet to be incorporated effectively into the post-colonial state.

Basically, this study is organized in eight chapters. The approach is thematic as well as chronological, which allows documentation and analysis of the historical role of irrigation, livestock keeping, and other coping mechanisms in food production and food security in semi-arid West Pokot. The thematic and chronological approach also allows for a clear understanding of state intervention and marginalization of the Pokot economy, and the impact of the same on food security and socio-economic development of the study area in general. Specifically, documentation and analysis of relevant information in each of the eight chapters is made within the context of the history of colonial and post-colonial West Pokot. Therefore, chapters are organized around a succession of related themes in their historical/chronological perspective within a wider context of Kenya's political economy.

Chapter one serves as an introduction to this study. It states the aims, hypotheses, rationale and significance of the study. It also outlines the conceptual framework, reviews the literature related to the study; and there is a section on methodology that discloses archival and field research, plus secondary sources used in this study. Furthermore, the chapter gives a general overview of the study area, emphasizing the arid nature of West Pokot, and state marginalization of the Pokot economy during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Chapter two analyzes the advent of colonialism in Kenya and West Pokot in particular. Specifically, it lays the foundation for our understanding of the establishment of colonial and post-colonial administrative structure in the study area, and government intervention in the Pokot economy, for example by imposing taxes on the Pokot herders/farmers for the benefit of the state. The chapter also highlights the history of population development (Pokot and non-Pokot groups and their relations), and land and land tenure; and government interference in land ownership and land use in the study area, through the creation of administrative boundaries and land consolidation in the period under review. Of importance, land is the mainstay of the Pokot and the Kenyan economy as a whole. Whether for grazing, mining, rain-fed and irrigation farming, land is guarded by the Pokot at all costs. Thus, land and related politics in the history of the Pokot is also central to our understanding of how the area inhabitants have utilized limited productive land to survive in a harsh environment.

Chapter three analyzes indigenous irrigation and food production in colonial West Pokot. Specifically, the chapter discusses the furrow system of the Pokot, its physical and organizational features, and its impact on food production in the period under review. Furthermore, over the years, Pokot farmers have cultivated grains – millet and sorghum – as their staple food. However, during the colonial period, maize, cassava, potatoes and different types of legumes, among other crops, were introduced in the study area. Thus, the chapter discusses the impact of these crops on food production and food security, and

related dietary changes during the colonial period and beyond. In addition, the chapter analyzes utilization of labour in farming and related activities, the importance of seasonality in Pokot farming activities, and government intervention in African agricultural activities, with emphasis on crop production and soil conservation measures and related politics. In sum, given the aridity and low productivity of the land in West Pokot, there was lack of enthusiasm on the part of the colonial state to allocate meaningful resources in the area for socio-economic development. Thus, state intervention in the study did not capture or transform the Pokot economy, and West Pokot remained on the periphery of the Kenya colony's political economy in the period under review.

Chapter four analyzes crop development in post-colonial West Pokot. The focus is mainly on government intervention in crop production, with specific emphasis on the breeding and promotion of high yielding hybrid maize seed, suitable to various ecological zones in Kenya, West Pokot included. At the same time, the chapter analyzes provision of credit facilities, mainly through government financial institutions/programmes and co-operative societies, to farmers to purchase hybrid seed and farm inputs in general. All aimed at boosting food and cash crop production in Kenya and West Pokot in particular. Besides, hybrid maize, the chapter analyzes increase in production of sorghum, millet, tubers and bananas, among other crops, as well as soil conservation measures undertaken by the government and farmers in West Pokot in the post-colonial period. It also highlights problems encountered by West Pokot farmers, mainly of affordability of seed, fertilizers and agro-chemicals, in the adoption and cultivation of hybrid maize in the period under review.

Generally, despite the fact that agriculture is the mainstay of Kenya's economy, the country still lags behind in technological innovation to sustain this important enterprise. For instance, the majority of Kenyan farmers (West Pokot included) continue to use farming tools, mainly the hoe, that have not been improved for nearly a century. Besides, use of farm inputs, especially fertilizers and agro-chemicals, is still very low in Kenya and West Pokot in particular. Furthermore, in the post-colonial period, there have been attempts to grow valuable cash crops, for example cotton, coffee, pyrethrum and sunflower in West Pokot District, but with little success. Therefore, like in the colonial period, valuable cash crops have had minor impact in West Pokot. Generally, the aridity of the land, cash crop input requirements, poor transportation network, and lack of proper marketing facilities in West Pokot have prevented its popularity as a cash crop earner. Nonetheless, central to this chapter is government intervention in crop development in West Pokot, and more important, farmers effort towards the adoption of hybrid maize seed, increase in maize planting/-production, as well as other crops, mainly aimed at striving for food security in a harsh environment.

Chapter five analyzes the role of herding, hunting and gathering in the Pokot economy. It highlights the fact that herding and farming have been complementary economies rather than mutually exclusive alternatives in West Pokot. Thus, as shown in this chapter, herding, hunting and gathering strategies are closely coordinated by the area inhabitants with crop producing activities for survival in a harsh environment.

However, with the establishment of colonial rule, government interference in Pokot livestock keeping became apparent. As a matter of fact, the colonial state was directly involved in trade in livestock products, livestock disease control- mainly in the form of quarantines, grazing management – through the establishment of grazing schemes, and destocking, among other activities, with severe consequences on Pokot livestock keeping. Besides, the creation of administrative boundaries interfered with Pokot grazing patterns

and hunting activities in the period under review. Furthermore, at independence, the Kenya government inherited grazing schemes and livestock marketing policies introduced during the colonial period. But as shown in this chapter, administrative measures that affected traditional livestock keeping, of importance livestock as a source of food, resulted in Pokot resentment during the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Furthermore, in the period under review, particularly in the post-colonial period, there were government attempts to introduce grade and cross-breed dairy cattle, wool sheep, improved beekeeping methods, and promotion of tourism through the Nasolot national reserve, as a package for socio-economic development in this part of the country. However, the impact of these activities on the well being of the larger population in West Pokot is yet to be realized. Generally, the overall implementation of government initiatives/investments in livestock, and socio-economic activities in general, did not transform the Pokot economy in the period under review. What is clear from this chapter is the fact that since the colonial period, state intervention in livestock keeping in West Pokot was mainly aimed at benefiting the state at the expense of the local population. Worse still, the consequences of livestock insecurity – disease (for example frequent outbreaks of foot and mouth disease) and cattle raids from the neighbouring groups (for example Karamojong and Turkana) – have over the years hampered the ability of Pokot farmers/herders to realize their quest for food security from livestock keeping, among other economic activities, in an arid environment.

Chapter six analyzes the role of trade, wage labour, mining, and their contribution to food security in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot. The chapter also emphasizes colonial and post-colonial state involvement in trade in livestock products in the area and the impact it had on trade as a coping mechanism in this part of the country. Moreover, during the colonial and post-colonial periods, the state emphasized money as the main medium of exchange. In this case, it interfered with Pokot trading patterns based on barter rather than monetary exchange. But despite state interference, most Pokot in the period under review were able to utilize income from trade (mainly trade in livestock products), wage labour and mining, however limited, to purchase food and cater for other necessities in times of need. Thus, in the colonial and post-colonial period, to agriculture and trade, wage labour and mining (mainly small-scale gold panning) were adopted by a number of Pokot households as other coping mechanisms for survival in a harsh environment.

Chapter seven examines external intervention, specifically government/donor community, in irrigation and provision of relief food during droughts and famine in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot. The chapter highlights the establishment of large-scale government/donor sponsored irrigation projects, aimed at enhancing food and cash crop production, and general socio-economic development in West Pokot. However, experience in West Pokot has shown that large-scale irrigation projects are very expensive to implement and to operate, and they have been also ill-adapted. Thus, they have turned out to be disastrous to the environment and existing farming systems. Furthermore, relief food is not a solution to the problems of food insecurity in West Pokot and other parts of Kenya affected by droughts and famine from time to time. As long as Kenya must continuously seek foreign food assistance to keep its people fed, it will be unable to engage in activities that promote sustainable development. Indeed, Kenya has to strive for self-sufficiency in food production rather than to rely on food imports and aid to feed its citizens.

Finally, chapter eight serves as a summary and conclusion to the study. The chapter also highlights lessons to be learned from the study.

This study would not have been possible without support of numerous individuals and institutions. Without any reservations, I owe the greatest debt to my advisor Professor Robert M. Maxon, whom I met first in Kenya, and without him my coming to West Virginia University, and more important, this dissertation would not have been possible. Professor Maxon's comments, suggestions and constructive criticism assisted me shape this study from its early forms through major revisions and additions to its present state. My many thanks also go to my teachers/doctoral dissertation committee: Professors Robert M. Maxon (chair of the committee), Robert Blobaum, Amos Beyan, Rodger Yeager and Calvin Masilela, who read the draft of the dissertation and offered invaluable suggestions. Once again, special thanks to Professor Maxon and his family for making me feel at home and closer to Kenya during my stay in Morgantown.

To the Department of History, West Virginia University, I say thank you for offering me a teaching assistantship and a lecturer position that financially made it possible for me to pay for my modest upkeep in Morgantown, and thus, enabled me to concentrate on my doctoral studies at West Virginia University. I also extend my special thanks to Mr. Henry E. Thornburg, for the award of the Rebecca Donally and Henry Everett Thornburg Fellowship; and Global Education Opportunities Award, offered to me by the Office of International Programmes, West Virginia University; both awards assisted me financially during the last stage of research and in the writing of this dissertation. My gratitude also goes to the faculty and support staff, Department of History, West Virginia University, for providing a friendly and supportive working environment, for the period I was a member of the department, both as a student and instructor. I also acknowledge the support of a number of my fellow doctoral students/graduate instructors, especially Opolot Okia; and not to forget Karla Vaughan (administrative secretary, Department of History), who patiently showed me how to use the computer and the necessary programmes. To them I say thank you very much.

My many thanks too goes to Moi University, Kenya, for giving me study leave that made it possible for me to undertake Ph.D. studies at West Virginia University. Gratitude to my colleagues in the Department of History, Moi University, and especially to Dr. Peter Odhiambo Ndege, Head of Department, who readily accepted taking over my teaching responsibilities while I was away. Professor Joshua Akong'a of the Department of Anthropology, and Dean, School of Social Cultural and Development Studies, Moi University, also deserves special thanks for his insightful comments on the earlier draft proposal for this study. Not to forget my dear friends from Moi University and Eldoret, Kenya, who kept in touch with me, Professor Peter Amuka, Catheryne Buteyo, Joyce Nyairo, Caleb Kapten, Alice Orembo, Dr. Kaddu Mukasa and Professor Emmanuel Obeng' (now in Uganda and Ghana respectively), Gladys Kitui, Dr. Gilbert Anjinchi, Victoria Anjinchi, Barnabas and Grace Nyongesa; to them I say thank you very much.

I must also express my gratitude to Professor Ton Dietz and Annemieke van Haastrecht of the Department of Human Geography, University of Amsterdam, for the support and hospitality I received from them during my visit/research trip to the Netherlands in 1995. To Professor Dietz, thanks for the informative discussions we had, based on your field research experience in West Pokot, and on your published and unpublished works on the area. Most important, thanks for making it possible for me to have access to the information on Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Programme on Kenya (especially West Pokot) and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, located in the special collection, University of Amsterdam.

My gratitude also goes to my dear friend Dr. Basilida Anyona Mutoro, for accommodating me in her small apartment during my stay in the Netherlands. Dr. Mutoro, by then a

Ph.D. candidate in the Faculty of Environmental Sciences, University of Amsterdam/Moi University and struggling with academic challenges of dissertation writing, was still able to sacrifice a few hours/days of her precious time to show me around Amsterdam, plus an Easter trip to Brussels, Belgium. Not to forget her continued support and encouragement through numerous phone calls and letters throughout my student life at West Virginia University. I also acknowledge the support I got from Araba Dawson-Andoh and Christine Chang of Wise Library, West Virginia University; and my friend Dessie Mandalasi, whom I met at West Virginia University, also undertaking her graduate studies, for encouragement and assistance that she and I know best.

For my field research in West Pokot, I must express my gratitude to Rachel Ndiema of the Arid and Semi-Arid Lands Programme, Kapenguria, and her daughter Gladys, and Peter Ng'eleiyo my former student at Moi University, for accompanying me on numerous field trips, and indeed making it possible for me to interview a number of informants in different parts of West Pokot District. Most important, to my knowledgeable Pokot and non-Pokot informants who kindly took time from their busy schedules to be interviewed, and provided some of the necessary first hand information for this study, I'm very grateful. Besides, to Professor Dietz, Rachel, Gladys, Ng'eleiyo, Albino Kotomei, Romanus Chizupo, Simon Lopeyok, Professor Jungerius the Physical Geographer, and the three students from the University of Amsterdam, I will always remember the field trip we undertook from Kapenguria to Kriich in January 1995. It made it possible for me to traverse parts of West Pokot District, and in the process enabled me to learn so much about members of the Pokot community and their survival strategies/coping mechanisms in a harsh environment.

I would also like to thank the staff at the Kenya National archives; West Pokot District Information and Documentation Center, Kapenguria; University of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Library; Institute of African Studies and Institute of Development Studies Libraries, also of University of Nairobi; Moi University's Margaret Thatcher Library, Ohio University Library and West Virginia University's Wise Library, who patiently assisted me in locating most of the necessary documents used in this study.

Furthermore, the support and interest shown by my family members towards my pursuit for knowledge is highly appreciated. With special appreciation I extend my gratitude to my dear mother Esther Naliaka Nangulu and my father Wilberforce Nangulu for their unfailing love, support and their belief that all children, male and female, are the same, and need proper parental upbringing/guidance, and should be provided with equal education opportunities regardless of gender. I would also like to acknowledge my siblings: William, Charles, Helen, Moses, Nixon and Hilda (all of whose last name is Nangulu); my grandmother Irene Naluende Nakhosi; my sister in-law Susan Mutuli; my parents in-law Luciana Maiche Ayuku and the late Rev. Habakkuk Ayuku; Phanice and Daudi; and all other members of my extended family whom I have not mentioned individually here, for their support and encouragement, and for the love and care they extended to my children while I was away. It is unfortunate that my father in-law Rev. Ayuku passed away in May 1999 – as a parent and educator – he would have loved to see the fruits of my studies far away from home and the family. May his soul rest in eternal peace.

Finally, for continual support and encouragement throughout the course of this project, I must extend my special thanks to my dear friend and spouse David Otundo Ayuku, for his countless phone calls, letters and e-mails; and for tirelessly taking care of our children; and updates on the children's welfare and of members of our extended family. To David and the children, Lucy Maiche, Billianne Khalayi, Ombisi and Brenda Ayuku, I apologize for being away for too long, and I hope to make it up in one way or another in the next phase

our life. I dedicate this dissertation to my mother and my children for making me a responsible and caring human being.

Despite the input from a number of individuals and institutions, any errors in this academic endeavor are my own responsibility.

## Introduction

This study seeks to investigate the historical coping mechanisms that have provided food security in a marginal area of Kenya: the semi-arid area inhabited by the Pokot in the northwest.<sup>1</sup> One of the main mechanisms has been irrigation. Thus, the dissertation will give considerable attention to the role of indigenous irrigation in food production among the Pokot. The main area of irrigation agriculture in West Pokot is Sigor division, in particular the five locations of Sekerr, Weiwei, Mwino, Lomut and Cheptulel (see Map 4 in the Annex<sup>2</sup>).<sup>3</sup> In addition, scattered irrigation furrows can be found along the rivers and valleys throughout the district. Irrigation is not seen by the Pokot as an isolated activity, but it is part of the overall farming system. Their other agricultural activities are rain-fed farming and livestock rearing. Farming and herding are supplemented by hunting and gathering. Moreover, trade, wage labour and mining activities in the area have also contributed to the Pokot subsistence economy in one way or another and serve as coping mechanisms. Through a historical investigation of these activities, this study will show that Pokot households rely on a variety of activities, rather than irrigation alone. In years of abundant rainfall, for example, there is less need for irrigation, while in years of inadequate rainfall the irrigated area may increase suddenly.<sup>4</sup> The Pokot therefore, treat irrigation as adaptable resource within their farming system. Hence, irrigation is geared towards food production (for consumption rather than commercial use) and just like the other coping mechanisms contributes to food security in a harsh environment.

The focus of the study of economic activity, with special emphasis on food security, among the Pokot spans the period between 1920 and 1995. Kenya officially became a

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<sup>1</sup> During the colonial period, the Pokot were referred to as the Suk by colonial administrators and the current West Pokot District was created and named West Suk.

<sup>2</sup> All maps are included in the Annex.

<sup>3</sup> R. Hogg, “Pokot traditional irrigation and its future development”, Occasional paper, West Pokot District Information and Documentation Center, (Kapenguria, 1984), 1.

<sup>4</sup> M.K. van Klinken, “Formal mistakes and informal lessons from irrigation in Kenya: The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation”, Paper submitted for the African Water Technology Conference, Nairobi, Kenya, 24-26 February, (Nairobi, 1987), 8.

British colony in 1920 and achieved independence in 1963. These events had implications extending beyond political and social change, to include important economic changes as well.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, how colonialism and later its legacy affected economic development in West Pokot is of interest to this study. The main question is whether West Pokot has experienced to any substantial extent food security and economic development during the period under review. Though not ideal, this period is long enough to give us an idea of how the Pokot have attempted to confront challenges caused by a dry climate. In addition, archival sources and government publications important to this study are available in Kenya Colony and Protectorate and District Annual Reports from 1920-1963; and West Pokot District Annual Reports and District Development Plans from 1963. Thus, the availability of sources also influenced the time frame chosen for this study.

Indeed, a most discernible change in the economy of the Pokot and other Kenyan societies occurred during the colonial period. Colonialism fundamentally altered the relationship of rural Africans to one another and to their environments. In colonial Kenya, the state attempted to gain control over essential elements of agricultural and livestock production by force and coercion. Traditional practices were challenged by an administrative system designed to facilitate the appropriation and exploitation of much of Kenya's best agrarian and livestock resources for foreign interests. The country's economic and social structures were directly or indirectly altered, as control over the critical factors of agricultural and livestock production became the province of a central state bureaucracy created and maintained by the interests of colonialism. Thus, most African societies found their means of coping with physical and economic environments endangered by the new arrangements. The Pokot were as a result affected by these new arrangements. However, the colonial state never expended the effort or resources that might have fundamentally transformed the Pokot economy. Rather, colonial officials never regarded West Pokot as possessing great economic potential. Thus, the colonial state undertook relatively few significant economic measures within the district; what was undertaken served merely to marginalize West Pokot within the Kenya political economy.

Despite the precipitous demise of colonialism, the structural changes it created remain essentially intact. The foundations on which the post-independence systems were built continue to plague independent African governments.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the Kenyan government has been unable to make good on the promises of social and economic well being for all, as the basic needs of the population remain threatened by the continued deterioration of their traditional means of survival. As noted by Baker "... it is the interplay of external, local and historical factors which accounts for acuteness of the African dilemma, rather than any one element in isolation".<sup>7</sup>

By stressing the historical significance of the current food crisis, we are recognizing the global dimension of challenges of development and Africa's "crisis in development".<sup>8</sup> In the recent past, for instance 1979/80, 1984/85 and 1992/93, Kenya has experienced persistent droughts and famines. A major continuing problem in the country is food short-

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<sup>5</sup> G.K. Ikiara, "Structural changes in Kenyan economy", In: *Papers on the Kenyan economy: Performance, problems and policies*, ed., Tony Killick, (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1981), 20-32.

<sup>6</sup> Rhys Payne, Lynette Rummel & Michael H. Glantz, "Denying famine a future: Concluding remarks". In: *Drought and hunger in Africa: Denying famine a future*, ed., Michael H. Glantz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 435-443.

<sup>7</sup> Randall Baker, "Linking and sinking: Economic externalities and the persistence of destitution and famine in Africa", In: Glantz, *Drought and hunger in Africa*, 149-168.

<sup>8</sup> Payne, Rummel & Glantz, "Denying famine a future", 442.

ages. The growing national concern is primarily on food security. A definition frequently used for describing food security is: "access by all people at all times to enough food for active healthy life".<sup>9</sup> A lack of food security will result in a food deficit; the characteristic of some people not having enough to eat. It thus becomes all the more urgent for Kenya to intensify its efforts to promote food production and self-reliance.

This is also the case because approximately more than half of Kenya's population already survives on the margin of nutritional subsistence even as they spend most of their incomes on food. For example, the overall food expenditure to income ratio was 0.76 in 1993, indicating that, on average, households spend the bulk of their incomes on consumption and largely food.<sup>10</sup> This implies that food is in short supply and expensive. Besides the historical factors mentioned earlier, one of the major explanations for food shortages in Kenya is that agriculture is relatively dependent on rainfall, and thus susceptible to adverse weather conditions. The limited application of advanced farm technologies in Kenya is also of importance. The difficulty in developing irrigation techniques to surmount the problem of unreliable rainfall is one good example, which is touched upon in study.

Moreover, Kenya, just as any other developing nation in the world today, depends heavily on developed countries for its technological needs. Almost 98% of all the world's technological research and development expenditure originates in the developed countries.<sup>11</sup> Yet, technological problems of concern to the developed countries are in accordance with their own economic priorities, not those of developing countries. As such, Kenya's economic dependence on inappropriate foreign technologies creates and perpetuates technological stagnation rather than development. Therefore, Kenya should focus its attention on developing the available indigenous technologies at a pace dictated by long-term economic growth requirements.

It is thus particularly important to study food production and coping mechanisms in one of Kenya's marginal areas, like West Pokot, using the historical approach. The semi-arid environment of the area has provided an incentive for irrigation to produce food-stuffs, as other sources of water to support food production became more precarious. There is strong evidence (as shown in this study) of irrigation as partly a successful coping mechanism, in relation to food security in West Pokot during the last three quarters of the twentieth century.

## The study area

West Pokot district covers an area of 9,100 square kilometers.<sup>12</sup> It is situated in northwest Kenya, bordering Upe in the west and Sebei district in Uganda in the southwest.<sup>13</sup> In Kenya, the southern part of the district borders Trans Nzoia district and Cherengany Hills of Elgeyo and Marakwet districts. In the east, there is Baringo district; part of it inhabited

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<sup>9</sup> World Bank, *Poverty and hunger: Issues and options for food security in developing countries* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1986), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Republic of Kenya, *Economic survey 1993* (Nairobi: Government Printer (hereinafter GP), 1993), 2.

<sup>11</sup> M.P. Todaro, *Economics for a developing world* (London: Longman, 1977), 395.

<sup>12</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 1.

<sup>13</sup> T. Dietz, *Pastoralists in dire straits: Survival strategies and external interventions in a semi-arid region at the Kenya/Uganda border, West Pokot 1900-1986* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Geographical Studies 49, 1987), 21.

by the East Pokot. In the north and northeast, West Pokot borders Turkana district (see Map 1).

Currently, the district is part of the Rift Valley province. It is composed of five administrative divisions, namely, Kapenguria, Kacheliba, Chepareria, Sigor and Alale. Kapenguria town is the district headquarters for West Pokot (see Map 2). The district is mainly occupied by the Pokot (singular Pachon), a group of Kalenjin speakers. The Pokot are scattered in all corners of the district and have occupied the area for at least ten generations.<sup>14</sup>

The district they inhabit comprises a variety of ecological zones, from low lying semi-arid plains at less than 900 meters to high mountain peaks which rise to over 3,000 meters.<sup>15</sup> In the northern part of the district there is an escarpment, separating the lowland plains and the Sook highland plateau.<sup>16</sup> This escarpment is the natural boundary between East and West Pokot. The Masol plains form the lowland areas. Apart from plains, there are valleys and mountains in the study area, for example, Mount Sondhang and Mount Kauk. Rivers are found in the study area too, for example, Muruny, Weiwei, Marin, Sigha, Kale and Suam. The major perennial rivers in the district are Suam, Weiwei and the Kerio (which meanders along the eastern boundary of the district). The remaining rivers are seasonal tributaries of the two main rivers, Suam and Weiwei, in the district.

Moreover, the district's climate varies from humid in the highlands to sub-humid in the escarpment zone and semi-arid in the lowlands.<sup>17</sup> The central area is semi-arid. Normally, most rain falls between March and September. On the average May and June are the wettest months, but quite frequently they receive little rainfall.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, annual rainfall in West Pokot varies from less than 400 millimeters (mm) per year in the lowest areas, to more than 1,500 mm per year in the highest areas. Deviation from the yearly and monthly means can be considerable. This is in particular true for the lower and drier areas of the district. Total rainfall per year can deviate more than forty percent from the long-term average. In some years, particularly in the Kacheliba area, rain in April can be as little as 10 mm or less. In other years the same month records rainfall of more than 120 mm (see Table 1.1 for details). It should also be noted here that little has ever been recorded in West Pokot about variation of rainfall within one month.<sup>19</sup> Generally, rainfall is highly variable both in amount and distribution. It is also highly unpredictable and unreliable. As such, it does not always provide sufficient water at long enough intervals for crop cultivation. For example, a dangerous dry spell in June has been known to ruin the crop, and irrigation is particularly important to lessen its effects.<sup>20</sup>

Droughts and famines are thus two severe and widespread interrelated phenomena in West Pokot. As noted by Dietz, 76% of the area can be classified as semi-arid.<sup>21</sup> Thus,

<sup>14</sup> T. Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation as a starting point in Northwest Kenya". In: *Making haste slowly: Strengthening local environment management in agricultural development*, ed., H. Savenije & A. Huijsman (Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1991), 149-173. To avoid confusion the singular form, Pachon, will not be used in this study.

<sup>15</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 1.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 151.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 152.

<sup>19</sup> Hubert Hendrix, Michael S. Mwangi & Niels de Vos, *District Atlas: West Pokot* (Kapenguria: Ministry of Planning and National Development, Republic of Kenya, 1985), 21; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996* (Nairobi: GP, 1994), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 154.

<sup>21</sup> Dietz, *Pastoralists*, 79.

West Pokot is a marginal area. “Marginal Areas,” refer to “low potential land” characterized by inadequate or unreliable rainfall in weak soils.<sup>22</sup> West Pokot possesses low potential with regard to the area’s capability to produce sustainable and high yields due to inadequate rainfall. In addition to aridity and resultant famine, human and animal epidemics as well as occasional human and cattle raids (for example, from the Sebei of Uganda), have made the environment very insecure.

*Table 1.1 Rainfall pattern in West Pokot, 1982-1992*

Station	Months	Highest amount*	Months	Lowest amount*
Kapenguria	April-Aug.	160-210	Dec.-March	15-70
Lelan	April-Aug.	180-280	Dec.-Feb.	30-60
Sebit	April-Aug.	80-150	Dec.-Feb.	15-60
Kacheliba/Kongelai	April-Aug.	75-110	Dec.-Feb.	10-25

\* Rainfall amount in millimeters

The table shows rainfall distribution as recorded in various stations. The figures are based on averages taken over 20 years of recording.

Source: *West Pokot District Development Plan 1994-1996*, 2-3.

In 1927-1929, 1938 and 1950, drought caused food shortages and heavy mortality in livestock in West Pokot. It is estimated that in 1927 alone, the Pokot lost 40% of their stock from starvation. In the following years, the danger of famine was accentuated owing to the invasion of locusts (1928-1929) and the outbreak of the east coast fever (in 1938) in the area. In addition, a serious famine in 1964-1965 and droughts of 1979-1981 and 1984-1986 all contributed to unfortunate years in the Pokot history.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, it is of paramount importance to note that the Pokot have utilized their own arid land, labour and irrigation technology; rain-fed farming and herding; as well as hunting and gathering among other coping mechanisms to achieve some form of food security. Although food shortage in West Pokot is sometimes described as alarming, as seen through the eyes of “visitors” to the area, it is important to recall that the Pokot have long coped with this environmental vulnerability. Since, droughts and famines in West Pokot seem to be part of the climatic history of the region, it is thus important to study Pokot ways of coping with droughts and famines as part of the efforts to increase food production in the area.

## The study

### *Statement of the problem*

For centuries, West Pokot has not been an easy environment. Environmental stress has become a major factor inhibiting food production and food security. Severe droughts and

<sup>22</sup> M. Falkenmark, “Water scarcity management and small-scale irrigation in traditional agriculture”, In: *Water scarcity – an ultimate constraint in Third World Development*, ed., M. Falkenmark, J. Lundqvist & C. Widstrand, (Linkoping: Department of Water and Environmental Studies, Tema V, Report 14, 1990), 1-31.

<sup>23</sup> West Suk District Annual Reports (WSDARs), 1927, 1929, 1938 and 1950, Kenya National Archives (KNA): WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Dietz, “Indigenous irrigation”, 158. In this study, the West Suk District Annual Reports are used in abbreviated form as follows: WSDAR (s), Year (s), then KNA File No: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. It should also be noted here that, WP, PC and RVP are abbreviated form of West Pokot, Provincial Commissioner and Rift Valley Province.

famines occur dramatically from time to time. These have shaken the very foundations of the Pokot society. At the same time, famine relief by state and non-governmental organizations has been provided to the Pokot since the colonial period. However, it is worth considering whether famine relief has addressed systematic problems of food insecurity, or whether it has only been a stopgap measure or, even worst, an obstacle in the struggle of the Pokot to cope with environmental stress.

A main question raised by this study is how the Pokot have over the years utilized the limited resources in an arid environment, mainly limited amount of water and scanty vegetation, for their food production. The adaptation of adequate coping mechanisms focuses on the adaptation of irrigation technology, herding, hunting, gathering and trading activities, and how they have contributed to food security over the years.

“Irrigation technology” in this study is taken to mean an agricultural science. According to Dumont, agricultural science is the practical farmer’s consultant.<sup>24</sup> In the strict sense of the term therefore, it is not a form of agriculture, but one of its techniques. It is a method which raises the level of agricultural productivity. As such, when it is well utilized, it changes the natural environment to the advantage of human beings.

In this study, irrigation technology will be highlighted; it will mean not merely techniques and the practical application of the science but also socio-economic organizational forms, as applied by the Pokot for the transformation of the material environment. Geared towards their daily needs and aspirations, in particular food production and food security, irrigation technology forms an integral part of the Pokot farming system. This technology not only symbolizes a sense of belonging to the community, but is also a living example of the Pokot initiative. It informs us of the manner and extent to which the Pokot harness their environment in order to enhance and perpetuate their existence. The totality of the Pokot history can therefore only be fully comprehended within the fuller perspective of their material environment and the means used to cope with it.

### *Aims of the study*

The basic aims of the study are:

1. To document environmental conditions and how they have affected the food situation in West Pokot from self-sufficiency to shortage; and the strategies adopted to survive droughts and famines during the decades under review.
2. To investigate and present a comprehensive picture of agricultural challenges and economic changes that occurred during the colonial and post-colonial periods in West Pokot.
3. To assess the impact of these changes and new technology on food production and food security over the period of study.
4. To document external intervention in the West Pokot economy and how this has affected traditional Pokot coping mechanisms, including irrigation, together with their impact on food production and food security.

### *Rationale for the study*

Marginal areas have traditionally supported more extensive forms of animal husbandry somewhat in harmony with indigenous wildlife populations and the intensive cropping

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<sup>24</sup> Rene Dumont, “Agriculture as man’s transformation on the rural environment”, In: *Peasants and peasant societies*, ed., T. Shanin, (London: Hazell Watson & Viney Ltd., 1971), 141-149.

systems on adjacent higher – potential areas.<sup>25</sup> Human population trends and development processes in Kenya have contributed to significant changes in the way marginal areas are managed. Consequently, in terms of policy options to the challenge of food production in marginal areas, there are three components and their interrelationship to ponder: people, technology, and natural resources. In the interaction between these three components, technology assumes a key intermediary role. This has, of course, always been the case. But, according to Falkenmark,

increasing the function of technology is to augment the services that natural resources can provide to man. To yield the desired output, the natural resources in general are becoming less and less ‘natural’ and more and more dependent on technological inputs.<sup>26</sup>

As a result, it would be irresponsible and economically impossible not to make use of technological innovations.

Although a wide range of technological improvements and changes are highly desirable, it is probable that attention should be concentrated on the already known and available technologies. In the case of West Pokot, there is the traditional irrigation technology. Although lacking a national outlook, it makes up for this by being rich in local details and historical trends. The challenge is basically to identify practices which fit the environment in West Pokot rather than trying to make farmers adapt inappropriate technologies. In contrast to the laboratory-tested attempts to boost irrigation and food production, the Pokot have acquired a true insight into the potential of the same through a time and field tested approach.

On the other hand, disregard for traditional strategies and marginal areas is a typical trait in many African countries. Marginal areas, mainly those which are semi-arid, also constitute regions and ecological systems for which knowledge is largely lacking.<sup>27</sup> In the case of West Pokot, the disregard for community effort and past experience is noticeable not only in terms of investments but also in actual policy. This neglect is highly regrettable in view of the tremendous hardships that people residing in this area must endure. More important, opportunities are lost to support and strengthen viable resource management practices which are the basis of a livelihood for thousands of people who have no other alternative.

As observed by Abubakar, Africans should try to build on the strength of indigenous systems already in place as a step towards attaining food security and to avoid turning into international beggars for food and other forms of aid.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the historical study of African peoples and how they have survived in marginal areas deserves more attention – to act as a correction or learning process for outside development agencies and governments to understand what projects are suitable to what environments if they are serious in contributing to meaningful development in Africa’s marginal areas.

### *Significance of the study*

Economic history is an important discipline in African historiography. In the 1960s to 1980s pre-colonial and colonial trade and agricultural production were popular themes in African economic history. However, the economic history of Africa is much more elaborate

<sup>25</sup> R.D. Child, H.F. Heady, W.C. Hicky, R.A. Peterson & R.C. Pieper, *Arid and semi-arid lands: Sustainable use and management in developing countries* (Morrilton: Winrock International, 1984), 3.

<sup>26</sup> Falkenmark, “Water Scarcity”, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ahmad Abubakar, *Africa and the challenge of development* (New York: Praeger, 1989), 4 and 113.

than simply the history of trade and agriculture. No discussion of African economy could be complete without due consideration of technology. This forms an integral part of the African economy and contributes significantly to its sustenance, and it is therefore important that this sector of the African economy be comprehensively studied in order to enhance overall understanding of African economic institutions. Such descriptions are not only necessary for analyzing the economy in a given region, but are also of comparative interest, as researchers continue the work of clarifying regional differences in techniques of production as well as similarities in various economic activities. Thus, this study partly seeks to restore irrigation technology and its contribution to food security to its proper and integrated place in African economic history.

The true importance of irrigation technology among other coping mechanisms (livestock keeping, hunting, gathering and trading activities) in West Pokot is of more than simply local significance. It has the potential to contribute enormously to irrigation and food production in other parts of Kenya through the lessons it provides irrigation engineers and planners in terms of its nature, application, organization, and integration of the farming system with the physical and cultural environment. Also, it is important to understand the factors which have ensured its survival for centuries and the conditions facilitating its persistence during the present century. The significance of this study, therefore, lies in an examination of coping mechanisms, such as irrigation and livestock keeping, developed/practiced in a semi-arid region and how these have affected food production and food security over the years in West Pokot.

## Conceptual framework

Kenya lags behind some developing countries in the development of appropriate dryland farming techniques. Limited and unadapted technology has been a severe constraint to food production and food security in Kenya's marginal areas. In reviewing the obstacles to development, one certainly can not overlook the very considerable colonial baggage which burdened the country as it came onto the world stage. This included economies keyed to the export of commodities of interest to the metropolitan powers, the neglect of indigenous food production systems and the adaptation of imitative institutions. African societies were split between traditional/rural and modern/urban sectors, the latter dominating political and economic choices, before, as well as after, independence. Moreover, upon gaining independence, the national government was to shoulder the responsibility of sustaining the social and economic foundations on which self-generating and self-reliant development could be achieved. Yet it was predictable that, because of the lack of realistic socio-economic goals, development would be a very difficult and fragile process.

It has also been argued that the colonial state was not an even-handed or impartial economic arbitrator, since its policies were sometimes discriminatory. As noted by Maxon, with the advent of colonial rule, economic differentiation between regions and communities quickly manifested itself. Those communities located reasonably close to the railway line, the coast, or to large markets such as the urban centers or plantations experienced the most peasantization as well as earlier opportunity to participate in trade. Maxon further notes that by 1914, the districts that constitute Central province today, together with the present day districts of Kisumu, Siaya, Vihiga and Kakamega, were the main centers of

commodity production in Kenya. However, this represented the trends that emerged in the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

Meanwhile, some communities adopted commodity production more rapidly than others. For instance, the Nandi and Kipsigis adopted commercial farming, while their cousins the Pokot were less involved in such production and market relations. Environmental stress and lack of proper infrastructure placed limits on the Pokot to engage in commodity production. Nevertheless, the Pokot generated some surpluses (mainly of livestock) for exchange with neighbouring communities, for example, to obtain grain in times of famine. As noted by Ochieng', this type of trade is small-scale, irregular and sporadic, and it reflects survival rather than market relations.<sup>30</sup>

On the other hand, West Pokot was a “closed district” under the provisions of the “Outlying Districts Act” (1902) and the “Special District Administration Act” (1934), which allowed District Commissioners to restrict movement across boundaries and to deport those whose actions were construed as dangerous to peace and good order. West Pokot remained a “closed district” until 1964.<sup>31</sup> It also remained a marginal area due to inaccessibility; before the beginning of the twentieth century, no roads existed in the district. People moved along tracks through the plains and hills. The colonial administrators also penetrated the district by clearing new tracks. However, at the time of independence West Pokot had a basic network of tracks rather than roads, passable by motorized transport only during the dry season. During rains, communication was much more difficult. When the Kitale-Lodwar A1 road that passes through the district to Turkana district was tarmacked between 1976 and 1983, this was a big step towards opening the district to the rest of the country.<sup>32</sup> As this study illustrates, West Pokot was one of the several portions of Kenya marginalized economically as a result of the colonial and post-colonial experiences.

At the same time, the study of economic development, as conceived and practiced in colonial and post-colonial Kenya, indicates that it was grounded on faulty premises about the possibility of modernization and its impact. As noted by Makokha, the assumption has always been that most cultivators and herders do not know enough about essential technology or are too committed to traditional values to make adjustments necessary to bring about economic development.<sup>33</sup> Central to this argument is that too much attention has been devoted to the state as the chief vehicle of development and modernization. According to Enloe, the concepts of “development” and “modernization” themselves have been confounded, and the study of political or economic development should also be concerned with entities beyond that of the nation-state.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>29</sup> George Oduor Ndege, “History of pastoralism in Kenya, 1895-1980”, In: *An economic history of Kenya*, ed., W.R. Ochieng’ & R.M. Maxon, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1992), 93-109; and Robert M. Maxon, “The establishment of the colonial economy”, In: Ochieng’ & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 63-74.

<sup>30</sup> William R. Ochieng’, “Kenya’s Internal and International Trade in the Nineteenth Century”, In: Ochieng’ & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 35-47.

<sup>31</sup> G.H. Mungeam, *British rule in Kenya 1895-1912: The establishment of administration in the East Africa Protectorate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), 202-3; Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya* (London: Heinemann, 1975), 190n; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 49.

<sup>32</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 80 and 89.

<sup>33</sup> Joseph Makokha, *The District Focus: Conceptual and management problems* (Nairobi: Africa Press Research Bureau, 1985), 66.

<sup>34</sup> Cynthia H. Enloe, *Ethnic conflict and political development* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1972).

In Enloe's view, attempts to resolve the problems of economic development (meaning modernization) have been confined to nation-state frameworks. Specifically, it has been a common procedure on the part of the colonizing powers and centralized African governments to introduce imported models among indigenous groups. Such policies and strategies have often proved to be ineffective, particularly in marginal areas, because they were not adjusted to accommodate the local socio-economic scene and ecological requirements of the physical environment.<sup>35</sup> Yet, African governments and international agencies still approach environmental problems as discrete phenomena to be dealt with through exotic technical and scientific means. Still, the question is not whether outsiders should contribute to the development of marginal areas or not. Instead, it is about who defines the framework for analysis and what eventually emerges as "authentic" knowledge about such areas. As noted by Payne *et al.*, "... faddish development policies have little success, no matter how well intentioned".<sup>36</sup> Therefore, any future emphasis given to economic development based on Western assumptions may be misplaced.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, development should be distinguished from modernization. Both concepts refer to the process of change, but modernization is a more specific type of change, and there can be development without modernization. According to Enloe, modernization is associated with such features as secularization, rationalized and centralized planning for economic growth, industrialization, mass civil participation, sophisticated communication networks, and complex bureaucratization – features which as encapsulations of cultural values and historical experiences, have very specific roots. They grow out of the context of the enlightenment and the Euro-American pattern of development since the Industrial Revolution. But this is only one sort of development, "that is change that takes place in stages".<sup>38</sup> Thus, development is something more than can be determined through a checklist of modernizing features of Euro-American variety.

Development in a more general sense refers to the processes of environmental adaptation; "it refers to successive transformations that enable an individual, an organism, a nation, or a sub-national group to cope with new demands upon it".<sup>39</sup> Thus the study of environmental adaptation/development becomes intimately a study of the desires, goals, aspirations, and perceptions of a national or communal polity. Moreover, particular regions or ethnic groups within a state territory may pursue environmental development in their own terms.

As noted by Environmental Development Action (ENDA), environmental development constitutes at various spatial levels (villages, wards, ecological zones, regions) an auto-centered socio-economic development. That is to say, it is a development basically designed and controlled by the people concerned, and aimed to benefit the maximum number of people, based on the following:

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<sup>35</sup> Carl T. Fumagalli, "An evaluation of development projects among the East African pastoralists", In: *The social Sciences and African development planning*, ed., Phillips Stevens, Jr., (Waltham: Crossroads Press, 1978), 49-63.

<sup>36</sup> Payne, Rummel & Glantz, "Denying famine a future", 435-443.

<sup>37</sup> Lillian M. Li, "Famine and famine relief: Viewing Africa in 1980s from China in the 1920s", In: Glantz, *Drought and hunger in Africa*, 415-434.

<sup>38</sup> Enloe, *Ethnic Conflict*, 9.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

The needs of the population as defined by them. A culture evolving under its own momentum. External relations minimizing all forms of exploitation. Local environmental resources. Innovation and decisions made by the group itself.<sup>40</sup>

Environmental development is thus, on one hand, inconsistent with isolationism, a state of autarchy with externally dependent growth which implies the imitation of foreign patterns of consumption and culture (modernization). Development in this form enables the people to invent their own solutions and ensure that their culture evolves at its own rhythm, while allowing them to integrate external contributions, technical or otherwise, according to their own specific requirements.<sup>41</sup> Thus, the indigenous irrigation practiced by the Pokot over the years, associated with their culture and the environment in which they live, is an important element. It is the technology of popular creativity, comprising inventions and do-it-yourself solutions worked out on day-to-day basis in food production and merits particular attention in this study. In addition, the importance of this technology lies in the fact that it provides the material for realization of economic cycles while permitting the modification of ecological ones.<sup>42</sup>

Thus, innovation and adaptability are key components of this strategy. Historically, people in Africa have proved able to adapt well to an adverse environment with large variations in climate. A diversified cropping and herding pattern and the ability to adjust the commencement of the growing season and grazing management to irregular rainfall patterns have been important principles in making use of the potential of semi-arid areas. For us to understand how innovation and adaptability has worked in West Pokot, we have to realize that the Pokot initiated their own irrigation technology and utilized available resources (land, water and labour) to facilitate food production. In return, crops were supplemented by adapted livestock enterprises and types of vegetation for food and medicinal purposes. In addition, some types of wild animals and insects supplemented crops as sources of food. This adaptability reflects considerable dynamism and resilience in traditional societies, such as that of the Pokot, which are often missed in current interpretations of the context in which development in marginal areas occurs.

In sum, environmental development seems apt to ensure both a certain economic development and a rational reconstruction of the setting in which people live. This does not, however, make this scenario "miraculous".<sup>43</sup> Nonetheless, the vital factor in the environmental development scenario, and one which is practically non-existent in other scenarios (when development is made synonymous with modernization), is the form of training and education. In drawing simultaneously on the old, traditional form of training and knowledge of the environment in general, this approach permits children and adults to understand their role in the environment and becoming familiar with the use of available techniques.

## Literature review

Interest in issues related to drought, hunger and survival strategies in Africa has increased in the past few years. Foeken describes several seasonal dimensions in food supply, food

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<sup>40</sup> Environmental Development Action (ENDA), *Environment and development in Africa: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Studies*, Volume 2 (Oxford and New York: Pergamon Press, 1981), 50.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 59.

availability and fluctuations in prices of crops and food stuffs. Foeken concludes that agricultural land-use on a wide scale in arid and semi-arid areas is impossible.<sup>44</sup> Climatic seasonality and unpredictability causes fluctuations in food production and contributes to food insecurity. In the same tone, Lofchie notes that internal constraints, such as drought, can turn food production shortfalls into famine.<sup>45</sup>

Affected by adverse seasonal conditions, people have developed actions to cope with these problems. In the literature several names have been given to these actions: survival strategies (Reitsma *et al.*) and coping strategies (van Lierre).<sup>46</sup> In this situation, a lot of people depend on marginal crop farming, domestic livestock and, at times, trade to survive. Besides, Watts discusses the role and effectiveness of households in combating constraints on food production processes, including drought episodes. He emphasizes the dynamic character of the peasant and pastoral populations, as well as the knowledge of the local conditions and adaptive flexibility to deal with them that resides with the small farmers.<sup>47</sup>

On the other hand, Hyden describes the production system of the independent African shareholder which he calls “peasant mode of production”. This peasant mode is characterized by ownership of land (the means of production) and domestic organization in which small, independent unspecialized units spend most of their effort on ensuring the production of their own household unit.<sup>48</sup> Hyden’s description echos Scott’s when he describes the peasant mode in which “everybody is ensured a share in the total labour product so as not to fall victim to starvation”.<sup>49</sup> The peasant mode gives rise to “an economy of affection” in which “affective ties based on common descent, common residence, among others, prevail ... familial and other community ties provide the basis for organized activity”.<sup>50</sup> In this case, if the African small shareholder farmers are characterized by “peasant mode of production,” so much more so are the Pokot who likewise own their means of production, practice “an economy of affection” and whose history of the striving for independence has long been noted.<sup>51</sup> Thus, historically, the Pokot have been little impacted by the state (both colonial and post-colonial), and they have learned to insure food production by relying on traditional land use and irrigation as well as rain-fed farming, and herding well adapted to the local conditions.

Furthermore, pressing as current food problems are, according to the 1984 World Bank Report, it is important to emphasize that they are not short term. They are part of a long unfavourable trend, best illustrated by putting the current food crisis in a longer perspec-

<sup>44</sup> D.W.J. Foeken & Adel P. den Hartog, ed., *Seasons, food supply and nutrition in Africa* (Leiden: African Studies Center, 1990), 10-16.

<sup>45</sup> Michael F. Lofchie, “The decline of Africa’s agriculture: An internalist perspective”, In: Glantz, *Drought and hunger in Africa*, 85-109.

<sup>46</sup> Henk Reitsma, Ton Dietz & Leo de Haan, eds., *Coping with semiaridity: How the rural poor survive in dry-season environments* (Amsterdam: Netherlands Geographical Studies 146, 1992); and M.J. van Lierre, “Coping with household food insecurity: A longitudinal and seasonal study among the otamuan in North-Western Benin” (Ph.D. Thesis, Wageningen, Netherlands, 1993).

<sup>47</sup> Michael Watts, “Drought, environment and food security: Some reflections on peasants, pastoralists and commoditization in dryland West Africa”, In: Glantz, *Drought and hunger in Africa*, 171-211.

<sup>48</sup> Goran Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and uncaptured peasantry* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 13.

<sup>49</sup> James C. Scott, *The moral economy of the peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976).

<sup>50</sup> Hyden, *Beyond Ujamaa*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Harold Kenneth Schneider, “The Pakot (Suk) of Kenya with special reference to the role of livestock in their subsistence economy” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Northwestern University, 1953).

tive.<sup>52</sup> This view is shared by Timothy Shaw. He states in no uncertain terms that the roots of the current Africa-wide crisis “lie in Africa’s inheritance of impoverished, extroverted and underdeveloped colonial economies compounded by adverse post-independence changes in the global division of labour”.<sup>53</sup> This situation, he contends, makes Africa extremely vulnerable “to drought as well as dependence and domination”.<sup>54</sup> However, what is disturbing in the World Bank Report is the generalization of drought related issues. The Report states that “what is true of the drought affected countries is true for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole”.<sup>55</sup> The effects of drought in the Sahel or West Pokot for that matter can not be the same as in the Kenya highlands. In most cases, the generalization of the World Bank Reports has become a hindrance in understanding specific African countries and regions and to promoting solutions for Africa’s agrarian crisis.

As noted by Dumont & Mottin, the plans the World Bank and the developed world have imposed on Africa have failed. Rather than development, Africa is heading to bankruptcy, with more famine around the corner or already present.<sup>56</sup> They further noted that, agricultural output in Africa is dropping and the continent is becoming increasingly dependent on the developed countries for food. Africa is trapped in what they term as “politics of the begging bowl”.<sup>57</sup> In addition, Michael Scott presents a positive overview of the activities and role of non-governmental agencies (or private organizations) in dealing with African famine relief and development issues.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, as noted by Borgin & Corbett, the glamorous schemes of the United Nations and its related organizations are unrealistic and hopeless. Borgin and Corbett in fact, reject non-governmental, United Nations and International fund/aid for Africa’s development.<sup>59</sup> For example, many funded water resource projects in Africa have failed.<sup>60</sup> In Kenya, the Bura irrigation scheme on the lower Tana River and the Lake Victoria Basin project are cases in point. As noted by Adams, the World Bank accepts the result that half of the rural development projects they have funded in sub-Saharan Africa have failed. Adams remarks that previously the farmer was doing pretty well in difficult conditions. Despite the high-tech and the grand plans, many irrigation schemes have turned out to be a waste of money, human resources and water.<sup>61</sup> In addition, Abubakar notes that aid has never been a solid basis for development. Development comes from the people of a country. The reality is that, there is no altruistic developer for Africa or indeed of any Third World countries.<sup>62</sup> Individuals and countries should be made productively strong. Bearing in mind that the

<sup>52</sup> World Bank, *Toward sustained development in sub-Saharan Africa: A joint programme of action* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 1984), 13-14.

<sup>53</sup> Timothy M. Shaw, “Toward a political economy of the African crisis: Diplomacy, debates and dialectics”, In: Glantz, *Drought and hunger in Africa*, 127-147.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>55</sup> World Bank, *Toward sustained development*, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Rene Dumont & Marie-France Mottin, *Stranglehold on Africa* (London: André Deutsch, 1983), 243.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-94.

<sup>58</sup> Michael F. Scott, “The role of non-governmental organizations in famine relief and prevention”, In: Glantz, *Drought and hunger in Africa*, 349-366.

<sup>59</sup> Karl Borgin & Kathleen Corbett, *The destruction of a continent/Africa and the international aid* (New York and San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982).

<sup>60</sup> J. Moris “Irrigation as a privileged solution in African Development”, *Development Policy Review* 5 (1987): 99-123; and J.R. Moris & D.J. Thom, *Irrigation development in Africa: Lessons of experience* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1990).

<sup>61</sup> W.M. Adams, *Wasting the rain: Rivers, people and planning in Africa* (London: Earthscan Publishers, 1992), 9-14.

<sup>62</sup> Abubakar, *Africa*, vii and 4.

African population does not know about, and is not interested in, sophisticated economic models, they are interested in action and concrete results.<sup>63</sup>

This poor performance of funded irrigation projects in sub-Saharan Africa in recent decades has stimulated increased interest in indigenous irrigation systems.<sup>64</sup> Africa has a strong and diverse tradition of informal small-scale irrigation. Data published in 1986 by the Investment Center of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) identified a total of 5.02 million hectares (ha) of irrigation in sub-Saharan Africa, of which 2.38 million ha (47%) are “small-scale and traditional”.<sup>65</sup> However, despite the level of interest in indigenous, small-scale, and farmer-managed irrigation in Africa, there are still remarkably few studies of the history, nature, extent and functioning of practical systems.

On the other hand, the ethnographic and archaeological evidence demonstrates the antiquity of irrigation techniques in East Africa, particularly “hill furrow” irrigation systems using simple dams and channels to divert water from the streams flowing down escarpments to supply drier land on the plains below.<sup>66</sup> These ancient systems are technically similar to the irrigation practiced by the Pokot over the years. They occur on the western wall of the Rift Valley in Kenya and Tanzania (from Pokot and Marakwet in the north to Nguruman to Sonjo in the south, and below highland masses to the east of the Rift Valley in north-east Tanzania and in southern Kenya (Mounts Meru and Kilimanjaro, in the Pare and Usambara Hills and in Taveta and Taita).<sup>67</sup>

Furrow irrigation was recorded on the Marakwet escarpment by Thomson in the 1880s.<sup>68</sup> It was later described by Hennings and by Huxley.<sup>69</sup> It has also been studied and mapped by Soper and Ssennyonga.<sup>70</sup> Channels (furrows) carry water down and cross the face of the Marakwet escarpment on the side of the Kerio Valley using simple structures of wood, stones and mud. Ssennyonga discusses principles of water use and management there.<sup>71</sup> At the same time, the work on Machakos by Munro, Kitui by Akong'a, Tharaka/Meru by Wisner and the one on Mwea Scheme by Hanger & Moris are important starting points for the Pokot study.<sup>72</sup> In addition, Dahl & Stanford, in their study of the

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>64</sup> W.M. Adams & D.M. Anderson, “Irrigation before development: Indigenous and induced change in agricultural water management in East Africa”, *African Affairs* 87 (1988): 519-535; and W.M. Adams, “Definition and development in African Indigenous irrigation”, *Azania* XXIV (1989): 21-27.

<sup>65</sup> Food and Agriculture Organization Investment Center, *Irrigation in Africa South of the Sahara*, Technical Paper 5, (Rome: Food and agriculture of the United Nations, 1986).

<sup>66</sup> J.E.G. Sutton, “Irrigation and soil conservation in African agricultural history: With a reconsideration of the Inyanga terracing (Zimbabwe) and Engaruka irrigation works (Tanzania)”, *Journal of African History* 25 (1984): 25-41; and J. Sutton, “Towards a history of cultivating the fields”, *Azania* 24 (1989): 98-112.

<sup>67</sup> P. Fleuret, “The social organization of water control in the Taita Hills, Kenya”, *American Ethnologist* 12 (1985): 103-118.

<sup>68</sup> J. Thomson, *Through Masai Land: A journey of exploration among the snowclad volcanic mountains and strange tribes of eastern equatorial Africa* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1885).

<sup>69</sup> R.O. Hennings, “The furrow-makers of Kenya”, *Geographical Magazine* 12 (1941): 268-279; and E. Huxley, “African Water Engineers”, *Geographical Magazine* 32 (1959): 170-175.

<sup>70</sup> R. Soper, “A survey of the irrigation systems of the Marakwet” in *Kerio Valley: Past, present and future*, ed., B.E. Kipkorir, R. Soper & J.W. Ssennyonga, (Nairobi: Eleza Services, 1983), 75-79.

<sup>71</sup> J.W. Ssennyonga, “The Marakwet irrigation system as a model of a systems approach to water management”, In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 96-111.

<sup>72</sup> Forbes J. Munro, *Colonial rule and the Kamba: Social change in the Kenya highlands, 1889-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975); J.J. Akong'a, “Famine, famine relief and public policy in Kitui-District”, Working Paper 388, Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, (Nairobi, 1982); Benjamin Goodwin Wisner, “The human ecology of drought in eastern Kenya” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Clark University, 1978); and J. Hanger & J. Moris, “Women and the household economy”. In: *Mwea: An*

Boran,<sup>73</sup> and Merryman, of the Somali, assert the necessity for in depth research in evaluating a population's adaptation to its environment.<sup>74</sup>

On a more general level, Galaty *et al.* discuss the future of the pastoral people, and van Zwanenberg & King give a more political explanation of the marginalization of drylands in Kenya.<sup>75</sup> As noted by Hazlewood, it has been remarked more than once that Kenya is still in the grip of nature. In many areas, when the rains fail, or disease or pests strike, people go hungry, as they sometimes do before harvest. However, the hunger of marginal areas is particularly disturbing because it is likely to increase. Hazlewood concludes that the problem of hunger is primarily a problem for marginal zones and marginal areas.<sup>76</sup>

Based on the existing literature, moreover, the history of irrigation and coping mechanisms in general in Kenya's marginal areas, and their role in food production in West Pokot in particular remains inadequately understood. The few studies that have been made have not shed sufficient light on our historical understanding of this subject. Hogg and van Klinken researched on irrigation in West Pokot. Hogg's major interest was on the future development of this technology in the area.<sup>77</sup> On the other hand, van Klinken, in his findings, observed that this technology was completely developed over a hundred years ago by the Pokot farmers themselves, and they manage it entirely on their own.<sup>78</sup> This clearly indicates that, there is a strong element of continuity in Pokot technology. The principle of continuity makes the historical approach a very important one in that, there is a lesson for the present and also for the future; for irrigation changes that are to occur in West Pokot will grow out of the existing technology. Van Klinken's work treats irrigation amongst the Pokot with the reality it deserves. However, he also admits that very little seems to be known about the history of this technology and official research is almost non-existent.<sup>79</sup> As such, this study intends to contribute some knowledge on irrigation technology and its contribution to food security, among other coping mechanisms in West Pokot.

Yadeta observed the constraints and opportunities which prevail among pastoralists, particularly among the Pokot.<sup>80</sup> The author provided information on the background of the social-ecological environment, revealing the extent of the population pressure and the possible responses adopted as subsequent actions. The attributes of a farm, that is the human resources, are raised separately in the work. The management system is scrutinized in relation to the rules of tenure, farm organization, performance and structure incentives.

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*irrigated rice settlement scheme in Kenya*, ed., R. Chambers & J. Moris, (Munich: Weltforum Verlag, 1973), 209-244.

<sup>73</sup> Gudrun Dahl & Steven Stanford, *Which way to go: A study of people and pastoralism in Isiolo district of Kenya* (Stockholm: International Livestock Center for Africa, 1978).

<sup>74</sup> James LeRoy Merryman, "Pastoral nomad settlement in response to drought: The case of the Kenya Somali", In: *Involuntary migrations and resettlement: The problems and responses of dislocated people*, ed., Art Hansen & Anthony Oliver-Smith, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1982), 105-119.

<sup>75</sup> John G. Galaty, Dan Aronson & Philip Carl Salzman, ed., *The future of pastoral peoples* (Ottawa: International Development Research Center, 1981); and R.M.A. van Zwanenberg with A. King, *An economic history of Kenya and Uganda 1800-1970* (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1975), 79-109.

<sup>76</sup> Arthur Hazlewood, *The economy of Kenya: The Kenyatta era* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 200.

<sup>77</sup> Hogg, "Pokot".

<sup>78</sup> Van Klinken, "Formal Mistakes", 3.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

<sup>80</sup> G. Yadeta, Dynamic process of development in marginal areas: A case study from the Pokot of north-west Kenya (Lund: CWK Cleerup Liberforlag and The Royal University Press, 1985).

Yadeta's work also contains general information on the Pokot. However, the work is flawed by incompleteness and over generalization when looked at in the perspective of the Pokot economy. Yadeta is not particularly helpful because he tends to lump together all the information which he collected among the West and East Pokot, and some of his generalizations are not applicable to each of them.

On the other hand, Patterson discusses the response of the Pokot to colonial rule. The emphasis throughout his paper is placed on the Pokot lack of response to British initiatives during the colonial period. The author goes further to suggest that:

Even with the attainment of independence, there was little reason to believe that the Pokot would be more willing to accept advice from a Kikuyu or a Kamba than from an Englishman.<sup>81</sup>

Patterson concludes that the Pokot are unresponsive to government initiatives and to any form of progress. However, based on research findings, subsequent chapters of this study show clearly that, in both the colonial and post-colonial period, the Pokot have not been unresponsive to government initiatives/progress. Instead, it can be argued that the Pokot have always resented state policies that have interfered with their subsistence economy in one way or another. As a case in point, during the colonial period, they were opposed to destocking policy that led to forceful extraction of their animals to raise state revenue, while interfering with their livestock keeping: a source of food, wealth and currency in a harsh environment. Generally, Patterson's work contains valuable information on the impact of colonialism on the Pokot socio-economic and political institutions.

Vermaat and Galle, on the other hand, carried out research on Kipkomo and Batei locations of West Pokot respectively. Although Vermaat's report contains important information on stockholding among the Pokot, he admits that little is known about crop cultivation in the area between 1963 and 1969.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, Galle gave a summary of the history, administration, physical geography, population, economic and social services of the area. This information was mainly written for government employees and non-governmental organizations working in the location.<sup>83</sup> However, the author goes further to give an apology that the information presented in his report is neither 100% complete nor 100% reliable. Thus, this study has attempted a detailed analysis of crop production, by way of rain-fed and irrigation farming, among other economic activities in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot.

Furthermore, Dietz analyzes survival strategies and external interventions in West Pokot. He offers a historical overview of the ways in which the government as well as missionary organizations dealt with periods of food shortage mainly in the period from the 1960s to 1980s. Dietz concludes that the effect of these interventions can be very destructive. On some occasions, the organizations undermined local adaptations and directly and indirectly contributed to food crisis.<sup>84</sup> This study, in particular chapter seven, contributes further to the subject of external intervention, with special reference to

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<sup>81</sup> K.D. Patterson, "The Pokot of western Kenya 1910-1963: The response of a conservative people to colonial rule", Occasional Paper No. 53, Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs, Syracuse University, (Syracuse, 1969), 54.

<sup>82</sup> Bert Vermaat, "Locational development profile: Kipkomo Location, West Pokot District, Kenya", Report for arid and semi-arid lands (ASAL) Programme West Pokot (Kapenguria, 1986), 25.

<sup>83</sup> M. Galle, "Locational development profile: Batei location, West Pokot District, Kenya", Report for ASAL Programme West Pokot, (Kapenguria, 1987), 1.

<sup>84</sup> Dietz, *Pastoralists*.

government/donor intervention in irrigation and famine relief in West Pokot, and the impact of the same on food security during the colonial and post-colonial period.

Generally, the study enhances our knowledge on problems of food security and coping mechanisms among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. Of importance, issues related to furrow irrigation, its organization as well as utilization, and modes of decision making in the construction and maintenance of the irrigation system have been adequately addressed. Apart from irrigation, other coping mechanisms, among them livestock keeping, hunting and gathering, trade, wage labour and mining; and their contribution to food security in arid and semi-arid West Pokot have been fully analyzed in subsequent chapters of this study. Moreover, an evaluation of government/donor intervention in irrigation farming and distribution of food aid during droughts and famine is presented; and the impact of the same on food production and food security as shown in this study is also fundamental to objective understanding of the external influence in socio-economic activities among the Pokot over the years. Thus, while gaps in the existing literature need to be filled, this study is a major contribution to our understanding of the problem of food security and coping mechanisms/survival strategies in Kenya's marginal areas and in particular among the Pokot of northwest Kenya.

## Methodology

Significantly, research for this study was based on two sets of data, primary and secondary. I made use of archival and field research, mainly carried out in Kenya. Archival sources, in particular WSDARs and Handing Over Reports, were consulted in the KNA in Nairobi and Ohio University Library.<sup>85</sup> I also made use of government publications, mainly on the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual Reports (C&PKARs), Native and African Affairs Annual Reports, Mines and Geological Department Annual Reports (MGDARs), and findings (of) and evidence to the Kenya Land Commission of 1932/33, Volume II, among others; located at West Virginia University's Wise Library.

Field research in West Pokot consisted of oral inquiry based on a prepared questionnaire. However, some of the questions were formulated on the spot, mainly prompted by new information received from informants in the course of the interview. Besides, oral interviews were carried out mainly in homesteads in Sigor division, where the Pokot have, and are still, using irrigation in food production. Sigor division has the earliest and broadest range of irrigation activities, covering a relatively large area compared to other parts of the district. Questions related to knowledge of the technology, its maintenance, utilization, efficiency and contribution to food security were asked in their historical context. Also, in order to visualize continuity in irrigation farming, another sample of homesteads was surveyed and information recorded on how the Pokot have over the years utilized furrow irrigation and how it has affected food production and food security in the area. This information was important in understanding irrigation and food security in West Pokot during the colonial and post-colonial period.

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<sup>85</sup> Ohio University Library holds a substantial amount of archival documents on colonial Kenya, acquired in duplicate form from the KNA. It should also be noted here that, after independence, District Annual Reports were published at the end of every year by the District Commissioner's Office, at the district headquarters. Until 1969, the West Pokot District Annual Reports, including colonial documents about the district can be found in the KNA, Nairobi. From 1970, most District Annual Reports are available in the Library of the District Commissioner, Kapenguria. In this study, West Pokot District Annual Reports are used in abbreviated form as WPDAR(s), and Year(s).

In addition to information on irrigation, I also carried out interviews in homesteads, market centers as well as mining areas, in relation to other coping mechanisms/survival strategies in the area. Out of this, valuable information was obtained on rain-fed farming, livestock keeping, hunting and gathering, trade, wage labour, mining and famine relief from external sources; and how they have contributed to food security in arid and semi-arid West Pokot was obtained.

Furthermore, published and unpublished works, for example, Kenya government publications, books, articles, dissertations, theses and newspapers were important means of supplementing archival sources and accounts based on oral traditions. It is worth mentioning here that I made use of published and unpublished works mainly found in West Pokot District Information and Documentation Center, Kapenguria; University of Nairobi's Jomo Kenyatta Library; Institute of African Studies (IAS) and Institute of Development Studies (IDS) Libraries, also of the University of Nairobi; Moi University's Margaret Thatcher Library; West Virginia University's Wise Library and University of Amsterdam Library (information on Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) Programme on Kenya and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa) among others. To this end, the presentation of detailed account of the history of irrigation technology/farming, and other coping mechanisms among the Pokot, backed up by provision of adequate data where possible, has been crucial to a full appreciation of indigenous methods and techniques used in food production; and the strive for food security in northwest Kenya.

## Conclusion

It is important to understand, right from the beginning, that West Pokot district is arid and semi-arid in nature. Rainfall is limited and so is the natural vegetation. Besides, climatic seasonality and unpredictability causes fluctuations in food production and contributes to food insecurity in the area. Generally, the environment in the study area is harsh in several ways. Physically, soils are poor for effective crop production and the terrain mountainous, and the latter makes it almost impossible, by road or otherwise, to access most of parts of the district. Secondly, animal diseases and cattle raids (and counter raids) between the Pokot and their neighbours (partly treated as a way to acquire animals for food particularly during dry years – a survival mechanism), contributes to livestock, human, and food insecurity in the area. Thirdly, a combination of drought and disease produces severe famine from time to time, in this part of the country. All these factors create severe limitations which makes the environment marginal for existence.<sup>86</sup>

However, the recurrence of famine every few years in West Pokot should be treated as part of the climatic history of the region; thus, it is important in understanding how the area inhabitants have coped with drought and famine over the years. This also leads to an attempt at understanding the key components of this study, innovation and adaptability. Despite of the environmental limitations, the Pokot have proved to be able to adapt to this part of Kenya for generations. As a matter of fact, the very harshness of the environment prompted them to initiate and adopt furrow irrigation and utilize available resources (land, water and labour) to facilitate food production, while striving for food security. Over the years, it has also meant that they have to rely on multiple coping mechanisms/survival strategies, ranging from irrigation and rain-fed farming, livestock keeping, hunting and gathering, trade, wage labour and mining; and at times famine relief provided by the

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<sup>86</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 84.

government and the donor community, all of which are detailed in subsequent chapters of this study. The study also highlights the impact of state policies on the Pokot subsistence economy, for example state intervention in irrigation farming, livestock keeping and trade in the area, and the impact such interventions had on food production and food security in the period under review. On the whole, this study analyzes food security and coping mechanisms in West Pokot during the colonial and post-colonial period and concludes that food security has been difficult to sustain for lengthy periods given the harsh environment of the area and its economic marginalization.



# 2

## Administration, population trends and land tenure

### Introduction

This chapter discusses the advent of colonial rule in Kenya and West Pokot in particular. It analyzes administrative matters in West Pokot under the colonial and post-colonial state in the period under review. Specifically, during the colonial period, the presence of the colonial government was made known through the appointment of Governors by the Colonial Office (CO) in Britain, as well as provincial and local administrators, for example, Provincial Commissioners (PCs), District Commissioners (DCs), District Officers (DOs), police officers, chiefs, headmen and members of the Local Native Councils (LNCs) among others. Besides, establishment of administrative centers, in this study Kacheliba and Kapenguria; the creation of administrative boundaries; and the levying of taxes as a major source of revenue for the colonial state, were all manifestations of colonialism.<sup>1</sup>

Africans were compelled to pay taxes from the sale of livestock (slaughter cattle, goats and sheep), livestock products (ghee, hides and skins), farm produce and from wage labour. Taxation performed two main functions in West Pokot District and in the colony as a whole. As mentioned above, it sustained the colonial system by providing the necessary revenue. It also created a basis of African dependency on the colonial economic system through the monetization of aspects of the local economy since taxes had to be paid in cash.

Furthermore, the colonial state imposed definite boundaries between different African groups, based on its policy of divide and rule. Colonial administrators argued that boundaries were necessary in the allocation of resources, mainly land for cultivation and grazing, between different African groups. They also argued that establishment of boundaries would eliminate inter-ethnic fights over grazing pastures and water, particularly among herders in marginal areas (for example, between the Pokot and Turkana, Maasai and

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<sup>1</sup> The colonial administration was based on centralization of power. For instance, a number of policies and related orders from the CO in Britain were relayed to the Governor, who then passed them on through the established hierarchy of government all the way to the village level, executed by chiefs and headmen on behalf of the colonial state. Almost all these aspects of the colonial administrative machinery (minus the CO) were inherited at Kenya's independence and perpetuated by the post-colonial state.

some Kalenjin speakers, and Kenya Somali and Rendille among others) whom the administration believed were warlike. Thus, in view of the colonial administrators, boundaries were necessary in maintaining law and order in the colony as a whole.

Significantly, the creation of definite boundaries also made it easier for the colonial state to alienate African land for European settlement, mainly in Kenya's high potential areas, and to confine Africans in mostly low potential areas, dubbed African reserves. Despite the fact that West Pokot did not directly suffer from land alienation, mainly because of its arid and semi-arid nature, its inhabitants felt the impact of colonialism, and the area automatically fell among the African reserved areas. As will be shown in this chapter, the imposition of colonial rule in northwest Kenya led to the creation of boundaries that split the Pokot as a group, on one hand, and the Pokot and their neighbours the Karamonjong, Turkana and Marakwet, on the other. Even though boundaries as visualized by the colonial administrators were intended to maintain law and order, in northwest Kenya they instead led to the static division of the limited and traditionally shared land and water resources, to some extent contributing to tensions and occasional open conflicts between the Pokot and their neighbours. It is worth mentioning that conflicts between the Pokot and their neighbours over scarce resources in an arid environment and occasional cattle raids preceded the advent of colonialism. However, the creation of static boundaries to some extent worsened the situation during the colonial period and beyond, leading to human and livestock insecurity in the area, a subject well detailed in chapter five of this study.

In addition, the present chapter covers population trends and land tenure in West Pokot district. These two aspects are important for our understanding of how the population in the study area over the years has utilized the limited productive land and how it has generally exploited its surroundings, for survival in a harsh environment. This chapter sets the foundation for our understanding of the impact of colonialism in West Pokot, and government intervention in Pokot economic activities in the period under review. In particular, it highlights government intervention in traditional land tenure, irrigation, crop and livestock production, as well as trade and gold panning among the economic activities, covered in subsequent chapters of this study, that served as vital coping mechanisms in the semi-arid West Pokot.

## Administrative history

Kenya became a British Protectorate in 1895 and remained so under the administration of His Majesty's government until 1920. In 1905, direction of the Protectorate's administration shifted from the Foreign Office to the CO. In 1920, Kenya was declared a British colony.<sup>2</sup>

Nonetheless, the first important contacts between the Pokot and Europeans came well after 1895 with the establishment of a British post at the Kerio river on the boundary between present West Pokot and Baringo district in 1908/9. It was supposed to watch over Turkana district, which comprised West Pokot and Southern Turkana. With European settlement proceeding apace in the Kenya highlands and the Rift Valley, the colonial

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<sup>2</sup> Great Britain, *Colony and protectorate of Kenya annual report, 1922* (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), 3-4. Hereinafter Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Annual Report, will be abbreviated and used as *C&PKAR* and His Majesty's Stationery Office as *HMSO*. It should also be mentioned here that, from 1952, with the crowning of the Queen, His Majesty's Stationery Office also changed its name to Her Majesty's Stationery Office, and hereinafter will be abbreviated and used as *HMSO*.

government was extending its reach into the northern frontier, subduing nomadic pastoral people (Pokot, Turkana and Somali) whom it believed were warlike.<sup>3</sup>

In 1910, a new post was established at Nyabotok where it stayed until 1913, as the headquarters of Turkana district.<sup>4</sup> In 1913/14, the colonial government established its first administrative post in West Pokot at Maerich, the present day center of Wakor in Sigor division. In 1915/16, the administrative center was moved from Maerich to Kacheliba in the western plains. Two years later (1918), West Pokot district was created, and subsequently parceled into divisions and locations for administrative purposes. Until 1921, the district was part of Naivasha province. Between 1921 and 1929, West Pokot was part of the Kerio province, then it was part of Turkana province until 1941. In 1941, the district was incorporated into the Rift Valley province.<sup>5</sup>

Moreover, until 1922, part of present-day West Pokot District, the Karapokot or Kas-sauria areas northwest of the Saum river, was administered from Uganda. In 1922, after negotiations between Kenya and Uganda, Karapokot was handed over to West Pokot district. In 1926, after further negotiations, the West Pokot/Karamoja section of the Kenya-Uganda boundary was defined and demarcated in the same year. This was an attempt to align the border of the two territories with the boundary between the land of the Pokot and that of their western neighbours, the Karamojong. At the same time, the West and East Pokot boundary was defined and demarcated. By 1929, North and South Turkana, East and West Pokot had separate district administrative stations; that of West Pokot was at Kacheliba.<sup>6</sup> In June 1930, Kacheliba was abandoned and the station moved to Kapenguria, and it has remained the district headquarters ever since. Kapenguria also doubled as the provincial headquarters for the newly created Turkana province. The province comprised of North and South Turkana, and West Pokot districts.<sup>7</sup>

The move to Kapenguria was undertaken to improve conditions for European administrators. From the point of view of the district administrators, "Kapenguria was undoubtedly a more healthy and pleasant spot which to live for the officers and clerical staff".<sup>8</sup> The new headquarters was officially visited by His Excellency the Acting Governor, H.M.M. Moore, on 13 December 1930. The Governor also held a *baraza* (meeting) at Kacheliba and toured the northern boundary of the district, on the Kenya/Uganda border, created in 1926.<sup>9</sup> But despite this choice, Kapenguria was not the best center for administering West Pokot. It is situated on the escarpment and at the southern most part of the district. By 1930, the African population in the area was extremely sparse. Kapenguria was also unpopular to the Pokot, owing to the prevalence of

<sup>3</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 45; and Dietz, *Pastoralists*, 26.

<sup>4</sup> Nyabotok no longer exists. It was situated near the present-day center of Kainuk in Turkana district.

<sup>5</sup> East Africa Protectorate, *Annual Report, 1913-14* (London: HMSO, 1915), 55; Fred Zaal, Ingrid van Tien-hoven & Mirjam Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Masol location, West Pokot District, Kenya", Regional Development Research (RDR) West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1985), 6; Schneider, "The Pakot", 46-47; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 45.

<sup>6</sup> Memorandum from the District Commissioner, West Suk, E.M. Hyde Clarke to the *Kenya Land Commission: Evidence and Memoranda*, Volume II (London: HMSO, 1934), 1741. The Kenya Land Commission is sometimes known as the Carter Commission after its Chairman, Sir William Morris Carter.

<sup>7</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR, 1929* (London: HMSO, 1930), 21; WSDAR, 1930, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *Native Affairs Department Annual Report, 1930* (London: HMSO, 1931), 22. Hereinafter, Native Affairs Department Annual Report, will be abbreviated and used as *NADAR*.

<sup>8</sup> WSDAR, 1930, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP 2/5/1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. Moore was the first Governor ever to visit West Pokot district.

the east coast fever that rendered cattle-raising impossible. In the meantime, following the Governor's visit and negotiations with the Uganda government, it was once again agreed that the Karapokot area, though part of Kenya Colony, was to be administered from Uganda to harmonize the Pokot/Karamonjong border relations.

However, the creation of restrictive boundaries was not welcomed by the Pokot. The Pokot were opposed to territorial confinement as it interfered with their traditional grazing management and cattle movement, particularly during the dry season, when in search of grazing pasture and water.<sup>10</sup> As a matter of fact, Pokot resentment against territorial confinement escalated in 1926, with the creation of the Pokot/Karamonjong or the Suam boundary along the Kenya/Uganda border. The Pokot, by then confined on the Kenyan side, had numerous water holes and the Suam River, but no sufficient grazing land. On the other hand, the Karamonjong, confined on the Ugandan side, had some ample grazing, but no permanent source of water. This boundary not only interfered with Pokot and Karamonjong grazing and water rights, but it also divided the Pokot into two, with one group in Kenya and the other in Uganda. Although the Pokot and the Karamonjong had territorial conflicts and cattle raids before the advent colonialism, they also had grazing agreements and watering rights and shared the available resources amicably.<sup>11</sup>

Evidently, the Pokot made known their resentment of the Suam boundary to the colonial administration in 1932. Specifically representing Pokot interests before the 1932/33 Carter Commission, Lepelupel s/o Kokwa, a Pokot of Tarakit provisionally in Uganda, stated that:

We do not want the Suam boundary. The inhabitants of Kaddam and Tabachiach were one people with us and the government then cut them off by placing a boundary. We now want the re-amalgamation not only of the Pokot now in Kenya and Uganda, but also with the Karamonjong. We are one people and what is now troubling us and spoiling our country is the boundary.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the Pokot were not only opposed to the Suam boundary, but all boundaries imposed by the colonial government, particularly those separating them with their neighbours the Turkana, the Elgeyo and the Marakwet. Worse still, the Pokot were divided into West and East Pokot, with the East group residing in Baringo district. As stated by Sengdel s/o Kochodet before the Carter Commission, "the Pokot were more interested in peace, access to grazing fields and water than boundaries in their midst".<sup>13</sup> In the same tone, Lutukumoi s/o Yoi, a Government Headman of Masol and by then about 60 years of age, duly affirmed before the Commission that "we do not like the government boundaries or taxes".<sup>14</sup> Thus, a feeling of unrest and enmity was being engendered between the Pokot and their neighbours, contrary to all the intentions of administration.

Clearly, the Pokot argued that boundaries created scarcity of resources and led to both human and livestock confinement with no sufficient room for movement. This led to antagonisms and outright conflicts. Worse still, they could not let the grass recover as it did in the past. These complaints were voiced by Aikimoi s/o Sakwora, a Government Headman and member of the LNC, before the Carter Commission:

<sup>10</sup> WSDAR, 1924, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>11</sup> *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1726 and 1730.

<sup>12</sup> Evidence of Lepelupel s/o Kokwa before the Carter Commission at Narramit, West Pokot District, 13 and 14 October 1932, *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1735.

<sup>13</sup> Evidence of Sengdel s/o Kochodet and Lotukumoi s/o Yoi before the Carter Commission at Narramit, West Pokot District, 13 and 14 October 1932, *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1734-1735. Sengdel was a Pokot from Weiwei Location, Sigor division.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

Before government interference, we used to make reservations for grazing during the dry weather. The land was divided into dry and wet weather grazing areas. Offenders were punished. The hills and the Suam area were kept for the dry weather and Kaddam for wet weather. From time to time we made peace pacts with the Karamonjong, and we have over the years inter-married with them.<sup>15</sup>

In the same tone, Loduk s/o Atuchei, also a Government Headman and representative of the Pokot, duly affirmed to the Commission that:

In the past, we used to graze our cattle as far as Kitale. We met no interference. The government arrived and pushed us back, out of that area, and Riwa was made the boundary. Within a short time, Kaddam was made the boundary. In those days (1916), there was grass throughout the whole of our area. Later on, the grass diminished, but we could see that grass still remained on Kaddam. Then the government withdrew the boundary to the Suam River. This was unsatisfactory to us. There is no room for us. Our own area as now left to us is dried up and there is no room for grazing and cattle movement.<sup>16</sup>

In spite of Pokot complaints, Karapokot together with Upe was administered from Amudat as part of Karamoja with its headquarters in Muroto, Uganda from 1930-1970. It was not until 1970, when the Uganda administration handed over the area officially to the government of Kenya. After some discussion about a possible special status as a sub-district, Karapokot was later divided into Kacheliba and Alale divisions of West Pokot District (see Maps 2, 3, 4 and 5). Thus, the continuous movement of the groups in search of grazing and water for their livestock (and occasional raids) was the reason for frequent and long term border crossings and the administration strategy to contain the same.<sup>17</sup>

All said and done, at independence West Pokot was divided into three divisions, Kapenguria, Sigor and Karapokot. However, as noted earlier on, Karapokot was still administered in Uganda until 1970. Between 1970 and 1995, West Pokot was divided into five divisions and twenty two locations (see Maps 3, 4 and 5). Kapenguria remained the headquarters of the district. While political life centers around Kapenguria, economic life centers around its “twin town” Makutano.

Besides the creation of West Pokot district and related boundaries, the colonial administration also went ahead and established a LNC in the area, as in other parts of the colony.<sup>18</sup> Specifically, a LNC was set up in West Pokot in 1925. This was a legislative branch that consisted of chiefs (nominated) and one elected member from each location. At the same

<sup>15</sup> Evidence of Aikimoi s/o Sakwora before the Carter Commission at Narramit, West Pokot District , 13 and 14 October 1932, *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1733-1734. Aikimoi was about 65 years old at the time he appeared before the Commission.

<sup>16</sup> Loduk s/o Atuchelei before the Carter Commission at Narramit, West Pokot District , 13 and 14 October 1932, *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1733. Loduk also wanted to know what immediate proposals the Commission had to make about the boundary and related Pokot complaints. He was informed there were no immediate decisions at the time. Loduk was about 45 years old at the time he appeared before the Commission.

<sup>17</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1933 (Nairobi: GP, 1934), 24; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 44; Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Kasei and Chemorongit locations, West Pokot District , Kenya”, RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 3; and Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Alale location, West Pokot District , Kenya”, RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 9-13. For details see James P. Barber, *Imperial Frontier: A study of relations between the British and the pastoral tribes of North East Uganda* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968). Karapokot was referred to as Karasuk during the colonial period. The area was administered by the East Africa Protectorate before 1920, Kenya Colony 1920-1930, Uganda Protectorate 1930-1962, Republic of Uganda 1962-1970 and the Republic of Kenya from the end of 1970 to the present.

<sup>18</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1931 (Nairobi: GP, 1932), 27.

time, there were varying numbers of headmen, depending on the size and population of the location who acted as assistants to the chiefs.<sup>19</sup> The duties of the LNC included adjustment of salary scales of its employees, making by-laws, imposing cess (levies) on grains and livestock products, licensing local traders, and effecting a proper use of the land. From time to time, the LNC was audited by the Local Government Inspectors who made sure that whatever levies were collected contributed to revenue needed in running the administration.<sup>20</sup>

Generally, the LNC in West Pokot, among other LNCs in various parts of the colony, served important government functions in African occupied areas. The colonial state used chiefs and LNCs to pass on government policies to the African population. For instance, beginning in the 1920s through the 1950s, the LNCs were used in implementing destocking policies, soil conservation and better farming methods as dubbed by the colonial administrators; issues amply documented in chapters three and five of this study. Besides, one of the ways in which the state could provide its minimal economic assistance to African farmers, herders and traders was through the LNCs. Therefore, in the absence of sufficient economic incentives and failure to involve African producers in measures designed to increase food and cash crop production, the colonial state relied heavily on chiefs and the LNCs to implement its policies and to spread the necessary propaganda. In addition, as part of the local government, the LNCs also became a source of wage labour and salary employment in African occupied areas.<sup>21</sup>

In 1953, the LNC was replaced by an African District Council (ADC), but representation continued to consist of one nominated and one elected member from each location. In the same year, twelve chiefs were nominated and twelve members elected to the new district council.<sup>22</sup>

In addition to the LNC, a local police force was established, which functioned as a law enforcement body at the disposal of chiefs to help in carrying out administrative orders, particularly tax collection. The local police, or Tribal Police as it was referred to by the British administrators, was regularized by the Tribal Police Ordinance of 1929. By this ordinance, provision was made for the establishment of units of local police in accordance with the principle that it was the duty of Africans to police themselves in the colony. Besides, the local police served as a direct link between the local councils and the central administration. This meant that recruitment of the local policemen was not only based on the physical and mental capability, but also those individuals holding a certain prestige in their community. At the same time, the colonial administration carefully avoided enhancement of local police authority to a stage where the LNCs could be subordinated to it.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the policy of the colonial government in the administration of Africans was to govern

<sup>19</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 51; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 48.

<sup>20</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA:WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Odhiambo Ndege, "Struggles for the market: The political economy of commodity production and trade in Western Kenya, 1929-1939" (Ph.D. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1993), 199-200; and Robert Maxon, "The years of revolutionary advance, 1920-1929", In: *A modern history of Kenya*, ed., W.R. Ochieng', (Nairobi: Evans Brothers Ltd., 1989), 71-111.

<sup>22</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Elections were held in all the twelve locations and candidates were elected by open ballot.

<sup>23</sup> NADAR, 1931, 73; and Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1938 (London: HMSO, 1939), 50. It should also be noted that the local police was not the same as the regular police in almost all their functions.

through councils, the local police, chiefs and headmen, and in limited proportions entrust these institutions with a measure of local responsibility and authority.<sup>24</sup>

## Taxation

On the other hand, in the colonial period, taxation as a source of revenue was the most important government activity. The Pokot like the rest of the population in the colony paid a hut and poll tax. A hut tax at the prescribed rate was payable on each hut (dwelling house) owned or occupied by the tax payer. The age of the liability for payment of the poll tax was 16 years and only raised to 18 years by the Native Hut and Poll Tax (Amendment) Ordinance of 1936. A poll tax at the prescribed rate was payable by all able-bodied African males who were not liable to pay hut tax. Hut and poll tax collection fell under the DOs.<sup>25</sup>

However, it should also be noted here that, right from the beginning of colonial rule, whatever taxes raised in West Pokot as well in other African occupied areas were mainly invested in government projects, for example infrastructure, and in high potential European settled area among other state operations. In this case, African occupied areas, in particular marginal areas like West Pokot, ended up being marginalized in terms of state allocation of necessary resources needed for socio-economic development. In the opinion of colonial administrators, the colonial state had meager resources earmarked for the colony's socio-economic development. Therefore, they had to be spent in designated areas - for example for financial and technical support of European agriculture - that brought in quick financial gains. Yet Africans, including those in marginal areas like West Pokot, were compelled to pay taxes from farm produce and livestock sales, as well as wage labour among other sources, regardless of whether they had enough for subsistence or not, a subject detailed in chapters five and six of this study.

Specifically in West Pokot, before 1915, attempts were made to collect a hut tax in the form of livestock, but with very little success. Between 1915 and 1922, the Pokot were compelled to pay their taxes in rupees (Rs) and afterwards in shillings (Kshs). However, taxation in the area was not firmly established until after 1922, when taxes were set at Kshs. 12 per hut and their collection was intensified. The estimated tax for 1915/16 was Rs. 14,915, and by 31 December, 1926 Kshs. 110,304 had been collected (see Tables 2.1 and 2.2). Some of the 1926 tax was from people who had not paid for two or more years. From the administrative point of view, a more accurate count was made in 1926 that made it possible to detect more tax defaulters.<sup>26</sup>

In the 1930s through the 1950s, taxes declined in West Pokot. In 1931, droughts and locust invasion in the area made it impossible for the Pokot to pay their taxes promptly. At the same time, the 1929-1933 Great Depression affected the economy of the colony as a whole. The depression struck savagely, affecting both European and African production. The majority of European settlers lacked the reserves of the capital necessary to withstand the slump, and so confronted the crisis politically, rather than economically, by pressuring the government to prop up their production with subsidies and all forms of protection.<sup>27</sup> The economic depression was severely felt in African reserves where low prices for

<sup>24</sup> As mentioned earlier on, these institutions in the Kenya colony were answerable to the DOs, DCs, PCs, the Governor and then the CO.

<sup>25</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKARs, 1931 and 1937* (London: HMSO, 1933 and 1938), 55 and 57.

<sup>26</sup> WSDAR, 1926, KNA:WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Schneider, "The Pakot", 46.

<sup>27</sup> David Anderson, "Depression, dust bowl, demography, and drought: The colonial state and soil conservation in East Africa during the depression", *African Affairs* 83, 332 (1984): 321-344.

agricultural produce and for livestock prevailed. For instance, in areas away from urban centers prices for sheep and goats fell as low as a shilling per head.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, prices for hides, a major African product, fell from a normal Kshs. 30 per frasila (36 pounds) to four or five shillings in some districts.<sup>29</sup>

*Table 2.1 Annual hut tax collection from 1915/16 to 1922 (rupees)*

Year	Tax in rupees	Rate of tax per annum
1915/16	14,195	@ Rs. 3 per tax
1916/17	23,727	3
1917/18	265	3
1918/19	16,140	5
1919/20	27,235	5
1920/21	36,102	6
1921/22*	44,956	8

\* Taxes shown for 1921/22 were for 9 months period. Besides, the exchange rate for rupees and shillings was one rupee for two shillings.

Source: Compiled from WSDARs, 1924 and 1926, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

*Table 2.2 Annual hut tax collection from 1922 to 1926 (shillings)*

Year	Tax in shillings	Rate of tax per annum
1922	82,800	@ Shs. 12 per tax
1923	87,252	12
1924	88,752	12
1925	85,440	12
1926	110,304	12

Source: Compiled from WSDARs, 1924 and 1926, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

The essential problem with many African products was that they were bulky and low per unit value; thus, they could not withstand a drop in prices especially when transport and other overhead costs remained constant. The result was that prices offered in trading centers for both farm produce and livestock products were so low that farmers/herders often could not even be encouraged to deliver their commodities for sale.<sup>30</sup> Yet the difficulties facing both Africans and the colonial government were further complicated by the necessity for Africans to pay taxes and for the government to collect them. Initial problems developed due to the inability of employers, especially European small-scale farmers, to grant advances to their African labourers to pay taxes.<sup>31</sup>

As the depression worsened, the tax paying capacity of the African population became increasingly smaller. In some areas, such as Embu and Meru districts, located far from transportation facilities for marketing crops and forced to compete with the Kikuyu for jobs (particularly in Nairobi and on European farms in Central province), the payment of taxes became extremely difficult. Tax collection in agricultural areas such as Nyanza province also fell short.<sup>32</sup> In West Pokot, there was trade depression in livestock products, parti-

<sup>28</sup> Irvin Durward Talbott Jr., "Agricultural innovation and policy changes in Kenya in the 1930s" (Ph.D. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1976), 35-36.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

cularly in hides and skins, and in view of the adverse conditions, the colonial administration found it necessary to collect taxes from the area at reduced rates.<sup>33</sup> A proclamation dated 27 April 1931, fixed the rate of hut and poll tax for West Pokot and the rest of Turkana province at Kshs. 10 and Kshs. 6 per annum respectively.<sup>34</sup> Nonetheless, the African population had to be compelled to pay taxes. They were concerned with survival at the subsistence level rather than meeting tax requirements. In fact, administrative officers in West Pokot as well as in other parts of the colony, including the high potential areas of Nyanza and Central province, had to spend the entire year collecting taxes, whereas in years of plenty the job normally took three months.<sup>35</sup> Generally, tax collection during the depression years became more difficult than ever before.

In the 1940s, the hut and poll tax in the study area was once again increased to Kshs. 11 and Kshs. 12 respectively. Nonetheless taxes collected continued to decline. The Second World War and lack of roads in West Pokot added to the difficulties of tax collection in the area. For instance, the estimated taxes for 1946 was £3,149 and for 1947 £3,461, well below the 1926 total tax collected.<sup>36</sup> Generally, tax collection was poor and by the end of 1950, Kshs. 15,825 remained to be collected in West Pokot.<sup>37</sup> This was also due to shortage of personnel in the district headquarters. For example, the three available tax clerks in 1950 were engaged in compiling tax rolls and records required by the central registry. However, they had to be sent out to collect tax to the detriment of the clerical work.<sup>38</sup> Yet, of an estimated poll tax of Kshs. 90,000 in 1953, the sum of only Kshs. 84,680 was collected. This was a big disappointment to the administration. Undoubtedly, a contributory factor is to be found in the harsh famine conditions experienced during the year.<sup>39</sup> In sum, as tax and commodity producers, Africans were perceived as a means to enable the colonial state secure the necessary revenue.<sup>40</sup>

Like other African groups, most of the inhabitants of West Pokot were compelled to pay taxes, even during periods of economic depression, with major effects on their subsistence economy. In the case of West Pokot, for example during the Great Depression, state imposed taxes made it almost impossible for the population to survive in an already arid and semi-arid environment. In this case, it can be argued that the colonial state created conditions through extraction of African resources (for example, Africans were compelled to dispose of their livestock at throw away prices to meet tax requirements), that made coping with drought and famine extremely difficult for the majority of people in the Kenya colony, in particular West Pokot, among other marginal areas.

Worse still, the colonial state marginalized the same tax paying African populations, in terms of state investments in their occupied territories and socio-economic development in general. Thus, West Pokot was not only neglected in terms of state/private investments, but (like other Kenya's marginal areas) also isolated conspicuously from the rest of the country, more important from main business centers, for example the capital city Nairobi

<sup>33</sup> NADARs, 1931 and 1933, 26-27 and 47.

<sup>34</sup> C&PKAR, 1931, 55.

<sup>35</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 40.

<sup>36</sup> Kenya Colony and protectorate, *Report of Native affairs, 1946-1947* (hereinafter RNA, 1946-1947) (Nairobi: GP, 1948), 93. The conversion rate for pounds to shillings is 1 pound = 20 Kenya shillings.

<sup>37</sup> WSDAR, 1950, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>40</sup> Ndege, "Struggles for the market", 198-199.

and Mombasa, Kenya's main outlets to the outside world, due to the poor transportation network in the period under review.

## History of population development

In terms of population development, West Pokot had an estimated population of 22,483 people in 1924 and 25,191 in 1926 (see Table 2.3 for details). In the 1930s and 1940s, estimates reflect population decline rather than growth in the district (Table 2.3). For instance, in 1933 West Pokot was estimated to have a total population of 17,343 people, a decline from the 1926 estimates.<sup>41</sup> The explanation for decline in population is that there was considerable fluidity of movement among the Pokot, between Karapokot and Karamoja in Uganda and East Pokot in Baringo district. As noted by the DC West Suk, E.M. Hyde Clarke:

The Suk were at this time an extremely fluid people, and their movement may be compared with that of a rubber ball-squeezed in one place, whether by raids, drought or from other causes, they bulged in another.<sup>42</sup>

It is estimated that, in 1933, some 7,000 Pokot were administered by the Uganda station at Moroto under the terms of the provisional agreement made in 1930/31.<sup>43</sup> Besides, in the 1930s, most Africans (non-Pokot), for example the Somali traders, left the old trading site Kacheliba and the district all together after the district headquarters was moved to Kapenguria.<sup>44</sup>

*Table 2.3* West Pokot population estimates, 1924-1943

Year	Pokot	African*	Asian	European	Total
1924	22,238	235	6	4	22,483
1926	24,908	273	3	7	25,191
1938	18,375	200	15	13	18,603
1939	20,166	198	13	14	20,391
1943	22,228	821	26	14	23,089

\* Non-Pokot

Source: Compiled from WSDARs, 1924, 1926, 1938, 1939 and 1943, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

Furthermore, variation in population figures is partly explained by the methods used in recording them. According to Schneider, in the 1920s through the 1940s, population estimates were based on a survey carried out by tax clerks, by way of asking adult males for information about their families and herds at the time when they paid taxes. But no check was made on the information given by the men so that only the figures relating to those who paid tax were reliable because those men were actually counted.<sup>45</sup> As noted by Isaac Sindiga, population figures given to tax clerks concerning the number of women and children were unreliable as custom prohibited counting. Besides, most people did not reveal the number of family members because of the fear that the data would be used for taxation

<sup>41</sup> WSDARs, 1924, 1926, 1933, 1938, 1939, 1943 and insert WP/1, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. The African Population was estimated at 17,301 and non-African at 42 people.

<sup>42</sup> Memorandum from Clarke to the *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1741.

<sup>43</sup> NADAR, 1933, 24.

<sup>44</sup> WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>45</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 18-19 and 359.

purposes.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, population estimates in the 1920s through the 1940s must be read with caution as they represent estimates based on incomplete information.

Nonetheless, there was steady population growth between 1946 and 1948. Population estimates for 1946 was 24,633 and 1947 was 24,733, although these are still below the 1926 estimates.<sup>47</sup> Thus the period 1926 to 1948 was probably characterized by high fertility and high mortality rates. It is worth mentioning that modern health care was far removed from the centers of African populations and had little impact before the 1950s.<sup>48</sup> As noted by George Ndege, the colonial state was not enthusiastic about being involved in the extension of colonial health care services in the African reserves. In this respect, there was a marked distinction in health care between reserves on one hand, and townships and European settled areas on the other.<sup>49</sup> Although preventive medicine began to be the center of focus in the 1920s and 1930s, the reserves continued to lag behind and were marginalized in this aspect, and this was especially the case in West Pokot.

In 1948, moreover, the first countrywide population census was conducted in Kenya colony. The results showed that West Pokot had a population of 28,000 people. Forty years later, in the 1989 census, West Pokot had a population of 225,449 people, projected to about 275,965 by 1994 (see Table 2.4 for population trend).<sup>50</sup> The sharp rise in the 1979 and 1989 total population figures is probably due to the fact that enumerators went to homesteads as opposed to the colonial method of relying on hut tax roll and headmen memory. Besides, the Bureau of Statistics in its comments on the 1989 census noted that it was reasonably satisfied about the validity of its figures. It warned however, that, it is impossible to conduct a faultless operation of this scale with the means at its disposal. In particular, many parts of the country, especially in West Pokot (among other low potential areas), that have over the years been marginalized by the state in terms of allocation of funds for the development of transportation network (among other socio-economic activities), are inaccessible and are not always reached by enumerators. The Bureau, however, emphasizes that, the 1989 census was a vast improvement over the quality of the 1969 and 1979 censuses.<sup>51</sup> Nevertheless, census data is fraught with difficulties and once again total population figures must be read with caution.

Based on the census data in Table 2.4, the population grew more rapidly after independence and accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s. Natural increase through surplus of births over deaths, partly explains this rapid growth. However, it should also be noted here that population growth rate in West Pokot, among other marginal areas, was far below the national average. For instance, by 1990, the rate of natural increase in semi-arid areas in Kenya was about 2.2% per year, compared to the national average of 3.5%.<sup>52</sup> Although no exact statistics are available, it is probable that child mortality in West Pokot and other semi-arid areas is higher than the average for Kenya. Especially outside Kapenguria

<sup>46</sup> Isaac Sindiga, "Population growth trends", In: *Themes in Kenyan history*, ed., William R. Ochieng', (Nairobi: Heinemann, 1990), 14-22; and oral interview with Pkemoi Limaa, at Sigor market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>47</sup> WSDARs, 1946 and 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>48</sup> Sindiga, "Population", 20.

<sup>49</sup> George Oduor Ndege, "Disease and socio-economic change: The politics of colonial health care in Western Kenya, 1895-1939" (Ph.D. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 1996), 254 and 302.

<sup>50</sup> WSDAR, 1948, KNA: PC/RVP/2/5/1; Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993 and 1994-1996*, 13-14 and 7; and *Daily Nation*, 12 March 1994.

<sup>51</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 7 and 11; and Sindiga, "Population", 20-21.

division, health services are not yet as available as in, for example, Western or Central provinces of Kenya. This is another good example that clearly shows that West Pokot still suffers from state marginalization, and thus, lags behind in Kenya's socio-economic development. Besides, there are no indications that the number of children born per woman in West Pokot is higher or the same as the Kenyan average. Thus, the explanation for lower fertility rate among the Pokot is the frequent drought and food shortages which afflict the population. This is as a result of the highly variable rainfall and harsh environmental conditions. Pronounced droughts at times diminish irrigation and herding resources, namely water and grazing pastures, leading to famine. Under-nutrition can have some bearing on infant mortality and also reduce the potential reproductive period for women by delaying menarche and bringing menopause forward. In addition, it can lead to natural abortions.<sup>53</sup>

*Table 2.4 West Pokot population trends, 1948 to 1989*

Census year	Number counted
1948	28,000
1962	62,600
1969	82,488
1979	158,652*
1989	225,449

\* In the 1979 census, the Pokot numbered 140,949 out of the total district population of 158,652.

Source: Compiled from WSDAR, 1948, KNA: WP/2/ PC/RVP/2/5/1; WPDAR, 1965, Appendix "F"; Republic of Kenya, West Pokot Development Plans, 1989-1993 and 1994-1996 (Nairobi: GP, 1989 and 1994), 13-14 and 7; and Daily Nation, 12 March 1994.

Therefore, a considerable part of the rapid population increase in West Pokot may be explained by the movement of people into the district. Areas where influx of population has occurred most over the years are Mnagei, Lelan, Riwa and Kipkomo in Kapenguria and Chepareria divisions. In the 1930s and 1940s, there was an infiltration of newcomers, chiefly the Saboat, Nandi and Bukusu, into the district. The Saboat started to enter the district in 1933 and continued to increase their numbers to such an extent that in a 1942 government decree they were notified to return to their homeland in the present Mount Elgon district. Owing to the Second World War, the order was never carried out, and after the war, the newcomers already in West Pokot were allowed to stay. This was only on condition that they had to pay 15 cattle per tax payer to the colonial government and to adopt Pokot customs and live as Pokot. As a matter of fact, this condition, whether it was unique to West Pokot or applicable to other parts of the colony (a subject outside the scope of this study), was unrealistic and was meant to chase the newcomers from the district. However, the policy of removal of squatter stock from Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu settler farms gave the movement into West Pokot a fresh fillip and there were over 100 Nandi in Mnagei location in 1947 (see Table 2.5 for details).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup> WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Sindiga "Population", 20.

<sup>54</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. In the colonial records, the Bukusu are referred to as Kitosh and the Saboat as Chepukos or Elgon Masai. Both groups lived in then North Kavirondo district, mainly in the present Bungoma and Mount Elgon districts. For details on the Bukusu and Saboat see Anne K. Nangulu, "Resistance to the imposition of colonial rule in Bungoma district: A case study of Lumboka-Chetambe War of 1894-1896" (B.A. Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1986); John Lonsdale, "The

Table 2.5 Saboat, Nandi and Bukusu human and livestock population in Mnagei location, 1947\*

	Men	Women	Children	Total	Cattle	Goats
Saboat	213	220	516	949	5,220	1,365
Nandi	113	73	194	380	1,289	1,105
Bukusu	20	---	---	93	188	38

\* These figures are based on tax count in Mnagei location, Kapenguria division. They represent about 25% of the Mnagei population and they do not include other ethnic groups as the Sebei, who are akin to the Pokot, and have co-existed over the years. Besides, there were 50 more families in Riwa location, not included in this table.

Source: Compiled from WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

In addition, the in-coming ethnic groups settled in the district without following Pokot customs and instead continued with their own. They settled mainly in the southern part of Mnagei location, and engaged in rain-fed farming and livestock keeping. Evidently, there was an increase in both human and stock population (see Table 2.5), and newcomers were viewed with growing concern by the colonial administration and the Pokot in Kapenguria and in other divisions. The colonial administration blamed the Pokot in Mnagei, and particularly Chief Kimoi, for encouraging the infiltration of the newcomers into the district in return for rewards in livestock. Despite this, the 1940s and 1950s in-migration was still negligible.<sup>55</sup>

However, after independence, in-migration increased sharply in West Pokot. For instance, in 1969 just under 10% of the population of the district was of non-Pokot origin. By 1979, the percentage of non-Kalenjin had grown to about 11%.<sup>56</sup> People of Luhya 5,312, Kikuyu 4,144, Turkana 3,855 and Luo 1,379 origin in that order, formed the major groups of these immigrants.<sup>57</sup> These groups of people have mainly settled in the high potential areas of Kapenguria division and in the business centers, such as Makutano, Ortum and Chepareria. Civil servants in Kapenguria and in divisional headquarters, some businessmen and other workers, who are not permanent residents, constitute the backbone of these groups.

There is also population growth in Chepareria and Sigor divisions. Chepareria follows Kapenguria because of its fairly fertile agricultural land and accessibility. The Kapenguria-Lodwar (A1) road passes through the division. Gold panning along the river banks and on the Sekerr hills also accounts for the higher population in the area, especially in Endo, Sook location. As for Sigor division, there is population growth in Weiwei, Mwino and Lomut locations. Sigor division accounts for 21.5 % of the district population because of its fairly fertile agricultural land coupled with irrigation facilities. In addition, in Kacheliba and

Politics of Conquest: The British in Western Kenya, 1894-1908”, *The Historical Journal* 20, 4 (1977): 845-859; E.F. Makila, *An outline history of the Babukusu of western Kenya* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1978); V.G. Simiyu, “The emergence of a sub-nation, Bukusu of Bungoma”, Paper presented at a Symposium, 3-5 December 1982 in Bungoma town; and B. Heine & W.J.G. Mohling, *Language and dialect atlas of Kenya*, Volume I (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag, 1980), 56.

<sup>55</sup> WSDARs, 1947 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>56</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 23. The other ethnic group which has not been categorized are the Cherengany, residing mainly in Kapenguria division.

Alale divisions, there are few people because the area is predominantly arid with very few irrigation facilities (see Tables 2.6 and 2.7).<sup>58</sup>

Worse still, Kacheliba and Alale experiences severe food shortages from time to time, and the two divisions are among the most outlying parts of Kenya. Kacheliba and Alale (compared to Kapenguria and Sigor divisions) are indeed poorly served by road or any other means of communication. Furthermore, like most parts of West Pokot (apart from Kapenguria and areas along the Kapenguria-Lodwar road) they are also poorly served by administrative and trading centers, as well as social institutions, among other services associated with socio-economic development. The poor state of Kacheliba and Alale divisions, and of the study area in general, reinforces the fact that over the years, West Pokot has been neglected and marginalized in terms of state investments and allocation of government funds necessary for general development in the area.

**Table 2.6** West Pokot population projections by division

Division	1989 Census	1993	1994
Kapenguria	55,957	108,650	112,069
Chepareria	35,094	57,362	59,167
Sigor	34,221	51,395	53,013
Kacheliba	19,842	29,805	30,743
Alale	13,542	20,333	20,973

Source: Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 10.

**Table 2.7** West Pokot population density by division, 1979-1994 (per sq. km)

Division	Area	1979	1993	1994
Kapenguria	1,600	35	68	70
Chepareria	1,400	25	41	43
Sigor	2,100	17	25	26
Kacheliba	1,800	11	17	17
Alale	2,200	6	9	10

Source: Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 12

Generally, population density is quite low in the district as a whole. Even the most populated areas around Kapenguria show densities of less than a quarter of the population for whole divisions in, for example, Kisii, Kakamega, Vihiga or Kiambu districts. Nevertheless, between 1979 and 1994, population density for West Pokot doubled, although the figure varies from 10 persons per square kilometer in Alale to 70 persons per square kilometer in Kapenguria division. The average density for the district in 1994 was 31 persons per square kilometer (see Table 2.7).<sup>59</sup> Population density is partly determined by agricultural potential (rain-fed and irrigation farming), gold panning, trade and employment

<sup>58</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 38; Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993 and 1994-1996*, 17 and 12.

<sup>59</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development plan, 1994-1996*, 10-11; and Norman Miller & Rodger Yeager, *Kenya: The quest for prosperity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994), 66. While population densities in West Pokot District are still low, arable tracts in Central, Nyanza and Western provinces (especially Vihiga district, the home of the Banyore and Maragoli) form Kenya's overcrowded agricultural core area. As noted by Miller & Yeager, in 1985, per capita arable land in these provinces averaged 0.26 hectares (0.65 acres) and average population densities had increased by 18.6% since 1979, from 237 to 281 persons per square kilometer.

opportunities in the district. Thus, population distribution was and still is uneven with pockets of high concentration in Kapenguria, Cheperaria and Sigor divisions.

It can also be argued that low population density in the study area partly explains lack of enthusiasm on the part of the state to allocate necessary funds for the areas's socio-economic development. As noted by van Schaik & Reitsma, one of the reasons why the national government may prefer to channel investments to more suitable high potential areas is the comparatively low density of population in most arid and semi-arid areas, in this case West Pokot, where relatively few people can benefit.<sup>60</sup> Thus, West Pokot, among other marginal areas in Kenya, suffers from aridity and related problems on one hand, and state marginalization on the other. Consequently, since the colonial period, West Pokot has lagged behind in socio-economic development, compared to, parts of Central province, among other regions of Kenya.

## The land

On the other hand, the Pokot themselves utilize their land largely on the basis of altitude, rainfall and agricultural potential. As noted by Hogg, the Pokot have divided their land into four zones. Briefly, he analyzes the four zones as follows:

The *Masop*, or high mountain tops, which receive most of the rain are heavily forested, the *Kamas*, or steep mountain slopes, which are the area of traditional habitation and finger millet cultivation, the *Tow*, or flat valley land, which provides some of the most farmland, and finally the *Kew*, or parched dry-lands, which abut the escarpment wall.<sup>61</sup>

Besides, in the four zones, soils vary greatly. As noted by Dietz:

... soils in the highest parts have moderately good fertility and rather low erosion susceptibility. Escarpment soils are loose, with low fertility. Near the rivers, alluvial soils are highly fertile ..., although in the most arid areas salinity poses a problem, as does occasional flooding.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, food production in the area corresponds more or less to altitude, soils and climatic conditions.

Furthermore, the mountains and valleys are inhabited by the agricultural Pokot, and the drylands by the pastoral Pokot. The herds of the mountain/hill farmers consist mainly of goats and sheep and only a few cattle, and in the plains, each pastoralist family owns a large number and variety of stock, and sometimes hundreds of cattle.<sup>63</sup> However, the mountain and plain Pokot are by no means separate, closed groups as contacts like inter-marriages, ritual celebrations and trading grain for milk and other animal products were and are still quite frequent.<sup>64</sup>

Besides, irrigation is used by the agricultural Pokot mainly in the *Kamas* and *Tow*. There are a few irrigation furrows in *Masop* areas, but by and large the highlands receive rain at sufficiently regular intervals to make irrigation unnecessary. The area between the *Tow* and

<sup>60</sup> Arthur van Schaik & Henk Reitsma, "Agriculture in dry-season environments", In: Reitsma, Dietz & de Haan, *Coping with semiaridity*, 19-36.

<sup>61</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 2.

<sup>62</sup> Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 152.

<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth L. Meyerhoff, "The threatened ways of Kenya's Pokot people", *The National Geographic Society* 161,1 (1982): 120-140.

<sup>64</sup> Irene Dubel & Marjanne de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated agriculture as a base of subsistence: The cases of the Pokot and Marakwet with reference to the labor of women* (Amsterdam and Nakuru: University of Amsterdam and Rift Valley Provincial Irrigation Unit, 1983), 3; and Meyerhoff, "The threatened ways", 126.

*Kew* at the foot of the escarpment is also important for irrigation.<sup>65</sup> But rivers in the *Kew* or parched drylands are purely seasonal, thus making agriculture by means of irrigation impossible. The parched drylands stretch through Kacheliba, Alale and some parts of Sigor division. Livestock in these areas are purely local breeds which have adapted to the hot climatic conditions.<sup>66</sup>

Generally, the district, being a semi-arid area, suffers from water scarcity. Surface and piped water supply serve only some 15% of the total district population. The first piped water supply in West Pokot was commissioned in 1954 at Kapenguria. A large part of Kapenguria is now served from the Makutano water supply, commissioned in 1973. The intake of Kapenguria and Makutano water supplies is from the rivers and streams east of Siyo, about eight kilometers from the district headquarters. Water is normally pumped to treatment works near Kapenguria and Makutano and then pumped to high level storage for distribution. By 1983, all divisional headquarters in the district had piped water supplies. Sigor and Chepareria are served by gravity from the Weiwei and neighbouring streams. Intake of the Kacheliba water supply is a well in the Suam river. However, during the dry season, piped water is insufficient to meet the needs of Kapenguria/Makutano and other divisional headquarters.<sup>67</sup>

Besides, ground water supply (boreholes) serves about 50% of the district population. About 30 boreholes were drilled in present Kacheliba division in 1952 and 1953. The United Nations Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) carried out this programme on behalf of the Uganda government. In 1981 and 1982 a number of these boreholes, which had broken down, were cleaned and rehabilitated and new ones drilled by the Kenya government, under the Ministry of Water Development. By 1983 the district had 54 operational boreholes, and over 80% are in the arid areas of Kacheliba and Alale divisions. The rest of the population survives the hard way by tapping water from the wells in riverbeds. The sand in the seasonal stream beds stores considerable amounts of water. By digging down in the sand, water can be reached. Although in the driest periods, very little water is found and only then after digging down a few meters. As a result of these several factors, only about 35% of the population has a reliable water supply.<sup>68</sup>

Although West Pokot suffers from aridity, mineral deposits are found in the area. Gold is the most important mineral found in the district. It has been panned near Marich Pass since the beginning of the 1950s, near Korpu/Turkwel Gorge since the early 1970s and in Alale since 1981.<sup>69</sup> At several places, the rocks contain small amounts of gold. Single grains of gold are released from the rocks during weathering and transported by rivers and deposited in river beds. Gold is then panned by local people. However, the concentration is not high enough to start large scale gold mining projects.<sup>70</sup> Besides gold, other minerals found in the district are copper, cobalt, chromite, nickel, kyanite, asbestos, and mica. Their

<sup>65</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 2.

<sup>66</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 1

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 3 and 24; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 84.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 25 and 87.

<sup>69</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 20.

<sup>70</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Kasei and Chemorongit", 6; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 19. Gold and its contribution to the Pokot's coping mechanisms, particularly during droughts and famines, will be discussed in more detail in chapter six of this study.

quantity, however, is small, and some of the old mining places are now abandoned because profits were not sufficient.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, it is important to recognize that agricultural, pastoral and mineral rich parts of the district are owned by the population through inheritance/land allocations. Traditional land ownership among the Pokot was vested in a clan. Pokot are divided into a large number of small exogamous patrilineal named clans. Each of these clans had its own clanland, often quite widely distributed. Land was allocated and inherited by male members of the clan (daughters married outside the clan). Each clan had its rules governing the use of land by individuals and families. The guardians of this land were clan elders.<sup>72</sup>

Ideally, a family could cultivate plots in the highlands, on the mountain slopes and the valleys. In this way they could benefit from varying rainfall, soil conditions and irrigation. However, not all families had plots which exactly matched this ideal distribution. Some families only had land on the valley floor and on the steep mountain slopes, while others held plots on the steep mountain slopes and the highlands.<sup>73</sup> Besides, access to irrigation furrows has always been as important as access to land. In this case, rules and regulations existed about the access to furrows. Therefore, traditional rules governing the Pokot use of land and irrigation contributed to their survival in a harsh environment, before, during and after the colonial period.

On the other hand, European settlers had no interest in land in West Pokot during the colonial period. The harsh environmental conditions made it impossible for Europeans to alienate land in the area. However, other parts of the Rift Valley specifically Trans Nzoia district neighbouring Pokot territory, suffered from land alienation. Although a detailed reconstruction of events leading to land alienation in Trans Nzoia is beyond the scope of this study, the acquisition of Trans Nzoia by European settlers, directly and indirectly, had an impact on the socio-economic life of the Pokot.

Significantly, when the colonial administration first established an outpost in West Pokot around 1909, the Pokot were using part of Trans Nzoia, particularly the Kitale plains, as grazing grounds for their stock.<sup>74</sup> The colonial administration eventually alienated most of the Kitale plains, a portion of the coveted “cool, invigorating climate, fertile soils and wide pasture grounds” which later became known as the “white highlands” simply because more land was wanted for Europeans.<sup>75</sup> As stated by L.D. Sanders in one of the government reports,

shortly before the 1914-18 war, A.C. Macdonald, Director of Agriculture, in company with Cecil Hoey (an early and prominent white settler), examined the country north of the Nzoia river lying between Mount Elgon and the Cherangany hills with a view to future European settlement. The area became known as “Trans Nzoia” and was subsequently surveyed divided into a large number of farm plots many of which were taken up by the “soldier settlement scheme” of 1918. Development in the region remained slow until the middle twenties, mainly on account of the long transport haul from railhead, but in 1926 the Uasin

<sup>71</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 20.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 54; and Hogg, “Pokot”, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Hogg, “Pokot”, 5; and oral interviews with Kibor Kiptum and Kirop Lonyala, Sigor market, 4 July 1995. The family of Kirop Lonyala in Mwino location, Sigor division, has always owned land along the Weiwei river (in the valley) and on the mountain slopes.

<sup>74</sup> Oral interviews with Korir Tumkou and Longiro Lomada, at Makutano town, 6 December 1995. Pokot informants insist that their ancestors grazed their animals throughout the present Trans Nzoia.

<sup>75</sup> John Eric Reynolds, “Community Underdevelopment, Ethnicity, and Stratification in Rural Destination: Mnagei, Kenya” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Washington, 1982), 27; and Mungeam, *British Rule*, 77.

Gishu and Kitale sections of the Kenya-Uganda railway was opened to traffic to the considerable benefit of agriculture in the area.<sup>76</sup>

The Pokot refer to this seizure of land and their expulsion from the Kitale plain grazing areas as *Kanyi Kwenda* – “the time of being chased”.<sup>77</sup> As noted by Hyde Clarke,

with the advent of European settlement, the Suk were driven north out of Trans Nzoia, and then with the delimitation of boundaries they were suddenly compressed into an area very much smaller than they had previously enjoyed.<sup>78</sup>

Thus, many Pokot believe that they have been victims of a double injustice in regard to Trans Nzoia. Not only was the area simply expropriated by the colonialists, but no real attempt at restoration of their grazing rights has been facilitated by the government of independent Kenya. Although most of the former European estates in Trans Nzoia are now owned by Kenyans, very few Pokot own land there – a fact that has been interpreted by particularly Pokot politicians as state marginalization and is not taken with equanimity.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, from the early 1970s, the process of land transfer from traditional ownership to individual freehold or leasehold has been implemented in some parts of West Pokot, particularly in Kapenguria division. In this division, the government has concentrated its efforts on social and economic development as compared to other parts of the district. Kapenguria is more accessible and it is in the highlands, suitable for arable farming and human settlement. The Land Adjudication Department in the Ministry of Lands and Settlement has been responsible for this process. Councils of elders, chiefs, the Survey Department and the District Land Board all have been involved in land adjudication. The procedure involved the declaration, gazetting, demarcation, survey and registration of land.<sup>80</sup> Almost 30% of the land area of West Pokot was under adjudication in 1983. Of all the land adjudicated, or under adjudication, approximately one eighth was parceled up as small-holder farms, the remainder as group ranches.<sup>81</sup> For instance, adjudication work in one group ranch, Ortum East, Chepareria division, was completed during the 1989-1993 period. In this same period, adjudication for Sangat and Korellach group ranches in Sigor division, was still in progress.<sup>82</sup> However, by the time land adjudication started in West Pokot, large tracts of land had been registered in other parts of Kenya. Once again this provides a clear

<sup>76</sup> L.D. Sanders, *Geology of the Eldoret area*, Geological Survey of Kenya, Report No. 64 (Nairobi: GP, 1963), 3. For details on European agriculture in Trans Nzoia and on Uasin Gishu railway see S.S. Kenyan-chui, “European Settler agriculture”, In: Ochieng’ & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 111-127; and Robert M. Maxon, “African Production and Support of European Settlement in Kenya: The Uasin Gishu-Mumias Railway Scheme, 1911-14”, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14 (1985): 151-162.

<sup>77</sup> Oral interview with Longiro Lomada, at Makutano town, 6 December 1995. Lomada related the story as it was related to him by his grandfather. *Kanyi Kwenda* is from the Kiswahili word *Kwenda* – meaning Go! Go!.

<sup>78</sup> Memorandum from Clarke to the *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1741.

<sup>79</sup> Reynolds, “Community underdevelopment”, 28; and oral interviews with Korir Tumkou & Lopele Chepkorom, at Makutano town, 6 December 1995. Some Pokot believe strongly that after independence, the Kenya government should have set aside grazing land for them in Trans Nzoia. This partly explains the ethnic clashes that have been going on between the Pokot and their neighbors, particularly the Bokusu, mainly in the Kwanza area of Trans Nzoia district.

<sup>80</sup> Elizabeth L. Meyerhoff, “The socio-economic and ritual roles of Pokot Women” (Ph.D. Dissertation, Lucy Cavendish College, Cambridge, 1981), 26; Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 92-93; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 54-55.

<sup>81</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 55. Detailed information on group ranches is covered in chapter five of this study.

<sup>82</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 92.

indication of lack of enthusiasm on the part of the state to fully integrate marginal areas in the country's development agenda. This is due to the fact that expected gains from land registration/consolidation, for instance increased food and cash crop production, tend to be lower in the country's marginal areas as compared to high potential areas. It is therefore not surprising that the process of land consolidation started late (and is yet to be completed) in the study area.

Specifically, land consolidation in Kenya goes back to the colonial period. In the 1950s, the direction of land ownership and agricultural policy in general was altered after the Swynnerton plan was published in 1954. Dubbed "a plan to intensify the development of African agricultural policy in Kenya," the plan had a major impact on land ownership and African agriculture in the 1950s and beyond. Swynnerton proposed that traditional land ownership be turned upside down. He recommended that all high potential African occupied land, that is, in all of Central province including Embu and Meru, all of Nyanza province and Kericho, Nandi, Elgeyo, Taita hills and parts of West Pokot, be surveyed, and fragmented holdings be consolidated and enclosed.<sup>83</sup>

Swynnerton envisaged that a number of benefits would flow from the reform. Provision of legal title deeds, and the accompanying security, was expected to encourage long-term investment in holdings and to provide collateral for farmers to obtain credit to support such investments. The plan also noted that with consolidation, it would be easier and more economical for the state to provide agricultural and veterinary services to individual farmers to grow cash crops and to improve the management of their livestock. This intensified farming would yield a number of advantages. In appropriate areas, surplus food production would be increased to feed the populations, employed labour and for export. Besides, a number of substantial and financially valuable cash crops, for example coffee and pyrethrum, would be produced as a source of revenue for both rural populations and the state. At the same time, the output of stock products would be increased to meet the needs of both domestic and export markets. In sum, the reform was expected to contribute directly to alleviation of poverty in the rural economy, through its beneficial effects on output and employment.<sup>84</sup>

The Swynnerton plan was accepted in its entirety, and the policy of land consolidation was put into practice with immediate effect. It is worth mentioning, however, that ever since land had been alienated for European occupation at the beginning of the twentieth century, landlessness and conflicts over the rights to land had been rife throughout Kikuyuland, among other affected areas, mainly in Rift Valley province. Therefore, it was not surprising that consolidation measures were first implemented in Kikuyuland. It should also be noted that the 1950s marked the peak of the liberation movement and Kikuyuland was the core of the freedom fighters "Mau Mau" rebellion. In any case, consolidation measures in Kikuyuland were forced through between 1954 and 1960, while thousands of the Kikuyu population had been forced into detention camps in Central province and other parts of the country, in an attempt to diffuse the "Mau Mau". Although the purpose of the

<sup>83</sup> R.J.M. Swynnerton, *A plan to intensify the development of African agriculture in Kenya* (Nairobi: GP, 1955), 9-10; Ng'weno Osolo-Nasubo, *A socio-economic study of the Kenya highlands from 1900-1970: A case study of the Uhuru government* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1977), 131; and van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 49. The Swynnerton plan, a government report, was named after its drafter and doctrinaire R.J.M. Swynnerton.

<sup>84</sup> Swynnerton, *A Plan*, 9-10; and William J. House & Tony Killick, "Inequality and poverty in rural economy, and the influence of some aspects of policy", In: Killick, *Papers on the Kenyan Economy*, 157-179.

Swynnerton plan was not meant to deal with the demands made by “Mau Mau” insurgents (return of alienated land and freedom), it was no doubt hoped that such a policy would alleviate the African land grievances. Besides, the colonial state used land consolidation measures to reward those loyal to it by an offer of land – a disincentive against joining the “Mau Mau”. It can also be argued that detention of thousands of Africans, specifically in Central province, made possible the change of African land tenure as was envisaged in the Swynnerton plan, while contributing to a new wave of landlessness in the country.<sup>85</sup>

Thus, although the Swynnerton plan emphasized colonial government’s concern to intensify the development of African agriculture, its primary aim was to contain problems related to the land question, in an attempt to safeguard European occupied land in the Kenya highlands. However, following intensification of political pressure from Africans, barriers against African land ownership in the Kenya highlands were lifted, a substantial acreage was transferred to Africans by the early 1960s and land consolidation began outside Central province. For instance, by 1962, roughly 300,000 holdings had been consolidated in Kikuyuland, and more farms were enclosed in the Rift Valley, particularly the area occupied by the Kipsigis. In Nyanza province, steady progress in land consolidation was reported. The number of farms consolidated in 1962 was 8,537 constituting 41,380 acres. At the same time in Maasailand (part of present Rift Valley), consolidation and demarcation teams were at work in the Ngong area, around Loitokitok and in Narok district. For example, at Loitokitok 1,500 acres of land were registered for individual holdings. Whereas in Meru and Embu, land consolidation made slow progress, with frequent halts for consultation, arbitration and appeal. The same applied to Coast province, where land consolidation gained ground very slowly.<sup>86</sup>

In the meantime, following Kenya’s independence in 1963, the land problem led directly to land consolidation as the focus of new government policy. In principle, all agricultural land in Kenya was legally defined as private property, that is, it could be bought and sold like any other commodity, by any member of the Kenyan community.<sup>87</sup> Besides, the main objective of land policy adopted by the independent government, as in the 1950s, was to create political stability in rural areas, settle the landless and stimulate the production of food and cash crops. Whether this political stability has been achieved (given the 1990s land/ethnic clashes in various parts of the country) remains open to discussion. To settle the landless and stimulate the production of food and cash crops has also turned out to be contradictory.<sup>88</sup> For instance, independent Kenya has been facing food shortages leading to famines, and the government has from time to time appealed to the international community for food aid to salvage the starving population. This is a subject discussed in chapter seven of this study.

Furthermore, the supposed agricultural transformation that followed land consolidation and enclosures in Kenya from the mid 1950s onwards had by 1970 touched only a minority

<sup>85</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 50-51; and Osolo-Nasubo, *A Socio-Economic Study*, 131. For details on the “Mau Mau” and the impact of the Swynnerton plan on Africans and how it created landlessness see Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the roots of Mau Mau: 1905-63* (London and Nairobi: James Currey & Heinemann, 1987); and Osolo-Nasubo, *A Socio-Economic Study*, 134-137.

<sup>86</sup> Great Britain, *Kenya: Report for the Year 1962* (London: HMSO, 1964), 42; and van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 52.

<sup>87</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 52.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid., 53. For details on land/ethnic clashes in Kenya in the 1990s, see Republic of Kenya, Kiliku Report: Report of the parliamentary select committee to investigate ethnic clashes in Western Kenya & other parts of Kenya (Nairobi: The National Assembly, GP, 1992).

of the smallholdings of Kenya in any way. At least two-thirds of them, including the study area, continued to combine the raising of grains and pulses together with traditional stock rearing on more marginal land, just as they had done before 1954. Even within those areas where the cash crops would grow and intensive dairying was taken up (Central Province, Kisii, Kericho, Nandi, Trans Nzoia, Bungoma and the Kapenguria division of West Pokot, among others), it was generally only the larger farmers who would spare the land and obtain the labour power to enter into the new enterprises on a scale which had an appreciable impact on farm output and income. But in the more marginal areas, for example North Eastern province as well as the more densely populated areas in Central Province, highland Machakos, central Nyanza and southern Western provinces, it is doubtful if many holdings below the three-acre threshold were greatly touched by the new enterprises.<sup>89</sup>

Thus, while the government seems to have seen a direct relationship between land consolidation and cash crop production on one hand and livestock keeping (in particular dairy farming) on the other, it is not applicable to most parts of the country. As the government has tried to stimulate cash crop production and dairy farming in general, as shown in chapters four and five of this study, producers, for example in West Pokot, have continued to maintain subsistence farming to meet their daily needs.

Besides, land consolidation has not been met with enthusiasm among the Pokot ever since its inception. The Pokot tended to resist government policy on land enclosures, citing the same reasons why they were opposed to creation of boundaries: a need to share grazing pastures and water for their animals, as well as for irrigation among other necessities, vital for their survival in a harsh environment.<sup>90</sup> But perhaps of greater significance is the fact that despite the fact of land consolidation in various parts of the country where it was completed as early as the 1960s and 1970s, for example in Central, Western and Nyanza provinces, land owners have once again subdivided their plots (mainly fathers to sons) according to old age-tradition.<sup>91</sup> This is partly explained by the fact that lack of security of occupation outside the home, particularly in urban centers, has over the years led to a widespread need for a rural base, in both high potential and marginal areas. Thus, retention of traditional patterns of land ownership/distribution among the Pokot, as well as other Kenyan communities, in one way or another undermines government policy behind land consolidation.

Nonetheless, land consolidation introduced before Kenya's independence has remained a major aspect of government policy. As at the end of 1978, a cumulative total of 7.6 million hectares had been wholly or partly covered by the reform, or over half of the total registerable area in Kenya. By any standard, this has been an ambitious programme, and over the years has claimed a sizeable share of total government spending on agriculture.<sup>92</sup> Therefore, what appears to have happened since 1954 is that, there has been a transformation in government policies, despite set backs here and there, affecting land ownership and agricultural production, in most parts of the country (especially in high potential areas).

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<sup>89</sup> Gavin Kitching, *Class and economic change in Kenya: The making of an African petitebourgeoisie, 1905-1970* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1980), 372.

<sup>90</sup> Oral interview with Longiro Lamada, 6 December 1995.

<sup>91</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 53.

<sup>92</sup> House & Killick, "Inequality and Poverty in Rural Economy", 169.

As mentioned earlier on, land adjudication as a government policy was, and is still, intended to provide landowners with title deeds or certificates of ownership to make it possible for them to acquire loans from financial institutions to develop farming enterprises. In most cases, farmers are required to deposit title deeds with the bank or any other credit institution as security against defaulting on loan payment. However, by the early 1990s, land adjudication was far from providing most of the Pokot with opportunities for economic development; instead it had contributed to the influx of the Kikuyu, Nandi, Luo and Luhya groups, among others, into the district. The newcomers have mainly purchased land in Kapenguria/Makutano area and in trading centers such as Sigor, Ortum and Chepareria.

It is worth mentioning, however, that the sale of land for cash in the district is far from widespread. The major constraint on such sales is not the price but the willingness of the Pokot to sell their economically viable land, in an already stressed environment, to immigrants. To most Pokot, these immigrants are regarded as strangers who have created competition over limited resources and contributed to population tensions in the area. As a matter of fact, population tensions in West Pokot led to ethnic clashes in Kapenguria/Makutano area in the early 1990s.

Evidently, the inter-ethnic tensions in West Pokot go back to the colonial period. In the 1930s and 1940s, there was growing tension between the Nandi immigrants and the Pokot. Prolonged tension and ill-feeling between the two groups culminated into the murder of two Nandi men at Polol near Kapenguria in December 1947. This incident worsened the Nandi/Pokot relationship, with each side preparing for confrontation. In 1955, there was open conflict between the two groups prompting government intervention. As a result, the colonial government evicted a few Nandi, those labeled as trouble makers, from the district in the same year. Commenting on the Nandi/Pokot conflict, the District Commissioner noted that “unless action was taken to control immigrants and future infiltration in the district, the administration was heading for serious trouble”.<sup>93</sup>

Nonetheless, more Nandi moved into the district, and they brought in more cattle from Uasin Gishu in the 1950s. At the same time, the Pokot called upon government intervention and demanded the removal of immigrants from the district. However, Pokot demands were rejected by the colonial administrators on the grounds that the Pokot themselves had let immigrants into the district by way of bribery and corruption, and they were told to “make best of it”.<sup>94</sup> One reason for Pokot ill-feeling towards immigrants in the 1950s was that several of them had enclosed their land, and each year a greater area was put under the plow. The Pokot were at least realizing that they had given away most of Mnagei which was their best agricultural land to the immigrants.

Yet, on the other hand, the movement of the Pokot outside the district in the colonial period was minimal. For example, whenever the men moved, they went to Trans Nzoia or Uasin Gishu districts where they worked on short-term as guards and herdsman. After independence, it became apparent that some immigrants were there to stay, particularly those who managed to purchase land and acquire title deeds in West Pokot. In sum, land is the mainstay of the Pokot and the Kenyan economy as a whole. Whether for grazing, mining, rain-fed and irrigation farming, land is guarded by the Pokot at all cost. Thus, land tenure and related politics in the history of the Pokot is also central to our understanding of

<sup>93</sup> WSDARs, 1947 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Unfortunately, the exact number of the Nandi evicted from West Pokot in 1955 was not available to the researcher.

<sup>94</sup> WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

how the area inhabitants have utilized limited productive land to survive in a harsh environment.

## Conclusion

At the beginning of the twentieth century, West Pokot was relatively isolated from the rest of the new colonial entity, due to its rugged topography that made communication almost impossible. Communication within the district was even more difficult as both roads and means of transport were lacking. This partly prompted the colonial administration to refer to West Pokot as “a closed/cinderella district”, where nothing much happened and to which no greater attention was given.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, like the rest of the country, the inhabitants of West Pokot paid taxes and its meager resources were exploited through unbalanced trade for the benefit of the colonial regime. On the other hand, apart from a few colonial administrators in the district headquarters, the policy of the colonial government in the administration of African areas (West Pokot included) was through local councils, police, chiefs and headmen, mainly to minimize expenditure.

Furthermore, European settlers were not attracted to West Pokot due to its harsh environment. However, the Pokot felt the impact of European settlement in neighbouring Trans Nzoia, mainly after the alienation of Kitale plains, which they had previously used as dry-season grazing grounds. Furthermore, very few Asians, Arabs and other African groups, for example Bukusu farmers and Somali traders, ventured into the district in search of economic opportunities. Nonetheless, there was tension between the Pokot and the immigrants, particularly the Bukusu and Nandi farmers, caused by competition over limited productive land, especially in Kapenguria division. But despite of the tension and occasional skirmishes, the Pokot in the period under review had no choice but to co-exist with the immigrants.

Specifically, with the implementation of the 1954 Swynnerton plan, and the land reform adopted by the independent government after 1963, land in Kenya (West Pokot included) was to be consolidated, enclosed and individual title deeds issued to ensure security of ownership. In addition, the reform made it possible for land to be exchanged as a commodity, aimed at boosting agricultural production for both domestic and export needs. Significantly, the land reform opened way for Kenyans, particularly after independence, to acquire land and settle in any part of the country. This in a way contributed to an influx of immigrants into West Pokot, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s with the inception of land transfer from traditional ownership to individual freehold or leasehold in the area. But in spite of the infiltration of immigrants into West Pokot, they were fewer in number compared to the Pokot population in the period under review. In the same period, population density in West Pokot remained considerably low as compared to other parts of the country, for example, Western and Central provinces of Kenya.

On the whole, no major towns, industries, and large-scale farming activities were found in the district in the period under review. Agricultural production was mainly for subsistence as opposed to commercial purposes. Even long after independence, before the construction of the Kitale-Lodwar road that passes through the district, West Pokot remained a “closed district”, which was a colonial legacy. Thus, the study area is yet to be incorporated effectively into the post-colonial state. This is in regard to the fact that it is still regarded as an outlying district and lags behind in terms of socio-economic develop-

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<sup>95</sup> WSDAR, 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

ment compared to other parts of the country, for example, parts of Western, Nyanza and Central provinces.

However, it is worth mentioning that Kapenguria (and West Pokot) is known to most Kenyans more by name and reputation than as an exact place. It was at Kapenguria where the late Jomo Kenyatta, Kenya's famous and long-tenured first president, was put on trial by the colonial administrators in 1952-53. He was tried together with other leaders of the Kenya African Union (KAU), a nationalist political party formed towards the end of World War II. Kenyatta had been arrested immediately after the colonial Governor, acting in response to a growing pattern of demand for independence, militancy and violence among the nationalists in the countryside, declared a State of Emergency in the colony. Kenyatta and others were alleged to be involved in the activities of the "Mau Mau". There was a widespread conviction among the authorities and the European settler community that "Mau Mau" represented a secret atavistic cult of the criminal conspirators bent on deceiving and subverting the mass of the African population, and especially the Kikuyu people. The perpetrators were thought to be sowing the seeds of discord, and inciting others to overthrow order of good governance. "Mau Mau" became a convenient theory for prosecution at Kapenguria. The political trial extended over a period of four months, and resulted in the sentencing of Kenyatta and others to periods of detention. Kenyatta was to spend the next seven years in confinement, mostly in the arid northern parts of present Turkana district.<sup>96</sup> Thus, West Pokot although an outlying district in the colonial and post-colonial period, and over the years marginalized by the state in terms of resource allocation for meaningful socio-economic development, still holds an important place in Kenyan history.

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<sup>96</sup> Reynolds, "Community underdevelopment, 6-7; and Carl G. Rosberg Jr. & John Nottingham, *The myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya* (New York: The New American Library, 1970), 277-285. During the Kenyatta trial, the main appeal of Kapenguria as a venue from the point of view of the authorities lay precisely in the fact that it was well removed from the emergency turmoil in Central Province of Kenya.

# 3

## Furrow irrigation and food production in colonial West Pokot, 1920-1963

### Introduction

While the preceding chapters shed light on our understanding of West Pokot, in particular its people, land ownership and how land has been utilized, this chapter discusses Pokot agricultural activities during the colonial period. Specifically, the chapter discusses the furrow irrigation system of the Pokot, its physical and organizational features, and its impact on food production in the period under review. Irrigation among the Pokot was, and still is, used during the dry season to help bring crops to maturation. Moreover, the types of crops grown, under irrigation and rain-fed, as well as weeding and harvesting are vital to understanding the Pokot farming system and the striving for food security in a semi-arid environment. The chapter also discusses labour, and how it has been utilized over the years in both irrigation and rain-fed farming, among other economic activities in the study area.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the advent of colonialism in Kenya and West Pokot in particular, and the impact it had on the African agricultural activities in the period under review. Specifically, before the establishment of colonial rule, the Pokot staple crops were sorghum and finger millet, but after 1920, new crops, mainly maize, cassava and varieties of beans, among others, were introduced in the study area. Thus, the chapter discusses the impact of these crops on food security and related dietary changes in the period under review. The chapter also analyzes government intervention in African agricultural activities within the larger context of Kenya's political economy, especially in the 1930s and 1940s.

However, it should also be noted that in the first two decades of the twentieth century, the colonial state's main focus was to financially assist the European settler agriculture as the basis of the colonial economy. In the 1930s and 1940s, however, in the face of the Great Depression, World War II, and the "collapse" of European agriculture, the colonial state had no option but to promote African production to salvage the colony's economy. Thus, the chapter highlights how these two events, the depression and the war, brought about a re-evaluation of the significance of African agriculture to the colonial economy. These two events prompted the colonial state to promote African agriculture, financially and technically. Even so, assistance bestowed the African sector remained relatively

minimal, to make sure that it did not pose a threat to European settler agriculture. It was also in line with the colonial state's policy of minimizing expenditure and maximizing profit.

Specifically, state policy for promoting African agriculture included, first, the establishment of demonstration/seed plots aimed at crop innovation and their spread in African occupied areas. Secondly, soil conservation measures, for example planting of trees, grass, terracing and use of manure and fertilizers were encouraged to check soil erosion and to restore fertility. In the view of colonial administrators, African producers relied on poor farming methods (for example, shifting cultivation) which contributed to land degradation, and they had to be compelled to conserve their land, through better farming methods, for present and future use. In the actual sense, as shown in this chapter, the main objective behind promoting African agriculture and the colonial administrators' obsession with soil conservation, it was aimed at benefiting the colonial state first and foremost. As perceived by the colonial administrators, well conserved soils would translate into an increase in African production, in particular commodity production that could be exported and bring in the much needed revenue for the functioning of the state. It also meant enabling Africans to sell their surplus farm produce to pay taxes, the paramount source of revenue for the colonial state. Thus, the introduction of new crops in West Pokot during the colonial period, and their impact on food security in the area should also be understood within a wider context of state policy towards African agricultural production and related state benefits in the colony as a whole.

It should also be emphasized right from the beginning of this chapter that, new crops, for example, maize and cassava, introduced during the colonial period, were adopted by local farmers mainly for domestic consumption rather than for commercial purposes. This is partly explained by the arid nature of the land, and even though furrow irrigation has been practiced in the area for generations, it could not sustain large-scale cash crop production. Therefore, given the low productivity of West Pokot in general, the colonial state was not enthusiastic in developing the area, especially in terms of infrastructure and marketing facilities, despite the fact that it extracted taxes from the local population. Instead, the colonial state concentrated on developing high potential areas, mainly those occupied by European settler farmers in the Kenya highlands, for quick returns. Generally, West Pokot remained isolated and marginalized in terms of socio-economic development in the period under review. Nonetheless, Pokot farmers adopted new crops in their farming system, grown under rain-fed and furrow irrigation, to enhance food security for their survival in a harsh environment during the colonial period and beyond.

### Furrow irrigation, labour and seasonality

Although, it is not known when the first furrows were dug by the Pokot, by the time the first colonial administrators arrived in the area, they found an extensive irrigation system already in operation. In 1911, M.W.H. Beech, an early colonial administrator, gave the following description of Pokot irrigation agriculture:

Millet, eleusine grain and tobacco are produced by the Suk (Pokot). The millet is grown on the fertile and well watered plots at the base of the escarpment, and is watered by means of irrigation ... the irrigation

system is the most ingenious, and its original construction must have required a vast amount of toil and patience.<sup>1</sup>

E.B. Hosking, another administrator, also noted the existence of furrow irrigation in the area in 1914. He stated, “When I was at Marich in 1914, the Suk ... were agriculturalists and were cultivating under irrigation”.<sup>2</sup> It is also noted in the 1929 district annual report, that “at the foot of Weiwei hills by means of a remarkable and ancient system of furrows, fairly considerable acres of millet are grown”.<sup>3</sup>

The Pokot have thus known the art of irrigation for a long time. Although it is not known when the Pokot dug the first furrow, oral history suggests that this was hundreds of years ago. It is likely that irrigation has been in practice for approximately 300 years.<sup>4</sup> What is also certain is that many furrows have been dug within living memory, some in the last few years, though these may be extensions of, improvements to, or reconstructions of existing or older alignments.<sup>5</sup>

While the existence of furrow irrigation among the Pokot is generally known, few people realize the extent of the system and the remarkable technology involved. The technology used in furrow construction has been evolved over the years by Pokot farmers.<sup>6</sup> The layout/alignment of furrows was, and still is, very carefully chosen, always following the natural contour of the mountain slopes. Besides, where it is necessary to drop the water steeply, natural drainage, streams and channels, are utilized, and water has always been diverted through aqueducts to where it is needed on the farms below.<sup>7</sup>

Intakes of irrigation furrows are made in the river. These are usually permeable barriers, constructed with boulders, logs, sticks and brushwood, breaking the flow of the stream or river to divert water into the furrow, without presenting a solid obstacle which would inevitably be carried away. Some furrows with their intakes high up on the mountain are particularly ingenious: they follow narrow and precipitous ledges, burrow in and out of rocks and overhangs, and cross wooden aqueducts and flumes. The aqueducts were, and still are, commonly made from hollowed logs and flumes from an assortment of materials; poles, sticks, grass and stones.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M.W.H.Beech, *The Suk: Their language and folklore* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1911), 15. Beech was by then District Commissioner, Baringo.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of E.B. Hosking, O.B.E., before the Carter Commission in Nairobi, 3 March 1933, *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1909-1910. Hosking was Officer-in-Charge Baringo district 1914-1918 and Elgeyo and Marakwet for the following six years.

<sup>3</sup> WSDAR, 1929, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>4</sup> Republic of Kenya, *District Profile: West Pokot District, Rift Valley Province* (Kapenguria: Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock Development and Marketing, Irrigation and Drainagebranch, 1994), 3; Ingrid van Tienhoven, Fred Zaal & Mirjam Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Lomut and Cheptulel locations, West Pokot District, Kenya”, RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1985), 24; and oral interviews with Lotiolo Lomachar & Limasia Loripo, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

<sup>5</sup> Soper, “A survey of irrigation systems of the Marakwet”, 75-95.

<sup>6</sup> Marinus K. van Klinken, “Traditional irrigation in Kenya: The case of the Pokot”, West Pokot District Information and Documentation Center, (Kapenguria, 1985), 4. This paper was prepared for the 8th Irrigation Symposium of the German Association for Water Resources and Land Improvement: Traditional Irrigation Schemes and Potential for their Improvement, held on 24 April 1985 in Berlin, Germany.

<sup>7</sup> Marinus K. van Klinken, “The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation. The construction of aquaducts in West Pokot District. Some data and experiences”, West Pokot District Information and Documentation Center, (Kapenguria, 1987), 11. This was a Report for ASAL Programme, West Pokot.

<sup>8</sup> Van Klinken, “Traditional Irrigation”, 4; Dietz, “Indigenous irrigation”, 152-153; Huxley, “African Water-Engineers”, 173-174; and Hogg, “Pokot”, 7-8.

The most innovative furrow construction achievements are those that cross deep gullies or jutting rocks. For small gullies, hollowed logs or sometimes large stone slabs are used, but for bigger gullies and for passing vertical rock surfaces elaborate structures are erected. These aqueducts are supported by vertical strong poles up to five meters in height. Cross-poles at right angles to the rock face are set in the forked tops of the upright, and on these longitudinal poles are laid in a more or less continuous platform. These poles are deliberately made quite short to limit the extent of the damage in case of breakages. On this platform is laid a thick layer of brushwood and leaves or grass weighed down with stones, while further layers of gravel and fine sand provide a fairly impermeable bed for the furrow. Using the same technology, the furrow can pass through some very permeable soils. In those sections, they line them with clay, reinforced with straw and leaves.<sup>9</sup>

The furrows are usually approximately 50 centimeters (cm) deep, and never deeper than one meter (m). The cross-section of the furrows varies less markedly (average width 50-100 cm) and are molded in the landscape as small surface rivers or streams. Furrows vary in their length too. In the Mwino area, the shortest is about 0.5 km and the longest over 5 km. Near Sigor, the Takoch furrow runs for about 10 km. The 0.5 km furrows serve just two or three households, while the 8 to 10 km furrows, serve 10 or 12 clans and over an area of about 200 hectares (ha). Potential water delivery is usually sufficient for irrigation. However, in the dry season, discharge is obviously much less than in the wet season.<sup>10</sup>

From the main furrow, outlets to minor ones are made, which means water gravitates to the farms. For instance, in Weiwei and Mwino valley much of the land is irrigated from the Weiwei river. All along the Weiwei and its tributary the Muruny, the Pokot have constructed furrows to run off the water; each main furrow supplies over one or more regions, while small irrigation ducts running off the main furrow supply individual farms.<sup>11</sup> Over the years an increasing number of irrigation furrows have been constructed, gravity fed with water from the Weiwei and other mountain streams. However, the exact number of furrows off a particular mountain stream depends on a number of factors: the local topography, distribution of farms, populace and availability of water.

For example, in Mwino, because of its large number of almost vertical mountain streams, furrows take off water at various levels. There are "higher" furrows covering the steep mountain slopes and "lower" furrows covering the valley floor. There are also furrows which plunge almost vertically down the mountain, for example, Sirorin at Tororo, Sigor division. At the valley floor there are other furrows which are taken off the main rivers, for example, Marin, Kale and Weiwei. These latter furrows, for example, Paro, Murel, Ipet, Ptokou, Takoch (or Korrelach) and Mochowon (or Sangat), are some of the most utilized in the study area.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, the physical obstacles with which the Pokot have to contend in the digging and maintenance of their furrows is enormous. Cross-gullying caused by seasonal streams, footpaths, landslides, erosion, water seepage and floods, among others, necessitate frequent repairs. Generally, the longer the furrow the more difficult it is to maintain. At most, the Pokot prefer shorter furrows off a river/stream than one long furrow, but often, this is not always possible due to topographical reasons.<sup>13</sup> Besides, even if a furrow has not been in

<sup>9</sup> Van Klinken, "Traditional Irrigation", 4-5; and Huxley, "African water-engineers", 173.

<sup>10</sup> Van Klinken, "Traditional Irrigation", 4; Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, 14; Hogg, "Pokot", 7; van Klinken, "The Pokot Traditional Furrow Irrigation", 11; and Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 152.

<sup>11</sup> Meyerhoff, "The socio-economic and ritual roles of Pokot women", 28.

<sup>12</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 7.

<sup>13</sup> Oral interview with Limasia Loripo, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

operation for several years, mainly because of natural disasters, its alignment can still be identified, and if need be repaired and be brought back into use.

Repairs on the furrows were, and still are, carried out as often as required under the supervision of the Council of Elders (*Kokwa*).<sup>14</sup> On the appointed day, a horn is blown calling all those using water from the furrow to report to work or send their representatives. Every user is responsible for the regular maintenance of the furrow up to the point where he diverts the water off to his farm. In case of too much leakage from a particular section of the furrow, usually a group of people are organized to reinforce that section with stones, mud, brushwood, leaves and grass in order to restore the water level as well as increase the flow of the furrow. Although most repairs are carried out in July/August after the long rains, they may happen at other times as well. Thus, there is no set time for furrow maintenance. Furrows were, and still are, maintained throughout the year as need arises.<sup>15</sup>

For instance, although during the rainy season furrow intakes are closed to prevent flooding, they are frequently breached, so that furrows silt up and have to be cleared before being reopened in the dry season. The main problems usually have to do with water seepage and the need for repairs to the intake. At least once every wet season the intake has to be repaired. Frequently, the sides of the furrow also have to be repaired. This work has to be done communally by furrow users. The elders supervise the repairs on the intakes and the main furrows. Individual farm holders are responsible for clearing the minor furrows/ducts on their plots.<sup>16</sup>

All the work involved in the maintenance, repair and extension of furrows has always been done by men. For instance, the rebuilding of a flood intake (which requires cutting into the river bank and directing some of the river water into the main furrow) is a day's work for a group of 15 to 20 men. To clear out and reinforce the main furrow, which sometimes involves redigging it, takes weeks with more labour deployed. Extension of the irrigation system, thus having to construct a new furrow/extend the old one, is hard work and can take weeks or months to accomplish the task. Based on estimates by Meyerhoff, roughly 200-300 working days are needed to repair kilometer of furrow length, and building a new irrigation furrow takes about 500 working days per one kilometer. Generally, work in the upper parts of a furrow, particularly those with intakes in higher elevations, is cumbersome: climbing two or more hours through rocks and thicket to arrive at the intake leaves relatively few hours per day for work on the actual furrow.<sup>17</sup> Thus, the irrigation system is not only innovative but also maintenance and labour intensive.

On the other hand, furrows are owned by users (mostly inherited), who also invest the time and energy in maintaining them. Smaller furrows usually belong to one clan, while longer furrows can be owned by users from two to five or more different clans. This

<sup>14</sup> Van Klinken, "The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation", 12; and oral interview with Lotiolo Lomachar, at Sangat, 15 July 1996. Members of the Council of Elders are the highest traditional authority within the community and are supposed to be the most knowledgeable in furrow technology.

<sup>15</sup> Van Klinken, "Traditional Irrigation", 5; Hogg, "Pokot", 8-9; and oral interviews with Lotiolo Lomachar & Lotudo Kakorio, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

<sup>16</sup> Elizabeth Jean Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones: A socio-anthropological survey of the irrigation schemes on the Turkwel river* (Rome: FAO, 1980), 16; and Ssennyonga, "The Marakwet Irrigation", 96-111. Brown's work was a consultant Report for Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth L. Meyerhoff, "The position of women in the subsistence economy of the Pokot agricultural community", Typescript, Institute of African Studies (IAS) Library, University of Nairobi, (Nairobi, 1978), 26-27; Meyerhoff, "The socio-economic", 28-29; Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 158; and oral interview with Lotiolo Lomachar, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

generally means ownership extends beyond lines of clans, for most furrows irrigate the land of a number of clans. For instance, Murel furrow in Mwino location irrigates the land of twelve clans.<sup>18</sup> In addition to irrigation, furrows provide water for domestic use, watering of livestock and construction of dwellings.

Water use is strictly controlled by the Council of Elders, for there is insufficient water for a general free-for-all. The elders allocate water for irrigation based on an equitable distribution schedule. Usually a system of water rotation is worked out whereby farmers use water in turns, day and night. Those receiving water at night take it during the day the next time round. For instance, water is allowed into each farm plot in rotation for three to four hours at a stretch. The farm owner is responsible for opening furrow outlets and irrigation ducts well directed to his farm, and closing them when his crops have received sufficient water. Besides, irrigation ducts run along the edges of individual farms and in many cases mark the farm boundary.<sup>19</sup>

Although water use is strictly controlled, occasionally there are cases of people stealing water out of turn. If they are caught they have to pay a fine – usually a goat to the Council of Elders.<sup>20</sup> The Council has the power to levy fines on those who do not adhere to their decisions and rules. Besides, no irrigation basins are used to water crops. Rather, water is allowed to run freely over the farms in a well organized gravity-fed irrigation system. The elders execute their duty, without favour or pay, for the well being of the whole community. This leads to an overall fairness and seldom results in conflicts.<sup>21</sup>

On the other hand, communal labour is an important aspect of irrigation work among the Pokot. Between households in the same clan, economic cooperation and sharing of irrigation work, construction and maintenance of furrows is the accepted norm. Clearing of fields, digging, fencing and building of dwellings are also communal. Reciprocal work parties of mixed gender are organized which move from one farm to another, starting with the farms of those most in need of help; for example, the sick and elderly members of the society. Participants are fed on different types of food, goat meat and beer (made from millet, sorghum or maize provided by each farm holder) as a token of appreciation. Women work parties are also organized to get a particular task done; for example, weeding or harvesting, and participants are fed on food and beer, minus goat meat.<sup>22</sup>

Generally, agriculture involves considerable division of labour. Men are responsible for clearing fields and work on the irrigation system. Women dig, plant/broadcast seeds, weed, and harvest grains. While women plant maize, sorghum and finger millet and vegetables, men may plant other crops, for example, cassava and bananas. Husbands are additionally responsible for the fencing of all fields and the building of granaries, thatching them with grass cut by wives. The fields are fenced to keep out domestic animals and predators, but small stock, for example, goats and calves, are allowed to eat the stalks after the crops have been harvested. Only irrigation and fencing are exclusively male jobs, but most other tasks

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<sup>18</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 9; and oral interview with Cheropo Lopoya, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

<sup>19</sup> Van Klinken, "The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation", 5-6; Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones*, 15; and Meyerhoff, "The Socio-Economic", 29.

<sup>20</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 9.

<sup>21</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 15.

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones*, 15; van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lomut and Cheptulel", 33-34; and Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 155.

can be performed by both sexes. In addition, farmers keep birds from their crops by hurling stones and mud balls from raised platforms, a day long chore usually assigned to children.<sup>23</sup>

Thus, each member of the family participates in the production for subsistence, and the various tasks are allocated on the basis of sex and age. However, the amount of grain a family can produce is not solely dependent on the amount of labour at its disposal, but also on the amount and quality of land available for cultivation and, more important, on the availability of water through rainfall or by way of irrigation.

Hence, in the study area, cultivation is dependent on adequate rainfall, but due to unpredictability of rains, irrigation has been used over the years during the dry season, and in times of drought, to help bring on crops in their later stages of growth. The Pokot identify three seasons: a dry season from January to March, a rainy season from April to July, and the third season from August to December "when the region is becoming dry". This last season includes the short rains which normally fall from October and November. Normally, land is prepared in March, planting in April after the first rains, and weeding in May to July. Harvest comes from late August to early November. However, a severe dry spell in June has been known to ruin the crop, and irrigation is particularly important to lessen its effects. The rainy season in October and November is too short to allow a second crop, except in those areas (and years) where irrigation is reliable well into February. This is true for Sangat area, along the Weiwei river, in Sigor division. Thus irrigation is not only used to overcome dry spells and to "extend the rainy season", but sometimes allows a second ratoon crop of sorghum in the area.<sup>24</sup>

Nonetheless, there is a great deal of variation in the cycle from year to year, not only because of the variation in the coming of the rains and amount of precipitation, but also because of the wide variation in altitudes throughout the district. The people in the foothills over the years have planted and reaped their harvest much earlier in the year than those living in the highlands. To maximize this advantage, Pokot farmers try to cultivate in several eco-zones. In a single year, a typical family cultivates from four to six pieces of land, measuring about two to three acres in different areas and eco-zones. Two pieces of land may be under maize, one under millet or sorghum, the rest under bananas and vegetables. During any one cultivation period, another five to ten pieces of land a family has access to are left fallow. By cultivating different crops in different eco-zones, a family is assured of a harvest at different times of the year. For example, the finger millet harvest usually occurs in late August, maize from the valley is ready in mid-October, and maize from the highland is not harvested till late November. As farm plots are relatively small in size, this results in an evenly distributed work load and ensures that food is available almost all year around.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, cultivating different farm plots in different eco-zones has over the years played a major part in reducing the risk of hunger due to crop failure.

<sup>23</sup> Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated agriculture as a base of subsistence*, 40; Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 155; Meyerhoff, "The socio-economic", 34; Meyerhoff, "The threatened ways", 125; Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones*, 15; and oral interview with Cheropo Lopoya, at Sangat, 15 July 1996. Women are not allowed to work on the irrigation system because the task is too difficult. However, they are allowed to fetch water for domestic purposes from the furrows.

<sup>24</sup> Van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lomut and Cheptulel", 25-30; Meyerhoff, "The Socio-Economic", 27-28; Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 153-154; and Hogg, "Pokot", 14-15. Sorghum is mainly a dry season crop, but some farmers do plant it during the rainy season.

<sup>25</sup> Meyerhoff, "The Socio Economic", 27-28 and 33; van Klinken, "The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation", 9; and oral interviews with Limasia Loripo & Lotudo Kakorio, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

At the same time, it is rare to find a Pokot farmer with only one irrigated crop. Usually, they have two or three different small plots, all possibly served by different furrows. If one of the furrows is unable to meet the demand, or is damaged by excessive seepage or floods, the farmer in the meantime concentrates on the other plots under irrigation. In some cases, the farmer can acquire a temporary right to land in another irrigated area by begging from friends or relatives, usually in exchange for a goat as a token of appreciation.<sup>26</sup> This social practice has over the years reinforced the community's spirit by mutual exchange and survival in a harsh environment.

It is therefore evident that irrigation has been well run by Pokot themselves, through the guidance of elders, all committed to their work. Generally, the technique for the construction of furrows is based on the concepts of innovation and adaptability: utilizing locally available materials and an ultimate knowledge of the environment. On the other hand, unless the furrows are maintained regularly, problems, for example leakage, become insurmountable, and this affects food production in the area. Maintenance is therefore a crucial part of the irrigation system. Significantly, the whole organization forms an intensive part of the social fabric and the history of the Pokot people. Thus, the survival strategy requires adaptability and the undertaking of risks in which the Pokot have to be commended. They have demonstrated the importance of fitting together irrigation organization principles and rules and the technology for implementing them. Considering the difficult mountainous terrain in which the Pokot live and cultivate, the results are truly remarkable.

### Agricultural activities in the colonial period, 1920-1939

On the other hand, through most of the first half of the twentieth century, the traditional rain-fed and irrigation crops in West Pokot were sorghum and finger millet. A little tobacco was also grown, for example in Lomut, Mwino, Cheptulel and in the Sekerr hills, Sigor division. However, with the advent of colonialism, new crops, for example maize, cassava and a variety of beans were introduced in the study area as well as other parts of the country. As mentioned earlier on, given the arid nature of West Pokot District, almost all Pokot farmers adopted new crops mainly for domestic consumption rather than for commercial purposes.

Specifically, in 1903 the colonial state assumed responsibility for agriculture in the country and set up a Department of Agriculture. In the early years, the department's limited resources were used mainly to deal with the problems of European agriculture which was in the first stage of development. European settlement was newly established, and relatively little was known of Kenya's agricultural resources and potential. Before it could devise appropriate policies, therefore, the colonial state through the Department of Agriculture had to first acquaint itself with the manifold agricultural features of the colony. Fact-finding relating to physical features, soils, ecological variations, existing and potential crops was the first task undertaken.<sup>27</sup>

As a result, increasing knowledge of African areas soon brought to light, in the view of colonial administrators, poor farming standards and low yields. At the same time, the

<sup>26</sup> Van Klinken, "The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation", 9; and oral interview with Lotudo Kakorio, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

<sup>27</sup> Eric Clayton, *Agrarian development in peasant economies: Some lessons from Kenya* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1964), 5-6.

Department of Agriculture was becoming more interested in the development of the highly fertile African areas, for example, parts of Central Kenya and Nyanza province, aimed at crop production for the export market to raise revenue for the colonial state. To succeed in affecting a substantial improvement in agricultural practice and an increase in production, a large number of instructors, both European and African, were required. It was argued that utilizing trained African agricultural instructors would be cheaper, and it was assumed that they would work more successfully with African producers than European officers.<sup>28</sup> It should also be noted that the colonial state operated on the principle of minimizing expenditure and maximizing profit. Thus, right from the beginning, the state aimed at spending as little as it could on African agriculture, while benefiting enormously from it, through taxation and export trade.

Consequently, one of the steps undertaken was the training of African Agricultural Instructors. They were given a training of two or three years, after which selected men who had satisfactorily completed their training were posted to African reserves. While there, they were entrusted with the responsibility to establish and manage demonstration plots devoted to the crops the state wanted to be grown. From these places, as centers of operation, seed would be distributed and African farmers in the surrounding areas would be advised accordingly on how to grow different crops, for example through inter-cropping, and how to secure better yields than they obtained under previous farming methods (for example, the growing of one type of crop at a time). Crops such as maize, sorghum, millet, groundnuts, simsim, cotton, beans and peas among others fell under this category. Each of these crops was well suited to the resources and facilities of the African, and no question of competition against the European grower (producing maize, wheat and English potatoes among others, mainly for export) could arise.<sup>29</sup> As mentioned earlier, an increase in African production would be directed towards an output of produce that could be exported. Besides, African producers would be in a position to sell part of the produce in the domestic market, and acquire cash to pay taxes, the principle source of revenue for the colonial state.

The 1929-1933 Great Depression played a major role in the colonial state's promotion of African agriculture in various parts of the country. As noted in chapter two of this study, the initial impact of the depression fell on both Africans and Europeans in Kenya. The immediate reaction of the colonial state was to provide assistance by way of subsidies to European farmers. When this failed, and as the depression lengthened, the colonial state turned its attention to the encouragement of African agricultural production to salvage the colony's economy.<sup>30</sup>

From the colonial administrators' point of view, by encouraging African production, it was hoped that this would cut back expensive capital, labour and other outlays characteristic of the European settler sector. In other words, given the prevailing conditions, this would be a cheaper way of production for both subsistence and the export market. It should be emphasized that by encouraging African production, the colonial state was primarily motivated by the fact that it would increase exports and thereby improve the colony's revenue.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 30 and 46-47.

<sup>31</sup> Tabitha Kanogo, 'Kenya and the depression, 1929-1939', In: Ochieng', *A modern history of Kenya*, 112-143: and Ndege, 'Struggles for the Market', 189-190.

Furthermore, encouraging African production was also based on the understanding between administrators and settlers that it (the African production sector) would be supported sparingly to make sure that it did not pose a threat to European settler agriculture.<sup>32</sup> In any case, the bulk of African production was mainly in the category of food crops, whereas European growers paid more attention to cash crop production. It is also worth mentioning that before the depression, Africans were never allowed to grow high paying cash crops, for example coffee, that was grown exclusively on European plantations. As noted by Robert Maxon, government policy never legally forbade Africans from growing coffee; but, largely influenced by European coffee growers, the colonial state never allowed them to do so.<sup>33</sup> However, the effects of the depression in the early 1930s led to the colonial government to decide, as a result of strong pressure from the Colonial Office in Britain, to allow the planting of coffee in African occupied areas of Kenya despite European opposition. Therefore, coffee was to develop in African occupied areas in the years after the Second World War, mainly in the Gusii highlands, parts of Central province (for example Murang'a), and on the slopes of Mount Elgon, specifically in present Bungoma district, Western Kenya.<sup>34</sup>

African surplus production, for example maize and beans, was also to be exported outside the districts of production, for example from Nyanza province to less productive areas, mainly Ukambani, present North Eastern province, Turkana and the West Pokot area among other marginal areas in the colony. At the same time, some of the African produced maize, groundnuts, simsim and all cotton were to be sold to settler enterprises offering ready market, for example, for oil production, or exported outside the country.<sup>35</sup>

It was also the hope of the colonial administrators that, if African agricultural output could be increased, through improved farming practices, for example, by issuing high yielding seeds to farmers, this could fetch high returns from marketing facilities within and outside the country. While providing revenue for the colonial state, it would also boost African purchasing power, and demand could be created among Africans for products from the European farms. For instance, wheat and English potatoes, among other products, from European enterprises were expected to find a ready market among African producers, in addition to the urban population. Furthermore, the colonial administrators argued that improvement of economic conditions in African occupied areas would lessen the number of people seeking employment in the already depressed European enterprises.<sup>36</sup> Thus, European and African agriculture could become more profitable, and stability could be restored to the country's economy.

At any rate, in the decade before the depression, African producers had demonstrated their prowess in chosen fields of agricultural production. In particular, they had demonstrated that they could produce cereals, especially maize, more efficiently than the settler farmers. Although the colonial state had started in the mid 1920s to look into possible ways

<sup>32</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 48.

<sup>33</sup> Robert M. Maxon, *Conflict and accommodation in Western Kenya: The Gusii and the British, 1907-1963* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickson University Press, 1989), 100; and Robert M. Maxon, "The roots of differential development in Western Kenya: The introduction of Arabica Coffee, 1930-1960", *Journal of Third World Studies* XIX, 1 (2002), 154-155, 160, and 166-167. It should be noted that, by the beginning of the 1930s, coffee was Kenya's leading export. Therefore, it is not surprising that European growers were out to monopolize coffee growing in the colony.

<sup>34</sup> Maxon, *Conflict and accommodation*, 100.

<sup>35</sup> Kanogo, "Kenya and the depression", 118-119.

<sup>36</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 48.

of expanding African agricultural production for sale, mainly to expand the state's base for revenue collection, it took the depression for the government to give the matter serious consideration. Significantly, it took the failure of the colonial state's subsidies for European agriculture to bring this course of action to the forefront.<sup>37</sup> As noted by Tabitha Kanogo, paradoxically, the depression appears to have been a break the Africans were awaiting to gain official recognition of their productive dynamic.<sup>38</sup> Thus, as a result of the depression, the colonial state embarked on a much more intensive programme of economic development in most African areas in the country.<sup>39</sup>

Specifically, it was decided by the colonial administration that to promote agricultural development in African areas, demonstration plots would be established in conjunction with seed plots for cultivation of seed for distribution to African farmers. Labour-saving devices such as plows would also be introduced in arable areas, for example in Nyanza province, and other farm tools encouraged on African farms in general. At the same time, as noted by Gavin Kitching, influenced by administrative worries about land degradation in the African reserves, for example in Central province, the Department of Agriculture attempted to design smallholder mixed farming combinations of grass lays (for intensive pasturing of livestock), growing of cash and subsistence crops, mainly maize and legumes, which by balancing nutrient demands on land and livestock providing organic manure, would increase production, raise nutritional levels and safeguard soil fertility. In addition, soil rejuvenation by use of composite manure and other fertilizers was to be encouraged.<sup>40</sup>

In this case, basic services offered by the Department of Agriculture were realigned to improve both European and African agriculture. In effect, they were designed to promote cash crop production and increase returns to African farmers, but more important to expand the base of revenue collection for the colonial state. As a result, the activities of the Department began to assume a much wider scope during the depression.<sup>41</sup> For instance, between 1932 and 1936, the Department initiated plant-selection and cross-breeding programmes designed to increase yield from existing African crops, to provide crops more resistant to drought for agriculturally marginal areas, for example Ukambani and West Pokot, regularly threatened by famine, and to breed varieties of crops more suitable for growth under different climatic conditions found in various parts of the country. Generally, throughout the 1930s the first serious efforts were made to obtain systematic information on African agriculture to devise a strategy for its improvement and expansion, and to inaugurate research efforts, at least at a minimal level.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore, in the 1930s, soil conservation became another major objective of the colonial state's agricultural policy in African occupied areas. The need to enforce soil conservation measures was given greater consideration by the realization that the population in African reserves, particularly in the more productive areas of Central and Nyanza provinces, was increasing rapidly, thus, contributing to land degradation. As noted by David Anderson, demographic statistics for the Kenya colony were notoriously unreliable, but it is clear that the African population in some parts of the country increased in the 1920s, and grew even more dramatically in the mid 1930s.<sup>43</sup> Specifically, from an esti-

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>38</sup> Kanogo, "Kenya and the depression", 118-119.

<sup>39</sup> Maxon, Conflict and accommodation, 99.

<sup>40</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 68; and Kitching, *Class and economic change*, 62.

<sup>41</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 82.

<sup>42</sup> Kitching, *Class and economic change*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, "Depression", 328.

mated figure of 2.5 million in 1925, Kenya's population had risen to 3 million by 1935, and to 3.5 million by 1940. Densities of population stood at over 140 persons per square mile in Kikuyu district of Fort Hall (present Murang'a) by 1938, and over 220 persons per square mile in Luo area of Central Kavirondo. Demographic pressure on land was also serious in some parts of North Kavirondo (present Vihiga and Kakamega districts).<sup>44</sup>

The pattern of European settlement having been clearly established in Kenya in the mid-1920s with the final demarcation of the African reserves in 1926, it became apparent within only a few years that these reserves were too small to house their rapidly growing population. Worse still, land pressure created by population increase and by expanding cultivation was further exacerbated by the accumulation of large numbers of livestock (as a source of food, capital and dowry among other socio-economic needs) by groups of sedentary cultivators. As further noted by Anderson, livestock purchases were often financed by the surpluses gained from greater agricultural production, but because the limited arable acreage was normally expanded at the expense of grazing land, this resulted in more livestock having less land to graze. In these circumstances, the problem of overcrowding could emerge with alarming rapidity, while leading to land degradation.<sup>45</sup>

Even in semi-arid areas where human population was more sparsely settled, for example, in the Kamba area of Machakos district, there were visible signs of land pressure by the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>46</sup> To a large extent, colonial policy of land alienation, including important dry season grazing areas for European settlement, for example in the Rift Valley and some parts of Central province, seriously contributed to land pressure and undermined the ability of local farming/herding systems in the colony.<sup>47</sup> As shown in chapter two of this study, European settlement in Trans Nzoia, in particular Kitale plains, seriously interfered with Pokot dry season grazing and pasture management in general, and created unavoidable land pressures and conflicts between them and their neighbours.

It can be argued that land alienation in one way or another led to overcrowding in African reserves, particularly in some parts of Central Kenya, thus contributing to land degradation. The Department of Agriculture, moreover, admitted that soil types in Kenya were prone to high acidity and degradation when constantly used.<sup>48</sup> However, most colonial administrators were quick to blame Africans for degradation, without considering natural causes as well as the colonial land policy. Degradation was often blamed on African farming methods, particularly shifting cultivation, over-stocking and even communal ownership of land.

Generally, natural as well as man-made causes were, and are still, a major contributing factor, particularly to soil erosion in various parts of Kenya. As noted by Wisner, drought, especially in marginal areas, for example in Turkana district, North Eastern and parts of Eastern province, can contribute to soil erosion by increasing the vulnerability of vast areas to wind erosion.<sup>49</sup> Pasture can also fall victim through the direct effect of dry conditions on the natural vegetation, through overgrazing, regardless of whether there is over-stocking or not, leading to soil erosion. In other words, very dry areas where soil cover is sparse, in most cases, are where natural erosion occurs. This is the case in a few places in the north-eastern part (in Alale division) of West Pokot. Other eroded parts of the district, however,

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 329.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 330.

<sup>46</sup> Munro, Colonial rule and the Kamba, 77-80.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson "Depression", 330.

<sup>48</sup> Ndege, "Struggles for the market", 195.

<sup>49</sup> Wisner, "The human ecology of drought", 87-88.

have suffered mainly from man-made erosion. For instance, in Sigor division, construction of irrigation furrows, particularly on mountain slopes, although significant to food production in West Pokot, over the years have partly contributed to soil erosion in the area. Related to this, crop cultivation on the steep slopes, whether through irrigation or rain-fed, causes soil erosion if proper conservation practices are not used.<sup>50</sup>

Fires, whether accidental or intentional, in most cases also destroy tree and grass cover leading to soil erosion. Similar ecological damage can be done to valuable forest resources and water catchment areas. In addition, gully erosion, especially in the study area, has occurred along roads, tracks and footpaths where land cover happens to have been destroyed. In sum, over the years, soil erosion in West Pokot has mainly been caused by water. This is due to the fact that the area is semi-arid, and extreme weather conditions are invariably the rule and usually involve erratic rainfall distributions. Soils are also obdurate and frequently of low inherent fertility; desiccated by wind and sun and bleached, soils are easily eroded by torrential rainfall. Under these conditions, even good soils rapidly lose their properties and structure unless carefully controlled.<sup>51</sup>

Generally, by the early 1930s, land degradation in some African occupied areas, whether through natural or man-made causes, affected the country's agricultural production. Besides, the colonial state realized that encouraging African production, particularly during the depression, without regard to the condition of soils would lead to further deterioration. As a result, soil conservation was enforced as a government policy in the overall framework of colonial state's promotion of African agriculture in the colony. Colonial administrators hoped that the problem of land degradation would be dealt with by promoting better farming methods, which included the use of manure, prevention of soil erosion and reconditioning of overused land (for example, through grass and tree planting), all aimed at preventing further depletion to enhance food production, and more important, cash crops for the export market. Thus, even with the high priority placed on soil conservation and promotion of African production, for example, by distributing high yielding seeds to farmers, the central objective was not to benefit Africans but the colonial state first and foremost. The state continued to seek ways of increasing cash crop production, as a source of revenue, sold on both domestic and export markets.

Therefore, as part of colonial policy, in the 1920s and 1930s, new crops were introduced in various parts of the Kenya colony, including the study area. For instance, maize and new varieties of beans were planted in Cheptulel, West Pokot, in 1924. In the same year, a few cassava cuttings were obtained from the Department of Agriculture, branch office in Kisumu and introduced in the study area. By 1931, English potatoes had been introduced in the higher and groundnuts in the lower altitudes in the district. Bananas and different types of fruits, for example, mangoes and pawpaws, had also been found to do well, but they required constant watering and attention.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 28.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.; and Clayton, *Agrarian development*, 56.

<sup>52</sup> NADAR, 1931, 107; WSDARs, 1924 and 1929, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; Franz-Michael Rundquist, Hybrid maize in diffusion in Kenya: Policies, diffusion patterns and consequences, case studies from central and south Nyanza provinces (Lund: CWK Cleerup Liberforlag, 1984), 87; J.D. Acland, East African crops: An introduction to the production of field and plantation crops in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda (Singapore: Longman, 1971), 124; and A. Fiona D. Mackenzie, Land, ecology and resistance in Kenya 1880-1952 (Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1998), 106. Maize, cassava and potatoes are not indigenous crops in Africa. They were brought to Africa by early explorers and later on by the early settlers. As noted by Rundquist, archeological evidence indicates that Central America and the Andean region in South

The introduction of new crops in West Pokot was made possible with the posting of Agricultural Instructors, mainly African, in the area; the establishment of demonstration-/seed plots; and the use of chiefs and members of the LNC as well as propaganda to compel the population to grow the new crops. To some extent, it was also made possible with the opening of the Government African School at Kapenguria in January 1931. It should also be noted that, given the semi-arid nature of the land in West Pokot, crop adoption in the area was based on trial and error, while the Pokot were also skeptical of the benefits of the new crops. However, with the realization of the benefits of particularly maize as a food crop and the impact it would have on food security in the area, the Pokot started to slowly adopt the new crops in their farming system. They viewed them in terms of crop innovation, mainly to diversify their traditional crops, millet and sorghum, rather than replacing them.

Thus from the early 1930s onwards, maize, beans, and cassava among other food crops made rapid inroads in West Pokot. Maize and beans were grown on mountain slopes (the *Kamas*), and both as well as cassava on flat valley land (the *Tow*), under rain-fed and irrigation farming. This in itself has continued to be a subsistence strategy, aimed at enhancing food security in a harsh environment. At the same time, the diffusion of maize in the study area has led to remarkable dietary changes among the Pokot, the impact of which is documented in other sections of this chapter as well as in chapter seven of this study.

As mentioned earlier, the Government African School at Kapenguria was one of the institutions that contributed to the introduction and spread of new crops in West Pokot. The first Principal of the school, G.H. Chaundy, noted that: "When he arrived in Kapenguria in January 1931, his first duties were to make a close study of the district to see how the new school could help the people both socially and economically".<sup>53</sup> By mid 1931, forty pupils had been admitted to Kapenguria School.<sup>54</sup> The period of attendance at the school was three years, during which, the boys (ages 12 to 16) received training in practical and simple theoretical agriculture.<sup>55</sup>

Each pupil had his own plot at the school, and thereon was required to put into practice what was taught. In addition to individual plots, there was a communal school plot, where demonstrations and experiments on better farming methods were carried out. This ranged from soil conservation, crop rotation, and correct methods of planting, to receiving a practical experience of what crops could be grown successfully in the area. The pupils were also taught tanning of hides and skins, and the collection and cleaning of bees wax. When

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America are the areas in which maize originated and was first used as a food crop. In East Africa, maize was first introduced by the Portuguese traders in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Initially maize growing was limited to the coastal areas up the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century when European settlers introduced new varieties which were better suited to the inland climate, for example, flat white maize (White Hickory King) in Kenya. Besides, non-indigenous varieties of beans for example, Canadian Wonder, Rose Coco and White Haricot among others were introduced during the colonial period and have contributed to the diet of the Kenya population.

<sup>53</sup> G.H. Chaundy, "The West Suk of Kenya: Teaching a primitive tribe to be better farmers", *Canadian Geographical Journal* 36 (February, 1948): 94-101. G.H. Chaundy was first posted to West Pokot in January 1931 as the Education Officer. Kapenguria was exclusively a boys school. Chaundy left West Pokot in 1943.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>55</sup> NADAR, 1935, 86 and 119.

they left at the end of three years, it was hoped that whatever knowledge they had acquired would be of use to Pokot farmers.<sup>56</sup>

Simultaneously, members of the LNC were supposed to spread word on the introduction and adoption of new crops in the district. For instance, at a meeting of the LNC held in August 1931, Chaundy outlined a scheme to help Pokot farmers augment their food supply. He stated that each location should have its own agricultural demonstration plot to try out new crops. Chaundy further explained that the benefits would be threefold: to introduce new crops in the district, to teach the people improved methods of farming, with specific attention being paid on soil conservation, and to bulk seed for distribution.<sup>57</sup>

At first Pokot farmers were suspicious of Chaundy's ideas and were opposed to having demonstration plots in the district. To most Pokot, the colonial administration was experimenting to see what crops would grow better in what areas, and when it was proved what parts of the district were highly productive, it would then alienate land for European farmers as it did in neighbouring Trans Nzoia district.<sup>58</sup> This prompted the colonial state, with the advise of Chaundy, to post an African Agricultural Instructor to West Pokot. As noted earlier in this study, the colonial administration hoped that with proper methods and by placing under cultivation all suitable areas, sufficient produce could be obtained not only for the requirements of the Pokot, but more important for acquisition of taxes, and in good years also there might be a surplus for export.<sup>59</sup>

Consequently, in early 1932, Jason Apinde was posted to the Department of Agriculture, West Pokot. In the same year, the first demonstration plot was set up in Mwino location, Sigor division. In the meantime, the African Instructor's house was immediately built, and the plot prepared for planting. At first, it was difficult to get the seeds and planting material out to the plot owing to lack of motor roads. Nonetheless, the Department of Agriculture at Kapenguria was helpful in supplying seeds suitable to the altitude and climate of the area. Therefore, in the 1932 planting season, the following crops were tried: yellow maize (which was later inter-cropped with Rose Coco beans), groundnuts, sweet potatoes, cassava, pigeon peas and bananas.<sup>60</sup>

Immediately the new crops were harvested, they were given to inhabitants of Mwino to sample, and sufficient seed was retained for the next planting season. The Pokot in other locations soon heard that the crops were "sweet", and at a meeting of the LNC held in August 1932, six chiefs from other locations requested that demonstration plots be started in their locations. This was agreed on condition that they set aside money to purchase seeds and for the payment of instructors to cater for plots, at the rate of eight Kenya shillings per

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>57</sup> G.H. Chaundy, "The agricultural education of a primitive tribe: The West Suk of Kenya", Supplement to the *East Africa Agricultural Journal* VIII (April, 1943): 1-11; and Chaundy, "The West Suk of Kenya", 7.

<sup>58</sup> Chaundy, "The agricultural education", 8; and oral interview with Mnangat Loriono, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>59</sup> NADAR, 1931, 107.

<sup>60</sup> Chaundy, "The agricultural education", 7-8; and WSDAR, 1935, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Jason Apinde was trained at Bukura and also had much experience in North Kavirondo district where he worked under European Agricultural Officers. First, he was stationed at the Kapenguria school, where he worked for a month, and in the process picked up a fair knowledge of the Pokot language. Afterwards, he toured the district under the supervision of Chaundy, to familiarize himself with his new working station. For some details pertaining to training of Africans at the Bukura Agricultural Training Center see Anne K. Nangulu, "A Study of Traditional Industries in Bungoma District, 1850-1960: The Case of Babukusu" (M.A. Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1990), 131-132.

month. In the meantime, eight trainees from the Government African School, Kapenguria were selected to take charge of the new plots in the following planting season.<sup>61</sup>

Therefore, in 1933, six more demonstration plots were started and cared for by ex-pupils of the Government African School, Kapenguria, under the supervision of Apinde. Sweet potatoes, maize, different types of beans, carrots and groundnuts were grown on the new plots. As noted in the 1933 *NADAR*, the influence of the Government African School, Kapenguria was beginning to be reflected in the diversification of crops in most parts of the district. Furthermore, at the Agricultural Show held in Nairobi in December 1933, the display of vegetables from the school garden and demonstration plots attracted considerable attention; especially onions and Canadian Wonder beans were pronounced “as good as any other on the show”.<sup>62</sup>

Commenting on the agricultural progress in 1934, the DC West Pokot wrote: “The policy of agricultural development has been consistently pursued and considerable progress has been made, especially with the introduction of new crops .... Agricultural demonstration plots under the supervision of two native Agricultural Instructors have shown marked development during the year. Each plot is in the charge of an ex-pupil from the Government African School, Kapenguria, and during the school holidays the Principal of the School goes on safari into the reserve, inspecting plots and extending the work of development.”<sup>63</sup>

The two African Instructors, Jason Apinde and Jason Mulimba, received their pay from the Department of Agriculture, while the ex-pupils of the Government African School, Kapenguria were paid by the LNC. The ex-pupils resided permanently on their respective plots, as they were responsible for the upkeep and relied on Pokot communal labour when necessary. As before, harvests from demonstration plots were issued to inhabitants of the respective locations for food, and a proportion was stored for issue as seed in the planting season.<sup>64</sup>

By 1935, there were eight demonstration plots in various parts of the district : Sigor, Lomut, Cheptulel, Tamkal, Mbara, Kokwotendwo, Parua and Lityei (see Map 4 and Table 3.1 for details). During the year, plots in the lower altitude, Tamkal, Sigor and Lomut were enlarged, and Cheptulel moved from near Chesogon to a new place, to enable irrigation furrows to run through them. New crops tried at the time on the four plots, and planted along water furrows were yams, pumpkins, pawpaws and early maturing varieties of sorghum. However, the new varieties of sorghum had disappointing results as they did not yield as well as the traditional variety.<sup>65</sup>

At the same time, as part of government policy to promote agricultural production in African occupied areas, soil conservation measures were undertaken on plots in the higher altitudes (the *Kamas*): Mbara, Kokwotendwo, Parua and Lityei. Soil erosion in the area, as

<sup>61</sup> Chaundy, “The agricultural education”, 8; and Chaundy, “The West Suk of Kenya”, 98.

<sup>62</sup> Chaundy, “The West Suk of Kenya”, 98; and *NADAR*, 1933, 86-87. The Nairobi agricultural show was held annually, and later on, similar shows were held on the provincial and district levels, as part of the propaganda to promote agricultural production in African occupied areas.

<sup>63</sup> *NADAR*, 1934, 111-112.

<sup>64</sup> *NADAR*, 1935, 119; and WSDAR, 1935, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. By 1943, Jason Apinde had been joined by Jason Mulimba, who was also posted to the district from North Kavirondo.

<sup>65</sup> WSDARs, 1935 and 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. The eight plots were run by the following: Principal Chaundy – Lityei, Instructor Apinde – Tamkal, Instructor Mulimba – Parua, Ex-Pupil(s) of Kapenguria School Kanyungu Wero Luriwa – Sigor, Kanyungu Wero Lolingwer – Cheptulel, Kasuriani Wero Luturiamoi – Mbara, Loikwa Wero Lurura – Kokwotendwo and Mareich Wero Lamali – Lomut.

mentioned previously, was caused by erratic and torrential rainfall, experienced from time to time. Unlike plots in the lower altitudes (the *Tow*), these plots relied mainly on rain-fed farming rather than irrigation. Maize and beans were interplanted in rows of four feet apart following contours, and at intervals of 20 yards wide there were strips of sweet potatoes 12 feet wide, as preventive measures against soil erosion. Of the harvested crops, for example maize at Lityei in 1935, 50 bags were distributed to the local people for food and seed. In addition, English potatoes were planted in April 1935 for the first time on Kokwotendwo and Lityei plots, and a good crop was harvested. Once again at Lityei, nearly 250 people were issued with the potato "seed" from the September harvest. Some new varieties of sorghum were tried as well on Mbara plot and of these *Kano* and *I'kumba* were found to be both early maturing and better yielding. Generally, the local people were issued with seeds: maize, beans and sweet potato vines among others. As noted by Chaundy, "it was gratifying to see that for the most part these seeds were planted and good yields obtained".<sup>66</sup>

Table 3.1 Demonstration plots in West Pokot, 1935

Plot	Location	Altitude (in feet)
Sigor	Weiwei	3,100
Lomut	Lomut	3,200
Cheptulel	Cheptulel	3,300
Tamkal	Mwino	4,000
Mbarra	Sekerr	6,000
Kokwotendwo	Mwino	6,500
Parua	Batei	6,500
Lityei	Mnagei	6,600

\* Owing to the variation in altitude of West Pokot, the sites chosen for plots were on sloping land, in order to demonstrate to Pokot farmers methods of soil conservation.

Source: Compiled from WSDAR, 1935, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

In the following year, steady progress was made on the eight demonstration plots and, Chaundy was on safari for 45 days during the school holidays, supervising planting, harvesting and issuing of seeds. On all the tours he was accompanied by the DC, and meetings were held at each demonstration plot, to emphasize better farming methods.<sup>67</sup> Summarizing agricultural progress, the DC wrote:

"There are eight demonstration plots in the reserve four above 5,000ft, and four in the plains. In these plots, the following crops, among others, have been successfully grown: maize (flat white in the highlands and yellow in the lowlands), groundnuts, simsim, English potatoes, onions, cabbages, cauliflowers, several varieties of beans (including Rose Coco, Canadian Wonder, Madagascar and Tepary), cassava, pawpaws, bananas, pineapples, tomatoes, *njahi* (*Dolichos lablab*), green grams, pigeon pea, and root crops such as dasheen and tannias."<sup>68</sup>

These plots were invaluable, not only in demonstrating to the Pokot the possibilities of better farming methods, but also as seed distributing centers (see Table 3.2 on seed issues).

Between 1937 and 1939, new demonstration plots were started at Chepareria, Kipkomo and Chepnyal (Sook location), experimenting with a large variety of crops already grown

<sup>66</sup> WSDARs, 1935 and 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>67</sup> WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

on the existing plots. Banana nurseries were also included at Chepareria and Kipkomo plots. Seeds and banana suckers were issued to the local people and by the end of 1939, some of them had managed a harvest of maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, *njahi* (*Dolichos lablab*) and an early maturing variety of sorghum. In addition, some of the banana suckers were issued to the people of Wakor (Sigor division) who planted them along the banks of irrigation furrows. The hill sides at Wakor (above 4,000 ft) were also planted with sweet potatoes by the local people for food and anti-erosion measures.<sup>69</sup> Thus, demonstration plots had proven most valuable and there is no doubt that they contributed to the spread of new crops in West Pokot.

*Table 3.2 Seed issues in West Pokot, 1936*

Plot	No. of people	Month/seed type/unit per person
Tamkal	273	April: 10 cobs of maize and 3 lbs groundnuts each.
Sigor	118	April: 10 cobs of maize and 2 lbs groundnuts each.
Mbara	191	April: 116 people received 40 cobs of maize each. August: 75 people received 15 cobs of maize and 8 lbs of English potatoes each.
Kokwotendwo	210	April: 150 people received 30 cobs of maize each. August: 60 people received 10 lbs of English potatoes each
Parua	293	April: 153 people received 15 cobs of maize and 10 lbs of English potatoes each August: 140 people received 40 lbs of English potatoes and 2 lbs of beans each.
Lomut	820	April: 456 people received 10 cobs of maize and 1 lb of simsim each. October: 364 people received 20 cobs of maize and 2 lbs of groundnuts each
Cheptulel	606	April: 206 people received 7 cobs of maize, 1 lb groundnuts and 2 lbs of Rose Coco beans each October: 404 people received 10 cobs of maize each.
Lityei	386	April: 225 people received 20 cobs of maize each. September: 161 people received 15 lbs of English potatoes and 2 lbs of beans each

*Source:* Compiled from WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

On the other hand, while the immediate thrust of development was the increase of food crops for local consumption, the possibility of growing cash crops for export had been explored; for example, cotton had been experimented under irrigation farming in the flat valley land (the *Tow*) at Lomut, Cheptulel and Sigor plots. In 1936, a sample was sent through the Director of Agriculture to the Imperial Institute in Britain for examination.<sup>70</sup> However, as recorded by the DO, West Pokot, in 1937: "until a road was made through the Marich Pass, it would be useless to induce the Pokot to grow cotton even though good samples could be produced in the area".<sup>71</sup> He further noted that "the construction of such a road would be very costly and the production would not justify such an expenditure".<sup>72</sup>

<sup>69</sup> WSDARs, 1937 and 1939, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Chaundy, "The agricultural education", 9. The three demonstration plots: Chepareria was started in 1937, Kipkomo 1938 and Chepnyal in 1939.

<sup>70</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1936 (Nairobi: GP, 1937), 120; and WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>71</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1937 (Nairobi: GP, 1938), 48.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

Based on the words of the DO, it can be argued that transportation and communication network, among other socio-economic activities, undertaken during the colonial period were designed to tap Kenya's resources for the benefit of the colonial state and related European interests. Therefore, it is not surprising that semi-arid West Pokot, not suitable for cash crop production (but a tax paying area), was marginalized by the colonial state in terms of allocation of funds for development purposes (for example, construction of at least some durable roads to link it to the rest of the country) and, thus, remained a "closed district" in the period under review.

It should also be noted that cotton, lacking such attributes as, for example maize, was less capable of incorporation into the traditional farming systems; it encountered greater obstacles in terms of adoption by African farmers.<sup>73</sup> Pokot farmers had indicated unwillingness to integrate the crop into traditional agricultural patterns. Despite this very serious barrier to growing cash crops in the area, there were undoubted signs that more and more varied crops were being planted, both under irrigation and rain-fed farming, and there was a considerable boost in food production.

### Agricultural activities, 1939-1963

However, it was not long before the outbreak of World War II initiated a new era. The declaration of war in Europe in 1939, and the colonial state's provision of additional troops within the country and the Middle East, interfered with the pre-war agricultural policies. Moreover, during the war period, the colony was forced to rely on its own resources to feed not only the local population, but also large garrisons of troops stationed there and prisoners of war, for example Italians captured from the horn of Africa. This meant the rapid expansion of food crops, in both African and European occupied areas, at the expense of an expanded pre-war programme of soil conservation.<sup>74</sup>

After the war, the destruction of land fertility in the African reserves, especially in the heavily populated and agricultural areas of Central and Nyanza provinces, that had already become a focus of official concern in the 1930s, only to be slowed in the face of wartime priorities, now became the most urgent concern of government agricultural policy.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, marginal areas, for example parts of Ukambani and West Pokot, even though they were not in a position to produce surplus (specifically grain) for commercial purposes, experienced a push from the colonial state during and after the war to at least produce sufficient food for themselves rather than relying on food transfers from other parts of the country. They were also compelled to continue practicing better farming methods, in particular the government's soil conservation policy started during the pre-war period.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, for many administrators, saving the land from the depredations of its human occupants became a vital obsession in the post-war period. At the center of government sponsored agricultural activities in the African occupied areas during the first five years after the war was soil conservation and restoration of fertility. As a matter of fact, in 1946, £11m was set aside to be spent over a period of ten years on agriculture, and over half of the same was allocated to the newly formed ALDEV programme and earmarked for

<sup>73</sup> T.D. Talbott, "African agriculture", In: Ochieng' & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 75-91.

<sup>74</sup> Mackenzie, Land, ecology and resistance, 116; and Clayton, *Agrarian development*, 18.

<sup>75</sup> Bruce Berman, *Control & crisis in colonial Kenya: The dialectic of domination* (London: James Currey, 1990), 274.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 276; and Clayton, *Agrarian development*, 9-10.

African agriculture, mainly for the prevention of soil erosion.<sup>77</sup> The adoption of policy favourable to African agriculture in the post-war period was determined by three main factors. First, the colonial state wanted to prevent the recurrence of the disastrous war-time food shortages and the problem of food insecurity, particularly in marginal areas, from worsening. Secondly, it also recognized that unless African agriculture was assisted financially, production in the reserves could fall. Thirdly, it became imperative to encourage African agriculture because increased African production would help augment exports to satisfy both the colonial state and the mother country's needs.<sup>78</sup>

The result was extensive programmes of contour-terracing, trenching, tree planting and use of grass lays, as means of holding the soil cover in place. In the case of badly eroded areas, reclamation and reconditioning was necessary in the form of land enclosure to control over-grazing and compulsory destocking, detailed in chapter five of this study. Other efforts in promoting African agriculture included crop rotation and the use of manure and fertilizers to retain soil fertility.<sup>79</sup> As noted by Bruce Berman, the sense of urgency felt by a number of officials stimulated an intensity of action marked by the willingness to ride roughshod over traditional practices that according to them interfered with conservation efforts, and by unwillingness to brook any opposition from farmers.<sup>80</sup>

In the meantime, Africans resisted conservation measures, as they interfered with their farming patterns and their socio-economic activities in general. For instance, in West Pokot, conservation work over-burdened labour requirements, given the fact that the same labour was needed in irrigation farming. However, any resistance against conservation measures convinced colonial administrators that it was necessary to force Africans to do what was good for their land. Local administrators, for example, chiefs and members of the LNCs, following state policies, readily resorted to compulsion in organizing communal labour, under the supervision of Agricultural Instructors, in carrying out conservation work, and the whole tone of government action was unequivocal and heavy-handed.<sup>81</sup> As a result, in the 1940s through the 1950s, soil conservation measures continued to be carried out, particularly in West Pokot, Baringo, Machakos, Kitui, Taita, Kikuyu reserve and North Nyanza districts.<sup>82</sup>

When all was said and done, in the post-war period, promotion of African production centered on the improvement of subsistence cultivation to ensure food supplies and on the export of whatever surplus was produced to raise revenue for the colonial state. Africans were encouraged to grow low-paying cash crops, for example cotton, simsim and ground-nuts, as noted earlier on, sold locally to European enterprises or exported out of the country. In the view of colonial administrators, to promote the growth of high paying cash crops in lieu of food production among African farmers believed to be careless in managing their land would invite total destruction of the soil through reckless pursuit of profit. They also argued that, only after sufficient production of food had been ensured and the fertility of land restored, could the extension or introduction of suitable cash crops in African areas under strict supervision be safely contemplated. As a result, the colonial administration

<sup>77</sup> Tiyambe Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War, 1939-1950", In: Ochieng' *A modern history of Kenya*, 144-172; Berman, *Control & Crisis*, 278; and van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 47.

<sup>78</sup> Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War", 160.

<sup>79</sup> Clayton, *Agrarian development*, 15.

<sup>80</sup> Berman, *Control & crisis*, 278.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1958 (London: HMSO, 1959), 43.

under the pressure of the main cash crop producers/beneficiaries, European growers, continued the general restrictions on African production of the most profitable export commodity, in particular coffee. Coffee growing in African areas occurred only under tight state control. It was only in the 1950s that increases in acreage and production of the crop took place in African occupied areas, for example in Gusii, Bungoma and Kikuyuland.<sup>83</sup>

Generally, government agricultural policies in African occupied areas in the post-war period, as in the 1930s, fell under the Department of Agriculture, assisted by local administrators, for example, DOs, chiefs, headmen and members of the LNCs. The methods of implementation also continued to be based on education, persuasion, use of demonstration plots and various means of propaganda, but, now more than ever, on the use of force. Thus, the means of achieving improved farming and soil conservation as per the government policy, although more intensified in the post-war period, followed the pre-war pattern and continued to be grafted on the existing agricultural pattern.<sup>84</sup>

Specifically for West Pokot, in the early 1940s the agricultural campaign in the area under the direction of Chaundy and Agricultural Inspectors, as in other parts of African occupied areas in the colony, emphasized soil conservation and better farming methods to promote crop innovation and increased agricultural production. As a matter of fact, on all demonstration plots, contour ridges were made with sweet potatoes planted on them to bind the soil. The Pokot were strongly urged not to plant grain on steep hill slopes (the *Kamas*), especially in Sekerr and Mwino locations, where the land was not as flat as the *Tow* in Sigor or Lomut, to prevent soil erosion. Emphasis was also laid on crop rotation, inter-cropping and the use of manure. For example, the leguminous crop was to always follow potatoes, and leguminous crops were to be inter-planted with maize and sorghum, and if possible composite manure applied from time to time to boost food production. Besides, the Pokot were urged to plant drought resisting crops such as *njahi* (*Dolichos lablab*) and Madagascar beans, to provide a soil cover in order to prevent leaching. In addition, crop residues were to be dug in (not burnt) as manure before the next rains, to increase the amount of humus in the soil.<sup>85</sup>

By the mid 1940s, the soil conservation campaign was intensified in West Pokot. Specifically, the government funded the Soil Conservation Service of the Department of Agriculture to enforce the campaign in the district. Consequently, scouts were employed under the supervision of Chaundy and posted to various parts of the district to see to it that the Pokot were engaged in proper soil conservation methods. Moreover, through the LNC, the Pokot were ordered to stop forest destruction (for example, in search of firewood), cultivation on the hillsides and near water catchment areas. By end of 1945, twelve Agricultural Instructors, paid by the LNC and eleven Soil Conservation Scouts paid by the Department of Agriculture, were in their respective stations, by then under the general supervision of F.C. Thompson who succeeded Chaundy.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Berman, *Control & crisis*, 278. For detailed information on coffee growing and increase in production in African occupied areas during the colonial period see Robert M. Maxon, "The roots of differential development in Western Kenya: The introduction of Arabica coffee, 1930-1960".

<sup>84</sup> Clayton, *Agrarian development*, 21.

<sup>85</sup> WSDAR, 1940, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Chaundy, "The agricultural education", 9.

<sup>86</sup> WSDAR, 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Chaundy had received some funding for soil conservation since 1938. He had also advocated for the increase in number of Agricultural Instructors to assist in the campaign, apart from carrying out other duties on demonstration plots. Some ex-pupils of the Government African School, Kapenguria, formerly in-charge of demonstration plots, were promoted to the level of Agricultural Instructors. Soil Conservation Scouts were also ex-pupils of the Government African School,

Furthermore, the years 1945/46 saw an increase in organized chiefs' *barazas* held at every demonstration plot, emphasizing soil conservation and better farming methods. In these meetings, it was made clear to Pokot farmers that only those who practiced soil conservation were to be issued with seed for new crops. Consequently, their names were recorded by the Agricultural Instructors, who later checked on how they planted the seed and whether they were abiding by soil conservation measures.<sup>87</sup> By then, there were a total of twelve demonstration plots in the district, and only seeds and seedlings suitable to particular areas were distributed. For example, seed for English potatoes was issued to farmers in the high altitudes (in the rain-fed zones – the *Masop* and the *Kamas*) and groundnuts to those in the lower/hotter areas (in the irrigation zone – the *Tow*).<sup>88</sup> Thus, the years of experimentation were virtually over, and it was becoming clear where specific crops would grow better in the district.

Apart from the more arid parts of the northern and western plains, the rest of West Pokot farmers continued to increase the area of arable land, particularly in Mnagei, Kapenguria division. By 1947, the impetus given by the ex-pupils of the Government African School, Kapenguria, most of them by now Agricultural Inspectors, had resulted in a very considerable expansion of rain-fed farming in Mnagei location and much of it under the plow.<sup>89</sup> Some Pokot migrated to Kapenguria division from the valleys of Mwino, Lomut and Cheptulel, where farming on the steep valleys and water catchment areas was prohibited by the Department of Agriculture. Large farm plots were also developed by the Saboat, Bukusu and Nandi immigrants in Mnagei location. Therefore, competition over acquisition of arable land in the division was beginning to be felt, and as already mentioned in chapter two, several land disputes were handled by the DC among other local administrators in the area. Evidently, the beginning of a land tenure problem was visible in the area, and Mnagei, a rolling grassland not in permanent occupation in the past but used purely as a dry weather grazing, was now claimed by both Pokot and immigrants. The natural desire for security of private ownership of land was apparent among the immigrants, who attempted to obtain a title over whatever land they owned with the view of settling in the area on permanent basis.<sup>90</sup>

On the other hand, between 1947 and 1950, work on the 12 demonstration plots had given a large number of the Pokot a grounding in agricultural practice, and the Soil Conservation Scouts had maintained the standard of contour ridges and non-cultivation on steep slopes. Instructions were given for contour ridges to be planted with grass, and this was partly successful, particularly at Mbara, Lomut and Kokwotendwo. In addition, a small experiment was carried out in the Morobus area, Batei location, with the view to stopping sheet and gully erosion which had become a menace and was denuding the area of grass. The experiment consisted of filling the gullies with brushwood to prevent further falls of earth and the terracing of the area in an effort to hold back rain water and prevent run-off. By the end of the 1949 rains, the result was very heartening: "grass was springing up in the

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Kapenguria. In addition, Chaundy left West Pokot district in 1943, and he was succeeded by F.C. Thompson. In 1945, Thompson spent more than sixty days on safari supervising soil conservation activities in the district.

<sup>87</sup> WSDARs, 1945 and 1946, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>88</sup> WSDAR, 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>89</sup> WSDARs, 1933 and 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. The agent for Massey-Harris Company at Kitale had presented the Local Native Council with some light plows for trial in the district since 1933.

<sup>90</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

gullies and between the terrace banks".<sup>91</sup> Consequently, a request was made by the Department of Agriculture, to the African Land and Utilization Settlement Board for a sum of £600 for 1950 to continue with soil conservation as an essential method of land management, not only in Morobus but in other parts of the district. Thus, in 1949/50, a drive was made to increase the capacity of contour terraces on farms and also the digging of cut-off drains, for example in the Morobus area, with Soil Conservation Scouts leading the way.<sup>92</sup>

After 1950, most West Pokot farmers no longer needed encouragement to plant maize, nor to clear new farms, but colonial policy concentrated on the development of a greater variety of crops and better use of the available land. On the other hand, Pokot farmers in the irrigation zone, in particular Sigor division, continued with furrow irrigation and adopted maize, among other crops, to enhance food security in the area. It should also be noted here that, colonial administrators had very little interest, if any, in furrow irrigation practiced in the area. As noted earlier on, since it could not sustain large-scale cash crop production, it was viewed by some colonial administrators as inconsequential to the colonial economy.

Furthermore, very few farmers in West Pokot adopted the plow in their farming activities during the colonial period.<sup>93</sup> As a matter of fact, those few included the Bukusu, Saboat and Nandi immigrants, who, as noted, had managed to establish residence in the high potential areas of Mnagei, Kapenguria division. In other parts of the district, in particular in the rain-fed zone, given the topography of the area, cultivation was, and still is, concentrated on the mountain slopes and hillsides, where soils are at least fertile and can maintain moisture needed to bring crops to maturation. However, utilizing the plow in these highland farming areas is almost impossible. On the other hand, in the lowlands, due to the arid nature of the land, farmers have over the years relied on irrigation for their farming needs. But given the way furrow irrigation was, and still is, utilized by farmers, as detailed at the beginning of this chapter, it can adequately sustain crop production on small farm plots, most of them aligned proportionately along irrigation channels, and served by a network of furrow outlets and irrigation ducts well directed to each farm plot. Thus, Pokot irrigation technology also made the use of the plow virtually impossible.

Therefore, given the Pokot farming tools, mainly the hoe, and the farming methods practiced for generations to enable them sustain a livelihood in a harsh environment partly explains why Agricultural Instructors, chiefs and members of the LNC emphasized the adoption of maize, among other crops, to enhance food security in the area, without focusing on production for the market. It also explains why the same local administrators emphasized soil conservation and better farming methods (for example crop rotation and use of manure) to augment food production without emphasizing the adoption of the plow in most parts of the study area. Thus, it can be argued that, the use of the plow has had very little impact on crop production and farming in general in West Pokot.

In the meantime, by 1952, farming activities, particularly in Kapenguria division, and the several demonstration plots in the district were under the control of H.J. York, the District Agricultural Officer (DAO). The DAO emphasized better farming methods, particularly soil conservation and the use of farmyard manure to boost food production. As a result, farmers were required to construct sheds (*boma*) where livestock, particularly cattle, could be confined overnight, and cow dung collected every morning, for the

<sup>91</sup> WSDARs, 1947 and 1949, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>92</sup> WSDARs, 1949 and 1950, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>93</sup> Over the years farmers in West Pokot have relied mainly on the hoe in their farming activities.

production of manure.<sup>94</sup> This was first started at Mnagei, Kapenguria, Chepnyal and Chepareria. For instance, at Chepareria, the Chief's Office and the *baraza* (meeting place) were established at the center of the demonstration plot so that all those who visited the chief would perforce see the efforts made to grow food crops using farmyard manure. In addition, agricultural loans were considered for those farmers who were ready to undertake the task of making manure and practice soil conservation as a way of promoting intensive and better farming methods. The Assistant Agricultural Officer (AAO) visited farms at random to supervise the layout and cropping programmes.<sup>95</sup>

Therefore, considerable attention was paid by both the Department of Agriculture and some of the farmers in West Pokot to soil conservation and production of manure in the early 1950s. For example, in 1952/53, Soil Conservation Scouts were given refresher courses on their work by the AAO. The AAO also held *barazas* in all locations in December 1952 to remind the people of their duties towards land management and to warn them that "failure to observe proper soil conservation practices in 1953 was to be met with severe punishment".<sup>96</sup> In spite of the warnings, the age old practice of planting finger millet on steep slopes of the high ranges was not easy to break, as the areas under cultivation were, and still are, scattered in the most inaccessible parts of the district. In 1953, increasing interest in the use of farmyard manure was nevertheless recorded on both rain-fed and irrigated farm plots. However, its use was still on a very small scale, and much of the material was no more than desiccated household droppings. Very few cultivators, particularly in Mnagei, were making good farmyard muck. During the year, the Department of Agriculture continued and extended its demonstration and seed bulking plots, and a new plot was opened at Kongelai in Riwa location, Kapenguria division. New varieties of cassava, banana and sweet potatoes were planted, and in the highlands, particularly at Mnagei, vegetable growing, for example, kale, cabbages, carrots and tomatoes were encouraged.<sup>97</sup>

In spite of the introduction of new varieties of food crops, maize continued to be the most popular and widely grown crop of all and did well in the higher areas. The bulk of this crop was grown in Mnagei, and the DAO reported in 1954 that overcropping had caused a considerable decline in soil fertility in some parts of the location.<sup>98</sup> Elsewhere, the staple crops sorghum and millet continued to be planted. Sorghum was grown extensively under furrow irrigation in Weiwei, Lomut, Cheptulel, Mwino and Batei. The DAO estimated the area under irrigation in 1954 to be 900 acres.<sup>99</sup> He also noted that:

After many years of irrigation, there is no apparent decline in the fertility of the soil, and this is no doubt due to the system of shifting cultivation practiced. One crop only is taken and the land is then allowed to revert and rest under bush fallow for 3-5 years. The *mtama* crop usually yields 7-8 bags per acre.<sup>100</sup>

Finger millet was still grown in the valleys and was the staple ingredient of beer as well as being an important food crop.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *African Affairs Department Annual Report, 1952* (Nairobi: GP, 1953), 76; and WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. In 1948, the Native Affairs Department was renamed African Affairs Department. Subsequent citation of the African Affairs Department Annual Reports will be abbreviated to *AADAR*. York was posted to Kapenguria, West Pokot, in 1952 as the first District Agricultural Officer, together with the Assistant Agricultural Officer.

<sup>95</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>96</sup> WSDARs, 1952 and 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>97</sup> WSDARs, 1953 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>98</sup> WSDAR, 1954, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

However, it should also be noted here that the above quotation illustrates different views on the part of the colonial administrators in regard to African farming methods. While the DAO noted that there was no decline in soil fertility due to shifting cultivation, others, as noted earlier in this chapter, blamed it (shifting cultivation) for contributing to land degradation in African occupied areas. This latter attitude shows clearly a lack of understanding of the benefits of African farming methods by a good number of colonial administrators who were always ready to link these methods to land degradation, without taking into consideration the nature of the land, especially in Kenya's marginal areas. Significantly, the quotation also illustrates the persistence of furrow irrigation and its continued impact on food production for the sustenance of the area population during the colonial period.

On crop cultivation, in 1955, the DAO noted that beans were becoming popular and also there was an increasing demand for groundnuts and root crops from demonstration plots (see Table 3.3). As part of the Swynnerton plan explained in chapter two of this study, high value cash crops, pyrethrum and coffee, were also introduced in Mnagei on trial plots during the year. Specifically, seven acres of pyrethrum were planted on approved small plots in July 1955, and it was planned to plant an additional 40 acres in the following year. At the same time, 6 trial plots, each of 64 coffee trees, were established, 4 in Mnagei and 2 in Kipkomo, Kapenguria and Chepareria divisions, respectively.<sup>102</sup>

*Table 3.3 Beans and root crop production in West Pokot, 1955*

	Acreage planted	Estimated yields per acre
Beans	50	3-4 tons
Groundnuts	8	500 lbs
Cassava	15	6 tons
Patatoes (English)	10	5 tons

Source: Compiled from WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

Generally, therefore, there was the introduction of new crops and improvement in farming methods in West Pokot during the colonial period, but not as rapid and extensive as to totally alter the Pokot farming system. The Assistant Director of Agriculture (ADA) Rift Valley province reported in 1956 that there were adequate soil conservation measures throughout the province in the form of contour cultivation and narrow base terraces, but there was still much to be done on the steep hillsides (the *Kamas*) in West Pokot. He noted that, in West Pokot, "there was often nowhere else for people to cultivate, and the land is too steep for narrow based terraces".<sup>103</sup> In any case, farm planning was progressing more in high potential areas, mainly in Mnagei and on demonstration plots, and whether this improvement was to be permanent and to continue to spread on a large scale throughout the district had yet to be proven. It should also be emphasized that less than 3% of the total land in West Pokot is of high potential.<sup>104</sup> Lack of cash crops in the district, moreover, remained one of the difficulties in generating funds for investment in better farming methods. Although pyrethrum and coffee had been introduced in the higher altitudes, they

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>103</sup> Kenya colony and protectorate, AADAR, 1956 (Nairobi: GP, 1957), 90-91.

<sup>104</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 58.

were still at the experimental stage in the early 1960s. The main stumbling block, however, was the nature of the land, particularly inaccessibility and unpredictability of rainfall, isolated from the country's main business centers (for example Nairobi and Mombasa) and a great shortage of capital for development, all contributing to the slowness of improved farming.

## Conclusion

Indeed, as shown in this chapter, the Pokot furrow irrigation is an efficient system that has been able to withstand the test of time. It is a remarkable system based on the rich array of locally devised skills and techniques. The craftsmanship lies in the use of the available local materials and the exploitation ingenuity of the local population. Despite numerous set-backs and difficulties, caused by leaks, breakages and occasional flooding, the Pokot furrow irrigation has survived over the years and contributed to food production and food security in a harsh environment.

Furthermore, before the introduction of maize into West Pokot in about 1920, the Pokot mainly cultivated finger millet and sorghum. After the 1920s, a variety of crops were cultivated with maize grown as one of the staple subsistence crops. The introduction and spread of maize, cassava and a variety of beans, among other crops in the study area, was part of the state's policy for promoting African agricultural production in the colony as a whole. Specifically, demonstration/seed plots did play an important role in the production of improved seed for general distribution to African producers, which became one of the chief agricultural services in African occupied areas in the period under review. By the late 1930s, some demonstration centers had taken on additional functions which included agricultural training on better farming methods, aimed at better yields and soil conservation. There seems little doubt that free distribution of improved seed, under the supervision of the Department of Agriculture, assisted by local administrators (chiefs, headmen and members of the LNCs), did achieve some improvement in the yield of African grown crops.<sup>105</sup> But, on the whole, promotion of African agriculture was meant to benefit the colonial state through revenue collection.

Moreover, before the outbreak of World War II, a number of factors had already acted to persuade colonial administrators that African agricultural production demanded drastic action. This was prompted by the desire to increase African production as a way of meeting some of the difficulties of the depression, but rapidly the state became preoccupied with the apparent threat posed to the productive capacity of African lands, for instance, due to soil erosion. In the late 1930s and most of the 1940s, the question of soil conservation became a more important subject of concern, and attention to it contributed to a very fundamental shift in colonial policy towards agricultural development in rural Kenya (West Pokot included).<sup>106</sup>

However, it should also be pointed out that though expansion of African production in the 1930s and 1940s was stimulated by government encouragement, in most cases, it was more the result of an independent response to local economic conditions. For instance, the slump in commodity prices during the depression hit hard at both European and African producers. This much the two groups shared, yet the European settler response to this crisis was defensive, demanding subsidies from the government, whereas the response of many

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<sup>105</sup> Clayton, Agrarian development, 8.

<sup>106</sup> Anderson, "Depression", 321-322.

African producers was essentially aggressive. With only limited margins of profit to be gained (if at all), even from most commodity production, and influenced by many factors other than prices, especially subsistence, African farmers continued to increase their farm production throughout the depression years.<sup>107</sup> Thus, African initiative and response to the depression can not be downplayed when discussing government intervention in African agricultural production during the colonial period.

As shown in this chapter, the depression dictated government policy towards African agricultural production and the changes of the 1930s established a framework within which the policies of the 1940s came to be implemented. The Second World War was, of course, to add important parts to this structure, but to fully understand the effect of the war, and the reasoning behind the agricultural reforms of the post-war years, we must recognize the significance of the shifts in policy accomplished during the 1930s. For instance, soil conservation became a fundamental issue because it lay at the very heart of strategies that emerged for promoting African agricultural production in the pre-war period. But, it should also be noted that the force with which soil conservation measures were implemented and the fact that this was done by unpaid labour and lack of incentive for the effort, meant that people never participated willingly.<sup>108</sup>

In addition, the results of soil conservation, whether terracing on the contour, the protection of forests, crop rotation, and use of manure and fertilizers among others, were minimal and localized. Soil conservation was mainly concentrated in areas of commodity production, for example, Nyanza province and parts of Central Kenya, and in famine stricken areas, for example Ukambani, Baringo and West Pokot. In the semi-arid lands, the colonial state still hoped that with improved seed suitable to the environment and well conserved soils, these areas could still produce surplus to be sold within and outside the country and raise state revenue, especially through taxation. More important, the state emphasized crop innovation and its spread in marginal areas, in particular West Pokot, to make sure that the area inhabitants were self sufficient in food production. This in itself would mean saving the state revenue incurred on transporting food from arable areas of Nyanza and the Kenya highlands and supplying relief to marginal areas, particularly during famines and prolonged drought.

On the whole, the African agricultural sector grew at a slow and regulated pace during the colonial period. The relatively slow growth of this sector, particularly in the area of cash crop growing, can be attributed to the limited resources bestowed on the African producers and the fact that for over thirty years of colonial rule in Kenya, Africans were not allowed to grow high paying cash crops, specifically coffee. Coffee growing was a monopoly of the European settler agriculture. Up to the 1950s, very few Africans were allowed to grow coffee and even then under scrutiny and restrictive measures as part of state strategy to make sure that they did not pose a competitive threat to European growers. Despite the fact that West Pokot is semi-arid, it is therefore not surprising that by the early 1960s, the cultivation of pure cash crops, for example coffee and pyrethrum, in the accessible high potential areas of Kapenguria division, were still at the experimental stage. Indeed, official thinking and action in relation to promoting African agricultural activities during the colonial period vacillated between emphasis on famine prevention, soil

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 325.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 333 and 343; and Ndege, "Struggles for the market", 207.

conservation and increased commodity production with tangible benefits to the colonial state.<sup>109</sup>

It should also be emphasized here that although new crops were introduced in West Pokot during the colonial period, and the colonial state emphasized crop development and soil conservation among other agricultural activities in the period under review, West Pokot remained on the periphery of the colonial economy. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that matters of crop development, particularly in the 1930s, were literally left under the supervision of a school headmaster, Chaundy, and it was not until 1952, that the first DAO, York, and his assistant were posted to the study area. Despite the fact that the role of the Government African School, Kapenguria, can not be underestimated in the promotion of maize growing (among other food crops) and better farming methods in the study area, the use of Chaundy by the colonial administration to supervise district agricultural activities explains the position of West Pokot in the colonial economy. It reinforces the fact that since semi-arid West Pokot was not targeted for cash crop production, and even though the population paid taxes, to most colonial administrators it was a “closed district” with little to offer to the colonial state. It also reinforces the fact that West Pokot was marginalized on the part of the state in resource allocation, whether in terms of funds or personnel, needed for the area’s socio-economic development during the colonial period.

Nonetheless, the Pokot whose only crops a few years back were finger millet and sorghum, were by 1963 growing a variety of food crops. The new crops had proved valuable in boosting food production and contributing to food security in the area. Undoubtedly, the Pokot were also in the process of acquiring a taste of completely new types of food, some not well adapted to the environment.

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<sup>109</sup> Ndege, “Struggles for the Market”, 208-209.

# 4

## Striving for food security: Crop development in post-colonial West Pokot, 1963-1995

### Introduction

Kenya became independent from British colonial rule on 12 December 1963, and exactly one year later, became a republic. After independence, crop development and agriculture in general continued to be the most important sector of Kenya's economy.

Furthermore, right from the early years of independence, the Kenya government stressed the need to promote the country's agricultural production to meet the needs of domestic consumption on one hand and for export (a source of revenue) on the other. Of importance to this study, striving for food security, especially in the country's marginal areas (West Pokot included), was part and parcel of Kenya's national development agenda. Therefore, as shown in this chapter, in its effort to enhance national food security and commodity production, the Kenya government invested in the production of high yielding hybrid seeds, in particular hybrid maize seed, as part of its wider agenda for the country's socio-economic development.

In the meantime, the political and economic strategy adopted by the Kenya government immediately after independence was referred to as African socialism.<sup>1</sup> In more conventional terms, it may be described as a capitalist strategy, both in domestic policy and in policy towards the global system, modified by the intention (not discernibly reflected in policy) of redistributing some of the gains to the poorer sections of the community (although this has yet to happen). While domestic and foreign private ownership has been encouraged, the public sector has expanded rapidly as has government intervention in the economy. In this respect, Kenya's development resembles that of many other global

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<sup>1</sup> For details see *African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya*, Sessional Paper No. 10 (Nairobi: GP, 1965).

economies, as one of managed capitalism, or a mixed economy, as it is sometimes described.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, on the domestic front, the government has favoured private ownership as the mode of production in both agriculture and industry.<sup>3</sup> Small-scale entrepreneurs have also been encouraged by the provision of credit and technical facilities. Internationally, the government has encouraged the integration of the Kenyan economy into the world capitalist system. Foreign aid and foreign missions have been welcomed. As a matter of fact, right from independence, Kenya's leadership during the Kenyatta and later on the Moi era opted for a clear strategy of economic growth, based on a determination to keep existing ties with western countries and gain foreign aid and investment. Significantly, Kenya's economy before and after independence was and still is primarily an agricultural economy with only a very small manufacturing sector.<sup>4</sup>

At any rate, the years after 1963 witnessed dramatic changes in the country's agricultural sector. The racial division which had earlier marked Kenya's agriculture came to an end as most of the European settlers sold their farms and left the country.<sup>5</sup> As noted in chapter two of this study, the face of rural Kenya was also transformed by the extension of land consolidation and individual land tenure to the most of the country's best agricultural land.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Kenya, and in particular West Pokot, experienced considerable improvement in agricultural production in the period under review.

Thus, this chapter analyzes crop development in post-colonial West Pokot within a larger context of Kenya's agricultural production. It explains the role of government intervention, especially in the breeding and promotion of hybrid maize in Kenya and West Pokot in particular. It should also be noted that, by the end of colonial rule in 1963, maize had been accepted as one of the major food and cash crops grown in various parts of the country. In this case, it is not surprising that the Kenya government was ready to invest time and money in maize breeding programmes, as part of a national agenda for economic development.

Specifically, breeding of hybrid maize was carried out in state run-research stations funded by the Kenya government and external donors. Promotion of hybrid varieties among Kenyan farmers was also undertaken by the field extension staff under the Ministry of Agriculture. At the same time, a number of farmers were provided with government loans for the purchase of farm inputs, mainly hybrid seed, fertilizers and agro-chemicals, to promote good husbandry and, more important, to realize full harvests of the improved crop. The main objective behind this crop innovation on the part of the government was to produce high yielding hybrid varieties, suitable to different ecological zones, ranging from the high potential to semi-arid areas found in Kenya, to enhance food security and commodity production in the country as a whole.

<sup>2</sup> Frances Stewart, "Kenya: Strategies for Development", In: Killick, *Papers on the Kenyan Economy*, 75-89.

<sup>3</sup> As a point of information, the majority of Kenya's industrial establishments are primarily concerned with the processing of food and other agricultural products.

<sup>4</sup> Stewart, "Kenya", 76-77; William R. Ochieng', "The post-colonial state and Kenya's economic inheritance", In: Ochieng' & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 259-272; and William Ochieng', "Independent Kenya, 1963-1986", In: Ochieng', *A modern history of Kenya*, 202-218. In 1964, Jomo Kenyatta became Kenya's first president, and following his death in August 1978, Daniel arap Moi succeeded to the presidency.

<sup>5</sup> Robert M. Maxon, "Small-scale and large-scale agriculture since independence", In: Ochieng' & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 273-296.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 273.

More important, adoption of hybrid seed and increase in maize production, both as a staple and a cash crop, was made possible by the willingness of farmers to cultivate it. This is due to the fact that hybrid maize, under good husbandry as noted above, produces higher yields than local maize.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, since the colonial period, maize in general (whether as a cash or food crop) has spread rapidly among Kenyan farmers, not only because of its advantages of high yield, but also ease of weeding and harvest as compared to sorghum and finger millet. However, this chapter also highlights problems encountered by farmers, particularly smallholders, mainly in terms of the affordability of seed, fertilizers and agro-chemicals in the adoption and cultivation of hybrid maize.

In addition to maize, the chapter further analyzes increases in production of other crops, specifically sorghum, millet, legumes, tubers and bananas among others, in West Pokot District during the period under review. These crops, maize included, have continued to be grown under rain-fed and irrigation farming, and they have served to diversify and to some extent stabilize food production in semi-arid West Pokot. However, with all the effort placed on crop development in post-colonial West Pokot, cultivation of pure cash crops (for example, coffee, pyrethrum and cotton), just as in the colonial period, have had only a minor impact in the area. On the other hand, the chapter also touches on the issue of land conservation and its importance to sustenance of agricultural production in the area. It should also be noted here that land conservation measures, for example terracing and tree planting to prevent soil erosion, have been practiced in Kenya and West Pokot in particular since the colonial period, a subject detailed in chapter three of this study.

Generally, despite the fact that agriculture is the mainstay of Kenya's economy, the country still lags behind in technological innovation to sustain this important enterprise. For instance, the majority of Kenyan farmers continue to use farming tools – mainly the hoe – that have not been improved for nearly a century. Besides, use of farm inputs, specifically fertilizers and agro-chemicals, is still very low in Kenya and West Pokot in particular. For example, a few farmers in various parts of the country use manure, but with the common managerial practices of livestock rearing, particularly in marginal areas, in this case in West Pokot where herders are in constant search of grazing and water as shown in chapters two and five of this study, manure in sufficient quantities is difficult to collect and, thus is not used by many farmers. At the same time, around homesteads, for example, vegetable gardens are mostly fertilized by household waste, chicken and goat droppings. Moreover, in the study area high quality yield of food crops and the few cash crops grown is hindered by pests and diseases that are prevalent in semi-arid West Pokot; these could easily be controlled with effective use of agro-chemicals. But the truth of the matter is that most Kenyan smallholders, particularly in marginal areas, are in no position to employ necessary technological innovations in their farming activities.

However, the problem is not just lack of the necessary farm implements for both food and cash crop production, or fertilizers and agro-chemicals for high quality yields among small holders in the country, but that of accessibility. The problem of accessibility also depends on affordability, and in turn this hinges on resources. Those that have the resources have access to available farming tools and required inputs, but such individuals are few as compared to the mass of farmers who need them most but have no means to acquire them. Worse still, Kenya's agricultural policy has accentuated sharply a trend toward social differentiation in the countryside by favouring large-scale cash crop farmers and the most

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<sup>7</sup> Local maize is used in this study to mean those varieties adopted since the colonial period, but not hybrid/-improved varieties.

prosperous smallholder producers in high potential sections, for example Kapenguria division in the study area, as well as other parts of the country. This small number of large-scale and prosperous smallholders are offered government loans for the purchase of farm inputs and provided with extension services from time to time. But, since the production of small-scale farmers in both high potential and marginal areas contributes in its own way towards the country's effort of striving for food security, it seems clear that Kenya's agricultural policies are promoting marginalization of the rural poor (most West Pokot farmers included) in terms of government allocation of available resources. To this degree, Kenya's rural policies are contributing to a slowdown in the rate of agricultural growth and contributing to food insecurity in the country. Therefore, the problem of accessibility to technological innovation by the majority of smallholders tends to become, that of distributing the available technology among those who need it most.<sup>8</sup> This also illustrates poor planning on the part of the government in promoting food and cash crop production, and contradicts/undermines its agenda of countrywide socio-economic development.

### Crop development: The case of hybrid maize

Nonetheless, it is obvious that the most significant development in maize growing in post-colonial West Pokot was the introduction of the hybrid variety in the area in 1965. It is worth noting that at this time hybrid maize had already been introduced in the more productive areas of Central, Nyanza and Western provinces, as well as in some semi-arid areas of Eastern province. Deliberate hybrid maize breeding in Kenya was first started in 1955. The starting point for this breeding programme was a local maize variety referred to as the Kenya Flat White, which was the variety commonly grown by Kenyan farmers.<sup>9</sup> This variety was best suited to the highland climates and for altitudes between 900 and 2,300 meters above sea level.<sup>10</sup>

The initial objective of the breeding programme was to increase yields of the maize varieties already present in Kenya for both food and cash crop production, and this work focused a great deal on the highland areas with a research station situated in Kitale. The programme developed rapidly, and after a few years, it was extended to include early maturing maize suited for drier lowland areas. Specific work on early maturing varieties started in 1957 at the Katumani Research Station in Machakos district, Eastern province.<sup>11</sup>

In the meantime, work progressed at the Kitale Research Station and in 1959 germ plasm was brought in from different Central American sources. This was meant to introduce new and high yielding genetic lines into the breeding programme which led to rapid results, and in 1961, a variety labeled Kitale Synthetic II was commercially released to farmers. From the first synthetic variety, the programme developed further, and in 1964, the first Classical Hybrid was released. This first hybrid had a yield potential advantage of at least 30% over the Kitale Synthetic II.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> S. Peterson, "Neglecting the Poor: State and Policy Toward Smallholder in Kenya", In: *Africa's agrarian crisis: The roots of famine* ed., Stephen Commins, Michael F. Lofchie & Rhys Payne, (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1986), 59-83; and Abubakar, *Africa*, 115.

<sup>9</sup> Acland, *East African Crops*, 126.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; and Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 72 and 91.

<sup>11</sup> Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 91-92; and Judith Heyer, Dustan Ireri & Jon Moris, *Rural development in Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971), 50.

<sup>12</sup> Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 92.

However, it should be noted here that synthetic varieties are less complex from a generic point of view, and do not call for new seed every year, which is the case for the proper use of classical hybrid varieties. Thus, in the initial breeding programme, the intention was to develop both synthetic and classical hybrid varieties, taking into consideration that the rural poor would not be able to buy seed every year. From a general point of view, however, the distinction between classical hybrids and synthetic varieties is probably not very important for the smallholder adopters. Adoption of classical hybrid varieties may incur higher and more recurrent costs, but a shift from synthetic to classical hybrid varieties was, and is still, perceived by some of the adopters as changing from a lower to a higher improved variety.<sup>13</sup>

Therefore, with the success of the breeding programme and with the purpose of obtaining high quality seeds for all major ecological areas in Kenya, a third breeding programme was started in 1965. This was aimed at the development of medium maturity hybrids, with a research station for that purpose located in Embu district, Eastern province. The work focused on developing a cross between the late maturity Kitale types (classical hybrids) and the early maturity Katumani types. Once again this work was successful, and in 1967, it was possible to release Hybrid 511 which had a 24% yield advantage over the locally grown varieties and the same maturity length of about 120 days.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, with the release of the medium maturity hybrids, the programme was further developed into breeding what came to be referred to as composite varieties. Specifically in 1973, a composite variety, Coast Composite X-105 was made available to farmers, mainly suited to the climatic conditions in Kenya's Coast province. It should also be noted that, the purpose of breeding composite varieties, like that of the medium maturity hybrids, was to improve yields on one hand and to retain a greater amount of generic variability in the seeds than in the more classical hybrids on the other; this again would save farmers from purchasing seed every year.<sup>15</sup>

It is also worth mentioning here that the early maturing Katumani maize, named after the Katumani Research Station in Machakos district, is a "drought-evading" variety, which ripens in 90 days instead of about 120 days taken by local varieties. Thus, it requires soil moisture for a shorter period to ripen as compared to other varieties. In proper growing conditions with low rates of cross-pollination with other varieties, Katumani maize, just like the medium maturity hybrids, can also retain its special characteristics for up to four planting seasons, thus, saving the farmer the cost of new seed. It is important to note that, with the introduction of Katumani maize, it has been possible for the Kenyan population living in marginal areas, for example West Pokot, to get quite good yields, especially during years of adequate rainfall.<sup>16</sup>

Furthermore, since the 1960s, the introduction and spread of synthetic, classical hybrid and all types of improved maize varieties in various parts of the country have been made possible through official extension services under the Ministry of Agriculture, and more important, the willingness of farmers to adopt crop innovations. Through the state run Kenya Seed Company (KSC), farmers through their own initiative have been able to purchase seed and total hectarage under hybrid maize has increased over the years. Specifically, since 1964, the KSC has sold its product to farmers through its branches and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 72 and 92.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 92-93; and Heyer, Ireri & Moris, *Rural development*, 50.

<sup>15</sup> Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 92-93.

<sup>16</sup> Diana Hunt, *The impending crisis in Kenya: The case for land reform* (Aldershot and Brookfield: Gower Publishing Company, 1984), 84.

appointed stockists, situated mainly in major towns and trading centers in various parts of the country. As a matter of fact, the KSC with its headquarters in Kitale is part and parcel of maize/other crop research stations in the country. In the period under review, the KSC has been the main producing and selling body of hybrid/improved maize seed among other seeds (for example vegetable seed) needed by farmers in Kenya.<sup>17</sup>

To expect high yields from classical hybrid, farmers have to purchase seed every year, use fertilizers as well as pesti-/insecticides, and weed the crop at least twice or use sprays to eliminate weeds. In other words, hybrid or improved seed varieties demand certain management, or crop husbandry, practices that differ from traditional ones if full yield is to be realized. Even farmers planting varieties of Katumani are also advised to plant a week or two before the rains and apply fertilizers and later on use insecticides. New seed for Katumani must be bought at least every four planting seasons. Hybrid/improved maize as an innovation has been made in a package form that include seed, fertilizers and agro-chemicals.<sup>18</sup>

In this case, for the poor households, whether in high potential or in marginal areas, the main disadvantage of hybrid maize lies in the relatively high working capital requirements in relation to resource availability. It is therefore not surprising that the growing of local (or unimproved) maize, even though low yielding, has persisted alongside hybrid/improved varieties (for example in most parts of West Pokot), because its cost of production is within the reach of the rural poor. For instance, local maize seed can be retained by the farmer from previous harvests or bought at a cheaper price at the local markets. The crop can also be planted without certified fertilizers and use of agro-chemicals; at most, farmers apply manure, if available, and with sufficient rains expect some harvest. On the other hand, a combination of hybrid maize seed and manure (but not certified fertilizers) under good husbandry is known to give lower yields than local maize under the same conditions.<sup>19</sup> Generally, the hybrid package of seed, fertilizers and agro-chemicals is beyond the means of many low income households in Kenya.

It may, of course, be argued that poor farmers can be provided with credit from financial institutions to meet the recurrent costs of hybrid maize production. However, if the total post-credit yield does not exceed household subsistence, as in the case of most Pokot families and others living in Kenya's marginal areas, or if sales are made to meet pressing needs in the household, for example medical expenses, the prospects for loan repayment may be severely undermined. This is in addition to the well-known institutional difficulties of getting credit to the poor in the first place.<sup>20</sup>

It is also worth mentioning here that adoption of hybrid maize does not necessary imply that a farmer plants only hybrid variety. As noted by Rundquist, empirical investigations into crop adoption behavior show clearly that it is customary for farmers to try out an innovation on a limited scale before complete adoption occurs.<sup>21</sup> Involved in the adoption process are a large number of factors which could make a difference between complete and partial adoption. These may include risk minimization, that is where farmers are well

<sup>17</sup> *East African Standard*, 24 September 2000. This citation is based on a feature that appeared in the *East African Standard*, on the introduction of new varieties of hybrid/improved seed by the KSC, suitable to various ecological zones in Kenya, entitled, "New maize seed varieties out", reported by Winston Chisere-remi.

<sup>18</sup> Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 94-96.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; and Hunt, *The impending crisis in Kenya*, 193 and 203.

<sup>20</sup> Hunt, *The impending crisis in Kenya*, 194.

<sup>21</sup> Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 124.

acquainted with the performance of local maize under different weather conditions, while they are less certain about the performance of hybrid maize under, for example, drought conditions (as in the case of most parts of semi-arid West Pokot). Thus farmers may have a tendency to keep some of the acreage under local maize rather than “placing all their eggs in one basket” by only planting hybrid maize. There may also exist preferences in favour of retaining some local maize known to farmers, although on face value hybrid and local maize should be the same crop. Palatability has often been quoted as a major difficulty in the introduction of new crops, especially when the crops seem to be one and the same as is the case with local and hybrid maize in Kenya.<sup>22</sup> Generally, there is no great difference between local and hybrid maize with respect to consumption patterns in Kenya.<sup>23</sup> In fact, in West Pokot as well as other parts of the country, hybrid maize is not so much looked upon as a cash crop, but is rather an ordinary food crop similar to local maize.

In sum, as part of agricultural development in independent Kenya, government promotion of hybrid maize in the country has been obvious. The interest, moreover, is not only restricted to the development for sale, but more important for food production to cater for rural populations in both high potential and marginal areas, and to the ever increasing urban population in Kenya’s capital city Nairobi and other towns such as Mombasa, Kisumu, Nakuru and Eldoret.

Thus, there has been official striving for food security through crop innovation, but more important, the willingness of the Kenyan growers, particularly smallholders, to adopt hybrid seed and increased production of maize as a staple food and cash crop can not be underestimated. Unquestionably, the small farmers are the backbone of Kenya’s agricultural production. They toil tirelessly to feed the nation on one hand and produce for the market on the other, with undeniable benefits to the government. For instance, the Kenya government is known to intervene in the marketing of agricultural produce, particularly coffee, tea and pyrethrum, and, important to this study, maize, on both domestic and export markets, aimed at collecting revenue from them, which is needed for the functioning of the state. It should also be noted that through revenue collection, the government is known to benefit more from agricultural produce at the expense of most smallholders, who toil under difficult conditions with little or no support, from the government.

Based on the above information, it is clear that the introduction of hybrid/improved maize in West Pokot was not an isolated phenomenon but part of government policy to boost food and cash crop growing in Kenya as a whole. Specifically, hybrid demonstration plots were established in various parts of West Pokot in 1965, and had a remarkable impact on crop development in the area. For example, in 1965/66, 700 acres of hybrid maize were planted in high potential areas at an average estimate of 18-20 bags harvested per acre.<sup>24</sup> The estimated acreage of hybrid maize and local maize in 1966 was 15,874 acres.<sup>25</sup> This reflected an increased production of maize by 40%, and was mainly for subsistence.<sup>26</sup> In the following year, early maturing Katumani maize was experimented in Sigor and Chepareria divisions respectively. Specifically in Sigor, Katumani was tried under furrow

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>24</sup> WPDAR, 1966. It should be noted that, although the Department of Agriculture makes a serious effort to establish the acreage under each crop, the size and inaccessibility of parts of the district makes it impossible to do more than an educated guess.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

irrigation in Weiwei location.<sup>27</sup> Since this variety matures in three months, it was meant to bridge the scarcity gap between harvests which in the past had caused food shortages in most parts of the district. This also illustrates the persistence of furrow irrigation in the study area, and its impact on food production and crop development in general.

Furthermore, in the 1970s, great strides were made in the use of hybrid seed to boost food production in West Pokot. Despite the total absence of rainfall in April 1970, maize produced during the year had surpassed the late 1960s production (see Table 4.1). Seed distribution proved no problem in the maize growing areas of Kapenguria division as the main stockists kept their supplies up to date at Makutano trading center. Elsewhere, problems of transport were reported and seeds reached only a few farmers during the planting season.<sup>28</sup>

*Table 4.1 Maize planting (in hectares) in West Pokot, 1970*

Division	Hybrid	Improved	Local	Katumani
Kapenguria	2,116.10	576.67	596.30	2.00
Chepareria	62.17	411.64	637.00	15.30
Sigor	8.40	---	442.00	26.60

Source: WPDAR, 1970.

It should also be noted that the problem of shortage and poor distribution of hybrid/improved seed, particularly in the lower parts of the district, persisted between 1970 and 1975. For example, in 1973, the district experienced the shortage of Katumani seed which quite a number of farmers, mainly in Sigor and Chepareria divisions, wanted to plant. Worse still, of all the appointed seed dealers in West Pokot, only one was in business at all times and was situated at Makutano. He was expected to serve Kapenguria and other parts of the district. As a result, some of the maize fields were planted with nondescript seeds to the detriment of food production in the area.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the seed shortage, a good number of hectares were planted with high yielding hybrid maize, especially in the high potential areas. For example, the yield of maize in 1971 was between 35-40 bags per hectare of classical hybrid varieties in the Kapenguria area and less on synthetic, also referred to as improved seed. Furthermore, the 1972 crop year saw a bumper yield not only due to better seeds but also due to increased hectarage under maize production. More smallholders were willing to adopt hybrid maize due to its higher yields compared to local maize, and the year was also blessed with adequate rainfall suitable for crop production. As a result, it is estimated that 16,407.6 hectares were under maize against 4,761.93 hectares in 1971 (see Table 4.2 for maize planting per section).<sup>30</sup>

Four years later, in 1976, hybrid maize production went up as compared to the early 1970s (see Tables 4.2 and 4.3). Many farmers had come to appreciate the high yielding hybrid as compared to the local variety. At the same time, Katumani maize continued to be grown in the lower areas of Sigor and Chepareria, and also in Kapenguria division.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>27</sup> WPDAR, 1967.

<sup>28</sup> WPDAR, 1970.

<sup>29</sup> WPDARs, 1971, 1972 and 1973.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, there was an appreciable hike in hectarage under hybrid maize. This can once again be attributed to the adoption of hybrid seed by more small farmers and the promotion of medium maturing hybrid in West Pokot by official extension services. For instance, in 1979, the hectarage for local and Katumani maize dropped as the two varieties gave way to hybrid maize (see Table 4.4). Katumani maize was slightly replaced by low altitude medium maturing hybrids, for example, 511 and 512 in the Sigor area. Yields for the new variety averaged 26 bags per hectare as compared to 20 bags per hectare for the local and Katumani varieties. However, total maize hectarage for 1979 was 6,139.1 hectares against a target of 12,000 hectares for the year. The target was not realized because of poor weather and poor distribution of seeds at the time of planting.<sup>32</sup>

*Table 4.2* Maize planting (in hectares) in West Pokot, 1972

Section	Hybrid	Local	Katumani	Total
Kapenguria	3,549.0	3,184.0	0	6,733.0
Chepareria	97.48	8,803.23	35.68	8,936.4
Sigor	2.4	626.0	110.8	738.2

Source: WPDAR, 1972.

*Table 4.3* Maize planting (in hectares) in West Pokot, 1975-1976

Maize variety	1975	1976
Hybrid maize	4,256	7,535
Local maize	3,691	1,785
Katumani	64	64

Source: WPDAR, 1976.

*Table 4.4* Maize planting (in hectares) in West Pokot, 1978-1979

Variety	1978	1979
Hybrid maize	4,260.4	4,855.1
Local maize	3,495.6	1,210.0
Katumani	120.4	74.0
Total	7,876.4	6,139.1

Source: WPDAR, 1979.

Nonetheless, in 1980, there were 9,450 hectares and in the following year 10,100 hectares under maize in West Pokot. The appreciable increase in hectarage was due to the fact that more farmers in both high altitude areas (the *Kamas*) in Kapenguria and the lowlands (the *Tow*) in Sigor and parts of Chepareria, not only adopted hybrid seed but also opened more fields to maize growing in striving for food security in the area. Yet, the earlier target of 12,000 hectares was once again unrealized, due to inadequate rainfall in the lower parts of the district, particularly in Chepareria division.<sup>33</sup>

Furthermore, the hectarage of maize is likely to increase yearly with a growing population and clearing of more land for agriculture. It should also be emphasized that the yield in each year is dependent on rainfall and irrigation. In a year with good rainfall such as the

<sup>32</sup> WPDAR, 1979.

<sup>33</sup> WPDARs, 1980 and 1981; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 63 and 72.

1982/83 crop year, the district produced more than 40 thousand tons of maize. If rains are erratic or far under average, even with irrigation, the total yield may be less than half of this estimate.<sup>34</sup>

To boost maize and crop production in general, agricultural extension officers advised farmers on proper crop husbandry including planting, weeding and use of fertilizers. Demonstration plots were set up in Kapenguria, Sigor and Chepareria divisions, aimed at encouraging farmers to use hybrid seeds and fertilizers for better yields.<sup>35</sup> In addition, in the 1970s and 1980s, demonstrations on better farming techniques were sponsored by the Kenya government through the Special Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and FAO in the area.<sup>36</sup>

The SRDP started in 1969/70 as a government sponsored countrywide programme with greater attention on Kenya's rural development. In particular, fourteen areas representing differing ecological, agricultural potential and population densities were selected in which to develop programmes that would raise rural living standards.<sup>37</sup> The fourteen areas (district – selected area) earmarked for the SRDP were: Kwale – 5 locations, Taita – Wundanyi, Embu – Mbere, Machakos – Yatta, Meru – South Imenti, Murang'a – Kihara, Nyeri – North Tetu, Baringo – Northern part, Nandi – North Nandi, Kisii – Irianyi, South Nyanza – Migori, Busia – Central, Kakamega – Vihiga, and, central to this study, West Pokot – Kapenguria division.<sup>38</sup> In the specifically agricultural field, there were nearly forty crop development projects of various types in the selected areas, covering crop production, credit schemes for specific crops and crop extension work.<sup>39</sup>

The essential aim of the SRDP was to try out experimental projects or methods in the cross-section of selected areas with a view to possible replication in other similar parts of Kenya. As noted by Ian Livingstone, the SRDP was "to utilize existing resources of government staff and finance as far as possible, and to seek external assistance to support what was, in effect, to be a large-scale self help effort".<sup>40</sup> In addition, it was, of course, hoped that successful projects would increase incomes and employment in the areas concerned. In fact, the SRDP proposal was included in the 1970-1974 national Development Plan. The plan identified the three guiding principles of SRDP as being experimentation, replication and the use of existing resources.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 61; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 26.

<sup>35</sup> WPDARs, 1966, 1970 and 1971.

<sup>36</sup> WPDAR, 1970; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 80. The SRDP was aimed at boosting crop and livestock production in West Pokot as part of the national agenda for economic development. The SRDP was introduced in West Pokot District in 1969/70.

<sup>37</sup> Ronald David Garst, "The spatial diffusion of agricultural innovations in Kisii district, Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Michigan State University, 1972), 4-5; and Heyer, Ireri & Moris, *Rural development*, 4. To help research, test and evaluate the viability of the SRDP, the government sought assistance of the specialists at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Nairobi, who led a survey in the 14 selected areas and developed a working document that was adopted in October 1969 as a government report for the programme.

<sup>38</sup> Ian Livingstone, "Experimentation in Rural development: Kenya's special Rural development programme", In: Killick, *Papers on the Kenyan Economy*, 320-328; and Heyer, Ireri & Moris, *Rural development*, 4. It should also be noted here that at the time Vihiga was part of Kakamega district, but now is a district of its own.

<sup>39</sup> Livingstone, "Experimentation in Rural development", 328.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

Therefore, as part of programme implementation in West Pokot, in 1972 the SRDP demonstrations on better farming techniques were held on 28 plots of  $\frac{1}{2}$  acre each and centered on maize husbandry. Farmers who were selected for demonstrations were provided with all the necessary inputs for crop production. The demonstrations paid off as many farmers appreciated the use of certified seeds and fertilizers, especially in Kapenguria division, where 3,549 hectares of land were planted with hybrid maize as compared to 1,881 hectares in 1971.<sup>42</sup>

In the meantime, FAO demonstrations of fertilizer trials were also carried out with fertilizers supplied freely to farmers. Indeed, a good number of farmers realized the value of fertilizers in prompting crop yields, especially hybrid maize. Therefore, by 1976, there was improvement in the use of fertilizers, particularly in Kapenguria and some parts of Chepareria division (see Table 4.5 for amount of fertilizers used). However, in other parts of the district, some farmers still relied on composite manure (for example, dried cow dung and goat droppings) with mixed results.<sup>43</sup> Worse still, problems of transport, lack of funds, shortage and poor distribution of fertilizers, just as in the case of hybrid seeds during the planting season, were still rampant, particularly in Sigor division.

*Table 4.5 Fertilizer used in West Pokot, 1976*

Type	Amount used (kilograms)
Phosphatic	159,125
Nitrogenous	59,850
Compounds/mixtures	21,650

Source: Compiled from WPDAR, 1976.

In sum, by the end of the colonial rule in 1963, maize had been accepted as one of the major food crops grown in almost all parts of the country. Over the years, maize has become the most important staple and cash crop in Kenya. The introduction of hybrid varieties has made it possible for the crop to be grown in different ecological zones and has been a major step towards crop development and striving for food security in West Pokot and the country as a whole. Indeed, maize will continue to play a major role in food and commodity production in Kenya's economy for years to come.

### Crop development: Provision of credit to farmers to enhance production

There was also continued effort on the part of the government to promote agricultural development in Kenya (West Pokot included), through provision of credit to farmers to purchase farm inputs. In this case, West Pokot farmers were encouraged by the field extension staff to acquire government loans for the purchase of hybrid seed and fertilizers to increase production. In particular government loans were made available to farmers through the farmers co-operative societies and the state run Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC), among other financial creditors.

The co-operative movement and its role in Kenya's agrarian development goes back to the colonial period. The first agricultural co-operative society in Kenya was initiated by the

<sup>42</sup> WPDAR, 1972.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.; WPDAR, 1976; and oral interview with Limasia Loripo, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

European settlers in the Rift Valley in 1908. It was called the Lumbwa Farmers Co-operative Society, and similar groups emerged in western, central and eastern Kenya soon thereafter. Although these early collective efforts are traditionally regarded as the birth of the co-operative movement in Kenya, they were not formally registered as co-operatives and, indeed, until the Co-operative Societies Ordinance was made law in 1931, there was no legal structure under which they could so register. The first society to be registered under the new Act was the Kenya Farmers Association (Co-operative) Limited (KFA), which had started as a company in 1923. This was followed in 1937 by the Kenya Planters Co-operative Union Limited (KPCU). Membership in these groups was confined to European farmers only, as was the Kenya Co-operative Creameries (KCC), which started shortly thereafter.<sup>44</sup>

The restrictive policy was primarily a result of fear among the Europeans that African co-operatives could strengthen the economic position of African producers, which could lead to difficulties for European settlers in getting a sufficient number of workers for their farms. At the same time, economic organizations of that kind could become a political platform for the Africans in their struggles against the racist colonial regime.<sup>45</sup>

Nonetheless, in 1944 the colonial state examined the possibility of mobilizing African farmers in marketing co-operatives. In 1945 a new co-operative Ordinance was passed and in 1946 a Commissioner of Co-operatives was appointed; henceforth co-operatives were no longer restricted to European farmers.<sup>46</sup> Co-operative societies were started wherever African farmers had been allowed to grow coffee, for example in Gusiland, but progress was at first very slow. Registration of co-operatives speeded up after 1951. This was partly the result of the fact that rising prices for most primary products made it easier to entice African households to become involved. The colonial state was also very interested, given the political climate engendered by the activities of the liberation movement (the "Mau Mau"), to provide a means for the few African coffee producers and those classified by colonial administrators as the middle class farmers, whom it wished to succor as a buffer against rural radicalism, to market their produce.<sup>47</sup>

In the meantime, the Swynnerton plan, already detailed in chapter two of this study, which emphasized an increased commodity production on African small-scale farms, led to a rapid increase of cash crop production, particularly coffee and pyrethrum production. New marketing channels therefore had to be established, and marketing co-operatives were useful means to fill the gap. Thus, most new co-operatives were registered in Central province, and co-operative membership also grew markedly in what would become Kisii, Meru, Embu, Taita and Bungoma districts (in post-colonial Kenya) as well. It should also be noted that the majority of literate Africans in the 1950s were more focused on the quest for Kenya's independence from British rule, and thus, they did not take the lead in the formation of co-operatives in African occupied areas. As a matter of fact, government initiative was the primary mechanism for co-operative formation down to 1960.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Sylvester J. Ouma, *A history of the cooperative movement in Kenya* (Nairobi: Bookwise Limited, 1980), 34-35 and 42-43; and Torben Bager, *Marketing cooperatives and peasants in Kenya* (Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1980), 20.

<sup>45</sup> Bager, *Marketing Cooperatives*, 20.

<sup>46</sup> Ouma, *A history of the cooperative movement*, 43-46.

<sup>47</sup> Tabitha Kanogo & Robert M. Maxon, "Co-operatives", In: Ochieng' & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 371-381.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 373-374; Ouma, *A history of the cooperative movement*, 49-53; and Bager, *Marketing Cooperatives*, 20.

Significantly, the formation of co-operative societies in various parts of the country enabled African producers to improve the marketing of their farm produce, ranging from coffee, pyrethrum, and vegetables to pigs, chicken and eggs among others. Consequently, at Kenya's independence in 1963, there were some 600 farmers co-operative societies with over 200,000 members. In the period immediately after independence, the movement began to accelerate, and between 1963 and 1966 about 200 new societies were formed each year. However, in contrast to the colonial period, formation of co-operative societies after 1963 came more from farmers' initiative, even though they were still monitored by the government.<sup>49</sup>

The expansion of co-operative societies was, however, too rapid, and adequate supervision and control of the societies' management had become impossible. As a result, in 1966, a new Co-operative Societies Act was passed, and during the subsequent shake-up in the movement, a number of the older societies, for example those that had misappropriated members' funds, were de-registered, and the number of new registrations slowed down to a more manageable pace. In fact, the main content of the 1966 Act was the increased control of the co-operatives movement by the government. Thus, the government assumed the right to dismiss elected committee members in-charge of co-operative societies and appoint new ones on the one hand, and to force societies to amalgamate or form unions on the other. Furthermore, District Co-operatives Officers, who were supposed to supervise and control co-operatives, including close control of all financial dispositions of these institutions, were placed in all districts with co-operative activities.<sup>50</sup>

After a few years, in 1974 the Kenya government established a new ministry, the Ministry of Co-operative Development (MCD), that was given the responsibility to oversee the activities of all co-operative societies in Kenya, except for land settlement co-operatives that fell under the Ministry of Land and Settlement. Specifically, the MCD registers co-operative societies and performs the role laid down in the Co-operative Societies Act. In every district with co-operative activities, the MCD has placed Co-operative Officers who control and supervise the co-operatives.<sup>51</sup>

Despite government intervention in co-operative activities, the co-operative movement has continued to expand since the 1960s. As a case in point, before 1960 there was no single co-operative society in West Pokot. The first co-operative society registered in the district was Pokot Farmers Co-operative Society in 1963. Until the 1970s it was the only registered society in West Pokot. In 1983 the district had 14 co-operative societies and one co-operative union, with about 3,000 members.<sup>52</sup> Generally, the growth of the co-operative movement in Kenya since independence has been impressive. It should also be mentioned here that co-operatives are not restricted to activities related to agricultural production; the movement provides many services in other sectors of the economy including savings and credit, banking and finance, insurance, transport, housing, fisheries, handicrafts, consumer co-operatives and others.<sup>53</sup>

It has been estimated that by 1990, there were more than 5,000 co-operative societies in Kenya and between them they had about two and a half million members. The annual turnover of business carried out was estimated at seven billion Kenya shillings in 1990, and

<sup>49</sup> Bager, *Marketing Cooperatives*, 21.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 23 and 25.

<sup>52</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> Kanogo & Maxon, "Co-operatives", 371.

they were responsible for more than 60% of the national agricultural production.<sup>54</sup> Expectedly, the government benefits heavily from the co-operatives, for example, through registration/annual fees paid by all co-operatives and a sales tax paid mainly by those involved in marketing of farm produce, among other taxes collected by the government agency the Kenya Revenue Authority. Thus, co-operatives control considerable resources, and their role in the national economy is not inconsequential.<sup>55</sup>

Of importance to this study, co-operative societies have served as an avenue for channeling credit and farm inputs mainly to small farmers – an avenue that did not exist before independence. They are frequently used in promoting agricultural innovations and their factories and go-downs are often used as supply nodes for hybrid maize seed, fertilizer, and agro-chemicals among other farm inputs. Co-operatives have also played an important role in contributing to wage employment in rural Kenya. Moreover, as noted earlier on, co-operative societies are linked to the MCD and, thus, they are linked to higher levels of government and to the national development agenda. More important, their direct contact with rural areas, for example West Pokot, gives the co-operatives the potential for playing an even more considerable role in Kenya's agrarian development.<sup>56</sup> Co-operatives have thus become a most important part of Kenya's economic framework.

For its part, the AFC was established in October 1963. Its main objective was to assist in the development of the country's agricultural industry, by making government loans available to both large and small-scale farmers. The funds were aimed at supporting food and commodity production in various parts of the country. As part of government policy, AFC funds were also extended to livestock keepers, particularly those raising dairy animals on one hand, and beef cattle in group ranches on the other; this was designed to increase production for meeting the needs of the local and export markets.<sup>57</sup>

Generally, since the 1960s, the AFC has operated as a specialized farm credit institution that only offers agricultural loans and does not lend to other sectors of the economy. Moreover, it does not take deposits or provide any other financial services. Administratively, it is an integral part of the government bureaucracy rather than an independent financial institution. This is also due to the fact that it is mainly funded by the Kenya government and external donors. This also means that, as a government agency, it is supposed to be more

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<sup>54</sup> Quoted from Kenyaweb, "Economy: The co-operative movement". Website: <http://www.kenyaweb.com/economy/cooperat/index.html> – site designed and maintained by Weblink Services Ltd. A Form-Net Africa Ltd. Company, 1998.

<sup>55</sup> Kanogo & Maxon, "Co-operatives", 371.

<sup>56</sup> Kanogo & Maxon, "Co-operatives", 380; and Rundquist, *Hybrid maize*, 211. Other important features of the co-operative movement in Kenya, central to it, but outside the scope of this study are: the national umbrella organization for co-operative societies in Kenya, the Kenya National Federation of Co-operatives (started in 1964 and it is the mouth piece on the international level for Kenya's co-operative movement); the Co-operative College (started in 1967, focuses on the production of qualified staff to run the co-operative societies and unions); and the Co-operative Bank of Kenya, opened for business in 1968. The idea of starting a bank was based on the premise that, savings of co-operative members (most of them farmers) should be used and invested in their own sector, rather than being deposited in the ordinary commercial banks which would use them (members' savings) for their own betterment. For detailed information on the co-operative movement in Kenya and related activities see Ouma, *A history of the cooperative movement in Kenya*; and Bager, *Marketing cooperatives and peasants in Kenya*.

<sup>57</sup> Zachary Theodore Onyonka", "Agricultural Development banking: A Case Study of Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Syracuse University, 1968), 59-61; and Jo Anne Paulson, "The Structure and Development of Financial Markets in Kenya: An Example of Agricultural Finance" (Ph.D. Dissertation, Stanford University, 1984), 15 and 108.

accessible to *wananchi* (citizens) and provide services according to the agricultural needs of the country.<sup>58</sup>

However, the AFC, like among other state corporations (for example, the KSC), has been riddled by corruption among high ranking office holders. It is known for mainly serving the interests of the politically connected, barely meeting the needs of the small-holding producer who needs its services most. For instance, independent newspapers and magazines (for example the *Daily Nation* and *Economic Review*) among other publications in Kenya have over the years given extensive coverage of how a good number of Kenyan politicians have identified AFC as an agency well placed to deliver personal patronage, either as a source of loans for themselves, or employment and loans to their supporters and kin.<sup>59</sup> More disappointing, loans obtained from AFC through political connections are rarely repaid, and they illustrate the misappropriation of state funds at the highest level of state machinery, to the detriment of small farmers, the backbone of Kenya's agricultural production and of taxpayers in general.

Furthermore, the activities of the AFC illustrate more than a misappropriation of state funds, but also poor planning on the part of the government, in this case, in the allocation of credit needed to enhance countrywide crop development as a step towards striving for national food security. Therefore, it can be argued that there is need for an overhaul of government planning in terms of allocation of credit to producers and accountability for its distribution. Besides, the government need to streamline its lending and loan repayment mechanism and the auditing of state funds. AFC funds, among others, must be based on accountability and transparency, as opposed to corrupt means, if the government is indeed serious in striving for national food security and production for the market.

After all is said and done, the few loans offered to farmers in West Pokot in the period under review were far from enough to fully promote food production in the area. As matter of fact, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, financial credit aid was cut down drastically to West Pokot farmers, this being the penalty for previous overdue loan repayments. Some overdue repayments dated back as far as 1964; thus financial institutions, for example the AFC, were reluctant to offer more loans for economic development in the area. However, farmers should not wholly be blamed for loan defaulting. The AFC and other government financial creditors are also to be blamed for inefficiency. As a case in point, the loan repayment record in West Pokot in 1971 was lower than the previous years, due to the fact that the district had no single qualified loan officer to monitor the process. Thus, loan collection during the year amounted to Kshs. 4,750 as compared to 1970's amount of Kshs. 8,860/65.<sup>60</sup>

Nonetheless, in the mid 1970s and early 1980s, the AFC and farmers co-operative societies, among other financial creditors, offered loans to farmers, specifically for farm

<sup>58</sup> Paulson, "The structure and development of financial markets", 15 and 25-26.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 108-109. It should be mentioned here that government finance corporations like any other state corporations are run by presidential appointees, most of them who are by no means experts in banking and finance matters. More disturbing, state financial corporations are not subject to inspection and reporting requirements that commercial banks go through, and are not monitored by the Central Bank of Kenya. Thus, it is not surprising that they are plagued with inefficiencies and financial mismanagement, at times eventual collapse, without realizing their assigned duties of enhancing the country's economic development. As a point of information, *Economic Review* was a weekly news magazine, published in Nairobi by the Economic Review Limited.

<sup>60</sup> WPDARs, 1968 and 1971. Unfortunately the total amount of loans offered to farmers in the 1960s and early 1970s in the district was not available to the researcher.

development. For example, in 1975, a total of Kshs. 207,200 was offered to 28 farmers for the purchase of hybrid maize and fertilizers to boost food production in the area. In the following year, 50 farmers received from the same creditors a total of Kshs. 528,850 in loans. Moreover, the year's repayment of the previous advance to farmers was relatively high, because of proper coordination, although there was still Kshs. 40,000 due to AFC.<sup>61</sup>

Four years later, in 1979, total loans granted to farmers for farm inputs by the AFC and co-operative societies was Kshs. 446,800. 237 farmers benefited from the government sponsored Integrated Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) loans during the year (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7 for loans and repayment progress).<sup>62</sup> It is worth mentioning that, the IADP was an integrated development plan under the already mentioned SRDP programme. Started in 1976/77 as a government funded programme, its main objective was to increase rural incomes and employment opportunities. IADP was intended to combine the provision of smallholder credit and technical advice with rural infrastructure development. It was represented as the central feature of the Kenya government's attack on rural poverty. As originally planned, IADP was at first to be implemented in the fourteen selected SRDP areas, establishing procedures and techniques for accelerated and self-generating rural development, that could be repeated in other similar areas and, in particular, accelerate Kenya's economic development.<sup>63</sup>

**Table 4.6 Co-operative society loans granted and recovery process in West Pokot, 1979**

Society	Number of Loanees	Total loan given	Amount used (Kshs.)	Amount recovered by Jan. 1981	Area plantedp (hectares)
Pokot FCS	126	257,176.45	169,169.80	40,181.85	107.6
Murkwijit	109	117,030.40	112,788.10	74,224.15	88.2
Talau FCS	45	112,100.00	106,170.00	22,097.80	72.2
Chepareria	100	119,222.00	119,222.00	34,054.20	80.9
Muruny	120	268,099.05	268,099.05	22,771.55	120.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>500</b>	<b>873,627.90</b>	<b>775,448.95</b>	<b>193,329.55</b>	<b>468.9</b>

Source: WPDAR, 1980.

Generally, the IADP emphasized a "whole farm approach" to smallholding development. In other words, credit was provided for a combination of household food crop production and production for the market. Credit was provided mainly for the purchase of hybrid seeds, fertilizer and agro-chemicals. The actual composition of the crops (or in the case of hybrid maize, varieties) grown varied according to the potential of different areas. Besides, in most high potential areas, farmers were also required to belong to a coffee, pyrethrum or diary co-operative society before they could participate in the programme. IADP credit was provided and collected through these societies (see Table 4.7).<sup>64</sup>

However, since most poor households, particularly in marginal areas, are environmentally constrained from growing cash crops, for example coffee, and do not belong to (or operate) co-operative societies, they were excluded from the IADP. They lacked a medium

<sup>61</sup> WPDARs, 1975 and 1976.

<sup>62</sup> WPDAR, 1979.

<sup>63</sup> Livingstone, "Experimentation in rural development", 325-326; and Hunt, *The impending crisis in Kenya*, 174. It is estimated that from 1976 to 1982, about Kshs. 968 million was allocated to the IADP.

<sup>64</sup> Hunt, *The impending crisis in Kenya*, 176.

through which credit could readily be distributed to them. In principle, private stockists, for example of hybrid seed and fertilizers among other farm inputs, were supposed to be an alternative medium of the IADP credit provision, but in many of the marginal areas like West Pokot (except in Kapenguria division) such dealers also did not exist.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, in the study area, IADP loans, just as in the case of co-operative loans (see Table 4.6), were allocated to a very small number of producers, mainly in Kapenguria division, but with mixed results.

*Table 4.7 IADP loan recovery through co-operative societies, 1978/79\**

Society	Amount recovered by Jan. 1980 (Kshs.)
Murkijit FCS	26,004.45
Pokot FCS	11,589.35
Talau FCS	582.60
Chepareria FCS	13,878.40
Muruny	8,553.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,608.55</b>

\* Unfortunately total amount of IADP loans granted to farmers through respective societies was not available to the researcher.

Source: WPDAR, 1980.

First there were delays in the implementation of the programme in the countrywide selected areas, including Kapenguria division. For instance, there were delays of up to six months in the submission of loan applications by small holders due to lack of proper information from the extension staff. Moreover, there were delays on the part of the government in loan disposal to distribution points (appointed co-operative societies or stockists) and in the distribution of inputs, mainly seed and fertilizer, for purchase of credit. Worse still, by 1980, it had become increasing difficult to find co-operative societies, particularly in West Pokot, that had not been rendered ineligible for credit by previous loan default.<sup>66</sup> In fact, in the early 1980s, the IADP programme was on the verge of collapse in West Pokot as well as other selected areas in the country.

On the whole, the available funding for SRDP/IADP was hardly sufficient to support integrated programmes in all countrywide selected areas in order to produce a significant development impact. As noted by Livingstone, SRDP/IADP funds accounted for only about 12-24% of the district development expenditures, showing clearly that the funds available were far short of what would have been required for an intensified, integrated rural development effort.<sup>67</sup> At the same time, the absorption of a considerable proportion of funds into non-SRDP/IADP projects and into normal on-going activities of the various government departments operating locally (for example, payment of wages for subordinate staff), reduced the amount available for genuinely experimental or innovative projects. Similarly, infrastructure projects such as roads may be basic to integrated rural development, but they also absorb substantial funds which might have financed a great many more

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 181.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Livingstone, "Experimentation in rural development", 326-327.

experimental and innovative activities.<sup>68</sup> In other words, these programmes, perhaps would have been successful if the selected areas already had proper infrastructure in place.

Generally, SRDP/IADP projects fell short of expectations in enhancing the country's agricultural production and tackling the problems of rural poverty according to the government's objectives. Relatively few projects (if any) emerged from the SRDP/IADP which the government was able to replicate or could consider replicating in the future in other areas in Kenya.<sup>69</sup> In fact, by the mid 1980s, the SRDP/IADP countrywide programme was abandoned largely as a result of the problems listed above.

Nonetheless, in 1980 three co-operative societies in West Pokot participated in the newly introduced and government sponsored Seasonal Credit Scheme and offered loans to 94 farmers, mainly in Kapenguria division (see Table 4.8 for details).<sup>70</sup> Moreover, a total of Kshs. 398,250 in loans was granted to 29 farmers by the AFC who managed to plant 214 hectares of hybrid maize.<sup>71</sup> However, the soaring prices of farm inputs, especially fertilizers, continued and this forced a good number of farmers to carry out low input operations. For example, the majority of farmers applied only phosphate or compound mixtures and little nitrogenous fertilizers as they could not afford all the needed farm inputs.<sup>72</sup> Yet, despite financial constraints on farmers, there was improvement in the use of hybrid maize as well as fertilizers in the 1980s and 1990s as compared to the early years of independence.

Table 4.8 Seasonal credit scheme co-operative society loans, 1980

Society	Number of loanees	Total loan given (Kshs.)	Hectares of maize planted	Amount of loan (Kshs.) recoverd by 1 <sup>st</sup> Jan. 1981
Pokot FCS	47	247,376.30	133.5	3,626.45
Murkwijit	27	171,664.10	92.7	36,689.30
Talau	26	80,959.60	43.7	9,488.55
Total	100	500,000.00	269.9	77,804.30

Source: WPDAR, 1980.

In sum, it can be argued that in the period under review very few farmers in West Pokot District (as shown by the number of borrowers and amount of credit allocated to them in Tables 4.6 and 4.8) benefited from government/co-operative loans needed to enhance crop production and food security in the area. On the whole, government support for subsistence production in West Pokot, in particular outside the high potential areas of Kapenguria, has been limited, although it remains an important objective of Kenya's development agenda. Therefore, a lot more needs to be done, not only in the provision of credit, but also toward improvement of the necessary transportation network in the area for easier distribution of

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. For instance, between 1971-1976, the estimated SRDP expenditures in all countrywide selected areas amounted to K£2.5 million. Even though the aims of the SRDP/IADP were specific and according to the Kenya government did not require very large financial expenditures, it turned out otherwise.

<sup>69</sup> Livingstone, "Experimentation in rural development", 322.

<sup>70</sup> WPDAR, 1980.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> WPDARs, 1975 and 1981.

the available farm inputs (for example, improved seed), to farmers residing in various farming zones (both rain-fed and irrigation) of West Pokot.

Furthermore, as noted earlier in chapters two and three of this study, most parts of West Pokot are still inaccessible and isolated from the rest of the country. It can be argued that since the colonial period, the area in general has been marginalized in terms of state investments and resource allocation and thus, it lags behind in socio-economic development compared to, parts of Western and Central Kenya. Once again, a lot more needs to be done on the part of the national government to fully integrate West Pokot into Kenya's political economy.

### Grains, legumes, tubers and other crops

On the other hand, the traditional food crops, finger millet and sorghum, appeared to maintain a steady area of 1,800 and 500 hectares and 1,200 and 400 hectares respectively, in the 1960s through the 1980s.<sup>73</sup> This indicates that before maize became a popular food crop in West Pokot, the area under these crops must have been more extensive. Moreover, sorghum experienced a modest revival as a food crop in West Pokot. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Kenya government stressed the need for the Pokot to grow more sorghum and finger millet. Sorghum's resistance to drought and the availability of varieties less susceptible to bird damage are useful for more secure food production in semi-arid areas of West Pokot. The nutritional value of sorghum and finger millet is also higher than that of maize. In addition, while sorghum is drought resistant, finger millet has a quality of pest-free storage.<sup>74</sup>

In Lomut location, Sigor division, which covers a much larger area than either Weiwei or Mwino in the same division, and is also much drier, farmers continue to mainly grow and irrigate sorghum in the dry season. Farmers rely on the river Sigha, which is the main source of water for irrigation in the area. Maize growing seems to have made considerably less in-roads in Lomut as compared to Weiwei and Mwino locations.<sup>75</sup> Sorghum is also irrigated in the more arid Kacheliba division along the Suam river valley.<sup>76</sup> It is worth mentioning that irrigation in Kacheliba and Alale divisions is on a very small scale and is purely carried out as a means of survival. Thus, sorghum has remained the dominant food crop in Lomut, Kacheliba and Alale in the post-colonial period. This clearly indicates that the introduction of new crops only diversified food crops in West Pokot without necessarily replacing the traditional crops adapted to the environment over the years.

Furthermore, legumes, bananas, potatoes and cassava have continued to supplement dietary staples in the area. In the post-colonial period, the emphasis has been inter-planting maize and legumes, mainly, different types of beans and peas. Legumes are an important source of proteins, vegetable oil and also act as "cover crops" in soil conservation. For instance, in the 1981 harvesting season, 27,300 bags of beans were recorded, compared to 25,400 bags in the 1980 season.<sup>77</sup> The crop has gained popularity among the Pokot and is

<sup>73</sup> WPDARs, 1966, 1975, 1976, 1979 and 1981; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 62.

<sup>74</sup> J. Tivy, *Agricultural Ecology* (London: Longman, 1990), 14-15; Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 7; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 62.

<sup>75</sup> WPDAR, 1966; van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lomut & Cheptulel", 25-27; and Hogg, "Pokot", 21-22.

<sup>76</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 17; and Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> WPDARs, 1979 and 1981; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 62.

grown widely in Kapenguria and Chepareria under rainfall, and mainly under irrigation in Sigor division.

It is also worth mentioning that each of these crops are agronomically suited to certain parts of the district. Bananas are grown in small quantities throughout the district, except in the highest areas. The largest concentrations are found in areas of traditional irrigation, Sigor and Chepareria divisions. Bananas grow well in fertile soils and well watered areas. Potatoes have grown well in Mnagei and have also spread to other highland areas of Lelan and Kapenguria. Together with beans, their popularity as food crops has grown since the 1970s. In 1984/85 season, potatoes yielded up to 85 bags per hectare.<sup>78</sup> The estimated hectarage of potatoes, cassava and bananas in the district between 1979 and 1983 was less than 100 hectares each.<sup>79</sup> Their low hectarage is more a result of investment and management, sometimes combined with environmental constraints, than anything else.

This is particularly true of cassava, which is liked for its drought resistant qualities. In West Pokot, it is planted in small plots, or inter-planted with other crops, in the lower areas of the district. It is mainly grown along the irrigation furrows in Sigor division. For example, the value of cassava was clearly shown during the 1980 and 1984 countrywide droughts, when grain crops largely failed, and Pokot families that had cultivated the crop were saved from starvation. As a result, the Kenya government stressed the need for more cassava to be grown in the district. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the crop was also introduced to Kacheliba division and Riwa location of Kapenguria division.<sup>80</sup> Other crops introduced in the area, and grown on varying scales, are groundnuts, sugarcane, mangoes, citrus fruits and various types of green vegetables. These crops do well in the lower areas of the district, where irrigation is available. Citrus fruits – lemons, oranges and grapes – are relatively new in West Pokot. Introduced in the late 1960s and early 1970s, they are grown on small acreage of half acre plots in most parts of the district. Nurseries at Kapenguria and Sigor supply seedlings to interested farmers.<sup>81</sup>

Once again, in the post-colonial period there have been attempts to encourage cultivation of cash crops in West Pokot. Like in the colonial period, pure cash crops, cotton, coffee, pyrethrum and sunflower have had minor impact in the district. Cotton as a cash crop, experimented with during the colonial period, has not been established among farmers in the district. Its input requirements, management and the difficulty of marketing due to inaccessibility and particularly the lack of a ginnery in the district have prevented its popularity as a cash earner.<sup>82</sup>

Sunflower was introduced in West Pokot in the mid 1970s. In the 1980s, it was taken up as a promising cash crop by a number of farmers, especially in Mnagei and Kapenguria locations. Interest soon declined when it appeared that the prices paid were disappointing and farmers could benefit more by growing food crops such as maize instead of sunflower. Besides, pyrethrum, introduced during the colonial period, is another cash crop with fluc-

<sup>78</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 62-63; and WPDARs, 1979, 1980 and 1981. The estimated hectarage of potatoes, cassava and bananas must once again be treated with caution.

<sup>80</sup> W.B.S. Critchley, "Agricultural development in Marakwet: Some controversial issues", In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 19-26; Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Sekerr Location, West Pokot District, Kenya", RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 18-19; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 62.

<sup>81</sup> WPDARs, 1972, 1976, 1979, 1980 and 1981; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 62.

<sup>82</sup> WPDARs, 1975, 1976 and 1980; and Critchley, "Agricultural development", 19.

tuating fortunes. It was stimulated as a cash crop for Lelan location under the government sponsored SRDP in 1973. Later the promotion was continued under IADP. The pyrethrum hectarage more than doubled in the 1979/80 crop year from under 35 to over 70 hectares. A serious problem arose when payment to farmers started being delayed between 1981 and 1983. Consequently, some farmers neglected the crop and others uprooted it and instead concentrated on the cultivation of food crops.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, coffee as a cash crop was introduced in the district around 1955, promoted under the ALDEV programme. Although the crop was well suited for the land in Mnagei and Kapenguria locations, its management requirements, compared to benefits, appeared quite difficult for most farmers. At the same time, it was more popular among the immigrants, particularly the Bukusu and Saboat, than among the semi-pastoralist Pokot. Nonetheless, a coffee factory was opened in 1963 near Tartar, about 10 miles south of Kapenguria. Coffee farmers struggled with mixed results for some time until they were finally discouraged in 1978 by the theft of coffee from the factory. Many of the coffee trees were left to grow wild without care. In the 1980s a serious effort was made by the government to revitalize the coffee industry in West Pokot through the Smallholder Coffee Improvement Project (SCIP). The factory at Tartar was rehabilitated, extension work strengthened and seedlings raised at a nursery at Kapenguria. However, the ethnic clashes of the early 1990s (already mentioned in chapter two of this study) disrupted the revival of coffee growing in the area. Most immigrants engaged in coffee growing were displaced from their homes and most of them have opted to resettle in other parts of Kenya instead of West Pokot.<sup>84</sup> Therefore, the future of coffee growing and cash crops in general in West Pokot remains uncertain.

Nonetheless, there was significant increase during the period under review in hectarage of food crops as compared to pure cash crops in West Pokot. This took place despite the fact that high and quality yields were to some extent hindered by pests and diseases that are prevalent in the area. For instance, for maize and sorghum, cutworms, stalk borers and shoot fly have been a major menace over the years. In addition, birds attack sorghum, finger millet, maize and sunflowers towards harvest, and farmers spend a lot of time watching over their crops. Furthermore, termites on growing crops and the occasional outbreak of army worms, particularly in Sigor division, damage both crops and grass. In addition, from a weather point of view, apart from drought, crops were (and are) at times damaged by floods, wind and hailstones in the area.<sup>85</sup> Worse still, weevils on stored grain remain a major threat to food security in West Pokot.<sup>86</sup>

Likewise, beans and vegetables are frequently attacked by aphids, cutworms, caterpillars and beetles.<sup>87</sup> While green scale attacks citrus trees and coffee, red spider mites attack pyrethrum. In addition to pests, leaf rust and Elgon die back on coffee and root rot on pyrethrum have been commonly reported in the area. For example, in 1980/81, leaf rust damaged about 30% of coffee yields in West Pokot.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>83</sup> WPDARs, 1970, 1975, 1976, 1979, 1980 and 1981; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 61-63.

<sup>84</sup> WPDARs, 1970, 1976, 1979, 1980 and 1981; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 63; and Republic of Kenya, *Kiliku Report*, 11-12; and oral interviews with Wafula Makheti & Mukhwana Simiyu, at Mabusi Scheme, 20 June 1999. These two are Bukusu and were displaced from Kapenguria division.

<sup>85</sup> WPDARs, 1970 and 1980.

<sup>86</sup> WPDARs, 1967, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1979, 1980 and 1981.

<sup>87</sup> WPDARs, 1970, 1976, 1980 and 1981.

<sup>88</sup> WPDARs, 1967, 1970, 1971, 1980 and 1981.

On the other hand, potato blight has always been the biggest obstacle in realizing better yields of the crop in West Pokot. At the same time, lack of certified seed continues to hamper the growing of English potatoes in Lelan and Mnagei locations. Major efforts in trying to avail farmers good seed were initiated in 1971, when three bags of the variety Kenya Akiba was received by the Department of Agriculture. However, they were too few, and in 1972, a majority of farmers reported total crop loss to potato blight, especially those who did not use certified seed. Therefore, the estimated hectares under English potatoes between 1973 and 1981 were mainly grown using uncertified seeds (see Table 4.9).<sup>89</sup> Besides potatoes, tomatoes are also attacked by blight. Blitox or Diazinon has always been sold to farmers through co-operative societies, and extension officers advised on how to use it to control pest and disease in the two crops.<sup>90</sup> Thus, blight resistant varieties, particularly of potatoes, are badly needed by West Pokot farmers, not only as a step towards disease control but more important to promote better yields of the crop.

*Table 4.9* Estimates of potato production in West Pokot, 1973-1981

Year	English potatoes (ga.)*
1973	131
1974	44
1975	259
1976	102.90
1979	47.7
1980	81
1981	95

\* Estimated average yields, 150 bags per hectare. Actual harvests are normally 85 bags per hectare or less, to some extent, due to blight and unavailability of certified seed.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1980 and 1981.

Generally, there have been attempts to control pests and diseases in almost all crops grown in West Pokot. For instance, many farmers have turned to the use of available pesticides and herbicides, among others. Red Triangle has been used by farmers in dusting maize for the control of weevils. For example, the amount of Red Triangle sold by the farmers co-operative societies in 1971 and 1972 amounted to 120 kgs and 450 kgs in packets of 500 grams each respectively. Stalk borer and shoot fly control was also practiced, thus 80 kgs of D.D.T. 5% dust was sold to farmers in the same period. In addition, stalk borer on maize and sorghum was also controlled by Dipterex 2.5% granulated.<sup>91</sup> However, the use of agro-chemicals in pests and disease control has been more widespread in more accessible areas of Kapenguria and Chepareria divisions than anywhere else in the district. A lot more needs to be done with the assistance of extension officers, particularly in the irrigation areas of Sigor division.

<sup>89</sup> WPDARs, 1968, 1971, 1972 and 1980.

<sup>90</sup> WPDARs, 1972, 1974 and 1979.

<sup>91</sup> WPDARs, 1971, 1972, 1979 and 1980. In the period under review, agro-chemicals were mainly sold by farmers co-operative societies in West Pokot District, or at times purchased by farmers from Kenya Farmers Association (KFA), Kitale, among other sources. It is also worth mentioning that the use of D.D.T., although cheap in terms of cost, has led to a lot of controversy for its impact on human health.

Despite problems of unreliability of rainfall, disease and pests affecting crop production, West Pokot farmers have over the years grown different types of crops, as shown in this section, grains, tubers, legumes, fruits and green vegetables among others, while striving for food security in the area. Besides food crops, a few cash crops, for example, coffee, pyrethrum and sunflower were also grown in the period under review but with poor results. This is partly explained by the fact that input requirements for producing high value cash crops, for example, coffee, are beyond the reach of most farmers in the study area. Worse still, most parts of West Pokot are still inaccessible and isolated from major business centers in Kenya, thus posing the difficulty of marketing high value cash crops on the part of producers. On the whole, farmers in the study area are not major cash crop earners or commercial producers. Thus, crop production in semi-arid West Pokot in the period under review was mainly for subsistence rather than market oriented.

### Soil conservation measures

Furthermore, another important project undertaken in the post-colonial period was soil and water conservation. The most common measures used in the district to prevent soil erosion, the same as in the colonial period, are grass-stripping, terracing, contour planting and afforestation among others.<sup>92</sup> For example, in 1975, under SRDP, 143 kilometers of terraces were constructed and 6,300 seedlings supplied to farmers by the Forest Department for rural afforestation to enhance soil conservation measures in West Pokot.<sup>93</sup> In the following year, grass strips were added to terraces and afforestation measures, particularly in Kapenguria, Sigor and Chepareria divisions (see Table 4.10 for details).<sup>94</sup>

Table 4.10 Soil conservation measures in Kapenguria, Sigor and Chepareria divisions, 1976

Division	Type of measures	Size in length/numbers
Kapenguria	Terraces	17.8 kilometers
	Afforestation	3,300 seedlings
Sigor	Terraces	5.3 kilometers
	Grass/strips	25.3 kilometers
Chepareria	Afforestation	167 seedlings
	Terraces	7.5 kilometers
	Grass/strips	14.6 kilometers
	Afforestation	2,700 seedlings

Source: WPDAR, 1976.

Generally, in the period under review, soil conservation measures were undertaken, particularly, by agricultural extension staff, who worked hand in hand with farmers, especially in areas most affected by soil erosion and in the preservation of water catchment areas. Agricultural Officers held public meetings (*barazas*) in collaboration with area chiefs in various parts of the district to advise farmers on the benefits of soil conservation to food production.<sup>95</sup> In the late 1970s and early 1980s, soil conservation measures were

<sup>92</sup> WPDARs, 1968, 1971 and 1976.

<sup>93</sup> WPDAR, 1975.

<sup>94</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>95</sup> WPDAR, 1979. Causes of soil erosion and its impact on agricultural production in Kenya and West Pokot in particular have already been detailed in chapter three of this study.

carried out in Kapenguria, Sebit, Lelan, Siyoi, Talau, Chepareria, Mtembur, Kacheliba, Keringet and Kanyarkwat (see Maps 4 and 5 for specific locations of these areas in West Pokot and Table 4.11 for general details on conservation work in the study area). Moreover, there were restrictions to bush burning, upheld by both land owners in West Pokot and administrators, especially on the mountain/hill slopes in the area.<sup>96</sup>

However, soil conservation measures remained a threat to crop development and thus to food production, as many sectors of forest cover were opened up. This is due to the fact that very limited land in semi-arid West Pokot is suitable for agricultural production, and with population growth, there is a tendency for people to spread to somewhat fertile mountain slopes and forested areas that are also water catchment areas in the district. Consequently, steep hill and river side cultivation without adequate soil conservation (since the colonial period) have and continue to place the extension worker in conflict with farmers. Thus, education is the key to soil and water conservation in order to ensure crop development and food security in West Pokot.

*Table 4.11 Soil conservation measures undertaken in West Pokot, 1981*

Cut-off drains	1.15 kilometers
Gullies controlled	6
Tree seedlings planted	47,000 seedlings
Fruit tree nurseries	500 seedlings
Trash line laid	2.3 kilometers
Grass strips planted	574,000 meters
The district had two nurseries namely:	
Kapenguria – 1981 – output	86,500 seedlings*
Sebit – 1981 – output	9,400 seedlings

\* The Kapenguria nursery had tree seedlings suitable for all zones in the district.

Source: Compiled from WPDAR, 1981.

## Conclusion

Indeed striving for food security is one of Kenya's countrywide problems. Since independence the government has strived for food security and commodity production through breeding and promotion of hybrid maize suitable to both high potential and semi-arid lands in the country. Since the colonial period, maize has been adopted as a staple and cash crop, grown in various parts of the country. However, with the introduction of high yielding hybrid varieties, Kenyan farmers (West Pokot farmers included) have been able to augment production based on their own initiative and at times through government support.

For instance, through state corporations and agricultural plans (for example, AFC and SRDP/IADP), detailed in this chapter, the government has provided credit, however limited, to farmers (some farmers in West Pokot included) for the purchase of farm inputs to promote food and commodity production as part of a national agenda for Kenya's economic development. A few farmers in West Pokot, like in other others of the country, have also benefited from field extension services undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture on one hand, and farmers co-operative societies on the other, all aimed at promotion of crop development in the study area.

<sup>96</sup> WPDAR, 1981.

However, government efforts to promote agricultural production through special agricultural plans and state run financial institutions have not been very successful. This is mainly because of poor planning and frequent misappropriation of funds earmarked for the country's agricultural projects (for example, SRDP/IADP detailed in this chapter), among other socio-economic activities. Worse still, graft among government officials and high ranking office holders in state run corporations like AFC has enormously contributed to misappropriation of funds for food and cash crop production and the country's economic development in general. Thus, there is need for an overhaul of government planning in terms of allocation of credit to producers and implementation of agricultural development plans if the government is serious in promoting food and cash crop growing in Kenya as a whole.

More important, it is the willingness and ability of farmers, particularly smallholders, to adopt crop innovation that has contributed to crop development in West Pokot. It should also be noted that, most Kenyan farmers have tended to adopt those crops that are more beneficial to them. For instance, since the colonial period, farmers in West Pokot have adopted and incorporated maize and cassava, among other food crops, into their farming system, which remains mainly subsistence oriented, rather than adopting cotton, a pure cash crop. Therefore, it is not surprising that pure cash crops, in this case, coffee, pyrethrum and cotton, have had very little impact in West Pokot. In sum, farmers, in particular smallholders, tend to adopt crop innovations and also improve their farming methods, and practice soil conservation measures, as a means of increased production if they find it in their economic and social interest to do so.<sup>97</sup>

Based on the same argument of producing mainly for subsistence, over the years, farmers in West Pokot have grown different types of food crops; in addition to millet and sorghum, they have added maize, cassava, bananas, potatoes and a variety of beans among others, to diversify and stabilize food production, as a way to enhance food security in a harsh environment. Furthermore, because of variations in altitude and amount of rainfall, dependence on a diverse number of foodstuffs is the rational and best survival mechanism for the population in West Pokot. Hence, new foodstuffs have been added to a repertoire of indigenous foods rather than substituted for them.

Nonetheless, cultivation techniques in West Pokot, like in most parts of the country, except on large-scale farms and in high potential areas, are still based on the hoe. Fertilizers and agro-chemicals, once again, except in high potential areas, specifically Kapenguria division, are not widely used. On the whole, the use of technological innovations, for example fertilizers, in West Pokot leaves a lot to be desired. It is also worth mentioning here that, despite the government effort in the provision of credit for the purchase of farm inputs and the achievement of food security in West Pokot, the effort can hardly be compared to state investments in farm inputs allocated to the country's high potential areas, for example Gusii in Nyanza, Bungoma in Western, Trans Nzoia in Rift Valley and Nyeri in Central provinces of Kenya. Therefore, it can be argued that there is continued state marginalization of Kenya's low potential areas, in this case most parts of West Pokot, in allocation of resources meant to enhance crop production and food security in the area. As a matter of fact, West Pokot continues to lag behind in crop development and socio-economic development in general, compared to other parts of Kenya. Thus a lot more needs to be done, particularly by the government, to encourage Pokot farmers, if possible through the provision of adequate loans for the purchase of fertilizers and hybrid seeds, and

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<sup>97</sup> Maxon, "Small-scale and large-scale agriculture", 295.

construction of durable roads for easier distribution of available farm inputs in the area. Indeed, the Pokot have and are still striving for self sufficiency in food production, although the effort is at times hampered by recurring droughts, financial and technical constraints, soil erosion, pests and diseases.

# 5

## Livestock keeping, hunting and gathering as coping mechanisms, 1920-1995

### Introduction

As shown in chapters three and four, irrigation and rain-fed farming are important economic activities among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. To establish the larger context of this study, this chapter analyzes the role of herding, hunting and gathering in the Pokot subsistence economy. It can be argued that inhabitants of West Pokot have long utilized a wide range of environments through various combinations of farming, herding, hunting and gathering, depending upon the vicissitudes of natural and socio-economic forces, for their survival in this part of the country. It should also be noted that Pokot agricultural and livestock keeping activities have been linked over the years in important ways. As a matter of fact, farming and herding were, and still are, complementary economies rather than mutually exclusive alternatives in West Pokot. Erratic rainfall, high temperatures and evaporation rates have taught the people not to rely on crops alone but also on animals. The Pokot have over the years raised cattle, goats, sheep, camels and donkeys. Their diet consists of grain and animal products – milk, meat and blood. In addition, their utilization of natural vegetation and wildlife for food has been extensive. Thus, as shown in this chapter, herding and hunting/gathering strategies are closely coordinated with grain producing activities for survival in a harsh environment.

However, livestock security is not guaranteed year after year. During droughts, the quality and quantity of forage declines, and livestock carrying capacity declines too. Due to starvation, livestock numbers may be reduced drastically through death. Diseases are also a major factor causing tremendous fluctuations in animal herds. An outbreak of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia or contagious caprine pleuropneumonia can literally decimate the livestock population in certain parts of the district, as happened in 1980.<sup>1</sup> In addition, raiding of livestock from/by other communities has been part of the historical experience of Pokot herders and their neighbours in northwest Kenya. It has been a way for young men to

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<sup>1</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 67.

show their quality as warriors. It has also been one of few ways for young men to start building a herd which they would need to get a wife and to subsist.<sup>2</sup>

However, with the introduction of guns and ammunition during the colonial and post-colonial period, as well as to changes in grazing management, the nature of cattle raiding changed. It degenerated into ordinary thuggery, murder and theft, causing both livestock and human insecurity in the area. Thus, the consequences of insecurity – disease and cattle raids – hamper the ability of Pokot herders/farmers to realize a higher level of food security from livestock in an already hostile environment.

Moreover, with the establishment of colonial rule, particularly from the 1920s, government interference in Pokot livestock keeping became apparent. Between 1920 and 1963, the colonial government was directly involved in trade in livestock products and livestock disease control, mainly in the form of quarantines, grazing management and destocking among others. Other activities of the colonial administration until the 1950s included efforts to end cattle raids and game hunting in the area. However, administrative measures affecting traditional livestock keeping resulted in Pokot resentment, not only during the colonial period but also in the post-colonial period.

### Livestock keeping: Grazing, labour management and social networks

It should also be noted here that at the beginning of the twentieth century, in addition to crop cultivation, livestock keeping was an important socio-economic activity among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. Nearly all families had at least some livestock and a number quite large herds and flocks. Most families raised cows, goats, and sheep. Not every family, however, raised all the three species of livestock. Those families that raised stock, for example in the early 1920s, had at least over eight cattle, thirteen goats and eight sheep.<sup>3</sup> Of the other sorts of livestock in West Pokot, camels varied in number since the beginning of the twentieth century from less than one hundred to possibly a few thousand in the whole district.<sup>4</sup> Camels can eat coarse food and among all the livestock they endure arid conditions the best. Camels were, and still are, used for obtaining milk and for riding or carrying goods.<sup>5</sup> In addition, poultry has been important for subsistence, mainly in the higher locations of the district.<sup>6</sup> Almost all chickens kept are of the indigenous type. Chicken meat and eggs have always contributed to the variety of the household menu and do reduce, to a certain extent, overall protein deficiency. Clearly, the diversification of livestock in the history of the Pokot has allowed a more efficient use of the environment, permitted a wider range of stock products, and contributed to a steadier supply of food than relying on a single species.

For instance, in a normal year, milk cows and sheep reach maximum milk production in May and June and gradually taper off to reach their nadir in March and April. Goats, on the other hand, achieve high milk production from November to March and are less productive between July and October. This contrast is important for two reasons. First, with mixed

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 66; and A.J. Docherty, "The Karamonjong and the Suk", *Uganda Journal* 21 (1957): 30-40.

<sup>3</sup> Tadashi Tanno, "A Study of the Ecological Anthropology of the Upland Pokot, Western Kenya", Report for Overseas Scientific Survey, (Kyoto University Primate Research Institute, 1980), 102; and oral interview with Lopeyok Ngolesia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 67.

<sup>5</sup> J. Tanaka, "On residential pattern and livestock management among the pastoral Pokot", In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 55-60.

<sup>6</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 67.

herds most Pokot families have access to milk over a good portion of the year. Secondly, the milk production schedule complements that of cultivation. Cattle and sheep reach their peaks at the end of the planting season and the beginning of the labourious weeding cycle. Goat production hits its zenith after the harvest of rain-fed crops is complete and continues in the planting season. Consequently, milk products are most readily available at those times when the agricultural cycle is least productive. Furthermore, if harvests are poor or late, animals may be slaughtered to carry families through the period of scarcity.<sup>7</sup> Thus, livestock serves as a complement to the agricultural production, substituting for crops in times of need and increasing the variety of nutrients in periods of abundance.

Cattle have been valued principally for four commodities – milk, meat, blood and hides. Of the four, milk is the most important, since it is the most available as compared to other cattle products, and it is an excellent food. It is estimated that in any ten cows, five will be in milk during a normal year, three in calf, and two dry, the latter being kept for bearing purposes.<sup>8</sup> On average, milking cows give about 1.5 liters of milk (each) per day in the rainy season and half a liter or even less in the dry season. By comparison a goat produces about half a liter in the rainy season per day and a quarter liter in the dry season.<sup>9</sup>

Generally, milk and milk products have over the years formed the chief items in the diet of most Pokot families. Milk products include fresh and sour milk, ghee and goat's cheese. Goat's cheese is made by collecting milk each day and storing it, in a large calabash. Burned herbs are added to it and in time it becomes hard and brown, well preserved to stay "fresh" to a period of six months. It is especially useful for filling in the diet during the dry season, being collected from June to August and used thereafter.<sup>10</sup>

However, when milk is not available or insufficient, blood is taken from a live animal. Blood is probably the rarest of the products and is eaten as a delicacy. Cattle are bled for food only when they are in good health and can not be bled again for at least five to six months. Mainly steers and oxen are bled from a vein in the neck, at most yielding two pints of blood. Occasionally, he-goats and sheep are also bled. Bleeding of animals for food has been practiced by Pokot herders/farmers as far back as they can remember.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, meat has over the years complemented the Pokot diet in times of abundance as well as scarcity. Meat is most often eaten fresh. Sheep and goats are slaughtered more frequently than cattle in order to provide food for the family and for entertaining guests. In the dry season, families will, if necessary, kill a goat or sheep for food and share some of the meat with neighbours. During the worst times of the year, when both grain and milk are in short supply, people who have stock depend more heavily upon meat. In such times an ox or cow is slaughtered, surplus meat is dried over the fire and preserved for future use.<sup>12</sup> Generally, during droughts and epidemics more animals are slaughtered and

<sup>7</sup> Oral interviews with Lopeyok Ngolesia & Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 206.

<sup>9</sup> Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Kapchok Location, West Pokot District, Kenya", RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 17.

<sup>10</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 205. There is also a milk and blood mixture, which is cooked and eaten as a delicacy.

<sup>11</sup> Harold K. Schneider, "Livestock as food and money", In: Galaty, Aronson and Salzman, *The future of pastoral peoples*, 210-223; Meyerhoff, "The threatened ways", 134; & oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>12</sup> C. Ann Muir, "Responses to Maendeleo – Changing perceptions amongst the Pokot of Nginyang in a period of transition", Occasional Paper No. 14, Center of African Studies, (Edinburgh University, 1985), 37; and Schneider, "The Pakot", 204 and 311. Meat sharing among the Pokot is part of reciprocal informal

surplus meat distributed to relatives, friends and neighbours or dried and kept for future consumption. Thus, in the history of the Pokot, livestock keeping has been considered as an important method of coping with their environment and a major contribution to food security in the area.

Furthermore, management of livestock in semi-arid West Pokot has always been much more complicated than has been sometimes assumed by outsiders. For instance, the hills of the northern part of Kacheliba, Pkopoch hills and the escarpments towards Kapenguria, the area along the Weiwei and the Suam rivers, have always been grazed in the dry season. During the wet season, animals graze and browse in the plains to allow vegetation to recover for the dry season, that is, in normal years. The fallow land and the bushland on the old farms have also been used as pasture lands. In addition, the cultivated farmlands have always been surrounded by fences and the remaining unfenced area used as pasture.<sup>13</sup> Generally, in the Pokot history, overall grazing has always been controlled by the Council of Elders (*Kokwo*).

Specifically, each *Kokwo* has been responsible for its own neighbourhood, and if necessary different councils have met together to discuss what grazing areas to open or close and when. The areas not in use are reserved, and any illegal grazing on them was punished by a fine, payable in livestock, to the *Kokwo*. The system of managing grazing areas is one of importance for cattle which rely on grass for food, whereas goats and camels can feed on bush/shrubs near homesteads.<sup>14</sup> The traditional grazing pattern has managed the movement of animals, while utilizing the available grazing pastures responsibly and, more important, preventing overgrazing of the already delicate environment.

Likewise, labour management has been important to livestock keeping. Herding of stock has been divided up among the family members, with the head of the household being responsible for all major decisions – grazing, slaughtering, sale or purchase of stock. Male members of the community from ages thirteen onwards undertake the responsibility of herding the most valuable stock, cattle. Besides, goats and sheep are herded together by children, mainly boys ages ten to twelve, mostly browsing on the available bush and on numerous slopes found in the area. At the same time, camels are usually herded close to home by the very young children, since they do not need to travel so far for food. Some milking cows plus calves can be kept close to home, under the care of women and girls, while the rest of the herd grazed elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> Occasionally, male relatives, friends or neighbours cooperatively manage a joint herd, particularly during the dry season, in search of grass or water some distance from home, as precaution against predators.<sup>16</sup> Therefore, there has been a clear division of labour between men, women and children in livestock

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arrangements. Traditionally, people condemn those who kill for their own immediate needs without sharing.

<sup>13</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 66; and Tanno, “A study of the ecological anthropology”, 102.

<sup>14</sup> Muir, “Response to Maendeleo”, 35.

<sup>15</sup> Edmund Geoffrey Creswell Barrow, “An analysis of human and environmental factors in the agricultural development of the East Pokot (Nginyang Division), Baringo District, Kenya: A Case Study, Vol, I” (M.A. Thesis, Antioch International, 1985), 51-52; and Tanno, “A study of the ecological anthropology”, 104.

<sup>16</sup> Oral interview with Lopeyok Ngolesia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

keeping. The men have been responsible for the herds, although women milk the animals and can, and do, have some rights over some animals.<sup>17</sup>

However, severe drought and disease, which occur at least once in five to seven years, can decimate herds of livestock and bring families to poverty and famine within a very short time.<sup>18</sup> One of the ways through which Pokot families have over the years tried to reduce the danger of complete loss of livestock is through *Tilia* (literally meaning “joint cow ownership”). It is an insurance system. The system has always been based on the exchange of a cow for a steer or an ox, with the provision that one who receives the cow is also obliged to give the original owner some of the calves. The cow provides milk for the person who receives it. There are no ceremonial overtones in the exchange, and those who exchange stock in this way are motivated only by its utility. Mainly, the exchange has always been between clan members or between best friends, and it is only effected after negotiations have been formalized. Witnesses have been usually present so that a man can be held to his word.<sup>19</sup>

Outside of the bride wealth, *Tilia* has been probably the most important method of exchange of cattle, and also sheep and goats. Based on research findings in places such as Weiwei, where inhabitants have always concentrated on irrigation farming, and thus have had few cattle, it has been possible to exchange goats or sheep. It is possible also to loan a milking cow to a neighbour who can decide to keep it and arrange *Tilia* after having it for sometime. If the owner of a cow requested grain, or goats or sheep, joint ownership could be established. However, a cow can never be exchanged for another cow nor an ox for an ox, but a cow can be given for goats or sheep or even grain, instead of an ox. Besides, only the best type of stock has always been used in the exchange, and neither a poor milking cow nor poor ox would be acceptable. *Tilia* has been known to continue until the original cow and all its female offsprings have died and may last for several generations. *Tilia* can be inherited from father to sons and even grandsons.<sup>20</sup>

Significantly, *Tilia* has always enabled male members of the Pokot community to secure oxen needed for ceremonies, for example, the *Sapana* (the initiation of young men into manhood). Or when prompted by pressure of other circumstances, most commonly when required to provide an ox for a fine, bride wealth, community feast, or similar events, a cow often is placed in the hands of another man. Besides, *Tilia* has always given male members of the Pokot community the right to claim assistance, for example, to borrow food from their *Tilia* partners when in need. At the same time, *Tilia* has always elevated a man’s social status in the society. It gives prestige to a man who has exchanged cows with his relatives, friends and neighbours.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Zaal, van Tienhoven & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Masol”, 21. Women, particularly widows, normally have rights on some animals among the Pokot.

<sup>18</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 66.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.; Enos Hudson Nthia Njeru, “The farming herders: Irrigation, reciprocity and marriage among the Turkana pastoralists of North-Western Kenya” (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 1984), 47-48; and Schneider, “The Pakot”, 264 and 267.

<sup>20</sup> Esther Moonen & Hans Verolme, *Sharing the land of abundance: The history and application of population carrying capacity models, A case From West Pokot, Kenya* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1991), 108; Schneider, “The Pakot”, 265 and 268; and oral interviews with Lopeyok Ngolesia & Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>21</sup> H.K. Schneider, “Pakot resistance to change”, In: *Continuity and change in African cultures*, ed., H. Bascom & M. Herskovits, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 144-167; Schneider, “The Pakot”, 264-266; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 66; and oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

Furthermore, *Tilia* has always acted as a method of dispersing wealth widely, thus insuring against loss of all animals in the event of cattle raids or disease, and acting as some sort of guarantee that affected parties would not be left destitute. To this widespread practice, the Pokot have added a variation in their institutionalized trading partnership between the men. No doubt, one of the latent functions of *Tilia* has been the cohesiveness that it adds to the Pokot society, since it binds Pokot families everywhere in a complex network of rights that are related to subsistence. Indeed, over the years *Tilia* has created obligatory ties outside the clan and neighbourhood, thus broadening a man and his family's association in the community and giving them greater economic security.<sup>22</sup>

By the same token, lending and borrowing as coping mechanisms have always been frequent among Pokot families. For example, if a woman had no food she could approach a neighbour who, if able, would help with grain, flour or whatever food available. While lending and borrowing are very common, particularly of milk and vegetables among women; there is very little free gift giving. Someday one is expected to reciprocate. These arrangements have never been regarded as economic debts, but are all the same expected from those considered in a position to help.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, cooperation in such subsistence acts as house building, herding, cultivation (especially irrigation), and the borrowing of milk, grain and other goods from relatives and neighbours have been dependent not only on the willingness to reciprocate but on the maintenance of good relations.<sup>24</sup>

It has always been common for households to share food with other households when food is available in adequate quantities. The spatial dimension of a drought, however, inhibits the utility of this strategy – since food production is reduced over a wider area.<sup>25</sup> All the same, members of the Pokot community have always attained social support by creating and maintaining a wide network of social ties. They nourish relations with clansmen who are dependable, and seek to establish associational ties with strangers through institutionalized friendships and *Tilia*. By the same token, they have always maintained good relations with their immediate neighbours in order to ensure cooperation and food security.<sup>26</sup>

In sum, apart from crop cultivation under irrigation and rain-fed farming, livestock keeping has always been an important adaptive food production system among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. Over the years, grains have been complemented by animal products – milk, blood and meat – for nutritional purposes, and, more important, as a coping mechanism in a harsh environment. Through *Tilia* as well as lending and borrowing based on

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<sup>22</sup> Harold K. Schneider, "The subsistence role of cattle among the Pakot and in east Africa", *American Anthropology* 59, 2 (1957): 278-300; Schneider, "The Pakot", 265; and Schneider, "Pakot resistance to change", 152.

<sup>23</sup> Jean Mable Brainard, "Herders to farmers: The effects of settlement on demography of the Turkana of Kenya" (Ph.D. Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1981), 81-82; Muir, "Response to Maendeleo", 38; Moonen & Verolme, *Sharing the land of abundance*, 136; and Oral interview with Cheptoo Kiprop, at Sigor market, 4 July 1995. For instance, a woman after giving birth will be given practical help and support by co-wives and neighbors who will bring her food, water and local medicine. She will, in turn, do the same for them in the event of their getting a baby.

<sup>24</sup> Schneider, "The subsistence role of cattle among the Pakot", 285-286. Lending and borrowing is frequent among the Pokot, but this does not include free loan of cattle.

<sup>25</sup> B.F. Maganda, "Surveys and activities of the Central Bureau of statistics related to food monitoring", In: *Coping with drought in Kenya: National and local strategies*, ed., Thomas E. Downing, Kang'ethe W. Gitu and Crispin M. Kamau, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1989), 106-112.

<sup>26</sup> Schneider, "The subsistence role of cattle among the Pakot", 290; and Oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

reciprocity, Pokot families have been able to forge socio-economic networks beyond blood relations, all aimed at strengthening the community's survival strategies, in one of Kenya's marginal areas. Thus, in the history of the Pokot, crop cultivation and livestock keeping among other subsistence acts (for example, trade, and hunting and gathering), detailed in subsequent parts of this study, have contributed to food security and Pokot survival in northwest Kenya.

### Livestock keeping and the impact of colonialism: The case of destocking, 1920-1963

With the establishment of colonial rule in Kenya and West Pokot in particular, the colonial state in one way or another interfered with African livestock keeping and utilization. For instance, considerable grazing land was removed from the traditional range system in the first two decades of the twentieth century to provide land for European occupation in Kenya. As a matter of fact, most of the land alienated for European settlement was located in the most productive regions of the Kenya highlands and parts of the Rift Valley, and affected livestock keeping practices of, for example, the Maasai in present Uasin Gishu, Laikipia, Narok and Kajiado districts. Kalenjin speakers, the Nandi and Kipsigis, also lost much of their agricultural and grazing land to European settlers, in the present Rift Valley province. Specifically, for West Pokot, as shown in chapter two of this study, although the inhabitants did not suffer from land alienation *per se*, acquisition of Kitale plains in the neighbouring Trans Nzoia for European settlement interfered with their traditional grazing management and cattle movement, particularly during the dry season, which affected the search of grazing pasture and water.

Furthermore, by the mid 1920s, some colonial administrators argued that Africans, particularly herders in Kenya's marginal areas, were keeping more cattle than the land could hold; thus leading to overgrazing and contributing to land degradation in one way or another. They further argued that it was extremely important to restore the natural grass cover in the affected areas of these parts of the colony for sustenance of livestock and agricultural production. To this end, the colonial administrators called for culling of livestock, popularly known as destocking, mainly in pastoral areas of the Kenya colony.<sup>27</sup>

This call became a reality from the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s, when the same administrators argued that there was widespread evidence that soil erosion in Kenya's pastoral areas was mainly caused by overgrazing. In the same tone, the interconnected problems of land degradation and overstocking were hotly debated by the veterinary section of the colonial administration. Both groups – administrators and the veterinary staff – concluded that pastoral areas of Kenya, most of which were arid and semi-arid in nature, were becoming impoverished. Consequently, the colonial state's response to this situation was the implementation of the destocking policy, to cull the cattle either by some form of cattle tax or compulsory purchase of animals, purportedly as a check on land degradation. Therefore, throughout the 1930s, pastoral areas, for example, Machakos, Kitui, Baringo, Elgeyo, Marakwet and West Pokot among others, were all affected by the destocking policy.<sup>28</sup>

However, it should be noted that, right from the beginning, destocking policy was met with strong resistance from African herders. Worse still, the droughts of 1927-1929 and

<sup>27</sup> Mackenzie, Land, ecology and resistance, 119.

<sup>28</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 99-100; and Anderson, "Depression", 330-331.

1933-1934 took a heavy toll on African livestock, particularly in the pastoral areas of the Rift Valley (West Pokot included) and in northeastern part of the country. But to the surprise of the African herders, these natural calamities did little to divert the colonial state's policy of destocking, thus, fueling African resentment against the policy and its related activities.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, these periods of drought coincided with the Great Depression (detailed in chapter 3 of this study), which in one way or another did much to prompt the colonial state to intensify destocking in African occupied areas. In response to the depression, the colonial administrators forced Africans to dispose of their stock at throw away prices to government licenced buyers (an aspect discussed fully in chapter 6 of this study), making it easier for the state to raise the much needed revenue, to sustain state functions and the colonial economy in the face of "collapse" of European settler agriculture.

It should further be noted that overstocking and overgrazing are relative terms, and the difficulty of measuring these two aspects makes it absurd that they were used as deciding factors in the implementation of destocking in African occupied areas in the 1930s and beyond.<sup>30</sup> As noted by Richard Waller and Neal Sobania, far from being overstocked, some pastoral areas may have been understocked, both in terms of the carrying capacity of the rangeland and of the family subsistence requirements.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, given the fact that in Kenya, droughts occur at least every three to five years, and in almost all cases take a heavy toll on livestock, naturally overstocking could not have been a serious problem to warrant the implementation of destocking policy, particularly in Kenya's marginal areas. Therefore, destocking, as one of the key issues of policy and implementation in the colonial period, may have been addressing the wrong problem and thus, compulsion was used where none was required.<sup>32</sup>

In this case, one can argue that destocking was not motivated by the concern of herders' welfare, but for the benefit of the colonial state. The colonial state used overstocking as an excuse to forcefully acquire animals from African areas at throw away prices to meet the needs of the domestic and export markets. For example, at the peak of the depression in the 1930s, the Maasai, Kamba and Pokot among other herders, were compelled to reduce their animals, mainly earmarked for slaughter, and others, particularly bulls, were forcibly sold to European farmers for breeding purposes. Thus, in addition to hut and poll taxes imposed on Africans, through livestock sales the state was able to obtain the much needed revenue for its own functioning. Indeed, increased destocking not only denied most Africans, in particular Pokot families, their use of animal products, but in the long run it also undermined their stock reproduction and accumulation cycles that were anchored in the agro-pastoral economy.<sup>33</sup>

It is also worth mentioning that government policy on destocking was based on the presumption that the potential value of African-owned livestock to the colony was immense, but by the 1920s and 1930s, to a large extent its use had been limited to merely a token passed between families in payment of bride wealth. This custom, according to

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, "Depression", 332.

<sup>30</sup> Lovell S. Jarvis, "Overgrazing and range degradation in Africa: Is there need and scope for government control of livestock numbers?", *Eastern African Economic Review* 7, 1 (1991): 95-116.

<sup>31</sup> Richard Waller & Neal W. Sobania, "Pastoralism in historical perspective", In: *African pastoralist systems*, ed., Elliot Fratkin, Kathleen A. Galvin & Eric Abella Roth, (Boulder and London: Lynne Rienner, 1994), 45-68.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>33</sup> Jarvis, "Overgrazing and range degradation", 95; and Ndege, "Struggles for the market", 148.

colonial administrators, was partly responsible for the overstocking of African occupied areas, with consequent deterioration of the available grazing land.<sup>34</sup>

Therefore, according to the colonial administration, the problems which African-owned livestock presented to the government and for which the solutions were not easy to find, were how to accommodate numbers to the carrying capacity of African grazing areas, improve the quality of the stock, turn the stock to economic use, and eradicate disease.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, the administration argued that, although to Africans stock was currency and wealth, the general system of the communal grazing militated against the control of numbers.<sup>36</sup> This led to the following irrational statement:

If a man has a fence or definitely limited area on which to graze his cattle he will soon find by experience how many head his land will carry. But when an indefinite number of Africans have equal rights to graze unlimited herds of stock over a large communal area, there is no incentive for one individual to limit his herd unless all his neighbours are prepared to do the same. Yet, the African society is not yet so organized as to contemplate any such arrangement. The individual therefore collects as many head of cattle as he can and if he can not find suitable grazing in his own Reserve he is apt to wander over boundaries of that Reserve on to European farms, unalienated Crown Land or Forest Reserve.<sup>37</sup>

Thus, based on a wrong premise, destocking was recommended as the quickest and least expensive means of making livestock keeping meaningful in African occupied areas.

Yet, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, African traditional systems, in particular the Pokot grazing pattern, had evolved within a framework of common access to land and water. This framework appears to have been well suited to the environmental conditions faced in semi-arid West Pokot, where rainfall is low, seasonal and highly unstable. Generally, traditional range management systems in Kenya's marginal areas enabled herders to exploit the available resources in ways which were, at least in many dimensions, efficient.<sup>38</sup> In this case, government intervention through destocking, citing overgrazing as the main factor, caused by African grazing patterns over a large communal area, was indeed uncalled for. In retrospect, destocking was tantamount to colonial exploitation of African livestock owners.

Specifically for West Pokot, the colonial administration estimated in 1931 that Pokot herders had about 320,000 head of cattle, and worked out a ratio at 13 animals to every household. As a result, it was asserted that such enormous numbers of cattle had eaten West Pokot District out of grass, and the only solution to land degradation was destocking.<sup>39</sup> Expectedly, destocking was carried out in West Pokot from the 1930s through the 1950s. For example, as part of destocking policy, over 3,000 head of cattle, from Kipkomo, Chepareria division alone, were cheaply obtained for soldiers as part of the war effort in 1941.<sup>40</sup> This was based on unfounded justifications that in the 1930s and early 1940s, West Pokot experienced gross overstocking, as the number of cattle was abnormally increased by the immigration of the Nandi and Saboat from the Trans Nzoia (European settler) farms to the area. On the same note, the colonial administration stressed that Kapenguria division, in particular Mnagei location, had absorbed most of the immigrants, and besides overstocking, the area under cultivation was increasing rapidly, leading to land

<sup>34</sup> NADAR, 1930, 62.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Jarvis, "Overgrazing and range degradation", 96.

<sup>39</sup> NADAR, 1931, 33.

<sup>40</sup> Vermaat, "Locational development profile: Kipkomo", 23.

degradation. The administration further noted that in addition to Kapenguria division, the western plains near the Suam river and the dry weather grazing in the high region of the Cherengani Hills, among others areas in West Pokot, were steadily deteriorating. Thus, outlets for surplus cattle were essential to reduce the number of stock to land carrying capacity in the area.<sup>41</sup>

In the 1950s, according to the colonial administration, over-stocking continued to constitute the most serious problem facing the African areas of the Rift Valley province. As a matter of fact, all DCs in the province met in 1952 in search of solutions to prevent further land deterioration in their areas presumably due to overstocking. As a result, they suggested that a permanent outlet for surplus cattle was an essential preliminary to any plan for reducing the number of stock to land carrying capacity and, if regular sales (with good prices paid) were emphasized, this would develop into the most valuable method of conserving and improving the districts.<sup>42</sup>

The DCs also pointed out the necessity for an accurate stock census being made before any measures for destocking could be undertaken.<sup>43</sup> Specifically for West Pokot, a stock census was carried out in 1952. There was opposition in Sekerr and Masol locations, but it was completed without major incident. The total stock figures for the district were placed at approximately 135,500 goats, 120,000 cattle and 42,000 sheep at the beginning of the year. Commenting on the figures, the DC noted that “there was localized overstocking, but the district as a whole could carry these numbers without any problems”.<sup>44</sup>

However, in April 1955 the question of overstocking was once again considered at the District Commissioners' meeting, and, as a result, a report was prepared on the subject and forwarded to the ALDEV Board. After this, the board recommended that a special committee be appointed to once again look into destocking measures. At the request of the board, therefore, a committee was then appointed consisting of the Provincial Veterinary Officer, the District Commissioner, Kitale (Trans Nzoia district), and the Senior Livestock Officer, Rift Valley province. After various sittings, the committee came up with a report detailing requirements and steps of destocking that was unanimously accepted at a District Commissioners' meeting on 5 October 1955 and was forwarded to the government for appropriate action.<sup>45</sup>

Consequently, steps were taken to implement the committee's report in all districts of the province. Specifically in West Pokot, a district *baraza* was held in 1956 to once again enforce destocking as recommended by the report.<sup>46</sup> By 1959/60, various steps were taken to further reduce the number of stock in the whole district. First, Individual Destocking Notices were issued under the ADC. Then, Individual and Locational Quota Systems were introduced as steps towards stock reduction. Last, but not least, the Reduction of Livestock

<sup>41</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Nandi and Saboat immigrants from Trans Nzoia, who ended up in West Pokot, were mainly squatters who had been kicked out of European farms together with their livestock. The European farmers strongly believed that African owned livestock was poorly kept and were the source of diseases that affected their stock.

<sup>42</sup> Kenya colony and protectorate, *AADAR*, 1955 (Nairobi: GP, 1956), 85.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Given the fact that, in 1931, animals in the study area were estimated to be about 320,000, and in 1952 about 120,000, this shows clearly the impact of destocking policy, particularly during World War II, on Pokot livestock keeping in the period under review.

<sup>45</sup> *AADAR*, 1955, 85; and Zaal, van Tienhoven & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Masol”, 25.

<sup>46</sup> Handing over report, A.D. Shirreff to E.H. Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4. Shirreff was by then the DC, West Pokot, and Risley was the incoming DC (1959). There is no evidence to indicate that West Pokot was overstocked, but in either way, government policy had to be implemented.

bylaw became operative from September 1959, and was to be effective until August 1960. In the meantime, destocking files were kept by the DO, Kapenguria, and each Chief had a list of his location's stock owners with their quotas.<sup>47</sup>

However, Mnagei and Lelan had had reductions based on individual quota system since 1957 and Riwa since 1958. Batei and Kipkomo were new additions to the Individual Quota System in 1959. In Batei, the rather severe method was adopted of making everyone with at least five head of cattle (h/c) to sell one or more animals. While in Sook, a flat locational quota of 300 h/c every two months had to be produced either at Ortum or Kishaunet sale-yards, based on 10% of the total locational holding.<sup>48</sup> In Masol, Sekerr and Mwino, a flat locational quota of 50 h/c every two months had to be produced at Ortum. Meanwhile, Lomut, Cheptulel and Weiwei had to produce a flat locational quota of sheep and goats: Lomut 200, Cheptulel 200 and Weiwei 125, based on the 1958 locational holding of small stock. No set cattle quota was imposed, but people there could produce one slaughter animal in lieu of 5 goats if they wanted to.<sup>49</sup>

Commenting on destocking in 1959, the outgoing DC, Shirreff, noted:

I make no claim that this system is perfect. Strict adherence to quotas requires persistence by the administrative staff. But, limited administrative staff in the latter part of 1958 and the first part of 1959 meant that supervision was inadequate.<sup>50</sup>

Shirreff further noted that although it was anticipated by the government that in 1959 West Pokot was to produce nearly 9,000 h/c, "there had been moans about destocking," and the Pokot were not by any means ready to part with their animals.<sup>51</sup>

As a matter of fact, since the 1930s the Pokot had been openly opposed to destocking. For example, destocking met severe opposition in Lelan, and the administration had to use force to implement individual quotas in the area. Still, the real cattle sales for Lelan in 1958 were one of the worst in the district as only 40% of the quota was realized.<sup>52</sup> In Sigor division, locational quotas were still a fairly new idea in 1959, and the local population was openly opposed to it. In particular, the people preferred to exchange their stock for food or money than go by either Locational or Individual quotas imposed by the government. Yet the idea of exchanging small stock for food was not popular with the administration, and it was necessary for the Pokot to maintain a firm front. At the same time, destocking in Lomut and Cheptulel was more resented in 1958/59, mainly because their neighbours the Marakwet "jeered at them for being such fools as to do what they were told by the government".<sup>53</sup>

Undoubtedly, between 1960 and 1963, resistance against destocking was felt all over West Pokot, and the result was a strong anti-government feeling among Pokot herders.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. Individual Quota System was: 1 in 10 quota on each individual, based on his counted stock figures. That is, one out of ten animals subject to destocking measures.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Handing over report, C.J.W. Minter to A.J. Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4; and Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lelan Location, West Pokot District, Kenya", RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 18-19. Minter was the DO, Kapenguria, at the time, and Foster, the DC, West Pokot.

<sup>53</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4; and Oral interview with Terengelo Kiptum, at Sigor market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>54</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lelan", 18-19.

Most Pokot herders mainly wondered if destocking was ever going to stop and this was balanced by a growing desire to sell stock on their own account in order to obtain money or food during the dry season. Therefore, Pokot herders were opposed to reduction of stock that was not only their wealth but also their food and currency. Besides, knowing how *Tilia* works, it is possible to understand the Pokot resentment against destocking. To the Pokot the government was attempting to destroy *Tilia*, an important socio-economic institution and a coping mechanism against stock raids and disease.<sup>55</sup> Thus, although total figures of animal disposal over the years through destocking were not available to the researcher, it is clear that continuous reduction of livestock meant endangering Pokot survival in a harsh environment.

### Livestock keeping and the impact of colonialism: Grazing schemes, 1930-1963

One of the most important effects of colonialism on livestock keeping in Kenya, and West Pokot in particular, was the establishment of grazing schemes as part of controlled grazing and stock management in the country's pastoral areas. The Specific goals of grazing schemes, according to colonial administrators, were to heal the existing damage to the land caused by overgrazing, to prevent further erosion, and to increase the carrying capacity of the land through sound livestock management.<sup>56</sup>

First, small-scale experimental grazing schemes were set up in the early 1930s in present day Machakos and Baringo districts. In both areas, according to the colonial administrators, experiments ranging from one to two years demonstrated that rested pasture could recover and that proper grazing management could be maintained if stock levels could be kept low enough to prevent a further cycle of overgrazing. Consequently, these minor and short term "successes" were the basis for considerable faith among colonial administrators in the process of pasture/land reconditioning in Kenya. At the same time, many administrative officers were of the opinion that controlled grazing and compulsory destocking would end the threat of erosion, while also easing congestion in the African reserves as a whole. Thus, in the 1930s through the 1950s, in addition to Machakos and Baringo, more grazing schemes were established in present Elgeyo, Marakwet, Samburu, and, central to this study, in West Pokot among other pastoral areas in Kenya.<sup>57</sup>

However, it is worth mentioning that the establishment of grazing schemes was not necessarily meant to sustain the land for the benefit of African herders, but to enhance livestock production for market to the benefit of the colonial state. Furthermore, it can also be argued that grazing schemes were established as a justification to implement destocking policy that virtually affected almost all African herders in the colony, for the benefit of the state. Thus, based on this argument, there is little doubt that in the 1930s, at the height of the depression, the colonial state simultaneously enforced the establishment of grazing schemes and destocking as government policies in African occupied areas. As noted earlier on in this chapter, destocking policy enabled the colonial state to extract as much revenue as possible from African herders, particularly during the depression years (and beyond) to sustain the colonial structure. In sum, it can be argued that commodity production or

<sup>55</sup> Oral interview with Terengelo Kiptum, at Sigor market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>56</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 104; and Heyer, Ireri & Moris, *Rural development*, 65.

<sup>57</sup> Anderson, "Depression", 337; and van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 104.

revenue collection for the benefit of the colonial state was at the center of controlled grazing and destocking policies, rather than concern for African subsistence.

Specifically for West Pokot, the first grazing scheme in the area was established in 1936, at Morobus, Batei location. This started as an experimental scheme, aimed at grass planting as a check on land degradation. First, a report from the West Pokot Department of Agriculture was sent to the Agricultural Officer, Kitale, who supplied planting grass for the project in 1936. The majority of grasses supplied were Rhodes (*Chloris Gayana*), Gnoden SPP. and *Brachera Bisantha*, all drought resistant.<sup>58</sup> Secondly, a grazing scheme was established in the Kongelai area, Riwa location. This scheme was expanded between the late 1930s and late 1940s. In 1949, the area from Mtembur to Kongelai was brought under grazing control. The Kongelai scheme was then bounded by the Kaiboni river on one side and the Suam on the other. The scheme was closed from the start of the rains, around mid-April, to 31st December each year, as recovery period.<sup>59</sup>

In the 1950s, the policy of grazing control, by selecting areas into pairs and resting them, became more emphasized. For example, at Chepareria two areas, one of 30 acres in the rain shadow and one of 300 acres in the dry belt, were each divided into three blocks for rotational grazing. Thirty head of cattle were grazed during the rainy season in the 30 acre area, moving from block to block, and, according to the DC, the results seemed to be encouraging. Consequently, other grazing areas were established in Riwa, Kipkomo, Batei and Sook locations. The normal closing of the grazing areas took place during the rainy season, with the hope of preserving some pasture land for the dry weather. However, in Batei lack of rain in 1952 resulted in both unclosed and closed areas being grazed bare.<sup>60</sup> In response to the problem, there was vigorous effort, once again, to plant drought resistant grasses in West Pokot. With the help of Pasture Research Officers, W.A. Davidson and D.C. Rennie, a thorough experiment was started on the six 20 acre blocks at Kongelai. This experiment was designed to discover to what extent drought resistant grasses would grow in the area and at what times of the year they would be ready for grazing.<sup>61</sup>

By 1953, the principle of periodic closure of grazing areas was still being watched by most Pokot herders and, as in the previous years, large blocks in Riwa, Mnagei, Sook, Kipkomo and Batei were closed during the rainy season.<sup>62</sup> However, the Kongelai scheme received a set back when Pokot herders, facing desperately dry conditions, invaded the area set aside at the beginning of the year. At the same time, destocking and fire robbed the Chepareria control area of value. Meanwhile at Morobus, the grass plot also showed set backs, and the bulking of only one indigenous variety of grass on experiment commenced. But it was too little to meet any meaningful grazing needs.<sup>63</sup>

Nonetheless, between 1955 and 1959, controlled grazing in a number of schemes on a four block, four month rotation period, were established in West Pokot. These grazing schemes were located in Riwa, Kipkomo, Batei, Chesera, Nakwijit, Masol and Lelan (see Table 5.1 for details). In 1956, Riwa grazing scheme was extended to the east and west, so as to take in the entire plain between the hills on either side, to a total of 48,000 acres. By the end of the year, there were 4,200 stock on the scheme. However, the cost of maintaining the scheme was extremely small, about £1,250 being spent during the year in

<sup>58</sup> WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>59</sup> WSDAR, 1949, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>60</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.; WSDAR, 1947, WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>62</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

addition to about £1,500 over the preceding two years.<sup>64</sup> This was applicable to all schemes and was in line with the administration's principle of minimizing expenditure on grazing schemes and maximizing profit on livestock production, most significantly through the inexpensive destocking policy.

*Table 5.1 The four block, four month rotation grazing adopted as the answer for the recovery of the semi-arid areas (sequence for development in West Pokot)*

<i>Riwa, Kapenguria Division</i>		
Jan.	1955	Pilot scheme of 20,000 acres started
Jan.	1955	Full scheme of 48,000 acres starte
.	1956	4 hafirs constructed*
	1958	Grazing fees collected
<i>Kipkomo 43,000 acres and Batei 30,000 acres, Chepareria Division</i>		
Jan.	1957	Schemes started (traces were cut in 1956)
	1957	3 hafirs constructed in Kipkomo
	1958	3 dams dug in Batei
<i>Chesera 23,000 acres, in both Kipkomo and Riwa Locations</i>		
	1958	Traces cut
Jan.	1959	Scheme started
<i>Masol 143,000 acres, Sigor Division</i>		
	1958	9 hafirs put in and traces partly cut
Jan.	1959	Scheme started

\* Water supply in the schemes was also provided by construction of hafirs or tanks.

Source: Compiled from handing over report, shirreff to risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

At the same time, grazing schemes for Kipkomo and Batei of 43,000 and 30,000 acres respectively were planned, traces cut and reserves of grass put aside ready to start on 1 January 1957. The schemes in Kipkomo location included Kipkomo and most of the Chesera grazing scheme, in addition to areas suitable for agricultural development between Korrelach, Chepareria and the Muruny river. In Batei location, a scheme was established between Sebit and Ortum area and the lush and productive Parua area as far as Karapokot (see Table 5.1 and Map 4).<sup>65</sup>

In Lelan, 70,000 acres were gazetted as ADC forest, to include the forest reserves of Kapkanyart and Tangasia. The area included an estimated 13,000 acres of grassland and the controlled Lelan grazing scheme that had been in operation since 1956. The gazetted area consisted of a three block scheme, two blocks open and one closed, changing over every six months.<sup>66</sup> However, the unsolved problems in Lelan were the issues of land ownership and land usage in the forest area. A considerable number of Pokot families had grazed their animals in the forest patches and settled in the same areas as far as they could remember. Yet the administration wanted them out, based on colonial land usage bylaws that pro-

<sup>64</sup> Handing over report, Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4; and AADAR, 1956, 94.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. In 1956/57, three tanks of water were constructed in Kipkomo, and four in Riwa. It is worth noting that, at Sebit, there were numerous small agricultural plots and irrigation channels.

<sup>66</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

hibited grazing in the gazetted and controlled areas.<sup>67</sup> The Forest Department also insisted on “no goat raising” in Lelan. As a matter of fact, this was an unnecessary irritation to Pokot stock owners. The number of goats in Lelan was small, about 3,000 against 9,000 cattle and 9,000 sheep in 1959.<sup>68</sup> Thus, the government was not only denying a considerable number of Pokot families grazing rights and land ownership in Lelan, but also reinforcing destocking policy in the area.

In the meantime, another forest boundary was created around Sekerr that was surveyed and gazetted at the end of 1959. This demarcated area became a controlled grazing zone and all habitations, human and stock, were excluded. Two hills in Sook location, Chepnyal and Cheptaran totaling about 20,000 acres, were also closed to Pokot habitation and became controlled areas under the land usage bylaws.<sup>69</sup> In addition, one more grazing scheme, 50,000 acres at Nakwijit in Sook, was in preparation in 1959, for start up the next year.<sup>70</sup> It was the last scheme to be established during the colonial period.

Furthermore, the colonial administration worked out stocking rates in all gazetted and controlled grazing areas. In Riwa, Kipkomo, Batei and Chesera, the stock rate was worked out at about an animal to ten acres or slightly more. It was estimated that when Kipkomo was fully recovered, it would carry an animal to six acres, the others slightly less. In Masol, stocking before the scheme started was one animal to 30 acres. As from 1959, the rate was an animal to 70 acres, based on the fact that it was one of the most arid areas in the district. In Lelan, for comparison with Masol, the stocking rate in 1958 was an animal to 1.3 acres of grassland though they grazed the forest too. Commenting on the stocking rate in 1959, the DC, Shirreff, noted that the destocking rate was not of primary importance, but it was the regular rotation that was important for better livestock management in the district.<sup>71</sup>

At the same time, each scheme had a Grazing Committee in place. Members of these committees were mainly Pokot elders, some of whom doubled as chiefs and headmen. In Riwa and Lelan, grazing elders also doubled as grazing guards, to monitor against trespassing. The objective of the committees, as noted by Shirreff, was “to teach the people to run the schemes themselves”.<sup>72</sup> But the real reason, in Shirreff’s words, was “to avoid if possible too obvious control of grazing schemes by a European Officer,” to minimize Pokot resentment, direct it away from confrontation with European administrators, and, more important, minimize expense in running the schemes.<sup>73</sup> Therefore, European administrators mainly played supervisory roles in grazing schemes. The system adopted (except for Masol) was that the DAO, then Hugh York, surveyed the scheme, made sure traces were cut and, together with the DC, got the scheme started.<sup>74</sup> Afterwards, the grazing committees were then set in place. Between 1956 and 1959, Riwa was supervised by York, and Kipkomo, Batei and Chesera by a Mr. Robinson from Chepareria.<sup>75</sup> Masol was York’s plan, but the execution was carried out by Shirreff and the Officer-in-Charge, Sigor, in frequent consultation with the District Land Officer, Kapenguria. The Officer-in-Charge also

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

doubled as the supervisor for the Masol scheme. From time to time, all schemes were visited by York and Shirreff to assess progress.<sup>76</sup>

Lelan was in theory under the Forest Department, but in practice the administration ran it through the Pokot Chief, Porit Loliwale. Likewise, in Riwa, the Chairman of the Grazing Committee, Kitiyo, was appointed headman of the whole scheme area.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, the African authority had been brought into the running of the schemes to minimize expenses as much as possible. Last, but not least, all grazing schemes were declared controlled areas under section 2 of the ADC land usage bylaws. This covered the prosecution of trespassers from outside. Fines, mostly paid in cash, were always awarded to the ADC, as part of the grazing scheme funds.<sup>78</sup>

However, it should be noted that Pokot herders resented the establishment of grazing schemes in their land and administrative measures affecting the same. For instance, a show of force by the General Service Unit (GSU) had to be used twice in 1957 alone to contain Pokot resistance against grazing schemes. Particularly, an attempt by the administration to use indigenous authority, *Kokwa*, to work out details of locational stocking rates, as well as destocking orders, as part of controlled grazing was strongly resented by Pokot stock owners.<sup>79</sup>

Furthermore, Lelan was the most difficult location, consisting largely of people who went to Karapokot when grazing control was imposed in the low plains, and subsequently they returned, only to ignore the ADC bylaws. As a result, they constantly grazed their stock in controlled areas. Likewise, in Riwa, Kipkomo and Batei locations, there were constant attempts by Pokot herders to graze their stock in controlled areas. The administration responded by tightening security, and schemes were patrolled by the GSU on a regular basis.<sup>80</sup>

Worse still, there was the problem of animal theft/poaching from Karapokot into Riwa grazing scheme. Although offenders were supposed to be brought to book under the ADC bylaws, lack of funds and personnel made it impossible for the colonial administration to protect controlled areas effectively. Only half of the population in Masol stayed permanently in the location; the rest chose to be constantly on the move with their animals as a response to both destocking and confinement on rotation basis in the grazing schemes. Mnagei people also resented grazing schemes and stock rating measures; as a result, they kept large herds in other locations, mainly Karapokot, through traditional social networks.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, grazing schemes in West Pokot continued to operate into the post-colonial period, as detailed in subsequent sections of this chapter, but frequent droughts made it very difficult to run them in their proper rotations.

In sum, during the colonial period the government intervened in livestock keeping through the creation of grazing schemes in African occupied areas. However, most of the grazing schemes were failures. For instance, by 1962 only ten percent of all the schemes in Kenya were operational.<sup>82</sup> The explanation for these failures, specifically in West Pokot, ranged from the semi-arid nature of the land, resentment from the local population against

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.; and Handing over report, Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>78</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>79</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *AADAR*, 1957 (Nairobi: GP, 1958), 48.

<sup>80</sup> Handing over reports, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959; and Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 107.

government interference in their grazing pattern, and trespassing, according to government administrators. But more important, the objective behind the creation of grazing schemes was perceived negatively by African herders. Grazing schemes were established as official policy to control overstocking/overgrazing and more important, raise revenue for the state through the interconnected policies of controlled grazing and destocking. They were not designed to fully develop the resources of that area for the benefit of both the state and the local population.

Furthermore, destocking took precedence over improved animal husbandry, that is, integrating development of various factors: land, water, grass, animals and the needs of the local inhabitants. As a result, the compulsory reduction of the numbers of African stock was usually the first step taken by administrators of grazing schemes. Not surprisingly, these measures met fierce opposition from African herders, in this case Pokot stock owners, who resented government interference in their subsistence economy.<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, the difficulty of measuring overgrazing, particularly in Kenya's marginal areas as noted earlier in this chapter, suggests that this was not likely to have been the deciding factor in whether or not to establish grazing schemes or to move toward different grazing patterns, as opposed to those suitable to the environment and practiced by the local population over the years. In this case, grazing schemes were established to enhance livestock production mainly for sale, for the benefit of the colonial state. What was lacking was any real understanding on the part of colonial administrators of the relationship between the local grazing patterns and the range conditions that could have been of use to both the state and African herders, whatever their access to land.<sup>84</sup> When all is said and done generally in West Pokot, grazing schemes were handicapped by erratic rainfall as well as lack of support from the local population; thus, proper rotational grazing was difficult to achieve and areas near permanent water, in the view of colonial administrators, were always overgrazed.

### Livestock insecurity: Drought, diseases and cattle raids, 1920-1963

Apart from drought, West Pokot suffers from livestock diseases and cattle raids from time to time. The history of livestock insecurity goes back before the advent of colonialism. During the colonial period, cattle raids mainly occurred in the boundary areas of the district, those with Uganda, Turkana, Trans Nzoia, Elgeyo Marakwet and to some extent Baringo. More important, cattle raids and diseases not only disturbed the peace and caused loss of animals, but these contributed to food insecurity in the district. As mentioned earlier, to most Pokot families livestock is food, wealth and currency, and any negative impact on livestock threatens their coping mechanism in a harsh environment.

For instance, in August 1923 a serious raid upon the Pokot was carried out by the Turkana. One Pokot was killed, and 1,737 head of cattle, 277 donkeys and 345 sheep and goats were taken.<sup>85</sup> In the same year, a group of Pokot herders recouped their losses in stock by counter-raiding their northern neighbours. In 1924/25, a group of Turkana herders retaliated once again, raiding their Pokot neighbours and inflicting severe casualties while capturing large numbers of stock.<sup>86</sup> In the meantime, the colonial government responded by

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Jarvis, "Overgrazing and range degradation", 107.

<sup>85</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR, 1923* (Nairobi: GP, 1924), 6.

<sup>86</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADARs, 1924 and 1925* (Nairobi: GP, 1926), 26.

confiscating thousands of cattle from both Pokot and Turkana herders, ironically as punishment for raids and counter-raids between the two ethnic groups.<sup>87</sup>

Worse still, in 1928, drought and locust invasion aggravated the situation. Most Pokot herders, rather than watch their stock die of starvation, trespassed on a large scale, this time moving westwards onto the Karamonjong territory. The Karamonjong became irritated, and at length exasperated, by the despoiling of their dry-weather grazing grounds. Both groups were ready for a fight, and one or two individual stock thefts culminated into open conflict. The conflict took the form of cattle raids and counter raids, lasting three months, during which 3,000 to 4,000 head of cattle changed hands, and some fifteen to twenty people lost their lives.<sup>88</sup>

Thus was brought about what, considering the admixture of the peoples concerned, was very nearly an internecine war, and it was not from the desires of the peoples themselves that this occurred. Pokot herders were heavily punished as being the aggressors, and a King's African Rifles (KAR) patrol instituted to keep the peace. Matters calmed down for a short while, but even this patrol was powerless to prevent future trespassing by most Pokot herders. They preferred taking a chance to find pasture for their cattle rather than risk certain death by starvation on one side of a purely arbitrary line, on the other side of which grazing could be found; moreover, they had relied on these lands over the years. Upon the withdrawal of the KAR patrol, the administration of the two districts, West Pokot and Karamoja, had to provide for regular patrols, accompanied at intervals by the DCs, in an attempt to maintain peace.<sup>89</sup>

The following year in January 1929, a meeting between the representatives of the Kenya and Uganda governments took place at Lokitanyala, near the boundaries of the Karamoja district of Uganda and the West Pokot and Turkana districts of Kenya. The meeting was attended by the PCs, Eastern province, Uganda, and Turkana province, Kenya, and the DCs and DOs concerned. Its primary objective was to discuss the subject of raids between the Pokot and the Karamonjong, and to decide the question of compensation, which was temporarily settled to some mutual satisfaction.<sup>90</sup>

While there was thus government intervention in raids and counter-raids, Pokot herders and their neighbours met frequently in search of solutions to their relations. For example, inter-ethnic *barazas* were held during 1930. One between Pokot and Karamonjong elders met on three occasions to discuss ways of averting raids and frontier crimes. Another between Pokot and Turkana elders met quarterly, alternately at Korpu and Lokwiam, to discuss ways of averting raids between the two groups.<sup>91</sup>

However, the meetings had very little impact as far as finding permanent solutions to the problem of raids and frontier crimes in the affected areas. As a matter of fact, there was trouble in 1931 between Pokot and Karamonjong herders. The root cause was attributed by the West Pokot DC to disparity of grazing areas available to the two groups. Pokot herders had been very hard pressed during the year owing to locusts and drought, with the result that they had cast covetous eyes to the apparently unused and extensive grass plains over their western boundary that belonged to the Karamonjong. All government endeavors, including the imposition of heavy fines, had failed to prevent Pokot trespassing. Worse still,

<sup>87</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1927 (Nairobi: GP, 1928), 12. The confiscated animals were an addition to regular taxes paid by both the Pokot and the Turkana.

<sup>88</sup> Memorandum from Clarke to the *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1742.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1929 (London: HMSO, 1931), 24.

<sup>91</sup> *NADAR*, 1930, 23.

in March 1931 a Ugandan policeman was killed while rounding up Pokot stock that he had undoubtedly found grazing well within the Karamoja district. As a result of this state of affairs, and after many unavoidable postponements, the PCs, Eastern province, Uganda and Turkana, met in December 1931 and made joint recommendations to the effect that the old boundary (the Suam created in 1926 as detailed in chapter two of this study) should be effected once again and the situation reviewed from time to time. This proposal required that a proportion of the Pokot population, approximately between 7,000 and 8,000 people, were to be directly under the Uganda administration.<sup>92</sup>

Yet between 1931 and 1936 West Pokot was once again hit by serious droughts and disease. In 1933, it was reported that there was high mortality among young stock from east coast fever, and “no less than fourteen government owned cattle died from disease”.<sup>93</sup> During December, a case of rinderpest affecting five large herds was reported in Mnagei location.<sup>94</sup> In 1935 and 1936, the district was in quarantine for rinderpest.<sup>95</sup> The drought was estimated by missionaries to have accounted for 60% of deaths amongst Pokot stock, although government estimates were placed at 35%. Undoubtedly, most Pokot families lost some of their stock to both drought and disease during this period. Their neighbours, the East Pokot and the Marakwet, were even more affected. Thus, on the account of serious droughts and subsequent shortage of grazing, the two groups endeavored to graze their cattle into the already depleted West Pokot. However, the government intervened, particularly in 1933, to prevent conflicts; offenders were warned and returned to their territory.<sup>96</sup>

The only positive aspect in the mid 1930s, especially in 1936/37, was that the Pokot maintained satisfactory relations with the Turkana and the Karamonjong. As a matter of fact, Pokot and Turkana elders met at Lotengot, Turkana district, during November 1937, and the Pokot of Masol were permitted to graze their animals in Loya Valley on the Turkana side of the border. The Pokot reasons for desiring this concession resulted from the spread of tsetse fly – infested areas around the central portion of Masol location.<sup>97</sup> Thus, although there were conflicts on and off between the Pokot and their neighbours, at times there were agreements and some understanding over the sharing of valuable resources among them.

Unfortunately, the affairs on the Pokot/Trans Nzoia and Pokot/Marakwet borders had been far from satisfactory during the last half of the 1930s. It is recorded that two locations of Riwa and Mnagei, which border Trans Nzoia, had required more supervision and caused more trouble than most of the locations in Kapenguria division. In Lelan area, stock theft cases and the never ending quarrels over the dry weather grazing on the border brought matters to a loggerhead. While on the eastern side, Pokot/Marakwet relations became strained owing to the fact that some Marakwet crossed the border (the Chesogon river) and built their *manyattas* (dwellings) on the Pokot side. Chief Litole and his people raised no objections, but as a *quid pro quo* they were required to use the grazing on the Marakwet side in the Chepelet triangle between the Chesogon and the Kerio rivers. At a subsequent meeting, between DOs, chiefs and elders of the two districts in August 1937, this arrangement was rectified and a new boundary demarcated; by this Marakwet families in

<sup>92</sup> NADAR, 1931, 24-26.

<sup>93</sup> WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> NADARs, 1935 and 1936, 132 and 129.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.; and WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>97</sup> WSDAR, 1937, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

question were allowed to maintain their *manyattas* on the Pokot side of the Chesogon, and in exchange a group of Pokot acquired Chepelet area. This arrangement, while entirely satisfactory to members of the Pokot community, caused annoyance to a group of Marakwet because those living on the hills were a different clan from those living in the plains. Thus, one section had gained at the expense of the other.<sup>98</sup>

In the late 1930s, the relations between the Pokot and the Elgeyo went sour once again. A certain number of stock thefts caused tensions between the two groups. Most of the offenders were arrested and received heavy sentences, and even though tensions between the groups remained high, the situation did not deteriorate into open conflict. During the last four months of 1938, border patrol was doubled, and some order appeared to be restored.<sup>99</sup> Generally, relations on almost all borders appeared to be satisfactory, and the only disturbance, which was of minor importance, was between a few Pokot and the Turkana. Pokot herders in their penetration into Karamoja were provocative toward the Turkana, but the Turkana in each instance reported such incursions rather than resort to arms. This made it possible to adjust matters in some peaceful manner.<sup>100</sup>

In the 1940s and 1950s, trespassing by Pokot herders, particularly to Karamoja, was frequent and Karamonjong herders into West Pokot occasional. A dry year with grazing shortage caused renewal of boundary disputes between the two groups. Besides, the Turkana/Karamonjong boundary agreement of 1936 had provided for mutual use of certain water holes and grazing areas to the two groups and a total exclusion of the Pokot except by permission.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, on the southern Turkana/Pokot border, a group of Pokot complained that earlier grazing concessions around Loya and Loteruk were denied to them. Consequently, a joint *baraza* with the DO, Lodwar, was held at Kolossia in December 1944. Members of the Pokot community were hoping to use this meeting to get a foothold in areas which they claimed to be traditionally theirs, for example, Loteruk and Koilongol. Tsetse fly had spread into the Masol plains so that large areas of good grazing were denied the cattle, especially during the rainy season. Therefore, Pokot herders in the affected area desired wet weather grazing and tsetse free in Turkana territory.<sup>102</sup>

Furthermore, livestock diseases occurred sporadically during the 1940s and 1950s in West Pokot. For instance, in 1946 and 1948, there were outbreaks of east coast fever and foot and mouth disease, respectively.<sup>103</sup> Between 1949 and 1953 no abnormal outbreaks of disease were reported except in 1952, when two outbreaks of anthrax were noted in Mnagei location.<sup>104</sup> In the following year, east coast fever was reported on the Chepareria escarpment and its extensions and trypanosomiasis in the Malmalte basin, Sigor division. Scattered locusts also invaded the district, causing havoc to crops and pasture, especially in the Sigor area.<sup>105</sup> In the same year, 1953, a rinderpest inoculation campaign was carried out in Masol, but, as noted by the Director of Veterinary Services, it was not a compulsory

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. It is worth mentioning that the new boundary was not a satisfactory solution, and negotiations for a further meeting with the authorities was in the pipeline for the new year.

<sup>99</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *NADAR*, 1938 (London: HMSO, 1940), 38.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>101</sup> *NADAR*, 1937, 46.

<sup>102</sup> WSDAR, 1944, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>103</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *AADAR*, 1948 (Nairobi: GP, 1950), 36; and WSDAR, 1946, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>104</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>105</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

measure in the district.<sup>106</sup> In Mnagei, spray pumps were introduced and several were in regular use as a step towards disease control.<sup>107</sup>

Although between 1955 and 1963 there was some administrative concern for the control of disease in West Pokot District, the issue was not taken seriously enough. The administration was mainly preoccupied with whether or not dipping and spraying could be introduced in the grazing schemes. Some discussions began in 1958 because there was a high rate of mortality from east coast fever among cattle in the Chepkogeph area, Kipkomo scheme. The conclusion reached, as noted by the Director of Veterinary Services, was that dipping or spraying was too expensive, it required a great deal of supervision, and to be effective had to be universal and compulsory. Some veterinary officers also argued that “dipping or spraying would break down the acquired immunity the cattle had to east coast fever, particularly, if calves were dipped too”.<sup>108</sup> Even though in 1961 there was a stock census in Mnagei in connection with the introduction of bylaws making dipping compulsory, little was done to bring it to realization.<sup>109</sup> As a matter of fact, there was an outbreak of bovine pleuro pneumonia and foot and mouth disease in Karapokot in 1963, and foot and mouth in the same year in Sigor, and the administration responded by placing the two regions under temporary quarantine.<sup>110</sup>

Thus, control of disease was never seriously considered by the colonial administration. Destocking and quarantines were always used as solutions for entomological and disease control. Likewise, the administration proved more diligent in collecting taxes and appropriating cattle as fines, despite resistance, than it did in providing protection for Pokot herds against Turkana and Karamonjong raiders. Disease and inter-ethnic raids remained a serious problem throughout the colonial period and continued to be so in the post-colonial period as well.

### Grazing schemes, grade and cross breed stock in the post-colonial period, 1963-1995

At independence in 1963, the Kenya government inherited grazing schemes introduced during the colonial period. To Pokot herders controlled grazing was a reminder of colonialism and they were opposed to its continuation after independence. On the other side, the Kenya government was attempting to maintain and if possible improve the schemes. In this connection, the Department of Range Management relegated responsibilities to the DAO, Hugh York, and the field extension staff to look into possibilities of improving grazing schemes in post-colonial West Pokot.<sup>111</sup> At the same time, the Kenya government was soliciting funds, mainly from the World Bank, to assist in improving grazing schemes, with the sole purpose of enhancing livestock production in West Pokot, as well as other pastoral

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>109</sup> Handing over report, Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>110</sup> Handing over report, A.J. Foster to J.M.A. Herdman, confidential, 30 June 1963, KNA: DC/WP/2/4. By then Foster was the DC, West Pokot, and Herdman was the incoming DC. This report included a special Handing over report for Sigor Division and Foster's Safari Reports, 1959-1963.

<sup>111</sup> WPDAR, 1966. Hugh York, the architect of grazing schemes during the colonial period, was still the District Agricultural Officer in the early years of independence. In 1967, York retired, and he was replaced by G.B. Rutto. The Department of Range Management, mainly dealt with the supervision of schemes at the time.

areas in the country, for subsistence the and market as part of the national agenda for economic development.<sup>112</sup>

However, between 1964 and 1970, grazing schemes suffered considerable setbacks and unpopularity among Pokot herders. As a matter of fact, besides the uncooperative attitude shown by Pokot herders, coupled with constant grazing trespasses by the Karapokot, the supervision of schemes was still hampered by lack of funds and inaccessibility of roads. It is no wonder that the government was banking on loans from the World Bank to revive the schemes. Worse still, Kipkomo scheme attracted the interest of local politicians for the whole of 1968. Mainly in search of their own political agenda, to get the Pokot vote, they constantly advocated for the abandonment of grazing control schemes in the district. The Karapokot, who were trying to infiltrate the Riwa, Nakwijit and Chesera grazing schemes across the Suam river, also agitated for the abandonment of controlled grazing.<sup>113</sup>

Consequently, the government responded by the use of force; specifically it deployed the police to Kipkomo in trying to organize and bring the scheme into a rotational grazing control system. The police also had to patrol the schemes to check on illegal grazing mainly in Riwa and Nakwijit schemes. However, the schemes were already out of control because of indiscriminate grazing practices. Kipkomo was worst off, and the herdsmen tried to infiltrate other schemes, especially in Batei and Chesera. By the end of 1968 and early 1969, all three grazing schemes had no grazing reserves left, and this forced the Chesera people to search for grazing in the Kopoch hills so as to keep the stock in fairly good condition until the start of the next rains. At the same time, the Masol scheme was also in very poor condition. This was caused by the 1968/69 insufficient rains as well as constant Turkana raids, causing both human and livestock insecurity. As a result, most Masol people evacuated the scheme and “trekked” to Weiwei, Lomut and Sekerr locations, in search of safety and better grazing conditions.<sup>114</sup>

Despite of the recurrent problems, the government continued to hold *barazas* in the district, with special emphasis on the benefits of controlled grazing and the building of self help cattle dips to control disease. Generally, the people’s response to government suggestions and plans was one of scepticism. Since the colonial period, Pokot stock keepers had not only been opposed to the establishment of grazing schemes in the area, as they interfered with their communal grazing patterns, but, more important, controlled/rotational grazing had proved to be impractical given the unreliability of rainfall in West Pokot. On the other hand, although Pokot stock keepers were in favour of cattle dips, most of them were opposed to the government idea of constructing them on a self help basis. As a matter of fact, this idea was treated skeptically as more of a way of tax collection than a project for development purposes.<sup>115</sup> This was mainly because most dips functioned only during the rainy season, and with frequent droughts in the area, some were put to use only once or twice, and were then completely abandoned.

However, the uncooperative attitude of Pokot stock keepers towards controlled grazing schemes did not deter the government from intervening in livestock production in the area. Instead, it prompted the government to look into ways and means of directly involving the

<sup>112</sup> WPDARs, 1965 and 1967.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.; and WPDARs, 1968 and 1970. The attitude of the people on grazing schemes was indifferent, and this was evident enough by failure to attend *barazas* in great numbers, called for the same purpose.

<sup>114</sup> WPDARs, 1968 and 1969; and Vermaat, “Locational development profile: Kipkomo”, 25. Masol was also the worst stricken part of the district because of the exodus of Baringo cattle into the area in search of pastures.

<sup>115</sup> WPDARs, 1969 and 1970.

local population in controlled grazing and related activities. In this connection, the Department of Range Management appointed a committee to look into possibilities of changing grazing schemes into group ranches starting with Kapenguria division.<sup>116</sup>

Group ranches or co-operative ranching schemes in Kenya were first established in the Maasai districts, Narok and Kajiado, in the early 1960s. By the early 1970s, the Kenya government had created more group ranches, in Baringo, Samburu, Embu, Kwale, Machakos (Yatta plains) and West Pokot districts as part of a package for economic development in the country's pastoral/marginal areas. In particular, some of the grazing schemes after independence were demarcated into group ranches, each owned collectively by a set of registered members and managed by an elected committee. It should also be noted that each group ranch was issued with a private title deed, and its members drawn from adult male representatives of the local community.<sup>117</sup>

Regarding the pastoral rights in and use of rangeland resources, the group ranches were established on an assumption similar to that of the colonial period that common land property led to overgrazing, inefficient use of resources, low levels of investment, and inadequate levels of quality herd offtake by herders. Policy makers also assumed that a change from government run grazing schemes to group ranches would precipitate a series of other social and economic changes, resulting in the development of a more profitable commercial ranching sector. In short, the aim of group ranches was to provide an economically secure basis for local investment. Land titles provided a form of collateral with which development loans could be secured, to enhance livestock production for subsistence and for market in Kenya's pastoral/marginal areas.<sup>118</sup>

Pokot stock keepers' attitude towards group ranching was negative in comparison to other parts of the country.<sup>119</sup> They were skeptical and also feared that group ranching would lead to government intervention in livestock marketing. This would mean paying the government for marketing services. Once again, to Pokot stock keepers this was tantamount to tax collection rather than improvement of livestock keeping.<sup>120</sup>

All the same, the government did not abandon the idea of group ranches. In the 1970s and 1980s, it included range areas of the district within Land Adjudication Section, and former grazing schemes were converted into group ranches, starting with Riwa and Mnagei. The adjudication, demarcation and registration process for Kongelai (Riwa), Kanyarkwat, Chesera, Serewo (Mnagei), Batei (Morobus), Kipkomo, Nakwijit and Konyao (Kapchok) group ranches was carried out between 1971 and 1975 (see Tables 5.2 and 5.3, and Map 4). By 1983, more group ranches had been added and some were yet to be adjudicated (see Table 5.4). A two paddock grazing rotation was also introduced, instead of the previous four rotational systems. This was thought to be practical, especially in those ranches affected by denudation, for example in Riwa and Mnagei.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup> WPDARs, 1971 and 1972.

<sup>117</sup> John G. Galaty, "Rangeland tenure and pastoralism in Africa", In: Fratkin, Galvin & Roth, *African Pastoralist Systems*, 185-204; and Heyer, Ireri & Moris, *Rural development*, 66.

<sup>118</sup> Galaty, "Rangeland Tenure", 190.

<sup>119</sup> WPDARs, 1969 and 1970.

<sup>120</sup> Oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996. For more detailed information on government intervention in marketing of agricultural and livestock production, see Roberts H. Bates, "The regulation of markets in Africa". In: Commins, Lofchie & Payne, *Africa's Agrarian Crisis*, 37-54.

<sup>121</sup> WPDARs, 1971, 1972, 1974 and 1975; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 56.

Table 5.2 Grazing schemes converted into group ranches, 1972-1975

Name of ranch	Acreage	No. of families	Head of cattle	Sheep and goats
Riwa*	58,000	334	7,323	15,964
Kipkomo	43,000	240	3,800	4,600
Chesera	23,000	184	1,900	2,800
Nakwijit	56,000	182	1,350	2,300
Masol	142,000	172	3,750	3,420
Batei**	30,000	300	3,000	2,200
Serewa***	---	---	---	---

\* Riwa ranch was at Kongelai

\*\* Batei was at Morobus

\*\*\* Serewa in Mnagei was adjudicated in 1973 and covered an area of 8,400 ha. By then the Metric system was in use, thus hectares were adopted instead of acres.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1972, 1974 and 1975.

Table 5.3 Members of respective group ranches by end of 1975

Name of Ranch	Number of members
Kongelai	412
Kanyarkwat	397
Serewa	226
Morobus	171
Chesera	131
Nakwijit*	---
Konyao*	---

\* In Nakwijit and Konyao, the recording of the prospective ranch members was still in progress by end of 1975.

Source: Compiled from WPDAR, 1975.

However, as shown in Tables 5.2 and 5.3, group ranches attracted fewer families, as well as members, in relation to the total West Pokot population of about 158,652 people by 1979.<sup>122</sup> This still reinforces the argument that Pokot stock keepers continued to view controlled grazing, whether in grazing schemes or group ranches, with a great deal of suspicion. The majority of herders in the area continued with the communal pattern of grazing to avoid government interference in their livestock keeping.

Nevertheless, government officials continued to hold *barazas* in West Pokot, emphasizing the benefit of group ranches on one hand, and promoting the adoption of improved stock, for example, dairy cattle (particularly in the high potential areas of Kapenguria division) on the other. More important, promotion of improved stock in West Pokot in the post-independence years was not an isolated phenomenon, but rather part of a countrywide government policy aimed at enhancing food and commodity production to foster Kenya's economic development.

It is worth mentioning that improved stock was first introduced in West Pokot during the colonial period. Specifically, in the first two decades of the twentieth century, steps were undertaken by the Departments of Agriculture and Veterinary Services of the colonial administration to introduce grade and cross breed animals to European farmers in Kenya. This was seen as a way to enhance dairy farming and beef production to meet the needs of the domestic and export markets in the colony. By the 1930s through the 1940s, European farmers, by then fully settled in various parts of the Kenya highlands, were raising pure

<sup>122</sup> Republic of Kenya, West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993, 13-14.

bred Ayrshire, Guernsey, Jersey and Friesian cattle, initially brought in from South Africa and Britain. Moreover, the Department of Veterinary Services had established foundation stock farms (for example at Kabete on the outskirts of Nairobi, and Konza and Elementaita in the Rift Valley); to supply European settlers with half-bred animals. This was done by inseminating Serenle and Boran heifers and cows with sperm from pure bred bulls, which continued to show good results throughout the colonial period.<sup>123</sup>

*Table 5.4 Adjudicated group ranches in West Pokot, 1983*

Division/	Name of Ranch	Area in hectares
<i>Sigor</i>	Pachu	8,207
	Orwa	14,638
<i>Chepareria</i>	Ortum West	3,660
	Morobus	7,548
	Chepkopegh	17,500
	Nakwijit	20,614
	Chesera	10,635
<i>Kapenguria</i>	Chemwochoi	1,835
	Kongelai	2,221
	Serewa	10,102
	Kanyarkwat	3,131
	Kotikomor	600
<i>Kacheliba*</i>		

\* Group Ranches in Kacheliba division (Nakuyen, Kacheliba, Kodich and Kanyerus) were in the process of adjudication and demarcation by 1983.

Source: Compiled from Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 46-58 and 256.

In the 1950s, there was considerable development in the adoption of pure and cross breed animals by African smallholders, for example, in central Kenya and in some of the other high potential areas in the country. This tendency was fostered and encouraged in accordance with the 1954 Sywnnerton plan, detailed in earlier chapters of this study, to intensify the development of crop and livestock production in African occupied areas. The basic educational training in crop and animal husbandry was carried out by the Departments of Agriculture and Veterinary Services. For instance, steps were undertaken to increase the facilities for multiplication of cross bred cattle on livestock improvement centers established in African areas (for example, in Kiambu, Embu, Kabsabet, Kakamega, and central to this study, Kapenguria), where Zebu cattle were selectively cross bred with pure breeds by the veterinary staff. Eighteen pedigree Sahiwal cattle were also imported from Pakistan during 1954 and were sent to livestock improvement centers. It was hoped that substantially increased numbers of improved Zebu cattle would become available within three to four years for disposal to African smallholders in various parts of the country.<sup>124</sup>

Generally, between 1954 and 1958, there was steady progress in the adoption of improved stock by African smallholders in accordance with the Swynnerton plan. During this same period, artificial insemination projects were promoted in African occupied areas, and

<sup>123</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR, 1947* (London: HMSO, 1949), 37-38. It should also be noted here that the foundation stock farm at Kabete was in operation by the early 1930s, and those at Konza and Elementaita by 1947. Besides, Kabete also served as the center for veterinary research during the colonial period and has continued to serve in the same capacity in independent Kenya.

<sup>124</sup> *C&PKAR, 1954*, 50; and Ndege, "History of Pastoralism in Kenya", 103.

farmers were taking increasing advantage of facilities offered. For example, in 1957 and 1958, the Central Artificial Insemination Station, Kabete, issued more than 80,000 and 100,000 doses of semen respectively, to both European and African areas.<sup>125</sup> By 1961, continuous progress had been made in artificial insemination projects for both pure and cross breeds, particularly in Central, Rift Valley and Nyanza provinces. For example in 1961, in Central province (mainly in Kiambu, Murang'a and Nyeri) there were 31,243 grade cows, made up of 12,737 Guernsey, 1,498 Jersey, 1,291 Ayrshire, 455 Sahiwal and Indian breeds, 102 Friesians, 60 Red Poll and 15,100 mixed grade.<sup>126</sup>

Furthermore, 1961/62 saw an increase in steady flow of grade cattle from European settled areas through open sales and private deals to African areas. This is partly explained by the fact that most European settlers were on their way out of Kenya following political developments of those years, as Africans fought for freedom from colonial domination that culminated into Kenya's independence in 1963. Thus, on the eve of and immediately after independence, most European settlers opted to leave Kenya for Britain or Australia, among other places, and in the process they sold their farms, animals and property in general, directly to African buyers or through the Kenya government. Significantly, in the early 1960s, there was a marked trend towards adoption of improved stock by African small-holders in various parts of the country. For instance, in Nyanza province there was a trend in almost all areas, except in central and southern parts of the province, towards greater appreciation of the need to improve livestock, mainly to enhance production for subsistence and for the market. As a case in point, in Kisii district, there was considerable adoption of grade cattle, chiefly Freisian and Ayrshire crosses by small farmers.<sup>127</sup>

In addition to improved cattle, there was a marked trend towards the adoption of improved sheep as well as poultry by African smallholders in the early 1960s. For example in 1962, wool sheep in the cold areas of Elgeyo/Marakwet, on the slopes of the Cherengani Hills, increased in number and this development spread to adjacent high potential areas of West Pokot, specifically in Kapenguria division. It is estimated that in the same year, there were 3,300 head of grade Corriedales in Elgeyo/Marakwet with fourteen high grade rams.<sup>128</sup>

Generally, in the years following independence, as part of government policy to enhance economic development in the country, farmers particularly in high potential areas were encouraged to adopt improved stock for subsistence and commercial production. As noted earlier, improved stock was first introduced in West Pokot during the colonial period. In the 1950s, through the Livestock Improvement Officer, a few cross breed dairy cows were introduced in Mnagei, Kapenguria division.<sup>129</sup> This was aimed at increasing milk and, more important, ghee production specifically for the export market. However, by 1963 this project had not made progress.

Nonetheless, immediately after independence, the Kenya government emphasized the introduction of grade and cross breed dairy cattle and wool sheep in the district to enhance food and commodity production in this part of the country. Consequently, by 1966, there were 98 head of grade cattle specifically in Kapenguria division, comprising a mixture of Guernseys and a few Red Polls. Mostly, they belonged to Chewoyet Secondary and Kapen-

<sup>125</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1957 (London: HMSO, 1958), 65; and *C&PKAR*, 1958, 42.

<sup>126</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1961 (London: HMSO, 1963), 43.

<sup>127</sup> Great Britain, *Kenya: Report for the Year 1962*, 43 and 45.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>129</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

guria Intermediate Schools, but a few belonged to individual farmers in Mnagei location.<sup>130</sup> In addition, there were 1,084 wool sheep in the district in the same year. These were kept in the Lelan Sheep Development Scheme, Lelan location.<sup>131</sup>

However, the standard of animal husbandry for both grade dairy cattle and wool sheep was very low, mainly due to lack of trained personnel. As a case in point, sheep-shearing was done in 1966 and only a total of 6,376 lbs of wool were obtained out of a stock of 1,084 sheep. The wool was also of low quality and fetched only Kshs. 19,128.<sup>132</sup> The population of wool sheep declined to 1,966 in 1971, whereas the figure for 1970 was 2,458. Although the total recorded loss during the whole year was 364 due to death from pulpy kidney disease, sales, slaughter, theft and wild predators, the decline in number could not be easily explained.<sup>133</sup>

Nonetheless, by the mid 1970s, the emphasis was on cross breeding, proper husbandry and management techniques. For instance, in 1976 the SRDP sheep development sub-programme purchased 60 ewes and 6 rams, cross breed, for farmers in Lelan location. However, only six farmers benefited from this limited stock through the Small Holder Credit Schemes. Although there were a good number of wool sheep in Kapenguria division, the availability of proper breeding stock could only be found in the distant area of Nakuru district.<sup>134</sup> Furthermore, sheep deworming, a necessity for proper husbandry, was not well covered under the SRDP programme. In 1976, the relatively new Muruny Farmers Co-operative Society took upon itself the responsibility of stocking all types of sheep with deworming drugs, especially *antihelminthes*, for both members and non-members. This action saved the farmers the long distance they had to travel to Kitale in search of drugs.<sup>135</sup>

Under the SRDP proper husbandry management was once again emphasized in 1976 to boost dairy farming in the district. Emphasis was laid on proper calf breeding (housing, feeding and deworming) and disease control through regular dipping and spraying. At the same time, there was emphasis on cross breeding for better milk producing breeds. However, there was neither proper breeding stock nor Artificial Insemination Services in the district.<sup>136</sup> Moreover, rural dairies were yet to be established in the area. For example, a separator was donated by the UNICEF in 1976, and although installed by the Muruny Farmers Co-operative Society, it was not functional by the end of the year due to administrative and technical problems.<sup>137</sup>

By then, the Talau Dairy Farmers Co-operative Society was the only one that sold milk locally in Kapenguria and to the KCC in Kitale. For example, by the end of November 1976, 56,035 kilograms of whole milk had been delivered to KCC and this fetched farmers Kshs. 53,882.65 (see Table 5.5 for trend in marketed milk production).<sup>138</sup> However, the society encountered many difficulties. For instance, skim milk and ghee could only be produced whenever the separator functioned to full capacity, which was rare. The main-

<sup>130</sup> WPDAR, 1966.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. The sheep in the Lelan scheme were mainly of Corriedale/Merino breed.,

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> WPDAR, 1971. As noted in the 1971 District Annual Report, perhaps a fertility problem had something to do with the decline in wool sheep, and the problem was under investigation during the year.

<sup>134</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid. Muruny Farmers co-operative society is located in Lelan location, Kapenguria division. The Co-operative also marketed milk and wool to KCC, Kitale, and to textile factories in Eldoret respectively

<sup>136</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid.

tenance of the separator was too expensive in comparison to the profit made by farmers, and spare parts were always hard to get as they had to be purchased from as far away as Nairobi.<sup>139</sup>

*Table 5.5 Number of dairy cattle (grade/cross breed) and milk sold, 1973-1976*

Year	Number	Milk sold (in kilograms)*
1973	1,433	23,830 (to KCC)
1974	1,790	71,602 (to KCC)
1975	2,262	133,028 (locally in Kapenguria division) and 56,035 (to KCC)
1976	2,549	117,800 (locally in Kapenguria division)

\* The figures for milk are the total amount sold between January and November of each year, December not included.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1974 and 1976.

In spite of the effort to introduce dairy cattle and wool sheep in the district, the local Zebu cattle and hair sheep continued to dominate the field. These were, and have been found mainly in the range areas of Sigor, Kacheliba and Alale. Mutton has been, popular but next only to beef and goat. For example, between 1973 and 1976, goats dominated all types of livestock in the district (see Table 5.6 showing domination of local breeds).<sup>140</sup> These were all local breeds, and like cattle and sheep were concentrated in the lower regions of the district. Besides, there are neither exotic beef cattle nor cattle fattening in West Pokot. Therefore, although there have been efforts to promote improved livestock in West Pokot, their numbers have been few to have a major impact on livestock keeping in the district. For example, in 1983 and 1992, the number of cross breed and pure breed dairy cattle together was estimated at nearly 4,000 and 10,526 head respectively.<sup>141</sup> Thus, local breeds, fairly adapted to the environment, continue to be the mainstay of livestock keeping in West Pokot.

*Table 5.6 Livestock population: estimated number of stock, 1973-1976*

	1973	1974	1975	1976
Grade dairy cattle	1,433	1,790	2,262	2,549
Beef cattle zebu	175,000	176,000	176,600	177,000
Sheep wool	3,017	3,442	5,011	6,087
Local breed	70,000	72,000	72,500	73,000
Goats (local breed)	270,000	275,000	276,000	276,500
Donkeys	12,000	12,000	12,000	12,000
Poultry* (local breed)	250,000	250,000	250,000	250,000
Commercial	632	---	200	393

\* Poultry is important for subsistence, mainly in the high locations. As shown above, only a few hundred hybrid layers were kept for egg sale, mainly in Kapenguria division. Otherwise chickens kept were of indigenous type.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1975 and 1976.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.; and Oral interview with Lopeyok Ngolesia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>140</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>141</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 68; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 71.

Apart from group ranches and promotion of improved stock in post-colonial West Pokot, other developments took place in livestock keeping during the period under review. As noted in chapter four of this study, in 1969/70 the government started the SRDP to promote agricultural and livestock production in various parts of the country, including West Pokot. The aims of this project were to encourage production and sales of beef cattle and develop agriculture and dairy farming in West Pokot. In reality the project was started in 1971 with the vaccination of stock in the district by the Livestock Division Staff.<sup>142</sup> In 1975/76 group ranches were incorporated into SRDP, starting with Kongelai, Kanyarkwat, Chesera and Serewa, all in Kapenguria division (see Table 5.7 for details).<sup>143</sup> However, the SRDP was not a success in West Pokot. The Pokot are not commercial wool, beef or dairy producers, and a real export of stock or livestock improvement, as anticipated by the government, was not realized.<sup>144</sup>

*Table 5.7 Position of SRDP incorporated ranches in West Pokot, 1976*

Name	Size (Ha.)	No. of families
Kongelai*	23,200	402
Kanyarkwat**	13,194	275
Chesera***	7,505	132
Serewa****	7,997	202

\* Four dams had been constructed in the ranch. One dip under construction. Two boreholes had been proposed.

\*\* Two dams had been planned for the ranch.

\*\*\* One dip had been proposed

\*\*\*\* One dam had been constructed and the second was in the process.<sup>145</sup>

Source: Compiled from WPDAR, 1976.

Thus, the overall implementation of grazing schemes/ranches and improved stock initiatives in the district has been poor and unproductive. For example, grazing in Masol area deteriorated due to illegal grazing and the high concentration of livestock, many of which came from Turkana and Baringo districts. A similar situation existed in Karapokot where continuous trespassing on Riwa, Nakwijit and Chesera made recovery of grazing schemes/-ranches unrealistic.<sup>146</sup> Insufficient rainfall from time to time, disturbance by Turkana raiders coupled with road inaccessibility, and lack of funds and personnel together made the realization of range management and the whole SRDP programme impossible.

### Livestock insecurity: Disease and prevention measures, 1963-1995

In the post-colonial period, West Pokot has had to deal with a wide range of livestock diseases: rinderpest, foot and mouth, contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia, trypanosomiasis, anthrax, black quarter and worms, among others. For instance, between 1963 and 1970, black quarter was prevalent with severe outbreaks in Sook location, and a total of 9,583 inoculations were carried out in 1965 alone compared to 2,100 the previous year. In the

<sup>142</sup> Vermaat, "Locational development profile: Kipkomo", 25.

<sup>143</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>144</sup> Vermaat, "Locational development profile: Kipkomo", 25.

<sup>145</sup> WPDAR, 1974. Although the government of Kenya had attempted to construct dams in group ranches, their success was yet to be realized. For example, Morobus group ranch already had a problem with water because all the three dams constructed in early 1974 dried up before September of the same year.

<sup>146</sup> WPDARs, 1971, 1972 and 1973.

same period, trypanosomiasis cases were reported in Kongelai, Sook location and Sigor division. In Sigor, particularly in Runo/Lomut area, deaths from trypanosomiasis were as high as 300 head of cattle. Besides, rinderpest, foot and mouth disease and contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia were the “biggest headache”, and vaccinations and inoculations were carried out in Karapokot to prevent transmissions, mainly from the Kenya/Uganda border. In 1965, for example, Rinderpest Tissue Culture Vaccine was used for 33,883 inoculations as compared to 37,776 in 1964. In September of the same year, a total of 7,989 inoculations were carried out against contagious bovine pleuro-pneumonia in the district.<sup>147</sup>

In 1966/67, reports of rinderpest were once again confirmed near the Kenya/Uganda border, and a campaign launched resulted in 31,239 head of cattle being inoculated in the same period. In the meantime, foot and mouth disease broke out in Kipkomo and Batei locations. During that time, most of the district was quarantined for that reason. Cases of anthrax and black quarter were also reported in the district. As a result, 3,800 doses of blanthrax and 275 doses of black quarter vaccine were used in 1966 alone. Animal husbandry in West Pokot was also being hampered by the tick-borne diseases (see Table 5.8).<sup>148</sup>

Consequently, the District Livestock Officer (DLO) conducted between 1968 and 1970 a vigorous campaign against disease in West Pokot. For instance, in 1968, a total of 11,143 full grown (cattle) and 1,990 calves were dipped at Keringet, Tartar, Bendera and Nasokol as a prevention against tick-borne diseases. In the same year, a total of 38,409 head of cattle were inoculated against rinderpest. Preventive inoculations against anthrax, trypanosomiasis and east coast fever were also undertaken by the DLO and his field staff during the year. For example, Riwa location experienced sporadic outbreaks of east coast fever, and 40 head of cattle were reported dead from tick borne disease. The district also suffered a great deal of foot and mouth disease which the DLO termed as “endemic”.<sup>149</sup>

Table 5.8 Cases of tick-borne diseases confirmed by laboratory examination, 1966-1969

	1966	1967	1968	1969
East Coast Fever	28	50	107	15
Anaplasmosis	13	---	33	24
Redwater	6	5	41	2

Source: Complied from WPDARs, 1966, 1967, 1968 and 1969.

Furthermore, the DLO intensified the regulations on the use of legal stock movement permits and only very few illegal stock movement cases were heard between 1968 and 1970. In the same period, a total of 38 persons were prosecuted for failing to report the presence of foot and mouth disease in the area. The Kenya/Uganda border also remained firmly guarded so that any animals from Uganda were to be bled and declared disease free before entering West Pokot.<sup>150</sup> Meanwhile, a growing number of the Pokot were coming to

<sup>147</sup> WPDARs, 1965 and 1966.

<sup>148</sup> WPDARs, 1966 and 1967; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 70. When an outbreak of a contagious livestock disease has been established, the district veterinary officer declares a quarantine for the affected area. During such quarantines, no movement of livestock is allowed in or out of the affected areas, to prevent further spread of the disease.

<sup>149</sup> WPDARs, 1968 and 1969.

<sup>150</sup> WPDAR, 1968.

grips with the tick menace as the requests for construction and use of dips to prevent tick-borne diseases was on the increase (see Table 5.9 for details).

Table 5.9 Selected dipping figures, 1970

Dip	Cattle dipped	No. of months reported
Keringet GK	3,119	7
Lomut Self-Help	1,324	5
Kapenguria Self-Help	5,197	2
Chepangang Self-Help	1,968	1
Tartar	559	3
Bendera	736	4
Nasokol	531	3
Hand sprayed	8,999	8

Source: Compiled from WPDAR, 1970.

Nonetheless, disease in general, and east coast fever and foot and mouth disease in particular, continued to be major threats to livestock in the period under review (see Table 5.10 on disease in general). For instance, east coast fever was responsible for 80% of the deaths of cattle in the district in 1971. In the same year, there were outbreaks of foot and mouth disease that continued until mid-1972. New outbreaks of the same disease were reported in Mnagei and Karapokot areas in October/November 1972, prompting quarantines to be reinforced in the district. Trypanosomiasis, which is also an endemic disease, continued to threaten livestock along the Suam river, at Sigor, Lomut and the Masol area. An average of 800 doses of Ethidium Bromize were used monthly in an attempt to combat the disease around the Suam-Nakwijit area alone. In addition, black quarter occurred at Kaiboni in Riwa location towards the end of December 1972. Although a number of herdsmen were prosecuted for illegal movement of stock, such movements remained the cause of animal diseases spreading out and circulating in the district.<sup>151</sup>

Furthermore, 1973 started with quarantines which were imposed in 1972, and others imposed and lifted during the year (see Table 5.12 below). At the same time, a rinderpest campaign was carried on throughout the year; however, it was not very successful due to drought that had affected many parts of the district. Only 384 samples were set aside for the laboratory rinderpest immunity survey.<sup>152</sup> As for the lower range areas of Sigor and Karapokot, trypanosomiasis, remained endemic between 1973 and 1976 (see Table 5.10 on livestock disease in general). An outbreak of foot and mouth disease was also reported in December 1976, and as a result, a quarantine was imposed in the district. As a matter of fact, the district was never free of foot and mouth and tick-borne diseases in the 1970s and early 1980s.<sup>153</sup>

In addition to cattle diseases, other stock diseases were reported in the period under review. For instance, many goats and sheep died of heavy worm infestations and poultry from new castle and fowl typhoid. For treatment and prevention of worms, farmers had to

<sup>151</sup> WPDARs, 1971 and 1972.

<sup>152</sup> WPDAR, 1973.

<sup>153</sup> WPDARs, 1974, 1975, 1976 and 1980.

use *Antilelminthes* and *Enteroxaemia*, respectively. New castle injectable and fowl typhoid vaccines were mainly used for the prevention of the same diseases.<sup>154</sup>

Table 5.10 Occurance of diseases (general), 1971-1975

Disease	Year	Outbreaks (B) & deaths (D)	Number of stock inoculated/vaccinated/dipped
Anaplasmosis	1974	110B	Dipping done but no. not specified
	1975	26B	„
Anthrax	1971	**	3,390 inoculated
	1975	--	16,037 inoculated
Black quarter	1971	3B	Inoculations, no. not specified
	1972	6B&6D	„
	1973	56D	„
	1974	32D	„
	1975	104D	Dipped but No. not specified
East coast	1972	15D	146,233 dipped
	1973	60B&67D	„
	1974	92B	251,886 dipped
	1975	62B	273,896 dipped
	1971	2B	Inoculations, No. not specified
Foot & mouth	1972	2B	„
	1973	3B	„
	1974	1B	„
	1975	1B	„
	1971	---	Inoculations, No. not specified
Trypanosomiasis	1973	550B	„
	1974	127B	„
	1971	---	82,486 inoculated
Rinderpest	1972	---	102,359 vaccinated
	1973	---	43,693 vaccinated
	1975	---	143,410 inoculated

\* This table is not exhaustive but tries to illustrate the problem of disease and its effects on livestock and thus food security in West Pokot.

\*\* In 1971, anthrax was very common in Kipkomo, Batei and Riwa locations. A total of 30 people were admitted to hospital after consuming the carcasses.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1974, and 1975.

Despite these measures, control of diseases remained a major problem in the district. Although a few dips were constructed in addition to existing ones, to prevent tick-borne diseases, management was still sub-standard (see Table 5.11 for details). For example, in divisions like Sigor and Karapokot, there were no functional dips in the 1970s. The main problem was lack of sufficient water and other required dipping facilities. The tick-borne diseases, such as east coast fever, can be prevented through regular dipping of livestock in a solution of water and *Acaricide*. Yet in the 1980s and 1990s, only a handful of dips functioned as required; that is, regular dipping with a prescribed concentration of chemicals.<sup>155</sup>

<sup>154</sup> WPDARs, 1973, 1974, 1975 and 1976.

<sup>155</sup> WPDARs, 1973, 1974 and 1976; Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 84-85; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 70. In 1974, the construction of six dips was in progress. Kishaunet, Chesera, Togromo, Ptoyo, Chepkopegh and Nakwijit, in Kapenguria, Sigor and Chepareria divisions. Of the six dips, four were completed and an average of 11,800 head of cattle were dipped every week.

**Table 5.11** Estimated number of dips in operation, under construction and not operating, 1972-1976

Dips	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
No. of dips (cattle)	14	15	20	32	33
No. of dips not operating	1	4	3	2	2
No. of dips under construction	4	6	8	2	5
No. of dips completed	4	6	4	1	2
No. of dips (sheep) completed	---	1	1	1	---
No. of dips in operation	19	20	25	26	25
No. of cattle dipped	171,510	236,528	251,886	273,869	282,560
No. of cattle sprayed*	79,997	93,492	48,659	254,425	240,918

\* Besides dipping, some of the cattle were hand sprayed or by spray-races, particularly in areas that had no dips.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1973, 1974, 1975 and 1976.

Beginning in 1976, the Department of Veterinary Services set in place two main disease control programmes, the Compulsory Annual Rinderpest and Contagious Bovine Pleuro Pneumonia Campaign and the Voluntary Foot and Mouth Campaign. These campaigns were implemented as attempts towards control of diseases and elimination of quarantines in the district. However, West Pokot continued to be plagued with livestock diseases and the imposition of quarantines. A rinderpest campaign began in Sigor division in October 1976 and covered Kapenguria division within the same month. Yet the campaign in Karapokot was not successful due to the severe drought in the area. The same applies to the foot and mouth campaign which began on 15 November and ended on the 30 November 1976 and covered only Kapenguria division. Nonetheless, there were two quarantine notices imposed in the district during the year. One was that of new castle imposed on Karapokot division from 24 March to 28 September 1976. A second one was that of foot and mouth disease, imposed on Mnagei location on 8 December 1976, and it was still in force the whole month of December (see Table 5.12 for details on more quarantines).<sup>156</sup>

**Table 5.12** Number of quarantines imposed on West Pokot, 1973-1976

Disease	Area	Date imposed	Date lifted
Foot and mouth	Mnagei location	24 March 1973	30 June 1973
New castle	Kapenguria division	2 August 1973	28 November 1973
Foot and mouth	Karapokot division	28 November 1973	24 June 1974
Foot and mouth	Mnagei	28 December 1973	26 July 1974
Foot and mouth	Mnagei	21 August 1974	25 October 1974
Foot and mouth	Mnagei/Karapokot*	22 January 1975	7 May 1975
New castle	Karapokot	24 March 1976	28 September 1976
Foot and mouth	Mnagei	8 December 1976	Still in force by end of 1976

\* The quarantine in Karapokot remained in force throughout the year.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1973, 1974, 1975 and 1976.

Thus, a greater part of the years under review were marred with livestock diseases and quarantines in West Pokot. Quarantines were imposed on movements of stock whenever

<sup>156</sup> WPDAR, 1976; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 70. In 1976, as a result of annual and voluntary campaigns, a total of 34,207 head of cattle were vaccinated against stock related diseases.

the outbreak and spread of diseases ran out of control. Tick-borne, foot and mouth, rinderpest, contagious bovine pleuro pneumonia and trypanosomiasis were the most prevalent diseases with far reaching effects in the district. Over the years, livestock diseases were controlled by means of inoculations, vaccinations and dipping, all with mixed results. The availability of sufficient vaccine, transport, personnel, the prevailing security situation (cattle raids), and the availability of grazing and water during campaigns determined the success rate of the preventive measures. Particularly important to this study, the frequent outbreak of diseases interfered with livestock health and thus food security in the area.

### Livestock insecurity: Border clashes and cattle raids, 1963-1995

While the Pokot have had to deal with the problem of livestock diseases, cattle raids have continued to pose a major threat to their survival in northwest Kenya. Border relations in the history of the Pokot and their neighbours have been varied and complex. Their relations range from years of some understanding and agreements to share scarce resources (grazing pastures and water), leading to temporary peace, and, at times, skirmishes escalating to conflicts, contributing to both livestock and human insecurity in the area. This latter trend, as depicted in the colonial period, to some extent worsened following independence.

Between 1963 and 1969, border clashes were mainly between the Pokot/Turkana, Pokot/Marakwet and Pokot/Karamonjong. For instance, the Pokot/Turkana conflict that flared up at the end of 1967 had escalated by 1969 to a point that not only human casualties reached an unprecedented peak; the theft of cattle, goats and sheep, most of which were never recovered, took on such proportions that many of the Pokot stock owners were left destitute. For example, the effect on Masol location was so intense that the area was virtually abandoned by its rightful inhabitants. The people of Masol had to flee their homes and they sought temporary shelters in the upper parts of Sekerr, Lomut and Weiwei. Besides Masol, the lower parts of Sekerr, between Orwa and Nasolot, also had their share of Turkana raids (see Table 5.13 and Map 4 for some details).<sup>157</sup>

*Table 5.13 Incidents of cattle raids between the Pokot and their neighbours, 1969*

Raiders	Date	Place	Animals stolen	Lives lost
Turkana	1 Feb.1969	Sarmai in Sigor	200 cattle	---
Turkana	11 Feb.1969	Sarmai	Unknown	8 Pokot
Turkana	13 Mar.1969	Lotong'ot in Masol	„	4 Pokot (juveniles) and 2 Turkana
Pokot	30 June 1969	Kotopur, S. Turkana	600 goats/sheep	4 Turkana
Pokot/Marakwet (border clash)	23 sept. 1969	Chesogon Market	---	

*Source:* Compiled from WPDAR, 1969.

<sup>157</sup> WPDARs, 1967 and 1969; and oral interviews with Kibor Kiptum & Pkemoi Limaa, at Sigor market, 4 July 1995.

On the other hand, perennial disputes on the Pokot/Marakwet border had remained unresolved during the colonial period, and these flared up again after 1963. First, it must be emphasized that in Pokot/Marakwet relations there are various factors that have contributed to the growing antagonism between the two groups. Over the years, for example, there have been disputes between the Cheptulel Pokot and the Endo Marakwet over water rights from the Chesogon river and its tributaries. The Endo Marakwet have not only claimed the right to the river, but they have also claimed the right to the small triangle south of Chesogon, the Sewero area, whereas there is no documented or traditional justification for the claim. Reciprocal grazing and irrigation rights between the two groups along the Chesogon also have been periodically trespassed or rejected by one side or the other. This has led to open conflicts on many occasions.<sup>158</sup>

Furthermore, antagonism between the Pokot and the Marakwet on Lelan border for many years has been caused by alleged stock theft and homicides that have caused outbreaks of hot tempers, mutual accusations and physical confrontations. As a case in point, it was noted in the 1967 WPDAR that:

On 10 July 1967, what began as a neighbour's quarrel ended up with a Pokot murdering a Marakwet. The Pokot was judged in a court of law, but this was not satisfying enough to the Marakwet. They went ahead and planned for revenge, and when normal precautions failed, the situations flared up on 18 July 1967.<sup>159</sup>

The administration had to use force, as it deployed both the Kenya Police and Administration Police in the area to restore order.<sup>160</sup> It is worth mentioning that government intervention was mostly inforced whenever border calamities involved loss of human life.

In Karapokot and Kapenguria divisions, cases of stock theft, murder and open conflicts were experienced after independence. Most thefts were committed by the Turkana, and the Karamojong and Sebei of Uganda. For example, in 1967 cases of stock theft were reported in Kapenguria division, 40 at Katikomor/Kanyarkwat area, and 28 at Kishaunet.<sup>161</sup> In such cases, the Uganda administration maintained absolute cooperation, at times allowing the Kenya Police (Department of Anti-Stock Theft) to penetrate into Karamojong and Sebei territories in pursuit of raiders, mainly to recover stolen stock. The veterinary departments, administration and police departments of both republics also held frequent meetings and joint *barazas* with the aim of solving this vexed problem. For example, in 1969 a total of four joint *barazas* between Kenya and Uganda representatives were held at Moroto and Sebei (in Uganda) and Kongelai, Kapenguria division. To some extent, a certain amount of success in recovering stolen stock resulted from these efforts. However, recovery presented many difficulties, the worst being retaliations and spread of livestock diseases (in particular, foot and mouth and pleuro pneumonia), which necessitated a lengthy quarantine of recovered stock at Kongelai in 1969.<sup>162</sup>

When the Kenya government took over the administering of Karapokot from Uganda in 1970, as noted in chapter two of this study, this process had its own impact on Karamojong/Pokot relations. The Karamojong purposely harassed members of the Pokot community that remained in Uganda, and the dispute was over grazing areas. The molestation was coupled with many cases of stock theft committed by both sides. A number of border

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<sup>158</sup> WPDAR, 1969.

<sup>159</sup> WPDAR, 1967.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> WPDARs, 1967 and 1969.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

meetings were then held at different venues between Kenya and Uganda officials in an effort to intensify security along the border.<sup>163</sup>

Generally, stock theft in West Pokot was on the increase in the 1970s. For example, a total of 1,039 head of cattle were stolen in 1972 and only 55 were recovered. In the Karapokot area alone, 600 head of cattle were stolen by both Karamonjong and the Turkana during the year, and none were recovered. At the same time, a total of twelve people lost their lives in stock raids, of which seven were from Karapokot. Mnagei location, specifically the Katikomor/Kanyarkwat area, was among the worst hit. Worse still, these raids led to a chain reaction, whereby the Pokot who had lost their animals to raiders started to steal from the non-Pokot in the district, particularly the Luhya, Nandi and Saboat in Kapenguria division. This culminated in ethnic clashes (as mentioned earlier in chapter 2 of this study) that reached a climax in the early 1990s. In the meantime, most of the stock stolen disappeared into eastern Uganda where it was reported to have fetched better market prices.<sup>164</sup>

A prolonged drought in the first quarter of 1972 was also responsible for the deterioration of grazing and contributed to conflicts between Pokot herders and the Karamonjong on one hand and Turkana on the other. Sigor division was particularly hit many times by the Turkana raiders in 1972 and 1974. Several deaths were reported and many animals taken. By 1976 cattle raiding was still rampant in the district. The situation became worse in the month of December when most of the people were celebrating *Jamhuri* (Independence Day, 12 December) and Christmas. The government deployed security forces in the area; in particular it posted a number of soldiers along the Masol/Turkana border and temporarily brought the situation under control.<sup>165</sup>

Conflicts again erupted on the Kenya/Uganda border in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In 1978/79, a group of Pokot and the Sebei (mainly herders/stock raiders) clashed heavily at Kanyerus in Kacheliba division. In 1980/81, the district was struck by *Ngoroko* raiders (in particular, heavily armed Karamonjong from Uganda). The raiders came in with illegally acquired, sophisticated weapons, consisting mainly of AK-47 rifles and grenades, stole all the animals available and killed all those in their way. The illegal acquisition of sophisticated weapons could be linked to the political turmoil at the time in Uganda following the overthrow of Milton Obote by Idi Amin in 1971 and the political instability that followed thereafter. For example, hundreds of *Ngorokos* also attacked the Nakuyen-/Lokichar area in Kacheliba division. Most homes in Kacheliba were devastated and it is estimated that Pokot stock keepers lost over 6,000 head of cattle to *Ngorokos*. Moreover, in the month of July 1980 alone, 27 Pokot were killed in *Ngoroko* raids.<sup>166</sup> Thus, most Pokot fled the Kacheliba division for fear of *Ngorokos*.

The calamities of 1979 to 1981 also befell the Alale division of West Pokot District. The most affected areas were Alale, Kasei and Chemorongit locations. The people of Alale not

<sup>163</sup> WPDAR, 1970.

<sup>164</sup> WPDARs, 1972 and 1974; and Republic of Kenya, *Kiliku Report*, 11-12.

<sup>165</sup> WPDARs, 1972, 1974 and 1976. In 1976 livestock security was also threatened by wild animals. Lions were reported to have killed several cattle in Chesera and Nakwijit ranches. Game scouts were called upon to deal with these predators.

<sup>166</sup> Robert M. Maxon, *East Africa: An introductory history* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 1994), 259-269; WPDAR, 1980; and Ton Dietz, Annemarie van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Suam Location, West Pokot District, Kenya", RDR West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 18-19. It should be noted here that heavily armed raiders are popularly referred to as *Ngoroko* (s) in the area.

only lost their animals to *Ngorokos*, but also to disease and drought during this period. It is estimated that they lost 1,400 cattle and 1,200 goats to disease, and 3,800 cattle and 1,100 goats to *Ngorokos*. Most of their sheep, donkeys and camels were stolen too. By mid 1981, there were hardly any animals in the area. The population was not only desperate, but also very insecure. The Pokot in Alale had to start all over again from remnant stock. The rest were obtained from bride wealth, *Tilia* and from counter-raids.<sup>167</sup>

Generally, similar security problems in West Pokot continued through the 1980s and into the 1990s. In the months of September and December 1981, for example, there occurred another wave of cattle raids in the district. The areas affected most were once again, Kacheliba, Alale and Sigor divisions. Raiders, both Karamonjong and Turkana, were well armed with machine guns, ready to confront any challenges posed by the Pokot (especially stock keepers) and the security forces. Insecurity along the Kenya/Uganda border between 1982 and 1988 led to the closing of many educational and trading centers. By the early 1990s, incidents of raids and counter-raids had not only escalated but had become more deadly than ever before in the history of the Pokot and their neighbours.<sup>168</sup>

This could be linked to an illegal trade in weapons in the 1990s involving the Sudanese People's Liberation Army (SPLA), Uganda's pastoralist Karamonjong warriors and Kenyan contraband traders.<sup>169</sup> The weapons, consisting mainly of AK-47 rifles, grenades and ultra-light G3A3 automatic guns, originated from the SPLA controlled southern Sudan and were trafficked through the Karamoja region in Uganda to Turkana, West Pokot, Baringo and Marakwet districts of Kenya, and on to other parts of the country. Investigations by *The EastAfrican* in 1999 revealed that SPLA fighters and deserters, who continue to have bases in southern Sudan and parts of Karamoja – a vast unpoliced region – sold weapons to Karamonjong and Jie warriors who then ferried them to Ochorichor grazing land in Upe, Moroto district. At Ochorichor, the guns were bartered for cattle, at the rate of ten animals per gun, from the Kenya Pokot who live along side their kinsmen, the Uganda Pokot.<sup>170</sup>

*The EastAfrican* further revealed that the Kenya Pokot, in turn, sold some of the guns to the East Pokot and the Marakwet, who then sold some of them to other people in the country, as far as Central province of Kenya. The guns, for example the AK-47 rifle, fetched as much as Ushs. 30,000 (\$20) in Uganda, and Kshs. 8,000 (\$108) to Kshs. 10,000 (\$135) each inside Kenya. More guns also entered northwest Kenya, right into the hands of the Turkana, through the Lokichoggio border post where an AK-47 rifle sold for just Kshs. 6,000 (\$82).<sup>171</sup>

Furthermore, cattle that were bartered for guns were at first driven through Moroto district and sold inside Uganda. However, by the mid 1990s, the gun traffickers had opted to sell the animals to Kenya cattle traders who offered better prices than their Ugandan

<sup>167</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Alale", 29-30; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Kasei & Chemorongit", 19. Almost all households also own sheep and donkeys, but the average numbers are relatively small. Camels are owned by very few Pokot.

<sup>168</sup> WPDAR, 1981; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 108, 129 and 145.

<sup>169</sup> *The EastAfrican*, 8-14 September 1999. *The East African* is published weekly by The Nation Group, Nairobi. This information was based on a joint report "Rising armed crime linked to SPLA guns", by a Special correspondent in Karamoja and E. Ogoso Opolot of the Nation Group.

<sup>170</sup> *The East African*, 8-14 September 1999; and oral interviews with Lorite Lotimu & Lopeyok Ngoleisia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

counterparts. The traffickers then traveled to Mbale to exchange the money into Uganda currency before traveling back to Moroto to purchase more guns from the SPLA through the Karamonjong.<sup>172</sup> Therefore, there has been a well connected gun trafficking racket across the Karamoja region, although nobody knows the exact number of guns sold illegally in northwest Kenya.

Armed with sophisticated weapons, by the mid 1990s cattle raiding between the Pokot and their neighbours had degenerated into thuggery, murder, theft and chaos. In November/December 1995, some Pokot (mainly herders/stock raiders) raided the Turkana more than three times, at Nadome, Lomelo and Napeitum, and left at least 44 people dead and about 12,000 animals stolen.<sup>173</sup> What began as a mere scramble for pasture and water due to drought degenerated into full scale inter-ethnic warfare between two traditionally hostile communities. It was also established that Pokot women had been raped by Turkana bandits at a watering point near Kapedo on the Pokot/Turkana border, an incident that fueled the November/December clashes. Evidently, on 16 November 1995 Pokot (herders/stock raiders) raided Kapedo, took 2,000 goats after killing one Turkana herdsman and injuring four others.<sup>174</sup> In retaliation, Turkana raiders attacked members of the Pokot community near Tangulbei, once again on the border, killing three people and taking more than 4,000 cattle on 27 December.<sup>175</sup> In response, the government deployed security forces, the GSU, regular Kenya Police and Administrative Police to contain the situation and arrest the culprits. However, it has always been difficult to fix the whole blame on either one side or the other for border clashes/cattle raids. In fact, every raid, particularly Turkana raids, evokes attempted retaliation from the Pokot and vice versa. Therefore, as each raid and counter-raid exacerbates the conflict, it has remained difficult to sort out the culprits and to bring an end to it.

Indeed, the Kenya security forces have constantly dealt with this very vexed problem. Yet government intervention has not been effective due to the fact that security personnel have been extremely thin on the ground, coupled with poor infrastructure, no proper roads nor sufficient police posts in northwest Kenya. Security forces sent to these hostile areas to stop raids have often complained of lack of supplies, let alone enough vehicles, to carry out patrols. For example, of the three policemen stationed at Lomelo outpost, there was only one policeman at the post, who hid when the raiders, numbering more than 700, struck in 1995.<sup>176</sup> As noted in earlier chapters of this study, this reinforces the fact that West Pokot still suffers from state marginalization, in terms of allocation of resources, in this case those needed to boost security measures and the area's socio-economic development in general. It is true that patrol outposts have always been targeted by raiders, especially *Ngorokos*, but in order to make the affected areas secure for livestock and all its inhabitants, a lot more needs to be done.

Furthermore, the Kenya government has attempted to disarm the Turkana, Pokot and Marakwet among others, but without much success. For instance, it has been difficult to disarm members of the Pokot community in their hilly areas, and during government crackdowns those targeted take refuge among their kinsmen in Uganda. Meanwhile, guns and other sophisticated weapons continue to stream into the area illegally. Many Kenyans,

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<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> *Daily Nation*, 14 February 1996.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

particularly in the 1990s, felt that the government had yet to deal with the real people behind the cattle raids in northwest Kenya. In recent years, cattle raiding in this part of the country is believed to be the work of influential people who engage in lucrative livestock trade. The leaders involved are said to have taken advantage of mainly the Pokot/Turkana and Pokot/Marakwet conflicts to organize raids, especially during the festive season in December, when livestock prices in Nairobi and other urban areas are high.<sup>177</sup>

Therefore, it is urgent that government arbitration and direct action on raids and counter-raids be given high priority and urgency in order to stop further disruptions of the peace. Preliminary measures at the international level in the form of joint *barazas* aimed at establishing joint border committees comprising mainly elders, councillors, chiefs and the local people, already in progress need to be reinforced. Such intervention measures need to be regularly and effectively conducted (not to wait until there are clashes) and culprits, whether locals or influential persons, linked to cattle raids, either as raiders or gun/livestock traders, need to be brought to justice without mercy or favour. In this way, border clashes and cattle raids between the Pokot and their neighbours may be curbed.

Indeed, cattle raiding still remains a real threat among the Pokot, despite the Kenya government's efforts to stop it. The devastation of war in northern Uganda, southern Sudan and in more recent times Somalia and Ethiopia, together with the recent severe droughts in Eastern Africa, have fostered new outbursts of armed theft in the region. With the availability of sophisticated weapons, raiding in northwest Kenya is far more serious and potentially deadly than when it was fought with bows and arrows and spears. A Pokot family can lose its entire herd of animals in a single day, and without livestock, a family can barely survive. Nor can the social networks that revolve around it.<sup>178</sup> Suffice it to say, cattle raids increase violence and insecurity, which causes people to abandon their homes temporarily or permanently, as in the case of Kacheliba, Alale and Masol, thus contributing to the decline of food production in the area. Cattle raids have not only contributed to livestock and human insecurity, but to overall food insecurity in West Pokot over the years. Thus, for socio-economic development and food security to be realized in West Pokot, peace is essential.

### Hunting and gathering as coping mechanisms

Although farming and herding are the main bases of the Pokot economy, associated with them are hunting and gathering as forms of food procurement in the area. Edible roots, leaves and fruits have always been gathered and used as food all over the area, although the items gathered differ with the season. For example, most of the fruits ripen in the first half of the dry season from July to early December. These foods have always served as auxiliary to the main items of diets, but at certain times of the year they become very important as a source of sustenance. This is particularly true in the Masol area where many wild plants are gathered during the dry season (January to March) when milk production is low.<sup>179</sup>

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.; and oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>178</sup> Meyerhoff, "The threatened ways", 134; and oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>179</sup> B.E. Kipkorir, "Historical perspectives of development in the Kerio Valley", In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 1-11; Schneider, "The Pakot", 210-211; and oral interview with Lotudo Kakorio, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

At the same time, ant hills, which proliferate in the area, especially in the plains, do usually yield huge quantities of termites (*Termes Bellicosus*) which have been gathered over the years, fried and eaten, or dried and stored for future consumption. Termites are considered a delicacy among the Pokot. They are available only a short time during the year, but they appear at a time when food resources are low and so form an important addition to the diet and supply of protein. Their importance has always been shown by the fact that ant hills are individually owned and jealously guarded.<sup>180</sup>

Furthermore, the vegetation in the area attracts bees, and accordingly bee keeping and honey collection have always been important activities among the Pokot. Members of the Pokot community have collected honey from the river banks and wild bees for as long as they can remember. For example, the riverine forest of the Weiwei is an important honey producing area for West Pokot. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the men to prepare beehives and collect honey at the beginning of the dry season. Honey has always been an important source of food for most Pokot families. It is a relish that accompanies the main dish, especially during the dry season when vegetables are scarce.<sup>181</sup>

As in the case of gathering, hunting has been important during the season of the year when food from farms and herds is scarce, and an occasional gazelle, hare or spur fowl has always been welcome to augment the diet. Members of the Pokot community have always used a number of different types of traps to snare any type of animal from squirrels to elephants. Birds or small animals have been snared or hunted with stones, throwing sticks or bows and arrows. Poisoned arrows have always been used when animals are hunted for human and animal protection and not for food. The Pokot do not use dogs in either hunting or herding, as dogs can expose their location to enemy raiders (for example, the Turkana) by barking.<sup>182</sup>

Traditionally, the main rationale for hunting was to provide the family with meat. Secondly, the safety of the community and domestic animals was only guaranteed by effectively keeping away the wild game, for example lions and leopards, that were hunted not so much for their meat and skins but for protection. Thirdly, and probably the most important reason, was that by hunting wild game for subsistence, the family herds were then left to multiply, forming a basic resource (capital) for the family.<sup>183</sup>

A limited amount of fishing has also engaged members of the Pokot community. A bony but flavorful type of barb is trapped in pools of stagnant water which form in the river beds when streams are trapped for irrigation in the dry season and sections of them are almost devoid of water. In the Weiwei irrigation system, fish that get into the furrows and channels are trapped and swept out of the water by hand or by using a sort of net consisting of mass twigs and leaves.<sup>184</sup>

Just as in farming and herding, division of labour in hunting and gathering developed along sex and age lines. Food procurement was such that men were solely responsible for wild game and women and children ensured the availability of wild vegetables, roots, berries, and at times mushrooms that were collected and prepared as relishes. Fruits were

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Joyce M.K. Olenja, "Dietary Patterns of the Marakwet of Kenya," In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 112-119; and Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones*, 17.

<sup>182</sup> Tanaka "On Residential Pattern", 57; Schneider, "The pakot", 211-212; and oral interview with Lotudo Kakorio, Sangat, 15 July 1996. Dogs are not regarded as food at all among the Pokot.

<sup>183</sup> Olenja, "Dietary Patterns", 112-119.

<sup>184</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 212-213.

collected by every member of the family, men, women and children – and mainly eaten as snacks while working in the fields, herding or traveling.<sup>185</sup>

However, during the colonial period, the administration interfered with the Pokot hunting and gathering activities, a source of their food supplements and trading items. As a case in point, as early as the 1920s and 1930s, the colonial administration warned the Pokot in *barazas* against hunting and imposed fines for killing game. For instance, the tendency of Pokot men to hunt leopards for their skins, mainly for clothing and for sale, led to a circular letter to the chiefs in 1937 stating that “leopards might only be killed in defense of life or stock”.<sup>186</sup> It was also noted in this circular that in the future “applicants for permits to sell leopard skins must obtain a letter from their chief stating that the leopard was killed in such circumstances”.<sup>187</sup>

Furthermore, in 1959 a Pokot man was given 6 months in prison for killing a zebra.<sup>188</sup> What Pokot men had practiced over the years as hunting for food and clothing items was then termed as poaching by the colonial administration. Specifically, the DC, Shirreff, in the same year noted that the worst poachers were the cultivators of Weiwei, Lomut and Sekerr who traditionally depended on game for meat, having a few or no stock. He further noted that “it was their responsibility to keep enough stock so that there should be no excuse for them to stop poaching”.<sup>189</sup> The DC was also of the opinion that, “the Pokot are a hunting people who if left to themselves would finish off all the game except the forest dwelling species”.<sup>190</sup> He further emphasized that they had been warned: “the only permitted killing was in defense of self or stock, but only limited action had been taken so far to stop poaching”.<sup>191</sup> Shirreff concluded that if hunting did not stop, “I suggest that we make it an offence for young men to carry bows and arrows, except when herding stock”.<sup>192</sup>

By 1959, there were small numbers of elephant, rhino, lion and buffalo found in the Kapkanyar area, Kapenguria division, and also in Malmalte area and on Mount Mtelo, both in Sigor division.<sup>193</sup> Other species occasionally seen were gazelles, giraffe, zebra, impala, bush buck, and cheetah. Shirreff was of the idea that if poaching were controlled, game would be attracted into some grazing schemes and, Masol, in particular, would become a game sanctuary.<sup>194</sup> Even though Shirreff did not state the advantage of the sanctuary in the area, one can argue that this was to serve as a tourist attraction for European visitors and residents alike in West Pokot.

Ironically, while members of the Pokot community were restricted from hunting for food and other needs, European hunting parties continued to operate in the area. In 1959, Shirreff noted that “controlled hunting should be encouraged as a means of ensuring the preservation of game, and in addition to the Malmalte area, occasional hunting parties be permitted into Riwa location”.<sup>195</sup> Thus, the colonial administration with its game policy, in

<sup>185</sup> Olenja, “Dietary Patterns”, 113-114.

<sup>186</sup> WSDAR, 1937, WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 8 and 11.

<sup>194</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

one way or another, interfered with Pokot hunting activities and hence their source of food supplements.

After independence the Kenya government continued with the policy of game protection, aimed at boosting tourism to economically benefit this semi-arid part of the country. By 1995, however, the district had only one game reserve. This is the Nasolot National Reserve on the boundary with Turkana near Turkwel gorge. This National Reserve has a size of about 100 square kilometers. It was gazetted in 1979, and ever since then its development was placed under the County Council of West Pokot. The animals found are mainly elephants, lions and leopards. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Council received a Yearly Grant in Aid from the Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife for development purposes.<sup>196</sup> However, very few tourists visit the Nasolot National Reserve. Although there are no exact figures for this reserve, undoubtedly insecurity from frequent border clashes and cattle raids is a major constraint to the development of tourism in the area. Thus, the intended economic benefits from the game reserve, particularly for the Pokot population, are yet to be realized in this part of the country.

Furthermore, in the post-colonial period, specifically under the SRDP, there was also an attempt to boost honey and wax production, an economic activity previously neglected during the colonial period.<sup>197</sup> Consequently, between 1970 and 1976, 272 Kenya Top Bar Hives were introduced in the SRDP area, mainly in Sigor and Kapenguria divisions, as a move towards modern bee keeping in the district. However, by mid 1976, the project was still experiencing problems with regard to bee occupation of the Kenya Top Bar Hives. Therefore, the SRDP officials suggested a few modifications in the style of hanging the hives to attract bees and agreed that a 20 acre plot be set aside for a breeding/research station in Sigor area along the Weiwei river to look into modern bee keeping problems.<sup>198</sup>

Generally, 13 out of 28 households do have traditional beehives on average, but not all hives are in operation every year. In 1983, for example, the total number of traditional beehives in the whole district was estimated to be over 10,000 with a potential production of at least 30 tons of refined honey per year. Yet, the average per household production of honey in the 1980s and 1990s was roughly 17 kilograms per year among households with hives. On average seven kilograms were marketed, and the rest used locally as medicine, for home brewed beer during work parties and for family consumption. Sometimes the honey beer is bartered for a goat or grains, particularly during famines when families are in need of food.<sup>199</sup>

It is worth mentioning that although there is a lot of potential for honey and wax production in the district, their marketing is encumbered by major hindrances. By 1995, the only organized outlet for marketing honey in the whole district was Kodich Honey Refinery, in Kapchok, Kacheliba division. For example, honey marketed in and out of West

<sup>196</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1994-1996*, 18-19; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 73.

<sup>197</sup> WPDAR, 1976; and WSDARs, 1936 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. What the researcher was able to find out in relation to beekeeping during the colonial period was a perfunctory mention of it in the 1936 and 1955 District Annual Reports. It was noted that in 1936 some 50 lbs of beeswax were prepared by the agricultural instructors at Mwino, Parua and Weiwei, and it had a ready sale. Moreover, in 1955, "the local people were told that if they brought in material, the wax could be prepared for them".

<sup>198</sup> WPDAR, 1976. By end of 1976, about 70 hives had been occupied, out of the original 272 Kenya Top Bar Hives.

<sup>199</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 68-69; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 68; Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Kapchok", 17; and oral interview with Cheropo Lopoya, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

Pokot in 1984 was only reflected as 0.8% and in 1988 and 1993 as 1.3% of the total amount harvested during these years. This was due to shortage of revolving funds to the Kodich Farmers Co-operative Society (that operates the refinery), and the small size of the only honey refinery in the district. Moreover, the local market price for honey in 1993 was only Kshs. 25 per 500 gram bottle. Thus, honey production and marketing in West Pokot have met with fluctuating success. A lot of honey is still traditionally produced and locally consumed.<sup>200</sup>

Indeed, Pokot knowledge of the flora and fauna is almost totally in relation to the plant value for their livestock and for people in terms of food and medicine. Tanaka found out that of the 307 species of plant, 61 (20%) were utilized for food (vegetable and fruit) and 118 (39%) for medicines of one sort or another.<sup>201</sup> Thus, members of the Pokot community exploited their natural surroundings for a considerable proportion of food - especially during the dry season - that has been vital for survival in a harsh environment, while at the same time striving to maintain the balance of the very delicate eco-system.

## Conclusion

Pokot farming and livestock activities are in fact two sides of the same ecological coin.<sup>202</sup> Over the years, members of the Pokot community have cultivated grains and supplemented them with animal products – milk, meat and blood. Livestock are also socially and economically valuable and are domestically and locally managed. The Pokot source of food also depends on the use of wild resources, by way of seasonal hunting and gathering. For example, vegetables, wild fruits and relishes – termites and mushrooms – are an important supplementary food supply. The Pokot can be said to have strived to attain a degree of food security, based upon a sound adaptation to their environment through a more or less an efficient and balanced exploitation of their fauna and flora.

However, the establishment of colonialism interfered with the Pokot livestock keeping and hunting activities, and hence their food supplements, in one way or another. Particularly, the creation of boundaries interfered with Pokot grazing movements and hunting activities, respectively. Yet, almost all government efforts, whether colonial or post-colonial, intended to improve Pokot livestock production were less than fruitful in the area. Specifically, the establishment of grazing schemes/group ranches were handicapped by erratic rainfall and the outbreak of livestock diseases from time to time. Therefore, intended proper rotational grazing for better livestock management/production was difficult to achieve and it only aggravated Pokot resentment against government policies. Particularly in the colonial period, the Pokot were not only opposed to livestock and human confinement in grazing schemes, but also resented destocking as well as taxation policies. In the post-colonial period, there have been government attempts to introduce exotic dairy cattle,

<sup>200</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 68-69; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Kapchok”, 17. The Kodich Farmers Co-operative Society, had 300 members at the end of 1982. Unfortunately figures showing total amount of honey harvested in the 1980s and 1990s were not available to the researcher.

<sup>201</sup> J. Tanaka, “List of plants collected from Baringo, Elgeyo/Marakwet and West Pokot Districts”, In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 147-164; and Barrow, “An analysis of human and environment factors”, 52.

<sup>202</sup> Thomas Spear, “Being ‘Maasai’ but not ‘people of cattle’: Arusha agricultural Maasai in the nineteenth century”, In: *Being Maasai: Ethnicity and identity in east Africa*, ed., Thomas Spear & Richard Waller, (London: James Currey, 1993), 120-136.

wool sheep, a modern beekeeping industry and the promotion of tourism through the Nasolot National Reserve as a package for economic development in this part of the country. However, positive impact of these activities on the larger Pokot population, particularly in terms of food security, is yet to be realized.

It is also worth emphasizing that colonial and post-colonial state investments in grazing/ranching schemes and improved stock were too minimal, to enhance livestock production in West Pokot. Despite the fact that Pokot herders kept different types of animals, mainly as sources of food and a coping mechanism in a harsh environment, there was little effort on the part of the state to invest more, for example, to control livestock disease or to enhance quality and surplus production in the area. It can therefore be argued that the state was more interested in extracting as many animals as possible from the area to raise state revenue than in investing in the development of quality/surplus livestock production for the benefit of both the state and Pokot farmers/herders. This in itself reinforces the fact that West Pokot continued to be marginalized in terms of state allocation of resources for the area's socio-economic development. It did not provide meaningful support of the inhabitants' continued effort in livestock keeping, while striving for food security in a harsh environment, as compared to the country's high potential areas; all this, despite the fact that Pokot animals were extracted for the benefit of the state.

Furthermore, colonial and post-colonial government efforts have not been, very successful in curbing cattle raids in the area. Border clashes and cattle raiding between the Pokot and their neighbours, particularly the Turkana, are still rampant in the area to the detriment of the affected communities. Thus, as long as livestock insecurity – disease and cattle raids – and general insecurity continue to prevail in West Pokot, full exploitation of the available resources will never be practical, and the idea of living above the subsistence level may be received with pessimism for some time to come.

# 6

## Trade, wage labour, mining, and their contribution to food security

### Introduction

While preceding chapters have analyzed irrigation and rain-fed farming, livestock keeping as well as hunting and gathering as coping mechanisms in semi-arid West Pokot, this chapter analyses trade, wage labour, and mining, with emphasis on their contribution to food security in West Pokot in the colonial and post-colonial period.

It should be noted that from the beginning of the establishment of colonial rule, the colonial administration engaged in trade in livestock products in the study area to the detriment of the Pokot survival strategies. The colonial administration enforced destocking policies and paid low prices for livestock products to maximize profit at the expense of Pokot stock owners. Colonial trading policies and government imposed quarantines, especially during droughts and diseases outbreaks, were bitterly resented by most Pokot. Furthermore, during the colonial period, other economic activities were initiated, for example, small-scale mining in West Pokot. While a considerable number of the Pokot provided labour in these mines, overall their benefits were negligible as compared to what mining prospectors, middlemen and the colonial administration gained from them. Nonetheless, a few Pokot utilized some of their meager earnings, whether from working in mines, government departments and on road construction in the area, or on European settler farms in neighbouring Trans Nzoia district, to buy food in times of need. Thus, trade, wage labour and mining in one way or another contributed to a degree of some food security during the colonial and post-colonial history of West Pokot.

Traditionally, trade was an important activity among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. Through trade, most Pokot were able to forge local and regional relations with one another and their neighbours, respectively. More important, these exchange relations enabled Pokot families to obtain food, particularly during famines, to avert starvation. Most Pokot accumulated livestock from trade, a safety net for social and economic well-being of the society.

Before the advent of colonialism, the Pokot relied on barter trade. Barter, however, was restricted almost exclusively to trade of stock or meat for grain between Pokot groups and also with their neighbours. Barter trade most frequently occurred between January and March when milk production was low and grain supplies were depleted. For example, a member of the Pokot community could slaughter an ox, cow or bull, dry the meat for preservation, and then transport it to the homestead or a market place to be bartered for grain. Therefore, cows were not only useful for their milk and calves, but when they stopped calving they could most often be slaughtered and exchanged for grain. Oxen, for the most part, were culls which could not be acceptable for a feast or joint cow ownership. Joint cow ownership itself could be arranged simply to get an ox or a steer for barter.<sup>1</sup>

One of the most important exchange situations among the Pokot was one in which a member of the society, mostly likely male, used a steer to acquire grain from another who had a surplus.<sup>2</sup> However, what was more common was the exchange of sheep, goats and dry meat for grain and other agricultural produce whenever there was shortage. As a case in point, the people of Masol traded with those of Weiwei, while the East Pokot traded with the West Pokot of Weiwei and Cheptulel. Weiwei, Cheptulel and other parts of Sigor division were and remain, attractive for trading because in normal years their inhabitants have some irrigated grain to spare in times of food shortage. The people of Mbara, who mainly relied on rain-fed farming, also kept livestock, which was traded for irrigated grain at Weiwei and Mwino in years when there was little rain. Members of the Pokot community are also known to have exchanged goats and dried meat for grain and tobacco from their neighbours, the Marakwet. However, barter of stock for grain was not confined completely to times of scarcity. It could also be undertaken due to illness or any other unforeseeable circumstances, when those affected had not irrigated their farms.<sup>3</sup> Thus, animal keeping households clearly have had an important food buffer, a living insurance, not only as a direct source of food, but also as a currency for its acquisition.

However, during the colonial and post-colonial periods, the state not only intervened in the marketing of livestock products from the area, but also emphasized money as the main medium of exchange. In this case, it interfered with Pokot trading patterns, based on barter rather than monetary exchange. But despite state interference, as shown in this particular chapter, most Pokot in the period under review were able to utilize income from trade (mainly trade in livestock products), wage labour and mining, however limited, to purchase food in times of need. Thus, in the colonial and post-colonial period, alongside agriculture and trade, wage labour and mining were adopted by a considerable number of the Pokot as additional coping mechanisms for survival in a harsh environment.

<sup>1</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 272-273; and oral interview with Lopeyok Ngolesia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996. When an animal was slaughtered for barter, the family kept some of the meat and some parts were given to neighbors. The rates of exchange in barter are difficult to determine as there were no standardized units.

<sup>2</sup> Schneider, "The subsistence role of cattle among the Pokot", 284.

<sup>3</sup> Schneider, "The Pakot", 274; Ton Dietz, Annemiek van Haastrecht & Annette Kruithof, "Endo-Mokoro, Kenya", In: Reitsma, Dietz & de Haan, *Coping with semiaridity*, 91-111; and oral interview with Lopeyok Ngolesia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996. Tobacco is grown in northwest Kenya for domestic consumption. The leaf is cured and prepared mainly for snuff and chewing.

## Trade in the colonial period, 1920-1935

In the colonial period, animal industry was an important factor in the colony's economic structure. Milk, butter, cheese, bacon, ham and wool were produced, mainly by Europeans, while both Europeans and Africans supplied the market with mutton, beef, ghee, hides and skins.<sup>4</sup> Considerable quantities of mutton, beef, milk, and ghee were consumed by Africans, and these products, together with blood drawn from living animals, supplemented the Pokot diet and contributed to food security in the area.

As early as 1920, the ghee trade seemed to have great possibilities in the colony. In 1921/22, £40,986 worth of ghee (8,137 cwt.) was imported into Kenya, and, according to the colonial administration, there was no reason why locally prepared ghee could not oust the imported commodity. In the meantime, local production was fostered by the imposition of one Kenya shilling per pound customs tariff on imported ghee, and the value of the imported commodity dropped to 4,557 cwt. (value £15,523) in 1922. In the same year, it was estimated that African-owned cattle totaled 2.5 million, and, to the administration, this was a manifestation that trade in livestock products of a considerable magnitude could be established, both local and for export. Therefore, the colonial state felt it was necessary, for example, to instruct African stock owners on how to treat hides for the export market. Evidently, the removal of the export duty on hides in 1922 gave an immediate stimulus to this trade, and efforts were then centered on improving the quality of livestock products.<sup>5</sup>

However, right from the beginning, the African stock industry was hampered by the existence of diseases (for example, foot and mouth and east coast fever), which necessitated quarantine regulations, prohibiting the movement of cattle from African reserves except through authorized quarantine stations. In some cases, this resulted in complete prohibition of the movement of animals. The situation was not so serious in respect to sheep diseases, and as a consequence movement was less restricted.<sup>6</sup> For example, the quarantine for cattle in West Pokot was in force the whole of 1924, and the only outlet for stock was at Kukwasiewa slaughter depot, established on the Pokot/Trans Nzoia border for the supply of meat to Kitale. This depot not only served as an outlet for Pokot cattle, but also as a source of revenue for the colonial administration. Although the depot could only take a limited number of cattle, the Pokot had to pay a collective service charge imposed by the administration. In addition, the depot had the effect of raising the price of oxen for slaughter within West Pokot.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in 1924, hide and ghee industries were considerably extended in West Pokot in addition to meat, and Pokot stock owners began to realize the possibilities of benefiting from them. As in the past years, the principal form of trade was the sale of livestock, and more than 1,923 sheep and goats left the district. The average price paid to Pokot stock owners by the middlemen – Somali traders and traders from Nyanza province – was six Kenya shillings per goat or sheep, but there was a tendency towards the latter part of the year for most Pokot to hold out for slightly increased prices. By end of 1924, a number of Pokot, previously employed by the middleman to negotiate for animals from stock owners,

<sup>4</sup> NADAR, 1931, 21.

<sup>5</sup> C&PKAR, 1922, 5.

<sup>6</sup> C&PKAR, 1931, 24.

<sup>7</sup> WSDARs, 1924 and 1925, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. It should be noted that the Pokot paid a collective fee for the establishment of the Kukwasiewa slaughter depot between 1922 and 1924. The depot became operational in 1924, after which they continued to pay for a service charge. Bullocks were slaughtered and taken to Kitale the same day by motor car.

had started trading on their own. As a result, this stimulated other Pokot to engage in stock trading in an attempt to oust the middleman.<sup>8</sup>

It is also important to note that, apart from selling livestock to obtain food and other necessities, taxation prompted most Pokot to sell their animals. For example, in 1924, tax collection commenced earlier than in previous years, and Kshs. 80,000 were collected by the end of the year. Practically all the money for the payment of taxes was obtained by the sale of goats, sheep, ghee, hides and to a small extent from wages. Owing to the 1924/25 quarantine, Pokot stock owners were still unable to dispose of their cattle outside the district, except in the form of slaughter meat. By 1925, in addition to the Kukwasiewa depot, some of the slaughter meat was sold through the local butchery at Kacheliba, by then the district headquarters for West Pokot. Generally, very little trade was carried out at Kacheliba township, except in *posho* (maize flour), American beads and copper wire for decoration.<sup>9</sup>

In 1925/26, there were six Pokot operated retail shops in the district. Moreover, 53 Stock Traders Licences were issued, of which 10 were taken out by Pokot stock traders in the same period. Although trade in hides had declined, production of ghee was much higher, with 8,435 pounds recorded in the 1925/26 period. Most of the ghee in the district was bought by the KAR and a company, S&T, at Lokiperuet in present-day Kacheliba division.<sup>10</sup>

In the following two years, drought caused grazing and water to be scarce everywhere and there was a heavy stock mortality in the district. At the same time, there were minor outbreaks of rinderpest and east coast fever. It is estimated that Pokot stock owners lost forty and thirty three percent of their stock in 1927 and 1928, respectively. This resulted in famine on the one hand and the unprecedented numbers of hides delivered to trading centers for sale on the other. The quantity exported increased owing to the fact that more people were drawn into the hides and skins trade. For example, the total number of Stock Traders Licences issued in West Pokot in 1927 alone was 47, and 16 went to Pokot stock traders, an increase of six over 1926. Twenty-four Hawkers Monthly Licences and nine Retail Traders Licences were also issued during the year. Consequently, the improvement of the hide and *posho* trade in the area was the principal reason for the number of motor lorries plying between Kitale and Kacheliba in 1927.<sup>11</sup>

Although Pokot stock-owners were at first reluctant to sell their stock, in spite of frequent complaints about shortage of grazing, in times of drought they had no option but to dispose of animals in order to purchase *posho*. In the 1927/28 drought, one saving element in the situation was the reasonable prices offered for hides, sheep and goats in the area. For example, hides were valued at eight Kenya shillings each, compared to 50 cents or less in previous years. It is also estimated that, in 1927 alone, Pokot stock owners obtained £4,500 from the sale of hides. At the same time, Pokot traders were buying sheep and goats in the area and exporting them to neighbouring Trans Nzoia district and Mbale in

<sup>8</sup> WSDAR, 1924, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>9</sup> WSDARs, 1924 and 1925, WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; and Kenya colony and protectorate, *NADAR*, 1926 (Nairobi: GP, 1927), 36. The quantity of hides exported from the district in 1924/25 was estimated at a total weight of 600 cwt. The value for 210 cwt. was Kshs. 8,269, and the rest, value unknown. This trade was carried out by a Messrs Kirsopp, of Trans Nzoia, who bought the bulk of the hides from West Pokot. As noted in the 1925 District Annual Report, trade in hides at the time was on the whole poor.

<sup>11</sup> *NADAR*, 1927, 12 and 33; Kenya colony and protectorate, *NADAR*, 1928 (London: The crown agents for colonies, 1929), 53 and 16; and WSDAR, 1927, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

Uganda (see Table 6.1). The average price paid to Pokot traders was seven to ten Kenya shillings depending on the size of the animal. Therefore, a considerable number of Pokot families survived the 1927/28 famine through the food they were able to purchase from the sale of available stock, and mainly from the sale of hides and skins from either starving or dead stock.<sup>12</sup>

Table 6.1 Sheep and goats sold by West Pokot traders, 1927-31

Place	1927	1928	1929	1931
Trans Nzoia	6,659	1,469	3,359	3,572 (by Somali traders) 1,993 (by Pokot traders)
Mbale (Uganda)	3,733	2,495	2,682	---
Baringo	375	---	---	---
Total	10,767	3,964	6,041	5,565

Source: Compiled from WSDARs, 1927, 1929 and 1931, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

While there was a boom in the hide trade, drought, rinderpest and east coast fever heavily affected the ghee trade, trade in slaughter meat, as well as that in sheep and goats. Worse still, the Pokot stock had no time to recover before the onset of the Great Depression in 1929. Besides drought, a plague of locusts on a large scale deepened the depression. During this time, the only outlets for cattle were once again restricted to the slaughter depot at Kukwasiewa and state purchase for rations to feed the colonial administrators at Kapenguria, the new headquarters for the district. Moreover, the Veterinary Officer only allowed cattle to be sold for slaughter after a month's observation and inspection period at Keringet in Kapenguria division.<sup>13</sup>

In the meantime, the depression did not spare the hide trade. Between 1929 and 1932, there was a decrease in the sale of hides and skins as the prices offered to Pokot stock owners/traders, at 50 cents or less per hide, were not tempting. Consequently, Pokot stock traders, owing to the shortage of cash and the fact that the Uganda route remained closed to livestock trade in 1931-1933, found their trading prospects curtailed. As a matter of fact, most of the hides and skins were bought by Asian and Somali traders among others who at least had better purchasing power than Pokot traders (see Table 6.2). Yet Pokot stock owners had no option but disposal of slaughter cattle for Kitale and Kapenguria, and sheep and goats to Somali traders, at throw away prices in order to obtain money for hut tax. For example, in 1929, some 3,369 sheep and goats were exported to Trans Nzoia from the district. In the same year, some 700 bullocks were slaughtered at Kukwaseiwa, and the meat taken to Kitale.<sup>14</sup> However, itinerant stock traders were fewer in number, and little money was brought into the district. In addition, there was no trade outside the district in food crops. All agricultural crops grown continued to be needed for local consumption, except for tobacco from Lomut and Cheptule locations that was sold in neighbouring

<sup>12</sup> WSDAR, 1927, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Memorandum from Clarke to the *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1748.

<sup>13</sup> WSDARs, 1931 and 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>14</sup> NADARs, 1929 and 1930, 68 and 42; WSDARs, 1929, 1931 and 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Memorandum from Clarke to the *Kenya Land Commission*, Vol. II, 1748. The fact that Asian and Somali traders bought Pokot traders out of business should not be interpreted to mean that they were unaffected by the depression. As noted in the District Annual Report, 1933, the shop and hide trade had decreased considerably, and it was difficult to know how Asians and Somalis managed to eke out a living.

Turkana district, partly to raise hut tax. Those Pokot with a little food to spare traded with those in need in exchange for sheep and goats.<sup>15</sup> Generally, there was curtailment rather than development in trade owing to the prevailing depression.

*Table 6.2 Details of trading licences issued, 1931-33*

	Asians	Somalis	Pokot	Other Africans
Licences	1931/32/33	1931/32/33	1931/32/33	1931/32/33
Trading	5	5/6	4	3/4
Hawkers	--	2/13	7	18/15
Stock traders	--	--/--	14	4/2
			4	--/--
				1
				3/--

Source: Compiled from WSDARs, 1931 and 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

On the other hand, during the depression, the colonial administration was disturbed by the fact that most of the trade in West Pokot and Turkana district s was in the hands of Somalis. According to the administrators, this was a real threat and unless the latter were strictly controlled, “they would try to establish herds of their own and thus form a Somali colony within Turkana Province”.<sup>16</sup> Based on this unfounded reasoning, Somali traders were not allowed to buy female stock in the area.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the PC, Turkana province, noted that the danger of Somali traders establishing themselves as livestock keepers and using it as a cover to establish a colony of their own in West Pokot existed, and though the purchase of female stock had been forbidden, it was feared that it had gone on secretly. He further noted that Somali shops in trading centers had been found to be the cloak under which they had taken shelter in more outlying parts of the district where they accumulated vast herds of stock of both sexes, while their shops contained little or no merchandise. It was therefore decided to control the number of Somali traders’ licences in future, and to centralize their shops in government stations (see Table 6.3).<sup>18</sup>

*Table 6.3 Trade centers and distribution of business, 1936\**

Kapenguria	2 Asian shops, 1 Swahili butchery and 1 Pokot beer shop
Keringet	1 Asian shop, 2 Somali butchers (supplying Kitale) and 1 Pokot shop
Kacheliba*	1 Asian shop (2 sub-tenants) and 1 Somali shop
Chesogon	1 Somali shop

\* There were no townships in the district. At the end of 1936, Kacheliba was handed over to the Uganda administration.

Source: Compiled from WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

### Trade in the post-depression and World War II period, 1935-1945

Despite the effects of the Great Depression, the economic history of the later years of the 1930s was one of gradual recovery. Moreover, there were attempts by the administration to improve trading activities in the colony and West Pokot in particular. The only immediate setback for West Pokot was the 1936 quarantine for rinderpest that halted the sale of cattle

<sup>15</sup> WSDARs, 1929, 1931, and 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>16</sup> NADAR, 1929, 42.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> NADAR, 1930, 42.

from the district. But 1937 brought some measure of prosperity to stock owners and traders in the area. Adequate rainfall ensured favourable grazing conditions and livestock prices also showed some improvement.<sup>19</sup>

Proof enough of the road to recovery, not only in West Pokot, but the colony as a whole was the report of the Meat and Livestock Inquiry Committee that was published in early 1937. Among the most important conclusions reached by the Committee was that an export trade in meat was essential to the future development of agricultural and animal husbandry. The result was the building of Messrs Liebigs' meat factory at Athi River, on the outskirts of Nairobi.

This meat processing factory was a subsidiary of Liebigs of United Kingdom, a private enterprise, profit making concern. Liebigs Ltd. was specifically invited by the colonial state to establish a meat processing factory in Kenya, targeting the export market. This was in line with state policy of extracting revenue from livestock, particularly in African occupied areas. At the same time, the establishment of the plant was a big step towards the accomplishment of the colonial state's destocking campaign. In the view of the colonial administrators, excessive stock in African occupied areas was to find a ready market at the plant. Moreover, it was designed to alleviate the settler pressure for profitable disposal of their high-grade cattle in Kenya. Specifically, Liebigs was to provide European settlers with a reliable outlet for their chilled beef exports at competitive prices.<sup>20</sup>

The factory cost £120,000 to build and was designed to process between 30,000 to 45,000 head of cattle per annum, with an enlargement capacity of 100,000 to 120,000 head per annum, for it to break even. Secondly, Liebigs was guaranteed by the colonial state a flow of livestock mainly from African occupied areas, at a fixed price, with a considerable profit margin to be obtained from processed meat, mainly on the export market, to benefit both the state and the company. These animals were to be derived for the most part from Kenya's pastoral areas, among them, Maasailand, Machakos, Kitui, Samburu, Baringo, Elgeyo, Marakwet, and, central to this study, West Pokot, as well as the north and north-eastern part of Kenya. In fact, by the end of 1937, Liebigs was in operation, expectedly getting most of its livestock supply from the nearby Maasailand, Machakos and Kitui areas, and aiming to expand its tapping grounds to other African areas. Of importance to this study, in the month of October 1937, a representative of Liebigs Ltd, visited West Pokot in the hope of getting a trial consignment of cattle for processing at the factory, but as Pokot stock owners demanded high prices for their animals, it was not possible to contract any business.<sup>21</sup>

Generally, right from the beginning, Liebigs Ltd. was in short supply of livestock, contrary to state assurance of organizing a steady flow of animals from African occupied areas. This was mainly due to the fact that Africans were strongly opposed to destocking, and although the state forcefully extracted animals from them, they were far from enough to meet Liebigs' minimum requirement of 30,000 to 40,000 head of cattle per annum. Besides, Africans preferred to dispose of their animals to private buyers, for example to Nairobi butchers among others, in the country's urban centers, outside the Liebigs market and government controlled prices. In other words, African stock owners were not ready to

<sup>19</sup> NADARs, 1936 and 1937, 129 and 150.

<sup>20</sup> Nicola Swainson, *The development of corporate capitalism in Kenya, 1918-77* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 29-30; and Kanogo, "Kenya and the Depression", 136.

<sup>21</sup> NADAR, 1937, 150 and 162; Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 301; and van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 101.

dispose of their animals to Liebigs at fixed or throw away prices. For instance, in 1937/38, the highest price offered for cattle by Liebigs was fifteen Kenya shillings per full grown animal, and two to three shillings for a goat or sheep. Yet the prices outside Liebigs market at this time, for example in the Nairobi, Machakos and Athi River region, were sixty to a hundred shillings for a bullock down to ten shillings for a goat.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, even though Liebigs had clearly hoped to take full advantage of the semi-monopoly in livestock trade offered to them by the colonial state, the strategy to obtain African animals fell short of expectation. At any rate, the Liebigs Ltd. would hang on till the end of World War II, with the hope of capturing the livestock market, but without much success. Thus, it can be argued that, the colonial state's attempts to establish a commercial beef industry in Kenya in the 1930s was less than successful.<sup>23</sup>

However, in other areas of the livestock industry, some progress was made in the commercialization of African hides and skins. The hides and skins trade received considerable emphasis from the colonial state in the post-depression period, and African farmers/herders were willing to respond because of the significantly higher prices offered for shade-dried hides.<sup>24</sup> It is also worth mentioning that, even before the 1929-1933 depression, the Departments of Agriculture and Veterinary Services had encouraged shade-drying of hides and skins in African occupied areas. Specifically by 1929, with the drop in prices for hides and skins, the two departments had considered a programme for improving the quality of the products, aimed at fetching at least higher prices on the export market. The programme involved the construction of hides and skins drying *bandas* (sheds) on one hand, and better skinning of the hides on the other. Besides, the programme was designed to provide a price inducement to African farmers/herders for the better prepared hides and skins, since the same products fetched better prices on the export market.<sup>25</sup>

Accordingly, in 1929 the programme conceived a number of measures that were to be successfully implemented during the 1930s. These included the continuation of education and propaganda aimed at converting African farmer/herders from sun-drying to shade-drying of hides and skins, and the establishment of marketing centers in principal areas of livestock production. Moreover, prices for both sun and shade dried hides and skins were prominently displayed at marketing centers.<sup>26</sup> With shade dried hides and skins fetching more money than sun dried, this in itself was a way of encouraging Africans to produce better quality products.

At the same time, provincial and district officials, private firms, LNCs and chiefs encouraged African farmers/herders to shade dry their hides and skins. African farmers-/herders were also offered lessons by agricultural officers, in particular African agricultural instructors, on flaying, dressing, and drying of hides and skins. It should also be noted that, although various state agencies encouraged shade-drying, much of the impetus for improving hide and skin drying methods came from African farmers/herders.<sup>27</sup> At the very least, African farmers/herders were gaining from these methods. In the case of the Pokot, they used some of the cash obtained from hides and skins to purchase food in times of need, even though most of it had to take care of state imposed sales and hut taxes.

<sup>22</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 101.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.; and Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 303.

<sup>24</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 303.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 276-277.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Generally, in the 1930s, progress was reported throughout much of the colony in the drive for shade-drying of hides and skins. This progress was represented principally by the growing awareness among African farmers/herders of the increased value of shade-dried hides and skins. For instance, prices for shade dried hides in Ukamba province in 1932 were Kshs. 11/50 per frasila while sun dried hides only commanded three shillings per frasila.<sup>28</sup> Thus, price differences between shade and sun dried hides and skins were to prove a significant inducement to African farmers/herders in converting to the more profitable method. In 1933, domestic prices in much of the colony remained relatively stable with prices for sun dried hides ranging between three and four shillings and those for shade-dried between twelve and fourteen shillings per frasila.<sup>29</sup> For Kenya as a whole, by 1938 the majority of hides and skins exported from the colony, measured by both value and quantity as well as quality, were shade-dried.<sup>30</sup>

Specifically for West Pokot, in 1937/38 shade and sun dried hides and skins, donkeys, sheep and goats were sold from the district, although not to Liebigs Ltd.<sup>31</sup> Meanwhile, the Department of Veterinary Services allocated the sum of £50 for the improvement of hides and skins in the area for the export market. Consequently, in 1938 a shade-drying *banda* for hides and skins was built at Kapenguria, and it was hoped that in the near future, more drying *bandas* would be built, in Keringet and other parts of the district.<sup>32</sup>

At the same time, it was the view of the colonial administrators that trade was unlikely to increase until means of communication were improved and Pokot farmers induced to produce cash crops. The DO, Kapenguria, noted in 1937 that the lack of a road through Marich Pass to the plains hampered agricultural production. He further noted that more and more varied crops were being planted, and that there was considerable trade with the Turkana in maize and tobacco from the Sigor division during the year. In addition, favourable conditions, with adequate rainfalls in 1936/37, contributed to satisfactory harvests, and no food shortages were experienced in the district. Thus, in April 1937, a monthly market day was instituted at Sigor in Weiwei location. Situated at the foot of the Marich Pass, it was a convenient meeting place for the Pokot of several locations, and it was intended to boost trade in agricultural produce and livestock in the area.<sup>33</sup>

In the meantime, while the colony was gradually recovering from the effects of the world depression, between 1939 and 1945 it felt the effects of World War II. Specifically, one of the greatest effects of the war on Africans was the drafting of men to serve in the war on behalf of the colonizing power. Many of the Africans who joined the war as the King's African Rifles in Kenya were captured by chiefs on DCs' orders. As noted by Tiyambe Zeleza, some of them were ordered to get into lorries while at labour recruitment centers (for example, in Central and Nyanza provinces) with the promise that they were being taken to places to work, only to find themselves landing at military training depots.<sup>34</sup> Those who joined the war voluntarily, as further noted by Zeleza, did so either because the army was "just another one of European jobs" available, or they fell prey to false rumors

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 279.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 280.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> WSDARs, 1937 and 1938, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>32</sup> NADARs, 1937 and 1938, 162 and 38.

<sup>33</sup> NADAR, 1937, 43 and 74; and WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>34</sup> Tiyambe Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War, 1939-1950", In: Ochieng', *A modern history of Kenya*, 144-172.

that military service would exempt them from paying taxes.<sup>35</sup> At the same time, propaganda was extensively used to persuade Africans to join the army. The most effective propaganda contained promises of better and fuller life after the war; including funds for trade and business, and permanent and high-wage employment, among other tantalizing opportunities.<sup>36</sup>

Apart from requiring men for the army itself, the military authorities, in conjunction with the colonial state, recruited labour for works of urgent harbors in Mombasa and military training camps. It is estimated that by 1941 approximately 20,000 Africans from the Kenya colony were recruited into the East African Military Labour Service and a further 16,000 into the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps. All in all, between 1939 and 1945, there were about 98,000 Kenyans, mainly Africans, who served in the armed forces in one capacity or another, at home or in military campaigns as far away as Burma.<sup>37</sup>

Specifically for West Pokot District, as noted in official records, there were about 30 to 40 Pokot on active service during the war, from which number three suffered casualties in 1944. However, the main form of contribution to the war effort was the provision of cattle, for example, through Messrs Liebigs Ltd., that purchased 1,065 cattle from the district in 1944 alone. The government had also instituted specific quotas for stock keeping districts in the colony as a way to sustain trade as well as a contribution to the war effort. All the same, in 1943/44 a combination of drought and locusts increasingly caused a serious shortage of livestock and grain in West Pokot. Therefore, towards the end of 1944, there was a general complaint among the Pokot that the stock quota could no longer be maintained. However, W.H. Hale, the then DC, West Suk, suggested that “a survey be made to verify the complaint and in the meanwhile the Suk to continue supplying stock as much as possible” to meet their quota.<sup>38</sup>

Consequently, between 1944 and 1946, the district disposed of 7,396 sheep and goats, 1,764 donkeys and 427 cattle to service the state imposed quota, to the detriment of the Pokot. It was noted in the 1944 District Annual Report that “West Suk by then was one of the few African reserves not over populated and over stocked”.<sup>39</sup> Of course, this explains the effects of government imposed monthly quota sales and World War II on the Pokot economy. Owing to the prevalence of east coast fever, moreover all cattle exported from the district had to be dipped at Keringet.<sup>40</sup>

Given the fact that West Pokot was isolated from the rest of the country and marginalized in terms of state investments in transportation network to link it to major livestock disposal centers, in particular Nairobi, Athi River and Mombasa, the area did not lose animals through state imposed quotas and related policies, at the same level as, for example, Kitui, Machakos and Maasailand that were close enough and at least well connected to the same disposal points. Therefore, it can be argued that West Pokot in

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 147-148.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> *C&PKAR, 1947, 87*; and WSDAR, 1944, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. It should be noted here that, given the number of Africans recruited from Kenya colony to serve in the war as noted by Zeleza, the official number of 30 to 40 Pokot on active service during the war is indeed on the lower side. Therefore, the same should be treated with caution.

<sup>39</sup> WSDARs, 1944 and 1946, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. The only licenced exporter of cattle from the district by then was Messrs Liebigs Ltd., and other traders, mainly Somalis, managed to dispose of sheep, goats and donkeys from the district. Besides, the 427 cattle were purchased between January and 31 July 1946. The low figure also reflects the impact of the war on cattle keeping in West Pokot District.

<sup>40</sup> WSDAR, 1946, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

comparison to Machakos and Maasailand, as well as the country's high potential areas, for example Nyanza province, lost fewer animals to the colonial state, and state linked private enterprises, for example Liebigs Ltd., during World War II. Nonetheless, the colonial state's extraction of Pokot animals affected their source of food and livestock keeping as a coping mechanism in a harsh environment.

During the war, not all traders in outlying centers in the district used money in the purchase of goods. Nearly all trade in shops was by way of barter for sheep and goats. It is noted in the 1946 District Annual Report that "if cash sales were insisted on and enforced, export of sheep and goats from the district would have been reduced".<sup>41</sup> Thus, Pokot stock owners at times were forced to exchange their animals for blankets, cloth, *jembes* (hoes), beads and copper wire available in the shops, whether they needed them or not. Worse still, at times they had to dispose of their stock and wait for the above mentioned exchange goods for days, weeks or even months. As supplies of the most goods were ultimately allocated by the Imports Controller, and because of the war situation, they often arrived late, if at all.<sup>42</sup> This situation continued even after the conclusion of the war.

Generally, World War II affected the livelihood of the Pokot of northwest Kenya in one way or another. It should also be mentioned here that, despite the fact that Pokot herders were not major commercial livestock producers and traders, or traded their stock and livestock products for capital accumulation, they still felt the impact of the war. As a matter of fact, the extracting of animals from the area based on state imposed quotas, to provide food for the army and to meet the needs of the export market, interfered with the Pokot source of food, currency and social networks, especially *Tilia*. Yet the trend continued in the post-war period, making it almost impossible for most Pokot families to survive in the semi-arid environment.

### Trade in the post-World War II period, 1945-1963

In the 1940s and 1950s, nearly all retail trade in the district was controlled by outsiders, chiefly Somalis and Asians, with a sprinkling of Arabs and a few Africans (that is African groups other than Somalis). Very few Pokot were successful traders. Despite of government crackdown on Somalis, nearly all shops in the outlying centers in the district were owned by the Somali traders. After the war, their main trade was in sheep, goats and donkeys. They used their plots as centers at which to assemble and graze stock, and when they accumulated sufficient numbers, they took them directly to Kitale for sale.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to stock trade, Somali traders and a few Pokot traded in foodstuffs and tobacco. For example, Somali traders purchased tobacco from Pokot and Marakwet growers at 25 cents per pound and sold the same to the Turkana at 50 cents per pound or even higher to maximize profit.<sup>44</sup> Undoubtedly, Somali and Pokot traders were the only people who ventured in trade in outlying centers away from government stations and from the main Kapenguria/Turkana road. In a way, it was a service to the community, particularly during famines, when they acted as food distributors in virtually all areas of West Pokot. But, more important, this was due to the fact that trade in accessible and reasonably secure places such as Kapenguria and Ortum was dominated by Asians and

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>43</sup> WSDARs, 1946, 1953 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>44</sup> WSDAR, 1944, WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

Arabs, respectively. Thus, in outlying centers the Somali traders were able to hike prices, for example on sugar and maize flour, beyond government regulated ceilings to maximize profits. It is also important to note that there were no convictions for offences against price control.<sup>45</sup>

The only trading convictions at the time were against hoarding of scarce commodities and smuggling. For example, an Asian trader (of Indian origin) was convicted at the Kapenguria district court in October 1945, accused of attempting to smuggle two bags of sugar from his premises (Reg. 13 (1) G.N. 478/42) to Kitale in the middle of the night. He was given a stern warning that, “in future if convicted he was to have his licence impounded”.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the DC and his team took great trouble to curb hoarding, ensuring the equitable distribution of sugar and foodstuffs (for example maize flour during famines) in the district. For instance, in 1945, there were 28 licenced retail traders in West Pokot. A meeting of traders was held in the DC’s office on the first Tuesday of each month, when available supplies of sugar (100 bags monthly for the district), imported famine *posho*<sup>47</sup> (May to October) and other available trade goods were collected by individual traders.

Nonetheless, Asian, Arab and Somali traders continued to hoard and smuggle commodities, especially sugar and maize flour, out of the district. Black market prices, particularly in Turkana during famines, proved too great a temptation compared to risks involved. Even though a closer system of control and buying was imposed in respect of grain grown in West Pokot, Asian and Somali traders smuggled the same out of the district.<sup>48</sup> For example, it is estimated that in 1954 alone about 1,500 bags of maize found their way to Lodwar, the headquarters of Turkana district.<sup>49</sup> This was from the storage facilities of Asian, Arab and Somali traders at Makutano, Ortum and Wakor that were supposedly, as per government licencing, a safety net to ensure that there was always *posho* available for purchase by Pokot families in times of need.<sup>50</sup>

Furthermore, under certain circumstances, a few Pokot farmers could dispose of some of the harvested grain to Asian traders. Thus, those with disposable grain secured a small amount of money with which to buy sugar, blankets, cloth, or beads and wire for decoration. Besides, Asians had set up mills for grinding maize, selling the finished product at controlled prices. Since maize, unlike millet or sorghum, could not be easily ground by Pokot women, they either sold it to Asians who had mills or took it to them to be ground at a price.<sup>51</sup> Asian traders therefore became consumers of the “small surplus” in maize, and could also bring in maize from outside, mainly from Trans Nzoia district. Yet before colonialism, “surplus” in grain was mainly disposed of within the area, and utilized by members of the Pokot community to shield them over the famine period, but with the Asian and Somali traders around, grain found its way out of the district to the detriment of most Pokot families.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to foodstuffs and tobacco, in the 1950s a small but increasing amount of trade in fresh vegetables was prevalent in the district. Most of the vegetables were sold in

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> WSDAR, 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.; and WSDARs, 1944 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Sugar distribution was in the hands of an Asian U.G. Patel & an Arab Mohammed Ghalib.

<sup>48</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>49</sup> WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Schneider, “The Pakot”, 277; and WSDAR, 1946, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.; and oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

Kapenguria, Kitale and Lodwar. A local vegetable market was started at Kapenguria in October 1955, and applications were made by mainly Kikuyu traders for stands at the new market.<sup>53</sup> Thus, a few Kikuyu had started to penetrate northwest Kenya in search of trading opportunities. But on the whole, retail trade in the district was controlled by Asians and Somalis, the latter penetrating all corners of the district.

However, the state continued to give considerable thought to the question of Somali traders, and administrative arrangements were once again made in 1946/47 to control their activities in West Pokot. First, an attempt was made to limit their ranching to five head of cattle per plot holder. However, they were allowed to trade in goats, provided that they were not ranned for long periods before marketing. Secondly, an attempt was made to limit the number of new plots allocated to Somali traders in the district. For example, a number of new plots were allocated in 1947, among them one at Makutano and another at Sigor, to A.M. Kaka, an Asian trader in the area. Although Somali traders had applied for plots during the year, none were granted. The administration justified its act by noting that “in West Pokot District, only the Asian traders stocked their shops properly and satisfied the wants of the local people”.<sup>54</sup>

In response, the Somali claimed a right to reside in West Pokot, own plots, and also engage in trading activities on grounds that they had been in the area for many years before colonial administrators and Asians. But the administration pointed out to them that since the late 1920s, they had been reminded on many occasions that “they were in the area on sufferance so long as they behaved themselves and, that they had no claim of right whatsoever”.<sup>55</sup>

At any rate, there was no solution to the Somali question, and they continued to engage in a wide range of trading activities, both legally and illegally, in the area. As mentioned earlier, Somali traders continued to flourish by venturing into other trading activities, mainly in locally grown tobacco and sugar in exchange for goats from the Turkana and Pokot groups respectively.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, they were attempting to diversify their trading items to make up for the loss of trade in cattle.

In 1947, the Marich Pass road right through Sigor to Chesogon on the Marakwet border was opened, and this led to the increase of government organized trade in the area. This was through the Meat Marketing Board (MMB), which started its operation in the colony in December 1946 and in West Pokot District in June 1947. At this time, the Liebigs Ltd., after failing to capture trade in livestock and maximize profit as per the government arrangements noted earlier on in this chapter, had ceased operations in Kenya colony. As a result, the colonial state established the MMB to organize the livestock industry in the colony, in particular the trade in slaughter animals, to meet the needs of the domestic and export markets. At the same time, the MMB, as a state agency, was licenced to purchase animals from both European and African occupied areas. However, the emphasis for MMB purchases was mainly to extract as many animals as possible from African occupied areas, as this was in line with the official destocking policy imposed since the 1930s. Furthermore, the MMB was to purchase animals at government controlled prices and also at official auctions, organized by the livestock officers in conjunction with the local admini-

<sup>53</sup> WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. The Kikuyu had suffered severe land alienation, next only to the Maasai, and some of them who lived as squatters on European farms or crowded in African reserves in central Kenya often tried to look for opportunities in other parts of the country.

<sup>54</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

stration in African occupied areas. In sum, the main objective behind the establishment and licenced operations of the MMB was to raise revenue for the colonial state. For example, the MMB acquired animals from African areas at low prices and sold the processed product at a profit on the export market. Thus, through the trading activities of the MMB, the colonial state was able to extract revenue from sales of livestock and livestock products.

However, despite the mandate bestowed to the MMB, it still faced competition from local and private buyers, both licenced and unlicenced, also trading in slaughter animals in African areas. In this case, the MMB had to bid for animals against private buyers, most of them offering “black market” prices, at all times higher than the official prices. For instance, in 1947 at an official auction in Garba Tulla in present North Eastern province, the MMB’s buyer was offering eight Kenya shillings per sheep or goat, but no sellers would accept less than nine shillings and fifty cents, an indication of the level of “black market” prices.<sup>57</sup> Thus, as noted by Kitching, the inability of any of the government licenced buying organizations (Liebigs Ltd. and MMB) to compete with free market prices is eloquent testimony to the buoyancy of the meat demand in Nairobi and Central province, among other areas, during the war and in the post-war period.<sup>58</sup>

However, this did not mean that the MMB was less successful in purchasing animals from African areas. In fact, the livestock officers, with support from the local administration, organized official auctions where the MMB agents were at times the sole buyers of slaughter animals. As a case in point, in 1948 alone the MMB handled over 63,800 cattle and more than 150,000 sheep and goats, mainly from African occupied areas.<sup>59</sup> However, these figures do not take into account the considerable internal consumption of meat by Africans, whose needs were not met by the MMB.<sup>60</sup>

In the meantime, the activities of the MMB started at a slow pace in West Pokot District. This was due to the fact that low prices paid by Messrs Liebigs Ltd. for cattle requisitioned during the war had made Pokot stock owners extremely suspicious of any form of government organized marketing. Thus, livestock sales to the MMB based on a new system of monthly auctions, as opposed to the wartime quota system started at a slow pace in the district. But within a short time, after some practical experience, some Pokot realized that there was no element of compulsion and slowly increased their sales to the MMB.<sup>61</sup>

In any case, Pokot stock owners had no choice but to dispose of animals to meet tax requirements and other needs, mainly food. For example, in August 1947 the district was short of grains and maize flour had to be purchased from Kitale, while local supplies were rationed. This was chiefly due to the poor harvest from the 1946/47 crop, but also to excessive illegal marketing of grains from the Sekerr area, Sigor division, to the then starving Turkana and to the ever-increasing consumption of *posho* beer (beer brewed from maize flour).<sup>62</sup>

Worse still, from October to December 1947, no livestock sales could be held owing to the outbreak of foot and mouth disease. As a case in point, 450 head of cattle were brought

<sup>57</sup> Kitching, class and economic change, 235

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Great Britain, C&PKAR, 1948 (London: HMSO, 1950), 39.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Great Britain, C&PKAR, 1950 (London: HMSO, 1951), 54. At this time, a Messrs Woodley was the buyer of cattle on behalf of the meat marketing board. The board was established in 1939 by order made under regulation 46 of the defense regulations to exercise some additional trading powers on behalf of the colony because of the prevailing war conditions.

<sup>62</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

in for sale in November, but all had to be turned away by the MMB. Therefore, the total number of stock sold during the year declined to 979 cattle and 1,800 goats and sheep. Nonetheless, in the following year, the quarantine was lifted, and in 1948 and 1949, Pokot stock owners sold 2,878 and 1,277 cattle respectively.<sup>63</sup>

Generally, the principal trading commodities in West Pokot in the 1950s continued to be slaughter cattle, hides and skins and, to a smaller extent, ghee, goats and sheep. However, in 1950 very few animals were marketed, although some trade was conducted in donkeys for North Nyanza during the year. Some maize flour was also purchased from outside the district for sale as food for a short time pending the harvest.<sup>64</sup>

Evidently, government attempts to streamline trade in slaughter cattle and other livestock products in the colony in the late 1940s and early 1950s, affected sales in West Pokot. Specifically, in 1948, the Hide and Skins Ordinance was passed. This Ordinance was intended to control and organize the hides and skins industry in the colony, with a view to improve the quality of the commodity and thus boost export trade.<sup>65</sup> Consequently, in 1951 considerable progress was made by the Hides and Skins Improvement Centers, a division of the Department of Veterinary Services. First, additional Hides and Skins Improvement Officers, mainly European, were trained and posted to district headquarters. Secondly, African Inspectors and Instructors were posted to various divisions and locations to enforce the building of drying sheds, supervise the actual drying and collect a surcharge on the sales of the commodity under the supervision of the Improvement Officers.<sup>66</sup>

Thus, the total volume and value of hides and skins trade increased and the methods of control resulted in an improved quality of the export products.<sup>67</sup> For example, between September and December 1952, 2,282 hides and 1,761 skins are known to have been purchased for export from West Pokot.<sup>68</sup> In the following year, hides and skins continued to constitute the main trading item from the district. A total of 43,227 pieces are known to have been sold. Also the LNC derived the sum of Kshs. 12,391.70 from surcharge of sales. The degree of efficiency in preparation was favourably commented upon by the Hides and Skins Improvement Officers, and there was an increase in the ratio of suspended to ground dried hides.<sup>69</sup>

In the meantime, the Kenya Meat Commission Ordinance had been passed in 1950. This Ordinance was enacted to establish a statutory corporation, the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC), to take over the functions of the MMB in the colony. Indeed, this Ordinance created what was in effect an important statutory monopoly.<sup>70</sup> Besides, the African Livestock Marketing Organization (ALMO), a division of the Department of Veterinary Services, was established in 1952. This was a government marketing channel that was to operate directly in the African reserves. In the same year, the government sanctioned the

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.; and Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *AADAR*, 1949 (Nairobi: GP, 1951), 49.

<sup>64</sup> WSDAR, 1950, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>65</sup> C&PKAR, 1948, 60-61.

<sup>66</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1951 (London: HMSO, 1952), 43.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>69</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Well prepared and high quality hides and skins were suspended as opposed to ground dried.

<sup>70</sup> C&PKAR, 1950, 54.

establishment of cattle holding grounds and monthly auction yards, mainly in livestock producing district s.<sup>71</sup>

Particularly for West Pokot District, Kongelai, Chepareria and Keringet auction centers were also established in 1952. By the end of the year, over a thousand head of cattle had been sold from these centers to ALMO, North Nyanza traders and for local slaughter, mainly by Somali butchers.<sup>72</sup> In the following year, the monthly cattle auction sales at the three centers continued to be active and a fourth center, Chepkono in Lelan location, was added to them. But owing to drought and lack of grazing, Pokot stock owners suffered heavy losses at the beginning of the year. Moreover, foot and mouth disease prevented sales during five months of 1953.<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, in the seven months when they were not restricted to quarantine, cattle auctions brought in Kshs. 50,000 a month to the district. A total of 2,343 head of cattle and 1,649 sheep and goats are known to have been sold. Although there was a considerable drift of stock across the Suam to Uganda, the principal traders were once again Somali and North Nyanza stock traders. Thus, the two main channels operating in African reserves were the private traders and ALMO, which passed on most of the cattle purchased to the KMC.<sup>74</sup>

However, Pokot stock owners preferred to sell their animals to North Nyanza traders, who offered more reasonable prices than the ALMO. The ALMO buyer, the District Livestock Officer and his team, at times obtained only a very small percentage of the total stock auctioned in the district. This prompted the DC, West Pokot, to note in 1953 that, "the principal hope of getting stock out of the district remained with the Somali and North Nyanza stock traders."<sup>75</sup> A clear indication that Pokot stock owners were not only suspicious of government organized marketing, but that the most reliable market for their animals was still North Nyanza and through Uganda is the fact that traders from these areas were always able to outbid the KMC.<sup>76</sup> In the opinion of the Senior Livestock Officer, Rift Valley province, "The Commission's prices were fixed below the natural free market level."<sup>77</sup>

Nevertheless, by 1954, the KMC had a large factory at Athi River, on the outskirts of Nairobi, and a new abattoir under construction at Mombasa; both facilities were to facilitate export trade. A second field abattoir was built at Marigat in Baringo district in 1955, neighbouring West Pokot. By 1958 a third field abattoir was in operation at Archer's Post in Samburu district. The establishment of field abattoirs was meant to stimulate the marketing of animals from African occupied areas, as part of the destocking policy and to help the KMC, through ALMO, obtain animals at government controlled prices for the much needed domestic and export markets. As noted earlier, the activities of the KMC were mainly designed to raise revenue for the colonial state. In this case, the Baringo and Samburu abattoirs were well positioned to extract African stock from the northwest and northern part of Kenya for the benefit of the state.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>71</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1955 (London: HMSO, 1956), 43.

<sup>72</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>73</sup> Kenya colony and protectorate, *AADAR*, 1953 (Nairobi: GP, 1954), 69-70.

<sup>74</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and *C&PKAR*, 1955, 43 and 49.

<sup>75</sup> *AADAR*, 1953, 70.

<sup>76</sup> *AADAR*, 1955, 86.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *C&PKAR*, 1955, 43 and 49; and Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1960 (London: HMSO, 1963), 40.

At the same time, stock routes from African areas, West Pokot included, were improved, together with cattle holding grounds and water supplies to hasten the disposal of cattle for slaughter to respective centers. For instance, slaughter animals purchased by ALMO buyers in present North Eastern province were sent to the KMC's Mombasa abattoir via Garissa and the Tana River stock route. In similar fashion, animals were sent to the same abattoir from Meru and Embu districts by a route east of Mount Kenya. Animals were also driven from Turkana, West Pokot, Marakwet, Baringo, Samburu, Kajiado, Narok and Kitui among other areas, through specified routes to supply the KMC factory at Athi River.<sup>79</sup> Generally, from the mid 1930s to 1960, livestock routes were planned from African stock-holding areas and linked to specific government buying centers, licenced slaughter houses and urban areas in various parts of the country. The planned routes were also organized in such a way that livestock from African areas avoided the European areas on the way to disposal points.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to stock routes, in the post-war period the state also made an effort to improve a few earth roads in African occupied areas to facilitate livestock and retail trade in the colony. For instance, motor transport was needed in the shipment of small stock, mainly goats and sheep, to KMC's factory at Athi River. In the West Pokot District, motor transport continued to be provided by Asian and Arab traders. In the early 1950s, an enterprising trader, Mohammed Ghalib had commenced to operate a weekly bus service through the Marich Pass to Sigor, and a twice weekly service to Kongelai, both popular services in the area. By the mid 1950s, he had widened the operation to two bus services, the daily Kitale-Kapenguria route, and weekly Kapenguria-Sigor route. Transporting small stock and goods by way of lorries was undertaken by U.G. Patel, and by the West Pokot Trading Co. owned by Mohammed Ghalib and Juma Sakini, both Arabs.<sup>81</sup>

Production of meat at the Commission's Athi River central factory increased considerably in the 1950s and larger markets were obtained in Europe and within the East Africa sphere. In 1958, a meat canning plant was opened at the Athi River factory, which after a few months of operation, increased its production to the order of 30,000 cans per day. In addition, sheep and goats were supplied to the KMC for export as livestock to the Persian Gulf.<sup>82</sup> Thus, in the late 1950s, although West Pokot was handicapped by outbreaks of foot and mouth diseases, it was possible to maintain supplies of slaughter cattle movement under vaccination and conveyance of small stock in lorries.<sup>83</sup>

Also, in the 1950s, stock censuses and branding campaigns were carried out in the colony. However, it should be noted that these can be traced back to the 1930s and were implemented as part of the destocking policy, and mainly to benefit the Liebigs Ltd. By 1937 colonial administrators decided to brand what they termed as the poorest African cattle in the Machakos region, then confiscated and sold them at the public auctions, mainly to buyers of Liebigs Ltd. In this manner, as noted earlier, they hoped to obtain the requisite number of animals at the price which Liebigs had stated was profitable to both the company and the state. Consequently, by May 1939 compulsory branding and culling of African stock had been extended to include Maasailand, Samburu and Baringo districts. The whole campaign was shelved, however, with the outbreak of World War II, and replaced by the

<sup>79</sup> C&PKARs, 1958 and 1960, 38 and 39-40; and van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 100.

<sup>80</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 100.

<sup>81</sup> WSDARs, 1953 and 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>82</sup> C&PKAR, 1958, 38-39.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.; and AADAR, 1957, 49.

quota system. The quota system was aimed at extracting as many animals as possible from African occupied areas to feed the army on one hand and for export trade on the other. Branding was revived however in the post-war period; this time branded animals were culled mainly to benefit the KMC factory at Athi River and state operated abattoirs.<sup>84</sup> Once again, steady supply of animals to the KMC meant steady flow of state revenue through export and domestic markets.

In West Pokot District, a census of cattle, goats and sheep was conducted for the first time in 1952, and a branding campaign was in progress by 1955. Both activities were intended to provide reliable information on stock numbers and their control to conform to land carrying capacity, but more important they were an essential preliminary to destocking to benefit the KMC and to control trade handled by African traders, particularly the Somali.<sup>85</sup> Thus, in 1955, 131,650 cattle were counted and branded, and 108,000 sheep and goats recorded, but not branded, in West Pokot District. These figures were in most cases very low in comparison to earlier estimates, with the sheep and goats figures in West Pokot much lower than was expected.<sup>86</sup>

On the other hand, before 1955 there was no control of internal movement of livestock, nor of such movement between West Pokot and Karapokot or West Pokot and Baringo. In 1955 inter-district stock movement was controlled, and this was made easier as a result of the branding census.<sup>87</sup> Specifically, each grazing scheme had a different numerical brand. After 1959, the District Brand (*Mtelo*) was marked on all cattle in addition to the numerical brand. An annual census and branding was carried out by the Department of Veterinary Services in conjunction with disease control vaccinations and inoculations. This was a requirement of the ADC Stock Counting, Branding and Disease Control Bylaws.<sup>88</sup>

At the end of 1958 a number of police sweeps were carried out to check on brands and were met with strong resentment from Pokot farmers/herders.<sup>89</sup> A good number of stock owners had not taken their animals for branding. They were suspicious of the whole exercise and feared that it was intended for destocking, which in one way or another was to affect their food supplement and trading activities. Nonetheless, census, branding and restrictions on inter-district stock movement were enforced, and Pokot stock owners were required to sell their animals through government channels. In defiance, major stock owners, particularly in Lelan and Chesera, continued to sell their animals privately to Uganda and to North Nyanza traders, although they were prosecuted from time to time.<sup>90</sup> Thus, government policies were not only resented by the Pokot (in this case stock owners), but they were not easy to enforce.

Nonetheless, in addition to stock census and branding, monthly stock sales were organized in the late 1950s and early 1960s in West Pokot District. For instance, in 1958/59, stock sales were held on alternative months at Kishaunet and Ortum in Mnagei and Batei locations, respectively. This proved much more satisfactory on the part of the administration than the previous method of scattered sales all over the district. As a result, stock sales became regular events run by the District Livestock Officer and his staff. The sales attracted Nyanza stock traders, as well as Sebei buyers from across the Kenya/Uganda

<sup>84</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 102.

<sup>85</sup> AADAR, 1955, 86.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> WSDAR, 1955, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>88</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.; and Handing over report, Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

border, who purchased some of the animals from the two centers.<sup>91</sup> Pokot stock owners in Karapokot also sent their cattle to Kishaunet sale yard in considerable numbers.<sup>92</sup>

However, from time to time, foot and mouth disease held up sales, although this was not the case in the 1958/59 period. Yet holding ground facilities in the event of disease were quite inadequate and in some parts of the district non-existent. This prompted the DC, West Pokot, to request the PC, Rift Valley, for permission to set up a larger holding ground at Tambalal near Kishaunet for purposes of disease control.<sup>93</sup> For their part, in the event of disease, Pokot stock owners preferred Sebei buyers to be allowed in and take animals straight across the Suam into Uganda. Undoubtedly, this would have been an excellent arrangement for Pokot stock owners to dispose of their animals rather than succumb to foot and mouth disease. But the Uganda government also screened almost all branded stock purchased from across the border. Consequently, Pokot stock owners in Karapokot at times had no choice but to send their cattle to the Kishaunet sale yard in considerable numbers. These were mainly purchased by the ALMO and to some extent by the North Nyanza traders. Commenting on stock from Karapokot, the DC noted in 1959 that "we have done nothing to stop this though the District Livestock Officer watches keenly from the disease point of view".<sup>94</sup> Thus, in case of disease, quarantines were imposed with immediate effect.

Cattle sales continued at Ortum and Kishaunet, and by 1961 the latter was combined with one or two day sales at Kongelai. Sheep and goat sales by the same period took place at Chepareria, Ortum and Kishaunet. Days of livestock sales were also almost the only times when stock revenue was collected.<sup>95</sup> However, by the end of the year, northwest Kenya was hit by severe drought, famine and the presence of foot and mouth disease. As a case in point, Baringo (Marigat) abattoir lacked suitable stock for processing.<sup>96</sup> In contrast the year was very successful for hides and skins industry. This was due to an exceptionally high cattle casualty rate and to continued improvement in hides and skins preparation, as well as Kenya exports competing successfully on the overseas markets.<sup>97</sup>

Following the 1961 drought, West Pokot was hit by unusual floods. In spite of the difficulties of purchasing and moving trade stock, the situation returned to normal in 1962. Once again, the ALMO and private traders resumed operations in northwest Kenya. However, purchases were lower since stock owners were intent on building up their herds after losses sustained during the drought. Thus, the Baringo (Marigat) abattoir remained on a core and maintenance basis.<sup>98</sup> Nonetheless, slaughter cattle and other livestock products remained the main trading items in West Pokot to the end of the colonial period.

Generally, as shown in this section, for the predominantly African pastoral areas, the colonial administration was focused on the establishment of improved marketing facilities, in particular state operated abattoirs and the KMC meat processing factory at Athi River, to streamline the disposal of African stock. Colonial administrators were of the opinion that

<sup>91</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Handing over report, Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4. Other trading sites for small stock in the district by the end of 1961 were: Chepareria, Chepkopegh, Chesira (Kipkomo location), Sebit (Batei location), Kaibichbich (Lelan location) and Chepnyal (Sook location), one of the most inaccessible parts of West Pokot.

<sup>96</sup> C&PKAR, 1961, 41-42.

<sup>97</sup> Great Britain, Kenya: Report for the year 1962, 52.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 49-50.

the establishment of livestock marketing outlets, in particular in African occupied areas, would provide greater monetary income to African herders, and thus enable them to pay state imposed taxes on one hand, and cull African herds on the other. The culling of African herds, or destocking for that matter, was based on what the Department of Veterinary Services considered to be reducing excessive stock to land carrying capacity and thus a measure designed to counter the problem of land degradation in African occupied areas.<sup>99</sup>

With the establishment of abattoirs and the meat processing factory at Athi River, there was need for continuous flow of livestock to feed them, mainly from African occupied areas. Consequently, the colonial administration made sure that slaughter animals from African areas were regularly disposed of at auction centers which were held in stock producing areas. State appointed and licenced buyers would then buy the animals after veterinary inspection, and a permit was issued for the movement of the purchased livestock outside the area. As noted earlier, the animals were mainly driven following prescribed routes. To a lesser extent, particularly in the case of goats and sheep, transported by lorries until they arrived at holding grounds where they were inoculated and dipped against various prevalent diseases. Finally, they would be taken for slaughter at the abattoirs and the KMC factory.

The main goal of the Department of Veterinary Services was to treat animals that were earmarked for sale, in order to satisfy the domestic and export market requirements of slaughter meat. This was also done to make sure that animals sold from African occupied areas did not transmit diseases to European settlers' cattle while en route to slaughter houses. Therefore, it can be argued that there was little effort on the part of the colonial state to prevent animal diseases, specifically in African occupied areas, during the colonial period. Yet this resulted not so much in a lack of state resources but of the choice of priorities for expenditure.<sup>100</sup> The state was more concerned with providing funds and technical support for the improvement of European settler agriculture as opposed to African production. Whenever the state injected funds in the African crop/livestock production sector, it was a well calculated move that ended up benefiting the state first and foremost. Thus, the state was not necessarily concerned with building up Pokot or any other African herds or preventing animal diseases for that matter, but to extract stock, a source of state revenue. It is not surprising that West Pokot remained on the periphery of the colonial economy and marginalized in terms of state allocation of funds (for example, for prevention of animal diseases) and the area's socio-economic development in general.

On the whole, state intervention in African livestock keeping during the colonial period in one way or another interfered with African source of food and subsistence in general, particularly among the Pokot of northwest Kenya. This was accomplished through the imposition of state policies (or example, those pertaining to livestock census, branding and destocking among others), that made it possible for the state to acquire African animals at throw away prices. Ironically, with Kenya's independence, Pokot farmers/herders continued to be subjected to state policies (for example, livestock marketing policies), some of which were initiated during the colonial period; these in one way or another affected their livestock keeping and trading activities, as detailed below.

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<sup>99</sup> Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 69.

<sup>100</sup> Van Zwanenberg with King, *An economic history*, 92.

## Trade in livestock and livestock products in the post-colonial period, 1963-1995

In the early years of independence, auction sales for livestock continued to be held on a monthly basis in West Pokot. In addition to old yards, new ones were built in Sigor and Lelan in 1965, while the Kishaunet yard was rebuilt during the year. Moreover, holding grounds remained an important facility in livestock trade in the post-colonial period. In 1968, the Pokot Area Council handed over the holding grounds to the Department of Veterinary Services, so that they could be used strictly for effective disease control, particularly on stock designated for auction. As a result, disease control and marketing were both under the Department of Veterinary Services, and the District Livestock Officer and his team undertook several auctions in the 1960s.<sup>101</sup>

Furthermore, the KMC continued to purchase animals from the district; however, the main cattle buyers were from Western province, the former North Nyanza. Goats and sheep continued to be bought by the local Somali stock traders, mainly exporting them to Kampala, in Uganda. Cattle trade in the district also attracted buyers from as far away as Limuru, on the outskirts of Nairobi. Limuru stock traders were mainly targeting the Nairobi market, and this prompted a sudden competition and a rise in cattle prices in West Pokot District. Thus, cattle traders increased in their numbers (including Pokot traders) and stock owners obtained reasonable prices at auctions. For example, in 1969, income from stock trade enabled a considerable number of people in West Pokot District to pay for taxes and services, and more important, to purchase food in times of need (see Table 6.4 for stock sales).<sup>102</sup> Services paid for were mainly education, health and self help projects, such as construction of dips.

Table 6.4 Stock sales, 1965-1969

	Year	No. sold	Gross prices (Kshs.) per animal	Average prices (Kshs.) per animal
Cattle	1965	1,238	---	---
Sheep and goats	1965	4,022	---	---
Cattle	1966	1,822	292,682	160/63
Sheep and goats	1966	5,800	174,918	30/15
Cattle	1968	2,795	493,367	176/50
Sheep and goats	1968	4,118	90,815	22/02
Cattle	1969	5,970	1,342,995	246/74 (highest and 205/75 lowest)

\* Figures for sheep and goats in 1969 were not available to the researcher. Sales tax collected during sales in 1966 was Kshs. 29,402 and Gross Total cess collected by the County Council in 1968 was Kshs. 39,920.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1965, 1966, 1968 and 1969.

Despite the fact that stock sales, both in the auction ring and by private transactions, had exceeded the all time record in 1969 (see Table 6.4), the outbreak of foot and mouth disease hampered stock marketing in West Pokot District. For instance, between 1966 and 1969, quarantines were imposed on certain parts of the district, specifically Kipkomo, Batei

<sup>101</sup> WPDARs, 1965 and 1968.

<sup>102</sup> WPDARs, 1968 and 1969; and oral interviews with Simon Lopeyok & Albino Kotomei, during field trip from Kapenguria through Chepnyal to Kriich, 29 January 1995 to 31 January 1995.

and Lelan locations, and certain holding grounds were not utilized properly in this period.<sup>103</sup> There was only one cattle dip at Keringet, designated for stock leaving the district and accessible only to a few neighbouring farmers, making it impossible to contain disease in holding grounds. In the meantime, the Department of Veterinary Services carried out supervision of dipping at Keringet and in other parts of the district on behalf of the Area Council. However, due to the chronic shortage of funds, the Council did not consider the possibility of establishing more dips in the area. But, Pokot stock owners were encouraged to establish some on a *harambee* (self-help) basis, of which none had been completed by the end of 1968.<sup>104</sup> Thus, livestock diseases continued to plague the district in the post-colonial period, not only retarding economic growth, but more important representing a threat to food security in the area.

The existence of foot and mouth disease unmitigated by a lack of adequate and serviceable holding grounds, greatly hindered stock sales, the main source of income to the populace. The cumbersome exercise of the inoculation with foot and mouth disease vaccine for all cattle earmarked for sale and subsequent 21 days of detention before sale also had an adverse effect on cattle marketing in the area. In response to the problem, in 1970, holding grounds were surveyed by the Stock Route Adviser and recommendations were made to the Department of Veterinary Services and the Area Council for repairs, implementation of necessary facilities and, where possible, their enlargement. In turn the Department of Veterinary Services and the Council approached the newly formed SRDP for assistance. Consequently, the holding grounds affected by the SRDP were Sigor, Nasukuta, Pkopoch and Outspan-Ortum.<sup>105</sup> The first step undertaken by the Area Coordinators for the SRDP was to request more land from the Sirikwa County Council in order to expand holding grounds. In their view, some of the original holding grounds were too small to facilitate efficient stock marketing in the district. Thus, in 1971, more land was added (see Table 6.5 for details).<sup>106</sup>

Table 6.5 Holding grounds in West Pokot, 1971

Holding grounds	Location	Previous acreage	Acreage granted by the Sirikwa County Council
Pkopoch	Sook	800	2,500
Sigor	Weiwei	1,200	2,000
Nasukuta	Kipkomo	1,200	1,200
Outspan-Ortum	Batei	10	10

Source: Compiled from WPDAR, 1971; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 108.

In the following year, three holding grounds, Pkopoch, Sigor and Nasukuta, became operational, for both disease control and trading activities. Pre-inoculation of stock offered for sale was also done away with during the year, and stock owners and traders were able to dispose of cattle without meeting extra expenses for drugs. This method proved very

<sup>103</sup> WPDARs, 1966 and 1969.

<sup>104</sup> WPDAR, 1968.

<sup>105</sup> WPDARs, 1970 and 1971.

<sup>106</sup> WPDAR, 1971; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 48. After independence the area Council of Pokot was established. In the early years, it was a unit within the Sirikwa County Council based in Eldoret. Eventually, the county council of Pokot was gazetted. The council operates from Kapenguria and covers the whole of West Pokot District.

popular with stock owners, but sales were hindered by the outbreak of foot and mouth disease in certain parts of the district. For example, Karapokot division was in quarantine for the disease for the whole of 1973. Worse still, the division had no single holding ground nor sale yard, making it difficult to effectively control disease and for the population to dispose of livestock. Although this area was also meant to have been covered under the SRDP, right from the beginning, the programme was faced with many problems, including shortage of staff, transport, lack of physical infrastructure and adequate funds which threatened effective implementation of the intended projects for the whole district.<sup>107</sup>

Nonetheless, livestock prices were reasonably high in the late 1960s to mid 1970s, prompting stock owners to sell their stock whenever there were auctions (see Tables 6.6 and 6.7). They also needed the money to pay for provisions, mainly food, and for services and taxes. However, due to drought and a foot and mouth quarantine that was in force nearly throughout 1974, the number of cattle sold through auctions was relatively less compared to previous years (see Table 6.7). Furthermore, there were only 14 organized cattle sales during the year compared to 25 for the previous one.<sup>108</sup> Generally, sales at auctions were reduced, even though the district remained free from quarantine in 1976, except in the month of December. As a matter of fact, more auctions were organized than in 1974/75, but only 1,990 head of cattle found their way through the yard sales. Even so, the number of cattle exported out of the district in 1976 alone was 3,181. This meant that some cattle owners sold their animals directly to stock traders, particularly those from Western province.<sup>109</sup>

**Table 6.6 Slaughter and non-slaughter livestock sold within and outside West Pokot, 1971**

Place	Number	Place	Number
<i>Cattle sold to:</i>			
Bungoma	3,208	<i>Goats and sheep sold to:</i>	
Uganda	416	Kampala	10,077
Elgeyo/Marakwet	163	KMC Athi River	122
Busia	110	Bungoma	94
KMC Athi River	77	Kitale	22
Locally sold	5,944	Eldoret	20
		Nairobi	6
		Kirinyaga	2
		Locally sold	9,032
<i>Donkeys sold to:</i>			
Machakos	40	<i>Poultry sold to:</i>	
Kericho	29	Trans Nzoia	276
Kakamega	2	Locally sold	118
Locally sold	149		

Source: WPDAR, 1971.

Meanwhile, no significant improvement in the hides and skins trade was made in the 1960s and 1970s in most parts of the district. Other than a slight increase in the number of

<sup>107</sup> WPDARs, 1972 and 1973. Inhabitants of Karapokot are known to have trekked to Kishaunet sale yard to dispose of their animals. The SRDP was a well intended government programme; however, it lacked proper planning. Thus, in the 1980s it ran out of funds and most of the SRDP projects came to a standstill.

<sup>108</sup> WPDAR, 1974.

<sup>109</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

drying sheds and licenced stores, the standard of hides and skins preparation failed to improve (see Tables 6.8, 6.9 and 6.10). The authorities concerned had made some effort to eliminate ground dried skins, but there had been not much progress.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, there were only eight employees for the hides and skins administration in 1970, serving the whole district. These consisted of four assistant Hides and Skins Inspectors, one Central Government Instructor and three County Council Instructors.<sup>111</sup> In 1974, the district was managed by only one Inspector from 31 July to December as a result of the dismissal of three County Council Instructors. The Council had to cut back its staff due to lack of funds.<sup>112</sup> Although there was an addition of two County Council staff in 1976, there was still a shortage of personnel in the Hides and Skins Section. Worse still, a chronic lack of funds and transport for extension work also hindered the proper execution of their duties.<sup>113</sup>

*Table 6.7 Slaughter livestock sold within and outside West Pokot, 1969-1976*

	1969	1970	1973	1974	1975	1976
Cattle to local slaughter houses	1,105	648	---	---	---	7,559
Sheep and goats local slaughter	8,566	4,425	---	---	---	---
Camels local slaughter	2	4	---	---	---	---
Cattle to other districts	5,656	6,311	5,946	3,271	3,922	2,488
Cattle to KMC Athi River	541	216	244	218	657	693
Sheep and goats to Uganda and other districts	8,330	5,541	---	---	2,279*	244*
Sheep and goats to KMC	718	1,276	70	164	1,140**	435
Poultry to other districts	615	475	---	---	---	---

\* Goats only; \*\* Sheep only.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1970, 1974, 1975 and 1976.

*Table 6.8 Hides and skins operations, 1967-1975*

Year	No. of registered drying sheds	Licenced buyers stores
1967	14	14
1970*	12	---
1972	12	20
1974	---	30
1975	16	27

\* All hides and skins registration certificates and buyers licences issued by Uganda Authority for 1970 were to be invalid in 1971, following the handing over of Karapokot administratively to the Kenya government. Moreover, the hides and skins trade during the year was monopolized by Mohammed Ghalib, who had been in the trade since the late 1950s.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1967, 1970, 1972 1974 and 1975.

Furthermore, the number of stock sold out of the district in the early 1980s was reduced drastically due to severe drought that was not only experienced in West Pokot but by the country at large. Although all livestock marketing centers were operational in 1980/81, the selling and buying of stock were not very encouraging. For example, a total of 565 head of

<sup>110</sup> WPDARs, 1967 and 1970.

<sup>111</sup> WPDAR, 1970. In 1970, the hides and skins section under the department of veterinary services was headed by J.A. Turunya and his assistant Musa Wasama.

<sup>112</sup> WPDAR, 1974.

<sup>113</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

cattle were purchased in 1981, from Kacheliba, Nasukuta and Keringet centers.<sup>114</sup> As a result of drought, stock owners were forced to wander about in search of grazing and water to far distances. Quite a number of animals, especially cattle, died, particularly in Alale and Kacheliba divisions. At the same time, some traders traversed the district to buy hides and skins where the merciless drought had affected livestock extensively. Thus in the early 1980s, the search for hides and skins became a major trading activity by both licenced and unlicenced traders in West Pokot.<sup>115</sup>

*Table 6.9 Revenue collected from hides and skins, 1967-1975*

Year	Hides and skins (Kshs.)	Government (Kshs.)	County Council cess stamps (Kshs.)
1967	4,313.6	18,172.95	33,650.05
1970	6,975	---	---
1974	---	---	18,214.60
1975	---	---	10,449.00

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1967, 1970, 1974 and 1975.

*Table 6.10 Hides and skins trade: Suspended (S) and ground dried (GD), 1975-1976*

Type S or GD	1975		1976	
	Number	Value (Kshs)	Number	Value (Kshs)
Hides - S	3,886	29,889	5,022	117,932
Hides - GD	72	72,500	142	2,608
Calves - S	492	1,965	326	2,283
Calves - GD	2	9	10	63
Goats - S	57,700	---	6,225	53,865
Goats - GD	19	---	189	1,666
Sheep - S	1,960	---	2,217	15,734
Sheep - GD	28	---	43	299
Total Kshs.		104,363		194,450

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1975 and 1976.

On the other hand, milk and wool were marketed, although little was sold in the post-colonial period. For example, in the 1970s, very little milk was sold to KCC Kitale and some wool made its way to a number of textile factories in Eldoret (see Table 6.11). In the 1980s and 1990s, Muruny, Tapach, Keringet and Talau Farmers Co-operative Societies, all in Kapenguria division, were handling the marketing of milk in the area. Although the activity was seriously affected by transport problems, on the whole, Pokot farmers/herders produced just enough for home consumption, a daily food supplement rather than a market oriented product.<sup>116</sup> Moreover, in the 1980s, the Kenya Grain Growers Co-operative Union (KGGCU), was handling the marketing of wool, but offering very low prices. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, once again the Raymond textile factory in Eldoret was buying wool in the district at a competitive price. The average price per kilogram of wool was Kshs. 20.70, and this earned farmers three million Kenya shillings in 1987. However, only a

<sup>114</sup> WPDARs, 1980 and 1981.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.; and oral interview with Romanus Chizupo, during field trip Kapenguria to Kriich, 29 January 1995 to 31 January 1995.

<sup>116</sup> Republic of Kenya, West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993, 69, 74 and 103-104.

small number of farmers (74), mainly in Lelan location, benefited. On the whole, the high potential areas of the district produced over 100,000 kgs of wool per year between 1987 and 1993, and this was sold in its raw form.<sup>117</sup> Generally, whatever wool produced has been marketed outside West Pokot.

Table 6.11 Milk and wool sold from West Pokot, 1971, 1974 and 1975

Year	Product	Sold to	Value (Kshs.)
1971	13,608	KCC Kitale	10,069.92
1974	53,657 kgs liters of milk	KCC Kitale	33,191.35
1975	98,838 kgs liters of milk	KCC Kitale	77,337.50
1975	133,028 kgs liters of milk	Sold Locally	---
1974	7,121 kgs of wool	Eldoret (Textiles)	75,400.00
1975	13,696 kgs of wool	Eldoret (Textiles)	78,580.46

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1968, 1971 and 1975.

In addition, poultry production in the post-colonial period continued to be mainly based on local breeds with a low production level, and with little sold within the Kenyan market. There are no records for eggs sold, because production was mainly for home consumption rather than for commercial purposes. Prices offered for chicken and eggs, were too low to encourage any profit-minded farmers to embark on poultry enterprises. For example, in the 1970s the average price for a full grown chicken was three Kenya shillings, and an egg cost ten cents in the open market. In the 1980s, Chepareria developed a reputation as a chicken and egg market in West Pokot District. Generally, surplus eggs and chickens have been sold through local markets and to retailers who in turn sell them to hotel and restaurant owners in the district.<sup>118</sup>

However, between 1985 and 1988, both local and hybrid chickens were on the increase at the rate of 80,000 birds a year, although most of them succumbed to new castle disease. In any case, the increase was due to the activities of the National Poultry Development Programme in its attempt to boost poultry enterprises in West Pokot and other parts of the country.<sup>119</sup> Nonetheless, apart from the disease problem, the future of poultry production will have to focus its attention on capturing a more lucrative but distant market (for example, Kitale and neighbouring towns), rather than relying solely on the West Pokot market.

### Trade in farm produce, *miraa* and beer, 1963-1995

Trade in agricultural produce was also carried out in West Pokot in the period under review. Although most of the crops are grown for subsistence, those who have a little to spare always exchange them for other commodities or money needed to pay for health and education services, among others. A few cash crops are also grown, and to a small extent, they contribute to the populace's purchasing power to buy food and other necessities. Therefore, trade in agricultural produce, although limited, is a means of procuring food to diversify the diet and, at times, to avert starvation.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 103 and 139.

<sup>118</sup> WPDAR, 1971; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 67.

<sup>119</sup> Republic of Kenya, West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993, 68.

For instance, in the 1960s, maize and beans among other crops were marketed both locally and outside the district. These crops were mainly handled by the Maize and Produce Marketing Board (MPMB), Kitale. The Board had appointed its agents in the main trading centers in West Pokot to purchase maize, beans, sunflower and castor seeds offered for sale (see Table 6.12). Local maize millers also purchased a major part of the maize produced, and ground flour was generally consumed locally while some was exported to Turkana district (see Table 6.12). Coffee and pyrethrum were also inspected, weighted and graded before marketing by the West Pokot Farmers Co-operative Society to KPCU, Nairobi and to the Pyrethrum Board of Kenya (PBK), Nakuru, respectively (see Table 6.12).<sup>120</sup> The MPMB, KPCU and the PBK have been, government controlled, a clear indication of government intervention in marketing of farm produce in the country. Generally, production for market in the 1960s, especially pure cash crops as shown in Table 6.12, was too low to make any major impact in the study area. Thus, it can be argued that Pokot farmers still mainly produce food crops for local consumption, while striving for food security in the area.

*Table 6.12 Quantity and value of crop production, 1966-1969*

Year	Crop	Quantity (bags/tons/kgs)	Value (Kshs and K£*)	Sold to
1966	Maize	722 bags**	Kshs 30,288	MPMB
1967	Maize	21,763 bags	Kshs 540,864	"
1967	Beans	323 bags	Kshs 13,808.70	"
1967	Sunflower	50 bags	Kshs 1,622	"
1968	Maize	518.3 tons	---	"
1968	Beans	22.3 tons	---	"
1968	Sunflower	10.8 tons	---	"
1968	Castor	70 bags	---	"
1969	Maize	2,052 bags	£2,385.4	Turkana
1969	Maize meal	2,045 bags	£6,135	"
1969	Ground flour			
1969	Sunflower	785 bags	£2,016.5	MPMB
1969	Coffee	7 tons	£1,263.5	KPCU
1969	Pyrethrum	684.92 kgs	£144.10	Pyrethrum Board

\* These are Kenya pounds: Kshs. 20 was equivalent to one sterling pound at the time.

\*\* Bags weigh approximately 90 kilograms when full.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1966, 1967, 1968 and 1969.

Nonetheless, in the 1970s, as part of the package for economic development, the Department of Agriculture sought to boost cash crop growing, especially sunflower, coffee, pyrethrum and cotton in West Pokot District. Efforts to expand the growing of these crops were staged in public meetings, mainly Chiefs' *barazas*. However, as noted earlier in this study, cash crop growing in the district left a lot to be desired, because of lack of incentives to promote it. Prices offered for these crops were not encouraging enough, and this is reflected in fluctuations in trade in coffee, sunflower and pyrethrum in the 1970s (see Tables 6.13 and 6.14). Therefore, government encouragement met with poor responses from the farmers.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>120</sup> WPDARs, 1966, 1968, 1969 and 1971.

<sup>121</sup> WPDARs, 1970 and 1971.

Unpredictability of the weather also contributed to low production and affected trade in certain farm produce in the same period. For example, there was an increase in the hectarage grown under beans in 1971 (213 hectares) over what was grown in 1970 (85 hectares). However, yields declined during the year, due to wet weather, particularly towards and through the harvesting stage. Thus, whatever was harvested was locally consumed and only a small portion was marketed (see Table 6.13).<sup>122</sup>

Table 6.13 Farm produce sales, 1970 and 1971

Commodity	1970		1971	
	Quantity (bags/kgs)	Value (K£)	Quantity (bags/kgs)	Value (K£)
Maize	5,887 bags	9,981.35	13,561 bags	20,954.90
Maize Meal	4,179 bags	9,198.80	3,164 bags	20,772.00
Coffee	9,719 kgs	3,447.65	4,428 kgs	1,167.78
Beans	474 bags	1,066.50	107 bags	416.80
Tobacco	398 bags	796.00	525 bags	1,307.50
Sunflower	346 bags	378.68	238 bags	289.85
Castor	71 bags	135.68	42 bags	93.25
Pyrethrum	558.70 kgs	138.66	356 kgs	56.50

\* Note: The information on farm produce sales as shown in this table reinforces the fact that West Pokot farmers are not major cash crop earners but subsistence producers.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1970 and 1971.

Table 6.14 Crop sales, 1975-1976

Crop	1975		1976	
	Quantity	Value (kshs.)	Quantity	Value (kshs.)
Maize	341,160 kgs	18,700,000	61,971 bags	3,675,851
Sunflower	5,300 kgs	212,000	2,687 bags	175,799
Coffee	---	---	12,087 Kgs	24,979.2
Pyrethrum	161.9 kgs	---	416 Kgs	2,080
Cotton	14 bags	---	905 Kgs	1,441
Tobacco	---	---	364 bags	43,680
Castor	---	---	43 bags	1,677
Beans	7,356 bags	639,360	1,357 bags	39,888

\* In the 1970s, the Kenya Farmers Association was the Maize and Produce Marketing Board's buying agent in the district.

Source: WPDARs 1975 and 1976.

Fluctuations in coffee production also affected the production and sale of castor seeds in the district. As a matter of fact, the growing of castor had not been taken seriously in the district, and it was only grown to provide shade or as wind breakers in some of the coffee fields. Some castor also grew wild around the homesteads. Generally, the crop was picked and sold locally to agents of the Maize and Produce marketing Board. In 1971, however, production of coffee dropped, unfortunately due to low payment; most growers neglected their fields, and this affected castor production, as they saw no need of replanting it as shade trees.<sup>123</sup> Thus, castor seeds as a source of income to the populace, mainly in Kapenguria division, relied heavily on coffee production in the area (see Tables 6.13 and 6.14).

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., 19 and 20.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

In the meantime, the growing of tobacco for snuff and chewing remained a popular enterprise especially in Mwino, Lomut and Cheptulel locations of Sigor district. As in the colonial period, the internal popularity of the crop ranked high for both barter and cash markets. Some of the cured tobacco was consumed locally in the district and the rest was exported to Turkana and Baringo districts. Tobacco was mainly sold through local open air markets and also through public auctions.<sup>124</sup> The known quantity and value of tobacco sold through public auctions in the period under review is shown in Tables 6.13 and 6.14.

Another trading item in the period under review was *miraa* (*Catha Edulis*). This plant is found in its wild state; it is not grown. Tiptops of the plant are harvested and used (chewed) as a stimulant. The plant specifically grows well in some parts of Alale division. The local inhabitants normally collect the plant in bunches and sell it to *miraa* traders in the area. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, a Somali trader who had a shop at Nauyapong market purchased *miraa* from the Pokot in the Lorusuk area. In the 1980s, an ex-local Chief had joined the Somali as the main *miraa* traders in the area. The peak of the trade in the post-colonial period was between 1972 and 1977, and also in 1982. For example, in 1982, the average number of bunches brought to the collection centers, at Nauyapong and Naruoro markets, was 350 per day. One bunch contained about 20 to 50 branches, and cost one shilling per bunch. The main *miraa* traders sold the product in Lodwar, Turkana district, mainly to the Somali population at a profit, three to four shillings a bunch. However, during the dry season, when supply is low, they bought at two shillings and sold at five to six shillings a bunch. Back in Alale, every week each trader could collect an average of 3,000 bunches during the rain season, and 750 bunches in the dry season. It is estimated that in 1982, the local population that engaged in *miraa* trade earned about Kshs. 250,000 from it. Those Pokot involved mainly bought food, goats and other household necessities from the *miraa* money.<sup>125</sup>

Finger millet and sorghum continued to be popular crops in the post-colonial period, suitably grown in most parts of the district. These crops are mainly used for food and some of it for brewing local beer. The sale of finger millet and sorghum is limited within the district, in the homes, open markets and retail shops. Following independence, there was an increase in hectarage under these crops, mainly in Sigor and Chepareria divisions (see Table 6.15 for details on production and sale of finger millet and sorghum). Except in the 1969 season when the disastrous floods that occurred in Lomut, Weiwei and Mwino locations and destroyed irrigation furrows, causing a set back in growing of sorghum during the year. The effects of floods were still experienced in the following year as shown in Table 6.15. Nonetheless, the yields of finger millet, particularly in the 1970s, were quite encouraging as the weather was also favourable for the crop (see Table 6.15).<sup>126</sup> Generally, finger millet and sorghum are subsistence crops, with reasonably high yields, that have contributed to food security in West Pokot.

Among the Pokot as well as other ethnic groups in Kenya, one important source of ready cash in the 1960s and 1970s, particularly for women, was the sale of home-made beer. Until 1979 the brewing and selling of local beer was partly done in the home or in government licenced beer halls. This practice goes back to the colonial period, when

<sup>124</sup> WPDARs, 1965, 1967, 1969 and 1971; Tanno, "A study of the ecological anthropology", 100; and oral interview with Albino Kotomei, during field trip Kapenguria to Kriich, 29 January 1995 to 31 January 1995.

<sup>125</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Alale, 27-28 and 34-35; and WPDAR, 1965.

<sup>126</sup> WPDARs, 1967, 1969 and 1971.

licenced beer halls, especially in West Pokot, were first opened in Kapenguria, Makutano and Keringet, all in Kapenguria division. As part of government regulation, drinking hours, particularly for government employees, were controlled, but with little success. As noted by the DC, West Pokot, in 1959, "beershops in outposts were an internal nuisance as the government staff was drunk all the time".<sup>127</sup> Consequently, in the same year, beer halls in Kaibibich, Chepareria and Ortum were ordered to close down.<sup>128</sup> Likewise in the post-colonial period, specifically in the late 1970s, the Moi government argued that beer drinking was retarding economic development in the country, as people wasted time in beer halls rather than engaging in worthwhile activities. Therefore, in 1979, beer halls throughout Kenya were closed, following a ban on the sale of non-bottled beer in the country. Since 1986, Chiefs and their assistants, and at times regular and administrative police, have been authorized to curtail the sale of any home-made beer in the country. Although it has become a hidden activity, home-made brewing is still important.<sup>129</sup>

Table 6.15 Sorghum and finger millet production, 1967-1976

Year	Crop	Estimated hectares	Division	Quantity locally marketed from all areas (bags)	Value K£ and Kshs
1967	Sorghum	590 *	Sigor	---	---
		167 *	Chepareria	---	---
1969	Sorghum	289 *	Chepareria and Kapenguria	100	£120
1970	Sorghum	49.13	Sigor	28	£28
1970	Millet	424.80	Sigor	---	---
		199.72	Chepareria	36	£72
		115.76	Kapenguria	---	---
1971	Millet	450	Sigor	---	---
		436	Chepareria	---	---
		58.50	Kapenguria	---	---
1972	Millet	2,665.2	All District (AD)	799.	52,172
1974	Millet	1,280	AD	3,640	182,000
1974	Sorghum	119	AD	1,428	42,840
1975	Sorghum	150	AD	1,800	---
1975	Millet	1,742	AD	20,904	1,092,000
1976	Sorghum	230	AD	---	---
1976	Millet	1,423.5	AD	646	77,550

\* These figures represent acres not hectares, as the metric system was implemented in 1970.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1967, 1969, 1970, 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975 and 1976.

In the meantime, sweet potatoes, cassava and bananas are grown for subsistence, and a small amount of each is exchanged in barter or cash markets within the district. Sweet potatoes and cassava are grown as famine crops in West Pokot. The main growing areas for sweet potatoes are Kanyarkwat, Keringet, Kishaunet (Kapenguria division) and some parts of Kipkomo location. The vines are occasionally used as fodder for livestock. Cassava is mainly grown in Sigor division, by way of irrigation. Unlike sweet potatoes, cassava is

<sup>127</sup> Handing over report, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

<sup>129</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Kruithof, "Endo-Mokoro", 108; *Daily Nation*, 17 November 2000; and oral interview with Pkemoi Limaa, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

harvested continuously during the year, and it is a reliable source of food whenever grains are in short supply. Likewise, bananas are harvested for most of the year, and are mainly grown in Weiwei, Lomut and Cheptulel under irrigation. In normal years, supplies of bananas in local markets are very common, where they are exchanged for finger millet, sour milk, dried meat, honey, tobacco and other commodities as well as cash. In addition, English potatoes are grown in small plots in Lelan and are used for subsistence or sold for cash.<sup>130</sup> The exchange of potatoes, cassava and bananas for cash in early 1970s is shown in Table 6.16.

Table 6.16 Potatoes, cassava and banana production, 1970-1971

Crop	Year	Estimated hectarage	Division	Quantity sold	Value (K£ and kshs.)
English potatoes	1970	100	Kapenguria	493 bags*	£739.50
Bananas	1970	20	Sigor	1,028 bunches	£ 64.70
Cassava	1970	64	Sigor	2,060 kgs	£15.45
Sweet potatoes	1970	6	Kapenguria	450 kgs	£16.30
Bananas	1971	24	Sigor	923 bunches**	£94.75
Cassava	1971	65	Sigor	1,355 kgs	£17.30

\* The price paid per 82 kgs (one bag) of English potatoes during the year ranged between Kshs. 18 to Kshs. 37 at the farm gate.

\*\* In 1971, cash sales of bananas were mainly limited to trading centers where prices ranged from two to four shillings per bunch as compared to one to three shillings in the previous year.

Source: Compiled from WPDARs, 1970 and 1971.

Fruits and vegetables have also been sources of food as well as trading commodities in the post-colonial period. Cabbages, kale, carrots, tomatoes, cowpeas and different types of fruits – oranges, lemons, pineapples, pawpaws and mangoes – are grown in small amounts in different parts of the district. Mangoes are mainly grown in Sigor division along the irrigation furrows. They are sold in open markets to shopkeepers and at times to wholesale traders, who eventually transport them to Kitale and sell them to retail traders and hawkers at a profit. Apart from open markets, fruits and vegetables are also sold to institutions, for example, schools, hospitals and the prison within the district. Government workers, among others, visit open markets as buyers and customers of farm produce from all zones of West Pokot. Their transactions are strictly on a cash basis, never in barter exchange.<sup>131</sup>

However, prices for fruits and vegetables remained relatively low in the post-colonial period. For example, in 1971, cabbages cost 20 to 50 cents, tomatoes 40 cents to one shilling, and carrots 60 cents per kilogram.<sup>132</sup> Citrus fruits remained at 10 cents per fruit from the late 1960s through the early 1970s.<sup>133</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, mangoes cost one to two shillings each, depending on the size of the fruit. Generally prices on almost all farm produce had increased by only 50 cents to one shilling in the early 1990s. Given the declining value of the shilling since the mid 1970s, these prices by all standards are low.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>130</sup> WPDARs, 1966, 1969 and 1971. Cassava is mainly boiled and eaten (also sold raw or when already boiled) and at times dried, and during famine is ground for *ugali*. The main problem facing English potato growing in the district is the availability of certified seed.

<sup>131</sup> WPDARs, 1969, 1971 and 1972; Tanno, "A study of ecological anthropology", 111 and 113; and oral interviews with Jennifer Chebet & Kibor Kiptum, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>132</sup> WPDARs, 1971 and 1972.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Oral interviews with Jennifer Chebet & Kibor Kiptum, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

But whenever there is drought, production is usually below demand; hence fruits and vegetables are very costly in the local markets. In times of prolonged drought, the same products, mainly vegetables (cabbage and kale) are obtained from outside the district, as far away as Central province, to meet the local demands.<sup>135</sup> Nonetheless, benefits from fruits and vegetables have prompted some Pokot farmers to increase production to meet the local demand. For example, in 1976, 58.80 hectares of vegetables were recorded in the district as compared to 20 hectares in 1975.<sup>136</sup> Particularly in Sigor division, more farmers have engaged in fruit and vegetable growing under irrigation, targeting the demands of the local market, particularly in the dry season, when sales for farm produce are more profitable.<sup>137</sup>

Some farmers attempted to grow chillies specifically for market in the 1960s, but this was met with very little success. For example, chillies were grown in small quantities in Kibos, Chesogon and Weiwei under irrigation in 1966. By the end of the year, 62 bags were sold to the MPMB, Kitale, with a return of Kshs. 1,428 to the growers. In the following year, seven acres were under chillies in the same areas, and 45 bags were harvested and prepared for sale to the MPMB. However, the MPMB could not accept the produce as it had not disposed of the previous inventory from its stores.<sup>138</sup> Thus, non-availability of markets for certain produce within the district, and poor marketing strategy by the government-run MPMB, as well as the poor transportation network, hindered the Pokot, particularly in the irrigation zone, to venture into some purely market-oriented horticultural products.

The Kenya government has provided a few loans in West Pokot to assist in such enterprises or boost economic development generally in the area. For example, in 1973, the district received an annual government grant of Kshs. 75,000 for trade development. The average loans to traders ranged from Kshs. 2,000 to Kshs. 10,000 per person, and the terms of repayment depended on the amount one was granted.<sup>139</sup> Meanwhile, only two traders in the district received the government regulated Industrial and Commercial Development Loan amounting to Kshs. 45,000 in the same year.<sup>140</sup> In addition, in 1973, the West Pokot Trade Development Joint Board issued loans to 29 African traders in the district, totaling to Kshs. 115,000.<sup>141</sup> However, the main problem was repayment of loans. In 1973 alone, the defaulting rate in the district rose, and a total of Kshs. 53,677/60 in arrears were owed by 34 traders.<sup>142</sup>

Nonetheless, the government continued to encourage the local people to engage in trading activities as part of its Africanization policy. The policy goes back to the early years of independence when the government took upon itself to place Kenyans in key positions, mainly in the civil service, previously occupied by Europeans and Asians. Based on this policy, various clauses in the 1967 Trade Licencing Act spelt out clearly that small businesses, particularly in the countryside, had to be owned and managed by Africans, as opposed to non-Africans, especially Asians. Therefore, more Africans in West Pokot took quite a number of stock trading licences and bought Asian shops and grinding mills in partnership, while others ventured into transport business (previously a domain of Asians

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>137</sup> Oral interview with Jackson Cheparer, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

<sup>138</sup> WPDARs, 1966 and 1967.

<sup>139</sup> WPDAR, 1973.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

and Arabs), operating *matatus* (commuter taxis). Consequently, in 1969 there was only one Asian trader left at Makutano out of the seven at the time of independence.<sup>143</sup> The West Pokot County Council was charged to control and licence petty trade business carried out in various trading centers and open markets in the district, in line with the government policy of Africanization.

In the 1970s, there were new developments in farm produce marketing channels in the district. For instance, beginning in 1976 maize was marketed through the Farmers Co-operative Society (FCS) at Makutano, and a few farmers delivered their crop direct to the KFA depot, Kitale. Some maize was also sold to KFA agents stationed at trading centers and to licenced holders, particularly around the Kapenguria suburbs. The rest was sold in open markets within the district. The FCS also handled sunflower that was sent to the KSC, Kitale, while some producers sent their sunflower direct to the Company. A newly formed Muruny Co-operative Society handled pyrethrum flowers for its members, and sold the product to the Board in Nakuru. Cotton was purchased by the Cotton Lint and Seed Marketing Board (CLSMB), Kisumu. Coffee continued to be marketed to the KPCU mills through West Pokot FCS.<sup>144</sup>

In the 1980s and 1990s, maize was marketed to the National Cereals and Produce Board (NCPB) which had replaced the MPMB and had set up storage facilities in Kapenguria. Likewise, the KFA had been replaced by the KGGCU as the main farm produce buying agent in the country for NCPB. Other produce channels in West Pokot District, for bananas, finger millet, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes, tobacco, fruits and vegetables among others, were mainly in the local open markets, institutions and individual farms.<sup>145</sup>

The post-colonial period has witnessed some growth of trading centers and road transport in West Pokot District. A number of centers, namely Makutano, Ortum and Chepareria expanded their trading activities. Moreover, open markets, for example, Sigor, Lomut and Chesogon, and others at the divisional and locational level, were surveyed and gazetted in different parts of the district. Most of the open markets operated on a weekly basis, particularly in the district and divisional headquarters.<sup>146</sup> Some markets, for example, those along the Kitale/Kapenguria/Lodwar route, are well served by automobiles as compared to those in the outlying areas of the district. In the 1970s, trading centers and markets along this route were served by Tom Mboya Rocket buses on a weekly basis. In the same period, other parts of the district were served by lorries and land rovers, most of them owned by the government, but with great difficulty.<sup>147</sup>

In the 1980s and early 1990s, through the government sponsored Rural Access Road Programme, divisional as well as locational headquarters were linked to Kapenguria and other parts of the country by way of motorable grade earth roads. Bus companies, such as Mawingo and Akamba Bus Services operated from Nairobi and other major Kenyan towns,

<sup>143</sup> WPDARs, 1968 and 1969.

<sup>144</sup> WPDAR, 1976.

<sup>145</sup> WPDARs, 1976, 1980 and 1981; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 26 and 103.

<sup>146</sup> K. Kurita, "Market at Chesogon Village: A preliminary report on economic activities of the Pokot and Marakwet". In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 61-74; Tanaka, "On residential pattern", 56; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 102; and van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lomut & Cheptulel", 35-38. Chesogon market is situated on the border of West Pokot and Marakwet districts and is also very close to the border of West Pokot and Baringo districts. It is precisely this factor that has made it over the years an important market place for both internal and regional trade in West Pokot District.

<sup>147</sup> WPDAR, 1973.

serve Kapenguria on a daily basis. However, the main means of transport in West Pokot, as in other parts of the country, remains the *matatu*. For example, Sigor town, which is some 7 km from the Marich/Kapenguria road, is served by *matatus* from Kapenguria on a daily basis. On the weekly market day in Sigor, the route is served by five to ten, or at times more *matatus*, transporting passengers as well as farm produce (mainly bananas, mangoes and vegetables).<sup>148</sup> Compared to market centers in Alale and Kacheliba, away from the divisional headquarters, Sigor is one of the few that are somehow well served by commuter taxis. During the rainy season, and like other parts of the district however, the Sigor market is reached with great difficulty. Nonetheless, there has been some improvement in road communication in the district in recent years. This improvement has led to the emergence of markets and some growth in trading activities in previously inaccessible areas. This contributes to distribution of food in one way or another, particularly in times of need, in most parts of West Pokot.

Nonetheless, most parts of West Pokot are still inaccessible and isolated from Kenya's main business centers/outlets to the outside world, in this case Nairobi and Mombasa, and this hinders the development of trade and other socio-economic development activities in this part of the country. As noted in earlier chapters of this study, since the colonial period, West Pokot has lagged behind in socio-economic development compared to the more productive parts of the country (for example, parts of Central and Rift Valley provinces). It is also clear from the earlier chapters of this study that socio-economic development in the country's high potential areas (in particular in the former European settler areas) was made possible through financial and technical support from the state. This was based on anticipated quick economic gains from the same areas that have boosted state revenue. This scenario reinforces the tendency of state marginalization of Kenya's arid and semi-arid areas in terms of necessary resource allocation needed for the areas' socio-economic development. Therefore, given the continued isolation and state neglect of most parts of West Pokot, the area is yet to be fully integrated into Kenya's political economy.

In sum, in the post-colonial period, livestock and livestock products (mainly hides and skins) continued to be the main trading items and main source of income to the populace in West Pokot. As shown in this study, very little milk and wool, both in quantity and value, were marketed from the district to the KCC in Kitale and to the textile factories in Eldoret respectively. Most Pokot produced just enough milk for home consumption, a daily supplement to their diet of mainly millet, sorghum and maize meal, among other foodstuffs, rather than as a market oriented product. The little wool produced from the district was mainly from Kapenguria division, which benefited a very small number of farmers, thus having very little economic impact on West Pokot as a whole.

At the same time, poultry production was mainly for home consumption. Birds kept were mainly local breeds of low productivity, and very few eggs and chickens were sold within the Kenyan market. Moreover, livestock diseases, quarantines and raids continued to plague West Pokot, not only retarding economic growth, but more important, representing a threat to food security in the area.

Trade in agricultural produce, *miraa* and beer was also carried out in the post-colonial West Pokot. Although most crops were grown for subsistence, those producers who had a little to spare always exchanged them for other commodities or money needed to pay for education and health services on one hand and consumption goods on the other. The few cash crops grown in West Pokot (for example, coffee and sunflower) had very little impact

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<sup>148</sup> Hogg, "Pokot", 11 and 19; and oral interview with Kibor Kiptum, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

on the Pokot economy. As noted in this study, a very minute number of smallholders, mainly in the high potential areas of Kapenguria division, grew cash crops with mixed results. Low prices offered for cash crops and inadequate government support, mainly in terms of provision of credit for the purchase of farm inputs, was a major hindrance in the promotion of cash crop growing in this part of Kenya. Thus, cash crop growing and income from it had very little impact on the living standard of the population in West Pokot as a whole.

Nonetheless, from a general perspective, West Pokot witnessed some prosperity in trading activities in the post-colonial period. This was partly made possible with the expansion of trading centers (for example, Makutano, Chepareria, Ortum and Sigor) in West Pokot. The completion of the Kitale-Lodwar road in the early 1980s and the construction of the rural access roads in West Pokot in one way or another enhanced trading activities in the area. Road construction made it possible for goods to be transported and disposed of within and outside the district and for others to be brought in from other parts of the country. This consisted mainly of food, particularly in times of need, thus enhancing trade as a coping mechanism in West Pokot. Generally, in the history of the Pokot, trading items, especially livestock and livestock products, have been exchanged for food, or exchanged for cash to purchase food, particularly during droughts, to avert starvation in this part of the country rather than for accumulation and investment. Thus, trade and trading activities are part and parcel of the Pokot economy, a source of food as well as currency, and serve as an important coping mechanism in semi-arid northwest Kenya.

### Wage labour as a coping mechanism in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot

During the colonial and post-colonial period, the range of practical coping mechanisms in West Pokot expanded to include wage labour. Some Pokot diversified their income sources to include wage employment to purchase supplementary foods, consumer items and to pay for taxes, school fees and health expenses. Wage earners were predominantly male and had rural based jobs, both within and outside the district.

Various factors prompted African groups besides the Pokot to venture into wage labour during the colonial period. For instance, in Kikuyuland, Central province, where the reserve policy by the 1920s resulted in severe land limitations, land shortage and taxation produced wage labourers. This was the case in the populous Kiambu, where access to land rapidly became limited, and those without much land could be pressed into the labour market to raise money for both hut and poll tax. At the same time, in Kikuyuland and Central Kavirondo, taxation and desire for European consumption goods, and for advancement into skilled and long-term jobs, prompted people to enter into the labour market. In other areas, particularly among the pastoralists and semi-pastoralists such as the Maasai and the Kamba, taxation, desire to purchase more livestock and the state policy of forced labour were the significant factors in these groups entry into the wage labour force.<sup>149</sup>

Despite the fact that among Kenyan herding and farming communities, the overwhelming reaction to taxation prior to the 1930s was the sale of livestock and farm produce to raise money for its payment, taxation became a headache particularly during droughts when production was low, and especially in the country's marginal areas. Especially, during the 1929-1933 Great Depression, taxation became a real hardship among African communities.

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<sup>149</sup> Sharon Stichter, *Migrant labour in Kenya: Capitalism and African response, 1895-1975* (Brunt Mill: Longman, 1982), 34 and 80.

At this time, livestock and farm produce prices, as noted earlier on in this study, fell and so did wages, while taxes remained constant. For instance, the normal rate for wage labour in 1929 for non-resident farm labourers was twelve to fourteen Kenya shillings, for 30 days work. In 1931/32, these wage rates fell to between five and eight Kenya shillings.<sup>150</sup> Typically during the depression, more African men from both the country's marginal and productive areas went out to work, even though wages were lower, because of the need to get cash for taxes among other necessities.

During the 1930s, it was evident that among the first African groups to move into wage labour, the Kikuyu, Luhya, and Luo of Central Kavirondo, the growth of wage-earners was rapid, and though accompanied by some force, wage labour also yielded some rewards to those who had adapted most quickly. Among the second group, the Embu, Meru, Kamba, Gusii and Luo of South Kavirondo, change was slower, but the need to raise cash for taxes and compulsion from the administration facilitated entry into the labour market. For instance, professional labour recruiters were given a practically free rein by the colonial state to recruit labour on behalf of European settlers and the government. Professionally recruited labourers were at times meant for essential government services. The colonial state liberally defined essential services as construction and repairs of roads, railways, harbours, telephones lines and portage, among other activities.<sup>151</sup>

However, at the end of the 1930s through the 1950s, there were still a number of African groups, such as the Turkana, Marakwet, Maasai and Kenya Somali among others, who had remained only minimally involved in the labour market. As noted by Stichter, responses of African societies to increased opportunities for wage earning varied greatly from qualified acceptance to strong structural resistance.<sup>152</sup> Using the example of the Marakwet wage earners, she further notes that "it was said, they would go out in groups to work, but they were independent, and if anything went wrong, they would just pack up and go home".<sup>153</sup> In the case of the Pokot, they treated wage labour as a coping mechanism, supplementary to their daily activities; some of them would go out to work on a short term basis, for example, during droughts and famine. This was mainly to raise money for food and taxes, and once the conditions improved, they comfortably returned home to their day-to-day activities. Thus, the response of African groups to wage labour was partly dictated by the need for cash to pay taxes, purchase food and consumption goods among other necessities. On the whole, the response varied greatly from area to area and was dictated by needs and wants of each community, and the extent of the impact of colonialism, for example, in terms of land alienation.

In the wage labour economy of the colonial period, there was growth mainly in estate agriculture, export and import commerce, in state funded infrastructure of transport and communication, and the civil service. The main trends of change from the 1920s were a greater emphasis on wage labour for the production of plantation crops such as sisal, coffee and tea. This coincided with the simultaneous entry of some foreign capital into agriculture, and a brief period of gold mining in North Kavirondo, mainly in present Kakamega district. Manufacturing and processing were very limited before World War II, but expanded

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., 35; and Talbott, "Agricultural innovation", 34.

<sup>151</sup> Stichter, *Migrant Labour*, 59; and Tiyambe Zeleza, "The colonial labour system in Kenya", In: Ochieng' & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 171-199.

<sup>152</sup> Stichter, *Migrant Labour*, 108.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

significantly during the war.<sup>154</sup> All these sectors of the economy provided openings for wage employment, particularly migrant labour, during the colonial period.

For instance, in Nyanza province, Luo and Luhya groups could commit themselves to a longer range and term of migration, since they could still retain land rights on returning to the reserve. They migrated equally to Nairobi and Mombasa, and also to down-country sisal estates on long contracts. Most Kikuyu, on the other hand, overwhelmingly preferred Nairobi which was near at hand and permitted frequent returns to their homes, particularly during weekends. For example, in the post World War II period, Kikuyu wage earners formed 55% of Nairobi's work force, whereas Luo and Luhya groups accounted for about 30%.<sup>155</sup> At the same time, the need for skilled and semi-skilled labour led to an increase in European and Asian employment. For example, between 1948 and 1960, European employment in commerce industry increased 100%, Asian employment by 70%, but African employment only by 45%. Only the advent of political independence and vigorous Africanization campaigns managed to arrest these trends.<sup>156</sup>

Generally during the colonial period, only a very small segment of the African work force was stabilized, but by the 1960s, the dominant pattern had become one in which most wage earners in the core sectors of the economy spent the whole of their working lives in employment, returning to their home areas only on holidays or on retirement. However, it should also be noted that most African workers never severed the connection with their homes in the reserves, to which they returned, and from which they could proceed again to earn a livelihood from farm produce and livestock keeping after retirement from wage employment.<sup>157</sup>

Specifically for West Pokot, participation in the monetary economy as wage workers during the colonial and post-colonial period to only a small extent reduced vulnerability to drought and famine for a limited number of Pokot households, at least in the short term.<sup>158</sup> For instance, as early as 1923, the Pokot were providing porters for government safaris in the district. The carrying of loads was not popular and in many ways was regarded as forced labour. Loads were heavy and porters had to trek many miles a day without any relief whatsoever. In the early 1920s, a considerable number of Pokot men also provided labour for a wagon road that was build by the KAR from the Pokot escarpment to Kacheliba and which was to be extended to the northern part of the district (see Table 6.17 for details on Pokot workers).<sup>159</sup>

In 1924, for the first time in any meaningful numbers, some Pokot went outside the district, to the neighbouring Trans Nzoia in search of employment. This was on European farms, where they were mainly hired on monthly contracts as guards, herders and in

<sup>154</sup> Ibid., 109. For details on gold mining in North Kavirondo see Priscilla M. Shilaro, "A failed eldorado: British Trusteeship, Luyia land rights and the Kakamega gold rush, 1930-1952" (Ph.D. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 2000).

<sup>155</sup> Stichter, *Migrant Labour*, 110.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., 140. For details on Africanization of the labor system in the post-colonial period see Tiyambe Zeleza, "The Labour System in Independent Kenya", In: Ochieng' & Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 347-369.

<sup>157</sup> Stichter, *Migrant Labour*, 139; and Maxon, "The years of revolutionary advance", 96.

<sup>158</sup> J. Greer & E. Thorbecke, *Food, poverty and consumption patterns in Kenya* (Geneva: International Labor Office, 1986), 8; and T.E. Downing, K.W. Gitu, C.M. Kamau & J.B. Borton, "Drought in Kenya". In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 3-23.

<sup>159</sup> WSDARs, 1923 and 1924, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. It should be mentioned here that most Pokot men who worked on this particular wagon road were mainly coerced by colonial administrators to work on the same.

harvesting maize. It was estimated that about 400 Pokot worked outside the district during the year (see Table 6.17 for some details). However, this number could have been higher, given the fact that the Pokot living on the West Pokot/Trans Nzoia border had a tendency to cross over without passing through labour monitoring stations. Moreover, not all Pokot (on European farms) worked on monthly contracts. Some worked as casual labourers for short periods, particularly during maize harvesting, when their labour was most needed. Thus, the wages given were also not in accordance with monthly contracts. In some cases, European settlers paid casual labourers on a daily or weekly basis, depending on the work accomplished. In any case, whether within or outside the district, Pokot labourers worked for an average monthly wage of five to six Kenya shillings in the early 1920s.<sup>160</sup>

Table 6.17 African labour registered for work outside and within West Pokot, 1924

Outside (all Pokot)	Number	Inside (Pokot and non-Pokot)	Number	
Month	Month			
July	156	July-Dec.	31	Pokot working for private employers
August	59	July-Dec	48	Others working for private employers
September	62	Oct-Dec	101	Pokot working on KAR wagon road
October	90	Nov/Dec.	Nil	
Total	367		180	

Source: Compiled from WSDAR, 1924, WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

Furthermore in 1925, 266 Pokot were registered at Kacheliba on three to four months contracts at Kshs. 8 to 10 per 30 day ticket. They worked on various public works, for example, roads and government buildings at Kacheliba station, by then the district headquarters of West Pokot. In addition, 154 Pokot porters were stationed at Kacheliba to transport building material to various sites during the year. At the same time, 208 people were employed by the Public Works Department, specifically to work on the road to Lodwar, in Turkana district.<sup>161</sup> As noted in the 1928 Annual Report, “labourers required for the construction of roads, and for other communal purposes were obtained with a minimum difficulty”.<sup>162</sup> This is partly because those Pokot were in search of wage employment to raise money for taxes. Through wage earnings and the sale of livestock, hides and ghee, some Pokot were also able to buy more *posho*, some *americani* and other necessities.<sup>163</sup> Thus, these Pokot worked hard, although they disliked supervised manual labour and had in the past despised it.<sup>164</sup>

In 1929, in regard to the general state of Turkana province (West Pokot included), the PC reported that:

<sup>160</sup> WSDARs, 1924 and 1925, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and oral interview with John Limangura, at Makutano town, 6 December 1995.

<sup>161</sup> WSDARs, 1925 and 1927, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>162</sup> NADAR, 1928, 16-17.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

At the beginning of the year the province was in the grip of drought and infested by locusts. The people and their stock were in the state of semi-starvation; there was little water anywhere but in a few water holes. At many places where hitherto water had been regarded as permanent, the supply failed, so that great distress was among the people.<sup>165</sup>

Thus, the task of clearing West Pokot and the whole of Turkana province from locusts seemed well nigh impossible, but it was done effectively. As noted by the PC, it could not, however, have been done without the constant help of the inhabitants of the province, thousands of whom worked for months at the tasks of locust destruction and road and track making without any payment other than a ration of maize flour.<sup>166</sup> It was further emphasized by the PC that the organization of locust destruction in the province was assumed by the Administrative Officers who, in most trying conditions, successfully supervised the work. They were given every assistance by the Department of Agriculture that supplied Locust Officers, equipment, transport and funds. The majority of Locust Officers were Africans who worked without reservations alongside the local inhabitants.<sup>167</sup> Thus, some of the Pokot workers as government registered labourers were at times paid in food instead of money, particularly during locust invasions, droughts and famines (but rarely during normal years with sufficient harvests).

In the meantime, between 1929 and 1933, like other parts of the colony, West Pokot felt the effects of the prevailing trade and financial depression. Work on settler farms in Trans Nzoia was difficult to come by where lower or delayed payments had also become the norm. This was to some extent offset by work in progress at Kapenguria station where considerable numbers of the Pokot were employed in 1931. The headquarters of the district was moved from Kacheliba to Kapenguria in 1930. Owing to the building progress on the administration block and residential houses for government officials, Kapenguria managed to absorb a regular contingent of Pokot labourers, and for a few months in 1931, some were also employed on road work. However, in the following year, no further funds were forthcoming and the building programme came to a standstill.<sup>168</sup> Generally, the 1929 drought on the one hand and locust invasion on the other, coupled with the Great Depression, compelled a considerable number of the Pokot to search for wage labour within and outside the district, hopefully to be able to purchase food and pay state imposed taxes.

Consequently, there was an influx of Pokot men moving into Trans Nzoia in search of employment. In 1933, it was estimated that, 800 Pokot had voluntarily gone out to work on European farms in Trans Nzoia district. Even though on time payment of wages was not yet guaranteed, work on European farms was becoming a more widespread way of earning income to pay Hut and Poll tax. On the other hand, the European settlers had found that they required more Pokot labour at the time, as the labour from North Kavirondo, which used to do most of the work, was by then employed in the gold mines at Kakamega.<sup>169</sup> As noted by the Officer-in-Charge, Kapenguria, "the demand for Suk labour on the Trans Nzoia farms had exceeded the supply, and wages by 1935 had risen to seven as compared to five Kenya shillings in the 1920s".<sup>170</sup> The attractions of the mines greatly diminished the flow of labour from North Kavirondo, upon which the Trans Nzoia farmers heavily relied. By mid 1935, between 1,000 and 1,100 Pokot were believed to be at work in Trans Nzoia.

<sup>165</sup> NADAR, 1929, 22.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> WSDARs, 1931 and 1932, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>169</sup> WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>170</sup> NADAR, 1935, 167.

As further noted by the Officer-in-Charge, “work on the farms was the principal means of obtaining money for tax and once this money has been obtained, nothing would induce the Suk to work longer hours.”<sup>171</sup> Thus, by the end of the year, the shortage of labour on European farms had threatened to become serious again.<sup>172</sup>

It should also be noted that Pokot wage labourers preferred to work on a short-term basis in Trans Nzoia due to the prevailing conditions on European farms. Most Pokot, just as other labourers, complained from time to time of poor working/living conditions and lack of treatment with respect by their employers. Labourers were generally employed on a monthly “ticket” upon which was entered a record of each completed day’s work. On the completion of 30 days work, which the labourer was generally required to perform within 42 days of the commencement of his or her employment, the labourer became entitled to payment at the agreed rate of the daily/monthly wage. Moreover, the employer was required by law to provide housing, food, and health care in case of sickness for his employees.<sup>173</sup> Furthermore, the enforcement of laws governing the relationship between master and servant and the general welfare of the labourer was primarily the work of Labour Inspectors. Enforcement fell within the duties of all PCs and DCs.<sup>174</sup> However, it was not unusual for employers to fire sick labourers, delay payment, or pay wages lower than what was in the contract. Worse still, food and housing were inadequate in most cases, or totally lacking. For example, a single room could be shared by several labourers, who were never allowed to be visited by friends or relatives, let alone their own wives and children.<sup>175</sup>

Commenting on the above conditions, the DC, West Pokot, in 1936 wrote: “wages are admittedly small, but it remains to be seen whether a large wage will tempt more Suk from the reserve to European settled areas”.<sup>176</sup> The DC further reiterated the words noted earlier on by the Officer-in-Charge: “the Suk seek labour only when necessity compels, and abandon work when that necessity, usually the need of money with which to pay tax or food during famines, has been fulfilled”.<sup>177</sup> As noted earlier, most Pokot viewed wage labour as a secondary source of income, a supplement to farming and livestock keeping, thus, as a coping mechanism in times of need. It can also be argued that this partly explains why members of the Pokot community were not lured into wage/migrant labour in large numbers as compared to the Luo and Luhya groups.

Nonetheless, in 1938 there was a high demand for farm labourers in Uasin Gishu district. A few Pokot were lured and worked on European farms in the area throughout the year. For instance, at the LNC meeting held in Kapenguria in December 1938, the Officer-in-Charge urged members to persuade the Pokot young men to go out and work and to some extent alleviate the problem of food shortage in the district. Chiefs were also notified through circulars to this end, and a fair response was received especially from Mwino and Sook locations. In the same month of December, an application was received for a private labour recruiter’s licence, and after approval of the Officer-in-Charge it was forwarded to

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<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> NADAR, 1931, 23; and WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>174</sup> Ibid.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.; and oral interview with John Limangura, at Makutano town, 6 December 1995.

<sup>176</sup> NADAR, 1936, 162-163.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

the Principal Labour Officer, Nairobi.<sup>178</sup> In the meantime, Pokot labourers in Uasin Gishu were offered the same minimum wages and operated under the same working conditions as in Trans Nzoia district.<sup>179</sup> Thus, to beat the odds, these Pokot opted to remain seasonal migrant labourers in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu districts, and had no intention by then to search for full time wage employment outside their home district. Wage labour was purely a coping mechanism in times of need, a supplement to their day-to-day economic activities.

In the 1920s through the 1950s, a few Pokot were also employed to serve the colonial state as Chiefs and Headmen, while others served as members of the Local County and District Councils, in the police force, as Agricultural Instructors, Soil Conservation Scouts, as well as workers within missionary stations, schools and mines. For instance, in 1933, there were 12 Chiefs and 33 Headmen on active duty in West Pokot. As government employees, the Chiefs' monthly pay was between Kshs. 25 to Kshs. 45, whereas Headmen received Kshs. 14 to Kshs. 22 per month.<sup>180</sup> Wage variations depended on rank as well as years of service. The Kenya Police force in West Pokot, also consisting of state employees, in a detachment from the Kitale unit, served under the command of the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Kitale. By 1937, the strength of this unit in the district consisted of the Corporal and six Police Constables. Their duties ranged from manning the police post and the treasury in Kapenguria, road and border patrol, to general security duties in the district.<sup>181</sup>

Apart from the Kenya Police there was the African Police, referred to as the Tribal Police by the colonial administrators, which operated mainly in the countryside. Specifically in West Pokot, during 1937, the strength of this unit consisted of 15 Pokot, a number, as noted by the DC, quite inadequate for the needs of the district. Several members of the African Police, as state employees, were drawing a wage of only Kshs. 10 a month which was not commensurate with their responsibilities. Generally, wages paid to African workers, in this case state employees, were low and as noted in the 1937 District Annual Report, "should an increase in the 1939 estimates be made, it could be devoted to the raising of African wage and salary levels".<sup>182</sup>

In addition to working as farm labourers and state employees during the colonial period, some Pokot worked as casual labourers on a few state licenced mining enterprises in West Pokot. As early as the late 1920s, there is evidence of mineral prospecting in West Pokot. Important to wage labour, the asbestos mines were in operation at Cheptuiyem, in Riwa, Kapenguria division in 1944. The East Africa Manufacturers Ltd turned out about six tons of asbestos per week and had a work force of about 68 labourers. Messrs O. Rule was in charge of the mines and operation went on without a hinge during the year. However, in April 1945, there was a disturbance between the local and Kakamega labourers employed in the mines. This was mainly started by Pokot labourers who wanted immigrants out of the area, claiming that they were not only interested in working in the mines but were also acquiring land in the area. Consequently, most of the Pokot labourers were discharged

<sup>178</sup> WSDAR, 1938, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. It is not clear from the records whether the private labor recruiter was ever licenced or the role the firm played in labor recruitment in West Pokot District.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid.

<sup>180</sup> WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and *C&PKAR*, 1938, 35-36.

<sup>181</sup> WSDAR, 1937, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.; and WSDAR, 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. During World War II, about 50 Pokot served in the forces, both military and police, but their terms of service were not clearly stated in the sources available to the researcher.

leaving behind a work force that consisted almost entirely of Kakamega labourers. Meanwhile, in the 1940s several Europeans prospected for gold under licence in Kapenguria division, but as far as it is known their efforts were not fruitful at the time. A few Pokot managed to work in gold mines on a short-term basis, and with their wages they were able to pay taxes, purchase food and other necessities. Most of them had been forced to give their animals towards the war effort, and those worst affected were in search of wage labour for survival purposes.<sup>183</sup>

It should be re-emphasized that one of the reasons why West Pokot lagged behind in the development of a wage labour force as compared to other parts of the country was due to the extreme and difficult nature of the district's environment, which has hindered the development of a communication network over the years. However, at the beginning of 1947, the new earth road from Sigor through Marich Pass was finally opened to traffic, and this meant that it was possible to travel by lorry from Kapenguria to the beginning of the Weiwei and Masol plains (47 miles). In June 1947, F.C. Kierk, the District Road Overseer, began the continuation of the road along the bottom of the escarpment to the southeast, to join up with the Elgeyo/Marakwet district road at Chesogon near the Kerio river. An average of 100 Pokot men were employed (per month) on road work and by September 1947, the alignment had been cleared. Work continued until the end of the year when the job was completed. Thus, a further 25 miles of road through the important irrigation areas of Weiwei, Lomut and Cheptulel were opened up and a line of communication was by then available. The colonial administration hoped that it could facilitate future export of produce from these farming locations.<sup>184</sup>

Besides road construction, various projects under the Public Works Department were completed in the 1950s, all offering employment opportunities to the local inhabitants. These included construction of the Game Control Officer's house, extension of the African Government School, Kapenguria, government stores, a rest house at Sigor, administrative blocks and residential houses for government officials at Kapenguria and at the divisional headquarters. Bricks were made year around whenever the weather permitted and, at any one given time, there was considerable stock at hand ready for planned projects. Therefore, in the 1940s and 1950s more Pokot found employment in the Public Works Department. However, employment was on a short-term basis and compared to the total population, the number of paid jobs was still very low at independence. Worse still, wages remained perpetually low, and some jobs (for example, road work) were paid out after two or more months of work. In addition, some Pokot labourers were still paid either in cash or food depending on the situation. Thus to most Pokot, wage labour was still regarded as a survival strategy than a permanent occupation as late as 1960.<sup>185</sup>

Clearly, short-term wage employment continued to be favoured by a number of the Pokot in the post-colonial period. This was particularly so during droughts and famines, for example in 1965/66, 1979/80, 1984/85 and in the early 1990s, when migrant labour involved "hunger trips" by at least one or more family members in West Pokot. Specifically, men temporarily moved to urban areas, Kapenguria, Kitale and Eldoret, where they worked

<sup>183</sup> WSDARs, 1944 and 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 108. Mine owners and prospectors preferred to work with the Kakamega laborers, as most of them had some mining experience, acquired after working in the Kakamega gold mines in the 1930s.

<sup>184</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.; WSDAR, 1950, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and Handing over reports, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959 and Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4.

as guards, using their wages to buy food for their families back home. For most of the families, several of these “hunger trips” lasted one or two months. Generally, “hunger trips” have become a common phenomenon, and they begin as early as November; they mostly involve helping with the maize harvest on large farms in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu districts.<sup>186</sup> Therefore, immediate food needs are the major reason for migrant labour in the post-colonial West Pokot. In contrast to the colonial times, taxation lost its importance as an incentive in the 1970s. Around 1970, the flat rate direct taxation by the Kenya government was virtually abolished.<sup>187</sup> Taxes collected since then have been on income as well as consumables, for example, sales and fuel taxes for the whole country.

In the late 1970s, the Presidential Directive on ten percent additional employment in both private and public sectors, which had to be implemented between 1 January and 30 June 1979, boosted wage labour for the country. In response to it, job seekers of all categories, 4,012 male and 1,002 female were registered in West Pokot during the year. The response to the Directive by employers both in the public and private sectors was also encouraging. As a result, 269 people (202 men and 67 women) were placed in employment out of the 5,014 registered job seekers in West Pokot. Generally, the Presidential Directive on ten percent employment appeared to have applied some temporary breaks on the movement of school graduates to urban areas. Some of those who had moved to Nairobi and other towns flocked back to the countryside with the hope of being offered employment in their home districts. Yet to most Kenyan job seekers, this was never realized, and the Presidential Directive was caught up in the World Bank and related interest groups’ demands for Market Liberalization and Structural Adjustment Programmes, which left many Kenyans unemployed in the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>188</sup>

Nonetheless, public and private sectors have provided wage labour opportunities for Pokot households, for example, as civil servants, teachers, priests and *matatu* drivers among others. Building activity in centers of the divisional headquarters and Kapenguria has over the years increased opportunities for contractors and their local casual workers. Road making also continues to offer wage labour opportunities. The largest openings ever recorded were in the 1970s and 1980s with the construction of the Kitale/Kapenguria/Lodwar tarmac road. Hundreds of Pokot worked on this road as casual labourers for months.<sup>189</sup> Furthermore, over the years, Chiefs, Assistant Chiefs and County Council em-

<sup>186</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Kruithof, “Endo-Mokoro”, 109; and oral interview with Romanus Chizupo, during field trip Kapenguria to Kriich, 29 January 1995 to 31 January 1995. In the post-colonial period, almost all farms in Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu are African owned, with the exception of a very small number of European farmers, mainly a new generation whose parents or grandparents opted to be Kenya citizens at independence when the majority left the country. Besides, there is a sizeable number of non-African commercial farmers/ranchers (European and Asian among others) who operate on leases, mainly sanctioned by the government.

<sup>187</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Kruithof, “Endo-Mokoro”, 109.

<sup>188</sup> WPDAR, 1979. For details on structural adjustment programmes and their socio-economic impact on the Kenyan society see Robert Maxon & Peter Ndege, “The economics of structural adjustment”, in *Decolonization and independence in Kenya, 1940-93*, ed., B.A. Ogot & W.R. Ochieng’, (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1996), 151-183; and Anne Nangulu-Ayuku, “Structural adjustment, retrenchment, and ‘the golden handshake’: The Kenyan Experience”. In: *The Third World on the Brink of the Twenty-First century*, ed., Nancy Schumaker & Marcia Jones, Conference Proceedings, Association of Third World Studies, Inc., (Statesboro: Office of Publications and Faculty Research Services, Georgia Southern University, 1996), 100-110.

<sup>189</sup> Ton Dietz & Annemieke van Haastrecht, “Market integration in Elgeyo Marakwet and West Pokot: Comparing Households and Locations”, Working Paper No. 392, IDS, University of Nairobi, (Nairobi, 1982), 41-42; Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, “An estimate of the population

ployees have contributed to the number of wage earners in the district. Meanwhile, most local shops and eating places engage one or two, or at times more labourers, in the district. In addition, in schools and hospitals apart from teachers and medical staff, these institutions also employ support staff (for example, cooks, cleaners and watchmen) from the area. All local wage earners combine these jobs with farming among other economic activities in the area. They need the money for school fees, clothes, and consumer goods (like washing soap, cooking oil and salt), and to buy additional food during drought/hunger season.<sup>190</sup> Undoubtedly, since the colonial period, wage labour has served as a source of secondary income to take care of taxes, pay for services and more important to this study, purchase of food in times of need for some Pokot families.

In sum, throughout the colonial and on into the post-colonial period, African participation in the labour market steadily increased. In the early part of the twentieth century, government persuasion and compulsion were prominent features of the labour market. In later years, particularly during the depression and years of inadequate rainfall, the poor income from crop and animal production in comparison to the income from wages was a more important factor. Generally, since the 1940s, there has been a marked increase in the number of African groups, for example Kikuyu, Luo, Luhya, Meru, Embu, Gusii and Kitui Kamba, among others in the labour market. At the same time, more Kipsigis were signing on at tea estates, for example in the Kericho area. Maasai were said to be willing to work, although mainly in the Naivasha and Gilgil farm areas. They still, however, convert almost all their wages into purchases of livestock. Thus, the precise combination of circumstances that prompted African groups to participate in the labour market varied in each case, but in both the colonial and post-colonial period, increasingly, it was not coercion which pushed Africans into wage labour, but as noted by Stichter, “the dull compulsion of economic relations”.<sup>191</sup> Significant to this study, the Pokot continued to seek labour on short-term basis, as a coping mechanism and a secondary source of income in times of need, mainly to purchase food during droughts.

### Mining as a coping mechanism in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot

Since the colonial period, geological surveys have revealed that there are deposits of gold, mica, chromite, nickel, asbestos, talcum, vermiculite and magnetite among other minerals in West Pokot. Of all the minerals, gold is the most important and is found in small deposits scattered all over the district. However, the concentration is not high enough to start large scale gold mining projects.<sup>192</sup> The few minerals found in West Pokot however, have in one way or another contributed to food security in the area in times of need.

First, mica was discovered in West Pokot in 1928; several claims were pegged and at the same time, promising reports were received from the London market for the purchase of the

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supporting capacity of West Pokot District , Kenya: Methodology and results”, RDR for the ASAL Programme of West Pokot, (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam, 1985), 38-39; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 89.

<sup>190</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Kruithof, “Endo-Mokoro”, 108-109; and oral interview with Romanus Chizupo, during field trip Kapenguria to Kriich, 29 January 1995 to 31 January 1995.

<sup>191</sup> Stichter, *Migrant Labour*, 80, 83 and 108.

<sup>192</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 9; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 20.

mica.<sup>193</sup> In the meantime, no more claims on mineral prospecting were made until the 1930s. In 1933, one party of prospectors obtained Outlying District Passes and prospected for gold in the vicinity of Naramit. In the same year, another party prospected for minerals on the plains at the bottom of the West Pokot escarpment.<sup>194</sup> Asbestos mines were founded at Nasolot only to be abandoned in 1936, and there were no more prospectors in the district during the year.<sup>195</sup>

It was not until the early 1940s that Captain H. Wreford-Smith extracted considerable mica in the Karapokot area. But by 1944, deposits were exhausted, and unable to find another “good vein” in the area, he was forced to close down his mining business. All the same, unavailing efforts were made by other prospectors to obtain specimens of the quartz among other minerals in West Pokot.<sup>196</sup> Therefore, in 1944, the asbestos mine at Cheptuiyem owned by the East Africa Manufacturers Ltd. was the only one in operation in the district. It produced a fair quality of asbestos, all of which was sent to Kakamega gold mines for processing.<sup>197</sup> It is estimated that in 1947, the mine exported about 120 tons of asbestos fibre per month to the processing factory at Kakamega. At the end of the year East Africa Manufacturers was planning to increase production to 200 tons per month, and to open a new plant some 3 miles from Cheptuiyem mine on the old Kacheliba road.<sup>198</sup> Even though this was not realized, the mining of asbestos continued and several parties of prospectors visited the district in the 1950s. For instance, by 1954, East Africa Manufacturers had been joined by G. Valpy Miners, and both parties were operating in the Cheptuiyem area. During the year, a total of 25.5 tons of asbestos fibre were mined by both companies.<sup>199</sup> Evidently, production was dwindling, a clear indication of the nature of mineral deposits in West Pokot that only allowed short rather than long-term mining. Although a few Pokot were employed in the mining business, mainly in digging out the asbestos, and paid a daily wage for the work done, the main beneficiaries were the licenced mineral prospectors and mining companies, especially the East Africa Manufacturers. The fact that the processing of asbestos was also carried on outside West Pokot clearly indicates that in the larger picture, mining activity at this time had little, if any, economic impact on the study area.

In the meantime, in December 1946, Messrs Moore of Ainabkoi, Uasin Gishu district, and his team were prospecting for gold along the Muruny river south of Morobus, but with no success. Exactly a year later, December 1947, Dr. E. Ganz of Kitale, formerly a geologist to the Royal Dutch Shell Oil Company, visited the Marich Pass/Sigor area in search of gold. Ganz was not successful and he stated that “the district was unusually interesting from a geological point of view, but, it was most unlikely that any minerals or precious stones would be found”.<sup>200</sup>

However, in the 1950s, gold mining was reported in West Pokot, a sure way of refuting Ganz’s earlier assertions. Ironically, gold was found near Marich Pass in workable quantities, in the same area visited by Ganz, and some claims were pegged by A.P.S. Bon and

<sup>193</sup> Great Britain, *C&PKAR*, 1928 (London: HMSO, 1929), 39.

<sup>194</sup> WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>195</sup> WSDAR, 1936, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>196</sup> WSDAR, 1944, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>197</sup> WSDAR, 1946, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>198</sup> WSDAR, 1947, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>199</sup> Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *AADAR*, 1950 (Nairobi, GP, 1951), 32; and WSDAR, 1954, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

Mrs. I. McNaugtan in December 1950. In the following year, relying on Pokot labour for mining, each of them obtained 2½ oz. of gold from the Muruny alluvials in the area.<sup>201</sup> Three years later, alluvial gold mining was reported in the Turkwel Gorge, and it was confined to Messrs J.F. van Wyck a licenced prospector, who seemed to do well out of his precious findings. By 1956, van Wyck's gold mining activities continued to prosper, and considerable interest from other prospectors developed in the mining possibilities in West Pokot. As a case in point, government geologists spent some time surveying the Sook and Sekerr areas for all sorts of minerals. In 1957, the New Consolidated Gold Fields Ltd. managed to acquire the rights of the Sekerr Inclusive Prospecting Licence, originally issued to Messrs Ulyate and Williams. At the end of the year, there were five Europeans and over 100 Pokot working in the Sekerr hills looking for gold, chrome and nickel.<sup>202</sup>

By 1959 most of the mining companies had left West Pokot due to the fact that their mining prospects were disappointing, "leaving their excavations unfilled" and scattered in most parts of the district. As a case in point, the New Consolidated Gold Fields Ltd. left large trenches in their mining hill sites in the Sekerr area. Therefore, the only operating concerns in the district at the time were van Wyck's alluvial gold mining in the Turkwel Gorge, Kenya Mining Company's prospecting for mica and beryllium at Parua, and W.D. Forrester's small asbestos works below Kanyarkwat. In addition, the unlicenced Dutchmen, Venter and de Jager, were by then prospecting for gold in the Marich Pass. However, after a warning from the Kenya Police that their vehicles would be searched, they both packed up and left the area. As noted by Shirreff, "I'm afraid they got away with quite a lot of illicit gold and should not be allowed back".<sup>203</sup> Nonetheless, in the 1940s and 1950s miners were relatively active in the area. At the mining sites, retail shops also existed and mining activities brought some employment opportunities and some income to the local population. At the same time, this eased Pokot trips, however limited, to Trans Nzoia and Uasin Gishu in search of wage employment.

With Kenya's independence in 1963, van Wyck and other miners were compelled to leave the area, and until 1965 no licenced mining activities were carried out in the district. The independent government was set to issue mining licences in West Pokot, as well as other parts of Kenya, based on its own terms as opposed to those of the colonial administration. This was mainly aimed at government control of mining activities in the country to raise revenue for the state on one hand, and open employment opportunities for the local population on the other. The government was also of the view that more gold and other minerals could be found in West Pokot. But given the limited nature of mineral deposits and, in particular, gold produced in the area by van Wyck between 1955 and 1963 (as shown in Table 6.18), this was yet to be proved.

<sup>201</sup> AADAR, 1950, 32; and Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *Mines and geological department annual report, 1951* (Nairobi: GP, 1953), 3-4. In the same year 1951, Rosterman Gold Mines Ltd. in Kakamega, the largest gold mining concern in Kenya at the time, produced an average monthly production of 1,208 oz. of bullion. Comparison to what was produced in West Pokot in the same year further explains the limited economic significance of mineral deposits in West Pokot District.

<sup>202</sup> AADARs, 1956 and 1957, 99 and 54; and WSDAR, 1954, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. Another party, Williamson Diamond Miners, still held an exclusive prospecting licence for asbestos among other minerals for a large area in the district, valid till February 1955, but had done nothing about it.

<sup>203</sup> Handing over reports, Shirreff to Risley, confidential, 14 September 1959; and Minter to Foster, confidential, 20 November 1961, KNA: DC/WP/2/4. The Kenya mining company was owned by Ibbotson, an Eldoret lawyer, and new consolidated gold fields, was owned by D.K. Williams of Kitale.

In 1965, a licenced Eldoret mining firm found chromium in the Ptoyo area, Chepareria division. A sample was sent to a Sheffield firm in England to confirm the nature of the deposit before embarking on serious mining. It was also agreed that in case the chrome ore was to be of considerable commercial value, a mining investment was to be undertaken jointly by both the Eldoret and Sheffield firms. In the meantime, there was some trouble between the Eldoret mining firm and the area residents, who claimed that the particular chrome bearing mountain, Kamaghan, was the abode of their deity. Thus, the DO held a *baraza* on 19 November 1965 and settled the matter after an agreement was reached that

Table 6.18 Gold produced in West Pokot by J.F. van Wyck between 1955 and 1963

Year	Average monthly production amount in ounces of bullion	Value (£)*
1955	21	---
1956	18	---
1958	15	---
1961	41.53	521
1962	50.39	629
1963	38.73	479

\* Value was estimated at the nearest £.

Sources: Kenya Colony and Protectorate, *Mines and Geological Department Annual Reports (MGDAR)*, 1955 (Nairobi: GP, 1956), 2; *MGDAR*, 1956 (Nairobi: GP, 1957), 2; *MGDAR*, 1958 (Nairobi: GP, 1959), 10; *MGDAR*, 1961 (Nairobi: GP, 1962), 14; *MGDAR*, 1962 (Nairobi: GP, 1963), 12; and *MGDAR*, 1963 (Nairobi: GP, 1964), 10.

the miners slaughter a goat on the mountain in sacrifice.<sup>204</sup> However, the chrome ore was found to be limited, and no major investment was ever established in the area as anticipated. But this did not mean an end to mineral prospecting in West Pokot.

In 1969 another licenced company, Mineral Prospecting Kenya Ltd., headed by Messrs A. Polland and A. P. Padul, found small deposits of mica in the Kongelai area, Kanyarkwat and other parts of Riwa location. The Department of Mines and Geology, headed by Amuram Segero, also carried out mineral survey around Marich Pass, Sebit and some parts of Kipkomo location. While, the mining firm and the government department operated in the district, they offered temporary employment opportunities to a number of local inhabitants, which enabled a few Pokot to pay taxes, rates and fees.<sup>205</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, small-scale gold panning was carried out, this time by members of the Pokot community, north of Sekerr, around Korpu and the Turkwel Gorge, stimulated by Somali traders in the area. Between 1974 and 1978, gold panning was fast developing into an important money earner for the local Pokot. During this period, gold panning was very much a Pokot affair. Normally, men did the digging, while women and children were the main panners. The Pokot sold the gold privately to Somali traders, who in turn sold it to Nairobi dealers. In 1980, gold activities in the district once again attracted government attention, and a mining co-operative society was proposed to avoid unlicenced exploiters or dealers, especially those who were exploiting the famine situation during the year, by

<sup>204</sup> WPDAR, 1965.

<sup>205</sup> WPDAR, 1969.

dishing out petty goods to Pokot panners such as packets of maize flour and bread in exchange for the valuable gold.<sup>206</sup>

Consequently, in 1981 the Korpu Mining Co-operative Society, Alale division, was registered by the government and also granted a prospecting and mining licence for a large area in West Pokot. Before the formation of the Korpu Co-operative Society (in 1980), there was only one licenced dealer, the Orbi Minerals Exploration Company, that prospected and purchased gold in the area.<sup>207</sup> Thus, there was high competition between the agents of the Orbi Company, the Co-operative Society, and the unlicenced Somali traders to acquire gold from Pokot panners. It is estimated that in the early 1980s, panners earned between Kshs. 100 to Kshs. 200 and Somali traders and the Korpu Co-operative Society Kshs. 140 to Kshs. 250 (or even more) per gram of gold.<sup>208</sup> Like the Somali traders, the Co-operative Society also sold the gold either to Orbi agents in the area or directly to Nairobi dealers at a profit.

By 1983, Korpu was no longer the major gold panning area, the quantities had been reduced and people had shifted to Sekerr, Kriich in Sook and parts of Alale division. For example in 1983/84, there were five gold mining sites in Sekerr location: Ghatia, Nasolot, Sarmach, Telot/Sekerr and along the Muruny river. It is estimated that at the time Telot-/Sekerr had about 600 panners and along the Muruny about 2,000.<sup>209</sup> It is also estimated that approximately 5,000 people were panning gold on all Sekerr sites and that there were about 50 unlicenced gold traders in the area. The total amount of gold found in Sekerr in this period was about 40 kilograms. For panners this meant at least between three and a half to four million Kenya shillings and for traders an additional two million or more. Since Sekerr was the main mining area in West Pokot from 1982 to 1984, estimates of production indicate that the total value of gold mined in the whole district during this period must have been over six million shillings.<sup>210</sup> Panners in Sekerr and Kriich were not only locals, but gold attracted fortune seekers from as far away as Sigor, Kapenguria and other parts of the district.<sup>211</sup>

Meanwhile, gold panning was also taking place at Naruoro, in Alale location, in the river valley between the Lorusuk and Kachangalau mountain. In the beginning, some gold panners found relatively large quantities, which they sold to the agents of the Korpu Mining Co-operative Society. By 1982, the quantity of gold at Naruoro had been reduced and people had to search for new sites. In October of the same year, some gold deposits were found at Nasal and Akwanga, still in Alale location.<sup>212</sup> However, gold panning in Alale remained, seasonal because of the arid conditions in the area. During the dry season, the river valley virtually dries up making it difficult to extract the alluvial gold in the area. As soon as the rains start – in normal years in April – gold panning becomes a somewhat profitable trade. Moreover, most of the gold from Alale has been sold via illegal trading,

<sup>206</sup> WPDAR, 1981; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Sekerr, Kasei and Chemorongit”, 19 & 23.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Sekerr & Alale”, 23 and 35; and oral interview with Samson Limakukei, at Kriich, 31 January 1995.

<sup>209</sup> Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Weiwei Location, West Pokot District, Kenya”, RDR, West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet”, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1986), 49; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Sekerr”, 23-24.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid.; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 72.

<sup>211</sup> Oral interviews with Richard Kokulia & Samuel Lochupet, at Kriich, 31 January 1995.

<sup>212</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Alale”, 35-36.

since the area is isolated, with poor communication links to the rest of the district. Thus, the area is always flogged by illegal traders who seem to make a fortune from their sales. It is also known that in recent years gold panning in this part of the district has attracted fortune seekers from Kacheliba and Kapenguria among other divisions.<sup>213</sup> Thus, illegal trading makes it very difficult to come up with meaningful estimates of the amount of gold found and sold from Alale.

In the early 1990s, gold panning continued along the river valleys, Marich Pass, Korpu-/Turkwel Gorge, Alale and on the Sekerr hills. Two co-operative societies became the official gold marketing channels in the district. These were the Korpu Mining Co-operative Society and the newly formed Lalua Marich Co-operative Society in Alale and Chepareria divisions, respectively. It is estimated that the co-operatives handled about half of the alluvial gold mined in West Pokot. Generally, the mining societies lacked enough working capital to buy all the gold produced and in certain instances members also lacked necessary equipment such as mattocks, masks and chisels for its extraction. Lack of a proper communication network, moreover, hampered the efforts of the Co-operative Societies to effectively organize proper marketing of gold on behalf of their members. In addition, the Co-operative Societies did not have reliable buyers, in most cases they relied on middlemen who offered them low prices, and thus at times deprived them of some of their commission.<sup>214</sup> Since gold is very sensitive both in marketing and pricing, efficient management of the Co-operative Societies could have increased the share of marketed gold to panners, and eliminated exploitation by illegal traders who as noted earlier offered low prices, but this was and is yet to realized.

Generally, although gold mining has been an important activity and a source of secondary income in West Pokot, compared to other activities, including irrigation and rain-fed farming, livestock keeping, trade and wage labour, over the years it has benefited a very small number of people, most of them outsiders, who invest and trade in mining activities in the area. Mining activities in West Pokot, however limited, are yet another source of income that has made it possible for a number of Pokot households to purchase food and meet other necessities from time to time.

## Conclusion

Apart from agriculture, West Pokot appears to sustain small but important trading activity. In the period under review, a considerable number of the Pokot certainly traded with one another and their neighbours, particularly the Marakwet and, to lesser extent, the Turkana. They also forged trading links with traders from Western, Nyanza and Central provinces and as far away as Uganda. Evidently, colonialism undermined the traditional method of balancing the economy based on farming, herding and trade. For instance, during the colonial period, instead of slaughtering an ox for food, or exchanging sheep and goats for grain, at times the Pokot were compelled to dispose of their stock for cash to pay government imposed taxes. Moreover, with the introduction of the cash economy, the medium of exchange became Rupees, then shillings, instead of the traditional barter system. To

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.; and Ton Dietz & Annemieke van Haastrecht, "Rapid rural appraisal in Kenya's Wild West: Economic change and market integration in Alale location, West Pokot District", Working Paper No. 396, IDS, University of Nairobi, (Nairobi, 1983), 26-28.

<sup>214</sup> Republic of Kenya, West Pokot District Development Plans, 1989-1993 and 1994-1996, 100-101, 103 and 27-28.

survive in the monetary system in both the colonial and post-colonial period, the Pokot were compelled to sell their stock or whatever little farm produce they could spare through government marketing channels, or to Somali and Asian traders, instead of solely trading with their traditional equal partners. Furthermore, hides and skins were cheaply obtained from the Pokot to meet the needs of the export market. In exchange for their products, particularly in the colonial period, the Pokot were offered low prices, or, instead of cash, given goods such as sugar, cloth, blankets and luxuries – beads and wire – for decoration. Thus, the trading system of equivalent value in terms of stock and grain was converted into the unbalanced monetary value.

In the colonial and post-colonial period, wage labour (although coercion was used in some instances during the colonial period) and mining were adopted as other coping mechanisms for survival in a harsh environment. A considerable number of the Pokot worked on a short-term basis within and outside the district as guards, on road construction, and as farm labourers. Important to our purposes, trade, wage labour and mining have been sources of income and have contributed to food security in one way or another in West Pokot District. From wage labour and minerals, some Pokot have been able to purchase food, particularly during droughts and famine. Gold is the most important mineral found in West Pokot District. Most probably gold can be panned for many years to come and it is likely that new mining sites will be discovered in the area. Although gold is limited in quantity, income derived from gold mining is one of the coping mechanisms and a good example of how members of the Pokot community harness the environment for their own survival. Thus, over the years, most Pokot have learned to rely on multiple economic activities, all complementing each other to survive in a harsh environment.

Last but not least, despite the fact that trade, wage labour and mining are important economic activities in semi-arid West Pokot, they have been exploited by the area inhabitants mainly to enhance food security in a harsh environment, rather than for capital accumulation. This is partly explained by the arid nature of the land, livestock insecurity – disease and livestock raids – and general human insecurity, which have made it almost impossible for Pokot farmers/herders to fully exploit their animals through trade for capital accumulation and investment purposes. Because West Pokot has continued to be isolated from Kenya's major business centers, for example Nairobi and Mombasa, and marginalized in terms of state investment in transportation, the area has continued to lag behind in trade, wage employment and socio-economic development in general, compared to parts of Western, Nyanza, Rift Valley and Central provinces of Kenya. Thus, West Pokot is yet to be fully integrated into Kenya's political economy.

## External intervention: Government/donor interventions with specific reference to irrigation and famine relief, and their impact on food security

### Introduction

Based on the above analyzes of irrigation and other coping mechanisms in West Pokot, it is clear that many Pokot have strived through these various means to adapt to a harsh environment over the years. Throughout the study, it has been shown that irrigation and other economic activities utilized by Pokot households had mainly been directed towards food security and not to the accumulation of surplus through cash crop production, livestock sales, wage labour and mining activities in the area. Nonetheless, the post-colonial era witnessed increased external intervention in the West Pokot economy as the government and various donor organizations sought to promote food security and economic development. Irrigation projects and famine relief are the major interventions discussed in this chapter, but these measures met with little more success in providing long-term food security than those detailed in the preceding chapters.

As illustrated in this study, furrow irrigation among the Pokot existed long before the advent of colonialism. However, since the late 1950s the government has attempted to intervene in irrigation farming in West Pokot. For instance, in the 1970s and 1980s, a few government/donor sponsored irrigation projects were established not only in West Pokot but in other arid and semi-arid areas of Kenya. External intervention in irrigation, particularly in marginal areas, is based on the premise that better management of water will enhance food and cash crop production and sustain a meaningful livelihood for a people living in a harsh environment.

Consequently, Kenya's river valleys, particularly in marginal areas, have been important targets for rural development planners. Most of these Kenyan rivers have been dammed, some several times, and irrigation schemes established, to try and increase agricultural

production.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, the success rate of large-scale irrigation projects has been poor. This is partly due to the fact that government/donor sponsored projects are based on a technocratic as opposed to a participatory approach that integrates local agro-ecological and socio-economic realities of the rural population. But despite the wrong approach to implementation of irrigation projects and their failure, the enthusiasm of African countries, and their advisers and bankers, for large-scale projects to transform the African environment persists.<sup>2</sup> It is this intervention to develop Kenya's water resources, and specifically in West Pokot, and the persistence of the mentality that gives rise to irrigation projects and sweeping environmental transformation that partly form the subject of this chapter.

At the same time, it is argued in this chapter that the development of irrigation projects along Kenya's and Africa's rivers, and wetlands in general, is not something that can be achieved through government/donor all-out grand plans and blueprints, but requires the involvement of the local population and consideration of local experiences pertaining to irrigation. In other words, if irrigation projects are to mean anything to the local population, in this case in West Pokot, they must be projects that people can understand and control. External intervention must also treat indigenous irrigation with the respect it deserves. Indigenous irrigation should be treated as the basis for irrigation development in Africa's wetlands, but not something to be replaced by the ill-adapted, large-scale irrigation projects illustrated in this chapter.

External intervention, especially in irrigation in marginal areas, must also consider ways and means of resource conservation. Arid and semi-arid environments are fragile and easily degraded. They need to be conserved for sustained agricultural productivity. Therefore, to assist local irrigation, in this case in West Pokot, such a situation also calls for attention on the part of the government to promote, for example, tree and grass planting to protect land degradation, bearing in mind that land is the basis of almost all coping mechanisms in a harsh environment.

However, irrigation and other traditional coping mechanisms in marginal areas do not fully protect the population against hunger. The fact that rainfall fluctuates dramatically from year to year and decade to decade means that adaptation can never be perfect.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, the Pokot, like other Kenyan populations (for example the Kamba and the Somali) living in marginal areas, have to rely on famine relief and food aid from time to time to avert starvation. Yet the study points out clearly that, although food assistance may ameliorate the most extreme situations and thus avert the spectacle of the starvation from food deprivation, its long-term effects seem almost certain to generate its own pattern of dependency. Moreover, food relief to meet the immediate needs of Kenyans, as well as other Africans, is a short-term solution and fails to deal with the issue of long-term food insecurity. Thus, this chapter examines government/donor intervention in irrigation and famine relief in West Pokot. The chapter also examines their impact on food security in West Pokot, among other marginal areas, and on the Kenyan society as a whole. It demonstrates that despite a significant increase in the scope of external intervention, West Pokot remained marginal in the wider political economy of Kenya.

<sup>1</sup> Adams, *Wasting the Rain*, 9. Other river projects have been designed to meet urban needs or demands of the industrial economy, for example, the construction of dams for urban water supply or for generation of hydro-electric power.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> John A.J. Gowlett, "Human adaptation and long-term climatic change in Northeast Africa: An archeological perspective", In: *The ecology of survival: Case studies from Northeast African history*, ed., Douglas H. Johnson & David M. Anderson, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 27-45.

## Irrigation projects

The history of government intervention in irrigation, specifically in Sigor division, goes back to the colonial period. In 1956, proposals for government intervention were laid down under the ALDEV plan. First, it was proposed that 250 acres of available land, south of the Muruny river and north of the Sigor-Ortum road, be set aside and at the same time divided into small units and allocated to approved cultivators on an annual basis for irrigation under government supervision. This was on condition that land allottees were to irrigate their farms according to instructions laid down by the Assistant Agricultural Officer, as opposed to traditional practice. Secondly, a 10 km furrow was to be constructed and its intake reinforced with concrete to ensure permanence to irrigation, as a way boosting agricultural production in the area.<sup>4</sup>

Unfortunately, colonial records do not provide further information on the immediate outcome of the ALDEV project. It was not until 1962 that this project was revisited by the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) under the name of the Weiwei scheme. Once again, a proposal for a government built irrigation furrow was submitted to ALDEV during the year; it was envisaged to irrigate the 250 acres of land proposed in 1956, for which the cost was estimated at K£ 10,500. However, instead of constructing a new furrow, ALDEV was of the opinion that available funds be first utilized to reinforce the intake of the local people's furrow and boost food production in Sigor division. Then at a later stage, with the availability of funds, the large-scale project of constructing a new furrow and irrigating the 250 acres of land would be undertaken. Thus, by April 1963, the construction of a reinforced intake (with concrete and wire mesh) on an old Pokot furrow was completed. But with Kenya's independence in 1963, the allocation of the 250 acres of land to cultivators as well as the construction of a new furrow proposed in 1956 and 1962 was no longer mentioned. What is clear from the records is that the reinforced intake was in operation until the onset of the 1969 floods.<sup>5</sup>

These major floods of March 1969 swept across the Mwino valley and affected most parts of Sigor division. This tragedy is still remembered by the local population as the most severe flooding since independence. Irrigation intakes and furrows were extensively damaged, and over 200 acres of crops destroyed. The government built intake in the area was not spared either. The concrete and wire mesh used to reinforce it were washed away. The local population attempted to rebuild the intake, using stones, with little success. In early 1970, new floods occurred, causing more havoc in the area. This was a major disaster to irrigation farming in the district.<sup>6</sup>

After this disaster, both the provincial and district administrators launched the idea to "rebuild" the destroyed government reinforced intake, so as to avoid prolonged reliance on food aid in the area. According to the administrators, this exercise was to be carried out at an estimated cost of Kshs. 60,000. It was also suggested that the main furrow be reconstructed by the local population, on a self-help basis. As a result, the Ministry of Water Development was approached to assess the situation and prepare a time plan for both the intake and furrow construction. This was submitted in 1971 with the cost for the intake

<sup>4</sup> Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 9-11; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Weiwei", 33.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.; WPDAR, 1969; and oral interview with Lotudo Kakorio, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

quoted at Kshs. 80,000 instead of the Kshs. 60,000 estimated by the administrators. Nonetheless, the plan was approved, ready for implementation.<sup>7</sup>

However, it was not until mid 1972 that the actual building of the destroyed government reinforced intake began. By the end of the year, a more reinforced intake and a section of the main furrow about 3 km long, both under construction, abruptly came to a standstill. This was due to the fact that the project had run out of funds. By early 1973, there was no indication as to when the work would resume. At this time, it became clear to the local population that the government had abandoned the project, and they had to come up with their own solution and try to restore irrigation for their own survival in the area. Without delay, between February and May 1973, the people of Sangat/Weiwei area decided to build a new intake, a few meters away from the abandoned one, and linked it to the old furrows, expectedly using indigenous techniques. Thus, government intervention in irrigation in the Sangat/Weiwei area had fallen short of expectation.<sup>8</sup>

Nonetheless, the government continued to write proposals and carried out investigations on possibilities of intervention in irrigation to enhance food production in West Pokot. For example, in 1974/75, investigations were carried out along the Sarmai, Orwa and Mohany rivers and the surrounding areas of Sarmarch, Mbara and Chepkondol, all in Sekerr location; these looked into possibilities of government sponsored small-scale irrigation projects or assistance towards extension of traditional irrigation in this part of Sigor division. In the same period, the District Development Committee allocated Kshs. 19,575 out of the Rural Development Fund to expand irrigation activities in Tamkal, Mwino location. As a result, in 1976, a new area was cleared and a five kilometer traditional furrow reconstructed by the local population to lead water into the newly developed plots. It is worth mentioning that the 1976 government funding in this part of Sigor division, even though it meant well, was too little to have a major impact on irrigation activities in the area. Meanwhile, government proposals/investigations for Sekerr location remained on file as they were never implemented.<sup>9</sup> Thus, by the late 1970s furrow construction, maintenance and irrigation in general continued to be carried out by the local people using indigenous techniques. Undoubtedly, government intervention had left a lot to be desired in that area as well.

However, government intervention in irrigation in various parts of the country persisted. As a matter of fact, after 1976 government/donor run pilot schemes were seen as the only viable option for economic development among the country's rural poor. Therefore, in the late 1970s a few large-scale irrigation projects were launched to enhance food and cash crop production, mainly in Kenya's marginal areas. For example, the Bura irrigation scheme along the Tana river, the Kerio Valley project (managed by the Kerio Valley Development Authority – KVDA) and the Lake Basin project (along the shores of Lake Victoria – managed by the Lake Basin Development Authority). The river/lake development authorities were state run parastatals and were commissioned to initiate and coordinate regional development activities.

Within the same period, the Kenya government, supported by FAO, UNDP and USAID among other donors, initiated other projects in the country's dry areas, under the Integrated

<sup>7</sup> WPDAR, 1976; Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 11-12; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Weiwei", 33.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.; and oral interview with Lotudo Kakorio, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Ton Dietz, Annemieke van Haastrecht & Mirjam Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Mwino Location, West Pokot District, Kenya", RDR, West Pokot/Elgeyo Marakwet, ASAL Programme, (Kapenguria, 1983), 13; Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Sekerr", 20; and Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 11 and 47.

Rural Development (IRD) plan, with a considerable emphasis on agricultural and water development, along with education and health facilities. Under the IRD plan, drylands food production had to be increased by higher yielding, drought-resistant varieties of hybrid maize, sorghum and millet. A number of small-scale irrigation projects were also started with the aim of boosting food production and also to provide employment opportunities to populations living in the country's dry areas.<sup>10</sup> As a case in point, an all-embracing Machakos IRD plan was started in 1978 with the support from the European Economic Community (EEC). Soon it was part of a nationwide Arid and Semi-Arid Lands (ASAL) programme, covering almost all dry districts in the country, each district sub-programme adopted by a particular donor or group of donors.<sup>11</sup>

Undoubtedly, the parcelling out of dry Kenya among foreign donors resulted in a patch-work of approaches to project implementation. This was mainly because ASAL programmes mostly financed a large number of scattered projects in various parts of the country. Even though they were to be implemented by the existing government machinery with a strong emphasis on local participation, there was no single approach to project implementation. In addition, more emphasis was placed on crop production, water development, soil conservation, education and training at the expense of other important activities in arid and semi-arid areas. For instance, livestock keeping received very little attention. This is not to say that rural populations did not gain at all from the ASAL projects, but it has to be made clear that right from the start the programme had many flaws that also led to unfinished projects and wastage of funds in one way or another.

However, the ASAL programme, based on district approach, was in line with the Kenya government's District Focus for Rural Development (DFRD) plan.<sup>12</sup> Specifically, in March 1983, the Office of the President announced a new policy aimed at stimulating social integration and economic development among all smallholders, including previously neglected subsistence populations. Termed DFRD, it was intended to "broaden the base for rural development and encourage local initiative in order to improve problem identification, resource mobilization, and project design and implementation".<sup>13</sup> Its main provisions were subsequently incorporated into the 1984-1988 development plan, another major policy statement emphasizing basic needs satisfaction through renewed economic growth, and again into the development plan for 1989-1993.<sup>14</sup>

Since rural areas are the home of some 80% of the Kenyan population, it was argued that it was there that the most effective mobilization of development resources could be accomplished. Thus, responsibility for planning and implementing rural development was shifted from Nairobi to the districts. Large numbers of civil servants were posted to rural districts from Nairobi, and the District Development Committees became important planning agencies. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, development efforts in Kenya

<sup>10</sup> Dick Foeken & Ton Dietz, "Government intervention in dry regions", In: Reitsma, Dietz & de Haan, *Coping with semiaridity*, 56-72. FAO, UNDP and USAID stands for Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations Development Programme and United States Agency for International Development.

<sup>11</sup> Foeken & Dietz, "Government Intervention", 63-64. The EEC has expanded and is currently the European Union (EU), but in this study EEC is used as this was the appropriate name in the period under review.

<sup>12</sup> Foeken & Dietz, "Government Intervention", 64.

<sup>13</sup> Republic of Kenya, *District Focus for Rural Development* (Nairobi: GP, 1987), 1.

<sup>14</sup> Republic of Kenya, *Development plan for the period 1984-1988* (Nairobi: GP, 1984), 91-98; and Republic of Kenya, *Development plan for the period 1989-1993* (Nairobi: GP, 1989), 33-37.

operated within a district focus.<sup>15</sup> However much sensitivity to local conditions and development requirements may have been heightened under the District Focus, the programme did not have the desired effect of dramatically improving the productivity of the disadvantaged rural communities whose needs and potential for economic development were greatest. Rather, the DFRD had once again demonstrated that in the political economy of contemporary Kenya, “decentralization to the district level and empowerment of the rural population are not the same”.<sup>16</sup>

New irrigation initiatives were thus set up in West Pokot, based on the criteria noted above. They ranged from pilot schemes to rehabilitation of traditional irrigation in the area. These operated under the KVDA, the National Youth Service (NYS), the Kenya Rural Development Fund (KRDF) and ASAL programme, among other government/donor sponsored projects.

In 1975/76, the first government/donor sponsored irrigation project in West Pokot was started at Amolem, located on the eastern bank of the Weiwei river. Amolem was started as part of the so called “Turkana Irrigation Cluster”. Situated in Sigor division, on the boundary between Turkana and West Pokot districts, it was started as a regional project to enhance food and cash crop production, provide employment opportunities for the local population, and particularly settle both the Turkana and Pokot who had lost their livestock after the drought and cattle raids of the 1960s and early 1970s. The project was started by the Ministry of Agriculture, with technical staff from FAO/UNDP, and funded by the Norwegian government. At first the project was managed from Lodwar and Nakuru, but in the early 1980s, part of the management was transferred to the District Agricultural Officer, West Pokot.<sup>17</sup>

The size of the scheme was about 50 ha, divided amongst 220 tenants, each with 0.24 ha of land. Crops grown by the tenant farmers included maize, sorghum, green grams, cotton, groundnuts, simsim, cassava, sweet potatoes, bananas, pigeon peas, sugarcane, sunflowers and varieties of fruits and vegetables. However, maize and sorghum were the most important crops. In addition, there was a tree nursery where fruit seedlings were grown, and some budded, ready for sale to the local population.<sup>18</sup>

Water for irrigation was pumped from the Weiwei (Mimalte) river to the primary canal, while application to crops was by ridge and furrow. Sprinklers were also used, mainly between 1979 and 1983. Sprinkler installation consisted of a pump and a pipe network equipped with ordinary valves. Nonetheless, the irrigation method on the Amolem scheme necessitated considerable machinery and fuel. In this case, the investment cost for elaborate sprinkler irrigation was high compared to traditional furrow irrigation. In a similar manner, the cost for pumping and that of replacing the equipment frequently when it deteriorates could hardly be borne by tenant farmers without government/donor support. Therefore, foreseeing future problems, in 1983, with the advice of the technical staff, an intake of

<sup>15</sup> Maxon & Ndege, “The economics of structural adjustment”, 156; and Foeken & Dietz, “Government Intervention”, 64.

<sup>16</sup> Miller & Yeager, *Kenya*, 134.

<sup>17</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 64; Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Weiwei”, 34; and Zaal, van Tienhoven & Schomaker, “Locational development profile: Masol, 27-29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.; WPDAR, 1979; and Office of the District Commissioner (DC) West Pokot, “Sigor Basin Integrated Development Report: DC Tour 16/1/1980 to 18/1/1980”, (Kapenguria: Office of the DC, 1980), 3-4.

about 2.7 km was dug to allow water to reach the scheme by way of gravity. After this, application on crops was through basin irrigation.<sup>19</sup>

Generally, problems for Amolem began in 1981 with the withdrawal of FAO/UNDP assistance to the scheme. From the records available to the researcher, no proper explanation is given as to why the donor community left Amolem. Most probably they realized that the project was not viable. Worse still, by 1985, almost all the technical staff affiliated to the donor community had left the scheme. As a result, tenant farmers were confronted with various problems. First they were unable to operate the scheme without government/donor support. Using relatively expensive equipment in a place far away from any source of spare parts meant that there was a high risk of losing all crops in the event of major mechanical problems. As a matter of fact, this became the trend in the late 1980s and early 1990s as farmers were completely unable to operate the water pump.<sup>20</sup>

Secondly, other problems, beyond technical/funding, arose after government/donor withdrawal. Since both Turkana and Pokot groups were allowed to have plots on the scheme, with no government presence, cooperation between the two groups broke down. Hostility between them escalated, and Pokot tenants demanded that Turkana tenants leave for their own district. Realizing that there was no future in the scheme, some of the tenants moved out in search of other opportunities to avoid open confrontation. For example, some of the Pokot tenants moved to gold panning areas, mainly in Sekerr location and along rivers in other parts of the district. Others, particularly the Turkana, moved back to their home district and returned to their subsistence activities, mainly livestock keeping. By 1994, both Pokot and Turkana tenants had virtually left the area, and the Amolem scheme was no longer operational, abandoned by the government and the donor community.<sup>21</sup>

From the very beginning, the Amolem scheme had no sign of success whatsoever. When the scheme was set up, for instance, it was anticipated that three crops a year could be possible, but by 1985, this had not been achieved. Only in 1979 and 1982/83 did the scheme manage two crops. The droughts of 1980/81 and 1984 were just as devastating to irrigation in Amolem as to other parts of West Pokot. Moreover, the 0.24 ha of land allocated to farmers was too small for both food and cash crop production. Even though the original plan was to plough for farmers and provide required inputs (for example, fertilizers and seeds free of charge to enhance agricultural production in the area), this was never realized. As a matter of fact, the sub-division of land into small units made it impossible to utilize tractors or any other farm machinery on the scheme. It was also anticipated that the scheme would provide employment opportunities to tenant farmers and to the local population. But sprinkler irrigation required very little labour, and the number of potential jobs expected from the scheme was limited from the beginning. Thus, what the local Pokot remember most about the scheme is that it displaced a number of traditional cultivators and reduced the dry season grazing areas available to the local population, forcing them to

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<sup>19</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 64; and Republic of Kenya, *Water resources study for the Kerio valley basin*, Kerio Valley Development Authority (KVDA), Sectional Report, Part Two, (Nairobi: KVDA, 1981), 125-126. This Report was prepared by Sogreah Consulting Engineers of Grenoble, France, on behalf of the KVDA.

<sup>20</sup> Republic of Kenya, *Water Resources*, 126; and Zaal, van Tienhoven & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Masol", 28-29.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.; and Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, ii.

move elsewhere along the Weiwei river. It provided a disruption to their coping mechanisms in the area.<sup>22</sup>

In the meantime, the second scheme in West Pokot was started in 1979 at Lomut, Sigor division. This was a government scheme operated by the NYS. The NYS farm was located half a kilometer east of Lomut center, along the Siya river. The farm was implemented to accelerate agricultural development in the area. It was to be developed by the NYS, in close consultation with the ministries of Agriculture and Water Development. The farm was about 30 ha in total, of which 20 ha were under irrigation by 1983. Water for irrigation was obtained from traditional furrows, diverted from the Siya river and stored in a dam before application through sprinklers. About 250 NYS men were based at Lomut to operate the farm. Cotton and maize were the main crops grown. Other crops included green grams, bananas, sorghum, groundnuts, cassava, beans, citrus fruits and vegetables. Rice was also tried, but without success.<sup>23</sup>

Part of the initial objective of the NYS farm was to educate and assist local farmers on the use of farm machinery (for example, tractors) and pesticides as well as fertilizers to boost agricultural production in the area. However, this turned out not to be the case, as there was no link whatsoever between NYS activities and those of the local population. As a case in point, the NYS farm emphasized cash crop production, whereas most of the Lomut farmers concentrated on subsistence crops.<sup>24</sup>

What the NYS farm and Lomut farmers had in common was that they both irrigated their farms using the Siya river. This in itself caused friction between the two groups, mainly because the Siya is the primary source of water for traditional furrow irrigation in the area. Evidently, the NYS irrigated its farm using water from the Siya via the local people's Parkulo and Chemasos furrows. Lomut farmers accused the NYS of high-handedness, in particular of using the furrows without compensation and making no contribution towards their maintenance. It also led to a reduction of traditional irrigation activities in the area, since the NYS farm used more water at the expense of local farmers.<sup>25</sup>

Production on the NYS farm was on the whole too little to have meaningful impact on agricultural production in the area. For example, in 1983, the farm's harvest was 324 bags of cotton, 200 of oranges and 65 bags of grapes. In the following year, output declined considerably, below half of the 1983 production level; this was due to severe drought not only in West Pokot but Kenya as a whole.<sup>26</sup> Whatever was produced from the farm was mainly sold outside the district, and the remainder, particularly food crops, utilized to feed the NYS men. Therefore, to the local population, the NYS farm was a source of government revenue and a service men's farm that had no benefit to the Pokot.<sup>27</sup>

Ironically, irrigation experts had been opposed to the NYS farm in the first place. They made it clear to the government that the Siya river did not carry enough water, especially during the dry season, to irrigate both the NYS and traditional farms in the area. But since

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones*, 22 and 60; Zaal, van Tienhoven & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Masol", 29; Republic of Kenya, *Water Resources*, 126; and oral interviews with Terengelo Kiptum & Peter Lonyalyo, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>23</sup> Van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lomut & Cheptulel", 28-29; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 64; Office of the DC West Pokot, "Sigor Basin", 5-6; and WPDAR, 1979.

<sup>24</sup> Van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Lomut & Cheptulel", 29.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 27; Hogg, "Pokot", 20-22; and oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>26</sup> Van Tienhoven, Zaal & Schomaker", Locational development profile: Lomut & Cheptulel", 29.

<sup>27</sup> Oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

the scheme was started as a presidential directive, experts' advice was ignored. Therefore, after 1985, it was evident that the farm was operating at a loss, even though the Moi government was not ready to give up so easily.<sup>28</sup> By the early 1990s, the NYS farm was just another statistic of the failure of government intervention in irrigation activities in the country. Thus, like their Weiwei neighbours, the people of Lomut continued to rely on traditional furrow irrigation for their own survival in the area.

The third irrigation project in West Pokot was initiated near Sigor by the KVDA. The KVDA, a government parastatal, was established by an Act of Parliament of August 1979. This was an integrated regional authority, whose development activities were not restricted to the Kerio Valley proper, but covered the whole of the Kerio and Turkwel river basins, as well as the surrounding areas. Operationally, the KVDA covered parts of Turkana, West Pokot, Marakwet, Elgeyo and Baringo districts. The KVDA was initiated with the purpose of trying to focus interest and resources on this area which for historical, environmental and other reasons has been marginalized and lagged behind other parts of Kenya in general socio-economic development. Specifically in West Pokot, the KVDA project was established on government land, initially allocated to the Prison(s) Department for farming purposes to procure food for inmates, but it was re-acquired in 1976 to pave way for a large-scale irrigation scheme in the area.<sup>29</sup>

As a result, in 1980/81, the KVDA started clearing land and constructing irrigation facilities for the pilot farm. The KVDA had no intention of constructing a new irrigation furrow in the area. Rather it aimed at rebuilding the government sponsored intake and the 3 km long furrow that were abandoned by the MOA in 1972. In early 1981, the KVDA embarked on repairing the MOA furrow, but project planners had begun work on the scheme too late. With the onset of the long rains, the newly constructed intake was washed away and the furrow extensively damaged. Therefore, to be able to irrigate at least part of the newly cleared 200 ha of land, the KVDA had no alternative but to rely on the Korrelach furrow owned by the local farmers.<sup>30</sup>

Expectedly, Pokot farmers resented external interference in their irrigation system, but as a government directive they had no option but to share the furrow with the KVDA. Competition over water was more pronounced during the dry spell in June, when Pokot farmers rely more on irrigation to bring food crops to maturation. Worse still, the local population had to maintain the furrow free of charge, including the section irrigating the KVDA farm. The local administration made it clear that as a government order, furrow maintenance on behalf of the KVDA was to be based on *harambee* labour. Thus each adult Pokot male was to work on the furrow at least once a week under the supervision of the Chief and his assistants. The area Chief also held *barazas* emphasizing the importance of

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.; Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot district development plan, 1994-1996*, 128; and Office of the DC West Pokot, "Sigor Basin", 5.

<sup>29</sup> F.B.K. Were, "Responsibilities and activities of the Kerio Valley development authority", In: Kipkorir, Soper & Ssennyonga, *Kerio Valley*, 12-18; Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 64; Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 33-36 and 54; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Weiwei", 35. The KVDA was to operate on a 20 year development plan in northwest Kenya. The main objective was alleviation of poverty through the "provision of basic needs to target groups".

<sup>30</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht and Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Weiwei", 35-36.

the KVDA project and the need for the local population to support government initiatives in order to enhance economic development in the area.<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, government directives and *barazas* only fueled Pokot resentments against the presence of the KVDA in the area. This led to open protests, particularly among the Pokot farmers in the Sangat/Weiwei area. Thus, under pressure from the local population, once again the KVDA embarked on repairing the former MOA furrow in the area. Between September 1981 and February 1982, a new intake was constructed and the whole furrow rehabilitated to meet the needs of the KVDA farm. The intake of the furrow was on the Weiwei river, about 10 km from the farm. Water ran by gravity through an extended furrow and was stored in diversion dams before application. Flooding, ridge and furrow systems were used in the field. The KVDA operated tractors and some other farm machinery to run the farm. In times of labour demand, a few hundred casual labourers could be employed, apart from about 60 permanent staff. The farm, which started in 1981, consisted of about 300 hectares of cleared land in 1983.<sup>32</sup>

Depending on the season, up to 80 hectares of land were irrigated. Maize and sunflower were the main cash crops. Other crops grown were cotton, rice, bananas, cassava, sorghum, sugarcane, citrus fruits and vegetables. The Authority also operated a fruit tree nursery at the scheme. Extension of the farm to 2,000 ha was part of the future plan.<sup>33</sup> At the same time, only a small amount of KVDA produced fruits and vegetables, among other food-stuffs, were sold in Sigor, Marich and Kapenguria. The rest found their way out of the district to other parts of the country. In addition, maize and rice were sold to the NCPB, Kitale and cotton to CLSMB, Kisumu.<sup>34</sup> Thus, the KVDA, as a government agency, was more keen on commercial farming, aimed at raising government revenue, than contributing to food security in West Pokot.

It is not surprising that the KVDA farm was viewed by the local population as an obstacle rather than an agency of economic development in the area. Even though the KVDA had rehabilitated the MOA furrow to eliminate conflicts, it only worsened the situation. This was mainly because the intake for the KVDA furrow at this time was less than 100 meters above that of the local people's Korrelach furrow. Therefore, the expansion of the KVDA farm in 1982/83 also led to insufficient water supply for the Pokot farmers down stream, especially during the dry season. This worsened during the 1984 drought, when the KVDA diverted as much water as possible to its farm in an attempt to salvage crops from the scourging heat, but downstream some Pokot farmers were completely cut off from the Weiwei water supply. Consequently, there was a reduction in traditional irrigation activities, particularly in the Sangat/Weiwei area.<sup>35</sup>

Even though the KVDA was intended to be a major demonstration center on appropriate irrigation farming in the area, just like the NYS farm, it remained a distant project to the local population. For example, Pokot farmers were never shown around the farm, nor were seminars or *barazas* held to enlighten the population on KVDA activities and their application to boost agricultural production in the area. Those who had access to the farm

<sup>31</sup> Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 27-28; and oral interviews with Simon Lalaita & Peter Lonyalyo, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 64-65; and Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Weiwei", 36-37.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.; Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 53-54; and oral interview with Jackson Chaperer, at Sangat, 15 July 1996.

were mainly wage labourers. However, wage labour offered to local inhabitants was not by any means a learning process on KVDA activities in the area. After all, employment opportunities were seasonal and too few to alleviate Pokot standards of living in any meaningful way. For instance, between May and August 1982, about 240 casual labourers worked on the KVDA farm, of whom 200 were local inhabitants. Of the KVDA workers, about half worked in the fields, a quarter on maintaining the irrigation system, and the remainder as guards and construction workers.<sup>36</sup>

However, by the early 1990s, the number of casual workers had dropped to about 40 people per month. Most of them had left voluntarily, citing long working hours and poor pay as the main reasons. For example, a normal working day ran from 7:30 am to 5 pm, wages were Kshs. 10 per day, and payment was often delayed. Besides, most Pokot realized that work on KVDA farm interfered with their farming activities, which were more assuring in food production than the monetary benefits they received from the KVDA.<sup>37</sup>

The establishment of the KVDA project also tended to interfere with the power structure of the Council of Elders (the *Kokwa*) and its role in irrigation farming in the area. For instance, the use of the local peoples' Korrelach furrow by the KVDA was (before the rehabilitation of MOA furrow) based on government directives as opposed to rules regulated by the *Kokwa*. This was a clear illustration of government and donor interference in socio-economic institutions that have played a major role in organizing a people to harness a harsh environment for their own survival over the years.<sup>38</sup> Undoubtedly, the KVDA had created competition over scarce resources, water and, to some extent, labour, and also it interfered with traditional institutional organization pertaining to irrigation, all to the detriment of the Pokot subsistence farming.

In the meantime, from the mid 1980s, the KVDA paid very little attention to the Sigor farm, concentrating more on its multi-million shilling project, the Turkwel Gorge dam on the West Pokot/Turkana border (see Map 6 for irrigation projects). As the largest KVDA project, the Turkwel Gorge dam was earmarked to open up thousands of hectares of land for irrigation, provide employment opportunities, fishing activities, serve as a tourist attraction and generate hydro-electric power. It was also designed to regulate the flow of the Turkwel/Suam river for use by smaller projects and people down stream. The dam was also to harness the excessive water floods during the long rains for storage for future use in the dry season.<sup>39</sup> Therefore, the Turkwel Gorge project was not only meant to benefit the dry-lands of West Pokot and Turkana districts, but the country as a whole.

However, the Turkwel Gorge project did not realize the intended objectives. For example, the possibility of irrigating with water from the dam decreased very considerably immediately after it had been opened. Downstream from the gorge, irrigable area around Katilu dropped drastically from 9,000 ha to 6,400 ha because a certain amount of water had to be maintained in the dam and also due to infiltration and evaporation. Moreover, given the salinity of soils down stream, particularly at Suguta, it was impossible for the dam to be utilized for irrigation in the Suguta/Kapedo area.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.; Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Weiwei", 36 and 40; and oral interview with Simon Lalaita, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 28; and oral interview with Simon Lalaita, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>39</sup> Office of the DC West Pokot, "Sigor Basin", 4-5.

<sup>40</sup> Republic of Kenya, *Water Resources*, 134.

Evidently, the Kenya government had been advised by experts to take into consideration some crucial steps before implementing the Turkwel Gorge project. Experts had made it clear that for the dam to be efficient, the hills in the area had to be afforested to control erosion and excessive silting of the reservoir, as well as to enable the catchment areas to conserve more water. They had also suggested a feasibility study of the area to determine whether the dam could be utilized for irrigation activities effectively. However, this crucial advice was pushed under the carpet by corrupt Kenya government officials and their French contractors to whom they had awarded the tender based on bribery rather than acceptable bidding procedures; the project went forward for personal gains as opposed to the interests of the surrounding population and the country as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, the Turkwel Gorge project turned out to be another “white elephant,” like the Bura irrigation scheme. It not only cost the tax payers millions of shillings, but also interfered with the Pokot and Turkana habitat. As a case in point, members of the two ethnic groups had been forcibly removed from the area to pave way for the multi-million project. Even though they were promised immediate resettlement, by 1995, some of them were still stuck on the edge of trading centers and church compounds in Turkana and West Pokot districts. They were a displaced and hungry lot, surviving on government and donor handouts with no hope for tomorrow.<sup>42</sup> When all was said and done, by mid 1990s, the KVDA irrigation projects in West Pokot had failed to realize intended objectives. Citing lack of funds, the government slowly pulled out of the Sigor farm, leaving behind another ill-adapted and useless project in the area.<sup>43</sup> Indeed, bureaucratic inefficiency, poor planning, financial mismanagement and related bribery scandals by the KVDA and government officials engaged in irrigation and other projects in northwest Kenya played a major role in the flop of external intervention in the area. Thus, having interfered with indigenous irrigation farming in one way or another, the KVDA actually contributed to food insecurity in the area.

At the same time, the government had other projects either planned or ready for implementation. Among these were the Cherangan, Kongelai and Kodich irrigation schemes. The Kodich irrigation scheme in Kacheliba division was initiated in 1983 by the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development. As part of the plan for this scheme, it was to be run by the farmers’ committee, assisted by extension staff. The planned irrigation area was about 75 ha for 60 families. Water from the Suam river was to reach the plots by gravity through a 3.5 km intake canal and then applied through basins. Maize, beans, and possibly seeds for dryland crop varieties, were to be the most important crops grown. However, the Kodich scheme turned out to be a big flop like other government and donor funded

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<sup>41</sup> Henry Bosch, “The Growing Threat of International corruption”, (Canberra and Sydney, 1997), 1. Paper presented at Seminars on Corruption in International Procurement, convened by Transparency International – Australia, jointly with the Institution of Engineers and the Association of Consulting Engineers, Australia.

<sup>42</sup> Oral interview with Romanus Chizupo, during field trip Kapenguria to Kriich, 29 January 1995 to 31 January 1995.

<sup>43</sup> Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 48. Apart from technical and financial support from the Kenya government, the KVDA farm in Sigor had also received funding from the Italian government. Yet it turned out to another statistic of failure of external intervention in irrigation farming, not only in West Pokot but Kenya as a whole.

schemes in West Pokot. As a matter of fact, none of the government funded schemes at Kodich, Cherangan and Kongelai were operational by 1994.<sup>44</sup>

As a result, government and donor intervention in West Pokot by the late 1980s and early 1990s became more focused on rehabilitation activities than on implementation of large-scale projects. A number of traditional irrigation furrows in the area had been put out of use by natural calamities, such as land slides, floods, river bank and river bed erosions, and gullies cutting across furrow alignments, too overwhelming for the local population to cope with by itself.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it was realized by some Kenya government irrigation planners and administrators that funds wasted on ill-adapted large-scale projects could be better utilized in assisting the local population rehabilitate traditional furrows to boost food production in the area.

Therefore, the few funds earmarked for irrigation in West Pokot were then redirected towards furrow rehabilitation. Rehabilitation activities were under the ASAL programme, funded by the Kenya and Dutch governments. Target areas for the programme were mainly in Sigor division, specifically Lomut, Cheptulel and Sangat/Weiwei. The ASAL programme operated from the district headquarters in conjunction with the Ministry of Agriculture's Small Scale Irrigation Unit. Therefore, under the supervision of ASAL and the District Irrigation Unit (DIU), irrigation experts and field extension staff were able to undertake some technical improvements, particularly reinforcement of intakes and furrow alignment, for the benefit of the local population. For example, a total of 32 furrows were rehabilitated between 1984 and 1994, and over 3,000 acres of land reclaimed to irrigated agriculture.<sup>46</sup>

It should be emphasized that furrow rehabilitation under ASAL was made possible by support from the local community. Unlike the large-scale projects, the ASAL programme was in line with the local peoples' needs. The ASAL approach was in part meant to support indigenous approaches regarded as basically sound, but with room for improvement. The approach was also "people centered", based on popular participation. In this case, local participation was carefully planned in a general framework offered by the District Development Committee in conjunction with ASAL/DIU, and whatever the programme entailed was passed on to the local population through public *barazas*. Basically, technical expertise needed in rehabilitation activities was modest. It relied on *harambee* labour and was developed by engineers who had in mind locally replicable appropriate technology. *Harambee* labour was organized in a way to fit the time schedules of people with many labour demanding activities. The improvements were also within the existing socio-cultural micro-context of a furrow committee. Thus, the outcome for furrow improvement was appreciated by the local community, district authorities and ASAL/DIU personnel.<sup>47</sup>

However, by 1995, it was not clear whether government intervention in furrow rehabilitation was a short or long-term project. This was a major concern, especially in areas where the activity was beyond the scope of, or not within, the ASAL programme. If the Kenya government is indeed committed to meaningful intervention in irrigation activities in West Pokot, it should have a long-term plan, based on continuous rehabilitation and maintenance of the technical component of furrows, so as to boost food production in marginal areas.

<sup>44</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 64-65; WPDAR, 1981; and Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, ii and 34. As noted in the *District Profile*, in 1994, the government had intentions to resume work on the Kodich irrigation scheme, but, citing financial constraints, the whole idea was put off.

<sup>45</sup> Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, ii.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.18; and Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 161.

<sup>47</sup> Dietz, "Indigenous irrigation", 168.

Bear in mind that of the total land surface in Kenya, about 80% is classified as ASAL. The development of ASAL areas that have been historically marginalized (that is in terms of state investments and allocation of resources needed for the areas' socio-economic development, during the colonial and post-colonial period) is therefore crucial since about 25% of Kenya's population and over 50% of the total livestock in the country are found in these areas.<sup>48</sup>

For sustainability, the intervention must also be appropriate in nature, that is in terms of funding, construction and reliability. The construction must make maximum use of locally available materials that can be obtained by the benefiting community. Rehabilitation activities should also be limited to already farmer-constructed furrows, and through local organizations, farmers should be able to contribute some amount of money, for example to engage an artisan and buy a few items (such as cement), which might be required in the rehabilitation – that is, in the absence of government and donor support.<sup>49</sup> In short, technical intervention should be kept simple but efficient, without altering the original technology. Generally, it should be based on the user's knowledge and experiences.

Indeed, the ASAL/DIU Programme in West Pokot demonstrates that a micro-approach, looking experimentally for possibilities to improve environmental management with minor investments and low-profile external involvement, can be quite successful. The approach should fit the local farming system and local management practices. It should also fit the time schedules and cost benefit judgements of people dealing with other coping mechanisms, of which irrigated farming (although very significant) is only one of several.<sup>50</sup>

### Demerits of irrigation projects and lessons to be learned

Generally, external intervention in irrigation is fraught with many technical, managerial, financial, socio-cultural, environmental and land use problems. Specifically, the political role in irrigation – and in river basin projects in general – slips into the complex area of “grand corruption”. River basin projects are large and expensive. Very large sums of money are paid for implementation of such projects, and commissions of every kind tend to become significant elements within decision making. Once again, as a case in point, the contract of the Turkwel Gorge dam in West Pokot, awarded to the French contractors in 1986, is one of the best examples of grand corruption in Africa's river basin development projects. According to the EEC delegate in Kenya, this contract was awarded to the French without international competitive bidding. In particular, the price of £270 million paid to the French contractors was more than double what would have been expected from competitive bids. The installed price of turbines to generate hydro-electric power was listed as £277,000 each, against a British consultant's estimate of £140,000 each. Yet “the Kenya government officials who were involved in the project were fully aware of the disadvantages of the French deal ... but they nevertheless accepted because of personal advantage”.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>48</sup> Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, 21; and Republic of Kenya, *National development plan, 1997-2001* (Nairobi: GP, 1997), 49.

<sup>49</sup> Republic of Kenya, *District Profile*, 33: and Marinus K. van Klinken, “The construction of Arched Aqueducts in West Pokot District: Some Data and Experiences”, (Kapenguria, 1987), 2-3. Van Klinken's paper is based on an article that appeared in *VRAAGBAAK* – a Dutch Magazine on appropriate technology – June 1978 Vol. 6 No. 2.

<sup>50</sup> Dietz, “Indigenous irrigation”, 169.

<sup>51</sup> Bosch, “The growing threat”, 1-5.

It is worth mentioning that Transparency International defines grand corruption as the abuse of public power for private gain. It occurs when large payments are made to people in positions of power, almost always politicians and senior public servants, to get things done that would otherwise be illegal. Probably the most common form of grand corruption is the awarding of major contracts on the basis of payments made to individuals, directly or indirectly, rather than on the basis of declared and accepted criteria in accordance with the law of the country concerned. Almost always, the bribe, and the issues at stake, are very large and in most of the cases involve payments by exporting or contracting companies in developed countries to people in power in developing countries.<sup>52</sup>

Basically, grand corruption is promoted by temptation and competition. Typically, the salaries paid to those who seek bribes in developing countries are relatively low, and when they deal with enormous sums in their public capacities and are brought into contact with businessmen who enjoy far larger personal rewards, the temptation is great. At the same time, international competitive pressures have grown enormously and companies seeking contracts and licences have seen bribery as an effective way of gaining an advantage over competitors. A whole profession of middlemen or facilitators has emerged who make their living from taking a proportion of bribes paid. However, grand corruption often leads to projects being done poorly. Those who pay the bribes often recover their money by compromising on the quality of work done. When bribes have been received, it is also difficult to demand high standards from the paymasters/contractors. Thus, projects based on grand corruption are monuments to the arrogance of their creators, most of whom live far away and are unaffected by their failure. They may be good business for corrupt African bureaucrats (in the short term), but they promise a poor future for Africa.<sup>53</sup>

Worse still, river basin projects can lead to environmentally damaging consequences that affect the livelihoods of local inhabitants. For instance, irrigation projects mean concentration of people on the scheme and the vicinity, which implies the destruction of the riverine forest, thus degrading a unique environment and upsetting the precious ecological balance. Specifically for West Pokot, the establishment of irrigation schemes along the Weiwei river did not enhance the position of traditional irrigators and livestock keepers who were confronted with a loss of land, water supply, dry-season grazing, riverine forests for wild foods and medicines, fuel and building material. In practice, irrigation projects have been operated in isolation from the rest of the needs of downstream users. When the impact is felt, international planners and contractors are usually long gone, and politicians and bureaucrats safely tucked in the suburbs of African cities.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, uncertainties at planning and design stages lead very directly to problems of scheme management and economies. A particular and common problem is that of irregular or inadequate water supplies. Project planning is often based on an attempt to impose stability on water supply, often without success. For example, lack of reliability in water supply along the Weiwei created the context for disputes between the KVDA and the Pokot farmers over a shrinking resource. At the same time, behind these triggers of conflict lie deeper-seated problems of the erosion of the indigenous management system. However, conflict over resources, and the degradation that often results, is not caused by a failure of

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.; and Adams, *Wasting the rain*, 127.

<sup>54</sup> Adams, *Wasting the rain*, 136 and 154; Gert de Gans, "Lopayat integrated Rural development project: Development proposals second phase (1982-1985): Sectoral programmes", Rural development services, (Nairobi: National Christian Council of Kenya, 1982), 2-4; and Brown, *Irrigation in arid zones*, 61.

indigenous management systems so much as by their dislocation by political and economic forces associated with government and donor intervention in river basin activities.<sup>55</sup>

In fact, many of the grandiose agricultural projects proposed and developed in Kenya have been colossal failures. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the Kenyan countryside was littered with the debris of failed agricultural projects. The construction for the Bura project started in 1979 provides a major example. The project wallowed from crisis to crisis, and by January 1986 it was “a failure, a disgrace and prime example of financial mismanagement”.<sup>56</sup> Thus, the project strategy not only failed to diffuse new methods of production to food producing areas, it may even have contributed to the problem of declining per capita food production.

The real tragedy is that, sometimes the farmer was doing pretty well in difficult conditions before the implementation of donor sponsored irrigation projects. Notably, large-scale irrigation projects have not been contoured to the needs of the African farmer. As noted by Commins, “most rural development projects still emerge from the external interests that are removed from the dynamics of peasant communities”.<sup>57</sup> Thus, the Bura, Kerio and Lake Basin projects failed to achieve key agricultural or developmental objectives partly for this reason. The NYS and KVDA irrigation projects in particular never gained headway among Pokot farmers who had other priorities and interests (mainly need for food crops rather than cash crops). Hence, based on Commins’ conclusion, such large-scale projects are destined to fail until they can be structured in such a way to have greater relevance to the needs of the peasant communities.<sup>58</sup>

Yet irrigation remains a key element in strategic thinking about the future of rural Africa. The ideology of irrigationalism also has adherents, both within national governments and donor consultancy communities. In the minds of planners, large-scale irrigation is still a going concern for Africa. For instance, the cultivation of irrigated vegetables for Europe has expanded rapidly in Africa since the mid 1980s. Kenya is one source of these vegetables, particularly green beans. There is also an important trade in irrigated flowers, flown to Amsterdam where they enter the world market.<sup>59</sup>

In essence, the use of water in Africa to irrigate high value crops for Europe may seem bizarre, and in the context of a country such as Kenya with substantial levels of malnutrition and starvation, perhaps obscene from a moral and economic sense. However, the argument is that since prices for traditional agricultural commodities (in particular tea and coffee for Kenya) continue to decline substantially (due to stiff competition from the world producing areas, of Asia and South America), Africa should look for new crops with which it can earn foreign exchange on the world market. In this case, Africa should identify and exploit its natural comparative advantage, where it has one. Therefore, out of season green vegetables and flowers are some of these advantage points and, in particular, are Kenya’s

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<sup>55</sup> Adams, *Wasting the Rain*, 150 and 171-172.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>57</sup> S.K. Commins, “Peasants and Rural development in Liberia”, In: Commins, Lofchie & Payne, *Africa’s agrarian crisis*, 133-152.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Adams, *Wasting the rain*, 184-186; and *Daily Nation*, 17 April 2000, “Flower firms to be blamed for pollution”. This *Daily Nation* coverage was based on a workshop held at Egerton University, Kenya, 14-16 April 2000, dubbed, “Education as a bridge to Sustainable Development: Kenyans which Way Forward?” Jointly organized by the University and the Ministry of Education.

“success stories” so far.<sup>60</sup> This in itself has not only created a new focus on irrigation, but also on “green house revolution” in some African countries.

Since the early 1990s, the World Bank and donor countries have been advocating a private large-scale irrigation strategy for Africa’s economic development. They have been advocating for a green house revolution of northern industrialized methods that will start to heal the crippled economies of African countries. In this case, benefits to the rural poor will not come through direct increases in food availability but through close involvement in capitalist enterprise and market exchange.<sup>61</sup>

Even though this may seem an important line, it does not solve the immediate needs of the rural poor, especially in Kenya’s arid and semi-arid areas, like West Pokot. Therefore, for agencies responsible for irrigation development in Kenya (whether multi-nationals or KVDA among others) to be effective and beneficial to the local population, they must undergo fundamental changes in the organization and operational style adopted in recent years. In particular, a shift from a bureaucratic style of management to a more flexible locally based participatory approach to planning, construction, and management of small-scale locally based irrigation systems is vital.<sup>62</sup>

Moreover, the knowledge and skills necessary for effectively developing irrigation systems are assumed to reside within the external authority, which requires data rather than insights from the local practitioners. Therefore, there is little recognition of the importance of traditional and local knowledge in planning, developing and managing irrigation projects. There is also little recognition of the important roles and functions of local water users’ institutions in integrating activities associated with external intervention.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, project design, in this study as exemplified by the KVDA, envisioned a production strategy focused exclusively on irrigated agriculture. The assumption was that Pokot farmers, who had been grazing their animals on the same land occupied by the KVDA, would not need the land, nor would they retain their livestock; if they did so, they would find alternative grazing land. The assumption was also that diverting more water from the Korrelach furrow would not affect Pokot agricultural productivity. In other words, local farmers were expected to adapt their socio-economic organizations and resource management strategies to the requirements of the new technical system, but not vice versa.

What is needed from agencies of external intervention is the participatory as opposed to the technocratic approach. The participatory approach integrates local agro-ecological and socio-economical realities and involves the water users and local institutions in project development. The implication of a shift to a participatory approach is that the planning and design process must be reversed. Instead of beginning with a technically and economically optimal site selection, assessment, and design process, planners should start by working with local needs, problems and options. By being accountable to farmers, planners must have problem solving capabilities, should be organized where applicable to the district or the local level, and should have the authority to make decisions quickly.<sup>64</sup> This is what

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<sup>60</sup> Adams, *Wasting the rain*, 184-186; and *Daily Nation*, 17 April 2000.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> John Thompson, *Combining local knowledge and expert assistance in natural resource management: Small-scale irrigation in Kenya*. From the ground up case study No. 2. (Washington, D.C. and Nairobi: World Resources Institute and African Center for Technology Studies (ACTS) Press, 1991), 24.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

Adams calls “network planning” – ideas and innovations flowing not down from above but up and across.<sup>65</sup>

In network planning, local and outside experts would work together, sharing knowledge and generating action, reflecting upon it and responding to it at each moment. Change would be steered continuously, not produced in a series of drastic thrusts. In this case, outsiders cannot jet in and out and expect to effect lasting and positive change. Furthermore, most donor agencies lack the staff expertise needed to incorporate rural people’s knowledge and needs into irrigation development projects. Successful accomplishment requires planners to incorporate the local people’s knowledge, plus the planners’ gained during the on-site work, into further planning as the implications of local variation and changing local conditions are understood.<sup>66</sup>

However, it should not be thought that such “development” will be easy. The human relations on which network planning is based are costly and long lasting. In any case, it should at least aim at empowering the powerless, in this study the rural poor striving to survive in arid and semi-arid areas. The ability of the poor, in this case among the Pokot, to secure rights to property and to scarce resources without interference from ill-adapted projects will be a key factor in determining the future of irrigation and related developments. Development agencies and institutions and individuals can, and should, seek to support the poor in their struggles for rights and resources rather than attempting to dislocate them.<sup>67</sup>

Indeed, the development of African rivers and wetlands is not something that can be achieved through an external all-out effort, nor it is something that can be done through some grand plan involving the dramatic application of “Northern” knowledge or methods. The future lies within rural Africa itself, in the hands of farmers and pastoralists. They need appropriate assistance to build that future for themselves and to choose its shape. External intervention should aim at sustaining their efforts. In other words, the notion that external planners can offer a blueprint for Africa’s development has to change. Development must be seen as a learning process, a process of experiment which should permit the project in hand to evolve at a pace suited to human and environmental circumstances, as well as to their economic and social behaviour.<sup>68</sup>

Furthermore, development planning is not a reserved area for external intervention, for dramatic actions and sweeping solutions. If development is to mean anything, it must mean change that people can understand and control. It means the end of blueprint planning, whether a grandiose plan to control water flow in a river basin or a small-scale plan to redesign channels on an irrigation scheme. There is obviously need to re-design the approach to development. There must obviously be far more respect for indigenous knowledge, in this case Pokot furrow irrigation, and recognition of the importance of diversity and flexibility as responses to the fickle environment of Africa. Most indigenous resource management systems, like Pokot furrow irrigation, have these characteristics, but most development projects do not.<sup>69</sup>

In short, for irrigation to be successful in West Pokot, and Kenya for that matter, it should be related to the existing irrigation traditions. Evidently, there is radical difference between government/donor “project approach”, which has been advocated so far in con-

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<sup>65</sup> Adams, *Wasting the rain*, 213.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., and Thompson, *Combining local knowledge*, 25-26.

<sup>67</sup> Adams, *Wasting the rain*, 213-214.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 209-210.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

ventional irrigation policies, and the experiences of the successful traditional systems. As clearly shown in this study, the Pokot traditional furrow irrigation has advantages and successes, which have ensured its survival for centuries.<sup>70</sup> Yet these lessons have been ignored for too long at the peril of existing irrigation practices. Therefore, if irrigation is to play a meaningful role in Kenya's agricultural production, further research should be encouraged on the working of traditional systems and their lessons incorporated in future policies. Above all, irrigation development should first and foremost be seen as an effort by the people themselves. Government and donors will find that by providing the right incentives and tangible inputs, local communities can more successfully develop irrigation farming, rather than spending millions of shillings on ill-adapted, externally introduced projects.<sup>71</sup>

In re-designing the approach to development, it is important to consider ways and means of resource conservation, especially in marginal areas. Arid and semi-arid environments are highly variable, fragile and easily degraded. They need to be conserved for sustained higher productivity. Not only the demand for resource conservation is growing, but during the last few decades it has also been noted that in many arid and semi-arid areas, streams and rivers are declining in volume and many springs have dried up. This problem has been very particular to areas where people have over the years practiced irrigation. One major reason for this situation is that forests that naturally protected the catchment area have been aggressively exploited, mainly for the purposes of fuel, agriculture and building materials.<sup>72</sup> Over ninety percent of the domestic energy used in Kenya comes from wood fuel (for example charcoal), and the same percentage of local houses are built of wood materials.

As also noted in this study, traditional irrigation has been mainly practiced in valleys and on the hill sides. All these areas need tree cover to hold soils in place, especially on the steeper slopes. Because of exploitation of timber, fewer trees are left to hold the soils in many areas. Thus, not only does land get exposed to wind and water erosion, but deforestation of these areas also leads to much faster run-off and streams drying up soon after the rains. Certainly, clearing forests over the years has meant that trees which provided pores to facilitate water infiltration and percolation have been destroyed, and thus the pool of soil water is continuously reduced. The tree crowns that intercepted and broke the erosive force of rainwater also continue to be removed.<sup>73</sup>

Although irrigation and afforestation are two different subjects, it is difficult to improve only irrigation in Kenya while the country (particularly in northwest) is facing the threat of desertification and the extinction of its water resources. Moreover, the problems of land degradation due to deforestation began in Kenya right from colonial times. The colonial government enforced terraces in farmlands and planting of shade and wind breaker trees. Cultivation and cutting of vegetation along river banks, steep slopes and valleys, as in West Pokot, was prohibited. The colonial government attempted to maintain a high timber yield and environmental protection. After independence, the Kenya government re-emphasized resource conservation, but, as in the colonial period, a lot more needs to be done, particularly to curb deforestation. Deforestation, which has meant indiscriminately removing trees and shrubs, has left former forest land bare, especially in areas of dense population.

<sup>70</sup> Van Klinken, "The Pokot Traditional Furrow Irrigation", 15.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Raphael Burra & Kick van den Heuvel, *Traditional irrigation in Tanzania: A historical analysis of irrigation tradition and government intervention*, Vol. 1, (Dar es Salaam: Tanzania National Freedom from Hunger Campaign, 1987), 88.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 89.

Therefore, to assist local irrigation, in this case in West Pokot, in such a situation also calls for attention on other environmental and survival concerns. Certainly people cannot be totally blamed for ravaging the surrounding vegetation which is sometimes the only alternative left to them for getting fuel and building poles. What needs to be done is for the government to provide funds to assist in the establishment of tree planting programmes for fuel and building purposes.<sup>74</sup> The government also must look into ways of finding alternative sources of domestic energy as a step towards a check on deforestation and protection of water catchment areas.

Traditional irrigation practices, once again as illustrated in this study among the Pokot, are normally self-supporting and are carried out with little or no government assistance. However, the above mentioned developments suggest that the traditional organization is no longer able to control deforestation, particularly in water catchment areas. A programme for conservation of water and soil should be considered for protection of traditional irrigation areas. An afforestation programme is appropriate in that it naturally will improve the present hydro-meteorologic conditions.<sup>75</sup> Nevertheless, the success of afforestation itself will necessarily involve popular participation to a greater extent, especially in rural areas.

In the meantime, problems hindering the development of afforestation have varied from lack of people's participation to technical issues such as choice of appropriate species suitable for particular geographical conditions. In many areas, people, and in this case the Pokot, have always been aware of the importance of forests. But the real problem revolves around the food, fuel and income linkages. The problem is therefore not the awareness of the people, but rather that of survival under the prevailing circumstances.<sup>76</sup>

At the same time, afforestation can also be difficult for the rural poor. Particularly in arid and semi-arid areas, the establishment and up keep of nurseries has been impossible because of financial constraints. Yet afforestation will not be possible without government assistance. Therefore, for any meaningful afforestation effort to be realized, the government has to assist the capacity of the districts to invest in forestry. Likewise, the districts should assist divisions and locations down to the village level and see to it that nurseries are established, seedlings made available and people well mobilized for resource conservation. The government, through the district and local administration, should also strengthen by-laws on the protection of existing natural forests in every single part of the country. In this way the threat of ecological disruption through deforestation may be averted.

At the same time, soil erosion should also be tackled. Usually what happens, particularly in West Pokot District, is that rain and water-flows remove the top soil from the available arable land. The annual loss from these is in fact much higher than is imagined. Raindrop erosion and uncontrolled irrigation water are the major causes of soil erosion on steep slopes of West Pokot with little or no vegetation cover. For example, water lost by leaks and seepage from furrows before reaching the plots for irrigation contribute to soil erosion in one way or another. However, there are several ways of preventing this. For a farmer on steep slopes like some parts of West Pokot, terracing and tree planting are the most appropriate. Usually, the length and steepness of slope can be changed through terracing. Bench

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

terraces are most preferable in such cases. Embankments of terrace-edges can then be planted with trees or sometimes grass when trees are not preferable.<sup>77</sup>

As a matter of fact, all these methods have been practiced in West Pokot and, as noted earlier in this study, they have been practiced since the colonial period. What is needed is to address resource conservation as an important component of the country's development agenda. Thus, with the continuous deforestation and the absence of an effective government programme, the water and land situation in traditional irrigation areas has deteriorated. Once again, traditional irrigated areas are responsible for a major portion of the food crop production. In some parts of West Pokot, this has decreased from two crops per annum to one and even none in times of prolonged drought. Therefore, urgent government attention is necessary to stabilize the situation, thus protecting the thousands of hectares of irrigated land.

In other words, what is needed is a new approach to development, combining integrated natural resource management with realistic socio-economic goals. A strategy for developing arid and semi-arid areas should have multiple elements. For instance, planting of well adapted crops, trees and grasses, should be mixed with animal and crop farming systems, applying appropriate water and soil conservation methods and irrigation techniques. Yet Kenya lags behind some developing countries, including some in Africa, in the development of appropriate dryland farming techniques.<sup>78</sup>

Therefore, experience in West Pokot indicates that economic development should include both resource conservation and expansion of food production, both in quantity and reliability, to feed a population that is growing rapidly in both higher potential and semi-arid environments. The provision of regular and adequate food supply in arid and semi-arid areas is a stabilizing factor assisting development of these areas. Furthermore, strengthening the economic links between ASAL and higher potential areas is also important. The arid and semi-arid environments are more highly constrained; thus, a production pattern based on resource advantages and easy movement of goods and services, specifically food, between areas is necessary rather than to wholly strive for regional self sufficiency. This will require rapid improvement of market, communication and transport infrastructure. The question of balanced regional development is also central to the development of rural areas. Thus ASAL (which has been historically marginalized in terms of state investments and allocation of resources) needs to be developed as an integral part of the Kenyan economy, and to avoid lopsided development that concentrates only in the higher potential areas as has been the case to a great extent in the past.<sup>79</sup>

### Famine relief

Striving for food security, not only in ASAL but in Kenya as a whole has not been easy, given the major constraints that Kenyans have had to face with great frequency. The environmental limits are the best known and one of the major over-riding constraints facing the Kenyan population, especially in marginal areas like West Pokot. As shown in this study, limited and erratic rainfall has over the years made crop and animal production marginal and at risk in arid and semi-arid environments. Kenya suffers from serious

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>78</sup> Republic of Kenya, Arid and semi-arid lands development in Kenya: The framework for programme planning, implementation and evaluation (Nairobi: Prudential Printers Ltd., 1979), 18.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 16 and 18.

drought affecting major parts of the country on the average of about once every ten years.<sup>80</sup> Weak soils, low in fertility, are also a limiting factor to regular and adequate food supply to meet the needs of the country. The result is inadequate production to feed the population and a lack of adequate coping mechanisms, particularly in ASAL, creating a dependence on external famine relief.

In the period under review, there has been government intervention to avert starvation due to drought, not only in the study area but also in other parts of the country. For instance, in the 1920s famine relief was supplied to Turkana province, to both Pokot and Turkana groups. Other parts of the country, mainly in present Eastern and North Eastern provinces, were also in need of food. The situation worsened in the late 1920s and early 1930s, owing to severe drought, locust infestation (particularly in arid and semi-arid areas) and due to the Great Depression, whose impact was felt in the whole country.<sup>81</sup>

As a response to the prevailing conditions, in 1929 the colonial state enacted the Food Control Ordinance under which it sought to provide an emergency organization whereby famine relief to starving populations could be distributed with the minimum disturbance to trade and related activities. The Ordinance was enacted after the government held a conference with representatives of the commercial and farm produce interests in the colony. Under the Ordinance, a Board with wide powers to look into matters pertaining to famine relief was constituted. It consisted of the Director of Agriculture, as Chairman, the Treasurer as Deputy Chairman, the Chief Native Commissioner and three unofficial persons. By a motion in the Legislative Council on 22 February 1929, a sum of K£200,000 was placed at the disposal of the Board for emergency famine relief, on the understanding that every endeavour would be made by the government to recover the amount (as soon as the economy stabilized) from persons whom food was granted to avert starvation.<sup>82</sup>

With relief food distributed to the most affected parts of the colony, for some time it looked as if the situation was under control, but in 1933, parts of West Pokot, Turkana and Ukambani were hit particularly hard by drought and famine. The year was one of exceptional difficulty from an administrative point of view. In West Pokot, to excessive heat was added the constant anxiety of cattle raids and massacres on the western frontier from the Karamonjong neighbours. In Turkana district, the population was so poverty stricken that it was unable to pay tax. Food relief measures were once again instituted in July 1933, and a varying number of the Turkana, mostly women and children, were fed for the first time at famine relief camps in Kaputir and then Lodwar.<sup>83</sup> At the same time in West Pokot, the tax was reduced by more than 50%, and whatever was paid was largely from the sale of starving livestock at Keringet, hides and skins, and from limited wage labour on the Trans Nzoia farms. But many Pokot were on the verge of starvation, surviving on diminishing flocks, wild berries and dom-nuts from trees by the time government relief reached them.<sup>84</sup>

By the mid 1930s, in the hills around Kapenguria and in the irrigated areas of Mwino and Weiwei, normal harvests were gathered, but elsewhere the rains were scanty and the

<sup>80</sup> Robin Needham, "Drought Assistance to NGOs Provided by CARE-Kenya", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 329-336.

<sup>81</sup> NADAR, 1929, 74; and WSDAR, 1933, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid. It was the responsibility of the Board, with the assistance of the local administrators, to document the cost of foodstuffs, recipients and see to it that all beneficiaries paid back promptly.

<sup>83</sup> NADAR, 1933, 23-24. Hides and skins were sold for cash with which to pay taxes or purchase maize meal. Generally, owing to the prevailing conditions, there was little business in the whole of West Pokot and Turkana districts, and many traders, particularly Somalis closed their shops and departed from the area.

<sup>84</sup> NADAR, 1933, 23-24.

population was in need of food. In the late 1930s, rains in most parts of West Pokot were above average, and the food situation was quite promising, but this was short lived. As a matter of fact, the food situation worsened with the outbreak of World War II. As noted by Zeleza, the greatest agrarian crisis of the war was perhaps the food shortages of 1942/43.<sup>85</sup> This could partly be explained by the fact that, the African agricultural sector had been drained of manpower as a result of military conscription on one hand, and extraction of livestock on the other, as contributions towards the war effort. At the same time, most parts of the colony including the most productive areas of Central and Nyanza province, experienced severe drought, contributing to food shortages and, in many parts, famine in the country.

Generally, the 1942/43 famine was felt in almost all corners of the country. However, marginal areas, like West Pokot, Turkana and the northeastern regions of Kenya were most affected. As a testimony to the harsh famine conditions, the colonial state responded by suspending conscription temporarily. A Reserve Foodstuffs Committee was also set up and empowered with purchasing food supplies (for example, from settler farms) and distributing them to African reserves, particularly in the country's marginal areas.<sup>86</sup> But the situation was worse than expected. By the late 1945 and early 1946, West Pokot and other arid and semi-arid areas in the colony were still on the verge of starvation. The 1945 long and short rains were a disastrous failure, and it was inevitable that famine relief would be required on an increasing scale until the effects of the 1946 long rains could be assessed. As a result, West Pokot, Turkana, Kitui, Machakos and other districts in ASAL received government famine relief to avert starvation.<sup>87</sup>

At the same time, food reserves in the colony were low and prices for them shot up drastically, beyond the purchasing power of the most affected population. For instance, maize went for Kshs. 10/50 per bag, almost double the price offered during normal years.<sup>88</sup> In this case, it can be argued that there was food, however little, to those households that could afford it, but poor households, especially in the country's marginal areas, suffered most since they did not have the resources to purchase food. Therefore, in the early and mid 1940s, market forces, in particular high food prices, worsened the food condition of most poor households in various parts of the country, especially West Pokot.<sup>89</sup> As a result, the government had to step in and, in particular subsidized cereals and also coordinated distribution of them to the most affected areas. However, by April 1946, in view of the cost to the colonial government and of the acute shortage of cereals generally, the government was forced to make reductions in food allocations, and this was accompanied by the decision to withdraw the subsidy in May. Worse still, it was then only too evident that the 1946 long rains had also failed and that the harvest would again be totally insufficient to support populations that had already existed on very meager rations for almost two years.<sup>90</sup>

<sup>85</sup> Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War", 150.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> WSDAR, 1945, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1; and RNA, 1946-1947, 29-30. Apart from drought, locusts, too, added to hardships by attacking food crops in the fields.

<sup>88</sup> RNA, 1946-1947, 29-30.

<sup>89</sup> For details on the 1943 food crisis and market causes, plus lack of affordability of food, on the part of poor households see Robert M. Maxon, "Fantastic prices" in the midst of an acute food shortage": Market, environment, and the colonial state in the 1943 Vihiga (Western Kenya) Famine", (Forthcoming in *African economic history*).

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. For instance, in 1946, the total cash paid by the Kamba for relief food, apart from that spent by those who bought food outside the Kamba territory, amounted to some K£200,000.

Luckily, most parts of the colony received rains above average in 1947/48, the food situation improved, and famine relief was discontinued for the time being. Specifically for West Pokot, in 1948/49 neither food purchases from outside nor famine relief entered the district. This was made possible by the satisfactory harvest of 1948, and strict measures of control over the sale of grains outside the district. For instance, from the start of the year traders and millers had to acquire a permit from the Assistant Agricultural Officer before they could buy or sell maize within or outside the district. Moreover, occasional stopping and searching of lorries leaving West Pokot at least controlled the transfer of grains in large quantities, particularly to Turkana district. Chiefs and their assistants were also instructed from the district headquarters to make sure that grains did not leave the district. For example, the Chief of Mnagei location and his assistants went around most farms in the area and inspected maize stores. The idea was to control the sale of maize and also to emphasize to farmers the need to store sufficient grains to last until the next harvest.<sup>91</sup>

Generally, in the late 1940s and early 1950s great efforts were made by the colonial government to boost crop production in high potential areas, for example Nyanza province, to prepare against possible food shortages and famine in the colony. For instance, in 1951, the campaign to encourage farmers in Nyanza to plant large fields with cassava and sweet potatoes paid off, so much so that it was possible to transfer some 1,000 tons of cassava from North Nyanza district to other parts of the colony. Nyanza also supplied cassava cuttings to Ukambani for the stocking of nurseries in Kitui and Machakos districts. The Kamba were also encouraged to plant more finger millet and sorghum as a famine prevention measure.<sup>92</sup> At the same time, in West Pokot, the need for increased acreage of root crops, cassava and sweet potatoes was fully realized by the Department of Agriculture and the administration as essential in the provision of food during droughts and locust invasions. Therefore, as discussed earlier in this study, efforts were made to grow and issue as much root crop seed as possible to local inhabitants from the available demonstration plots in the area.<sup>93</sup>

In the meantime, the maize crop, among other cereals harvested in West Pokot District in 1951, was a fair one, but in 1952 the long and short rains were poorly distributed in the area. Thus, by July 1952, local food stocks were seriously depleted and food had to be obtained from outside the district to prevent starvation. Consequently, the government permitted local traders to purchase maize from settler farms in the neighbouring Trans Nzoia and from the Maize and Control Board, Kitale. By the end of the year, a total of 1,010 bags of the commodity had been purchased; however, food shortages were far from over, particularly in the Masol area.<sup>94</sup> It was not until early April 1953 when widespread rains set in that brought relief to the whole district, the greater part of which was suffering from a severe drought lasting five and a half months. Apart from a dry spell in late May, which seriously affected the chances of a normal harvest in the lower areas, rainfall distribution was satisfactory, and in major food producing areas a fair crop was harvested during the year. The last rains fell during the Christmas week, to total 45.70 inches in the Kapenguria area and surrounding regions, a few points above average.<sup>95</sup> Generally, the

<sup>91</sup> RNA, 1946-1947, 29-30; and WSDAR, 1949, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>92</sup> AADAR, 1950, 17-18. In 1950/51 no organized famine relief was requested in the Rift Valley province, although some foodstuffs were purchased outside West Pokot District and sold through traders in the area.

<sup>93</sup> WSDAR, 1952, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1. During the dry months of 1953, larger quantities of meat were consumed from fallen animals to supplement the available grains.

principal crop continued to be maize, which was in some areas affected by stalkborer. The yield of English potatoes, grown on an increasing scale in Mnagei, was also diminished by blight.<sup>96</sup>

Nonetheless, in the 1950s, as part of government intervention, there was tighter control on the movement of maize from West Pokot, which disappeared too easily into the black market in the north. The Department of Agriculture also continued with its efforts to encourage the planting of famine crops, millet, sorghum, cassava and sweet potatoes. For example, at Sigor the Agricultural Officer introduced a short-term dwarf *mtama* as part of famine prevention measures.<sup>97</sup> Indeed, emphasis on food sufficiency was the trend throughout the 1950s and it continued into the post-colonial period.

While the independence government continued with famine prevention measures, in 1965/66 the whole country was hit hard by severe drought. There was need for famine relief in most parts of the country. In particular, West Pokot among other arid and semi-arid areas, seemed like it was facing an endless drought and famine, which resulted in mass losses of cattle and, in scattered places, an appreciable number of human beings perished, until the National Food Relief Scheme, launched by President Jomo Kenyatta, reached their door steps.<sup>98</sup> Generally, the whole country was badly hit by famine before the onset of the long rains. It is worth mentioning that Kenyatta responded to the 1965/66 famine with a “back to the land” slogan, urging Kenyans to invest heavily in agriculture as an endeavor to curb famine and strive for self-reliance in food.<sup>99</sup>

In the following years, 1967 to 1970, most parts of the country received enough rainfall, and grains (mainly maize) were planted in large quantities, sufficient to sustain the population. However, 1969/70 was another unforgettable period in post-colonial West Pokot. The district received excessive rainfall, causing severe floods, particularly in the food producing areas of Sigor division. In both years, the long rains started in mid April and short rains in August, and a number of rivers, especially the Weiwei, flooded; thus, irrigation intakes, furrows and bridges were completely destroyed, crippling farming activities as well as communication in this part of the district. Besides Sigor, Kapenguria division, specifically Riwa location, and parts of Chepareria division, Kipkomo and Sook locations, were also affected by floods. Famine relief had to be supplied to flood affected areas. Karapokot was equally affected, but it was almost impossible for relief to reach most parts of the area. For instance, contractors assigned to distribute famine relief in Karapokot complained bitterly of the deplorable state of the roads. On one occasion, a trader, Mohammed Ghalib, had his lorry full of foodstuffs for Kanyerus area swept away by the heavy floods.<sup>100</sup> Nonetheless, the government struggled and made sure that food supplies reached those in need in target areas.

Famine relief was also supplied to schools, hospitals and other institutions. For example, under the nationwide Kenya School Feeding Scheme (KSFS), some schools in West Pokot District were able to receive food from the government. The programme was aimed at keeping children in school lest they drop out due to food shortages. The KSFS was started in West Pokot towards the end of 1971. Three schools were first supplied with “supro food” (mixed meal high in nutrition) in August, and by December seven schools had been

<sup>96</sup> WSDAR, 1953, KNA: WP/2/PC/RVP/2/5/1.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> WPDAR, 1966.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> WPDARs, 1970 and 1971.

supplied with food and school equipment. The food supply went on steadily despite the very poor condition of roads. Modalities of food purchases and distribution to respective schools under the KSFS were handled by the Ministry of Education. Therefore, in West Pokot, this was under the mandate of the District Education Officer.<sup>101</sup> Thus, the government response to the 1969/70 floods in West Pokot was on the whole commendable.

Kenya has also received food aid from international donors, both direct and via voluntary agencies, in times of need. As mentioned earlier, West Pokot (as well as Kenya as a whole) is subject to periodic droughts that can persist for several months and play havoc with domestic agriculture. Therefore, the Kenya government has received food aid from the USA, the EEC, the Netherlands, Canada, France, Germany and the World Food Programme (WFP) among other international donors. Moreover, food aid has always come in various forms for various purposes. For instance, Kenya has received food aid for development purposes as well as emergency relief. The country has also experienced the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), for example the Red Cross and church organizations, in the coordination and distribution of famine relief and food aid to target populations in various parts of the country.<sup>102</sup>

In 1974 the World Food Conference set three main objectives for food aid to meet the needs of people in different situations and in different parts of the world. These were to provide emergency food relief, to combat hunger and malnutrition, and to promote economic and social development. Different donors gave different priorities to these goals, but since the late 1970s almost all of them have attempted to justify their aid within a development framework.<sup>103</sup> In the case of the United States, for instance, food aid has seen many changes since 1954 when the American government began systematically to export food on concessional terms as part of its policy to cope with a growing domestic agricultural surplus. In short, food aid began as a scheme designed primarily to assist rich country farmers by disposing of surplus commodities, mainly to Third World countries. Over the years, the general trend has shifted from surplus disposal to food aid for development.<sup>104</sup>

The WFP was founded in 1963, under the umbrella of the UN and FAO, partly as a device by the USA to encourage "burden" sharing. The bulk of its food aid is tied to well defined projects in the recipient country, and WFP has become something of a champion for the cause of project food aid. It continues to grow and has acquired a justifiable reputation as a relatively effective operation. It is increasingly influential in determining food aid policy, particularly in developing countries.<sup>105</sup> Yet its success is also attributed to those who contribute to its coffers. For instance, the main contributor to WFP is the USA. Between 1963 and 1976, the United States accounted for 36% of the total pledges. The next

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> Anne Fleuret, "Food aid and development in rural Kenya". In: *Anthropology of development and change in east Africa*, ed., David W. Brokensha & Peter D. Little, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 79-98; and *Daily Nation*, 20 November 1999. Information in the *Daily Nation* is based on Rosemarie Muganda Onyango's feature, "Are NGOs Essential for Kenya's Development". "Food aid" may be defined as the in-kind transfer of food from excess to deficit nations or regions. Such aid may be delivered in a number of different ways: as emergency relief to disaster victims; as a donation in support of health facilities, schools or Rural development activities; in the form of concessional sales to governments, who usually deliver the food to recipients through commercial channels, often at subsidized prices; or in the form of either donor or concessional sale, as an incentive for policy reform.

<sup>103</sup> Christopher Stevens, *Food aid and the developing world: Four African case studies* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), 23.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 38.

largest contributor was Canada with 18% of the total pledges, followed by the EEC with 12%. During the 1977/78 pledging period, the proportion of the total pledges made by the main donors was 30% for the USA, 22% for Canada and 8% for Saudi Arabia.<sup>106</sup>

In addition, the origins of the EEC food aid programme separate from the bilateral undertakings of its member governments, is to be found in the 1967 Food Aid Convention. The Convention was the most solid part of the International Grains Arrangement (1967) and persisted in a modified form when the latter was replaced by a more limited International Wheat Agreement in 1971.<sup>107</sup> The relative proportions of food aid of national and community actions have changed over time, the latter gradually rising from 29% in 1968/69 to 55% in 1975/76. The EEC programme of food aid in dairy products began in 1970, and it consists entirely of community actions.<sup>108</sup>

The actual delivery of food aid is accomplished in four principal ways: through clinics or Maternal and Child Health (MCH) programmes; in School Feeding Programmes (SFP); as "food for wages" or the Food for Work (FFW) programme, and as emergency relief to famine victims.<sup>109</sup> Each of these methods of distribution singles out a specific group or groups in the population as its principal beneficiary or target. MCH programmes target pregnant and nursing women as well as children under the age of five; SFP, the school attending population; and FFW, un-employed or under-employed adults and members of their households.<sup>110</sup>

Of these schemes, by far the most important in terms of numbers of beneficiaries and quantities of food supplied are the mother and pre-school children and school feeding programmes. These target groups are assumed to be not only vulnerable but also economically significant. Children, in general, are the labour of tomorrow, and it is assumed that their future contribution to economic development will be affected significantly by any malnutrition in their early years. Moreover, young mothers must stay healthy if they are to feed their babies well and also produce strong children upon whom the future of the country depends.<sup>111</sup>

Target groups in many FFW programmes (or food for wages) are given a ration of food aid as full or part payment for work done. The beneficiaries often provide manual or, in some cases, semi-skilled labour on public work projects. Food for wages also covers the agricultural sector in which farmers are given food aid as an incentive to provide labour for designated projects (for example, irrigation projects), to introduce new varieties of crops, or to incorporate innovations into their farming activities.<sup>112</sup> Various reasons have been advanced for disbursing food aid in this way. It may encourage governments to undertake labour intensive projects that would not otherwise have occurred. It may stimulate local participation, it may be a convenient transition from emergency food handouts to development food aid, and, importantly, it may be an efficient mechanism for distributing income, particularly to the rural poor.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 40-41 and 43. Wheat, maize and flour still form the bulk of food aid (71% by value in 1973/74), but dairy products (dried skim milk), fish concentrates and vegetable oil have been growing in importance.

<sup>107</sup> Stevens, *Food Aid*, 33.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Fleuret, "Food Aid", 79.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Stevens, *Food Aid*, 85.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 67 and 102.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

Since independence, West Pokot has received all the above mentioned types of food aid in times of need. For instance, between 1978 and 1980, Suam, Chemorongit and Kasei locations were threatened by drought, livestock diseases and cattle raids, and emergency famine relief, as well as FFW programmes, had to be introduced in the area. In Suam, relief was supplied by the government, the Catholic Relief Center, the Red Cross and Faith Homes. In 1979/80, the government also supplied food to Kasei, and it is estimated that 4,600 people were on the verge of starvation in the area. To distribute food effectively in both Chemorongit and Kasei locations, famine relief centers were established at Kauriong, Kases, Kiwawa and Kunyao. In Kases center, the Red Cross also organized a maternal and child health programme, feeding some 4,000 people. It is estimated that in 1980 alone, the Red Cross spent a total of five million Kenya shillings on famine relief in West Pokot. It is also estimated that almost half of it was spent in Chemorongit and Kasei locations.<sup>114</sup>

By early 1981, starving people by the thousands swarmed relief centers, but the government and other famine relief agencies were completely unable to cope with the situation. Centers like Kauriong had completely run out of relief food. For example, of the 4,800 people badly in need of food in Chemorongit location, the Red Cross managed to feed only 1,000 in the early part of the year. At the same time, in Kiwawa, a FFW programme was organized by the Associated Christian Churches of Kenya (ACCK) as a check on the ever increasing number of people in search of free food. The ACCK received a grant of Kshs. 80,000 from World Vision (a worldwide NGO) to boost the programme. Food and wages were offered in exchange for construction work on the ACCK mission buildings and a dispensary. The ACCK also supplied seeds and farm implements in the Kiwawa area, purchased by funds received from the World Vision and Kenya Freedom from Hunger Council (KFFHC), at a total cost of Kshs. 100,000. Although Katumani maize and sorghum seeds were distributed free of charge, the 1981 rains stopped too early and only half the sorghum crop was harvested.<sup>115</sup>

The KFFHC is a non-governmental organization that focuses on development projects throughout Kenya. Its main objective is to alleviate hunger and malnutrition through projects such as water development, institutional assistance, women groups and community food activities. The National Freedom from Hunger Walk is held every year to raise funds for the Council and also bring to attention the problems of hunger and malnutrition in Kenya. Thus, the KFFHC and the NGO community in general make valuable contributions to the overall relief efforts in times of need. Some respond to stressful situations in West Pokot several months before the government moves in.<sup>116</sup>

In the meantime, the 1979-1981 famine and cattle raids, among other calamities, did not spare Kapchok and Alale locations. During this period, more than 250 families in Lossam and Timaler, Kapchok location were supplied with famine relief by the KFFHC. In 1980, many people from the location also trekked to Kunyao famine relief center in search of food. In 1980/81, the Church Province of Kenya (CPK) also started food for work cam-

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<sup>114</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Suam, Chemorongit & Kasei", 19 and 21. For example, most goats died from heavy worm infestation in the above mentioned areas of Karapokot.

<sup>115</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profiles: Suam, Chemorongit & Kasei", 22 and 31.

<sup>116</sup> J.W. Navis, "Report on non-governmental organizations in West Pokot District", ASAL Development Programme, (Kapenguria, 1992), 13; and John Borton, "Overview of 1984/85 National drought relief programme", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 24-64.

paigns in Nakwijit and Kodich, also in Kapchok and some parts of Alale, as an attempt to avert starvation and to prevent people from leaving their homes for relief centers.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to famine relief and FFW programmes, village famine committees were formed under government supervision in Alale, to make sure that food reached those in need. In April 1979 alone, it was estimated that more than 2,400 people in Alale location were affected by famine. The area was also affected by livestock diseases and by August, the people of Alale had lost more than half of their animals. Worse still, the area was under quarantine for foot and mouth disease for most parts of 1979/80. This meant no cattle sales or movement of cattle from the area. Thus, unable to earn any money from livestock sales to buy food, and other necessities, many people were prompted to move to Amudat and Amukariat famine relief centers in the location. However, by April 1980, the numbers seeking famine relief had surpassed food rations that had been designated for the area. It is estimated that at this time, more than 5,000 people in Alale wholly relied on famine relief. The most affected parts of the location were Nauyapong, Sasak and Kalapata areas. Nonetheless, the Kenya government and the Catholic World Council worked around the clock, distributing whatever food that arrived in the area to avert starvation.<sup>118</sup>

The worst was far from over. Alale location - as well as other parts of the district - was struck by an outbreak of cholera by May 1980. The government worked hand in hand with the Red Cross in attempting to contain the situation. Anti-cholera campaigns were launched and vaccinations administered all over the district, and those who had fallen victim to the disease were rushed to Kapenguria District Hospital and other medical support centers in the area. As a result, the number of possible deaths was greatly reduced. Meanwhile, the supply of famine relief continued throughout the year and saved many lives.<sup>119</sup>

Between May 1980 and April 1981, Alale location also came under severe attack from a combined force of hundreds of Karamojong and Turkana cattle raiders. A real war developed that left Alale virtually devastated. For example, 127 Pokot lost their lives and more than 1,000 people were left homeless. It is also estimated that in 1980/81, 11,000 head of cattle were stolen from Alale location. This worsened the situation as more people had to rely heavily on famine relief for survival. For example, the Red Cross fed more than 5,000 people from Alale, Amukariat and Nauyapong centers in April 1981 alone. Food was transported to Kalapata using donkeys to reach the starving Pokot. In addition, the government was faced with the hard task of providing security and encouraging people to move out of relief centers for their homes and organize their lives once again.<sup>120</sup>

As a relief for Alale, by June 1981, gold had been discovered at Nuruoro, and in October a real gold panning fervor spread throughout the location. This attracted people, including those in relief centers, to the hillsides of Nuruoro in search of the precious metal. The *miraa* trade mentioned earlier in this study was also developing at the time. The government also stepped in and supplied people with maize and sorghum seeds in readiness for planting on the onset of the 1982 rains. In addition, the government beefed up security to deal with cattle raiders not only in Alale but northwest Kenya as a whole. The 1982 rains were above average and most of West Pokot had a satisfactory harvest. This made it

<sup>117</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Kapchok", 10 and 16.

<sup>118</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Alale", 23-24.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.; and WPDAR, 1980.

<sup>120</sup> Dietz, van Haastrecht & Schomaker, "Locational development profile: Alale", 24; and oral interview with Lorite Lotimu, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

possible for the Red Cross and other famine relief agencies to leave the area for the time being.<sup>121</sup>

The 1980/81 famine was felt in all parts of West Pokot, including the high potential areas as well as irrigated farm lands. For example, by July 1980 it was reported that more than 18,000 people in Sigor division were in need of famine relief. Prolonged drought and invasion of armyworms in the 1979/80 planting seasons had made it impossible for farmers to irrigate as well as harvest whatever food crops existed in the area. In response, the government offered a monthly allocation of 100 bags of maize for Sigor division, to be supplied until the next harvest. However, the government allocation was not sufficient to feed even twenty five percent of the starving population in the area. As a result, the District Food Committee (DFC) requested additional famine relief for Sigor as well as other parts of the district. Between July 1980 and November 1981, most people in Sigor division, for example in Weiwei, Lomut and Masol, were on the verge of starvation. The expected 1981 rains had also failed. Therefore, in addition to the DFC's request for more food, the newly formed Sigor Food Review Committee (SFRC) also sent its request to the government to increase grain supply from at least 100 to 400 bags of maize per month for Sigor division. Besides maize, it also requested dried vegetables, powdered milk and beans to avert starvation as well as fight malnutrition, especially among children and nursing mothers.<sup>122</sup> Evidently, within Sigor division, famine relief has always been necessary in dry years and also after flooding which destroys irrigation furrows and crops, leading to food insecurity in the area.

In 1984/85, drought again threatened the food security of as many as three million Kenyans. Production from major grain, horticultural and livestock producing areas was sharply reduced. The drought began with the 1983 short rains in the northern and eastern part of the country. Only the central and western highlands received enough rain to produce maize. The following season, the 1984 long rains almost completely failed, except in a narrow strip along the coast and in the western highlands. As a result, the production of the staple food crop, maize, was reduced by 34% from the average for the previous three years. The production of wheat was also down by 39%. Undoubtedly, massive food imports were required to meet the needs of the country.<sup>123</sup>

First, the Kenya government imported 368,000 tons of yellow maize from Thailand. This proved to be the most readily available grain, with little red tape involved in the acquisition. It also purchased some 8,000 tons of maize for animal feed and 105,000 tons on a concessional purchase from the United States Commodity Credit Corporation. In addition, 74,000 tons of wheat was purchased, mainly from Australia and from some European countries through the EEC. Apart from purchases, the first shipment of emergency food was 10,000 tons of wheat donated by the Netherlands that arrived in Mombasa in October 1984.<sup>124</sup>

Furthermore, Kenya received a total of 1,851 tons of maize and 15,133 tons of wheat from other external donors through the WFP. Most of the maize arrived in September 1984 and the wheat in March 1985. The 1984/85 WFP emergency operation aimed at providing a

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Dubel & de Kwaasteniet, *Irrigated Agriculture*, 49-50; Office of the DC West Pokot, "Sigor Basin", 8; and oral interview with Terengelo Kiptum, at Sigor Market, 4 July 1995.

<sup>123</sup> Downing, Gitu, Kamau & Borton, "Drought in Kenya", 7; J.B. Wyckoff, "Drought and food policy in Kenya", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 355-368; and Maganda, "Surveys and activities", 106.

<sup>124</sup> Borton, "Overview of 1984/85 National drought", 30 and 33.

ration of 400 grams of maize per day for 180 days to approximately 250,000 beneficiaries. For the operation to be effective, the WFP imported grains were first delivered to the NCPB depot in Mombasa. From there they were distributed to other NCPB stores, mainly on the provincial and district level, targeting the most affected parts of the country. It is from the NCPB stores that NGOs assisted the government in food distribution through on going relief programmes and food for work activities. Generally, the WFP staff, the Kenya government and NGOs played an important role in the distribution of food throughout the 1984/85 emergency period.<sup>125</sup>

For its part, West Pokot benefited from the famine relief and food aid imported in the 1984/85 period. For example, 3,150 people in West Pokot were among the beneficiaries of the WFP emergency food. It is estimated that between mid-November 1984 and mid-January 1985, a total of 90 tons of maize were distributed to Pokot families. Within the same period, the Catholic World Council distributed 16 tons of maize, benefiting at least 60 Pokot families.<sup>126</sup> In addition, the government responded to the 1984 drought by channeling famine relief through the school feeding programme. Once again, West Pokot benefited from the programme. In the 1984/85 emergency period, 342 schools and approximately 67,144 pupils in West Pokot benefited from the school feeding programme.<sup>127</sup> Indeed, in the 1984/85 food crisis, government efforts to import grains and distribute them through appropriate channels were critical in averting famine.

However, it should be pointed out that although yellow maize from Thailand was meant to save the starving population, it was a mistake in the first place. The type of maize to be imported was of critical importance since Kenyan consumers (most Pokot included) strongly prefer white to yellow maize. By mid 1985, there was no consumer demand for yellow maize. By then the food situation improved a great deal. The short rains of December 1984 to February 1985 prompted a good harvest. As the situation improved and local white maize became available, consumers switched to this preferred staple grain. With no consumer demand for yellow maize, much of it remained in government stores throughout 1985 and most of 1986.<sup>128</sup>

In the meantime, the government worked out ways of disposing of the yellow maize. Apparently, some of it was sold to the brewing industry and to food processing factories in manufacturing glucose for the domestic confectionery industry. The most significant attempt to use the inventory came in September 1986, when 60,000 tons were offered to government controlled milling industries for use in livestock feed.<sup>129</sup> Although yellow maize was not wasted, most of it ended up serving totally different needs that were not part of the initial plan. It also meant disposing of the commodity at a much cheaper price than its original cost, to the detriment of taxpayers. Thus, it can be argued that importation of yellow maize was more than a mistake; rather it clearly illustrates poor planning on the part of the Kenya government.

<sup>125</sup> Pascal T. Woldemariam, "Institutional experiences in drought management in Kenya", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 281-288. This article is based on a WFP Report, authored by Woldemariam.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 287.

<sup>127</sup> J.B.M. Bukusi & Simon K. Mbarire, "Effect of the 1984 Drought on education", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 299-305. No financial assistance was given to *harambee* secondary schools; thus they were excluded from the school feeding programme.

<sup>128</sup> Borton, "Overview of 1984/85 National drought", 30 and 35-37.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

Not all imported food for the 1984/85 famine, as well as other years of need, arrived on time. This is mainly because of the tedious negotiations/procedures involved in the importation of food, particularly food aid, whether from the United States, WFP or the EEC. For instance, the EEC (currently the EU) food aid has been supplied on an annual basis. This means that on average it takes twelve months from the date on which tenders for supply are sought, and on top of this is the time needed for delivery and distribution. This average figure also conceals major variations for each recipient country. Even though emergency aid procedures are more rapid, it still takes an average of six months from the date a request is made until approval of an agreement by both donor and recipient. As a result, in most cases, emergency food aid does not always arrive until the emergency has passed. This may actually be dysfunctional for the recipient if the food aid competes with a good post-emergency harvest.<sup>130</sup> Generally, the EEC as well as other donors' procedures for processing requests for food aid have been unnecessarily time consuming.

Thus, food aid may have an adverse effect on the local production. Food aid often leads to lower food prices, thus reducing production incentives and increasing dependency on imported food. Even though food aid related programmes such as FFW are meant to contribute towards socio-economic development and the alleviation of poverty, so far this has not been realized. Specifically, the impact of FFW on labour productivity in West Pokot is extremely low. The primary reasons appear to be that FFW attracts people with low work capacity, mainly the elderly. Besides, participation in FFW programmes is shunned by many as work in exchange for food is associated with lowering one's status in society. It is also easy to forget that precisely because it is labour intensive, FFW has to face a full range of human problems. The morale of the work force is easily broken if, for example, food deliveries are not made promptly. The consequences are a very low labour productivity and a very high cost of operations. Thus, food aid is not a major solution to the problems of development; in many cases it is inferior to cash aid and it is certainly not an adequate substitute for agricultural production.<sup>131</sup>

Food aid also shifts local tastes towards cereals like wheat that are not grown effectively in most recipient countries. Some food aid is also given in the form of loans which add to debt burdens on developing countries.<sup>132</sup> Generally, food aid is rarely given to one government by another without conditions. Donor governments usually expect to influence the political or economic policies of the recipient through the gift. Where food aid supplies a significant proportion of the food consumed within a country, the influence of the donor may be correspondingly larger in the determination of government policy.<sup>133</sup> It is true that relief food has an effect on famine survival and undoubtedly is a positive coping strategy in the shortest run. However, relief food results in mere survival of beneficiaries, it does not help them towards self-sufficiency, nor does it protect them against a recurrence of

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<sup>130</sup> Stevens, *Food aid*, 36-39.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 110-111, 115 and 197; and oral interview with Lopeyok Ngalesia, at Kapenguria, 22 June 1996.

<sup>132</sup> Philip Ndegwa, "Drought and food policy in the African context", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 369-378.

<sup>133</sup> Ben Crow, "Moving the lever: A new food aid imperialism?", In: *The food question: Profits versus people?*, ed., Henry Bernstein, Ben Crow, Maureen Mackintosh & Charlotte Martin, (London: Earthscan Publishers, 1990), 32-42. Food conditionality in fact is part of a wider process of global economic and political integration led by dominant capitalist powers, in which the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank "Structural Adjustment Programme" is another element; however globalization is outside the scope of this study.

famine.<sup>134</sup> As noted by Curtis, Hubbard and Shepherd, "to be saved by famine relief is to come a long way with virtually nothing but your life".<sup>135</sup> Thus, while assuring immediate survival, this strategy carries negative consequences that are often unavoidable and increases the level of dependence in the long run.

Indeed, Kenyans have managed in the recent past to keep abreast of their food requirements only at a considerable cost in terms of financial outlay and foreign aid dependency. Purchased cereal imports increased from 15,000 tons in 1974 to 188,000 tons in 1990, and cereal food aid grew by nearly three times: from 2,000 tons in 1974/75 to 62,000 tons in 1989/90.<sup>136</sup> Although maize is a staple food, Kenya fell short of maize self sufficiency in 1978.<sup>137</sup> As mentioned earlier, in 1980 the country's food shortage problem worsened, forcing the Kenya government to import large quantities of maize, wheat, rice and milk in order to meet shortfalls in domestic production. Relatively weak maize harvests in 1984/85 and 1992/93, due to severe drought, forced the government to import huge quantities of the commodity. While virtually no imports were recorded for 1991, nearly 415,000 tons of maize was imported in 1992.<sup>138</sup> The production of wheat, an important local staple, dropped from 195,000 tons in 1991 to about 126,000 tons in 1992, leading to an increase in wheat imports.<sup>139</sup> The significant increase in maize, wheat and rice purchase abroad account for the very sharp rise of 88% in food imports in 1992.<sup>140</sup> It should also be noted here that besides severe droughts, poor planning on the part of the government (for example, in the provision of adequate credit and proper distribution of the available farm inputs, including hybrid maize seed and fertilizer to farmers), all contributed to food shortage in Kenya. Worse still, an influx of refugees from the war torn zones, especially Somalia, Sudan and other neighbouring countries, exacerbated the food problem and necessitated large quantities of food from abroad to supplement local production.

Available statistics from the Food Crop Development Division of the MOA show that maize production in 1993 stood at 19 million bags against an area under the crop of 1,343,500 hectares. This was below the national target of 30 million bags needed to sustain the population before the next harvest. However, in 1994, the area under maize was expanded to 1.5 million hectares and production jumped to 34 million bags. But in 1995 this figure dropped again to 29,987,368 bags and the area under cultivation also dropped to 1,438,740 hectares.<sup>141</sup> It is therefore clear that maize and food production in general has frequently remained below the national requirements.

As a result, food deficits continue to affect more than 80% of households, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions.<sup>142</sup> For example, in 1984/85 and 1992/93, the northern part of Kenya (ranging from West Pokot and Turkana to Marsabit, Wajir, Moyale and Garissa) and Eastern province (mainly Kitui and Machakos districts) experienced total crop failure. The human and economic implications of drought were grim. The Kenyan population faced

<sup>134</sup> Paul Harrison, *The greening of Africa: Breaking through in the battle for land and food* (London: Grafton Books, 1987), 130.

<sup>135</sup> D. Curtis, M. Hubbard & A. Shepherd, *Preventing famine: Policies and prospects for Africa* (London: Routledge, 1988), 5.

<sup>136</sup> Miller & Yeager, *Kenya*, 66-67.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Republic of Kenya, *National food policy: Sessional paper No. 14* (Nairobi: GP, 1981), 6; and Republic of Kenya, *Economic Survey 1993*, 18.

<sup>139</sup> Republic of Kenya, *Economic Survey 1993*, 123.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> East African Standard, 30 April 2000.

<sup>142</sup> Miller & Yeager, *Kenya*, 132.

severe malnutrition, starvation and even death. Livestock losses were substantial in Turkana, Marsabit, Moyale and in some parts of West Pokot. Once again, this prompted the government to appeal for food aid to both developed countries and international agencies.

Yet the western donor community has uncritically embraced food aid as an appropriate response to the most extreme form of rural destitution: namely, starvation. Because western donors have viewed food assistance almost entirely as an immediate, short-term response to the extreme crisis, there has been very little analytical concern with its long-term effects. As a case in point, the Kenya government has been able to obtain food aid at subsidized prices (for example from the WFP), and it is under substantially less pressure to fully implement its national food policy and to look into the root causes of food crisis. More troubling, food aid seems to attract ever larger and more permanent clienteles, who most of the time survive on famine relief. In the case of populations in northern Kenya, in particular the Turkana, they have been reduced to beggars, and since the 1980s most of them are stuck at food distributing centers, for example Kakuma, in Turkana district.<sup>143</sup> Thus, food aid undermines the already fragile economic basis of national/local food production, enhances poverty and generates its own pattern of dependency to the developed world.

## Conclusion

From the above analysis, we may conclude that government intervention in irrigation schemes, both in colonial and post-colonial West Pokot have not been a success. In Kenya, and most parts of Africa, government and donor policy on irrigation has tended to favour large-scale irrigation projects. But despite the grand plans, most attempts to transform Kenya's and, in particular, West Pokot's environment and agriculture through irrigation projects have failed. Experience has shown that large-scale projects are very expensive to implement and to operate, and they have been also ill-adapted, thus representing a serious drain on the economy as well as being disastrous to the existing farming systems.

At the same time, administrative and logistical shortcomings and poor coordination among government and donor agencies involved in irrigation projects, for example the KVDA in West Pokot, have resulted in haphazard planning, miscommunication, financial mismanagement and grand corruption among others. Moreover, government and donor agencies are still lacking in research programmes on appropriate irrigation not only in Kenya but in most African countries. Few efforts have been made to examine traditional strategies, in this case the Pokot furrow irrigation, to identify success and failures and pinpoint needed modifications and appropriate irrigation programmes.

Therefore, for effective irrigation development in Kenya, and other parts of Africa, irrigation incorporating experiences of traditional systems could hold hope for the future. What is most required is radical change in attitude of government officials, irrigation specialists and staff from intervention donors to realize the potential of traditional irrigation. In this case, the Pokot furrow irrigation provides lessons for understanding a local coping mechanism and how it has contributed to food security in the area. Significantly, Pokot furrow irrigation is based on local participation, initiated and implemented by farmers themselves, rather than by government institutions and related agencies. This irrigation system, therefore, is to be closely fitted into the natural, cultural and social

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<sup>143</sup> *Daily Nation*, 17 June 2000. Apart from serving as a famine relief and food aid distributing center, Kakuma also doubles as a refugee camp for displaced populations from war torn zones of Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia. By June 2000, Kakuma was home to almost 64,000 refugees.

environment, enabling it to be managed with locally available resources. Moreover, the semi-arid nature of West Pokot has contributed to the perpetual need of irrigation farming as a coping mechanism in this part of Kenya.

Thus, if irrigation is to play a meaningful role in Kenya as well as Africa's agricultural production, indigenous irrigation should be given the recognition it deserves. In other words, intervention should mainly be based on improving existing irrigation systems, where possible, rather than developing new and ill-adapted large-scale projects. It should also aim at resource conservation, particularly to curb soil erosion and preservation of water catchment areas, the life line of irrigation farming. These measures can lead to a substantial extension of land to be brought under irrigation using available water resources, which themselves must be considered as a limiting factor, particularly in semi-arid West Pokot.

Given the fact that drought is a recurring problem for West Pokot and Kenya as a whole, it undoubtedly has affected irrigation farming and agriculture in general. While drought may result in water shortages, episodic diseases, and economic losses, the major impact for the majority of the Kenyan population is decreased food security. Hence, coping mechanisms more or less collapse and can not cope with the scale or duration of food shortage, prompting external intervention in the form of famine relief and food aid. However, relief food to meet the needs of the Pokot, as well as other Kenyans, is a short-term solution that fails to deal with the issue of long-term food insecurity.

Unless government and donor policies are corrected, extra food aid from donors and related agencies may bring temporary relief but has no lasting benefits. Food aid is not, by itself, the solution to Kenya's and to West Pokot's food insecurity. But in spite of the overwhelming demerits of food aid, it is impossible to deny emergency food in the short-term. The critical, unanswered, question is how to combine food assistance with political leverage that would induce the Kenya government, as well as other African governments, to undertake long overdue agricultural reforms and institute development programmes that might help generate food productivity at the local as well as the national level.

Indeed, food insecurity is a domestic/national problem that must be confronted and resolved by the Kenyan people. More substantial policy reforms are needed to improve productivity in the agricultural sector. Solving Kenya's food insecurity, in particular for the country's marginal areas, must involve long-term plans. It requires policy reforms that must include provision of inputs, such as credit, fertilizers, better quality and affordable farming tools and disease resistant seeds among others, to the rural poor to improve their ability to produce food.<sup>144</sup> Moreover, since rainfall in Kenya and West Pokot in particular is often very unpredictable, the government has to look into ways of enhancing appropriate irrigation to boost food production. In addition, the availability of more efficient techniques in weather forecasting would help the Kenyan farmer be better prepared to meet the challenges posed by inadequate rainfall. As such, an appropriate strategy for Kenya to achieve self sufficiency in food must include not only improvement in the production of food, but also its distribution, to meet the needs of all Kenyans whether in high potential or in arid and semi-arid regions.

Last, but not least, as long as Kenya must continuously spend scarce foreign exchange to import food as well as seek external food assistance to keep its people fed, particularly in the marginal areas, it will be unable to engage in activities that promote sustainable

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<sup>144</sup> S.B. Westley, B.F. Johnston & M. David, "A summary report on food and nutrition strategy for Kenya", IDS, Occasional Paper No. 14, University of Nairobi, (Nairobi, 1975), 16.

development. Thus, the question of greatest importance, particularly to the Kenyan leaders, is how soon the country will be able to dispense with huge food aid inputs, and how soon it wants to do so. No matter how much food imports and aid are poured into the country, the key to self-sufficiency and sustainable development is productivity.

# 8

## Summary and conclusion

### Summary

The Pokot have relied on a wide range of coping mechanisms: rain-fed and irrigation farming, livestock keeping, hunting and gathering, trade, wage labour and gold mining among others, for their survival in the arid and semi-arid environment of northwest Kenya. As shown in this study, traditional furrow irrigation has over the years played a major role in food production among the Pokot. Innovated by the Pokot, the irrigation system has been used as a security against droughts, to take crops to maturity.

The Pokot irrigation system is based on a rich array of locally devised technologies and techniques. Irrigation farming is practiced mainly in Sigor division and along the rivers and streams in other parts of the district. Undoubtedly, the layout of intakes and furrows is proof of the Pokot's ingenuity as well as their mastery of the physical environment. Under sometimes extremely difficult conditions, utilizing the available local materials, they have produced engineering achievements that have been able to withstand the test of time. The whole irrigation system – i.e. the construction, maintenance and repairs of furrows – forms an intrinsic part of the social organization and history of the Pokot.<sup>1</sup> The rules related to irrigation are well understood and followed by users, and seldom lead to conflicts.

Moreover, rain-fed farming in West Pokot is mainly concentrated in the high potential areas of Kapenguria and some parts of Chepareria division. Food production in West Pokot is still mainly for home consumption as opposed to commercial purposes. Over the years, the Pokot have cultivated grains – millet and sorghum – as their staple food. However, during the colonial period, maize, cassava, and potatoes, as well as different varieties of beans, fruits and vegetables were introduced. Through the Department of Agriculture, demonstration plots were established that served as seed producing and distribution centers in the area. For instance, maize seed, beans, cassava cuttings, sweet potato vines among other seeds were issued to local inhabitants as a way of boosting food production in the area and the colony as a whole.

In the 1930s, the colonial administration increased the number of demonstration plots and seed issuing centers in West Pokot as well as in other parts of the colony. Specifically,

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<sup>1</sup> van Klinken "The Pokot traditional furrow irrigation", 5.

the administration was out to boost agricultural production in African occupied areas as an attempt to salvage the colony's economy in the face of virtual collapse of European settler agriculture during and immediately after the Great Depression.<sup>2</sup> Thus, justification for focus on maize, a variety of beans and early maturing sorghum and millet among others, was based not only to provide food for the African population, but rested for the most part on the increased yield of these crops and their marketability.<sup>3</sup>

However, maize production in West Pokot was not as easy and high yielding as anticipated. First, maize was unable to withstand drought or temporary cessation of the rains. As a result, there was low production of the crop, particularly in the lowlands, with frequent crop failure. As shown in this study, a second problem concerned the vast increase in pests and disease prevalent in the area. It was not until after independence that Katumani, a hybrid variety suitable particularly to irrigation farming areas of Sigor, was introduced in the study area. Even though there was considerable increase in maize production, in terms of hectarage under the crop and the quantity of the produce in the period under review, it was and remains too low to meet the needs of the district and to generate surplus revenue through export. Generally, environmental stress hampered agricultural production in West Pokot. State attempts to create a profitable agricultural economy failed, leaving West Pokot a marginal area within Kenya's political economy. Nevertheless, maize became the staple food in West Pokot as in the rest of Kenya.

Apart from crop cultivation, livestock keeping is an adaptive food productive system among the Pokot. Over the years, grains have been supplemented by animal products – milk, blood and meat – as important sources of protein in the Pokot diet. As detailed in this study, livestock play a vital role in maintaining the long-term viability of the economy, which although it relies on rain-fed and irrigation farming, is beset by frequent crop failures. At such times, livestock can be readily exchanged for grain among neighbouring groups, or sold in the local and regional market for cash, needed for the purchase of food. As the most effective means of famine insurance available to them, the Pokot regard livestock, mainly cattle, as their last defense against starvation, a view that has been amply justified in this study, in both the colonial and post-colonial period.

However, as part of state policy during the colonial period, destocking, quota systems, planned grazing schemes, and livestock marketing plans were all introduced in West Pokot. Particularly during World War II, the Pokot were compelled to dispose of their animals at throw away prices not only to meet the imposed quota system, but as part of their contribution towards the war effort. As shown in this study, the Pokot resented government imposed policies that interfered with their livestock management in terms of grazing and exchange as well as livestock bonding (*Tilia*). It should also be noted that the Pokot resented the creation of boundaries, which interfered with their movement of stock in search of grazing and water, especially during the dry season. Furthermore, according to the Pokot, state policies, especially destocking, were no different from taxation, as both were implemented to raise revenue for the colonial administration.

With Kenya's independence in 1963, the national government, to the disappointment of the Pokot, inherited colonial policies, including grazing schemes and marketing plans, aimed at raising government revenue just as in the colonial period. These interfered with the Pokot survival strategies in a harsh environment. Furthermore, in the post-colonial period, grazing schemes and auction yards were expanded and harsh penalties meted out to

<sup>2</sup> Mackenzie, Land, ecology and resistance, 107.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 109.

trespassers. The government imposed limitations on Pokot grazing grounds have been a major point of contention in the study area. In the post-colonial period, there have also been government attempts to introduce exotic dairy cattle and wool sheep as part of a package for economic development in the study area. However, the impact of these activities, particularly in terms of food security, on the larger Pokot population has yet to be realized.

Moreover, since the colonial period, government plans to improve livestock production in West Pokot were hampered by erratic rainfall and periodic outbreak of diseases, including foot and mouth and rinderpest. Resultant quarantines have been imposed during outbreaks, aimed at controlling the sale as well as movement of livestock from the affected areas, and to contain the spread of diseases to other parts of the country. It should also be noted that rinderpest campaigns, and disease control in general, by way of vaccinations and inoculations administered by the Veterinary Department have been carried out in the study area from time to time. However, eradication of diseases, particularly foot and mouth, has remained a challenge yet to be overcome. The fact that these have continued to have a huge impact on West Pokot, in contrast to those portions of Kenya more fully integrated into the national economy, points again to the lack of effective state initiatives in West Pokot during the period under review and the marginalization experienced by the Pokot over the course of the twentieth century. Thus, the government needs to invest more in research to eradicate livestock and crop diseases in the study area, and to boost food security and trade in livestock and related products, as a source of income for rural populations.<sup>4</sup>

Besides livestock diseases, cattle raids and ethnic clashes in northwest Kenya also hamper the effectiveness of traditional responses to drought. Food production suffers as farms are abandoned, or planting, weeding and harvesting are disrupted. Investments, mainly in livestock, become even more risky. Yet since the colonial period, the government has dealt with problems of cattle raids in Kenya's livestock keeping regions with little success. For instance, from the 1970s through the 1990s, the Pokot were under attack from the Karamojong and Sebei of Uganda on one hand, and from their Kenyan neighbours the Turkana and Marakwet on the other. However, it should not be taken for granted that the Pokot were and have always been on the defensive. As a matter of fact, in the 1990s and the start of the current century, the Pokot are known to have sparked off cattle raids leading to ethnic clashes particularly on the Pokot/Marakwet border. As also pointed out in this study, almost all cases of cattle raids and counter raids began as a mere scramble for pasture and water due to drought, and at times escalated into open warfare.

The deteriorating security situation and related problems in northwest Kenya, in one way or another, are also linked to illegal trade in arms in this part of the country. Automatic weapons are easily smuggled from the war torn zone of southern Sudan through northern Uganda or Turkana district to the study area and beyond. Undoubtedly, the devastation of war in eastern Africa and recent severe droughts in the region have fostered new outbursts of armed theft in this part of the continent. Thus, the availability of automatic weapons has increased incidences and severity of cattle raiding and general banditry not only in the study area, but other parts of northern and northeastern Kenya.<sup>5</sup>

In this case, it would be a mistake to regard cattle raiding as a purely traditional option, as it is initiated by some people in northwest Kenya, as well as in other livestock keeping areas, for economic gain. Cattle raiding is no longer a sustainable activity, as animals in

<sup>4</sup> In other words quarantines are not a solution to the spread of livestock diseases in the country.

<sup>5</sup> Jeremy Swift, "Planning against drought and famine in Turkana: A District contingency Plan", In: Downing, Gitu & Kamau, *Coping with drought in Kenya*, 306-325.

affected areas are heading off to the market faster than they can reproduce themselves. With sales from raided cattle yielding high returns, particularly since the late 1970s, raiding can be regarded as yet another branch of the informal economy with its widespread corruption.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to crop production and livestock keeping, non-agricultural income has been utilized as a coping mechanism in West Pokot. For instance, in the colonial period, European farmers in neighbouring Trans Nzoia were in need of labourers for agricultural production. As shown in this study, particularly in famine years, Pokot men are known to have made "hunger trips" for one or two months to Trans Nzoia and as far as Uasin Gishu in search of employment to earn money for taxes and for family needs, especially food. They were mainly employed as farm labourers, herders and guards, based on monthly or other stipulated contracts. After the first decade of independence, direct taxation was abolished. Thus, the Pokot spent most of their income on food, services (transport, health and school fees), and clothing among others necessities. At the same time, most of the food during famine years has been purchased from outside the district.

However, over the years, Pokot migration for work outside the district has remained minimal. For instance, in the post-colonial period, apart from the usual movement of government employees, only a few hundred Pokot work outside the district. The out-migration to major towns has been minimal, and though a considerable number of the Pokot still seek wage labour in the neighbouring Trans Nzoia for the short-term (for example, during maize harvesting), they return to their homes after the work season.<sup>7</sup>

Besides wage labour, mining, and specifically gold panning, has been an important source of income in West Pokot. A number of the Pokot households have utilized money from gold from time to time to purchase food as well as for other necessities. However, money from gold is rather unreliable as a source of income. First, most of the gold is found in river beds; thus mining fluctuates a great deal particularly during the dry season. Secondly, the frequency of cattle raids and related insecurity interfere with gold mining in the study area. Moreover, gold deposits in West Pokot are sporadic, limited in nature and do not encourage large-scale investment. Nonetheless, gold mining illustrates how the Pokot in recent years have harnessed their surrounding environment in search of income, and how it has contributed to food security in the study area.

In other words, buying food is a basic survival strategy in West Pokot. The question is whether the majority of the people can buy food with ease. Farmers that have some members of the family engaged in wage labour elsewhere or gold panners, as well as retail or stock traders, can benefit from small amounts of cash remittances to buy food in times of need.<sup>8</sup> However, the majority of Pokot families rely on crop production, livestock keeping, the use of wild resources, hunting and gathering; thus they can hardly afford to buy food for a long period in years of extreme drought. Moreover, in famine years, various staple foods, especially grains, are more expensive and sporadically available in the local markets.

Thus, the habitat of the Pokot places limitations upon their coping mechanisms and productive capacity as compared to other regions of Kenya, including Central, Western and

<sup>6</sup> Suzette Heald, "Agricultural intensification and the decline of pastoralism: A case study from Kenya", *Africa* 69, 2 (1999): 213-237; and Michael Fleisher, "Cattle raiding and household demography among the Kuria of Tanzania", *Africa* 69, 2 (1999): 238-255.

<sup>7</sup> Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas*, 40; and Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District Development Plan, 1989-1993*, 44.

<sup>8</sup> Joshua Akong'a, "Drought and famine management in Kitui district, Kenya", In: Brokensha & Little, *Anthropology of development*, 99-115.

some parts of Nyanza provinces. The irregularity of rainfall, weak soils, erosion, and limited amounts of satisfactory land for cultivation contribute to low food production in the study area. Moreover, government policies throughout the twentieth century directed very limited resources toward the promotion of agrarian change in West Pokot, in contrast to what were viewed as the more potentially productive areas of Kenya. Beyond exploiting the area's livestock resources from time to time, the colonial and independent states were content to marginalize the West Pokot economy. Consequently, coping mechanisms are strained at times to the breaking point, prompting external relief on the one hand and establishment of irrigation schemes on the other, the latter aiming at transforming the arid and semi-arid environment to boost crop production in the area.

As detailed in this study, there has been government intervention of various sorts since the colonial period, ranging from crop intervention to forced soil conservation to famine relief. Large-scale irrigation is one such intervention, but it did not transform West Pokot agriculture or fundamentally integrate or capture it within the national economy. Even though the Pokot have relied on furrow irrigation for years, government intervention was based on the premise that irrigation in the study area was underutilized; thus, there was need for better water management through the establishment of large-scale schemes. Fully exploited, these would produce sufficient food to meet the needs of the populace, particularly during famines. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Kenya government, with support from the donor community (for example the Norwegian government and FAO among others) established irrigation schemes in the study area, but with little success. Although irrigation is an obvious means to reduce drought susceptibility and enhance crop production, experience in West Pokot and other arid and semi-arid areas has shown that large-scale schemes are ill-adapted, and rather than boosting agricultural production, they have instead contributed to food insecurity in rural Kenya.

As a case in point, the implementation of irrigation projects in West Pokot, for example the Amolem, NYS and KVDA farms among others, not only tampered with traditional furrow irrigation well adapted to the environment, but these also led to the dislocation of the local population to pave way for them, while disrupting the ecological balance in the area. The external initiated irrigation projects, in their brief period of use, also proved to be a source of government revenue as opposed to alleviating the food situation for the rural poor. Worse still, high operating costs and financial mismanagement, coupled with all sorts of corruption, as illustrated in the Turkwel Gorge project, meant that large-scale schemes absorbed a disproportionate share of the nation's scarce resources, most of them loans earmarked for agricultural development. As a result, irrigation projects increased the national debt burden, a drain on taxpayers, and yet by the mid 1990s were an enormous failure, an addition to the statistics of doomed government and donor projects in West Pokot.

## Conclusion and lessons to be learned

This study has documented the environmental conditions that have affected the food situation in West Pokot, tracing the evolution from self-sufficiency in the pre-colonial period to the shortages experienced during the twentieth century. It has detailed the Pokot strategies adopted for survival during the droughts and famines over the period under review. The study has also investigated the agricultural changes that have occurred in West Pokot during the colonial and post-colonial eras. Moreover, it has assessed the impact of these changes, and the new technologies, on food production and food security. Finally, it

has documented the various external interventions that marked the period under review and how these affected traditional Pokot coping mechanisms, in particular traditional irrigation technology, that have been developed to secure food security in the area.

In addition, this study has provided considerable evidence to show that for much of the twentieth century, food security in West Pokot has been difficult to achieve, even with irrigation technology. It is also clearly shown that livestock keeping, hunting, and gathering of other indigenous staples have provided essential supplements to irrigated and rain-fed food crops. Pokot households have had to fully utilize all potential resources of the area in seeking food security. Nevertheless, this examination has shown that with the introduction of new crops, agricultural techniques, and forms of economic activity during the twentieth century, West Pokot was marginalized in the political economy of Kenya. Despite the use of irrigated food crops, various supplements to household diets, and the introduction of new crops such as maize, this investigation has clearly illustrated that West Pokot has indeed faced increasing food shortages which have produced a need for external assistance.

As argued in this study, a variety of food crops and livestock products are produced in the study area and in other parts of the country with limited rainfall. It is important that the rural people be assisted in improving the resources at their disposal and in the conservation of the environment, to boost agricultural production rather than wasting funds on large-scale projects.<sup>9</sup> Specifically, external intervention in irrigation in West Pokot should aim at assisting farmers rehabilitate traditional furrows. For instance, the government should continuously assist in the reinforcement of intakes and furrow alignment, as well as preservation of water catchment areas without tampering with the flow of the river (by avoiding damming) and the existing technology. Generally, intervention should be based on the users' knowledge and experiences.

Furthermore, this study has also analyzed the role of government and donor community during famine years in West Pokot. Famine has been one of the drawbacks of the African population. It is either endemic or epidemic, and there is not one country which is immune to it. As shown in this study, the international donor community has played a critical role in the public response to famine not only in West Pokot but Kenya as whole. Food donors in this effort have operated through multilateral and bilateral agencies (for example WFP, EEC and USAID) and through NGOs.<sup>10</sup> The inability of the Kenya government to cope with famine within its borders, particularly in arid and semi-arid areas, has repeatedly led it to seek external assistance. For instance, in the 1980 and 1984/85 national droughts, imported food by the Kenya government and food aid from the international community played a major role in averting starvation in the country.

However, as pointed out in this study, relief food, whether for emergency or development purposes, while assuring immediate survival carries negative consequences that increase the level of dependence in the long run. For instance, the Kenya government through its bilateral and multilateral relations has been able to obtain food aid at subsidized prices and consequently it is under substantially less pressure to fully implement its national food policy and look into the root cause of food crisis. Yet, whether subsidized or not, most food aid is given in the form of loans, which automatically increases the debt burden especially

<sup>9</sup> Howard B. Sprague, *The status and challenge of dryland agriculture in developing countries of the tropics and subtropics* (Washington, D.C.: United States Agency for International Development (USAID), 1981), 2.

<sup>10</sup> Joachim von Braun, Tesfaye Teklu & Patrick Webb, *Famine in Africa: Causes, responses, and prevention* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 184.

on Kenya and other African countries that are already spending almost all their foreign exchange servicing debts. At the same time, food imports are making African populations dependent on rice and wheat that are difficult to grow economically in most parts of the continent (Kenya included).<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, food aid is tied to economic and political interests of the donor community. In fact, food aid is an arm of foreign policy: it is given or withheld according to the calculations of self-interest on the part of the donor.<sup>12</sup> Generally, relief food undermines the already fragile economic basis of Kenya's marginal areas as well as national food production, while perpetuating a pattern of dependency to the developed world.

At any rate, although drought is a natural event that is beyond human control, such is not the case with famine. Policies and actions at national and local levels can reduce or eliminate the risk of famine.<sup>13</sup> As this study argues, the Kenya government should give priority to early warning of famine crisis, preparation for it and implementation of long-term preventive measures. In this case, overcoming the obstacles to food security and famine prevention requires a comprehensive development strategy that places the greatest emphasis on promoting agricultural growth, subsistence food crops and crops for sale.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, this strategy has to be people-centered, based on networking between cultivators and government agencies. The access to and types of agricultural technology, including crop innovation, needed to alleviate hunger in famine prone areas as well as other parts of the country, have to be improved through greater understanding of adaptive coping mechanisms used by the rural communities. Their failure or breakdown due to prolonged drought, for example in the 1980s, does not imply that they are inappropriate, or they can be replaced by large-scale projects or food imports. As detailed in this study, traditional coping mechanisms, be it furrow irrigation or livestock bonding, are the cement of rural life. Thus, they are an essential element in survival during frequent, but less acute, periods of ecological stress.<sup>15</sup>

Indeed, Kenya has to strive for self-sufficiency in food production rather than relying on relief food to feed its citizens. Food security needs to be at the center of national development plan. Solving Kenya's food security must involve long-term plans. This requires policy reforms that must be contoured to the needs of cultivators as well as herders, whether in marginal or high potential areas. Long-term plans also call for government investment in infrastructure, for example transportation networks and storage facilities, to ease distribution problems of agricultural inputs and farm produce to meet the needs of the society. Based on Kenya's history and the country's economic structure, its future still lies within rural communities, in the hands of farmers and pastoralists. Therefore, they need appropriate government assistance, taking into consideration their coping mechanisms and a peaceful environment to build a future for themselves and the country as a whole. As shown in this study, the government must seriously address famine preventive measures as well as cattle raids and ethnic conflicts in general, not only in the study area but as matter of national concern, bearing in mind that food security and peace are essential for political

<sup>11</sup> As noted in this study, there have been attempts to grow rice in West Pokot under irrigation with no success. Yet, from time to time, relief food is also given in the form of rice and wheat that are virtually impossible to grow in this part of the country.

<sup>12</sup> G. Arnold, *Aid in Africa* (London: Kogan Page, 1979), 7.

<sup>13</sup> Swift, "Planning Against Drought", 306.

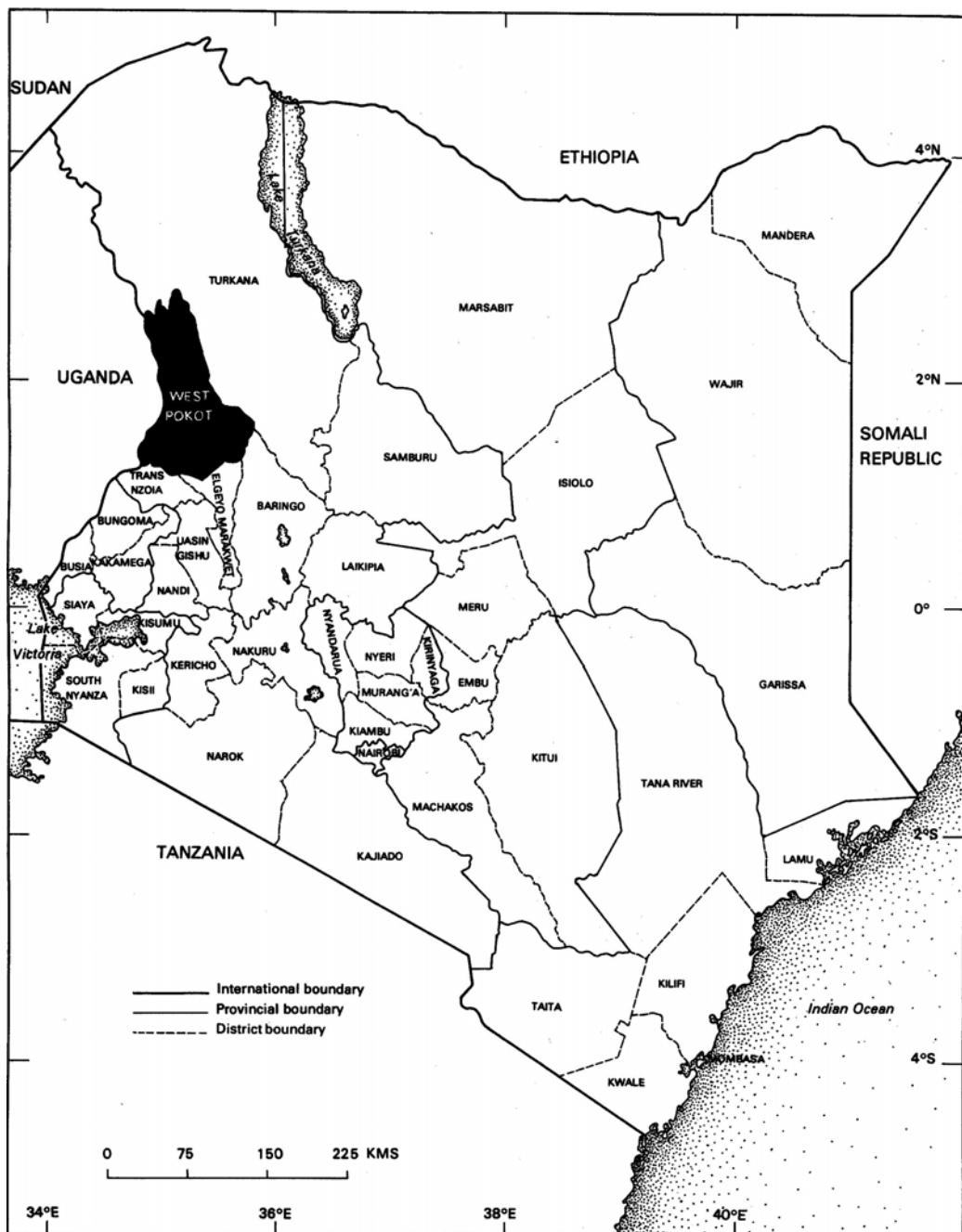
<sup>14</sup> Von Braun, Teklu & Webb, *Famine in Africa*, 186-187.

<sup>15</sup> David M. Anderson & Douglas H. Johnson, "Introduction: Ecology and society in northeast African history", In: Johnson & Anderson, *The ecology of survival*, 1-24.

stability and socio-economic development. Last but not least, if Kenya cannot manage to produce enough food on the national and local level to feed its citizens in both normal and dry years, sustainable development will continue to elude the nation.

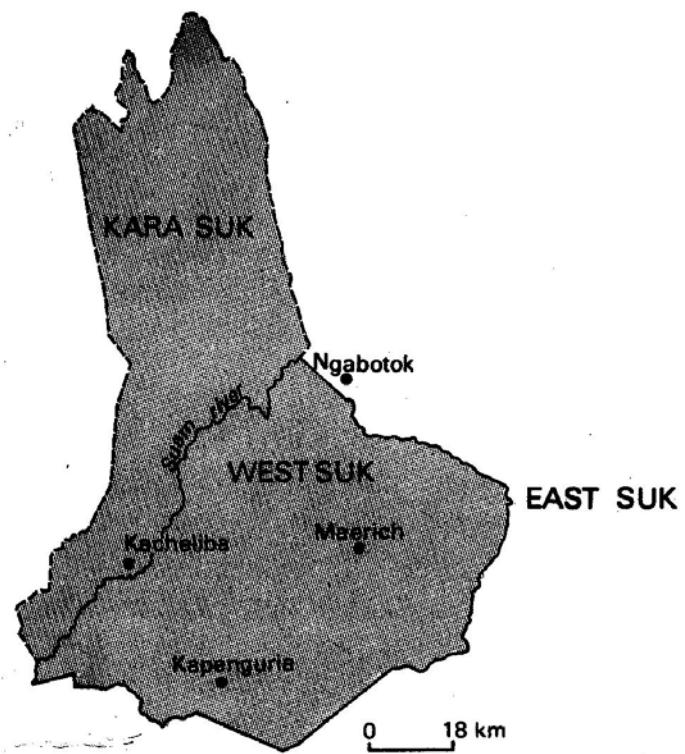
## Annex: Maps

*Map 1* Location of West Pokot district in Kenya



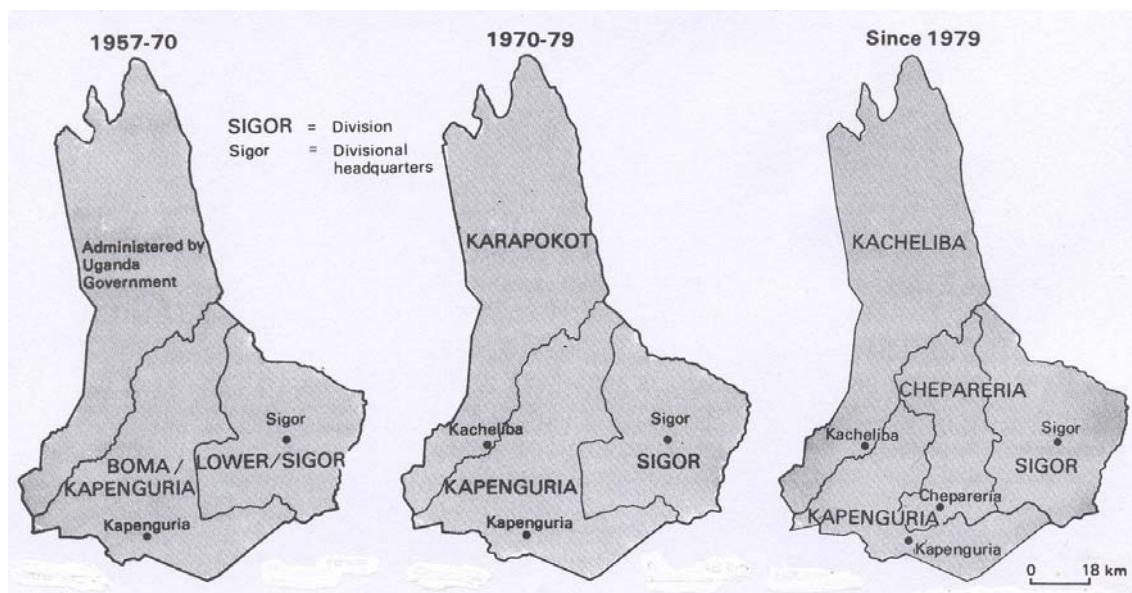
Source: Hubert Hendrix, Michael S. Mwangi & Niels de Vos, *District Atlas: West Pokot* (Kapenguria, Ministry of Planning and National Development, Republic of Kenya, 1985), 4.

*Map 2* West Suk/West Pokot district headquarters, 1910-1983



*Source:* Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas: West Pokot*, 45.

Map 3 West Suk/West Pokot district administrative divisions, 1957-1983



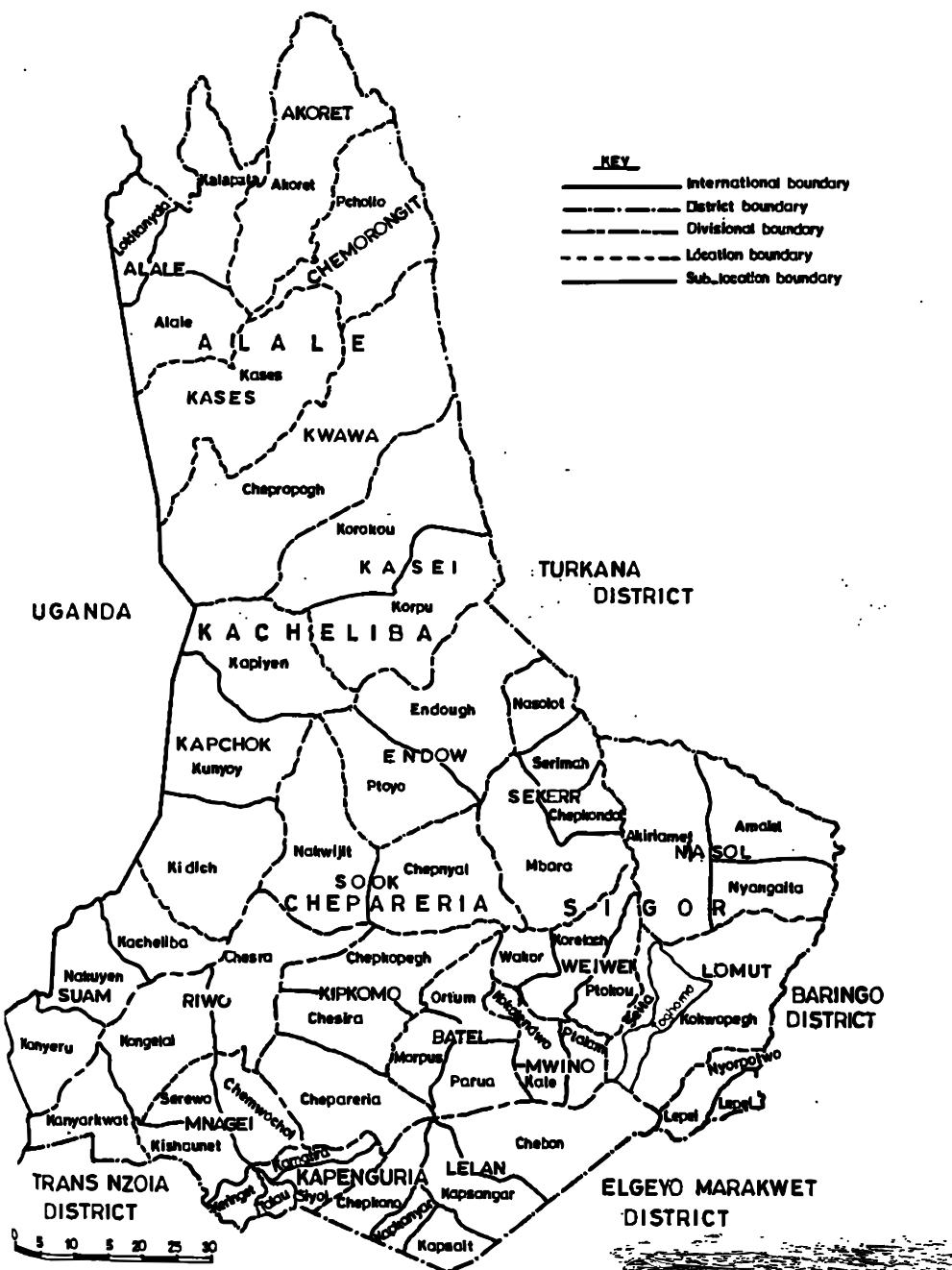
Source: Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas: West Pokot*, 45.

*Map 4* Administrative boundaries, West Pokot district, 1983



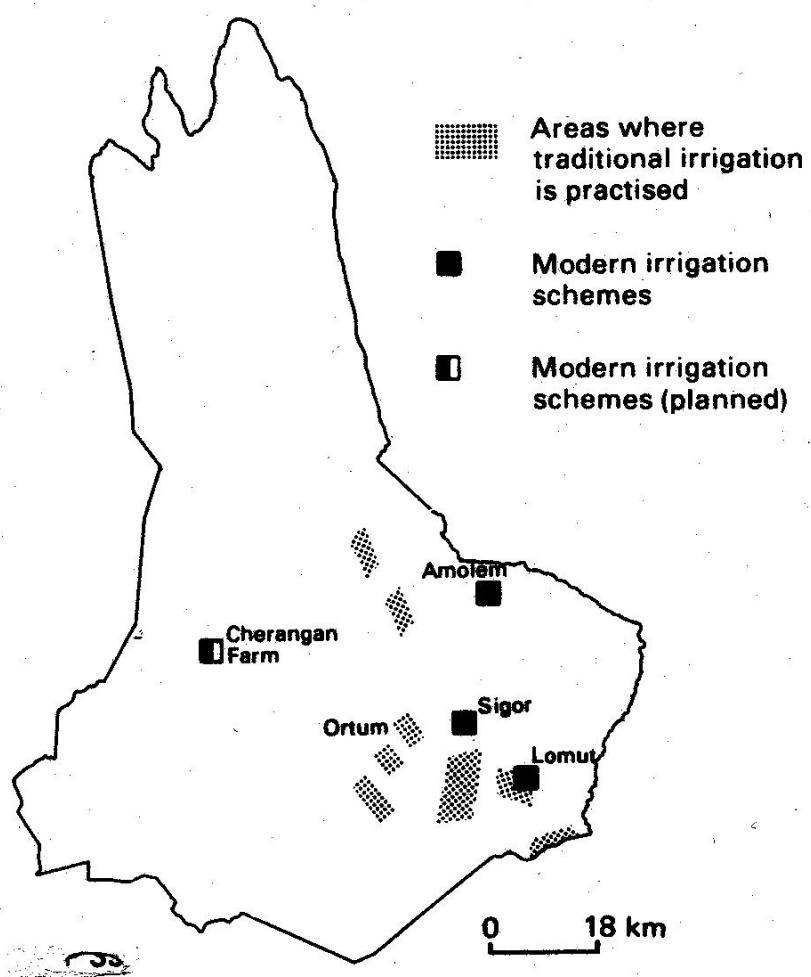
Source: Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas, West Pokot*, 47.

Map 5 Administrative boundaries, 1995



Source: Republic of Kenya, *West Pokot District, Development Plan 1994-1996*, 5.

Map 6 Irrigation in West Pokot, 1985



Source: Hendrix, Mwangi & de Vos, *District Atlas: West Pokot*, 64.

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Oral interviews are listed by name of informant and date of interview. The site where the interview took place is listed in notes.

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 Jackson Cheparer, 15 July 1996.  
 Lopele Chepkorom, 6 December 1995.  
 Romanus Chizupo, 29-31 January 1995.  
 Lotudo Kakorio, 15 July 1996.  
 Cheptoo Kiprop, 4 July 1995.  
 Kibor Kiptum, 4 July 1995.  
 Terengelo Kiptum, 4 July 1995.  
 Richard Kokulia, 31 January 1995.  
 Albino Kotomei, 29-31 January 1995.  
 Simon Lalaita, 4 July 1995.  
 Pkemoi Limaa, 4 July 1995.  
 Samson Limakukei, 31 January 1995.  
 John Limangura, 6 December 1995.  
 Samuel Lochupet, 31 January 1995.  
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 Longiro Lomada, 6 December 1995.  
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