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Choices, Constraints and Changing Diet during the Colonial Period: A Case Study of the Maasai and Ki- kuyu

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English Abstract:

This study is interested in contributing to a better understanding of how and why food production and consumption has changed historically. It is hoped that with this type of understanding we can better equip ourselves and our societies in devising strategies which work towards healthier and more ethical dietary patterns today. In order to contribute to this type of dialogue and a growing awareness of what we eat, why we eat it, and how it affects those around us, this thesis will examine the Maasai and Kikuyu communities of East Africa during the colonial period. These case studies will be considered together in order to examine two different modes of production and consumption centering around agriculturalism and pastoralism. Within this examination both structural and conceptual factors will be explored in order to question why changes occurred or did not occur in each of these communities during the colonial period.

Die vorliegende Studie will einen Beitrag zum besseren Verständnis, wie und warum sich die Herstellung und Konsumtion von Essen historisch gewandelt haben, leisten. Dieses Verständnis kann uns und die Gesellschaften, in denen wir leben, vielleicht besser befähigen, Strategien in Richtung gesünderer und ethisch eher vertretbarer Ernährungsmuster zu entwickeln. Um in diesen Dialog einzutreten und zum wachsenden Bewusstsein darüber, was wir was essen und wie dies unsere Mitmenschen betrifft, beizutragen, werden in dieser Arbeit ostafrikanischen Völker der Massai und Kikuyu während der Kolonialzeit betrachtet. Die beiden Fallstudien werden zusammengebracht, um zwei unterschiedliche Produktions- und Konsumtionsweisen zu erforschen, die von nomadisierender Viehzucht einerseits, vom Feldbau andererseits gekennzeichnet sind. Dabei werden sowohl strukturelle als auch konzeptionelle Faktoren erforscht, und es wird gefragt, warum in diesen zwei Gesellschaften während der Kolonialzeit Veränderungen aufgetreten oder nicht aufgetreten sind.

This thesis is dedicated to those who taught me along the way of the necessity of questioning and being critical: to Mr. Ian Cotter who began my love of the radical and who first convinced me of the power of questioning – I cannot thank you enough; to Dr. Jim George who helped give words to my theoretical leanings and who was not hesitant in sharing the possible consequences of thinking differently; to Dr. Patrick O’Brien who challenged most of my opinions and beliefs in the space of a year; and to Dr. Martina Kaller-Dietrich and Dr. Tirthankar Roy who helped me work through this thesis suggesting different angles and perspectives which I had not considered.

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Choices, Constraints, and Changing Diet During the Colonial Period: A Case Study of the Maasai

1. Introduction of Study:

Food is one of the most basic material needs in our everyday lives and yet as individuals we rarely question the paths our food and its history have traveled. Globalization processes have played a particular role in changing food habits and diet in the past two centuries resulting in a diet today which has much different social, political, environmental, and political influences and impacts than previously. This study is interested in contributing to a better understanding of how and why food production and consumption has changed historically. It is hoped that this type of understanding will better equip ourselves and our societies in devising strategies which work towards healthier and more ethical dietary patterns today. Furthermore, an examination of dietary change and the factors which have influenced this change will help to build new perspectives surrounding the interaction between local production and consumption practises and global processes such as incorporation into the world economy and increased interaction and exchange between different parts of the world. This type of insight has potential to contribute to a better understanding of current dietary trends which can be characterized within the last several decades as moving away from sustainability and self-sufficiency and towards dependency on less nutritious, fresh, and environmentally-friendly food products.

In order to contribute to this type of dialogue and growing awareness of what we eat, why we eat it, and how it affects those around us, this thesis will examine the Maasai and Kikuyu communities of East Africa during the colonial period. Each of these case studies was chosen because they provide insight on how global processes such as colonialism have affected local diet. Furthermore, while the Maasai study focuses on pastoral modes of production and

consumption, the Kikuyu study focuses primarily on agrarian modes of production and consumption. While both pastoralism and agrarianism provide different insights about changing dietary patterns, they also enable a more comprehensive study on the intersecting and complimentary roles these play in both Maasai and Kikuyu communities. Not only were the Maasai and Kikuyu communities interlinked through their food systems but they also became subsumed under European colonial administrations. Within these similarities and contrasts it is hoped that both local and global contexts can be explored in relation to changing diet and food consumption patterns. From these two case studies two main questions arise:

1. What did diet consist of within Kikuyu and Maasai communities during the colonial period?
2. Which factors played a central role in influencing dietary patterns of the Kikuyu and Maasai during colonialism?

These questions will be prefaced by an outline of the theoretical perspectives behind the conceptualization of the study in section two as well as a section on research methodologies in section three. Sections four and five will then examine the dietary patterns of the Maasai and Kikuyu as two separate case studies during the colonial period. After outlining both continuity and change within the diets of each of these communities, sections six and seven will explore various reasons behind these dietary patterns. The sum of this research hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the various factors which influence diet with specific regard to globalization processes during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

2.0 Theoretical Models

First, this section will discuss how this study situates itself amongst broader theoretical frameworks. At the basis of this examination lie questions perpetuated by critical theory and

postmodern arguments. These arguments give shape to an examination which questions the current structure of diet as natural and inevitable. Instead of viewing diet as having progressed, evolved or developed, diet is presented as having been constructed by several interacting factors including social, political, economic, and environmental influences. As such, diet is not necessarily dictated nor evolutionary but rather has been both shape-able and changeable and remains so today.

Secondly, it is important to reach a better understanding of diet and how it can best be conceptualized. Have conceptions of diet changed over time and across place? What factors and processes influence diet? Current literature suggests that diet is influenced by availability, culture, convenience, media, education and other social factors which tend to be context-specific. This section will consider whether influences on diet are similar within the context of the following case studies or whether they were different. If they were different, what can this add to our current understanding and conception of diet and dietary influences?

2.1 Critical Theory and Frameworks

Critical theory has played a major role in contesting claims that existing political, economic, and social structures have evolved naturally and progressively. In this way critical theorists argue that global structures are not immutable; instead, structures are created by different social forces – sometimes knowingly and generally with motive. Robert Cox writes that “theory is always *for* someone and *for* some purpose. All theories have a perspective. Perspectives derive from a position in time and space, specifically social and political time and space”.¹ In this way, the

¹ Robert W. Cox, “Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory,” *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. Vol. 10, No. 2, pp126-155 ; p128

world can be seen from a variety of perspectives depending on a person's experiences, context, and expectations. Any theory which fails to acknowledge that it has its own underlying values and assumptions fails to understand that no perspective is objective. Instead, a sophisticated theory is "never just the expression of a perspective. The more sophisticated a theory is, the more it reflects upon and transcends its own perspective; but the initial perspective is always contained within a theory in itself, divorced from a standpoint in time and space."² In this manner, it is important to verbalize the theoretical roots in which this study situates itself. By doing so, both the reader and writer are able to recognize and consider underlying assumptions and perspectives which have shaped both the writer and the research.

Critical theory not only provides valuable insight into ways of structuring a study but also provides a key perspective in regards to this study's conception of diet. In a discussion concerning multilateralism, Cox notes that "multilateralism can only be understood within the context in which it exists, and that context is the historical structure of world order".³ Furthermore, Cox considers multilateralism as "not just a passive, dependent activity" but as "an active force shaping world order".⁴ If this type of perspective is applied to our study on diet, various useful concepts are brought up. First, if diet is conceptualized as an active rather than a passive force, we can consider its influence on our social, economic, and political lives occurring on a variety of levels from local to global. However, this conceptualization of diet as a force does not seek to construct diet as an entity in itself without outside influence but rather as one among many intermingling forces which influence each other. Secondly, diet must be placed

² Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*. Vol. 10, No. 2, pp126-155 ; p128

³ Robert W. Cox, "Multilateralism and World Order," *Review of International Studies*. 18, (1992) pp161-180; p161

⁴ Ibid.

within the dominant order of the time. During the colonial period, the dominant order was generally, although not entirely nor always overwhelmingly, dictated by colonial officials' desire to extract profit – and it can be argued later on in the colonial period to install development – largely through incorporation into the western capitalist market and the creation of a strong external economy. As such, incorporation into the western capitalist market will be used to reflect the dominant order of the colonial period and as a backdrop to the processes affecting dietary patterns during this time period. Furthermore, the indigenous context, which was once dominant also plays a part in our narrative as various players sought to resist and contend the reformation of economic structures by colonial powers while others collaborated and benefited from these same circumstances. In this way, it is the interplay of both colonial and indigenous forces which have tended to influence dietary patterns rather than the passive acceptance by the native population of colonial structures and conceptions of diet.

2.2 Conceptualization of Diet

A traditional understanding of diet generally views the process of globalization as one which has widened our ability to choose different food products, expanded the variety of our diet, and provided easier access to a steady supply of food which meets our nutritional requirements. At most, this holds true for a small percentage of the world population. At the least, this perspective fails to take into account the growing voices in all segments of society which reveal decreasing varieties of food products, domination of the food industry by a few multinational food companies, and the inability of the majority to be locally sufficient in even the weakest sense. These trends seem to be occurring internationally and have sparked counter-movements calling for locally-produced organic foodstuffs such as the slow food movement and calls to take part in

a “100 mile diet”.⁵ These movements advocate a response to the globalization of food production based on the ability of individuals to become aware of the food they consume and the impact it has on the world around them.

Today it seems that we view our diet and what we eat as just another consumer activity alongside the cars we buy, the clothes we shop for, and the vacations we choose. Factors affecting the decisions we make in regards to our diet are commonly framed as a consumer choice based on rational decision-making. As such, we have come to view our decisions in regards to our diet as occurring within a consumer-driven marketplace.⁶ Classical economic theorists generally stress the ability of individual consumers to make decisions within the free market economy which leads to the product that best suits their wants and needs.⁷

Within this theoretical perspective, individuals act to maximize their own utility in order to, very simply put, get more for less. In this way, economists view consumption as a rational act of the individual conducted in order to satisfy his or her wants within certain limits such as income and prices. Generally, these wants are seen to originate within the consumers’ personalities while consumption is seen to be a choice that is reflective of consumers’ underlying preferences.⁸ However, this theory provides little guidance as to why these needs and wants arise and why they might change. Although it may recognize certain limitations which may constrain a consumer's choice, this theory also fails to account for restrictions on consumer behaviour which lay outside the economic sphere such as political and cultural factors. Even when attempting to

⁵ See...

⁶ Elaine H. Asp. “Factors Affecting Food Decisions made by Individual Consumers,” *Food Policy*. 24 (1999) 287-294. P 287

⁷ For a more in depth discussion on this point see Robert East’s *Consumer Behaviour: Advances and Applications in Marketing*. (London: Prentice Hall, 1997)

⁸ Colin Campbell, “Chapter 5: The Puzzle of Modern Consumerism”, *The Consumer Society Reader*. ed. Martyn J. Lee. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), p.52

explain certain behaviour by incorporating a cultural aspect, such as 'keeping up with the Jones', classical economic theory still does so within traditional constraints of marginal utility theory and assumed rationality. As such, the economic framework remains the same without taking into account political and cultural measures which prevent individuals from making choices within the context of a perfect market.

This type of approach has been criticized for its reluctance to set itself within social processes,⁹ as well as to consider the way in which power and society interact to create and imbue economic value in certain social situations.¹⁰ As a result of this line of thought, it is suggested that the consumption of food cannot be adequately studied while it is seen as separate from social and political contexts. In this way, food consumption even at a subsistence level is suggested as not only meeting physical or what some term 'primary' needs but rather as having a social function which is intricately linked to power relations. In the context of this study, the manifestation of power relations is suggested as being reflected within colonial policy relating to land and agriculture as well as within the Kikuyu and Maasai societies. Therefore, it is the interplay within these categories of supply, demand, power relations, and social function which influences and are influenced by diet over an extended period of time. With these factors in mind, it is vital to move past the conceptualization of diet as a commodity. Diet is not merely a method of consumption – a sphere in which consumer choice takes place. Instead, diet is a complex act within society that has political and social function in itself.

⁹ Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods: Towards an Anthropology of Consumption*. (London: Routledge, 1996), p.xxi

¹⁰ Arjun, Appadurai. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p.3

3.0 Methodological Considerations

The research and writing of this thesis occurred over a two year period. It stands as a compilation of a double degree program in Global Studies at the *London School of Economics and Political Science* and the *University of Vienna*. As such, the case study on the Kikuyu along with various parts other sections including methodology, theory, and structural influences are drawn directly from the previous dissertation completed at the *London School of Economics and Political Science* for the year 2007/2008. The case study on the Maasai is drawn exclusively from research conducted during 2008/2009 while the conclusions are a combination of the entire degree program.

In order to conduct this study, research occurred in a variety of stages using an assortment of sources. In regards to primary sources, nutritional records and colonial documents provide the basis for section four regarding the Kikuyu diet; this research is enhanced by a variety of historical and anthropological research. Secondly, agricultural and veterinary records from the British Protectorates of Tanganyika and Kenya were consulted in order to begin constructing a conception of the dominant forces behind consumption patterns and changes in sections six and seven. These records were drawn from Colonial Agricultural Reports written by the officers in charge of Kenyan and Tanganyikan agriculture as well as major policy reports and other archival materials from the *London School of Economics and Political Science*, the *School of Oriental and African Studies* at the *University of London*, the *London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine* and the *British National Archives* at *Kew Gardens* in London . Tanganyikan Veterinary reports were also consulted as well as a variety of secondary sources which added a multiplicity of perspectives from varying disciplines, time periods, and theoretical perspectives.

Important to note in regards to the use of colonial materials in both case studies, is the recognition that the conception of traditional diet exists as a construct rather than a reality because diet was never a stationary entity prior to, during, or after colonial rule. While this paper concentrates on dietary shifts during colonialism, research on the pre-colonial period suggests that diet was neither stable nor monotonous but was in a regular state of flux both in the short and long term. This view is a necessary break from the modernist perspective which draws a sharp distinction between traditional and modern modes of lifestyle. As such, this distinction fails to reflect previous change as well as change brought on as a result of factors other than colonialism. While the concentration of this paper does rest on the changes occurring during the colonial period and particularly the influence of colonialism and incorporation into a capitalist marketplace, it wishes to do so in a manner which recognizes this is not the only major change which occurred to the dietary patterns of both communities and should not be viewed as a progression or development towards modernity.

3.1 Research on the Kikuyu

Research on changes in Kikuyu consumption patterns was based on various nutrition studies carried out during the 1920's and 1940's. The Orr and Gilk's study surfaces as the most famous of these studies in its attempt to bridge the gaps between diet, nutritional intake, and health by chronicling the differences in diet between the Kikuyu and Maasai communities. This study was published in 1931 and reflects information gathered in the late 1920's. Other nutritional studies that were consulted include those conducted by N. Humphrey in 1945, T. Farnsworth-Anderson in 1937, and C.R. Philip in 1943 and 1947. These were found in the *East African Medical*

Journal as well as colonial reports on nutrition and diet from the corresponding periods and were conducted by medical officers and colonial personnel. Such journal articles were obtained from the *London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine* as well as the medical collection at the *University College of London*.

Although extremely helpful in detailing foodstuffs consumed at the time of investigation, a cautionary approach was taken concerning colonial official's conception of 'traditional' Kikuyu diet as well as impressions of nutrition during the time period which concentrated greatly on meat and milk consumption. For example, Orr and Gilk's study assumed the Kikuyu diet they documented was in its original state and that an original stable state of indigenous diet existed. In contrast, more recent studies suggest the predominance of maize as a staple as well as deficiencies in meat and vegetables are recent dietary phenomenon rather than previous features of Kikuyu diet. For this reason, section 3.1 regarding consumption patterns from 1890 to 1914 does not assume to be representative of Kikuyu diet before European contact but rather attempts to portray diet as it was at the beginning of European contact. This ambiguity surrounding diet before European contact occurs as a general problem as most sources regarding Kikuyu nutrition and diet were written and researched when European contact had already been made. Further note should be made in regards to the lack of nutrition studies conducted during the post-war period. While emphasis remains on the period of dietary transition during the interwar period, the post-war period was kept separate in order to signal the continuation of the process of food transitions as well as to avoid portraying dietary change as a switch from "traditional" dietary patterns to "non-traditional" ones. Instead, this paper conceptualizes this shift as occurring over an extended period of time, which continues to change today, and which does not . This shift of

dietary habits was also enriched with research gained from anthropological studies, first-hand accounts of interactions by missionaries and colonial officials, as well as historical and sociological studies of the Kikuyu.

3.2 Research on the Maasai

The Orr and Gilks' study also provided a starting point of interest regarding Maasai diet during the colonial period. However, research in medical journals on the state of nutrition of the Maasai, resources were much more limited than those conducted on the Kikuyu. As a result, the dietary account of the Maasai is drawn mainly from written records of European adventurers, colonial Agricultural and Veterinary Reports, and secondary anthropological studies. Similar to the Kikuyu study, caution was taken when approaching colonial records which tended to regard indigenous diet as simple, monotonous, and in need of improvement. Similar to research done on the Kikuyu, primary sources were used from the *Kew Gardens*, *the London School of Economics and Political Science*, and *the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London*.

One of the major challenges within research conducted about the Maasai particularly through colonial sources was the criss-cross of information available on the Maasai from both Kenya and Tanganyika. Because the Maasai were not contained within one national boundary, as was the case in many communities under colonial rule, research was necessary from both Kenyan and Tanganyikan sources. However, due to time constraints the majority of the research conducted was taken from Tanganyikan sources. The major weakness with this approach is that Veterinary Reports were consulted from Tanganyika but not from Kenya. The examination of Kenyan

Veterinary Journals would have been a valuable addition although time restraints made the examination of both sets of Veterinary Records impractical. Furthermore, it was not until the author's arrival back in Canada and further development of the thesis that the realization came as to how valuable this contribution might have been. As a result, other resources and research attempt to make up for this oversight and perhaps a future extension of this project could stretch to include this resource.

A second challenge which occurred during the research period on changing Maasai diet, was the lack of colonial health and nutritional studies conducted on the Maasai in comparison to those done concerning the Kikuyu. While suggestions concerning why this was the case surface later within this study, there is a clear difference in the type of research used to support conclusions about Maasai diet. More information on dietary patterns of the Maasai was drawn from colonial explorers as well as contemporary secondary historical studies rather than by colonial nutritional studies. The information gathered from these sources was complimented by studies such as those completed by Kaj Arhem which detail Maasai diet in more recent times. Details from these studies were used to further explain dietary trends observed within primary sources.

Lastly, this project certainly recognizes the limitations of using colonial sources as the focal point for much of the research done. As such, this project is a beginning point which necessitates further research on the subject matter. Colonial sources were used as a starting point because they allow for an exploration of how colonial perspective and policy influenced diet during this time period. While caution was taken in reviewing the attitudes and conclusions about diet within colonial records and nutritional studies, it was also recognized that some value

was to be retained from these sources. It was in this spirit that research was conducted. Furthermore, the two primary sources which provided a particularly interesting starting point were the Kenyan and Tanganyikan Agricultural and Veterinary Records because, as a whole, they had not been previously used to consider the dietary patterns and changes of the Kikuyu and Maasai. While in many ways, the exercise of reading through the extent of these colonial records alongside other primary and secondary sources proved to be much more than a two year project, the information gathered contributes to an emerging dialogue on the history of diet as well as contributing to the limited research already conducted on the dietary patterns of the Kikuyu and Maasai.

4.0 Dietary Transitions of the Kikuyu

Dietary trends in East Africa throughout the colonial period can be generalized as a move from self-sufficiency to a decrease of food security. This decrease in food security is reflected in an increased dependency on outside food sources for many native populations. Other common dietary trends during the colonial period in East Africa include food shortages, a decreasing amount of millet and sorghum, an increasing amount of white maize, a decreasing amount of wild leaves, fruits and vegetables, an increasing amount of European vegetables, as well as the replacement of breakfast foods by tea.¹¹ The following section looks more specifically at how the diet of the Kikuyu changed during the colonial period and whether these themes hold true for the agricultural Kikuyu population of Kenya. Section five then moves to discuss whether these themes are relevant in relation to the Maasai, a pastoral community located in Tanganyika and

¹¹ Ulrich S. Oltersdorf. "Comparison of Nutrient Intakes in East Africa," *The Human Biology of Environmental Change: Proceedings of a Conference Held in Blantyre, Malawi*. April 5-12, 1971.
<http://apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/Africa/Comparison%20of%20nutrient%20intake%20in%20East%20African.pdf>

Kenya. Establishing an outline of these changes will then provide the basis for a discussion on why these changes may have taken place.

4.1 Initial Conquest 1890-1914

An overarching picture of Kikuyu diet during the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century shows that consumption patterns revolved around particular annual and perennial staple crops, various vegetables and fruits, and animal products such as milk and meat. This overview also reveals differences in male and female consumption patterns as well as practices which included earth eating and consumption of plant ash. During the early colonial conquest, staple food crops included millet (*mwere*) as well as different varieties of indigenous beans such as tree peas (*njogo*) and *njahe*, a nourishing bean eaten mostly by women after child birth.¹² These three crops were planted in rotation in order to maintain soil fertility and take best advantage of the long and short seasons of rain. Roots such as sweet potatoes (*ngwali*) were eaten as staple perennials and comprised part of rotational farming methods.¹³ Alongside sweet potatoes, bananas (*marigu*), consisting of many varieties, were the other main perennial which formed a major part of Kikuyu diet.¹⁴

These staple crops were complimented by various wild greens including *hatha*, a type of wild nettle, found in the forest and cultivated by women in small patches outside of huts, as well as *terere* and *togita*, annual herbs which were plentiful six to eight weeks before the start of each

¹² T. Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", *East African Medical Journal*. XIV. (1937), p.122; Claire C. Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890-1990*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), p.42

¹³ Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.123; N. Humphrey, *Thoughts on the Foundations of Future Prosperity in the Kikuyu Lands*, (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1945), p.30

¹⁴ Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.123; Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.337

rainy season.¹⁵ In addition, wild fruits and berries were gathered from uncultivated land and forests including wild fig (*nguyu*), *nathi*, *ngambura*, *ndare*, *matuya*, and *mbiru*.¹⁶ This quota of green leaves, legumes, and fruits provided particularly valuable nutritional elements such as calcium and Vitamin C enhancing Kikuyu diet.¹⁷ Other foodstuffs included sorghum, various types of peas such as cow peas (*mathoroko*), *thoroko*, and *thuu*, sugar cane, coloured maize and yams (*ikwa*).¹⁸ The main meal, called *irio*, consisted of millet, various beans, green leaves, coloured maize, sweet potatoes, yams, and other wild vegetables boiled, mixed and cooked with mashed banana.¹⁹ *Ukuru*, a type of gruel, comprised a second regular dish composed of millet flour.²⁰

Livestock products such as meat and milk made up a third component of Kikuyu consumption during this period. Most evidence during this period tells not only of ritual slaughters of goats and sheep but of the consumption of these animals after each slaughter was performed.²¹ The regularity with which sheep and goats were slaughtered suggests the consumption of meat during this period was a common part of the diet. Most authors note the continuity with which such sacrifices were performed during a wide range of events such as religious ceremonies, dowry payments, territorial settlements, judicial sentencing, and child naming.²² While elders may have received the largest portions of meat, all segments of the population participated in

¹⁵ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.28; Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.339

¹⁶ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.28; Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.339

¹⁷ Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.123

¹⁸ Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.337

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.339

²⁰ Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.123121

²¹ C. Cagnolo, *The Akikuyu*, (Nyeri: Mission Printing School, 1933), p.27; Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p.17; Leakey, *Mau Mau and the Kikuyu*, p.41; Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.339

²² Cynthia Brantley, "Kikuyu-Maasai Nutrition and Colonial Science: The Orr and Gilk Study in Late 1920s Kenya Revisited", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 30:1 (1997), p.77; Cagnolo, *The Akikuyu*, p.27; Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p.17; Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu*, p.107; Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.339; Scoresby W. Routledge and Katherine Routledge, *With a Prehistoric People: the Akikuyu of British East Africa: Being some Account of the Method of Life and Mode of Thought Found Existent Amongst a Nation on its First Contact with European Civilization*, (London: Arnold, 1910), p.65

consuming these regular, ritualistic, religious and cultural slaughters.²³ Records of meat feasts also appear amongst the literature including Farnworth-Anderson's account of the custom of *kirugu* where a number of men buy an ox, take it to an isolated place, slaughter it, and consume its meat.²⁴ In addition to meat, milk consumption both fresh and soured is noted alongside the drinking of warm blood either on its own or mixed with fresh milk.²⁵ While exact figures of the quantities of milk and meat consumed do not exist, most studies suggest that while meat was not the dominant factor in Kikuyu diet, its consumption was at the very least adequate – adding required protein and other nutritional elements to the Kikuyu diet.

Differences between male and female diets centered on the addition of more green leafs and legumes to women's diets as well as different eating patterns prevalent among pregnant and lactating women.²⁶ For example, pregnant women added ash from burning certain swamp plants or wood ash from the fire to their food during pregnancy as well as natural salt earths such as *munyu*.²⁷ In addition they consumed calcium rich beans *njahe* which were associated with fertility and nutritional benefits particularly important during pregnancy and for fertility.²⁸ Dirt eating also occurred and was most common with women during pregnancy.²⁹ In this way, Kikuyu women's diet was particularly effective during pregnancy and lactation and, in general, more varied and higher in calcium than that of Kikuyu men.³⁰ With this combination of food crops and animal products, Taylor concludes that the Kikuyu diet at this time “appears to have

²³ Brantley, “Kikuyu-Maasai Nutrition”, p.77; Taylor, “Changing Food Habits”, p.339

²⁴ Farnsworth-Anderson, “Kikuyu Diet”, p.124

²⁵ Brantley, “Kikuyu-Maasai Nutrition”, p.77; Farnsworth-Anderson, “Kikuyu Diet”, p.125; Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p.18

²⁶ Brantley, “Kikuyu-Maasai Nutrition”, p.65

²⁷ Taylor, “Changing Food Habits”, p.340

²⁸ C.R. Philip, “Nutrition in Kenya: Notes on the State of Nutrition of African Children”, *East African Medical Journal* XX,vii. (1943), p.230; Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way: Women, Men and Trade in the Nairobi Area, 1890-1990* p.42; Taylor, “Changing Food Habits in Kikuyuland”, p.340

²⁹ J. Foster, “Pica”, *The Kenya and East Africa Medical* 4:3 (June 1927), p.1

³⁰ Brantley, “Kikuyu-Maasai Nutrition”, p.65

contained all the essential nutrients and there is little evidence to suggest that the Kikuyu, prior to European contact, were not well fed”.³¹

4.2 Interwar Period 1914-1950

During the interwar period, a variety of nutritional studies as well as agricultural records shed light onto three major changes in Kikuyu food consumption. The first change occurred in the shift from millet to maize as the predominant staple crop.³² The second occurred in regards to a decrease in the amount of green vegetables consumed during the same period in which the production of European vegetables and potatoes were increasingly grown. The third is found in the decreasing level of meat consumed.

Published in 1931, the Orr and Gilk’s report highlights the dominant place of maize in the Kikuyu diet by the end of the 1920’s. Their findings state that the main meal of *irio* was composed of maize, legumes, and bananas while *ucuru* was composed of millet flour and water.³³ At this time, millet still played a major role in Kikuyu diet but shared dominance with maize. Together, maize and millet made up 60% of the male Kikuyu diet.³⁴ According to Orr and Gilk, a further 25% of the diet was made up of sweet potatoes.³⁵ Women’s diets showed similar dominance of these three crops but included more legumes, plantains and green leaves.³⁶ By 1932, Agricultural Officers were reporting the diminishing cultivation of millet crops with

³¹ Taylor, “Changing Food Habits”, p.341

³² This appears to be a trend that occurred in other Kenyan agricultural communities as well. For example, Meru agriculture also experienced a shift to maize production and consumption as a new staple food as well as the introduction of new varieties of beans. By the early 1950s, maize had become one of the most important crops exported by the Meru. See Frank Edward Bernard. *East of Mount Kenya: Meru Agriculture in Transition*. (Munich: Weltforum Verlag, 1972), pp81-82.

³³ J. B. Orr and J. L. Gilk “Studies of Nutrition: The Physique and Health of Two African Tribes,” *Privy Council: Medical Research Council*. The Dietetics Committee of the Economic Advisory Council. Special Report Series, No. 155. (London, 1931), p.26

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 21

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *Ibid.*

maize and wheat crops taking their place and by the 1940's, dietary records of the Kikuyu no longer document the use of millet as a main staple.³⁷ In 1943, Philip notes that millet was “going out of fashion” and that white maize had replaced indigenous coloured varieties.³⁸ Furthermore, maize was not only replacing millet but overtaking staple beans such as the nutritionally rich *njahe*.³⁹ In 1945, Humphrey concludes that this shift from millet and beans to maize lead to calcium deficiencies as well as a poorer diet in general while Philip suggests this transition caused a decrease in Vitamin A.⁴⁰ Humphrey viewed the loss of indigenous bean varieties as a particularly “grave misfortune” due to their unusually high nutritional value.⁴¹ With both millet and traditional bean varieties surpassed by white maize by the end of the 1940's, both Humphrey and Philip share a depreciating opinion of white maize emphasizing its nutritional deficiencies in comparison to previous indigenous staples as well as coloured maize.⁴² During this period, some colonial officials found white maize so much less satisfactory than previous staples that they suggested that the wrong policy choice had been made in regards to introducing white maize into the reserves and, as a result, that the policy should be reversed.⁴³

In addition to decreasing nutritional levels as a result of shifts in staple crop, a decline in indigenous greens also contributed to lowered nutritional composition of Kikuyu diets. Although Orr and Gilk record liberal amounts of legumes and green leaves eaten by Kikuyu women in the late 1920's, they still recommended an increase in the consumption of green

³⁷ AR 1932, p.601; Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.36; Philip, “Nutrition in Kenya”, p.227

³⁸ Philip, “Nutrition in Kenya”, p.231

³⁹ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.36; Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.40; AR 1948, p.60

⁴⁰ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.36; Philip, “Nutrition in Kenya”, p.321-322

⁴¹ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.36

⁴² A.R. Paterson, “Health and Agriculture”, *East African Medical Journal*. XX:vi. (1943), p.196; Philip, “Nutrition in Kenya”, p.231; Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.36

⁴³ Paterson, “Health and Agriculture”, p.196

vegetable during this period.⁴⁴ By the early 1940's however the lack of green leaves and legumes is clear. Philip records this deficiency describing the impact as lowering Kikuyu intake of Vitamins A, B2, and C as well as calcium, phosphorus and iron.⁴⁵ Humphrey corroborates this point recording a considerable change in the consumption of leafy vegetables which, previously, had always been included in daily food except in incredibly dry periods but which in 1945 had shrunk to a shadow of their former supply.⁴⁶ As the amount of *terrere* and *togotia* decreased, Humphrey comments that even the once prevalent presence of *hatha* was waning; he labels the loss of *hatha* as unfortunate and comments that "it undoubtedly would be all to the good if every household had once again its own carefully tended patch in the garden compound".⁴⁷

Ironically, production of European vegetables was on the increase in Kikuyu regions but mostly as cash crops or as food for Europeans living in Nairobi rather than as a foodstuff consumed by Kikuyu.⁴⁸ Although this influx of vegetables may have been able to supplement some of the necessary nutritional elements now lacking as a result of the decrease in indigenous greens and legumes, it was unable to reach those who needed it most. While the majority of European vegetables were not included in the Kikuyu diet during the colonial period, high yielding varieties of European potatoes and European beans such as Haricot and French beans did become substantially incorporated into Kikuyu diet.⁴⁹ Like maize, these crops also replaced indigenous produce. European potatoes were grown on a large scale by the late 1920's when they became a

⁴⁴ Orr and Gilk, "Studies of Nutrition," p.11-12

⁴⁵ Philip, "Nutrition in Kenya", p.231

⁴⁶ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.35

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p.35

⁴⁸ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.35; Philip, "Nutrition in Kenya", p.231

⁴⁹ Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.343

popular food crop and by the 1930's they had been incorporated as a common ingredient in *irio*, the main meal prepared by the Kikuyu.⁵⁰

While indigenous greens declined, so did the quantity of meat being consumed by the Kikuyu. Already in the 1930's Orr and Gilk report that Kikuyu agriculturalists were chiefly vegetarian consuming little cows' milk and meat.⁵¹ Anderson reports that the intake of milk had been reduced due to the large acreage occupied by economic crops such as wattle and maize which made grazing lands scarce and forced Kikuyu to graze their cattle at a distance from their homes while Humphrey affirms the continuation of this trend stating that milk consumption was inadequate even in households wealthy enough to afford proper intake and that Kikuyu diet was essentially vegetarian.⁵² As with milk, by 1943, meat was "so infrequently eaten by the masses that the intake is considered negligible".⁵³ These decreases in both meat and milk, are suggested to have led to the decline of nutritional elements in Kikuyu diets such as animal proteins, fats, and calcium.⁵⁴

4.3 Post-War Period 1948-1960

As noted previously, no dietary studies conducted by colonial personnel are available for this period. However, production records and historical accounts suggest that maize continued to dominate food consumption patterns during this period while chickpeas, rice, and cabbage became items which were added to Kikuyu diet.⁵⁵ Similarly, neither millet consumption or traditional bean consumption returned to its former prominence in Kikuyu diet. By the end of

⁵⁰ AR 1929, p.609; Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.125

⁵¹ Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.21

⁵² Humphrey, *Thoughts*, p.36; Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.125

⁵³ Philip, "Nutrition in Kenya", p.231

⁵⁴ Farnsworth-Anderson, "Kikuyu Diet", p.125

⁵⁵ Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.59

the 1950s beans are reported to have slipped from a regular item of consumption to almost a luxury food item.⁵⁶ Increased amounts of processed foods were available such as bread, tea, sugar, and coffee but most natives remained unable to purchase these things in any substantial quantity as had been the case in previous decades. Generally, no evidence points towards improvements in diet with decreasing soil fertility, increasing population, and the conflict between Mau Mau and colonial forces for the majority of the 1950's.⁵⁷

5.0 Dietary Transitions in Maasai Society

5.1 Initial Colonial Conquest: German Rule from 1880 to 1919

At the time of German conquest, the Maasai were almost exclusively pastoralists subsisting largely on the milk, meat, and blood of their herds. European explorers at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century report the main dietary staples of the Maasai as animal flesh and animal products such as milk and blood.⁵⁸ The first written description of dietary patterns of the Maasai records the communities' distaste of agriculture and the belief that "the nourishment afforded by cereals enfeebles" and were only suited to inferior communities.⁵⁹ In 1898, Lord Lugard expressed his surprise that the Maasai were "content with the meat of their cattle for food and hides for dress" and that even though many wild animals mingled with their herds, the Maasai did not hunt these animals.⁶⁰ Milk, butter, honey, and meat from cattle, goats,

⁵⁶ Ibid., p.61

⁵⁷ From 1953 to 1960 the Kenyan colonial government declared a state of emergency due to an uprising of native protest. These protestors, the Mau Mau, were based in the Kikuyu regions and sought to reclaim traditional lands as well as push for self government. Hostilities between the colonial government and the Mau Mau plagued most of the decade but ended in native dissent being suppressed by colonial force.

⁵⁸ William Walter Augustine Fitzgerald, *Travels in the Coastlands of British East Africa and the Islands of Zanzibar and Pemba: their Agri Resources and General Characteristics*. (London: Chapman and Hal, Ltd., 1898); A.C. Hollis, *The Maasai: Their Language and Folklore*, (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1905) pp317-319.

⁵⁹ Dr. Krafp (1860) quoted by B.K. Ole Kantai, "Forward" in S.S. Ole Sankan, *The Masai*. (East African Literature Bureau: Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala, 1971). pxix

⁶⁰ F.D. Lugard, *The rise of our east African empire: early efforts in Nyasaland and Uganda: Vol. I*. (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1898).

and sheep constituted the main staples.⁶¹ In addition to these general dietary patterns, Maasai diet was stratified within the society. Male warriors called *ilmurran* consumed only the dietary ideal of the Maasai which centered almost exclusively on blood, milk, and meat.

Generally, cow's milk was consumed although in times of shortage women and children also consumed milk from small stock.⁶² Milk was consumed either fresh, soured, or mixed with blood.⁶³ It was also fermented and churned until a type of yoghurt and ghee (*engrno*) was produced and the latter used to feed infants.⁶⁴ Blood was used and consumed on the occasion of special ceremonies and acquired by "darting a healthy animal's neck veins".⁶⁵ Blood was mixed with fresh milk and either cooked using a special method of preparation to produce a dish called *ilmurra* or mixed with oil and herbs and used as a medicine.⁶⁶ In addition to the staple foods of milk and blood, meat was boiled in a soup (*imortori*), fried, or roasted on a wood fire during important ceremonies.⁶⁷ The soup comprised another major segment of Maasai diet as well as providing food for those who were sick.⁶⁸ Soup was prepared by boiling cows' or goats' meat with the bark or roots of certain plants.⁶⁹ In addition to milk, blood, and meat, diet was supplemented with wild vegetation.⁷⁰ Wild plant foods including fruit, roots, tubers, and plant gums and resins, were generally consumed as a snack and collected by women and children in

⁶¹ B.K Ole Kantai, "Forward" pxix.

⁶² Kaj Arhem, "Milk, Meat and Blood: Diet as a Cultural Code Among the Pastoral Maasai" *Working Papers in African Studies No 35*, (University of Uppsala: African Studies Programme, Dept of Cultural Anthropology, 1987) p6.

⁶³ Maryam Imbuni, Henry Saitabaur, and Patrick Maundu. *Maasai Diet: A Cultural Perspective of Food in a Pastoral Community*. 2005. Web. 25 Mar 2009. <http://apjcn.nhri.org.tw/server/Africa/Maasai%20diet.pdf> p1

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

the forest or while herding animals.⁷¹ Lastly, honey was consumed both in its natural form as well as used in brewing beer.⁷² Children and elders generally consumed this wild honey while only elder men were allowed to drink honey-wine and beer.⁷³

While the centrality of animal products in Maasai diet is not disputed, their attitude towards grains, vegetables, and other non-animal products draws some contention during this time period. Almost all colonial European records of Maasai diet emphasize Maasai aversion to non-animal products and record trading for other food products as occurring only when animal products were scarce and during times of starvation. However, other reports record regular trade and trading relations between pastoral and agrarian communities.⁷⁴ For example, Hodgson suggests that most Maasai – with the exception of the *ilmurran* who adhered to strict dietary restraints – regularly traded for grains and other foodstuffs to supplement their diets.⁷⁵ While vegetarian food traded was particularly important in supplementing Maasai diet in times of scarcity and during the dry season, these non-animal products were consistent parts of Maasai diet rather than only a safeguard in times of need. Vegetables and grain supplements were more frequently consumed by women and children than the male population who attached more importance to maintaining the ideal diet – especially among the *ilmurran* of the community.

By the turn of the century, Maasai herds appear to have been decreasing as a result of cattle dying from exposure to diseases such as Rinderpest and colonial regulations barring Maasai raids

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Hollis, *The Maasai*, pp318-319.

⁷⁴ Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu*, p.131; Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*, p.50

⁷⁵ Dorothy Hodgson, "Pastoralism, Patriarchy, and History: Changing Gender Relations Among Maasai in Tanganyika, 1890-1940," *Journal of African History*. 40 (1999) pp41-65.

on neighbouring herds.⁷⁶ In 1905, Hollis writes that in previous years when the Maasai possessed large numbers of cattle they ate “no other kind of food, but nowadays they often have to eat savage’s food, such as maize, rice, bananas, and cereals, for they no longer own the vast herds which they formerly possessed”.⁷⁷ Similarly, another European recorded in 1916 that while cattle, sheep, and goats used to be the only means of living amongst the Maasai, that this was no longer the case by the beginning of the 20th century.⁷⁸ Instead, women and children mostly consumed milk as well some grain from agricultural neighbours and meat only on great occasions.⁷⁹ Warriors’ diets still were made up of milk, blood, and meat but the number of cattle owned by Maasai was so diminished that Maasai were increasingly eating a more vegetarian diet reported to be similar to the Kikuyu.⁸⁰

While the arrival of the colonial presence may have contributed to a decreasing ability of the Maasai to consume their ideal diet of meat, milk, and blood, this unavailability does not appear to be out of the ordinary. In times of drought or disease prior to European contact, it seems plausible that Maasai herds would decrease in number leading to a necessary increased reliance on vegetable and staple crop foods such as millet. These foods were available through extensive regional and interregional trading networks in which various agrarian and pastoral communities participated. Their varying concentrations on animals and crops was complimentary as well as providing options for either type of community to rely on the other in times of bad harvest or animal disease.

⁷⁶ Lugard *Vol. I*; Ethel Youngusband, *Glimpses of East Africa and Zanzibar*. (London: John Long, Limited, 1910), p76

⁷⁷ Hollis, *The Maasai*, p319

⁷⁸ Youngusband, *Glimpses*, p78.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p76.

5.2 British Colonial Rule 1920-1963

John Roscoe writes in 1921 that while the Maasai were once self-sufficient in supplying their own food and clothes to the point they were independent of foreign associations and not pressed to maintain friendly relations with their neighbours, that situations of poverty and almost starvation had forced them to either adopt a primarily vegetarian diet or to die.⁸¹ Roscoe notes that

there can be little doubt that they would have recovered their old spirit of independence had not the British arrived on the scene at the time of their extreme need and given them new motives in life, while they were still in a pliable condition, needing a helpful hand to raise them from poverty.⁸²

The adoption of a primarily vegetarian diet increased dependence on agricultural products such as maize, beans, and potatoes used in porridge and eaten for breakfast and sometimes supper.⁸³

The vegetarian part of the Maasai diet would have also been changing along with that of the agriculturalists around them such as the Kikuyu who faced aggressive campaigns promoting the production of grains such as white maize. As mentioned before these were generally less nutritious than previous staple grains such as maize and millet.

Although this changing of vegetarian staples is not generally mentioned in regards to the Maasai it seems probable to assume that the Maasai were also affected by changes in staple grain products which provided decreased nutrition in times of increased need such as the transition from millet to white maize experienced by the Kikuyu. Although changes in the types of grain

⁸¹ John Roscoe, *Twenty-Five Years in East Africa*, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1921) pp266-267.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p267

⁸³ Imbumi, *Maasai Diet*, p1

consumed seem probable, the main staples of Maasai diet of meat and milk remained the same as long as they had access to them. Even though access was sometimes restricted to these items for a variety of reasons, the Maasai generally seemed to have possessed the ability to regain access to these products once their context allowed for this.

However, while access to these dietary staples had a tendency to be cyclical, it is likely that each time the Maasai managed to increase their access to these staples that the quantity of these staples – particularly those available to the Maasai – was on the decrease. For example, in 1948, the colonial administration reported that most towns in the colony were “woefully short of milk and dairy products”.⁸⁴ Similarly in 1949, officials noted the lack of fresh butter and cheese products as a result of supplies of fresh milk in the Northern Province which were barely able to meet demand; as a result retailers were forced to import butter from Kenya.⁸⁵ By the 1950s came the “realization that a rapidly expanding population of over 8,000,000 humans cannot rely increasingly on the local livestock population of 6,764,000 cattle, 2,727,000 sheep, and 3,887,000 goats for animal protein foods is inescapable. Not only must the level of production of these animals be raised but an increase in numbers is essential”.⁸⁶

However, while it seems clear that meat and milk were no longer in abundance, some Maasai were able to remain close to their herds affording better access to milk and meat products than their surrounding agrarian and urban neighbours. This access was due at least in part to colonial policies which sought to increase meat and milk production and therefore which looked at some pastoral populations to continue producing animal products. While many Maasai were able to

⁸⁴ VR 1948, p21.

⁸⁵ VR 1949, p19.

⁸⁶ VR 1955, p31.

retain access to their herds, and their dietary staples of milk, meat, and blood, they did so in an increasingly resource-competitive environment and amongst an increasing population who were losing access to food production as well as amongst colonial policy which saw Maasai herds as commodities to be sold rather than a food source to be protected, sustained, and worshipped.

5.3 Post-War and Independence 1950-1960s

In the 1960's the Maasai remained a pastoral community with a continued focus on animal products as their main nutrient sources. A nutritional report done in the late 1960's describes the Masai as entirely dependent on their cattle with adults and children getting the majority of their calories from milk.⁸⁷ However, Kaj Arhem describes dietary changes of the Maasai in the post-colonial period as replacing blood with maize gruel – a mixture of milk with water and maize flour which is boiled into gruel – due to scarcity of milk.⁸⁸ Although more detailed dietary and nutritional accounts of the Maasai diet is significantly lacking in comparison to the Kikuyu diet, it appears that the Masai diet remained focused on dietary staples such as milk, meat, and blood. While these were certainly supplemented, especially in time of need, with the vegetables and grains it appears that the dietary ideal of the Maasai remained the key pillar around which their dietary consumption was based throughout the colonial period. Even though animal products as a food source may have been decreasing in the quantity available, this was not necessarily a new phenomenon. Furthermore, milk, meat, and blood were never replaced by another single or group of staple products.

⁸⁷ M.C. Latham with assistance from F.J. Stare "World Review Nutrition Diet" *Nutritional Studies in Tanzania (Tanganyika)* Department of Nutrition, Harvard University, Boston, USA. 7 (1967), pp 21, 34-35

⁸⁸ Arhem, *Meat, Milk, and Blood*, pp6-7

6. Structural Influences on Diet: Introduction of New Economic Structures and Incorporation into the World Capitalist Market

Three main dietary shifts stand out within the Kikuyu community during the colonial period.

These three main shifts include the replacement of millet and beans as staple crops by maize as *the* staple crop, a drastic decrease in the consumption of indigenous leafy greens and legumes, and another drastic decrease in the consumption of animal products, particularly meat and milk.

Similarly the Maasai also experienced a decrease in the amount of animal products they consumed during the colonial period. In place of meat and milk food products, the Maasai relied increasingly on grains and vegetables.

While both the Maasai and Kikuyu share commonalities in dietary changes one stark difference sticks out. The Maasai continued their pastoral existence which revolved around milk and meat as staple dietary products whereas the staple products in the Kikuyu diet (millet and beans) were replaced by white maize. While the lack of milk and meat in the Maasai diet was supplemented by agricultural produce, this was not a new phenomenon; rather, this supplementation was used regularly as a coping mechanism during times of scarcity. Although consumption of animal products decreased within Maasai diet, these staple products do not seem to have been replaced by other staples in the long term. This next section seeks to ask why these changes in diet occurred as well as why the Kikuyu experienced a total replacement of their staple foods while the Maasai retained the core pillars of their diet.

Structurally, these changes were fundamentally influenced by economic transitions within both Kenyan and Tanganyikan economies. At the centre of these structural changes to colonies' economies was the rearrangement of trade in order to produce and extract profit from the colony.

Profit generated from both external and internal trade required the incorporation of the colony into western capitalist economic structures as well as the creation of an economy based on export. In order to create such an economy, the production of desirable surplus goods was necessary as well as a sufficient labour force to produce these products. In order for both surplus and labour to be achieved, the colonial administration attempted to restructure local economies through incentives and compulsions. These included the introduction of cash and cash transactions, the promotion of certain products and their sale, and the creation of marketing boards and regulations which served to control trade and trading relationships.

Two clarifications must be made at this point in order to ensure that no misunderstandings occur as to what was being introduced within the colonies and what types of changes were encouraged to occur. First, the changes brought by the introduction of different economic structures by the colonial administration were not entirely new. It has been argued in several places that capitalist activity was occurring in East Africa before the arrival of westerners. Arguments have been made which suggest that several systems of regional trade and capitalist activities existed outside of the western world prior to colonial contact.⁸⁹ Within this system, communities such as the Maasai showed signs of Smithian growth as they specialized in pastoral activities and traded animal products such as meat, milk, and hides for agricultural produce in regional trading networks. Although a certain amount of surplus available for trade is apparent during the pre-colonial era, the volume of this trade was not large enough to support an economic system which was able to grow beyond a regional scale. In this way, the extent to which capitalist activity

⁸⁹ See A.G. Frank and B. Gills, "Five Thousand Year World System in Theory and Praxis" R. Denemark, J. Friedman, Barry K. Gills, and George Modelski. (eds), *World System History: The Social Science of Long Term Change*, (New York: Routledge, 2000); Janet Abu-Lughod, "Discontinuities and Persistence: One World System of a Succession of Systems?" A.G. Frank and B. Gills (eds), *The World System: Five Hundred Years of Five Thousand?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993); Immanuel Wallerstein, "World System Versus World-Systems" A.G. Frank and B. Gills (eds), *The World System: Five Hundred Years of Five Thousand?* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993)

influenced political, social, and economic spheres was limited and existed separately from the demands of a larger western-dominated capitalist market. While capitalist activity was in existence before the introduction of colonialism, a systematic capitalist infrastructure and overarching ideology were not the driving forces behind economic interactions. Instead, activities which can be classified as capitalist existed within local political, social, and economic contexts.

Secondly, the introduction of different economic structures by colonial forces was not entirely capitalist-based both in theory and in practice. The introduction of colonial economic structures placed more value on generating profit for the metropole than on introducing capitalist structures. While a free market ideology may have been prevalent at some levels, free market practises was not encouraged with many European settlers receiving subsidies and benefits that native producers did not. In this way, the Europeans transplanted parts of capitalist economic structures which matched their own economic goals but which broadly failed to include local communities and individuals.⁹⁰ However, profit generation by a colony depended on that colony's ability to be incorporated into the western capitalist market. This was generally accomplished through the promotion of a strong external export economy. Although the means of doing this were not always achieved by adopting capitalist structures within the colonies' economies, the end point was certainly to incorporate these colonies into a larger capitalist "world" market as directed by western forces. In these ways, the existence of certain types of capitalist behaviour may be observed within some East African communities; however, these capitalist behaviours were not set within nor did they make up a broader capitalist system. Both

⁹⁰ This type of failed incorporation of marginalized populations is in many ways a part or a product of capitalism but in theory it is not a capitalist structure in itself.

of these clarifications seek to provide a more complex understanding of existing economic structures as well as suggesting that capitalist activities are not necessarily unique to the western world nor entirely new to other societies.

6.1 Creation of a Monetary Economy

Previous to colonialism, both Kikuyu and Maasai communities traded food products, livestock, livestock products and a variety of consumer goods. Livestock, especially cattle, served as the currency within these interregional trading networks.⁹¹ As a result, livestock served as a means of accumulation, investment, and transfer of wealth for both communities and provided increased security in the context of a bad harvest or an epidemic amongst herds. The ability of the Kikuyu and Maasai to provide for themselves within regional and interregional trading networks allowed them to be self-sufficient but also to have access to other food stuffs and means of accessing it through the accumulation of cattle and the existence of trade. As such, livestock as a currency provided a banking mechanism in difficult times in that it could be traded for necessary food products. Specialization by the Kikuyu in agriculture and the Maasai in pastoralism allowed for one community to experience times of scarcity in their food production without going hungry. This symbiosis of production and trade through livestock allowed the both communities to be self-sufficient, even in times of scarcity.

From the colonial viewpoint, a monetized economy was desirable as the basis for new economic structures which used currency instead of trade and barter. It was desirable because it provided a way in which to force local populations to incorporate themselves into new colonial economic structures which sought to produce a surplus which would generate profit for the metropole.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.60

Colonial policy sought to incorporate local populations into colonial economic structures through the installation and payment of taxes and other fees to the colonial administration. This new monetary currency could be gained through either selling one's labour or producing and selling desirable goods therefore forcing local populations into the labour force or into surplus production rather than subsistence production supported by barter made possible through regional trading networks. A cash economy would also encourage those who had the resources to produce and sell enough of their products to purchase the goods they needed within the cash economy. Those who were unable to produce enough products to sell would be coerced into the labour force in order to participate in this new cash economy

Neither the Kikuyu nor the Maasai had reason to participate within the colonial monetary system if they were able to be self-sufficient particularly in regards to their daily food intake. If the Maasai were incorporated into the cash economy and became dependent on cash as a means to buy other goods and as a way to acquire a certain type of wealth, then they would, in turn, have incentive to sell their cattle or cattle products which the colonial administration wanted for export and internal trade. If the Kikuyu were incorporated into the cash economy and became dependent on cash as a means of acquiring necessary products, they too would have to either sell their labour or sell agricultural products suitable for sale on local, national, or international markets.

The colonial administration used several methods to install this type of monetary economy within their colonies. These included both incentives and the use of force to incorporate communities into monetary structures in which cash transactions replaced barter and trade as

well as promoting new conceptions of wealth. The colonial government used taxation as a primary avenue to coerce Maasai and Kikuyu communities into selling their livestock as well as promoting the perception of cattle as commodities rather than forms of wealth, sustenance, and identity. Taxes included poll taxes on all circumcised Maasai men as well as a hut tax or ‘plural wives tax’ which covered ‘dependent’ women within the family home.⁹² These taxes ensured that the Maasai community needed access to cash in order to pay these taxes which were required by law by the colonial government. In Kikuyu communities, hut taxes were similarly used to force natives into the cash economy by either becoming wage labourers or producers of crops which could be sold for cash rather than traditional crops whose surplus was traded for other goods or livestock.

Education and colonial propaganda were also used to justify and convince local populations of the “rationality” of integrating into a monetary economy. For example, in 1933, the colonial administration in Tanganyika developed a ‘money campaign’ with the goal of educating Maasai men in the value of money and in order to encourage the adoption of trade through cash transactions.⁹³ Money was portrayed as a rational way to acquire and keep profit. In opposition, cattle were portrayed as banking mechanisms which were “subject to numerous diseases, suffered from lack of grass and water, were victim to the lion while the shilling knew none of these drawbacks”⁹⁴. While the pastoralist might point out that cattle can reproduce while money cannot, the colonial official answered that “the wiser plan was to retain only a moderate herd of productive stock and to convert all their unproductive beasts into ready money”.⁹⁵ In the case of

⁹² Hodgson, *Pastoralism, Patriarchy, and History*, p58

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p59

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp59-60

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p60

the Maasai in Tanganyika colonial officials believed that through the provision of markets for livestock and surplus animal products and the encouragement of proper methods of hide and skin preparation, these would both “let the native see for himself the monetary value of his cattle, sheep, and goats”.⁹⁶

Resistance to this structural rearrangement of the economy and the replacement of trade and bartering with currency is clear in the level of continued refusal of local communities of their incorporation into the monetary economy. In 1924, a colonial official reports that

as things are at present a native will contentedly go through life year in year out feasting his eyes on herds of large mature oxen reaching, then passing their prime, and gradually going down the hill to become less and less valuable. If, to raise his hut tax, to buy clothes for his wife and children, or to pay for the digging of his garden he finds it necessary to part with an ox, invariably the victim will be a yearling which is sold for a few shillings just at the time when the animal is at a stage of growth best suited to yield an adequate return for his grazing. It is this foolish practice which causes such a shortage of meat in the country, floods the market with immature skins, deters meat companies from engaging in commercial enterprise, and burdens the grazing lands with hosts of unproductive mouths in the dry season when grazing is scanty.⁹⁷

Within this quote we can see the colonial official’s frustration in the impartial incorporation of local individuals into the monetary economy. Instead of conducting all business by means of cash, many local people continued to use trade and barter as a primary means of exchange as well as to conceptualize wealth not monetary but rather in the size of their herds and their social status as determined by cultural and societal norms.

By the end of the 1920s the native stockowner’s attitude towards his herds continued to oppose that which was desired by the colonial administration. Overstocking was becoming a problem –

⁹⁶ VR 1935, p22

⁹⁷ VR 1924, p18

one which the administration attributed to the attitude of the native towards their stock. This attitude was characterized as the perception of livestock as a bank which would be able to be used in times of trouble and which also showed status and wealth to neighbours and family. In a study conducted in the late 1960s and 1970s, this type of attitude continued to be prevalent among the Loitokitok Maasai converted money from “their herds when the need was immediate rather than when the time was opportune”.⁹⁸ In this way, the Loitokitok sold their cattle not when market conditions were best and cattle could be sold for a higher price but rather they tended to wait until they needed money immediately.⁹⁹

In this way, native communities continued to perceive status and position as deriving directly from the number of livestock owned.¹⁰⁰ A Veterinary Report from 1927 explains that “no individual member of a pastoral tribe to-day regards the possession of the money equivalent of cattle as conferring on him the same degree of *heshima* or dignity as the cattle themselves”.¹⁰¹

In response, colonial opinion was that

education and added enlightenment will, no doubt, gradually surmount in due course what appears today to be almost impossible. The process of metamorphosis, from a state of lethargy or contented indifference to one of economical progress and energetic development of available resources, must necessarily be slow in the beginning.¹⁰²

In other words, the colonial administration considered the native individual’s lack of response to act within colonial economic structures a result of stupidity, backwardness, and laziness rather than active resistance to a certain way of life and colonial economic structures.

⁹⁸ Paul Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato: A Study of Rituals of Rebellion* (London: Manchester University Press for International African Institute, 1988) p23

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p23

¹⁰⁰ VR 1927, p35

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

Even in the 1950s, the successful incorporation of native populations into the monetary economy was dubious at best. Edward Twining notes the “African temperament and the conservative way he clings to old habits” in that

he has a very limited use for cash, his amusements are simple, and he possesses a natural genius for enjoying his leisure. It is only by inducement that he can be persuaded to earn more, and it seems that it would be a great benefit to Africans generally if the inducements could take the form of providing cheap goods which would ease the burden of the overworked African housewife. A quiet and discreet inquiry into this problem is at present being undertaken. The supply of labour in Tanganyika is bound to undergo a number of changes as local development is accelerated and employers will do well to turn to these and other suggestions about which the Labour Dept. are prepared to give advice. I have no fears that there will not be enough to go round, provided employers tackle the problem properly.¹⁰³

It seems in this way that while the Maasai adopted cash as a means to trade within the colonial system, they retained their own perceptions of wealth to a certain extent. Paul Spencer suggests one possible reason why the Maasai choose to adopt cash as a means of transaction within colonial trade but on a larger level resisted full incorporation into the monetary system was because with cattle they were able to maintain a certain level of self-sufficiency. According to Spencer,

It is not that Maasai shun cash, medicines, or alternative foods, but they have no control over their availability or exchange values, and they cannot afford to depend on them. So long as they retain the freedom to choose and a commitment to pastoralism, then this by their own assertion has an overriding autonomy. The political umbrella and economic dominance of the national sector is a recognised fact that lies beyond the scope of their community life or the foci of Maasai tradition. They would be seriously affected by a total collapse of the national economy, but their way of life would surely survive, as it has survived earlier disasters”.¹⁰⁴

While the establishment of a monetary economy was not as envisioned by colonial officials, its promotion and, at times, partial incorporation into native economies had several ramifications.

¹⁰³ Edward Twining, “The Situation in Tanganyika,” *African Affairs*. 50:201 (Oct 1951), p302

¹⁰⁴ Spencer, *The Maasai of Matapato*, p22

First, the introduction of a monetary system encouraged the perception of money as wealth rather than stock. This type of encouragement was given to promote a shift from sustenance living and production to surplus production, labour specialization, and an increased division of labour.

The influence these actions had on food and diet was that individuals began to move farther away from their food sources. The monetary system based on surplus production compartmentalized food production as just one of many possible means of employment for monetary compensation within society. In this way, the introduction of large-scale trade within Tanganyikan and Kenyan economies suggests the creation of greater distance between the individual and their food source both conceptually and physically. Conceptually, food production was promoted as one among many tasks necessary for monetary payment rather than a vital and spiritual action necessary for human growth and survival. Physically, distance grew larger with specialization of labour in regards to food production resulting in the ability of certain individuals to disengage with food production as well as the area of production. These are the types of results it appears that colonial officials hoped for; however, these are not always the results that occurred.

A second ramification of the adoption of a cash economy and the reduction of trade and barter was a decrease in the amount of power which women exercised within both Kikuyu and Maasai societies. In both of these communities women had generally dominated and controlled trade and trading relations previous to colonialism. With the introduction of a cash economy and increased attempts at commoditization of produce, women in both of these communities saw their power over trade drastically reduced along with much of their power in the economic

sphere of their societies. Hodgson neatly sums up this process in relation to the Maasai by stating that colonial measures “combined to replace the female-dominated barter economy with a male-dominated cash economy”.¹⁰⁵ In this way, “as Maasai men slowly integrated themselves, however peripherally, into the cash economy, they used their position to consolidate their exclusive rights over the disposition of cattle, gradually dispossessing women from their shared rights of control over these animals. Livestock, especially cattle, became a form of male currency.”¹⁰⁶ As a result “female-dominated barter was eventually displaced from its central position in the pastoral economy by male-dominated cash transactions”.¹⁰⁷

With the introduction of the coin and colonial economic structures, the indigenous economy based on barter and exchange did not vanish but began to dissipate, being incorporated, sometimes not completely, into colonial capitalist structures. To some, this potential “taught new possibilities between capital and work” and resulted in increased trade and improvement in the quality and quantity of products available for purchase.¹⁰⁸ Along this line of argument, it is assumed that increased wealth derived from a capitalist monetary economy enabled people to improve their diets because they were imbued with the power to purchase not only those things that they and their neighbours traded but also to buy imported goods which could supplement deficiencies in people’s diets.¹⁰⁹

Theoretically, this seems quite plausible; practically, however, this type of assumption fails to recognize the possibility that either the purchasing power instilled was not great enough to

¹⁰⁵ Hodgson, *Pastoralism, Patriarchy, and History*, pp57-58

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p60

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p60

¹⁰⁸ Cagnolo, *The Akikuyu*, p.258

¹⁰⁹ Raymond Firth, “The Sociological Study of Native Diet”, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 7:4 (Oct 1934), p.402

acquire new goods or that new goods were unavailable due to geographical, cultural or political reasons. Even near the end of the colonial period in the 1950's Koinange writes that Kenyans in general did not have access to certain basic products such as milk because it was too expensive in any area other than those which were primarily based on pastoralism.¹¹⁰ Similarly, Taylor notes the lack of meat available to the Kikuyu which increasingly worsened throughout the colonial period so that while the Kikuyu were aware of the nutritional value of meat in their diet it was inaccessible to them.¹¹¹

Furthermore, while traditional economic theory accords consumers with the ability to demand products that they want, such as indigenous varieties of food, this does not hold true for the Kikuyu during the colonial period. First, the majority of local communities existed with limited financial means with which to exert such power. Secondly, most Kikuyu communities existed not only within an inferior economic role but also within a system where they inhabited inferior social and political roles therefore reducing their power to affect change as well as their perception of their ability to do so. Although colonialism brought with it products from outside the Kikuyu realm of consumption which could have potentially enhanced the Kikuyu diet, the majority of the Kikuyu lacked the means with which to obtain these goods. Furthermore, much of the imported foodstuffs which were accessible to the Kikuyu had a lower nutritional value than indigenous crops, such as millet, coloured maize, and traditional varieties of beans. Why, then, were these types of crops adopted by colonial officials and the native population if they were less nutritious than previously grown crops? This question will be examined in the

¹¹⁰ AR 1955, p.2

¹¹¹ Taylor, "Changing Food Habits", p.348

following section in regards to colonial desire to push increased export production and the policies which accompanied this goal.

6.2 Promotion of Export and Surplus Production

In addition to the introduction of a monetary economy, the promotion of export products was aggressively undertaken by the colonial government. The promotion and coercion of certain export products fuelled the switch from a primarily subsistence economy to a surplus production economy in which power was taken away from the individual to produce for their own dietary needs and given instead to those who controlled export production – the colonial administration and indigenous collaborators. Control of the nature and type of goods produced within the colonies was vital because these products were what allowed colonies to enter into the world marketplace. Export production also required a surplus of goods which could be sold on external markets and outside subsistence living. However, the surplus required to generate profit was much larger than that previously generated by both communities to sell within regional trading networks. For this reason, colonial officials also undertook an extensive campaign not only to promote specific products for sale but also to aggressively promote a surplus large enough to generate profit within the world market.

The promotion of certain products is clear in the case of the Kikuyu where the shift from subsistence to production began with the experimentation and then the introduction of economically viable crops. Many of these were introduced in the colonial context with the desire to create a strong export sector based on a few staples best-suited to market conditions and demand. Crops such as white maize, which were aggressively promoted by the colonial

administration, replaced indigenous crops such as millet as the staple crop. In the Maasai case, livestock products were promoted including ghee, meat, and hides. This promotion resulted in efforts to increase production of these products as well as to increase Maasai desire to sell these products; however, it did not encourage a fundamental shift in producing different staples as had occurred with the Kikuyu.

From the beginning of the 1920's, Kikuyuland was one of two areas in Kenya on which agricultural officials focused their work; this work concentrated on discovering crops best-suited to local cultivation which would give the largest economic return with the lowest production costs.¹¹² Such food crops included European potatoes, wheat, varieties of European beans, marrowfat peas, imported varieties of millet, sorghums, and various fruits. All of these food crops were introduced with the goal of "encouraging economic crops which have an export value".¹¹³ By 1937 varieties of beans grown in the Central Province included Rose Coco, Painted Lady and Boston Beans.¹¹⁴ Rose Coco beans were the main variety grown in Kikuyu areas such as Kiambu, South Nyeri, and Fort Hall.¹¹⁵ These crops provided increased incentive for production over traditional bean varieties within new economic structures because they promised higher economic returns than indigenous crops.

Similar to the transfer in production from indigenous varieties of beans to imported varieties, the type of maize that was predominantly grown as well as the extent to which it was produced changed drastically from 1900 to 1960. This change in variety was by no means accidental as

¹¹² AR 1922, p.24,148

¹¹³ AR 1925, p.19

¹¹⁴ AR 1937, p.60

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

indigenous coloured maize was replaced by white maize. White maize was introduced because it was a high yielding variety as discovered through a series of agricultural experiments conducted by colonial officials. These experiments searched for maize varieties which would produce the most profit for the least amount of input. Varieties which excelled included Kenya White Maize, a cross between Natal White Flat, introduced by Europeans in 1902 from South Africa, and Hickory King, an American variety of maize, introduced in 1907.¹¹⁶

Once these high yielding strands of white maize were obtained, inspection and education of Kikuyu farmers began in attempt to eliminate coloured native maize from production and in favour of the new white variety.¹¹⁷ Seeds were issued free to natives by the government in order to encourage them to plant this type of maize and other plants which were most desired by the colonial administration.¹¹⁸ For example, in 1925, 25,000 lbs of Kenya White Maize were issued in Kikuyu regions to encourage its production over other types of maize and staple crops.¹¹⁹ This was the largest seed issue of any crop during the year totalling ten times larger than government issues of European beans which made up the second largest issue of a single cropping seed. Other seeds issued in Kikuyu regions included wheat, cotton, ground nuts, simsim, rice, chillies, and onion; none of these which were issued in any comparable amount.¹²⁰ The distribution of Kenyan White continued on a substantial scale throughout the next decade.¹²¹ With such an overwhelming introduction, maize crops were almost entirely free from indigenous coloured varieties by the early 1930's.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.47

¹¹⁷ AR 1922, p.24; AR 1925, p.171

¹¹⁸ AR 1922, p.148

¹¹⁹ AR 1925, p.2

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ AR 1929, p.44-46; 1936, p.75

¹²² AR 1933, p.28

In addition to the introduction of maize as a staple food crop, non-food crops were also introduced during the colonial period including pyrethrum, cotton, essential oil plants, grasses, leguminous fodder crops, green manure, and cover crops.¹²³ In Kikuyu districts, coffee, wattle trees, pyrethrum, and tea plantations became some of the most popular and successful non-food cash crops. For example, coffee was introduced in Kenya around the beginning of the twentieth century with export production beginning in 1909 with a meagre 8.5 tons produced for the whole of Kenya.¹²⁴ By 1920 the amount of coffee exported had increased to 5,318 tons and by the mid 1950's had reached 26,247 tons.¹²⁵ The acreage of land under coffee also continued to increase. In the 1950's, for example, the area of land occupied by coffee grew substantially from 3,867 acres in 1953 to 26,161 acres in 1959.¹²⁶ Tea production was introduced later on in the colonial period; by 1959 its production occupied 29,982 acres with 22,024,776 lbs of tea produced during that year.¹²⁷

As can be seen in the expansion of the cultivation of coffee and tea, the introduction of non-food crops precipitated a trend towards the use of expansive areas of land to produce non-food crops. Not only did this decrease the amount of land which could be used for food production but it destroyed forest areas which had traditionally contained many green vegetables and legumes which the Kikuyu collected. These vegetables and legumes provided vital nutritional components in the Kikuyu diet. Non-food crops not only took over forest areas used for gathering but also expanded across traditional grazing land. This expansion drastically reduced

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ M. F. Hill, *Planter's Progress: the Story of Coffee in Kenya*, (Nairobi: East African Std Ltd, 1958), p.203

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.205

¹²⁶ AR 1959, p.3

¹²⁷ AR 1957, p.12

common grazing lands the Kikuyu required for raising their livestock. Furthermore, the introduction of both food and non-food cash crops changed the production objectives of the Kikuyu. Originally working within a food economy based on self-sufficiency and food security, cash crops forced a shift towards an economy in which the majority of crops were grown both for export and to feed increasing rural and urban populations.¹²⁸ This represents a shift from subsistence to surplus production as well as the beginning of a decline in traditional food plants which were not promoted in any manner as was maize and various other European food crops which became prominent in the Kikuyu diet throughout the colonial period.

While the colonial administration did not aggressively pursue policies which attempted to influence the main production staples which might have affected Maasai diet as they did in the case of the Kikuyu, colonial officials did attempt to improve the type of livestock as well as the type and quality of livestock products sold. As in the case of the Kikuyu, the promotion of these products by the colonial administration was fuelled by a desire to promote particular export products which would be marketable within the global economy. Similar to experimentation with crops to discover what would produce the largest economic benefit for the least amount of input, colonial experimental farms conducted studies geared towards “improving” domestic livestock. Although varied conclusions arose regarding the utility of cross-breeding and importing foreign livestock, colonial experimental stations continued to promote certain types of cattle, sheep, and goats. Education was provided to livestock owners in order to promote improved genetics within local stock as well to promote certain methods of handling and treating domestic stock.¹²⁹ One dismal official reports that “After twenty years spent in endeavouring to

¹²⁸ Gura, “A Note on Traditional Food Plants”, p18

¹²⁹ VR 1929 p71

persuade the African to improve his methods of stock rearing I have come to the conclusion that many generations of education and evolution must elapse ere we can hope that he will afford his domestic animals treatment on a par with that meted out by even the most backward of the semi-civilised nations”.¹³⁰ In this way, colonial officials strove to change the composition of local herds in order to create standardized herds that would be productive in the ways officials wanted.

Colonial officials also changed production methodology in order to create specific products which would garner the most money within national and international marketplaces. For example, the creation of marketing boards sought to standardize and increase the quality of products such as skins, meat, and milk. In order for products to be sold within the international marketplace, market demands had to be met both in terms of standardized characteristics and quality as well as finding a commodity which was in demand and able to be produced for less than it could be sold. Regulations were put in place in order to meet these externally-driven market demands. These regulations affected the way Maasai produced products by putting emphasis on the need for surplus products which could be bought and sold such as hides, skins, and milk products rather than on milk, meat, and blood products which were consumed by the producer or traded within regional trading networks.

Regulations guiding the sale of skins and hides began with colonial desire to improve the quality of hides and skins. They blamed poor quality mainly on the method of preparation resulting from bad flaying and drying of hides.¹³¹ Trade in both of these products increased with improved methods of stretching and drying which resulted partly because of “practical village to

¹³⁰ VR 1929 p71

¹³¹ VR 1928, p40

village demonstrations” as well as the revival of the hide and skin market internationally.¹³² The colonial administration consider the chief obstacle to increased sales a result of the wasteful practice by the natives of slaughtering immature yearling and oxen. Of the practice, the Veterinary Official commented: “so deep rooted is the evil, and so great would be the benefit derived from its suppression, that I feel sure the Administration would be studying the best interests of the natives were legislation enacted prohibiting it”.¹³³

Furthermore, the method of sale was seen to hinder maximum profits in addition to poor quality of hides and skins. Generally, trade was bought and sold by weight in parcels or lots and indiscriminate of good, bad, or indifferent quality.¹³⁴ This type of sale and purchase was based on the *shelabela* principle which the administration deemed as “the most common and fundamental reasons for the faulty preparation which condemns local hides to the inferior grades in the European market”.¹³⁵ One proposition was to establish centres in important cattle areas where fresh hides would be collected directly from the herdsmen and then prepared for export under European supervision.¹³⁶ Proper flaying would be rewarded with higher prices while the “evil effects” of branding, smoke-drying, and scarring would be clearly explained.¹³⁷ In this way it was “hoped to effect a gradually-increasing improvement in the quality of the exported products, by striking at the source of the existing unsatisfactory condition”.¹³⁸

¹³² VR 1924, p17

¹³³ VR 1924, p18

¹³⁴ VR 1928, p40

¹³⁵ VR 1928, p40

¹³⁶ VR 1928, P40

¹³⁷ VR 1928, p40

¹³⁸ VR 1928, p40

By 1933, reports of improvement of the quality of hides surface in the annual Veterinary Report from the colony alongside encouragement offered by London buyers who were impressed with local hide exports.¹³⁹ Colonial officials site continued complaints about *shelabela* which they regarded as “an easy way of trading for those who know nothing about produce” and which the native population favours “as he soon finds out that more meat and fat he leaves on the hide the more money he will receive”.¹⁴⁰ As such, the *shelabela* system was condemned by these officials as providing no incentive towards the production of higher quality hides.¹⁴¹ Over ten years later, reports of improved practices of preparing hides and skins were reported with the majority suspension dried.¹⁴²

Similarly, the colonial administration also sought increased profits through improved quality in the ghee industry¹⁴³ and did so through the use of regulatory bodies such as ghee posts equipped with buying posts spattered across the territory. While ghee posts providing the equipment needed for manufacturing, the buying posts bought ghee from native communities according to predetermined quality. A colonial official remarks that “the native speedily tumbles to the fact that it does not pay to bring indifferent butter since the price given at the buying post depends on the quality whether good, indifferent or bad. After a post has been in operation for a few weeks, only good butter is purchased”.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ VR 1933, p108

¹⁴⁰ VR 1933, p108

¹⁴¹ VR 1933, p108

¹⁴² VR 1945, p14

¹⁴³ Ghee was the name commonly used for “unadulterated butter-fat of animal origin” or clarified butter. See VR 1939, p3

¹⁴⁴ VR 1924, p19

In order to improve the quality of ghee, instruction and demonstrations were given in pastoral areas and in selected schools.¹⁴⁵ By 1939 the production of ghee was confined to registered creameries owned by Native Authorities and under the supervisions of the Veterinary Department.¹⁴⁶ Ghee produced by the native population was generally regarded as low grade although “some of the less rancid samples find a market overseas”.¹⁴⁷ Regulations were also installed to standardize the quality of milk with a minimum legal fat percentage.¹⁴⁸ The government dairy in Dar Es Salaam justified these regulations citing the economic and hygienic benefits that would come from following colonial standards of efficiency and hygiene relating to ghee production.¹⁴⁹

While increasing efficiency and hygiene seems to be a fairly straightforward endeavour, who exactly was defining and experiencing these ‘benefits’? These types of regulations sought to control the types of products produced as well as to put emphasis on specific products which were seen as desirable for exporting. Increased efficiency was defined as increased profit for those at the level of the colonial administration while hygiene was standardized and defined by this same group. Local farmers and herdsman were not only coerced into producing for the colonial market but their production were moulded to fit colonial needs. These needs were based on profit rather than local dietary needs and customs.

Agricultural policies targeting the Kikuyu, particularly in the beginning and middle of the colonial period, continually called for increased production using propaganda, legislation,

¹⁴⁵ VR 1928, p41

¹⁴⁶ VR 1939, p3

¹⁴⁷ VR 1939, p3

¹⁴⁸ VR 1928, p36

¹⁴⁹ VR 1928, p36

coercion and incentives to 'encourage' native farmers to move from subsistence to surplus production. In the Kikuyu case, both incentives and compulsion were used to promote increased production of particular crops deemed economically valuable by the colonial government. Incentives included reduced transport costs such as various laws in the early 1920's which reduced railway freight rates and finally adopted a flat rate.¹⁵⁰ This attempt to encourage production was geared specifically towards maize growers in more remote areas and added the benefit of offering business for the Kenyan railway which was experiencing a decline in traffic.¹⁵¹ Compulsion came in the form of ordinances such as the *Increased Production of Crops Ordinance* of 1945 which demanded compulsory cultivation by farmers of scheduled crops such as maize, wheat, barley, oats, flax, pyrethrum, rice, vegetable seeds and grass seeds.¹⁵²

Furthermore, in the Kikuyu context, seed farms were established in the colonial period on native reserves to provide incentives, education, and free seeds to both increase production and direct the type of produce grown. In these ways seed farms served as a "nucleus" for colonial agricultural work in the district by attempting to organize native production as desired by colonial officials.¹⁵³ The primary function of these farms was to grow, bulk, and distribute improved varieties of seeds to natives with the goal of replacing 'poor' seed with 'good' seed. Seeds developed and bulked on farms in Kikuyu areas were primarily concerned with bulking white maize as well as imported varieties of millet and beans.¹⁵⁴ In order to insure desired results, propaganda was spread in locations before issues of seed were made. Issues of seed were

¹⁵⁰ Miracle, *Maize in Tropical Africa*, p.138

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² AR 1945, p.2

¹⁵³ AR 1932, p. 60, 76; AR 1933, p.93; AR 1936, p.74

¹⁵⁴ AR 1933, p.93

conducted from hut tax lists with numerous staff required from the agricultural office to ensure that seed was properly planted and to prevent the use of old seed.¹⁵⁵ As a secondary function, seed farms were used for trials of new tools and educational demonstrations on more efficient production. These demonstrations centered around the promotion of crops as desired by the colonial government as well as lessons on spacing trials, terracing, green manure, labour-saving tools, and selection of seed in the field.¹⁵⁶

As such, these farms served as centres which provided increased economic opportunities within the new economic framework introduced by colonialism. Within this system of incentives and constraints native producers responded, using colonial education of cultivation techniques to produce crops which were both larger in quantity and ‘better’ in quality as perceived by colonial standards.¹⁵⁷ However, much of the increased quantity was exported while improved ‘quality’ did not necessarily correspond with increased nutritional benefits. Quality by colonial standards was generally the attainment of a standardized product as well as a product which was profitable to produce, desirable on the global market, and standardized. While the opportunities afforded by some colonial policies may have met increased production goals and maybe even increased purchasing power in some situations, it did not improve the overarching nutritional quality of Kikuyu diet while also prompting a change in key staples consumed by the Kikuyu.

Colonial regulations on food production both directly and indirectly affected the type of food produced and consumed in local communities. Indirect effects included the promotion of

¹⁵⁵ AR 1934, p.73

¹⁵⁶ AR 1936, p.94

¹⁵⁷ For a case study of Western Kenya suggesting similar results see Jennifer Hoskinson’s “Agricultural Transformation in Rural Western Kenya: The Maize Crop in the Mt. Elgon Region, 1930-1930”, *West Virginia University*. Research Paper 9717. (May 1997), p.18

specialization in certain products in order to retain a greater profit such as in the ghee and maize industries. Colonial regulations based on the needs and demands of an external market also created a different conception of food production and consumption. The colonial conception of food and food production was one based on the separation of the individual from their food source through commodification whereas food and food production were embedded in many local populations with intricate links to spirituality and cultural spheres of society. Food as a way of life was not the colonial ideal. Instead, food as one commodity for sale among many was vigorously promoted by the colonial administration. Resistance to this changing conception of food consumption and production is clear in local populations' varying levels of refusal to be incorporated within these new economic structures. Resistance can be seen throughout colonial records as local populations' unwillingness to act within the colony's rules and regulations of food production.

Resistance was met with varying levels of success. The Maasai were faced with more opportunities as pastoralists because colonial regulations and policies reflected national and international marketplace demand for animal products such as hides, skins, milk, meat, and ghee. In contrast, the Kikuyu were faced with much more limited opportunities within the colonial economy to produce food products. Kikuyu staples of millet and indigenous varieties of beans were considered undesirable within the colonial economic marketplace. White maize was seen to be much more profitable and as such colonial officials promoted its production over previous staple crops. Contrary to the Kikuyu who were met with aggressive colonial policy to change what they produced, the Maasai were presented with various opportunities to pursue their pastoral mode of production and subsistence albeit with a focus on surplus production rather than

subsistence production. For these reasons, it is probable that local resistance to colonial policy had more opportunity for success within the case of the Maasai as compared to the case of the Kikuyu.

6.3 Trade Rules and Regulations

Trading rules and regulations sought to limit traditional barter and exchange and promote the cash economy as well as to control the types of products produced. Control of internal native trade and commerce placed limits on the movements of many local communities across different regions as well as placing restraints on traditional indigenous markets. These limitations threatened the ability of both the Maasai and Kikuyu to participate within complex regional and interregional trading networks that had been established during the pre-colonial period.

It appears that both Maasai and Kikuyu communities participated in local and regional trading networks during the pre-colonial period. During the late nineteenth century, this trade between the two communities included gourds for milk and tobacco in exchange for hides, skins, leather cloaks, and livestock.¹⁵⁸ In this trade, one can see the complimentary structure of Kikuyu agriculturalism and Maasai pastoralism which encouraged the development of trade not only between individual localities but which also brought smaller communities into a larger system of trade.¹⁵⁹ In this way trade provided a safety net during famines in which the Maasai pastoralist and Kikuyu agriculturalist could depend on each other for exchange of foodstuffs.¹⁶⁰ Similar complementary trading relationships also existed among those inhabiting dry areas, such as

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p.131

¹⁵⁹ Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*, p.50

¹⁶⁰ Muriuki, *A History of the Kikuyu*, p.131

Migwani and Mumoni, and those in highland zones, such as Kikuyuland, Mount Kenya, Nyamheri Range, and the hills of Ulu.¹⁶¹

Ambler refers to this type of reliance of central Kenyan communities as a “complex web of economic interdependence” with critical exchanges being made between communities so that by the nineteenth century “an intricate regional mosaic of distinctive local ecologies and economies” had developed and by the second half of the nineteenth century constituted a “coherent regional exchange system”.¹⁶² Within this exchange system, food products, livestock, livestock products and other consumer goods were regularly traded.¹⁶³ Regional trade was generally based around the demand for food and livestock products in order to diversify diets, ease inequities, alleviate temporary shortfalls in food production, in order to meet social obligations, and to ensure at least a basic level of economic security.¹⁶⁴

Allowing both the Kikuyu and the Maasai to diversify their diet as well as providing security during food shortages, these trading networks were vitally important to the diet of each of these communities. As colonial policy progressed and increasing restrictions and regulations were placed on trade, the safety net provided by trading networks during times of scarcity was removed, reducing local communities’ ability to work within their own economic framework. Local trade became restricted to trading centres where the government levied heavy licensing fees on sellers.¹⁶⁵ In 1937, colonial policy prevented natives from selling or buying produce

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.57

¹⁶² Ambler, *Kenyan Communities*, p.49-50, 57

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p.50, 57-58

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p.50, 57-58

¹⁶⁵ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p.68

outside markets controlled by the colonial government.¹⁶⁶ Similarly, the loss of indigenous markets occurred across many East African societies with the result of reduced access to traditional foods and reduced knowledge of traditional food habits due to the removal of a common space controlled by local populations where food goods were traded.¹⁶⁷ The colonial government also made traditional trading activities difficult with policies that restricted mobility between communities. In the early 1920's movement controls on local traders in Kikuyu areas were applied by district officers so that locally produced staples were not exported outside of the district.¹⁶⁸ Traditional trading partnerships, such as those between the Kikuyu and the Kamba now faced restricted mobility with the imposition of special passes and the inability to visit freely.¹⁶⁹

In addition to controls on native mobility and market participation, the *Grading of Maize Ordinance* in 1919 signalled the beginning of controls levied on the quality of maize produced for sale. Modeled after a similar South African Act of 1917, a grading system was set up with four categories of maize including fair and average for European-grown maize, and native white and native coloured for African-grown maize.¹⁷⁰ In 1936, the Maize Control Bill ensured maize as the principal staple of the country as well as extending its jurisdiction to all British East African territories and establishing a central marketing board which would purchase all produce and therefore become the government's first attempt at price controls.¹⁷¹ Legislative control in 1932 and again in 1935 further strengthened the power of the agricultural director to inspect and

¹⁶⁶ AR 1937, p.12

¹⁶⁷ Verna Raschke and Bobby Cheema, "Colonisation, the New World Order, and the Eradication of Traditional Food Habits in East Africa: Historical Perspective on the Nutrition Transition" *Public Health Nutrition* 11:7 (24 Oct 2007), p.665

¹⁶⁸ Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.87

¹⁶⁹ Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya*, p.69

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p.87

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.90

control the types of crop planted and the quality of produce as well as establishing a compulsory grading system for an increased number of products.¹⁷² This legislation included the department's authority as already prescribed over groundnuts (in 1929), wattle bark (in 1930 and 1931), simsim (in 1930) and maize (in 1930).¹⁷³ Grading services also extended to cover maize, potatoes, beans, and wattle bark.¹⁷⁴ In the Central Province, inspection centres located at the exits from each districts served to examine produce brought by traders who had purchased it at district markets.¹⁷⁵ Increased 'quality' promised to bring a better price but only for certain products as indigenous varieties and the strengthening of their benefits were ignored by the colonial government. If Kikuyu wanted to profit economically under the colonial system they had little choice but to adopt these 'superior' crops tested, marketed, and promoted by the colonial government.

With this understood, the initiative to profit under this system is apparent in the collaboration of Kikuyu with colonial officials to enforce trading restrictions as well as efforts to increase the quality and quantity of production without colonial coercion. Kikuyu men were generally the individuals who acted as collaborators with the colonial government in their desire to squeeze Asian traders, Kikuyu women, and younger Kikuyu men out of access to trade and markets in attempt to procure more profit for themselves.¹⁷⁶ Compliance even before enforcement is apparent in the Kikuyu's own attempts to improve the quality of the maize they produced.¹⁷⁷ In this way, natives became self-regulating in eliminating coloured varieties of maize in order to derive benefits from the growing profitability of "high-quality" white maize. Compliance,

¹⁷² AR 1932, p.64; AR 1937, p.12: Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.88

¹⁷³ AR 1932, p.64

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.65

¹⁷⁵ AR 1937, p.99

¹⁷⁶ Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.87

¹⁷⁷ AR 1937, p.100

however, was not the only reaction to colonial policy as many Kikuyu, especially women, continued to trade illegally creating a black market which reached substantial proportions in the late colonial period.¹⁷⁸ This non-compliance demonstrates the inability of some Kikuyu to make such choices within the colonial system. Although limiting, these constraints did not necessarily prevent everyone from carrying on activity disallowed by colonial regulations.

The Veterinary Department's concern with improving the marketing of livestock centered around their wish to closely supervise the movement of livestock along stock routes and their sale at markets as well as encouraging better preparation, production and marketing of livestock products such as hides, skins, and dairy.¹⁷⁹ With these types of rules and regulations the colonial administration believed it was possible to meet their goal: "that livestock production must be greatly increased to meet the demands of an expanding economy".¹⁸⁰ While traditional marketplaces and itinerant trading were made illegal¹⁸¹, marketing boards established specific centres in which trading was allowed to occur in order for regulations to be followed more strictly. Colonial administration saw these marketing boards, centres and regulations as "the sheet anchor on which depends the success of our endeavours towards disease control and elimination in this Territory".¹⁸²

Districts in which no regular market policy existed were reported as being "infested with a host of peregrinating petty traders (three or four in many instances trading under one licence), who stroll from kraal to kraal buying occasional animals, evading quarantine regulations, mixing the

¹⁷⁸ Robertson, *Trouble Showed the Way*, p.86-90

¹⁷⁹ VR 1957, p1

¹⁸⁰ VR 1956, p5

¹⁸¹ VR 1924, p16

¹⁸² VR 1924, p16

herds and spreading disease without cessation”.¹⁸³ While the implementation of such mechanisms were heralded as disease prevention, the desire to prevent disease such as Rinderpest stemmed from the colonial administration’s aspiration to use these cattle as the basis of a lucrative cattle market. In 1924, the Veterinary Official reports that

In every district in which the cattle market system has been inaugurated, greater facilities for trading, and an increase in the number of cattle traded has resulted. The reason for this is that movement can be supervised at market centres, and measures speedily instituted for the control of disease in the vent of its appearance.¹⁸⁴

In the Northern Province, which was reported as a great consuming and producing area by the mid 1930s, all of the cattle trade was limited to scheduled markets by 1934 although trade in small stock was still itinerant.¹⁸⁵ In 1934, over 67,908 cattle were sold through marketing centres for around 61, 469 pounds in 21 marketing centres with most of the cattle reared in the Northern Province and some from the Central Province.¹⁸⁶ By 1939 the marketing system was reported as advancing beyond immediate requirements although stock routes were reported as unsatisfactory due to lack of funds to purchase dipping tanks for suitable points along the route, for clearing the bush of tsetse along the way, improving water facilities and arranging rest camps and holding grounds.¹⁸⁷ As a result, stock were dying from preventable disease and inanition contributing to “uneconomic loss”.¹⁸⁸ Six years later a return to voluntary sales led to a marked decline in the selling of stock at primary markets.¹⁸⁹ Improvements were made on stock routes within the next five years and by 1945 colonial officials reported benefits due to improved

¹⁸³ VR 1924, p16

¹⁸⁴ VR 1924, p17

¹⁸⁵ VR 1934, p30

¹⁸⁶ VR 1934, p30

¹⁸⁷ VR 1939, p3

¹⁸⁸ VR 1939, p3

¹⁸⁹ VR 1945, p14

pastures and water supplies on main stock routes.¹⁹⁰ Stock markets provided a regular routine system of sale under the supervision of the Veterinary Department. In the Northern Province, established market centres were located in Arusha – which acted as the main clearing house for Maasailand, Babit, Dongobesh, Bassodesh, Massagoloda, Katesh, Mbugwe, Longido, Arusha-Chini, and Kibaya.¹⁹¹ Captain Tremleet, the Senior Veterinary Officer in 1928 comments about “what an important economic asset the cattle are to the native and the country”.¹⁹²

7. Colonial Conceptions of Diet and Food Policy: the Why and How

As discussed in the previous section on trade, the actions of the colonial administration as well as the choices made by native individuals and communities affected the way communities produced food, connected to food and food production, and, inevitably, the diet they consumed. However, the way diet changed as well as the reasons diet changed in Kikuyu and Maasai communities seem to differ on several accounts. These differences are clear in the drastic change in staple foods within the Kikuyu diet as compared with the continuity of Maasai staples of milk, meat, and blood. Even though the Maasai experienced a decrease in animal products within their diet, staple food were retained more than within Kikuyu communities.

While the previous section explores structural reasons behind change in diet, this section will explore how colonial conceptions of indigenous communities and diet contributed to shifting dietary patterns. In order to properly understand colonial conceptions of local dietary patterns it is necessary to first understand their conceptions of the local population as a whole. From these conceptions, which tended to change over the length of the colonial period, we can begin to

¹⁹⁰ VR 1945, p14

¹⁹¹ VR 1928, p39

¹⁹² VR 1928, p39

explore colonial conceptions of indigenous diet and how these perceptions shaped colonial policy towards diet.

Within this discussion, it is important to begin by asking why the colonial government was interested in the diet of local populations? This interest takes root in several larger discourses which were predominant within colonizing countries at the time including western capitalism, modern western scientific thought, and development. Although western science and development perspectives have a history which is tightly intertwined with capitalism, each of these influenced conceptions of diet in different ways and at different times during the colonial period. This section will first address the discourse of western capitalism and why colonial officials began to think about diet within the colonies. Secondly, this section will consider how the local communities viewed diet and how these perspectives differed from those of the colonial administration. Thirdly, this section will examine how western scientific thought came to impact colonial conceptions of local dietary patterns. Lastly, this section will briefly touch on the introduction of developmentalist ideas and how these further solidified the notion that western dietary practices were superior and therefore preferable to local ones.

7.1 Western Capitalism: The Production and Reproduction of a Labour Force

As noted in the previous section on trade, the colonial administration appears to have been primarily interested in diet because it formed the basis of a healthy working population. An interest in promoting better nutrition surfaced primarily because a population which reached at least bare nutritional requirements would be able to supply labour for colonial demands. In the colonial perspective, if the labour force were able to attain a reasonable level of nutrition,

productivity was likely to be efficient – raising the amount of surplus produced as well as increasing the earnings of colonial extraction. Furthermore, colonial perspective believed that labourers who were adequately fed were less likely than starving workers to cause dissent and disruption. As discussed previously, the formation of and control over a large labour force was vital in an economy based on tenants such as external trade within a capitalist world market, increased specialization and division of labour, and the promotion of a monetary economy. More simply put, in order for a population to work sufficiently as a labour force, they must be fed well enough to be able to be productive throughout the work day.¹⁹³

With this type of understanding about worker needs, colonial officials sought to increase labour efficiency by recognizing that an unhealthy labour force was not a productive one.¹⁹⁴ In 1951, Edward Twining explains that “employers must pay more attention to the physical causes of labour inefficiency by eliminating or controlling such inefficiency-making diseases as Malaria and Hook-Worm, and giving their labour not only a better diet but a better balanced diet”.¹⁹⁵

Making labourers physically fitter meant that their productivity and efficiency could be increased therefore increasing their output and the profit made off of their labour. Studies such as those conducted by Orr and Gilks during the colonial period demonstrate the desire of the administration to gather knowledge about the state of nutrition about various native groups. These studies exist much more prominently in regards to native populations who were seen as

¹⁹³ Although this theoretical perspective views the working population more as robots needing fuel and energy than humans who in addition to physical fuel need social and spiritual energies as well, it is easy to see how this basic idea was logical in the colonial mind. What this perspective fails to comprehend is that if workers are also treated as human beings with emotional and mental needs as well as physical needs, working efficiency and ability would be much higher and sustainable for a longer period of time.

¹⁹⁴ Edward Twining, “The Situation in Tanganyika,” *African Affairs*. Vol 50. No. 201 (Oct 1951), pp297-310; p302

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

potential labour forces such as the Kikuyu. They are almost non-existent for those communities considered to be undesirable or ill-suited for labour such as the Maasai.

The Maasai were seen to be less desirable as a workforce by the colonial administration for a variety of reasons. In comparison to other local populations, the Maasai were seen as desirable collaborators to be incorporated within the British system of indirect rule. The Maasai's reputation as warriors of whom many of the neighbouring communities feared, provided the British administration with access to a certain extent of power within regional political and social networks. Having collaborators who held power locally and regionally was important to the British because they ruled indirectly through local leaders who they incorporated into the colonial administration. Maasai were more regularly appointed within the police force as well as within various security jobs within the colony than other local communities. Maasai considered labour outside of stock-handling as beneath them. They resisted incorporation as labourers seeing this as one of the worst offences on their honour. While colonial officials certainly used force to incorporate many local communities into the labour force, they preferred communities who they perceived as more docile than the Maasai. Furthermore, colonial officials viewed the Maasai at a more esteemed level than other native communities because of their skill as stockmen¹⁹⁶ in addition to their prowess as warriors. Although the colonial perception and praise of Maasai as knowledgeable herdsman diminished as the colonial period continued, several accounts during both German and the beginning of British rule site the Maasai as capable and sensible in regards to their stock-handling methods and skills.

¹⁹⁶ VR 1924, p2

This view of the Maasai as potential collaborators and as knowledgeable herdsmen is contrasted with colonial perceptions of other East African communities, particularly of agricultural communities, as backwards, simple, and ignorant. Targeting certain groups such as agricultural communities – but also pastoral communities who officials considered to be poorly versed in animal care – as a labour force was justified by the desire of the colonizers to civilize these “savages”. Veterinary reports characterize “the average African Native” as unreliable and inconsistent and who “if left to his own devices even for a month” will “slack off and ultimately get into mischief”.¹⁹⁷ A similar characterization was portrayed within annual Agricultural Reports which noted the administration’s nonexistent expectations that the native population were or had the potential to be “steady and reliable producers of surplus from annual crops” due to their lack of motivation to plant crops if they did not feel the inclination to do so as well as due to their inability to understand that to “maintain his old cash income, he should either farm better or do more farming, or both”.¹⁹⁸ Other characteristics noted by the colonial administration in annual reports included laziness, apathy, primitiveness, and an unwillingness to work hard.¹⁹⁹ As a result, the chief attitude of colonial officers was one of patriarchy which both justified and required them to maintain surveillance over the native population and their labour in order to produce more efficient and effective labour within the colonial economic system.

These characteristics appeared to colonial officials to be incompatible with their desire to create a capitalist-based economy. In colonial eyes, a certain type of work was required in order to build a surplus – a type of work which was motivated by the desire to make a profit within an economy that values specialization, division of labour, and material surplus as guiding

¹⁹⁷ VR 1924, p2

¹⁹⁸ AR 1930, p6

¹⁹⁹ VR 1924, p3, 20; VR 1928, p42; VR 1929, p71

principles. Even though the Maasai were held in a more esteemed position than many other East African communities, they were still regarded as inferior to the western individual and unable to comprehend western ideas of civilization and modernity. Veterinary officials despaired at what they considered to be one of the chief obstacles to “progress”: the “wasteful practice prevalent amongst natives of slaughtering young immature yearlings and two year old oxen”.²⁰⁰ Officials felt that the “best interests of the natives” could only be protected if this practise was banned by the administration.²⁰¹ In these ways and many more, the colonial administration considered local populations to be childlike in their inability to perform as expected in daily life prompting the adoption of a patronizing and patriarchal attitude towards local communities.

If we apply these colonial conceptions of local communities to conceptions about local diet, the suggestion is that if the people are simple, than their vital life systems must also be simple – including their food system. As such, “in dealing with relatively primitive people and with limited staff, both European and native, it is perhaps unnecessary to emphasize that only with the most simple schemes...is there any likelihood of success being achieved, and then only by the closest co-operation between the administrative and technical staffs concerned”.²⁰² These perceptions also considered local diets to be monotonous, badly balanced, and ‘undeveloped’. In the Orr and Gilks’ study, the Kikuyu were seen to be nutritionally deficient due to their primarily vegetarian diet at the time while the Maasai diet of milk and meat was seen to be much more sufficient. While the study categorizes the Kikuyu diet as monotonous due to a lack of meat and milk products, it does not categorize the Maasai diet as monotonous even though the study fails to note what other food products the Maasai were consuming other than meat, milk, and blood.

²⁰⁰ VR 1924, p18

²⁰¹ VR 1924, p18

²⁰² VR 1937, p37

This perception can be said to occur due to preconceptions of the indigenous individual and the community in which they were situated as well as colonial assumptions about diet which prized animal products over vegetarian products. This second point will be explored more fully below.

7.2 A Losing Paradigm? Spirituality and Connection with the Land

Although these types of colonial discourses about local populations and their diet were the dominant ones of the time, they were not the only ones. For this reason, this section will contemplate indigenous conceptions of diet. East African communities generally viewed their connections with food production and their food sources much more spiritually than the colonial government was able to as a colonizing force. For example, Kikuyu reverence to the land demonstrates the centrality of agricultural production to their everyday lives, their subsistence needs, and their spiritual and cultural lives. Kenyatta describes the Kikuyu as agriculturalists who depend entirely on the land which “supplies them with the material needs of life, through which spiritual and mental contentment is achieved”.²⁰³ Spiritually, the land was considered as an eternal shelter for the spirits of the dead as well as the basis which provided nourishment to the living.²⁰⁴ The land was celebrated through planting ceremonies, harvesting feasts and dancing, and magic ceremonies connected with the fertility of the land.²⁰⁵ In this context, Kikuyu agricultural production not only served to meet the goals of attaining food self-sufficiency and providing food security for the entire group, as was common in many East African societies during the pre-colonial period, but was also deeply connected to spirituality.

²⁰³ Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya* (London: Heinemann, 1979), p.21

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.21, 55

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p.58, 60

In Maasai communities, diet also had cultural and spiritual significance as well. For example, the consumption of meat and honey mead made up an important part of rituals in symbolizing the transition in male Maasai lives. Both meat and mead were seen to have transformative powers as well as the power to transcend death and create new life both symbolically and socially.²⁰⁶ The ritual slaughter and consumption of animal products was highly sensitive to the connection between consuming certain food products and their spiritual and cultural significance. As such, food was not simply conceived as a commodity to fuel the body's ability to be productive but was seen as part of a larger social system and a way of life with cultural and social significance. Honey and honey mead were also seen to have symbolic meaning in that they were considered agents of blessing. Honey mead was consumed by elders and sprinkled on male initiates on ritual occasions to enhance the powers of clairvoyance.²⁰⁷ During rituals pertaining to the transition of Maasai men from one age-set to the next, roasted meat and honey mead were consumed in order to transport each individual into a sacred state of being.²⁰⁸

A deeper connection to food is visible through the incorporation of food products into the culture and rituals of both Maasai and Kikuyu societies as well as through its intertwinement in spirituality. This conception of food stands in contrast to the colonial perception of diet as a key factor in ensuring a labour force which could work efficiently to produce profit for the colony. Furthermore, food rituals and cultural symbolizing indicates a complex incorporation and understanding of food within indigenous communities rather than a simple food system purely based on a subsistence existence.

²⁰⁶ Arhem, *Milk, Meat and Blood*, p9

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

7.3 A New Spirituality: Western Science and the “Objective” Account of Diet

This long-developed spirituality between community, individual, and diet was challenged by a different sort of ‘spirituality’ by the British. Scientific examination and nutritional elements became the driving force behind diet in the colonial mind beginning in early twentieth century. Instead of connection with the land, mystical relations with the divine, and local food production and trade capabilities which determined who should eat what, the colonial administration relied on scientific studies of nutrition to determine what were the most appropriate foods to be consumed. For example, in Kikuyu communities women consumed dirt or pica which was found to be a source of necessary iron. In the western world the consumption of dirt was seen to be barbaric and strange. If science had actually been objective, officials would have discovered that dirt-eating was actually quite nutritionally beneficial. Similarly, the Orr and Gilks study underlines the undesirability of the vegetarian nature of the Kikuyu diet. The lack of meat and milk consumed within the Kikuyu diet was seen as a weakness of the indigenous diet when it was more likely a consequence of earlier colonial policy as well as part of a complex response to scarce resources.

Regardless of the cause of the increasingly vegetarian nature of the Kikuyu diet, meat and milk products were prized by studies conducted by colonial officials such as Orr and Gilks. To add to misconceptions of indigenous diet were misconceptions of diet within Britain. During the 1920s and 1930s, animal products such as meat and milk were seen as more nutritionally beneficial than vegetarian foods. Vegetarian diets were seen to be nutritionally deficient because they lacked proteins found in milk and meat. These popular conceptions of diet within Britain during this period fuelled colonial bias against the primarily vegetarian diet of the Kikuyu as well as

promoted the conception that Maasai diet was superior because it was based around animal products. The Orr and Gilks study conducted in the 1920s was based on these types of beliefs and worked to fuel misconceptions of vegetarianism as well as the idea that the East African diet was innately deficient.

Reliance on science as an objective method of interpreting the natural world placed severe limitations on the colonial administration's ability to understand the dietary patterns of both the Kikuyu and the Maasai. Science promoted a limited perspective first because it was not practised objectively and second because it failed to account for spiritual elements and the communities' relation to the land and their food source. The perspective of the community regarding food and land was reverent in its understanding that their health and ability to extract food was dependent on the health of the land. Kikuyu practises such as rotational cropping as well as Maasai practises of rotational grazing demonstrate an understanding of underlying ecological principles necessary to produce food and how this is intrinsically connected to the continuing health of the environment. The scientific perspective of the colonial administration was unable to see this holistic view of land and food. As a result, they perceived local populations as ignorant prizing western knowledge over indigenous knowledge and conceiving indigenous food systems as simple and inadequate.

7.4 Development and Modernization: "If your diet was more like ours, you'd be better off"

The creation and maintenance of an efficient labour force seems to be the driving factor behind attention to diet during the early and mid- colonial period in conjunction with an attempt to subdue dissent within the native population through the avoidance of provocation caused by lack

of food with the potential to lead to revolt. This desire for increased labour efficiency through the provision of a basic balanced diet was backed by a scientific understanding of nutrition which was becoming popular at the time in the western world. This perspective on the legitimacy and validity of science as an objective way of perceiving diet was, in turn, backed by a development and modernization dialogue which was beginning to unfold in the western world.

Near the end of the colonial period during the 1950s, colonial concern with diet began to turn towards evolving the developmental discourse. This developmental discourse coincided with evolving perceptions of modernity and modernization discourses which were humanitarian on the surface but generally adhered to principals of incorporation into the international arena on the terms and to the benefit of the western world. Blueprint development models were also beginning to form during this period. These models heralded modernization ideals which could only be reached through the dissemination of western values and structures onto colonies so that “they become like us”. Behind most of these discourses were western elite aspirations to further stratify the world economy through the dissemination of western capitalist values as well as the incorporation of the developing world as primary commodity producers which inhabited a lower strata in the world economy than manufacturing and service-providing nations.

In many ways, the goals of the developmental perspective were the same as those of the western capitalist perspective. For example, within Tanganyika, administrators saw development as

higher production, shifting from a ‘traditional’ to a ‘modern’ economy and promoting ‘progressive’ individuals. Within this dual economy framework, the obstacles to development were clear: the suffocating, irrational demands of ‘community’ in terms of communal resources and the social obligations of individuals. A new discourse of poverty framed the ‘problems’: Africans in general

were 'poor' and their 'low standard of living had to be raised' by the proposed economic development programs of the metropole.²⁰⁹

These similarities were no mistake but rather an extension of the western capitalist agenda. However, the way in which these goals were hoped to be achieved were somewhat different than they had been previously. They were also in response to immediate motivating factors although, at the heart of the matter, these motivations stemmed from similar places as before. The first immediate motivation came from the desire of the metropole to calm the criticism it was receiving as a colonial power and in this way to restore the legitimacy of empire and imperialism both at home and abroad.²¹⁰ The second motivation came from the need to rebuild the British economy after the economic ruin of WWII.²¹¹ The third motivation stemmed from the desire of those to complete what they perceived to be a civilizing mission in which they had a duty to help their colonies reach a better economic standard of living.

In the 1950s, British colonial administrators began adopting a development discourse which saw ethnic divisions not as a way to maintain and administer indirect rule but which saw different ethnic communities as barriers to development and modernization. For example, officials in Tanganyika developed the Maasai Development Plan (MDP) with the seemingly innocent goals of building more water supplies, clearing tsetse, and experimenting further with grazing controls and fodder production within a small pilot scheme.²¹² It was framed by "ethnic assumption about what problems 'the Maasai' (as opposed to other ethnic groups) faced in terms of their

²⁰⁹ Dorothy Hodgson, "Taking Stock: State Control, Ethnic Identity and Pastoralist Development in Tanganyika, 1948-1958" *The Journal of African History*. 41 (2000), p62.

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p61

²¹¹ *Ibid.*

²¹² *Ibid.*, p55

development”.²¹³ The plan was designed to organize the Maasai into modern ranches which were both dependent on labour and capital intensive.²¹⁴ In the end, the plan failed to build confidence among the Maasai in colonial visions of development and, instead, fuelled anti-colonial mobilization by becoming a deeply contested arena between the Maasai and colonial administration.²¹⁵ The MDP also symbolized a shift in the way the Maasai were perceived by the British administration. While their pastoral culture had previously been seen as something to encourage, it now stood as a symbol of backwardness as well as the Maasai’s inability to incorporate into new economic models.

Diet was now being promoted as a common ‘right’. All people should be able to eat like the western world even though they may live in a completely different context. Modernization suggested that improvements in all realms of life, including diet, should be based on the experience of the western world. Based on this assumption, development discourse carried with it the same patriarchal attitude as its colonial forefather. Similarly, it would move beyond the colonial period but would take with it the idea that diet in the developing world was simple and in need of improvement rather than acknowledging its own limited understanding of the indigenous context as well as the historiography of diet, globalization, and the capitalist marketplace.

8. Conclusions

The first question this thesis asks is: how did diet change within Kikuyu and Maasai communities during the colonial period? Changes in the Kikuyu diet include a shift in staple

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p57

²¹⁵ Ibid., p55

products such as millet and indigenous beans to white maize, and a decrease in the consumption of meat, milk, and legumes. In regards to the Maasai, dietary changes were mainly centered around the decreased consumption of milk, meat, and blood. While Maasai supplementation of their dietary staples with agricultural products seem to be a fairly routine procedure during times of scarcity, the replacement of staples in the Kikuyu diet with white maize seems to be a drastic reordering of dietary patterns which led to nutritional deficiencies.

A second question this study asks is: which factors played a central role in influencing these dietary changes within both communities? Structural changes to local economies seems to have played a large factor in both cases so that the creation of a monetary economy, the promotion of export and surplus production, as well as trade rules and regulations, worked to incorporate both Kikuyu and Maasai economies into the world capitalist marketplace. Conceptual changes also influenced how colonial policy was administered in that discourses of western capitalism, local paradigms regarding land and food, western science, and development and modernization each contributed to varying constructions of diet within this time and context.

In these ways, the role of food within the colonial context was contested between a spiritual and holistic act of subsistence which promoted a certain degree of specialization as well as trading connections to a commoditized act of production used as a means to generate profit for the colonial metropole in the context of a global capitalist marketplace. While food security and self-sufficiency in both communities seems to have occurred throughout the colonial period, local resistance to colonial demands are recorded in a variety of forms. As a result, it seems that the discourse surrounding diet in East Africa was very different depending on who was speaking.

Although the discourse of the colonial administration was generally quite different from that of local communities, it is also clear that this discourse would not have been able to become dominant without the collaboration of some local forces.

The domination of this discourse resulted in a forceful attempt to shift from subsistence to surplus production during the colonial period. While this shift was never completed during this time period – nor has it ever been – it had several ramifications on local populations and their diets. In the Kikuyu case, the effects of this shift seem to be more severe than in the case of the Maasai. This severity is reflected in increasing nutritional deficiencies throughout the colonial period in the Kikuyu diet that did not have the same opportunities to be corrected as in the Maasai case. It is reflected in both cases as a decrease in food security and a weakening in the wider conceptualization of food in East Africa as a holistic part of society. Throughout the colonial period, the idea of food as a commodity to be sold and produced separately from the individual, community, and environment, grew as a result of colonial discourse and administration. This shifting conceptualization of food and its place within the East African economy from subsistence to production served to weaken the intrinsic value of food itself. This pattern is one which has continued to infiltrate our society today and seems ironic as food is one of the cornerstones of our existence – its production ties us to the land and causes us to respect and care for the environment while its consumption nourishes our bodies so that we can live health and meaningful lives.

As part of a wider examination on dietary transitions and the state of nutrition in both the developed and the developing world today, this study suggests that the current situation in which

many societies suffer from food insecurity and inadequate nutrition can only be properly understood, and therefore combated, if past patterns of food consumption are examined and analyzed. It is in the hope of contributing something to this type of understanding that this study presents itself as well as to suggest that similar studies on food are needed in order to tackle this global problem.

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EDUCATION

- | | | |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| 2008-current | University of Vienna | Vienna, AT |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Currently completing an MA in Global History➤ Awarded Erasmus Mundus Scholarship | |
| 2007-2008 | London School of Economics and Political Science | London, UK |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ MSc Global in Global Economic History➤ Completed dissertation with distinction➤ Awarded Erasmus Mundus Scholarship | |
| 2003-2007 | Dalhousie University | Halifax, CA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Combined Honours BA in International Development Studies and Political Science with distinction➤ Placement on the Dean's List from 2003-2007➤ Awarded Killiam Fellowship Scholarship 2005/2006➤ Awarded In-Course Scholarships 2003-2007 | |
| Spring 2007 | University of Havana | Havana, CU |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Intensive Study Program in International Development Studies | |
| Winter 2006 | Australian National University | Canberra, AU |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Completed a semester abroad in International Relations Theory | |
| 1998-2003 | Elmira District Secondary School | Elmira, CA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ OAC graduate with Honours➤ Attended a French exchange program to Luxembourg in Winter 2000➤ Awarded Woolwich Township Woman of the Year, EDSS Top Five Scholar, Most Sportswomen-like Player of the Year, The Woolwich Observer Award➤ Proficiency in Senior Core French, RBC Royal Bank/William Exley Award for Proficiency in University Stream Core English, Carla Kruse Art Award for Proficiency in Visual Art, Phyllis LeLeu Kitchen Award for Creative Writing | |

EMPLOYMENT

- | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------|
| 2009-current | Katimavik | Orillia, CA |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Project Leader position within a nation youth volunteer service program➤ Responsible for facilitating healthy group dynamics, the Katimavik learning program, community relations, administration, finances and logistics➤ As a live-in position for youth from 17-21, worked within a dynamic and changing environment focusing on developing others, interpersonal skills, leadership, problem solving and creativity | |
| 1998-2008 | Thorn Glass Studio | St. Jacobs, CA |

- Designer and creator of sandblasted glass vessels
 - Studio assistant responsible for finishing of hand blown glass, organization of retail and work areas, and customer service
- 2006-2007 Dalhousie Campus Tour Guide and Recruitment Assistant Halifax, CA
- Conducted information sessions for prospective students throughout PEI and New Brunswick
 - Led campus tours for prospective students and visiting academics
 - Assisted registrar's office and student recruitment with office work
- 2005-2006 Dalhousie Residence Assistant Halifax, CA
- Training in peer mentoring and leadership skills
 - Assisted students with personal and academic problems while providing an environment conducive to student living, community building, and individual growth
- 2004-2006 Benjamin's Restaurant and Inn St. Jacobs, CA
- Waitress in a casual fine dining atmosphere

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

- Winter 2009 Minjeni Women's Group Moshi, TZ
- Accompanied first-time patients on local hospital visits and completed follow-up visits in homes of patients
 - Completed paper work concerning finances spent within the organization and attended project planning meetings
- 2007-2008 People and Planet London, UK
- Fair Trade Coordinator for LSE chapter of People and Planet
 - Coordinated awareness campaigns, fundraising activities, and society events
- 2006-2007 Students for Students Halifax, CA
- Activity planner and leader for an after-school program for students from ages 5-8
- 2006-2007 World University Service of Canada Halifax, CA
- Fundraised for Dalhousie's Student Refugee Program
 - Participated in organization and promotion of student levy for the Student Refugee Program
 - Society won Dalhousie's Best C Level Society of the Year
- 2003-2006 Frontier College Halifax, CA
- Volunteer with a children's program within a local women's shelter
 - Mentor and tutor within a reading circle for children ages 4-12 at the George Dixon Reading Centre
 - Peer tutor and mentor for primary school child at Bayers-Westwood Community Centre

- 1999-2002 Doon Heritage Crossroads Kitchener-Waterloo, CA
- Junior interpreter and guide
 - Provided historical information and demonstrations to the public

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE AND OTHER INTERESTS

- 2006-2007 Dalhousie Model United Nations Society Halifax, CA
- Participant in the World Model United Nations Conference, Geneva, Switzerland
- 2006-2007 Publications Halifax, CA
- Creative writing piece in 'Green Perspectives' published by Dalhousie University Environmental Studies Department
 - Essay in Comparative Religion Journal published by Dalhousie University
- 2004-2005 Environmental Representative and Frosh Leader, O'Brien Hall Halifax, CA
- Implemented and maintained recycling program within residence
 - Organized social activities throughout the year and during orientation
 - Managed meetings and collected suggestions for residence cafeteria
- 2001-2005 Waterloo Women's Field Hockey Team Waterloo, CA
- 2001-2003 Student Council Senior Advisor and Environmental Head Elmira, CA
- Organized and ran recycling program within high school
 - Planned, organized, and ran various social and academic events
- 2001-2002 Production Manager and Artistic Director Elmira, CA
- Oversaw administrative jobs within Elmira Youth Players such as registration and booking of theatre space as well as general well-being and preparation of cast and crew
 - Co-designed and co-created set and costumes
- 1999-2003 Newspaper Editor at High School Newspaper Elmira, CA
- Edited News, Opinion, and Arts and Entertainment sections
 - 2001 and 2002 awards: Toronto Star Best High School Newspaper in Ontario

LANGUAGE SKILLS AND COMPETENCES

Mother tongue is English with proficiency in French and beginner skills in Spanish, German, and Swahili.

References Available Upon Request