

Land, Credit and Crop Transitions in Kenya:

The Luo Response to Directed Development

in Nyanza Province

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PREFACE

A New Scramble?

Historians of Africa refer to the late nineteenth century as the time of the Scramble. The European imperial powers sent their "explorers" into the savannahs and rain forests of Africa to claim lands that they had not before known, but that they were wrong to call unknown. With straight-edges on maps, they etched the borders that today seem to make so little sense geographically, ethnically, linguistically. Twentieth-century Africa is stuck with these borders, inventions from another continent and another time.

Africanist social science today is witnessing a similar scramble in the field of development as scholars from outside the continent and from within vie for grounds on which to plant the flags of their mother disciplines. There are political scientists who defend power and presidencies as their protectorate. Economists cling to growth and equity, or supply and demand, as subjects of what some of them have called the queen of the social sciences. Anthropologists hold kinship and custom, bridewealth and beliefs to be an important part of the study of humankind. The geographers, whose learned society in Britain spearheaded that empire's thrust in the first scramble, are running with the pack in the second.

If social scientists go about their studies of Africa with the same possessiveness and insensitivity as their Victorian forebears, the marks

they leave on African studies will one day look as ridiculous as the straight line that now divides capitalist Kenya from socialist Tanzania, dividing Luo from Luo, Maasai from Maasai. A lender will be the province of one discipline, a borrower that of a second, the loan between them that of a third. In development, if boundaries must be drawn at all, they must be drawn in ways that recognize overlapping claims and the complexities of local human relations. Disciplines that study the same problem in the same place must borrow and lend among themselves.

Anthropology has as much to contribute as any other single discipline to the study of land rights and lending in Africa. But no single discipline, as disciplines are defined today, will adequately describe or explain the thought and behaviour that these subjects offer for study. This study touches on the "micro" and the "macro", the indigenous and the superimposed, the spontaneous and the directed. It is about a specific theory, and about specific development projects; but more broadly, it is about how rural people have adjusted, and failed to adjust, to life at the edges of a state and of an international agricultural order. Like a growing number of development studies, it poaches in many fields: agronomy, agricultural economics, history, geography. I hope this trespassing may at least open some questions for common study.

Though cutting the thesis for a length limit has required editing some citations from the text, references to some of the most useful sources have been left in the bibliography.

Where Credit is Due

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