

This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-
NoDerivs 3.0 Licence.

To view a copy of the licence please see:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/>

RESERVE

POLITICS AND THE PEASANTRY IN KENYA:
THE LESSONS OF HARAMBEE

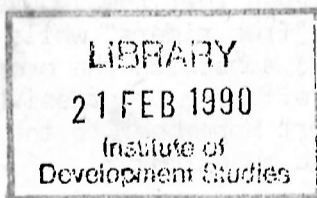
By

Joel D. Barkan and
Frank Holmquist

WORKING PAPER NO. 440

INSTITUTE FOR DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
P.O. BOX 30197
NAIROBI, Kenya

July, 1986



Views expressed in this paper are those of the authors. They should not be interpreted as reflecting the views of the Institute for Development Studies or of the University of Nairobi.

This paper has protection under the Copyright Act, Cap. 130 of the Laws of Kenya.

ISN = 45 939

IOS/WP 440

POLITICS AND THE PEASANTRY IN KENYA:
THE LESSONS OF HARAMBEE

By

Joel D. Barkan &
Frank Holmquist

ABSTRACT

As anyone familiar with Kenya knows, Harambee, or self-help is a pervasive phenomenon which engages just about all rural dwellers, many city dwellers, most politicians and many state personnel. The widespread popularity and political significance of self-help has been documented in the literature for over a decade. Most studies, however, have assumed a rather homogeneous peasantry, and failed to examine the differential popularity of self-help in terms of the varying material circumstances of different strata within the Kenyan peasantry.

This essay is addressed to the neglected question of what, precisely, is the social base of self-help. Based on survey research data from 2,075 respondents in seven districts, this paper argues that Harambee is particularly popular among "small" and "middle" peasants - those who own between one and ten acres of land.

The paper further argues that the landless obtain benefits from Harambee projects as virtual "free riders" while "rich" peasants (those owning more than twenty acres) subsidize the poorer elements of the community through what is in effect a progressive form of local taxation. Whether "rich" peasants support Harambee, to the extent of their ability to pay, however, is an unresolved question.

INTRODUCTION

As anyone familiar with Kenya knows, Harambee or self-help is a pervasive phenomenon which engages just about all rural dwellers, many city dwellers, most politicians and many state personnel. Self-help primarily means the construction of social service infrastructure by the residents of rural communities to meet locally defined needs. Most, albeit not all, self-help efforts are small scale development projects devoted to the provision of collective goods to be enjoyed by all households (if not all individual members) of the local community: nursery, primary, and secondary schools; village polytechnics; cattle dips; health centers; water projects. In addition, there are efforts such as mutual aid and production groups which are collective in operation, but whose benefits are private in that their distribution is restricted to a set of particular individuals, usually women. The initiation, financing, and organization of these projects comes primarily from within the community with assistance often sought from without. And while communities may manage and finance most projects over the long-term, there usually is an effort to transfer the very expensive recurrent costs and management responsibilities of large projects to the state.

As such, self-help projects have become the "stuff" of grass-roots politics in Kenya -- the principal activity around which political leaders and aspiring leaders seek to establish and maintain their political careers. Members of the local district councils in Kenya, and would be members establish reputations of community service by raising funds for self-help projects and by lobbying the civil service to assist projects in their areas. Members of Parliament and aspiring members likewise seek to "deliver the goods" on self-help, and by so doing draw local self-help organizations into their personal political machines and in turn attach their machine to the clientelist structures which dominate Kenyan politics and control patronage at the center of the Kenyan system.¹

¹ Joel D. Barkan, "Bringing Home the Pork: Legislative Behavior, Rural Development and Political change in East Africa," in Joel Smith and Lloyd Musolf (eds.), Legislatures in Development. Durham: Duke University Press, 1979, pp. 265-88; Joel D. Barkan, "Legislators, Elections, and Political Linkage" in Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania. op.cit., pp. 71-101; and Njuguna Ngethe, Harambee and Development Participation in Kenya. (Ph.D. dissertation) Ottawa: Carleton University, 1979.

The widespread popularity and political significance of self-help has been documented in the literature for over a decade.² The studies to date, however, including our own, have tended to assume a rather homogeneous peasantry. That is to say, there have been no attempts to examine the differential popularity of self-help in terms of the varying material circumstances of different strata within the Kenyan peasantry.

Our purpose in this essay, therefore, is to address ourselves to the neglected question of what, precisely, is the social base of self-help? Who in rural society is more and less prone to embrace it, lead it, and perceive personal and family benefits in it? Who is most prone to believe in its future? By examining the social base of self-help which is acknowledged to be close to the heart of Kenyan rural politics,³ we shall also examine the social base of much of Kenyan politics. The principle thesis of this essay is that "small" and "middle peasants," constitute the vital base of self-help, and that this fundamental fact goes a long way in explaining why the Harambee ideology has become the core of an emergent public philosophy in Kenya -- a set of widely held values which has shaped the rules of Kenyan politics, imbued the political system with a measure of legitimacy, and forced the Kenyan state to be minimally accountable to the public it governs.

2. Joel D. Barkan, Frank Holmquist, David Gachuki and S.E. Migot-Adholla, "Is Small Beautiful?" Occasional Paper No.15, Comparative Legislative Research Center, University of Iowa, 1979; Joel D. Barkan, "Self-Help Organizations, State and Society," Occasional Paper No.21, Comparative Legislative Research Center, University of Iowa, 1981; Frank Holmquist, "Implementing Rural Development Projects," in Goran Hyden, Robert Jackson and John J. Okumu (eds.) Development Administration: The Kenyan Experience. Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970, pp.201-22; Frank Holmquist "Defending Peasant Political Space in Independent Africa," Canadian Journal of African Studies, 14(1980), pp.157-67; Frank Holmquist, "Class Structure, Peasant Participation, and Rural Self-Help" in Joel D. Barkan (ed.), Politics and Public Policy in Kenya and Tanzania. rev. ed., New York: Praeger Publishers, 1984, pp.171-97; Frank Holmquist, "Self-Help: The State and Peasant Leverage in Kenya," Africa, 54:3, (1984), pp. 72-91; Philip Mbithi and Ramus Rasmuson, Self-Reliance in Kenya: The Case of Harambee. Uppsala: Scandinavian Institute of African Studies, 1977; Barbara P. Thomas, Politics, Participation and Poverty: Development Through Self-Help in Kenya. Boulder: Westview Press, 1985; Edgar V. Winans and Angeliqe Haugerud, "Rural Self-Help in Kenya: The Harambee Movement," Human Organization, (1977), pp.334-51.
3. Joel D. Barkan, "Bringing Home the Pork," op.cit. and "Legislators Elections and Political Linkage," op.cit.; and Njuguna Ngethe, Harambee and Development Participation in Kenya, op.cit.

Self-help in Kenya is a community-wide phenomenon. Regardless of the nature and divisions within local communities, the vast majority of all residents -- almost 90 per cent -- are or have been involved in the self-help process. For those familiar with the distribution of land ownership in Kenya, this finding may be a surprise. Indeed, a glance at the data would suggest that community-wide self-help is impossible given the extraordinarily high concentration of land in few hands. According to Alice Amsden, "(1)less than 5 percent of all farms account for almost 50 percent of all farm land, while some 30 percent of the smallest farms account for less than 2 percent of all farm land."⁴ Community-wide self-help cannot occur in a community environment where the divisions between rich and poor are so marked, and where those at the bottom are normally excluded from benefits controlled by the rich.⁵ The small farm and large farm sectors, however, are geographically distinct and self-contained. Self-help flourishes in the areas of the former where most of the population resides, and where the degree of inequity in the pattern of land ownership is much less pronounced.⁶

4. Alice B. Amsden, "A Review of Kenya's Political Economy Since Independence", Journal of African Studies, 1 (1974), p.423.

5. Recent research by Barkan in the Indian state of Rajasthan indicated that community-wide self-help was a rarity, because of extreme inequalities and the pervasiveness of the caste system. The rich had no incentive to join with the poor, and the poor never expect such.

6. For two recent discussions in the long debate on the question of land ownership and inequality in Kenya see Alila, Patrick O., Gatheru Wanjohi and Kabiru Kinyanjui, "Rural Landlessness Situation in Kenya," Report for FAO Expert Consultation on Landlessness: Dynamics, Problems and Policies, Rome, October, 1985.

As we search for the social base of self-help, we are also mindful of the fact that because almost all Kenyans are involved in self-help, self-help means different things to different participants. As such, it is also sociologically "messy." It embraces many of the most severe tensions in the Kenyan political economy, and its implications are contradictory. Depending on who one talks to and what one reads, self-help is described as either a cooptive device employed by the Kenyan ruling class to tax and manipulate the peasantry, or as an unalloyed vehicle of mass peasant interests. Neither perspective squares with the facts. A more accurate view is that self-help is an arena of contested terrain that experiences a changing balance of forces and which has produced different outcomes over time. During the colonial era, the Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement represented self-help as a locally initiated vehicle of peasant protest, and provided an organizational base for African nationalism. Official self-help, known as "community development", was, on the other hand, a state-led initiative to coopt those opposed to the colonial regime. Post-colonial self-help, on the other hand, is best termed as "half-way" because it comprises elements of both local, state and outside initiative, leadership, funds and management.⁷

RURAL STRATIFICATION, CLASS FORMATION AND THE AFRICAN PEASANTRY

Two themes have dominated the literature on the nature of rural populations in the less developed countries, and the peasantry in particular. The first, and oldest, was articulated in the "liberal development and modernization" literature of the 1950s and 1960s. While acknowledging the diversity of indigenous African political systems, and the fact that these systems were sometimes marked by sharp distinctions between the rulers and the ruled, the development and modernization literature nonetheless treated the peasantry as a homogeneous and undifferentiated sector of society. As such, the peasantry was assumed to be bound by tradition, averse to risk, parochial in outlook, and having little relation to the state. Politically, the peasantry was viewed as having

7. Frank Holmquist, "Class Structure, Participation, and Rural Self-Help" op.cit., p.181.

no politics other than the protection of ethnic interests and/or of avoiding the state.⁸ Economically, the peasantry was perceived as the stagnant rural periphery of a "dual economy" driven by a dynamic urban core. The development of the periphery was thus viewed as being dependent on its penetration and direction by the core -- a process which would be led by emergent bureaucratic elites and which would result in the transfer of the necessary inputs for development from the center to the rural areas. The process would turn on the extension administrative control into the countryside, and with it the expanded provision of Western values, education, technology, and capital. Conceived in this manner, the developmental process involved the displacement of indigenous "traditional" practices by "Western/modern" ones.⁹ Put differently, the rural populations of the countryside would become more differentiated and assimilated into the national political and economic system dominated by core. They would be "captured."¹⁰

8 James S. Coleman, "The Development Syndrome" in Binder et.al. (eds.) Crises and Sequences of Political Development. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973. pp.73-100; Walt W. Rostow, The Stages of Economic Growth. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961. p.140.

9 For two early critiques of the assumption of displacement see Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced Polarities in the Study of Social Change," American Journal of Sociology, 72 (January, 1967), pp.351-62; and C. S. Whitaker, "A Dysrhythmic Process of Political Change," World Politics, XIX, 2(1967), pp.190-217.

10. The term is Goran Hyden's in his widely read account of peasant-state relations in Tanzania. Though Hyden argues that the Tanzanian peasant functions in a pre-capitalist mode of production, and has therefore not been assimilated into the world capitalist economy of the urban core, his paradigm for the developmental process shares the dualistic perspective of the 1960s in that he regards the peasantry in undifferentiated terms and assumes that their goals and those of the center are incompatible. In the same vein, James C. Scott has argued that the breakdown of the moral economy of the Southeast Asian peasantry was the result of the penetration of the village political economy by outside forces, principally the state. See Goran Hyden, Beyond Ujamaa in Tanzania: Underdevelopment and the Uncaptured Peasantry. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979 and James C. Scott, The Moral Economy of the Peasant. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976.

By the early 1970s another, almost polar opposite, theme emerged to challenge the conventional view of the preceding decade. In this view, the peasantry was highly differentiated and stratified in respect to income, land ownership, and access to education, credit, technology and state services.¹¹ Instead being regarded as "mired in tradition," peasants were now seen as "rational" and calculating actors who sought to maximize their self-interest under difficult conditions. Those who possessed a cushion against loss were viewed as willing to take risks to improve their situations. Those who existed precariously on the edge of survival, were not.¹² Some observers also subscribed to a correlary view -- that political interests were defined and pursued in a differentiated manner by different peasant strata or classes.¹³ These classes were assumed to be in conflict within rural communities, and to develop different and competing relationships with the state. This view held that wealthy peasants who prospered from the farming of export commodities established an alliance of privilege with local bureaucrats that controlled the state at the expense of small holders and the landless.¹⁴

Students of self-help in Kenya insert themselves into this analytical environment, though often unselfconsciously. Where a relatively undifferentiated peasantry is seen, there is a tendency to view the marriage of peasant and state in self-help as almost ideal -- the hoped for confluence of peasant need and state response in the modernization paradigm. Where, however, the peasantry is viewed as highly stratified, there is the opposite tendency -- to see self-help as

-
11. Keith Griffin, The Political Economy of Agrarian Change. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974, chapter 2.
 12. James C. Scott, *ibid.*, pp.15-25.
 13. H.U.E. Toden Van Velzen, "Staff, Kulaks and Peasants" in Lionel Cliffe and John S. Saul (eds.), Socialism in Tanzania Vol. 2 Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1973, pp.153-79.
 14. Joel Samoff, "Underdevelopment and its Grassroots in Africa," Canadian Journal of African Studies, 14, 1 (1980), p13.

an exercise dominated by rich peasants and rural elites in alliance with a reactionary state at the expense of the rural poor. Perceived in this manner, the small and middle peasant majority are not served by self-help but manipulated, and at times coerced into a process that taxes them heavily yet provides them with very little.

Whether self-help is therefore a vehicle through which the peasantry extracts resources from the rural rich and the center, or whether it is a vehicle through which the center and the rural rich dominate small farmers, is, of course, an empirical question. It is a question, however, that cannot be answered before determining the nature and extent of rural stratification, and following that, the social base of self-help: Which elements of the peasantry participate in self-help and why? How much do various strata invest in self-help? To what extent do various strata view self-help as a process that benefits them and a process over which they exercise control?

The question of the extent of class formation and class action in rural Africa is a complex one which has only recently been the object of systematic study. In his thoughtful article on the nature of class domination in Africa, Richard Sklar reminds us that class formation, as well as class consolidation, class identification, and class action are each dependent on the simultaneous presence of several objective conditions.¹⁵ Thus, class formation occurs when there is a social and political coalescence among individuals engaged in similar occupations; whose relationships (i.e. ownership/non-ownership, control/non-control) to the means of production are similar; and whose incomes and educational backgrounds are the same.¹⁶ Class consolidation, Sklar continues, requires all of the above plus the measure of social organization required to establish the foundation of economic and political power for class members.¹⁷ Class consciousness is present when would-be class members

15. Richard Sklar, "The Nature of Class Domination in Africa," Journal of Modern African Studies, 17,4 (1979), pp.531-52.

16. Ibid., pp.533-4.

17. Ibid., p.538.

subscribe to a common set of values. Class action occurs when class members engage in a collective action, the effect of which is to "increase or reduce social inequality and domination, or to strengthen or weaken the means whereby the domination of a privileged stratum is maintained."¹⁸

Sklar's identification of the conditions which can be measured to determine the presence or absence of class phenomena in Africa was directed exclusively towards determining the parameters of dominant classes. Measurement of these same conditions can also determine the nature and boundaries of subordinate classes including those residing in the rural areas. Gavin Kitching seems to move in this direction when he suggests that class analysis per se may not get us very far until the concept of class is "unpacked,"¹⁹ that is to say, disaggregated and operationalized into a set of observable and measurable variables via which one might identify different strata within the rural population.²⁰

Survey data collected in seven rural areas in 1980 by Joel Barkan and David Gachuki²¹ confirm Kitching's supposition. As indicated by the data presented in Tables 1 to 4, the picture of class formation in rural Kenya is not a "neat" as some writers would lead us to believe. While such measures of stratification as land ownership, income and occupation correlate with each other, the degree of correlation is weak. This in turn suggests that the presence of classes (as distinct from strata) in the rural areas and the boundaries between classes might be difficult to discern.

18. Ibid., p.547.

19. Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1980, pp.3-5.

20. Ibid., p.330

21. Data from the 1980 survey is from 2,075 respondents living in seven parliamentary constituencies in rural Kenya: Embu-South, Githunguri, Kajiado-North, Laikipia-West, Ikolomani, Mbiti and Kitutu-East. Separate samples of 300 respondents were drawn for each constituency based on age-sex quotas computed after a review of the 1979 Kenyan census. Interviews for each sample of 300 respondents were randomly assigned to 30 sampling plots a half mile in diameter which were themselves randomly distributed across the constituency. Ten interviews were thus conducted in each plot. All interviewing was conducted in the local language of the area or in Swahili.

Table 1: Monthly Income by Amount of Land Owned

MONTHLY INCOME*	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
100/- or less:	49%	46%	30%	30%	31%	14%
101/- to 500/-:	29	30	36	36	39	30
501/- to 1,000/-:	7	9	16	18	17	25
1,001/- to 3,000/-:	6	7	8	9	12	24
3,001/- to 9,000/-	1	1	1	2	-	3
9,001/- or more:	8	7	10	6	2	2
N =	(221)	(218)	(279)	(160)	(59)	(63)
Pct. of total sample:	22%	22%	28%	16%	6%	6%

*In Kenyan shillings

Spearman R = .201

Table 2: Amount Land Owned by Monthly Income

AMOUNT LAND OWNED	MONTHLY INCOME*					
	100/- or less	101/- 501/-	501/- 1,000/-	1,001/- 3,000/-	3,001/- 9,000/-	9,000/- or more
None:	30:	20%	12%	15%	10%	23%
1-2 acres:	27	20	15	19	10	22
3-5 acres:	23	30	33	24	20	39
6-10 acres:	13	17	21	16	30	14
11-20 acres:	5	7	7	8	-	1
21 acres or more:	3	6	12	17	30	1
N =	(367)	(328)	(135)	(86)	(10)	(74)
Pct. of total sample:	37%	33%	14%	9%	1%	7%

*In Kenyan shillings

Spearman R = .201

The relationship between land ownership and income is a case in point. As shown in Table 1, a substantial proportion of large landowners are poor while a small but significant proportion of landless reported high incomes. Seventy per cent of those owning 11 to 20 acres of land, for example, reported incomes of under 500 Kenyan shillings per month, a figure only somewhat lower (and within the range of sampling error) than the 78 per cent of landless respondents who said they were in this strata. Conversely, 8 percent of the respondents owning no land reported monthly incomes over 9,000 shillings, while the proportion for those owning 11 to 20 acres, and for those owning more than 21 acres was 2.

The weak relationship between personal income and what is normally assumed to be the main determinant of income in the rural areas, is demonstrated further in Table 2 where we have simply inverted the data presented in Table 1. Fifty-seven percent of the respondents earning under 100 shillings per month own less than 2 acres, but the proportion for those earning over 9,000 shillings is 45. Conversely, 11 percent of those earning under 100 shillings own 11 acres or more while the figure for the top income group is 2. Put more succinctly, the Spearman coefficient for the relationship between land ownership and income for our respondents is only .201²².

22. Several explanations for the weak relationship between income and the size of land holdings have appeared in the literature. Gavin Kitching has presented data which demonstrates that small holders farm their land more intensively, and place a greater proportion of their land more intensively, and place a greater proportion of their land under cultivation than large farmers. Ecological conditions also account for lower productivity per acre and hence lower farm income per acre on large holdings many of which are located in less fertile regions. A substantial proportion of personal income, moreover, is derived from off-farm sources. See Gavin Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya, op.cit., pp.330-74 and J. L. Lijodi and Hans Ruthenberg, "Income Distribution in Kenya's Agriculture," Zeitschrift fur Auslandische Landwirtschaft, 17(1978), p.124.

Different measures of stratification thus yield different profiles of stratification rather than a clear picture of discrete and identifiable classes. That the rural population of Kenya is highly stratified in respect to the standard measures of socio-economic position, and that there is inequality, is clear as can be seen from the entries in the bottom rows of both tables which indicate the proportion of the total sample which falls within each category (column) of the independent variable. Though weak, a significant relationship between land ownership and income must also be acknowledged. The rural population, however, cannot be neatly be divided into a landed bourgeoisie of kulak farmers, and a landless or land impoverished rural underclass. Nor can the rural population be neatly divided into a category of "poor peasants" who have little or no land and low incomes, a category of "middle peasants" who have some land and middle incomes, and a category of "rich peasants" who own large holdings and who have high incomes, because there are too many cases which cannot be accommodated by this typology. Any attempt, moreover, to isolate and compare the members of the rural population who can be so categorized is likely to yield dubious results. When preparing the data for this article, the authors attempted just such an analysis. After discarding more than 30 percent of the sample which did not fall into the three previously mentioned categories, we examined the cases that did fall within these categories to see whether they differed in respect to their level of participation in self-help, their values, and their level of political involvement. Even when one employed this methodology of constructing such "ideal" types for heuristic purposes, the salience of class, particularly in the form of class consciousness and class action was not evident.

An examination of the relationship between occupation and land ownership, and occupation and income as presented in Tables 3 and 4 yield a similar picture. As one might expect, respondents with high status occupations such as teachers and civil servants earn more than those who pursue occupations of lower rank. Again, however, the relationship is not tight. Nor do teachers and civil servants always control large amounts of land. Indeed, while 11 and 17 percent of these two occupational groups reported respectively that they owned more than 20 acres, 19 and 28 percent reported that they owned none. In contrast,

Table 3: Amount of Income by Occupation

MONTHLY INCOME*	PRINCIPLE OCCUPATION					
	Farmer	Ag. Laborer	Fundi	Shop-keeper	Teacher	Civil Servant
100/- or less:	40%	19%	5%	20%	1%	---
101/- to 500/-:	36	60	50	42	13	27
501/- to 1,000/-:	8	5	23	22	48	47
1,001/- to 3,000/-:	4	6	7	11	37	27
3,001/- to 9,000/-	1	--	2	2	1	--
9,001/- or more:	12	10	14	2	1	--
N =	(628)	(62)	(44)	(45)	(125)	(30)
Est. average income:	216/-	252/-	484/-	244/-	650/-	515/-

*In Kenyan shillings

Table 4: Amount Land Owned by Occupation

AMOUNT LAND OWNED	PRINCIPLE OCCUPATION					
	Farmer	Ag. Laborer	Fundi	Shop-keeper	Teacher	Civil Servant
None:	12%	36%	26%	11%	19%	2%
1-2 acres:	27	24	22	13	11	14
3-5 acres:	30	25	35	23	31	35
6-10 acres:	16	9	8	23	20	7
11-20 acres:	8	2	6	17	9	7
21 acres or more:	7	3	4	13	11	17
N =	(908)	(99)	(51)	(53)	(112)	(29)
Estimated average land holding (in acres):	3.09	1.46	2.22	4.83	3.75	3.78

shopkeepers ranked highest in terms of average land holdings but fifth in respect to average income. Whether the respondents in this last occupational category are part of a rural upper class, a middle class, or an underclass -- or all three, is thus difficult to determine.²³

Our own "struggle" to generate a concept of class formation that is applicable to Kenya's rural population suggests that there is as yet no "class struggle" in rural Kenya, because there are no classes. Different strata with different interests that are at times in conflict, "yes," but not classes and class conflict in the classic Marxist sense of the terms. The significance of this seemingly bold assertion will become evident in the next section where we explore the relationships between the most powerful measure of rural stratification and various aspects of citizen participation in self-help. For the moment, however, we are left with several alternative measures of stratification with which to pursue our basic question of what is the social base of self-help. Which one(s) do we use?

Space does not permit us to report the findings for all available measures. We have consequently chosen to limit our presentation to a discussion of the relationships that exist between one measure of rural stratification -- the amount of land owned by our respondents -- and several measures of citizen involvement in and perceptions of self-help. We have chosen land ownership for three reasons. First, although the relationship between land ownership and personal income is weak, land ownership is the one variable which best discriminates between strata if of the Kenyan peasantry in respect to their levels participation in self-help. Although income, occupation, and education all effect the level of citizen participation in self-help, the amount of land owned by an individual is the single most powerful determinant of his or her

23 These figures also question the thesis advanced by Gavin Kitching that the level of income derived from off-farm employment is the determinant of the size of land holdings in Kenya. Off-farm income, may, but does not necessarily lead to the control over large land holdings, a qualification that Kitching himself concedes. See Kitching, Class and Economic Change in Kenya, op.cit., p.371.

involvement in self-help. Thus, if one wishes to test the hypothesis that different strata exhibit different levels of participation in self-help, the best way to do so is to examine the impact of land ownership. If there are no differences in the level of support for self-help between different strata of land holders and the landless, then it is unlikely that there will be differential levels of support when other measures of stratification are employed. Conversely, the distribution of support for self-help by the level of land ownership, provides the clearest picture of what elements in the population provide the social base for self-help, and which do not.

A second reason why we have chosen to use land ownership as our measure of stratification is the importance of land ownership, particularly its social and political importance, in the minds of most Kenyans. Explanations of past political history in Kenya, and prognostications about the future invariably turn on the issue of the distribution of this scarce resource. Until such time as most Kenyans gain their livelihood from off-farm employment, land will be a primary (if not the sole) determinant of wealth and power in rural Kenya. Third, the data we possess on land ownership are both more extensive and more valid, than the data we possess on individual income. More than 1,600 respondents or 77 percent of our sample of 2,075 reported the size of their land holdings to our interviews compared to 1,146 or only 55 percent who were willing to divulge their monthly incomes. Questions about land holdings, however, is consistent with the distribution of land reported by the Kenya Integrated Rural Survey.²⁴

24. Central Bureau of Statistics, Integrated Rural Survey, 1974-75, Nairobi: Government Printer, 1977. p.44.

THE SOCIAL BASE OF HARAMBEE

We first raised the question of what constitutes the vital social base for self-help, because we hypothesized that different strata and possibly different social classes would exhibit different levels of support. Our prime concern in wanting to test this hypothesis, was to answer the question of whether the Kenyan Harambee movement is a vehicle of small farmers, or whether it is a vehicle through which rich peasants, in alliance with the state, coopt and tax and the rural masses. To the extent that our evidence supports one position or the other in this controversy, it supports the former -- that the social base of self-help is very broad and is provided principally by a wide spectrum of land owners in the middle of the socio-economic hierarchy. Our data further indicate that while landless peasants and "rich" farmers who own more than 20 acres are the least likely to support self-help, the former believe that they benefit from self-help to the same degree as middle peasants, while the latter are taxed in a mildly progressive manner to support the movement. Almost everybody in the rural areas supports self-help, the only difference is the degree.

Perhaps the most interesting finding in our data, one that is validated throughout our analysis, is that the relationship between social stratification, as measured by the amount of land owned, and support for self-help as measured by the number of Harambee projects they join, and their propensity to participate in each of eight types of projects, are what we term "small," "middle," and "upper-middle" peasants, a wide spectrum of the peasantry which includes those who own from 1 to 20 acres.

The terms "small," "middle," and "upper-middle" are, of course, arbitrary distinctions. We use the term "small" to refer to farmers who own 1 or 5 acres of land, and who constitute 44 percent of our sample. By "middle peasants" we mean farmers who own between 6 and 10 acres of land. Respondents in this category comprise 16 percent of our sample. By "upper-middle" we refer to those who own between 11 and 20 acres and who comprise 6 percent of those surveyed for our study. Taken together, these three groups account for 72 percent of our respondents. They run the gamut from the moderately poor to those who are prosperous by Kenyan standards, but not "rich." Most significantly, these groups exclude the landless

(22 percent) and the "rich" who own more than 20 acres (6 percent). Although respondents in the "middle" and "upper-middle" categories consistently exhibit higher levels of participation in self-help than those labeled "small," the members of all three groups are similar in their degree of involvement in self-help, and are distinct from the landless and the rich.

Table 5: Number of Projects Joined by Amount of Land Owned

NUMBER OF PROJECTS	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
None;	26%	8%	8%	4%	3%	18%
One of three:	47	31	29	32	27	36
Four to six:	17	37	39	27	30	18
Seven or more:	10	24	24	38	40	27
N =	(342)	(378)	(444)	(240)	(100)	(99)
Average number						
projects joined:	2.5	4.2	4.2	4.8	4.8	3.5

Table 6: Percentage of Respondents Who Have Participated in Each of Eight Types of Self-Help Projects by Amount of Land Owned*

FACT PARTICIPATING BY TYPE OF PROJECT	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
Nursery school:	23%	40%	49%	54%	60%	49%
Primary school:	53	76	80	78	88	71
Secondary school:	39	69	69	76	78	55
Health clinic:	30	63	63	66	64	46
Cattle dip:	27	53	56	59	45	39
Water project:	25	31	34	45	43	38
Mutual assistance group:	5	16	16	23	23	13
Production group:	6	7	7	9	9	7
N =	(341)	(378)	(444)	(240)	(100)	(98)

*Percentages total to more than 100 because most respondents participate in more than one project.

The curvilinear relationship between land ownership and participation in Harambee is depicted clearly in Tables 5 and 6. Table 5 summarizes the extent of peasant participation in self-help in terms of the number of projects the respondents said they had joined. As indicated by the table, 92 to 97 percent of those owning from 1 to 20 acres said they participated by landless respondents was 74 percent, while the level for "rich" peasants was 82. While most respondents in all categories said they participated in several projects, this tendency is markedly greater among the "small" and especially among the "middle" and "upper-middle" groups. "Small" peasants who own 1 to 5 acres of land thus participated in an average of 4.2 projects each, while the figure for the "middle" and "upper-middle" peasants was 4.8. Almost 40 percent of the latter two categories, moreover, participate in seven projects or more! By contrast,

landless respondents participated in an average of 2.5 projects, while the rich participated in 3.5. Notwithstanding these variations, the most important finding in Table 5 is that the Harambee movement rests on a firm social base. Because 72 percent of the sample own 1 to 20 acres, those in this category who participate in self-help constitute 67 percent of all respondents. Assuming our data is an accurate representation of rural Kenya, two thirds of the rural population are thus landed and frequent participants in self-help. Even if the landless poor and rich did not participate, and they do, Harambee would have a firm footing in the countryside.

The curvilinear relationship between land ownership and participation in self-help is again illustrated in Table 6 where we present the level of participation for each of the eight most common types of Harambee projects. As indicated by the table, the curvilinear relationship holds for all eight types of projects though the highest level of support shifts slightly between those who own 6 and 10 acres and those who own 11 and 20, our "middle" and "upper-middle" categories. The relationship is thus maintained for both large projects such as secondary schools and water schemes, and small projects including nursery school, cattle dips, and mutual assistance groups. The relationship also holds for both the most popular projects, mutual assistance groups and production groups which provide collective goods to a restricted segment of the community.

In addition to demonstrating broad and deep support for self-help across the "small" and "middle" peasantry, Tables 5 and 6 suggest three additional conclusions. The first, is that small and middle peasants are the ones most likely to participate in self-help because they have the most to gain from the enterprise and at the same time can afford to participate. Although the landless need the benefits self-help offer and participate, their ability to participate is less. Conversely, the rich have little or less to participate, but often do so out of considerations of social obligation and status vis a vis their neighbours. When asked why self-help was so popular in Kenya, half of those who owned land in all categories replied that Harambee "is the only way we can start schools, health clinics, etc. in this area; development is

dependent upon self-help" while the proportion of landless which responded in this manner was one third. Another 8 percent of all groups said that "with Harambee, the local people determine what is to be done; there is local control." Self-help, in short, is supported most by those who recognize that they will only obtain basic human services if they provide these services for themselves on a collective goods basis, and by those who have the resources to do so. While support for self-help may thus involve a tax on rural Kenyans, it is not, as we shall see below, a tax that falls disproportionately on the poorest members of rural society. Most important, it is a local tax by local people on themselves for local services, and not a method by which the state appropriates resources from the countryside to the center. Indeed just the opposite is true. To the extent that the state is pressured into providing a portion of the recurrent expenditure for self-help projects after they are established in rural communities (e.g. providing the salaries for certified teachers for Harambee schools), Harambee is a local tax that extracts a matching funds from the center.²⁵

A second, and related conclusion, and one which is supported further by data we have presented elsewhere,²⁶ is that self-help consists largely of small projects that operate autonomously with little assistance or direction from the state. While large projects such as secondary schools, health clinics and water projects invariably seek state assistance and often receive it, the overwhelming majority of projects are small projects

25. State provision of the recurrent expenditures for Harambee is now viewed with increasing alarm by the center. See John M. Cohen and Richard M. Hook, "District Development Planning in Kenya," Development Discussion Paper No. 229, Harvard Institute for International Development", April, 1986, p. 77.

26. Joel D. Barkan, "Self-Help Organizations, State and Society", op.cit.

which establish no links to the state. These include nursery and primary schools, mutual assistance and production groups, and cattle dips (some of which are occasionally state aided). These projects attract high levels of participation from relatively small catchment areas, and have laid down a veritable carpet of small locally rooted organizations across rural Kenya.²⁷ Given the nature of its social base, the existence of this "organizational infrastructure" provides rural residents the means to resist encroachment by the center, if not always the means to become linked to the state for the purpose of extracting state resources.

Third, the strong support for self-help by the middle peasantry together with the dropoff in support by the landless and the rich, suggest that self-help does not involve the manipulation of the rural poor by the landed rich in alliance with the center. Stated simply, rural residents are rational actors who pursue their self-interest within the resources at their disposal. Their participation in self-help, which is clearly selective and varies greatly from one type of project to another, is in large part the result of an assessment that it is in their interest to do so.²⁸ Neither the landed rich nor the center, moreover,

27. Catchment areas for most self-help projects generally exceed 5 kilometres. See Joel D. Barkan, "Development Through Self-Help: The Forgotten Alternative," Rural Africana, 19-20, Spring-Fall, 1984, pp.128-9.

28. Because they are projects which produce collective goods, self-help efforts are always susceptible to the problem of "free riders" and most rural residents are cautious about joining such efforts. For a discussion of the conditions under which peasants are prepared to join collective goods efforts, See Samuel Popkin, The Rational Peasant. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. pp.252-8.

posses the means to coerce small and middle peasants into participating in Harambee on a sustained basis. Nor is it in their interests to do so. Indeed, if there is coercion to participate and contribute to self-help, it is most likely coercion levied from within the local community by small and middle peasants on themselves and on the landless and rich rather than coercion levied from within the local community by small and middle peasants on themselves and on the landless and rich rather than coercion levied from without.²⁹

Table 7: Number of Projects for which Respondents a Leader by Amount of Land Owned

NUMBER OF PROJECTS LEAD	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
None:	90%	80%	78%	76%	64%	70%
One:	4	11	12	10	14	12
Two or more:	5	9	10	14	22	18
N =	(342)	(378)	(444)	(240)	(100)	(99)
Number of project leaders:	(31)	(76)	(98)	(58)	(36)	(30)

29. Eleven percent of our respondents reported that they had at some time been coerced into contributing to a self-help project. There was little variance, however, across landholding groups. The percentage of landless and small peasants who said they had experienced was 10 and 12 percent respectively. The percentage of middle peasants was 9 percent while the percentage for those classified as rich was 11. When asked whether it was sometimes necessary to force people to contribute to Harambee projects for the good of the local community, 56 percent of the small peasant respondents and 52 percent of the middle peasants said "yes", while the percentage for rich peasants was 40. Forty-nine percent of the landless respondents also favored coerced contributions.

Turning briefly to the question of who leads self-help, Table 7 suggests what we might expect; that the landless are least likely to be leaders of Harambee projects, while "upper-middle" and "rich" peasants who own more than 11 acres are the most likely to lead. In contrast to the relationship between the amount of land owned and project participation, the relationship between the amount of land owned and being a project leader is always positive rather than curvilinear. The variance in the propensity to lead projects, however, is not pronounced, especially among those who own land. Though they are most likely to be drawn from the most prosperous farmers, project leaders come from the entire spectrum of the rural population. Indeed, when one compares the actual number of respondents within each category of the peasantry who indicated that they had been a project leader, instead of comparing the percentages which did so, one finds that the greatest number of project leaders are "small" peasants, that is to say, those who own between 1 and 5 acres. This finding again suggests that self-help is a largely autonomous phenomena consisting of many small projects lead by "typical" members of the rural community.

WHO PAYS AND WHO BENEFITS?

We turn now to the question which has already been mentioned in the foregoing discussion: Who pays for self-help, and who benefits? Is self-help a tax on the rural poor, or is it a tax on the rich? To what extent does self-help redistribute resources within rural communities, and between rural communities and the center? The scope of this essay does not permit a detailed examination of the extent to which self-help is a mechanism for transferring resources from the center to the periphery of rural Kenya, but it is the authors' contention that the net flow of benefits is in this direction. While many correctly contend that self-help was initially encouraged and given official blessing to shift the cost of providing social welfare services from the state to the peasantry, the net result of the Harambee movement has been to transfer more resources from the center than would have occurred had the movement never emerged and grown to its present size. Private transfer payments to self-help projects in the form of small but daily contributions by salaried members of

the bureaucratic bourgeoisie and urban wage earners are substantial as any visitor to Nairobi can attest. While data on the total amount of these transfers are virtually impossible to obtain, it is clear that these payments annually run in the millions of shillings. Public transfer payments in the form of state provision of the recurrent costs of Harambee, most notably secondary schools, are also substantial, and the authors are presently attempting to assess the magnitude of these expenditures.

In respect to the question of who pays for self-help within the local community, Tables 8 and 9 provide some meaningful insights of the type only survey data can provide. Citizen contributions to self-help take two forms: contributions in cash, and contributions in kind, especially labor. A commonly held assumption is that the rich, if they pay at all, are more likely to contribute cash while the poor are more likely to contribute labor because they do not have the cash. Our data, however, suggest that this generalization is true, but with one important caveat.

Table 8: Amount Money Respondent Has Contributed by Amount of Land Owned

AMOUNT CONTRIBUTED	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
None:	32%	4%	4%	10%	5%	6%
1/-to 50/-:	33	34	21	20	13	14
51/-to 100/-:	10	19	19	14	15	11
101/-to 200/-:	9	19	21	18	30	18
201/-to 400/-:	7	13	18	16	14	18
401/-or more:	10	12	16	22	24	34
N =	(226)	(289)	(342)	(206)	(87)	(73)
Est. Ave. Contribution	95/-	144/-	177/-	190/-	210/-	246/-
Pct. of all respondents in sample:	18.5	23.6	28.0	16.8	7.1	6.0
Pct. total land owned by sample:	0.0	6.2	19.7	23.7	18.9	31.5
Pct. of total money contributed by sample	10.8	21.0	30.4	19.6	9.2	9.0
Contribution index (by population):	58	89	109	117	130	150
Contribution index (by amount land owned):	"	339	154	83	49	29

*Because landless peasants own no land, an index figure cannot be computed. If one arbitrarily assumed a figure of .1 pct., the index would be 10,800!

As indicated by the top half of Table 8, one third of the landless poor contributed nothing to self-help in the year prior to our survey, while the proportion for those who owned land was, excepting those with 6 to 10 acres, 5 percent. Conversely, the magnitude of contributions rises steadily as the amount of land owned rises. An estimate of the average contribution by each individual within each category of land owner is provided in the first row below the entries for the N for each column. These estimates indicate clearly that those who are relatively prosperous pay more, and that there is a substantial jump between the average contribution of the landless and all categories of land owners including those with holdings of only 1 to 2 acres. From their standpoint as individual members of the community, individual contributions to self-help constitute a mildly progressive tax. At the very least, resources are not being transferred from the "poor" to the "rich" or even to the "middle". The extent to which land owners in each category overpay or underpay the bills for Harambee is indicated by the entries for the Contribution Index (by population). As shown by the entries, the total contribution by all landless respondents (computed by multiplying the number of landless respondents by the estimated average contribution for the group, in this case 95 shillings) was 58 percent of what their proportion of the total population (sample) predicts they should contribute. "Small" farmers contribute roughly what their numbers require as those owning 1 to 2 acres contributed 89 percent of their quota while those owning 3 to 5 acres contributed 109 percent. The index figures steadily rise to the point where "rich" peasants with more than 21 acres contribute 150 percent of what their numbers require.

But while those with more land pay more, and while it is clear that resources are not transferred from landless and small peasants, it is doubtful whether those who are most prosperous pay the same proportion of their income as their less affluent neighbors. Because we have stratified our sample on the basis of land ownership rather than income, we are unable for the purposes of this paper, to compute what proportion of personal income the average member of each land ownership category contributes to self-help.

The contribution index (by amount land owned), however, is highly suggestive. In this index we attempt to determine whether respondents overpay or underpay on the basis of the proportion of the total amount of land owned by the entire sample which each category of land owners hold. Because the proportion of all land owned by the landless is zero, we cannot calculate an index figure for this group. As suggested by the entires for all categories of land owners, however, "small" peasants pay from 154% to 339% of what their land resources would predict, while "middle," "upper-middle," and especially the "rich" peasants underpay. Stated simply, from the standpoint of the magnitude of individual assessments, the "middle," "upper-middle" and "rich" pay more than the average. From the standpoint of their ability to pay, however, they pay less. Yet it should be noted that just as payments are assessed to and paid by individuals rather than to units of land resources (i.e. farms), the benefits of self-help are largely (with the exception of cattle dips) enjoyed by individuals. Those with relatively large land holdings may underpay on the basis of their resources, but they probably do not overutilize self-help services on the basis of their numbers. Put differently, they may underpay on the basis of their ability to pay, but they overpay in terms of the individual benefits they receive. To that extent, they subsidize the less affluent.

The picture in respect to contribution in labor is somewhat different. As one would expect, the magnitude of labor contributions declines as one moves across the spectrum of land owners from "small" peasants to "rich." The drop, however, is not precipitous, indeed there is a slight rise as the "rich" report greater labor contributions than "upper-middle" peasants. Most significantly, the landless, whom one would have expected to be the greatest contributors of labor because of their poverty, contribute the least. Indeed two thirds of the respondents with no land said they contributed no labor at all, and the average contribution was 4.9 days -- less than half the average contribution by all other strata. Using our indices of contributions, the question of overpayment and under-

Table 9: Amount Labor Respondent Has Contributed by Amount of Land Owned

AMOUNT LABOR	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
None :	66%	18%	20%	36%	36%	17%
1 to 5 days:	16	22	25	17	16	22
6 to 10 days:	5	8	9	8	9	11
11 to 30 days:	6	12	10	11	21	28
31 days or more:	7	40	37	28	18	22
N =	(188)	(241)	(228)	(148)	(56)	(46)
Est. Ave. contribu- tion:	4.9	19.7	18.3	14.6	12.6	15.9
Pct. of all respond- ants in sample	18.5	23.6	28.0	16.8	7.1	6.0
Pct. of total land owned by sample	0.0	6.2	19.7	23.7	18.9	31.5
Pct. of total labor contributed by sample:	6.8	35.3	31.0	16.1	5.2	5.4
Contribution index (by popula- tion):	37	150	111	96	73	90
Contribution index (by amount land owned):	*	569	157	68	28	17

*Because landless peasants own no land, an index figure cannot be computed. If one arbitrarily assumed a figure of .1 pct., the index would be 6800.

payment is as follows: On the basis of population, the landless pay only 37 percent of what their numbers predict, "small" peasants pay somewhat more than their numbers warrant, while "middle," "upper-middle" and "rich" peasants underpay. Small peasants, especially those with only 1 to 2 acres of land are the greatest providers of labor contributions. Turning lastly to the contribution index calculated on the basis of land resources, the pattern reported in Table 8 is replicated but in a more extreme manner. Since the relatively wealthy would prefer to contribute cash rather than labor, it is not surprising that the degree of underpayment is higher than it is when the contributions are in the former medium. In sum, when it comes to contributions in labor, those owning 6 acres or more do not, as a group, pay their expected share.

We turn lastly to the question of which strata of the peasantry benefit most from self-help? Our data to answer this question are purely subjective in that they consist of our respondents' beliefs about the degree to which they believe they have benefited from self-help, and their anticipations for future benefits. We possess no data on the actual amounts of specific benefits each respondent has received from self-help. Notwithstanding the subjective nature of the data, it is striking to note that the highest assessments of the benefits received from self-help are given by landless and "small" peasants. As indicated in Table 10 roughly three fifths of all respondents believe that they have "benefited a great deal" from projects in their area, while virtually no one reported that they received "none."

Table 10: Perceived Benefits from Self-Help by Amount of Land Owned

PERCEIVED BENEFITS	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2 acres	3-5 acres	6-10 acres	11-20 acres	21+ acres
Great deal:	65%	59%	59%	57%	64%	56%
Some benefits:	17	25	30	31	28	34
Very few benefits:	15	16	10	12	8	9
None:	3	--	1	--	--	1
N =	(241)	(353)	(419)	(229)	(96)	(86)

Table 11: Did Respondent Expect Benefits in the Future by Amount Land Owned.

EXPECTED BENEFITS?	AMOUNT LAND OWNED					
	None	1-2	3-5	6-10	11-20	21+
	acres	acres	acres	acres	acres	acres
Yes:	92%	86%	93%	92%	91%	86%
No:	8	14	7	8	9	14
N =	(121)	(108)	(113)	(71)	(34)	(36)

Those who reported receiving "very few" benefits seem to be clustered among landless and small peasants suggesting that there are some members of this group who are left behind. The basic message of Table 10, however, is that belief in the value of self-help is broad based and strongest among the rural poor. What amounts to a deep faith in self-help is even more powerfully demonstrated in Table 11. Data presented in the table is in response to the question: "Although you may have not received many benefits from these projects, do you think that you and the members of your household will receive more benefits in the future?" The question was put in this manner to assess the extent of support for self-help in the future, and to assess the level of support among those who may not have benefited from some projects at the time of our study for reasons of ineligibility; for example, respondents who contributed to a secondary school, but whose children were too young to attend. The results presented in the table speak for themselves, and again demonstrate that support is broad based. Indeed, if there is any softness in the high level of support for Harambee it is among "rich" peasants owning more than 20 acres. Both Tables 10 and 11 indicate a slight dropoff in enthusiasm among the rural rich. Although the extent of dropoff is within sampling error, it suggests that far from manipulating self-help, the rich regard Harambee as an exercise which they subsidize.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE KENYAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

This paper has addressed itself to the question: "What is the social basis of self-help?" Our response is that the base is the broad majority of what we have termed "the small and middle peasantry," and the "rich" as well. We found that self-help is extremely popular among them; that they usually participate in more than one project; that they are taxed in a moderately progressive fashion, but that they perceive substantial benefits and are very positive about the role of self-help in their futures.

The rural poor have a different and more complex relation to self-help. They do not have power within it. They are less likely to be leaders and many do not contribute money or labor, while others contribute only small amounts. Those that do contribute may well contribute a greater proportion of their income than do middle peasants and the wealthy. At the same time, however, the poor overwhelmingly believe that they benefit from the process. Indeed, a good number of them are virtual free riders in that they contribute little to project construction, but ultimately use the facility.

In an overall context of state bias against small holders,³⁰ self-help affords small and middle peasants a measure of leverage on the state, and results in state policies that are least injurious to the rural poor. In a situation where few, if any well-funded policies are designed, let alone implemented to benefit the landless and rural poor, state toleration of self-help may be the most positive of Kenya's rural development policies. Kenya's rural poor would strongly agree. Self-help, however, is by no means the "ideal policy" or process for the rural poor. Ultimately, their interests lie in obtaining heavily subsidized social services, particularly education, meaningful land reform, and rapidly expanding and well remunerated

³⁰Stephen Peterson, "Neglecting the Poor: State Policy Toward the Small holder in Kenya," in Stephen K. Commins et. al. (eds.), Africa's Agrarian Crisis: The Roots of Famine. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1986, pp. 59-83

wage employment. With the expansion of off-farm employment unlikely to occur due to a slow growing economy, and with land reform barred by the interests and power of the wealthy, self help, and the basic needs it provides, is not without interest for those supportive of poor peasant interests.

Identifying the broad social base of self-help also helps us to understand the position of the peasantry and self-help in Kenyan politics and their significance for development policy. The broad and deep support and participation by the middle peasants together with the rich, and the strong support, if not participation by the poor, help explain the power of the movement and the minimal accountability that peasants force upon the state. The political dynamics of self-help have given peasants some leverage over the state for social welfare development. Put differently, self-help has resulted in a greater expenditure of state funds on rural social welfare services than the state intended to provide, and turned peasant-state relations towards the peasants' advantage.³¹

The broad small holder base of self-help, and its autonomous character has also laid down a veritable carpet of local organizations across the rural landscape, an organizational infrastructure consisting of an experienced local leadership having multiple contacts with state personnel and procedure. Project density is advantageous to peasants approached by state programs, and the state in search of rural organizations and local contacts for its projects and programs³²

³¹ Frank Holmquist, "Self-Help: The State and Peasant Leverage in Kenya," op. cit. and John M. Cohen and Richard M. Hook, "District Development Planning in Kenya," op. cit.

³² Joel D. Barkan, "Development Through Self-Help," op. cit., pp.

The broad social roots of self-help among the peasantry and peasant leverage have forced the bureaucracy to acknowledge that they ignore peasant opinion, local leaders and local organizations at their peril. This form of accountability may only happen when it is forced upon the state from below -- again, a testament to the autonomous character of most self-help activity.

Our search for the social base of self-help has also revealed that self-help is community based as defined by ownership of land. That is to say, for those not rooted in the community by virtue of control over land, despite other indicators of status, they will be less engaged in self-help and less likely to lead it than middle peasants. Those wealthy in land, on the other hand, will be more drawn to self-help than the wealthy without land, but less involved than small holder peasants.

The broad based participation and predominance of initiative among the peasantry allows self-help to occur in lieu of the state as much as in concert with the state. The popular view is that self-help is the only way to develop the countryside--that communities cannot wait for the state to provide assistance. Self-help, despite its intimate relationship with clientelist hierarchies, and often bureaucratic personnel, is also deeply autonomous. Most projects function independently at the grassroots level and are not linked to either the state, or external leaders or resources.

Self-help has a classically populist appeal to small and middle peasants whose world view posits a united peasant community in uneasy relation to the state. Peasant ideology and consciousness is all but unexplored in the literature but Njuguna Ng'ethe's work is a rare and penetrating analysis of the interplay of official and peasant ideology in the rise of self-help after independence.³³ He argues convincingly that soon after Independence, President Kenyatta found himself in a quandry. Parliament and KANU were deeply divided into ideological, ethnic, regional and personal factions that made it

³³ Njuguna Ng'ethe, Harambee and Development Participation in Kenya. op. cit.

increasingly difficult, from his perspective, to govern. In an effort to deflect these divisions away from the center, Kenyatta began to articulate a new rationale for constituency service based on the already extant self-help motif. Kenyatta in effect told the politicians (particularly Members of Parliament) to "do something useful"--to help initiate and organize self-help efforts in their constituencies, and that the government would help those who helped themselves. Self-help would be a cooperative effort involving the people and the state. This message resonated extremely well with small property owners who perceived their community facing an aloof outside world, but one that may be influenced with the right approach and with the right allies.

The politics and attitudes of small farmers toward the Kenyan state are deeply ambiguous. As believers in small property they support a capitalist structure. But they also perceive abuses in the form of corruption, misuse of office, ethnic favoritism, nepotism and a great political distance between themselves, the dominant classes and the state. Our data reveal that while the middle peasants, indeed the majority of all peasants, believe that self-help may help them get something from the state, they increasingly know that they must fend for themselves. This is particularly true given the fiscal crises Kenya has faced in the 1980s, and the restructuring of the provincial and district administration to implement a new policy of administrative decentralization known as District Focus.

While the impact of this administrative and political restructuring upon self-help is unclear, a major impetus to District Focus was the desire to "get a hold on self-help" and limit the incidence of uncontrolled initiative from below which, given the logic of self-help, raises the pressure to devote a greater proportion of state funds, particularly recurrent expenditures, to self-help

induced social services than the state wishes to provide.³⁴ With a more controlled local planning apparatus under administrative aegis with District Focus, the intent is to give the green light to selected projects in keeping with scaled back fiscal possibilities, and in the process effectively dampen initiative "outside the plan." Initiative will then lie primarily with the state, local involvement will diminish, and former self-help projects with possible state participation are likely to become state projects with possible local participation.

The result is likely to parallel the experience with Kenya's Rural Development Fund where the state closely regulated the pace of project development and proved chronically unable to summon up local participation and labor on demand. Thus, self-help may be reigned in, and with it the primary political vehicle of the middle peasantry. All this occurs amidst a recent atmosphere of policy deference toward production and wealthy peasants, if not capitalist farmers, created by aid agencies with their prescriptions in response to fiscal crisis, external debt and balance of payments problems.³⁵ On the other hand, because most projects are small and autonomous, it is also likely that any attempt to rein in self-help fail. Projects which have emerged solely through local initiative and local resources are likely to continue that way, at least in the short term. Given this reality, the net result of District Focus may merely be a clarification of the rules of the game via which middle peasants and their representatives will contest for the shrinking pie of state assistance.

³⁴ Acknowledgement of the inherent tension between self-help and government attempts to control expenditures at the local level is candidly noted by the consultants responsible for designing and implementing the district level planning procedures on which District Focus is based. See John M. Cohen and Richard M. Hook, "District Development and Planning in Kenya," Development Discussion Paper 229. Cambridge: Harvard Institute for International Development, April 1986, p. 77

³⁵ Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa.
Washington: The World Bank, 1981

One could, however, see District Focus as a vehicle to accelerate the transition to capitalism and provide a way out of the recent fiscal crisis. In this model, most powerfully stated at a general level by Gavin Kitching,³⁶ there is no room for development based upon the small holder peasantry. There is instead only an implicit "real capitalism" based upon large rural producers coupled with a serious industrial thrust, again based upon large producers. According to Kitching, populist scenarios of economies based upon middle (or small) peasant producers have not worked. Well-meaning, but ultimately deadend, efforts to dodge the horrors of capitalist transitions have only delayed the transition and perversely extended the suffering.

Kitching's brilliant exposition almost masks the fact that he has his history wrong. There are recent and past examples of rather vigorous capitalist transitions based upon small holder peasants such as Taiwan, South Korea, Thailand, Bulgaria, Finland, Denmark, etc.³⁷ We see no reason why a transition to capitalism cannot be effectively carried out on a small holder base in Kenya.³⁸ Indeed, we see no alternative. Without a vigorous internal market which only a relatively prosperous small holder peasantry can provide. Kenya's industrialization would have to depend upon the demand of a wealthy few, or upon a rapidly expanding export capacity, or both. Neither seem likely.³⁹

³⁶ Gavin Kitching, *Development and Underdevelopment in Historical Perspective*. London: Methuen, 1982; and Gavin Kitching, "Politics, Method, and Evidence in the 'Kenya Debate'", in Henry F. Stein and Bonnie K. CAMPBELL (eds.), *Contradictions of Accumulation in Africa*. Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1985.

³⁷ Robert Bideleux, *Communism and Development*. London: Methuen, 1985, p. 55

³⁸ Leo, *Land and Class in Kenya* op. cit., pp. 171-98

³⁹ Martin Godfrey, "Prospects for a Basic Needs Strategy: The Case of Kenya," *IDS Bulletin*, 9:4 (June, 1978), pp. 41-44

And to enforce highly skewed income distribution and growing centralized control of the means of production, including land, would require an expanded and more repressive state apparatus as the Latin American experience would suggest.⁴⁰

This discussion helps put self-help and its middle peasant base into political and developmental perspective. If it is true that a viable long-term industrial and development policy in Kenya requires a reasonably prosperous peasantry, it also begs the question of what matrix of forces will direct state policy in this direction. Needless to say, a populist state cannot simply be summoned up on demand.

Self-help provides a mechanism of defense to small holders in a very difficult situation.⁴¹ Ironically, it also affords the state measure of legitimacy. Self-help, in short is not a zero-sum game for small holder peasants or the state. In the continental context of the near complete decay of state capacity and structures, this vehicle of legitimacy is no small asset for both the peasantry and the state. One of the reasons that self-help has been so durable in Kenya is that the state is reasonably predictable. Local organization, initiative, regular elections, clientelist alliances, and well-known avenues for exerting influence, coupled with fairly reliable state funding and management of projects the state takes over, gives everyone something to shoot for. The whole effort is not "pie-in-the-sky." But if, as has occurred elsewhere in Africa, further political departicipation,⁴² a coup d'etat, or chronic civil disturbances (or warfare) break out (e.g. Uganda), the self-help system would breakdown and with it would go the primary vehicle of small holder political leverage. On the other hand, it is precisely because the Kenyan state has been predictable and given rise to local organization, initiative and regular elections that we can talk about a Kenyan political system where the probability for political decay is low.

⁴⁰ Frederick S. Weaver, Class, State and Industrial Structure: The Historical Process of South American Industrial Growth. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980

⁴¹ Frank Holmquist, "Defending Peasant Political Space in Independent Africa" op.cit.

⁴² Nelson Kasfir, The Shrinking Political Arena. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

And to ensure highly trained staff and growing control of the state of education, health and welfare expanded and more representative state apparatus in the Latin American experience would suggest.

This discussion helps put things in perspective. It is true that a stable long-term industrial and development policy in some respects a reasonably representative democracy, it also begs the question of what matrix of forces will direct state policy in this direction. Needless to say, a popularly elected government is a necessary condition.

Self-help provides a mechanism of defense to small borders in a very difficult situation. Ideologically, it is also a means of state defense of representative democracy and the economic context. The main challenge is to ensure that the state is not a mere vehicle of legitimacy, but that it also serves the economy and the state. One of the reasons for self-help has been to provide in some states that the state is reasonably representative, social organization, industrial organization, agricultural organization, and welfare. It is not enough to have a state with fairly reliable state apparatus for existing influence. Coupled with fairly reliable state funding and management of projects in the state cases, even everyone something to do. The state is not "pre-in-the-city" but it has covered elements in health, family, political organization.

It is a question of the state's role in the economy and with respect to the primary sector of small holder, family, leverage. In the other hand, it is primarily for the larger state has been productive and gives rise to more organization, initiative and regular elections that we can find a better political system where the possibility for political activity is low.

40 years of development, the state has been a major force in the process of economic growth and industrialization. The state has been a major force in the process of economic growth and industrialization. The state has been a major force in the process of economic growth and industrialization.