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RESERVE

DEMOGRAPHY AND ECONOMY IN A RURAL COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a report of on-going research which examines the demography and the economy of a Kuria location and draws out the relationship between the two. It represents the first step of a detailed ethnographic study of the cultural expressions of social and economic differentiation whose twofold objective is to 1) demonstrate the factors and processes of differentiation, and 2) to examine how unequal situations are reproduced and legitimated through key institutions, ideologies, and cultural typifications providing the framework by which people explain and understand their situation and the events of their lives.

An examination of the demographic structure shows an increasingly young population made up of mainly children. This is both a result of the cumulative effects of high population growth and of the increasing practice of polygamy and *omoka mona* marriage. These factors also contribute to the high incidence of homesteads without male heads, and a very high ratio of dependents to productive members. For analytical purposes, the sample homesteads have been divided according to the stage within the development cycle that they have reached, and this information has been used to set up a comparison with their economic standing.

In investigating the economy, we see that though agriculture remains the main source of cash income, off-farm income from occupations and jobs is of key importance to the economy. We also see that the homesteads in the latest stages of development depend mostly on farming. The reverse is true when it comes to occupational and business income. Having the highest income, both per homestead and per capita are the homes within the penultimate stage of development, which rely both on agricultural and off-farm sources of income.

INTRODUCTION

Kenya stands out as a successful exception to the generally unimpressive picture of development experiences among countries in sub-Saharan Africa. The backbone of its economy is agriculture, and the expansion of smallholder production has been a dynamic element in the country's growth process since the mid-fifties. In this process, economic and social structures of the rural areas have been radically transformed. It is the aim of this research to explore the basic structural transformations that Kenya has experienced in the course of this century, and to illuminate how these processes shaped, and were in turn shaped by the meanings people gave to the changes in their lives. Whereas previous studies of socio-economic differentiation have emphasized a macro-regional approach, this study attempts to combine macro-perspectives with in depth community level data.

The objective of the ethnographic study is to provide detailed information along two lines 1) to highlight the factors and processes of differentiation, and 2) to demonstrate how unequal situations are reproduced and legitimated through key institutions, ideologies, and cultural typifications which provide the framework by which people explain and understand their situation and the events of their lives.

This paper addresses the first part of the above stated objective, focusing on the nature of economic differences as they exist now. It looks at the demographic structure of the community, outlines the economy, and draws out the relationship between the two. It must be remembered that both the data presented and the correlations are tentative, this being a report of on-going research. No claim is being made that the data presented are conclusive, as the results of the survey are still being cross-checked and augmented by in-depth case studies.<sup>1</sup>

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The research area is in the south-eastern, highland region of South Nyanza district, in Kehancha Division. The environment is a hilly, highland plateau just south of the equator, ranging in elevation from 1400 to just over 1,800 meters. Due to the elevation, climate is generally mild. A bi-modal pattern of rainfall allows for two growing seasons per year. Less rain falls in the adjoining lowlands, affecting the agricultural potential for lowland dwelling Kuria in Tanzania and neighboring Luos.

Unlike the vast majority of the district, this area is settled by the Abakuria, a Bantu-language speaking people who reside in Kehancha division and adjoining regions of Tanzania. In Kenya they are bounded on the south by the international boundary with Tanzania, on the east and north by the provincial boundary with Rift Valley, and on the west by Luo settlements which extend up to Lake Victoria.

Being a minority ethnic group within a district whose major population differs sharply both in terms of language and customs, the Kuria compose a rather closed enclave, with their main ties being south towards Tanzania. These ties are of kinship, ritual activity and trade. But increasingly throughout the century, the community has forged stronger ties with the rest of Kenya, partly following its political incorporation first into the colony and then into the nation state, and partly in pursuance of economic objectives. Indeed, the local perception is that the Kuria dwelling in Kenya are both more "progressive" in their general orientation and more advanced economically than their kinsmen in Tanzania.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Prior to the colonization of East Africa, the ethnic grouping Abakuria was not to be found. The entity known as such today were a series of ibiaro (sing. ikiaro), variously translated as "provinces" (Ruel 1958, 1962), and sub-tribes (Tobisson 1986), numbering 15 (Ruel 1958:26), 18 (Chacha 1963:7-14), or 13 (Abuso 1980:7-8). An ikiaro was composed of people occupying a common territory, who joined together in defense when threatened. Within it there were means for ordering joint activities and for settling disputes, and homicide was considered a crime (Ruel op.cit.).

The ibiario were acephalous, as were the sub-units of which they were composed.<sup>2</sup> The only legitimate authority figures were the abiene (homestead heads, sing. umuene) who were recognized as the heads of the lowest level units of organization, i.e. the homesteads.

Of the ibiario, four are located in Kenya. Of these only one is located here in its entirety, the others having segments of their population still residing in Tanzania. Current research is taking place in the location of the Abairege.<sup>3</sup>

#### Pre-Colonial Era

The early history of the people, as recreated by Abuso (1980) is one of migrations of the ibiario, instigated both by searches for land for grazing and cultivation, and by pressures applied by neighbouring groups, most notably the Maasai, with whom the Kuria have a long-standing relationship of enmity and admiration. In the course of these migrations a great deal of amalgamation took place between the various ibiario, as well as other ethnic groups, including the Luo, Maasai and Kisii.

Migration continues to be an important aspect of Kuria life and is commonly explained as the carrying out of an ancient prophesy which foretold that the people would move north (into Kenya) in the beginning of the century, then retreat southwards (to Mugumu in Mara Province, Tanzania), and then move again towards the north-east. Today there is a sizeable movement of Kuria (of all ibiario both from Tanzania and Kenya) into Narok District lands which adjoin Kehancha Division.

#### Early Colonial Era.

After the establishment of colonial government, the Kuria began to leave the fortified hill-top settlements and spread out across the country to live near their fields and grazing grounds. There were no major restrictions on the expansion, though earlier settlement groupings

2. The units are, in descending order according to size: ibisaku (sing. egesaku), amagiha (sing. irigiha), and ichika (sing. eka).

3. When administrative locations were delineated, these were made to correspond with the old ikiaro lines. Thus in Kenya there were four: Bwirege, Nyabasi, Bukira and Bugumbe. About 5 years ago, each location was split into two, denoted as East and West. Thus each ikiaro today occupies two administrative locations.

were represented in the different directions of movement. The general dispersal meant that there was some spill-over from the fortified settlements located on the Tanganyika side of the boundary to the areas traditionally claimed by them on the Kenya side (Ruel 1958:150-51). This is particularly true for Bwirege in Kenya, which is populated by settlers formerly situated entirely in Tanganyika.

Other movements across the border followed pressure exerted by either administration in enforcing particular requirements, ranging from conscripted labour to bridewealth limitations. Though the authorities, particularly German, tried to halt such movement, the measures, though forcible, were ineffective. The Kuria have always taken advantage of the international border going through their territory and across their provinces to be on, or to convey their property to, whichever side is more beneficial. Figures from 1907 to 1911 show a marked increase in population in all four Kuria provinces in Kenya, the number of huts increasing in Utende (Bugumbe) by 57%, in Ukiria (Bukira) 79%, Nyabasi 18%, and Uregi (Bwirege) 190% (Ibid.: 151). The situation of fluid movement of homesteads lasted till about 1940 (Ibid.:10). Ample land remained and there was no formalization of individual rights over it. The plough was introduced, as were a number of crops.

Trade and labour migrations were engaged in by the Kuria as early as the second decade of this century. Though it seems likely and evidence (Abuso: 1980) supports that Kuria were engaged in trade long before colonial times, the colonial administration decided to encourage the border trade early on, as for example, by establishing a trading center in Suna in 1910.

By 1915, 13% of able-bodied young men were registered as working away from home. In the 1920s this increased, and many men went into the police (Ruel 1959: 149-50).

The main points of concern to the administration throughout the colonial period were 1) the constant movement across the international border, 2) the high rate of bridewealth, 3) the frequency and scale of cattle raiding, 4) the corruption of chiefs and headmen, and 5) the remoteness of the region (from the headquarters at Kisii) which defied close administration as well as the efforts of development officers.



The introduction of new crops, particularly those for cash, was greatly hindered by a lack of infrastructure and did not take hold until the opening of a gold mine in Kehancha in the 1930's which provided a market (if rather limited) for produce. Today, agricultural output is below potential, markets are underdeveloped and the only paved road in the Division intersects the western-most location on its way to Tanzania, leaving the rest of Bukuria with unpaved roads which are often impassable during the rainy seasons.

#### Late Colonial Period.

In the 1950s began a movement of "enclosure", most markedly in Butende location (Bugurube), where by 1957 the majority of all arable land had been claimed. "Enclosure" took the form of a homestead head claiming the land surrounding the homestead and marking the boundaries with sisal. The movement was encouraged by the government and came at a time of increased pressure on land. It was less marked in other areas of Kenyan Bukuria, where it was opposed by "traditional elements" (Ruel 1958: 10).

By the end of the 1950s procedures concerning the transfer of rights in land had yet to be fully developed. There was land still available for settlement, and a man's sons were able to migrate to new areas if there was insufficient land at home or to migrate as wage labour (Ibid.: 12). Tenant farming had not developed. Land did not have capital value. Ruel stresses that the land ownership rights which began developing in the 1950s related to the modern economic circumstances of the Kuria, with emphasis on individual rights of homestead heads rather than the more general rights of the corporate group.

Kuria had a mixed pastoral-agricultural economy, with each homestead acting as an economic unit, maintaining its own farms and livestock. Finger millet was the main crop cultivated, the main cultivating season being concerned with it. Various secondary crops were grown, including sorghum, sweet potatoes, cassava, maize, and beans. These were generally grown in the minor cultivating season. Maize, when grown as a cash crop, was also cultivated in the main season. Wild vegetables were collected. Livestock provided a vital supplement to the bulk of diet based on farm crops, milk and meat were in the 1950s more plentiful than in the past (Ibid.: 6). To gauge the effects of changes which had been introduced by the

government as alternatives to traditional methods of cultivation, such measures to avoid soil erosion, the introduction of "better farming," etc., Ruel draws a distinction between general peasant-farmers and "a class of emancipated" farmers. For peasant-farmers, concerned primarily with obtaining a subsistence livelihood, there have been enormous improvements in the extent of crop-production and livestock holding, and thus less thought given to direct modern introductions. The greatest success in the creation of a class of emancipated farmers, concerned to work for monetary income as much as for subsistence livelihood, was scored by the introduction of coffee (Ibid.:8).

#### THE COMMUNITY

Settlement patterns are not centralized, people live in homesteads, dispersed over the hills, villages and plateaus. Individual homesteads are fenced, as is land, and communities are bounded by natural borders such as streams and hills. Extended families tend to own contiguous land, the primary form of ownership transfer being inheritance. It is important to note that this is a very recent phenomenon, not having become a significant factor until about 30 years ago. Till then, when sons split off to form their own homesteads they could claim any pieces of land held by their egesaku<sup>4</sup> that was not being used by someone else. In future a profile will be made to correlate the size of landholdings divided through inheritance with the economic level of those who, thirty years ago, inherited rather than claimed land. The significant variable in each family is the number of sons among whom land had to be divided.

A survey of 233 homesteads (imigi sing. umugi) was carried out in eight communities of one administrative sublocation.<sup>5</sup> The total number of people living in those homesteads is 2,130. Of these, 51% are children under the age of 14. Married adults comprise 33% of the population, and single circumcised males and females 16%.

Only three of the homesteads were headed by non-Kuria, in all cases Kisii, a father who settled in the area about 30 years ago and his two sons, one born in this community. All but two households are headed by members of one ikiaro (Abairege). The families originating from other locations have come to Bwirege because of their jobs. Men frequently

4. Egesaku is the unit of social organization just below the ikiaro in size.

5. Ntimaru Sublocation, Bwirege West.

unmarried women who are not Abaige. On the whole few people outside the immediate extended patrilineal units reside in the communities. This is most frequently a sister-in-law, often a young sister of the mother of young children. She usually is responsible for taking care of the baby.

Production Unit: The Homestead.

In this study the homestead is taken to be the basic economic unit. It includes all the individuals living together in a number of houses, clustered around a central cattle corral. The head of the homestead is the owner of the farmland which the members cultivate, as well as of the livestock which resides within it. A homestead is made up of houses (ichinyumba), one per each married woman residing within that homestead. The exception are newly married wives, who do not have their own kitchen and farm and cook alongside their mothers-in-law. Generally they establish their independence with the birth of a child.

Though production and consumption activities are not necessarily undertaken by the members of the homesteads collectively, the most important resource, land, is made available to them on the basis of membership within the unit. The composition of the compounds is variable, depending mainly on the stage within the development cycle of the homestead. The basic grouping includes a male homestead head, his wife or wives and children. An older homestead, and one that is considered ideal, also includes married sons, their wives and children.

There are basically three types of family organization found in Bukuria, which include the elementary, compound and joint (Ruel 1958:68). Elementary families (E) are monogamous, compound families (P) polygamous, and joint (J) where two or more brothers of the same mother are living within one homestead. Any of these basic types may be simple (S), having one married adult generation, or extended (X), having two married generations. In the instances where polygamous wives separate, each with her own homestead, such a family forms a compound section (C), which in turn can be simple or extended.

The mean number of residents per homestead is 9.14, the mode 7 and the median 8. The composition of the average homestead is as follows: 1.1 married males, 1.85 married females, 0.97 unmarried males over 14 years

of age, and 0.46 unmarried females over the age of 14 and 4.62 children under 14. Of the married males, 0.6 are actual homestead heads (abiene), 0.53 their sons and/or brothers. Of the married females 1.1 are wives of the abiene, 0.6 his daughters-in-law, and 0.12 brothers' wives or married daughters who have been chased from their husbands' homesteads. These calculations are based on the number of full time residents, children who are away for most of the year in boarding schools or work away from home are not included in the figures. A comparison with figures collected thirty years ago (Ruel 1958:71) shows that the average homestead size has increased by 2.6 persons, the growth having taken place in the number of children and unmarried males.

To avoid strife, competition and witchcraft accusations, many polygamists have separate homesteads for each of their wives. Thus polygamy, though idealized and often practised, is infrequent as a form of living arrangement. Less than 15% of the homesteads are polygamous, though 49% of abiene are married to more than one wife, 38% have two wives, 10% three and about 1% four. There is also a relatively high rate of breakdown of polygamous marriages, with one of the wives running away from her husbands home, sometimes taking her children with her. In 1958, 82% of married men were monogamous, 15% had 2 wives and 2% had 3 wives (Ibid.:72). The institution of polygamy is being practised more widely than previously.

Of the adult population, 53% of married males and 61% of married females have their own home. The remaining people live in the homesteads of their fathers or fathers-in-law. It is interesting to note that 67% of homesteads have no umuene in residence, and therefore women, who are ineligible to be homestead heads, in effect direct the affairs of the members of their living unit, unless they have adult sons.

In the sample of 233 homesteads, only in two are women considered to be the heads. One of these is an aged widow, who lives on her own, on a small piece of land loaned to her by her son-in-law, the spouse of her only child. The possibility of such a situation is greatly dreaded by Kuria women, a woman with no sons has no hold on land she cultivates once her husband dies, especially if he has brothers. Partly for this reason the

institution of omoka mona (son's wife) marriage exists.<sup>6</sup> The only other female headed homestead is a result of such an arrangement following the death of her parents-in-law, the unit being composed of the daughter-in-law, her children and her consort.

#### Demographic Structure.

Homestead economy to a large extent depends on the development stage which the household has reached. One of the main resources of peasant production is free labour, supplied by family members.

I have identified four stages in the development cycle: A) a unit composed of a man, his wife or wives, and children. There is only one generation of married adults present and children are young. B) The homestead remains one generational, but its composition is changing as daughters are married off, and the umuene may be marrying another wife. C) The homestead begins to grow in size as sons marry and the daughters-in-laws move in, and begin to reproduce. This is the ideal of a Kuria homestead, and has been discussed by Ruel (1958) and Tobisson (1986). The labour of the now married away daughters is replaced by that of the daughter-in-laws moving in. D) As married sons split off with their families to establish their own homes their natal homestead decreases in size. The aging parents generally live with their youngest son, who is not to split away.

The development cycle not only has important implications in terms of the availability of labour, but also in the control over the resources an umuene has, including land and cattle. Upon splitting off from his father's homestead, a young umuene (omosaacha) is usually given land by his father (omogaaka) on which he can build his homestead and grow crops. The ownership of the land remains in the hands of his father, the son has the right of use. In the sample, 43% of homesteads are in the first

6. The institution of "woman-marriage" has received quite a bit of attention in anthropological literature, particularly as it brings to question issues of sexual classification (e.g. O'Brien 1977, Oboler 1980, Huber 1968/69, Fwezaura 1985). In the Kuria case, in the view of the people, in the terminology, and in the wedding ritual itself there is no suggestion that a woman assumes the role of a husband in relation to another woman. The two main persons concerned are related and mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, and the institution is most accurately described as the practice of marrying a daughter-in-law for a house (inyumba) which has no male offspring. The role of the daughter-in-law is that of a wife of a fictitious or deceased son of that house, and she will provide grandchildren to perpetuate it, and assist her parents-in-law as they grow old.

stage of development. The majority (56%) of these are one-generational monogamous families (i.e., have one generation of married adults). Twenty-one percent of the homesteads have reached the second stage of development, here the modal family is still one generational, but polygamous. Another

Table 1: Family Type by Development Cycle Stage

| Family Type | A   |    | B   |    | C   |    | D   |    |
|-------------|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|
|             | No. | %  | No. | %  | No. | %  | No. | %  |
| ES          | 57  | 56 | 14  | 29 | 1   | 2  | 2   | 6  |
| EX          | 0   | 0  | 6   | 12 | 23  | 48 | 8   | 23 |
| PS          | 26  | 26 | 15  | 31 | 0   | 0  | 2   | 6  |
| PX          | 0   | 0  | 1   | 2  | 12  | 25 | 6   | 17 |
| CS          | 11  | 11 | 8   | 17 | 0   | 0  | 4   | 11 |
| CX          | 0   | 0  | 3   | 6  | 12  | 25 | 12  | 34 |
| JS          | 7   | 7  | 1   | 2  | 0   | 0  | 1   | 3  |
| Total*      | 101 |    | 48  |    | 48  |    | 35  |    |

\*not including the homestead of the old widow who lives completely alone.

Source: Field survey.

21% of the homesteads are in the third stage of development, they are two-generational and the modal family is monogamous extended. The remaining 15% of homesteads are in the last stage of development, whereby some of the adult sons have split off to form their own homesteads. The modal type of family arrangement is a multi-generational compound section yet, in this development stage, all types of family arrangements are represented.

In comparing this distribution with that recorded thirty years ago, we find a decrease in the number of monogamous families (from 63% to 44%) and of joint families (from 18% to 4%). The opposite trend is evident in polygamous families, which have increased from 18% to 26%, and in compound section, which have increased from 1% to 22%.

The average number of occupants per homestead varies with development cycle. As can be expected, at the first stage the number of occupants is the lowest. The mean is 7.8 occupants, the mode and median 7.

At the second stage the mean number of occupants rises to 8.2, the mode remains 7 and the median is 8. Homesteads in the third stage are the largest, having a mean of 12.25 people, a mode of 10 and median 11. The last stage represents the widest spread in statistical terms, the mean being 10.1 occupants per homestead, the mode 5 and the median 9.

An analysis of the development cycles as well as that of homestead composition shows the youthful nature of Kuria society. As most members in homesteads are below the age of 14, so also most homesteads are in the first stage of their development. As other data are collected, it will be profitable to analyse the opportunities open to families of each developmental stage at a given point in the historical development of the community, e.g., the onset of land registration. This may well underline and document the importance of development cycles within the overall process of differentiation, and show that the critiques of the Chayanovian theory of differentiation, e.g., Kithing (1980) are correct to demand that developmental cycles must be analysed in correlation with historical events.

#### ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

Every homestead within the communities studied undertakes farming as one of its productive activities.<sup>7</sup> Specialization in economic activities is not very far advanced. Whereas the decision whether or not to cultivate cash crops is often influenced by whether or not the members of a homestead have non-farm sources of income, all homesteads rely on their own agricultural activities for all or most of their subsistence needs.

Farming is the most important source of cash income in Bwirege, accounting for about 51% of the total income in the surveyed communities. The average cash income per homestead from farming is Shs. 6,089 per year. Though all the food crops grown can be sold in the local market, the bulk of the income from farming comes from

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<sup>7</sup> The exception is that of the aged widow described above, who depends on her daughter and son-in-law to provide her food due to her advanced age.

the cultivation of the three main cash crops: tobacco, maize and coffee.

Business enterprises and jobs, both on the part of the abiene and of their dependents represent 47% of the cash flow within the communities. The remaining 2% of cash value comes into the communities from various sources, including remittances sent by children living away, assistance with school fees, etc. In virtually all cases the amounts of money involved are small.

The following chart demonstrates the relationship between form of income and development cycle of the domestic group.

Table 2: Percentage of Total Income by Development Cycle

| Farming      | Occupation | Business            | Dependents' | Other  |
|--------------|------------|---------------------|-------------|--------|
| D = 67%      | A = 37%    | B = 19%             | C = 39%     | B = 6% |
| B = 59%      | B = 4%     | A = 17%             | D = 30%     | D = 3% |
| C = 56%      | C = 2%     | C = 2%              | B = 13%     | C = 1% |
| A = 41%      | D = 0%     | D = 1% <sup>8</sup> | A = 5%      | A = 1% |
| Total Sample |            |                     |             |        |
| 51%          | 18%        | 11%                 | 18%         | 2%     |

Source: Field Survey

Farming represents the most significant proportion of total income for those homesteads within development cycle D, and the smallest proportion in cycle A. The exact reverse is true of income from occupations. Business income represents the largest proportion of total income for homesteads within cycle B, and dependents' income for those

<sup>8</sup> The only umuene in this development cycle is the aged widow mentioned above, who does no farming, lives on the land of her son-in-law, and is a small scale trader in snuff.



in cycle C. Other income is not a significant factor in any development cycle, but is the highest for those in the cycle B.

Average total income for the whole sample is Shs. 11,855 per year. When looked upon in terms of the development cycles, we see that the highest average income is had by cycle C (Shs. 14,918/year), followed by cycle A (Shs. 12,196/year), followed by cycle D (Shs. 10,370/year). Development cycle B has the lowest average total income (Shs. 9,196 per year).

#### Land Ownership

The mean size of landholding is 4.7 hectares, with the mode and medium both being 4. This average is based on 205 homesteads, of which 7 own no land at all.<sup>9</sup> For the remaining 28 homesteads, most of which are in first stage of the development cycle, the land they farm and live on still belongs to their father, and it is assumed that they will eventually inherit it. Taking a holding of 3.7 to 5.7 hectares to be the average, we find that 31% of the homesteads fall within the category. 40% of the homesteads have a holding smaller than average, and 29% larger.

Thirty-one percent of all homesteads own the average 3.7 to 5.7 hectares of land, controlling 29% of the total land in the communities. Forty percent of the homesteads own less than 3.7 hectares, controlling 20% of the land total, and the 29% that own more than 5.7 hectares control 51% of the land. The mean holding for the above average group is 8.2 ha, for the below average group 2.3 ha. The largest landholding is 23.6 hectares and is owned by an old man who disinherited his sons as they split off from the natal homestead.

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9. Two of these homesteads are of the non-Abairege abiene who own land in their natal abiara; two are widows who had no sons and thus no security in land holding, two are widows who have young children and whose land was taken over by the brothers of their husbands. Only one case is of a male, who was away when his father divided his holding, and thus did not inherit any.

There is now a small market in land with more buyers than sellers. Landlessness has not become a problem, mainly because those who sell their land migrate into the Rift Valley or to Tanzania. Some of these people have returned to try and reclaim their land and have found that under the current land tenure laws they have given up their rights irrevocably.

#### Farming: Subsistence

As mentioned above, all homesteads produce the bulk, if not all their staple food needs as a part of their everyday activities. The staple foods were traditionally finger millet, millet/sorghum, and cassava. Since the 1920s maize has been cultivated in increasing amount, and is nowadays considered a staple food. Many other types of crops are also cultivated, including sweet and Irish potatoes, yams, green vegetables, tomatoes, onions, bananas, and to a much smaller extent sugar cane, pineapples, and fruits such as guavas, passion fruit, oranges and lemons. Though sale is not the primary motive for the cultivation of any of these, all are marketable, and are often sold in small quantities by women in order to obtain cash for grinding charges, and for the purchase of salt, fat, soap or other household needs. Income from these represents 21% of total farming income generated within the sample.

Though basic subsistence needs are to a large extent met by domestic production, a significant portion of the cash income of all the homesteads is spent on the purchase of food. The largest cash outlays are generally made for meat, fats, sugar, tea and green vegetables.

Only 39 homesteads (17%) buy staple foods, and of these almost 60% buy one type only. It is usual that women begin selling off some of their grains immediately following harvest, despite the fact that the price at that point is at its lowest level. In some cases, they buy maize to meet subsistence needs later on, as their granaries run out before the next harvest is brought in. What also happens is that the woman/women in a particular homestead do not cultivate cassava or millet both of which are used in small quantities in preparing the staple food ubukiima (ugali) in combination with a much larger quantity of finger millet.

#### Farming: Cash Crops.

Coffee was the first cash crop introduced to Bukuria, and is cultivated by 151 homesteads, i.e. 65% of the total. Of these 60% grow coffee only, while 40% cultivate both coffee and tobacco. Coffee represents a long term commitment of land, a prolonged period of no returns while the trees mature, but is relatively undemanding in terms of labour. It is also the least lucrative of the crops grown for cash, representing only 16% of the total farming income. In the opinion of local agricultural officers, the potential of coffee farming is much greater than is being realised. The main reasons for the relative lack of attention to this crop are volatile prices and the delay in payments made to farmers, which often exceed six months. Consequently, some of the coffee produced is smuggled and sold across the border, and some is not picked, farmers perceiving the effort not to be worth the returns.

Tobacco was introduced within the last decade. Its cultivation demands fresh land each year, a sizeable investment in inputs (financed by loans from the tobacco company) and a major investment of labour. The sale of the product takes place after almost a whole year of cultivation, and the peak periods of labour (transplanting, weeding, harvesting and curing) coincide with the peak labour periods of the main growing season's subsistence production. The great labour demand is one of the reasons why so few homesteads (15%) grow tobacco as the sole cash crop (excluding maize). Nonetheless, tobacco income is the single largest category of farming income, representing 36% of total income from farming. The average monetary yield from cultivating tobacco is more than twice the average yield from maize, which is the second most lucrative crop.

One hundred and eighty-four homesteads (79%) earn at least a part of their farming income from the sale of maize. This income amounts to 21% of total farming income represented in the survey. Though some cultivate large acreages with the clear intention of selling it, more homesteads sell their surplus only, or sell small amounts periodically to meet domestic cash flow needs. It would be inaccurate to say that maize farming is not considered as cash cropping in that people expect to earn money from the maize they cultivate, but its dual character as both a food/subsistence and a cash crop places it conceptually within a different realm

from tobacco and coffee. Along with other food crops, it is often the main source of income for women, and one which is disposed of in satisfying the needs of themselves and their children.

Table 3: Source of Farm Income by Development Cycle.

| Dev. Cycle   | Tobacco | Maize | Coffee | Other |
|--------------|---------|-------|--------|-------|
| A            | 38%     | 14%   | 26%    | 22%   |
| B            | 27      | 22    | 30     | 21    |
| C            | 48      | 11    | 27     | 14    |
| D            | 31      | 18    | 23     | 26    |
| Total sample | 36%     | 16%   | 27%    | 21%   |

Source: Field survey.

Forty-four homesteads in the sample, i.e. 19% do not cultivate either coffee or tobacco. For these homes, the average farm income is Shs. 1858/year. Though 6 of these homes own no land, the average land-holding is just under 4 hectares, and is therefore, close to the average for the total sample. Though their farm income is low, their average total income is Shs 11,011/year, which is on par with the average total income for the whole sample. It is apparent that many of the homesteads which do not grow cash crops have alternate sources of cash income, most particularly through business and/or occupations.

#### Off-farm Income: Occupations.

Of the 212 abiene represented in the sample, 47 (22%) have an occupation aside from farming. Of these 15 are white collar workers, including teachers, headmasters, education officers, preachers and health workers. The remaining 32 are blue collar/casual labourers, including watchmen, tailors, tea pickers, carpenters, masons, and assorted types of labourers. Twelve of these abiene (26%) have migrated out of the location for their jobs. Young people, particularly those who are educated, are interested in gaining employment, preferably white collar. There is a great scarcity of such jobs in the community, but connections and resources for out-migration are narrow. It is clear that younger abiene are engaged in off-farm employment more than older ones. Of the abiene having jobs, 77%

are in development cycle A, 15% in B, and 9% in C. There are no homestead heads in the last development cycle who earn an income from an occupation.

The average income for these employed men is Shs 10,538 per year, with 28% earning salaries above the average, and 72% below. Those earning above average income (13 abiene) earn 70% of the total income from occupation, with a mean income of Shs 26,197 per year. The below average earners (34 abiene) earn 30% of the total income from occupation, with the mean income being Shs 4,241 per year. In all, occupational income earned by homestead heads represents 18% of the total cash flow within the communities surveyed.

Off-farm Income: Business.

In total, business income represents 11% of the cash flow within the communities. Of the 212 abiene represented in the sample, 26 (12%) have a business which provides a steady income. Of these, 8 run retail shops, 3 carpentries, 3 each trade cattle and smuggle, two have hotelis, and one each have a butchery, bicycle repair, masonry, or earn their living through trade in timber, snuff, fruit, or as a healer. Of the abiene engaged in business ventures, 69% are in development cycle stage A, 19% in B, 8% in C and 4% in D.

The average income from business is Shs 11,729 per year, with the median at Shs 7,100. A third of the businessmen make more than the average, with carpentry workshops being the most profitable ventures. Two thirds make less than the average amount, the least profitable being small-scale trading in snuff and timber.

Though none fell within the sample, it is important to note that there are more profitable types of businesses in the location, and quite sizeable amounts of money are earned by middle-men trading in grains (particularly maize), posho mill and bar owners. These three types of businesses appear to have the highest profit margins, earning incomes in the hundreds of thousands of shillings.

Off-farm Income: Dependents.

Dependents' income represents 18% of the total cash flow within the sample communities. It is the sum of monies generated by wives, sons

and daughters-in-law living within the homesteads of the abiene. Data on business ventures carried out by dependents of the homestead heads have so far been analyzed for their wives only. Of the 355 women still alive who are married to the abiene, 35 (10%) have a business or an occupation outside of the home. Unfortunately, information regarding income is available for only 23 of them. The average income is Shs 3,500 per year, with the median at 2,400. The occupations pursued include 4 teachers, 1 nurse, 11 prostitutes, 11 traders, 2 farm labourers and 7 service providers; services including drawing and carrying water, selling prepared foods, brewing liquor, etc.

The highest income is earned by the women teachers and nurses, and is at least double that earned through businesses engaged in by the others. There is no information regarding the income of the prostitutes.

The future analysis of off-farm income for dependents of the abiene will provide information not only regarding the amounts of money brought in but also regarding the types of occupations and business the younger generation is pursuing, data invaluable for comparison of age groups and delineating trends. Nevertheless, it is widely believed that business is the best way to acquire wealth, and some of the high drop-out rate from primary schools on the part of young men is attributable to their desire to advance themselves economically through business ventures.

Assets: Cattle.

Livestock plays an important part in Kuria society, both in terms of its economic and its cultural value. Cattle has been described as forming the "ultimate value" in the society (Ruel 1959), being the main gauge of wealth and the object to which all other forms of surplus (e.g. income, surplus grains) were transformed. It holds a central point in social life, being the most accepted form of bridewealth payments, as well as in ritual, where virtually all serious ceremonies require the slaughtering of an animal and the scrupulous division of its meat among the various relatives.

In colonial records Kuria animal husbandry features rather prominently, particularly owing to two aspects of central concern to the administration: the high number required in bridewealth and the omnipresent raiding/rustling in an attempt to secure a sufficiently sized herd.

Currently, raiding is still a frequent occurrence, despite the presence of anti-stock theft units. Bridewealth requirements have, however, been significantly reduced in recent years. Two reasons for this are most frequently cited: 1) there is insufficient pasturage due to population pressure and 2) with young children attending schools, there is no one to look after the cattle while they graze.

The number of cattle kept by household heads are indeed significantly lower now than 30 years ago. Ruel (1958: 18-19) states that all homesteads owned some cattle, however few. To be regarded as prosperous, a man needed to own 50-60 cattle, a figure which was fairly common. For the richest, figures of 200-300 were named. The largest herd recorded in the present survey was 40 animals, and only 5 abiene had herds exceeding 20 heads.

Of the 233 homesteads 54 (23%) own no cattle. The mean herd size is 6.3 animals; the median 5 and the mode 0. If we exclude those who own no animals, the mean herd size is 8.2 heads, the median 7 and the mode 4. In comparing these figures with those for 1971 (Lexander & David 1972:6) we see a decrease from the average herd of 11.3 animals. It is clear that the herds are getting smaller, though the decrease is perhaps not as dramatic as suggested by Ruel's evaluation of animal husbandry in the 1950's.<sup>10</sup>

Other assets:

Clearly, not as much prestige is attached to owning cattle as was in the past, and simultaneously, other objects have gained in their prestige value. Though conspicuous consumption has yet to become a widespread reality in Bukuria, certain functional objects are used as status markers. The most prominent (and widely found) are iron-sheet roofs. They represent a cash investment of considerable value, and symbolize both the "progressive" nature of the homestead and its wealth. Other objects being valued in a similar way are bicycles, radios, radio/cassette players, sofa sets and to a much smaller extent motor vehicles and televisions. Investment in secondary education is another way of spending large amounts of income, and it tends to be confined to those abiene who are educated themselves.

10. This, as all the preceding figures given by Ruel are for Bugumba location in Kenya, and therefore may be a bit misleading, if there are substantial differences between the locations. In this context (of animal ownership) the bias would have to be reversed, because it continues to be held that the Abairege are the least developed and most traditional of the Kuria location, owing to their remoteness from centers of innovation.

### Summary.

From the foregoing examination of the demography and economy of a rural community, a picture arises of an increasingly young population with a high dependency ratio, and of heavy reliance by homesteads on the labour of women for agricultural activities, the mainstay of the economy.

While agriculture remains the primary source of income, off-farm sources come a close second. In examining the relationship between the development cycle stage of homesteads and the type of economic activities they pursue, we see the heaviest reliance on farm generated cash income in the oldest development cycle, and the smallest in the youngest development cycle stage. The highest cash income, both per homestead and per capita is found in the third stage, the ideal homestead form of two generational families, where income is generated through both farm and off-farm activities, the senior adult generation relying on agriculture, the junior more often on jobs and/or business.

The elucidation of the relationship between development cycles and economy is not conclusive without further investigation of other significant factors, including the conjunction of the movement through the stages of development all homesteads go through and the historical and economic development of the community as a whole. Future analysis will focus on this as well as other factors such as migration, education, employment history and religious affiliation.



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