

**THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF LIVESTOCK ECONOMY AND ITS
TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE AKAMBA OF MACHAKOS, KENYA,
1895-1963**

BY

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

I, declare that this thesis is my original work prepared with no other than the indicated sources and support and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award. No part of this thesis may be reproduced without the prior written permission of the author and/or Moi University.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Tabitha Kailu Kilonzo for her exceptional role in my upbringing.

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to examine the historical trajectory of livestock economy and its transformation among the Akamba of Machakos between 1895 and 1963. The main thrust of the study was the need to examine and detail the role of the colonial capitalist agency in the marginalization and neglect of livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos. The objectives that guided this research included; the examination of the nature and significance of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos during the pre-colonial era; assessing the impact of colonial policies on livestock economy in Machakos and finally, establishing the response of the Akamba of Machakos to various colonial policies on livestock production. To achieve this, the study employed the theories of the articulation of modes of production and the agency theory. The study utilized the historical research design in order to link phases of the area of the study with the study title. Data collection was done through primary and secondary sources. Primary sources involved the use of vast archival materials which provided the official state position on livestock production; oral interviews with selected informants helped to reveal the Akamba perception on the livestock economy in the area during the period under study. The target population consisted of people who were involved in livestock management or trade during the colonial period. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to select a sample of 24 informants who were well versed with Akamba livestock economy. The research instrument that was employed to collect oral data was unstructured interview schedule. In addition, secondary sources were utilized. They included books, journal articles, dissertations and unpublished documents. They helped in identifying the gap, hence laying the basis for the significance of the proposed study. Data was analyzed using qualitative method. It was compiled into themes and reported in descriptive texts and direct quotations. The study established that livestock industry was a predominant economic activity among the Akamba as livestock was both a measure and store of value. It equally observed that, the advent of colonialism which bred capitalism contributed to the relative decline of livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos. Furthermore, the study also found out that while the colonial state articulated the Akamba livestock economy to colonial capitalism, the Akamba responded as receptive agents ready to accommodate, absorb and adapt new practices into their pre-colonial livestock economy. The Akamba therefore, retained what they deemed beneficial to their livestock industry and restructured it with the new and progressive ideas from the colonial state. The study concluded that the integration of the Akamba pre-capitalist mode of production into colonial capitalism progressively undermined livestock industry which had been a predominant economic activity among the Akamba of Machakos on the eve of colonial rule, hence placing it on a negative trajectory. The study thus recommended that the national government and the County Government of Machakos should devise appropriate and practical policies which can improve livestock sector in Machakos.

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

- Agriculture** In general, this term refers to crop as well as animal husbandry. However, pastoral farming differs from agriculture, which now applies to crop production in its narrowest sense. The former definition is used in this study.
- Bourgeoisie** Refers to a capitalist class that owns and controls the means of production
- Capital**
- i. The store of means of production, equipment, machinery, mills, mining, agricultural property, semi-finished raw materials and finished products, etc. Capital includes all the different investments that contribute to the further development of what the population wants.
 - ii. A substantial amount of money that can be utilized as a means of production, to pay employees, or to purchase raw materials, etc. i.e. all that is required to set up a business.
- Capitalism** A capitalist economic structure is one in which wealth is concentrated in the hands of a few individuals (the capitalist class) who own the means of production, such as factories, raw materials, estates, machines, trading syndicates, and so on, as well as wealth in the form of currency. A large number of people who have no other way of earning

a living except by selling their labor force for income.

Commercialization

Is used in this study to refer to the raising of animals and their products for exchange purposes

Class

This is a classification of people based on factors such as income, influence, profession, and so on.

Development

The achievement of significant economic development, as well as a resulting rise in the fulfillment of human needs as well as potentials.

Famine

Widespread deaths of people including adults from starvation and associated diseases

Historical Trajectory

Changes undergone by something over a given period of time. These changes can be conceptualized as more or less distinct stages separated by turning points.

Livestock

Animals and birds that are kept on a farm for food or traded as a source of income such as cows, sheep, goats and chicken.

Modes of Production

The economic base encompasses the relationship of the forces of production and the related social relations of production.

Pastoralism

Keeping of animals

Peasant

A collective of small agricultural producers who manufacture primarily for their own use using simple machinery and the labor of their families.

| | |
|--|--|
| Relations of Production | Determined mode of production and its basic conditions of life, which often involve ideological and political considerations. |
| Social Formation | Entails the relationships that suppliers form with one another during the manufacturing process. In the mode of processing, the relationships may be altered or altered. |
| Trajectory | the channel followed by a moving entity under the action of given forces through space as a function of time. In relation to the study, it implies the trends and livestock production patterns taken by the Africans. |
| Transformation | The process of changing completely the character or appearance of something |
| Transformation of Livestock Economy | An examination of the channel taken by the livestock sector in Machakos as influenced by both the state and the African peasant forces through space as a function of time. |

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| ADC | African District Council |
| ALDEV | African Land Development Board |
| ALMO | African Livestock Marketing Organization |
| ALUS | African Land Utilization and Settlement Board |
| ASALs | Arid and Semi Arid Lands |
| ASLUB | African Settlement and Land Utilization Board |
| CD | Colonial Development |
| CD&W | Colonial Development and Welfare |
| DARA | Development and Reconstruction Authority |
| DAO | District Agricultural Officer |
| DOA | Department Of Agriculture |
| DC | District Commissioner |
| DEB | East Africa Literature Bureau |
| DO | District Officer |
| EALB | East Africa Literature Bureau |
| EAP | East Africa Protectorate |
| EAPH | East African Publishing House |
| ECF | East Coast Fever |
| IBEAC | Imperial British East Africa Company |
| KAR | King's African Rifle |
| KCA | Kikuyu Central Association |
| KTI | Kitui (District) |
| KLB | Kenya Literature Bureau |
| KMC | Kenya Meat Commission |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| KNA | Kenya National Archives |
| LCB | Livestock Control Board |
| LNC | Local Native Council |
| MA | Master of Arts |
| MKS | Machakos (District) |
| NACOSTI | National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation |
| NFD | Northern Frontier District |
| OI | Oral Interview |
| PC | Provincial Commissioner |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UMA | Ukamba Members Association |
| USA | United States of America |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| WWI | World War I |
| WWII | World War II |

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Generally, during the pre-colonial era, most Africans depended on the produce from their farms as well as livestock keeping to sustain their livelihood. However, livestock keeping was valued more for its social as well as economic values. Van Zwanenberg and King¹ have attested to the fact that even among the settled agricultural peoples and in the mixed agricultural and pastoral societies, the ownership and control of cattle and other livestock had a high economic and social value in the 19th century. They note that the basis of political power of the Bahima or the Tutsi ruling classes in Western Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda was based on their ownership of livestock rather than on any ethnic differences within the societies.²

In Kenya, at the beginning of colonial era, pastoral societies were either agro pastoral or nomadic pastoral. This means that they were either pure or mixed pastoralists. The pre-colonial pastoral life was best described in socio-economic terms. Socially livestock was vital as the ladder of social status which most men essayed to climb at some time in their lives³. Thus, it is clear that the pre-colonial Kenyan societies, whether agro-pastoral or purely pastoral, the acquisition of livestock was crucial.⁴

The Akamba of Machakos, who are the focus of this study, were agro pastoralist. Prior to the colonial era, they grew sorghum, millet, maize, cow peas, beans, sweet potatoes, bananas, squash and sugarcane among other crops. They also reared animals like cattle,

¹ Van Zwanenberg. R.M.A., and King, A. *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, 1800-1970* (London, 1975), 80.

² Ibid.

³ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya", in Ochieng, W.R. and Maxon, R.M. (Eds). *An Economic History of Kenya*. (Nairobi, 1992), 94.

⁴ Kitching, G. *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie, 1905-1970*. (New Haven, 1980), 203.

goats and sheep.⁵ Matheka⁶ observes that although crops were viewed to be important source of staple food, livestock was also highly valued as a source of food during dry seasons when crops would fail. The Akamba would also exchange their livestock with the neighbouring communities like the Agikuyu to acquire other commodities like grains especially during famine. As such, Cattle served as an insurance against crop failure because seasons of low rainfall did not always result in scarcity of pasture. Kimambo⁷ has also observed that the spatial and ecological design of traditional Akamba life provided a sustaining foundation for their economy. Pastoral activities predominated originally, but by the nineteenth century a mixed economy emerged. In spite of this, livestock, particularly cattle, continued to play important subsistence and social roles. Mutiso⁸ argues that the traditional strength of Akamba attachment to livestock is indicated by the importance of *syengo* (cattle posts) as pioneer outposts in territorial expansion. Through an elaborate social system, stock was collected at the local level and dispersed among relatives and eco-zones.

However, today livestock economy is no longer the mainstay of the economy of Machakos. Many people have ventured in other activities like wage employment, pure crop farming, trade, charcoal burning, bee keeping, hand craft among others. This can be attributed to the changes that were witnessed during the colonial period. In Africa generally and Kenya in particular, the advent of Europeans put an end to the importance placed to livestock acquisition. Land was taken away by the Europeans to create room for the 'White Highlands'. The Akamba were then pushed to the African reserves which

⁵ Rocheleau, D., *et al* "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade: Ukambani, Kenya, 1890-1990". *World Development*, Vol. 23, No. 6. (1995), 1040.

⁶ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine: Ecology and History in Machakos District during the Colonial Era". M.A. Thesis. Kenyatta University. (1992), 79.

⁷ Kimambo, I.N. "The Economic History of the Kamba, 1850-1950" in B.A. Ogot (Ed). *Hadith 2*. (Nairobi, 1968), 80.

⁸ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui: Ecosystems, Integration and Change", in B.A. Ogot (Ed). *Ecology and History in East Africa*. (Nairobi, 1979), 2-3.

were created to tame their movement. New economic systems, ideas and techniques which did not favour pastoralism were spread across the country and economic changes occurred.

As much as economic transition did occur on the African continent long before colonial dominance. This was mainly due to environmental change leading to population movements. Communities modes of production would evolve as they adapt themselves and their systems to the current physical and social climate such as droughts, population growth, and livestock epidemics, which all resulted in a shift in modes of production. These changes automatically led to economic transformation. But with the coming of the Europeans, the economic adaptation changed as a result of the policies that were introduced by the colonial government. Since then, the economic adaptation of Africans has been the product of a complex relationship between Europeans and Africans.⁹

Ndege¹⁰ has supported this view by observing that during the first two decades of colonial rule, a new chapter was inaugurated in the history of pastoralism. The colonial state imposed considerable limitations on the freedom of pastoralists and hence accessibility of their livestock to grazing pastures. The enactment of various land and livestock ordinances began to erode the traditional economic foundations of the pastoral sector¹¹. In Machakos, the land ordinances drastically altered the social, economic and ecological organization of the Akamba, a factor which undermined the Akamba indigenous modes of production.¹²As a result, by 1952, livestock production had already been subordinated to crop production.¹³ This subordination was manifested in

⁹ Cokumu, P. "The Colonial Transformation of Agriculture in Siaya, 1894-1945". M.A. Thesis. Kenyatta University. (2000), 1.

¹⁰ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya", 97.

¹¹ Ibid, 98.

¹² Zeleza, T. *Akamba*. (New York, 1995), 43-44.

¹³ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya"

the substitution of coins and notes for livestock as a means of trade, as well as the substitution of money as a measure of wealth¹⁴. Thus in the modern day Machakos, livestock plays a very minor role as compared to the way it was in the pre-colonial period.

In view of the above, a considerable number of scholars have investigated the colonial history in the lens of colonial production and export of cash crops such as cotton, coffee, tea and groundnuts. Adedeji¹⁵, Cokumu¹⁶, Chacha¹⁷, Smith¹⁸ Thus, livestock production has suffered neglect. This neglect has tended to give the misleading impression that British colonialism exploited only the crop producers, and avoided the livestock keepers who dominated the livestock and dairy industries. Besides, the few studies that have attempted to look at the livestock production have mainly focused on the role of livestock in the economies of Africa within the context of nomadic pastoralism. Little attention has been paid to the role of livestock in mixed agricultural communities that are predominant in Kenya. It is against this background that this study sought to analyse the historical context of the transformation of the livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos during the colonial era.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

In the pre-colonial period, livestock was the hallmark of wealth among African communities as exemplified by the Akamba of Machakos. It was both a measure and store of value. However, with the advent of colonialism, which bred capitalism in

¹⁴ Kitching, G. *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, 224.

¹⁵ Barker, L. *The Politics of Agriculture in Tropical Africa* (Beverly, 1965).

¹⁶ Cokumu, P. "The Colonial Transformation of Agriculture in Siaya".

¹⁷ Chacha, B. "Agricultural History of the Abakuria of Kenya from the End of the Nineteenth Century to the mid 1970's." MA Thesis Egerton University. (1999),

¹⁸ Smith, L. An Overview of Agricultural Development Policy in J. Heyer *et al. Agricultural Development in Kenya: An Economic Assessment*. (Nairobi, 1976).

Kenya in general and Machakos in particular, the Akamba livestock economy was placed on negative trajectory such that by the time Kenya attained its independence, the ownership of livestock no longer generated the same general feeling of respect and prestige among the Akamba of Machakos as it was the case during the pre-colonial period.

Generally, we can say that the situation in which livestock keeping was the predominant force in Machakos during the pre-colonial period was turned upside down so that today livestock keeping people are impoverished, dominated and underprivileged. It is therefore necessary to examine and detail the colonial capitalist agency in the apparent marginalization and neglect of livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos. The need for such examination was compounded by the paucity of the literature focusing on this subject. This may have arisen as a result of the misconception formed to the effect that livestock keeping communities were largely untouched by colonialism. As such, the fundamental transformation brought about by colonial capitalism on the pre-colonial livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos has eluded scholarly attention. That being the case, there is an apparent lack of sufficient knowledge over the impact of colonial rule on livestock production in the region. Thus, by focusing on the colonial transformation of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos between 1895 and 1963, this study sought to unravel the forces central to the peripheralization of livestock production as a key component of the economy of the people of Machakos.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following objectives:

1.3.1 Overall Objective

The study sought to examine the historical trajectory of livestock economy and its transformation among the Akamba of Machakos from 1895 to 1963.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- i. To examine the nature and significance of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos during the pre-colonial era.
- ii. To assess the impact of colonial policies on livestock economy in Machakos.
- iii. To establish the response of the Akamba of Machakos to the various colonial policies on livestock production.

1.4 Research Questions

In order to explore the transformation of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos during the colonial period, the study was guided by the following questions:

- i. What was the nature and significance of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos on the eve of colonial rule?
- ii. What was the impact of colonial policies on livestock economy in Machakos?
- iii. How did the Akamba of Machakos respond to various colonial policies on livestock production?

1.5 Justification of the Study

A preliminary survey on the existing works related to the study showed that there is hardly any engrossing literature on the subject of the Akamba livestock economy. Whatever exists in form of written (both published and unpublished) scholarly works is fragmentary and often relates to the effect of land degradation and subsequent

destocking policy during the colonial era without presenting a coherent and systematic historical account of the changes witnessed in the Akamba livestock production in the era of colonial rule. As a matter of fact, the information related to the history of livestock economy of the Akamba people during the colonial period is almost unwritten. As such, this study addressed this gap by assessing the role played by the colonial capitalism in transforming livestock economy in Machakos from 1895 to 1963 with an aim of creating an understanding of the reason behind poor performance in this crucial sector of the Akamba economy.

The findings of this study are expected to be useful to policy makers both at the national and county levels in policy formulation on livestock production. It is also expected that the outcomes of this study will go a long way into building the historiography of the history of livestock economy in Kenya, East Africa and the continent as a whole, inspiring other scholars and researchers and acting as reference resource for other scholars.

1.6 Significance of the Study

Kenya has been faced by serious food shortages. The country's production of food does not meet the demands of the ever increasing population. The situation is even becoming worse as millions of Kenyans are facing starvation. To sustain the ever growing population, the country must increase the production of sufficient and quality food. This will go a long way in eradicating poverty in the country. To achieve the food security which is one of the pillars of the big four agenda, there is need for a historical understanding on the significant role of the livestock sector in food security. Thus, this study examines the historical trajectory of livestock economy and its transformation among the Akamba of Machakos from 1895 to 1963 with an aim of creating

understanding of Africa's poor pastoral performance. It examines livestock production in relation to colonial policies. The study maintains that although there are other factors like the vagaries of weather, failure for the country to have a robust and reliable livestock industry is as a result of the failure by the government to formulate policies aimed at improving the livestock sector. The interaction between the livestock production and government policies has therefore been affecting this sector since the colonial period. It is thus important to analyse and properly document this interplay especially in the rural areas. The present study, is therefore, important as it examines the role played by the colonial state in the peripherization of livestock industry from a historical perspective. It is hoped that this historical study will serve as a basis for understanding the present state of livestock production in Machakos. Furthermore, a knowledge of the past successes and failures as outlined in this study will help the government in formulating policies for the improvement of the livestock sector in Machakos.

1.7 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The study restricted itself to the colonial transformation of livestock economy in Machakos district. Machakos district was selected for the study because it was the first administrative center of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC). In the late 1880s, Machakos was the capital of the protectorate and remained so up to 1899 when the capital was moved to Nairobi because Machakos was bypassed by the railway which was still under construction.¹⁹ The declaration of Machakos as the capital of the protectorate set the stage for alienation of large tracts of land which set in motion processes that undermined the livestock industry among the Akamba. For instance, the

¹⁹ [http://masakucountycouncil.com/about-thika/background information](http://masakucountycouncil.com/about-thika/background-information) accessed on 31. July 2020.

creation of the Machakos reserve followed by the declaration of all the unoccupied lands as Crown Land cut off the Akamba of 3/5 of their grazing area. This led to overpopulation, overcrowding and overgrazing. Hence, for most of the colonial period, Machakos District was the stage of a complex agrarian problem. The problem came to be known as 'The Machakos Problem' in colonial circles.²⁰ The problem went unabated and as such, land crises increased in frequency and intensity over the years. The colonial administration blamed this on the Akamba overstocking and pressured the Akamba to cull off their livestock. This culminated into the infamous destocking policy of the 1930s. In a nutshell, the colonial policies sowed the seeds of land crises in Machakos which impacted negatively on livestock production in the study area.

The year 1895 was taken to be the entry point for this study since it is the year that Kenya came under British rule, after the colonial government taking over the administration of the protectorate from the IBEAC in 1895. The declaration on July 1st 1895 of a small protectorate over the small area between Mombasa and the rift valley would turn out to be a very crucial turning point in Kenyan history and that of Machakos in particular. This declaration saw the introduction of several policies that brought significant changes on the African communities. It was therefore an important event in Kenya's history. The study ended in 1963 because it is the year Kenya attained independence. This duration was considered in order to capture all the colonial reforms that had a significant impact on livestock economy in Machakos all the way from start of colonial rule to the eve of independence. The time scope was considered to be ample in examining the interplay between colonial capitalism and livestock economy in the study area.

²⁰ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine", 1.

The study had the following limitations. First, it only covered Machakos County. Therefore, the findings may not effectively be generalized to apply to the whole country. Furthermore, there is very limited research done on livestock production in Kenya. As such, most of the comparisons needed for the findings of this study were obtained from studies conducted outside Kenya. Moreover, the researcher faced several challenges as stated below.

In some areas, the researcher was treated with a lot of suspicion. To overcome this challenge, the researcher incorporated the help of village elders who took the researcher to various homesteads and shopping centers to meet targeted respondents. This made the work much easier. Moreover, some places were unreachable because of poor road network. The researcher overcame this by using motorbike and sometimes walking to the said destinations.

1.8 Literature Review

Enormous literature that has focused on aspects of the livestock economy of colonial Kenya was reviewed. The literature review was organized according to themes which assisted in responding to the fundamental research questions in order to carry out the study more precisely. The relevant related literature was therefore grouped into three categories as per the research questions. They include; the nature and significance of livestock in pre-colonial African societies, the impact of colonial policies on livestock economy in Africa and the response of the Africans to colonial transformations on livestock production.

1.8.1 The Nature and Significance of Livestock Production in Pre-Colonial African Societies

Schneider²¹ has investigated the nature of the livestock economy in colonial Africa through the lens of the African Cattle Complex theory. He argues that the Africans fetishized cattle for cultural uses, especially social status, rather than for subsistence, a phenomenon he argues is present in East Africa. He asserts that his premises are exemplified in the affection for and identification with cattle among the Africans, the feeling that they are the best source of help from super natural and the belief that only cattle have aesthetic value. His findings challenge the views of some scholars that the incorporation of East Africa into the world economy led to a definite rise in the material standards of the people. By looking at the Pokot community in Kenya, he notes that the Pokots never changed their way of living despite the attempts by the colonial government to improve agriculture in Kenya. His observation is that the Pokots maintain superiority of herding as a means of subsistence. This, according to him is a manifestation of cattle complex. He concludes that the Pokots could derive a better way of living by venturing into another source of livelihood rather than pastoralism. As indicated, this study has attempted to stress on the value of cattle in the economies of Africa but has mainly focused on nomadic pastoralism. It has paid little attention to the role of cattle in mixed farming communities. In this context, the Akamba who were mixed farmers in the pre-colonial period are not well represented by the above study. This study therefore attempted to demonstrate that livestock played a significant economic role among sedentary agricultural peoples just as it did in purely pastoral communities.

²¹ Schneider, H.K. "The Pokot (Suk) of Kenya with Special Reference to the Role of Livestock in their Subsistence Economy". Ph.D. Thesis, North Western University. 1953.

On the contrary, Mwatwara²² dismisses the cattle complex claims. He disagrees with the argument that African men fetished cattle for cultural uses. The author demonstrated in his analysis of African livestock regimes and the advent of a colonial order in Southern Rhodesia that Africans did not have an unreasonable Cattle Complex and were simply able to sell their livestock to Europeans if they deemed the rates offered to be sufficient.²³ More importantly, his research revealed that local ownership was not solely based on cultural beliefs; cattle were also important for social, economic, and religious purposes. He analyzed the uses of cattle in southern Rhodesia as a store of wealth, bride-wealth transactions, transport, and as suppliers of food and manure. Mwatwara's work gives insight into the significance of cattle in precolonial African societies.

Hopkins,²⁴ writing on West African economies uses the example of cattle-producing communities such as the Tuareg and Fulani, who valued livestock for their economic qualities rather than their social values. He has shown the presence of a symbiotic partnership between cattle producers and cultivators, as well as how each party depended on the other's goods. Hopkins' work is important because it offers a framework for interpreting the patterns of economic activity in pre-colonial Africa. Hopkins' perspective on the Tuareg and Fulani of West Africa, on the other hand, does not accurately represent the condition in pre-colonial Machakos, as the aforementioned groups were pure pastoralists, while the Akamba were agro-pastoral. As a result, this research attempted to determine the Akamba actual role during the pre-colonial era.

²² Mwatwara, W., & Swart, S. "If Our Cattle Die, We Eat Them but These White People Bury and Burn Them! African Livestock Regimes, Veterinary Knowledge and The Emergence of a Colonial Order in Southern Rhodesia, 1860-1902", *Kronos* vol.41 no.1 Cape Town. (2015).

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Hopkins, A.G. *An Economic History of West Africa* (London, 1972).

Adebayo²⁵ examines the organization of livestock items such as hides and skins processing and sale in Northern Nigeria. He affirms that hides and skins were important resources in the pre-colonial caravan trade between central Sudan and North Africa, while Kreiker²⁶ observes that in the late 1870s and early 1900s, cattle were the main export from the Ovambo floodplain. Kreiker goes on to say that the kings of Oukwanyama, the largest of the Ovambo floodplains' polities, were the most important cattle suppliers to European traders, who exported the animals to the Cape Colony, the Transvaal, and Luanda.²⁷ These two studies offered some preliminary knowledge about the economic importance that livestock had in Africa on the eve of colonial rule.

According to Hakansson and Widgren,²⁸ cattle became so important to social reproduction in East African communities that without them, the basic social structures of families, households, and kin groups could not be established. As a result, any family needed to acquire cattle in order to create new households and crucial kinship and affinity networks. In a similar vein, McClendon²⁹ notes that in pre-colonial southern Africa, cattle were not only the vehicle for establishing and maintaining marriage ties between lineages, but were also the medium of ties of patronage and clientship.

Sie³⁰ supports the above views by observing that among the Datoga of Tanzania, cattle had the highest economic and social value. They were named, branded and their

²⁵ Adebayo, A.G. "The Production and Export of Hides and Skins in Colonial Northern Nigeria, 1900-1945". *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 33, No. 2. 1992.

²⁶ Kreiker. "De-Globalisation and Deforestation in Colonial Africa: Closed Markets, the Cattle Complex, and Environmental Change in North-Central Namibia, 1890-1990". *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 35, No. 1. 2009, 235.

²⁷ Ibid. 238

²⁸ Håkansson, N., & Widgren. M. "Labour and Landscapes: The Political Economy of Landesque Capital in Nineteenth Century Tanganyika". Vol. 89, No. 3. (2007).

²⁹ Mc Clendon, T. "Hiding Cattle on the White Man's Farm: Cattle Loans and Commercial Farms in Natal, 1930-50". *African Economic History*, No. 25. (1997).

³⁰ Sie. D. "The Effects of Wealth on Livestock Dynamics among the Datoga Pastoralists of Tanzania". *Institute of Biological Anthropology*, University of Oxford.

pedigrees memorized. She points out that cattle were most important for their milk production, which provided a staple food as well as purchasing grain during the dry season when milk yields were poor. Similarly, Huntingford³¹ holds the belief that pastoralism was a major source of income for the Nandi. He notes that apart from keeping cattle for food, they also kept them for social prestige and valued them so much that an individual who had a lot of cattle was regarded as rich while one with few was poor and the one with none was not even recognized. A similar view is also expressed by Towett³² who observes that a human without a cow or a goat was treated as a pitiful poverty-stricken creature of God to whom no one would pay even a day's visit. On the other hand, Lemoosa³³ has emphasized the Samburu symbiotic relationship with livestock. He notes that they devoted considerable amount of their energies and time in serving the need of their livestock, they guarded them against wild animals day and night. Furthermore, they would compose songs about them, and make tethering-cords and ornaments for them. They would even wash their hands and faces in the urine of the cattle. The above studies demonstrate that the pre-colonial African societies had a lot of attachment with their livestock. They will be useful in interrogating attachment placed on livestock in among the Akamba of Machakos.

Similar views are also shared by Pallaver³⁴ who underscores the economic significance of cattle in pre-colonial Buganda. Through examining the role of cattle as a medium of exchange, he shows that African cattle were "the hallmark of wealth," It served both economic and social purposes. He notes that cattle acted as a unit of accounting by

³¹ Huntingford, G. *The Nandi of Kenya Tribal Control in a Pastoral Society*. London: Rutledge and Kenyan Paul Ltd. (1953).

³² Towett, T. *Oral Traditional History of the Kipsigis*. (Nairobi, 1979).

³³ Lemoosa, P. "A Historical Study of the Economic Transformation of the Samburu of the North Central Kenya, 1909-1963" MA Thesis. Kenyatta University. (1998), 48.

³⁴ Pallaver, K. "The African Native Has No Pockets: Monetary Practices and Currency Transitions in Early Colonial Uganda. *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 3. (2015), 478-480.

which the valuation of prestige items such as hoes or cloth was calculated, and that cattle was an agreed metric for measuring wealth. The above studies by Hakansson and Widgren, McClendon, Sie, Huntingford, Towett, Pallaver are important as they offered a great insight to this study particularly on both social and economic value placed on livestock, in the communities studied.

Helge Kjekshus³⁵ study which dealt with livestock in the context of the East African ecological setting, argues that the cattle owners were dynamic, innovative and technical in their approach to methods and practices of disease control. He identifies methods of control used by the people of Tanzania. The controls that he cites include nocturnal movements, smoking, bush clearing and wildlife eradication schemes. Kjekshus attributes the existence of large numbers of livestock to the capacity of African herdsmen to control their environment. This control was eroded by colonialism. Thus, Kjekshus rightly suggests that livestock keepers in Africa were aware of the closer relationship between cattle production and ecological balance.³⁶

One of the studies that has attempted to document the pre-colonial Akamba livestock economy is by Mutiso³⁷. He has attempted to look at precolonial livestock economy among the Akamba of Kitui. He observes that the strength of the Akamba attachment towards livestock is indicated by the importance of cattle posts. He demonstrates that cattle played an important subsistence and social roles among the Kitui Akamba during the pre-colonial rule. Although the study has been done in Kitui, it has a wealth of information about Akamba livestock economy on the eve of colonial rule.

³⁵ Kjekshus, H. *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East Africa History: The Case of Tanganyika, 1850-1950* (London, 1977).

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Mutiso, G. "Kitui; Ecosystems, Integration and Change", in B.A. Ogot (Ed). *Ecology and History in East Africa* (Nairobi, 1979), 135.

From the above reviewed works, it is evident that the nature and significance of livestock among the Akamba of Machakos during the pre-colonial era has not received adequate attention, a gap that this study sought to fill.

1.8.2 The Impact of Colonial Policies on Livestock Economy in Africa

There are several historical studies that show how pre-colonial economies became dominated by colonial capitalism. Authors such as Rodney³⁸ and Leys³⁹ have used the underdevelopment paradigm to explain the outcome of the incorporation of African economies into the world capitalist system. They contend that this integration created a situation in which the capitalist modes took center stage thus relegating the pre-capitalist societies to the periphery. They further note that this relation culminated into domination, subordination and exploitation of pre-capitalist social formation which led to uprooting or replacement of the existing social, economic, political and cultural institution and relations by the capitalist structures. This study employed the articulation school to examine the extent to which the Akamba livestock keepers in Machakos either resisted or succumbed to the policies embedded in colonial capitalism.

Claude Ake⁴⁰ in his analysis of the political economy of Africa identified some ways through which the pre-colonial economies became dominated by colonial capitalism. These include the improvement of transport systems, imposition of tax, commercialization, and commoditization as crucial factors in the dislocation of the production patterns of the pre-colonial economies and their subsequent incorporation into the circuits of the capitalist economy. It was vital to explore how these features

³⁸ Rodney, W. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Dar es Salaam, 1972).

³⁹ Leys, C. *Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neocolonialism 1964- 1971* (London, 1975).

⁴⁰ Ake, C. *A Political Economy of Africa*. (Harlow, 1981).

affected the livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos during the colonial period.

Wolff,⁴¹ also contends that, during the colonial era, Kenya's economic past witnessed the radical transformation of African culture into a wage power, resulting in the widespread repression of African peasant cattle production. He argues that the colonial development programs had difficult constraints for the African population. These policies included land alienation and labour policies which forcibly diverted labor from African indigenous production to wage labor in European settler's farms especially in Uasin-Gishu and Trans-Nzioa. This study used this background to explore how the reorganization of the African labor under colonial capitalist economy affected chores in the livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos.

Van Zwanenberg and Anne King,⁴² have surveyed the economic history of Kenya and Uganda between 1800 and 1970. They suggest that colonial rule and the entrenchment of white settlers in livestock farming have harmed the growth of the African cattle industry. They note that African cattle were viewed as veterinary hazards and were constantly kept under quarantine to prevent or at least control the spread of disease to the settler dairy farms and ranches.⁴³ In a similar study, Shutt,⁴⁴ is of the opinion that in colonial Zimbabwe as elsewhere, the regulation of animals was just as important as the regulation of humans under colonial rule. State repression of Africans' horses, dogs, and even donkeys, for example, was part of policies intended to control Africans' migration and affect land alienation in settler colonies. According to his findings, the

⁴¹ Wolff, R. *Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930: The Economics of Colonialism* (Nairobi, 1974).

⁴² Van Zwanenberg, R.M.A, with King, A. *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, 1800-1970* (London, 1975), 87-90.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Shutt, A. "The Settlers Cattle Complex: The Etiquette of Culling Cattle in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1938". *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 263-286. (2000).

colonial state made destocking a major strategy of rural control and production. These two studies have only looked at livestock control but they have glossed over the effects brought about by the control of African livestock movement on the overall livestock industry. Nevertheless, the studies are indispensable as their pioneering work was a useful starting point in the study of the livestock economy in Machakos during the colonial era.

While examining the impact of the introduction of currency in pre-colonial Buganda, Pallaver⁴⁵ has underscored the crucial impact of the introduction of currency on the value of cattle among the Buganda. The imposition of colonial rule in Uganda according to him changed the role of livestock in African societies. He is of the view that with the introduction of currency, cattle ceased to be a measure of wealth and that the motivation for the introduction of the currency was not for the benefit of the Africans but that of colonial government. The article provided useful insights for this study as it shows some of the ways the livestock economy in the communities studied were affected by colonialism. However, the study is not only brief but also tends to narrowly focus on the role of cattle as a medium of exchange. In other words, the study does not show the social structure that emerged from the process of articulation of modes of production and how that transformation was reflected in livestock production.

By using a case study of Rhodesian beef production as a case study, Sasamuwo³⁷ examines how Rhodesia's beef industry failed to satisfy competitive demands for war supplies on one side and internal civilian needs on the other. More specifically, the case study demonstrates how, in response to the commercial beef industry's inability to satisfy increased local demand, the government attempted to make the African people

⁴⁵ Pallaver, K. "The African Native Has No Pockets. (2015), (478-480).

bear a portion of the beef industry's wartime economic burden by forcefully requisitioning their cattle by range control policies. His discussion of the evolving existence of African livestock production systems during the colonial era is especially important to this research.

One of the few historical studies on colonial livestock economy in a Kenyan community has been done by Ndege⁴⁶. The study has documented the colonial transformation of the cattle economy in Rongo. It shows how colonial policies on the people of Rongo rendered the cattle economy in Rongo dormant in spite of the favorable ecology of the region suitable for a mixed economy of crop and livestock production. He argues that on the eve of colonialism, Rongo had a robust cattle economy but by the time colonial rule ended, cattle were no longer the mainstay of Rongo division. He further adds that the monetization of the economy facilitated the development of cattle trade and the transformation of the purpose of cattle production from the satisfaction of domestic needs to profit making. The author blames the colonial state, whose policies were basically meant to support a settler economy, for turning Rongo division into a reservoir of cheap labour through tax demands, forcible labor recruitment and conscription into the colonial army during the two world wars. Ndege's study provides useful insights for the present study as it shows some of the ways the community studied adjusted to the socio-economic changes imposed on them by the colonial state. However, the study has been done on a community with a somehow different socio-ecological background as opposed to Machakos. The present study thus sought to uncover the extent to which similar adjustments were witnessed in Machakos given that it has quite a different socio-ecological setting.

⁴⁶ Ndege. G. "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division, South Nyanza District, 1900 to 1960". MA Thesis. Kenyatta University. 1989.

Hughes⁴⁷ has documented the Maasai eviction of 1904 and 1911 and the consequence the eviction had on their livestock. He is of the view that the problem with the Maasai eviction was not simply a matter of the quality of land that they lost to the white settlers but the loss of their cattle through diseases which the cattle were exposed to during their movement to the reserves created for them by the colonial government. He emphasizes the dependency of the Maasai on their livestock, and total identification with their cattle. He uses the word “en-kishu” which means that both cattle and Maasai are perceived as people and as such, cattle disease is inextricably linked to human health and is spoken of almost interchangeably with that of humans. This study benefited from this work especially when investigating the impact of the creation of African reserves on livestock production in Machakos.

Peter Rigby⁴⁸ and Robert Tignor,⁴⁹ both exploring the question of continuity and change among the Maasai pastoralism point out that the raiding in which the Maasai warriors (Ilmurrin) had participated in since time immemorial was greatly hampered by the Stock Theft Ordinance which was introduced by the colonial government. This was done by imposing huge fines for cattle raiding on the community, a practice that saw the Maasai warriors and elders bear the brunt of the ‘communal fines’ under the Collective Punishment Ordinances. Similarly, Peter Waweru⁵⁰ and Peter Lemoosa⁵¹ have underscored the struggle by the Samburu against settler machination to have the community’s only reliable grazing reserve, alienated for their use. This controversy,

⁴⁷ Hughes, L. “Environmental Impacts of the Moves: Rough Time in Paradise Claims, Blames and Memory Making Around Some Protected Areas in Kenya”. *Conservation & Society*, Vol. 5, No. 3, (2007).

⁴⁸ Rigby, P. *Cattle, Capitalism and Class. Iparakuyo Maasai Transformations*. (Philadelphia, 1992).

⁴⁹ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Akamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900 to 1939*. (New Jersey, 1976), 74-77.

⁵⁰ Waweru, P. “Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism under Colonial Rule, 1909-1963”. PhD Thesis. Egerton University. (2006), 136-140.

⁵¹ Lemoosa, P. “A Historical Study of the Economic Transformation of the Samburu of the North Central Kenya. 1909-1963”. MA Thesis. Kenyatta University. (1998), 161-164.

besides being the only major case in NFD, demonstrates that the impact of colonialism was not felt only on crop producing communities but even the livestock producers. In addition, Fumagalli⁵² discusses the colonial impact both on ecology and socio-cultural institutions of the Samburu. He observes that the establishment of colonial rule had detrimental effects on their traditional institutions particularly livestock economy. It destroyed the concept of collective rangeland and resource use, planning and utilization, hence, the Samburu principles of land were dismantled thereby undermining their traditional experience based on utilization of the environment. The above studies, despite being based on purely nomadic communities, informed this study on the official mind of the colonial government on livestock production during the era of colonial rule.

There have also been a number of local level studies which are relevant and useful to this study. The importance of livestock as a major component of the economy of the Akamba people has received some attention from several scholars. Matheka⁵³ has done a study on the political ecology of famine in Machakos. His study examined how land, labour and livestock ordinances hampered the growth of livestock sector in Machakos. He concludes that under colonialism, the Akamba did not interact freely with their environment, rather, they just responded to various stimuli as dictated to them by the colonial state thus, their economic undertakings were therefore prescribed by official policy. Indeed, this was the midwifery role of the colonial state in the articulation between the capitalist mode of production and the traditional Akamba economy whereby the later suffered destruction. The work enriched this study with useful

⁵² Fumagalli, C.T. "A Diachronic Study of Change and Social Cultural Process among the Pastoral Samburu". Ph.D. Thesis, University Ann Arbor, Michigan. 1977.

⁵³ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

information on the destruction of the economic structure particularly the livestock production of the Machakos Akamba during the colonial period.

Another study about the Akamba is by Rocheleau *et al*⁵⁴ who argue that during the colonial period, colonial officials and settlers alienated the most fertile land in Mua Hills in Machakos and pushed the Africans to the reserves. They aver that the overpopulation in the reserves led to overstocking and over cultivation. The results, they say, was a serious soil erosion crisis. According to the authors, instead of connecting this problem to the powers of land alienation, population concentration, and destruction of land tenure and land use processes, colonial officials "constructed" the soil erosion crisis surrounding Akamba cattle-rearing and agricultural activities. Simultaneously, official policies were enacted to stifle Akamba livestock activity and quarantine their cattle.⁵⁵ Although this work did not discuss the Machakos livestock economy in detail, it was nevertheless useful to this study as it provided useful information on how land alienation and the subsequent creation of African reserves affected livestock industry.

O'Leary's⁵⁶ study about the economic and social change in semi-arid Kenya has majorly focused on how the Kitui Akamba were integrated to the colonial economy. He notes that the policies imposed during the colonial period led to the extension of land under cultivation, the shrinking of grazing land and the eventual destruction of the livestock sector. In line with O'Leary's argument, Mutiso⁵⁷ avers that lack of grazing pasture and the imposition of quarantines led to the destruction of livestock industry and the eventual decline of the long distance trade that the Kitui Akamba had

⁵⁴ Rocheleau, D., *et al* "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade, 1050.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ O'Leary, M.F. *The Kitui Akamba: Economic and Social Change in Semi-Arid Kenya* (Nairobi, 1984).

⁵⁷ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui: Ecosystems, Integration and Change".

established with the Mount Kenya communities as well as the coastal people during the pre-colonial period, as the Kitui Akamba resorted to other ventures like wage labor and pure crop farming.

Munro⁵⁸, in his work on social change among the Machakos Akamba devotes a chapter to agrarian distress in the district prior to 1939. He discusses the impact of the distress in terms of political activities resulting from forced culling of livestock (destocking) and land reconditioning measures. However, he does not discuss the impact of the distress in terms of the changing livestock economy. It is thus clear from the review of the literature in this section that the history of the impact of colonial capitalism on the livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos has not been documented.

1.8.3 African Response to Colonial Policies on Livestock

Not only did different systems of development have different reactions to imperial capitalism, they also had different reactions among them.⁵⁹ This is to suggest that through the colonial state's agency, Kenya's historically and culturally distinct and complex modes of development were differently expressed to colonial capitalism. According to Van Zwanenberg,⁶⁰ the reaction of Africans to the state-managed economy differed over time and space, depending on the economic opportunities available to them. He notes that some Africans became migrant laborers, others produced cash crops, others went to work as squatters on European farms, and others enlisted in the British army. Along the same line, Berman and Lonsdale⁶¹ state that according to the basic character of capitalist infiltration, the essence of indigenous

⁵⁸ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

⁵⁹ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

⁶⁰ Van Zwanenberg, R.M.A. *The Agricultural History of Kenya to 1939*. (Nairobi, 1972).

⁶¹ Berman, B., & Lonsdale J. "Crises of Accumulation, Coercion and Colonial State: The Development of the Labour Control System in Kenya, 1919-1929". *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 14, No.1. 1980.

modes of development, the local ecology, and resource endowment, the method of articulation differed while Cokumu⁶² claims that the particular impact of colonial policy on the African continent varied according to area. While some regions were important as labor sources, others excelled in agricultural production, mineral extraction, or both. This is to mean that different African communities responded according to the way they were articulated.

Parson⁶³ claims that during the colonial era, South Africa's ruling class morphed into a petty-bourgeois political class. The study has shown that, while non-state workers retained ownership of cattle, their capacity to participate in cattle capital accumulation was restricted by the colonial administration's monopoly of cattle marketing in South Africa. Along the same line, Kitching's⁶⁴ work, traces the historical creation of classes in Kenya. He notes that colonialism through land reforms brought about stratification among Africans as it led to major changes in customary practices, sexual division of labour and links between farm and off-farm income were created. The project reflects on the emergence of Kenya's petit-bourgeoisie community as a result of colonial policies. He examines active retail merchants, civil servants, primary school teachers, and clerks using examples from Central and Western Kenya. He states that this class put aside money from other sources to spend in property, agricultural production, as well as other off businesses. This research aims to determine whether Africans in Machakos accumulated resources.

⁶² Cokumu, P. "The Colonial Transformation of Agriculture in Siaya".

⁶³ Parson, J. "Cattle, Class and the State in Rural Botswana". *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 2. (1981).

⁶⁴ Kitching, G. *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*.

On the same vein, Leys,⁶⁵ in his analysis of underdevelopment in Kenya postulated that a small class of Africans such as chiefs, tribunal elders and the educated, who got cash for salaries, managed to accumulate wealth and were tied to foreign capital while Swainson,⁶⁶ argues that colonial government in the 1950s deliberately encouraged the emergence of an African middle class as a means of political stability and prevention of ultra-radical nationalism. The above works discuss the emergence of class differentiation in Kenya and even in other African countries during the colonial rule. Of immediate relevance to this study is their discussion of the changing fortunes of African privileged class particularly in terms of livestock acquisition. Thus the present study relied on this analysis with a view to finding out if the class differentiation took place in Machakos.

One of the studies that touch on African responses towards colonial policies on livestock production in Kenya has been done by Ngisirei⁶⁷. She has dedicated a chapter on African responses towards colonial policies on livestock production. Her findings differ with the views of many scholars that the incorporation of East Africa into the world economy led to an automatic collapse of the African production systems. By examining specific individuals, Ngisirei's has demonstrated that during the colonial era, the Nandi responded to colonial policies by taking advantage of the new cattle breeds and modern methods of livestock keeping provided by the colonial government to improve their living standards. They purchased high-quality cattle and developed cooperative movements to market milk as well as milk products. Her study also shows that the Nandi used the proceeds from the sale of milk and acquired credit facilities that

⁶⁵ Leys, C. *Underdevelopment in Kenya*.

⁶⁶ Swainson, N. *The Development of Corporate Capitalization in Kenya 1918-1977*. (Nairobi, 1980).

⁶⁷ Ngisirei. R. "British Colonial Transformation of Indigineous Cattle Production and the Socio-Economic Effects among the Nandi of Kenya, 1890-1963". MA Thesis. Kisii University. (2017).

they used in expanding their dairy farming and developing their farms. Subsequently, the successful farmers were able to send their children to school. Her conclusion is that the colonial policies had a positive impact on the cattle economy of the Nandi people. Ngisirei's findings are supported by Connelly who observes that the education and access to skills and knowledge facilitated by the colonial government enabled individuals to benefit from development intervention and market opportunities. He concludes that those who acquired new cattle breeds and accepted the improved methods of livestock keeping became more successful as opposed to those who failed to adapt to the new changes.⁶⁸ The two studies are important in interrogating the changes witnessed in Machakos as a result of the introduction of new technology in livestock production.

On a contrary opinion, Waweru⁶⁹ has argued that the colonial policies undermined pastoralism in Samburu. In a whole chapter, he has examined the response of the Samburu to the soil conservation program and how that reaction shaped the politics of land conservation in the district. He has also examined the Europeans perceptions on Samburu land use and how those perceptions influenced land reconditioning policies in Samburu district. He argues that the interference in the productive system of the community through the implementation of the land reconditioning policies and the commencement of a destocking campaign in 1939 was the beginning of a serious conflict with the British on the eve of the Second World War. His conclusion is that the colonial perception on pastoralism and the subsequent policies on livestock sector dismantled the Samburu pastoralism.

⁶⁸ Conneley, W.T. "Colonial Era Livestock Development Policy; Introduction of Improved Dairy Cattle in High Potential Farming Areas of Kenya". *World development* 26. (1998), 1740.

⁶⁹ Waweru, P. "Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism."

Studies that have closest affinity to Machakos District are those by Bernard and Thom, Mutiso and Munro. For instance, Bernard and Thom⁷⁰ study on population pressure in Kitui and Machakos are of the view that population pressure in Ukambani, which became one of Kenya Colony's most difficult problems, was probably made worse rather than abated by the colonial government decisions and measures taken throughout much of the colonial era. For instance, the Akamba responded to the colonial government's encouragement of fixed crop agriculture by limiting the range of grazing areas. The study was useful to the present study as it demonstrates some of the ways the people of Machakos district responded to colonial policies. However, it has mainly looked at general responses rather than the responses geared towards livestock production.

Mutiso⁷¹ and Munro⁷² suggest a class-based interpretation of the impact of colonial rule on the Akamba. The studies show that some Akamba became a privileged class through education and were referred to as 'the 'educated' (asomi) and gained an advantage over others at the periphery. Ultimately, they achieved status and special access to land and livestock and gained legitimacy through the colonial political system. Although this work doesn't discuss the Akamba responses towards policies affecting livestock production in detail, it is nevertheless useful to this study as it provided some useful information for the study of livestock economy in the Akamba community.

The reviewed literature demonstrates that at present, there are studies that discuss the impact of colonial capitalism on the African pre-colonial modes of production. However, most of the studies have focused their attention on the production and export

⁷⁰ Bernard, F., & Thom, D. "Population Pressure and Human Carrying Capacity in Selected Locations of Machakos and Kitui District". *Journal of Developing Areas*. (1981), 390-91.

⁷¹ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui: Ecosystems, Integration and Change".

⁷² Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

of cash crops such as cotton, coffee, tea and groundnuts. Thus, livestock production has suffered neglect. Other studies have particularly looked at the impact of colonialism on livestock production and economic development of the continent. However, these studies focus on the entire continent. Consequently, the solutions they propose are general tailored to cover the whole continent and hence cannot be used to explain developments occurring in specific regions of Africa.

A few studies that have attempted to address the colonial livestock transformation have been done on specific communities while a majority of them are based on nomadic pastoralism. Hence, the conclusions of such local level studies on sections of the country cannot be used as a representative of all the communities. Several studies have also attempted to address the effect of colonial capitalism on Machakos economy. They have to a large extent dwelt on environmental degradation and its role in generating food crises in Machakos during the colonial period.

However, no specific study has been done on the livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos. In a nutshell, it can be argued that the history of the colonial transformation of livestock economy in Machakos is almost unwritten. Indeed, more fundamental aspects relating to the significance of livestock in the pre-colonial period and how this changed immediately after white occupation have scarcely received historical analysis. The present study therefore sought to address this lacuna.

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study argued that the economic organization of a given society can best be understood in the historical context of that society. This is to say that the economic development of any society cannot be separated from the society's system of production and distribution. Therefore, in order to understand the transformation of livestock

production in colonial Machakos, there is a need to investigate the pre-colonial livestock economy of the Akamba and how that economy became integrated to colonial capitalism. The study was therefore guided by two theories namely; the articulation of modes of production and the agency theory.

1.9.1 Articulation of Modes of Production

The theory of articulation of modes of production advanced by P.P. Rey⁷³ and Claude Meillassoux⁷⁴ combines the ideas of the dependence viewpoint (unequal trade, shifting international divisions of labor, unequal growth, and so on) with the Marxist perspective of accumulation within the field of production and processes of class formation and struggle. As a result, it encompasses the political, technological, and social aspects of transition in a single historical phase.⁷⁵

Rey identifies three major stages in the process of articulation. One, capitalism reinforces the pre-capitalist modes. Two, capitalism subordinates the pre capitalist whilst still using it. Three, capitalism does away with the pre capitalist totally. He emphasizes that despite its bid to substitute itself for the old modes of production, capitalism still needed these modes of production for a long time so that both can get supplies and labor power from them. In the same vein, Meillassoux emphasizes that to subsidize and cheapen the reproduction of labor in the capitalist sector, capitalism must coexist or be articulated with these modes of production. He is of the view that the articulation between two modes must be understood not as a static or stable condition, but as a process.

⁷³ Rey, P. & Becker, J. "Class Alliances". *International Journal of Sociology*. Vol 12, No 2. (1992).

⁷⁴ Meillassoux, C. "The Social Organisation of the Peasantry: The Economic Basis of Kinship". *Journal of Peasant Studies*, Vol. 1, No.1, 81-90. (1973).

⁷⁵ Gutkind, P.C.W., & Wallerstein, E. (Eds). *The Political Economy of Contemporary Africa*. (Beverly Hills, 1976).

According to this school of thought, the emergence of modern production modes did not totally abolish pre-capitalist modes of production, but rather reshaped them. As a result, through a mechanism of fragmentation, conservation, and adaptation, indigenous modes of production were gradually subordinated to the capitalist mode.⁷⁶ In support of this view, Berman,⁷⁷ argues that articulation of modes of production is a very complex process which involved the penetration, subjugation, destruction, conservation and transformation of the non-capitalist modes of production as a result of their integration into the colonial capitalist system. In pre-colonial African formations, for example, the dominant modes of production were feudal, tributary, slave or pastoral.⁷⁸ On distinct words, both of these types were absorbed into multinational capitalism. It should be noted that the African modes of production mentioned above are general definitions that do not encompass Africa's varied and complex historical reality. As a result, rather than labeling social formations, it is necessary to define the pre-capitalist style in question as it applies to different communities. It is simple to analyze the articulation of a specific social structure with capitalism until the complexities of that social formation are understood.⁷⁹

In view of the foregoing, Mudzinganyama⁸⁰ summarizes his study about the articulation of the modes of production in Bechuanaland by arguing that by the 1940s, Bechuanaland had been turned into a labor pool for South Africa as a result of the articulation between pre-colonial society and the colonial capitalist regime. He outlines

⁷⁶ Meillassoux, C. *The Social Organisation of the Peasantry*.

⁷⁷ Berman B. "Articulation, Class Struggle and the Specification of the Colonial State", Paper Presented at the Conference of the African Studies Association, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, October (1980).

⁷⁸ Cliffe, L. "Rural Class Formation in East Africa". *The Journal of Peasant Studies*. Vol. 4, No.2, (1977), 199.

⁷⁹ Zeleza, T. "The Political Economy of British Colonial and Welfare in Africa". *Transafrican Journal of History*, Vol. 15. (1985).

⁸⁰ Mudzinganyama, N. "Articulation of the Modes of Production and the Development of a Labour Reservoir in Southern Africa". 1885-1944: The Case of Bechuanaland. *Botswana Notes and Records*, Vol.15. (1983).

the major aspects of the British colonial policies which led to this transformation. The major aspects that he outlines are as follows: 1) changes in the traditional system of administration and its replacement by a three tier system of government consisting of the High Commissioner, the Resident Commissioner and the Chiefs; 2) the alienation of a much larger percentage of the most fertile land for European settlers; 3) introduction of monetary taxation; 4) restriction on African trading; and 5) introduction of European goods. The ultimate result of these policies, he observes, was to turn what was once a tributary society into one that relied on labor migration for subsistence or well-being.

In Kenya, land alienation, tariffs, and forced labour were some of the policies introduced by the colonial state in colonial Kenya to compel Africans to submit to the measures enforced by the colonial state. However, certain elements of pre-capitalist African societies, such as land tenure structures, were left intact in order for these economies to replicate cheap labor, thus subsidizing wealth. However, those efforts were not necessarily fruitful and in most circumstances, they were met with resistance from the colonized.⁸¹

Ndege⁸² has argued that the incorporation of Kasipul Kabondo constituency into the capitalist system resulted in economic reforms in the constituency during colonialism. According to the author, the colonial government used its political machinery to maintain colonial state dominance and ensure that indigenous peoples were included in the colonial economy. He observes that indigenous economies are now governed by the

⁸¹ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

⁸² Ndege, P. O. "Economic Change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962". MA Thesis. University of Nairobi. (1987).

needs of the imperial empire, which is governed by Britain. As a result, the residents were forced to participate in the manufacture of export goods and wage labor.

Similar views are shared by Makana⁸³ who draws our attention to the state policies on cultivation of coffee in Bungoma during colonial period. He points out that the state formulated policies which revolved around the provision of inputs, training of locals in agricultural production, determining both what was to be produced and how it was to be produced, supervising the production, determining the quality of the produce and even, where the produce would be marketed.

In support of this, Onduru⁸⁴ argues that the agricultural organisation of the Jo-Kano was sound and fair, and that it was based on the Jo-Kano understanding of their own climate. He goes on to say that the imperial capitalist regime disrupted, partly ruined, changed, and subordinated Jo-Kano agriculture. A study by Lemoosa,⁸⁵ demonstrates that in the Samburu coordinated and maintained a barter trading scheme prior to the arrival of the British. They traded beef for small animals and vice versa. He goes on to describe how the barter system was largely replaced by money as a medium of trade during the colonial era. He further argues that colonization converted the Samburu from being consumers of livestock and livestock products to being producers of the same hence changing the nature and significance of livestock production among the Samburu. In the same vein, Too⁸⁶ observes that during the colonial era, families began to work for themselves as opposed to communal organizations. The extended family relations were

⁸³ Makana, N. "Metropolitan Concern, Colonial State Policy and the Embargo on Cultivation of Coffee by Africans in Colonial Kenya: The Example of Bungoma District, 1930-1960". *History in Africa*, 36. (2009).

⁸⁴ Onduru, T.A. "Some Aspects of Economic Change in Kano. 1850-1963". M.A Thesis. University of Nairobi. (1992)

⁸⁵ Lemoosa, P. "A Historical Study of the Economic Transformation of the Samburu, 48.

⁸⁶ Too, P. "Agriculture in Nandi District under Colonial Rule 1895-1963". M-Phil Thesis Moi University. (1996).

interfered with as many of the activities were commercialized and individuals preferred to sell their animals to accomplish a given task using the cash acquired from the sale. On the other hand, the beer meant for exchange of labour became commoditized. The amount of beer corresponded with the amount of work one did. Such labour could engage in cultivation, house building or harvesting.

Thus, the viewpoint of articulation of modes of production traces the historical mechanism by which the African indigenous productive system, or rather pre-capitalist societies, is invaded by colonial capitalism's policies. In general, this was a complicated, conflict-ridden, and chaotic operation. As Berman⁸⁷ stresses, articulation was partly an intentional and partly accidental mechanism of confusion and conflict that seldom corresponded specifically with the goal or desires of the historical agent, thus the need to understand the colonial state's critical and conflicting position in the process and the variable responses of African communities in resisting or accepting capitalism.

In conclusion, the study maintains that articulating African modes of production with colonial modes of production has harmed the former. Therefore, this thesis followed the analytical viewpoint of articulation of modes of production, a perspective that proved useful in studying the impact of colonial capitalism on the livestock economy of the Akamba of Machakos. However, the theory of articulation of modes of production did not provide room for analyzing the Akamba as key players of this process. To fill this gap, the study also utilised the agency theory.

⁸⁷ Berman, B.J. "The Concept of 'Articulation' and the Political Economy of Colonialism". *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 18, No.2, (1984), 407-14.

1.9.2 The Agency Theory

Agency implies the right to exercise a degree of influence over the social ties in which one is entangled, which implies the ability to transform certain social relations to some extent. People have the ability to think for themselves and behave in ways that affect their experiences and life trajectories in this situation.⁸⁸ Anderson⁸⁹ has observed that during the colonial period, the Africans producers used their own innovative and creative power to circumvent around the colonial state capitalist conditions to make their own lives better or gain from the imposed situations.⁹⁰

Talbot's⁹¹ framework which is more localized to suit the Kenyan experience, demonstrated the multiple means by which African in Kenya delayed, avoided, deflated and even deflected the intentions of the state to their own advantage. In his research on African farmers in colonial Kenya, he applied the principles of commercialization, creativity, adaptation, and diversification. Commercialization is used to refer to the raising of animals and their products for exchange purposes, price differentials for varying grades of agricultural produce that indigenous systems developed for the exchange of animal products. Innovation on the other hand refers to new ideas, methods or inventions of doing things differently and better than those that existed before. While adaptation is a term used to refer to gradual change of behaviour and attitude by the people made to incorporate new systems and techniques from external sources.

⁸⁸ William. H & Sewell, J. "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation". *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 98, No. 1. (1992).

⁸⁹ Anderson, D. *Eroding the Commons: The Politics of Ecology in Baringo, Kenya; 1890-1963* (Nairobi, 2002).

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Talbot, D. "African Agriculture", in Ochieng, W.R. and Maxon, R.M. (Eds). *An Economic History of Kenya*. (Nairobi, 1992), 75-78.

According to Talbott's framework, traditional African economies had principal themes of production. Talbott disputes the myths that the African past was more or less static or at best repetitive. Instead, he acknowledges a continuous process of social and political innovation, economic improvement and technical change. In total, Talbot observed that, Africans were real innovators during this period, since they developed, adapted and integrated animals, crops and techniques to the Kenyan experience; accepting, rejecting and modifying them to compliment changing traditional society policy and economy.

Omwoyo's⁹² study about the agricultural changes in Kipsigis land contends that the indigenous agricultural organization of the Africans did not disappear during the colonial period. Rather, it kept readjusting and co-existed with the colonial capitalist sector in a contradictory manner of "destruction/preservation" or "conservation/dissolution". It emerges more clearly from his study that although agricultural land, animal husbandry, labour, and trade policies were aimed at achieving maximum benefits for the white settlers and the colonial state, the Kipsigis seem to have reacted in their own ways to exploit such policies for their own economic advantages. Thus, the Kipsigis were definitely not passive to the new colonial agricultural policies. They perceived them correctly, accepting those that were of benefit to them while rejecting the undesirable ones, even if for a while.

Sharon Stichter has explored how Africans responded creatively to new constraints and opportunities. Equally important, Stichter examines the growth and modification of the migrant labour economy. Unlike other labour historians who view taxation as simply a government response to settler labour demands, Stichter argues that taxation alone

⁹² Omwoyo, S. "The Agricultural Changes in the Kipsigis Land, 1894-1963: An Historical Inquiry". PhD. Thesis, Kenyatta University. (2012).

could not force Africans to join wage employment. In her view, other factors, which influenced African responses to wage labour included the fact that by the early 1920s, a cash economy had pervaded African societies with money being required for all transactions. Thus they went to wage labour to get money, not only to pay tax but also to obtain material goods.

In Machakos context, the study maintains that the Akamba responded to colonial capitalism as receptive agents ready accommodate, absorb and assimilate new practices into their traditional livestock economy. The Akamba therefore, retained what they deemed beneficial to their livestock economy and restructured their traditional systems of production with the new and progressive ideas from the colonial state with what they considered beneficial to them. With this progressive nature of the Akamba, their livestock industry structurally evolved during the period of the study. The above discussion thus lends credence to the utility of the agency theory in the interpretation of the colonial transformation of the livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos.

1.10 Methodology

1.10.1 Study Area

The study was conducted in Machakos County formerly Machakos District in the period 1895-1963. Machakos County is one of the forty seven counties in Kenya and one of the eight counties in the Eastern region.⁹³ Machakos District forms part of former Kenya's Eastern Province (and in the 1950s, was part of what was called Southern Province). According to Matheka,⁹⁴ Machakos District was in the former Eastern

⁹³ Tiffen, M., *et al. More People, Less Erosion: Environmental Recovery in Kenya* (Chichester, 1994), 17.

⁹⁴ Matheka, R. (1992). "The Political Economy of Famine".

Province, Kenya. From 1895 to 1902 the Machakos area together with Kitui formed Athi District in the then Ukamba Province of the East Africa Protectorate. In 1902 Athi District was split into two and the Machakos area came to be known as Ulu District. It existed under that name until 1920 when it was renamed Machakos District. In 1933, Ukamba Province was joined to Kikuyu province to form Central Province.⁹⁵ The District was part of Central Province until 1953 when Machakos and Kitui Districts were severed from Central Province and joined Kajiado and Narok Districts into a new Southern Province. However, on the recommendations of the Regional Boundaries Commission of 1962, Machakos District became part of Eastern Province at independence in 1963.⁹⁶ In 1910, following the amalgamation of the Constitution of Kenya 2010, it changed from Machakos district to Machakos County.⁹⁷

During the colonial era, the district covered roughly 14,250 square kilometers and stretched 275 kilometers from northwest to southeast during the colonial period. It narrowed from a width of 125 kilometers in the north to less than 20 kilometers in the south. The District is bordered on the west by Kajiado District, on the southeast by Taita-Taveta District, on the east by Kitui District, on the northeast by Embu, on the north by Murang'a, and on the northwest by Kiambu District and Nairobi Province.⁹⁸

Machakos County is located between the latitudes of 0° 45 South and 1° 31 South, and the longitudes of 36° 45 East and 37° 45 East. The elevation of the county ranges from 790 to 1594 meters above sea level. The area has a semi-arid climate characterized by hot days and cold nights with temperatures varying from a mean annual minimum and

⁹⁵ Maxon, R., & Ofcansky, T. *Historical Dictionary of Kenya: African Historical Dictionaries*, No. 77, (2nd Ed). (London, 2000), 249.

⁹⁶ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

⁹⁷ Government of Kenya. *The Constitution of Kenya 2010*. Nairobi: Government Printers. (2010).

⁹⁸ Muendo, L. "Local Government and Development in Kenya". *The Case of Machakos District, 1925-1974*. M.A Thesis, Egerton University. (2015), 31.

maximum of 13.7⁰c and 24.7⁰c respectively. The County's average rainfall is generally unevenly distributed and inconsistent. The annual rainfall ranges from 500 to 1300 mm. The short rains will occur in October and December, while the long rains will occur in March and May. Due to the semi-arid nature of the region, subsistence agriculture is primarily practiced, with maize and drought-resistant crops such as sorghum and millet being cultivated.

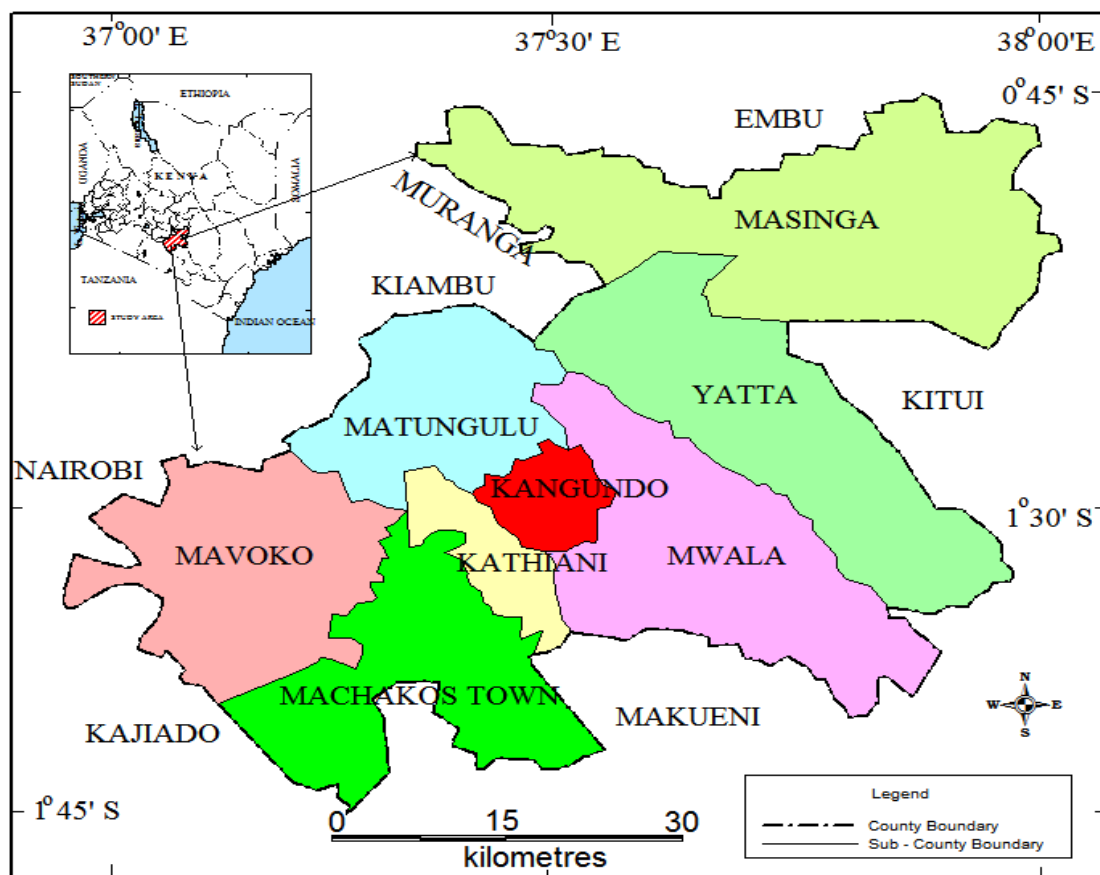


Figure 1: Map of Machakos County showing Machakos Sub-Counties as the study area

Source: Moi University Geography & Environmental Studies Dept. GIS Lab. 2021.

1.10.2 Research Design

The study was based on historical research design which according to Walliman⁹⁹ is the systematic and impartial gathering, evaluating, and synthesis of data to collect information and draw conclusions regarding historical events. It entails delving into the context and connections between events, as well as the use of primary and secondary historical evidence in the form of writings, objects, and documents. The references must be both reliable and authentic. The importance of historical analysis is that it allows for the quest for solutions to current issues in the past. As a result, an understanding of the meanings and an evaluation of the events' importance are needed. Thus, the historical research design acted as a sketch map through time and space that helped the researcher to narrate the economic transformation particularly the livestock economy of the Akamba.

1.10.3 Data Collection Methods

The study utilized both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained from two major sources namely, archival and oral sources from the people of Machakos. Before the commencement of oral interviews, archival research was undertaken at the Kenya National Archives. Several records pertaining to colonial policies were perused through and analyzed. The most targeted records were the ones that focus on the Athi District and the Ukamba Province, Ulu District, Machakos district, Central Province, Southern Province, Eastern Province, District and Provincial Annual Reports of the aforementioned administrative units, Annual Reports of the Agriculture and veterinary departments, Political Record books, the colonial handing-over Reports, Minutes of the Machakos Local Native Council, Memoranda on issues like soil erosion, destocking,

⁹⁹ Walliman, N. *Your Research Project: Designing and Planning Your Work*, 3rd Edition (London, 2011).

etc. Archival research has the following advantages; first, archival analysis tended to reduce response biases since the researcher was not present when the data was collected. Second, it's much less expensive because the data has already been gathered. However, archival data has some limitations in that the data may be lost or incorrectly entered. This challenge was addressed by utilizing written and oral sources to reinforce the archival sources.

Therefore, in addition to archival sources, oral interviews were also conducted. They were used to cross-check and supplement data from archival sources. In order to get the right informants who participated in livestock industry, purposive sampling procedure was used to identify the informants. Assistance was sought from the chiefs, assistant chiefs and headmen in the district who provided the names of some informants. To identify more informants, snowball sampling procedure was used to identify particular individuals, especially those who engaged in different livestock ventures especially on the eve of independence. Accordingly, those who owned livestock or looked after livestock, active traders in livestock and related products were identified and interviewed. Emphasis was laid not only on those who owned and traded in livestock, but also those who prepared livestock products for consumption or exchange and were active in those chores by about 1963. In addition, colonial chiefs and members of African District Council (ADCs) were identified and interviewed. Accordingly there were three categories of respondents. To ensure that all the three categories are included in the sample frame, one person from each category from each sub-county in Machakos County was included in the interview. Accordingly, three people from each of the eight sub-counties of Machakos County were brought within the sample frame. This brought the total number of informants to 24.

The interviews schedules contained open ended questions. The interviews were conducted using English, Kiswahili and Kikamba languages depending on the respondent's ability to understand and/or speak either of the languages. This was done to ensure that there is no communication barrier and also to ensure a two-way dialogue between the interviewer and the informants. During the interview, sound recording using the cell phone and note taking was used simultaneously in order to ensure that all the data is captured properly. The sound record was interpreted and transcribed at the end of the working day and the information synthesized within the set themes of the objectives. The interview schedules were ideal for the researcher because they assisted to get the response directly from the respondents. In addition, in the event of unclear responses, the researcher was able to probe the respondents further for confirmation. The interview schedules also assisted the researcher to clarify the topic of conversation better and encourage both literate and illiterate informants to respond to questions. Borg and Gall¹⁰⁰ corroborate this as they argue that interviewing helps the researcher to elicit knowledge from the respondent on particular subjects and also helps the interviewer to draw inferences about what the respondent tells, both verbally and non-verbally. However, despite the many advantages, interview schedules have some limitations. For instance, they can be time consuming.

A part from the primary data, secondary data was also utilized. It was obtained from library and internet sources. The first task was to study all the studies relevant to the subject. These studies were vital in identifying the gaps and shortcomings that exist in the available literature. Works on livestock production and management, the structure and functioning of pre-colonial and colonial economies, socio-economic transition

¹⁰⁰ Borg, W. R., and Gall, M. D. *Educational Research: An Introduction* (Fifth Ed.) (New York, 2003).

during the colonial era, and the role of the colonial state in the transformation of colonial African economies were all given special attention. In addition, literature on pre-colonial livestock economies in Africa was reviewed to identify their salient features since this was vital in the provision of background information upon which structural continuities and discontinuities in the colonial period was examined.

After gathering information from the library, Kenya National Archives and field research, data from all the sources was cross-checked, synthesized and analyzed. Data from secondary sources such as newspapers, books, government documents, and unpublished articles, reports, theses, and dissertations enhanced the analysis of primary evidence. These secondary sources were particularly helpful in synthesizing, comparing, and potentially analyzing primary data from archival and oral sources. Both qualitative and quantitative data was utilized to evaluate the extent to which the articulation of the capitalist modes of production with the pre-capitalist modes of production resulted into destruction of the livestock sector among the Akamba of Machakos. Quantitative data was used to reinforce qualitative data. The historical narrative was then presented in chapter form taking into account both thematic and chronological considerations while at the same time addressing the objectives of the study.

1.10.4 Ethical Considerations

The researcher received all required documentation, including an introduction letter from Moi University, before beginning data collection in order to apply for a research permit from the National Commission for Science, Technology, and Innovation (NACOSTI). The purpose of the research was also clarified by speaking with the sampled respondents in the study field. The local administrative offices were contacted

for assistance. The researcher then demonstrated the study to the participants. The respondents were told by the researcher that the thesis was conducted solely for scholarly purposes. The research guides' position was also specifically established. It was made clear that participation was entirely voluntary, and that respondents could refuse or withdraw at any time during the study. As a result, respondents were not forced to take part in the survey. The participants gave their informed consent to participate or not. Respondents were also asked for permission to include their photos as well as verbatim captions in this thesis.

1.11 Organisation of the Study

The narrative on the transformation of livestock among the Akamba of Machakos from 1895 to 1963 is in chapter form. The approach in the arrangement of the chapters is thematic although, it follows a chronological order to allow for the development and flow from one chapter to another. The study is organized in seven chapters. The first chapter has given the background of the study by stating the problem, outlining the objectives and the research questions. Literature related to the study and a review of some theories which have been used in the study of the colonial economies have been explained. Finally the applicable methodology used in the study has also been highlighted.

The second chapter explores the nature and significance of livestock on the eve of colonialism. It also presents the historical geography of Machakos in order to describe the unique environment and climate of Machakos which informed the study. It also provide the basis on which livestock economy in Machakos was premised. The chapter, therefore, serves as a basis upon which the subsequent developments on the livestock economy during the colonial period were assessed.

Chapter three examines the integration of Machakos economy into the colonial economy. It acts as a link between the pre-colonial and colonial periods. It details the impact of colonial policies like land alienation, introduction of taxation and demand for colonial labour on livestock production in Machakos. Further, the development of colonial infrastructure like roads and the establishment of trading centers are analysed in terms of their impact on the livestock economy in Machakos.

The fourth chapter explores the inter-war economic trends in the context of both internal and external crises. The crises include famines, the great depression and environmental degradation among others. The impact of these crises on livestock production and management in Machakos district has been analyzed. The responses of the Akamba of Machakos livestock owners to these crises are also explored.

Chapter five delves into the analyses of the Second World War in relation to its impact on the livestock economy of Machakos. The chapter maintains that the war demands like livestock requisitioning and the conscription into military had a crucial and detrimental impact on livestock economy of the Akamba.

The sixth chapter argues that the period 1945-1963 saw new developments in the livestock economy of Machakos. It further shows how these developments affected the livestock economy in the district. The chapter concludes that these post WWII developments saw Akamba of Machakos shift to other ventures which in turn outcompeted the livestock industry. This led to the eclipse of livestock economy as the principal sector of the economy of Machakos.

Chapter seven gives the summary and the conclusions of the study. It also gives the recommendation of the study and suggests other areas related to the study which need further research.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter has established the background against which an analysis of the transformation of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos can be undertaken. The review of existent literature has reviewed that there is at present no systematic study devoted to momentous changes that occurred in the livestock sector of the people of Machakos during the colonial period. This has strengthened the urgent need to undertake the study. Furthermore, the chapter has explained the applicable methodology while simultaneously giving rationale for the theoretical constructs to be employed in the study. The next chapter sets the backdrop to the analysis of the livestock economy by detailing the historical origins of the Akamba and the centrality of livestock in their pre-colonial economy

CHAPTER TWO
THE PRE-COLONIAL SETTING: THE ORIGINS OF THE AKAMBA
AND THE PLACE OF LIVESTOCK IN THEIR ECONOMY ON
THE EVE OF COLONIAL RULE

2.1 Introduction

Despite the fact that this study examines the transformation of livestock production under colonial era, it is important to give some historical basis of the Akamba on the eve of colonial rule. This will provide the background of the Akamba livestock economy which in turn illuminates how the establishment of colonial rule actually changed this crucial sector of the Akamba economy. In that connection, this chapter examines the geo-ecological setting and socio-economic and political structures which influenced their migration and settlement patterns. The chapter further details the physical environment of Machakos District in relation to its influence on the Akamba livestock production in the pre-colonial era. Therefore, this chapter describes the migration and settlements of the Akamba people and proceeds to highlight the nature of livestock production in the economy of the Akamba during the pre-colonial era. The overall aim is to present and analyse the background against which the transformation of livestock industry in the colonial period occurred. The chapter thus establishes the historical basis upon which the analysis of the articulation of capitalist forces with the existent livestock economy will be anchored.

2.2 Migration and Settlement

The Akamba are a Bantu community that has inhabited the region of present-day Machakos County, Kitui County and Makueni County. They have inhabited these

places since the pre-colonial period.¹ Studies about the origin of the Akamba are diverse and sometimes contradictory. Two historians, writing on the subject agree that the Akamba came to their present homelands from the south. Jackson² traces the place of origin of Akamba migration northwards in the stretch of countryside that radiates outwards from Mount Kilimanjaro. However, Munro³, disputes that by observing that there is no conclusion that can be made on any particular location since the Akamba use the name Kilimanjaro simply to mean the southern point of the compass. He argues that the Akamba immigrants came to the Machakos hills as part of the dispersal of the north-eastern Bantu-speaking peoples sometime between the 14th and the 16th centuries.

According to Manzi⁴, a period of residence in Kikumbuliu could be connected with the beliefs that the name “Akamba” derives from an association with the baobab tree. Traditionally Kikumbuliu was an area which had been associated with a heavy concentration of the baobab trees called *mwaamba* by the Akamba, the fruit being known as *ngamba*. Traditionally the tree was very important to the Akamba people. It served two important functions in their life. Firstly the Akamba used the tree to make the most prized string called *ikanda* (or Kamba in Kiswahili) and secondly it was used as an *Ithembo*, (a sacred tree or shrine).⁵ However, it is evident that many historians agree that the ancestors of the Akamba came to the Machakos area from the southeast through Makueni and Nzau. They, however, disagree on the place of origin, some claiming that the Akamba came from the area around Mount Kilimanjaro, while others place the ancient home of the Akamba down towards the coast in the neighbourhood of

¹ Manzi, J. “A Biography of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina wa Ndo of Migwani Division, Kitui District, 1889-1989”. MA Thesis. University of Nairobi. (2000), 35.

² Jackson, K. "Dimensions of Kamba Pre-colonial History" in B.A. Ogot (Ed). *Kenya before 1900* (Nairobi, 1976), 180-194.

³ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 8-11.

⁴ Manzi, J. “A Biography of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina Wa Ndo”, 35.

⁵ Musyoka Ndolo, OI at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020.

Giriamaland. Yet still some claim that the Akamba, together with the other Bantu-speaking peoples of the eastern highlands, came from the Shungwaya area to the northeast⁶. The land which the Akamba came to settle was largely hill country bordered in the west by the Kapiti and in the north by the Athi plains. To the east, it bordered the Athi River which curves round the solitary hill known as Donyo Sabuk to flow to the southeast.

Some Akamba traditions of origin claim that the Akamba came to the Machakos area in the early 16th century. The Akamba were living on the plains around Mount Kilimanjaro, and were probably semi-nomadic. In this semi-arid area the Akamba kept livestock, hunted wildlife and collected edible plants and roots⁷. According to Jackson⁸, the Akamba began to move out of the Kilimanjaro Plains towards the end of the sixteenth century due to competition for resources with the Maasai and other groups. Other sources agree that the Akamba, who were hunters at the time, arrived in present-day Machakos around 1600. The Akamba initially settled in the Mbooni Hills in the 17th century, having moved slowly northward through the Chyulu Hills, Kibwezi, Makueni, and Nzauwi.⁹ From Mbooni, the first major move, occurring about 150-200 years ago, was across the Athi River to other massifs, reaching Kitui in the eighteenth century and Kilungu, Iveti, Kalama, Mukaa, and Mbitini thereafter.¹⁰ This dispersion was fostered by population growth and pressure, by a flexible social system in which fissioning was a norm, and by the gradually declining threat of the Maasai and other pastoral peoples who occupied the plains of eastern Kenya, and eventually settled

⁶ O'Leary, M.F. *The Kitui Akamba: Economic and Social Change in Semi-Arid Kenya*. (Nairobi, 1984). 1.

⁷ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine, 57.

⁸ Jackson, K.A. "An Ethnohistorical Study of the Oral Traditions of the Akamba of Kenya". Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles. (1972).

⁹ Bernard, F. E., and D. J. Thom. "Population Pressure and Human Carrying Capacity in Selected Locations of Machakos and Kitui Districts". *Journal of Developing Areas* 15. (1981), 338.

¹⁰ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa: An Ethnological Monograph*. (New York, 1920), 15.

permanently in the Mbooni Hill.¹¹ Here they first became consolidated as a separate people and turned increasingly to agriculture.¹² Eventually, overpopulation and overcrowding forced them to move and clear the bushes, and the traditional land-use system of integrating highland agriculture with lowland cattle-grazing came into being.¹³ The land-tenure system of *ng'undu* (nearby grazing lands), *utui* (small clan based settlements or small villages with permanent household cultivated plots and fallows), *kisesi* (household grazing plots and paddocks), and *weu* (large tracts of common pastureland) developed in conjunction with this new subsistence system¹⁴

The same tradition puts the Akamba at that time in close proximity to the Nyamwezi, from whom they subsequently parted, the Nyamwezi moving towards Lake Victoria, and the Akamba by way of the Tsavo River to the region of Chyulu. Akamba is said to be a place-name in the Nyamwezi country. This in itself means very little. But the fact that the Akamba still, maintain utani (the so-called joking relationship or vituperative alliance) with the Nyamwezi (and apparently with no other community) seems to be inexplicable on any ground other than that the two communities were in contact at one time or another. The Akamba elders actually go further, and say that the utani demonstrates an actual (not ritual) blood relationship; the two communities, they suppose, were at one time one.¹⁵

¹¹ Hobley, C.W. *Ethnology of Akamba and Other East African Tribes*. (London, 1971). See also Krapf, J. L. *Travels, Researches, and Missionary Labors during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*. (London, 1968), 352.

¹² Owako, F.N. "Machakos Land and Population Problems". In S.H. Ominde (Ed). *Studies in East African Geography and Development*: (London, 1971). See also Lambert, H. E. "Land Tenure among the Akamba (Part I)". *African Studies* (Johannesburg) 6, no. 3. (1947a). 147.

¹³ Lambert, H. E. "Land Tenure among the Akamba". *African Studies*, 6:4. (1947b), 142.

¹⁴ Wamalwa, B. N. "Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Resources", in, *Gaining Ground: Institutional Innovations in Land-Use Management in Kenya*, ed. Amos Kiriro and Calestous Juma, 45-65. (Nairobi, 1989).

¹⁵ O'Leary, M.F. *The Kitui Akamba*, 3.

Cattle owners led the settlement of dry frontier lands, attracted to the superior grazing on the plains. They started establishing cattle posts which later became permanent villages.¹⁶ In this and other moves, the Akamba retained integrated highland/lowland, crop/livestock systems of land use. The main reason of the land-tenure system was to spread risk and ensure group survival. The system was flexible, equitable, and geared towards benefitting the community as a whole.¹⁷

Lack of water and the presence of tsetse flies controlled movement of the Akamba pastoralists. Moreover, oral tradition indicates a wide dispersal to the wet season grazing grounds in the lower unoccupied areas (*Weu*). For instance, Mutiso¹⁸ notes that the Akamba traditional grazing areas in the last century extended as far as Holla and in the north-east as far as Garissa. To the west, the Akamba grazed the whole of Yatta plateau as far as Mwea plains, Katw'anyaa and around Donyo Sabuk in the environs of Thika/Athi River. To the South, they claim to have grazed all what is now Tsavo National Park and Kibwezi area. Other communities of course grazed in these areas also, but the point is that the Akamba established *Syengo* in these areas, especially in the dry periods, but later receded to their tribal core areas in Machakos and Kitui district.¹⁹

Akamba adaptability can also be seen as the very core of a stable nature-society relationship based on flexibility of movement and technology change. The traditional land-use system may be conceptualized as a coherent repertoire of diverse strategies, including both expansion and intensification of settlement, agriculture, and livestock

¹⁶ Owako, F. N. "Machakos Land and Population Problems".

¹⁷ Wamalwa, B. N. "Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Resources".

¹⁸ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui: The Ecosystem, Integration, and Change", 34.

¹⁹ Kisovi, L. (1992), Changing Land-Use Policy and Population Problems in Kitui District, Kenya. *Journal of East Africa Research and Development*. 94.

production. Akamba farmers and agro-pastoralists cultivated in readiness to expand, intensify, relocate, or supplement their farming and livestock production activities in response to the changing economic and ecological conditions at local and national level.²⁰ The traditional land-use system was well adapted to the vagaries of the physical environment. Integrated crop/livestock systems, spatially separated holdings, and mutual reciprocity arrangements served to spread risk and to provide mechanisms for coping with drought.²¹ The settlement of the Akamba in the above areas helped them to transform their pastoral economy. First, as Ambler²² states, the Akamba settlements in these areas had the advantage of access to extensive pasturelands, and as a rule, farmers living in these drier sections placed great emphasis on herding. Indeed, in the early 1890s, Major J.R.L. Macdonald observed that the people of Kibwezi owned considerable flocks of sheep and goats.²³

The great attraction of settling in the relatively open lands of northern Ulu was, of course, the opportunity for increased livestock ownership. This emphasis on herding provided a basis for expanded trade with the highlands. They established a strong trade link with some agricultural societies living around Mount Kenya.²⁴ Further, they established trade relations with the coastal Swahili and Arabs popularly known as the long distance trade. In this trade, the Akamba acted as middlemen between the Mount Kenya region and the coast. Ndolo²⁵ observes that the involvement of the Akamba in

²⁰ Bernard, F. E., and Thom D. J. "Population Pressure and Human Carrying Capacity", 384.

²¹ Waller, R. "Ecology, Migration, and Expansion in East Africa", *African Affairs*, Vol. 84. (1985).

²² Ambler, C. *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the late Nineteenth Century*. (New Haven, 1988), 54.

²³ Macdonald, J.R.L. *Africa, 1891-1894. Soldiering and Surveying British East* (London, 1973), 34-36.

²⁴ Ambler, C. *Kenyan Communities in the Age of Imperialism*, 57-58.

²⁵ Ndolo, D. "The Dynamics of Social Change in an African Society: The Akamba of Kenya". PhD Thesis. Bayreuth: University of Bayreuth. (1989).

the long distance trade made their demand for livestock to go up thus intensifying their production of livestock.

2.3 The Influence of Physical Environment in Akamba Settlement and Economy

The argument that geography is the crucible out of which history is made is true in the Machakos case. This is to say that the complex interrelationship between the physical environment and human activity is the basis for understanding a community's socio-economic setting.²⁶ This is due to the fact that, in precolonial African societies, subtle gradations in elevation, topography, vegetation, and soils meant that certain areas would be better suited than others to the production of particular crops or to raising livestock.²⁷ Hence, if one wishes to understand a certain community and its development, one must have some knowledge of its milieu, the land it lives in and especially the physical environment.²⁸

Land in Machakos District rises from slightly below 600 m above sea level in the south to 1,100 m in the north-east and 1,600 m in the north-west. The centre of the District contains several hill masses rising steeply to 1800-2100 m. They include Kangundo, Iveti, Mbooni, Mua and Kilungu.²⁹ These hills are surrounded by a plateau, in places deeply dissected, which slopes gradually downwards from about 1700 m in the north-west to 700 m in the south-east. In the north the isolated Donyo Sabuk Mountain rises to 2144 m and, in the south, the Chyulu volcanic range rises to 2392 m. On the east side of the Athi River, the Yatta Plateau (a volcanic lava flow) forms an escarpment, backed by a gently inclined eastward-sloping surface.³⁰ Apart from the volcanic formations,

²⁶ Mazrui, A.A. *The Africans: A Triple Heritage*. (London, 1986).

²⁷ Lemoosa, P. "A Historical Study of the Economic Transformation of the Samburu".

²⁸ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*, 22.

²⁹ Matheka, R. (1992) "The Political Economy of Famine".

³⁰ Tiffen, M., *et al.* *More People, Less Erosion*.

the hills are mostly made of granitic rocks of the Basement Complex, schists and gneisses.³¹

These hills have a historical significance for the Akamba. They formed pasture reservoirs that were sought for pasturing livestock during the dry seasons when pastures would become coarse and unpalatable and sometimes scarce in the lowlands. This is because pasture is greener in highland and dryer on lowland in the dry season. The importance of the lowland was also engrained in the belief that mountainous areas were disease ridden in the wet season because of stagnant swampy areas. Also, the extreme cool conditions make livestock to contract pleuro- pneumonia and earthworms.³²

In addition to playing this role of reservoirs, these highlands provided defenses during the raiding wars between the Akamba and the neighboring ethnic groups. The Akamba maintained advanced posts along the western frontier. They established sitting lookouts on the uninhabited hills overlooking the Kapiti and Athi plains on the Kangundo, Iveti, Mbooni, Mua hills where they could keep an eye on Maasai movements and their cattle.³³

Another factor that influenced the pre-colonial livestock economy was the rainfall. The average annual rainfall in Machakos District ranges from slightly over 1,000 mm in some of the highlands to slightly below 500 mm in the low-lying southern and south-eastern parts of the district. The hilly terrain strongly influences rainfall distribution, favouring the central hill massifs.³⁴ The rainfall is characterised by small total amounts, strongly seasonal distribution, and high temporal and spatial variation from year to year

³¹ Ibid.

³² Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

³³ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

³⁴ Mutiso, G.C.M. *Kenya: Politics, Policy and Society* (Kampala, 1975).

and from season to season. The economic activities of Machakos District are influenced by two major factors namely rainfall and temperatures. The short rains start in October and continue through December. This is known as Mbua ya Mwee (the rain of millet), so called because during his season people used to plant and harvest millet in plenty. The long rains on the other hand begin in March and continue through May. The Akamba people call these rains Mbua ya Muvya (rain of sorghum). This is because traditionally sorghum was planted in plenty during this season. Dry cold weather continues from June to August. July is the coldest month, and the temperatures may be as low as 40 F. Dry weather then starts in late August and continues until the resumption of the short rains. Consequently, during this period, those who live in the hill experience cooler climate and wetter as compared to those who live in lowlands. Crop farming is therefore more intensive in the hill areas than in the lowlands.³⁵ This is because rainfall is unreliable and high temperatures compounds the problems of insufficient precipitation. Moreover, soils often absorb water inefficiently, and despite careful application of traditional techniques of soil and water conservation, much rain is lost as runoff. During the pre-colonial period, the Akamba preferred keeping livestock as these circumstances only allowed extensive cultivation of only a limited number of crops in many areas like a few varieties of pulses and grains which did not require a lot of rainfall. Furthermore, harvests were less plentiful and less secure. As a result, farmers always kept livestock as insurance against later drought.³⁶

Mutiso³⁷ has also contended that these environmental variations allowed the Akamba historically to practise nomadic movement of livestock from the lowland to the

³⁵ Manzi, J. "A Biography of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina Wa Ndoo of Migwani Division".

³⁶ Ambler, C. "Population Movement, Social Formation and Exchange Central Kenya in the Nineteenth Century". *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 2. (1985), 203.

³⁷ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui: The Ecosystem, Integration, and Change".

highlands during the dry spell and from the highlands to the lowlands during the wet seasons. Unlike the highlands, plains and lowland country usually offered excellent pasture lands and hence the chance to accumulate wealth in terms of livestock. The large scale cattle owners thus were concentrated in this dry, open country. However, even in the plains, the presence of tsetse flies-and trypanosomiasis restricted the expansion of cattle-keeping into some areas notably along the Tana River and in the areas bordering southern Kitui and Ulu. As such, farmers in these areas were more likely to own sheep and goats than cattle.³⁸

Sheep and goats were thus an important component of the Akamba pastoral economy. They were reared mainly for milk, meat and blood. The stock complemented cattle in ensuring the sustenance of life in households.³⁹ Sheep and goats also contributed to the ecological balance of the Akamba. They exploited different aspects of the pastoral resource which cattle could not. Goats and sheep are browser on vegetation and could therefore feed on twigs and dry leaves of shrubs even during the most severe drought unlike cattle which mostly feed on grass⁴⁰. This helped in minimizing the competition over the exploitation of the ecology hence maintaining the health of each group of animals.⁴¹

The presence of goats also demonstrate the above capacity as they tend to produce goats kids and plenty of milk during the dry season because the dry weather conditions was good for their health and there would be plenty of *waa* (fruits of acacia plants) which they liked very much and also helped in the production of milk. The lactating goats and sheep would provide milk for the household when cattle would produce little or no milk

³⁸ Ambler, C. "Population Movement, Social Formation and Exchange", 208.

³⁹ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/11/2020.

⁴⁰ Lemoosa, P. "A Historical Study of the Economic Transformation of the Samburu", 39.

⁴¹ Jackson, K. "Dimensions of Kamba Pre-colonial History".

due to scarce pastures and water.⁴² Hence, the herding of diversified animals in Machakos are expressions of the adaptability of the Akamba to their ecology. Further, the practice of transhumance allowed the Akamba to manipulate and exploit their varied environments.

The soils of Machakos were also of significant importance for understanding the Akamba pastoral economy. In Machakos, soils vary according to factors such as parent rock, relief and rainfall. The district dominant soil groups are alfisols, ultisols, oxisols, and lithic soils.⁴³ These soils are all generally of low fertility, and many are highly erodible.⁴⁴ The ultisols and alfisols are also susceptible to sealing (capping), which increases runoff and makes the clay soils hard to plough by the end of the dry season. However, the soils have rich mineral contents, especially sodium chloride⁴⁵. These minerals were useful for livestock licking purpose because of their sour taste. The Akamba attached great value to these minerals and believed that they nourished their livestock.

In terms of vegetation, the dominant vegetation of this part of Kenya is dry bush with trees, and, in the higher areas, savanna with scattered trees.⁴⁶ Some of this vegetation formed an important component of pasture food resource for the livestock. The *Ikoka* (cynodondactylon), *Mbeetua* (eragostissuperba) and *Mbwea* (panicum maximum) are types of grasses which used to be fed to the animals during dry seasons.⁴⁷ Characteristic vegetation at the higher altitudes (above 1,700 m) includes remnant evergreen forest

⁴² Grace Mwelu, OI at Mua on 06/11/2020.

⁴³ Barber, R. G., D. B. Thomas, and T. R. Moore. "Studies on Soil Erosion and Runoff and Proposed Design Procedures for Terraces in the Cultivated, Semi-Arid Areas of Machakos District, Kenya". In *Soil Conservation: Problems and Prospects 1980*, ed. Royston P. C. Morgan, (New York, 1981), 237.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Mwanzi, H.A. *A History of the Kipsigis*. (Nairobi, 1977), 15.

⁴⁶ Ominde, S. H. *Land and Population Movements in Kenya*. (London, 1968), 44-46.

⁴⁷ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui Livestock". *Institute of Development Studies*. Working Paper No. 305, 10.

(*Podocarpus* spp.) and bracken, mist forest, and evergreen thicket clumps in grassland. Elevations at 1,200-1,700 m are dominated by *Combretum* species, with particular plant associations correlated with topography and moisture. The most widespread vegetation type is semi-arid deciduous thicket and bushland, particularly *Acacia/Commiphora* associations in the 800-1200m elevation range. In the dry areas below 900m, *Commiphora/Sanseveria* thorn bush grades into semi-desert vegetation.⁴⁸ These Vegetation types played a crucial role in the pastoral economy of the Akamba as they relied on them to feed their livestock during the dry season and also used it to build Kraals, troughs and containers for watering their livestock. Furthermore, some plants were believed to have medicinal value for livestock and humans and were therefore used to control livestock diseases.⁴⁹

In matters of water supply, Ukambani in general has been treated very scurvily by nature. There are no lakes. The rivers, except Tana and Athi, are usually empty except during and directly after the rainy periods.⁵⁰ Consequently, in terms of surface water resources, Machakos District is poorly endowed. Most of the district is drained by River Athi and its tributaries except for the northern most parts which are drained by Tana and Thika rivers. River Athi is the only major perennial river in the district, although some of the hill massifs have perennial streams whose flow is intermittent at low altitude. Some of the seasonal rivers also have sub-surface water in their sandy beds during the dry season.⁵¹ This fact of sub-surface water was fully exploited by the pastoralist Akamba. They dug wells on the floors of rivers and streams by using digging

⁴⁸ Owako, F.N. "Machakos Land and Population Problems".

⁴⁹ Tabitha kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

⁵⁰ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa, 143*.

⁵¹ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

sticks and iron bars. The wells would be used for watering livestock during the dry spell.⁵²

The above description of the geography of Machakos District is the basis for understanding the challenges the natural resources of the area have posed to human activity in the past. As Mwanzi⁵³ argues, the environment without people is meaningless because 'nature' is not natural but is 'produced' by different social systems. For example, it is not possible to reconstruct the pre-colonial social formation of the Akamba without recourse to the environmental potential of their area of residence. This is because the geography of this area did affect their way of life. In other words, the environment played a significant function in the evolution of the Akamba pastoral economy.

2.4 The Place of Livestock in Social and Political Organization of the Akamba

Livestock economy played a significant function in the evolution of the Akamba institutions. It provided both political and social necessities largely influencing the evolution of the social and political institutions which were established among the Akamba community.

2.4.1 Social Organization

The significance of livestock in the Kamba social system was well expressed in social structures and institutions. The Akamba livestock attachment intervened at one point or another in the ceremonies concerned with all their social structures and functions. For example, livestock was an important ingredient of the family, clan, marriage, child birth, initiations, among others.

⁵² Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

⁵³ Mwanzi, H.A. *A History of the Kipsigis*. (Nairobi, 1977). Vii.

Among the social structures where livestock played a crucial role was the *musyi*. *Musyi* was the basic unit in Akamba social organisation. The word *Musyi* literally means a 'family'. It is also used to refer to a home. Therefore, the word *Musyi* is taken to stand for both residence and affinal-consanguinal relations⁵⁴. The father was the head of the family. He played the managerial function. Further, he had the physical and jural rights over the household's livestock. The father therefore, had the right to transfer physically an animal from his herd to somebody else. For instance, he could transfer part of his animals from his herd to that of his in laws in the form of bride wealth.⁵⁵ The members of the family had the jural rights of ownership of animals. According to this right, they physically owned the animals and enjoyed the use of their products like milk, blood and meat but had no right to transfer these animals to friends. They built their animals from a livestock allotted by their mother, father and the relatives. The labour offered by cattle associates to a household was usually rewarded in kind. These ranged from milk, meat and butter.

Next to the family was the *Mbai*, or the clan. The *Mbai* ranked second to *Musyi* in the kin structure and function of the Akamba people. A clan, according to the Akamba means a group of people whose members are related or in other way connected by means of a common bond. Underscoring the role of the clan among the Akamba, Katola says that, the clan is a *Mkamba*'s birth certificate by which he identifies himself when he meets another *Mkamba*.⁵⁶ Apart from their believe in common descent from a real

⁵⁴ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*.

⁵⁵ Mutua Nzuki, OI at Makutano on 01/11/2020.

⁵⁶ Katola, M. "The Akamba Concept of Taboo with Particular Reference to Machakos District". M.A Thesis, Kenyatta University. (1987).

mythical ancestor, the common type of such a uniting bond is a totem which signify their unity and common bond that they share with one another.⁵⁷

The functions of the *Mbai* merge on many points with those of *Musyi*, but they differ both quantitatively and qualitatively. The first distinction between the two is membership. *Mbai* comprises several families that can trace their descent to a remote common ancestor.⁵⁸ Each clan branded their cattle so as to identify them from others when they mingled during communal grazing. They branded conventional patterns on the flanks of their cattle and they also sometimes marked their ears. Each clan had several brands, but a certain family had its own brand. Upon seeing branded cattle, a *Mkamba* would know at once which clan the brand belonged to.⁵⁹

All the pre-colonial Akamba agreed on the basic importance of the clan, and all would give the same reason for its importance. As Oliver⁶⁰ puts it, “the clan will help a man if he gets into a serious trouble. It clearly provides a kind of security in a very fluid system, and here the rules are spelled out with precision.” For instance, if a young man was orphaned or his parents were too poor and did not have enough livestock to afford the bride-wealth, each member of the clan would be asked to chip in and contribute a certain number of animals towards the bride wealth. Similarly, a clan member may have a big debt due to an accident (*mbanga*). For example if accidental fire destroys other people’s property or in case of accidental killing. Usually, the fine for accidental killing would be fourteen head of cattle for a man and eight for a woman. If the said person is unable to raise the number of animals that he is asked to pay then his clan members would

⁵⁷ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*.

⁵⁸ Muthiani, J. *Akamba from Within: Egalitarianism in Social Relations*. New York: Exposition Press. (1973).

⁵⁹ Hobley, C.W. *Ethnology of Akamba and Other East African Tribes*. (London, 1971), 22.

⁶⁰ Oliver, S. “Individuality, Freedom of Choice, and Cultural Flexibility of the Kamba”. *American Anthropologist, New Series*, Vol. 67, No. 2. (1965).

unite and assist him to pay the debt.⁶¹ It can therefore be argued that clans used to undertake major social-economic problems cooperatively. They bore the immediate responsibility of disciplining their members as well as helping those in economic crisis.

Livestock was a significant component of all the Akamba social functions especially during the rites of passage. In child birth ceremonies for instance, livestock was highly involved. As Herskovits⁶² notes, the livestock attachment intervened at one point or another in the ceremonies concerned with the birth of a child among the Akamba. For instance, there was the use of milk and the imposition of milk-taboos on the mother before the birth of her child. On the day after the birth of a child, the family would have a feast; a he-goat would be slaughtered for the celebration, or, if the family was well-to-do, an ox would be slaughtered. The skin of this animal could not be sold or given away; the woman would use it to sleep on, or her husband would make clothes for her from it. If it is disposed of, a strip would be cut from it and fastened to the skin in which the child is carried on its mother's back. If the new born was a boy, he would be allotted a bull by his parents as a gift. This bull would be exchanged with a female cow later to ensure that it multiplies. Other relatives, both paternal and maternal would also give the child gifts in terms of livestock. This was mostly in terms of goats and sheep. This means that a boy would begin building his stock right from birth simply by taking advantage of the livestock gifts allotted to him by his parents and relatives.

As far as initiation ceremonies (*nzaiko*) were concerned, livestock played a very crucial role. The father to the *mwaikwa* had to pay a certain fee to the performer of the rite. The fee was a bull or a certain number of goats agreed by the father of the *mwaikwa*

⁶¹Muvinya Makau, OI at Katheka on 11/11/2020.

⁶²Herskovits, M. "The Cattle Complex in East Africa". *American Anthropologist*, New Series, Vol. 28, No. 3. (1926), 498.

and the performer (*mwaiki*). If a man was too poor and could not afford this fee, he would postpone the circumcision of his children till he could raise the fee.⁶³

On the material day, the elders would have good supplies of meat around a fire place. The animals to be slaughtered for these elders would be provided by the parents to the *mwaikwa* as a payment for the privilege of going through the ceremony. The fathers to the *mwaikwa* could also use this opportunity to buy a higher rank in the council of elders (*Nzama*) by providing more animals for slaughtering as compared to the others. This gesture would appease the elders who would then consider them for higher ranks. The animals provided during these ceremonies were eaten in common. The animals were cut up according to certain principles, since members of the lower status were never allowed to eat of all parts of an animal. None of the meat set apart for consumption on this occasion would be taken home to the villages. Only the elders could crack the bones to get at the marrow and all bones would be collected and burnt at their fire. Anyone who broke this rule would be fined several goats.⁶⁴ After the initiation, the *aikwa* would be given gifts in terms of livestock by the parents, relatives, neighbours and also the friends to the relatives.

After circumcision, the boys entered the age-grade called *Nthele*. Once in this age grade, they were considered mature and ready to marry. Their main duty was to defend the society and also bring wealth to the society through the culturally sanctioned cattle raids against their neighbours. In fact, according to Lindblom⁶⁵, the institution of circumcision was used to inculcate in the minds of male initiates the sanctity of raiding.

⁶³ Hobley, C. *Ethnology of A-Kamba*, 68.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*.

The *Nthele* would look after goats and sheep or calves, he would learn how to pen them, learn where the best pasture was to be found and where to take the cattle for watering. His father would show him the different salty clays which should be given to cattle and also which plants were edible, poisonous or used as medicine to the cattle. The boy would also learn how to distinguish domestic animals by their colours. It was also a must for him to learn all the colours and shades, the shape of their horns, and sometimes their origin (for example, paid in bride price, given as a gift or kept for someone else).⁶⁶ This exemplifies the central role played by livestock in the initiation ceremony among the Akamba.

Another example rite of passage where livestock intervened was the marriage institution. Livestock occupied an integral part in marriage institution as it was used for the payment of bride-price. Traditionally, the bride-price, known among the Akamba as *Ngasya*, was paid in terms of cows and goats. There was no standard amount set for bride-price but it was a common practise that “the girl’s bride-price should be the same as that of her mother’s”. However, it was the number of goats that varied not cows, unless one counted cows in place of goats.⁶⁷

The father (or the lineage) was responsible for acquiring the first wife for each son. A young man depended on the good will of his father for the payment of the bride price, hence the father determined whether his son would get a second wife or not. Sometimes the livestock for the sons' dowry was acquired through dowry payments for their sisters. In some instances, the capacity of a man to marry more than one wife would be determined by his wealth rather than his father’s. Those who could afford to pay

⁶⁶ Simiyu, V.G. “Traditional Methods of Education in East Africa”. *Présence Africaine Editions. Nouvelle série*, No. 87. (1973), 186.

⁶⁷ Muthiani, J. *Akamba from Within*.

Ngasya (bride-price) could marry another wife. And in most cases, only old established men could afford the luxury of more than one wife. In this case, if a man was wealthy enough (which meant having a huge flock of livestock), and could afford to pay the bride-price, he took a second wife with the consent of his parents and of course, that of his first wife. Therefore, men ensured both the material and biological reproduction of their lineages through what Sheriff⁶⁸ calls "their control over the means of production, cattle and procreating women". Thus, individuals used livestock to expand their lineages and to create allies or clients.

Indeed, Munro⁶⁹ thinks that the increase in Akamba raiding activities in the late nineteenth century was partly due to a desire on the part of the Akamba to acquire cattle and women. In support of this, Watt⁷⁰, who was living in Machakos in the early 1890s, records that the Akamba raided the great Maasai clan, and carried off, not only their cattle, but also in many instances, their women and maidens.

The Akamba also used livestock to offer sacrifices to their ancestors and also to *Mulungu* (God). Mbiti⁷¹ contends that the Akamba made sacrifices to God on occasions such as at the rites of passage, planting time, before crops ripen, during their first harvest, when holding a purification ceremony after an epidemic and most of all, when the rains failed or delayed. Therefore, there was to be a good reason to occasion the offering of sacrifices among the traditional Akamba.

⁶⁸ Sheriff, A. "Social Formations in Pre-colonial Kenya", in B.A. Ogot (Ed). *Kenya in the 19th Century*. Nairobi: Bookwise. (1985).

⁶⁹ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 26-27.

⁷⁰ Watts, M. "On the Poverty of Theory". Natural Hazard Research Context" in K. Hewitt (Ed), *Interpretations of Calamity from the Viewpoint of Human Ecology*. (Boston, 1893), 223.

⁷¹ Mbiti, J.S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. Nairobi: Heinemann. (1969).

The Akamba had different sacrificial animals such as; oxen, sheep, goats and chicken. This depended on what the *Mundu Mue* (medicine man) advised. Whatever the animal to be sacrificed, it had to be of one colour, never spotted or striped and one without any deformity (*kiema*). The offerings comprised certain foodstuffs such as '*ngima*' (stiff porridge). This was made from finger millet and smeared with a lot of ghee, and drinks such as the traditional beer (liquor) and water.⁷²

When the need for a sacrifice was identified, the elders consulted the medicine men or women (diviners), and if he or she agreed, the day for the sacrifice would be set. When the sacrifice was made for a certain family, the sacrificial animal would be offered by that particular family. However, when the sacrifice was meant for several homesteads (*utui*) the sacrificial animal would be provided by each *Mutumia wa Ithembo* (the elder of the shrine).⁷³

On the day of the sacrifice, the *Atumia ma Ithembo* along with their wives took the sacrificial animal to the place of sacrifice where they slaughtered the animal in the presence of all the members of the homestead. Then the blood would be mixed with beer and poured out at the foot of the tree or at the sacrificial grove, while uttering some prayers for rain, the end of famine or for healing from an epidemic, or whatever the community need was. In Akamba sacrifice, women had an active role to play. The elder wives of the *Atumia ma Ithembo* offered the women's sacrifice of food that they brought and placed at the spot where the mixture of blood and beer had been poured out. After the sacrifice, the elders (both men and women) ate the meat first and then shared it out to all those present.⁷⁴ It is thus clear from the foregoing description that the social fabric

⁷² Mutunga, R. "The Akamba Traditional Religion and Christianity: A Philosophical Study". M.A. Thesis University of Nairobi. (1994), 122-124.

⁷³ Mbiti, J.S. *African Religions and Philosophy*. (Nairobi, 1987), 59.

⁷⁴ Mutunga, R. "The Akamba Traditional Religion and Christianity".

and organization of the Akamba was closely mediated by the livestock economy of the community during the pre-colonial period.

During all these functions and feasts, the age classes, gender and seniority in the council of elders were considered in the distribution of meat. When an animal was slaughtered, the meat was divided into different parts and there were specific parts to be given to different groups of the members of the family according to gender, age and other positions held in the family. It was not permissible for anyone to touch meat that fell to the share of those at higher grades, even if the elders were not taking part in the feast. The portions of elders of the highest grade were taken to their villages by the *anake*, who slaughtered animals and prepared the meat. Women and the youth ate certain parts of an animal. Women ate legs, the stomach, and the meat on sides of the belly while the youth ate neck, lungs, liver, kidney and the heart.⁷⁵ All the other parts were reserved for the *atumia*. This only means that the Akamba were conversant with the anatomy of the animals.

2.4.2 Political Organization

The smallest unit of the Akamba political organization was the *Musyi* (homestead or family). It was also the smallest unit of both political and territorial organization. From the family, the next political unit was the clan which was under the *Nzama* (Council of elders). The affairs of the clan were therefore in the hands of the *Nzama*.

Appointment to the *nzama* was determined by the age-class of an individual which in turn was dictated by the life-cycle of an individual. A Mkamba life-cycle was divided into a number of age classes corresponding to age and cultural development. He began life as *Kana* (child), then went on to become a *Kavisi* (little boy) then a *Kivisi* (boy), a

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Mwanake (warrior), *Nthele* (young married man) and finally *Mutumia* (elder). The first stage of manhood was that of the *mwanake*, which may best be interpreted as "warrior." It was often taken to mean an unmarried man, but this is not so, for so long as a man took part in the ordinary dances he was designated a *mwanake*, and he would dance until he reached the stage when he was called *nthele*. Both the *mwanake* and the *nthele* used to take part in the raids and fights to protect the clan.⁷⁶ The next degrees were those of the elders, the junior degree of which was *Mutumia wa Kisuka* (men's club). The duties of these elders were principally the digging of graves and disposing of corpses. After this came the *Mutumia wa Nzama* (elder of the council), and, finally, *Mutumia wa Ithembo* (the elder of the shrine), whose main duty was to make sacrifices to God on different occasions.⁷⁷

Not all *Atumia* were members of the Council of Elders. In fact, the *Atumia* grade did not in itself carry with it the right to a seat in the council of elders. Any *Mutumia* who wished to be admitted in the council of elders had to make a special payment to the sitting council members and had to be a member of the immediate lower grade. This was usually a bull. In fact, Lambert⁷⁸ notes that the attainment of a higher grade among the *Atumia* was chiefly a question of economic means. In other words, having a huge flock of livestock and wives. Apart from wealth, other considerations were made. For instance, age was an important factor. It was not common for middle-aged *Mutumia* to be part of the council of elders. This was a preserve for the senior members of the clan. The experience and knowledge of clan traditions were also considered. It was the sitting council members who had the right to appoint and determine the suitability of the new

⁷⁶ Musyoka Nzila OI at Mitaboni on 03/11/2020.

⁷⁷ Dundas, C. "The Organization and Laws of Some Bantu Tribes in East Africa". *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 45. (1915).

⁷⁸ Lambert, H. E. "Land Tenure among the Akamba", 139-42.

recruits.⁷⁹ Once a man fulfilled all the other criteria, he was fit to be an elder. The *Nzama* elders then declared such a person an elder upon payment of the required fee to the members of the *Nzama*.

However, as Lindblom⁸⁰ notes, even in the same *Nzama*, seniority of an elder was not automatically acquired but was determined by the number of animal payments made. The most junior member normally being one who had just paid his entrance fee, and was usually indicated by the portion of the slaughtered beast to which a member was entitled to at the feast. This grade was easily reached by the presentation of a goat to the members of the *nzama* (council). The person presenting the goat assumed the right to eat a goat's head, and was called *Mutumia wa Mutwe* (elder of the head). The next grade was gained by giving a bull, which entitled one to the meat of the animal's lower leg. Another bull gave him the right to the upper part of the leg. When he was in a position to present another one, he advanced further. A fourth bull entitled one to eat from the hump, which was considered a great delicacy. A fifth and last bull was paid before one may eat of the tongue and head of cattle. An elder of the fifth grade had gained the right to eat all kinds of meat. To pass through different grades among the Akamba was known as *kukula* (climb).⁸¹ When a man had made sufficient payments to entitle him to be in the highest seat, then he would stop paying. In practice a man who had attained the highest level in the council refused to make a further payment and stayed in that position till his son removed him.⁸²

Nzama played several functions. Among the key functions of the *Nzama* was to decide on the raiding expeditions. The council of elders had to give permission before any

⁷⁹ Manzi, J. "A Biography of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina Wa Ndoo".

⁸⁰ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*, 145.

⁸¹ Mulei Ndungi OI at Muthesya on 08/11/2020.

⁸² Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*, 145.

raiding or war expedition could be carried out. After they gave their consent, experienced warriors, who were normally of the age-set of *Anake* and *Nthele*, were selected as leaders of the raiding mission. The selected members then acquired the title *Athiani*, (*singular, Muthiani*). These were the so called *Athiani*, but their authority was only temporary, and in times of peace, they occupied no public position in the clan. The *Nzama* institution also ensured that the Akamba pastoral resources were utilized by all herders in the most appropriate way. It ensured the maintenance of a just land tenure system, rangeland management strategies and regulation of pasture and watering points.

Apart from the political hierarchy, the Akamba also had the territorial hierarchy. *Musyi* was the smallest territorial unit. Several *Misyi* made up wider territorial units, a village (*utui pl Motui*). Several *Motui* were combined into a unit called *Kivalo*. Generally, claims to land were agreed upon and regulated by the *utui* elders. They could limit the amount of grazing land an individual appropriated or refuse to admit certain individuals into their *utui*.⁸³ Consequently, a prospective settler offered beer and a goat (*mbui ya mathanzu*) to older settlers. These items were used in a ceremony in which the new settler took an oath. (*The ndundu oath*), thereby committing himself and his household to co-operation in *utui* affairs.

Such co-operation was important for defending frontier settlements from raids and for reciprocal obligations, especially in labour. The Akamba valued such cooperation to the extent that if one refused to cooperate with the *utui* members, he would be abandoned in the time of need. The saying *mundu ni andu* (a person is people) strongly implies that no one could live without the assistance of other people. Indeed, the oral Akamba traditions include a cautionary story of the dangers of self-isolation of any clan

⁸³ Penwill, D.J. Kamba Customary Law.

member. The story is about a young man; a local resident named Mwilile who managed in rapid succession to acquire substantial herds and married several wives. He felt that he was now rich enough and did not require the other members of the society. He moved away from the hillside settlements and isolated himself somewhat from the community. He looked down upon his neighbours. The contempt that he apparently felt for his poorer neighbors is conveyed in the memory that he permitted his livestock to trample their fields. But in his preoccupation with acquiring property, Mwilile neglected to provide adequate protection for his livestock which could only be achieved through cooperation with fellow *utui* members. When raiders struck and he sent out the alarm, his neighbors are said to have responded, "*You are a strong man, go and take your cattle back.*"⁸⁴ Hence, all his livestock was raided and he became poor and miserable.

The cooperation among the *utui* members was also seen during the establishment of syengo (cattle posts). Establishing syengo was a collective affair where the village elders had to agree. Where a *mundu muthwii* (rich man) had enough cattle to send to an individual *kyengo*, there was still the same ritual for collective sending of *kyengo*. Thus, as far as the Akamba were concerned, nobody could send livestock to a *kyengo* alone. All the village elders were involved.⁸⁵

Apart from the political and territorial leaders, there was also a special class of persons called the *Athiani* (warrior leaders). They did not fall anywhere in the leadership hierarchy but they were influential enough to command some considerable following. These were people with special skills in leading raiding and hunting expeditions. Their primary task was to protect the community in various capacities. They went around

⁸⁴Tabitha Kilonzo OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

⁸⁵ Mutiso, C.G.M. "Kitui Livestock", 3.

looking for water sites at which the community could settle. They led the community in clearing of new areas for settlement and grazing and they also led in the raiding for livestock and fighting off the enemies. In the latter part of the 19th century, the military function of the *Athiani* came to dominate. They were most exclusively used to ward off the Maasai and spy on Maasai livestock and Maasai raiders.⁸⁶ It has been argued that people who had the skills of a *Muthiani* were in a position to attract followers and that it was through such followers that large commercial caravans would be organised.⁸⁷

Such men acquired a lot of wealth and even gained power over the *Nzama*. These tendencies became particularly pronounced toward the end of the 19th century when a series of new leaders emerged in frontier communities. These leaders drew clients and dependants of various ethnic and lineage backgrounds into lineage based settlements in which individual loyalty and obligation formed an increasingly fundamental element of social structure. Mwatu wa Ngoma was undoubtedly the most well-known of these leaders. As a youth, he lived in the densely populated Ulu Hills, but like a number of his ambitious contemporaries, Mwatu moved east to Mwala, in the open country between Ulu and Kitui. Mwala offered opportunity with its ample grazing land and access to the major trade route that crossed the region through Kitui. He was successful enough to break through the structural impediments to the exercise of personal power, carving out for himself a small personal fief. By the mid-1880s, Mwatu had earned a reputation as a distinguished warrior and local leader. With the cattle he acquired in raiding and trade, he was able to make advantageous marriage alliances and clientship arrangements.

⁸⁶ Ambler, C. "Population Movement, Social Formation and Exchange", 220.

⁸⁷ Tabitha Kilonzo OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

At the same time, Mwatu used his growing contacts with coastal traders and later with the British at Machakos, to expand his influence further and build up his military strength. With a few firearms and a growing number of warriors including some Maasai recruits, Mwatu increased his raiding. As he acquired still more cattle, he was able to enlarge his immediate following and extend his influence over a wider circle of lineage villages. By the mid-1890s, Mwatu wa Ngoma had become in effect the head of a small predatory state. Warriors under his command raided very widely for livestock and captives, expanding Mwatu's wealth and sphere of support, while at the same time disrupting movement along the important routes linking Mount Kenya with Ulu, Kitui, and Mwingi.⁸⁸

2.5 The Pre-Colonial Akamba Livestock Economy

The Akamba, like other pre-colonial African societies depended on livestock production for their livelihood. The animals kept by the Akamba included cattle, goats and sheep. Livestock keeping was more valued in terms of social qualities as well as their economic values. Thus those people who had animal wealth had a high prestige, with cattle the most prestigious. Therefore, people who kept large herds of cattle were held in great respect. In other words animal wealth defined the social status of a person. Hence, livestock were 'vital to the ladder of social status which most men essayed to climb at some time in their lives.'⁸⁹

The larger the herd one possessed, the more he was able to cope with emergencies without seriously depleting the size of his herd. Even more important was the fact that livestock were not only source of consumption goods but also an agency for protection,

⁸⁸ Tabitha Kilonzo OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

⁸⁹ Ambler, C. *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism*, 26.

sustenance and perpetuation of labour. Ambler⁹⁰ argues that wealth and influence were inextricably intertwined in the societies of central Kenya (implying Kamba, kikuyu and Maasai). Since land was freely available, prosperity and security depended essentially on access to and control over labor. A fact that was illustrated in the popular aphorism *andu ni indo*, “people are livestock” in this case, livestock was the only form of wealth. So it can also be translated to mean that ‘people are wealth.’

As Ndege⁹¹ argues, cattle accumulation was not an end in itself but practised in order to transform these cattle into human beings, thereby increasing the size of the social group and the amount of labour power at the command of an individual. Thus, individuals used livestock to expand their lineages and to create friends or clients. The importance of labor resources among the Akamba of Machakos in the accumulation of wealth comes across in a song that women sang while grinding flour:

| | |
|---|---|
| <i>Kwa kitili ve eitu na anake.</i> | At Kitili's there are servants, |
| <i>Na kwou ve mbui, malondu na ng'ombe.</i> | Males and females, |
| <i>Na we ndukambite ngya.</i> | And so there are goats, sheep and cattle |
| <i>Nikwithiwa ndi andu makwa.</i> | You! Do not call me a poor person! |
| | Simply because I have no relatives. ⁹² |

Again, in this work song, the wealth of Kitili's homestead is illustrated by a mention of servants and livestock. Indeed, “*andu ni indo*” could be translated to mean not only “people are wealth” but it also means “people are livestock.” The scale of livestock accumulation was the surest indicator of wealth in nineteenth-century central Kenya.⁹³ Thus, men built up their bases of wealth first by expanding their families, generally by marrying additional wives and sometimes through the adoption of dependents. They gained control over more labor through hire, through the development of patron-client

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹Ndege, G. “The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division”, 37.

⁹²Tabitha Kilonzo OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020

⁹³ Stanner, E. "The Kitui Akamba. A study of British Colonial Administration in East Africa".

relationships, and through the manipulation of social obligations.⁹⁴ For example, the poor settled around a wealthy stock-owner so that they could obtain milk from his compound, in return they helped him with like livestock work, farm-work and in other activities.⁹⁵ Wealth was self-perpetuating. Access to labor gave a man the resources to enhance his stature and develop a following. Because his household could produce more food and livestock, a relatively rich man was in the position to reward workers and offer them the hospitality of beer parties and feasts that was an essential part of building a position of leadership. Ownership of large numbers of livestock allowed wealthy individuals to obtain yet more wives, clients, and other dependents.

In addition, livestock was also the most important form of saving in the Akamba economy. At the subsistence level, cattle provided the essential foods which included meat, milk, ghee, blood and butter. The herd also acted as a bank from which resources could be drawn to satisfy certain urgent needs like purchasing grain in times of food scarcity.⁹⁶ In case of severe famine, cattle would be driven to Kikuyu land to be exchanged with grain. For instance Jackson⁹⁷ notes that the precolonial trade categorised under the heading *kuthuua*⁹⁸ involved the selling of livestock and livestock products by the Akamba to the Agikuyu in order to obtain grains and tubers such as beans, maize, yams and arrowroots. However, the Akamba viewed their cattle as an attractive piece of investment and they would only exchange them for grain as their last resort when they didn't have any other commodity to give out in exchange for grain.⁹⁹ In fact, those who exchanged grain for cattle were always at an advantage. As

⁹⁴ Krapf, J.L. *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, 355.

⁹⁵ Musembi Joseph OI at Ngelani on 07/11/2020.

⁹⁶ Ambler, C. H. *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism*.

⁹⁷ Jackson, K.A. "An Ethnohistorical Study of the Oral Traditions of the Akamba of Kenya".

⁹⁸ *Kuthuua* literally means 'buying food'

⁹⁹ Mutie, P. "In Spite of Difference: Making sense of the Coexistence between the Akamba and the Maasai peoples of Kenya". Ph.D. Dissertation, Bielefeld University. (2003), 154.

Kitching¹⁰⁰ generally notes about pre-colonial Kenyan communities, “the rates of exchange between the livestock, food crops and artisan products were generally in favour of the livestock owner.” This was because the volume of millet which was exchanged for one cow or goat was normally a product of more labour than that expended on rearing livestock. This may explain why the Akamba were most reluctant to exchange their cattle for grain and why they were so eager to recover them when the harvest was good.

Cattle also served as an insurance against crop failure because seasons of low rainfall did not always result in scarcity of pasture. Moreover, in times of drought, cattle recovered fast after the onset of rains and provided milk and blood long before any crops could provide food.¹⁰¹ Besides cattle, the Akamba also kept large flocks of goats, sheep, and chicken. These were to a larger extent the main source of currency besides serving subsistence, ritual and even 'medicinal' purposes. Apart from meat, goats gave milk, which was used only to supplement the commonly used cow milk. In addition, the fat-tailed African type of sheep was also used to supplement meat, and its fat was used for cooking, seasoning and also for ceremonial rituals.¹⁰² At the same time, animal skins were used as baby cribs, knife-sheaths, quivers, men's hats and bags as well as sandals. They were also used as clothes and bedding after intensive beating and conditioning.¹⁰³ Thus we can conclude that the pre-colonial Akamba livestock economy was reliable and self sufficient. This was majorly made possible by their well organized land tenure which favoured livestock as discussed below.

¹⁰⁰ Kitching, G. *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, 203.

¹⁰¹ Matheka, R. “The Political Economy of Famine”.

¹⁰² Manzi, J. “A Biography of Senior Chief Solomon Kasina Wa Ndo”.

¹⁰³ Musyoka Ndolo OI at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020.

2.6 The Akamba Land Tenure System

Land is an important natural resource which most communities depend on for their livelihood. The Akamba elders controlled land rights within their jurisdiction. All members of the Akamba community had jural rights of access and exploitation of their land and water resources. These were commonly owned property. This form of ownership evolved in an environment of constant fluctuation of pasture and variable rangeland. Land and water were a means of livelihood for all members of the community.¹⁰⁴

In the pre-colonial period, land was abundant. The land available was utilized for crop production, grazing, hunting and other purposes. However, livestock economy largely influenced the evolution of their land tenure system. It also influenced their rangeland management approaches and the choices or preferences they made of animals. Appropriate use of these options enhanced the exploitation of their multi-faceted ecology. Akamba customary land tenure illustrates different forms of 'ownership, control and use which exist for different types of land.¹⁰⁵ Broadly, Akamba people speak of five types of land: *Weu* is the commonage or the communal grazing grounds, *Kisesi* is a demarcated (generally enclosed) patch of grazing land round a *kyengo* (cattle post), *Kitheka* is bush-land, *Muunda* is a cultivated patch of land, a tilled field or a garden. Finally *Ng'undu* means permanent cultivable holding.¹⁰⁶

During the pre-colonial period, an individual went into the commonage (*weu*) and marked out a piece of land for cultivation (*ng'undu*). The land he marked then became

¹⁰⁴ Jackson, K.A. "An Ethnohistorical Study of the Oral Traditions of the Akamba of Kenya".

¹⁰⁵ Penwill, D.J. *Kamba Customary Law: Notes Taken in the Machakos District of Kenya Colony*. London: Macmillan. (1951).

¹⁰⁶ Musembi, C. "De Soto and Land Relations in Rural Africa: Breathing Life into Dead Theories about Property Rights". *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 28, No. 8. (2007), 1463.

a permanently private property which he could pass over to his sons. The original meaning of the word is "open grass country or plains" as distinct from bush or forest. Strictly the term "commonage" could only be applied to grass country in which the Akamba were fully established and which they could hold against an enemy. Anyone could go to the *wetu* and establish a cattle post (*kyengo*).¹⁰⁷

A *Kisesi* was a grazing area to which one family claimed exclusive rights, by establishing a cattle post (*Kyengo* pl. *Syengo*) and marking the surrounding trees. This was a pre-colonial Akamba system of land tenure which derived from the process of pioneering into an unclaimed area (*wetu*) and clearing it for settlement. A man would enclose his grazing area next to his homestead or away in a specially built cattle-post, *Kyengo*. A man could not claim a *kisesi* as an individual right unless he had the cattle to make a cattle post essential.¹⁰⁸ According to Kisovi¹⁰⁹, there was a certain amount of glamour about the word *kisesi*, as it implied the ownership of cattle.

The socio-economics of *kyengo* was that a collection of individuals would move their livestock out of an established village to a safe uncrowned region. If there were possibilities of being attacked, a group (not always necessarily a clan) would move out in an attempt to establish temporary cattle bomas. These would be mainly young men looking after cattle. When the region became safe enough to bring women, clearly the region became a new settlement. The practice for the establishment of a *kyengo* as a new homestead was to marry another wife and leave the base (home) of origin to the

¹⁰⁷ Lambert, H. E. "Land Tenure among the Kamba", 146.

¹⁰⁸ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui: The Ecosystem, Integration, and Change".

¹⁰⁹ Kisovi, L. "Changing Land-Use Policy and Population Problems in Kitui District".

elder wife. The new wife would then be stationed there and allotted some livestock to build up her stock.¹¹⁰

As the family grew, young men who herded together could relocate to the *kisesi* and establish a new settlement. In this case the *Kisesi* became a private inheritable land. When abandoned, *Kisesi* land reverted to *Weu* and anybody could colonise it. Private grazing rights lasted only while the area was actually used. If the cattle post was abandoned the area reverted to *weu*. However, if part of the *Kisesi* was cultivated, it became *ng'undu*. *Ng'undu* was inheritable while, interests in *kisesi* were regarded as temporary. They were not inheritable, and could be reclaimed once they were abandoned.¹¹¹

Sometimes, a man could even allow others to graze his cleared land, thus establishing a temporary grazing ground, however the original land owner still remained the owner of the land and the tenant had to leave when the owner required the land back. Sales were very rare because land was plentiful, but when they took place, the payment was usually a goat or two¹¹². As such, in the pre-colonial period, land was owned partially communally and partially individually.

Despite the above form of rights to land and water and the regime of ownership, there were a few exceptional cases where individual privileges over certain aspects of the rangeland were entertained. When an individual person dug a water-hole on a surface of a seasonal stream, he acquired privileges over the use of this well. By virtue of this privilege, the well maker administered the use of water from this well. He had the first

¹¹⁰Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui Livestock", 2.

¹¹¹ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*.

¹¹² Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

opportunity to exploit the water for his livestock and that of close members of his clan. They were then followed by other members of the community.

The granting of permission to other herders depended on the capacity of water to serve both human and livestock populations of the well maker and his clan. In some circumstances, water could be denied to one requesting the use of the well. Such cases could happen when infected cattle sought to use water which was fed on uninfected ones.¹¹³ This study therefore maintains that land tenure was central to the Akamba livestock production on the eve of colonial rule. Another factor that determined success livestock sector was the ways that one could use to acquire or replenish livestock. This is made clear in the next section.

2.7 Methods of Acquiring Livestock

The main method of acquiring cattle was through inheritance. Sons would inherit their father's cows, sheep and goats. These are animals which the man acquired during his lifetime. Upon the division of his property following his death, such livestock and their off springs were to be distributed to the man's wives, who in turn shared them among their sons.

Another major source of livestock acquisition was through barter trade. The Akamba traded with their neighbours especially the Maasai. The Akamba were the key providers of honey, bows and arrows and even beer to the Maasai where they received livestock and its related products like milk, meat and hides in return. When Akamba farmers had a bumper harvest, then the Maasai could obtain their cereals simply through barter trade.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Mutie, P. "In spite of Difference", 154.

The Akamba could also acquire cattle through bride wealth. Livestock was used for traditional payment of bride-price. Traditionally, the bride-price, known among the Akamba as *ngasya*, was paid in terms of so many cows, goats and sometimes (but not common) sheep. The more daughters one had the more livestock he could acquire. Thus daughters were viewed as source of wealth by their parents.

Fines and compensations were also other way's through which some individuals in the society acquired cattle. When one committed a serious offence such as murder, he was supposed to compensate the bereaved family in form of cattle, or sheep and goats. The death of a man was usually compensated for by the payment of 14 head of cattle (13 cows and 1 bull) while the death of a woman was compensated by eight cows (seven cows and one bull)¹¹⁵. Thus, the bereaved family could acquire livestock through this method.

Another method of acquiring livestock was through loaning. This is where credit facilities (*kuvithya indo*) were extended to those who did not own or had lost cattle as a result of disease or raids. A cattle owner (loaner) who had a large herd could give a loanee some cattle. The loanee may be a relative or a friend whom the loaner had known for a considerable period, often linked by marriage, living or working for the loaner. Such loaned cattle may be milked, one may use or sell the ghee on condition that they took good care of the animals. If not well fed or watered, the animal could be reclaimed. They loaned animals would be monitored by the owner who maintained knowledge of new calves and under no circumstances could the trustee sell these animals. The recipient would keep the animal so given, look after them well and consume the milk, ghee and blood. He would keep the animals until he had built his stock or, in cases of

¹¹⁵ Dundas, C. "The Organization and Laws of Some Bantu Tribes in East Africa".

epizootics, after replenishment of his herd he would return the cattle he was given to the owner retaining their offspring. The system was a kind of insurance against ones (the loaner) entire herd being lost to enemies especially through raids by the Maasai and other pastoralist communities. In addition, cattle loans enabled the rich to insure their herds against disease epidemics by sending parts of the herd to diverse places. In addition, entrusting a friend with ones most cherished possession served symbolically to dramatize and reinforce the ties of friendship among men.

Closely related to loaning were gifts. Gifts were used as a way of assisting others to acquire or replenish stock. An individual could get cattle from friends who were large cattle owners. However, as opposed to loaning, he was not obliged to return the acquired cattle even after replenishing his stock. Both loaning and gifts as ways of acquiring cattle operated within a scheme of stock associateship. Stock associateship went even beyond the kinship system and one could have several stock associates with whom one maintained and recognized reciprocal rights of stock relations, either for assistance or to risk diversion.

Another method used to acquire livestock among the pre-colonial Akamba was cattle raiding. The Akamba raided for livestock and women, as well as for territorial expansion of 'Akamba land'. Raiding seems to have been part of pre-colonial Akamba system of production. The raiding took place at two levels. The first level was the intra community raiding which involved raiding amongst the Akamba themselves. For example, the Akamba of eastern Machakos raided those of Kitui while Kilungu Akamba raided other Machakos Akamba.¹¹⁶ Thus, raiding was not only directed towards other ethnic groups such as the Maasai and the Kikuyu, but it was also an intra-

¹¹⁶Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 17.

Akamba affair. When the Akamba captured someone during the raids, they would try to establish if the person was a Mkamba or from another community. If the latter was the case, the war prisoner would be killed or taken as a slave. If on the other hand the captive was a Mkamba, he would be asked to pay some fine in form of livestock and then released.

The second level was the inter-community raiding. It involved the Akamba and their neighbouring Maasai and Kikuyu particularly during epidemics. The three communities, the Kikuyu, the Akamba and the Maasai restored their ravaged herds by raiding one another.¹¹⁷ However, inter-ethnic raids remained small-scale surprise attacks until the 1880s and 1890s when the Akamba intensified their raids on the Maasai and the Kikuyu. This was encouraged by factors such as a decline in Maasai military power due to human and animal epidemics, and succession disputes. Another factor was the involvement of the Akamba in the long distance trade which occasioned a rise in the demand for livestock. Ndolo¹¹⁸ notes that between the 1880s and the 1890s, the “Akamba-Maasai warfare had reached a new level of intensity.” This was due to the fact that both communities held cattle in high esteem.

According to Munro,¹¹⁹ the Maasai moran felt justified in raiding Kamba cattle for they believed that god had given all the cattle in the world to the Maasai who could legitimately take them away from the *Lungu* (dirty people) as they called the Akamba. The Maasai usually carried out their raids under the cover of darkness, and when they attacked an alarm system of drums and war-horns called the Akamba men to drive off

¹¹⁷ Mutie, P. “In spite of Difference”, 186-87.

¹¹⁸ Ndolo, D. “The Dynamics of Social Change in an African Society”.

¹¹⁹ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 17.

the invaders. In this case, no one among the Akamba had the responsibility for the overall direction of the defensive battle.

It was the tradition of the Akamba to reclaim their livestock whenever they lost them through raiding. After being raided, they organized a counter raiding expedition after a short while. A rescue party would be organized to pursue the raiders before they reached their destination. The rescue party would free those taken prisoners first, then they would seek to get back their cattle from the community that may have raided them.¹²⁰

The raiding unit was formed by the *anake* and young *Nthele* (married men) of a *Kivalo*. A member of the *Kivalo* known as the *Muthiani* (scout-cum-general) was then appointed to provide leadership. The *Muthiani* was an older *Nthele* or even *Mutumia* (elder) who used his knowledge of the seasonal movements of the game animals and the Maasai animals on the plains to initiate both hunting and raiding expeditions. When organising a raid, the *Muthiani* first carried out a reconnaissance to locate the cattle. Then he called together the *Anake* and obtained the sanctions of the elders. He then led the raiding party to the cattle. He directed the tactical moves of the attack but took no part in the fighting. Success brought him a large share of the spoils.¹²¹

Occasionally, several *Ivalo* would combine to form an *Ita* (army) for a large raid, in which case one of the *Athiani* would be recognised as the supreme commander. Raiding therefore gave scope for certain individuals to exercise leadership. This however depended on the knowledge of physical geography and more importantly a record of

¹²⁰ Hobley, C.W. *Ethnology of Akamba and Other East African Tribes*.

¹²¹ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

continued success.¹²² As a result of their successful raiding, they began engaging in long distance trade where they sold the livestock that they had obtained from raiding.

Increased demand for livestock to serve the needs of the long distance trade gave greater impetus to their operations and offered a wider scope for the attainment of wealth and prestige because a successful raiding added to the stock of Akamba cattle, some of which the Akamba sold to Swahili traders in the district or drove to the coast. The demand for cattle and slaves created by the coastal traders prompted the Akamba to intensify their raiding activities on the Maasai and the Kikuyu.¹²³ Some of the livestock and women captured in the raids helped to swell Akamba lineages while the rest were sold off to coastal traders. For instance, in 1877, Hildebrandt¹²⁴ met a party of Machakos Akamba on their way to the coast with a herd of 700 cattle taken from the Maasai.

The intensification of raiding among the Akamba coincided with a gradual shift in the long standing balance of power between the Maasai and the Akamba which favoured the extension of Akamba cattle raiding activities in particular. During the 1870s and 1880s, the Maasai military strength declined as a result of civil war and devastating epidemics such as cholera and small pox. The military initiative slowly passed to the Akamba, the Kaputei Maasai were then driven back from the foot hills and the *athiani* increased both the frequency and the intensity of their raids on the Maasai. The slackening of Maasai pressure and the loosening of Maasai control of the plains also

¹²² Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹²³ Muriuki, G. *A History of the Kikuyu, 1500-1900* (Nairobi, 1974), 95.

¹²⁴ Hildebrandt, J. "Travels in East Africa," *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society*. 22 (1877-78), 277-278.

presented the *athiani* with greater opportunities to raid the kikuyu and the Kitui Akamba.¹²⁵

Among the more successful *athiani* of the later 19th century were Syombesa of Nzau, Ndulu of Kilungu, Kitutu wa Nguu and Mailu wa Thambu of Iveti and the most famous of all, Mwatu wa Ngoma of Mwala. As mentioned earlier, in the 1880's Mwatu became a famous *Muthiani* of distinction. His fame spreading far beyond the northern ivalo which united under his leadership to raid the Maasai, the Kikuyu and the Kitui Akamba.¹²⁶

Payment for special services was also an important way of acquiring cattle among the Akamba. Specialists like medicinemen (*awe*) blacksmiths (*atwii*), and seers (*athani*) were paid in form of livestock. These included cattle, goats, sheep and even chicken in return for their professional services. Through this payments, they acquired a large number of herds and became very rich and respectable. Lindblom,¹²⁷ has noted that in Ukambani, among the richest people on the eve of colonialism were the people with special skills. For instance the *athani* (seers or prophets) amassed a lot of wealth for their special magic powers. The Akamba who acted as middlemen in the long distant trade needed their services in their raiding activities. The seers foretold the success of raids in return for a share of the booty. Being prominent people in their *ivalo*, seers also accorded hospitality to passing caravans for a fee. They also acted as trade brokers by playing the role of middlemen in the trade between the Akamba and the coastal traders. Such people also became involved in the new military and commercial situation.

¹²⁵ Ambler, C. *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism*, 100.

¹²⁶ Muvinya Makau, OI at Katheka on 11/11/2020.

¹²⁷ Lindblom, G. *The Akamba in British East Africa*.

One of the two most renowned prophets of the latter 19th century was one woman named Syokimau¹²⁸ who is remembered for her prophecies for foretelling the coming of the Europeans to Akamba country. Much more revealing is the case of a man named Masaku¹²⁹ who established a formidable reputation as a prophet, partly on his ability to foretell the rains and partly on his ability to provide information as to where elephants or Maasai cattle could be found. Some explain his special powers by the fact that even the Maasai used to visit him secretly at night. While the Maasai may have benefited from his ability as a seer, they also dropped hints about their cattle movements and their impending raids.¹³⁰ Masaku's intelligence service made him to become a rich man and became a leader.¹³¹ Masaku parlayed his rising individual wealth and influence into increasingly dominant positions in the affairs of the community. As continued accumulating livestock and built up the number of supporters, places like Iveti (where Masaku hailed from) also became centers of political influence. Indeed, when, during the 1890s, the British gradually established themselves in the region, they made effective use of this emerging power structure. They built their first permanent post in Iveti near Masaku's place which they misspelt Machakos. The study concludes that the ability of one to acquire livestock was thus an important factor in his success as livestock owner. Another factor that influenced livestock keeping was the ability to organise labour as an important means of production as it is revealed in the section below.

¹²⁸ Syokimau was a Kamba prophetess who could predict impending attacks from other communities such as the Maasai and Gikuyu giving Kamba warriors ample time to prepare for the defense. She is credited as the greatest prophetess among the Kamba people because she foretold the coming of the white men and the construction of the railway line. In her vision, she saw a long snake belching fire and smoke as it moved from one water to another. From it came people with skin like meat who spoke unintelligibly like birds and carried fire in their pockets, they made all the livestock to disappear.

¹²⁹ Masaku was a Kamba seer after whom Machakos town was named.

¹³⁰ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹³¹ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

2.8 Division of Labour in Livestock Management.

The Kamba household drew labourers from its own members and sometimes from the cattle associates in one homestead or nearby homesteads and clan's affine and brothers' in-law. There was a clear gender division in terms of herding, care, milking and handling of milk products and equipment.

It was the responsibility of young men and boys to see to the wellbeing of the animals. Small animals like goats and sheep would be left under the care of women and children and sometimes, old men. When animals were taken to graze, if the distance was short, the animals were returned to the homestead in the evening and would be put in an enclosure located within the homestead. That was mostly during the wet season when the herders did not have to take the animals far away from home since pasture was plentiful. It was only during the times of famines or when the rains failed that the boys took the animals to graze far away in the fields in search of pasture and water. It was a usual practice for the livestock from the same village to mingle and graze together. Boys and young men who were grazing together helped one another to drive wild animals such as leopards, hyenas and even lions as it was easier for the boys to scare away hyenas or lions while in a group rather than as individuals.¹³²

Secondly, this method of grazing the cattle together offered the herdsboys the opportunity to co-operate and interact freely. It was a means of bringing the boys together for socialization. The boys would play various games such as archery, jumping, racing, throwing and hide-and-peek, while the cattle grazed in the fields or

¹³²Katiko Musyoka OI at Iveti on 04/11/2020.

even rested in the shade. This way the herdsboys avoided loneliness and boredom throughout the day. Therefore, the boys enjoyed grazing the animals together.¹³³

During the dry season, some of the livestock (especially if not needed immediately for meat or milk) would be taken out onto the plains (*Syengo*) where they were grazed together in turns by mixed teams of boys and young warriors for specific periods of time, mostly during the dry season. While out on the plains, the herders lived in temporarily constructed shelters and food had to be delivered by their respective families. The warriors kept themselves busy by practicing battle drills and dancing, while the herdsboys in their turn occupied themselves with a variety of games such as hide-and-seek. The young men and boys would also take the animals to the rivers or streams to drink once a day. In addition, they would take the animals to salt licks once or twice a month.¹³⁴

On the other hand, milking was done by women twice a day in the morning and in the evening but when the calves grew older the milking will be done only in the morning. Sometimes young unmarried boys helped their mothers with the milking.¹³⁵ The handling and storage of milk was also a woman's affair. Milk that was not to be used immediately would put in a special gourd *kitete* and left for several days to become sour. After which it was taken through the process called *kuthuka*. This involved shaking the *kitete* back and forth vigorously till the milk became fine. A plant called *mutei* would be used to season the milk. The sour milk would then be sieved to separate it from butter. The sour milk would be mixed with millet to make a meal while the butter would be used as cooking fat. Women could also prepare butter and ghee through

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Musyoka Nzila OI at Mitaboni on 03/11/2020.

¹³⁵ Tabitha Kilonzo OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

a technique which called for churning the milk in a calabash until butter started collecting. The milk was then poured into a large half- calabash and then collected and ladled off by a wooden spoon. Butter that was not going to be used right away was mixed with millet flour then boiled. This was done to absorb the impurities of the remaining milk. This was the method used to extract ghee from butter.¹³⁶ Women would also take care of the milking equipment like calabash (nzele), gourd (kitete) among others. Therefore the study can convincingly argue that the organization of labour among the Akamba during the pre-colonial period was undeniably a key factor in their successful and robust livestock industry.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter set out to describe the pre-colonial setting of the Akamba and the place of livestock in their economy on the eve of colonial rule. The foregoing indicates that the geo-ecological setting and socio-economic and political structure influenced the migration and settlement patterns of the Akamba. The chapter further reveals that physical environment of Machakos District influenced the Akamba livestock production in the pre-colonial era. The chapter also established that livestock economy on the eve of colonialism was viable and reliable. It provided the people with basic food requirements. In addition, it was the main commodity of the exchange between the Akamba and their neighbours. Livestock acted as a bank and store of wealth and men with large herds were held high in the society. More importantly, livestock was a means through which the Akamba community reproduced itself. This was done through payment of bride wealth to acquire a wife who would in turn give birth to children. Furthermore, there was division of labor in the roles pertaining livestock management.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

This was done based on gender and age. Diseases and epidemics sometimes disrupted and undermined cattle production. However, the Akamba were innovative enough to deal with these problems through means like moving to new places and also moving some cattle to friends and relatives to ensure not all the livestock died in case a killer disease struck. However, the establishment of an alien rule changed this scenario and this organization was altered. The next chapter thus examines how colonial rule changed the system of livestock production among the Akamba of Machakos.

CHAPTER THREE
THE INTEGRATION OF MACHAKOS ECONOMY INTO THE COLONIAL
CAPITALIST SYSTEM AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON THE LIVESTOCK
INDUSTRY, 1895-1919

3.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the establishment of colonial rule and the subsequent integration of the Machakos economy into the colonial capitalist system between 1895- 1919. Further, the chapter details the various forms which the integration took, and the impact it had on the Akamba livestock economy.

The chapter demonstrates that the establishment of British colonialism in Kenya in 1895 was an important turning point in the history of the Akamba people. As the Akamba and the rest of Kenyan communities came under British colonial rule, their pre-existing institutions were subjected to a re-structuring ordeal as dictated by the demands of the capitalist mode of production. The period therefore witnessed initial attempts by the colonial government to articulate the Akamba economy into the mainstream colonial capitalism in order to serve alien interest.

Through a process of “primitive accumulation”, the colonial state appropriated African land, confiscated livestock, introduced taxation and institutionalised forced labour on behalf of the settlers. Public resources were also used to prop the European settler sector by providing it with transport, marketing facilities and finance. Thus, the main premise of this chapter is that the period 1895-1919 set the stage for the incorporation of the Machakos economy into the mainstream of the colonial economy and this in turn initiated the process leading to the gradual decline of the livestock industry.

3.2 The Advent of Colonialism

In the late 1890s, the Akamba experienced the first significant contact with colonial officials and administration.¹ In January 1889, Fredrick Jackson established an IBEA temporary post at Nzai. The company officials then built the first permanent post near Masaku's homestead (which they misspelled as Machakos), and from there, they relied on a series of alliances with local leaders to spread British influence across Ulu². In August the following year, Jackson established another post at Kaani in the Iveti Hills after signing a treaty with a local trade-broker, Mbole wa Mathambyo. Mbole duly made his mark on the document which was drawn up in English and Arabic. According to the oral sources, it is highly unlikely that Mbole had any knowledge of either of these languages. Oral sources further indicate that it is highly likely that he was told one thing verbally, in a language he understood, but what was written was totally different from what he had been told.³ The treaty reads in part:

Let it be known to all whom it may concern that Mboli [sic] Chief of Ivatt [sic], in Ukambani, declares that he has ceded all his sovereign rights and rights of government over all his territories, countries, peoples and subjects, in consideration of the IBEAC, granting the protection of the said company to him.⁴

Consequently, in 1889, Machakos station was established. It became the first British upcountry station and was the capital of the inland territories of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC).⁵ Its primary use was that of a general store and forwarding station. When the colonial government took over the administration of the Protectorate from the IBEAC in 1895, Machakos was the capital of that administration

¹ Rocheleau, *et.al.* D. "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade", 1040.

² Ambler, C. H. *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism: The Central Region in the Late Nineteenth Century.* (New Haven, 1988), 106.

³ Musyoka Ndolo, OI at Mbiuni on 2/4/2020.

⁴ Machakos District Political Record Book Vol. 1 up to 1911: KNA/DC/MKS/4/2:1.

⁵ <http://masakucountycouncil.com/about-thika/background-information> accessed on 31.July 2020.

and remained so up to the time the Kenya-Uganda Railway first reached Nairobi in 1899. Nairobi was then declared the capital because Machakos was bypassed by the railway which was still under construction.⁶

The British used the company to administer the East Africa Protectorate as part of the Berlin Conference's requirement of effective occupation. The aim of IBEAC was to inherit the centuries-old long distance trade that had linked the African interior to the coast. It sought to replace the Swahili, Mijikenda and Akamba ivory traders, who by the 1860s had trodden routes that ran from the coast via Kitui, through Mount Kenya, into the Tugen and Cherengany hills all the way to Mount Elgon and Turkana.⁷ The Akamba knowledge of these routes was harnessed and used in the building of the Company's fortunes. The knowledge acquired by the IBEAC officials was later to be of great importance in the survey and engineering reports for building the Kenya-Uganda railway.⁸

Following the failure of the private Imperial British East Africa Company to administer the territory, The British Crown took over the administration of the East Africa Protectorate. Consequently on 15 June 1895, a protectorate hence forth known as the East Africa Protectorate (EAP) was declared over the territory between Uganda and the coast. Subsequently, the administration was formally transferred from the company to the protectorate authorities on 30 June, 1895.⁹ The high cost of the Uganda Railroad

⁶ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 54.

⁷ Muendo, L. "Local Government and Development in Kenya: The Case of Machakos District 1925-1974". M. A Thesis, Egerton University. 2015.

⁸ Atieno-Adhiambo. E.S "Mugo's Prophecy" in B.A. Ogot and W.R. Ochieng' (eds), *Kenya: The Making of a Nation, A Hundred Years of Kenya's History, 1895-1995*, (Maseno: Insitute of Research and Post Graduate Studies. 2000, 6.

⁹ Sorrenson, M.P.K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1968), 17.

was one impetus for this change, and making the railroad pay was the major reason behind the decision to try to entice white settlers to the Kenya highlands.¹⁰

When colonizers established themselves in Ukambani with the British Imperial East Africa Company, the Akamba put up resistance, particularly between 1887 and 1892. Nonetheless, in 1892, Frederick Jackson, an employee of the Company, made a peace treaty with the Nzama of Akamba. The Nzama was a sort of Upper House of the Atumia (Council of the Elders) that made the most important decisions concerning the whole region or different utui (villages). Although this treaty was not respected immediately, it curbed the fighting force of the Akamba. The Company, in order to surround the region, established a police post at Machakos in 1892.¹¹

From 1892-1899,¹² the whole of Ukambani was brought under British control. When IBEAC was replaced by formal colonialism in 1895, the mode of interaction soon translated itself into a military frontier, and conquest battles became the norm from 1894 onwards.¹³ Several punitive military expeditions were sent before the Akamba could be brought under control. The most noteworthy of these expeditions were those to Kilungu, Mukaa, Mbooni and Kangundo between 1894 and 1896.¹⁴ In some cases, very severe punishment was inflicted and in other cases, the Akamba had to flee from these expeditions with their stock but they would still suffer losses as their huts and farms would still be burnt down. Lonsdale noted that the period 1894-1910 was

¹⁰ Bates, R. "The Agrarian Origins of Mau Mau," *Agricultural History*, vol. 61. 1987.

¹¹ Muendo, L. "Local Government and Development in Kenya".

¹² This was the tenure of John Ainsworth's (The first Sub-Commissioner of Ukamba province).

¹³ Atieno-Adhiambo 'Mugo's Prophecy', 6.

¹⁴ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Akamba, Kikuyu, and Maasai from 1900 to 1939*. (New Jersey 1976), 20.

characterised by geographical survey, fortress building and military conquest all over the future Kenya.¹⁵

Following the above developments, within that decade, the formerly fragmented but autonomous society lost its political and to a large extent, economic independence to a foreign power. This was done against a background of calamities. First, in 1898-1899, foreigners brought smallpox to the region.¹⁶ This was followed by a severe drought. The drought led to a succession of failed harvests which brought massive death and social turmoil. The heavy livestock mortality led to intense inter-community raiding. To make matters worse, just as grain reserves were at their lowest level in most of Ukamba Province, rinderpest also broke out in February 1898. The disease was introduced by oxen imported for railway construction work. Ainsworth's attempts to prevent the disease from spreading from Nzau were a total failure. All these forces coalesced into the great famine of 1897-1901 (*Nzaa ya Magunia*).¹⁷ Underscoring the ravages of the famine, Ambler points out that by early 1899, Central Kenya¹⁸ was in the grip of a famine more serious than any recalled in living memory.' Some people saw as much as fifty percent of their herds destroyed.¹⁹

Furthermore, F.D. Lugard who traversed Maasai land and Ukambani in late 1890 recorded:

Never before in the memory of man, or by voice of tradition,
have the cattle died in such vast numbers²⁰

¹⁵ Lonsdale, J. "The Conquest State, 1895-1904", in W.R. Ochieng' (ed), *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980* (Nairobi, 1989), 6.

¹⁶ Wamalwa, B. N. "Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Resources," 45-65.

¹⁷ Nzaa ya Magunia Famine was so called because the bags that were used to transport the food by the Europeans were by then largely unfamiliar in Ukambani. See Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

¹⁸ According to Ambler, Central Kenya is the place currently occupied by the Kikuyu, Akamba, Embu, Meru and Maasai.

¹⁹ Ambler, C.H. *Kenya Communities in the Age of Imperialism*, 6.

²⁰ Kuczynski, R.R. *Demographic Survey of British Colonial Empire*. Vol. 2. (London, 1949), 195.

The colonial authorities took advantage of the calamities such as smallpox, rinderpest and famine that befell the Akamba people to obtain livestock from them. The colonial government started giving relief food to the Akamba in exchange for livestock.²¹ This further led to more loss of livestock. Thus, the 1889-1899 decade marked an important transitional period in the history of livestock production in Machakos. The study maintains that, the coming of the British in 1889, and the series of disasters in the 1890s, combined to chart a new path in the development of livestock economy of the Akamba society. The pauperization of Africans by the ecological disasters therefore gave the justification to the European view that the economic foundation of the protectorate could not be entrusted to a ‘people whom they had just seen die in thousands from famine and disease.’²² The famine also convinced the colonial administrators that Africans could not be relied upon to develop the country. This lent credence to the intensive land alienation witnessed in Ukambani in the first two decades of colonial rule. This is revealed in the section below.

3.3 Land Alienation

During the period under discussion, the most important policy affecting the Akamba livestock industry was land alienation. The land policies introduced by the colonial government marked the onset of a series of Ordinances which eventually led to the alienation of large tracts of land from the indigenous people. According to Spencer,²³ the colonial state felt that its dream of turning Kenya into a flourishing European colony would never come true as long as pastoralists continued to hold possession of some lands in the country. Therefore, these lands could only be useful to the country if

²¹ Rocheleau, D. “Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade”, 1040.

²² Berman, B., & Lonsdale, J. *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa* (London, 1992), 34.

²³ Spencer, I.R.G. "Pastoralism and Colonial Policy in Kenya, 1895-1929" in R. I. Rotberg (Ed). *Imperialism, Colonialism and Hunger in East and Central Africa*. (Lexington, 1983), 113.

alienated for European agriculture and stock raising. If this happened, they could eventually become the driving motor to the colonial economy. It was for this reason that settlers in need of cattle ranches had their eyes set on Machakos.

The above principal set the stage for the alienation of large tracts of in Machakos. However, the history of land alienation in Machakos area goes back to 1891 when Charles Hobley suggested that if ever the IBEAC decided to promote European settlement, some of the Kamba country would be suitable.²⁴ In 1893, William Mackinnon, the head of IBEAC and a firm believer in the ‘civilizing’ influence of commerce and Christianity, made settlement a reality by allowing East African Scottish Industrial mission a free grant of 100 square miles of land in Kibwezi.²⁵ This set the stage for more settlers to start acquiring land in Machakos.

In order to provide land for the settlers, the British, like other European colonists elsewhere, had to introduce a new concept of the African land system, (that of vacant or unoccupied land). Article 2 of a Royal Ordinance of July 1, 1895, stipulated that;

None has the right to neither occupy land (vacant) without title nor dispossess the natives of the land they occupy. Vacant land must be considered as the property of the State.²⁶

This meant that all the areas that had been set aside by Africans for religious purposes as well as all land which had been actively used by Africans but left to lie fallow in order to restore its fertility could be granted to Europeans for ninety-nine years.²⁷ In addition to this, all the lands that the pastoral peoples had left behind during the

²⁴ Kimanthi, A. “The Akamba Land Tenure System and Its Impacts on Women’s Land Ownership in Masinga Division, 1895-2010”. M. A Thesis, Kenyatta University. (2016), 72.

²⁵ Sorrenson, M.P.K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, 16.

²⁶ Simiyu, V.G. “Land and Politics in Ukambani”, 107.

²⁷ Kimanthi, A. “The Akamba Land Tenure System”, 77.

rotational grazing were liable to expropriation for the purpose of granting them to Europeans.²⁸

In 1897, the protectorate administration promulgated the East African Land Regulations of 1897, which it used to alienate land from the Africans to allocate to white settlers. This was intended to encourage the European settlement that would pay for the railway. The Commissioner could initially give certificates of occupancy for only 21 years, a period that was later extended to 99 years. Accordingly, In 1897, Charles Kitchen, applied for 10, 000 Acres of land at Ol Donyo Sabuk. He intended to conduct coffee growing experiments for the firm and advocated for freehold title.

In May the same year, Arthur Hardinge, (the first Commissioner of the East African Protectorate), issued a proclamation reserving for railway purposes all land within a mile on either side of the line beyond the coastal strip, subject to any rights that proved to his satisfaction. Therefore, any land alienated, whether for construction of the railway or occupation by the administrators or settlers, became crown land (now government land to become public land). Sorrenson²⁹ contends that Hardinge's proclamation of May 1897 was just in time to forestall European claims to land in Machakos. By that time, there were already twelve European applications for land in the zone in the Ukamba Province.

The Foreign Office adopted the same policy or attitude in East Africa. It concluded that in territories occupied by "savage tribes", land expropriation was inevitable and

²⁸ Mwangi, G. *Land and Nationalism: The Impact of Land Expropriation and Land Grievances upon the Rise and Development of Nationalist Movement in Kenya, 1885-1939*. (Washington DC, 1981).

²⁹ Sorrenson. M.P.K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, 26.

inspired the promulgation of the 1902 East Africa (Lands) Order in Council which defined Crown Land as;

All land in the Protectorate of East Africa which for the time being is subject to the control of Her Majesty by virtue of treaty, convention or agreement, or of the Protectorate of Her Majesty and all land which has been acquired or shall hereafter be acquired by Her Majesty by virtue of the Lands Acquisition Act, 1894³⁰.

In 1902, the Crown Land Ordinance No. 21 was passed. The Crown Land Ordinance vested power on the Commissioner to sell freeholds in crown land within the protectorate to any purchaser in lots not exceeding 1,000 acres (400 hectares). As such, any empty land or any land vacated by an African could be sold or rented to Europeans, and land had to be developed or else forfeited.³¹

Further, in the same year, by virtue of the Outlying District Ordinance (1902) which provided for the Governor to declare a district closed and define its limits and thus the Native Reserves there within, James Hayes Sadler, (who had succeeded Stewart and also the first Governor of the East Africa Protectorate) created three Kamba Reserves, Kikumbuliu, Machakos and Kitui. Kikumbuliu was a region that spanned the Mombasa-Nairobi railway in the south-west of Ukambani, between Makindu and Kibwezi stations. It was a sort of wedge in the Maasailand. Further, in 1903 for instance, Sir Charles Eliot, the second commissioner of the EAP, gave free land concessions of 256 hectares (640 acres) within the railway zone in Ukambani and elsewhere and recommended particularly Mutito Andei, Makindu, Simba, and Sultan Hamud. The beneficiaries had to occupy their land within three years.³²

³⁰ Kimanthi, A. "The Akamba Land Tenure System"

³¹ Syagga, P. "Public Land, Historical Land Injustices and the new Constitution," <http://www.sidint.net/docs/WP9>. Pdf, (accessed on 14/04/2021), 6.

³² Sorrenson. M.P.K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, 64.

In 1906, Sadler, published an order (11) defining the boundaries (the Ulu-Kikumbuliu sub-district) following geographical features, rivers, streams, wells, etc.³³ After the Order, the Governor made some land concessions along the railway line to some Whites who wanted to grow Sanseveria fibre. Earlier, Hollis and Hobley had toured the areas and suggested new boundaries which amounted to a reduction of the Kikumbuliu reserve by 3/5.³⁴ This, Hollis pointed out, could bring no hardship to the Kamba as most of the land was unoccupied and those on the fibre estates were to stay because they were needed for labour.³⁵ The boundaries of the Kitui and Machakos Reserves were also defined by description of geographical features. However, the western boundary of the Machakos reserve was very vague and was not marked on the ground as described in the Official Gazette.

Therefore, this left the boundary open to future manipulation. Thus, more land was further alienated from this area.³⁶ The new boundaries created many problems among the Akamba around the Mua Hills. According to John Ainsworth, the Akamba did not occupy these hills until 1895 but all the facts point out that they were using the hills rather permanently before the arrival of the European.³⁷ There were already a few white farmers in the region who had obtained land on lease on the Athi Plains outside the Reserve. In 1908, they envied the more rainy Mua Hills where there were apparently no ticks and applied for more land on the hills. There were more than 1,500 Akamba with over 3,000 cattle. Therefore, Ainsworth protested in a bid to save them and also to

³³ Simiyu, V.G. "Land and Politics in Ukambani, 108.

³⁴ Sorrenson. M.P.K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, 211.

³⁵ CO. 533/58, Memo by Hollis, 19 Jan. 1909, in Sadler to Crewe, 6 March, 1909.

³⁶ Matheka, R. *The Political Economy of Famine*.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

save all the African Reserves not only in Ukambani but in the whole Protectorate, warning that taking away reserves from the Africans might lead them to rise up.

However, F. Jackson, the then Acting Commissioner, recommended that the Akamba on the hills be induced to move because the land was not only suitable for White settlement, but the it would be put into better use by settlers than by the Akamba.³⁸

Jackson was also supported by J.W.T. Maclellan, the Secretary for Native Affairs (relieving Hollis) who alleged that the Akamba had too much land which they could not put into use because they were too lazy. He put it that;

The Wakamba are very rich but extremely lazy and indolent. I have less sympathy with them than other tribes.³⁹

This proclamation by the two officers led to the evacuation of about 2,315 Akamba who owned 5,605 head of cattle and an unknown number of goats and sheep in 1908. The land was therefore alienated and the Akamba families, together with their animals had to be driven away. Initially, the settlers asked for free holdings of 10 ha, but later went up to 400 ha. New boundaries of the Machakos Reserve were to be defined but were not published until March 1, 1910. The new boundaries excluded Sultan Hamud Station from the Machakos Reserve, because while the settlers in the north were taking the land on the Mua Hills, the fibre planters in the south had also snatched the land within the railway zone. Machakos town also was excluded from the Reserve as public land. Again, not all the land from the Mua Hills was included in the alienated area. Finally, as before, the boundaries marked on the ground differed from those published in the Gazette.⁴⁰

³⁸ KNA/DC/MKS/I0A/8/1 Ukamba Province File: Mua Hills, 1908.

³⁹ Simiyu, V.G. "Land and Politics in Ukambani", 109.

⁴⁰ KNA/DC/MKS/10/1/2. Ukamba Province Land File.

Dundas, the D.C. of Ulu (Machakos) District who was against the new boundaries on the Mua Hills said in his report that the land taken away from the Akamba was twice as much as what had been declared, and added complacently that:

A worrying factor this year has been the project of moving the natives with their cattle across the Yatta⁴¹

When the area was again declared open for further alienation, Dundas noted:

It is hoped that the influx of other settlers, when the allotment of new farms on the Mua Hills is done, will not bring a disturbing factor⁴².

Although the alienation of land in Machakos was not as extensive as in Kikuyuland and the Rift Valley, it was progressive. Therefore, by the start of the First World War, nearly 300,000 ha of land (more than 650,000 acres) in Ukambani had already been alienated to the white settlers. The largest tract was taken between 1906 (beginning of the Akamba African Reserve) and 1908. The redefinition of the boundaries of the Akamba Reserves and the introduction of the Land Record Book in 1912-1913 also contributed to big slices of Akamba land going to foreigners.

In 1915, the 1902 ordinance was repealed and replaced by a new Crown Land Ordinance of 1915 that declared all land within the protectorate as crown land, whether or not such land was occupied by the Africans or reserved for Africans occupation. The effect was that Africans became tenants of the Crown, with no more than temporary occupation rights to land. The land reserved for use by the Africans could also at any time be expropriated and alienated to the settlers. The 1915 Lands Ordinance therefore signified the commencement of the disinheritance of Africans from their lands. The ordinance empowered the Commissioner of the Protectorate to grant land to the settlers for leases of up to 999 years. These 999 years notwithstanding, the settlers clamoured

⁴¹ Machakos Political Record Book: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/2, 1911.

⁴² Ibid.

for perpetual leases (freeholds).⁴³ The total land alienated in Ukambani by 1915 was 298,014 ha.⁴⁴ The extent of land alienation in Machakos can be discerned from the statistics represented in the following table.

Table 3.1: Land Alienated in Machakos upto 1915

| Year | Ha |
|---------------|-----------|
| 1906 | 48,228 |
| 1907 | 54,696 |
| 1908 | 86,408 |
| 1909 | 21,837 |
| 1910 | 9,622 |
| 1911 | 8,159 |
| 1912 | 29,026 |
| 1913 | 22,614 |
| 1914 | 14,152 |
| 1915 | 3,272 |
| Overall Total | 298,014 |

Source: Simiyu, V. “Land and Politics in Ukambani from the End of the 19th Century Up To 1933”. *Présence Africaine Editions*. No. 89, (1974), 119.

As it can be seen from table 3.1 above, colonial authorities consistently alienated large tracts of land from the Akamba of Machakos between 1906 and 1915. It is in 1906 when Sadler, published an order (11) defining the boundaries of the Kamba Reserves. However, as shown from the table 3.1 above, there was a sharp increase on land alienated 1908. This is the year when many Akamba were forcibly moved from the Mua Hills. Further, as table 3.1 indicates, the least amount of land was recorded in 1915. This is because as Simiyu⁴⁵ observes, most of the alienable land in Machakos had already been alienated before the First World War.

⁴³ Syagga, P. “Public Land, Historical Land Injustices”, 6.

⁴⁴ Simiyu, V.G. “Land and Politics in Ukambani”, 119.

⁴⁵ Simiyu, V.G. “Land and Politics in Ukambani”, 110.

As a result of the alienation of the best African land for the interest of the European settlers, often African herds were confined to areas from which some of their richest grazing lands had been excluded. Consequently, the Akamba herders were forced to graze in tsetse fly infected areas due to shortage of pasture in open pastureland. The concentration of livestock in specific favourable areas of the district enhanced the widespread infection of livestock diseases such as pleuro-pneumonia and rinderpest.

As is demonstrated in the previous chapter, the Akamba land-tenure system had depended on seasonal and periodic access to large tracts of grazing land during the pre-colonial era. This was done through the transhumance movement from the lowlands to the highlands during the dry spell to get pasture in the highland. As well, they could move from the highlands to the lowlands during the wet seasons to avoid livestock diseases prevalent in the highlands at such a time. Thus, their social organization was based on conditions of abundant land and freedom of movement. However, through the process of land alienation, the society's adaptation to environmental risks was greatly reduced. The Akamba ethnoscience and social organisation, which had hitherto given the society a fair margin of security against environmental hazards, became obsolete in the face of these new pressures. This was made even worse by the negative perception of colonial state towards pastoralism. Thus, the following section details early colonial state's position on livestock production and its impact on the livestock sector in Machakos.

3.4 The Perception of the Colonial State towards Pastoralism

Colonial policies in pastoral areas were anchored on the perception that the pastoralists were unproductive and a barrier to the development of the colonial economy.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁶ Mutiso, C.G.M. Kitui Livestock.

colonial administrators felt that the pastoralists had poor land use practices and therefore the only solution to this problem was to invite foreigners who would make better use of the land. Therefore, the first decade of the 20th century witnessed not only the establishment of institutions of political control in the East Africa Protectorate, but also the final settlement of races which would later be agents of economic change. Furthermore, the great famine of 1897-1901 (*Nzaa ya Magunia*) as mentioned earlier, was used as an excuse for advancing the cause of foreign settlement. Indeed, in July 1899, Ainsworth appealed to his superiors to think of introducing Indian cultivators who could improve farming in Ukamba Province. He envisaged that such cultivators would assist the Akamba to improve their methods of irrigation, something which "even the severe lesson of famine with all its attendant terrors" had failed to teach them.⁴⁷

Furthermore, Sir Charles Eliot, the commissioner of the East Africa Protectorate and the chief architect of European settlement in Kenya cast doubt as to whether any resources could accrue from a poverty stricken peasantry with a backward agriculture. He despised the African ways of production especially pastoralism. In regards to pastoralism, Elliot remained unequivocal that, pastoralism had no part to play in the colonial economy.⁴⁸ He was responsible for sounding the death knell on the pastoral peoples by predicting that their way of life would not be sustained in the face of the advances of western ideas and technologies.⁴⁹ According to Waweru,⁵⁰ the alienation of land for European settlement in Kenya, could only be justified through the vilification of the pastoralist methods of land utilization which the state felt was wasteful and dangerous to the soil. Sir Eliot decried what he described as backward

⁴⁷ KNA/PC/Coast 1/1/45 Commissioner, Ukamba, Inward, 1899.

⁴⁸ Wolff. *The Economics of Capitalism: Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930*. (New haven, 1974), 66.

⁴⁹ Anderson, D. "Cow Power: Livestock and the Pastoralist in Africa", *African Affairs*, Vol. 92, 366. (1993), 121.

⁵⁰ Waweru, P. "Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism", 50.

characteristics of pastoralists which he alleged were traceable to the infancy of the human race.⁵¹

This negative perception of pastoralism was further reinforced by theories of social Darwinism and especially the three stage theory which placed the hunter –gatherer at the bottom of the civilization ladder and the cultivator at the top. Pastoralism being in the middle was viewed half-way between the two and was consequently regarded as a barrier to civilization which needed to be bridged.⁵² As such, pastoralism as a whole was seen as a brake on the development of the country, an uncivilized body that could be curbed for the benefit of the entire country. Spencer has also argued that;

In the development of peasant production in the reserve areas of Kenya, one of the most important elements in the calculation which fixed the final size of the pastoralists reserves was the observation that, ‘for the immense extent of the land the pastoralists occupied, they contributed very little to the economic development of the country’.⁵³

According to the colonial state, not only did the pastoralists fail to produce exportable commodities in quantity, they also refused to produce labour to help the developing European economy. Thus, as well as being unproductive and administratively inconvenient, the pastoralists were also a direct threat to the successful establishment of a European livestock industry in Kenya.⁵⁴

Hence this kind of attitude became the guiding principal in the formulation of policies for pastoral areas. More white settlers were therefore encouraged to take up land in Machakos. The white settlers were then supported by the colonial state to set up ranches. However, the feeling that the Akamba livestock could spread diseases to the European livestock created fear amongst the white ranchers. This forced the colonial

⁵¹ Spencer, ‘I.R.G. Pastoralism and Colonial Policy in Kenya, 113.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Mutiso, G.C.M. “Kitui Livestock”.

state to impose quarantines on the Akamba livestock. This was meant to restrict the movement of African livestock from the reserves to the white settler ranches.⁵⁵ As a result, during the colonial period, Machakos District was mostly under livestock quarantines. This is made clear in the section below.

3.5 The Imposition of Quarantines

To promote the white ranchers and also frustrate the black pastoralists, the colonial government instituted several regulations directed against African pastoralism. The outlying District Ordinance of 1902 and later the Special District Ordinance declared Machakos a closed district.⁵⁶ Further, the Cattle Disease Ordinance of 1902 restricted the movements of livestock between districts which greatly hampered the marketing of stock. As will be seen in subsequent chapters, Machakos district was in perpetual quarantine throughout the colonial period ostensibly to protect settler cattle. For instance, in 1906, Sadler enacted an ordinance on animal disease. The following year, he imposed quarantine on cattle in Machakos and Kitui Districts except those destined for slaughter. The quarantine lasted to October 1908, only to be re-imposed in 1910 and the trend continued. This made the DC of Kitui to lament in 1916 that during the previous ten years, the cattle in the Kamba districts had been subjected to an almost permanent quarantine.⁵⁷

As these regulations were being enforced, the state moved fast to give support to European ranchers at the expense of the African pastoralists. This was done through strategies like extension services and fencing. This ensured that African livestock was

⁵⁵ Ibid

⁵⁶ Mutiso, G.C.M. “*Kitui: The Ecosystem, Integration, and Change*”.

⁵⁷ KNA/DC/KTI 1/11: Kitui Political Record Book.

kept off the European ranchers As Lonsdale observes, ‘the colonial government fenced pastoralist out of the best grazing lands while fencing capitalist ranching in.’⁵⁸

The settlers, having the same negative attitude towards the Akamba livestock, never wanted the Akamba livestock near their ranches and pressured the government to push the Akamba livestock far away from their ranches. For instance, in 1908 the settlers formed the UIu Settlers Association, and their first request to the Director of Agriculture was that all Akamba cattle be moved to Yatta as a way of keeping settler cattle free from diseases. The director agreed with them but opposition from the Akamba forced the government to abandon the idea. However, this became a reason for more strict rules on quarantine as Akamba cattle were viewed as health hazards.⁵⁹

The justification for quarantines was further provided by the creation of two pastoral zones. The veterinary department, whose main task by then was attending to the settler livestock, conducted a research which revealed that Kenya was divided roughly into two East Coast Fever (ECF) zones. One was a "clean zone" where ECF was not prevalent and the other, a "dirty zone" where the disease was prevalent. The categorization formed a "V" or wedge between the dirty zones. The "clean zone" was largely the pasture lands into which European stock farmers were moving and included such districts as Laikipia, Naivasha, Nakuru, Uasin, Gishu, and Limuru. The dirty area included most of the African reserves.⁶⁰ Machakos and the whole of Ukambani was of course categorized under the dirty area.

With this information in hand, the Veterinary Department moved swiftly to prohibit the movement of cattle between clean and dirty areas through the creation of quarantines.

⁵⁸ Berman, B. & Lonsdale, J. *Unhappy Valley*, 35.

⁵⁹ Machakos District Annual Report: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/2, 1910, 8.

⁶⁰ Tignor. R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*, 314.

The major rule was that cattle from the dirty areas were only permitted to enter clean areas if they passed through temperature bomas run by the Veterinary Department where they could be observed by veterinary officials for three days to determine if they were infected.⁶¹

In essence, since the clean and dirty areas divided roughly between European and African settlement regions, these rules placed most African reserves in quarantine vis-a-vis the European areas and also limited movement between different African districts if such movement entailed traversing European areas. Thus, regulations designed to safeguard the new animal husbandry of European ranchers limited the free movement of African cattle and placed obstacles against Africans' exploiting a rising demand in European areas for meat and trade stock. African cattle were permitted to leave quarantined zones only through veterinary stations.⁶²

Ndege⁶³ argues that it is clear that the colonial policies pertaining to veterinary control and checks during the formative period were riddled with contradiction and discrimination. The veterinary service was preoccupied with quarantining African cattle ostensibly to avoid contaminating European cattle, and an almost continuous quarantine existed from 1901 onward. These quarantines inhibited movement of Akamba livestock and made it very difficult to sell livestock, a situation which contributed to overcrowding of cattle on the reserves.⁶⁴

This state of affairs had serious negative repercussion on the Akamba livestock industry. The creation of the reserves and the imposition of quarantines to protect the

⁶¹ Waller, R. "Clean' and 'Dirty': Cattle Disease and Control Policy in Colonial Kenya, 1900-40." *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 45, No. 1, (2004), 58.

⁶² Tignor. R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*, 315.

⁶³ Ndege. G. *The Transformation of Cattle Economy*, 95.

⁶⁴ Gupta, D. "A Brief Economic History of the Akamba", 67.

settlers' herds prevented the Akamba herders from following patterns of migration designed to maximise the use of available pasture as they used to do during the pre-colonial era. Secondly, under quarantine regulations, the export of cattle from the reserves was prohibited and severely restricted. In these circumstances, numbers tended to increase rapidly until the maximum grazing capacity of the reserve was reached. Overgrazing was inevitable as a result of this overcrowding. It caused soil erosion and the reduction of the livestock carrying capacity of the land. Hence, these early colonial policies on livestock industry coupled with land alienation hampered the growth of the livestock sector among the Akamba of Machakos. Indeed, a prosperous cattle trade which attracted Chagga, Giriama, Nyamwezi, Somali and Swahili traders at the turn of the century collapsed in 1909 due to quarantine regulations⁶⁵ As Waller⁶⁶ argues, the stoppage of trade that quarantines caused was just as likely to destroy the livestock economy as the diseases they were intended to check. Not only did quarantines paralyse stock movement and ox transport, they also skewed stock prices by creating artificial shortages and inflating demands for immune stock. The constraining effects of the imposition of quarantines coupled with lack of pasture due to land alienation was manifested by the pasture crises witnessed during this period. A detailed analysis of these crises is undertaken in the next section of this chapter.

3.6 The Pasture Crises and their Implication on the Machakos Livestock Economy

The colonial government alienated large tracts of land from the Akamba, hence, curtailing movement of livestock, taking over unsettled lands, and forestalling the option of opening new lands. Thus, land became scarce and pasture inadequate.⁶⁷ The problems of overcrowding thereby created by land alienation were further exacerbated

⁶⁵ Machakos District Quarterly Report, 1909: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/3.

⁶⁶ Waller, R. 'Clean' and 'Dirty Cattle', 73.

⁶⁷ Wamalwa, B. N. "Indigenous Knowledge and Natural Resources".

by the wholesale imposition of quarantine on the reserves which occasioned an increase in livestock in the reserve. Yet the Akamba could not move their surplus cattle to a new *Syengo* because some of the land they used to rely on had already been alienated.

Consequently, new trends in the system of land use were beginning to emerge. For instance, whereas before 1900 the people of Machakos had unrestricted movement and access to grazing lands, the alienation of land by the colonial government imposed considerable limitations on the freedom of livestock movement and grazing. Besides, some of the land which had previously been devoted “to communal livestock grazing was now allocated to crop production. These measures began to pose the danger of overgrazing and artificial overstocking.

The issue of overstocking created by land alienation was made worse by the wholesale imposition of quarantine on the reserves which in turn led to further increase in livestock in the reserve. For instance, the Cattle Disease Ordinance of 1902 which restricted the movements of livestock between districts greatly hampered the marketing of stock. This affected the pastoral reserves in two ways. Firstly, by cutting down the movement of cattle, quarantine tended initially to lower the incidence of diseases, and secondly, under quarantine regulations, the export of cattle from the reserves was prohibited and severely restricted. In these circumstances, livestock numbers tended to increase rapidly until the maximum grazing capacity of the reserve was reached. Overgrazing was inevitable as a result of this overcrowding. It caused soil erosion and the reduction of the cattle carrying capacity of the land.⁶⁸ To make matters worse, the Akamba could not move their livestock from the reserve as the land they had relied on

⁶⁸ Mutiso, G.C.M. “Kitui Livestock”. *Institute of Development Studies*. Working Paper No. 305, 4.

to establish new syengo during the pre-colonial period had now been alienated for white settlement.

The biting impact of land alienation was even made worse by the declaration of Yatta plateau as a crown land in 1906. The reason for it being declared as crown land was because it had not been occupied at that time. However, by declaring the Yatta a crown land simply because it had not been occupied at that time, the government had acted in ignorance of the transhumance patterns of the Akamba. What the colonial government did not know was that the area had been an important grazing area of the Akamba during the pre-colonial period in which the practice of transhumance allowed the Akamba to manipulate and exploit their varied environments. They would move from the lowlands to the highlands during the dry spell and vice versa. Thus, at the time the Yatta was declared a Crown Land, the Akamba had migrated from the Yatta plateau which is a lowland and moved to the highland owing to the dry spell. Hence, the reason for the Yatta not being occupied at that particular time was not because it was not useful to the Akamba, but rather because the Akamba had moved to the highlands due to drought, expecting to come back during the wet season. Simiyu⁶⁹ has contended that in order to obtain the ownership of unoccupied land, the colonial government had introduced a new concept of the African land system (that of vacant or unoccupied land). It stipulated that ‘all the vacant land must be considered as the property of the State.’

The right to alienate the Yatta was therefore done in the light of this high-handed misrepresentation of the African land system. This claim is supported by Mutiso⁷⁰ who argues that, Southern Yatta, which was under permanent occupation before the famine, was abandoned when the famine struck. As a result, the land was not occupied in 1906

⁶⁹ Simiyu, V.G. “Land and Politics in Ukambani”.

⁷⁰ Mutiso, G.C.M. “Kitui: The Ecosystem, Integration, and Change”.

and was therefore declared Crown Land. Henceforth the Yatta Plateau could not be used without government consent.⁷¹ This culminated into a serious pasture shortage.

The pasture shortage was further worsened by the severe drought of 1909. The Akamba thus made numerous petitions to the D.C to allow them to cross the Athi. These petitions came from the people of Mwala, Manyalla, Kibauni and Kathioli but in spite of the severe drought, they were not granted. As the cattle began to starve, East Coast Fever also spread among them and about 10,230 head of cattle died.⁷² The highest mortality occurred in those areas which had lost access to pasture due to the imposition of reserve boundaries. These included the locations bordering the Yatta Plateau. (Kithangathini, Mwala, Manyala, Kibauni and Kanthyoli) as well as the south-western parts of the district.⁷³ Every D.C.'s annual report mentioned the grazing problem of the Akamba people. For example, in 1910-1911, Dundas wrote:

Grazing is, however, at times inadequate to the requirements of the people, and it must be admitted that occasionally they are forced by circumstances to move outside their Reserve with cattle.⁷⁴

In 1912, as livestock began to press heavily on land resources in parts of the reserve, more requests were made by Kamba herders to graze their flocks on the Yatta plateau. As a consequence of the failure of the short rains, the problem of finding sufficient grazing within the reserve became acute and arrangements were therefore made for certain people of those locations principally affected to graze their stock outside. In February 1912, six headmen received permission granting their subjects to graze their stock on the Yatta escarpment on payment of between 200-400 Rs per month for a period of three months. Some 19,000 head of cattle besides numerous sheep and goats

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Machakos District Quarterly Report. 1909: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/3, 12.

⁷³ Mutua Nzuki OI at Makutano on 01/11/2020.

⁷⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1909-16: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/2.

belonging to the location where people had collected the money were moved across. The people of Kalama and Maputi also obtained permission to graze their stock in certain of the unoccupied farms between Kiima Kiu and Bondoni outside the south west boundary of the reserve. Similarly, in Mukaa, people were allowed to extend their grazing ground to the south in the unoccupied farms between Kiima Kiu and Sultan Hamud.⁷⁵

The problem of pasture still persisted up to 1913 and some Mwala Akamba were given permission to graze in Yatta. The following year, herders from other locations were allowed to take surplus stock onto Yatta upon the payment of 1,700 rupees. During the low rainfall period of 1913-15, the elders of Kiteta, Kibauni, Manyala and Kithangathini once again approached the administration for permission to graze their cattle on the Yatta Plateau. This time, they were allowed to graze about 19,000 head of cattle in a specified portion of Yatta for a period of three months after paying Rs 1,700 to the government.⁷⁶

These payments were a source of bitterness among the Akamba, who argued that they had once grazed on Yatta freely and also that the payments they had made initially should at least have constituted a right to its continued use. But the state was reluctant to confer such a right, partly because European settlers had cast their eyes on these empty lands and partly because the government did not regard the Akamba use of the Yatta as a fundamental solution to the more pressing problem of limiting livestock within Machakos district.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Machakos District Annual Report, 1909-16: KNA/DC/MKS 1/4/6, 31-33.

In 1917, the elders of the same locations once again approached the government for permission to graze their livestock in Yatta. Initially, the Governor refused to grant the request, but due to high livestock mortality the elders of the aforesaid locations were allowed to lease pasture in Yatta for six months at a rent of Rs 6,800 per month⁷⁷. On the contrary, the people of Mukaa and Kilungu found the payment of 1 heifer per 10 head of cattle as rent for grazing outside the reserve rather excessive.⁷⁸ Instead, they resorted to poaching for pasture in the neighbouring Crown Land, a practice for which they were heavily fined by the government. For example, 10 offenders from Kilungu Location were fined 95 head of female stock after cash fines had proved ineffective.⁷⁹ The reserves policy therefore enhanced the colonial states goal of primitive accumulation while simultaneously impoverishing the Akamba through loss of livestock by starvation and diseases, and through payment of grazing fees and fines. For example, due to starvation and diseases, 180 tons of hides were exported from Machakos and Kitui in 1918 alone.⁸⁰ They were from cattle which had died due to starvation.

We can therefore conclude that land alienation, coupled with colonial policies shaped the Machakos livestock sector negatively as colonial ideology viewed pastoralism patterns of land-use like transhumant pastoralism as wasteful. Consequently, the Akamba lost effective access to about two-thirds of the land which they had formerly controlled including their most fertile lands and half of all their pasture. Along with some of their best grazing land, they lost the freedom to migrate seasonally and periodically in search of water, pasture, and cropland. Hence by the end of the First

⁷⁷ KNA/DC/KBU 1/11: Ukamba Province Annual Report, 1918-19, 43.

⁷⁸ KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10: Machakos District Annual. Report, 1918-19, 52.

⁷⁹ Matheka, R. 1992. *The Political Economy of Famine*.

⁸⁰ Ukamba Province Annual Report, 1917-18: KNA/DC/KBU 1/11, 43.

World War, a vicious cycle was manifest in the livestock industry in Machakos. Retardation in livestock trade and the reserves policy created a perpetual scarcity of pasture, even in seasons of adequate rainfall. Consequently, numbers of Akamba livestock died annually, literally from starvation. The colonial land tenure and livestock policies also forced the Akamba into sedentary settlements and continuous cultivation on relatively small areas of poor quality land. This in turn led to overstocking and therefore soil erosion. In a nutshell, the process of land alienation and further imposition of livestock quarantines sowed the seeds of future crises, including those of land degradation, overpopulation, and urban migration.

However, as much as the colonial state had acquired enough land, land alone was not enough to make the colonial economy to flourish. The colonial state required finances to set up formal administration to provide basic services such as the development of infrastructure and the maintenance of law and order. Therefore, it was against this background that direct taxation of Africans was introduced in Kenya by the colonial administration. Thus, the next section describes how taxes were levied from the Akamba of Machakos and how it affected their livestock economy.

3.7 Taxation and Colonial Economy

The importance of taxation as a key pillar in supporting the colonial economy was underscored in the following terms by Askwith as quoted by Sichertman;

Apart from maintaining law and order, our primary function was to collect tax. This meant personally receiving thousands of shillings from ragged people day after day and issuing them with receipts which they guarded in their leather pouches against the day when some official might demand evidence of payment. This was all part of the purpose of oiling the very elementary government machinery and also providing services such as the development of infrastructure⁸¹

⁸¹ Sichertman, C., *Ngugi wa Thiongo: The Making of a Rebel*. (London, 1990), 346.

Taxes in Kenya were initially introduced to meet the costs of colonial administration and to make the country self-sufficient. However, the colonial state also used taxation as one of the measures to compel Africans into wage labour.⁸² This was done through altering the indigenous modes of production forcing the Africans from being crop producers, pastoralist or mixed farmers to wage earners. Hence as a result of the articulation between the pre-colonial society and the colonial capitalist state, Kenya was transformed into a labour reservoir for the colonial government and the white settlers. The then colonial governor of Kenya Henry Belfield put it that;

We consider that taxation is the only possible method of compelling the native to leave his reserve for the purpose of seeking work. Only in this way can the cost of living be increased for the native ... and it is on this that the supply of labour and the price of labour depend.⁸³

According to Tarus,⁸⁴ the Akamba were among the first people to begin the payment of taxes when they were officially introduced to it in 1901. This was after the imposition of the Hut Tax Regulations of 1900, which gave the authority to the colonial government to collect hut tax (a tax on all huts used as a dwelling) from the Africans. Lane who was the D.C of Machakos district by then divided up the district into locations. Each location was put under a chief who was to ensure maximum collection of taxes. The chiefs were assisted by the colonial police. In return, the chiefs were given some commission from the tax they collected⁸⁵. The tax at first was Rs 1/- per hut in 1901. From 1 April 1903, it was raised to Rs 2/- per hut following a proclamation in the Official Gazette of 1 August 1902.⁸⁶ The 1901 Hut Tax Regulations were replaced by the East Africa Hut Tax Ordinance No. 19 of 1903. In 1906, the amount was raised

⁸² Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya", 95.

⁸³ Clayton, A. and Savage, D.C., *Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963* (London, 1974), 41.

⁸⁴ Tarus, I. "A History of the Direct Taxation of the African People of Kenya. 1895-1973". Ph.D. Thesis, Rhodes University. (2004), 41.

⁸⁵ Muendo, L. "Local Government and Development in Kenya", 38.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

to Rs 3/- per hut following a proclamation in the Official Gazette.⁸⁷ Thus, the early history of the District was largely the history of tax collection. This is exemplified in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Hut Tax Collection in Machakos District, 1901-1910

| Period | Description | Rupees | Cents |
|----------|-------------|---------|-------|
| 1901 -02 | Hut Tax | 8,668 | 00 |
| 1902-03 | Hut Tax | 17,028 | 50 |
| 1903-04 | Hut Tax | 31,521 | 56 |
| 1904-05 | Hut Tax | 51,696 | 00 |
| 1905-06 | Hut Tax | 54,280 | 00 |
| 1906-07 | Hut Tax | 88,429 | 00 |
| 1907-08 | Hut Tax | 86,226 | 00 |
| 1908-09 | Hut Tax | 84,951 | 90 |
| 1909-10 | Hut Tax | 108,054 | 00 |
| 1910-11 | Hut Tax | 114,108 | 00 |
| | Poll Tax | 22,455 | 00 |

Source: Machakos District Political Record Book up to 1910. KNA/DC/MKS/4/1

As shown in table 3.2 above, the tax burden in Machakos steadily increased from Rs 8,668 in 1901 to Rs 108,054 in 1911. It is also evident from the table that in the year 1906, there was an increase in the amount of tax collected. This is attributable to the increase in the tax rate from Rs 1 in 1901 to Rs 2 in 1906. However, as indicated in the above table, tax figures for the three years 1906-1909 started dropping. This can be explained by new tactics that the Akamba designed to evade payment of tax as from 1907. They began limiting the number of huts by accommodating more than one wife in the same hut. The Machakos District Annual Report for 1908-1909⁸⁸ noted that there was a substantial decline in revenues from the Hut Tax owing to the fact that people

⁸⁷ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya".

⁸⁸ Machakos District: Annual Report, 1908-09: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/1.

had broken up their huts and placed more than one wife in a hut, while a 1909 quarterly report from Machakos District⁸⁹ indicated that the inspection of Hut Tax Receipts was a difficult matter as the Africans would send their extra wives into the bush when they heard the Inspector's approach. To counter this problem, Proclamations of 24th February, 1909, and 21 May 1909 were issued whereby additional adults residing in the same hut became liable to Hut Tax. The Ordinance of 1909 was further replaced by New Hut and Poll Tax Ordinance of 1910 and by Proclamation of 15 June 1910 Official Gazette. Accordingly, Poll Tax (a tax of fixed amount that was levied on every adult male even if he did not own a hut) was applied to all the parts of the protectorate.⁹⁰

During this period, money in circulation was still very limited. Hence, most of the taxes were paid in kind, labour and livestock. Since the colonial administration was determined to obtain taxes from the people at its beginning, an arbitrary value was placed on every African product likely to be tendered in payment of tax, be it beads, cloth, brass wire, cowries, and livestock. A hut owner would either pay a sheep, a goat, cattle or so many chickens to raise hut tax.⁹¹ This is supported by McGregor Ross who notes that a cow or two sheep would be accepted in lieu of two rupees.⁹² But by 1906, payment in kind was dying out. The Africans themselves had become sufficiently familiar with the use of the rupee as a mode of payment since it was less cumbersome compared to barter trade.⁹³ Besides, the animals paid as tax caused many other problems as the colonial government sometimes lacked the market for the livestock. As explained by Meinertzhagen in his diary,

⁸⁹ Machakos District Quarterly Report, 1909: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/3.

⁹⁰ Tarus, I. "A History of the Direct Taxation of the African People in Kenya", 61.

⁹¹ Musyoka Nzila, OI at Mitaboni on 03/11/2020.

⁹² McGregor, W., *Kenya from Within: A Short Political History* (London, 1927), 145.

⁹³ Pallaver, K. "Colonial Currencies, Labour Relations, and the Payment of Wages in Early Colonial Kenya" in Karin, H. Karin & P (eds.), *Colonialism, Institutional Change, and Shifts in Global Labour Relations* (Amsterdam, 2018), 301.

The result is that sheep have been dribbling in with no arrangements to keep them. Many have been stolen and many are suffering from foot rot. There is no market for them, so they have become a burden to the administration. As such this is the first time in history when tax has become a burden to the collector of taxes. Today we have 746 sheep, all penned up and largely lame from foot rot.⁹⁴

With this kind of problem, there was a deliberate attempt by the colonial administration to demand from the people that they pay their tax in cash and the easiest way was to encourage the taxpayers to seek wage employment.

In 1905, the responsibility of the protectorate was transferred from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office. Hence, the most important duty of the colonial office as pertains to colonial Kenya at that period in time became that of financing of the protectorate's administrative activities.⁹⁵ As Killingray⁹⁶ points out, the collection of adequate revenue with which to run the colony was an essential element of effective colonial government. In this case, the District Commissioners and other colonial administrators, to whom Berman⁹⁷ refers to as 'the men on the spot', were expected to make the administration self-sustaining by ensuring maximum collection of taxes through whatever means possible. According to Berman,⁹⁸ taxation had a double effect. It prompted a rise in domestic production as much as it stimulated wage employment. However, for the Akamba who did not like wage labour, the easiest way to meet tax requirements was from the sale of stock. Indeed, the Akamba used to call the tax "a livestock tax", because they always had to part with their livestock to pay it.⁹⁹ The rash statement of Dundas was therefore, not surprising:

⁹⁴ Meinertzhagen, R., "Kenya Diary 1902-1906". (London, 1983), 42.

⁹⁵ Ghai, Y.P. and McAuslan, J.P. "Public Law and Political Change in Kenya: A Study of the Legal Framework of Government from Colonial Times to the Present. (Nairobi, 1970), 14 -16.

⁹⁶ Killigray, D. "The Maintenance of Law and Order in British East Africa". *African Affairs*. 85, (1986), 411.

⁹⁷ Berman, B., *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination*. (London, 1990).

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

The Kamba are a pastoral tribe and manual labour in the field is absolutely against their natural inclination.¹⁰⁰

Luongo¹⁰¹ has also observed that the Akamba did not willingly work for wages, and when it was time to pay the tax, they obtained their money through selling cattle, goats, and sheep. The Akamba did not look upon tax in the same way as the Kikuyu did because it did not drive them into the labor market in search of money the same way it did to the kikuyu. If they did not obtain the money needed to pay their taxes through selling pastoral products, many simply refused to pay tax rather than seek wage employment. Although the penalty for non-payment was imprisonment with hard labor, this did not make them see the need to work for the European farms.¹⁰² When the end of tax-collecting time was approaching (taxes had to be collected before the end of the financial year, on 31 March), the Akamba would fill the markets with livestock. Livestock would suddenly become very cheap on the local markets, as people sold cattle to obtain the rupees to pay tax.¹⁰³

By the end of World War One, an estimated 36% of males from the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru districts engaged in wage employment while both Kamba districts (Kitui and Machakos) only had 7%, the lowest for all the communities in the highlands.¹⁰⁴ Interestingly enough, as Muendo's work has demonstrated that, livestock enabled the Akamba of Machakos to pay even higher amounts of tax compared to the communities that engaged in wage labour.¹⁰⁵ Table 3.3 below corroborates.

¹⁰⁰ Machakos District Annual Report, 1908-09: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/1.

¹⁰¹ Luongo, K. "If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them: Government Cleansings of Witches and Mau Mau in 1950s Kenya". *History in Africa*, Vol. 33. (2006). 451-471.

¹⁰² Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*, 105.

¹⁰³ Pallaver, K. "Colonial Currencies, Labour Relations, 313.

¹⁰⁴ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*,

¹⁰⁵ Muendo, L. "Local Government and Development in Kenya", 38.

Table 3.3: Tax Figures for Various Districts during the Period, 1913-1914 and 1917-1918 In £

| District | 1913-1914 | 1917-1918 |
|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| Nairobi | 12, 633 | 11 895 |
| Kiambu | 107, 766 | 194 431 |
| Machakos | 151, 374 | 266 995 |
| Kitui | 11, 589 | 197 593 |
| Total Ukamba | 283, 362 | 671 004 |

Source: Tarus, I. (2004). A History of the Direct Taxation of the African People of Kenya. 1895-1973. Ph.D. dissertation, Rhodes University.

From table 3.3 above, it is evident that Machakos district had a good and marked record of payment for the period 1913-1918 which was way much better as compared to the neighbouring districts. Between the years 1913-14 and 1917-18, Machakos paid 53% and 40% respectively of the taxes paid in Ukamba province, thus becoming the largest contributor.

The colonial pressure on taxation, forced the Akamba to reject the official authority system and to seek inspiration and leadership in religious figures. Ogot¹⁰⁶ has given an account of the first phase of Akamba resistance to colonial taxation which emerged in the form of traditional religious practices and belief in supernatural powers. Between 1911 and 1913, the *Kilumi* dance was effectively used by the Kamba of Machakos and Kitui as a channel of expressing opposition to colonial taxation and forced labour. The leader of the movement was a woman Syotune wa Kathuke. She used the dances to start off an anti-colonial movement. She was joined by Kiamba and several others, and led an organisation known as *Ngoma ya Ngai* (God's dance) which had a very large following. Syotune formed a small army of women and mounted guards and sentries in

¹⁰⁶ Ogot, (Ed), B. A. *Zamani: A Survey of East African History* (Nairobi, 1968), 263.

villages to monitor those collaborating with the colonial administrators. In addition, they demanded the removal of all Europeans from Kenya and the return of the land that had been alienated for white settlement.

Her counterpart, Kiamba, told people not to pay the white man's taxes. He proclaimed that the order had come from the God of the Akamba people and for those who disobeyed the order, their houses would be swallowed up by the earth and a big sea would spring up where the houses had been. He urged the Akamba to chase away Europeans as an ambassador would come from Kavirondo to re-establish relations with heaven.¹⁰⁷

The impact was that the tax payments and the provision of labour suffered. This was a shock to the colonial government who saw Syotune and Kiamba's movement as a political threat. In 1913, the colonial government moved troops into Ukambani to suppress the movement. Consequently, Syotune and Kiamba were arrested and deported to Kismayu. Other leaders of the movement were similarly arrested and deported¹⁰⁸. The anti-tax movement thus came to an abrupt end and the Akamba had to pay taxes. They had to sell more their livestock in order to pay taxes.

The continual drain on livestock for tax payment affected the Akamba livestock industry adversely because as evident, money for the payment of hut tax was obtained almost entirely by the sale of livestock. Thus, the value of cattle, goats, and sheep had dropped by one-fifth, as a consequence of the forced sales of livestock to meet the tax obligation. The consequence of this was the further depletion of livestock among the Akamba. Indeed, by 1919, the livestock economy, though still the dominant economic activity among the Akamba, was already undergoing rapid transition from subsistence

¹⁰⁷ Katiko Musyoka, OI at Iveti on 04/11/2020.

¹⁰⁸ Kimambo, I.N. "The Economic History of the Kamba", 88.

as it was on the eve of colonial rule, to commercial oriented production. On the whole, taxation had transformed the pre-capitalist social formations of the Machakos Akamba in a number of ways.

First, it made wage labour, commodity production, and sale of livestock necessary thereby influencing the monetization of the pre-capitalist economy. Although cash had not fully penetrated the Machakos economy, there were signs of increasing monetisation of the Machakos economy. The establishment of trading centres and the increase in the sale of livestock and related products were bringing in more cash in the form of rupees. In any case, taxes had to be paid in rupees. As such, the pre-colonial barter method, though still dominant, was co-existing with the new cash economy.

It also changed the pre-colonial political system into a colonial institutional infrastructure, Power now rested on the chiefs who rechannelled surplus produce from the people for the purposes of accumulation by the colonial state, mainly for the capitalization of the settler sector. This in turn led to socio-economic differentiation since taxation was a means by which colonial chiefs and headmen appropriated their subjects' surplus to accumulate wealth. It also undermined the pre-colonial political institutions like the Council of Elders (Nzama) which had been the dominant political force in the pre-colonial period. Taxation also undermined food security among the Akamba of Machakos. As demonstrated in chapter two, livestock acted as food security for the Akamba when crops would fail. The pre-colonial Akamba people combined crop production and pastoralism in a set of agro-ecological strategies which assured them of a wide range of subsistence products as well as food security.

However, by 1919, instead of the Akamba accumulating large herds to save them from hunger during famines, most of them were selling them to obtain money to meet their

tax obligation. This was one major drawback to the prevention of food shortages in Machakos. Thus, taxation which bred the commoditization of livestock accelerated the disappearance of the food security system because with the continuous sale of livestock, it followed that, should there be any crop failure, there would be trouble as there would be no livestock to fall back on. Consequently, some households were left in a more vulnerable state to food shortages during the periods of drought. Apart from land alienation, taxation and the weight of colonial policies, the livestock economy of Machakos would also experience disruption from a punitive regime of forced labour. The following section addresses this issue.

3.8 Colonial Labor Demands

Lord Delamare, the doyen of the colonial settlers, put it that, 'land is of no use without labour.'¹⁰⁹ He believed that a part from the Africans giving their land to the white settlers, they were also expected to provide labour so as to make the same land productive. His statement thus set the motion for the determined efforts by the colonial administration to make the African people provide the labour force required.

Richard Wolff¹¹⁰ identified three major stages in the integration of the Africans into a wage labour force during the colonial period. The first stage, 1895 to 1914 was the decision by the colonial government to establish a settler economy. The second stage was from 1914 to 1919 and it involved mobilization of the Carrier Corps for war. The third and the last stage which fell from 1919 to 1939 entailed the establishment of a regular labour supply. This section will be interested in the first two stages.

¹⁰⁹ Ochieng', W.R. *A History of Kenya* (London, 1985), 106.

¹¹⁰ Wolff, R. *Britain and Kenya, 1870-1930. The Economics of Colonialism*. Nairobi: Trans Africa Publishers Ltd. (1974).

During the first stage 1895-1914, there was the first step employed by the colonial administration to create a migrant wage labour class was the removal of land rights from the African people as well as taxation. Land alienation was undertaken through direct seizure, conquest, pressure on chiefs and every other means open to the colonialists.¹¹¹ This was done in order to make the Africans impoverished hence being forced to look for wage labour. The chiefs were thus empowered not only to collect maintain law and order, but also to assist the colonial administration in mobilizing cheap labour for public and settler requirements. Thus, these years saw a series of labour laws being introduced.¹¹²

The turning-point of the articulation process in the country was the colonial state's decision to promote a settler economy. The establishment of farms run by settlers created tension that remained at the basis of the Kenyan economy for the subsequent years. There was conflicting co-existence of African peasant production with the settlers' demand for cheap African labour. Settlers were convinced that, given that the government had "invited" them to East Africa, it was its duty to provide labourers for their undertakings. Therefore, one of the main concerns of the government became to find labourers for the white settlers.¹¹³ Coercion was one of the chief tools employed by the colonial government to obtain labour. This led to a system of state control on labour that by the 1920s was, in its scope and intensity, greater than in any other British colony in Africa.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Maxon, R.M. "Establishment of the Colonial Economy". In Ochieng, W.R. and Maxon, R.M. (Eds). *An Economic History of Kenya* (Nairobi, 1992), 67-68.

¹¹² Ochieng, W.R. *A History of Kenya*, 106.

¹¹³ Pallaver, K. "Colonial Currencies, Labour Relations, 302.

¹¹⁴ Luongo, K. "If You Can't Beat Them, Join Them".

As noted by Munro¹¹⁵ the Akamba were not as deeply involved in the colonial economy as their neighbours, the Kikuyu. They eschewed most forms of paid employment and as a result, for a long time they remained an enigma and even a disappointment to European colonial agents. Whenever labour shortages occurred, harried settlers and administrators would question why the Akamba could not be recruited as successfully as the Kikuyu. On the other hand, for the Akamba, it simply did not make any sense for them to neglect their own livestock and farms in order to work on somebody else's farm. Furthermore, much of the work which Europeans wanted African men to do was traditionally women's work in the pre-colonial Akamba economy and this increased reluctance to accept European employment.¹¹⁶

Tignor¹¹⁷ reveals that even during the construction of the Kenya-Uganda railway, the Akamba labour proved unreliable, but the Kikuyu and Luo were responsive. The unreliability of labour in the rail construction was prevalent in the regions where the stock keeping communities had settled. This was due to the fact that their herds buffered them against the need to work by providing them with adequate food supplies, and hides and skins as well as livestock to sell to realise the necessary money for hut and poll tax.¹¹⁸ Geographically, the railway was divided into two sections. The first division, from Mombasa to Nairobi, continued to suffer from labor shortages and employed Asian unskilled workmen. Most of these areas were occupied by the agro-pastoral Akamba and the pastoral Maasai. On the second division, labor was more plentiful because of the presence of the Luo and Kikuyu.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁵ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹¹⁶ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

¹¹⁷ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*, 97.

¹¹⁸ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

¹¹⁹ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*, 97.

Tignor has also pointed out some glaring statistical differences on the number of the Akamba wage labourers against the other communities especially the Agikuyu. He observes that in the years 1916-1917 there were 3,300 Kikuyu living in Naivasha district as migrant workers as compared to 10 Kamba. Tignor's observation has also been supported by Luongo who argues that although one of the aims of colonial taxation was to compel the work-shy and livestock-rich denizens of Machakos to participate in the cash economy and colonial labor market, this was not an easy task. The problem was so acute that, in 1908, the settlers, led by Grogan (who had land in Ukambani) demonstrated noisily in front of the Governor's office in Nairobi. The settlers complained about the failure of the Akamba chiefs to supply enough labour to them. In fact, the District Commissioner despaired in a 1908-1909 and reported that,

The amount of Akamba native labour does not increase. The people will not work even in the parts of the district where there is no food.¹²⁰

After the demonstration of settlers, Sadler passed an Ordinance introducing a contractual policy between employer and employees. The salary was then fixed at 4 rupees. The Royal Commission on Labour (1912-1913) increased this to 5 rupees a month. But the problem still remained unsolved; the D.C. of Machakos wrote that;

The problem of the labour force has not been solved and it is disturbing the trade of the district.¹²¹

Some settlers were therefore forced to increase the wage even more in order to encourage more labourers to come. Some farmers paid up to 6-7 rupees a month plus posho. The Mica industry in Mukaa even paid 10 to 12 plus posho and opened a sort of technical school for its African labourers in 1915 where 30 Akamba were enrolled. However, the D.C. of Machakos, (1914-1916), Lightbov complained to the settlers that 10 to 12 rupees (20-24 shillings) plus posho was an excessive salary because it would

¹²⁰ KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/2 Machakos District Annual Report, 1909-16.

¹²¹ Ibid.

still not have made the Akamba to work. He quoted a farm in the Mua Hills which had lost all its maize harvest in 1913 because the Kikuyu workers did not turn up and the Akamba could not just bother themselves with farm work. He continued:

It is useless to hope that a Mkamba can come back just for work of planting and weeding like a Kikuyu.¹²²

Oral sources have indicated that those who went to work for the European were often mistreated to the extent that they sometimes refused to offer their labour. Due to this mistreatment, in 1911, an atavistic movement that colonial authorities came to frame as a "hysterical mania," of the Akamba organized demonstration and ordered people not to work.¹²³ One of the reason for the movement was to protest against the inhuman treatment of the labourers by their European masters. The movement which was led by Kiamba and Syotune intended to 'tengeneza' (deal with) the white man. Kiamba and Syotune ordered people not to work on certain days.

According to Sorrenson,¹²⁴ the movement was triggered by troubles between the Akamba and one of the European settlers by the name G.L. Langridge who had land in Mua hills. He was renowned for being brutal in his treatment of labourers. He was an unscrupulous, arrogant and cruel fellow who revealed to the neighbouring Akamba what the colonial regime was at a local level. He practised all sorts of exactions including forced labour, money and free milk, preventing the Akamba from bringing their animals to a water spot that was outside his free holding, while taking his animals into the Reserve.¹²⁵ Even Dundas who was the then D.C of Machakos by then had to acknowledge the fact by reporting that;

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Machakos Political Record Book: DC/MKS/4/4: Vol 11: 1910-11.

¹²⁴ Sorrenson, M.P.K. *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*.

¹²⁵ Katiko Musyoka OI at Iveti on 04/11/2020.

It was this question of Mr. Langridge wanting to graze his cattle in the Native Reserve, in spite of formal prohibitions, that had been at the origin of the trouble.¹²⁶

McGregor Ross also noted that the African labourers used to be mistreated by their European settlers. He noted that:

The ruthlessness of some of the members of this early group of settlers is almost unbelievable at the present day. One of them supervised his labourers from a chair at the door of his hut by firing a rifle in the direction of any whom he thought to be slacking. The bullet kicked up the soil near the delinquent one and reminded him that the master's eye was on him. The inevitable mischance took place, of course. A labourer was seriously wounded, being shot through the arm, the bullet entering his chest.¹²⁷

In essence, the mistreatment of labourers by employers led to desertions, absenteeism and reluctance to offer their labour. This was the beginning of what was to become 'labour troubles'. This made labour to be termed as the most important problem for settlers in Kenya in the first decade of colonial rule. In Machakos, the D.Cs blamed the monumental laziness of the Akamba. Some claimed that the Akamba preferred looking after cattle than working in the fields. As such, the Akamba had already acquired a reputation among the colonial officials for being extremely lazy and indolent¹²⁸

Apart from the demand for labour to work in the settler farms, the colonial government also needed supply of cheap labour for other purposes like construction of roads and bridges. The mobilisation of labour was done through government appointed chiefs. Tarus¹²⁹ has noted that as early as 1900, the use of forced labour had been a common feature of the East Africa Protectorate. Chiefs, Headmen, Liwalis and District Commissioners were expected to do their best to provide labour for the construction of

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ McGregor, R., *Kenya from Within*, 98.

¹²⁸ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹²⁹ Tarus, I. "A History of the Direct Taxation".

roads, government buildings, construction of dams, bridges and for the European settlers.

In Machakos, those who turned out for work were initially paid in livestock. A cow was equivalent to a worker's three months' salary. The use of livestock in the payment of wages shows that livestock was, in the formative stages of colonial rule, a medium of exchange just as it had been during the pre-colonial period. On the other hand, those who did not turn out for work were required to pay cattle in lieu of their labour. The construction of roads was so forceful that if an individual within the location which the road was under construction did not participate, his livestock would be confiscated.¹³⁰

The number of livestock to be paid was left at the discretion of local chiefs. The delegated authority to the chiefs was often used arbitrarily. Their colonial role as mobilisers of local resources for various purposes such as road construction gave the chiefs and headmen the opportunity to enlarge their incomes. Since there was no fixed number of livestock in lieu of labour, the chiefs often abused the system to enrich themselves at the expense of the livestock owners. Seizure of livestock as fines for failure to carry out such colonial requirements as roadwork was a further source of income.

Although the Akamba did not go out in large numbers in search of wage labour, the effect of labour migration was still felt in Ukambani. The expatriation of Akamba men to work outside their homelands greatly affected their livestock production. The outflow of labour created acute labour shortages for the livestock economy in Machakos. In response to these shortages, the traditional household division of labour was adjusted. Younger people, the elderly and women increasingly took part in animal

¹³⁰ Musyoka Ndolo, OI.at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020.

husbandry as opposed to the pre-colonial period. This was a new trend in the Machakos economy which was brought about by the demands for colonial labour. The demand for labour also resulted in loss of livestock among some Akamba livestock owners as they had to dispense with some livestock to avoid conscription into wage employment in the colonial establishment. The Akamba further lost livestock through increased sales of livestock in order to obtain imported goods. This intensified the commercialization of livestock and its related products. Thus, the next section examines this issue.

3.9 Commercialization of Livestock and Livestock Products

The process of commercialising livestock and livestock products in a pastoral society took place in most pastoral societies in Kenya during the era of colonial rule. It was part of a wider process of turning livestock and its products into commodities.¹³¹ Commoditisation involved a process in which the utility value of livestock and its related products increasingly changed. Hitherto, livestock was majorly used for the subsistence of the producers and some political and social functions. It was also used as currency against which the value of other goods could be measured. However, during the colonial period, the utility value of livestock began to have an exchange value and its products could be sold and acquired on the market. At first, this exchange took place as barter trade, but soon money was used as an intermediary.

Local livestock trade became part of the international trend of supply and demand, with emphasis on price formation.¹³² This was also accompanied by the acquisition of non-food consumption items or rather material goods like ornaments, blankets and clothing. In Machakos for example, the need to raise money for buying consumption goods such as sugar, kerosene, blankets and clothing led to the intensification of commodity

¹³¹ Sahil. M, et al. *African Pastoralism*. Pluto Press. 2001.

¹³² Ibid.

production, which also aided the Akamba in the payment of taxes. According to Matheka,¹³³ the first two decades of colonial rule in Machakos saw new developments in trade and exchange. This was marked by the introduction of money and emergence of new market centres. For instance, in a circular to District Commissioner (D.Cs) in 1909, E.P.C. Girouard, the then Governor of Kenya, emphasised that it was "an important duty of the District Commissioners to encourage trade by every means in their power".¹³⁴ The government encouraged commodity production through propaganda and support for Indian merchant capital.¹³⁵

To ensure that the trade in Machakos succeeded, the colonial government with the help of Indian merchants undertook to set up shops in Machakos. Sites were then granted to Indian traders who for the first time sold such commodities as cotton, shawls, kerosene lamps and salt.¹³⁶ Hence, as shown by table 3.4 below, by 1900, several shops had been set up in various trade centres in Machakos district.¹³⁷

Table 3.4: Shops Set up in Machakos by 1900

| Trading Centre | Matungulu | Mwala | Mukuyuni | Kalama | Nzauwi | Mukaa | Total |
|-----------------|-----------|-------|----------|--------|--------|-------|-------|
| Number of Shops | 6 | 14 | 15 | 8 | 6 | 5 | 54 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Report, 1908-09: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/1.

Table 3.4 above indicates that by 1900, 6 trading centres had been established in Machakos with a total of 54 shops. The establishment of trading centres and the increase in the sale of cattle and related products reveal that the Akamba had developed a strong desire for foreign goods.

¹³³ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹³⁴ Machakos District Quarterly Report, 1909: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/3, 58.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Musyoka Ndolo, OI at Mbiuni on 10/11/2020.

¹³⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1908-09: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/1.

The trend of opening up shops continued and by 1910, they rose to 29, then 42 in 1914.¹³⁸ The shops acted as collection centres for hides, skins and ghee. Thus, the Akamba were encouraged to sell ghee, hides and skins. In addition, they sold grains, tobacco, chicken and eggs in Nairobi. On the other hand, the Akamba bought the consumer items sold by the Indians¹³⁹. Acknowledging this development, in 1896 Ainsworth contended that;

The evidence of shifting commercial patterns was apparent in the growing use of imported goods in the Machakos and Dagoretti hinterlands. I recall that when i first arrived at Machakos nearly all the natives wore goatskins, but by the end of 1900, an estimated half of the residents of Ulu and Kitui were wearing imported clothes.¹⁴⁰

One feature of this trade was that money was increasingly used as a medium of exchange while bartering of commodities was dying out slowly. Local commodities were now exchanged more often using the new currency introduced by the colonial government in trade between the Akamba, Maasai and Kikuyu. This new trend could only mean that livestock was gradually ceasing to be a medium of exchange as it had been during the pre-colonial era. On the contrary, livestock and it's by products was now a commodity which could be sold in the market in exchange for cash. For example, bulls were sold at prices between Rs 30 and Rs. 50 according to their size. Hides for cattle were sold at 50 cents per lb while skins for goats and sheep 10 to 50 cents per piece. Ghee was sold at Rs 23 per frasila. Bee wax was also sold and it went for 50 cents per lb. Cereals sold included maize, beans, mbaazi, sorghum, wimbi. The DC observed that;

The Akamba are now selling their produce for cash and also purchasing imported goods with the cash. Barter trade is now dying out nearly everywhere and soon there will be no such methods of trading.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ KNA/Ainsworth, Diary, 30 April 1896.

¹⁴¹ Machakos District Quarterly Report, 1909: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/3.

However, from 1909, trade in livestock and livestock products started to decline. This was due to the outbreak of diseases and lack of pasture. East Coast Fever spread among the livestock and about 10,230 head of cattle and unknown number of goats and sheep died. The highest mortality occurred in those areas which had lost access to pasture due to the imposition of reserve boundaries. These included the locations bordering the Yatta Plateau (Kithangathini, Mwala, Manyala, Kibauni and Kanthyoli) as well as the south-western parts of the district.¹⁴²

The Akamba also lost their livestock due to starvation. They could not afford the payment of grazing fees and fines.¹⁴³ For example, due to starvation, 180 tons of hides were exported from Machakos and Kitui in 1918 alone.¹⁴⁴ The estimate of the mortality was even suspected to be lower than reported as the Indians who were the chief buyers of the hides had refused to buy some hides hence most of the hides rot in the villages.¹⁴⁵

The pasture-disease problem was made worse by inadequate veterinary services, an inoculation fee of shs 2/50 per animal and perpetual quarantine. The inoculation fee was so high that the Akamba regarded it as a 'second tax'. Moreover, the rinderpest inoculation sometimes killed the inoculated animals.¹⁴⁶ It was a huge burden to the Akamba and they constantly found themselves breaking the quarantine regulations which stated that only inoculated animals could be exported. The Akamba were fined 300/ and 95 heads of cows for breaking the quarantine regulations.¹⁴⁷ All this retarded trade as only inoculated cattle could be sold. Consequently, the cattle trade started collapsing. In 1919 the D.C. noted that;

¹⁴² Katiko Musyoka OI at Iveti on 04/11/2020.

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1917-22: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10.

¹⁴⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1908-09: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/1.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

Owing to the quarantine, the only cattle taken out of the reserve have been those bought by Lieut. Hill for the civil government in April, May and June. The number of which appears under livestock supplied for civil purposes, the branded cattle which only numbered 970. The goats and sheep trade has also been very quiet¹⁴⁸.

The trade in skins and hides had also started declining to a considerable level. This mostly owed to the fact that most of the animals that could be slaughtered to obtain the skins and hides had died due to starvation and diseases. The D.C reported that;

In exports, the most serious decline is in hides and skins which have decreased by one and fifty two tons.¹⁴⁹

The livestock trade was also hindered by the quarantine regulations. The only export of African cattle into European regions was through quarantine stations. The resultant trade patterns therefore favoured the British market economy. British administrators drew and executed policies which underdeveloped the Akamba livestock economy.

Essentially, the study can advance the argument that the commercialisation of livestock and livestock products reduced the Akamba to producers of livestock for the British markets while remaining consumers of exotic goods. As was evident in the previous chapter, the pre-colonial Akamba system of production could be described as a natural economy of household production characterised by a simple integration of production and consumption within households. The Akamba households were therefore engaged in the production of use-values rather than exchange-values. However, with the advent of British colonialism which integrated the Akamba livestock economy to the mainstream colonial capitalism, there was emphasis on production of the latter.

This saw the Akamba of Machakos produce livestock and its production for sale rather than subsistence. The increasing orientation of livestock products to the market became more marked in the case of hides and skins. Hides and skins were now mainly produced

¹⁴⁸ Machakos District Annual Report. 1917-1922: KNA/MKS/1/1/10.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

for the market instead of clothing and beddings as it was the case in the pre-colonial era. Furthermore, the acquisition of food through the market became important and was often accompanied by a change from a mainly livestock-based diet to mainly grain-based. For instance, ghee, which had been a valuable food among the Akamba of Machakos was slowly entering the market in large quantities in comparison to the pre-colonial period. The demand for ghee started to reduce the domestic consumption of milk and compelled people to consume other types of food.

Hence, the commercialization of livestock and livestock products not only deprived the Machakos Akamba of nutritive foods such as milk, ghee and eggs but also reduced food surpluses through increased sale of cattle, goat sheep and chicken which were the source of milk and/or meat. A part from monetisation of livestock and related products, the livestock industry suffered another blow as the colonial authorities encouraged more crop production than livestock production as demonstrated in the following section.

3.10 Changes in Crop Production and Technology

In order to develop a self-sufficient economy, the colonial government encouraged cultivation of food and various cash crops. Basing their exploitative designs on prior imperial experience, the British looked for agricultural products that could be included in an international system. Technologically, various grains which were in demand in Europe could be grown in Kenya. Maize had already been extensively incorporated into existing African production system¹⁵⁰. Among the agro pastoral, the protectorate government encouraged the cultivation of food and cash crops. The growing of crops like groundnuts, wattle, cotton and rice were therefore encouraged. Maize and beans varieties were also distributed by the government¹⁵¹. In Machakos as elsewhere in

¹⁵⁰ Talbott, D. (1992). "African Agriculture", 80.

¹⁵¹ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya".

Kenya, the desire to enhance agricultural productivity was motivated primarily by the need to raise taxes to support the colony and its freshly built and highly uneconomic railway road. Another underlying cause was the metropolitan industrial demand for raw materials.¹⁵²

Initially, Akamba agriculture was mainly subsistence. They used to plant millet, sorghum, cassava, tobacco, sugar-cane and sometimes yam. However, from 1906, recommendations were made to the Akamba to try new crops. Maize was being sold at railway stations in 1902, a year before the arrival of the first European settlers. A few years later, in 1908, the Administration, in an effort to improve seed quality, which was seen as a cause of low yields, issued imported maize seed along with beans and groundnuts.¹⁵³ Indeed, the D.C. had a farm at his station from which 'better' maize and beans seeds, together with wheat, groundnuts and English potatoes, were issued free to Africans with the idea of promoting trade in graded produce for export.

However, the new crops were not received with enthusiasm. Osbourne (D.C. of Machakos, 1911-1912) reported that despite the distribution of free bean seeds and new types of maize, the Akamba showed little interest in the new crops. Again, cotton (which had failed in Nyanza) was recommended in Machakos but the Akamba were not enthusiastic.¹⁵⁴ However, the situation changed gradually and by 1913, Osbourne (the D.C.) reported that the Akamba had generally increased their production in cash crop production.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Silberfein, Marilyn. *Rural Change in Machakos, Kenya: A Historical Geography Perspective*. (Lanham, 1989).

¹⁵⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1909-16: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/2.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

The most significant change in agricultural technology in Machakos during this time was the rapid and widespread adoption of a succession of new steel hoe (jembe) types. By 1905, most of the Akamba were still using wooden blades (mwoo) to till their land. But the administration encouraged the Akamba women to use the metal hoe and in 1908 and 1909 the market of hoes in Ukambani was reported to be impressive. The introduction and diffusion of the steel hoe (jembe) was a major success in the realm of agricultural technology.¹⁵⁶

Another major symbol of economic change was the introduction of the ox-plough and the training of ox-teams. According to Peberdy,¹⁵⁷ in 1909, the D.C induced the chiefs to buy ploughs. In addition, headmen were given hoes (jembes) as part of their hut-tax commission. By doing so, the DC hoped that the other Akamba would see the benefits of the tools and then follow suit. By 1909, two chiefs had trained ox-teams of for ploughing. However, real enthusiasm for plough-teams came in 1910.¹⁵⁸ The D.C. reported that;

Chiefs and other 'progressive' Akamba are getting a "handsome return" from their plough investments although the bulk of the people still look to stock for the production of wealth.¹⁵⁹

In 1912, there were 3 ploughs in the Machakos neighbourhood. Thereafter, smallholders in Kangundo are reported to have started buying ploughs in large numbers and training their own oxen.¹⁶⁰ In addition, they were also promoting row planting of maize and beans, using strings, which replaced irregular sowing with jembes (which had by then replaced digging sticks).¹⁶¹ This undoubtedly led to the District Commissioner's statement in 1912 that;

¹⁵⁶ Machakos District Annual Report, 1908-09: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/2.

¹⁵⁷ Peberdy, J. R. (1961). *Notes on Some Economic Aspects of Machakos District*.

¹⁵⁸ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

¹⁵⁹ Machakos District Quarterly Report, 1910: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/6.

¹⁶⁰ Machakos District Annual Report/1909-16: KNA/DC/MKS 4/2, 42.

¹⁶¹ Silberfein, M. *Rural Change in Machakos*.

The Akamba are beginning to cultivate larger areas and disposing of larger quantities for cash crops than in former years¹⁶²

Gradually, the Akamba began to appreciate the advantages of plough cultivation when they found out that the new technique implied less work on their part. The use of the plough also led to the Akamba farmers bringing more land under cultivation. This practice did much harm to the Machakos environment. In particular, the colonial insistence on deep ploughing and crop rotation rather than fallow had disastrous ecological effects, resulting in inferior yields in subsequent years. The soils of Machakos did not have the chemical proportions to sustain continued cultivation, and deep ploughing was responsible for turning the soils into sun-baked powder. Hence, more fertile areas where farmers readily abandoned the hoe and adopted the plough were subject to erosion.

The development of cash crop production was detrimental to livestock production in Machakos. With the extension of the cultivated area, the grazing areas became smaller and livestock fewer. The introduction of the plough undoubtedly increased areas under cultivation and also yields and encouraged the Akamba to accept the growing of cash crops as already mentioned. As land tenure and land use systems underwent transformation, so did livestock economy within Akamba society. Scarcity of pastureland, along with other financial and administrative pressures, resulted in an overall decrease in Akamba livestock wealth and a drastic decline, for most households, in livestock holdings. By the beginning of WWI, significant number of the Akamba were peasant cultivators instead of herders, and cash crops had become a significant income source.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Machakos District Annual Report/1909-16: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/2.

¹⁶³ Tiffen, M. Mortimore and F. Gichuki, *More People, Less Erosion: Environmental Recovery in Kenya*. Chichester: Wiley, 1994.

The development of crop production also led to diversion of labour from the animal husbandry. Agriculture and animal management from then onwards had to compete for the available labour. This became more marked during planting, weeding and harvesting periods. Akamba men began to appreciate the advantages of plough cultivation when they found out that the new technique implied less work on their part as compared to livestock care. In the pretext of attending demonstrations, training oxen and learning how to handle the plough, men withdrew from some of their other responsibilities especially animal husbandry leaving such responsibilities to the women. The onset of WWI would further occasion a transformation in the livestock economy of Machakos.

3.11 The First World War and Its Impact on Machakos Livestock Production

The First World War was a watershed in the economic history of Kenya. It became a catalyst for transforming the African livestock economy into an important aspect of a market economy and a source of income. By so doing, it caused a closer incorporation of African peasants into the colonial economy. African local production of foodstuff came under the control of the state, owing to the enormous demand for food for the troops and the porters engaged in the East African Campaign¹⁶⁴.

The military also demanded livestock for slaughter to feed the soldiers and as a means of transport in areas where tsetse flies were absent. Required were sheep, goats and cattle while camels were procured in the dry and remote Northern Frontier District. It is estimated that up to 3000 cattle and 15,000 sheep were required each month to serve the needs of the combatants during the war.¹⁶⁵ The army supply officers established

¹⁶⁴ Tarus, I. "A History of the Direct Taxation", 100.

¹⁶⁵ Overton, J. "War and Economic Underdevelopment: State Exploitation and African Response in Kenya, 1914-1918" *The International Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 22, No.2, 201-21. (1989).

stations for buying livestock among the Maasai, the Akamba, Kalenjin and in Nyanza exclusively to purchase livestock from Africans.¹⁶⁶

According to Tarus,¹⁶⁷ among the protectorate's first people to be affected by the war were the Akamba. The colonial government requisitioned large amount of livestock from them to feed the allied troops. Apart from requisitioning for livestock, the Akamba had to bear the brunt of increased tax rates which rose from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 during the war. Hence, they had to sell additional livestock in order to meet their tax obligation. Accordingly, during this period, the Akamba livestock sales increased dramatically as demonstrated in table 3.5 below

Table 3.5: Total Number of Livestock Sold by the Akamba of Machakos for Military Use

| Year | Number | Approximated price (Rs) |
|-----------|--------|-------------------------|
| 1915-1916 | 7,940 | 306,402 |
| 1916-1917 | 12,538 | 406,953 |
| 1917-1918 | 1,881 | 48,017 |
| 1918-1919 | 1,431 | 49,617 |

Source: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/11

From table 3.5 above, it is clear that from 1915-19, 23, 835 heads of cattle were obtained for the war earning the Machakos Akamba Rs. 810, 839. It is also clear that there was a record increase in the number of cattle sold between the years 1916-17. The study maintains that this increase was necessitated by food shortage in Machakos during the war period. Furthermore, from 1916, the colonial government raised the hut and poll tax from Rs. 5 to Rs. 6 in order to raise funds for the war demands. In this case, the Akamba of Machakos had to sell more livestock to buy food and also meet the tax obligations. Apart from livestock, the colonial government also procured large amounts

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Tarus, I. "A History of the Direct Taxation", 92.

of labour to serve in the First World War and in the civil service. The P.C. for Ukamba Province observed,

The government asked without ceasing for two of the main assets and most cherished possessions of a native tribe - their young men and stock¹⁶⁸

In comparative terms, the specific impact of war-time labour demands on the people of Machakos can be discerned from the statistics reproduced in table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Labour Recruitment for the War Effort in Machakos District (1914-1919)

| Type of labour | 1914-1915 | 1915-1916 | 1916-1917 | 1917-18 | 1918-19 |
|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Registered for labour outside the district | 1,411 | 3,115 | 4,095 | 4,369 | 91 |
| Registered for labour inside the district | - | 150 | 450 | 413 | 660 |
| Carrier corps | 516 | 2,117 | 3,900 | 5,076 | - |

Source: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10, 1917-18:47; 1919-20:7.¹⁶⁹

It is evident from the table above that many Akamba of Machakos were recruited for work outside the district between 1916 and 1919. In this case, they were recruited to provide labour in the war. The years 1916-1918 are depicted as having the highest number of the recruits from Machakos. This can be explained by the forced recruitment from 1916. According to parsons,¹⁷⁰ at first, recruitment to the war was voluntary. However, not enough men volunteered to join the Carrier Corps, and forced recruitment began in 1916. Chiefs and their assistants pressed Africans into war service by outright armed forces.

The colonial government also recruited carrier corps in large numbers. Machakos district contributed a considerable number of carrier corps as compared to her

¹⁶⁸ Overton, J. "War and Economic Underdevelopment. (1989), 205.

¹⁶⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1917-22: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10.

¹⁷⁰ Parsons, T. "Wakamba Warriors Are Soldiers of the Queen. The Evolution of the Kamba as a Martial Race, 1890-1970". *Ethnohistory*, Vol. 46, No. 4, (1999), 666.

neighbours in Ukamba Province. Table 3.7 summarises the number of carrier corps recruited in Ukamba Province during WWI.

Table 3.7: Carrier Corps Labour, Ukamba Province (1915-18)

| STATION | 1915-16 | 1916-17 | 1917-18 |
|----------------|---------|---------|---------|
| NAIROBI | 747 | 832 | 1,345 |
| KIKUYU | 2,599 | 2,359 | 2,552 |
| MACHAKOS (ULU) | 2,117 | 3,900 | 5,076 |
| KITUI | 3,064 | 3,885 | 3,470 |
| TOTAL | 8,527 | 10,976 | 12,443 |

Source: KNA/DC/KBU 1/11, 1917-18, 64

Table 3.7 demonstrates that Machakos was the largest contributor of the carrier corps in Ukamba Province especially in 1918-1919 when it contributed 5,076 carrier corps translating to 41% of the total number of carrier corps in the whole province. The spike in the numbers in 1918-1919 can be explained by the increased demands by the colonial state to the Machakos Akamba. According to Munro,¹⁷¹ in early 1917, when animal and mechanical transport for the East African Campaign failed due to tsetse fly, Machakos District was forced to surrender 77.15 per cent of her able-bodied men as carrier corps for the war effort.¹⁷² In addition, as the allied troops advanced into German East Africa in 1916 and 1917, the need for carriers increased, and the administration in African areas more aggressively sought out able-bodied men from Machakos more than ever.¹⁷³

Besides the procurement cited above, the war intensified the impoverishment of the livestock economy of the district in various ways. First, about 3,000 Carrier Corps died in the war. To borrow from Maxon's words, 'Many men never returned as they died in

¹⁷¹ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹⁷² Ukamba Province Annual Report: 1917-18: KNA/DC/KBU/11, 64.

¹⁷³ Maxon, R. *East Africa: An Introductory History*. (Morgantown, 1986), 201.

a war of little concern to them'¹⁷⁴. Consequently, for the Akamba, loss of livestock was one enduring collective memory. By 1918, the continued calls for military labour had led to severe population loss and dislocation in many parts of Kenya. As the demand for fighters grew, so did labour supplies and livestock in Machakos decrease. This was engendered by the fact that the Akamba were close to the German East Africa war zone where the British were fighting with the Germans. It was therefore easy to transport the fighting troops.

Consequently, during this period, not enough men were home to provide adequate labour for livestock production. Generally, Machakos had become a labour pool for the colony hence, draining it of its best youthful labourers who, during the pre-colonial era, had been relied upon for herding and raiding for livestock. Famine and social distress resulted. Again, in 1916, tax was also increased considerably to meet the cost of the war. Given that most of the Akamba people obtained their tax money from the sale of livestock, the increase in tax rates definitely meant selling more livestock. Consequently, the Akamba were to bear most of the burdens of the First World War.¹⁷⁵

The foregoing indicates that the Akamba livestock economy was better off before World War One. The continual exploitation of the Akamba livestock economy for military use resulted in the general decline of its performance. The demand for labour to serve in the war also resulted in loss of livestock among those who had to bribe the chiefs with livestock so as to spare them from being forcefully conscripted into the war. Further, the war depleted the district of its able-bodied men who had been charged with livestock management duties during the pre-colonial period. Consequently, African

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Tarus, I. "A History of the Direct Taxation."

manpower resource was diverted to the war effort hence livestock production was abandoned or left to the old men, women and children.

3.12 Conclusion

The main objective of this chapter was to examine the establishment of colonial rule and the subsequent integration of the Machakos economy into colonial capitalism and how this affected the livestock industry in Machakos. It has acted as a bridge between the community's pre-colonial past and the colonial era. Evidence has been adduced to show that the imposition of colonial rule in Kenya in general, and Machakos in particular, took place against a background of disastrous ecological breakdown which not only destroyed the economic mainstay of the community, but also led to unprecedented demographic collapse.

The chapter has further attempted to show how the Akamba production system was progressively incorporated into the world capitalist system over the 1895-1919 period. Starting with the turbulent 1890s, through the imposition of colonial administration at the turn of the century, to the First World War, it is evident that the Akamba gradually became part of the world capitalist system through the strategies of the colonial state.

It is also clear from the chapter that by 1919, the Akamba had lost effective access to about two-thirds of the land they had formerly controlled including their most fertile lands and half of all their pasture. This curtailed the movement of stock into grazing zones that were formerly important to the community's transhumant pattern. Thus, the Akamba herders lost the freedom to migrate seasonally and periodically in search of water, pasture, and cropland. Eventually, the delicate balance which the Akamba had painstakingly maintained between their pastoral economy and the ecosystem was completely disrupted. The imposition of Hut and Poll tax by the colonial government

coupled with the commercialization of livestock to acquire material goods like sugar, kerosene and clothes forced the Akamba to sell most of their stock to meet the imposed financial obligations. Furthermore the introduction of cash crop production and the colonial labour demands led to the diversion of labour from the animal husbandry to these ventures, something was detrimental to the livestock industry.

The chapter has also demonstrated that the outflow of men for military purposes during the First World War created an acute labour shortage for the livestock economy in Machakos. In response to these shortages, the traditional household division of labour was adjusted. Younger people, the elderly and women increasingly took part in animal husbandry as opposed to the pre-colonial period. This was a new trend in the Machakos economy which was brought about by the demands for colonial labour. The overall consequence of all these was the relative depletion and decline of the livestock economy of the Akamba of Machakos. It is thus important to underscore the fact that by the end of World War I, colonial capitalism had started transforming the Machakos economy through integration and dissolution while at the same time, conserving some of its aspects. These processes continued in the subsequent years of colonial regime as we reveal in subsequent chapters. The next chapter will delve into an analysis of the interaction between the livestock economy and the subsequent evolution of colonial policies during the inter-war period.

CHAPTER FOUR
LIVESTOCK ECONOMY IN MACHAKOS DURING THE INTER-WAR
PERIOD, 1919-1939

4.1 Introduction

The twenty year inter-war period marked the second major phase of the articulation process in Kenya. The period was characterized by the economic reassessments brought about in Machakos as elsewhere in Kenya by the dual policy, the depression of the early 1930s, droughts and famines, the international alarm generated by the catastrophic dust bowl in the southern plains of America, the recognition during the 1930s that rapid increase in the human and stock populations of the African Reserves was creating serious pressure on the land and later, a severe locust infestation. However, the crisis of the era in the Machakos livestock industry was the establishment of the Liebig's Meat Factory and the subsequent destocking policy which involved forced culling of livestock. This became the major focus of the colonial government throughout the 1930s. The relative influence of each of these factors combined to shape an essential backcloth to the economic reforms in Kenya in general and Machakos in particular.

This chapter analyses how the Dual policy, the Great Depression, soil erosion campaigns, destocking policy and natural calamities combined to chart a new path for the history of livestock production in Machakos. The chapter proceeds on the premise that all these factors militated against positive developments in the livestock sector in Machakos during the inter-war period.

4.2 The Post-World War I Depression

The period from 1920-1922 was marked by the post-world war I depression which brought a slump on the prices of primary product. This drop in world prices for Africa's

agricultural exports together with unsuccessful attempts to stabilize currency and exchange rates were some of the factors that caused the fall in export earnings.¹ This led to a sharp decrease on the prices of livestock and its by-products hence cutting down the Akamba income. For instance, the average price of an ox fell from Rs 50 to Rs 35.² There was also a sharp drop in the prices of skins and hides which made the export of hides and skins to decrease by one and fifty two tons. Gradually, the demand for livestock and its products became less during the year as the Akamba still expected the prices for the periods before the depression. Stone, the then DC commented that:

The native has not realised the economic position of the country and still asks prices which were extravagant a year or two ago, with the result that other and cheaper sources of supply will be developed to the detriment of the local native.³

The post-WWI depression also coincided with a major drought which followed hard on the heels of the First World War. Rains failed in 1921 leading to the death of large numbers of Akamba cattle literally from lack of pasture. Drought was also accompanied by lack of enough grazing space. The Akamba had been requesting for the permission to graze in the Yatta but the government feared that allowing the Akamba access to pasture facilities outside their reserve would encourage such demands in the future⁴

The First World War and the subsequent recession also made the colonial government to raise the tax burden up to eight rupees per year in 1920. To make matters worse for the Africans, in 1921, the new changes in administrative procedures demanded that a full year's tax had to be paid in a nine-month period instead of the usual one-year

¹ Maxon. R.M. "The Establishment of the Colonial Economy". in Ochieng, W.R. and Maxon, R.M. (Eds), *An Economic History of Kenya*. (Nairobi, 1992), 71.

² Machakos District Annual Report: 1916-17: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10, 9

³ Machakos District Annual report, 1920-21: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/14, 25.

⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1917-22: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10, 24.

period.⁵ Thus, the tax burden for the Machakos Akamba rose from Rs 151,000 in 1914-15 to Rs 448,000 in 1920-21.⁶

The depression was also characterised by currency changes in 1921 and again in 1922 which at the end of the day favoured the European settlers at the expense of the Africans.⁷ Under Governor Sir Edward Northey, there was a change from rupee to florin to shilling, and also the introduction of paper currency in 1921. All these changes reflected a definite bias on the part of the colonial state to aid the economic interests of the settlers rather than those of Africans. The bewildering changes caused confusion among the Africans.⁸ The Africans faced the possibility of seeing the value of the subsidiary coinage they held cut by half. The Africans perceived the paper money as being worthless and they suspected the colonial government to be playing tricks with them.⁹ As a result of this, many Akamba lost their savings because many of them did not exchange their rupees for florin coins in 1921. Therefore, after the war they were left with worthless rupees when their use was discontinued.¹⁰ Lamenting about the exchange of rupees to florin coins and also paper money, some Kilungu people lamented through a song that;

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Asungu nimoosa ilovia syonthe,</i> <i>Matunenge mathangu,</i> <i>Tuina ilovia ingi,</i> <i>Nundu nimakwata kila makwenda,</i> <i>Masyoke kula maumie.</i></p> | <p>the Europeans have now collected all the rupees, they have given us papers, we don't have any more rupees, now that they have gotten all they wanted, They should go back to where they came from.¹¹</p> |
|---|--|

⁵ Overton, J. "War and Economic Underdevelopment: State Exploitation and African Response in Kenya, 1914-1918". *The International Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 22, No.2, 201-21. (1989), 208.

⁶ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 251.

⁷ Were, G.S. and Derek, A.W. *East Africa through a Thousand Years* (London, 1972), 242.

⁸ Spencer, I. R. G. "The First Assault on Indian Ascendancy: Indian Traders in the Kenya Reserves, 1895-1929". *African Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 320. 1981, 327-343

⁹ Were, G.S. and Derek, A.W. *East Africa Through a Thousand Years*, 243.

¹⁰ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

¹¹ Syoindo Masila, OI at Kalama on 05/11/2020.

As the people of Machakos were adjusting to their losses, they were struck by another blow; the reduction of wages. The European employers, in a bid to cushion themselves from post war recession, reduced wages paid to their African employees. The European employers were supported by the state so this implied that the African employees could not complain. The reduced wages, together with the fall in livestock prices and also the rise in tax rates, made tax payment a bigger challenge for the Akamba. Nevertheless, this situation did not hinder the colonial administration from collecting tax. Stringent measures were taken to see to it that defaulting tax-payers took sufficient stock to Machakos town to be sold by Public Auction in order realise the amount required for the tax obligations.¹²

To meet the increased need for money, the Akamba turned more and more into commodity production. In addition to the sale of ghee and grains, they also earned money through the sale of chicken and eggs in Nairobi. Indeed, the Machakos Akamba supplied most of the chicken and eggs consumed in Nairobi and its environs in the early 1920s.¹³ Another means of earning money was by selling sugar-cane beer. Consequently, beer-brewing enhanced trade in sugar-cane beer, a factor which had detrimental effects on livestock production in Machakos as many Akamba turned to beer production and drinking.¹⁴ In short, the war and its concomitants increased primitive accumulation to unprecedented levels.

It is thus evident that the effects of the post war recession, such as decreased prices for livestock, unreliable market for hides, lack of employment and reduced wages, coupled with a drought in 1921, had an adverse effect on the livestock sector in Machakos.

¹² Machakos District Annual Report, 1921: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/10, 3.

¹³ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 212.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

Moreover, the depression also saw the settlers exports drop. Thus, from 1920-22, Kenya's export earnings dropped precipitously. The drop caused a severe financial crisis for the colonial state.¹⁵ Unprepared to see the settler sector collapse in the face of the post-war depression, the colonial government expanded its expenditure to support settler agriculture. In addition, the colonial state and the metropolitan government turned to African peasant production as the salvation of the former. This involved supporting the Africans peasant production both financially and also offering some specialized services through veterinary and agriculture departments in order to boost their production. This strategy was officially called the Dual policy.¹⁶ It is discussed in the next section.

4.3 The Dual Policy and its implication on Machakos Livestock Industry

From the second decade of the 20th Century up to the World War II period, Kenya was characterized by the dual economy¹⁷ which was necessitated by the huge deficit that faced Kenya and the colonial office for which, even drastic cuts in expenditure could not provide a solution. As a result of pressure from the white settlers and the British merchants with interests in Kenya, the colonial state stimulated African production for export as a primary means of finding a way out of the economic crisis in 1922.¹⁸ The policy was proposed by Governor Sir Edward Northey who hoped that the Dual Policy would facilitate cooperation rather than competition between African peasant and European settler production for control of the export market.¹⁹ Moreover, Governor Sir Robert Coryndon who replaced Northey, enthusiastically adopted the Dual Policy and

¹⁵ Mukhwana, D. "The Interplay between State Policies and Agricultural Production in Kakamega, Kenya, 1930-1970." PhD. Thesis, Moi University. 2019, 79.

¹⁶ Maxon, R. "The Establishment of the Colonial Economy", 72.

¹⁷ The Dual Policy was an economic policy proposed by Governor Sir Edward Northey, which advocated for the colonial state support to both the settler and African Peasant agriculture to support their production of crops for both domestic and foreign markets

¹⁸ Maxon, R. *East Africa: An Introductory History*, 205.

¹⁹ Maxon, R., & Ofcansky, T. *Historical Dictionary of Kenya*.

also gained support among Colonial officials after they realized that in the severe Post World War I depression, European settler agriculture alone could not underwrite colonial economic solvency. As such, throughout the 1920s, the Dual Policy remained the official policy. More government revenue was therefore spent in providing specialized agricultural and veterinary service for white farmers and also improving African economic production.²⁰ Ideally, the Dual Policy pledged the colonial state to parallel and complementary development of African and European areas in Kenya, as the settler agrarian enterprise had failed to become the real prop of Kenya's colonial economy, despite the immense official state support it had received from the colonial government.²¹ This served as the initial official acknowledgement of the centrality of the African peasant sector in propelling Kenya's colonial economy.

However, despite the 1922 adoption of the dual policy and the dictum on the paramouncy of African interest, the colonial state remained largely partisan.²² The dual economy, which was by then regarded as the main framework for colonial action in the 1920's and 1930's, was felt in the Machakos reserve only too slowly. For instance, from 1921-4, the reserve obtained very little attention from the specialised government departments which had been set to meet the needs of the European community.²³

Further, the agriculture and the veterinary department, although potentially the most important agencies for promoting economic change in the African reserves, made only minimal gestures towards their new commitments in Machakos. It was not until 1924 that an Agricultural Supervisor was posted to the district for the first time. In the

²⁰ Mukhwana, D. "The Interplay between State Policies and Agricultural Production in Kakamega, 92.

²¹ Maxon, R. "The Establishment of the Colonial Economy", 71.

²² Kanogo, T. "Kenya and the Depression, 1929-1939" in W.R. Ochieng' (Ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. (London, 1989), 113.

²³ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 116

following year, the veterinary staff increased from one Stock Inspector to one Veterinary Officer and two Stock Inspectors. Since a Forest Officer had been posted to the district in 1921, the district now had representatives of the major departments by 1925.²⁴

With the coming of the Veterinary Officer and two Stock Inspectors, the administration began to devote some attention to the Akamba livestock. The veterinary department contemplated establishing inoculating, quarantining and educational stations in Machakos.²⁵ Subsequently, the veterinary department, which had previously located its stations on the reserve perimeters in order to enable veterinary officers to oversee quarantining and the movement of stock out of African areas, started opening some small inoculation stations in 1924. The small stations were opened at Machakos, Kilungu, Mbooni, Mbitini, Muani, and Waterfalls by 1927. A few years later the department founded a veterinary training school at Machakos.²⁶ The number of stations on the parameters of the reserves through which trade stock and cattle for slaughter could pass into the European areas was also increased.²⁷ They included Machakos, Waterfalls, Thika, Athi River, and Kibigori.²⁸ Some attention was since then devoted to inoculating African herds against rinderpest and pleuropneumonia. This is illustrated in table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Number of Cattle Inoculated against Rinderpest and Pleuropneumonia between the Years 1924 -1929.

| YEAR | 1924 | 1925 | 1926 | 1927 | Total |
|-------------------|--------|--------|--------|--------|---------|
| Number Inoculated | 86,123 | 51,227 | 27,709 | 25,662 | 190,721 |

Source: Department of Agriculture, Annual Reports, 1924-27.

²⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1925: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/15.

²⁵ Tignor. R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*.

²⁶ Machakos District Annual Report, 1927: KNA/ DC/MKS/ 1/1/15, 20.

²⁷ Tignor, R.L. "The Colonial Transformation of Kenya", 319.

²⁸ KNA/MKS/Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1924, 50. .

Table 4.1 indicates that between 1924 and 1927, the people of Machakos submitted a total of 190,721 of their cattle to the veterinary department for inoculation. It can also be deduced from the table that the number of stock presented for the inoculation was on a declining trend. This was because of the negative attitude that the people developed towards inoculation. First, the people of Machakos felt that the inoculation fee charged for the inoculation services was too high. The inoculation fee was Shs 2/50 per animal, for double inoculation of adult cattle and 50d for a calf. Infact, the Akamba referred to it as second tax.²⁹ This meant that only those stock keepers who had money for inoculation to their cattle received the service while those who did not shied away from the services. Second, the death of animals due to inoculation discouraged stock-owners from getting their animals inoculated. Thus the Akamba gradually lost the enthusiasm towards inoculation.

On the other hand, the white settlers got good services from the veterinary department. Tignor notes that European production was clearly favoured as more government revenue was spent in providing specialized agricultural and veterinary service for white farmers as compared to those of the Africans. For instance, the techniques employed by the veterinary department to deal with stock diseases in the African reserves were very different from those employed on European sectors. These differences were reflected by the fact that European ranches were relatively free of disease while the African reserves were not. Europeans had more money to combat diseases and the agriculture department was willing to commit more staff to European areas.³⁰ Indeed, by 1930, the Veterinary Department had succeeded in eradicating pleuro-pneumonia from European herds and had also controlled ECF and rinderpest. This was possible

²⁹ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 166.

³⁰ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*. 1976, 321.

because the veterinary department employed the same technique employed in Great Britain for handling pleuro-pneumonia in the European farms. The technique was referred to as “stamping out” method.

On the contrary, in the African regions, the state only sought to control pleuro-pneumonia rather than eradicating it as it was doing in the European areas.³¹ This was due to the fact that the activities of the increased veterinary staff in the Machakos reserve were mainly negative. According to Munro,³² on the whole, the veterinary officers came to the district to extend the quarantine system which had been set up to protect European-owned livestock from rinderpest. They shared the view held by administration and settlers that the Machakos reserve was not only overstocked, but that 20-30 per cent of the livestock was old, maimed or useless. Consequently, they argued that pastoral improvement would be impossible until the excess stock was killed off to reduce overstocking. In other words, overstocking was perceived in terms of cattle complex which had nothing to do with land alienation, quarantine measures or even a people's rational response to their environment³³. Thus, the officers' insistence on maintaining the quarantine until all the Akamba cattle had been inoculated proved counter-productive. The veterinarians and agriculture officials found it difficult in adjusting from their older orientation towards European farming and ranching to their new responsibilities for improving African production. Hence, their tentative initiative in the Machakos reserve did not last. They slowed down the inoculation drives in 1928.

³¹ Department of Agriculture, "Pleuro-Pneumonia and the Preventive Method of Inoculation," Bulletin No. 1.

³² Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 166.

³³ Van Zwanenberg, R.M.A., and King, A. *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda, 1800-1970*. London: Macmillan, 1975.

With the veterinary services suspended, the only form of expenditure on the district was on roads. But even here the disparity between the European settled area and the reserve was alarming. For example, in 1925, the Public Works Department allotted £1,568 to the European areas in the district and £300 to the reserve. In 1926, the grants were £3,500 and £300 respectively.³⁴ This discrimination was also well demonstrated in the expenditure of the colonial administration on the district as compared to the revenue collected from the people. Despite the fact that the Akamba contributed so much tax to the colonial economy, a very small percentage went into the development of the district. The only significant expenditure in the district was on administration. For example, in 1926, the Akamba contributed Shs 871,517 out of the district's revenue of Shs 965,000. Yet, the district's expenditure for that year was only Shs 68,142. This translated to only 7.8 of the total district revenue of the year. To make matters worse, it was not even spent on the district development rather it was majorly spent on administrative costs.³⁵

The negative attitude towards the Kamba districts was also well demonstrated by the allocation of revenue towards African agriculture, for example, in 1931, the two Kamba districts received the least. Table 4.2 below corroborates.

Table 4.2: Distribution of the Expenditure of the Agriculture Department on African Agriculture in 1931.

| Province | Kikuyu | Nyanza | Coast | Maasai | Ukamba |
|-----------------|--------|--------|-------|--------|--------|
| Expenditure (£) | 8,483 | 7,283 | 2,669 | 608 | 162 |

Source: Munro, J.F. (1975). *Colonial Rule and the Akamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands 1889-1939*. London: OUP.

As evident from table 4.2 above, Ukamba provinces (Both Machakos and Kitui Districts) received only £ 162 while Nyanza and Kikuyu received 8,483 and 7,669

³⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1925. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/15, 26.

³⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1926. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/15, App.3.

respectively. The low allocation can be explained by the negative attitude of the colonial government towards the Akamba pastoral orientation. The agricultural department argued that the Akamba were conservative and pastoral and that the area they inhabited lacked the natural advantage of Nyanza, Kikuyu and the Coast Provinces.³⁶

A part from the inadequate funds, the veterinary staff was also too small for the vast area and the large herds involved. This made it impossible for the limited staff to attend to all parts of the district. Moreover, as stated earlier, the inoculation of African cattle was also made difficult by the high fees charged. The Akamba found it difficult to pay the Shs 2/50 per animal for double inoculation of adult cattle and 50d for a calf.³⁷ A herder who had as many as 500-1000 head of cattle would thus be unable to afford to have his entire herd inoculated. Moreover, the death of animals due to inoculation discouraged stock-owners from getting their animals inoculated and only did so when forced by circumstances.³⁸ For instance, during the hardship time like droughts, the veterinary department virtually ceased to inoculate the Akamba cattle because families could not raise enough money. The Akamba would only seek the services of the department when it was absolutely necessary to export stock out of the reserve, like in times of food shortage or tax payment. This made the D.C to comment that;

The number of stock moved out of the Machakos reserve on permit was only 3,525 head of cattle, 37,235 sheep and goat, the greatest number being moved when the natives found it necessary to sell their stock in order to obtain tax money.³⁹

³⁶ KNA/Report on Efforts to Stimulate Native Production by E. Harrison Acting Director of Agriculture 28, July, 1924.

³⁷ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*. 1976, 319.

³⁸ Machakos Diary Book April 12, 1926: KNA/ DC/MKS 6/4/1. W. Campbell.

³⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1932-33: KNA/ DC/MKS/ 1/1/25, 169.

The overall effect of this state of affairs was that cattle in Machakos were on constant quarantines because only those cattle which had been inoculated could be sold. Quarantine regulations, therefore, led to the confinement of stock in the reserve. This resulted in overstocking and environmental degradation.⁴⁰

We can therefore conclude that throughout the 1920s, the Machakos livestock economy remained largely untouched by any real effort on the colonial government to change or develop it. Due to the negative attitude that the veterinary department had towards Machakos livestock, it failed to pursue the policy with vigour in the region. Thus, the Dual Policy did not succeed in bringing any significant development in the Machakos livestock sector. However, the period witnessed some transformation in crop production as the following section reveals.

4.4 Agricultural Production Trends in the Inter-War Period

During the 1920s, at a time when the stereotype of Akamba conservatism was being used to justify the lack of any major shift in colonial policy, economic transformation took root among the Akamba especially those of north and west of Machakos. The change manifested itself in new attitudes towards crop production. The Akamba started appreciating the market-oriented crop production. This started gradually with a few individuals, but gained momentum through the later 1920s and into the early 1930s.

A major symbol of this economic change was the new enthusiasm towards ox-teams. Although one or two chiefs had trained teams of oxen for ploughing as early as 1909 as mentioned in chapter three, the real enthusiasm for plough teams came in the 1920s when a number of Akamba had become familiar with them on settler farms. By 1934,

⁴⁰ Owako, F. N. "Machakos Land and Population Problems". In *Studies in East African Geography and Development*, ed. Simeon H. Ominde, 177-192. London: Heinemann Educational Books. 1971.

the number of ploughs in Machakos was over 600.⁴¹ The use of the plough gained momentum because of their efficiency. The plough could break up more land for cultivation than the wooden digging stick or the iron hoe. The crops grown by the Akamba in Machakos at that time were mainly sorghum, millet, maize, beans and peas which the Akamba had always produced.⁴²

But in the late 1920s, with the increased use of the plough, there was a long-term shift from sorghum and millet to maize among the Akamba. The use of plough resulted to high yields of crops hence encouraging more Akamba to become more involved in maize production. As David Matheka narrates;

Before I bought a plough, i used to plant only a small area just enough for my family. However, when I bought the plough, i started planting bigger areas. I could now harvest hundreds of bags which I used to sell in Nairobi or sell to Indian cereal buyers. I made so much profit which I used to build a brick shop where i continued selling my farm produce and other goods. Later, I decided to cultivate all my land and sell all the livestock I had. I only retained the ox-teams and a few cows for milk.⁴³

According to Peberdy,⁴⁴ maize became more popular from the 1920s as compared to the initial years of colonial rule. This was due to a variety of reasons. First, famine relief programmes and commercial imports during drought were both in form of maize, hence, reinforcing the trend towards maize production.⁴⁵ A part from that, the Akamba employees in European farms were paid partly in maize or maize flour. This made them to get used to maize as their staple food. Maize also proved to be slightly superior to sorghum in terms of resistance to locust attacks, it was also easy to grow, less susceptible to disease than sorghum, and required less labour for bird scaring and threshing unlike millet. The above characteristics increased the popularity of maize.

⁴¹ Kitching, G. *Class and Economic Change in Kenya*, 94.

⁴² Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

⁴³ David Matheka, OI at Syokimau on 14/11/2020.

⁴⁴ Peberdy, J. R. *Notes on Some Economic Aspects of Machakos District*. 1961.

⁴⁵ Owako, F.N. "Machakos Land and Population Problems"

Thus, in 1930, maize was estimated to occupy 42% of the cropped area, and sorghum and the millets together, only 21%.⁴⁶

From 1932 onwards, the Agricultural Department carried out trials on more than 10 imported maize varieties, about 10 Kenyan varieties and hybrids and chose the ones suitable for Machakos. It encouraged the people of Machakos to plant them. Thus there was a shift from livestock production to maize growing. The shift is reflected in the work song below which was sung during the harvest period.

| | |
|---|--|
| <i>Musungu anaisye tuvande mbemba.</i> | The white man said that we should plant maize, |
| <i>na itu tunaivanda,</i> | And we did that. |
| <i>Mundu umwe akaselewa akiithya ng'ombe,</i> | One man was left herding cattle. |
| <i>Tukamutheka twitala mbesa,</i> | We will laugh at him as we count money |
| <i>twatwaa makunia ma mbemba ndunyu.</i> | After taking sacks of maize to the market. ⁴⁷ |

From the above work song, it is more than evident that the people of Machakos had started appreciating maize as a cash crop more than they did livestock.

Alongside maize and the usual production of other grains and legumes, a more intensive commercial land-use developed in the Machakos reserve. In the later 1920s and early 1930s, as transport facilities improved and opened up the urban market of Nairobi, market gardening, initially confined to southern Iveti, spread through Iveti into Kangundo and Matungulu. In addition, farmers in the northern location, using seeds obtained from mission gardens, introduced several new types of vegetables and fruits in their small holdings. These included onions, European potatoes, straw berries and mangoes.

In Kilungu and Mbooni massifs, apart from the production for fresh fruits and vegetables, wattle was also adopted. It was first introduced by the Spiritan's missions

⁴⁶ Tiffen, M., *et al* "More People, Less Erosion.

⁴⁷ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

and the forestry department nurseries. The inhabitants of these locations readily adopted it because its bark had a ready market. The wattle sales were very impressive. Bark from Mbooni and Kilungu began to enter the market on a significant scale from the mid-1930s. The producers sold it directly to a European firm but in 1938, an Indian firm of M.D. Puri and sons installed their cotton ginnery and a wattle factory at Nzau and the D.C encouraged producers to form co-operative societies to facilitate sales to the factory.⁴⁸ In addition, the canning factory established by the Kenya Orchards Limited at the foot of the Mua Hills in 1938 to purchase fruits and vegetables from both the Europeans and the Akamba farmers was a great success. These developments highlighted the positive transformation which was taking place in the Akamba economy. The two businesses, along with the cotton ginnery indicated that the Akamba economy had reached a stage in its evolution permitting sustained production for the market thus boosting the growth of local agricultural processing industry.

In 1934, after the great famine, the colonial government decided to introduce a cash crop which would be a reliable solution to make the Akamba to be self-sufficient. The officials placed their hopes on cotton, which had been successfully introduced as a cash-crop in Kitui and planting begun in 1935 in Mukaa, Mbitini, Nzau, Kaumoni and lower Kilungu. All the farmers were forced to purchase seed and plant it in their fields under the supervision of thirty cotton instructors, a number of whom were non-Kamba. At first, growers had to transport their cotton to a ginnery in Kitui, but in 1938, Puri and sons Merchants who had been prominent businessmen in Machakos Township since 1919, opened a ginnery at Nzau location and obtained monopoly purchase of all local

⁴⁸Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 180.

cotton⁴⁹. However, the cotton project failed because the Akamba showed no enthusiasm towards it.

Other cash crops that were introduced to these areas were groundnuts and simsim. The overall effect was the promotion of market-oriented crops rather than subsistence crops during this period. In 1935 for example, the seeds issued by the colonial administration from seed farms were majorly for cash crops. They included 330 bags of maize, 160 bags of beans, 60 bags of green grams, 20 bags of English potatoes and only 8 bags of sorghum.⁵⁰ All these were commercial crops. A part from sorghum which was given in a very small quantity, all the others were market oriented crops. Therefore, this programme was mainly meant to promote the incorporation of the Akamba into the market economy.

A number of observations emerge from the colonial push for cash crop initiatives among the Akamba of Machakos during the inter-war period as they relate to the livestock economy. First, the shift to cash crop production led to more clearing of any available land for the production of cash crops. This worsened the already existing problem of land scarcity especially grazing land. The central feature of this emergent scarcity was the disappearance of *wetu* as a result of both the need for new land for subsistence, and the boost given to the expansion of cultivation by the spread of cash cropping. The land scarcity issue became so serious that it gave new emphasis on two land use practices; tenancy and sale where a man could become the tenant of another in return for payment. These practices had neither been witnessed in precolonial times nor even in the formative years of the colonial encounter among the Akamba of Machakos.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Machakos District Annual Report, 1932-35: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/25.

In addition, the adoption of plough agriculture by the young Akamba entrepreneurs further speeded up the process by which the communal land of the *wau* was converted to be proprietary land since a plough owner could establish rights of cultivation over a large area of *wau* for cash crop production. Thus, the policy of maximum production during the inter-war years led to a state of agrarian crisis in Machakos. Increased crop production had been encouraged without improvement in agricultural techniques, a practice that led to soil degradation and erosion. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that although the use of ox-ploughs had become more widespread than before, people of Machakos had never been adequately trained in their proper use. Fields were ploughed downhill, making it easy for rain water to wash away top soil. Farm boundaries were turned into big gullies as soil became increasingly exhausted due to overuse and erosion. Thus, during the inter-war years, the *wau* land came under increasing pressure from population growth and the reduction of the grazeable land. Such pressure was evident from the controversy that ensued over the Yatta plateau as detailed below.

4.5 The Yatta Plateau Controversy

The controversy brought about by the declaration of the Yatta plateau as a Crown Land in 1906 as demonstrated in the previous chapter, continued to be a major problem even after the World War I. By the early 1920s, the application for grazing in the Yatta had become an annual occurrence. Over 20,000 cattle and unknown number of sheep and goats were using the Yatta for pasture⁵¹. However, as much as the Akamba had now regained access to the Yatta, their traditional free commonage rights in the area had now been transformed into money rentals to a colonial landlord.⁵²

⁵¹ KNA: Thompson C.B. The Yatta and the Akamba Grazing Problem. Typescript. 1924.

⁵² Kimambo, I.N. "The Economic History of the Kamba", 90.

From 1921-3, the administration attempted to give a lasting solution to the future of the Yatta. There were some suggestions of opening the plateau to agricultural settlement by the Indians. However, the Indians could not be allowed to occupy the crown land as the white settlers felt that the crown lands should be left exclusively for white settlement. Besides, these were the years of the great controversy about the restriction on Indian land-owning in the White Highlands.⁵³ In 1923, a meeting of Kenya's Provincial Commissioners resolved that the Yatta should be added to the Machakos reserve.⁵⁴ However, this resolution was never to be implemented as the Ulu Settlers Association which represented the settlers of Machakos strongly opposed the idea of the Akamba grazing in the Yatta insisting that the Yatta being a Crown Land should be reserved only for European use. Subsequently, in 1924, a white settler applied for 10,000 acres on the plateau to set up a sisal plantation, a factor which brought about a heated controversy.⁵⁵ To solve the controversy, Trail, the then P.C of Ukamba Province, holding the view that the colonial government favoured the European-managed agriculture on the Yatta, denied the Akamba access to the area. He then ordered the eviction of all the Akamba and their livestock from the plateau.

The eviction started in 1924 and resulted in death of between 30,000-40,000 Akamba cattle⁵⁶. Consequently, there was a protest by the Akamba livestock owners. The protests were led by the Mission elders and teachers who acted as the spokespersons for the Akamba stock keepers. Discussion of the affair reached the Legislative Council in Nairobi and even as far as the House of Commons in London.⁵⁷ Finally, due to the

⁵³ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 196.

⁵⁴ KNA/D.C/MKS/10A/13/Grazing of cattle in the Yatta plateau by Natives of the Machakos District, 1916-1923.

⁵⁵ Kenya Land Commission Report. 1356-9.

⁵⁶ Machakos District Annual Report, 1924: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/15, 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 5.

heavy livestock mortality and the subsequent demonstrations, the Akamba who occupied the eastern locations were allowed to use the pasture in Yatta, however, they received no compensation for their losses. The P.C. of Ukambani instructed the two D.C.s to allow the Akamba of both districts (Machakos and Kitui) to occupy the Yatta Plateau. Nevertheless, while the administration granted some access to the Yatta, it steadfastly denied the Akamba occupation rights there. The Akamba were not allowed to engage in any cultivation or permanent settlement on the plateau. Only a limited construction of the makeshift *syengo* (cattle post) for sheltering the herders was allowed.⁵⁸ In addition, they had to pay 2 shillings per animal and a reasonable quantity of skins⁵⁹.

This restriction created a major problem. The pasture facilities became a preserve of only those who could afford the monthly grazing fee of 2 shillings per head of cattle and 50 cents per head of goat and sheep.⁶⁰ This problem, together with the settlers' hostility towards Akamba livestock led to confinement of livestock in the reserve for most of the year, thereby causing environmental degradation. Moreover, Yatta pasture was only available to the eastern locations. Hence, areas away from it, like Mukaa, continued to suffer from pasture shortage. The consequence was that the Akamba started poaching for pasture. Even heavy fines could not discourage poaching of pasture in the alienated land bordering the western locations.

Pasture poaching in turn led to a bitter agitation among the settlers. In 1925, the District Committee (the settlers' equivalent of the LNC) advised the government to auction all the Crown Land marked out for alienation for such land stood as a temptation to the

⁵⁸ Moore, T. "Land Use and Erosion in the Machakos Hills". *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, Vol. 69, No. 3 (Sep., 1979), 422.

⁵⁹ Machakos District Political Record Book, Vol. 5, 1924. KNA/DC/MKS 10A/1/4.

⁶⁰ Simiyu, V.G. "Land and Politics in Ukambani," 135.

Akamba to continue poaching for pasture.⁶¹ On August 31 1925, the settlers held a general assembly (Ulu Farmer's Association) and passed a resolution deploring the occupation of the Yatta by the Akamba. While conceding that it was impossible to chase the Akamba from there completely, they demanded a rigorous policy and a strict limitation of livestock in the Reserve.⁶² Consequently, from 1926, the administration intensified its propaganda to persuade the Akamba to sell most of their livestock in order to ease the grazing problem.

The grazing issue was worsened by the onset of the Great Depression in the 1930s which forced the white settlers evict some squatters. As a consequence, the squatters who were evicted from the settler farms went back to the reserves with their livestock. Besides, even those squatters who were left on the settler farms were ordered to reduce on their numbers. To reinforce this, in 1934, the colonial administration introduced regulations which limited to ten the number of cattle any adult squatter might keep on a European farms.⁶³ Accordingly, the squatters took their surplus stock back to the reserve thereby exacerbating the grazing problem. The repercussion was more pressure on the reserve. By the mid-1930s, some Akamba herdsmen were driving their livestock into the Mwea region of Nyeri district because of inadequate grazing in their own reserve. Nonetheless, this only solved the matter temporarily as in 1930, the DC of Nyeri announced the closure of free settlement area of the Mwea plains and ordered that all the Akamba, together with their livestock should be evicted. In doing so, the D.C was enforcing an earlier ruling which stated that the reserves are set aside for the use by members of a specific community and not for the general use by all the

⁶¹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1925: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/15, 15.

⁶² Simiyu, V.G. "Land and Politics in Ukambani", 136.

⁶³ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

Africans.⁶⁴ Therefore, the stock of the migrants returning from the Mwea, and the livestock expelled from the European settler farms added some 37,000 head of cattle and unknown number of goats and sheep to the reserve.⁶⁵ Many livestock owners did not have anywhere to graze their stock. Apparently, a class of landless peasants had already been created. The increasing pressure led to the intervention of the Kenya Land Commission which added several hundred square miles to the reserve.⁶⁶ The Kenya Land Commission thus created new boundaries of the Yatta.

However, the new Yatta locations joined the reserve on a different arrangement from the ones that existed during the pre-colonial period. Not only did the administration uphold its ban on settlement on the Yatta but it also subjected the pasture lands of the plateau to even tighter restriction following a recommendation of the commission. In 1937, it introduced a quota of 12,000 head of cattle in the area (where 49,000 grazed in 1936), prohibited all sheep and goats and divided the new location by an east-west line to regulate seasonal grazing.⁶⁷

There can be little doubt that during the inter-war period, land available for livestock grazing reduced drastically so that by the eve of the World War II, the Yatta, which had played such an important part in Akamba history, was closing down. The community whose social structure and land use system evolved in conditions of plentiful land began to face a halt to its land colonizing activities. This owed to the colonial land policies in the 1930s which were extremely restrictive. The colonial administration was hell bent on frustrating the livestock keeping communities. Thus, instead of making it easier for

⁶⁴ KNA/PC/CP/Ukamba Province: Natives in the Reserve Other Than their Own. 1931.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Kenya, Colony and Protectorate of, 1933. Kenya Land Commission, Evidence, Vol. 2. Nairobi: Government Printer. See also, Simiyu, V. (1974). "Land and Politics in Ukambani."

⁶⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1937-38: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/27.

the Akamba to satisfy their need for pasture, the administrators were now making it even more difficult. Aside from this grazing restrictions, the livestock sector in Machakos was further frustrated by the imposition of quarantines as to which the analysis below now focuses.

4.6 Livestock Marketing and the Politics of Quarantines

During the inter-war years, just like it was during the initial years of colonial rule, the colonial government continued to impose quarantines in an attempt to control and check the spread of cattle diseases especially from the African reserves to settler ranches. Only the inoculated cattle could be allowed to pass through the quarantines. The problem with this restriction was that there were inadequate veterinary officers and facilities for provision of inoculation services in the reserve. Needless to say, even if the facilities were there the Akamba would still not take all their cattle for inoculation as they could not afford the cost and also because they had come to associate inoculations with quarantines. Thus, given that most of the Akamba cattle were not inoculated, Machakos remained in quarantine, not only because of ECF, but later, rinderpest and pleuropneumonia. It is important to note that even if the Akamba were to take all their cattle for inoculations, the quarantine station were too few that they would not be able to serve all the livestock. As such, livestock trade was hampered. At some point the D.C. sympathising with the Akamba noted that;

Trade has been on the decline. The natives have on several occasions asked for easier outlet for their slaughter stock than through Machakos Quarantine Station. It is a pity inoculating centres cannot be established on all main routes from the reserve as such a measure would undoubtedly encourage more traders from Kikuyu Reserve.⁶⁸

The concern was however not addressed. Instead, veterinary scouts were deployed to monitor the movement of stock in Machakos whenever quarantines were in force. The

⁶⁸ KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/25 Machakos District Annual Report, 1932-35.

administration officials were also under strict instructions not to allow any movement of cattle outside their areas of jurisdiction during such periods. Accordingly, the people of Machakos became convinced that quarantines were not only detrimental to their economic interests, but also that the colonial officials appeared to use these regulations for the benefit of the settlers. As a result, the cattle traders in Machakos tried to exploit the loopholes in quarantine regulations.

One effective way of neutralising the quarantine system was by involving in illegal cattle transactions. This entailed the establishment of off-view and off-road cattle routes and markets which were outside the reach of veterinary scouts. These markets became so popular that by 1939 each locality in Machakos had such off-view routes and markets.

Indeed, Munro⁶⁹ has noted that due to the quarantine restrictions, much of the post WWI period livestock trade was illegal. Although by 1924 seventy licensed Akamba and kikuyu dealers were handling 'legal' cattle at the rate of 5,000 head per annum, cattle sold on the 'illegal' or black market, greatly outnumbered those sold and exported in accordance with the colonial restrictions.

Another measure taken by the Akamba to circumvent the quarantine problem was the emergence of a professional group (*Aingi ma Ng'ombe*) who walked cattle to and from markets. By the nature of their work, they were knowledgeable about the marketing of cattle. They became the propelling force behind the success of the trade. They knew how to evade veterinary scouts during quarantines. Furthermore, they were not only

⁶⁹ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 85.

conversant with the cattle prices in different markets but were also familiar with the local physical environment and knew the shortest and safest routes to the markets.⁷⁰

After discovering that there were illegal markets, the colonial administration introduced more stringent measures in order to prevent the circumvention of the quarantine regulations. For example, exchange or purchase of cattle between individuals of different locations was proscribed. Cattle had to be sold or bought only in the official markets. The new regulations decreed that no African shall within the aforesaid locations purchase cattle for cash or barter from a Kamba of another community or location other than his own or elsewhere than at a market authorised.⁷¹

By adopting these stringent measures, the colonial administration hoped to achieve three main objectives. The first was to ensure that all cattle transactions took place at official markets. It became illegal to buy and sell cattle outside these markets. Secondly, the colonial administration hoped to restructure the existing village-based barter trading patterns and by so doing tighten the colonial grip on the local economy because apart from enforcing quarantines, the new marketing regulations were supposed to raise revenue for the local colonial authorities through the sale of permits to cattle traders.⁷² The official markets were henceforth to serve as points for the restructuring and coordination of cattle transactions.

Nonetheless, Quarantine regulations were not fully enforceable for some reasons. First, the number of veterinary scouts was few and could hardly police all the routes effectively. Second, there was very little attempt to popularise the regulations to the

⁷⁰Mutua Nzuki, OI at Makutano on 01/11/2020.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²Ndege. G. "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division".

local cattle owners and traders. As a result, the regulations proved unpopular with the Akamba. The third reason was the inconsistency and contradictory nature of the quarantine regulations. For example, the colonial administration sometimes allowed the movement of cattle for slaughter even for cattle which had not been inoculated. Furthermore, while the colonial administration was prohibiting movement of cattle to neighbouring locations and districts, it was encouraging and advising settlers to purchase African cattle.

It is clear from the above discussion that the quarantine measures which had begun since 1902 had become quite common and stringent in the 1920s and 1930s. In the long run, they slowed the tempo of the trade and contributed to the rapid increase of livestock in the African reserves to the extent that the pastoral communities were increasingly finding it impossible to utilise the available pasture. The regulations antagonised the local cattle owners and traders in Machakos to the extent that they started suspecting the intentions of the colonial authorities. They saw the quarantine measures as a deliberate attempt to undermine the local economy. Accordingly, many traders bitterly complained about this disruption of trade. But since the local traders could not challenge the colonial regime, they had no option except to fit within the new framework and cope as best as they could with the strict surveillance by veterinary scouts and administration officials. This made the livestock trade less attractive. Thus, besides the livestock trade, some people started venturing in other forms of trade as discussed below.

4.7 The Emergence of an Enterprising Class

The dearth of opportunities occasioned by lack of pasture and natural calamities made a number of Akamba to engage in commerce. With the turn to cash cropping at a time of buoyant prices for cash crop products, the general level of commercial activity in the

district rose. The number of trading centres increased during the inter-war period. This stimulated the growth of urban centres. The trading centres attached to livestock markets experienced expansion through the establishment of permanent shops, tea-shops, butcheries and temporary shelters of vegetable kiosks to service the large population that met during market days.

Market places recognized by the administration as public markets grew to 11 in 1929 and 28 in 1932 out of which 9 were African markets.⁷³ The Akamba also took to shop keeping. Men with experience in livestock trade or Indian owned shops or with savings from cash cropping or wage employment built and stocked small brick shops alongside the periodic markets. The number of Akamba owned shops in the reserve rose to 85 in 1929 and to 169 in 1932, most engaged in general retailing and bulking up produce for resale to Indian dealers, but a few were more specialised tea-shops and butcher's shops. In 1932, the Akamba owned 35 eating houses and 10 butcher shops.⁷⁴ The growth of an internal market for foodstuffs in Machakos gave a new advantage to crop production over livestock production. For instance, in 1929, the local price for maize was double the 1906 price while the price of hides and skins for export had fallen by 30% from the 1906 price. Accordingly, a conscious expansion of cash crop production was now very much desired.

This new awakening also led to a major conflict between the Akamba and the Kikuyu. The conflict was fuelled by the competition over markets. Despite the fact that Machakos district was the principal source of eggs and fowls for Nairobi, Kikuyu middlemen controlled the urban market. They were not comfortable buying from the Akamba dealers in Nairobi. Hence, they sent their agents to Machakos district,

⁷³ Ukamba Province Annual Report, 1925-32: KNA/PC/CP 4/2/3.

⁷⁴ Native Affairs Department, Annual Report, Nairobi: Government Printers. 1932, 56.

something that was seriously resented by the Akamba egg dealers. There was also a rivalry between the Kikuyu and the Akamba in the livestock trade from Machakos district to markets in the Kikuyu areas. The Kikuyu dealers adopted various devices to restrict the Akamba from their market including the levy of extra tolls by market masters, and persuading local officials to withhold trading licences from Akamba dealers during tax collection periods. Akamba resentment at these tactics probably underlay an incident in 1935 when people in the Mukuyuni area of Kangundo attacked a party of Kikuyu bringing cattle from Mwala and killed two of them.⁷⁵

Most of these establishments were set up by livestock traders and traders in livestock by-products through the profits they accrued from the livestock trade. Accordingly, livestock sector had now to compete with other sectors that the Akamba had started engaging in. In fact, the picture that emerges from the commercialization of livestock economy and the engagement in cash cropping is that a new enterprising group was beginning to shift resources from livestock industry to more lucrative sectors of the economy of Machakos. Some of their investments were quite parallel to the hitherto cherished activity of livestock keeping. This shift of resources from livestock to the new ventures was in essence institutionalising and consolidating competing ventures to livestock economy in Machakos. This led to labour shortage in the livestock sector hence jeopardizing its development. The situation was further aggravated by the labour migration occasioned by the *Kakuti* famine. This is made clear in the next section.

⁷⁵ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 174.

4.8 The Kakuti Famine, the Dwindling Livestock Industry and the Changes in Labour Patterns

As noted in chapter three, up to the end of the First World War, the Akamba mostly fulfilled their material needs and tax obligation through the sale of livestock. As a result, the Akamba entered the labor market selectively, and throughout the first two decades of colonial rule, the District Commissioners complained of the Akamba unwillingness to work on government projects and settler farms. Gupta underscores this by observing that before the drought, the Akamba could not engage in wage labour unless forced out under the Native Authority Ordinance or redirected on to European farms through the use of the Native Registration Ordinance. The local government's labour requirements were, also, obtained through the use of the Native Authority Ordinance under which tribal Headman had to obtain labour for government.⁷⁶ Even many young, unestablished men avoided wage labour because their fathers paid their taxes through the sale of livestock thereby outbidding the government and settlers for their labour. This tendency to escape wage labour was often interpreted in terms of the 'lazy native'. Tignor has argued that for the Akamba, livestock was not just a buffer against crop failures but also a protection against the exploitative colonial labour market.⁷⁷

However, by 1929, the situation had changed and many Akamba were freely looking for wage labour. From 1928 through the mid-1930s, the whole Ukambani region experienced severe famine. The great *Kakuti*⁷⁸ famine of 1928-29 resulted from locust plague and the interruption of established rainfall patterns. These factors combined to

⁷⁶ Gupta, D. "A Brief Economic History of the Akamba", 67-68.

⁷⁷ Parsons, T., "Wakamba Warriors Are Soldiers of the Queen".

⁷⁸ The Kakuti famine had several names. Kakuti is probably the most popular and describes the locusts' action of stripping the land of its vegetative cover. Another name given to the famine was Nzalukangye, which expresses the bewilderment the famine caused among the people. With their crops and livestock affected by the locust infestation, they had to search everywhere to get food because the problem spread all over the district. The third name of the famine was Nzamulangye, it expresses the act of swatting locust nymphs with leafy twigs.

eliminate the interdependence between ecological zones. Second, the locusts destroyed both crops and pasture. This weakened the livestock industry which the Akamba had depended on for milk and blood in periods of food scarcity. Lack of pasture not only made livestock too weak to provide food and/or sell but also caused a heavy mortality. It was estimated that during the drought, as many as 60,000 head of Akamba cattle were either sold, eaten in place of other food or died from lack of grazing.⁷⁹ This struck a blow at the self-sufficiency of the Akamba. This led to a major paradigm shift from majorly livestock oriented economy to more preferences in wage labour. This paradigm shift is amplified by the words of Musyoka Ndolo who says,

*Before the famine of Kakuti, I had more than 100 heads of cattle. The famine was very severe and i took 85 to Katende during that period. Out of those, only 3 bulls survived. I lost hope in keeping livestock and sought for wage labour.*⁸⁰

The colonial government, eager to see a reduction in the number of Akamba livestock, refused to offer any assistance and insisted that the Akamba had a lot livestock which they could sell to get money for food and tax. However, the Akamba had lost so many animals that they could sell to get money for tax. More and more sought wage labour. This was evident from the number of the Akamba seeking wage labour in the late 1920s and early 1930s. For instance, while there were only 2,581 people working outside the district in 1926, the number grew to a monthly average of 6,730 in October 1928 and 8,501 in October 1929.⁸¹ The increase in labour migrancy was a reflection of worsening conditions in the reserve. For example, in 1931, the D.C. observed that;

In the previous decades, the Machakos Akamba paid their taxes and fines promptly due to their livestock wealth and only extra-economic measures could force them to enter wage labour in large numbers the way they are doing now.⁸²

⁷⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1930: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/23.

⁸⁰ Musyoka Ndolo, OI at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020

⁸¹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1929: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/22, 19.

⁸² Machakos District Annual Report, 1931: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/24, 5.

The paradox of the time was that although before 1925 it had been necessary to apply the provisions of the Native Authority Ordinance to obtain 500 men for work on the Thika-Nyeri railway line,⁸³ in 1929, labour recruiters in Machakos now easily obtained considerable numbers of men for work outside the district.⁸⁴ Similarly, European sisal estates in Kiambu and Thika, which were renowned for their oppressive labour conditions, had enough Akamba casual labourers in 1929.⁸⁵ The labour Department Report of 1937 noted that neither secondary industry nor agriculture outside the Native Land Units could absorb a very much larger proportion of Africans seeking for wage labour.⁸⁶

Others were offered employment in the military. The military was a reliable source of income. In addition, military service also granted *askaris* an exemption from taxation and forced labor. Thus, the government service in general, and the KAR in particular, became increasingly popular among the Akamba in the 1930s. The District Commissioner noted;

Although the Kamba still dislike manual labor, there is a sharp rise in the number of applicants for the few available openings in the KAR.⁸⁷

In addition to formal employment, the Akamba also engaged in squatting. This was necessitated by the lack of grazing land. However, from 1929, the demand for squatting facilities in Machakos was greater than the European farms in the district could provide. Consequently, settlers took advantage of the situation and began agitating for conditions which were more favourable to them at the detriment of the squatters. For instance, they started pressing for the implementation of a 270-day working year and

⁸³ Machakos District Annual Report, 1925: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/15, 18.

⁸⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1929: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/22, 19.

⁸⁵ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*, 178.

⁸⁶ Parsons, T., "Wakamba Warriors Are Soldiers of the Queen".

⁸⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1931: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/24.

the reduction of the squatters stock in their farms from 10 to 5 heads of cattle for every male squatter. In short, the 1928-29 food and pasture shortage led to abundance of cheap labour and therefore the need to tighten squatting conditions.⁸⁸ While corroborating this reality, the D.C reported that;

The shortage of food in the Reserve brought out both more casual and squatter labour for work on the farms. An endeavour has been made to tighten up the provisions of the Resident Native Labourers' Ordinance⁸⁹

For the colonial administration, the worsening condition of the Akamba reserve was a welcome development. The then D.C. enthusiastically noted that the lack of food as a consequence of drought had done something to cause the Akamba to seek employment away from home and it was only for such economic crisis that would have resulted in Akamba going out in large numbers to seek for wage employment as the Kavirondo and Kikuyu⁹⁰.

From the foregoing, the study can advance several observations. Firstly, colonialism through its economic and labour policies created a crisis in local economic production. The 1928-29 famine accelerated the tendency to remove labour from animal husbandry in order to invest it in wage employment. Acute labour shortages also contributed to the famines in Machakos as the Akamba had relied on livestock for their food security.

On the other hand, socio-economic relation between men and women were greatly transformed. Women had to carry the burden regarding the production and the running of daily affairs of the household in the absence of men. Women cultivated land, took care of the livestock and even engaged in local trade to maintain their households. It was these new developments in division of labour between men in their work places and women in the reserves that became one of the means through which women were

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1929: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/22, 16.

⁹⁰ Ibid, 5.

made to subsidize the development of the European economic sector. The impact on women was that they were left as the foundation of the subsistence sector. As such, women were indirectly integrated into the capitalist system. In other words, the traditional subsistence sector (pre-capitalist mode of production) and modern sector (capitalist mode of production) were existing side by side, as a product of capitalism.

As noted in chapter one, the articulation process was not necessarily to destroy the pre-capitalist mode of production completely but rather to transform some aspects of it while at the same time conserving other aspects. Hence, women were to provide food for the family and sometimes to their husbands who were working in towns because men who were mostly engaged in wage labour were getting very low wages to allow the modern sector to accumulate more capital. The low wages earned by many African male labourers rendered them incapable of buying enough food. Thus, they relied on their wives in rural areas to provide them with some food.

Lastly, migratory labour caused the gradual decline of the once valued traditional communal work. The people of Machakos now attached more importance to cash as an exchange value. This meant that there was no free labour any longer. Labour itself had become a commodity which could be sold in exchange for money. Accordingly, there was deprivation of labour for animal husbandry. Further, the Great world depression which occurred in the early 1930s dealt another blow to the livestock economy of Machakos. This is detailed in the next section.

4.9 The Impact of the Great Depression on the Machakos Livestock Economy, 1929-33

The Great Depression, which lasted from 1929 to 1933, was a period of economic stagnation in African colonial history. The depression struck at the economies of all the

African colonies affecting both European settler agriculture and African production. Many European settlers in Kenya came near to bankruptcy as their export markets collapsed. Subsequently, the colonial state was at that time preoccupied with the economic recovery at the expense of the colony's development. The only remarkable feature being an unprecedented exploitation of African resources by the colonial state with the fundamental issue being the state protection of settler estate production, in order to rescue it from the brink of collapse. In doing so, the colonial state sought to transfer the burdens and sacrifices of recovery to the Africans. This strategy saw the colonial administration attempt to save a vast majority of white settlers who lacked the reserves of capital necessary to withstand the slump. Frustrated by the turn of events, most of the settlers met their crisis politically, rather than economically. They pressured the government to prop up their production with subsidies and forms of protection. The years of the depression, therefore, exposed the weakness of the settler economy, thereby generating a wider debate that questioned the very validity of the settler position in East Africa.⁹¹

On the other hand, the African peasant did not escape the vagaries of the depression, although they proved to be more resilient and bounced back with vigour for the economic reconstruction.⁹² For instance in Machakos, the depression stagnated trade and virtually eliminated the demand for livestock and other locally produced commodities. The depression also affected the Machakos economy in that the prices of livestock, hides, skins and ghee fell drastically. These being the major trade items of the Akamba, they were left with no other choice but to sell most of their stock at any

⁹¹ Brett, E. A. *Colonialism and Underdevelopment in East Africa: The Politics of Economic Change* (London, 1973), 184-185.

⁹² Kanogo, T. "Kenya and the Depression, 1929-1939" in W.R. Ochieng' (Ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. (London, 1989), 112.

price offered in order to buy food and pay taxes. This in turn led to a sharp plunge in the value of livestock. In particular, cattle prices during 1932-1934 fell to a fifth of their level ten years earlier. According to indices compiled by Stanner,⁹³ in 1933, prices of cattle dropped not only in Machakos but Kenya as a whole. Kitching also supported Stanner's observation by noting that during this time, cattle prices in Kenya were more adversely affected as compared to other commodities. He notes;

Though the money prices of food crops fell continuously from the late 1929 to 1934, the prices of cattle fell even more drastically during the same period. This was more due to a series of drought and locusts infestation which affected pastoral areas particularly badly.⁹⁴

Surprisingly, the fall in stock prices during the depression was applauded as a "blessing in disguise" by the administration. In 1933 the District Commissioner of Machakos asserted that;

Stock prices remain very low. This should be taken as a blessing in disguise in a district such as this, because it tends to dispel the illusion often cherished by natives as to the high value of their stock; and also because it necessitates a greater number of animals being sold to obtain a given sum of money, thus helping to reduce numbers.⁹⁵

The economic disasters drove large numbers of Akamba seeking wage employment, and accepting employment as sisal cutters. Interestingly, jobs which would have been rejected before the depression were now acceptable. This indicated a general decline in alternative opportunities of earning income.⁹⁶ The trend was also accelerated by a nearly 30 percent jump in Ukambani's population during the interwar era.

However, just as the Akamba were beginning to enter into the wage labour, their hopes were shattered by the ravages of the great depression. The depression made many settlers to become bankrupt and some were forced to abandon farming. Accordingly,

⁹³ Stanner, W.E.H. *The Kitui Akamba. A study of British Colonial Administration in East Africa.*

⁹⁴ Kitching, G. *Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite Bourgeoisie, 1905-1970.* (New Haven, 1980), 159.

⁹⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1934: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/25, 35.

⁹⁶ Gupta, D. "A Brief Economic History of the Akamba", 68.

the demand for African labour declined. This made some of the Akamba who had been absorbed in wage to be declared redundant. Thus, the number of Machakos Akamba labourers in European farms was reduced from 6,739 in 1930 to 4,651 in 1931 and those who remained had their wages reduced by 15 per cent⁹⁷ In short, the Akamba, who for a long time had been blamed for the colony's labour problems because of their being 'lazy and indolent' could not get employment when they needed it most. This crisis is overemphasized by Sharon Stitcher who arguing in the context of Kenya as a whole notes that;

Whereas in the 1920 the problem for settlers had been to extract enough labour from the peasant economy to realise profits from the high export prices, during the depression, the problem was swiftly reversed; how to wind down the settler enterprise, disemploy labour and tighten belts for a period of adversity became the problem.⁹⁸

The conclusion that can be made from the foregoing is that the period of the Great depression was terribly a demoralizing one for the Machakos livestock economy in many ways. First, following the Great depression, the people of Machakos were fully drawn into the colonial economy. They had no choice but to participate in that economy through selling their labour, engaging in trade or in the cultivation of cash crops. As a consequence, the people of Machakos became so dependent on wage-labour. Therefore, labour that could otherwise boost the livestock sector was directed to wage labour. While the Great Depression was taking its toll, Machakos livestock economy was further affected by a locust invasion in 1934 which led to destruction of crops and pasture. This was largely responsible for the *Mavindi* Famine analysed below.

⁹⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1928-30: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/22, 6.

⁹⁸ Stitcher, S. "The Formation of a Working Class in Kenya", in R. Sandbrook and R. Cohen (Eds). *The Development of an African Working Class: Studies in Class Formation and Action*. (London, 1975), 94.

4.10 The Mavindi Famine-1934-35

Mavindi famine⁹⁹ occurred against the background of a deteriorating ecology, depression and other problems such as drought and locust invasions. This interplay of factors was largely responsible for the social breakdown witnessed in Machakos during this time. However, the immediate cause of the famine was an aftermath of the locust invasion which devastated the vegetation, crops and pastures not only in Machakos but in the entire Ukambani region. These famines forced the Akamba to sell most of their stock to buy food. The extent to which the famines affected livestock sector in Machakos is reflected in the number of livestock sold from Machakos as shown in table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3: Livestock exported from Machakos on permit from 1934-1937

| Year | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Cattle | 3,524 | 9,512 | 10,520 | 7,832 |
| Goats | 37,235 | 76,062 | 89,243 | 27,881 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Report, 1937: KNA/MKS 1/1/27, 28.

Table 4.3 indicates that the number of cattle and goats exported from the Machakos reserve increased steadily especially from 1934-35. This is attributable to the *Mavindi* famine which occurred from 1934-35. On the other hand, the falling off of the numbers exported in 1937 is accounted for by the fact that it was a season of good rains when it was easier to find grazing land for the livestock in the reserve. The good rains also enabled the people of Machakos to have enough food. Hence, there was no need for selling much livestock as compared to the previous years.

⁹⁹ The Mavindi (bones) famine was so called because some people collected and sold bones to earn money for food. For more about the *Mavindi* famine, see Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

The *mavindi* famine mentioned above, also led to deaths of livestock. Consequently, there were many skins and hides sold from the Machakos reserve. Thus, the colonial administration, through the L.N.C, decided to promote the skin and hides trade. Shades (bandas) for buying and processing skins and hides were established in Machakos in 1934. Such shades were built by the Local Native Council at Machakos, Mbooni, Mitaboni, Kangundo, Matungulu, Syathani, Masii and Kaani to facilitate the buying of hides and skins. Although the government reported that the Akamba responded well to the skins and hides trade, the fact was that most of the animals died due to starvation as a result of drought and locust invasion. Table 4.4 shows the number of hides and skins delivered to the established buying shades.

Table 4.4: Number of Hides and Skins delivered to the Shades, 1934-38.

| | 1934 | 1935 | 1936 | 1937 | 1938 |
|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| Hides | 9,275 | 13,613 | 27,160 | 32,482 | 17,841 |
| Skins | 4280 | 8,914 | 24,690 | 48,550 | 35,892 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Report, 1938: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/27, 26.

It is quite clear from table 4.4 above that the number of skins and hides sold kept on going up. However, in 1938, there was a decrease in the sale of skins and hides. The decrease can be attributed to two causes. First, a very large percentage of the cattle collected for destocking sales would have died had they remained in the reserve. Second, the slaughter of cattle for meat ceased when destocking commenced.

Apart from the skin and hides industry, the dairy industry was also promoted. Three diaries were opened in Kasikeu, Nzauwi and Emali. The veterinary department monopolized sales of milk from the three diaries and intercepted milk supplies, checked

adulteration by lactometers, and converted the milk into ghee for bulk sale. In 1937, they converted 54,000 gallons and 33,000 gallons in 1938.¹⁰⁰

However, nothing much could be obtained from this trade as much of the livestock had died due to drought while others were sold to buy food or eaten as food. We can therefore conclude that the little that had been achieved in Machakos economy during the inter-war period was adversely affected by a series of natural disasters which were made worse by the effects of the depression. This drastically affected the livestock trade and the small export trade in skins.

During the high noon of the natural calamities and the depression, the environmental degradation also seems to have reached its apogee. As such, the 1930s were also characterized by the regional and global concerns over land degradation. This led to the infamous destocking policy as detailed in the next section.

4.11 The Anti-Soil Erosion Campaigns, the Dust Bowl and the Destocking Policy

In the 1930s, land degradation and the related problem of decline in soil fertility were at the core of the colonial state's concerns. The internalization of these issues underlined their importance to both governments and agricultural communities in many parts of the world. The American dust bowl of the 1930s provided the impetus for solving these environmental problems through the international exchange of agricultural and ecological information in the form of agro-ecological internationalism.¹⁰¹ Through the reports of newspapers and magazines, the images of the agricultural wasteland of the southern plains of America, an area that had previously been rich farmland, reached East Africa. Pamphlets and books alerting people to the

¹⁰⁰ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*, 182.

¹⁰¹ Shanguhya, M. *Population, Tradition, and Environmental Control in Colonial Kenya*. University of Rochester Press. Rochester. (2015).

dangers of erosion and instructing them on methods of soil conservation began to arrive in East Africa in the late 1920s. This copious literature, much of it emanating directly from the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service, under the guidance of Hugh Bennett, seemed to have particular relevance to the overcrowded African Reserves of Kenya, heavily populated parts of upland Tanganyika, and to the many intensively cropped areas of Uganda.¹⁰²

In Kenya, the most influential proponent of the campaign was Colin Maher, a graduate of the Imperial College of Tropical Agriculture in Trinidad who had spread professional interest in conservation. He was very influential through his enthusiastic reports and writings.¹⁰³

In Machakos, colonial officials and settlers were increasingly aware of land degradation on the African Reserves. Rather than linking this phenomenon with the successive forces of land alienation, quarantines, overpopulation, and disruption of land tenure and land use systems, colonial officials instead "constructed" the soil erosion crisis around Akamba cattle-rearing and agricultural practices.¹⁰⁴ The colonial government therefore, identified the Akamba agricultural and pastoral practices responsible for the soil erosion crisis.

The colonial government's recognition of overstocking in Machakos started back even before the First World War. That was because the Akamba would move surplus livestock into the Yatta plateau when offered a chance for temporary grazing.¹⁰⁵ The large and increasing stock population received attention in three major reports on East

¹⁰² Anderson, D. "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought", 326.

¹⁰³ Tiffen, M., *et al. More People, Less Erosion*, 1.

¹⁰⁴ Rocheleau, D. *et.al.* "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade", 1042.

¹⁰⁵ Leon Spencer, "Notes on the Kamba Destocking Controversy of 1938," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5-4 (1972), 634.

Africa: the Ormsby-Gore Commission of 1924-1925; the Hall Commission Report of 1929; and the Carter (Kenya) Land Commission Report of 1933-1934.

The Ormsby-Gore Commission felt that Machakos was overstocked and therefore the Akamba should not be allowed to increase their livestock. It called upon the Kenya government to substitute stock-raising with agriculture. The commission argued that in Machakos, livestock was kept from birth to death less as a source of milk and meat than as money. Hence, it had no economic value. In support of the Ormsby-Gore Commission, the annual report of the Native Affairs Department of 1925 estimated that the Machakos reserve carried four times as much stock as it should. A veterinary survey in Kangundo location in 1928 showed that the people possessed more than 15,000 cattle in an area that should not have had more than 8000.¹⁰⁶

Further, in 1929, the Agricultural Department estimated that the carrying capacity of the reserve was 60,000 cattle but that it in fact carried 247,000 cattle with 260, 000 goats and 50, 000 sheep.¹⁰⁷ On the contrary, the Akamba saw erosion as caused mainly by the Reserve boundaries, which prevented a family from moving to a new site where grazing and cultivation could be combined. For them, temporary relief grazing on the Yattas was the only solution as it, necessitated the transport of food from the home. The desirable areas for settlement and grazing were the lands disputed with the Europeans in the north, or the Yattas, and resentment at land lost was particularly strong in the north. To emphasise on that notion, when in 1938 the DC told a meeting in a northern location that they were putting too many cattle on too small a land (comparing this to a bag). One of those attending reported: 'But we had a bigger bag on Yatta and Mua Hills

¹⁰⁶ Tignor, R.L. *The Colonial Transformation of Kenya*.

¹⁰⁷ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Colonial Report Annual Report, 1929, 29.

where we could take our cattle but the Europeans had made the bag too small.¹⁰⁸ It is thus clear that the Akamba and the colonial government were not reading from the same script regarding soil erosion and the carrying capacity.

Supporting the above notion, Waweru¹⁰⁹ argues that the concept of carrying capacity is perhaps one of the most controversial paradigms in the science of resource management in arid and semi-arid lands (ASALs). He notes that it is extremely difficult to comprehend how the colonial government and the commissions arrived at the carrying capacity in African reserves. In the same vein, Sabine Hausler¹¹⁰ also describes the colonial approach to soil erosion and conservation which, like many other ideas of stock management then employed by the colonial administrations in the African reserves to be unfit as they were originally designed for cattle ranching in North America. She argues that in Africa, the concept was defined from an environmental point of view with no reference being made on social, economic and political factors that influence how Africans utilized their resources. While expressing the same views in regard to Machakos, Newman¹¹¹ observes that the stock censuses of Machakos represented the vaguest of estimates. This fact is made amply clear by the 1939 revised estimate which suggested that the figures in use before 1938 had overestimated the number of stock in Machakos district by 150,000. In addition, lack of adequate knowledge to base policy upon was compounded by the antipathy within the colonial service for technical staff, and the low status of the veterinary officers.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Newman, J.R. *The Ukamba Members Association*. Nairobi. Transafrica. 1974, 14.

¹⁰⁹ Waweru, P. "Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism", 188.

¹¹⁰ Hausler, B. "Listening to the People: The Use of Indigenous Knowledge to Curb Environment Degradation", In D. Stiles (Ed.) *Social Aspects of Dryland Management*. Chisester, (1995), 181.

¹¹¹ Newman, J.R. *The Ukamba Members Association*, 7.

¹¹² Ibid.

In 1929, the Agricultural Commission of 1929, chaired by Daniel Hall also raised concern of overstocking in Machakos. The highly publicized report elevated the soil erosion in Machakos to the status of one of the most serious problems in all of Kenya, defining it as a major hazard.¹¹³ The Commission provided *inter alia* for ‘the limiting the number of stock of any kind in any area.’ It recommended among other things destocking as the only viable solution for Machakos district, it also recommended the establishment of a meat factory so that the Akamba could realize some value from their surplus cattle. The report read in part;

The commission agrees that compulsory action, for which the government has already taken powers, must be exercised to reduce the number of livestock in the Kamba reserve. Indeed a reduction down to one-third of the present number is necessary if the tribe is to be preserved.¹¹⁴

The commission was nevertheless hampered by the fear that compulsory destocking would result in rebellion by the Akamba. It in fact observed that the ownership of stock is so interwoven with African customs that the livestock owners regard stock as currency and not as a productive asset. So at this point, the government was faced by one challenge; ‘dealing with the Akamba psychology of cattle complex’ which was so foreign to their modes of thought.¹¹⁵ The commission recognised fully the danger of interfering with the customs of the Africans, because that would have brought protests. Thus, the commission advised that careful measures were supposed to be taken to deal with the psychology of the Akamba. It suggested the minting of a special coinage, with the picture of the meat company printed on top. The coinage was to consist of large pieces coined from some type of resistant bronze, bearing the image of a bull, and of a

¹¹³ Myrick, B. Colonial Initiatives and Kamba Reaction in Machakos District: The Destocking Issue, 1930-1938. In, *Three Aspects of Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, ed. Bismark Myrick, David L. Easterbrook, and Jack R. Roelker. Foreign and Comparative Studies, Eastern Africa. (1975), 21.

¹¹⁴ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Colonial Report Annual Report, 1929, 30.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid*, 31.

nominal value of Shs 30 while smaller ten shillings pieces would similarly carry the figure of a goat. This money was to serve as legal tender in the reserves only but would be exchangeable at any of the banks for their face value in the ordinary currency of the country. The coins were to be perforated with four holes, so that they could be strung together on a strip of hide for purpose of display. The commission believed that by doing so, the transition from cattle as currency in the purchase of wives and other material things to cattle as saleable assets could be facilitated. This plan was adopted but by 1930, although negotiations for a factory were in the final stages, they collapsed due to the lack of sufficient funds which was occasioned by the stringency in the period after the world economic depression of the 1930s.

Similarly, in its report of 1934, the Carter Land Commission (later Kenya Land Commission) reaffirmed the urgent need for destocking and reconditioning the reserve. It recommended that a large section of the Yatta be turned over to the Machakos Akamba for grazing, but only in conjunction with vigorous culling of old, maimed, and useless livestock. The colonial administration decided to use the LNC to persuade the Akamba to sell their excess stock but it met resistance. The members of the LNC were at a dilemma as they were not willing to betray their fellow Akamba. At the same time, the colonial administration was putting pressure on them to help in the destocking issue. As one of the Akamba councillors quoted by Tignor put it, "They were between two fires; the government and the people in the reserves."¹¹⁶ They could not pass the resolution about destocking without there being grave unrest in the Reserve."

¹¹⁶ Tignor, R. L, "Kamba Political Protest: The Destocking Controversy of 1938," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (1971), pp. 239.

Consequently, the meat factory, which was expected to provide an outlet for the Akamba livestock, was not set up until 1930¹¹⁷.

In February the same year, Colin Maher¹¹⁸ tabled his report on soil erosion and land use in the Ukamba Reserves. He expressed the seriousness of the soil degradation condition in the Machakos reserve by stating that;

The Machakos Reserve is an appalling example of a large area of land which has been subjected to uncoordinated and practically uncontrolled development by natives whose multiplication and whose increase of stock has been permitted, free from the checks of war and largely from those of disease, under benevolent British rule. Every phase of misuse of land is vividly and poignantly displayed in this Reserve¹¹⁹,

In the same month, Sir Frankdale, Agricultural Advisor to the Colonial Office, toured the reserve and reaffirmed that conditions had seriously deteriorated. Then from May to July 1937, R.O. Barnes, Soil Engineer in the colony's Department of Agriculture, conducted a research which revealed that recovery of the reserve would require about £250,000 because it was in a sorry state.¹²⁰ This was followed by Professor I.B. Pole Evan's tour in June 1938 who reported that the reserve was in shambles due to land degradation.

The alarming reports from the 'soil experts' were taken seriously by the colonial government. All the above voices, in addition to the Dust Bowl images projected from the United States of America made the crusade against soil erosion unstoppable. This also coincided with the completion of the meat factory at Athi River in 1937 which was to be operated by the Liebig's Meat Firm. This made the destocking issue to be emphasised more than ever before. In 1938, the Liebig's Meat Firm which was

¹¹⁷ Newman, J.R. *The Ukamba Members Association*.

¹¹⁸ Maher, C. "Soil Erosion and Land Utilization in Ukamba Reserve Machakos. 1937.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

¹²⁰ KNA/DC/MKS 10A/29/1 Memorandum on Soil Erosion in Ukamba Reserve (1937), Report to the Department of Agriculture' by R.O. Barnes.

previously located in Southern Rhodesia was invited to Kenya where it opened its business operating the meat factory at Athi River. The firm had been enticed to come to Kenya by promises of a prosperous and profitable trade which was to be facilitated by livestock obtained from the livestock keeping communities especially the Akamba and the Maasai. The Kenyan colonial administration had already constructed a factory which could handle 70,000 head of cattle a year. The firm had been assured that this figure was easily obtainable because of the overstocking in the reserves. The European settlers also had an interest in the success of Liebigs because they hoped that its profits might be used to construct a freezing plant, enabling European livestock owners to enter the world meat export trade. In an effort to make conditions even more attractive to Liebigs owners so that they halt their plans for moving their plant to Tanganyika, Governor Robert Brooke-Popham ordered that efforts be made to make the company obtain livestock. The governor noted that;

I trust that it is clear to everyone that the Liebigs must be kept in operation in Kenya. The contrary is unthinkable. To maintain such operations, compulsion must be used in the supply of livestock.”¹²¹

Thus, the timing and scale of the destocking programme in Machakos were arranged to meet the demands of the firm. When the Akamba refused to willingly sell their livestock to the Liebigs firm, the firm faced a serious shortage of livestock contrary to what the owners had been initially promised before they came to Kenya. Accordingly, the then colonial Governor Robert Brooke-Popham sent out a directive in January 1938 ordering that Liebigs be given a steady supply of stock and that a program of branding and destocking be carried out with vigour in Machakos district and extended to Kitui. Emphasizing the gravity of the matter, he wrote;

In all frankness i must admit that in its initial stages, at least the factory is unlikely to be a popular institution. So, at the start, drastic measures

¹²¹ Newman, J.R. *The Ukamba Members Association*, 9.

must be undertaken and that to save the Akamba from themselves, compulsory appropriation must be adopted.¹²²

However, according to the report that had been given by the Hall commission of 1929, some of the livestock in Machakos were so weak even to be accepted for sale by the Liebig firm. The report had indicated that some cattle and goats were not worthy any money.¹²³ The government was at this point faced with the classic dilemma. If it destroyed livestock without paying compensation to the owners, that would have been an intolerable injustice, and if it had destroyed them and paid anything like the market value it would have been an intolerable burden on their finances.¹²⁴ The dilemma was underscored in the following terms by the Hall Commission;

At the outset it is improbable that this factory can be a paying proposition. The livestock that will be culled are of such poor quality and in so low a condition that little saleable meat can be obtained. The factory will therefore have to convert the greater part of its purchases into meat extract, fertilizer and hides. It is improbable that the factory will be able to pay for the cattle at the value the native places upon them. The Akamba considers that all cattle are of equal worth and, if he has to rate them as money, he is disposed to regard even the worst starving as worth the kind of price he knows is being given for working oxen or beef cattle.¹²⁵

The dilemma was resolved by compulsory sales of African cattle at a price which bore no relation to the free-market price. The prices being offered by Liebig's were often one-quarter of market value. The average price paid for full grown cattle was about fifteen shillings while the market price at that time was about 55 to 65 shillings. Many small calves were sold at prices of one to two shillings, as did sheep and goats. To the Akamba, this was virtual confiscation, especially since the livestock that was allowed to enter the open market obtained much higher prices.¹²⁶ In short, the programme was

¹²² KNA/Robert Brooke-Popham to Passfield.1930./PRO.C.O. 53339716076.

¹²³ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Colonial Report, 1929, 30.

¹²⁴ Mosley, P. *The Settler Economies: Studies in the Economic History of Kenya and Southern Rhodesia 1900-1963*. (Cambridge, 1983), 56.

¹²⁵ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya, Colonial Report Annual Report, 1929, 30.

¹²⁶ Mosley, P. *The Settler Economies*, 56.

meant to benefit the buyer at the expense of the seller. The scheme was a form of primitive accumulation in which the state mobilised Akamba cattle for European capital.

Peter Nyong'o¹²⁷ has argued that a more convincing reason for the destocking policy in Ukambani must be sought. He contends that with a meat factory set up and a meat marketing corporation envisaged, the settlers did not want competition from the Akamba within the Kenyan market. In real sense, the campaign was not motivated purely by environmental factors. Hence, it must be examined within the context of the prevailing political and economic landscape in Kenya during the 1930s.¹²⁸ Thus, the project was meant to purely benefit the meat factory without caring the loss of the stock keepers. At the same time, the project would provide settlers with a reliable outlet for their chilled beef exports while 'lower grade' African cattle would be canned to subsidise the cost of settler production.¹²⁹ Swainson has noted that the active role of the state in this project reflected the closeness between the colonial state, the Liebigs Firm and the settlers. Indeed, the government of Kenya not only provided loan capital for setting up the meat factory but also guaranteed the company a consistent supply of livestock at the company's declared prices which were a quarter those of the market price.¹³⁰ The settlers also bought Akamba livestock at throw away prices and later sold them to the Liebigs Meat Company at high profits. This means that the Liebigs firm and the European settlers were the greatest beneficiaries of the livestock trade during

¹²⁷ Nyong'o, P. "The Possibilities and Historical Limitations of Import-Substitution Industrialization In Kenya", in Coughlin, P And Ikiara, G. Eds., *Industrialization In Kenya, In Search of Strategy*. (Nairobi, 1985). 15.

¹²⁸ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya", 100.

¹²⁹ Rosbery, C.G. and J. Nottingham. *The Myth of Mau Mau: Nationalism in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1966), 168.

¹³⁰ Swainson, N. *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977* (London, 1980), 30.

that time. This is evident in the number of livestock they purchased as shown in table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Number of Cattle Bought by Different Groups during the Destocking Period (1938)

| Number of Cattle | Buyer |
|----------------------|--------|
| Liebigs Meat Company | 11,077 |
| European Settlers | 9,773 |
| Akamba | 171 |
| Indians | 2,402 |
| Arabs | 1,677 |
| Somali | 2,244 |
| Total | 2,745 |

SOURCE: Machakos District Annual Report, 1938: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/27, 38.

Table 4.5 indicates that the chief buyers of the Akamba livestock were the European settlers and Liebigs factory. This means that the two were the greatest beneficiaries of the scheme. The two chief buyers obtained 37% and 33% respectively of the total number of cattle exported from Machakos in 1938. This was a very big percentage especially when compared to the Akamba traders who only bought less than 1%.

It was against this background that the Akamba regarded the programme as an assault on their wealth and a machination to turn them into a community of paupers. No wonder then that when the government came to Ngelani Sub Location in Iveti location, the biggest, wealthiest, and most populous location in the district, they encountered resistance. At Ngelani sub-location, people refused to cooperate in having their cattle branded for sale. The Ngelani opposition was led by rich stock owners who had been in Nairobi in the late 1920s during the Harry Thuku crisis and the development of Kikuyu political consciousness and who were thus politically conscious. The four principal leaders included Samuel Muindi Mbingu, Elijah Kavulu, Isaac Mwalonzi and

Simeon Kioko. All of them had attended Kamuthanga primary school at Kangundo founded by the African Inland Mission. They later furthered their education in Nairobi and elsewhere. Kioko became a clerk at Kenya Orchard Ltd, Muindi went into the police, Kavulu was a clerk in government service, and Mwalonzi a teacher in the Church Missionary Society School in Nairobi. They formed part of the Akamba elite both in Nairobi and their home area. Their work in Nairobi enabled them to accumulate wealth which they used to buy a lot of livestock, ploughs and land and hired labour. Thus, by 1930 they had established themselves as part of a class of rich peasants, farmers and traders.

Through their financial influence, they mounted a sophisticated passive resistance campaign against the colonial administration. At first, the opposition took the form of spontaneous secret meetings to rally support against the government policy. For instance Musyoka Ndolo recalls;

I was in Nairobi when I heard that cattle were being taken from Ukambani by the colonial government. I also heard that it was not the colonial government that wanted our cattle but a trading company. By this time, I was a sergeant. Major and I went to see the Commissioner of Police in charge of Nairobi area to ask him why the cattle were being taken. He told us that they would be taken by force. When I came back home on for my leave, I called a group of people together to talk to them about cattle being taken. All of us agreed that it could never happen and that we must fight. When I went back to Nairobi, they came to see me and we went to an Indian who helped us to telegram Mr. Kenyatta about the destocking issue.¹³¹

The leaders were in touch with the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) in Nairobi. KCA assisted in sending reports and telegrams to Association leaders, the Governor, the Provincial Commissioner, and the Colonial Office, and writing in the Kikuyu nationalist paper, *Muigwithania*.¹³² Further, in London, Jomo Kenyatta took up the

¹³¹ Musyoka Ndolo OI at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020.

¹³² Tignor, R. L, "Kamba Political Protest: The Destocking Controversy of 1938."

destocking issue and wrote letters to the *Manchester Guardian* and *The New Statesman* and *The Nation*.¹³³ With the assistance of a sympathetic Indian lawyer Isher Dass, they presented their case in the Kenya Legislative Council and also to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and into the full light of British public opinion.

This agitation did not however stop the government from implementing the forced culling. On 8 July, just before dawn, three armed parties made a sweeping movement through Ngelani Sub-Location, rounded up 2,539 head of cattle and removed them from the area. The colonial administration ordered the people of Ngelani to go after the cattle and get them branded for sale to the Liebig firm, failure to which, after 28 days, they would be sold. In doing this, the colonial state hoped that the Akamba would change their mind and willingly cull their livestock. Nonetheless, the Akamba especially those of Ngelani sub-location in Iveti location remained adamant, refused to reclaim their stock to have them branded, and instead demanded to see the governor. Due to this confiscation, the anti-destocking movement even gained such widespread support among the Ngelani people that the leaders created a political organization modelled after the KCA and with ties to it called the Ukamba Members Association (UMA). Muindi became the president and Kioko the secretary. Later, when Muindi was deported, Kavulu became the president. The leadership of UMA ordered their members not to take back their cattle for branding.

UMA activities were also supported by the Akamba war veterans. They actively supported UMA with funds and technical assistance. As one former lance corporal recalled,

I was a member of the Kyama Kya Ngelani (Ngelani Union) I worked the telephones which kept us in touch with our supporters in London. As a result, almost every major newspaper in the United Kingdom carried

¹³³ KNA/C.S.I/23/Minutes of H.E. The Governor to Colonial Secretary of State. 4:138.

*a story on the Akamba and the destocking story. The secretary of state found himself in the difficult position of having to explain why the British government was persecuting its loyal askaris and police officers.*¹³⁴

In the rest of the reserve, people refused to co-operate in reconditioning activities. Only a few yards of mechanical bench terracing were created by the reconditioning team in Kilungu, Mbooni and Iveti hills. Due to lack of co-operation, the work of the soil conservation service supported by the Colonial Development fund was confined to combating soil erosion instead of educating the Akamba to appreciate the necessity for maintaining and increasing the fertility of the soil.¹³⁵

The attitude exhibited by the Akamba emanated from the feeling that the colonial government was killing their livelihood. By targeting and confiscating cattle which acted as their savings, the colonial government was in effect undermining the Akamba economy. Thus an oath against forced culling was taken and in some cases, force was used to ensure nobody would take their cattle back for branding. There were night meetings which had to be very secretive. As such, they were never held in the villages and only those who were perceived to be truly interested were informed. About 500 people would meet and take oaths.¹³⁶ The oath partly stated;

If I allow my livestock to be branded or if i don't stop them from being taken away, may i suffer because of it forever.¹³⁷

Subsequently, the Akamba especially those from Iveti refused to accept payment for 2,539 head of cattle which had been seized in July.¹³⁸ Thus the government threatened to conduct a forced sale of all cattle unclaimed after twenty-eight days. This is when

¹³⁴ Parsons. "The Akamba Warriors are the Soldiers of the Queen", 682.

¹³⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1937-38: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/27, 25.

¹³⁶ Mutua Nzuki, OI at Makutano on 01/11/2020.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Spencer, L. "Notes on the Kamba Destocking Controversy of 1938," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5-4 (1972).

the members of UMA realised how determined the colonial state was in forcefully implementing the destocking policy. They organised a march to Nairobi to see the governor. Between 2,000-3,000 men, women, and children marched to Nairobi to petition Governor Sir Robert Brooke-Popham to halt the auctions. Once there, they camped near the racecourse grounds for six weeks. Although the Governor never met them, he promised to visit them in Machakos Town to discuss their complaints. On 25 August, the Governor came to Machakos and made some notable concessions, promising to stop the compulsory sale of stock and to reintroduce voluntary sales. Ultimately, the Akamba agreed to voluntarily reduce their herds if the forced auctions were ended.

It is quite evident that the attempt to enforce compulsory culling of livestock was vehemently resisted by the Akamba for various reasons. First, it was a stumbling block to a growing desire to accumulate wealth. Thus, the Akamba capitalist class nurtured by the colonial situation was not ready to allow the government to interfere with the process of accumulation. Second, the prices offered for the stock amounted to primitive accumulation in favour of European capital. Above all, reduction of stock threatened the economic and subsistence bases of the community, as livestock was the last buffer against famine in Machakos. The study therefore concludes that the government intervention in Machakos livestock during the inter-war period only centred on land reconditioning measures and livestock culling instead of development.

4.12 Conclusion

The chapter has discussed how colonial policies transformed the livestock economy in Machakos between 1919 and 1939. The chapter has noted that the period started on a low note due to the World War I depression which led to poor economic performance not only in Machakos but Kenya in general. This made the colonial government to

realise that African peasant production was crucial in the development of the colony. The colonial administration, therefore, adopted the dual policy. However, despite the adoption of the dual policy as the basis for the social and economic development of the colony, the colonial state remained largely partisan. As such, the livestock sector in Machakos continued to be subordinated to and structured to service the settler sector during the 1920s. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that the Dual Policy and the other colonial policies during this period were very largely determined by the need to maintain the viability of white settler agriculture. This arrangement saw the establishment of a new production system based on colonial capitalism and the commoditization of production which began to demolish the various strategies used by the Akamba of Machakos to prevent food shortages and famines.

The interwar years also saw the introduction of new production systems which were based on colonial capitalism. For instance, cash crops which had hitherto not been grown in Machakos were now being grown. They included vegetables, fruits, cotton, beans, sunflower and rice, for which the Local Native Council acted as a source and distributor of seeds. In this respect, a major transformation in Machakos agriculture was the expansion of maize and fruits and vegetable production. Hence, both the consumption and acreage of the crop increased steadily at the expense of sorghum, millet and other indigenous food crops. The repercussion of this development was that the livestock sector started competing for labour and land with crop production.

Accompanying these important changes in cash crop production was the development of livestock trade. The growth of various market centers where livestock was the main trade item is a clear indication of the extent to which the traditional forms of marketing were now almost fully incorporated into the colonial economy as opposed to the initial years of colonial rule when the two forms of marketing co-existed. In fact, the picture

that emerges from the commercialization of livestock economy is that a new enterprising group was beginning to shift their attention from the livestock sector to other sectors which were deemed to be more lucrative. The new investments were now gaining more attention to the detriment of the hitherto cherished activity of livestock keeping. This was in essence institutionalising and consolidating competing ventures to the livestock economy of Machakos. While this was happening, the Great Depression, starting in 1929 followed hard on its heels. It was accompanied by a severe locust infestation, as well as well as the famines of 1929, 1931 and 1935. These factors combined to adversely affect any attempts at the development of the Machakos livestock sector. Consequently, many Akamba were forced to seek wage labour as an alternative source of livelihood. In the process, there was a shift of labour from the reserve to the settler sector and also to civil and military sectors. This accelerated the tendency to remove labour from the livestock industry in Machakos and engaging it in wage employment. Migratory labour indirectly undermined and reversed African attitude towards livestock production as the most valuable means of production and survival as had been the case during the pre-WWI period. The increasing opportunities for employment, coupled with the depletion of livestock and crop failure produced the conviction that wage labour was the most profitable and certainly the most secure. This interference eventually resulted in acute shortages of labour in Machakos which in turn contributed to the gradual decline in livestock production.

The interwar period also witnessed the highly publicised anti-soil erosion campaign and the infamous destocking policy which led to an unprecedented rise in the political agitation of the Akamba. The chapter has argued that while the concern over land degradation of the Machakos reserve might have been genuine, it was over-exaggerated by the colonial administration which also failed to carry out adequate awareness among

the Akamba. In spite of the hullabaloo over the rapid increase of stock in Machakos and the emergence of the forceful conservationist ideology, the colonial administration had failed to explain the principle and advantages of destocking. Consequently, the reconditioning programmes and the subsequent destocking policy issued by the state and the methods employed to implement them, did not yield any positive results. The interplay of the above mentioned factors was largely responsible for the poor performance of the livestock sector in Machakos.

The study therefore concludes that the interwar period was a period of retrogression rather than development in the livestock economy in Machakos. Moreover, before the shockwaves of the destocking policy and Great Depression had completely subsided, the people of Machakos were once again plunged into another world catastrophe; the outbreak of the Second World War. Therefore, the next chapter details the impact of the Second World War in relation to its influence on the livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos.

CHAPTER FIVE

LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION IN MACHAKOS DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 1939-1945

5.1 Introduction

The Second World War period was a critical one in African history. The period was decisive in the history of the colonial economy of Kenya as a whole and Machakos in particular. The period was marked by the increased demand for foodstuff particularly to meet the war food requirements to the Allied troops. The colonial government increased the requisitioning for livestock at this time. To achieve this, the colonial government ordered compulsory sale of livestock to the Meat Supply Board.

In addition, thousands of men from Machakos district were recruited into the colonial army. This withdrawal of labour and livestock from the Machakos reserve towards the war effort negatively affected the livestock sector. Therefore, there is no doubt that the war had a profound impact on the overall performance of the economy of Machakos district. This chapter discusses the evolution of livestock production and overall trajectory of economic development in Machakos within the context of the Second World War.

5.2 Requisitioning for Livestock

The outbreak of the Second World War had far reaching repercussions on the livestock economy of Machakos. The main effect emerged to be the considerable loss of livestock through forced sale. The establishment of Meat Control Board following the outbreak of the war intensified livestock commoditization among the Akamba of Machakos. The monthly quota for each district was fixed according to the number of livestock in each

district as estimated by the administration. ¹As Zeleza stresses, ‘the immediate task of the colonial government at this time became that of ‘the mobilization of all the potential resources of the colonial empire both of men and materials, for the purposes of the war.’

Chiefs became crucial instruments for the mobilisation of human and material resources to meet the increasing demands of the War. Once the DC got the quota for his district from the colonial administration, he divided the quota according to the number of the locations and ordered the chiefs to ensure that their locations met their quota.² Livestock became one of the important resources whose demand increased tremendously as the colonial government required meat in large quantities for the provisions of the troops.

This meant that livestock had to be obtained from all parts of Kenya using all possible means.³ As such, every homestead in Machakos had to part with some livestock for the war requirements. The increased demand for livestock and the subsequent launching of the requisitions by the colonial state seriously affected livestock prices not only in Machakos but also in other parts of Kenya. This occasioned a plunge of livestock in the market which in turn led to the supply outstripping the demand in the local markets. The imbalance between supply and demand resulted in low prices of livestock.

Consequently, livestock owners were left with no choice but to sell at the low prices offered. The low prices were alarmingly low that it became a major concern.⁴ For instance, whereas in 1938 an ox could fetch 50-60 shillings, in 1940, the price dropped to as low as Shs 32 and Shs 34 in 1942. Some livestock owners in Machakos refused to sell their livestock citing the low prices. To add salt to the injury, in 1943, owing to the

¹Zeleza, T. "Kenya and the Second World War, 1939-1950" in W.R. Ochieng' (Ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980* (London, 1989b), 145.

² Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui Livestock", 13.

³ Ndege. G. "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division", 137.

⁴ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui Livestock", 14.

onset of the *Mwolyo* famine, the condition worsened. The livestock prices dropped even further.

At the same time, price differentials between the settlers and the Africans were also witnessed. For example, the settler first grade beef was sold at Shs 34 per 100 lb while African beef of the same quality was sold at Shs 26. In fact, European cattle irrespective of quality were always bought as first grade beef. So, settlers would buy African cattle, use it for a while as a work oxen before subsequently selling it as settler cattle.⁵ No wonder then that the Akamba were reluctant to sell their livestock to the colonial administration. For example, in 1943, Some Akamba complained through the Local Native Council that their animals were being bought at 'next to nothing prices' and therefore they would not sell them.⁶ Indeed, in the same year, Machakos District failed to meet its quota for cattle.

Generally in the whole colony, the colonial administration had to use force to meet the district's annual quota during the war since the prices paid by Meat Supply Board were unacceptable to the African. In Kuria for instance, Chacha⁷ notes that the colonial administration used force to obtain cattle from the Africans. Under such circumstances, the livestock owners in Machakos were forced to sell their cattle in order to avoid them being taken by force. Accordingly, during this time, the Akamba lost a lot of livestock through the forced sales. This is illustrated in table 5.1 below.

⁵ Zeleza, T. "Kenya and the Second World War", 149.

⁶ Mutiso, G.C.M. "Kitui Livestock", 15.

⁷ Chacha, B. "Agricultural History of the Abakuria of Kenya, 121.

Table 5.1: Livestock Exported from Machakos during the WW II Period

| Year | 1939 | 1940 | 1941 | 1942 | 1943 | 1944 | 1945 |
|-----------------|-------|--------|-------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| Cattle | 5,060 | 3282 | 3,046 | 2,206 | 1,089 | 400 | 700 |
| Sheep and goats | - | 10,876 | - | 3,594 | 10,964 | 50,000 | 38,779 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Report, 1939-45: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29.

It is evident from table 5.1 that the Machakos Akamba played a major role in the war effort. Throughout the war period, the colonial state mobilised Akamba resources to meet the war demands. However, as indicated in the table, the number of livestock sold especially cattle kept on declining. This was possibly due to two factors. First, the prices were too low so the Akamba lacked the enthusiasm to sell. Some would even bribe the corrupt chiefs so that they would not be forced to sell their livestock. Secondly, in 1940, Machakos District was invaded by army worms and locusts which cleared the pasture leading to low mortality and also rendering the animals too weak to be sold. The two wartime famines also made the Akamba to use most of their livestock as food and exchanged others with the kikuyu to obtain grain food. Accordingly, the sales decreased.

The forced sale of livestock considerably reduced the livestock population in Machakos as the district was drained off a high number livestock. The Akamba attempted to recoup their losses by intensifying raiding, but they found the neighbouring communities as badly hit as they were. It is therefore more than apparent that the continual exploitation of the Akamba livestock economy for military use resulted in the general decline of its performance. Aside from the forced sale of livestock, the persistence of colonial wage labour demands also continued to destabilise the livestock economy of Machakos as illustrated by the analysis in the next section.

5.3 The Increased Preference for Wage Labour

Perhaps the most demanding aspect of the World War II was the withdrawal of labour from Machakos for service in the King's African Rifles (KAR) in addition to other forms of employment. For example, in 1945, there were 15,000 Machakos Akamba in civilian employment, a similar number in the KAR, and many more conscripted as labourers in sisal farms in Thika and others in settler farms and ranches. In short, over 50 per cent of the reserve's able-bodied men were out at work during the early 1940s.⁸

It is important to note that during the Second World War, wage labour especially military service, began to have a greater appeal among the Akamba. This was contrary to what had been witnessed during World War I when the Akamba had shown little interest in military service and actively resisted conscription into the Carrier Corps.⁹

One of the primary reasons for this change in attitude of the Akamba toward military service was the gradual economic transformation of the Akamba Reserves during the 1930s.

Throughout Ukambani, new commercial opportunities and the increased desire for material goods, coupled with the growing land shortage and also the dwindling livestock sector, led to increased interest in cash money and wage labor.¹⁰ Added to those factors already mentioned was the introduction of some sort of compulsory destocking in 1938 and the increases in the prices of all imported goods, at the outbreak of the war, especially for such items as blankets, wire, pangas, jembes, etc.¹¹ During the relative prosperity of the pre WWI period, as pointed out in chapter three, most of the Akamba fulfilled their material needs through the sale of livestock, or in the well-

⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1945: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29, 5

⁹ Parsons, T. "Wakamba Warriors are Soldiers of the Queen", 676.

¹⁰ Gupta, D. "A Brief Economic History of the Akamba", 69.

¹¹ Ibid.

watered areas of Machakos District, through the commercial production of poultry and vegetables for Nairobi markets. As a result, the Akamba entered the labour market selectively. It is for this reason that throughout the decade, most of the District Commissioners who served in Machakos complained of the unwillingness of the Akamba to work on government projects and settler farms.¹² Even many young unestablished Akamba men avoided wage labour because their fathers paid their taxes by selling livestock, thereby outbidding the government and settlers for their labour.

Unfortunately, with the dwindling land and livestock resources, many Akamba found themselves unable to sustain the previously highly cherished livestock ownership owing to diminished land that would otherwise support the grazing of huge numbers of livestock. Consequently, the Akamba found themselves in different forms of wage labour as shown in table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Number of Machakos Akamba Engaged in Wage Labour by 1945.

| Type of Employment | Formal Sector Employment | Military Services | Informal sector employment |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Number of Machakos Akamba employed | 15, 000 | 12, 000 | 1,800 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Reports, 1939-45: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29.

As shown in table 5.2 above, there were 28, 800 Akamba employed in different sectors during the Second World War. The table further indicates that military service was particularly attractive. This was because of its comparatively higher wages as compared to the other sectors. The twenty eight shillings per month plus food and clothing earned by a newly trained private was substantially more than the six to eight shillings they could have made in unskilled civil labour.¹³ Although the military wages were not as

¹² Palaver, K. "Paying in Cents, Paying in Rupees", 301.

¹³ Parsons, T. "Wakamba Warriors are Soldiers of the Queen", 684.

attractive in the more prosperous regions of Kenya, in Ukambani these wages were considered to be very good because of lack of alternative means. Gradually, the KAR became a preferred occupation because of its relatively high pay rates and its prestige as a "manly" occupation as compared to working in settler farms. People who worked for the army gradually attracted greater respect in Machakos. As David Matheka notes,

I wanted to join the army so that I could marry the woman of my choice. I envied my friends in the army who were well-respected, had large amounts of disposable income and women preferred to marry them. Men who wore the army uniform and carried a gun were regarded as privileged members of the society. Many Akamba women would be attracted to the men with uniforms and good pay from the military service.¹⁴

As a result, KAR and the military became the most popular form of paid employment during World War II and only the strict recruiting quotas of the KAR would limit more Akamba men from being recruited there. As a consequence, the demand for the Akamba soldiers finally matched the supply as opposed to the case during the First World War when the Akamba men would forcefully be conscripted to the army. This can be discerned by the statistic given by Parsons,¹⁵ who has documented that in 1942, the Akamba made up 30 percent of the Kenyan complement of the KAR, 32 percent of the East African Army Education Corps, 43 percent of the East African Corps of Military Police, 46 percent of the East African Artillery, 46 percent of all signalers, and 13 percent of the non-combatant labour services.

Further, according to the Kenyan Labour Department, nearly one-third of all employed Akamba males were in the military from 1943 to 1946. To put it another way, by 1944 one in three Akamba men between the ages of fifteen and forty-five were in the army. In comparison, the enlistment figures for the more populous Luo and Kikuyu ethnic

¹⁴ David Matheka, OI at Syokimau on 14/11/2020.

¹⁵ Parsons, T. "The Wakamba Warriors are Soldiers of the Queen", 683.

groups were 18 percent and 6 percent respectively, while the percentage of the reputedly more martial Nandi and Kipsigis groups was only 10 percent.¹⁶

Infact the military labour became so popular that the supply was more than the demand. Some young men had to be sent back by the recruiting officers because they were not needed. One chief Mutua wa Nzuki contends that;

Some young men became frustrated as they went to the recruitment centres only to be told that they were not needed. They had seen how their agemates had been transformed by the military wages. They also wanted to wear the uniform and carry the gun and also become the centre of attention in their villages just like their counterparts. However, their dreams were shattered when they were told that they were not needed.¹⁷

In view of the above, it's discernible that the most lasting impact of the war was the extent to which it changed the Akamba attitude towards wage labour. The Akamba, who had always been blamed for not being as reliable as the kikuyu in terms of engaging in wage labour to the extent of being labelled 'lazy and indolent' became the most reliable during this time. This made the DC to comment that:

'I think that in the whole country of Kenya there is no any other tribe which does the service for their King in the KAR as the Akamba tribe.'¹⁸

It is no wonder Parsons contends that the Akamba got one of the best war records of any East African community during World War II. They held 56 percent of the British Empire Medals earned by Kenyan Africans, 32 percent of all East Africa Force Badges, and 24 percent of all "Mention in Despatches."¹⁹ These acts of bravery impressed British officers. In addition, the East Africa civil liaison officer concluded that the Akamba showed more courage than any other Kenyan ethnic group during the fighting

¹⁶ KNA/Kenya Labour Department, Manpower Bulletins, 1942-46.

¹⁷ Mutua Nzuki, OI at Makutano on 01/11/2020.

¹⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1939-45: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29.

¹⁹ Parsons, T. "The Wakamba Warriors are the Soldiers of the Queen", 685.

against the Japanese in Burma. Further, the Kenyan government's official report on the war agreed and labelled the Akamba the colony's best martial race in terms of courage and dependability.²⁰ As such, more and more Akamba got involved in military labour and relied on it more than livestock. Young men started being self-reliant and no longer needed their parents to pay their taxes or bridewealth as it had been the case in previous years. If anything, the reverse happened. The older men, whose livestock had been depleted, started relying on the young men who would send part of their wages to their ageing parents.

The study thus contends that this process of personal enrichment for young men had socio-economic repercussions. In chapter two, we noted that the Akamba marriage practices included the exchange of livestock as a form of bridewealth payment. In most cases, it was only older men who could afford such amount of livestock. Hence, the high value of livestock reinforced the authority of older men, as sons usually needed help from their fathers to acquire enough livestock to pay bride wealth. However, with most of the young men opting for wage labour, this balance was disrupted. This disruption sowed the seeds of a socio-economic revolution in Machakos because the young men now earned their own bride-wealth, thereby undermining the authority of their elders.

The study also maintains that World War II, through its economic and labour policies created a crisis in labour needed for livestock production. Civil and military recruitment accelerated the tendency to remove labour from the livestock economy and direct it towards outside employment. This interference with labour coupled with acute

²⁰ Kenya Colony and Protectorate, Native Affairs Department, Report on Native Affairs, 1939-1945. London.

depletion of livestock and the occurrence of natural calamities, combined to generate the two major wartime famines in Machakos as analysed in the next section.

5.4 The Wartime Famines

As noted earlier, one significant aspect of the Second World War was the drain of manpower from the African reserves. This was demonstrated by the number of young men who joined the KAR and other forms of employment during this period. While conscription was the common method of recruitment in other areas of the colony, most Machakos Akamba joined the KAR voluntarily because the economic conditions in the Ukamba reserves had become so difficult. On the other hand, the army clothed, housed, and fed a man, and if he was careful, most of his earnings could be converted directly into saving. By the end of 1941, 12,000 young men from Machakos were in some form of military employment.²¹ The problem of outmigration of labour was so glaring that in 1941, the Agricultural Officer lamented that;

This district more than most others has been steadily bled for the military during the past three years of its most active, energetic and often intelligent elements of the male population. These men are missed from the community especially where mixed farming development is needed.²²

The emerging drain of manpower, coupled with natural calamities undermined food production which in turn led to two famines. *Nzaa ya Makovo and Nzaa ya Mwolyo*²³.

5.4.1 *Nzaa ya Makovo*, 1939-41

Nzaa ya Makovo literally meant "the famine of the boots." The phrase was used to exemplify the connection between the employment opportunities created by the war and the concurrent food shortage. This means that the outmigration of labour caused acute food shortages. Matheka underscores this by noting that;

²¹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1941: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29.

²² KNA/DC/MKS 8/4/ Department of Agriculture Annual Report: 1943, 388.

²³ Rocheleau, D. *et.al.* Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade, 1041.

In a bid to escape famine, the Akamba may be said to have caused another food shortage by creating a shortage of agricultural labour in their reserve.²⁴

The *Makovo Famine* started in earnest in September 1939 and ended in April 1941. The famine was attributed to low rainfall in the 1938-40 period and an invasion of army worms and locusts in 1940. The most affected areas were all the low-lying, eroded locations. These included Kaumoni, Kibauni, Kisau, Lower Mbooni, Nzau and Kikumbulyu. However, by the end of 1940, famine conditions existed in most of the reserve.²⁵

To cope with the famine, those who were in the military remitted some of their earnings to the reserve, and the money was used to purchase food-stuffs. Nevertheless, the absence of such labour power hindered the development of the livestock industry in the reserve. O'Leary's²⁶ observes that the influx of military remittances in Kitui helped the people to survive famines in the 1940s. This equally applied to the whole Ukambani region. The Akamba *askaris* sent home an average 12.67 shillings in family allotments per month.²⁷ Indeed, the remittances by the military servicemen alone exceeded the amount of money spent on food during the famine.²⁸ The Machakos famine also clearly reveals that there was no shortage of money in the reserves. This is according to Anderson and Throup who observe that in addition to paying £100,000 to the Kikuyu and the Kitui Akamba to buy food, the Machakos Akamba spent a further £67,000 on 118,000 bags of food from the government.²⁹ From the foregoing, we can deduce that

²⁴ Matheka, R. (1992). *The Political Economy of Famine*.

²⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1940: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29, 2.

²⁶ O'Leary, M.F. *The Kitui Akamba: Economic and Social Change in Semi-Arid Kenya* (Nairobi, 1984), 43.

²⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1939-45: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ Anderson, D & Throup, D. "Africans and Agricultural Production in Colonial Kenya: The Myth of the War as a Watershed". *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 26, No. 4, *World War II and Africa*. (1985), 340.

the people of Machakos were very dependent on this war remittances. No wonder the D.C. observed that;

Had it not been for the military remittances, the Akamba would be a tribe of paupers³⁰

Aside from the famine problem, there was also a problem of tax payment. Many Akamba could not meet their tax obligation due to famine. The livestock which the Akamba could have sold to pay taxes had either died due to lack of pasture or forcefully sold to the meat supply board for war purposes. Thus, many still relied on the military remittances made for food purchase to pay tax. For instance, in 1942, the Akamba spent £ 28,000 from the military remittances on poll tax.³¹ Apparently, the Akamba survived this difficult period by relying on money that the soldiers sent home in almost all aspects. As the District Commissioner confirmed;

Kamba civilians are so dependent on these remittances that the district would not be able to survive another famine without them.³²

Majority of the people who did not have any of their kins working in the army still relied on the remaining livestock for survival. On the basis of the hides sold in 1940, it was estimated that 17,000 head of cattle were slaughtered for food or died of starvation in the reserve. About the same number were sold or found their way to Kikuyuland and other adjoining districts to obtain food.³³ The D.C. recorded:

People who had no ready cash sold cattle and goats in order to obtain money for buying maize, while many of these animals were slaughtered for food.³⁴

It is important to note that the figures cited above do not include sheep and goats, which were more readily sold or eaten during food shortages than was cattle. This fact

³⁰ Machakos District Annual Report, 1939-45: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29, 5.

³¹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1939-45: KNA DC/MKS I / I /29, I-3 and 9.

³² Ibid, 5.

³³ Machakos District Annual Report: 1939: KNA/DC/MKS/1/1/29, 2.

³⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/30.

notwithstanding, the official figures clearly demonstrate the society's reliance on livestock during food shortages. Despite the fact that livestock was causing environmental degradation, vulnerability to recurrent droughts made every family desire to have some stock.³⁵ The foregoing is an indication of the Akamba's overreliance on wage labour for food. Apart from the *Makovo Famine*, the Akamba would further suffer another more serious famine; the *Nzaa ya Mwolyo* as discussed below.

5.4.2 *Nzaa ya Mwolyo*, 1942-43

The greatest agrarian crises of the war were perhaps the food shortage of 1942-43. In Ukambani, the famine was referred to as the Mwolyo Famine (*Nzaa Ya Mwolyo*). *Mwolyo* was a word which was coined in Ukambani during this time to refer to "relief food." The famine started in 1943 and ended in 1947. This was not only the longest recorded food crisis in Machakos District but it was also unique because it started in crop producing areas of Kangundo, Matungulu and Iveti, unlike in previous cases when famine started in the low-lying areas. It was caused mainly by a general impoverished condition of the land and shortage of African man-power owing to extensive recruitment for military and civil production.³⁶ In 1943, the Food Shortage Commission of Enquiry noted that the continual drain of manpower as a result of urban migration saw the production of food left to old men and the women folk. Another reason was the increased production of cash crops at the expense of food production.³⁷

In late 1943, the colonial government and the LNC started giving out relief food (*mwolyo*). However, as noted by Matheka,³⁸ the government subsidy for food was a

³⁵ Tiffen, M., *et al More People, Less Erosion*.

³⁶ KNA/DC/MKS 8/4, Department of Agriculture Annual Report, 1946, 408.

³⁷ Zeleza, T. "Kenya and the Second World War".

³⁸ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

fictitious claim. In reality, the people contributed livestock for the war effort and were supplied with food in return. Even then, evidence suggests that this arrangement amounted to unequal exchange imposed on the people by the colonial state. For example, the Agricultural Officer's report for 1945 stated;

We do at present levy a contribution for livestock control of 50,000 sheep/goats a year and any default is usually adjusted by threatening to reduce famine relief issue.³⁹

The benefits of this primitive accumulation to the colonial state were manifested by the administration's insistence on collecting the levy even after the Akamba had asked the government to be allowed to sell their livestock to their preferred buyers after which they would buy their own food. This became a source of conflict between the LNC and the administration, especially in 1946. The administration argued that through the levy, the Akamba supplied other parts of the colony with meat and received grain in return. But the Akamba were against this government-mediated exchange. They asked to be allowed to sell and buy in the open market. Indeed, members of the LNC cited instances when animals levied from the Akamba were sold to butchers in Nairobi and elsewhere at very high profits.⁴⁰ Despite vehement opposition, the government collected the levy until December 1946. The levy was not only a form of unequal exchange but punished the poorest households. This was caused by a condition which required every household to pay its livestock quota before it was allowed to buy imported food. This meant that the families that did not have livestock were forced to buy goats at high market prices in order to meet this obligation. In short, the government used the famine situation to acquire Akamba livestock at quasi-market prices, thereby impoverishing the society further.⁴¹

³⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1939-45; KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/29.

⁴⁰ Machakos Local Native Council Minutes Book.1945-47: KNA/DC/MKS 5/1/4, 96.

⁴¹ Ibid, 98.

The conclusion that can be made here is that the severe food shortage during the Second World War was a grim but eloquent testimony to the outcome of the cumulative effect of discriminative economic policies. This period was characterised by important changes which occurred in the social concepts of livestock production and its relations to economic security. The proliferation of opportunity for wage labour, together with the constant food shortages, produced the conviction that wage labour was the most reliable economic activity and certainly the most secure. Accordingly, livestock was no longer such a feasible measure of wealth as it had been in the past. By 1945 a large number of the people had come to feel that the only real economic security lay in some form of education and longterm wage employment outside home. The period of WWII also witnessed a perpetuation of the earlier colonial prerogative relating to programmes of land reconditioning as discussed below.

5.5 Continuation in Land Reconditioning Programs

The Second World War instigated a partial suspension of the land reconditioning drive initiated in 1939. With large numbers of men out at work and most of the agricultural staff helping with the war effort, the colonial administration found it necessary to suspend large scale reconditioning until after the war. Only closure of denuded land to stock and cultivation was widely practised during the war. However, due to continued land degradation, communal terracing was introduced in the reserve in 1942, but the exercise proved unpopular. The Government again turned its attention to the rehabilitation of the district under the auspices of a new "reconditioning" committee formed in 1944. However, the abortive attempt which the Government had made in 1938 to destock the district by compulsory sales now apparently caused the Akamba to view all reconditioning plans with keen distrust. At the same time, reports were circulated that newly rehabilitated land would be turned over to Europeans and large

numbers of Akamba would be compelled to work on European farms as a measure of population relief and that severe cuts would be enforced in the number of livestock to which the Akamba were so attached.⁴² Hence, the Akamba became very suspicious of any reconditioning activity.

Nonetheless, the agricultural officials focused with renewed vigour on reconditioning. It initiated the draining of *shambas*, terracing, and planting grasses. The DC reminded the people of the administration's intention not only to continue with the reconditioning work but also to intensify it.⁴³ He noted that;

As an acknowledgement of governmental generosity, the Kamba must not only cooperate in reconditioning programmes but also voluntarily reduce their surplus cattle and goats as well. The government is prepared to give them another chance.⁴⁴

Clearly, the administration was retreating from its firm position regarding destocking. Indeed, as Spencer⁴⁵ argues, one motivation for the decision to withdraw from compulsion was the necessity to institute immediately the reconditioning programme on an intensive scale during the rainy season. Destocking was now placed within the context of the larger soil conservation issue. Voluntary reduction of the livestock population and acceptance of proper agricultural and pastoral methods were crucial. Thus, officers were surveying the area, and the need for restoring confidence was clear.⁴⁶

The agricultural officers therefore actively encouraged the enclosure of grazing lands as well as the enclosure of homestead lands. They distributed sisal for demarcation of

⁴² De Wilde, J. C., *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa. Vol. 2: The Case Studies*. (Baltimore, 1967), 93.

⁴³ KNA/ DC/MKS.10B/15/1: Points for Baraza with Kamba Policy," 2 December 1939.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Leon Spencer, "Notes on the Kamba Destocking Controversy of 1938," *International Journal of African Historical Studies* 5-4, 1972, 630.

⁴⁶ KNA/DC/MKS. 10B/15/1. S. H. La Fontaine to Provincial Commissioner, Nyeri, 2 December 1938.

individual or family holdings in the drier, lower areas of the reserve, a task undertaken voluntarily by the more "well-to-do" Akamba. They believed that sisal, would protect land from damage by excessive numbers of livestock, and would eventually promote voluntary reduction of stock. As individual land holdings were fenced, officers conducted surveys, establishing ownership and noting soil features. After two years of serious effort to counter soil erosion, an agricultural officer reported that there were signs of progress.⁴⁷

Unfortunately, the advent of the *mwolyo* famine coincided with this reconditioning work. Hence, the colonial administration took advantage of the food shortage and ordered the people of Machakos to engage in reconditioning programmes in exchange for relief food. However, the Akamba felt that the amount of relief food that they were given did not correspond with the work they did. Hence, the use of relief food as a tool for enforcing terracing at a time when food scarcity in the colony had made the government the sole distributor of food-stuffs undoubtedly made people to hate the reconditioning drive. Similarly, closure of pasture land to stock without providing an alternative, caused a lot of resentment against the colonial establishment in Machakos. Consequently, any form of government interference in land-use was viewed with distaste. This had an adverse effect on the reconditioning programmes in Machakos. The District Agricultural Officer concluded that the anti-soil erosion campaign in the previous six years had been ineffective in Machakos. He noted that only the compulsory closure of grazing lands and individual fencing or ownership, had made any difference to the condition of the range.⁴⁸ This shows that the reconditioning programs in Machakos were not as productive as had been anticipated. Munro has argued that the

⁴⁷ Leon Spencer, "Notes on the Kamba Destocking Controversy of 1938", 631.

⁴⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52: KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/30.

reconditioning programmes did very little to bring positive development in Machakos as they led to land enclosing hence, promoting individualism.⁴⁹ The spread of individualism at the expense of communal use triggered land shortage among many people.⁵⁰ For example, in 1944, about 13 per cent of the population in Machakos District was landless.⁵¹ In 1945, over-population in Machakos was estimated at 200,000 people.⁵²

In a nutshell, the so called 'development programmes' had led to 'underdevelopment' in Machakos. On the one hand, neglect of the livestock sector and lack of land for expansion had led to over grazing in the Machakos reserve. On the other hand, rural capitalism which encouraged individualism through the introduction of fencing had created a landless class which was previously dependent on livestock and crop production. Therefore, there is no doubt that the World War II period was the climax of 'The Machakos Problem'. By 1945, there was no more virgin land in the reserve and opportunities for pastoral pursuits in the reserve had come to an end. The consequence was over-cultivation and over-grazing, which resulted in a dwindling pastoral economy.

5.6 The Shift to Cash Crop Production

The outbreak of the Second World War in 1939 hindered the promotion of cash crop production in Machakos. Most of the agricultural staff was mobilised for the war effort. Thus, the colonial government abandoned the quest for agricultural development in favour of campaigns to recruit Akamba men, both voluntarily and under coercion, into

⁴⁹ Munro, J.F. *Colonial Rule and the Akamba*.

⁵⁰ Throup, D.W. *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau*. Nairobi: Heinemann. 1988.

⁵¹ KNA/DC/MKS/1/58, 70.

⁵² Thurston, A. *Smallholder Agriculture in Colonial Kenya: The Official Mind of the Swynnerton Plan* (Cambridge, 1987), 21.

the army and to increase wartime production. However, the production of grain crops were hindered by severe food shortages and famines as mentioned earlier.⁵³

Nonetheless, in spite of the general lack of state assistance to Akamba agriculture, some areas of the reserve achieved considerable progress. For example, in the Kangundo-Matungulu area, some farmers not only started using manure in their farms but also paddocked their land and grew fodder crops. Some farmers in the area also began producing lucrative Indian crops such as Bengal gram and Coriander. The missionaries and Asian traders were active in introducing horticultural crops to Kangundo. Coriander was recorded as the main district export in 1943. It was regarded as a significant market crop in several drier areas in the 1940s.⁵⁴ Other Asian vegetables were also introduced in the same way. The traders supplied seed to farmers and fixed the price for the crop products. This shift from maize mono-culture to other cash crops is perhaps explained by two factors. First, a 200-lb bag of Bengal gram sold at Shs 100 in 1944 compared to about Shs 10 for the same quantity of African brown maize.⁵⁵ Second, the depletion of soil fertility by maize, and the consequent need to use manure to restore fertility, required that farmers grew remunerative crops in order to compensate for the extra effort. Thus, at the height of the famine in 1944, the two locations intensified their cash crop production as they sold 2,980 bags of Bengal gram.⁵⁶

Similarly, production of fruits and vegetables was intensified during this period. In Iveti and Makindu, a variety of vegetables and fruits were grown under irrigation. Indeed, Iveti not only became the main supplier of straw-berries to Nairobi and the Kenya Orchard's fruit factory at Machakos, but also exported straw-berries to Eldoret. In

⁵³ Rocheleau, D. *et.al.* "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade." 1042.

⁵⁴ Peberdy, J. R. *Notes on Some Economic Aspects of Machakos District.*

⁵⁵ Department of Agriculture Annual Report. 1941-47: KNA/DC/MKS 8/4, 317.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

addition, large quantities of tomatoes, carrots, onions, guavas, paw paws, okra and chilies were exported daily from Machakos and Makindu at the height of the food crisis in 1944.⁵⁷ By 1945, Matungulu Vegetable Company had won a contract to supply the army base at Mackinnon Road with fruits and vegetables.⁵⁸

In sum, the study argues that despite the lack of colonial state's support, commercial agriculture can be said to have expanded in Machakos during the war period. All this development was at the detriment of the livestock economy. Most of the Machakos Akamba shifted all their attention to the new venture while abandoning livestock production. Some hitherto renowned livestock keepers were now showing more interest in the production of cash crops than in the livestock sector. There was a growing vigour in economic diversification with special attention to more profitable ventures, especially cash crop production which was seen as a relatively more economically rewarding enterprise.

5.7 Conclusion

The chapter set out to analyse the impact of World War II on the livestock economy in Machakos. The study has demonstrated that the outbreak of the Second World War had contradictory effects on the Akamba economy. One of the most important changes during the war period was the fact that a wage-earning class had taken root. It was a class that depended entirely on wage earning for everyday sustenance. This saw the declining role of the livestock economy. People began to have a feeling that they could no longer rely on livestock for survival. The economic changes brought on by this new wealthy working class contributed to the further erosion of established societal norms. Young, experienced, and wealthy ex-servicemen saw little reason to respect the elders

⁵⁷ Matheka. R. "The Political Economy of Famine", 204.

⁵⁸ KNA/DC/MKS 8/4. Department of Agriculture: Annual Report. 1941-47, 263.

as they no longer depended on them to establish themselves socially and economically. Wage labour, rather than age or tradition, became one of the main avenues to social status in post-war Machakos.

Secondly, the wage income was at the expense of the subsistence labour in Machakos. On the whole, production in the reserve deteriorated due to lack of labour. The out migration of the Machakos Akamba to seek for wage labour may be said to have caused the decline of livestock sector in Machakos as it created the shortage of labour required for production. This led to the two wartime famines namely *makovo* and *mwolyo*.

Moreover, the land reconditioning programmes, coupled with cash crop production encouraged the use of sisal to enclose land holdings. This led to individualism in land use. This in turn created a landless class. Many people in Machakos had nowhere to graze their livestock. The repercussion was that many people decided to abandon livestock keeping to venture in other more viable enterprises which did not require a lot of land. Apparently, the once cherished livestock industry in Machakos was slowly coming to a halt. The policies introduced during the World War II period were further amplified in the later years of colonialism as discussed in chapter six.

CHAPTER SIX

POST WORLD WAR TWO DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES AND THEIR IMPLICATION ON LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION IN MACHAKOS, 1946-1963

6.1 Introduction

The period after the Second World War has been described as the beginning of a new era for both the imperial metropolitan powers and the colonial state. This was as a result of the adjustments made by Britain in response to the war outcomes. After the war, Britain was economically exhausted so much so that she had to more than ever; rely on her colonies to fix her economy. Apart from the shattered economy, Britain faced two other major challenges. At the global level, the United States of America (USA), her major financier, and the Union Social Soviet Republic (USSR), exerted constant pressure on her to grant independence to her colonies and also allow freer international flow of capital. Moreover, on the local scale, Britain faced the challenge of the emergence of nationalists' resistance and an increasingly political conscious population. Therefore, the convergence of the British injured economy, international pressure and the local nationalist politics exerted more pressure on Britain. It was, therefore, in response to this mutually reinforcing pressure, that Britain reconsidered its imperial policy and for the first time, had to contribute on a large scale to African welfare. This is the context within which this chapter discusses the evolution of the livestock economy in Machakos.

In Machakos, as elsewhere in Kenya, the colonial administration initiated some changes. For instance, there was an increased vigour for land reconditioning programmes, establishment of settlement and grazing schemes, mass education, establishment of several marketing enterprises partly aimed at reducing the

overstocking problem while also ensuring a steady market for the Akamba livestock and improvement of livestock breeds. Despite the initiation of these measures, the trajectory of colonial policy continued to be tilted more towards cash crop production.

6.2 The Colonial Development and Welfare (CD&W)

The year 1945 did not simply mark the end of the Second World War, but it also signalled the beginning of a new era for both the imperial metropolitan powers and the colonial world.¹ In the aftermath of the war, a fundamentally new hierarchy emerged among the metropolitan capitalist countries, one marked by the economic hegemony of the USA which had come out of the war as the richest nation in the world and as Ochieng² puts it, ‘with a glut of capital’. On the other hand, Britain emerged from the war as the biggest debtor nation in the world. By the time the war ended, Britain owed £600M.³ Consequently, British economy was subordinated to that of the USA which had now become the new global power in what was seen at that time as ‘the New World Order’. The new centre of power therefore shifted from London to Washington.

As British capital became incapable of competing with America capital on a global scale, the British economy was reorganised. Laissez-faire capitalism gave way to a higher level of state intervention, a process which was reciprocated in the colonies, where of course state intervention was already highly pronounced.⁴ The impact of all this was that the colonies became fully integrated into the world capitalist system. The colonies were to be used to solve the 'problems of the sterling area' in two ways; first, the production of colonial primary products was to be dramatically increased not only

¹ Zeleza, T. “Kenya and the Second World War”, 156.

² Ochieng. W.R. “The Mau Mau, the Petite Bourgeoisie and Decolonisation.” Unpublished Paper. Kenyatta University. (1984), 8.

³ Zeleza, T. "Kenya and the Second World War", 156.

⁴ Maloba, W. “Nationalism and Decolonization”, in W.R. Ochieng' (Ed). *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980*. (London, 1989),

to meet British commodity needs, but also, as Lord Trefgarne, the first chairman of the Colonial Development Corporation emphasized, to provide vital dollar-earning exports to the USA.⁵

Hence, the metropolitan state attempted to exercise centralized and planned control over colonial production and trade and shape them to serve the needs of British economic recovery. In 1947 the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, bluntly told a conference of colonial governors that the ‘ultimate solution of the difficulties the sterling area was then facing was to be found in the colonies.’⁶ The United Kingdom therefore intended to increase the tempo of colonial development in Africa. In a nutshell, the needs of the British economy in the post-war era raised her intervention in colonial economies to unprecedented levels.⁷

On the other hand, social and political struggles were intensifying in the colonies. Nationalist parties and movements were up on arms. There were mass unrests which spasmodically erupted into demonstration and riots, boycotts, strikes, petitions and violent protests. Then British government then realised that the old framework could no longer contain the political crises in the colonies. This made Osborne to comment that, the Second World War provided the impetus for a re-thinking of the nature of colonial rule. Indirect Rule was clearly no longer tenable.⁸ The disturbances that were witnessed during this time made the environment uncondusive for the massive production that the colonial government badly wanted. It was therefore in response to

⁵ Berman, B., *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination*. (London, 1990).

⁶ David, E. “Kenyan Askari in World War II and their Demobilization with Special Reference to Machakos District”. In, *Three Aspects of Crisis in Colonial Kenya, Eastern Africa Series* (Syracuse, 1975), 29.

⁷ Aseka, E.M. “Political Economy of Buluyia 1900 – 1964.” Ph.D. Dissertation. History Department. Kenyatta University, 1989, 385.

⁸ Osborne. M.G., “Changing Kamba, Making Kenya, 1880-1963.” Ph.D. Thesis, Harvard University. 2008, 155.

such mounting pressure, underlined by the imperatives of British economic reconstruction, that a new post war colonial policy was unveiled. Its central plank was the Colonial Development and Welfare programme (CD&W).⁹ The fundamental objective of development and welfare programmes in Africa was to help lift the metropolitan economy out of its post-war crisis.¹⁰ The new emphasis on CD&W found expression in the series of Colonial Development and Welfare Acts and the foundation of the Colonial Development Corporation which provided metropolitan capital on an unprecedented scale for the expansion of colonial commodity production.¹¹

Accordingly, a number of institutional mechanisms were created to implement it. First, the CD&W Act of 1945 passed by the metropolitan government was to assist in the reconstruction and economic development of the colonies. The CD&W Act stipulated that each colony should prepare a Ten-Year Plan to cover the first period of post-world war development. In addition, the amending Act of 1949 and 1950, provided for a total of £140M to be available over the years 1946-56.¹² The colonies were then invited to submit ten year development plans, which were to take into account the money provided under the Act.

To take advantage of the Colonial Development and Welfare, Kenya submitted her Ten Year Development Plan covering the period 1946-1955. She earmarked a total expenditure of £17,586,000.¹³ Furthermore, a development committee was appointed under the chairmanship of the chief secretary for the 1946-55 period. Further, the Development and Reconstruction Authority (DARA) was established to co-ordinate

⁹ Zeleza, T. "Kenya and the Second World War", 157.

¹⁰ Berman, B., *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 259.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 256.

¹² British Aid-5. "Colonial Development. A Factual Survey of the Origins and History of British Aid to developing Countries". *The Overseas Development Institute Ltd.* London. 1964,33.

¹³ Zeleza, T. "Kenya and the Second World War"157.

development activities and expenditure. It operated simultaneously with the Ten Year Plan. Its main role was to help the African reserves to recover from the land degradation they suffered during the Second World War.¹⁴ As such, the authority proposed a programme whose thrust was the resettlement of surplus African population and reconditioning of damaged land. A committee called African Settlement Board was then set up in 1945. It changed to African settlement and land utilization board (ASLUB) in 1946 and to African land utilization and settlement board (ALUS) in 1947 through which problems affecting African land could be addressed. As the title of the board clearly indicates, its initial concern was to search for alternative land to settle the African population inhabiting badly denuded areas. However, after failing to locate such land, the board is said to have realised that the “root of evil” which was to be tackled was not overpopulation but mismanagement of the land.¹⁵

The emphasis as the board’s 1962 report indicates shifted from the original concept of settlement in new areas to reconditioning, reclamation and resettlement of existing African areas.¹⁶ That explains the constant change of the committee’s name. Each change of name signified a change in the committee's perception of the agrarian crisis in African areas and therefore a shift in the committee's approach to the problem. For example, by 1953 it had become abundantly clear that large scale resettlement of the African population was impossible due to lack of suitable land and other resources for establishing settlement schemes. Consequently, the Board changed its strategy from establishment of expensive settlement schemes to promotion of intensive use of the land already occupied by Africans. This explains why the title of the organization

¹⁴ Odingo, R.S. "Settlement and Rural Development in Kenya".

¹⁵ Waweru, P. *Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism*, 213.

¹⁶ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. 1962. *African Land Development (ALDEV) in Kenya*. Nairobi: Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Water Resources. 1962, 3.

changed in 1953 to African Land Development Board (ALDEV).¹⁷ In Machakos, the board came up with land reconditioning programmes, settlement and grazing schemes as well as mass education. All these projects made up what was generally known as the Machakos Betterment Scheme.

At that time, Machakos District was generally regarded as the classic example both of the devastation that had be caused by soil erosion and of the rapidity with which badly eroded land could be rehabilitated with proper measures. Therefore a scheme for establishing settlement schemes and stepping up of agrarian betterment throughout the reserve was highly recommended. It was approved in principle by the African Settlement Board and the expenditure estimates for 1952, totaling to about £50,000 were passed by DARA.¹⁸ Funds from ALDEV were allocated to cater for these projects. In fact, according to Odingo,¹⁹ Machakos was the greatest beneficiary of the ALDEV programme in the whole Southern Province and even the whole colony. This can be discerned from the table below.

Table 6.1: ALDEV Expenditure in Southern Province, 1946-62

| District | Grant £ | Loan To ADC £ |
|-----------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Machakos | 1,414,039 | 4,100 |
| Kitui | 259,940 | 4,900 |
| Narok | 49,609 | 18,500 |
| Kajiado | 70,556 | 10,900 |
| Total | 1,799, 144 | 119,700 |

Source: Odingo, R.S. "Settlement and Rural Development in Kenya" In S.H. Ominde (Ed). Studies in East African Geography and Development. (London, 1971), 168.

¹⁷ Cone, L.W. and J.F. Lipscomb. *The History of Kenya Agriculture* (Nairobi, 1972), 91-96.

¹⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1952: KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/30, 14, 20, 25.

¹⁹ Odingo, R.S. "Settlement and Rural Development in Kenya"

Table 6.1 above shows that Machakos was the greatest beneficiary of the ALDEV funds. This was attributable to the fact that Machakos reserve was considered to be the most affected by soil erosion and overstocking. The new policy thus aimed at opening up all uninhabited areas in the Machakos Reserve for permanent settlement by the Akamba. It involved the eradication of tsetse fly, provision of water resources and construction of roads in the said areas.

A pilot project was first put in place to establish the best way to go about it. This is according to the ALDEV's 1946-55 report which partly stated that;

In Machakos district for example, much of which is typical of the vast semi-arid areas of Kenya, experimental work is proceeding along the following main lines in order to find the best method of re-establishing a grass cover on the overgrazed and severely eroded lands on the reserve.²⁰

The establishment of Makueni Settlement Scheme in Machakos emerged as a clear manifestation of the resolve to implement the new policy. This is revealed in the next section.

6.3 The Makueni Settlement Scheme

The first objective of the post-WWII development programme was the opening up of all uninhabited areas in the Machakos Reserve for permanent settlement by the Akamba. This involved the eradication of tsetse fly, provision of water resources and construction of roads in the hitherto uninhabited areas of Makueni, Yatta Plateau, North Yatta and the southern parts of the district.²¹ It was expected that the resettlement within the district would be one of the few means of relieving overpopulation in the district. To this end, the Makueni Settlement Scheme was carried out in the southern part of the

²⁰ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. 1946-55. African development in Kenya, 1945-1955. Land, Livestock and Water. Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. (1952), 8.

²¹ KNA, DC/MKS 8/14. District Team Meetings, 1949-52, 102-04.

district. The settlement area comprised of more than 400,000 acres of tsetse- and game-infested bush land with unreliable rainfall.²²

In fact, a report by ALDEV indicates that during 1946-1962, Makueni Settlement Scheme received the highest amount of the ALDEV's expenditure as compared to the other projects in Machakos.²³ It received £180,800, while the rest of Machakos received £ 109,000. This is a reflection of the hopes that the colonial government had placed on the scheme. These costs covered dam and borehole construction, clearance of the bush to create fly barriers by bulldozer and semi-compulsory labour, organised shoots of rhino and other wild animals, rations for the settlers prior to the first harvest, assistance to the settlers in initial ploughing, house-building, staff costs, mechanical terracing, etc.

In addition, experimental livestock were bought locally and sent to Makueni for trial in areas on the boarder of the fly country. They were subjected to improved methods of animal husbandry. Their conditions improved immensely and it was concluded that they were fit for the scheme.²⁴ Accordingly, clearance operations were initiated in 1945, and the first people were settled on holdings of 20 acres in 1948/49. Furthermore, ALDEV employed a lot of staff to work on the improvement of the scheme. The 1946-55 report²⁵ noted that by 1954, the Makueni payroll numbered 212 ALDEV employees, and many other settlers were employed by the Agricultural and Veterinary Departments, or by the colonial Administration.

²² DeWilde, J. C. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa. Vol. 2. The Case Studies.* (Baltimore, 1967).

²³ ALDEV Report, 7.

²⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52: KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30.

²⁵ Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. *African Development in Kenya, 1945-1955.*

Ultimately, with the completion of the project, 2,250 settlers together with their families who totalled to about 12,000 people were accommodated on farms ranging in size from 20 acres to 60 acres.²⁶ The cost, exclusive of the salaries of supervisory personnel, averaged £1249 per settler. Until 1957, during the first year of settlement, each settler was given free rations and their five acres of arable land were ploughed for the first time, free of charge. Beginning that year, however, the Government charged each settler £15 for ploughing. It was not until 1960 when an annual rate of Sh 10 for water supply was also charged.²⁷ The scheme was undoubtedly an expensive venture. In fact, emphasising the extent of the ALDEV expenditure on the scheme, the development report of 1946-55 noted that;

For many years the eroded condition of Machakos district has caused grave concern and much public money has been spent in efforts to solve this difficult problem. Since 1946, a comprehensive reconditioning scheme has been drawn up and run by experienced staff from the administration and agricultural departments, augmented by additional staff from ALUS. The cost to date excluding administration and agricultural staff is about £110,000 on reclamation and £250,000 in adjoining relief areas. (Makueni, Emali, Tsavo and Yatta). Although the problem is not yet solved, the progress is encouraging.²⁸

However, as reported by Musembi Joseph,²⁹ In spite of the material support that the new settlers were given, the scheme remained unpopular. This was attributable to the conditions that were set by the government to the would-be settlers. Initially, Makueni Settlement Scheme was not only meant to resettle as many people as possible, but also to serve as a model for improved farming. Settlement officers created model holdings to test everything from the amount of water needed per head of stock to the amount of land required for grazing as the agricultural wisdom of the time suggested that land had a fixed carrying capacity. Officials drew up a strict set of rules with which permit

²⁶ DeWilde, J. C. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ African Development in Kenya, 1945-1955, 5.

²⁹ Musembi Joseph, OI at Ngelani on 07/11/2020.

holders would have to comply with each signing the document known as the "Makueni Rules." These rules mainly involved stock limitation and restricted size of arable land for each settler. The rules stated for instance that any permit holder was allowed only seven head of cattle, with five sheep or goats as a substitute for one head of cattle, and that he must submit to all instructions of the settlement officers regarding the branding, dipping or inoculation of his cattle. Failure to adhere to these rules would have resulted in the confiscation of livestock, or possibly removal from the settlement. Musyoka Ndolo stresses this by noting that;³⁰

Before coming to Makueni, I had two syengo (cattle posts). One had over 100 heads of cattle while the other one had over 300 altogether. However, when we came here, we had to reduce our herds to almost nothing. We were then forced to cultivate as all the other wealth had gone. Before that, we just used to cultivate small pieces of land and even those small pieces were not cultivated well as people were always away looking after cattle.³¹

The above conditions by the government, therefore, led to a low turn up of would be settlers. In fact according to Ondigo, the Makueni settlement scheme, despite being the most ambitious settlement scheme in the colony at that time, was not very successful because it did not attract as many people as earlier anticipated. For instance, archival data indicates that by March 1947, officials made an offer of land in Makueni to 40 families from Machakos. However, as much as each family had demonstrated landlessness to some degree, each offer was categorically declined.³² Moreover, by the start of 1950, only 100 families were settled, at the extraordinary cost of £1,249 per family. Furthermore, by 1960, the scheme had only absorbed 2,187 families at an average cost of £148 per family.³³ This was only a small fraction of those who needed land. In fact, some 70 Kamba families who needed land were not willing to take up land

³⁰ KNA, DC/MKS/12/2/1, "Makueni Rules," including "Comments on Draft Rules," 19 November, 194.

³¹ Musyoka Ndolo, OI at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020.

³² Machakos District Agricultural Gazetteer, 1959. KNA, DC/MKS/14/3/2.

³³ Odingo, R.S. "Settlement and Rural Development in Kenya: 1971, 169.

in Makueni. But could not be accommodated in Makueni took up residence in Shimba Hills in Kwale District in 1958.³⁴ It's thus clear that many people were disinterested in the scheme. All the same, the settlement scheme was useful in absorbing became an important destination for Akamba returnees and their livestock. For instance, some of the squatters evicted from Nairobi and Thika ended up in the Makueni settlement scheme.

In view of the above, it is clear that the Makueni Settlement scheme was an expensive and unnecessary measure. Despite the expenditure of money and manpower, the scheme was a failure as it did not provide a sufficient answer to the growing population pressure and overstocking. As a consequence, scarcity of pasture continued being a challenge. Hence we can convincingly argue that the Makueni settlement scheme was not a panacea to the pasture problem and as such did not bring any positive development to the livestock industry in Machakos. Another project initiated under the Machakos Betterment Scheme programme was the establishment of the Yatta Grazing Scheme which is detailed below.

6.4 The Yatta Grazing Scheme

In Machakos, the Yatta grazing scheme was the major grazing scheme funded by the ALDEV. However, ALDEV also financed seven other grazing schemes, although these were just but minor projects which were not very successful and collapsed after a short period. So Yatta grazing scheme was the grazing scheme which to some extent, served the purpose of a grazing scheme. It was financed by a loan of £ 6,000 pounds from ALDEV to the ADC. It covered the North Yatta, an area of 240,000 acres, and the Machakos Yatta, an area of 160,000 acres on the Yatta Plateau beyond the Athi River.

³⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1958. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/34, 3.

The grazing scheme was operated by the Veterinary Department, although, it was taken over by the Agriculture Department in 1959.³⁵ After the establishment of the Yatta grazing scheme, controlled grazing was therefore initiated, not only to make more effective use of the grazing land in the Yatta, but also to prevent this land from being overstocked.³⁶ The ten stock units limit (with five sheep and five goats counting as one stock unit) was fixed in 1950.

As Tabitha Kilonzo³⁷ reports, from 1950, both Yattas were sub-divided into paddocks which were to be grazed in rotation with each having its own water supply. The number of graziers and the number of livestock that could be grazed was controlled by licenses, with the stipulation that any natural increase in livestock had to be sold or brought back into the reserve. As such, although the Akamba had a tradition of keeping cattle not immediately required for meat or milk on the Yatta (in cattle posts), the grazing regulations which dictated the number of livestock one could keep in the Yatta grazing scheme forced them to change the practice. The excess livestock which were as a result of natural increases in the Yatta were usually brought back to the reserve. Consequently, the Yatta plateau, which was originally supposed to provide for relief grazing, quickly became a means of increasing the total number of livestock in the reserve. This led to further overstocking in the reserve.

Apart from the limitation of the number of livestock kept in the scheme, an annual grazing fee of Sh 6 per adult head of stock per year was also charged to defray the cost of maintaining the scheme. The levy was meant to meet the cost of rangeland

³⁵ De Wilde, J. C. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*, 114.

³⁶ Brown, R. H. The Kenya Veterinary Department. Survey of the Grazing Schemes Operating in Kenya. 1959.

³⁷ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

improvement especially the provision of water. Attesting to this fact. Susanna Kasili reported that;

The grazing schemes were mainly supported by grazing fees collected by the ADC from the beneficiaries. For example, a grazing fee of 6 per head of cattle per year was instituted in Yatta in 1949.³⁸

In 1955, the grazing fee was raised to from Sh 6 to Sh 9 in 1955.³⁹ This made the scheme to be a somehow sustainable mechanism to address the grazing issues that had been a thorn in the Machakos reserve for several years.

However, serious difficulties were apparently encountered. One was that of providing perennial water supplies through dams and bore holes. To some extent, this was relieved by the construction of the Yatta Furrow. The year 1959 witnessed the completion of the furrow. It covered 37-miles at a cost of £324,982.⁴⁰ The furrow, apart from supplying some supplemental water for the grazing areas of North Yatta and the Machakos Yatta, was supposed to provide water for irrigating an area of approximately 1,900 acres.⁴¹ However, the furrow, faced challenges due to constant drought and the high cost involved and as such could not be as reliable as desired. This severely limited the planned development of these areas.⁴²

Another principal source of trouble in the grazing scheme was grazing by outsiders. Scarcity of pasture had become a big problem for the stock keepers who could not afford the grazing fee at the Yatta. The situation was accentuated by an army worm infestation in April 1961 which cleared the green vegetation. Moreover, the widespread incidences of tsetse fly in Yatta and throughout the southern parts of the district made

³⁸ Susannah Kasili, OI at Ndalani on 30/10/2020.

³⁹ De Wilde, J. C. 1967. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*, 114.

⁴⁰ Musila, S. "The Impact of Irrigation on the Socio-Cultural and Economic Lives of a Rural Community. The Case of Yatta Furrow Irrigation in Machakos District, Kenya." MA Thesis. University of Nairobi. 1993, 37.

⁴¹ Ibid, 38.

⁴² Ibid.

the situation even worse. These challenges aggravated the already existing challenge of pasture scarcity. Consequently, there was large scale invasion of the scheme by the surrounding stock keepers. In fact, the police had to be used to keep frustrated Akamba herdsmen off the grazing schemes. As a result of this challenge, the goal of reserving the areas to people permitted to graze there was never achieved as it had become so difficult for the administration to curb illicit grazing on the plateau. Many unlicensed animals found their way into the plateau while even those who were permitted to graze there had herd size that far exceeded their allotted quotas. Unfortunately due to the frustration in the reserve, no amount of punishment could deter the Akamba from flouting these obnoxious rules.⁴³

The main reason why the colonial administration was unable to curb the illicit grazing was because it lacked an elaborate means of isolating permitted from non-permitted stock. The permit alone was incapable of doing this given that the livestock were spread all over the plateau and most of those with non-permitted stock distributed them to other households whose permits had deficit. In North Yatta, a census taken in 1959 disclosed that there were 725 unlicensed stock owners as compared with 1,058 licensed ones. Under these conditions, there was a larger extent of overstocking and eventual overgrazing.⁴⁴ This frustrated the government's efforts of keeping the scheme functional.

Illicit grazing aside, attempts by the colonial government to combat tsetse fly in the infested areas became another big challenge. The uncleared bush covering over 100,000 acres in the North Yatta had all been infested. The other grazing schemes also faced similar challenges and had to be closed down. For instance, a grazing scheme in

⁴³Susannah Kasili, OI at Ndalani on 30/10/2020.

⁴⁴G.C.M. Mutiso, "Kitui; the Ecosystem, Integration, and Change".

Makindu was abandoned in 1959 on the advice of the Chief Zoologist after the emergence of drug-resistant trypanosomes.⁴⁵ All these challenges, coupled with the pressure from the Akamba politicians, posed a major challenge to the success of the grazing schemes. Consequently, just as the Makueni settlement scheme, the Yatta grazing scheme never provided any long lasting solution to the problem of lack of pasture. Indeed, it only worked against the development of the livestock industry as the regulations under which it operated restricted the number of stock one could hold. It is therefore evident that despite the fact that the scheme attempted to provide some short-term solution to the grazing problem, it was unable to bring any meaningful and sustainable solution. Another aim of ALDEV was to restore the fertility of the inhabited areas and developing productive farming methods. In this regard land reconditioning activities were promoted. Therefore, the next section gives an analysis of the post-world War II land reconditioning activities

6.5 The post-World War II Land Reconditioning Programs

As mentioned earlier, another aim of the Machakos betterment scheme was to restore the fertility of the inhabited areas and develop productive farming methods. Land reconditioning activities such as communal terracing, grass planting, closure of denuded land to livestock, tree planting, dam construction and the use of manure were thus promoted.

In 1945, the land reconditioning campaign which had slackened among the Akamba during World War II gained momentum again. With the drawing up of the Ten Year Development Plan, a more serious attack on land degradation was made. Nevertheless, it met a lot of mistrust. Rumors had gone round that once the Akamba had rehabilitated

⁴⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1959. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/35, 20-21.

their land; it would be taken and given to the European farmers who would in turn force the Akamba to become labourers on the same farms. This provoked strong resistance to terracing including the uprooting of markers lay out to delineate areas for the digging.

This resentment is revealed by Musembi in the statement below.

In 1946, some people threw themselves in front of tractors to disrupt the work. However, the government was not completely daunted because it considered terracing to be essential to the future of Ukambani, it was one of the central foci of government propaganda. For the colonial administration, land reconditioning was conceived as a war to be won. Hence, soil conservation work was made the major policy in Machakos.⁴⁶

In regard to this, there was mobilisation of resources by both the colonial government and the Machakos ADC for the land conditioning campaigns as well as improvement of agriculture in the district. This was given a boost by the money that Machakos district received from ALDEV. As observed earlier, Machakos received the lion's share of funds devoted to African lands. This went a long way in pushing the land reconditioning campaigns. In addition, in 1951 the ADC came up with a Five-Year Plan meant for the reconditioning programmes in Machakos. The plan was then approved by ALDEV. It was to cost £50,000 in 1952 and £20,000 in each of the subsequent years. It proposed a mechanical unit of two D6 and three D7 tractors for reconditioning work, eleven reconditioning assistants and agricultural field staff of five hundred and seventy people.⁴⁷ This was followed by the promotion of programmes such as communal terracing, grass planting, closure of denuded land to livestock, tree planting, dam construction and the use of manure. In addition, compulsory communal work was organised for terracing and grass-planting, and large areas were closed to grazing.⁴⁸ Gradually, some progress occurred. Narrow base and bench terraces were constructed across the district. Grass planting, manuring, and water impoundments supplemented

⁴⁶ Musembi Joseph, OI at Ngelani on 07/11/2020.

⁴⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1952. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30, 25.

⁴⁸ Tiffen, M. *et al.* *More People, Less Erosion.*

the terracing program. To achieve this, the colonial authorities used two major agents; the colonial chiefs and the African Development Council (ADC).

The ADC played a major role in the reconditioning activities by passing a series of resolutions which forced the Akamba to engage in the reconditioning programmes. For instance, in 1947, it resolved that no one would be allowed to cultivate his land if the land had not been terraced. The ADC also empowered Native Tribunal Courts to impose fines on those people who failed to take part in terracing work. One was to be fined Shs 10 for the first time he failed to engage in terracing work while second and third offenders were fined Shs 15 and Shs 30-100 respectively.⁴⁹ Attesting to this, Elijah Mutaki who was a member of the ADC in the 1950s notes that;

During the 1950s, I was in the ADC. We were promoting land reconditioning programe. A majority failed to see the purpose of communal work and the land reconditioning activities, but those of us who were educated saw its use in preventing soil erosion. Hence, those who failed to engage in land reconditioning problem were refused permission to cultivate their land unless they had dug mbeenzi (benches). Those who refused to engage in the communal work were also arrested and fined. As such, there were many arrests and fines. Bulls and he-goats were taken from those were refused to engage in the reconditioning work and eaten by the leaders of the communal groups.⁵⁰

In 1953, the ADC also passed a soil conservation by-law which prohibited people from planting more than half of their arable land with maize, or allow their livestock to graze out of their stalls during the four dry months of the year.⁵¹ Commenting on the ADC's work, in 1953, the DC noted that;

The widespread rains and the application of the ADC by-laws have brought about a considerable improvement in the quantity if not quality of the farms throughout most locations.⁵²

⁴⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946. KNA; DC/MKS/4, 15.

⁵⁰ Elijah Mutaki, OI at Ndithini on 09/11/2020.

⁵¹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1953. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/31, 22.

⁵² Machakos District Annual Report, 1957. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/34.

Further, in 1954, the ADC passed a by-law in which Locational Councils, with the advice of locational agricultural officers, could give each land-owner in a location a written order stipulating how many cattle, sheep or goats he could keep in his holding.

The by-law stated that;

No occupier of agricultural land shall keep on his holding a greater number of cattle than the Locational Council considers the holding can carry without detriment to its well-being and fertility.⁵³

Hailing this as an important development, the D.C. commented that stock limitation was to be done through the Akamba themselves if it was to succeed.⁵⁴ Colonial chiefs were also instrumental in the soil reconditioning programmes to a larger extent. The creation of the Locational Councils headed by the chiefs gave a great impetus to the reconditioning programmes. For example, some Locational Councils told the Africans that unless they planted their eroded land with trees during the rainy seasons, the land risked being taken off from them and given to the ADC.⁵⁵ To a large extent, the Locational Councils became the executive arm of both the ADC and the government.

The significance of Locational Councils in enforcing government measures becomes very clear when it is considered that the councils were led by chiefs, who were under administrative pressure to enforce reconditioning measures. For example, in Murang'a District, the efficiency of chiefs and headmen in the 1940s was judged by the extent of soil reconditioning which the people under them performed within a specified period of time.⁵⁶ This made the chiefs to work hard in ensuring that land reconditioning in their areas of jurisdiction was taken seriously. Hence, the land reconditioning project was very successful in Murang'a.

⁵³ Machakos District Annual Report, 1955, KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/33, 2.

⁵⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1954. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/32, 4.

⁵⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1954. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/32, 5.

⁵⁶ Thurston, A. *Smallholder Agriculture in Colonial Kenya*, 28.

Accordingly, Major Joyce, a Machakos rancher who was on the ALDEV board, recommended that the Muranga' system where labour for terracing was organised by local elders be adopted in Machakos. In 1946, Chief Uku of Matungulu and four other chiefs visited Fort Hall (Muranga District). They realised that in Muran'ga, the elders of each village were responsible for managing communal labour which was done twice a week.⁵⁷ They considered this system to be a successful terracing programme. Chief Uku then told the Committee that he thought the Utui (village) could organise a similar programme in Machakos. The system was then adopted in Machakos. All adults had to turn out for the communal reconditioning work two days in a week. The chiefs were then ordered to keep duty rosters on reconditioning work in their locations.⁵⁸

The chiefs tried to utilise the traditional Akamba work group (*mwethya*) to organise for communal land reconditioning work. However, the organisation of the communal work differed fundamentally from the traditional *mwethya*; for instance, unlike the traditional *mwethya* which was voluntary, the communal work was compulsory and people who would not turn up would be taken to court and be fined., it was also a continuous activity which was instigated by government officers and led by the chiefs, government officials or those whom the Government regarded as elders. On the contrary, the traditional *mwethya* was a special day-long project which used to be requested for by an individual host who wanted some help in a certain project. Moreover, in the traditional *mwethya*, there was a lot of feasting after work. The host would usually slaughter a goat for food and even prepare the traditional beer for celebration after work. On the other hand the 'land reconditioning *mwethya*' did not involve the host giving any food. It is thus apparently clear that the communal work organised by the colonial administration was

⁵⁷ Tiffen, M., *et al. More People, Less Erosion*, 186.

⁵⁸ Machakos Local Native Council Minutes Book, 1945-47. KNA, DC/MKS 5/1/4, 15.

not therefore, the traditional *mwethya* which the Akamba had been traditionally used to.

Furthermore, the use of coercion by the colonial administration to push the people to work did not augur well with people. Many Akamba felt that the use of compulsion killed the meaning and the spirit of the traditional *mwethya* as it had been known by the Akamba initially. Traditionally, *mwethya* was a work-group for people of the same age-group or sex, and participation was voluntary. On the contrary, the communal work organised by the colonial administration for reconditioning activities forced parents to work alongside their grown-up children and even in-laws. Sometimes people were coerced harassed by the supervisors in the presence of their children and other people. This did not go down well with many people. Hence, they started detesting the *mwethya* communal work.⁵⁹

In addition to *mwethya*, the *nzama sya utui* (Village Councils) were formed in 1947. They were to assist the chiefs in coordinating the reconditioning work. They were charged with the duty of safeguarding the land by co-ordinating communal terracing. In this case, the *mwethya* groups still did communal work as previously, but were now under the Utui Councils which decided where, when and how the group was to work. They devised their own means to ensure that the members complied with communal work schedules rather than relying on the chiefs' sanctions as it had been before. In addition to terracing, they undertook the making of boundaries for newly demarcated land, constructed dams, made roads, and built new houses.⁶⁰ The chiefs coordinated all the Utui Councils in their location. The role of the Utui Councils in the reconditioning programmes is underscored in the following words by Mativo who notes that;

⁵⁹ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine".

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The co-ordination of the reconditioning activities was done by a village elder who got instruction from an agricultural officer. The agricultural officer would say where he measured terraces. The elders then told the people of the village where they would be working next. Some people didn't like this sort of work, but the elders and the agricultural officer could send them to court. Accordingly, those who were too poor to call a mwethya group could now have them free of charge.⁶¹

Those chiefs who succeeded in managing the *mwethya* and the *Utui* Councils did well in the reconditioning programmes and they were commented by the DC. For example, in 1947, the DC named five chiefs as being the most illustrious in the reconditioning activities. They included; Uku Mukima of Matungulu, Mutinda of Masii, Muthoka of Kisau, Mukonzo of Kilungu and Ndivo of Kibauni. Their locations led in reconditioning activities.⁶² At the same time, Uku Mukima received a Certificate of Honour from the Chief Native Commissioner for his outstanding performance in reconditioning activities.⁶³ He was also appointed to be the Soil Conservation Headman.⁶⁴ It is therefore likely that these chiefs pressurised the locational councils to make decisions that favoured the administration's objectives on reconditioning. These objectives were not necessarily consistent with the people's welfare. On the other hand, some chiefs whose reconditioning work was not satisfactory according to the colonial government were fired and replaced with others. For instance, in 1950, chiefs Jonathan Kala of Kangundo and Mutuku of Nzau were forced to resign due to what was termed as "absence of reconditioning work" in their areas.⁶⁵

Another factor that gave the reconditioning activities a boost was the creation of divisions under the District Officers (DOs). This was done in order to ensure closer administration, as a means of re-establishing control and as a basis for development. In

⁶¹ Linet Mativo, OI at Kithimani on 30/10/2020.

⁶² Machakos District Annual Report, 1947. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30, 5.

⁶³ Machakos District Annual Report, 1950. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30.

⁶⁴ Matheka, R. "The Political Economy of Famine"

⁶⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1950. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30, 7.

September 1951, Jim Pedraza was the first DO to be posted to Kangundo Division in Machakos District, where he remained throughout 1954.⁶⁶ Within a period of three years that he was in Kangundo, the division was considered a progressive one due to numerous development schemes, for which Pedraza received credit. By the end of the first year, three other sub-stations had been established, in Machakos, Kithimani and Makueni Divisions. While appreciating the role played by the DOs, the Central Province Annual Report recorded:

There is no doubt that the policy has paid handsome dividends, as a glance round the agricultural work will show, not to mention the improvement in law and order and the generally cheerful co-operative spirit of the people.⁶⁷

Pedraza work was so impressive that the experiment of sub dividing districts into divisions was considered to have succeeded and as a result, the policy of dividing districts up into divisions was spread to other provinces.⁶⁸ Furthermore, Machakos began to be cited as one of the best in land rehabilitation programme.

Another DO who is worth a mention is Nottigham, (nick named Kanyenze due to his cruelty) the DO of Kiteta Division. According to the oral sources, he was so tough that nobody could dare evade the reconditioning work. One Zachayo Mulandi recalls his actions by noting that;

During the emergency, many people were involved in the politics of freedom for Africans. This was the time of the Akamba Liberal Party. Many were agitating for their rights. For example, to graze their animals wherever they wanted. However, they could not succeed as Kanyenze (Nottigham) was so tough. His control was so strict that if the animal interfered with the benches built by the communal labour, the owners were arrested, fined or jailed. He was so tough that despite there being other DOs who came before and after him, people still remember

⁶⁶Thurston, A. *Smallholder Agriculture in Colonial Kenya*.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 68.

⁶⁸ Pedraza, J. "Land Consolidation in the Kikuyu Areas of Kenya", *Journal of African Administration*, Vol 8, 2, 1956

*his regime. They refer to it as the Ivinda ya Kanyenze. (Kanyenze's time).*⁶⁹

The above two examples of the two District Officers who succeeded in reconditioning work shows how the creation of the position of the DO enhanced the land reconditioning activities in Machakos District.

Another more subtle mechanism of control was through propagation of social welfare or community development (CD) activities. Colonial policy at the time aimed at promoting self-help groups and local organisations. In 1948, the Colonial Secretary established the Community Development (which later became part of the Ministry of Social Services). The programme expanded to embrace a full-scale team of social workers.

The government used propaganda through cinema and the press to educate people about the benefits of soil reconditioning. This had been suggested in 1929 by the then Colonial Secretary L.S. Amery who urged the Films Committee to consider "questions of cinema in education, the circulation of British films, and censorship." The Committee reported back in 1930 indicating that cinematography had great possibilities for education especially with illiterate peoples.

During the 1930s, officials in Kenya had also noted the mobile cinema van's potential as a medium for propaganda. Thus in 1949, the government used the cinema as a medium to champion the CD and Social Work campaigns. Films were often educational (although comedies and westerns were also used to draw audiences). They included *Jonathan Builds a Dam, On Patrol and African Progress*.⁷⁰ They showed how a village could succeed in improving its daily life through working together with the colonial

⁶⁹ Zachayo Mulandi, OI at Kivaa on 07/11/2020.

⁷⁰ Osborne. M.G., "Changing Kamba, Making Kenya".

administration. Oral sources indicate that the mobile cinemas were so popular that it brought so many people together. One informant notes that;

A cinema show was a major town event. People would come from far and wide to watch the wonder. It was like a miracle to many and it was popular with all the people including seniors.⁷¹

Apart from the mobile cinema, the colonial government also used the print press to ensure the success of its extensive system of propaganda. In October 1949, the government printed the first issue of the Machakos-based *Mwei wa Mukamba* (The Kamba Monthly) published monthly. The weekly *Akamba* complemented it. Both were very popular. Now information officers replaced war-related material with posters promoting better agricultural practices, soil conservation programmes among others. The material also lauded the new successes of terracing and other government.

In addition to the campaign, in 1953, the colonial government appointed John Malinda, to the position of the African District Assistant, responsible for (CD) work. He used his position to strengthen the soil conservation groups. He tried to make more use of the traditional *mwethya* groups for communal reconditioning programmes, but this time round, they were made a bit voluntary. Instead of forcing people to take part in communal work, they were educated on the benefits of the land reconditioning and gradually, they started seeing its value. This seemed to somehow bring the government soil reconditioning programmes into fruition.

Hence, from 1956 onwards, communal work groups gradually gave way to the voluntary and traditional self-help groups, such as the clan-based *Mwethya* through which people assisted each other in certain farm tasks, or the local *Ngwatanio* (unity) which generally worked on community projects. The latter types of self-help groups

⁷¹ Peter Munyaka, OI at Muisuni 10/11/2020.

were promoted, among others, by the government's Community Development Staff. It can therefore be argued that despite the many challenges, substantial progress was made in the reconditioning programme. The total area protected by soil conservation works reached a peak of 103,000 acres in 1958 and the area planted with grass in any year was 56,940 acres.⁷² As such, Machakos began to be cited as a colonial success story in land rehabilitation.

Nevertheless, the land reconditioning activities had a profound effect on the livestock industry in Machakos. First, the land reconditioning programmes were very labour-demanding and as such, they drained the labour that was supposed to be directed to animal husbandry. Second, the programmes entailed carving up the land into blocks of various sizes and digging terraces or benches on it with strict controls being imposed over herd movement. Large tracts of land were also supposed to be entirely closed off from livestock to permit regeneration. At the long run, the reconditioning programmes were successful in making the land better and soils more fertile. However this was only geared towards the improvement of cash crop production but not livestock production. Infact the main aim of the reconditioning programmes was to regulate grazing and control stock numbers in the designated areas so as not to interfere with the rehabilitated land. This was a major blow to the livestock sector as the programmes interfered with what the Akamba had regarded as their inalienable right to graze their livestock wherever they wanted. Land reconditioning aside, another factor that deprived the livestock industry of labour was the introduction of influence of the Ex-Soldiers who encouraged labour migration and mass education on which the next section focuses.

⁷² De Wilde, J. C. 1967. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*, 94.

6.6 The Return of the Ex-Soldiers, Mass Education and the Shift in Labor Patterns

The period after the Second World War witnessed increased desire for education which was of course closely tied to the rise of social welfare and the return of educated soldiers from South-East Asia.⁷³ With the introduction of the CD&W, the colonial government considered the African ex-soldiers to be the ideal vehicles through which to spread development and welfare in Kenya. This was due to the fact that they were to some extent considered to be educated and literate, and were well-trained and had worked closely with British soldiers during the war.⁷⁴

The ex-soldiers had been sensitized about development while in India and Burma, particularly from contact with other soldiers. The same was true of education, which soldiers received from the Army Educational Corps. Literacy became a thing of great respect and pride.⁷⁵ As a result, a great number of soldiers returned from the war as great believers in education which they wanted for their children. Accordingly, they were the ones on whom welfare would rely, the aim being “to transform swords into plough shares.” Acknowledging the importance of the ex-soldiers, Hussey noted that;

Returning warriors are travelled men, they have experienced the mental stimulus which comes from travel and observation of conditions outside their country... we must direct African aspirations into channels which may, with British assistance, lead to an era of increased prosperity, education being part of that prosperity.⁷⁶

This awakening by the ex-soldiers is evident from the way they pushed for education facilities to be increased in Machakos. The ex-soldiers also influenced the rest of the people. Their influence catalysed by the establishment of more schools in Machakos

⁷³ Shorter, A. *East African Societies*, 120-145, Library of Man Series (London, 1974), 121.

⁷⁴ Osborne. M.G., “Changing Kamba, Making Kenya”, 207.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ Hussey, E.R.J. "Educational Policy and Political Development in Africa," *African Affairs* 45. (1946),

resulted to more desire for education. It was now every parent's desire to see their children going to school. According to one informant,

People were woken up by KAR, and they knew now that they should educate their children. Their eyes were opened, they arrived with great fanfare from their service abroad, flush with cash and a strong belief in the value of "development" and education.⁷⁷

The annual reports of the DCs indicated a constant demand for education and the building of schools. This was clear from the DCs statement who noted in 1945 that "the demand for more schools is incessant."⁷⁸ Efforts were therefore made to increase the number of learning institutions.

The number of learning institution went up. Statistics reveal that while in 1945, the district had 29 elementary schools, 11 mission and 18 government schools, plus government primary schools at Machakos Town and Kangundo, and a Roman Catholic Mission primary school at Kabaa, by 1957, the district had 114 DEB schools and 168 mission schools.⁷⁹ This also resulted to an increased number of school going children. For instance in 1945, slightly more than 5,000 pupils attended school in Machakos, but by 1956, the number of children who were attending school had risen to 28,493 boys and 11,433 girls. This meant in effect that the same number of livestock labourers had been deducted from the livestock industry in Machakos as the school going children started devoting more of their time to education rather than herding livestock. Thousands of the pupils who were going to school were in the age bracket of seven to eighteen which was the prime age for providing labour in rural economy. Although these children still took part in animal husbandry during the weekends and in the evenings, the labour that they had provided before was greatly lost. Apparently, a large

⁷⁷ Kavutha Munyoki, OI at Athi River, on 13/11/2020

⁷⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52: KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30.

⁷⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1957: KNA, DC/MKS/1/1/34.

number of the Akamba had come to feel that livestock was no longer such a feasible means of acquiring wealth as it had been in the past and the only real economic security lay in some form of formal education. As such, more emphasis was placed on formal education. This is evident from the following song which was sung to that effect.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <i>Kethia ni ivinda ya tene</i> | if it was during the pre-colonial times |
| <i>Ila kwai Mwatu wa Ngoma</i> | during the times of Mwatu Ngoma ⁸⁰ |
| <i>Nau, ngwitya uta na thyaka</i> | my father, I would have asked you for bow and shield |
| <i>Indi yuyu nikwitya kisomo,</i> | but now I will ask you for education |
| <i>Uta ni kalamu</i> | the bow is the pen |
| <i>Na thyaka ni ivuku</i> | and the shield is the book ⁸¹ |

This shift of attention to education forced parents and in some cases grandparents to look after livestock during school days. Those people with money also hired labour for livestock management. Livestock keeping had become an expensive venture. Indeed, as Joseph Musembi has argued;

As children allocated more of their time to education and less to the farm, the parents made up for the foregone labour and had also to work extra hard to offset the additional education costs by allocating more of their own time to family labour.⁸²

Supporting this argument, Ndege, who did his study about the transformation of livestock economy in Rongo observes that;

While in the period prior to the Second World War emigration of persons to colonial establishments outside the district had been the major factor contributing to lack of labour for animal husbandry, after the Second World War, it was because of most of the children going to school.⁸³

The foregoing is an indication of how education reduced labour from the livestock sector. Aside from the promotion of formal education, the ex-soldiers also undermined livestock production in Machakos because they were no longer interested in working

⁸⁰ Mwatu wa Ngoma was a well-known *Muthiani* (warrior leader) in Machakos.

⁸¹ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/10/2020.

⁸² Joseph Musembi, OI at Ngelani on 07/11/2020.

⁸³ Ndege. G. "The Transformation of Cattle Economy in Rongo Division", 149.

in the reserve after they returned from fighting. Their unwillingness to stay in the reserve also took off the much needed labour from the district.

The soldiers returned with lots of money, and families everywhere slaughtered animals to celebrate their returning members. The moment was a break in an otherwise difficult year of drought. The money quickly ran out and they became broke. The soldiers found themselves frustrated as they were unwilling to happily return to their villages and do the jobs they had done before 1939.⁸⁴ As Osborne⁸⁵ argues, the Second World War had transformed the Mkamba soldier from a barefoot porter dressed in rags into a professional soldier. Oral evidence also indicate that these men now believed that they were "above" herding livestock as they were now used to the cash economy and all that wages could bring. Consequently, many former soldiers left the reserve to Mombasa or Nairobi in search of wage labour. Another informant remembered that when the soldiers returned, most of them became useless as they were too proud to engage in 'dirty jobs' like herding livestock or going to the farm. He added that they drank a lot and generally caused chaos, and that they would even kick people with the boots they had proudly brought home from the army. When they finished their money, they went back to the city to search for employment as they could not fit in the villages. As Mulei Ndungi recalls;

I was a corporal in the army during the Second World War II. During the war while away in Ceylon and Burma, I used to send money to my young brother to buy for me some livestock. He had bought for me thirty goats and sixteen cows. However, when I returned from the war, I found it very difficult to stay in the village. I sold all the cows and goats which my brother had bought for me, and together with my friends and brothers, we drunk all the money. When the money was gone, i went to Mombasa to look for a job. I was ready to do any job provided I avoided staying at the reserve.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Nzilani Muoki, OI at Kalandini on 12/11/2020.

⁸⁵ Osborne. M.G., Changing Kamba, 155.

⁸⁶ Jacob Ndue, OI at Tala on 11/11/2020.

Many Akamba soldiers especially the uneducated ones were so desperate that they had to become used to jobs which did not pay as well as those they had in the military. Many enlisted in the KAR and many other jobs because they would prefer any other job which would help them to run away from the reserve.

This was also induced by the impoverishment of the Akamba (as a "push factor"), as well as the increase in urban wages (as a "pull factor"), which followed, firstly, the withdrawal of the Kikuyu, Embu and Meru (K.E.M.) employees from major times because of the Mau Mau politics. This gave many opportunities for wage labour to the Akamba.⁸⁷

Apart from the wage labour issue, other soldiers wanted to engage in trade. They returned with high hopes and flush with cash to set up businesses but quickly found their desires frustrated. Many wanted to set up business as lorry drivers or taxi owners, putting to use skills they had learned in the army, others wanted to set up shops and begin trading. The soldiers pushed the LNC so hard to be given the licences. Their push for the licences was too hard that the DC recorded in 1946 that;

There is an avalanche of applications for trade plots and lorries to be funded from soldiers' savings and gratuities.⁸⁸

Yet each activity required a license from the government, and the government was unwilling to hand out these licenses to every applicant. The government's official policy was that trade and transport licenses had to be restricted to protect potential African business people and their customers from the harsh realities of a market economy which in most instances meant a limit of one trade license per five hundred Africans. This made the ex-askaris to be even more frustrated.

⁸⁷ Gupta, D. 1973. "A Brief Economic History of the Akamba," 70.

⁸⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946. KNA, DC/MKS Annual Report.

Others were given the licences but failed due to lack of experience. Some used the money to build shops but most used up all their money just for building and then there was no money left for stock. As a result, many failed and their shops were wasted or sold later to new traders. For instance, Josiah Kitaka, Masika Kyungu, Ngui Muvia, Kitonyo Mbuvi, Mukonzo Muyanga, Solomon Kyengo, Kivindu Muli among others failed. Only a few like Muthaisu Mutua and Kivindu Muli succeeded. As such many ex-askaris ended up being frustrated and left the reserve in search for wage labour in cities.

This meant that women and the elderly had to undertake the men's roles. Labour relation within the household was also affected. As men sought employment in the cities, women were now taxed with the responsibility of herding and cultivating, reconditioning work, as well as taking care of the family. These tasks were definitely too overwhelming for women. This fact was underscored by F.J. Hart who observed that on his safari in Kibaoni in August 1947, he found 249 men and 609 women digging terraces.⁸⁹ These figures were typical of those in other areas in Machakos. This is a clear indication of the absence of male labour in the reserve. Accordingly, the women had to reduce the number of animals they kept because initially men and young boys were the ones who used to herd the livestock. Writing about the Nandi of Kenya, Obler⁹⁰ also supports this by arguing that women workloads increased to enable men to work for cash.

From the above discussion, it is evident that the return of the ex-soldiers, coupled with the promotion of formal education jeopardised the development of livestock economy

⁸⁹ KNA, DC/MKS/8/5, Hart, "Safari Report," 11-12 August, 1947.

⁹⁰ Oboler, R. "Women, Men and Property Change in Nandi District, Kenya" Ph.D Dissertation, Temple University, 1982.

in Machakos is inescapable. This is especially true when we consider that the young men who were at the school going age had been to a large extent, relied upon to provide labour for livestock production and management during the pre-colonial period. This was a big blow to the livestock industry especially in Machakos where male labour was held at a premium and families generally preferred their sons to supervise the grazing of livestock. Moreover, the return of the ex-soldiers who had been expected to boost labour for animal husbandry in Machakos would on the contrary deprive the district of its labour. It is therefore true that colonialism through its economic and labour policies created a crisis in livestock production in Machakos district. Apparently, a large number of the Akamba had come to feel that livestock was no longer such a feasible means of acquiring wealth as it had been in the past and the only real economic security lay in some form of formal education and long term wage employment outside home. The proliferation of opportunity for wage labour, together with the constant food shortages and depletion of livestock produced the conviction that labour export was the most profitable allocation of resources and certainly the most secure. Away from the issue of labour, the livestock industry was faced by another challenge emanating from the government's urge to enforce the pre-WWII destocking policy through the establishment of monopolistic bodies purported to help the Akamba market their stock while in the real sense the government wanted to continue with the destocking policy. This posed a major challenge in the marketing of livestock in Machakos, a fact that is revealed by the analysis in the next section.

6.7 The Contradictions of Land Rehabilitation, Stock Control and Stock Marketing

After WWII, overstocking was considered one of the greatest obstacles to land rehabilitation especially in the so called Arid and Semi-Arid Lands. (ASALs).⁹¹ Basically, the government's efforts focused on the control of livestock numbers and finally the introduction of quality breeds and improvements in animal husbandry. The reasons for such measures were the assumptions that the livestock held by the Akamba were largely unproductive and excessive in number as compared to the available grazing land. The control of livestock numbers was therefore sought not only by regulations, but also by efforts to stimulate marketing.⁹² The stock marketing was done by several bodies as discussed below.

6.7.1 The Livestock Control Board (LCB)

The Livestock Control Board was established during the WWII to help the colonial government get the required number of stock for military consumption.⁹³ After 1945, compulsory sales and livestock control continued just like it had been during the WWII period. The animals were bought by the livestock control buyer at fixed prices. This created much discontent among the Akamba who considered that to continue with the control after the end of the war was a breach of faith. Besides, the prices offered by the Livestock Control Board for stock were way too low and bore no relation to the prices offered by the Kikuyu traders.⁹⁴ Moreover, the animals that were bought so cheaply from the Akamba were later resold by butchers in Nairobi at a handsome profit. The Akamba, therefore, decided to 'illegally' sell their livestock to the kikuyu traders and

⁹¹ Waweru, P. "Continuity and Change in Samburu Pastoralism" 232.

⁹² DeWilde, J. C. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*.

⁹³ Mutiso, C.G.M. "Kitui Livestock". *Institute of Development Studies*. Working Paper No. 305, 13.

⁹⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30.

as such, no livestock was sold to the board. Consequently, there was an acute shortage of meat in urban areas, a crisis which necessitated a special meeting of the LNC. The LNC suggested that the board would do better if it employed some reliable Akamba buyers to act as their agents.⁹⁵ However, the Akamba agents still did not succeed as the prices at which they were buying stock were still lower than the ones in the 'black market.

Following these challenges, in 1949, a scheme was started by which stock was auctioned. The livestock control buyer competed with anyone else who cared to bid for the animals. This action was appreciated by the Akamba, as it appeared to remove their main grievance, which was on grounds of price.⁹⁶ Appreciating this move, the DC observed that;

The great point about the auctions is that this method of sale has now been accepted in most locations and by the LNC and prospects for voluntary destocking by this method when the beasts fatten up again are brightening.⁹⁷

Actually, there was much less competition for stock than was expected, and the control buyer in fact purchased his animals more cheaply at the auctions than he had done before at the controlled prices. Much of the livestock brought was however in too poor condition for him to buy as sales to the LCB were mainly confined to immature bullocks and old cows that were deemed economically insignificant to the Akamba stock keepers and which needed culling to reduce the pressure on the scarce pasture. This created a problem again in meat marketing especially in the urban areas because such stock could not offer quality meat. To arrest the situation, in 1949, the board's headquarters in Nairobi instructed its agents in Machakos to stop buying immature and old stock as

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

they were ‘unworthy’. The decision did not auger well with the Akamba stock keepers and they again stopped selling to the board. Moreover, the board did not have the power of compulsion and could not solve the overstocking problem. Consequently, a more forceful body, the Kenya Meat Commission (KMC) was established in 1950.

6.7.2 The Kenya Meat Commission (KMC)

Following the decision by the LCB to stop the purchase of ‘unworthy’ stock, the government decided to constitute a more reliable body. Accordingly, the (KMC) was established in 1950 through an act of parliament under the Kenya Meat Commission Ordinance of 1950.⁹⁸ Its main objective was to simultaneously provide a ready market for livestock farmers and high quality meat and meat products to consumers.⁹⁹ It had very wide-ranging functions: to purchase livestock, establish and operate abattoirs, provide cold storage and refrigeration for the purpose of slaughtering cattle and small stock, process by-products, prepare hides and chilling, freezing, canning and storing beef, mutton, poultry and other meat food for export or consumption within the colony. In other words, it was to act as the government’s commercial organization.¹⁰⁰ On the other hand, KMC was expected to “provide Africans with an alternative market at a guaranteed price than that was being offered locally. However, according to Waweru, the commission was meant to cushion the European ranchers and mixed farmers from adverse market forces and competition from African producers. This can be discerned from the fact that its founding chairman was Gilbert Colville one of the leading Laikipia-based beef barons.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ndege. P. How Colonial Legacy Made KMC Bite off More than it could Chew. Daily Nation (September 12th 2020). Nairobi: Nation Media Group Ltd, 22

⁹⁹ https://www.kenyameat.co.ke/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=75

¹⁰⁰ Ndege. P. How Colonial Legacy Made KMC Bite off More than it could Chew, 22.

¹⁰¹ Report of Enquiry into the Meat Industry of Kenya. 1956.

The state however saw the role of KMC in African areas not in marketing terms but purely as conduit through which the so called surplus herds could be gotten rid of. This explains why the government made the commission the sole buyer of stock in the African reserves in 1950. This cemented what Berman calls “the system of monopoly marketing and fixed prices”.¹⁰² However, the body did not have the powers to enforce destocking in the African reserves. Therefore, the commission purchased livestock from the Africans with caution.¹⁰³

Soon the commercial inclination of KMC and the government land rehabilitation programme clashed. The organization wanted the Akamba to sell their best animals so that it could get quality beef. On the other hand, the Akamba wanted to get rid of the less profitable stock. So, KMC could not be expected to attract the Akamba producers with the low prices it was offering especially considering the fact that it wanted the best stock for quality meat. This brought a lot of conflict. Furthermore, the insistence by the district administration that its agent zero in immature stock whose meat attracted low grading led to a serious misunderstanding. In August 1950, KMC refused to buy this category of stock which the administration felt should have been the “first to be gotten rid of in any destocking programme.”¹⁰⁴ It is apparently clear that the district administration and the KMC were not reading from the same script. There was a clash between the district administration which was promoting destocking programme and KMC whose main goal was that of the provision of quality beef to the consumers. This clash once more halted the government’s campaign to reduce stock in Machakos.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Berman, B., *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*, 267.

¹⁰³ Ndege, G. “History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya”, 102-103.

¹⁰⁴ David Matheka, OI at Syokimau on 14/11/2020.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

As such, KMC failed and was replaced by private livestock dealers who formed the ‘free market’ system that continued to control the livestock trade.¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, for the three consecutive years since 1950 to 1952, stock sales was on a declining mode as reflected in table 6.2 below.

Table 6.2: Stock Sales in Machakos from 1950-52

| Year | Head of cattle | Goat | Sheep |
|------|----------------|---------|--------|
| 1950 | 44,229 | 133,175 | 50,226 |
| 1951 | 26,944 | 92,964 | 49,476 |
| 1952 | 20,355 | 82,287 | 40,867 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Reports, 1946-52. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30.¹⁰⁷

The above table indicates that the stock exported by the Akamba kept on declining. This is because of the low prices offered by KMC. Furthermore, stock sales were severely endangered by the Mau Mau movement and the 1952 state of emergency which virtually led to the closure of livestock markets in Kikuyu and restricted the influx of kikuyu livestock traders on whom the Akamba livestock sellers were largely dependent. In addition, there was an outbreak of diseases which led to the closing of auctions and stock routes. As such, during the period between 1950 and 1952, the sales kept on declining. From the foregoing, it can be observed that neither the KMC nor the free market system served well the governmental policy of destocking the pastoral reserves as well as providing beef to the urban areas. Therefore, the colonial government had to devise another method of stock culling if land degradation was to be arrested. Accordingly, the African livestock marketing organization (ALMO) was formed.

¹⁰⁶ Bernard Maluki, OI at Mbusyani on 10/11/2020.

¹⁰⁷ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/30.

6.7.3 The African Livestock Marketing Organization (ALMO)

In its unrelenting effort to get a permanent solution to the issue of destocking in the pastoral reserves, the government established the African Livestock Marketing Organization (ALMO) which was to work closely with the veterinary department.¹⁰⁸ This was an extension of monopoly marketing of stock in African reserves. Its main goal was to encourage the sale of the ever increasing number of livestock in the African reserves by all means. ALMO was also given the power to fix prices when it deemed necessary. By 1955, ALMO was for all practical purposes a KMC arm obliged by the state to curb overstocking and also supply it with sufficient stock for meat in urban areas. Ultimately, ALMO was designed to meet the government's objective of land rehabilitation through culling rather than providing the African stock owners with ready market for his stock. The organisation positioned itself such that it benefitted from the imposed monthly stock quota of 800 per month. Nonetheless, these measures were initiated too late as in most districts, the livestock prices had already gone up to quite unreasonable heights, and the ALMO was unable to do much. Instead, the method of 'free market' sale and movement of stock to markets was left to control the animal population.¹⁰⁹

However, even as the government was struggling to reduce the high numbers of stock, overreliance on livestock had greatly fallen due to a fall in overall livestock numbers. Even the auction markets established to facilitate the offtake of cattle, had to be closed because so few cattle were offered for sale. For example, the Simba-Emali Ranch, which the ADC established in 1955 primarily to facilitate destocking, never achieved its original target of purchasing 3,000 cattle yearly. The ranch had been tasked with

¹⁰⁸ Van Zwanenberg, R.M.A., & King, A. *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda*.

¹⁰⁹ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya", 103.

buying yearlings in the district for fattening and subsequent export. It is reported to have purchased about 3,500 cattle in total or an average of 1,750 per year during the two drought years 1959 and 1960. Thereafter, however, purchases dropped to only 900 in 1961 and 524 in 1962, both of which were good rainfall years. In 1963, almost all of the 1,893 cattle which were bought had to be purchased outside the district in order to keep the ranch stocked. This indicates also that the district earned less from livestock. For example, livestock earned the district £166,612 in 1960 and £ 216, 768 in 1961 compared to a total revenue of £623,337 and £797,452 in the two respective years.

Based on the above findings, it's quite clear that neither the Meat Marketing Board nor its successors, Kenya Meat Commission and the African Livestock Marketing Organization (ALMO) solved the problem of livestock marketing. As a result, throughout the post-war period, these institutions found themselves competing with the so called black markets in the Machakos reserves which were offering up to double the price that was being offered by the institutions for a given animal. There is no doubt that the foregoing attempts at solving the problem of marketing African livestock in order to circumscribe the adverse effects of overstocking were at best stop-gap measures, and thus failed to attain the desired outcome. Therefore, another approach to the production and improvement of livestock in African reserves was sought. It was set in motion by the Swynnerton Plan which came into effect in 1954 as detailed in the next section.

6.8 The Swynnerton Plan and its Implication on the Livestock Economy in Machakos

The Swynnerton Plan was a proposal by R.J.M Swynnerton, then an Assistant Director of Agriculture on how the state could accelerate agricultural development in African reserves. It was an economic blueprint that was produced by the state to guide

progressively the process of improving and transforming African peasant production by addressing African land problems.¹¹⁰ This was necessitated by the land issues and underproduction that was witnessed in the years after 1945.

After the Second World War, the government assisted demobilized British officers to "claim" or to buy land in Kenya. This intensified land use and increased pressure to evict "squatters," including Kenyan war veterans from the white highlands. At the same time, the human population in Kenya was increasing. As populations continued to expand, land shortages and pressure emerged once again as insuperable problems.¹¹¹ Combined with other pressures, this eventually led to the "Mau Mau rebellion" of the early 1950s in Central Kenya.¹¹² The government had to look seriously into the issue of increasing population and the need for more land.

In Machakos, the land problem led to hastily planned resettlements such as the Makueni settlement and Yatta Grazing Schemes established under the guise of the Machakos Betterment Scheme. However, these schemes were hardly sufficient to satisfy a growing land hunger as the demographic changes over the years and the increased crop acreages were causing strain on grazing land. Land shortage, therefore, led to underproduction not only in Machakos but many parts of the country. The persistent low productivity on the reserves, the growing political insurrection in some parts of Kenya, and the dire need by the state to boost its financial base, led to a liberal proposal for land-tenure reform. It was against this background that towards the end of 1953, the then Assistant Director of Agriculture R. J. M. Swynnerton was called upon to prepare a comprehensive five-year plan to intensify and improve African peasant production.

¹¹⁰ Thurston, A. "Smallholder Agriculture in Colonial Kenya"

¹¹¹ Bernard, F. E. and Thom, D. J., "Population Pressure and Human Carrying Capacity (1981), 406.

¹¹² Bates, R. "The Agrarian Origins of Mau Mau", *Agricultural History*. 61: (1987).1-28.

The plan was endorsed and accepted by the Kenyan government as the framework within which the development of African agriculture should proceed. Therefore, in 1954, the colonial government implemented the Swynnerton Plan. Accordingly, Her Majesty's government in the United Kingdom made a grant of £5,000,000 to partially meet the cost of implementing the plan.¹¹³

The Swynnerton Plan argued that the greatest obstacles to development had been the complicated communal land tenure system and the serious degree of land fragmentation found in African areas.¹¹⁴ The Plan proposed *inter-alia*, that high quality African land be surveyed and enclosed. This was to be by reforming land tenure, consolidating fragmented holdings, issuing freehold title, intensifying and developing African agriculture, providing access to credit, and removing restrictions on growing crops for export.¹¹⁵ It consisted of a three-phase programme: (1) land adjudication to "phase out" customary tenure; (2) land consolidation into one block per household to eliminate small, dispersed parcels, to allow greater specialization, and to realize economies of scale in cash crop production; and (3) land registration to provide for security of ownership and to establish a land market. Overall, the aim was to facilitate increased investment and employment in agriculture and to increase rural incomes and the "productivity" of land.¹¹⁶ The plan was predicated on an assumption that explicitly progressive farmers should be given more land. It stated in part;

¹¹³ Makana, E.N, (2009). Peasant Response to Agricultural Innovations: Land Consolidation, Agrarian Diversification and Technical Change. The Case of Bungoma District in Western Kenya, 1954- 1960. *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 35 (1)

¹¹⁴ Swynnerton, R.J.M. "A plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture in Kenya" (Nairobi, 1954), 7.

¹¹⁵ Bradshaw, Y. W. "Perpetuating Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Link between Agriculture, Class and State." *African Studies Review* 33, no. 1: (1990). 1-28.

¹¹⁶ Okoth-Ogendo, H. W. O. 1981. "Land Ownership and Land Distribution in Kenya's Large-Farm Areas". In *Papers on the Kenyan Economy: Performance, Problems, and Policies*, ed. Tony Killick, 329-338. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books.

Successful or wealthy African farmers would be able to acquire more land and bad or poor farmers less, creating a landed and a landless class¹¹⁷

First, the government was to determine how much land a farmer owned according to previous allocations. Then this land, usually composed of scattered parcels, would be consolidated into a single holding. When the farmer's property had been defined by location and size in a state-maintained register, the progressive farmer would be issued with a title granting "absolute proprietorship" over that land.¹¹⁸ Such absolute proprietorship was important because it would encourage the farmers to invest more in terms of labor and capital in the development of individual farms. Eventually this would deal with the problem of underdevelopment.¹¹⁹

In Machakos like other rural areas, underdevelopment was defined specifically as a problem of poor agricultural productivity, especially with reference to exportable cash crops. So this policy created a market-oriented class of African farmers within the commercial farming and export sector.¹²⁰ Thus, the introduction of land consolidation and individual ownership promoted cash crops growing. Further, land consolidation made necessary the transformation of farming techniques from shifting to continuous cultivation.

The plan also emphasised that, in areas suited for mixed farming, the farmers must abandon traditional ways of stock keeping and embark on modern methods of farming. The farmers were trained to control the rate of stocking and also to establish and maintain productive grass. They were also given instructions on how to provide

¹¹⁷ R.J.M. Swynnerton, "A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture"

¹¹⁸ H. Fearn. *An African Economy: A study of Economic Development in Nyanza Province of Kenya, 1903-1953*. (Nairobi, 1961).

¹¹⁹ Makana, E.N, Peasant Response to Agricultural Innovations.

¹²⁰ Bradshaw, Y. W. "Perpetuating Underdevelopment in Kenya"

supplementary fodder for periods of grass shortage. Furthermore they were taught how to eliminate ticks and subsequently East Coast Fever through frequent dipping or spraying. Though theoretically sound, the suggested ways and means of improved animal husbandry met the first snag in the farmers themselves who saw the programme as difficult to achieve financially.¹²¹

The Swynnerton Plan also proposed that, in arid areas where mixed farming was not possible, the government should adopt other measures for the improvement of livestock. Machakos, as already mentioned was to adopt grazing schemes and controls. However, five grazing schemes had already been established with funds from ALDEV. They included; Yatta, Makindu, the Lower Makueni (Crown Land Area 6 and A), the Lower Makueni (Native Lands Areas B and C) and the Simba-Emali with Yatta being the major grazing scheme. Each scheme was now divided into paddocks so that each paddock was grazed for a period of four months and then left for a year to regain soil fertility in order to have quality pasture. However, these schemes functioned only imperfectly as they faced so many challenges. In fact, as indicated earlier, scarcity of water, coupled with tsetse fly infestation, outbreaks of diseases and illegal grazing, made Yatta to be written off as a failure by independence.¹²² In the long run, the grazing schemes did not resolve the grazing challenges.

On the other hand, the introduction of land consolidation greatly affected animal husbandry. While previously one could herd his livestock on any open grazing land, now herding became restricted to each person's land, and trespassing was not allowed. The formerly open spaces were divided into individual holdings, and there was no

¹²¹ Tabitha Kilonzo, OI at Matuu on 30/11/2020.

¹²² Leslie W. Brown., "An Assessment of Some Development Schemes in Africa in Light of Human Needs and the Environment." *The Ecology of Man in the Tropical Environment* (Morges, 1964), 28.

longer communal grazing. Consolidation also limited the number of cattle one could keep depending on the amount of land one had. For the drier areas however, individual land enclosure and limitation of stock were evidently not the answer. In view of limited supplies of water and the large amount of grazing land required for even a modest amount of cattle, individual ranches would have to be extremely large and this was obviously impossible.

Some people also entered commercial agriculture and used larger off-farm income sources to buy land and put much larger areas of what had been communal grazing under cultivation. With the now fixed boundaries of the African reserves, the communal land ownership had come into a resounding end. This is underscored by one Ndue Mandi who asserts that;

Many people began to have those big farms where they planted maize. They did not want any animal to go near their farm. As a result, livestock lacked pasture and their numbers had to be kept down. If someone had sons who wanted to have some land for cultivation, then he had to slaughter or sell the animal.¹²³

In Ukambani, land consolidation was sanctioned by the *Nzama* (council) which was formed to decide on boundaries and to settle disputes arising from them. Once started, enclosure proceeded relatively quickly, leaving a few unfortunate Akamba who had been working away from home during the enclosure with no land at all. Thus, by 1956, it was being reported that there were some serious signs of landlessness where considerable consolidation of land had been done. In fact the *Nzama* members had to be specially trained to resolve grazing disputes and stock trespass due to the land shortage.¹²⁴ The problem of landlessness mostly came from those who were coming

¹²³ Jacob Ndue, OI at Tala on 11/11/2020.

¹²⁴ Rocheleau, D. *et.al.* "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade",

from towns. Most of them had to be resettled in the Shimba Hills settlement scheme in Kwale. Attesting to this, in 1958, the D.C. noted that;

There was a revival of recruitment for the Shimba Hills scheme in the second half of the year. Landless Akamba who came back from the towns and found out that they had nowhere to settle have moved to the Shimba Hills settlement scheme.¹²⁵

This recourse to the Swynnerton Plan also fostered social stratification. It plunged many Akamba residents into further poverty and hunger.¹²⁶ Common grazing and forest areas essential for livestock grazing were often the first lands claimed for growing agricultural estates.¹²⁷ Consequently, those without capital, savings, or investments other than livestock were often unable to cope with the circumstances and became impoverished as they had nowhere to graze their livestock.¹²⁸ Such frustration can be discerned from the words of Simon Mukonzo who laments that;

*Our livestock were reduced by the lack of grass because no livestock could graze in the enclosed places. Before the introduction of the wire, (fence) livestock were grazed in that land. But the introduction of wire meant that the livestock had to die. That is how our livestock came to be reduced.*¹²⁹

Another impact brought about by the Swynnerton Plan was the simultaneous creation of a successful large holder class and a landless and/or near-landless class, a situation which in turn caused unforeseen socio-economic problems. Land hunger was often displaced to more fragile areas. It also led to the pursuit of wage labor because many people who found themselves pushed off the best lands in their home areas went to work in the cities, the army, and the police force.¹³⁰ For instance Musyoka Ndolo notes that,

¹²⁵ Machakos District Annual Report, 1958. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/34.

¹²⁶ Mbithi, P.M., and Ben Wisner. "Drought and famine in Kenya: Magnitude and attempted solutions". *Journal of East African Research and Development* 3: (1973) 103.

¹²⁷ Mbogoh, S. G. "Crop production". In *Environmental change and dryland management in Machakos District, Kenya, 1930-1990* (London, 1991).

¹²⁸ Hunt, D. *The Impending Crisis in Kenya: The Case for Land Reform*. (Aldershot, 1984).

¹²⁹ Simon Mukonzo, OI at Masii on 04/11/2020.

¹³⁰ Rocheleau, D. *et.al.* "Environment, Development, Crisis, and Crusade", 1044.

*When all the land had been individualized, I had to find some other work as a soldier but i got a job in the store because i could write out names and count out the ration.*¹³¹

Thus, the plan that was intended to rectify the crisis of underproduction actually led to a massive landlessness in Machakos. The attempts of these displaced people to establish settlements in environmentally fragile frontier areas paved the way for the construction of the environmental crisis which resurfaced even after independence.¹³²

Nevertheless, while livestock production was declining due to lack of grazing land, crop production was gaining momentum in the economy of Machakos. This was because land consolidation as proposed by Swynnerton Plan promoted individual land ownership and cash crop growing. Thus, this study argues that the Swynnerton Plan was instrumental in intensifying the shift of emphasis from livestock to cash crop production. The district was increasingly becoming a prominent cash crop producing zone. On the other hand, land consolidation had created a landless class which was previously dependent on livestock. Therefore, there is no doubt that the Swynnerton Plan brought unforetold land issues in Machakos. As a result, by 1960, there was no more virgin land in the reserve and opportunities for pastoral pursuits in the reserve had come to an end. In short, the once cherished livestock industry had now bowed to pressure from other 'more viable' ventures mostly cash crop production. As a consequence, by 1963, most Akamba of Machakos had adopted cash crop production at the expense of livestock keeping. Hence, in the next section the chapter details the post-World War II developments in cash crop production and their place in undermining livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos.

¹³¹ Musyoka Ndolo, OI at Mbiuni on 01/11/2020.

¹³² Ibid.

6.9 The post-World War II Development in Cash Crop Production

The development of cash crops which had mainly started during the World War II period reached its peak during the 1950s and 1960s. It mainly concentrated on fruits, vegetables and coffee in the hill masses and sisal and cotton in the lower and drier areas. The cultivation of fruits and vegetables developed primarily owing to the proximity of Machakos district to the Nairobi market. Another factor was the existence of two canneries. One of the canneries was at Machakos and the other at Thika operated by Kenya Orchards and Kenya Cannery respectively.¹³³ The expansion of these cash crops in Machakos saw the rise of exports of this type of garden produce from a two-year average of about £12,000 in 1950- 1951, to a six-year average of £63,000 in 1957-1962, with a peak of £85,961 in 1959 as the canners provided seed and advice to improve on the production.¹³⁴ The fruits that were grown by the Akamba during this period are discussed below;

Coffee. This period saw a rapid expansion of coffee in the high potential areas of coffee growing. It developed rapidly in the mid-1950s in the hill masses of Kangundo-Matungulu, Mbooni, Iveti-Mitaboni and Kilungu-Mukaa.¹³⁵ Its production and marketing were closely regulated by the Department of Agriculture under coffee rules which required that all planters belong to cooperatives. The rules dictated that coffee be grown on terraces and that certain standards be observed with respect to spacing, manuring, mulching, pruning and windbreaks.¹³⁶ This close supervision was

¹³³ De Wilde, J. C, *Experiences with Agricultural Development*, 104.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Mutiso, S.K. "Coffee Production in Machakos District. A Case Study of Matungulu Location". M.A Thesis. University of Nairobi, (1981), 9.

¹³⁶ Simon Mukonzo, OI at Masii on 04/11/2020.

instrumental in maintaining a high level quality of coffee. The district actually had a larger portion of its output classified in the first three grades than any other district.¹³⁷

However, when the Department of Agriculture relaxed its control under political pressure in 1960 and turned over primary responsibility to the growers' cooperatives, a rapid decline in quality took place.¹³⁸ However, by 1963, it had somewhat recovered. 4,750 acres had been planted with 2.6 million trees, production had risen to 477 tons of clean coffee and 112 tons of "buni" or dried coffee beans. The gross value of coffee sold in 1963 was about £145,000, equal to £120 per acre of coffee.¹³⁹

Fruits and vegetables. Intensive production of fruits and vegetables was evident in the micro-environments found in the hill areas of Machakos, and the northern part of the district which was well within reach of the Nairobi market. Strawberries and Egyptian onions which had been introduced by the AIM church in Mbooni in 1935 had become very a reliable source of cash especially among the Akamba of Kangundo. For example, in 1952, the Agricultural Officer reported that;

Fruits and vegetables especially strawberries and onion are cash crops of increasing export value, and much favoured by the growing band of bench enthusiasts. Some Kangundo growers made impressive profits from them during the year.¹⁴⁰

In addition, pineapples which had first been introduced about 1930 were grown in commercial quantities from 1952 using imported suckers.¹⁴¹ The African Inland Mission also introduced the mango to parts of Mbiuni in the early 1950s.¹⁴² As a result of increasing fruits and vegetable large scale production, private companies such as

¹³⁷ DeWilde, J. C. *Experiences with Agricultural Development*.

¹³⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1961. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/35.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Machakos District Annual Report, 1952. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/30, 16.

¹⁴¹ Peberdy, J. R. 'Notes on Some Economic Aspects of Machakos District, 247.

¹⁴² Gielen, Hans. *Report on an Agroforestry Survey in Three Villages of Northern Machakos, Kenya* (Nairobi, 1982), 37.

Thika Cannery Limited and Kenya Orchards Limited moved into the northern locations to encourage production of green beans, pineapples and a wide variety of vegetables and fruits for their industries.¹⁴³

Maize. By the time the war ended, maize had become a significant cash crop. The northern locations and parts of Iveti and Masii began to export maize in large quantities. Despite, the restriction by the Maize Control Board, some Akamba still sold their maize illegally to Donyo Sabuk and Kikuyu areas. The colonial authorities punished some of the people who sold the maize but still the black market deal was too good to be abandoned because it offered more lucrative prices as compared to the ones offered by the Maize Control Board.¹⁴⁴ Thus, even the Tribal Police posts at Kangundo and Tala could not even stop this trade. As a result, a good deal of maize slipped out of this end of the district to Kikuyuland.¹⁴⁵ The Akamba became too excited by these prices and sold all their maize harvest to the extent that they faced serious food shortage.¹⁴⁶

Following the problem, the colonial government appealed to the ADC to convince the Akamba to shift from maize production to indigenous food crop production. Further, in August 1949, J.T. Moon, the Provincial Agricultural Officer for Central Province and C.C. Swain, the Maize Controller asked the ADC to advise the people of Machakos against cultivating maize. J.T. Moon told the council that maize was introduced in Kenya as a cash crop but it had become insignificant in Machakos because it was not helping the Akamba to be self-sufficient.¹⁴⁷ In addition, in July 1950, R.E.T. Hobbs the Deputy Director of Agriculture urged the Akamba not only to grow traditional crops, but also to abandon the use of imported maize seed which had become detrimental to

¹⁴³ Machakos District Annual Report, 1954. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/32, 4.

¹⁴⁴ Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1947. KNA; DC/MKS 8/4, 9.

¹⁴⁵ Machakos District Annual Report. KNA; DC/MKS 8/4. 1947, 32.

¹⁴⁶ Machakos District Annual Report, 1947. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/30, 2.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

their food security.¹⁴⁸ Following the above directives, in 1948 the ADC passed a resolution which obliged every landholder to set aside a quarter acre for cultivation of famine relief crops such as cassava and sweet potatoes.¹⁴⁹ However, maize had already become the favourite crop because it gave them money.

Sisal. Sisal was first planted on a large scale in the reserve in the 1936-39 period when the Department of Agriculture, as a way of controlling soil erosion, forced landholders to fence in their land holdings.¹⁵⁰ However, after the Second World War, sisal began being planted as a cash crop. The extensive dry areas of the district had to rely primarily on sisal as a cash crop as they did not enjoy a favourable climate enjoyed by the western and northern parts of the district. The agricultural staff consistently encouraged the planting of sisal in hedgerows, which had the additional advantage of stabilizing the soil.¹⁵¹ As noted by Elijah Mutaki,

Interestingly, the sisal did so well in these parts of the district. Owing to that success, the DC pressurised the ADC to invest in a sisal factory. This would have been useful in buying sisal from farmers particularly in dry years hence boosting the market. Therefore, in 1952, a brushing and baling plant was opened by the ADC in 1952. This gave a boost to sisal production.¹⁵²

By 1963, sisal export was valued at £289,363, and it became the most important export crop in the district. These exports were undoubtedly made possible by the rise in sisal prices during the late 1950s and early 1960s. For instance, whereas the price of sisal per long ton averaged about £82 per ton in the seven year period 1953-1959, it maintained an average of approximately £100 in the next three years and rose steeply to £144.8 in 1963.¹⁵³ In this regard, the 1946-55 Development Report noted that;

¹⁴⁸ Machakos Local Native Council Minutes Book, 1949-50. KNA; DC/MKS 5/3/1. 98-99.

¹⁴⁹ Machakos District Annual Report, 1948, 9. KNA; DC/MKS 1/1/30.

¹⁵⁰ Bahemuka, J., and Mary Tiffen. 1992. "Akamba Institutions and Development", 1930-1990.

¹⁵¹ Peter Mukala, OI at Kinanie on 14/11/2020.

¹⁵² Elijah Mutaki, OI at Ndithini on 09/11/2020.

¹⁵³ DeWilde, J. C. 1967. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*.

The high price of sisal has encouraged the sale of fibre by Africans. Thus, to ensure a reasonably high standard, control has been enforced. In Machakos, the ADC has established its own brushing and baling plant, and from its revenues from the sisal cess, it has advanced £25,000 to enable the agricultural department to operate a sisal marketing scheme. And although it is undergoing some teething problem, the high hopes placed upon it in enriching people makes it undoubtedly the most preferred.¹⁵⁴

Consequently, sisal production rose from 463 tons in 1959 to 4,250 tons in 1960 and then to 5,508 tons in 1961. As a result, there was hope of sisal becoming the main cash crop of the Akamba and helping them in social-economic betterment.

In view of the above, it is least surprising that the colonial state's attempts at encouraging crop production through distribution of seeds, and official campaign to the people of Machakos to diversify their economic base, had by 1963 yielded results. This, however, was at the expense of livestock which prior to the dawn of colonialism had been the mainstay of Machakos economy. In fact, livestock no longer acted as the buffer against famine in the economy of Machakos as cash crops had become so prominent that during the 1949-50 famine, it was not livestock that was so much relied on to buffer the Akamba from famine but rather, a cash crop in the form of, sisal. During this time, all the markets were white with fibre from sisal hedges. This influenced the adoption of the name to the famine of 1949-50 as "the Famine of Sisal" (*nzaa ya makonge*). This famine is analysed below.

6.10 Nzaa ya Makonge, 1949-50

Nzaa Ya Makonge is the Kikamba version of 'Famine of Sisal' which occurred from 1949-51. During this famine, sisal fibre was the chief source of income, hence, the name famine of sisal. In deed oral sources indicate that the impact of the famine of 1949-50

¹⁵⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/30, 1.

was not as bad as the previous famines since the sale of sisal fibre enabled people to import cereals especially from Embu and Meru.¹⁵⁵

The famine was attributable to low short rains in November 1948 and widespread drought conditions in 1949. However, other factors also contributed to the famine. One of these factors was increased production of maize at the expense of the indigenous food crops. At this time, maize had become a significant cash crop and there was no attempt made by the people to keep surplus maize for the subsistence purposes within the reserve. For example, after good harvests in March 1947, the northern locations and parts of Iveti and Masii began to export maize to kikuyu land, leaving no maize for their own consumption.¹⁵⁶

While the maize dilemma was taking its toll, an army worm infestation followed hard on its heels. This was exacerbated by the drought problem in 1949-50 which led to scarcity of pasture. This made the cattle so thin that Kikuyu traders were reluctant to buy them for they could not survive the long export routes. The people, especially those who could not produce sisal ended up slaughtering most of their stock for food. The situation was even made more complicated by the spread of pleuro-eumonia which was introduced by squatter cattle evicted from Mount Kenya in 1949. The wide spread pleuro-pneumonia led to the imposition of quarantine which made the problem of the scarcity of pasture worse. As a result, the colonial administration denied the Akamba the access to the grazing areas in the unoccupied European farms in the Koma Rock area so as to stop the spread of the disease to neighbouring white settler ranches. The people in turn refused to take their animals for inoculation, arguing that there was no

¹⁵⁵ Mutua Ngunu, OI at Ndunduni on 10/11/2020.

¹⁵⁶ Machakos District Annual Report, 1946-52. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/30, 2.

need to inoculate cattle that would eventually die due to starvation.¹⁵⁷ The controversy led to the death of hundreds of head of cattle.

At the end of 1949, rinderpest broke out in the south-western locations. But fear of creating a situation similar to the one created in the northern locations led to the imposition of a lax quarantine. Movement of livestock in the reserve was allowed because of poor rains and depletion of pasture by army worms. By August 1950, rinderpest was widespread in the reserve, thereby necessitating the imposition of a reserve-wide quarantine for cattle, sheep and goats. This led to overcrowding of stock at a time when it was impossible to export them. However, by the end of the year the quarantine on sheep and goats had been lifted and inoculated cattle could be exported.¹⁵⁸ This is reflected in table 6.3 below.

Table 6.3: Livestock Exported or Slaughtered In 1950-51

| Period | Exported from Machakos Reserve | | Consumed in the Machakos Reserve | |
|---------------|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------------------------|----------------|
| | Head of Cattle | Sheep/Goat | Head of Cattle | Sheep/Goat |
| Jan-Dec 1950 | 12,911 | 40,650 | 26,121 | 109,595 |
| Jan-July 1951 | 7,138 | 25,294 | 11,389 | 48,305 |
| TOTAL | 20,049 | 65,954 | 37,510 | 157,900 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Reports, 1962. KNA/DC/MKS 2/18/8, 314

Table 6.3 shows that in 1950 and 1951, a total of 20,049 head of cattle and 65,954 goats and sheep were sold in the reserve while 37,510 head of cattle and 157,900 sheep and goat were consumed in the reserve. This in effect meant an equal loss of livestock in Machakos district which in the long run led to an overall depletion of livestock in the district.

¹⁵⁷ Department of Agriculture: Annual Report, 1941-47, KNA/DC/MKS 8/4. 238, 252, 260.

¹⁵⁸ Machakos District Annual Report, 1950. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/30.

Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, during this time, the Akamba benefited from sisal trade which had become so successful. In June 1950, a trade in sisal started when European estates began to buy sisal from the reserve in order to boost their exports. The Akamba engaged in this trade and used the profits to buy food during the famine that occurred during this time. In other words, sisal, as opposed to livestock, acted as food security during this period. Appraising the trade in 1950, the P.C. for Central Province said:

So universally profitable did this trade become, owing to the steep rise in the world price, that it gave its name to the food shortage now known as 'Njaa ya Makonge'¹⁵⁹

Therefore, the commonest way of acquiring money for buying food at this time was by selling sisal fibre to European sisal estates and not livestock as had been the case previously. The DC stressed this fact by observing that “the scheme was the most sensible and economic way to help the Akamba, certainly far better than subsidizing food or giving relief.”¹⁶⁰ In fact, the condition given for the issue of free food during the food shortage was that “relief food should not be given in an area where sisal for decortication was available.”¹⁶¹ This point is underscored by Elijah Mutaki below.

*Many Akamba did not even need relief food because they could obtain food from the money they got from the sale of sisal. This made the government to remain committed to sisal production because it relieved it from the burden of giving famine relief food to the Akamba. As such, the food shortage made sisal decortication the leading industry in the district in terms of income and employment.*¹⁶²

In view of the above, it is apparently clear that sisal production had overtaken livestock as a prominent economic venture. For example, in 1960, sisal accounted for 47 per cent of the district's revenue of £623,337 while livestock, coffee, hides/skins and vegetables

¹⁵⁹ Central Province: Annual Report, 1950. KNA, DC/MKS 1/2/1, 1.

¹⁶⁰ Machakos District Annual Report, 1950. KNA, DC/MKS 2/18/8, 340.

¹⁶¹ Ibid, 365.

¹⁶² Elijah Mutaki, OI at Ndithini on 09/11/2020.

accounted for only 19, 9, 8 and 7 per cent respectively. Apparently, sisal had become the most reliable source of cash to the Akamba of Machakos as opposed to the previous period where livestock was the main source of cash. Secondly sisal had also overtaken the place of livestock as the buffer against famine. Table 6.4 below corroborates;

Table 6.4: A Comparison between the Sisal sales and Livestock sales in Machakos District in the Years 1960 and 1961.

| Year | 1960 | 1961 |
|-------------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Sisal Sales (£) | 290,000 | 440,640 |
| Livestock and bi-products Sales (£) | 166,612 | 216,768 |
| District Annual Revenue (£) | 623,337 | 797,452 |

Source: Machakos District Annual Report, 1962. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/36,10

As evident in table 6.4, in 1960 and 1961 sisal earned the district more revenue than did livestock. It earned 47% of the total district revenue while livestock earned 27%. Similarly in 1961, sisal earned the district 55% while livestock gave 27%.¹⁶³ It is clear that livestock was no longer the main source of revenue for the Akamba of Machakos as had been the case during the pre-World War I period.

It can thus be concluded that livestock production had already been overtaken by cash crop production and as such it no longer enjoyed the predominant position it held during the pre-colonial period. However, while the campaign to promote cash crop production was proceeding, efforts to improve animal husbandry and to introduce new breeds of livestock were also being made as revealed in the next section.

6.11 Livestock Improvement

In 1948, the reconditioning committee endorsed the veterinary department policy of upgrading of Akamba stock in preference to importation of exotic bulls. However, although the Veterinary department remained committed to this goal of developing an

¹⁶³ Machakos District Annual Report, 1962. KNA, DC/MKS 1/1/36, 10.

improved cross breed, this did not come in fruition until 1959. This was due to the fact that by 1958, the debate over the import of exotic or the Sahiwal cattle was still unresolved. But despite this fact, by 1958, the demand for improved breed of cattle was so intense that the then DC noted that;

Many of the small holders who are now adopting sound farming practices are anxious to acquire improved stock. It is hoped that an increase in the release of grade Sahiwals will be possible in 1959.¹⁶⁴

However, in spite of the insistent demands by the farmers, grade cattle were not introduced in the reserve until 1959. The government advanced two major reasons for its refusal to introduce grade cattle in Machakos district. First, it was argued that the reserve was already overstocked. So, by introducing more cattle, the problem of overstocking in the district would be exacerbated. The government suggested that the district needed to sell most of its livestock for it to attain the scientifically proven ratio of land holdings versus stock. According to the colonial government, the destocking campaign was necessary if herds in Machakos were to be kept under proper husbandry methods. Hence, the government intensified the destocking campaign to ensure that there was a reduction in livestock in the reserve. It introduced several measures to assist in the destocking. First as discussed earlier, the government established KMC to provide a ready market for the Akamba livestock. It also opened several auction centres for cattle in the Machakos reserve.¹⁶⁵

Another reason advanced by the colonial government for not introducing grade cattle in African areas was that serious cattle diseases were still a major problem and husbandry methods were not good.¹⁶⁶ In fact, the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 made it clear that grade cattle would not be brought into the African reserves until diseases such

¹⁶⁴ Machakos District Annual Report, 1957-58: KNA, DC/MKS/1/1/34.

¹⁶⁵ Elijah Mutaki, OI at Ndithini on 09/11/2020.

¹⁶⁶ Ndege, G. "History of Pastoralism in Colonial Kenya", 147.

as East Coast Fever had been brought under control.¹⁶⁷ Unfortunately, by 1958, East Coast Fever was still prevalent in Machakos so grade cattle could not be brought. Having ruled out the introduction of grade cattle in Machakos, the colonial government embarked on the improvement of the local Zebu breed. The government had already started a plan of establishing a bull camp to improve the stock in Machakos district. It was therefore recommended that those who were interested in improved breeds should purchase from the camp.¹⁶⁸

The reluctance by the colonial government to allow the Africans to keep grade cattle continued up to 1959 when Swynnerton and the Director of Veterinary Services, Ken MacOwan, finally sought a decision from the Minister of Agriculture, Michael Blundell, who ruled in favour of exotic stock but with strict regulations for purchasing and introduction. Accordingly, European grade cattle were now introduced legally during this period, starting in Central Province where high-altitude grazing made tick disease less severe.¹⁶⁹ Gradually, the exotic cattle were introduced in the other areas of the country.

In Machakos, 18 Sahiwals were supplied to approved farmers in 1959. Those who were interested in the Sahiwal bulls provided voluntary labour and in return, the colonial government gave them the Sahiwal bulls.¹⁷⁰ However, there were several conditions for them to get these grade cattle. Mutua Ngunu recalls that;

Farmers who were able to acquire and keep the cross breeds were referred to as 'progressive farmers'. Many were those who had gone to school, had fenced their farms and acquired individual ownership. These farmers had been encouraged to adopt modern methods of dairy production and had been taught the importance of small size of

¹⁶⁷ Swynnerton, R. J.M, (1955). A Plan to Intensify the Development of African Agriculture.

¹⁶⁸ Elijah Mutaki, OI at Ndithini on 09/11/2020.

¹⁶⁹ Thurston, A. *Smallholder Agriculture in Colonial Kenya*.

¹⁷⁰ Bernard Maluki, OI at Mbusyani on 10/11/2020.

*dairy herd. They had also maintained productive grass for zero grazing.*¹⁷¹

These farmers obtained high profits from the improved livestock. Hence, grade cattle soon became a major investment among the Akamba thereby prompting interest from everyone. Many went for credit to own them. They became so aggressive in their quest for the improved breeds for cattle that Mr. Beaumont the District Veterinary Officer had the following to say;

There is a considerable agitation throughout the district for the uncontrolled importation of European exotic stock, mainly jersey, in preference to Sahiwals. The veterinary department hopes to win the support of Locational Councils to adopt a by-law controlling the import of exotic stock into the district.¹⁷²

Like cash crops, grade cattle were also subject to strict supervision and controls. The whole project was very closely supervised, because it was obvious that if any success was to be realised, the veterinary department had to make sure that the death percentage was kept at an absolute minimum. Veterinary teams made innumerable visits to all the farmers who had better cattle to see that they were provided with adequate amounts of feed, and that they had been kept in a clean environment.¹⁷³

The Agricultural Department took advantage of the quest for grade cattle by the farmers and enforced strict animal husbandry standards. Before a farmer could get credit, his land had to be consolidated and delineated by a farm plan or layout, with grazing areas fenced and planted with productive species of grass. He had to castrate all male cattle over three months, the farm had to have an adequate internal water supply and he had to institute a regular spraying programme to reduce the tick population. Every effort was made to insist that the owners of the improved breed of cattle acquire sprayers or

¹⁷¹ Mutua Ngunu, OI at Ndunduni on 10/11/2020.

¹⁷² Machakos District Annual Report, 1959. KNA/DC/MKS 1/1/35, 18.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

build dips in order to protect these cattle against the ravages of ECF. In addition, he or his wife also had to attend a short course at the district farmers training centre.¹⁷⁴

In addition, breeding places for grade cattle were also established in several centers throughout the country. For instance, the veterinary department recommended the establishment of veterinary breeding farms at Makueni and Makindu in addition to the Machakos one. It also undertook to experiment with sahiwal bulls at Machakos and Makueni for upgrading of indigenous stock. For instance, the livestock centre in Machakos carried 350 head of improved cattle on 1450 acres. It also had rams and billy goats which it sold to the Akamba in the reserve.¹⁷⁵

However, despite all the efforts, the progress was extremely slow. It is reported that by 1962 there were only 151 Sahiwal and Sahiwal crosses, including calves, in the district. Moreover, the number of grade cattle (European types) in the district was only 80 in 1962 and 147 in 1963.¹⁷⁶ To make matters worse, the owners of the improved breeds of cattle failed to observe disease control. Thus, 15 grade cattle were reported to have died in 1962 and 46 in 1963, most of them from ECF¹⁷⁷

The experience with poor cattle management caused the Department of Agriculture to insist on such rigid requirements which apparently few farmers could comply with. Nearly all farmers, for example, required a loan for the acquisition of grade stock, construction of cattle sheds and dips, dairy equipment, fencing, etc. However, under the loan regulations laid down by the Department, no farmer could even be considered for a loan until he had complied with a whole series of requirements which in themselves necessitated considerable investment. Consequently, many farmers gave up and the

¹⁷⁴Mutua Ngunu, OI at Ndunduni on 10/11/2020.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ De Wilde, J. C. 1967. *Experiences with Agricultural Development in Tropical Africa*, 116.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

experiment of livestock improvement, just like the grazing and settlement schemes, became a white elephant project.

In light of the above, it can of course be argued that very few Akamba benefited from the livestock improvement project. This is attributable to three main factors. First, the vastness of district meant that the three camps put in place to act as livestock improvement centres could not sufficiently serve the entire district. Second, the cost of acquiring and maintaining the exotic breed cattle was too high for the Akamba stock keepers. Third, and more importantly, the conditions that were set by the colonial administration for one to acquire grade cattle proved to be too difficult for the Akamba. This rendered the livestock improvement project a failure.

6.12 Conclusion

This chapter has focused attention on the history of the livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos after World War II. Evidence has been adduced to show that during this period, the colonial state intensified its intervention in Machakos district and Kenya as a whole. This involved the introduction of the CD&W which was to assist in the reconstruction and economic development of the colonies. Accordingly, the colonies were invited to submit ten year development plans, which were to be funded by money provided under the Act. Several bodies like DARA and ALDEV were also established to co-ordinate development activities and expenditure.

In Machakos, the development programmes were summarised under the Machakos betterment scheme. The main issue that ALDEV focused on was overstocking and soil denudation which in turn called for destocking, planned grazing schemes and the encouragement of marketing plans. This is why ALDEV focused on the establishment of grazing and settlement schemes. ALDEV also promoted the reconditioning

activities. However, the introduction of the grazing and settlement schemes together with the ongoing land reconditioning activities led to the restriction of the number of livestock that one could keep. Another major disadvantage of the grazing and settlement schemes initiated in this period was that they interfered with what the pre-colonial Akamba had regarded as their inalienable right to graze their livestock wherever they wanted. The Akamba livestock keepers did not see any advantage in changing their traditional livestock management practices to allow for increased commercialization. Hence the betterment scheme and the reconditioning activities did not bring about any positive change in the livestock industry in Machakos. Moreover, development in livestock production was further hampered by the return of ex-soldiers who believed in white collar jobs and formal education. This accelerated the tendency to remove labour from livestock production in Machakos.

The chapter has also shown that the establishment of the monopolistic statutory livestock marketing structures such as the LCB, KMC and ALMO was meant to cleverly force destocking among the Akamba. Though basically geared towards stock destocking, the bodies pretended to be assisting the Africans to market their livestock. Consequently, none of the three bodies assisted the Akamba to market their livestock. The chapter, therefore, argues that overstocking was a colonial creation meant to force the Akamba to sell their stock at throw away prices. Thus, the interests of the LCB, KMC and ALMO were inimical to those of the Akamba and the exploitative prices they paid to the community for its stock bore no relation to the locally existing prices. This opened the trade to free market. As a result, these institutions, throughout the post-war period, found themselves competing with the so called black or illegal markets in the African reserves which were offering up to double the government price for a given animal.

Moreover, the changes instituted by the colonial state following the adoption of the Swynnerton Plan of 1954 led to the introduction of land consolidation which greatly affected animal husbandry. Previously, one could herd in any open grazing land but now livestock grazing was restricted to each individual's land and trespassing was not allowed. The formerly open spaces which had been used for communal grazing were divided into individual holdings, and there was no longer communal grazing. Consolidation also limited the number of livestock one could keep depending on the amount of land one had. Further, land consolidation made necessary the transformation of farming techniques from shifting to continuous cultivation. This in effect meant that land was engaged in crop production throughout the year and there was no time that land could be left uncultivated for utilization by livestock.

Furthermore, the development of cash crop production was detrimental to livestock production in Machakos. With the extension of the cultivated area, the grazing areas became smaller and livestock fewer. The promotion of cash crop production undoubtedly increased areas under cultivation and also yields and encouraged the Akamba to appreciate growing of cash crops as opposed to animal husbandry. Consequently, scarcity of pastureland, along with other financial and administrative pressures, resulted in an overall decrease in Akamba livestock wealth. Thus, by the time Kenya won independence, most of the Akamba were now peasant cultivators instead of being livestock keepers, and cash crops had become a significant income source.

This development of crop production also led to diversion of labour from animal husbandry to cash crop production. Cash crop and livestock industry from then onwards had to compete for the available labour. This was to the disadvantage of livestock sector which did not enjoy the favour of the colonial government as cash crop production did. As such, livestock also ceased to act as a source of food security among the Akamba of

Machakos. As demonstrated in chapter two, during the pre-colonial era, livestock acted as food security for the Akamba when crops would fail. The pre-colonial Akamba society combined crop production and pastoralism in a set of agro-ecological strategies which assured it of a wide range of subsistence products as well as food security. However, by 1950, as mentioned before, cash crops especially sisal, had taken up that role. This was demonstrated by use of sisal instead of livestock to deal with the famine during *nzaa ya makonge*. This reduced the enthusiasm of the Akamba towards livestock.

Moreover, attempts by the government to improve the indigenous livestock as proposed by the Swynnerton Plan were undermined by a number of factors ranging from lack of finance, drought, pests infestation, prevalence of cattle diseases, dealing with famines and population pressure in the district. As a consequence, the maintenance of large herds became both an expensive and a hazardous exercise.

CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

7.1. Summary

This study set out to analyse the transformation of livestock economy in Machakos District during the colonial period. In chapter one, the background of the study, the objectives, the statement of the problem, scope and limitation of the study as well as the literature reviewed in this study are dealt with. Furthermore, the chapter explained the rationale for the theoretical constructs to be employed in the study while simultaneously explaining the applicable methodology which the study utilised to analyse the transformation of the livestock economy in Machakos during the colonial period. This study, therefore, proceeded on the premise that the integration of the Akamba indigenous productive system or rather pre-capitalist mode of production into the world economy progressively undermined the livestock industry which was a predominant economic activity in Machakos on the eve of colonial rule. The study demonstrated that the geography of Machakos influenced the economic choices of the Akamba as reflected by their migration and choice of settlement in the area. It is for this fact that chapter two of the study analysed the physical environment of Machakos in relation to its influence on livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos.

In chapter two, the study looked at the migration and settlement of the Akamba as well as their socio-political and economic organization. The study maintained that geography is the crucible out of which history is made as evidenced by the people's migration and choice of settlement in the area. Therefore, the analysis of the physical environment of Machakos district was useful in reconstructing the pre-colonial Akamba economic activities and their way of life as dictated by the environmental potential of the region. It has been demonstrated that rainfall in Machakos is unreliable for

sustainable crop production, a factor which necessitated the Akamba to become mixed farmers. Using the agency theory, the study has contended that traditional African economies had principal themes of production. These are employed to explain the nature and significance of Akamba livestock economy during the pre-colonial period. The myths that Africa's past was more or less static or at best repetitive is debunked by acknowledging a continuous process of social and political innovation, economic improvement and technical change. The study therefore argues that the history of livestock production and management among the Akamba of Machakos during the pre-colonial period was that of innovation rather than stagnation. For instance, the Akamba were innovative and used this innovativeness to deal with livestock diseases and solve other problems pertaining livestock production. The study has also demonstrated that the livestock economy in Machakos was reliable and self-sufficient. It has also shown that livestock was the backbone of the economy not only in Machakos but Ukambani in general. It was the hallmark of wealth, and therefore the accumulation of livestock was vital to the ladder of social status which most men desired to climb at some point in their lives.

Further, the study has demonstrated that division of labour was applied in assigning roles in livestock care and management. The chapter has concluded by noting that livestock economy underwent major transformations with the establishment of colonial rule. This laid the basis for chapter three which looked at the integration of Machakos economy into the colonial capitalism.

The main thrust of chapter three was therefore, to explain the impact of the integration of the Machakos economy into the colonial capitalist system and its implication on livestock industry in Machakos. Evidence has been adduced in this chapter to show that the establishment of colonial rule among the Akamba took place against a background

of serious ecological problems ranging from human and animal pestilences to drought and famine which led to a demographic catastrophe in Machakos. This partly justified the imposition of colonial establishment which further had a lasting effect on the livestock economy of Machakos. The chapter demonstrates that the colonial impact on the indigenous livestock economy was gradual. In the first two decades, colonial rule asserted itself in Machakos by alienating land for settler production and introducing taxation. As a consequence, the Akamba lost effective access to about two-thirds of the land which they had formerly controlled including their most fertile lands and half of all their pasture. This in turn curtailed the movement of stock into grazing zones that were formerly important to the community's transhumant pattern. Thus, the Akamba herders lost the freedom to migrate seasonally and periodically in search of water and pasture. Eventually, the delicate balance which the Akamba had painstakingly maintained between their pastoral economy and the ecosystem was completely disrupted. Furthermore, the imposition of Hut and Poll tax by the colonial government forced the Akamba to sell most of their stock to meet the imposed financial obligations.

Other measures imposed by the colonial government necessary for the articulation of the African modes of production into colonial capitalism included opening up of trading centres, development of transport and communication networks, cash crop growing and institutionalization of wage labour for settlers and public works. These measures resulted in the migration of labour, reduction of African land for livestock grazing, the commoditization of the livestock and livestock products and the commercialization of the Machakos economy. Moreover, the impact of the First World War on African livestock production was evaluated. The chapter has shown that Akamba were recruited into the army through forced conscription. In addition, the Akamba were forced to sell their livestock at extremely low prices to meet the war subsistence demands. At the

same time, during the First World War, tax rates were raised. This forced the Akamba to sell more livestock to meet their tax obligation. This chapter, therefore, argues that the incorporation of the economy of Machakos into the capitalist economy through colonialism led to partial changes in the pre-existing forces and relations of production. This chapter thus set the basis for chapter four which looked at the period starting from the end of WWI to the onset of WWII signalling the second major phase of the articulation process in Kenya.

Chapter four has shown that in the 1920s, the Post World War I depression and the politics of the day compelled the colonial state to re-organise African production not only in Machakos but Kenya at large as provided for in the Dual Policy. However, the chapter further maintained that despite the colonial administration's adoption of the dual policy and its emphasis on the paramountcy of African interests, the colonial state remained mainly discriminative on aspects of African economic development. Most of the attention was still directed towards the settler economy. Thus, African production, especially the Machakos livestock sector was ignored, mainly because the colonial policy was against pastoralism. This problem was also exacerbated by the rise in tax rates and reduction of wages for the African labourers working on the settler farms.

The Akamba responded to these challenges by engaging more in commodity production. For instance, the Akamba who for a long time had been described as conservative pastoralists began to grow cash crops. As a result, there was a dramatic increase in the quantity of marketed crops as the Akamba sold these produce to pay tax and meet their material needs. Therefore, the Indians established more shops and local markets everywhere with new goods like clothing, sugar, kerosene, iron hoes (jembe) and ox-ploughs among other goods. This triggered more commercial production from the Akamba. As such, production ceased to be mainly for use value and surplus produce

for exchange increasingly acquired prominence which made more land to be brought under cultivation. Increase in cash crop production was also made possible by changes in technology as imported iron hoes and ox-ploughs were used for cultivation in Machakos. These new agricultural implements increased physical efficiency in production which in turn encouraged the opening up of more land under cultivation hence limiting land available for grazing as former communal grazing fields were cleared for settlement and crop production. Further, the administrative emphasis on crop production gradually led to the predominance of crop production over livestock keeping. This undermined the balance which had existed between the two forms of production during the pre-capitalist period.

The period was also characterised by the growth of various market centers where livestock was the main trade item. It was exchanged with money. This offers meaningful insights into the extent to which traditional forms of marketing were now almost fully incorporated into the colonial economy. From this, the study can convincingly argue that the engagement of the Akamba in commercial activities was beginning to make them shift their attention from the livestock sector to other sectors which were deemed to be more lucrative. The new investments were now gaining more attention to the detriment of the hitherto cherished activity of livestock keeping and also institutionalising rival ventures to livestock economy in Machakos.

The chapter also asserted that the global economic slump witnessed in the late 1920s significantly affected livestock economy in Machakos as it resulted in a sharp drop in livestock prices and increased the tax burden. The depression was also compounded by natural calamities like drought famines, recurrent cattle diseases, and locust invasions forcing many Akamba to seek wage labour. Furthermore, the poor condition of the reserves and settler political fears coalesced in 1935, with both the global anti-erosion

movement and the reaction to the "Dust Bowl" in the United States to jeopardise the development of livestock economy in Machakos. The overall effect of all these was more emphasis on soil conservation campaigns and the push for destocking policy which was highly resented by the Akamba. However, before the Akamba could come to terms with the ravages of the Great depression and the destocking policy, they were again plunged into the Second World War. This necessitated the focus of chapter five on the livestock economy in Machakos during the WWII.

Chapter five looked at the WWII and its impact on livestock economy in Machakos. The chapter utilised the articulation of modes of production to detail how the Akamba became involved in the WWII. The chapter has demonstrated that the war led to slackening in reconditioning programmes in Machakos. Further, the chapter has shown that the colonial government constantly requisitioned for livestock from the Akamba to meet the war demands, as well as conscripting them to the KAR to take part in the war. During the same period, many Akamba were also willing to join the war because of the harsh economic condition prevailing in Ukambani region at that time. The long Great World Depression of 1929-33 immediately following the 1928-29 drought, had dealt a death-blow to the livestock economy which had for a long time sustained the self-sufficiency of the Akamba. These harsh environmental conditions, combined with population pressure, strictly controlled reserve boundaries and the continuing need to pay tax rendered the economic conditions too harsh in Machakos. As a consequence, the Akamba, mostly from Machakos, finally lost the ability to selectively interact with the colonial economy or rather avoid participation in the colonial economy as laborers, an ability they had had up until the 1930s. This was evident from the way most of the Akamba readily accepted the wage labour in order to circumvent the prevailing conditions at that time. Most of the Akamba left the reserve to seek for wage labour

especially in the military. This left the district with scanty labour for livestock production. The study thus maintained that the conscription of men to serve in the war, confiscation of livestock catalyzed by the natural calamities at that time were responsible for the wartime famines in Machakos namely *Nzaa ya Makovo and Nzaa ya Mwolyo* which made the Akamba to sell even more livestock leading to its depletion. The chapter, therefore, concludes that state policies pursued during the Second World War were detrimental to the livestock sector in Machakos.

Finally, Chapter six interrogated the extent to which the Post-World War Two development programmes impacted on livestock economy in Machakos. The chapter has demonstrated that by the time the war ended, Britain was under pressure to grant political freedom to its colonies. This gave birth to the ideology of colonial trusteeship, which though not new, gained central importance in the post-war decade and became the focus of British propaganda. These new, more visible manifestations of "trusteeship" were attempts to assuage pressure from the United States and the Soviet Union, as well as intellectuals in Africa, that Britain ends colonial rule. These intellectuals frequently cited the text of the Atlantic Charter signed by Roosevelt and Churchill in 1941 which pledged "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." This also took place in the background of political awakening and a major series of political insurgence among the Africans. The challenges, therefore, provided the impetus for a re-thinking of the nature of colonial rule, as Indirect Rule was clearly no longer tenable and the colonial government needed a new strategy for maintaining control in Kenya.

Desirous of finding a solution to the problems, the British Government instituted programs of "development," "welfare" and later "community development". Consequently, after the Second World War, new methods of trusteeship involving

welfare and development became the official approach to British rule in Africa. This was followed by the establishment of DARA and ALDEV bodies to coordinate these development activities. Machakos got the lion's share of the ALDEV's funds. The funds were utilized in the Machakos betterment scheme which included the Makueni settlement scheme, the Yatta Grazing Scheme, the reconditioning programmes as well as the improvement of educational facilities. However, the study argues that the programmes were detrimental to the development of livestock industry as they involved limiting the number of livestock that one could own. The Makueni Rules for instance stated that; 'any permit holder was allowed only seven head of cattle, with five sheep or goats as a substitute for one head of cattle', and that he must submit to all instructions of the settlement officers regarding the branding, dipping or inoculation of his cattle. Failure to adhere to these rules would result in the confiscation of cattle, or possibly removal from the settlement.

Livestock production in Machakos would further be adversely affected by the return of the ex-soldiers who had developed an increased prevalence to formal education. These two factors led to a change of Akamba attitude towards livestock as a means of production and survival. The increasing opportunities for employment, coupled with the depletion of livestock, led to a general feeling that wage labour was now the most reliable and the most secure source of livelihood.

This period also witnessed the continuation of the destocking policy as part of anti-soil erosion campaign in the whole country. This was done under the guise of livestock marketing bodies namely; LCB, KMC and ALMO. However, it should be noted that these bodies were instruments of settler influence and state control of the agricultural sector and as such, never helped in the marketing of the Akamba livestock as they purported to.

Nonetheless, the last straw that broke the camel's back in regard to livestock economy in Machakos during the colonial period was the introduction of the Swynnerton Plan in 1954. The plan never gave any serious consideration to the improvement of the livestock industry in the ASALs. Rather, it was aimed at 'fostering development in the underdeveloped regions' like Machakos of which underdevelopment was defined specifically as 'a problem of low agricultural productivity, especially with reference to exportable cash crops'. It thus promoted cash crop production at the expense of livestock production. The plan was also predicated on an assumption that "successful" African farmers would "be able to acquire more land and bad or poor farmers less." This created two classes of people in Machakos; a landed and a landless class. The landed were those who were seen to engage in serious cash crop production and as such referred to as 'the progressive farmers' while the unlanded were the ones not engaging in large scale cash crop production. The policy thus created a market-oriented class of African farmers within the commercial farming export sector. Thus, instead of providing a panacea to the land problem, it further, plunged many Machakos residents into further loss of land as the common grazing, gathering, and forest areas essential to poor smallholders who were dependent on off-farm resources were often the first lands claimed for growing agricultural estates. As such, scarcity of pasture land along with other financial and administrative pressures, resulted in a drastic decline, for most households, in livestock holdings. At long last, as land use systems and labour patterns underwent transformation, so did livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos. Therefore, by the time Kenya won independence, livestock production had already been subordinated to other economic ventures mainly crop production. In fact, the ownership of livestock no longer generated the same general feeling of respect and prestige as it did on the eve of colonial rule. Generally, we can say that the situation in which

pastoralism was the predominant force in Machakos District in the early part of the nineteenth century had been reversed and livestock accumulation was no longer the sole or even the most important yardstick of one's economic status. At this time, the economic enterprises in Machakos were so diversified such that the accumulation of livestock per se no longer commanded the socio-economic esteem it had enjoyed on the eve of colonial rule.

7.2 Conclusion

The overall objective of the study was to examine the historical trajectory of livestock economy and its transformation among the Akamba of Machakos from 1895 to 1963.

To achieve this, the study was guided by three specific objectives

In relation to the first objective which sought to examine the nature and significance of livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos on the eve of colonial rule, the findings of this study established that the Akamba relied heavily on animal husbandry. Livestock production was the central force to the Akamba life. It played economic, political as well as social functions. Moreover, it was a principal source of food, supplementing agricultural products with milk, meat and blood. Thus, the study concluded that on the eve of colonial rule the people Machakos had a viable and robust livestock economy which was supplemented by agriculture. This shows that the Akamba organised their production systems to accommodate environmental perturbations such as drought.

In relation to the second objective, the study sought to analyse the role of colonial rule in transforming livestock economy among the Akamba of Machakos. This objective was considered important since most of the economic policies formulated and implemented by the colonial state in colonial Kenya to a large extent influenced the

livestock industry. In regard to this question, the study has demonstrated that the colonial government introduced policies like land alienation, taxation, forced labour, monetization of the economy and the promotion of cash crop production. These policies had numerous negative effects on the Akamba system of production. First, land alienation, which was meant to provide land for European settlers and to force the Akamba into wage labour, delimited the land available for the livestock sector. Second, the introduction of taxation as a means of raising revenue for the state and coercing Africans into wage labour forced the Akamba to sell more livestock in order to get money to meet their tax obligation. Third, the colonial labour policies accelerated the tendency to remove labour from animal husbandry in order to invest it in wage employment. Furthermore, the study found out that the promotion and development of trade and monetisation of the economy by the colonial state made the Akamba to sell more livestock and livestock products to acquire material goods. This engendered monetisation of the Akamba economy which further transformed the purpose of keeping livestock from subsistence to commercial. This in turn led to commodity production as individuals sought to escape proletarianisation by accumulating wealth. Fourth, the proximity of the Machakos Akamba to settler farms led to perpetual quarantines, a factor which adversely affected their ability to market their livestock outside the district. Another significant policy was the introduction and promotion of cash crop production. This led to diversion of land and labour from the animal husbandry and directed them towards cash crop production. All these aspects of colonial capitalism progressively led to the decline of livestock economy in Machakos. The study, therefore, confirmed that the colonial state played a pertinent role in incorporating the Akamba peasants in the global capitalist economy, which in turn destroyed livestock industry in Machakos.

Closely related to the second objective was the third objective whose main thrust was the need to explore the Akamba responses towards colonial policies affecting livestock industry in Machakos. First, the Akamba responded to land alienation policy by reducing the number of livestock they had or abandoning livestock keeping altogether and venturing in other economic activities like cash crop production. Another policy was the imposition of taxes where the Akamba of Machakos responded by selling more livestock to get money for tax payment. The third policy was the imposition of forced labour which made the Akamba move into wage labour hence there was development of migrant labour class in Machakos. The perennial quarantines also imposed by the colonial government made the Akamba to engage in other business ventures as opposed to livestock. This ventures included shop keeping and transport industry among others. The colonial state also promoted the monetisation of the economy which inturn made the Akamba to engage more in commodity production. Finally, there was introduction and promotion of cash crop production. The Akamba responded to this by diverting land and labour from the animal husbandry to cash crop production.

The study also found out that while the colonial state articulated the Akamba livestock economy to colonial capitalism, the Akamba responded as receptive agents ready to accommodate, absorb and adapt new practices into their pre-colonial livestock economy. The Akamba therefore, retained what they deemed beneficial to their livestock industry and restructured it with the new and progressive ideas from the colonial state. Furthermore, the study has demonstrated that although the colonial process impoverished the bulk of the society, it also nurtured a rural capitalist class. The colonial state started to incorporate these progressive Akamba into the colonial establishment by allowing them to grow lucrative cash crops and by providing them with loans and extension services. Hence, the so-called 'progressive Akamba emerged'.

They included cash crop producers, traders and wage earners. This is the class which organised protests against state intervention in the process of accumulation. The class sponsored the 1938 protests against forcible destocking. In short, the colonial situation intensified social differentiation among the Machakos Akamba, a phenomenon which manifested itself through the ability of some individuals to acquire land and livestock.

This in turn led to the intensification of the process of commercialization of livestock and its by products, a situation which brought about the increased demand for dairy cows. This means that some Akamba responded to declining livestock industry in the 1950's by buying grade cattle which enabled them to sell livestock products. The progressive farmers were also able to diversify their activities by engaging in other income generating ventures like running shops and acquiring trucks which were used to transport goods. This in effect led to the shift from purely pastoral economy to that of diverse economic ventures. As a result, livestock economy was now relegated to the periphery.

In view of the above, the overall conclusion of the study is that livestock industry was a predominant economic activity among the Akamba of Machakos as livestock was both a measure and store of value. However, the advent of colonialism which bred capitalism contributed to the relative decline of livestock industry among the Akamba of Machakos. Furthermore, while the colonial state articulated the Akamba livestock economy to colonial capitalism, the Akamba responded as receptive agents ready to accommodate, absorb and adapt new practices into their pre-colonial livestock economy. The Akamba therefore, retained what they deemed beneficial to their livestock industry and restructured it with the new and progressive ideas from the colonial state.

Therefore, the main thesis of this study is that the integration of the Akamba pre-capitalist mode of production into colonial capitalism progressively undermined livestock industry which had been a predominant economic activity among the Akamba of Machakos on the eve of colonial rule, hence placing it on a negative trajectory.

7.3 Recommendations

In view of the findings of the study, it can therefore be concluded that livestock production is an important sector that needs to be improved and strengthened. So the study proposes the following recommendations for improving livestock production in Machakos.

1. In view of the profound influence that geographical factors have had on Machakos history, the government should devise appropriate and practical policies which can improve livestock sector in Machakos taking into account the ecological setting of the county.
2. The people of Machakos, as the major stakeholders in the livestock industry should be educated on current trends and practices in the livestock industry such as keeping of superior breeds so as to increase the yields from the livestock industry.
3. The people of Machakos should diversify their economic activities to ensure balanced economies in which livestock and crop production are not only coherent but also complementary

7.4 Suggestions for Further Research

Further research should be carried out to cover other aspects which could not be addressed by this study because they were out of the scope of the specific objectives of the study. The researcher found out in the course of this study that there is need to

explore the following issues that are pertinent to development of livestock production and improvement in Machakos.

- i. The study calls for investigations on the interplay between increased cash crop production and the decline of livestock production in Machakos District during the colonial period.
- ii. Research also needs to be carried out on the role of land tenure system in undermining livestock production in Machakos.
- iii. Further research should also be carried out to examine the place of livestock in food production and food security in ASALs.

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| 2 | Susanah Kasili | 88 | Yatta | 30/10/2020 |
| 3 | Linnet Mativo | 71 | Yatta | 31/10/2020 |
| 4 | Musyoka Ndolo | 102 | Mwala | 01/11/2020 |
| 5 | Chief Mutua wa Nzuki | 70 | Mwala | 01/11/2020 |
| 6 | Daniel Mukonzo. | 68 | Mwala | 02/11/2020 |
| 7 | Musyoka Nzila | 93 | Kathiani | 03/11/2020 |
| 8 | Simon Mukonzo. | 88 | Kathiani | 04/11/2020 |
| 9 | Katiko Musyoka | 76 | Kathiani | 04/10/2020 |
| 10 | Syoindo Masila | 103 | Machakos Town | 05/10/2020 |
| 11 | Grace Mwelu | 66 | Machakos Town | 06/11/2020 |
| 12 | Musembi Joseph | 75 | Machakos Town | 07/11/ 2020 |
| 13 | Zachayo Mulandi | 72 | Masinga | 07/11/2020. |
| 14 | Mulei Ndungi | 69 | Masinga | 08/11/2020. |
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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Sample Questions

ORAL INTERVIEW GUIDELINES ON THE HISTORICAL TRAJECTORY OF LIVESTOCK ECONOMY AND ITS TRANSFORMATION AMONG THE AKAMBA OF MACHAKOS, KENYA, 1895-1963

General Information

Name----- Sex:..... Sub-location:

Age..... Date..... Amount of land owned.....

Types of crops grown..... Number and types of animals
kept..... Number of dependants.....

PART 1: PRE COLONIAL PERIOD

A: FOOD ECONOMY

1. What were the various ways of obtaining food on the eve of colonialism?
2. What was the order of importance of these activities?
3. Which was the social unit of production and consumption?
4. How was labor shared within the social unit?

B: LAND

1. Before the coming of the Europeans, who owned the land?
2. How did people acquire land in the pre-colonial period
3. How was the ownership of land i) individual ii) family iii) clan iv) community
Could an individual own land? Yes_____No._____ If Yes, how? How was
an individual's land rights protected?
4. Was it possible for an individual to acquire more land?
Yes_____No_____ If Yes, How? .

5. How was the acquired land used? Who organized and patterned out the use of land?
6. What forms of land ownership existed among the Akamba on the eve of colonial
7. Conquest. Were there any landlords or a group of landless people in your community before the colonial period?)
8. How did your people allocate land for various types of use e.g. cultivation.
9. grazing and hunting') Who had the right to allocate the land')
10. Could one lose land after acquiring it? Yes _____ No. _____ If Yes, Why? How?
11. Did both women and men have equal rights to land? Yes _____ No _____ Give reasons for answer.
12. Could an outsider acquire land? Yes ____ No _____ Give reasons.
13. Could land change ownership? Yes _____ No _____ If Yes, How?
14. What factors necessitated this change?
15. How were resources shared or used for example i) Grazing grounds, ii) Water points e.t.c
16. Did we have conflicts in land ownership? Yes _____ No _____ If Yes, How were they resolved?

PART 2: LIVESTOCK INDUSTRY AMONG THE AKAMBA OF MACHAKOS DURING THE PRE COLONIAL PERIOD

1. What forms of livestock were kept in the pre-colonial era?
2. Were the same animals reared all over Ukambani?
3. What was the order of importance of the various forms of stock?
4. What purposes did livestock serve?
5. Were livestock rearing and crop production interdependent?

6. Did everybody own stock?
7. How did livestock-owners relate with people who had no stock?
8. How was livestock acquired? b) Who owned the cattle e.g. cattle, sheep, goats?
9. How were gender roles in relation to cattle production?
10. What system was used to keep the livestock? Was it changing? Yes _____
No ____ If Yes, How? _____
11. Were there different locations for crops and livestock _____ If yes, how were they identified? _____ were there also different locations for different types of livestock?
12. What type of implements were used in livestock production? _____
13. Which cattle products existed and how were they used? Was it changing? Yes _____ No _____ If Yes, How?
14. Did you ever have food shortages? Yes _____ No _____ If Yes,
15. What caused the shortage? How was the problem solved?
16. How were the animal products such as milk, meat, hides and skin I) Used II) Disposed, usage.
17. Who was responsible for storage and disposal of surplus?
18. Did the Akamba have any form of exchange? If Yes with whom and which commodities?
19. What was the medium of exchange?

PART 3: LABOUR

1. During the pre-colonial period, how was labour organized?
2. How were people working i) Individually ii) Groups/Clans iii) Communally
3. How was labour organized communally

4. What tasks were performed by i) Men ii) Women iii) Men and Women iv) The elderly v) Children
5. What tools were used? Did they influence the division of labour between men and women?
6. Was there labour scarcity in the pre-colonial period?
7. Was there any form of payment of labour amongst your people." [f so, how was it paid')

PART 4: TECHNOLOGY

1. What implements were in use in the pre-colonial period?
2. How did these implements influence the amount of land cultivated and division of labour in society?
3. What implements were introduced during the colonial era?
4. Were these new implements accessible to everybody?
5. What changes did the new implements bring?

PART 5: FAMINE

1. Were there famines during the pre colonial period?
2. What caused the famines?
3. Did the famine affect the whole of Ukambani?
4. How did people acquire food during the famines?
5. What were the effects of the famine on the community?

PART 6: COLONIAL PERIOD A: LAND

1. How did land alienation affect you? What economic and agricultural changes did the British bring in the area? How did they affect the people's land ownership and usage affect the people
2. Was the alienated land settled on by your people prior to the coming of the

3. Did the White man take any land from your family? _____
4. Did you have right to use land during the colonial period? _____
5. Were there colonial government projects like offices, roads, railway established in Machakos during the colonial period? if yes, How did the colonial government acquire land to implement these projects in this area and in other chief's headquarters?
6. Were the Africans moved to reserves?
7. What was the effect of this movement
8. After the reserve boundaries were laid, was the reserve land enough for all the clans?
9. Was land owned communally or individually in the reserve? _____
10. Was there soil erosion in the reserves?
11. Did the White man introduce soil erosion measures? _____ If yes, how were they implemented? _____

PART 7: LIVESTOCK PRODUCTION

1. Did the system of land ownership affect the system of livestock production during colonial period. Yes _____ No _____ Reasons for answer: _____
2. Was there introduction of cash crops in this area? If yes, Did this introduction of cash crops affect animal production? If yes, how
3. Were there new breeds of livestock introduced in Machakos, if yes, How did this affect livestock production in your area? No _____ If Yes name them: _____
4. Did the people of Machakos embrace the new breeds of animals? _____. If yes, which breeds were particularly kept and why? ____

5. Did they interfere with diet of the people? Yes _____ No _____ Explain:

6. Did the indigenous animals still exist by the end of World War II,
7. Did the British establish any livestock centers in Machakos ? If so, what livestock activities were they engaged in')
8. Were there efforts made by the colonial government to increase animal production among your people') if yes, name them.
9. Was there trade involving livestock and livestock products? Did trade in livestock affect production of food in any way')
10. How did your people sell their animals or animal products') How fair were the transactions to your people')
11. Did your people take any initiative to produce more animal products to sell to the British colonial officials? If so, what were the colonial government's efforts to boost trade in livestock and livestock products?
12. Did there emerge an indigenous group or groups of traders') if yes, what obstacles or prospects did they encounter?
13. How did colonial policies on land, livestock diseases, etc affect the livestock industry?
14. The colonial government introduced the destocking policy. How did the Akamba respond towards it?
15. Were there any imported British and Indian goods among your people') [f so, name them.
16. Apart from these where else did other goods come from')
17. How did the World War I and II affect your people's livestock production in this area)

18. In what way would you say your people benefited from colonialism' in terms of livestock production?)
19. What were its bad effects as far as your people's livestock economy was concerned')
20. Was there a group of people or individuals that accumulated wealth and land during the colonial period') If so, what was the economic and social status of these people or individuals prior to the coming of the British')
21. During the Period of Emergency, the colonial government came up with a plan that spearheaded the sub-division and registration of land within the country. What impacts did the plan have on livestock production in Machakos?
22. Did the Emergency Period affect livestock production? _____

PART 8: LABOUR

1. How did the British colonial rule affect the labour organization of the people vis-a-vis animal husbandry and exchange activities? How were individual roles in the society affected?
2. Was the traditional labour organization affected? _____
3. Were the people of Machakos involved in the Second World War? _____ If yes, did the war affect the system of livestock production? _____
4. Was there taxation during the colonial period. __If yes, how did the Africans raise the money for paying the taxes?
5. How did the introduction of 'Kipande' affect your people') How did your people pay their taxes, offer their labour. and maintain agricultural and livestock

PART 10: FAMINE

1. Were there food shortages during the colonial period? _____ If yes, how were they addressed? _____

PART 11: TECHNOLOGY

1. Was there new technology like farm implements introduced during colonial period?
2. What were their effect on livestock production'

Appendix B: Research Authorization Letters


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26th October 2020

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NAIROBI

REF: MWIKALI WINNIFRED WAMBUI-SASS/DPHIL/IHS/02/19

This is to confirm that the above named is a student in the School of Arts and Social Sciences, Department of History, Political Science and Public Administration pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in History. She has successfully completed her coursework and defended her thesis proposal titled: *"The Transformation of Livestock Economy among the Akamba of Machakos, Kenya, 1895-1963."* She is now allowed to collect research permit in order to collect data in the field.

Any assistance given to her will be highly appreciated.


Prof. Ken Oluoch, PhD
Chairman, Department of History Political Science and Public Administration


 26 OCT 2020
 MOI UNIVERSITY
 P.O. Box 3900 ELDORET



REPUBLIC OF KENYA

NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION

Ref No: 958806

Date of Issue: 29/October/2020

RESEARCH LICENSE

This is to Certify that Ms. Winnifred WAMBUI MWIKALI of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Machakos on the topic: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LIVESTOCK ECONOMY AMONG THE AKAMBA OF MACHAKOS, KENYA, 1895-1963, for the period ending : 29/October/2021.

License No: NACOSTI/P/10/7428

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