

GREAT JOURNS

Journal of Arts and Humanities

Vol.1 No.2, January 2026



Challenges and Impact of Tea Farming and Economic Transformation in Kenya: A Case of the Kipsigis Community of Bureti, 2003-2010

Jackline Chepkirui,¹Dr. Evans Nyamwaka²and Dr. Daniel R. Kandagor³

¹ Master's Candidate, Department of History, Kisii University, Phone: +254726400033, email, jackylangat91@gmail.com

² Senior Lecturer, Department of Political Science, History and Peace Studies, Kisii University, Kenya.

³ Senior Lecturer, Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Kisii University, Kenya.



ABSTRACT: The paper examines challenges and impact of tea farming in relation to the economic transformation of the Kipsigis community of Bureti between 2003 and 2010. The study was conducted in Bureti Sub-County in Kericho County, Kenya. The study upon which this paper is embedded was guided by two theories, which are: Dependency and Articulation of Modes of Production Theory. The study targeted those who had attained 45 years and above, especially those who were involved in tea growing at one point in time and those who still grow tea. There were also those who perhaps never grew it, but witnessed its growth and have information on the same. Kenya Tea Development Agency officers were also targeted. The researcher employed snowball sampling to help in identifying reliable informants. A pilot study was done in Konoin which experienced tea growing much earlier than Bureti. The study used descriptive qualitative research design and interview guide to collect data. From the target population, 14 informants were interviewed which formed the basis of the sample size. The number of informants was realized when the researcher had reached a point of saturation. Data analysis entailed discussion of oral information and verbatim discourse. The researcher corroborated primary information with secondary data to ascertain historical evidence. Finally, data was presented qualitatively. The findings of the study revealed that there were immense challenges witnessed by tea growers in Bureti. These include, inadequate buying centres, low price, poor transportation system, delayed payments, delayed collection of tea leaf and labour shortage in relation to 2007-2008 post-election violence. The following were found as impacts of tea growing: it led to food shortage and hunger, development of urban centres, development of schools as well as improvement of household income. The findings of the study would avail important information to tea growers in Kenya at large, and more so, to the Kipsigis community of Bureti sub-County. Agents of tea production such as the Kenya Tea Development Authority would also find useful information. The available information would aid the government to strategize better policy formulation to improve tea production in Bureti and other tea-growing regions in the country.

Keywords: tea growing, tea leaf, small-scale, large-scale, tea plantation, tea growers.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Industrial Revolution that started in Britain in the Eighteenth Century brought about marked changes in the sectors of textile industry, agriculture and metal manufacture. These changes were also characterized with radical economic policies that influenced social and economic structure in Britain.¹ Consequently, the Revolution soon spread to other European countries and eventually to other continents such as the Americas and Africa. Africans played essential role in the supply of raw materials and labour during the Industrial Revolution². This phenomenon led to European imperialism and the eventual imposition of colonialism in Africa in general and Kenya in particular which altered Africa's history perpetually³. In Kenya, the British colonists insisted on the development of cash crops such as cotton, coffee, sugarcane and tea to achieve the economic goals of the metropolis.⁴

¹ T. S. Ashton. *The Industrial Revolution*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.

² J. E. Enikori. E. *Africans and Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. p 362

³ W. Rodney. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East Africa Publishers, 1972

⁴ Ibid.

Tea growing originated from China where the legendary Chinese Emperor, Shen Nung, accidentally discovered the tea plant at the mountains of Sichuan and Yunan around 2737 BC.⁵ Afterwards, tea growing spread to other parts of East Asia such as Japan, Korea, Vietnam, Iran, Taiwan and Thailand from the sixth century onwards and tea drinking became popular among priests, monks and royal classes before spreading to other lower classes. 6

In Europe, tea was first introduced by an Italian traveler, Giovanni Battista Ramusio in 1655 and in 1615, tea was first mentioned in Britain.⁷ The British further introduced tea farming overseas for commercial purposes in order to break the Chinese monopoly⁸. The British choose India as their first tea farming ground for export purposes overseas by launching vast plantations in Assam region in 1823, and later, in the African countries such as Kenya.⁹

The introduction of tea farming in Kenya is credited to GWL Caine and Arnold Butler McDonald in 1903 and 1904 respectively¹⁰. Caine, prior to his coming to Kenya, had tried tea farming in India. In his two acre-farm in Limuru, he extracted mature samples of tea and sent them for analysis to the Imperial Institute in London to ascertain its suitability in Kenyan soil¹¹. When the report came, Imperial Institute confirmed that Kenya was suitable for tea production. In 1925, therefore, tea was cultivated in Kenya for commercialization.¹² This process was initiated by Malcolm Fyers Bell of the Brooke Bond and Company.¹³ Brooke Bond and Company was founded by a British citizen, Arthur Brooke in 1845 and who opened his first tea shop in 1869 at Manchester.¹⁴ However, it is important to note that tea farming was restricted for the African people in Kenya until the 1950s when the Swynnerton Plan was implemented. Henceforth, tea growing developed with levels of dynamisms in Kenya characterized with myriad of challenges and impact. The paper assesses the challenges and impact of tea farming among Kipsigis community of Bureti, Kenya from 2003 to 2010. The paper focuses on these concerns within the framework of economic transformation in Kenya.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Upon the introduction of tea growing among the Kipsigis of Bureti, the natives experienced a lot of challenges and impact. This situation characterized the entire production of tea in Bureti. Tea farming is essential in the realization of the Kenya Vision 2030 in relation to wealth creation as stated in Sectional paper No. 2 of 2005. In regard to this, the current study sought to investigate and account for the economic transformation of the Kipsigis in relation to tea farming.

Since tea growing was introduced during the time of low population, currently, there could be challenges attached to tea growing in regard to augmented population in Bureti. Tea farmers in Kipsigisland have been complaining of problems that they undergo in the process of tea growing.

⁵ J. Benn. *Tea in China: A religious and Cultural History*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015.

⁶ V. Mair, et al, *The True History of Tea*. New York:Thames and Hudson, 2009

⁷ G. Ramusio, *Voyages and Travels*. *Voyages and Travels: Venetia* (publisher unknown) , 1655

⁸ S. C. Taylor. *Food Culture in India*. Dehli: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004

⁹ D. Campbell, *The Tea book*, London: Pelican Publishing Company, 1995

¹⁰ N. Swainson. *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1980

¹¹ K. M. Korir, , “Tea plantation economy in Kericho District and related phenomena to circa 1960” A BA Dissertation University of Nairobi, Kenya, 1976

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Nevertheless, tea growing has also had noticeable impact that has changed lives of the people. Tea farming has had impact on the lives of the people of Kenya and more so, the Kipsigis. Addressing challenges and impact of tea growing from a historical background is deemed necessary since it informed on the trends and dynamics of tea production. The study focused on the challenges and impact of tea growing among the Kipsigis of Bureti Sub-County, Kenya, 2003-2010. Tea farming has had an impact on the lives of the people of Kenya, and more so the Kipsigis. Addressing challenges and impact of tea growing from a historical background is necessary since it will inform on the trends and dynamics of tea production.

1.2 Justification of the Study

Tea growing is one of the sub-sectors in agriculture that has created robust means of earning livelihoods among many communities in Kenya. The study commences in 2003 because this was the time when change in regime was witnessed when National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) government installed the government after winning the general elections the previous year, 2002. With Mwai Kibaki installed as the third president of the Republic of Kenya, hopes were high that tea growing would have some beneficial direction in Kenya and, particularly, among the Kipsigis of Bureti. The study terminates in 2010 because this was the time that marks the end of the operation of the old constitution that was adopted after the independence of Kenya. Subsequently, the old constitution gave way for the New Constitution promulgated in 2010.

Studies on challenges and impact of tea growing among the Kipsigis of Bureti from a historical perspective are scanty. This can be justified by citing few studies that were done within the same geographical set up as the study area in consideration to the periodization covered. For instance, Chepkemoi¹⁵ addressed effects of smallholder tea production in Bomet between 1954 and 2002. Korir¹⁶ was concerned with issues regarding tea plantation economy in Kericho District while Oluoko¹⁷ studied on aspects of smallholder tea production in Belgut Division of Kericho District. The cited studies reveal that concerns of challenges and impact of tea growing needed to be addressed, and therefore merits conducting the current study.

1.3 Limitations of the Study

Within the context of this study, limitations refer to unpleasant conditions that, if not properly addressed, may to a greater extent interfere with the outcome of a study. However, some limitations may be beyond the control of the researcher. Within the period of conducting the study, few limitations were encountered. Some of which the researcher endeavored to reduce their effects on the study. For example, some identified informants tried to recommend their friends or relatives during snowball approach of sampling technique. The researcher overcame this by probing into the ages and experiences of the recommended informants. Archival sources could not be available throughout the entire periodization, more so from 2003 to 2010. To overcome this, the researcher, relied a lot on oral information from the field.

¹⁵ F. K. Chepkemoi. "Effects of Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya: The Case of Bomet County, 1954-2002." (Master's Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2017).

¹⁶ K. M. Korir. "Tea Plantation Economy in Kericho District and related phenomena to circa 1960." (Bachelor of Arts Dissertation, University of Nairobi, 1976).

¹⁷ A. A. Oluoko. "Some Aspects of Smallholder Tea Production in Belgut Division of Kericho District, Kenya." (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1999).

1.4 Theoretical Framework

The study utilized two theories. These are: Dependency Theory Articulation of Modes of Production Theory (AMPT). Both theories were postulated by Karl Marx.¹⁸ The proponents of the Dependency Theory (DT) perceive economies of the third world countries as part of capitalistic world economy and refer to them as economies of the periphery. There are two terms that characterize DT: metropolis and periphery. Dependency therefore, is a situation in which the so-called metropolitan nations siphon resources from the developing countries for the sake of their development. This eventually causes them to under develop.

In respect to this study, when the white settlers introduced tea growing in Bureti, there was an aspect of underdevelopment witnessed. This justifies the rationale of the relevance of the use of this DT in the study. The introduction of cash economy by colonial administration is what compelled the introduction of cash crops in most colonized nation. Kenya at large and Bureti was not an exemption. The European settlers targeted rich fertile land which they called White Highlands (WH) and Bureti happened to be within the WH. The introduction of tea growing in Bureti undermined the growth of subsistence crops which the Kipsigis community of Bureti had been growing even during the pre-colonial period. This was an aspect of underdevelopment.

Dependency Theory addressed the attitude behind production but AMPT addressed the whole question and process of production, and in this case, tea. AMPT proponents perceive capitalism as a strategy geared towards internal development as a result of external intrusion and imposition. Colin Leys¹⁹ sees the peasants' mode of production as a sense of transitional approach used by capitalists to maximize exploitation and optimize production.

The white settlers introduced taxation and wage labour in Kenya. This was geared towards strengthening the cash economy to feed the metropolis. One major way that would sustain such economy was encourage cash crop production in viable regions. This brought about distinctive economic change among the Kipsigis community. The Kipsigis had to quickly resort to tea growing and seriously produce since they had to shift from indigenous production to embrace this exotic crop. The Kipsigis were not idle people before the introduction of tea. They had diversified ways of producing food, processing the same and storing food.²⁰

Articulation of modes of production has been found useful in this study. It had hitherto been used by Ndege²¹ in studying economic change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962. The same theory was also used by Oricho²² in addressing the nature and trends of cotton growing in Karachuonyo, 1903-1980. This is a vivid indication that the suitability of the theory in addressing studies that relate to economic activities cannot be ignored.

¹⁸ T. Benton. "Mode of production, Articulation and Social Formation" in *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism : Althusser and his Influence*, London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1984.

¹⁹ C. Leys. *Under development in Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1994.

²⁰ S. Omwoyo. *Colonialism and the severity of Famines and Food Shortages among the Gusii of Western Kenya, 1890-1919*. Unpublished paper. 2004.

²¹ P. Ndege. "Economic Change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962" (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1987).

²² S. O. Oricho. "Nature and Trends of Cotton Growing in Karachuonyo, 1903-1980." (Master of Arts Thesis, Kisii University, 2019).

II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Tea farming is an economic activity that many countries in the globe have ventured into for centuries due to its importance in the society. It is also potentially suitable for growth in areas that receive high rainfall. Saberi²³, explores the economic and social uses of tea including its use as a currency during the Tang Dynasty and the 1913 creation of tea-dance that combined tea and tango. Mary and Heiss,²⁴ traces the origins of tea to China where it was first discovered accidentally. These authors argue that the plant grew wildly and widely in the mountainsides of China and was the drink for both priests and royal families. Fuller²⁵ points out that, “jungle tea” continues to be harvested from the wild trees in remote areas by villagers for centuries in China.

Jane McCabe²⁶ uncovers a story related to painful experience undergone by a family in tea growing. Lorna Peters, later, the grandmother to McCabe was one of the 130 adolescents who resettled in the New Zealand. This was as a result of efforts by the government plan for settlement schemes of 1908 and 1938. She narrates how tea was planted by the Europeans using the natives. This plan brought about traumatic disruption to families, more so break ups of Anglo-Indian families, hence disrupting the larger economic and political stability in a bid to grow tea in the country.

In Malawi, like other British colonies, European colonists propagated tea growing, hence augmenting marked expansion.²⁷ The extent and approach of introducing tea growing in Malawi was arrogantly based on racial superiority. This implies that the British administration undermined African natives when they introduced tea growing. They British introduced tea growing in Nyasaland (Malawi) mainly to engage African to provide labour in the production of tea. This approach was meant to divert the attention of Africans from championing the spirit of nationalism geared towards independence.

Tea farming was introduced in Uganda in 1900 by the Indians. This is according to a study conducted by Matheson and Bovill.²⁸ The findings of the study further revealed that, upon its introduction, it was restricted to be done only in plantation farms. The belief that informed this decision was that if it was grown by small-scale farmers, the quality of production would be low.²⁹ On the other hand, preference to plantation farming of tea would as well avoid the competition between European and African farmers. This would eventually enable the British farmers to dominate the market and secure labour from the Africans anytime their services were needed. It was only until when tea prices declined in 1920 that plantation agriculture was greatly crippled when small-holding farming was encouraged. The main aim of embarking on plantation farming was to help in the payment of taxes that was necessary for administrative purposes.³⁰

²³H. Seberi, *Tea, a Global History*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 2010.

²⁴ Mary and Robert Heiss. *The Story of Tea: A Cultural History and Drinking Guide* Random House, 2011.

²⁵ T. Fuller. *A Tea from the Jungle Enriches Placid Village*, New York: The New York Times, 2008.

²⁶ J. McCabe. *Tea and Colonial Resettlement: Imperial Families, Interrupted*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017.

²⁷ M. Roy. *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation, and Empire*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003.

²⁸ J. K. Matheson., & E.W. Bovill. (Eds) *East African Agriculture*, London: Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1950.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

Kenya is the world's largest producer of tea, and most of it is produced in the Rift valley region, particularly, in Kericho. A study conducted by Korir³¹ in Kericho District revealed that production of tea was largely promoted by multinational tea companies. This continued until recommendations of Swynnerton Plan of 1954 was implemented. The Plan proposed that the Kipsigis people be permitted to grow tea as small-holders in Kimulot Division in the present Bomet County. This proposal was later followed by initiating a pilot scheme in 1957 which marked the outset of small holder production of tea. The study, however only focused on the way the Kipsigis faced the challenge of alienation of the Kipsigis land for the growth of tea.

Wambui³² in Kiambu District examined the transportation of tea leaf. The study asserted that, by 1950s, tea was wholly produced on estates owned by private companies which did not encourage small-scale approach to tea growing. Due to mere skepticism, it was believed that African farmers would not sustain large-scale production of tea. As such, their involvement in large-scale farming would lead to production of poor tea leaf. This would in turn tarnish the good reputation the country had in the field of the marketing of tea. This implies that the colonial regime were against Africans growing tea, and therefore, this was an immense challenge.

Njogu³³ compared the extent of securing food security among two types of households; tea-growing and non-tea growing households. The study was done in Kirinyaga district and as well assessed nutritional status of the children within these two types of households. The study revealed that the payments for tea proceeds were done on a monthly basis, and annual bonuses given at the end of every year. It was also found out that income from small-scale tea growers was not as attractive as those obtained from large-scale farming. The households that grew tea were more concerned about the purchase of food when they receive their dues compared to the households that never grew tea.

A study conducted by Langat, et al³⁴ on smallholder tea farmers in Nandi South District, established that most farmers faced food shortage between the months of April and July and only got food through markets. This means the farmers did not have food reservoirs and only bought food from the markets which largely depended on proceeds from the sale of tea. This problem of food shortage was caused by high competition between tea and maize and as a result the former outdid the latter in regard to production. This resulted in more land availed to cash crops than food crops. The study addressed effects of tea farming on food production.

³¹ Korir, K. M. "Tea plantation economy in Kericho District and related phenomena to circa 1960" A BA Dissertation University of Nairobi, Kenya, 1976.

³² L.A Wambui, "Smallholder Tea leaf transportation in Kiambu District, Kenya". Unpublished MSC thesis, Egerton University, 1995.

³³ W. E. Njogu. "Household food security and nutritional status of children in Tea and non-tea producing households in Ndia Division Kirinyaga District". Unpublished MA Thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, 2002.

³⁴ B. K. Langat, V. K. Ngenno, T. K. Sulo, P. M. Nyangweso, M. K. Korir, M. J. Kipsat., & J. S. Kebenei. *Household food security in a commercialized subsistence Economy: A case of Smallholder tea farmers in Nandi South District, Kenya. Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics* Vol3. (pp 201- 209).<http://www.academicjournals.com>, 2011.

Njeru³⁵ conducted a study that focused on how tea growing affects women's work and labour allocation in Embu District. The study revealed that involvement in agricultural activities by women led to imbalance of time allocation to different labour requirements. The study established that much labour provided by the women were for tea production. Other obligations such as livestock rearing and food production suffered adverse drawbacks in labour production. Although there was increased labour load for women, their income power as a result to involvement in tea production was secure.

III: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology refers to the logic of the application of scientific methods when investigating a phenomenon.³⁶ The study used qualitative research design, which, according to Trochim,³⁷ provides the glue for which the research holds together. The researcher used descriptive qualitative research design so as to answer the research questions appropriately. Its use enabled the researcher to obtain first-hand information from the participants. The approach also allowed the informants to describe their experiences and attitudes in their own narrations. This study was carried out in Bureti Sub-County.

In regard to population of the study, the researcher targeted people who were 45 years and above. These included farmers who had grown tea at one point in time, the current tea growers and the custodians of knowledge in relation to tea farming. Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) officers were also interviewed. A total of 14 informants were interviewed until a point of saturation was reached. This number represented the sample size for the target population of the study.

Sampling procedure, which Kothari³⁸ defines as the process of selecting a representative population from a target population entailed snowballing. Snowball sampling is a chain-referral sampling and non-probability in nature.³⁹ The sampling method is based on recommendation from initial subjects to produce other subjects.⁴⁰ This because getting respondents aged 65 and those having the required information may be difficult. So, the recommendation of the already identified respondents was important. Using snowball, new contacts were identified until the researcher was satisfied that there were no more subjects to be addressed. At this point, sample size for the study was determined.⁴¹

³⁵ E. Njeru, *Land Adjudication and its Implications for the Social Organization of the Mbeere*. Land Tenure Research Centre: University of Wisconsin, USA, 1978.

³⁶ J. Moulton & H. C. Marais. *Basic concepts in the Methodology of Social Sciences*. 5th edition. (HSRC Publishers, South Africa, 1996).

³⁷ W. M. K. Trochim. *The Qualitative Debate*. Research Methods Knowledge Base. <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualmeth.php>, 2006.

³⁸ C.R. Kothari. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd Publishers, 2004.

³⁹ J.S. Coleman. *Snowball Sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling: Human Organization*, London: Sage, v. 17, p. 28-36, 1958.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

A pilot study was conducted in Konoin Sub-County to ascertain validity and reliability of data collection instruments. Mugenda, et al,⁴² define validity as the extent to which data collection instrument measures what it is expected to measure. Konoin is where the first trial farms were established when tea was introduced among the Kipsigis community. Weaknesses and limitations of the instruments were discussed with the supervisor to achieve suitability of validity. Reliability of data collection instruments was ascertained by a test-retest method. This approach enabled the researcher to test whether the prepared instrument is reliable for data collection.

Data collection was done by use of interviews, archival information. Unstructured questions were used during interviews and were arranged according to objectives of the study. Part one of the sample questions addressed personal information of the respondent, while part two addressed information related to the objectives of the study. These sample questions were issued out by the researcher while conducting the interview. Consequently, the researcher visited the Kenya National Archives and critically perused annual reports and other resources on tea farming.

Data analysis refers to the process of simplifying and interpreting the collected data.⁴³ Qualitative method of data analysis was employed in this study.⁴⁴ The researcher organized the archival data by utilizing the notes collected from both public and private archives thematically. Consequently, the researcher coded and transcribed the oral data collected during interview sessions. This data was then organized thematically and systematically before presentation. A synthesized data was then written in a continuous prose and put within historical context.

IV: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the study are presented in two categories; challenges and impact. Presenting these findings in two distinct categories is meant to bring out clarity. On challenges, the study revealed inadequate buying centres, low prices, poor transportation system, delayed payments, delayed collection of leaf, effects of post-election violence in relation to unrest and labour shortage. Concerning the impact of tea growing, the following were established: food shortage and hunger, development of urban centres, development of schools and improvement of household income.

4.1.Challenges of Tea Farming in Bureti

As in many parts of Africa and Kenya as well, production of cash crops faced many challenges. There were also certain challenges that were faced by tea farmers in Bureti. The challenges impeded the production of tea to some extent. Major challenges revealed by the findings of the study are discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ R. Cooper & S. P. Schindler. *Business Research Methods* (8th Ed.). Boston, Irwin: Mc Graw-Hill 2003.

4.1.1 Inadequate Buying Centres

Tea farmers in Bureti did not have enough buying centres, leading to increased delay in buying tea and hiking the cost of its transportation to stipulated buying centres.⁴⁵ This shows that the situation of inadequate buying centres could constrain farmers in the production of tea. It could also lead to destruction of tea leaves as some would go bad, leading to incurred loss to the farmer. The foregoing informant further states that:

During the time that farmers produced much tea, buying centres became very congested. The KTDA officers encouraged expansion of tea growing without putting up more buying centres. Sometimes farmers would queue until very late in the night, situation that at times forced some farmers who hailed from far to sleep at the centres to which they took their tea.⁴⁶

Considering the above, it appears that tea-buying centres were spread far apart and farmers had difficulty delivering their tea leaves. Such situation could as well lead to loss of weight and quality of the leaf. The officers could have thought of establishing more buying posts to encourage farmers in the production of tea in Bureti.

4.1.2 Low Prices

In addition to limited buying centres, another informant indicated that, the other main challenge that tea farmers in Bureti experienced was low payment for delivered tea. This was worsened by itinerant middle-men who squeezed buying price.⁴⁷ Further, the findings revealed that there was prevalence of middlemen (popularly known as *mang'rito* in Kalenjin language) in the purchases of tea was chiefly attributed to distance and few buying centres.⁴⁸ The sentiments of the informant can best be understood in her vivid expression as thus: "Sometimes I have paid workers to pluck tea leaves so that I could transport them to the buying centres. Then all of a sudden a buyer with ready money and means of transportation would come. I, at times find myself in a dilemma whether to use the little money I had for transport leaving the children without food or to accept the convenience which the middlemen would give me. I would not use transport; the buyer would also pay cash. Weighing these two options critically, I found convenience in allowing the middlemen to buy my tea, even at a slightly lower price. As a matter of fact, this would also save me from waiting for long to be paid after delivering tea."⁴⁹ In general, tea farmers were paid low prices which delayed after delivering tea to the buying centres. This could discourage tea farmers from producing more tea in Bureti.

4.1.3 Poor Transportation System

There was insufficient transportation system that affected tea growing in Bureti. However, tea farmers were used to the problem. They were ready to face the negative consequences that would be occasioned by the transportation problem and were ready to incur losses.⁵⁰ Roads were also in poor condition which led to delayed delivery of tea, especially during rainy seasons. In trying to

⁴⁵ O.I. with: Bornice Chepkoech Ruto from Kapkatet on 21/12/2020.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ O. I. with: Paul Keter from Litein on 16/12/2020.

⁴⁸ O.I. with: Esther Chebet Yegon from Litein on 18/12/2020.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ O. I. with: Ludia Cherotich Marisin from Chebwagan on 17/2/2020.

solve the problem of poor roads, tea farmers in Bureti have tried to raise the matter to the concerned committee, but none has addressed their grievance.⁵¹ The same state of bad roads and poor transportation was also a problem to tea farmers in Konoin as majority of farmers waited for long for transport for their tea.⁵²

4.1.4 Delayed Payments

Tea farmers in Bureti faced delayed payment as well as fluctuating prices. The prices kept on changing and, in most cases, to the disadvantage of the farmer. There was also general low payment of tea proceeds. The most painful experiences that tea farmers experienced was delayed payment.⁵³ The plight of the farmers was profoundly expressed in the following words: “Yes, it is true that we produce much tea here in Bureti and tea farming is the backbone of livelihoods to many households. If they decide to pay us low prices, then they should pay us in cash; if they decide to delay the payment, then we should be paid good prices. Low payment which is also paid late is like double tragedy to the tea farmer. There is none to advocate for better prices for the tea farmer.”⁵⁴ It is clear that delayed payment and low prices was a problem that continued to exist unresolved in Bureti. This also indicates that the Tea Board of Kenya (TBK) and other major stakeholders in the tea sector such as Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) were not performing up to their required mandate. KTDA did not do much to encourage tea farming in Bureti. For instance, they could not regulate prices of farm inputs such as fertilizers which tea farmers still purchased at higher prices. Low payment was also a problem to small-scale tea farmers in Konoin.⁵⁵

4.1.5 Delayed Collection of Tea Leaf

At times farmers got discouraged from growing tea in Bureti due to certain difficulties such as delay in the collection of the already delivered tea leaves from the buying centres.⁵⁶ The informant further explained that: “The farmers knew when tea had been taken to the buying centres and were also in a position to know when it had been collected from there to the processing factory. Any delay in collecting tea leaves from the buying centres was a clear prediction that payment would as well delay.”⁵⁷ Considering this, it is apparent that there were laxity on the side of the officers who were designated to collect, buy and transport tea in Bureti. As much as these challenges were being experienced, tea growing still thrived in Bureti. Generally, there was increase in tea production

⁵¹ O.I. with: Stanley K. Chumo from Chebwagan on 16/12/2020; O.I. with: Sophia Chelangat from Litein on 17/12/2020.

⁵² F. K. Chepkemoi. “Effects of Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya: The Case of Bomet County, 1954-2002.” (Master’s Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2017), p. 84.

⁵³ O. I. with: Leah Mibei from Litein on 16/12/2020.

⁵⁴ O. I. with: Paul Samich from Cheborgei on 16/12/2020.

⁵⁵ Chepkemoi. “Effects of Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya, p. 86.

⁵⁶ O.I. with: Jane Rono from Litein on 21/12/2020

⁵⁷ Ibid.

between the year, 2000 and 2006 in Kenya.⁵⁸ However, the steady progress of tea production was hard hit by the outbreak of the post-election violence of 2007-2008.

4.1.6 Post-election Violence, 2007-2008

One of the worst civil unrest that Kenya witnessed was the post-election violence following the flawed presidential election dispute. During this period, there was disruption of a number of economic activities in the country; disruption in the agricultural sector was not an exemption either. The tea sub-sector in Bureti was also affected by the same situation. The outbreak of post-election violence led to low production of tea. The young people who provided labour in tea farms were engaged participated in the violence.⁵⁹ The informant further explained thus: “War did not bring anything good to us apart from snatching our sons from us. During this civil confusion, both tea farming, transportation and processing suffered a great deal. Sometimes we looked for our children to go to the farm to tend to tea or pluck it but we could not find them. Transportation system was also interfered with by the violence. Where would one transport his tea leaves to? And even if you transported the tea leaves, who would weigh them and record it? Or how certain are you that you would eventually receive your money for the delivered tea?”⁶⁰ From hence, it is clear that the post-election violence led to low production of tea in Bureti since there was grave unrest which lowered production.

4.1.7 Labour Shortage

Labour in tea farms was mostly provided by the same young men who were actively involved in the post-election violence. The post-election violence, which was ethnic-based also led labour shortage. The implication herein is that people who were instrumental in the provision of labour in tea farms feared and had to run away for their safety. This gravely affected tea production in Bureti.⁶¹ Post-election violence is a common scenario in almost all Kenya’s electioneering period as ethnic clashes of 1992 even affected production of tea in Belgut.⁶² Majority of those who provided labour, and were not of the Kipsigis origin were forcefully evicted from Kipsigis land. This led to greater crises in the shortage of labour for tea production in Bureti.⁶³

4.2 Impact of Tea Farming in Bureti

Ochieng and Ogot⁶⁴ historically observed that many countries in the post-independent Africa continued to increase cash crop production so that foreign exchange could be earned. All the efforts that were made to improve transportation and general infrastructure were basically geared towards improving the production of cash crops. The reason was that, the value of cash crops were higher compared to food crops. In relation to these improvements, tea growing brought certain impacts in Bureti as discussed in the subsequent sub-sections.

⁵⁸ W.B. Waweru. “Social Economic Factors Influencing Tea Production by Smallholder Tea Farmers: A Case of Kirinyaga County in Kenya.” (Master’s Project, University of Nairobi, 2012).

⁵⁹ O.I with: David Samich from Cheborgei on 15/12/2020.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ O. I. with: Rodah Mibei from Litein on 16/12/2020.

⁶² A.A. Oluoko. “Some Aspects of Smallholder Tea Production in Belgut Division of Kericho District, Kenya (Master of Arts Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1999), p. 133.

⁶³ O. I. with: Joseph Mibei from Cheborgei on 16/12/2020.

⁶⁴ W.R. Ochieng and B.A. Ogot. *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940-1993*. (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995).

4.2.1 Food Shortage and Hunger

Tea growing in Bureti grow led to food shortage since large acres of land were used for cultivation of tea. The little land that remained is competed for by livestock keeping and food crop production. As much tea is grown in Bureti, the community suffered from shortage of food. They had to purchase food from the market whenever they were in need. This largely depended on the availability of money.⁶⁵ Although tea farmers could get good money from the proceeds obtained from tea, stable food security could only be achieved when food was produced within the locality. At times, payment could delay as long as two to three months. Considering the fact that all the resources had been put in the production of tea at the expense of food production, availability of funds to buy food at the right time was lacking.⁶⁶

The extent to which food shortage that was experienced in Bureti led to hunger. Tea growing is the main source of income to many households in Bureti and for this reason, large tracts of land has been put under tea farming.⁶⁷ Due to intensive involvement in the production of tea, decreased production of food crops was experienced in Bureti, leading to hunger and malnutrition. In the words of one informant, food production was, and has been low.⁶⁸ A more vivid explanation from this information is captured as follows: “Tea growing is good and has really helped in boosting our economic status in Bureti. This has only helped those with large tracts of land since they can plant both cash crops and food crops in different farms. However, for us who have small acreage of land, sometimes are found in a dilemma. In the long run we produce tea and neglect food crops. This has led to experiences of food shortage in our land here.”⁶⁹ The findings show that growth of tea at the expense of food crops led to food shortage in Bureti. This was largely attributed to shortage of adequate land to fragment so that cash and food crops could be produced in the same season. The above findings were in line with the revelation by a study hitherto conducted by Langat, *et al*⁷⁰ in Nandi South District which found that tea farming led to food shortage especially between the months of April and July.

4.2.2 Development of Urban Centres

The findings of the study established that there were social and economic development.⁷¹ Tea farming in Bureti led to the development of urban centres. Tea-buying centres that were established later developed into most urban centres that we find today in Bureti. Tea processing factories were also built near the buying centres or at the exact location where buying centres existed. This was an aspect of economic development and urbanization. Again, schools were constructed close to these buying centres and this led to social development in Bureti.⁷² From

⁶⁵ O.I. with: Sophia Chelangat from Litein on 17/12/2020.

⁶⁶ O.I. with: Jane Rono from Litein on 21/12/2020.

⁶⁷ O.I. with: Sophia Chelangat from Litein on 17/12/2020.

⁶⁸ O.I. with: Leah Mibei from Litein on 16/12/2020; O.I. with: Joseph Ngeno from Litein on 17/12/2020.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ B.K. Langat. “Household Food Security in a commercialized subsistence economy: A Case of smallholder tea farmers in Nandi South District, Kenya.” *Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics* Vol 3 (pp. 201-209).

⁷¹ O. I. with: Sophia Chelangat from Litein on 17/12/2020.

⁷² Ibid; O. I. with: Joseph Mibei from Cheborgei on 16/12/2020.

these findings it can be concluded that tea growing was the springboard of a number of economic developments that Bureti sub-County is currently proudly witnessing.

4.2.3 Development of Schools

The findings of the study revealed that tea growing improved access to education in Bureti. Before robust increase in tea growing, farmers used to struggle in taking their children to school due to lack of school fees. But during the process of increased production of tea, it was convenient for farmers to take their children to school. Proceeds from tea farming could be used to pay school fees as well as meeting other educational needs.⁷³ This shows that tea farming led to social and economic development in Bureti since access to education eventually led to economic empowerment.

4.2.4 Improvement of Household Income

Tea growing in Bureti economically empowered farmers since the benefits obtained from tea growing inspired the impetus to grow more tea.⁷⁴ This is an indication that growing of tea boosted their earning power and economic livelihoods. This also indicates that growing of tea in Bureti somewhat compromised the growth of other cash crops and food crops as was revealed by another informant⁷⁵ Therefore, as much the growth of tea challenged the production of food crops, many households were economically empowered. Through the proceeds obtained from tea farming, farmers could purchase items whose prices could have otherwise not been afforded in the absence of tea growing.

V: CONCLUSION AND RECOMENDATION

5.1 Conclusion

Tea growers in Bureti faced many challenges in the production of tea. The roles of Kenya Tea Development Agency (KTDA) improved production of tea in Bureti. Inefficiency of some KTDA officers in the provision of necessary services in relation to tea growing negatively impacted on tea growing in Bureti. Major challenges were low price, delayed payment which, as much as, discouraged farmers, they still found source of encouragement in growing tea. Tea growing improved economic status of smallholder farmers in Bureti.

5.2 Recommendations

In relation to the last objective, the fourth, the government should strongly come on board to counteract some of the pressing challenges that impede the production of tea in Bureti and Kenya at large. Some of the challenges that smallholder tea farmers encountered could easily be overcome had the governments got concerned and involved. Any economic activity in any region that has been proved to be viable should be encouraged. Tea growing empowered economic livelihoods of the Bureti smallholder farmers.

5.3 Suggestion for Further Research

The study has established challenges and impact of tea growing in Bureti. It is prudent to consider area for further research in the light of the findings. Within the same understanding the

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ O. I. with: Paul Keter from Litein on 16/12/2020.

⁷⁵ O. I. with: Rachel Chepkwony from Cheborgei on 23/12/2020.

researcher suggests that a study be conducted on the “effects of tea growing on food production in Bomet Sub-County, Kenya, 2010-2021.”

References

I Primary Sources

Oral Informants

1. Bornice Chepkoech Ruto from Kapkatet on 21/12/2020.
2. David Samich from Cheborgei on 15/12/2020.
3. Esther Chebet Yegon from Litein on 18/12/2020.
4. Jane Rono from Litein on 21/12/2020.
5. Joseph Mibei from Cheborgei on 16/12/2020.
6. Joseph Ngeno from Litein on 17/12/2020.
7. Leah Mibei from Litein on 16/12/2020.
8. Ludia Cherotich Marisin from Chebwagan on 17/2/2020.
9. Paul Keter from Litein on 16/12/2020.
10. Paul Samich from Cheborgei on 16/12/2020.
11. Rachel Chepkwony from Cheborgei on 23/12/2020.
12. Rodah Mibei from Litein on 16/12/2020.
13. Sophia Chelangat from Litein on 17/12/2020.
14. Stanley K. Chumo from Chebwagan on 16/12/2020.

II Secondary Sources

Books/Theses/Journal Articles/Internet

- Ashton, T.S. *The Industrial Revolution*. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Benton, T. “Mode of production, Articulation and Social Formation” in *The Rise and Fall of Structural Marxism: Althusser and his Influence*, London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1984.
- Benn, J. *Tea in China: A religious and Cultural History*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015.
- Campbell, D. *The Tea book*, London: Pelican Publishing Company, 1995.
- Chepkemoi, F. K. “Effects of Smallholder Tea Production in Kenya: The Case of Bomet County, 1954-2002.” Master’s Thesis, Kenyatta University, 2017.
- Coleman, J.S. *Snowball Sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling: Human Organization*, London: Sage, v. 17, p. 28-36, 1958.
- Cooper, R. & Schindler, S.P. *Business Research Methods* (8th Ed.). Boston, Irwin: Mc Graw- Hill 2003.
- Enikori, J. E. *Africans and Industrial Revolution in England: A Study in International Trade and Economic Development*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Fuller, T. *A Tea from the Jungle Enriches Placid Village*, New York: The New York Times, 2008.
- Korir, K. M. “Tea plantation economy in Kericho District and related phenomena to circa 1960” A BA Dissertation University of Nairobi, Kenya, 1976.

- Kothari, C.R. *Research Methodology: Methods and Techniques*. New Delhi: New Age International (P) Ltd Publishers, 2004.
- Langat, B.K., Ngenno, V.K., Sulo, T.K., Nyangweso P.M., Korir M.K., Kipsat M.J., & Kebenei J.S. Household food security in a commercialized subsistence Economy: A case of Smallholder tea farmers in Nandi South District, Kenya. *Journal of Development and Agricultural Economics* Vol. 3, 2011, (pp. 201-209).
- Leys, C. *Under development in Kenya*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1994.
- Mair, V., et al, *The True History of Tea*. New York: Thames and Hudson, 2009.
- Mary and Robert Heiss. *The Story of Tea: A Cultural History and Drinking Guide* Random House, 2011.
- Matheson, J.K., and Bovill, E.W., (Eds) *East African Agriculture*, London: Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1950.
- McCabe, J. *Tea and Colonial Resettlement: Imperial Families, Interrupted*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2017.
- Moulton, J. & Marais, H.C. *Basic concepts in the Methodology of Social Sciences*. 5th edition. HSRC Publishers, South Africa, 1996.
- Mugenda, O. M. & Mugenda, A. G, *Research Methods: Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches* Nairobi-Kenya Nairobi: Masola Publishers, 2003.
- Ndege, P. "Economic Change in Kasipul and Kabondo, 1800-1962." Master of Arts Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1987.
- Njeru, E. "Land Adjudication and its Implications for the Social Organization of the Mbeere." Land Tenure Research Centre: University of Wisconsin, USA, 1978.
- Njogu, W.E. "Household food security and nutritional status of children in Tea and non-tea producing households in Ndia Division Kirinyaga District". Unpublished Master's Thesis, Kenyatta University, Nairobi, Kenya, 2002.
- Ochieng, W.R. & Ogot, B.A. *Decolonization and Independence in Kenya, 1940-1993*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1995.
- Oluoko, A.A. "Some Aspects of Smallholder Tea Production in Belgut Division of Kericho District, Kenya." Master of Arts Thesis, University of Nairobi, 1999.
- Omwoyo, S. *Colonialism and the severity of Famines and Food Shortages among the Gusii of Western Kenya, 1890-1919*. Unpublished paper. 2004.
- Oricho, S.O. "Nature and Trends of Cotton Growing in Karachuonyo, 1903-1980." Master of Arts Thesis, Kisii University, 2019.
- Ramusio, G. *Voyages and Travels*. *Voyages and Travels*: Venetia (publisher unknown), 1655.
- Rodney, W. *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*. Nairobi: East Africa Publishers, 1972.
- Roy. M. *Tea: Addiction, Exploitation, and Empire*. New York: Carroll & Graf, 2003.
- Seberi, H. *Tea, a Global History*. London: Reaktion Books Ltd. 2010.
- Swainson, N. *The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya, 1918-1977*. Nairobi: Heinemann, 1980.
- Taylor, S. C. *Food Culture in India*. Dehli: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004.
- Trochim, W.M.K. The Qualitative Debate. Research Methods Knowledge Base. <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualmeth.php>, 2006.
- Wambui, L.A. "Smallholder tea leaf transportation in Kiambu District, Kenya". Unpublished MSc. Thesis, Egerton University, 1995.

Waweru, W.B. "Social Economic Factors Influencing Tea Production by Smallholder Tea Farmers: A Case of Kirinyaga County in Kenya." Master's Project, University of Nairobi, 2012.