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HISTORICAL DIMENSIONS OF THE FOOD CRISIS IN AFRICA: SURVIVING FAMINES ALONG THE KENYA COAST, 1880-1980

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AN HISTORICAL DIMENSION OF THE FOOD CRISIS IN AFRICA:
SURVIVING FAMINES ALONG THE KENYA COAST, ca. 1880-1980

By Thomas J. Herlehy

Famines put great stress on local institutions and can threaten the very existence of a society. In examining the impact of famines on Kenyan society in a historical context, one question that deserves attention is whether or not one society's ability to cope with food crisis has improved as a result of colonial interventions. Wrigley has argued, for example, that as a result of the establishment of British colonial rule and the incorporation of East Africa into the international economy, most people experienced a definite rise in their material standard of living. In particular, he asserts that the colonial state protected African families against the catastrophies of famine, Wrigley attributing the explosive population growth in East Africa after 1920 to a sharp reduction in abnormal or cataclysmic deaths, especially deaths from famine, pestilence and war. Indeed, Wrigley asserts that after 1919, when more than 150,000 Kenyans died from famine and disease, there were _no true famines_ (emphasis added), only severe shortages of food from time to time.[1] While the British colonial regime clearly did act to alleviate hunger during food crises, other evidence suggests that in many instances local socio-economic ties among the peoples of Kenya were just as effective in enabling the victims of hunger to overcome their plight as were official government famine relief measures. Certainly among the Mijikenda peoples of the Kenya coast there was a marked preference for mobilizing local resources to cope with famine, rather than relying upon government assistance.

This paper is a case study of famine along the Kenya coast, illustrating how the Mijikenda peoples in particular survived the food crises that afflicted them between 1880 and 1980. There are nine Mijikenda peoples who inhabit the coastal territory extending from Vanga in the south, to Malindi in the north, but the vast majority live in the hinterland between Mombasa and Kilifi. In particular, this is a case study of the ARavai, ARihe, AKambe, AGiriama and ADuruma coconut palm cultivators, cattle herders, and grain farmers in the region between Mazeras, Kaloleni and Mariakani.[2] The Mijikenda share this territory with AKamba cattle herders who migrated to the Mariakani area during the early and mid-19th century, seeking relief from famines in Ukambani, and with Swahili farmers and estate owners who inhabit the coast itself and land as far west as Jomvu.[3]

The late 19th century was a time of severe food crises in East Africa with famine striking the coast four times between 1880 and 1900. The 20th century has been no less cruel to the Mijikenda, with five major food crises and other, minor episodes of hunger as well. While it is clear that fewer people died of starvation after 1920, it is important not to underestimate the very serious threat these more recent food crises posed. Acknowledging that an important distinction exists between situations of famine and those of chronic malnourishment and hunger,[4] I would argue that the most severe food shortages of the 20th century still deserve to be known as famines.[5] Indeed, both the British officials who served in the coastal region and the Mijikenda peoples themselves refer to the major food crises of the colonial era as real famines (_nzala_, Mijikenda vernacular, _njaa_, KiSwahili), and this designation will be utilized here as well.

Surviving Famine During the Late 19th Century

> There were famines, really severe famines; and there were famines, other famines, not given very good names because they really were not very severe famines. Even if there is famine, there will still be some people who will not feel it. They will only know that there is a famine because they see that many people are starving and searching for food.[6]

Drought is the most common cause of acute food shortage in East Africa. When rainfall is either insufficient or highly erratic crops will not mature properly and farmers will be unable to feed themselves and their families. Several years of below average and very erratic rainfall in the 1880s and 1890s resulted in poor harvests, exhausting existing food reserves and creating famines. These famines were exacerbated by the intermittent warfare waged within the Kenya coastal region by Swahili and Arab slave owners and by Mazrui, Busaidi and British forces and their respective allies who were attempting to secure complete control of the area.[7] Despite the dislocation caused by raids, warfare and famine, not everyone living in the Mombasa hinterland suffered to the same degree. While some people did succumb to starvation, others managed to survive, while a few individual families actually benefitted from the onslaught of famine. The fate of the residents of the coast depended upon their ownership of food or foodproducing resources, and on their ability to exchange something for food.

Mwakisenge

The first famine to strike the Mijikenda in the late 19th century became known as Nzala ya Mwakisenge. A severe drought in 1883 caused a crop failure and food shortage that endured until 1885. There is some disagreement over the derivation of the name for this famine. Some Mijikenda testify that the famine was so severe that selfish fathers sent their sons away (sengerako, Mijikenda vernacular), so that they could eat alone without having to share their scarce food supplies with their dependents.[8] Other elders maintain that just the opposite occured, that people called each other together (sengerakuno, Mijikenda vernacular) so that everyone could share what little food was available with the hope that everyone would survive.[9] Another explanation suggests that when individuals went to buy food at the few Asian shops in the hinterland, crowds of people gathered there pushing and jostling one another (songea, KiSwahili) as they tried to buy some food. Then when people left the shops they behaved like the chisengesenge insect (Mijikenda vernacular) which walks backward and forward, entering its home by backing into it in order to be sure no predator is following it. Accordingly, people who were able to buy food went with it secretly into their homes, watching to be sure no one followed them in order to steal what they had bought.[10] All these explanations may be correct, reflecting the local differences in experience that various peoples had at that time. But everyone does agree that it was a most severe famine requiring unusual efforts to survive.[11]

According to contemporary observers, Mwakisenge was "the worst famine in thirty years" in the hinterland. The suffering caused by the famine was vividly described by a Methodist missionary stationed in Jomvu:

> Thousands have died and many have sold themselves into slavery to escape starvation. This dreadful scourge has ravaged whole districts and counties between here and the

> interior, westward, northwestward and southward .... On the roads leading from the coast to the interior dead bodies lie thick and emit a fearful stench. Hyenas who gloat on carcases have become satiated and are unequal to the task of clearing the country of the putrid remains. Many ADuruma natives - lank, gaunt, bony, and with an expression on their faces of men and women who seem half-mad - have come and thrown themselves at our feet and piteously begged for food.[12]

Just as the famine was subsiding in 1886, a smallpox epidemic broke out, killing even more people throughout the hinterland.[13]

Although there is no doubt that Mwakisenge was a severe famine, many people survived and even prospered to a degree. Cattle-owning AKamba, ADuruma and AGiriama families sold or slaughtered some of their livestock in order to eat or buy grains. Cereal farmers among the ADuruma, AGiriama, ARihe and AKambe were less fortunate because when their crops did not mature they were forced to exhaust their reserve supplies of food, and then seek work when subsequent plantings failed as well. Those people who were too old, infirmed, or young to go to work did not easily survive and many of them perished. The coast itself had not been so severely affected by drought, and therefore many Mijikenda migrated there to work for Arab or Swahili estate owners, and European missionaries, in order to survive.[14] Some people pawned their wives, children and themselves in exchange for food from coastal plantation owners, much as their fathers and grandfathers had done during the previous famines of Chingo (1857-1862), and Maere (1836-1838).[15] Many of the freed slaves living on Church Missionary Society (CMS) land in Rabai migrated north to Fulladayo, near the Sabaki River, to live with other runaways because there was still maize growing there.[16] Indeed, migration from a drought-striken area to a place where food was still growing was one of the most common responses to famine.

One particular group of farmers who coped surprisingly well during Mwakisenge famine were the ARavai coconut palm cultivators of Rabai and Ruruma locations. Rabai especially had been a food-importing and palm wine-exporting area since the mid-19th century, and one might expect that people who depended upon regular food imports would suffer the most during famine.[17] However, coconut palm trees do not require certain amounts of rain at specific intervals in order to bear fruit; the palm tree will continue to yield coconut fruits or palm wine at least three or four times a year after the rains have fallen. Hence, during Mwakisenge as well as subsequent famines, ARavai coconut palm owners survived by eating their own coconuts and by selling palm wine for food. Indeed, the famine relief provided by the coconut tree prompted many other Mijikenda peoples to migrate to Rabai, Ruruma and other palm growing areas near the coast in order to share in the harvest of coconuts and palm wine. And by 1886 long caravans of Akamba traders were observed coming to Rabai, carrying many gourds full of maize to exchange for palm wine.[18] When asked why farmers would continue to trade scarce foodstuffs and livestock, such as chickens or goats, for an alcoholic beverage, such as palm wine, during a severe famine, the ARavai remark that people who want to drink will not stop drinking just because of famine: "Do you not know that we have something desirable here, something people want all the time? How can you stop them from drinking palm wine when it is like a food to them?"[19]

Mkufu

In 1889 drought again struck the hinterland, causing a famine known as Mkufu. The famine endured for one year, until the resumption of normal rains in 1891. The Mijikenda designate this famine as Mkufu because at that time one method by which people survived was to trade their own jewelry (mkufu/mikufu, KiSwahili, or mlia/milia, Mijikenda vernacular), as well as necklaces, bracelets and other ornaments that they manufactured either to AKamba herders or Asian shopkeepers for food.[20] Although this famine did not persist as long as Mwakisenge, it was a harsh famine that prompted some AGiriama families to capture and sell slaves, or to pawn their own dependents in exchange for food at the coast.[21] Just as the Mkufu famine was drawing to an end, a rinderpest epidemic infected the cattle of Mijikenda and AKamba stock herders, further reducing their wealth.[22]

Sometimes during famines local conflicts would erupt within communities, with certain elements being singled out as the cause of the crisis. During the Mkufu famine such a phenomenon occured in Ribe where the local elders blamed the Methodist missionaries for detaining the rain by their charms. When a local rainfinder went on a search and suggested that the rain had been hidden inside the Christian mission at Ribe, the ARihe became quite agitated and threatened to drive the European missionaries and their followers out of Ribe. Only the onset of rain saved the Methodists from possible harm, and even then the start of rains in 1891 convinced many people that the Christians indeed had detained the rain and were only releasing it because they had been implicated by the ARihe rainfinder.[23]

Bom-Bom

Another drought afflicted the Mijikenda in 1894, and before the next planting could be harvested in 1895 locusts attacked coastal farms, destroying many crops. This drought and subsequent food shortage coincided with intermittent warfare in the coastal region. In June and November of 1895 rebels sympathetic to the Mazrui leader Mbaruk bin Rashid attacked Rabai, burning 53 homes, killing 6 people and wounding 7 others, while destroying several farms, including many coconut palm groves, before being driven away.[24] Because of the fighting throughout Mijikenda territory during 1895, this famine was called Bom-Bom, after the sound of gunfire. Yet even though the drought, famine and pestilence brought a food crisis to the area, people living in Rabai, Ruruma and other locales report that this famine was not as severe as the previous two, and that most people survived by trade or migration to more peaceful and prosperous places.[25]

Magunia

The worst famine to occur in the coastal region, as well as many other parts of East Africa, began in 1898 after a severe drought. For almost two years there were almost no grain or vegetable harvests in many parts of Kenya because of the negligible rainfall. Indeed, water became so precious that some Mijikenda elders placed waterholes under the protection of powerful oaths that would kill anyone who attempted to draw water from the designated reservoirs.[26] Contemporary observers estimated that this famine affected more than 2,000,000 people throughout East Africa; and accompanied as it was by a smallpox epidemic, dysentry, and a plague of jiggers, the famine led to the deaths of more than 40,000 people. Among the victims were a few Europeans, including the Methodist missionary Thomas H. Carthew of Ribe.[27]

This famine is known to the Mijikenda as the Magunia famine because the grain, primarily rice, that was imported to feed the starving people, came from India in gunny sacks (gunia/magunia, KiSwahili).[28] Famine relief camps were established in Mombasa and both the colonial British government and mission societies organized public works projects by which able-bodied individuals could receive a ration of food and seed in return for labor.[29] However, most Mijikenda who migrated in search of food either settled among more fortunate Mijikenda farmers in the palm tree belt or became the clients of Muslim landowners. Arab and Swahili plantation owners were losing slave labor at that time and they were only too happy to give hungry immigrants access to food and land in return for labor on their estates. This tradition of interdependency between coastal landowners and destitute families from the hinterland had existed at least since 1836, and it continued to endure throughout the colonial era as well. However, the influx of squatters onto coastal estates increased to such a degree during the 20th century that it led to conflicts over land ownership between plantation owners and squatters, who had maintained and even improved neglected parcels of land throughout the coast. These conflicts caused the colonial government to regard the widespread presence of squatters as an impediment to the economic development of the coastal region, and they attempted to discourage squatting, eliminating one form of famine relief that many Mijikenda peoples had come to depend upon.[30]

Within the hinterland some people survived the Magunia famine by helping Asian merchants transport the imported grain to their shops. In Mombasa sacks of grain were loaded onto small boats and brought up the creeks to local landing stations near Rabai and Ribe. Asian traders then offered people work carrying the heavy magunia from the creeks, to their stores in Mazeras, Rabai, Ruruma, Ribe and Kambe. In return for a day's labor a porter received a ration of about 2 kilograms of rice, maize or millet. However, that was not always adequate to feed one man's family and consequently some porters cut open their sacks, buried some of the grain in the forest, proceeded with the sack to the store, and then returned at night to retrieve what they had buried. But even this did not help everyone. Some porters were already so weak from hunger or disease that even the task of carrying the maguni was too much stress for them and they died while working. A few hills in Rabai are named in commemoration of some of these men, such as Bendeje and Gumo. Many other people died from disease, especially smallpox and plague, during this famine. Eyewitnesses maintain that the fear of infection was so great that even those people who were very weak and ill but not quite dead yet were buried by the Administrative Police in order to prevent the spread of disease.[31]

Although Magunia was a very severe food crisis for many people throughout East Africa, some individuals maintained themselves without undue hardship, while a few actually benefitted by the dislocation in the Mombasa hinterland. During the drought prominent coconut palm tree owners could hire enough destitute tappers that they actually increased their sales of palm wine, securing enough revenue and food in return to feed their own families, pay their workers, and still have food or money left to invest in cattle ownership or coconut tree mortgages. Palm owners with farms along the creek and river beds where moisture was still available were the most fortunate in this respect. Much of the palm wine tapped in Rabai and Ruruma was sold near the coast because grain was available there. So much palm wine was sold near Kisauni, the CMS station (Freretown) opposite Mombasa, that Magunia famine is also known as the famine Kisauni among the ARavai.[32] Indeed, the vitality of the coconut palm economy not only attracted many hungry ADuruma, AGiriama and AKamba people to Rabai seeking temporary sustenance from the coconut tree during the famine, after the famine it prompted them to return to their own

homes with coconut seedlings in the hope that they themselves could harvest and sell palm wine or coconuts during time of normal rainfall and enjoy some protection from hunger during time of abnormally dry seasons.[33]

During the late 19th century the Mijikenda were continuing to expand territorially throughout the Kenya hinterland. AGiriama families were the most prominent migratory settlers, as they moved northward from Mariakani, past Kaloleni, towards the Sabaki River Valley. The territorial expansion of the Mijikenda was caused not only by modest population growth, but by a search for better environments away from the scourge of drought and famine. By 1900 the Mijikenda occupied a unique geographical position astride variable ecological zones suitable for hunting, grazing, intensive grain and vegetable farming, and fruit tree cultivation. Together with their history of socio-economic interaction among themselves, as well as with neighboring peoples, this access to several environments ensured that even during the most severe ecological disaster, anyone who was able and willing to move or to sell something, including their own labor, could find kindred help or alternative sources of food that would enable them to survive.[34] This fact, more than any thing else, meant that the Mijikenda could expect to survive famine during the 20th century much better than they had the food crises of the 19th century, and that most deaths would be from disease and not starvation.

Surviving Famines During the 20th Century

> There are famines, real famines, and then there are small famines. And during these famines, really severe famines you may not eat. But during the other famines, if your farming fails and you do not harvest any food, there is food there at the store. And you will use your pocket money to buy that food.[35]

There is no doubt that in some areas of East Africa the British did augment the ability of some people to survive the food crises of the 20th century. For example, J. Forbes Munro argues that between 1910 and 1940 "the development of rail and road transport and the growth of the marketing system" helped to improve "food supply and nutritional standards" especially in "marginal areas" of Ukambani. Munro points out that "although there were some years of scanty rainfall, food could now be imported into Ukambani in bulk, to be distributed through a network of retail shops," and so even though droughts caused deprivation for many people, death from starvation became more rare than it was during the 19th century. Ukambani also experienced "better than average rainfall from 1914 through the 1940s," enabling farmers to produce good harvests between droughts. Consequently, because of these political, economic and ecological factors, the ability of AKamba families to survive food crises improved between 1900 and 1914.[36]

These factors certainly were not as important to the Mijikenda who had long been a part of a widespread network of exchange that incorporated hunters, herders and farmers into one regional economy. Their proximity to the coast and ports such as Mombasa, Kilifi and Malindi ensured that the Mijikenda could both export and import the commodities they needed, whether foodstuffs, hardware or consumer goods. Because they were so close to Mombasa the construction of the railroad through their territory had a neglilgible impact on their access to extraordinary food supplies. The building of roads facilitated the exchange of goods, enhancing existing trading relationships, but it was not until after the 1950s when regular lorry service was inaugurated that road transport displaced Mijikenda use of creeks and footpaths that connected the hinterland and the coast.

Indeed, certain aspects of British colonial rule had a deleterious impact on the ability of food-importing people, such as the ARavai, to overcome drought and famine. Aside from the rather well documented British discrimination in favor of white settler agriculture over African farming, and official preoccupation with the upcountry to the detriment of the coast, there were particular government policies that had a negative effect on coastal agriculture and food crises prevention. Along the coast itself agriculture ossified when the colonial government refused to recognize the rights of squatters to land which they had kept productive in spite of landowner disinterest, while Swahili and Arab landowners were reluctant to invest in estates over which they did not have more control, especially control over the squatters.[37] What was most noxious to the Mijikenda though were British regulations designed to inhibit the production and marketing of palm wine, while promoting the harvesting and sale of coconuts and copra. By limiting the amount of palm wine that could be legally transported from palm wine producing locales such as Rabai, the British prevented ARavai palm wine merchants and palm cultivators from accumulating the grain reserves necessary to feed their families, especially during times of drought or food shortages. And by encouraging the production of cash crops such as copra, cotton, and cashew nuts, the colonial régime was making Mijikenda farmers even more susceptible to food crises. For if farmers stopped selling palm wine, a product virtually always in great local demand, and harvested coconuts instead, and then turned over their small maize plots to cotton, rubber or cashew nut farming, and the price of any of these goods dropped at the time of famine, not only would these people not have enough food to feed themselves (with the notable exception of coconuts or cashew nuts), they would not receive enough money from the sale of their cash crops to buy the food necessary to sustain their families.[38]

Finally, unlike Ukambani, Mijikenda territory between Rabai and Kilifi did not enjoy better than average rainfall during the colonial era. From 1899 through 1961 there were 34 below average years, "dry years," of rainfall and 29 above average years, "wet years," of rainfall. The wettest years were between 1900 and 1909, and 1932 through 1941; while there were three decades of unusually dry weather, from 1910 to 1919, 1920 through 1931, and from 1942 until 1950. The preponderance of dry years was an ecological impediment to the successful development of Mijikenda agriculture. Combined with the political and economic constraints imposed upon the Mijikenda, drought created several rather severe food crises for these people during the colonial era.

TABLE 1:
KENYA COAST ANNUAL RAINFALL STATISTICS, ca.1875-1980

Year	Inches	Town	Year	Inches	Town
1875	47.91	Mombasa	1928	25.17	Kilifi
1876	41.44	"	1929	31.72	"
1877	89.61*	"	1930	30.12	"
1878	52.60	"	1931	39.66	"
1879	45.57	"	1932	44.44	"
1880	44.75	"	1933	31.97	"
1881	not reported		1934	46.37	"
1898	not reported		1935	43.06	"
1899	35.16	Mombasa	1936	45.30	"
1900	61.66	"	1937	33.72	"
1901	58.14	"	1938	45.00	"
1902	63.18	"	1939	46.39	"
1903	33.84	"	1940	53.95	"
1904	59.75	"	1941	43.64	"
1905	51.67	"	1942	32.44	"
1906	62.99	Rabai	1943	20.57	"
1907	47.04	"	1944	44.55	"
1908	50.37	"	1945	38.70	"
1909	60.12	"	1946	37.93	"
1910	29.82	"	1947	55.05	"
1911	43.70	"	1948	30.00	"
1912	38.27	"	1949	25.27	"
1913	40.08	"	1950	37.87	"
1914	46.55	"	1951	66.76	Rabai
1915	51.84	"	1952	24.83	"
1916	33.88	"	1953	60.75	"
1917	25.61	"	1954	14.10	"
1918	36.26	"	1955	33.32	"
1919	35.74	"	1956	28.99	"
1920	49.27	"	1957	54.57	"
1921	9.54**	"	1958	34.75	"
1922	74.27***	"	1959	45.74	"
1923	22.11	Kilifi	1960	36.24	"
1924	34.13	"	1961	56.65	"
1925	39.72	"			
1926	36.73	"	1979	26.89	Kilifi
1927	26.94	"	1980	35.89	"

Mean Annual Rainfall: 49.57 inches
Average Annual Rainfall: 42.31 inches

*Highest rainfall recorded in years under consideration
**Lowest rainfall recorded in years under consideration
***Highest rainfall recorded during the colonial era

Source: 1875-1880 statistics from William W.A. Fitzgerald, Travels in the Coastlands of British East Africa and the Islands of Zanaibar and Pemba (London, 1898), 8. 1899-1980 statistics from the Annual Reports for Mombasa District, Rabai District and Kilifi District, Coast Province, Kenya National Archives.

Memarongwe

The first food crisis to afflict the Mijikenda during the 20th century was a minor famine centered around Mariakani and Kambe locations that became known by two names, Memarongwe, and Madzungu or Marenje. Between 1910 and 1912 below average and erratic rainfall prevented cereal farmers from harvesting a significant crop. Consequently many people had to forage for food. One of the indigeneous plants eaten in order to curb hunger was the gourd or squash plant known as madzungu or marenje (Mijikenda vernacular).[39] This famine was also named after a woman, Memarongwe, who had a market in her village near Rabai: where tappers came to sell palm wine and buy food. Memarongwe sold cassava during this drought, but even she died because she was unable to procure enough food after she had exhausted her own resources.[40]

Despite local famine conditions, ARavai palm tappers continued to collect palm wine which they sold to grain farmers from territory west of Mariakani. Many palm wine tappers congregated in Mazeras during Memarongwe famine because of the number of retail stores where food was available. Although many Mijikenda grain farmers were willing to sell scarce supplies of maize for palm wine, they drastically reduced the amount of cereals that they exported to towns such as Malindi and Mombasa, which evoked considerable complaint from town dwellers and local administrators. Indeed, one official remarked that many AGiriama "would continue to sell their grain for palm wine until they were on the verge of famine," but would not bring any to town for sale.[41] During this famine, as they had done in the past, some AGiriama and ADuruma families migrated to Rabai and Jomvu in order to work for farmers who could feed them. Most Mijikenda preferred to go to work for their neighbors rather than seek employment from European planters along the coast, and this dismayed the colonial regime as well.[42]

Faini

The first severe famine to strike the Mijikenda during the 20th century was caused in part by direct British interference in the expansion of Mijikenda agriculture. In 1914 and 1915 the AGiriama rebelled against the British government because of demands for labor for coastal plantations, public works projects, and government military forces. The British suppressed the revolt, forced the AGiriama to pay a fine of Rs. 100,000/- (£10,000), and forced them to evacuate the rich farming lands they were cultivating north of the Sabaki River Valley. The dislocation caused by the fighting prevented many people from cultivating their fields, so despite an above average rainfall in 1914 and 1915 few crops were harvested by the AGiriama. In order to pay the fine levied by the government, the AGiriama had to sell their livestock and use up their cash reserves, while also borrowing heavily from Asian merchants and wealthy Mijikenda neighbors, promising repayment after the harvest of 1916. But with the Sabaki River granary closed to Mijikenda farmers, prospects for future harvests were not very good. When the AGiriama were still unable to pay the entire amount of the fine after 1915, the colonial administration confiscated their remaining livestock and forced more than 1000 young men to go to work as porters in the British East Africa Army.[43]

Drought came to the hinterland in late 1915, and it endured until 1920, causing widespread famine among the Mijikenda. In 1917 locusts attacked the few crops farmers were trying to cultivate under the dry conditions prevailing at that time. Further dislocation was caused by an influenza epidemic that weakened or killed hundreds of Mijikenda people, and many other Africans throughout East Africa during 1918 and 1919. Because this famine started at the same time that the British were collecting the fine from the AGiriama, the famine of 1916-1919 became known as Nzala ya Faini (the famine of the fine, Mijikenda vernacular).[44]

According to both British and Mijikenda testimony, Nzala ya Faini was every bit as severe as Nzala ya Magunia had been.[45] Cattle, goats, and coconut trees had been the primary source of relief among the Mijikenda during previous famines. But the wholesale confiscation of their livestock meant that AGiriama families had nothing left to sell in order to purchase food. Furthermore, many coconut trees suffered because of the long-term drought, and by 1918 hundreds of palm, orange, mango, and other fruit trees were moribund throughout the coastal region. Although the colonial government imported large quantities of millet and maize, primarily from South Africa, to feed famine victims, no one received any rations unless they paid cash or worked on a government project.[46]

Those Mijikenda who survived Nzala ya Faini relied on several strategies to procure food. Many AGiriama were forced to migrate in search of work and food; some of them went west to hunt with their Waata (Laa/Ariangulo) neighbors, a few lived on the edible roots available in the country, while others went to work for friends or relatives in exchange for food.[47] Rabai was one place where many AGiriama congregated because of the opportunity to work for coconut palm owners, and because it was one of the few trading centers allowed to operate by the military authorities between 1916 and 1918.[48] However the influx of so many hungry people into Rabai and coastal estates put an additional strain on already scant resources that often culminated in riots over access to scarce food supplies.[49]

The ARavai maintain that although some of their older and weaker palms died because of the drought, they themselves were not as severely affected by the famine as their AGiriama neighbors. It was difficult to procure food, and when available it was quite expensive; nevertheless by selling palm wine for cash, or trading it for what maize was brought in by the ADuruma, most ARavai families survived the famine. The ARavai also were able to purchase some of the livestock confiscated by the British from the AGiriama. Rabai was the local administrative headquarters for the colonial authorities, and when the British brought the cattle and goats seized from the AGiriama into Rabai, they were bought by ARavai families. Goats could be purchased for Rs. 3/-, and cattle for Rs. 20/-.[50]

The one strategy few Mijikenda people pursued in order to get food was to go to work for the British, either the government or private plantation owners. The Mijikenda preferred to work among their own kin or neighboring peoples because their work habits and customs were more compatible with one another. Even Muslim plantation owners along the coast were considered by the Mijikenda to be more tolerant employers than the Europeans. Muslims allowed their Mijikenda workers to take religious holidays off, and to observe a less rigid schedule than European employers did. Furthermore Muslim estate owners allowed their Mijikenda employees to tap some of their coconut palms for palm wine, both for their own consumption and for sale in town, splitting the profits with the tree owner, while British plantation owners adamantly refused to allow their coconut trees to be used in this way. Muslim and Mijikenda landowners also were willing to accept open-ended arrangements with immigrants seeking work and food, thereby permitting workers to return to their own farms at short notice, with little risk of losing their wages or missing the planting season back in their own home area. Mijikenda resistance to European demands was a source of constant irritation to the British, and their unwillingness to come out to work for European planters or the government was even taken by the British as a sign that the Mijikenda were not experiencing severe famine, an assessment that would be made time after time during food crises throughout the colonial era.[51]

Dzua Bomu

The Mijikenda began to recover from Faini famine during 1919. However, after one wet year a record dry year ensued; in 1921 only 9.54 inches of rain fell in Rabai, and other areas throughout the hinterland experienced similar drought. Indeed, the British reported it was the most severe in the living memory of most Mijikenda elders. The Mijikenda themselves refer to this as the famine of Dzua Bomu (the fierce sun, Mijikenda vernacular). Virtually all grain and vegetable crops dried up in their fields and even coconut trees withered and died from the lack of rainfall. Livestock died because there was little pasture and water for them, too. The ability of the British to provide effective famine relief was severely hampered because in 1921, after ruling the Mijikenda from Rabai station for 25 years, the government decided to move its district headquarters to Kilifi, a more salubrious environment for European officials, and a more central point for a district that extended from Mombasa in the south to Malindi in the north.[52]

After so many years of drought the British decided that the best form of immediate famine relief would be to embark on a program of water-supply. During 1921 and 1922 the government forcibly recruited Mijikenda laborers to work building dams along the creeks and rivers in Mariakani and Rabai. This achieved two results: needy families received an immediate ration of food in return for their work, and the dams helped to conserve water, so that when drought struck again, there would be more water for local residents.[53] When Dzua Bomu was followed by near-record rains in 1922, known locally as Mvula Bomu (the great rains, Mijikenda vernacular), British planning proved superb. However, as these dams filled with water, they became ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes, thereby increasing the incidence of malaria among the Mijikenda. Still, this was a small price to pay in the eyes of the British; a few administrators remarked that, "I would rather be sick for a while with malaria than risk dying of thirst or have my crops wither and cattle die because there was no water."[54]

Although there was drought and food was scarce, even some Mijikenda state that Dzua Bomu was not a really severe famine because very few people died of hunger. The drought compelled AKamba and AGiriama cattle herders to evacuate the drier pastures around Mariakani and Gotani, and they brought their herds eastward, towards Rabai, seeking water. But even the rivers in Rabai were so dry that eyewitnesses maintain that the crocodiles living in the area died and never returned after this severe drought. With no water and virtually no pasture, herders were forced to slaughter many of their cattle and goats before they died, so that they could sell their hides and meat for money to buy grain.[55] Local tappers could still get palm wine from the more sturdy coconut trees, but even those palms dried out after a few months. This prompted many ARavai, ARihe, and AGiriama tappers to go in search of the more drought-resistant, but lower-yielding, mkoma/mikoma (Kiswahili) palm tree (hyphaene or dom palm), which could be tapped for palm wine, too. There were few foods available within the hinterland though: only cassava and some maize. The primary local diet of the Mijikenda during Dzua Bomu, for those families unable to purchase food, consisted of palm wine, cassava and mangoes, eaten alone or in combination. Although few people reportedly died of hunger, this was not a very nutritious diet. The adverse effect of poor nutrition, especially for the years from 1916 through 1922, cannot easily be calculated. Children must have suffered the worst; and the endemic presence of bilharzia, hookwork, and malaria, combined with the poor diet of famine years, must have adversely affected the growth and development of Mijikenda children at that time.[56]

The drought Dzua Bomu was the cause of some controversy within Rabai, much as the drought of Mkufu had been in Ribe. In 1921 Rabai was a community divided between two elements, the western-educated, largely Christian community that disdained traditional customs of the Mijikenda, and the more conservative elements led by the kaya elders who supported the maintenance of ARavai rituals. When drought came, both sides accused the other of witchcraft, of trying to forestall the rains in order to ruin the fortunes of the others. Feelings ran especially high among the non-educated palm tappers because they were so much more dependent upon their farms for their sustenance and income than were those educated people who held jobs in the civil service or who worked for companies operating in towns such as Mombasa. In 1922 ARavai coconut palm tappers summoned a renowned mganga (traditional herbalist, KiSwahili), to search for the rain they were convinced had been bewitched by elements in the Christian community. According to popular ARavai tradition it was through the successful search of Joha Bejoha and his assistants that rain finally came to Rabai and Ruruma, and as a result the rains of 1922 are also remembered as Mvula ya Joha (the rains of Joha).[57]

The Mijikenda endured much agricultural hardship during the 1920s. In 1924 a flock of birds came in inordinate numbers, destroying the millet crops around Mazeras, Gotani and Rabai. Drought occured again during 1927 and 1928, reducing harvests. Swarms of locusts wrecked more destruction around farms near Mariakani in 1928, creating a minor food crisis during 1929. A second wave of locust attacks in 1929 further aggravated the food shortage. Poor rains fell in 1930 and harvests did not improve until 1931 and 1932. During this time the colonial government was proceeding with its program of dam-building. Local officials also encouraged the Mijikenda to plant more drought-resistant crops, such as cassava, sorghum, and millet, but the Mijikenda did not heed this advice. Maize had usurped most other cereals in Mijikenda diets by the early 20th century. Millet was considered too troublesome to cultivate by many farmers, because they had to be on constant watch to protect their plants against birds, and neither millet nor sorghum yielded as much per acre as maize did during adequate rainfall. Many Mijikenda farmers continued to keep a few cassava plants in their gardens to guard against drought and famine, but very few families continued to cultivate millet or sorghum after the 1920s. Most farmers hoped that because they could plant and harvest two maize crops per annum, as opposed to only one annual crop of millet or sorghum, that even if they lost one planting of maize to drought, they could recover with their second annual planting of maize.[58]

Nzije

Although the amount of rainfall increased during the 1930s, it was sporadic and, in some cases, just as damaging to crops as drought could be. For example, 1934 was a wet year but there was virtually no rain for three months, and then when the rains commenced, they came with such tremendous force and unabated intensity that many crops perished. Farmers undertook second and even third plantings, but their efforts went for naught when a swarm of locusts invaded the hinterland later that same year. This was the most widespread, destructive plague of locusts experienced by the Mijikenda during the colonial era, surpassing the destruction caused in 1928 or 1929. According to local testimony, these locusts ate everything in sight: crops in the field, pasture grasses, the fresh palm leaves on coconut trees, and even the dried palm thatching used to build homes. The government recruited many Mijikenda to work exterminating the locusts and their larvae. As a result, this famine was intimately associated with locusts and so it became known as Nzala ya Nzije (the famine of locusts).[59]

The Nzije famine endured from 1934 through 1935 and ended only when the locusts left the hinterland. This famine was made worse by an outbreak of smallpox in 1935, and the prevalence of other diseases, notably trypanosomiasis and malaria. During the famine the British embarked on extensive famine relief projects; during 1934 more than 2000 Mijikenda men were employed building roads between Rabai, Kaloleni and Mariakani, for which they received a ration of food. For those farmers who could not tap their palm trees because the buds were eaten by locusts, or for grain farmers who lost their crops, this government work did provide some famine relief.[60] However, most tappers migrated to other parts of the palm belt that were less affected by the locusts, particularly farms near Mombasa.[61] Some palm trees in the hinterland survived the locust plague, and the owners of those trees remained in Rabai or Ruruma selling wine for grain or cash.[62] Many Mijikenda families also migrated north to Chonyi territory, southwest of Kilifi, to work as temporary laborers cultivating rice, cassava and maize for a share of the harvest. In this way Mijikenda families avoided the need to rely on official famine relief while strengthening the bonds of communality among themselves.[63]

The Mijikenda enjoyed one decade of relative prosperity following the end of Nzije famine. Only in 1939, when a drought reduced harvests and a heavy rain washed out much of a subsequent planting, did farmers experience any difficulty. But the strong rains at the end of 1939 endured through early 1940, doing damage not only to crops but washing out roads, dams and communication networks throughout the hinterland. Fearing a severe famine, the government banned the export of millet and maize in order to keep food within the district. Yet often times farmers had to sell their crops in order to meet the financial demands of the colonial state, especially annual tax payments. Indeed, one official remarked that the tendency of Mijikenda farmers to sell much of their harvest to get the money to pay tax or meet other expenses, meant that families were more vulnerable to starvation if even a slight drought and famine took place.[64]

Ngano

Another severe famine began in the hinterland during 1943 and endured until 1945. A failure of rains lasted from 1942 through 1943, creating drought conditions and a food shortage. Late in 1943 the situation was complicated by the arrival of locusts in grain producing areas near Mariakani, and the pastures near Gotani. Rainfall, though moderate in 1944 and 1945 was untimely and therefore not of much help to farmers cultivating their fields. Local harvests did not provide any relief until late 1945 and early 1946. Because there was little prospect of local relief, the government imported tremendous amounts of food. In July 1943 alone, 1500 bags (72,000 kg) of cassava flour were distributed in Kilifi District, and in December 2500 bags (120,000 kg) of maize flour were given to needy families. During 1944 more than 32,640 bags (1,566,816 kg) of whole wheat were distributed to the Mijikenda residents of Kilifi District. Because imported wheat was the primary food eaten by Mijikenda families during this food crisis, the famine of 1943-1945 became known as Nzala ya Ngano (the famine of wheat).[65]

The Mijikenda endured Ngano famine largely because of the efforts of the British government, and this is one time when Wrigley's assessment of the contribution of the British to alleviate deaths from catastrophe seems well deserved. The government distributed the wheat flour to the Chiefs in all locations, making the Chiefs responsible for rationing out portions of food to local families, with between 1 and 2 kilograms going to each man, woman and

child every week. Some Chiefs preferred not to handle the distribution themselves, and they made local store owners responsible for storing and passing out the flour, but only according to coupons issued by the Chief to needy families. By having the Chiefs administer the famine relief program, the British ensured that only those local families who were truly needy would receive the food. Indeed, several wealthy farmers who were known to have sizeable maize storage bins full from previous harvests, were denied an allocation of wheat flour by their Chiefs.[66]

Although the British generously distributed much wheat flour, they did extract much forced labor from the Mijikenda in return. For example, during 1943 more than 2340 laborers were recruited in Kilifi District and sent to work on European sisal, rubber and cashew nut estates. Other laborers were conscripted for roadwork and the building of water pipelines.[67] Consequently many Mijikenda preferred not to rely on government supplied wheat lest they become subject to official labor demands. These young men went to work on their own farms, tapping palms for wine, or they migrated to plantations near Mombasa and even as far south as Tanga, Tanganyika, to escape conscription and earn the money necessary to buy food to feed their families.[68]

Kabushutsii

Within just a few years after the end of Ngano famine, the Mijikenda were victims of one of the most severe famines of the 20th century. The failure of rain in late 1947 reduced harvests at that time and when the early rains of 1948 proved inadequate as well, a food crisis began. The government had to import more than 32,500 bags (1,561,440 kg) of maize meal in 1948 to feed the hungry residents of Kilifi District. The continual lack of rain and poor harvests in 1949 necessitated the importation of 36,407 bags (1,747,536 kg) of maize meal that year, as well as 4860 bags (233,280 kg) of cassava. When the drought endured through 1950 many Mijikenda were still lacking food, prompting the government to bring in more than 64,650 bags (3,103,900 kg) of maize meal, and an additional 10,160 bags (487,680 kg) of maize into Kilifi District. Finally in 1951 the drought broke and a wet year ensued with adequate harvests. Even though local food production increased in late 1951, it was not enough to completely alleviate the residual hunger in the area, and so the British imported almost 69,000 bags (3,312,000 kg) of maizemeal during the year. Drought returned in 1952 necessitating the importation of 22,464 bags (1,078,272 kg) of maize meal for famine relief. Again, 1953 was a wet year but 1954 was a near record dry year and there was no adequate rainfall until almost 1957. Although this famine was punctuated by a few years of good harvests, the time from 1948 through 1954 is remembered as one of the most difficult in recent memory.[69]

The famine of 1948-1954 has several local names, all indicative of the serious nature of this food crisis. Around Mazeras, Rabai, and Ruruma the famine was known as Kabushutsii, a word which means to avert one's eyes from another person by gazing down at the ground. The ARavai maintain that this food shortage was so severe that no one would want to look at anyone else while eating food lest they notice that other person's hunger and be forced to invite them to come share what little food one had.[70] Other eyewitnesses report that this famine was so stressful even family members refused to cooperate. Instead, each person kept his or her own food without sharing it with one's wife, husband, son, daughter, or parent. This led people to call the famine Ndulgu Si Mtu, which means that a relative is no one, "brothers are not brothers," that even bonds of kinship were unimportant when compared to one's own personal hunger.[71] During this famine there was such a severe

shortage of grain that few families had any cereals to eat, except what they could buy from shops stocking imported food. Consequently many Mijikenda families survived by eating coconuts. Some people were so hungry that they did not wait for the coconuts to fully ripen, instead they ate unripe coconuts causing some people to refer to this as the famine of Makaroma (unripe coconut, Mijikenda vernacular).[72]

The Mijikenda survived this famine much as they had endured others mentioned above. Some families continued to sell palm wine around Rabai and Ruruma, while other tappers migrated to work along the coast. ADuruma and AGiriama herders brought their livestock to Rabai for sale and there they purchased grain and palm wine. Some families living between Rabai and Ribe subsisted on wild spinach, mtsunga that grew along the creeks and rivers in the area, while other families ate cassava and yams they had planted in anticipation of such famine. During the famine many Mijikenda families continued to plant cassava.[73]

For those people with nothing to eat and nothing to trade for food, except their own labor, government relief was most welcome. During Kabushutsii famine the British imported a total of some 240,000 bags (11,524,000 kg) of cereals to help feed the residents of Kilifi District. Much of this food was sold through local shops in the hinterland, but a significant amount was also given to those people who worked, forcibly or voluntarily, on public works projects. Kabushutsii was such a severe famine that even women and children came out to work on road building, dam building and bore-hole digging. One official reported that had there been no government assistance, "there would have been many deaths from starvation, whereas in fact there were none reported."[74]

Conclusion

> Famines, famines are the way of the world. There is a time of famine, and then there is a time of plenty when there is no hunger. There are famines in this world. Famines will never leave us.[75]

By the end of the colonial era the British themselves recognized that although they had done much to provide emergency famine relief, the Mijikenda peoples themselves were quite resourceful in coping with drought and food crises. One officer noted that within Kilifi District, "it is extremely difficult for people actually to starve, owing to the prevalence of tree crops, in particular the coconut tree, which can be relied upon to provide excellent if rather restricted nourishment."[76] Before ca. 1880 coconut palm cultivation was confined to the coast itself, parts of Digo land (Kwale District) southwest of Mombasa, and the area around Rabai and Ribe. But beginning in the late 19th century the coconut tree spread rapidly throughout the coastal hinterland, until by the 1930s virtually all Mijikenda peoples were growing some palms. The rather rapid adoption of coconut tree farming attests to its importance both as a potential source of income, from the sale of wine and coconuts, and as a source of food, especially in time of famine. By planting coconut palms Mijikenda grain farmers ensured that even if their cereal crops failed because of drought, the more resilient palm tree would yield minimum sustenance during a food shortage.

The ability of the Mijikenda to survive famine improved during the 20th century because of their initiative in planting tree crops, especially the coconut palm. Mijikenda opportunities to migrate in search of land and employment in areas unaffected by drought also increased, enhancing their ability to overcome hunger or starvation. Because of their proximity to the

Indian Ocean ports of Mombasa and Malindi the Mijikenda enjoyed relatively quick access to imported food during times of crises, whether during the 19th or 20th centuries. Under British colonial rule this access to international food supplies, as well as access to domestic food supplies, increased, improving Mijikenda ability to secure food and withstand shortages. Combined with official campaigns launched to provide smallpox innoculations, to encourage the digging of pit latrines, and provide some basic health services, this influx of food supplies helped to alleviate hunger and reduce death from starvation and disease. Undoubtedly many food problems lingered even at the end of the colonial era, such as malnourishment, but by 1963 the ability of most Mijikenda to survive famine had improved, at least in part because of British assistance.

Structurally however, the British had done little to eliminate some of the causes of famine; most of their efforts were directed toward providing temporary relief, not permanent change. Indeed, it can be argued that some colonial policies actually impeded the ability of farmers to cope with drought and famine on their own, making them more dependent on official assistance than they might have been in the past. A few British officials even admitted that colonial agricultural policies were not well suited to African farming in Kenya. By emphasizing the production of cash crops instead of foodstuffs, and devoting its attention only to the most productive areas of the colony, the government neglected basic food production and farming in the more marginal areas of Kenya such as the coast.[77] A few sympathetic administrators pointed out that many African farmers, such as the Mijikenda, had not received adequate services, including agricultural assistance, in return for the amount of taxation and labor they gave the government. As early as 1923 the senior officer at the coast pointed out that "the Native Public provides the greatest part of this Colony's revenue but hitherto they have received very little in return."[78] In 1943 another official criticized government policies that concentrated too much on European plantations along the coast to the detriment of farming and stock-raising in places such as Rabai, Mariakani and Kaloleni.[79] While the British did encourage the planting of more cassava and millet to guard against future drought or famine, they also promoted the production of cotton, rubber, sisal, copra and cashew nuts, cash crops which would not feed farmers' families if world prices were low, or if drought adversely affected local production. Finally, by taking control of the trade of grains, such as maize, through government parstatal organizations, such as the Maize Marketing Board, the government inhibited the local exchange of foodstuffs that had provided much relief during some famines of the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, the central control exercised over the purchase and sale of cereals may have contributed to the severity of recent famines, forcing the government to provide more famine relief than may have been necessary if local food supplies and local networks of exchange were allowed to operate intact.

Makusudi

The result of poor official planning can be seen in the most recent food crisis to occur in Kenya. Poor rainfall in late 1979 reduced yields along the coast and in many other farming areas of Kenya, and by the beginning of 1980 there was a shortage of food. But, after record harvests in 1977 and 1978 there was widespread suspicion that although food was available, it was not reaching local citizens because of profiteering, primarily because of illegal exports to impoverished Tanzania and war-torn Uganda. Undoubtedly Kenya's relative lack of grain storage facilities did force the government to sell

some surplus maize, rather than risk spoilage, but many people, both within and outside the government, felt that somehow there should have been enough surplus to cope with the crisis of 1980. Instead Kenya was forced to import several hundred tons of maize and wheat from Europe and America, until by late 1980 the famine subsided.

Along the coast the Mijikenda gave this famine two names indicative of their perception of their condition and its causes. Some people refer to it as Nzala ya Pesa Si Kitu (KiSwahili), the famine when "money is nothing," because even though you have money, it is worthless because there is no food in the store which you can buy.[80] Other people refer to it as Nzala ya Makusudi (Mijikenda vernacular), "the famine of deception," because it is not really a famine, only a condition caused by people hoarding food. The Mijikenda argue that there was food in Kenya but it was not being distributed, and even when some of it reached the local shops, it was deliberately with-held by store-owners in order to feed themselves and their families until the next shipment arrived.[81] During most of 1980 there were long lines of customers at local stores and people were limited in the amount of maize flour, the staple of the Kenyan diet, that they could buy. In some instances the Administrative Police had to be stationed in markets in order to prevent fighting over the scarce food supplies.

The Mijikenda survived this famine as much of Kenya did because of international relief. Even though palm growers could still sell palm wine, there was no local maize crop that they could buy with the money earned from wine sales. Eating cassava and coconuts curbed hunger, but the demand for maize flour created tensions throughout the coast. Because the Maize Marketing Board bought up so much of the local surplus of grain, few farmers had reserves to sell or consume themselves, and palm wine merchants no longer could depend on the traditional networks of exchange that brought cereal from Duruma, Giriama and Kambe territory into Rabai, and sent palm wine into those areas. Being a food-importing and palm wine-exporting region came to be a serious weakness in the overall context of Kenya's political economy.

Footnotes

[1]Christopher Wrigley, "Changes in East African Society," History of East Africa, III, ed. by D.A. Low and Alison Smith (Oxford, 1976), 513, 522.

[2]The Mijikenda are composed of "nine closely related but distinct peoples who share a common linguistic and cultural heritage." Thomas T. Spear, The Kaya Complex: A History of the Mijikenda Peoples of the Kenya Coast to 1900 (Nairobi, 1978), 4-44. The nine peoples, according to the vernacular designation, are: the ARavai, ARihe, AKambe, AGiriama, ADuruma, ADigo, AChonyi, ADzihana, and AKauma. Names for these nine peoples are usually written without the plural prefix "A" but it is retained here in order to distinguish the original inhabitants from the names of the places they occupy. Mijikenda itself is a KiSwahili term derived from the vernacular Midzi Chenda, "nine villages," and is also rendered Miji Kenda by some writers, especially those of coastal origin.

[3]Regarding the AKamba migration see Robert J. Cummings, "Aspects of Human Porterage with Special Reference to the AKamba of Kenya: Towards an Economic History, 1820-1920" (Ph.D. thesis, UCLA, 1975), 99-109.

[4]Famine in Africa, published by the OAU and FAO of the UN (Rome, 1982), 1-3.

[5]Amartya Sen, Poverty and Famine: An Essay on Entitlement and Deprivation (Oxford, 1981), 1-7, 39, 45.

[6]Thomas J. Herlehy, "Coconut Palm Traditions," (CPT), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (kaya elder, Rabai). These traditions were collected during 1980 among the Mijikenda coconut palm farmers in the Mombasa hinterland. Transcripts are in the author's possessions and will be available at Boston University and University of Nairobi. I would like to acknowledge the generous support of the Fulbright-Hays Research Program which enabled me to carry out the fieldwork for my forthcoming Ph.D. dissertation upon which this paper is based. A kaya elder is an initiated member of the traditional ruling council of the individual Mijikenda peoples; the kaya was a fortified village in which most people lived during the 19th century.

[7]The importation of slaves by sea was banned in 1873, the overland transport of slaves was prohibited in 1876, Frederick Cooper, Plantation Slavery on the East Coast of Africa (New Haven, 1977), 122-130. Regarding Mazrui-Busaidi warfare see Peter L. Koffsky, "History of Takaungu, East Africa, 1830-1896," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1977), 156-186, and T.H.R. Cashmore, "Sheikh Mbaruk bin Rashid bin Salim el-Mazrui," Leadership in East Africa, ed. by N.R. Bennett (Boston, 1968), 109-137.

[8]Thomas T. Spear, "Mijikenda Historical Traditions," (MHT), MHT 2: Mwinga Gunga (MGiriama). Spear's traditions were collected in 1971, and some have been published in Thomas T. Spear, Traditions of Origin and Their Interpretation: The Mijikenda of Kenya (Athens, Ohio, 1981). The MHT may also be consulted at University of Nairobi and the African Studies Association Oral Data Archives, Indiana University. I would like to acknowledge Tom Spear's generosity in making the unedited version of his interview transcripts available to me.

[9]Spear, MHT 3: Bukardi Nzovu (MGiriama).

[10]Herlehy, CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief, Ruruma).

[11]This famine was known as Yua ya Ndata (the Famine of the Star) among the AKamba of Ukambani because of the appearance of a bright star in 1882 (the Great September Comet of 1882), so bright that it was visible to the naked eye even in daylight. J. Forbes Munro, *Colonial Rule and the Kamba: Social Change in the Kenya Highlands, 1889-1939* (Oxford, 1975), 23.

[12]Thomas Wakefield correspondence of 17 February 1885, *United Methodists Free Churches* (UMFC) *Magazine*, 28 (1885), 465.

[13]William Taylor correspondence of 26 September 1885, Church Missionary Society (CMS) archives: G3/A5/1885/152. The CMS archives may be consulted at the University of Birmingham, England. Marc H. Dawson, "Smallpox in Kenya, 1880-1920," *The Social History of Disease and Medicine in Africa*, ed. by John M. Janzen and Steven Feierman (special edition of *Social Science & Medicine*, Part B - Medical Anthropology, XIII, B (1979), 245-250.)

[14]John W. Handford correspondence of 12 July 1884, CMS: G3/A5/1884/81.

[15]Wakefield correspondence of 17 February 1885, and John Baxter correspondence of 1885, *UMFC Magazine*, 28 (1885), 456, 673. Herlehy, CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (*kaya* elder, Rabai), CPT 32: Jeremiah Tsuma (retired Headmaster, Ruruma); Cooper, *Plantation Slavery*, 128; Cynthia Brantley, *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya, 1800-1920* (Berkeley, 1981), 31. Regarding the practice of pawning relatives see Spear, *The Kaya Complex*, 100, 136-137, and Koffsky, "History of Takangu," 10-15, 50-66.

[16]Taylor correspondence of 9 June 1885, CMS: G3/A5/1885/87.

[17]Regarding the palm wine trade and Rabai's unique position in the coastal economy see Thomas J. Herlehy, "Ties That Bind: Palm Wine and Blood-Brotherhood Along the Kenya Coast During the 19th Century," *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, forthcoming. This article is based on a paper presented to ASA in Washington, DC, November 1982.

[18]Taylor correspondence of 11 May 1886, CMS: G3/A5/1886/172.

[19]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 9: Kola Mruu (village elder Rabai), CPT 10: Ambari Washe (*kaya* elder Rabai).

[20]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 5: Tsama Mkuzi (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 30: Gideon Mkando (ex-Chief Ruruma), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma); Taylor, "Journal," entry of 13 October 1887, CMS: Taylor mss. I.

[21]Brantley, *Giriama Resistance*, 34-35.

[22]Herlehy, CPT 5: Tsama Mkuzi (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 10: Ambari Washe (*kaya* elder Rabai); Munro, *Colonial Rule & the Kamba*, 38. Regarding the dramatic effect of rinderpest epidemics see Helge Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East African History* (Berkeley, 1977), 126-132.

[23]F.A. Heroe correspondence of 3 June 1889, UMFC Magazine, 32 (1889), 593. Concerning the history of these mission communities, especially the relations between the Christians and Mijikenda see Thomas J. Herlehy and Rodger F. Morton, "The Rise and Decline of Two Ex-Slave Communities in Coastal Kenya: the WaMisheni of Rabai and Ribe, 1880-1980," The Suppression of Slavery in Africa, ed. by Suzanne Miers and Igor Kopytoff, forthcoming.

[24]Marie Ackerman, "Journal," entry of 2 November 1895, CMS: G3/A5/1895/108; William H. Jones correspondence of 15 November 1895, CMS: G3/A5/1895/337; Hardinge to Salisbury, 6 July 1895, British Government, Public Record Office (PRO), Kew Garden, London, England, Foreign Office (FO) archives, file 107/36.

[25]Herlehy, CPT 34: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 9: Kola Mruu (village elder Rabai), CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 30: Gideon Mkando (ex-Chief Ruruma).

[26]Brantley, Giriama Resistance, 87.

[27]Coast Province Famine Committee Report, submitted to the Provincial Commissioner, C.H. Crauford, 4 July 1899, Kenya National Archives (KNA), Coast Province (CP) collection, Minute Paper (MP) 90/154; H.K. Binns correspondence of 22 February 1899 and 2 April 1899, CMS: G3/A5/1899/62 and 91.

[28]Hardinge, "Report on the East Africa Protectorate (EAP) 1899-1900," British Government, Parliamentary Paper (PP) C.9125, 6; A.C. Hollis, "Autobiography," II, 21-22, Mss. Brit. Emp. s.294, Rhodes House Library of Oxford University, England. This famine was known as the famine of Mapunga among the Akamba of Ukambani because rice (mapunga) was the primary famine relief food brought up the railroad line to relief camps in Machakos & Kitui, Munro, Colonial Rule & the Kamba, 47-48, 56, 60, 191,192.

[29]Hardinge, "Report on the EAP, 1899-1900," PP C.9125, 6; Hollis, "Autobiography," II, 21-22; C.H. Crauford to Foreign Secretary , 12 June 1899, PRO: FO 2/197.

[30]Frederick Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters: Plantation Labor and Agriculture in Zanzibar and Coastal Kenya, 1890-1925 (New Haven, 1980), 227, 233-272.

[31]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 47: Chai Munga and Ngala Chai (kaya elders, Ribe).

[32]Herlehy, CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 9: Kola Mruu (village elder Rabai), CPT 32: Jeremiah Tsuma (retired Headmaster Ruruma).

[33]Spear, MHT 23: Mwinga Gunga and Pembe Bembere (AGiriama); Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 4: Nzaka Knya (kaya elder Rabai); regarding the spread of coconut cultivation among the Mijikenda see Thomas J. Herlehy, "An Economic History of the Kenya Coast: The Mijikenda Coconut Palm Economy, ca. 1800-1980," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Boston University, 1984), chapter III.

[34]Brantley, Giriama Resistance, 51-53.

[35]Herlehy, CPT 24: Harry Fanjo (ex-Chief Rabai).

[36]Munro, Colonial Rule & the Kamba, 192.

[37]Cooper, From Slaves to Squatters, 233-272.

[38]Herlehy, "An Economic History of the Kenya Coast," chapter V regarding the threat colonial restrictions posed to the Mijikenda palm wine trade.

[39]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 23: Juma Bembaita (farmer Rabai), CPT 25: Charo Munga and Komolo Dzomba (farmers Rabai), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma); F.W. Brett (Asst. District Commissioner, Rabai), Quarterly Report, 12 July 1912, KNA: CP, MP 233.

[40]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 14: Mfuko Mpee (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 25: Charo Munga and Komolo Dzomba (farmers Rabai).

[41]Herlehy, CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (kaya elder Rabai); R. Skene (Asst. D.C., Malindi), "Report on Drought," 11 June 1912, KNA: CP, MP 189; C.W. Hobley, "Report on Giriama District," 1913, KNA: CP, Kilifi District (KD), Political Record Book (PRB), I.

[42]J.M. Pearson (DC, Rabai), "Labour Inspection Report," 16 September 1912, KNA: CP, MP 308; H.C. Burns (CMS Acting Secretary, Freretown) to H.R. Tate (Provoncial Commissioner, PC), 7 October 1912, KNA: CP, MP 189.

[43]Brantley, Giriama Resistance, 125-132; H.L. Mood (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa) 8 May 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1260.

[44] Brantley, Giriama Resistance, 125-132; Herlehy, CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 36: Tarazo Ndune (ex-sub Chief Ruruma), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma); R.F. Palethorpe (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa) 8 January 1917, and 22 February 1917, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; C.W. HObley, "Food Production Committee Report No. 2," 14 June 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1260.

[45]R.F. Palethorpe (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 29 June 1916, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; F.M. Lamb (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 1 December 1917, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; Herlehy, CPT 10: Ambari Washe (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (kaya elder Rabai).

[46]R.F. Palethorpe (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa) 22 August 1916 and 18 December 1916, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; C.W. Hobley, "Food Production Committee Report No. 2," 14 June 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1260; R.W. Lambert (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa) 26 April 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1260. For example, in February 1917, some 78 tons of maize were imported at Mazeras for sale, and 192 tons at Mariakani; in March 1918, 230 tons of maize were sent to Rabai; and in September 1918, 28 tons of maize went to Rabai and 907 tons of maize arrived in Mombasa for famine relief.

[47]R.F. Palethorpe (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 22 August 1916, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; R.W. Lambert (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 8 May 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1260.

[48]The British had closed shops along the railway line, in towns such as Mazeras, Mariakani, Samburu, and Maji ya Chumvi, because of the fighting along the Kenya-Tanganyika border, and fear of German raids into the area. J.M. Pearson (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa) 27 June 1916, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I.

[49]R.F. Palethorpe (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 27 June 1916, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; H.L. Mood (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 23 January 1918 and R. Skene (DC, Malindi) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 15 February 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. II.

[50]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 10: Ambari Washe (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 25: Charo Munga and Komolo Dzomba (farmers, Rabai), CPT 45: Daniel Katana (store owner Kambe).

[51]Herlehy, CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 5: Tsama Mkuzi (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 12: Bedzuya Mrenje (mganga, Rabai), an mganga is a traditional herbalist/doctor. R.F. Palethorpe (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 8 January 1917, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. I; R. Skene (DC, Malindi) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 9 January 1918 and 15 February 1918, and F.M. Lamb (DC, Rabai) to C.W. Hobley (PC, Mombasa), 24 June 1918, KNA: CP, MP 1195, vol. II.

[52]KNA: CP, Kilifi District (KD), Annual Report (AR) 1921, by W.M. Logan, 4-6; Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 5: Tsama Mkuzi (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma), and CPT 44: Mulinge Mgala (kaya elder Ribe).

[53]H.H. Strafford (DC, Kilifi) to J.W.T. McClellan (PC, Mombasa), 4 February 1922, 19 April 1922, and 19 October 1922, KNA: CP, MP 1195A.

[54] Thomas J. Herlehy interviews with Peter H. Brown (DC, Kilifi, 1952-1954) in England, and with John Henry Flynn (District Officer, Kilifi, 1931-1933) in England. These interviews with ex-colonial officials were conducted by the author in 1980 as part of the Ph.D. dissertation research. Transcripts are in the author's possession, and they will be deposited at Boston University, University of Nairobi, and the Colonial Records Project of the Rhodes House Library at Oxford University, England.

[55]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 21: Jindwa Karruku (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 25: Charo Munga and Komolo Dzomba (farmers, Rabai), CPT 38: Mwitu Tabia (farmer, Ruruma).

[56]R.A.W. Procter (DC, Mombasa) to J.W.T. McClellan (PC, Mombasa), 12 March 1922 and H.H. Strafford (DC, Rabai) to J.W.T. McClellan (PC, Mombasa), 19 April 1922, KNA: CP, MP 1195 A; S.H. Fazan (DC, Rabai), "Tour Diary," 1920, KNA: CP, MP 1204; Herlehy, CPT 13: Bemunga Abdallah (ex-sub Chief, Rabai), CPT 16: Madziwe Saha (farmer Rabai), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 36: Tarazo Ndune (ex-sub Chief, Ruruma), CPT 44: Katama Mwatsuma and Mulinge Mgala (kaya elders, Ribe).

[57]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 5: Tsama Mkuzi (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (kaya elder Rabai), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (kaya elder Rabai).

[58]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1924, by E.G.St.C. Tisdall; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1928 and 1929, by C.M. Castle-Smith; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1930 by R. Pedraza; Herlehy, CPT 14: Mfuko MPee (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 29: Muhaso Munga (*kaya* elder Ruruma), CPT 34: Mvaya Munga (farmer, Ruruma).

[59]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1934 and 1935, by J.D. MacKean; Herlehy, CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 10: Ambari Washe (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 21: Jindwa Karruku (*kaya* elder Rabai).

[60]Herlehy, CPT 14: Mfuko Mpee (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 18: Bemwamba Dena and Muwawa Dena (farmers, Rabai), CPT 21; Jindwa Karruku (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 25: Charo Munga and Komolo Dzomba (farmers, Rabai), CPT 45: Daniel Katana and Mwayayi Mturi (store owner and farmer, Kambe).

[61]Herlehy, CPT 17: Tsuma Mumba (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 38: Mwitu Tabia (farmer, Ruruma), CPT 40: Tsuma Kazibeni (farmer, Ruruma), CPT 42: Mbaji Kalume (farmer, Ruruma).

[62]Herlehy, CPT 10: Ambari Wshe (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 20: Nyagundo Benyagundo (*mganga*, Rabai), CPT 41: Munga Fereji (*kaya* elder Ruruma).

[63]Herlehy, CPT 29: Muhaso Munga and Mwambega Ngenja (*kaya* elders Ruruma), CPT 35: Mwatepe Gadi (farmer, Ruruma), CPT 44: Katama Ndoro and Chireri Dzombo (*kaya* elders, Kambe).

[64]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1934, by J.D. MacKean; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1939, by G.G. Usher.

[65]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1943, by G.R.B. Brown; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1944, by H.A. Carr; Herlehy, CPT 7: Nzaka Ngao (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 10: Ambari Washe (*kaya* elder Rabai).

[66]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1943, by G.R.B. Brown; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1944, by H.A. Carr; Herlehy, CPT 16: Madziwe Saha (farmer Rabai), CPT 18: Bemwamba Dena and Muwawa Dena (farmers, Rabai), CPT 19: Mdigo Katimbo and Mishi Dzua (farmer and his mother, Rabai), CPT 24: Harry Fanjo (ex-Chief Rabai), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma), CPT 45: Chitosi Tsuma and Mwayayi Mturi (farmers,Kambe), CPT 46: Chiringa Mwatela (*kaya* elder Kambe), CPT 48: Moto Moroho (farmer, Ribe).

[67]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1944, byl H.A. Carr, 3; Herlehy, CPT 11: Dagamra Shaha (ex-sub Chief Rabai), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma), CPT 45: Daniel Katana (store owner Kambe), CPT 46: Samson Bajila Baya (farmer, Kambe).

[68]Herlehy, CPT 12: Bedzuya Mrenje (*mganga*, Rabai), CPT 22: Mwayambi Mwazuma (farmer, Rabai), CPT 28: Befukwe Kagumba (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 38: Mwitu Tabai (farmer, Ruruma), CPT 42: Mbaji Kalume (farmer, Ruruma).

[69]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1948, 1949, 1950 and 1951 by J.D. Stringer; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1952 and 1953, by P.H. Brown.

[70]Herlehy, CPT 12: Bedzuya Mrenje (*mganga*, Rabai), CPT 24: Harry Fanjo, ex-Chief Rabai), CPT 26: Dzuya Kavu (farmer, Maji ya Chumvi).

[71]Herlehy, CPT 11: Dagamra Shaha (ex-sub Chief Rabai), CPT 31: Shongwe Kombo and Dzombe Ndune (*kaya* elders, Ruruma), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma).

[72]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 25: Charo Munga and Komolo Dzomba (farmers, Rabai), CPT 44: Mulinge Mgala and Katama Ndoro (*kaya* elders Ribe), CPT 45: Mwayayi Mturi and James Mwachai (farmers, Kambe).

[73]Herlehy, CPT 3: Figo Dzogofya (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 9: Kola Mruu (village elder Rabai), CPT 13: Bemunga Abdallah (ex-sub Chief Rabai), CPT 37: Athmani Kinda (ex-Chief Ruruma), CPT 46: Mwaringa Menza (farmer Kambe).

[74]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1948, 1950 and 1951 by J.D. Stringer; KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1952 and 1953, by P.H. Brown.

[75]Herlehy, CPT 4: Nzaka Kunya (*kaya* elder Rabai).

[76]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1955, by D.W. Hall, 2.

[77]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1956, by D.W. Hall, 9.

[78]G.H. Osborne (PC, Mombasa) to the Manager, East Africa Railways, 2 November 1923, KNA: CP, MP 1195 A. Osborne made this observation in the context of asking the Railroad to give free water to laborers on public works projects, because at that time there was such a shortage of water that workers were trading some of their daily ration of food for some water.

[79]KNA: CP, KD, AR, 1943, by G.R.B. Brown, 4.

[80]Herlehy, CPT 19: Mdigo Katimbo and Mishi Dzua (farmer and his mother, Rabai), CPT 10: Ambari Washe (*kaya* elder Rabai), CPT 24: Harry Fanjo (ex-Chief Rabai).

[81]Herlehy, CPT 29: Mwambega Ngenja and Muhaso Munga (*kaya* elders Ruruma), CPT 31: Shongwe Kombo and Dzombe Ndune (*kaya* elders Ruruma).