

Economic and Political Relations in Ugweno
Reproduction of a Kulak Elite in a Cash-Crop Area in Mwanga District
Kilimanjaro Region

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Abstract

This study sought to examine the social and political character of what was regarded as a 'kulak' area and the effects of 'penetration' upon it - to find out the extent to which kulaks had been touched by the penetration process. The study also attempted to assess the extent to which the process of the formation of certain areas of a local 'productive' exploiting class had been underestimated. The ultimate aim was to locate the specific relationship between the peasant strata both in the economy and the polity and the consequences of this relationship.

Due to the nature of the research problem, it was decided to take one village in a traditional cash-crop and 'kulak' area. This village (Shighatini in Msangeni Ward, Ugweno Division, Mwanga District) was randomly picked among 13 villages in the Ugweno mountain zone. This village was picked mainly because all 13 villages had almost the same type of economy. Hence, the study of any one village was adequate in providing a good picture of the whole mountain zone. Further, Ugweno division was picked because cash-crop production (and agricultural production as a whole) was higher here than in Usangi division - the only other division in Mwanga District.

The research involved staying in the village for two months. During this time, observation of the village economy, politics and ideology was carried out. Neighbouring villages were also observed for the purpose of having a better picture of the whole mountain zone. Also, village records were studied and informal interviews conducted with older peasants (and those with special skills like traditional iron smiths, herbalists and church ministers), teachers and other staff in the village. Moreover, a formal questionnaire was administered on the basis of sample surveys. From the village household list (obtained from the village office), 40 (10%) out of 400 households were randomly picked for formal interviewing.

It was confirmed, during the study, that kulaks were dominant in the economy. They were, indeed, expanding their economic activities; thus, buttressing their superior position in the economy. Village politics and ideology were controlled and manipulated by kulaks. Kulaks were able to use both the

village and church leaderships to entrench their economic and social position. According to the study, there was little or only mild opposition to kulak domination of the polity and to kulak ideology. This was mainly due to the strength of the kulak class and the absence of independent class consciousness or ideological development among the sub-merged peasant categories.

The study re-affirmed that kulaks still existed as a local 'productive' exploiting class. Increasing political and economic 'penetration' of the rural areas had strengthened the relative position of the kulak class. The kulaks used that penetration for their own ends. They re-adjusted their economic and social behaviour to the changes in the penetration process.

Further, the study noted that the economic and political penetration of the peasantry had different effects on different peasant categories. Whereas the kulaks were able to adjust to this penetration and use it for their own benefits, this was not the case with the other peasant categories. The majority of these categories continued to wallow in abject poverty.