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COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
AND POLITICS IN KENYA

Malcolm Wallis  
Department of Government  
and Administration

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## Community Development And Politics In Kenya

Malcolm Wallis

Kenyan Bureaucrats have tended to take the view that the involvement of politicians in community development work has been largely negative in its results. Community Development workers, Development Planners and other civil servants working in sectoral ministries such as Education and Health have shared this attitude. Their criticisms of politicians have covered a number of points. For example, frequent comments have been made about the alleged corrupt practices of politicians involved in self-help projects.<sup>\*</sup> Politicians have also been accused of recklessly encouraging communities to embark on ambitious projects without thorough planning, of making promises which later cannot be fulfilled and of using self-help for their own political ends without taking into account the real needs of the communities in question. The result has been a number of over-ambitious projects which are subsequently abandoned or never become operational ( e.g. a Health Centre which is built but not used because<sup>of</sup> the inability of the Ministry of Health to provide adequate staff and equipment). There is no doubt that self-help has been a significant source of tension between administrators and politicians.

In this paper, we wish to examine in some detail the political aspects of self-help in Kenya. A lot of work on Community Development (CD), especially the "textbooks", neglect this dimension almost entirely. However, the connections between CD and politics are close; as such, there is something to be said for spelling them out. Our assumptions differ somewhat to the conventional wisdom of the bureaucrats to whom we have just referred. Certainly, it seems wrong to assume that the role of politicians has been a completely negative one. The issue is more complex than that. It will be argued that self-help has also often performed important functions for the political system

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<sup>\*</sup>In Kenya, the terms "Community Development", "Self-help" and "harambee" are synonymous.

as a whole. To be more specific, it has significantly contributed to filling the vacuum created by the inadequacy of the ruling party, KANU, as an agency of grass roots mobilisation of rural communities in Kenya. This weakness of KANU is far from being unique in Africa. As Aristide Zolberg has pointed out, ruling parties in most west African countries have shown similar tendencies.

#### KANU and rural development.

Clearly a development strategy involving a theoretically high level of popular participation can include an important role for political parties. For example, in Tanzania, since the Arusha declaration of 1967, considerable emphasis has been placed on this issue by the national leadership. A similar point can be made with regard to Zambia where President Kaunda has frequently called upon United National Independence Party (U.N.I.P.) Members to play an active role in the implementation of development projects.<sup>2</sup> Although these leaders may not always be specific about what this entails, a number of organisational requirements for such a role seem to be involved. First, there needs to be a regular, subscribed, membership. Secondly, this membership needs to be organised down to quite a low (or local) administrative level (e.g. the village, the sub-location or the "parish"). Thirdly, there needs to be some means by which members can make known their views on policy matters to the leadership, both through regular national conferences and through the passing of resolutions at the local level. Fourthly, an institutional means has to be found for regularly clarifying, and (possibly) adjusting party policy. Fifthly, the relationship between the party on the one hand and the civil service, cabinet and parliament on the other needs carefully spelling out.

In both examples cited above, Tanzania and Zambia, there may be grounds for questioning the organisational effectiveness of the ruling parties but both countries have made greater attempts than Kenya. KANU has thus far failed to play any meaningful role in development policy, and has from time to time come in for criticism as a result.<sup>3</sup> Some of these criticisms have come from K.A.N.U. members themselves. For example, in 1968 a K.A.N.U. MP's private

motion in the National Assembly moved that :-

"In view of the fact that our Government is a political one and that the party organisation and African Socialism have been deliberately neglected and all Government powers delegated to civil servants; this House urges the Government to organise the party in such a way that the party is given priority in all matters which will enhance party democracy and African Socialism on which principles our state was founded."<sup>4</sup>

The debate revealed some confusion on the part of the critics as to what was wrong and what needed to be done but there was clarity on some points. Mr. Mbogoch (Enbu North), the mover of this motion, noted that the party had failed to hold annual elections and did not hold annual conferences.<sup>5</sup> He complained bitterly that M.Ps and District Chairmen of KANU were just the "rejects of society" and warned that these weaknesses considerably enhanced the dangers of military intervention. Government reaction to this motion was to agree to support a somewhat diluted version:

"In view of the fact that KANU is the ruling party this House urges the Government to recognise the party in such a way that the party is given priority in all matters which will enhance party democracy and African Socialism on which principles our state was founded"<sup>6</sup>

Criticism continued into the 1970's, perhaps becoming more strident with the passage of time. Early in 1975, the outspoken M.P. from Western Province, Mr. Shikuku stated in the National Assembly that "KANU does not function and is in fact dead."<sup>7</sup>

Later that year he was detained, apparently for his outspoken insistence on the need to revitalize KANU. Another criticism at around the same time came from Mr. N. . . ., Chairman of KANU Mombasa branch, who was reported as arguing that "an immediate reorganisation of the ruling party - KANU was vital to the development of this country and the sooner it was carried out the better."<sup>8</sup>

But, as of 1977, attempts to revive the party had been abortive and the prospects for any new initiatives did not appear to be bright. In essence, KANU does not seem likely to provide a vehicle for promoting participation of the country's population in rural development efforts.

#### Self-Help and Kenya Politics

The weakness of KANU does not mean that no vehicle for participation exists. In fact, the self-help movement has gone a long way towards filling this gap. The movement has provided a network of relationships in the midst of which politicians have vied for support with relative freedom. It is clear, for example, that many of the M.Ps who have been elected since independence (elections were held in 1969 and 1974) have been successful partly because of the use they have made of the opportunities provided for them by self-help. This point applies not only to the Kikuya politicians of Central province, where "harambee" has taken deepest roots, but may also be made for most of the rest of Kenya, including those areas without a significant history of involvement in the independence struggle. Thus, at the local level, it is accurate to assert that party politics is "dead" but quite wrong to take the view that politics is wholly absent from the scene; in fact, the self-help movement has provided the focal point for some very lively politicking indeed. For the most part, the involvement of politicians in self-help takes the form of giving donations to projects. It rarely involves any regular organisational activity; relatively few MPs have a record of membership on a significant number of self-help committees. By donating to projects politicians seem to have at least two objectives in view. One is simply to obtain support by the act of donation itself. The other, and perhaps the more important, is that the meetings, at which the donations are given, provide an opportunity for them to make speeches which they might not otherwise be permitted to make. District Commissioners have frequently applied their power of refusal to allow directly political meetings to be held but are not usually concerned to stand in the way of what appear to be worthwhile self-help project meetings. Yet, at the same time, a number of politicians (the most notable of whom is the late J.M. Karuki) have

used such meetings to make speeches of quite a critical and radical character. It could well be that the safety valve effect of this practice has been appreciated by higher authority, which, in turn, has deliberately allowed it to continue.<sup>9</sup> Thus, the national leadership, whilst for the most part eschewing the use of KANU as a party for participation, has adopted a largely permissive attitude to self-help.

Research on the connection between politics and community development has been carried out in Kenya, and provides some useful sources for amplification of the points being made here. In this connection, the work of Lamb, Mutiso, Godfrey and Wallis may usefully be summarised.<sup>10</sup> Lamb's work was done in Central Province, Mutiso and Godfrey's throughout Kenya and Wallis's in Rift valley. It is unfortunate that relatively little work has been carried out in the Nyanza and Western Provinces where the opposition K.P.U. has been strong. As a result, most of the research described here refers primarily to areas of K.A.N.U. hegemony.

Lamb's fieldwork was carried out in 1967, earlier than the other studies referred to here. Basically, his interests was in discovering the nature of the political network in one district, Murang'a in Central Province. As far as community development is concerned, his conclusion is that it offers "both a training ground and a political arena for local political actors, and a potential constituency of organised support for local politicians."<sup>11</sup>

A particularly interesting section of his study for our purposes is concerned with the building of "Harambee" (or self-help) schools in Murang'a ... and particularly in the politically divided area of Kandara. Like many other parts of Central Province, this area has been characterised by rivalry between "two KANUS", often referred to colloquially as "KANUA" and "KANUB". On the one side there was the faction led by Taddeo Mwaura, who had been a detainee during the 1950's but after independence tended to ally himself with the "loyalist" or "House Guard" group, which in turn was largely uncritical of Government policy on such issues as land and unemployment. The opposing faction was more or less under the leadership of Bildad Kaggia who had been one of President Kenyatta's colleagues in prison in the 1950's.<sup>12</sup> Kaggia's position was, according to Lamb's account, very different from that of Mwaura- "Kaggia's stand was one which emphasized the revolutionary elements of African nationalism, demanding

firm action against the former loyalists."<sup>13</sup> In Kandara this factional conflict took a particularly sharp form, not surprisingly in view of its general reputation as the 'worst' division in the district during the Emergency.

To a considerable extent, this conflict was reflected in the building of self-help schools, many of which were started at least partly ( and often mainly) for directly political reasons. In 1964 and 1965 very many of these schools were built, often without the involvement of the Community Development Department or the approval of the Education Department. Many of the schools ran into difficulty through lack of planning and insufficient funds as a result.

Lamb is convinced that many of these schools were encouraged by members of what he calls the Mwaura faction in order to recruit support against Kaggia and his followers. For example, most of the members of the school committees were influential in the Mwaura faction. During the Emergency, most of them had been loyalists and Home Guards. Kaggia refused to cooperate in the building of these schools, although for a time officers in the Provincial Administration tried to persuade him otherwise. His argument was that self-help was a method by which the Government was trying to evade its development responsibilities.<sup>14</sup>

By the mid-1960's the disenchantment of Kaggia and others with the Government's policies generally led to the creation of the Kenya People's Union under the leadership of Mr. Oginga Odinga. Kaggia was Odinga's deputy in the party. The Government's reaction was to call what became known as the "little general election" of 1966. In Kandara, Kaggia, who had been M.P. since independence, was defeated by Mwaura by the handsome margin of 20,230 to 2,170.<sup>15</sup> Of course, it would be wrong to conclude that this was wholly the result of Mwaura's self-help activities. There is little doubt that restrictions were placed on Kaggia's campaign activity, for example. However, the fact that Mwaura had been able to build up an effective political machine, partly through self-help, was no doubt a strong contributory factor. Following the election, Mwaura attempted to consolidate his position through the building of more schools. In Kandara, there is little doubt that the building of self-help schools has been a

useful political strategy, even if many of them have suffered from chronic planning and financial difficulties. To a large extent, this is a consequence of the high priority accorded to education by Kenyans. Even if the building of schools is very difficult, the hope that something worthwhile will eventually materialise seems to be enough to attract political support to those who sponsor such activities. As a result, Lamb argues, the Mwaura faction of KANU set up a system of political recruitment which assisted considerably in the defeat of Kaggia. It is also interesting to note that this faction reflected very much the ideology of the national leadership. This was summarised by the D.C., Murang'a, as "work hard, forget the past and buy land."<sup>16</sup> Thus KANU was able to bolster its position in Kandara not through the formal party structure before 1965 (controlled by Kaggia, incidentally) but through self-help groups associated with a particular factional leadership. Kaggia's defeat in 1966 seemed to indicate that staying out of self-help was not an effective political strategy. Indeed there is evidence that politicians with similar 'militant' attitudes learnt this lesson. In the 1969 General Election, most constituencies were characterised by rivalry in self-help and the 'radicals' were fully drawn into this process. To adopt Kaggia's position had become more or less untenable. Finally, there is little doubt that Lamb's analysis confirms the view expressed earlier that, by neglecting politics, the textbooks omit a significant dimension of Community Development work.

The second study to be analysed here, that of Mutiso, was carried out in the Machakos district of Eastern Province. It is particularly interesting for two reasons. First, it explicitly shows a direct link between local self-help activity and the political career of a Cabinet Minister, hence indicating a clear relationship between self-help and national politics. Secondly, his case-study is of interest because it suggests something of the role performed by rural women in Kenya politics. Of all the Kenya districts, Machakos has a reputation for being in the forefront of self-help activity. Some writers have argued that this is linked with traditional (i.e. pre-colonial) patterns of social organisation.<sup>17</sup>

Mutiso's study, however, centres on what he argues is not



a traditional organisation because it substantially 'undercuts' traditional relationships.<sup>18</sup> "Mbai Sya Eitu" ( meaning " Clan of girls") originated among the Kamba women of the Northern Division of Machakos district in 1961. A few years later their activities became less geographically confined and their influence was felt throughout Machakos and also in the neighbouring Kitui district. This women's organisation, which makes heavy use of symbolism and ritual in its activities, has been involved in two kinds of related activity. First, it has considerable political influence - a fact which was clearly borne out in the 1963 and 1969 elections. Secondly, it has been a powerful agent in raising funds for such self-help projects as schools and health centres. These two activities are interrelated in that the one clearly strengthens the other. The ability of the organisation to initiate ( and often complete) self-help projects is likely to enhance its political "clout" conversely, if it has widespread political support it is more likely to be able to extract funds and labour from rural communities. Mutiso's account, although not really making this point explicit, seems to confirm this.

Much of the discussion of 'Mbai Sya Eitu' necessarily centres on the political personality of Paul Ngei, now Minister of Local Government in President Kenyatta's Cabinet. Like Kaggia, Ngei was a colleague of President Kenyatta's in detention in the 1950's. As such, he was one of the few Kamba politicians to be implicated in the " Mau Mau" Movement. Like Kaggia's opponents in Kandara, Ngei was quick to realise the uses of " Larambee" as a political strategy. "Mbai Sya Eitu", the "President" of which was his mother, was one of the principal weapons in his armoury.

When he was released from detention in late 1961, Ngei was faced with a dilemma which often faces ex-detainee politicians. Whilst he had been out of circulation, other politicians had emerged and capitalised upon Ngei's absence to build quite strong positions for themselves. In Machakos, the main figure who constituted a threat to Ngei in this sense was Henry Mulli who was recognised as the leader of the more educated and younger sections of the population.<sup>19</sup> When Ngei came out of prison, he still had considerable popularity in the area but it was nevertheless essential for him to deal with the threat posed by Mulli. Mutiso characterises Ngei's strategy thus:-

"Organisationally speaking then Ngei concentrated on undercutting Mulli not only as a Kamba spokesman but also by mobilising those who were less educated and Non-Asomi (illiterate) against Mulli."20

In order to do this, he formed a "tribal" party, the African People's Party ( which was almost entirely Kamba in Membership) in 1962 and worked through the most powerful available "non-asomi" organisation, "Mbai Sya Eitu", which seems to have been formed with this political purpose in mind. Ngei's successes in the 1963 election in the Kangundo constituency (when he stood on an APP ticket against Mulli for KANU) and again in 1969 (when both he and Mulli were KANU candidates, Kenya then being a one-party state ) are to a large extent attributable to the organisational backing he received from "Mbai Sya Eitu."

Precisely how the organisation performed this function is not entirely clear from Mutiso's analysis, but a rough picture may be derived from his paper nonetheless. First, it appears that the "harambee" work of "Mbai Sya Eitu", to which Mutiso devoted substantial attention, contributed to the political effort. This would have been more the case in 1969 than in 1963 ( when "harambee" was really only just getting started). The existence of tangible evidence of successful projects sponsored by "Mbai Sya Eitu" ( and thus linked to Ngei) influenced political behaviour. A second point is that Ngei, through this women's organisation, was able to appeal to the resentment felt by the poorer, less literate sections of the population towards the literate- the "asomi". In this connection, it is not only ironic that Ngei is a University graduate ( Makerere) but he has also become quite a wealthy man, largely as a result of the advantages given him by virtue of his political position. Nor is he conspicuous for advancing the cause of the poor in Parliament or Cabinet- if-anything, it is the opposite. Thirdly, the political success of Ngei, through "Mbai Sya Eitu," may be attributable to the fact that he directly solicited the support of a section of the population often neglected in Kenya politics until then - the rural women. "Mbai Sya Eitu" became an "umbrella" organisation through which their support was obtained. Again, however, it is doubtful if Ngei may be regarded as a champion of the cause of rural women.

Although it is possible that the above account does not really do Mutiso's study justice, like LMA's work it provides substantiation for the main point being argued here- that to separate the analysis of self-

help from the political system is very artificial and a distortion of reality. Mutiso makes it clear that "Uhai Sya Eitu" is not just political, it does respond to genuine community needs, and could do more with government support.<sup>21</sup> This is not in dispute ( although Mutiso may be overstating its "development" potential). What is important is that in Machakos, as in Murang'a, it is not just the political party that has to be studied in order to understand the nature of local politics. Self-help must also be taken into account. Indeed there seems a good case for arguing that the latter is the more important of the two.

Further evidence of the political nature of self-help in Kenya is provided by the case of the "Harambee" Colleges of Technology which mushroomed in many parts of the country in the early 1970's. These were considerably more ambitious than other types of project which had been carried out earlier. Part of the justification given for the colleges was economic and developmental - in that the organisers regarded them as way of reorienting the educational system in a more technological direction and away from the dominant rather bookish approach in the ordinary schools. It is significant, however, that the development planners were just about the only group of remotely influential people who opposed these projects - on the grounds that the already existing system of polytechnics and technical colleges was, in fact, underutilised. Although it seems clear that many Kenyans who took part in fundraising and other activities were convinced of the economic merits of what they were doing, the evidence from the work done by Godfrey and Mutiso is indicative of important political considerations as well. For example, they identify regionalism ("Majimboism") as being one of the motives of the founders of these projects.<sup>22</sup> There has even been talk of converting the colleges into "tribal universities."<sup>23</sup> Because not all regions are equally endowed with resources ( and, perhaps, organisational cohesiveness) some regions have done much better than others. Kiambu and Murang'a Colleges, for example, are now in operation whilst the projects in many other parts of the country look unlikely to see fruition. It is significant that the Kiambu and Murang'a Colleges are in the predominantly Kikuyu Central Province; their success is only likely to reinforce ethnic feeling against the inhabitants of that part of Kenya. Thus regionalism seems to breed further regionalism as the process of cumulative inequality makes itself felt.<sup>24</sup>

As well as the regionalism aspect, the colleges of technology have been a vehicle for personal political ambitions. For example, in 1974 the former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Njoroge Mungai, tried to start such a College in his constituency of Dagoretti as part of an (unsuccessful) attempt to bolster his chances of winning the election there later in the year.<sup>25</sup> Godfrey and Mutiso refer to a letter written by a politician in defence of this practice:-

"Which of the colleges of technology have not got the leadership or support of politicians?"<sup>26</sup>

In this sense, at least, the colleges of Technology are well within an established "Harambee" tradition. However, in other ways, they constitute a significant departure from that tradition.<sup>27</sup> First, because the scale of these projects is much larger than has been the case with other types of "Harambee" activity it has not been possible for them to be dominated by one leader. This fact has had the consequence, in some areas, of immobilising the projects all together, Ukamba and Meru being cases in point. Secondly, the two authors argue "the institutes of technology campaign represents something entirely new in Kenyan politics, the return to their areas of ethnic origin of members of the elite other than professional politicians."<sup>28</sup> As this point, the discussion becomes somewhat confusing since Godfrey and Mutiso refer to these people as "non-politicians" but deny that this means they are "non-political." Indeed, the use of the term "non-politician" looks even more suspect when the two authors remark that:-

"MP's anxiety about this group has intensified since 1969 when many members lost their seats to non-politicians who argued that their education and/or bureaucratic experience fitted them for political leadership."<sup>29</sup>  
( my underlining).

This just does not make sense. By definition, MPS cannot be beaten in elections by "non-politicians." However, if this point is left aside, the Colleges of Technology study does indicate another significant dimension in the politics of "Harambee". It appears that these projects are a means by which a more educated, perhaps more "bureaucratic," group is attempting to develop a political base for itself. One should not take this point too far. After all, plenty of project organisers did not stand

for election in 1974 and many of them no doubt had a genuinely disinterested desire to serve their communities. But, equally, political ambitions have been fostered through the Institutes. In the 1974 Election campaign a politician's contribution to the Institutes was undoubtedly an important factor in many areas.<sup>30</sup> And certainly, by 1974, it had become politically risky to isolate oneself from these projects. Godfrey and Mutiso report that only two Ministers (out of twenty-one) did not get "formally involved."<sup>31</sup> One reason for this high level of involvement is undoubtedly the fear that their political position might otherwise be undermined. The two ministers who did not get involved had a particularly tough time in the 1974 Election.

Thus, the case of the Colleges of Technology seems to offer further confirmation of our central thesis that "Harambee", not the Party (or other formal political institutions), is the organisational framework for political competition and participation in Kenya. The criticisms directed against the Colleges- by development planners, for example- may well be valid on one level, i.e. that they do not make economic sense. However, given the constraints within which political competition occurs in Kenya, they do make a kind of political sense, albeit in an often economically wasteful way.<sup>32</sup>

The other piece of research to be reported on here was carried out by the present author in Kericho district in 1969 at a time when a general election campaign was in progress.<sup>33</sup> An opportunity was thus afforded to observe how self-help activity and electoral politics are inter-connected. In Kericho in 1969 there is little doubt that self-help was used as a resource for the cultivation of politicians constituencies. An example of this is the building of secondary schools in the Belgut constituency in the west of the district. In 1968 Alfred arap Kerich (the sitting M.P. from 1963 - 1969 and Assistant Minister for Commerce and Industry) organised a Harambee Secondary School Project only two miles away from a school which had just been built by Wesley Rono, a local school teacher. Until this time, Kerich had been something of an "absentee" M.P. and had not been active in self-help. When he learnt that Rono was planning to stand against him in the next election, whenever it came, he felt compelled to make his own contribution to the building of a Harambee school in order to safeguard his electoral position. Rono had

in fact decided to make substantial use of "Harambee" as a political weapon. In his objective he was successful, defeating Kerich by 8,016 votes to 4,457. It is significant that virtually no attempt was made by the government to control such undoubtedly wasteful projects, both from an economic and educational point of view. This was not just because Kerich was an Assistant Minister; after all, they made no attempt to control Rono's activities either. This lack of control cannot be attributed to mere administrative neglect. Rather, it seems to have been a deliberately permissive policy which was adopted.

Members of the government have been aware of the problems which can result from the Kerich type of activity. This explains the concern of Mr. Arap Moi, the Vice-President, when he spoke to the National Community Development Committee in Parliament:-

"Mr. Moi said that it was a bad habit for politicians to try to please the masses by promising things which will never turn up. He said, "This is a very serious problem caused by us politicians."

But, in spite of his criticisms, Mr. Moi was himself heavily involved in "Harambee" projects throughout the areas he was trying to control politically (which included Kericho) when the Colleges of Technology movement started he became a leading figure in the Right Valley Project. This does not really imply dishonesty on his part. To survive politically, he had to get involved in "Harambee" even if this meant a certain amount of economic irrationality.

The election of 1974 also provided significant indications of links between electoral politics and self-help. In this connection, mention has already been made of the efforts made by Dr. Mungai in his Dagoretti constituency, efforts which, as things turned out, amounted to too little, too late. A particularly interesting case of success in 1974, however, was that of Mr Mwai Kibaki, Minister of Finance and Planning. In his ministerial capacity, Kibaki frequently found it necessary to stress the need for greater government control over the self-help movement, but in his capacity as politician he was often obliged to behave in an opposite way. This contradiction was brought out particularly clearly in the 1974 election. Kibaki had been the Minister responsible for the publication of two development plans, 1970-74 and 1974-78, in both of

which there is stress on the need for greater control of self-help projects. There is no doubt that his Ministry's policy was that, from an economic point of view, it was undesirable for self-help projects to be allowed to mushroom without planning controls.

However, as a politician, Kibaki was obliged to see matters quite differently. Since independence, he had been M.P. for the Nairobi constituency of Bahati.<sup>36</sup> In common with most other countries in Kenya the early 1970's were characterised by considerable economic difficulty. As elsewhere, rising prices and unemployment gave rise to growing social discontent, especially in the urban areas. Kibaki became the focus of much of this discontent in the course of 1973/1974 and criticism of his handling of the economy became strident, both within parliament and outside. As Kibaki put it himself in 1975:-

"There is little serious effort to understand economic issues. In Parliament the MPs blame the Treasury. Outside everyone blames the Minister. People think the Minister of Finance is all powerful and is responsible for everything that has to do with the economy."<sup>37</sup>

Until the 1970's, a feature of Kibaki's career had been his relative isolation from the political in-fighting that is common in Kenya politics. However, in 1969 a narrow electoral victory had brought home the danger facing him. And the economic difficulties referred to above reinforced for him the feeling that a change in approach was needed. For one thing, it became clear that his position in Bahati was becoming untenable in that, in an open contest, he stood little chance of victory in the next general election. As a result, Kibaki decided to go home politically, back to the rural constituency of Othaya in Nyeri district. In building for himself a new political base, involvement in "Harambee" played a major part. For instance he became heavily involved in the sponsorship of a hospital at the town of Karatina, a project which had been rejected by both the development and physical planners on the grounds that there was a large district hospital less than twenty miles away.<sup>38</sup> It is notable that Kibaki's involvement in this project goes back as far as 1970, an indication of his early awareness of the difficulty facing him in Bahati. But in the course of 1974 the effort reached a zenith. By the time the election campaign proper commenced in September

of that year, hardly a day passed without reports of Kibaki having addressed on "Harambee" meeting.<sup>39</sup> His activities were to a large extent devoted to the conventional self-help projects such as schools.<sup>40</sup> But a large part of his effort went into a project to provide piped water for a large number of homes in the area-the Othaya Water Project. Kibaki quickly established himself as the leading sponsor of this endeavour, the total cost of which was estimated at twelve million shillings (K).<sup>41</sup> As a result of Kibaki's efforts, over one million shillings had been contributed for the project by the time of the election.<sup>42</sup> What Kibaki was doing probably did not have development planning approval, but was undoubtedly politically successful. He achieved a landslide victory:-

Table I

Othaya Election Result, 1974.<sup>43</sup>

|                   |        |
|-------------------|--------|
| 1. Mr. Kibaki     | 14,603 |
| 2. M. Mugwiri     | 820    |
| 3. I. Muthua Kega | 156    |
| 4. J.T. Mwaniki   | 97.    |

His strategy, in which "harambee" played a large part, had paid off handsomely. From 1975 onwards he was in a strong local position for perhaps the first time in his career, and his status nationally was greatly enhanced as a result. Yet to do this, it had been necessary for him to act in a way quite contrary to the policy of the Ministry of which he was in charge. Political necessity had once again got the better of economic planning criteria.

The Kibaki case is certainly a useful example of the role of "Harambee" in building a political career, but is less significant than the case of J.M. Kariuki, usually known as "J.M." Prior to his assassination in 1975, he had developed a power base which far transcended his home area, an unusual phenomenon in Kenya politics, and had largely done this through his "Harambee" activities.<sup>44</sup> Since the banning of the Kenya People's Union in 1969, he had also established a reputation as being the leading radical critic of government policy-a position which also contributed to his increasing popularity in the 1970's.



To understand the role of Kariuki in Kenya politics, it is necessary to go back to the "Mau Mau" period of the 1950's. Kariuki indentified himself at that time with the revolt and was detained as a result.<sup>45</sup> After 1963, he was largely associated with such Kikuyu politicians as Bildad Kaggia, who argued that those who had fought for freedom were not gaining<sup>any</sup> thing from independence. In addition, he was strongly critical of those in government ( or linked with it) who had become wealthy as a result of their positions. He argued, for instance, that there should be a ceiling on land holdings in Kenya.<sup>46</sup> It is odd, in the circumstances, that he remained in the government for so long; until 1969 he was Assistant Minister of Agriculture and from 1969-74 he was Assistant Minister of Tourism and Wildlife. After the 1974 elections he did not receive a government post, probably because his criticism of government had become too great a source of annoyance to Kenya's ruling class. His dismissal from office, however, was a bitter personal blow for Kariuki.

From our point of view what is interesting about the politics of Kariuki is the use he made of "Harambee" to boost his position. Although he was an Assistant Minister, he was nevertheless often refused permission to address public meetings.<sup>47</sup> He was, however, often able to get around this restriction by addressing "Harambee" meetings after making (often considerable) contributions.<sup>48</sup> There is little evidence that he was banned from addressing such meetings.<sup>49</sup>

Of course, not all the contributions by Kariuki to self-help projects are a matter of public record. There are numerous press reports, but it is probable that they only scratch the surface. It is safe to conclude that substantial sums of money have been involved. An interview in 1969 suggested that £1,000 per month might be a reasonable estimate. Kariuki denied this, but not sufficiently strongly as to indicate that this figure is very wide of the mark.<sup>50</sup> By 1975, it could well have become an under estimate. The question arises of where the money came from. In the interview referred to, he stated that it had come from business, especially agriculture:-

"I'm not very wealthy at all. The only thing is that I have been working very hard. We have been told by H.E. The President to go back to the land. I went to the land right from the beginning. At the end of 1962, when people started fearing whether it was good to buy a large scale farm, I went there and bought a farm."<sup>51</sup>

From there he went on to invest in coffee estates, obtained royalties from Kenya Tea Detainees, bought more farms, opened a bookshop and so on. On this evidence, there is little doubt that he was one of the first successful African Business-men in Kenya.

He was, however, prepared to use his wealth to further his political career and to try to bring about egalitarian change. The genuineness of his "radicalism" was often questioned. Whether he was genuine or not, there is little doubt that very many Kenyans were convinced that he was. The outcry which followed the announcement of his death seems adequate evidence of this.<sup>52</sup> His popularity extended to virtually all parts of Kenya. With the possible exception of the President himself, Karinki was the only Kikuyu politician in a position to make this claim-which is probably why he was feared by those in power. Community Development undoubtedly contributed to his popularity by providing an organisational framework for the communication of his ideas.

Little mention has yet been made of President Kenyatta. To omit him altogether, however, would be a disservice to the argument which we are presenting here, for it was the President who was responsible for popularising the slogan "Harambee" soon after independence. In his speeches the 'Harambee' theme is common and are often climaxed by a chanting of the word. This point is amplified by his speech on the occasion of Independence day in 1963:-

"My friends we are now on independent nation, and our destiny is henceforward in our own hands. I call on every Kenyan to join the today in this great adventure of nation building. In the spirit of HARAMBEE, let us all work together so to mould our country that it will set an example to the world in progress, toleration and high endeavour."<sup>53</sup>

The speech closed with these words:-

"Now the Government is ours. Maybe you will now be blaming Kenyatta, saying 'Kenyatta, we elected you, but where is this or that ?' But you must know that Kenyatta alone cannot give you everything. All things we must do together. You and I must work together to develop our country, to get education for our children, to have doctors, to build roads, to improve or provide all day-to-day essentials. This should be our work, in the spirit that I am going to ask you to echo, to shout aloud, to shatter the foundations of the past with the strength of our new purpose...HARAMBEE!"<sup>54</sup>

The last passage is particularly helpful in indicating what Kenyatta has been trying to do with the 'Harambee' idea. First, it is clear that he has seen 'harambee', from the time of independence onwards, as a tool for development which would not place an undue burden on government expenditure. In regarding matters thus, Kenyatta is really echoing the view taken by the colonial government in the 1950's, i.e. that Community Development could be development 'on the cheap'. Secondly, there is, of course, the deliberate use of rhetoric ("Shatter the foundations of the past" etc) which was designed to link perhaps quite a mundane point about economic development with the very meaning of independence.<sup>55</sup> In doing this Kenyatta was displaying a skill which he had clearly possessed for many years; after independence it was possible for it to flower without restriction. Thirdly, it is clear from this speech that Kenyatta saw 'Harambee', from the very beginning, as a political tool, even as a ideology, which could be used to bolster the position of his government. Fifteen years after independence, it is possible to regard this strategy as at least a partial success. The government has remained in power not merely because it has used coercion, but also because the energies of the people have been diverted into a variety of 'harambee' activities.

The President, himself, is the sponsor of a number of major 'harambee' projects, the best known of which are the Gatundu self-help hospital, the Gatundu children's orphanage home, and the Forces Memorial Hospital. (Gatundu is the President's home area and constituency). In addition his wife, Mama Ngina, has also been a prominent sponsor of major projects (e.g. Mama Ngina's Children's home, Mama Ngina Secondary School). In the early days at least, this sponsorship of projects was seen as setting an example to the Kenya people 'Harambee' became something of a bandwagon; virtually all leading politicians felt they had to follow the President's example, without, of course, outshining the work of their mentor. These sponsored projects were not, however, primarily 'developmental' in nature; to view them in this way would exclude the role they have played in the politics of Kenya. The flood of visitors to Kenyatta's "court" has become one of the principal features of the country's politics.<sup>56</sup> Leys describes this phenomenon thus:-

"To the court came delegations of all kinds; district, regional, tribal, and also functional. Most of them came from particular districts, often in huge numbers, accompanied by teams of traditional dancers and choirs of schoolchildren, organised and led by the MPs and local councillors, and provincial and district officers from the area. They gave displays of dancing and singing; the leaders presented cheques for various causes sponsored by the President and expressed their sentiments of loyalty and respect; and would finally outline various needs and grievances." 57

The final sentence of Leys's account is the most important. By the 1970's a pattern had been established: to see the President, if one is from outside the immediate governing circle, it is obligatory to bring along a fairly substantial donation for some cause or other. Only in this way is it possible for a group of people to get across its needs to the President. 'Harambee', then, has become a facilitator of interest group politics. One month picked out at random may serve us as an example:-

1. February 20, 1974 - Mrs Salie, a Malaysian visitor, contributed 5,000/- to Gatundu self-help hospital, 3,000/- to Gatundu children's orphanage, Kiguno self-help hospital, 1,500/-, to the Ethiopian Famine Relief Fund 2,000/-.
2. February 21, 1974- The Bishop of Mt Kenya, Rt. Rev. Obadiah Kariuki, to Ethiopian Famine Relief Fund 1,100/-.
3. February 21, 1974 - The Minister for Tourism and Wildlife, Mr. J.M. Shako, on behalf of "African first shooters" contributed a total of 7,000/- to Gatundu self-help hospital and Kiambu Institute of science and technology.
4. February 25, 1974 - Mayor of Embu, Councillor A Githenji, on behalf of the Jumuiya Baladia Muslim Mission. He contributed 500/- to each of the following: Gatundu self-help hospital; Mama Ngina's Childrens' Home; the Forces Memorial Hospital; and North East Province Famine Relief Fund.
5. February 26, 1974 - Leader of Ndumo dancers, Mr. Nganga Wangoro, contributed 500/- to Gatundu self-help hospital.

6. February 26, 1974 - Mukuru Farmers' Company Ltd of Limuru contributed 1,500/- to each of Gatundu self-help hospital and Mama Ngina's Childrens' home and 1,000/- to each of Kiambu Institute of science and technology and Ethiopia Famine Relief Fund.<sup>58</sup>

These contributions amount to a form of tribute—a means of showing one's and loyalty to the ruler with the hope of gaining some reward.<sup>59</sup> Often what was being sought was a favourable administrative decision of some sort, and it can be assumed that such decisions were often obtained in this way. To sum up: the President having set the "Harambee" bandwagon in motion was now using it as a vehicle to channel personal access to himself.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Essentially, what we are arguing is that Community Development in Kenya, in the specific form of "Harambee", has been of considerable political importance. Mainly, its contribution has been to act as a mechanism for control. It is undeniable that the country is experiencing a pattern of growing social differentiation in the sense that Leys describes it in his study.<sup>60</sup> There is the emergence of a class structure with an economically powerful bourgeoisie at the apex and a very complicated "mix" of petty-bourgeois, proletarian and peasant elements at the lower levels. Part of the appeal of politicians like Karitki, for example, was that they represented the aspirations of these diverse elements. One does not wish to dispute the accuracy of Leys' account of the political economy of Kenya. There is no doubt that he is broadly right about the emergence of a class structure under the impact of neo-colonialism. However, it is notable that he pays little attention to the phenomenon of "Harambee". As a result, one gets little feeling of how the present government maintains itself in power, except through coercion and the "ideology of tribalism."<sup>61</sup> The omission of "Harambee" from his analysis means the neglect of a vital component of the whole process of political control in Kenya.

The uses of "Harambee" for Kenya's governing class may be spelt out in a variety of different, albeit connected, ways. First it may be viewed as a form of manipulation of the "people" by those who rule. "Harambee"

in this sense is linked with what John Saul describes as "interested, manipulative populism" :-

"For it has been mentioned that a populist vision can divert attention from internal contradiction; used consciously, it may thus become a most conservative force, even a cynical cover for continuing privilege. Growing differentiation either between the elite and mass or within the rural community itself, as well as subtle compromises with international capital, can be masked behind a rhetoric of homogeneity and national interest"<sup>62</sup>

"Harambee" is clearly populism in this particular sense. It masks the growing differentiation which Leys quite correctly observes, and places in its stead the view of the world as expressed by the D.C. in Murang'a - "work hard, forget the past and buy land."<sup>63</sup> It also squares with the rhetoric so often employed by President Kenyatta as, for example, in the speech on Independence Day, 1963, which was quoted earlier. As an approach to development, it purports to assist the poor; in reality it has effect of entrenching the bourgeoisie in power. "Harambee" as "manipulation" could also be well described as a form of false consciousness.

A second, closely connected, use of "Harambee" for the rulers is as a means of promoting the "ideology of tribalism", which, in turn, makes possible the avoidance of the emergence of class consciousness. We have cited, in this connection, the "regionalist" implications of the "Harambee" Colleges of Technology. Whether consciously manipulated or not, this particular form of "Harambee" has certainly had the effect of diverting people's political energies and spirit to their regions of origin. As projects in, say, central Province, reach fruition so it becomes necessary that Western and Nyanza Provinces are not left behind. A spirit of regional competition is induced and this is very helpful for purposes of political control. This analysis can be taken further, to the village (or sublocational) level where the same spirit of competition is found; here, too, political energies are successfully diverted from a class view of Kenya politics.

Another sense in which self-help in Kenya works as a mechanism of control is through cooptation. By drawing "local leaders" into the framework of policy-making the hope has been that some elements

of discontent may thus be siphoned off.<sup>64</sup> This point does not only apply to self-help. In Kenya, there are various kinds of groups and committees which fulfil a similarly cooptative function, e.g. cooperatives and tea committees ( for smallholder tea producers). Cooptation also supplies a safety-valve effect; it enables resentment to be released in a way which the government can nevertheless keep under reasonable control. It is clear, for example, that the building of schools in Kandara ( as discussed by Lamb) may be partly viewed in this light, as may be the numerous similar activities taking place in the rest of Kenya.

Self-help has also served to offer a "space" in which politicians hostile to government policy may operate, even if in a restricted manner. J.M. Kariuki was a useful case in point. Unable to express his ideas through such formal political mechanisms as the party, he was nevertheless able to do so at "Harambee" meetings, and in the process build a considerable political base for himself.<sup>65</sup> But it should be noted that his case also reveals the limitations of this strategy. Once it became clear he had ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ established such a base, stronger action was required against him. So "Harambee" does provide limited opportunities for politicians critical of government, including those of radical persuasion.<sup>66</sup>

Enough has been said to establish that the conventional, largely bureaucratic, view of politicians as "meddlers" in self-help is not very helpful. It should also be clear by now that the omission of politicians from the textbooks on "CD" is misleading. Community Development in Kenya is, in fact, a matter of considerable political importance and a means by which the government seeks to maintain control of society in which class divisions have become pronounced. It largely does this by substituting other kinds of local, or "ethnic" consciousness for class sentiments. Whether "Harambee" will retain its hegemony as a dominant organising ideology in Kenya remains to be seen. But the task of those who would replace it with an alternative, more class based, approach is certainly an uphill one. However far the process of class differentiation may have gone the emergence of real class conflict, involving the peasantry on any large scale, appears remote. There will be continued discontent . but, partly through coercion and partly through ideology, it is likely to remain fragmented and muted in its impact.

FOOTNOTES

1. Aristide Zolberg, Creating Political Order. ( Chicago, Rand McNally, 1966)
2. For example, his speech at the party's Mulungushi conference of 1971 ( reported in Times of Zambia ( Lusaka), May 11, 1971)
3. See, for example, John Okumu, " Charisma and Politics in Kenya: notes and comments on the problems of Kenya's party leadership" in East Africa Journal ( Nairobi, February 1968)
4. Kenya National Assembly, Debates, November, 1, 1968, col. 2657
5. Ibid, col. 2661.
6. Ibid, col. 2684.
7. The Standard (Nairobi), Feb 7, 1975.
8. The Standard (Nairobi), Jan 29, 1975
9. By 1977, there was some evidence that this pattern was beginning to alter. In December of that year, Mr. Oginga Odinga, the former leader of the opposition Kenya People's Union, was stopped by the police from addressing "Harambee" fund-raising meetings. Observers concluded that this was part of an attempt by the authorities to prevent him from making a political come-back. The Weekly Review (Nairobi, Dec. 26, 1977) p.8).
10. Geoff Lamb, Peasant Politics (Lewes, Julian Friedman, 1974), G.C.M. Mutiso, "Ikai Sya Eitu: a low status group in Centre-Periphery Relations" ( unpublished paper, University of Nairobi, .N.D. G.C.M. Mutiso and E.M. Godfrey, "The Political Economy of Self-Help: Kenya's "Harambee" Institutes of Technology" in Canadian Journal of African Studies (VIII, vol., 1974 ) M.A.H. Wallis, The Politics and Administration of Rural Development in Kenya: a case study of the Kericho District (Ph.D Thesis, University of Manchester, 1974)
11. Lamb, op cit., P. 55.
12. See his autobiography -- Bildad Kaggia, Roots of Freedom (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1975).
13. Lamb, op. cit., P. 29.
14. Ibid, P. 16..
15. Ibid, P. 42. See also Cherry Gertzel, The Politics of Independent Kenya (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1970), ch. 3.
16. Lamb, op cit., P. 70
17. For example, Philip. M. Mbithi, Rural Extension and Rural Development: its application in Kenya ( Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau, 1974) ch. 3.



18. Mutiso, op.cit., F.28.
19. Mutiso refers to Mulli's supporters as the "Asomi", meaning "readers". Until 1963, Mulli was an Assistant Minister.
20. Mutiso, op.cit., PP. 13-14.
21. Ibid, P.45.
22. Godfrey and Mutiso, op.cit., P 119.
23. Ibid
24. Gunnar Myrdal, Asian Drama ( New York: Pantheon, 1967).
25. The Standard (Nairobi), July 8, 1974.
26. Quoted by Godfrey and Mutiso, op.cit., PP. 121-122. The letter originally appeared in the Daily Nation.
27. Ibid, P 122.
28. Ibid, P. 122
29. Ibid, P.122
30. For example, in Keru South West. See "Joe" Election Review 1974 (Nairobi, October 1974), P.31.
31. Godfrey and Mutiso, op.cit., P. 127
32. Sometimes this wastefulness has taken on dramatic proportions, compounded by a mixture of corruption and financial mismanagement. Nyanza province's Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology is a case in point. In July, 1974, an M.P. called for a public inquiry into R.I.A.T's affairs as a result of a number of complaints about the running of the organisation (Sunday Post (Nairobi), July 21, 1974) and in November of the same year it was reported that the project was owed KSh2, 500 in bounced cheques and unfulfilled promises made in writing (The Standard (Nairobi), Nov 6, 1974). In April 1976, the auditors reported that it was "obvious that large sum of Riats' money had been misappropriated" (Weekly Review (Nairobi), April 12, 1976)
33. East African Standard (Nairobi), December 8, 1969.
34. East African Standard (Nairobi), September 5th, 1970.
35. Wallis, op.cit.
36. Some biographical information is contained in the Weekly Review (Nairobi), March 3, 1975.
37. Ibid, P.4.
38. For this information I am indebted to former official of the Town Planning Department, Nairobi, Kenya.
39. For instance, Daily Nation (Nairobi), 9 September, 11 September, 20 September and 7 October.

40. E. G. Mahiga Primary School. Kibaki gave £175. The Standard (Nairobi), Sept 23, 1974.
41. Daily Nation (Nairobi), Oct 7, 1974.
42. Ibid. The Daily Nation reported the main project meeting as the "biggest ever Harambee meeting held in Othaya division."
43. The Standard (Nairobi), Oct 15, 1974.
44. The date of his assassination has not been established. He disappeared on March 2, 1975. The Weekly Review (Nairobi), March 24, 1975.
45. An account of his early life and year in detention may be obtained from J.M. Karinki, Man Man Detainee (London: Oxford U.P., 1963).
46. Mambo (Nairobi), April 1975, P. 5.
47. "Joe" Election Review (Nairobi), October 1974, P. 9.
48. Karinki had a gift for moving from a specific topic to a general critique of government policy. The author was able to witness his technique in action in 1974 when Kariuki's lecture on tourism to University of Nairobi students was quickly transformed into an attack on government policy.
49. Community Development Officers, when interviewed, could not recall Kariuki being prevented from addressing "Harambee" meetings (Interviews, Kenya 1973-1975).
50. Sunday Nation (Nairobi), June 22, 1969. In the same interview, Kariuki denied that he was using "Harambee" to widen his political base.
51. Ibid.
52. The Weekly Review (Nairobi), March 24, 1975: "At his death, however, the Government seems to have discarded any illusions it might have had about his popularity. The announcement of his death was followed by a deployment of riot police in key areas of Nairobi where trouble might have been expected."
53. Jomo Kenyatta, Suffering without bitterness (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1966), P. 213.
54. Ibid., P. 217.
55. The Speech was delivered in Kiswahili. The editors of Suffering Without Bitterness comment:- "Now it is not possible, whatever the scholars may say, to translate the glowing idiom of the Swahili which he employed into English of comparable fluency and impact" (P. 214).

56. The term "court" has been taken from Colin Leys, Underdevelopment in Kenya (London: Heineman 1975), P. 247.
57. Ibid., P. 247.
58. All figures are taken from the Daily Nation. (Nairobi).
59. The mysterious visitor from Malaysia presents some difficulty here, but it would be most surprising if her motives were entirely altruistic.
60. Leys, on cit.
61. Ibid., P. 237
62. Giovanni Arrighi and John. S. Saul, Essays, on the Political Economy of Africa (London: Monthly Review Press, 1973), P. 175
63. See LaDB, on cit., P. 70.
64. For a through going use of the concept of cooptation, see Philip Selznick, T.V.A. and the Grass Roots (New York: Harper, 1966), esp. PP. 219-226. He argues " The rise of the mass man, or at least the increasing need for governments to take into account and attempt to manipulate the sentiments of the common man, has resulted in the development of new methods of control. These new methods center about attempts to organize the mass, to change an undifferentiated and unreliable citizenry into a structured, readily accessible public" (P. 219).
65. Until around the time of Kariuki's death, Parliament was also quite a lively forum for critics of government but this did not give him as large an audience as "Harambee".
66. The restraints imposed upon Mr. Odinga in late 1977 are also of interest in this connection. (See footnote No.9).

DE/AST  
March, 1978.  
N. U. L.



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