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# The Intimate Geography of Family Farms

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## INTRODUCTION

This article describes the development of family farms within a Kipsigis community in western Kenya. In Kenya, throughout rural Africa, and elsewhere in the “developing world,” family farms figure as key discursive and geographic spaces where the “development process” is located (see Crehan and von Oppen 1988, McCracken 1982, Ferguson 1990). Family farms are hybrid spaces where individual, local, state-based, and various “expert” visions of development intersect. They have the added virtue of being places whose geographic, historical and cultural specificity makes them accessible to ethnographic description.<sup>1</sup>

In describing the development of family farms, this article moves back and forth in time and location, combining elements of narrative history, and life history with my own exegesis of structural, cultural, and geographic changes that are specific to Kipsigis country, but which should also be familiar in other parts of the developing world. As a centerpiece I present an ethnographic vignette describing one man’s efforts to build a family farm and the family drama this precipitates. My aims are to convey some sense of the lived, felt, and remembered experiences of the rapid spatial and geographic changes transforming Kipsigis country, and to connect this phenomenological description of a changing landscape to broad transformative processes conventionally associated—by both Kipsigis and various outsiders—with the term “rural development.”

Employing the metaphor of development’s imprint on the landscape, it is crucial to recognize that “development” and “landscape” are fluid and changeable cultural constructions. Each continues to shape the other in a dialectic involving an ever-expanding field of power, at its nexus, the intimate geography of family farms (cf. Anderson 1983, Carter 1988, Cohen and Odhiambo 1989).

How, for example, do Kipsigis women, traditionally identified as cultivators, adapt “customary” work groups to the new social and spatial realities of family farms? And how do these customs connect to “women-centered” ideologies of development advanced by the state and other agencies? How do Kipsigis men—classic herders, warriors and managers of a semi-pastoral economy—adjust a mobile and acquisitive relationship with their landscape to the parochial and finite spaces of family farms? How are new forms of value influ-

enced by old, and how does this affect relations between fathers and sons, husbands and wives, affines and neighbors?

I will not begin this essay with a definition of the family farm. Rather, I present an eccentric case: one that I believe—and most Kipsigis would agree—pushes the envelope. Proceeding from the particular to the general, this farm is “typical” insofar as it illustrates just how plastic family farms can be. Kipsigis are busy determining the social and geographic contours of family farms. And while they draw upon “outside” sources—the media, their schooling, various expert development programs past and present—there is still room for a good deal of experimentation (cf. Pigg 1992).

This coupling of family and farm, which seems so familiar to us, involves particular patterns of feeling and sentiment, particular relations of and for production, and particular kinds of space. All these particularities are relatively new and problematic for Kipsigis farmers. People have had to learn how to live together on family farms. In doing so they have had to revise some of their most basic notions about autonomy, intimacy, gender, mobility and space.

Changes in subjectivity, habit, and custom are, above all, place-bound experiences in which geographies of the heart and imagination connect with broader political, cultural and economic forces. In Kipsigis country the ligaments of this articulation include feeder roads, processing plants, tea plantations and family farms. It is in this context that the development process is, to paraphrase Pred and Watts, “reworked” as Kipsigis make cultural and practical sense of new geographic realities (1992). So before assaying one man’s efforts at development, it is crucial to present a picture of the lay of the land, at least in a few broad strokes.

### *Ndaraweta’s Development Path*

Ndaraweta Sublocation, the place where the events described in this article occurred, is located in the Kericho District of western Kenya, along the edge of the Transmara Forest. During the colonial period Ndaraweta and adjacent sublocations were part of the Kipsigis Native Reserve, an irregularly-shaped remnant of the land once occupied by Kipsigis, sandwiched between white settler farms and, by the mid-1920s, vast tea estates run by James Finlay Co. and Brooke Bond Leibig Ltd.

To the north of Ndaraweta thousands of acres of tea remain under the management of these multinational firms, a testimony to Kenya’s post-independence development path and the resilience of capitalist agribusiness. Ndaraweta and adjacent sublocations are still popularly referred to as “the Reserve,” and continue to suffer some of the disabilities associated with that term, chiefly poor communications and what is now an anachronistic reputation for “backwardness.”

The first farms in Ndaraweta were established shortly after the Second World War and rapidly eclipsed the existing regime of herding and shifting cultiva-

tion. Early land claims were partly based on the labor and material investments required to establish a new farming regime. Clearing the forest, plowing with oxen, establishing pasture, and planting a variety of exotic trees including black wattle, cypress and eucalyptus all served to bolster claims to a piece of land (see Donovan 1996).

A pilot tea-growers' project sponsored by the Colonial Development Corporation coincided with the final stages of land consolidation in Ndaraweta. Extension officers instructed Kipsigis to place their tea close to their houses ("close to their hearts," as one farmer put it) so that these bushes would receive proper care. Such "improvements,"—a term frequently applied to these plantings in colonial documents—were part of an ambitious plan to transform Ndaraweta's "bushy" landscape, along with the "shifting cultivators" or "pastoralists" who lived there, into a modernizing landscape occupied by "forward looking peasant proprietors" and their families (KNA 1933–58, cf. Kalinga 1993).<sup>2</sup>

In the simplest terms, Ndaraweta's geographic transformation can be described as a series of replacements. Tea, pasture, and other exotic vegetation replaced what is now popularly called "the bush,"—indigenous forest in various stages of secondary growth. Maize replaced finger millet and sorghum. Cattle replaced goats and sheep. Family farms replaced a relatively fluid arrangement of houses with nearby fields and gardens. As one local man explained, before Ndarawetans began enclosing land: "people here did not have farms, just houses."

Smallholder tea is certainly the most visible sign of rural development in present-day Ndaraweta. Foreign loans and direct aid projects have enabled the Kenyan government, through its parastatal, the Kenya Tea Development Authority (K.T.D.A.), to build a nearby tea processing plant at the hub of an expanding network of feeder roads and buying centers for local farmers' green leaf.<sup>3</sup> These infrastructural developments, coupled with an initially energetic extension program; enthusiastic, at times even heavy-handed political persuasion at all levels of the Kenyan administration; and a modest but steady rise in the price of green leaf through the 1970s and 1980s, have contributed to the near universal acceptance of smallholder tea among Ndaraweta's farmers.

The income generated from local farmers' green leaf has in turn stimulated the growth of market centers, local businesses, and local demand for a wide range of consumer goods. Likewise it has accelerated the commercialization of other farm products, most notably maize and milk, and bolstered a range of on- and off-farm investments. It has also contributed mightily to the skyrocketing price and scarcity of agricultural land.

Such synergy provides one explanation for Ndaraweta's movement into the "developing world." More generally, it provides the kernel for a good number of processual, if not precisely historical accounts of agrarian change advanced by both conventional and critical development theorists (cf. Hirshman 1967, Peel 1977, Robertson 1984, Lappe *et al.* 1980, Dahl 1984, Williams 1986, Es-

cobar 1988). Not surprisingly Kipsigis have fashioned their own version of this *idée reçue* of development discourse. For many Ndarawetans tea is emblematic of the series of geographic and structural changes that have transformed their country in recent decades, changes they are likely to describe by the phrase *bandap tai*: literally, “moving ahead” or “traveling forward.”<sup>4</sup>

Get Ndarawetans talking about how they and their country have changed and willy-nilly they are talking about development. In such discussions the bush evokes a backward and insular past, a time when people dressed in skins and kept goats in their houses at night to protect them from marauding leopards. This now-defunct landscape contrasts sharply with the bold symmetry of small-holder tea. These blocks of emerald green monoculture, assiduously pruned and measured, are a vivid stamp, quite fantastic to those who remember the variegated and “bushy” landscape of their recent past, of what development brings.

Likewise, the kind of synergy briefly outlined here is hardly distant or abstract for Kipsigis farmers. Rather it rebounds to the most intimate moments and spaces of family life—arenas of consumption, sexuality, reproduction and succession that are the basic elements of people’s identities. It is right here, within these most familiar settings, where habit and custom run up against the exigencies of “rural development,” and differently-positioned protagonists advance their separate, at times conflicting visions of what it means to be moving ahead.

#### ARAP<sup>5</sup> CHERUYOT’S PLACE: A WORK IN PROGRESS

Kegore Cheruyot was just two years old when he migrated with his family to Kamabiriri *kokwet* in 1930.<sup>6</sup> He spent his youth herding goats and “patrolling” the countryside with other young men of his generation and managed to complete two years of schooling. In 1948 he married his first wife and helped his father consolidate claims to the land his family had occupied during the time of shifting cultivation. Soon after this he found employment at African Highlands, a British-run tea estate some twenty miles north of Kamabiriri, where he worked for eight years plucking and pruning tea.

Kegore and his extended family currently live on a sixteen-acre farm contiguous with the farm of his younger brother Labosa, who inherited an equal share of the land their father claimed in 1948. Kegore has two wives and eleven children. Four sons from his eldest wife’s house are married and “jobbing” away from home. Their wives and children live on the farm. There are two other sons and a daughter from this house who are also living at home. Kegore’s junior wife has three sons, all in primary school, and a daughter in nursery school.

Kegore is widely recognized as one of the most innovative farmers in Ndaraweta. His five acres of impeccably well-managed tea have become a standard of excellence for other growers in the area. He is a founding member of the Lib-

erty Church, a small splinter sect which broke off from the African Gospel Church (A.G.C.) in the late 1960s. The Liberty Church, as its name obliquely implies, is not adverse to polygyny, girls' initiation, smoking tobacco, or brewing beer for special occasions, practices which are strictly forbidden among A.G.C. congregants.

Perhaps it is this combination of Kegore's commitment to custom and his innovative approach to farming that prompted his neighbors to elect him community elder and spokesman (*boiyotab kokwet*), a position that enables him to exercise his understated but persuasive style of leadership as a mediator of kokwet disputes and as a liaison to the chief's office.

### *A Family Drama*

About midway through my stay in Kamabiriri, the kokwet was vicariously engaged in a showdown between Kegore and his thirty-year-old son, Paul. The confrontation centered on the question of whom Paul would marry. There were two young women in contention: Paul's current sweetheart, a woman he had met through his recent involvement in the A.G.C.'s "youth movement," and a surprise entry on the scene, who soon became Kegore's favorite.

Paul is the third son of Kegore's first wife. He is a Form Two leaver, having obtained what is roughly equivalent to a tenth-grade education in the U.S. system. He occasionally works for an older brother who has a small shop at a nearby market center, and fills in irregularly as a *matatu* (country taxi) driver for a prosperous neighbor. Paul recently joined the A.G.C., taking what seemed to be a radical turn from his reputation as a merrymaker, and had his heart set to marry a young woman from a nearby A.G.C. congregation. Paul's proposed marriage was championed by local A.G.C. women, who were hopeful that Paul could convince his father that this woman would make a suitable match, and who were quietly trying to convince Paul's mother as well.

In what appeared to be a stunning and totally unanticipated turn of events, another woman appeared at Cheruyot's homestead, claiming that Paul had promised to marry her. She came from the northern part of the location and no one in Kamabiriri seemed to know much about her or her family. Apparently Paul had befriended her during one of his tours as a *matatu* driver. According to Linda Muriet, a friend who was following events closely from her vantage point as a devoted A.G.C. member, this woman simply arrived at Cheruyot's place and announced: "I am here as your son's wife. This is my home." Much to everyone's surprise, arap Cheruyot immediately put her to work in his tea.

Paul insisted that he hardly knew this woman and denied that he had promised to marry her. His contentions were supported by local A.G.C. women, though most other villagers, particularly his age-mates, were skeptical. It is common practice for young men to promise marriage to the women they are courting, and in this case the gambit seemed to have backfired. In his defense,

Paul's supporters countered that once a person is "born again," he ought to be able to shed the perturbations of a sinful past. As Linda reported, they all began praying for Paul "in their hearts."

In the meantime, Paul's former paramour was settling into the daily routine on arap Cheruyot's farm. She continued working in Cheruyot's tea and spent her nights sleeping in Paul's mother's house. Paul took an extended leave from his father's farm, sleeping at his brother's shop, and vowed to everyone who would listen that he intended to "chase" this woman away when he returned home.

As village elder, Kegore was concerned about the negative reaction that would follow if he turned away a woman who (rumor had it) may have been carrying his son's child. Many of Paul's age-mates have been charged with "spoiling" young women, and this was a source of growing consternation within the community, as well as the Kenyan administration. In the weeks following her arrival, Kegore made some queries about this woman's "character" (*misto*) and apparently came away with favorable reports.

Within a month of her arrival, Kegore told his first wife that he had accepted this woman as their new "daughter." And, he warned, Paul had better muffle his protests or he (Kegore) would burn down his bachelor house and curse him.<sup>7</sup> Faced with such a stern and potentially deadly ultimatum, Paul had little choice but to accept the situation. His only means of protest was to stay away from home, and this was the course he followed over the months to come. Ultimately, however, he had to face the bitter realization that his protest was quite useless. Like his other married brothers who were away working, his presence was not required at home. His new wife was there to "represent" him, as Kip-sigis say, and secure his place on the family farm.

Kegore was certainly not unique in taking an active interest in whom his son would marry. People are anxious to learn what they can about the "character" of a potential daughter-in-law. Will she be a hard worker? Will she cooperate with her new parents? And perhaps most importantly, how will her entry on the scene affect the often fragile intimacies between family members? No doubt such concerns were amplified for Kegore by the fact that his son had recently converted to the African Gospel Church and was proposing to marry an A.G.C. girl.<sup>8</sup> Neither of Kegore's wives nor his four current daughters-in-law had strong Christian leanings. Furthermore, the fact that local A.G.C. women were actively promoting Paul's proposed marriage must have been disquieting. If things grew sour at home this girl could rely on her fellow churchgoers for cooperation and support.

### *Kegore's Experiment*

Maintaining good cooperation at home is particularly important for Kegore because of his innovative farming strategy. Kegore has divided his five acres of tea into two equal-sized blocks.<sup>9</sup> One block is assigned to his eldest wife's

house, the other to his junior wife's house. The tea assigned to his elder wife's house is further divided into "squares." Following Kegore's scheme, one square is assigned to each of his four married sons. Since these men are all working away from home, their wives are left with the responsibility of plucking the tea. Two remaining squares—approximately .8 acre in all—are reserved for Paul and his younger brother, who is still in primary school. This tea was plucked by Paul, his mother, occasionally Kegore and, as the situation evolved, by their newest "daughter," Paul's de facto wife. Kegore and his junior wife work on the tea assigned to her house, which has not been subdivided since her three sons are all in primary school. When extra hands are needed he calls on his daughters-in-law.

According to Kegore, this strategy evolved incrementally. When he started planting tea in 1964 (he finished in 1972) he did not plan to share his tea with his sons. Indeed, he hoped to earn enough cash to buy them a separate piece of land. But now he sees this may not be possible because of skyrocketing prices. He depended on hired labor right through the 1970s, but found his pluckers to be unreliable. In his words they were "running away" every few months, and consequently his output was low. Furthermore, Kegore explained, he did not like the idea that his sons' wives would have to look for contract work (*kibarua*) on neighboring farms in order to earn cash for their household expenses. He reasoned that they could earn this money working in the tea. He was also unhappy watching those of his sons who had not gone far in school (here he was referring to Paul and an elder brother, who had recently opened a shop) just "sitting" at home. It was better, he thought, to put them to work in his tea.

Kegore's farming strategy is fundamentally different from those of his neighbors' on a number of counts. Following his own exegesis, the division of his tea into blocks conforms with the customary principle of assigning equal shares of his productive assets to each house. In doing so, however, he has accelerated the normal course of events. A few farmers do permit their mature sons to plant a few lines of tea on the family farm, but none, so far as I know, have moved to partition their tea between households or sons until the final stages of succession. Kegore's strategy effectively contains the centrifugal forces set in motion by subdivision and the commodification of farm products and labor.

To a great extent, Kegore carries this off by the sheer force of his personality and by skillfully managing familial relationships. In effect, he is employing his wives and daughters-in-law as pluckers on the tea that he has preemptively, if only partially subdivided. This gives each household on his farm an individual stake in tea production while he still retains control over the entire operation.

What makes Kegore's strategy even more radical by local standards is the fact that none of the women on his farm grow maize or millet, aside from the few stalks that they each cultivate in the kitchen gardens near their houses. In-

stead, Kegore buys the shelled maize consumed by his extended family from neighboring farmers.<sup>10</sup> When I questioned him about this unusual departure from local practice, he pointed to his tea and replied: “This is my food crop.”

Without maize and millet to plant, weed and harvest, the married women on his farm are free to focus on their daily rounds of plucking tea. But they have had to forego the principal occupation of other women in their community, producing food for their families. This work is largely accomplished through cooperative work groups that women create and manage with their neighbors. In fact, one of the chief reasons why every other farmer in the area who has a large tea plot hires pluckers is because of such scheduling conflicts. As Kegore explained: “You cannot burn two sticks at the same time.”

### *Spatial Form and Social Fantasy*<sup>11</sup>

Kegore acknowledges that his farming strategy is quite unconventional. As he puts it, he runs his farm “like those people from the African Highlands,” the British-run tea estate where Kegore worked during the 1950s. In those days tea estates were buying maize from neighboring Kipsigis farmers as “rations” (*posho*) for their workers, an arrangement no African worker is willing to tolerate today. What Kegore’s farm does mirror, in miniature, is the gridlike organization that characterizes production on the estates. Kegore meticulously records the quantity of green leaf each of his sons’ wives plucks on a daily basis, and distributes the monthly income earned from these squares. He keeps the year-end bonus—the second payment for the entire volume of green leaf delivered to the buying center over one year—along with monthly earnings from the block he has assigned to his junior wife. This serves as a kind of general fund, a portion of which he redistributes to his married sons according to his own calculations, and on which he also draws to purchase maize.

By turning tea, the quintessential cash crop, into his “food crop,” Kegore blurs the distinctions between men’s and women’s work and the gendered spaces that such work demarcates. Running counter to custom, Kegore works shoulder-to-shoulder with his wives and daughters-in-law, collapsing the physical distance between them and reconfiguring the moral distance as well. He fosters a new kind of intimacy—based upon his close supervision of their thoroughly commoditized labor—that leaves little room for conventional outward expressions of difference and respect. By redirecting the productive energies of these women, by commodifying and thereby “capturing” their work, Kegore has managed to thwart their efforts to establish separate places for themselves on his farm. And, at least for the moment, he has kept the fragmentary forces of succession at bay.

Reflecting on the broader implications of his strategy, Kegore also identified what he conceived to be a fundamental difference in customary and contemporary forms of value that influenced his decision to share his tea with his sons. “In Kipsigis,” Kegore asserted, “a cow belongs to the father alone.” And, while

a father could not be expected to give his sons cows as a source of startup capital, he reasoned, tea is quite a different thing: "They are just bushes," he explained, "you cannot say 'these are mine, go plant your own' . . . no."

How closely does Kegore's reading follow local conventions? No Kipsigis, so far as I know, would divide his herd among his sons while he was still alive and active. Despite the growing marketability of livestock and milk, cows remain closely identified with their owners. With the exception of bridewealth and homicide payments, the redistribution of a man's cattle is one of the terminal acts of succession. However, most Kipsigis do not share Kegore's opinions about tea.

In the popular view, tea belongs to the "old man" and should not be partitioned before his death, which is one reason why wives and children are often less than enthusiastic about working in the old man's tea. Kegore certainly holds a minority viewpoint, but as we shall see, other men are at least considering the idea of developing "family tea plots." Kegore's creative innovation has been to accelerate this process.

Kegore's neighbors admire his well-tended tea and are impressed with the labor discipline he has mustered within his extended family, something rarely seen on other farms. But no one, so far as I could establish, was willing or even desired to make the radical adjustments necessary to achieve such results. One of the keys to Kegore's success has been the compliance of his daughters-in-law. If any of these women had chosen to resist his plans and asked for a place to plant some maize and finger millet, he would have been hard-pressed to refuse them. Small wonder then that Kegore chose to select the girl who appeared unexpectedly at his homestead as Paul's future wife, over her A.G.C. rival. Her tenuous position made her a more pliable, and hence suitable candidate.

Kegore seemed to recognize the morally ambiguous qualities of his farming operation. He explained that even though his wives and daughters-in-law did not plant maize or finger millet, he encouraged them to participate in some form of cooperative work with their neighbors. As he stated: "It is not good for them to stay alone."

Food production is one of the principle ways that married women can begin to establish a separate place for themselves on the family farm, develop their own idiosyncratic cooperative ties with other married women in their neighborhoods, and extend their claims to space outwards from their cooking stoves to their kitchen gardens, and from there on to their finger millet and maize fields. But the only practical work these women can do with their neighbors is weeding tea, an infrequent and unpopular chore that is often done with contract labor. This domestic dilemma is at the nub of Kegore's farming strategy.

#### THE INTIMATE GEOGRAPHY OF FAMILY FARMS

"Intimate geography" may seem a peculiar way to describe family farms. Many who study family farms marshal a conceptual vocabulary designed to decipher

the articulation of “interests” rather than “emotions,” and in many respects this article follows the same path.<sup>12</sup> Yet “intimate” does seem an apt term for the kinds of adjustments that Kipsigis are making as they learn new ways of living together on family farms. As people’s lived world changes, assuming new shapes, boundaries and horizons, so too change their ambitions, their fears, and their moral visions of what is possible.

Kegore’s bold and somewhat eccentric experiment in farming follows just such a course. Inspired in part by the “rational” symmetries that he encountered at the African Highlands tea estate, Kegore has fashioned a radically different spatial design for his family farm, in which the labor of his wives and “children” is choreographed within a grid of blocks and squares. But from where does this design truly spring? What historical, existential, and practical realities does Kegore’s vision of family and farm attempt to address?

It is tempting to step back and pose a neo-Marxist interpretation. Here, Kegore’s farm becomes one more instance in which the “logic” of capitalism overwhelms indigenous cultural forms, amplifies patriarchal authority and undercuts the power of junior men and women.<sup>13</sup> Retooling the title of this piece, Kegore’s experiment in geography has created more thorough and intimate forms of domination. It is equally tempting to advance a socio-psychological interpretation which paints Kegore as an aging but still powerful head of household trying to cheat his mortality by maintaining coherency and authority in a manifestly unstable context. Both interpretations have their merits. But to my mind, neither is satisfying from an ethnographic point of view. And neither gives Kegore his due.

### *Changing the Cultural Landscape*

Prior to the advent of family farms, Kipsigis pursued a fairly mobile existence of herding and shifting cultivation. Ties of kinship and affinity were articulated through the circulation of livestock within and between exogamous patrilineal clans. Men maintained a flexible and often expansive sense of clan identity that was well-suited to a form of life partly based on herding. Women had to manage more ambiguous relations to clans; always “daughters” of their natal clan, they gradually, with marriage and maturing children, came to identify more completely with their husbands’ clans.<sup>14</sup> In this regard their clan identities seem more place-bound, tempered by the cooperative ties they develop with their affines and neighbors and by their principal work as cultivators (cf. Berry 1985).

These fundamental facts persist, and at the same time are transformed within the parochial spaces of family farms. Stated simply, present-day Kipsigis families are “developing” in tandem with the development of their farms. This dialogic connection between spatial form and social fantasy, and simultaneously, between social form and spatial fantasy, is at the crux of what it means to be “moving ahead.” In practical and existential terms it involves a shift from

neolocal towards patrilocal residence, diminishing the physical distances between polygynous households, and a narrowing and intensification of clan-based affiliations.

These new geosocial realities have fostered new forms of feeling, and, to revive an old-fashioned term, a new sense of corporate identity that coheres around a piece of land, what Kipsigis call a *koret*.

People are intimately identified with their farms. Likewise, the countryside that I encountered has become almost completely personalized. Walking down a road as I was getting to know the area, a companion would point out this fellow's tea or that fellow's maize or another fellow's neatly paddocked pasture on the next ridge. Even the crushed stones under foot were quarried at so-and-so's place. Brothers and sisters will refer to their natal home as *korenyon*, "our land." This expression has a definite jural as well as a geographic meaning different from *olin* or *gaa*, which refer to home and family. But *korenyon* also communicates a strong sense of attachment.<sup>15</sup> These days, one's fortune is intimately tied to one's *koret*.

For Ndarawetans, these explicitly place-bound attachments are a modern development. There are elders who can look back fifty years and remember a time when "the land could not be finished," or as one old man told me, "land was for everyone." Demographic and economic changes have radically altered this situation. Portrayed in broad strokes, land has replaced livestock as the principle resource required to start a household. And while cattle remain the preferred media for bridewealth payments, such exchanges ultimately depend on the availability of privately owned pasture. This narrowing of access to productive resources is changing the Kipsigis mobile and acquisitive relationship to their landscape and with it, their views about themselves.<sup>16</sup>

### *Changing Forms of Value*

The advent of tea, and of commercial markets for maize, milk and other farm products have all accelerated the process of privatization. Yet land is not completely "commodified" as we might employ the term. Kipsigis *say* that land belongs to old men, "fathers" like Kegore, of single or multigenerational families. But even the most obstreperous among them would think long and hard about selling the family farm or even a piece of it, without first consulting his wife or wives and mature sons. Though still somewhat vaguely articulated, land has become a family holding.

In a classic case of cultural bricolage, Kipsigis support this position by employing certain principles of succession long associated with the inheritance of livestock. Like a father's herd, land is divided equally among sons. In cases where cowives have set up households on one farm, each house gets an equal share of the land, in effect a separate *koret*, that is then divided between sons who belong to that house.

As Kipsigis see it, the likely discrepancies in landholdings among half broth-

ers mirror discrepancies in the size of herds attached to different houses, an inevitable outcome of the vagaries of fortune, natural increase, differences in bridewealth payments and the like. Such lopsided divisions of land also jibe with the axiom that livestock attached to different houses should not be mixed once the old man dies. This is the principle that Kegore draws upon, quite inventively, in dividing his tea into separate blocks.

Still, there are differences between land and cattle that belie a simple transfer of sentiments, values and practices from old regime to new—different metaphoric and metonymic extensions, different practical possibilities and constraints. Kipsigis view cattle as a sign and a surety of fertility, good fortune, wealth. Cattle are mobile; they reproduce. They carry the promise of future generations and echoes, however faint, of ones past. But despite people's best efforts and intentions, cattle are easily alienated: stolen, decimated by disease, sold to pay for a child's school fees, for medical bills, or for sundry other goods and services in a cash-based economy. In contrast, land, as it is currently configured, is finite and much more resistant to quick manipulation or alienation. The memories it holds seem deeper, at least potentially. Likewise the identities it supports are narrower and more concentrated.

### *Domesticating Change*

Along with a score of practical dilemmas, these differences in substance and value pose domestic challenges for Kipsigis farmers.<sup>17</sup> Particularly vexing are the challenges of managing relationships between fathers and mature sons. Many people contend that a father should give his maturing sons some latitude to develop a portion of the family farm before formal subdivision occurs. An analogy is drawn to the claims which young men advance for a portion of the bridewealth cattle received when their sisters marry. I was often told that a father ought to hold these animals in trust since they belong to one house (essentially one hearth) and are part of the patrimony that enables sons to start their own careers as "old men"—mature, sexual beings with families of their own. Likewise, so the thinking goes, fathers are stewards of the land.

While such notions have a certain moral punch they are hardly prescriptive. Fathers are reluctant to cede control of their land, or to witness the fragmentation of farms it took them years to build. Responding scornfully to the pressures of a younger generation, one old man told me, "these young people think they can just climb the trees we planted and fly."<sup>18</sup>

Yet most elders do concede that some accommodations should be made for these young men, who, for lack of land, are spending their most productive years in economic and social limbo. For their part, growing numbers of these "youth," some approaching middle age, spend a good portion of their time "sitting" and "strolling" at home or away "jobbing" for paltry wages that offer little chance of accumulation or investment in the farm economy.

This is precisely the kind of *anomie* that Kegore claims he is trying to counter

with his radical farming strategy. By managing the labor of his sons' wives Kegore is modulating their access to land, an irony not lost on these men. In the starkest terms, he is able to exert some measure of control over their ambitions, their productivity, and indirectly at least, their sexuality. Indeed, quite dramatically so in Paul's case.

Faced with similarly idle and restless "children," quite a few old men of Kegore's generation have settled on a different solution. They are allowing sons to plant some tea of their own. There are two variants of this strategy. In one, each son is allowed to extend a section of the original plot, working with the unspoken assumption that this is the portion he will eventually inherit. In the other variant, each son is given the liberty to plant a separate tea plot, which serves as a kernel for the eventual subdivision of the family farm.

There are a number of variables influencing such decisions: farm size, family size, the need to use the land for other purposes, and most crucially the old man's disposition. Mindful of the fragmentation such strategies are bound to foster, a few elders spoke almost wistfully about the prospect of a family tea plot managed in perpetuity, or at least jointly for another generation, by their sons. Yet to my knowledge, no one in the entire Location had created such a joint (corporate) holding. As one thoughtful commentator explained to me: "These children want things that are mine (*viz.* their own), not things that are ours."

Contrary to Kegore's assertion, tea and cattle do share certain common features. People *do* say—to their sons or younger brothers—"these are mine . . . go and plant your own." In this regard planting tea, like owning cattle, is a mark of autonomy, of coming of age if not outright succession. Like cattle, tea is prolific, generating a monthly flow of cash. And, as Kegore himself demonstrates, tea is amenable to fractional calculations and shareholding, much like the family herd.

It is no accident that tea serves these competing functions, that it is both an anchor of family enterprise and a stamp of individuation. Historically, the planting of tea, like the planting of other exotic trees, firmly established a claim to a piece of land. And again, like cattle, Kipsigis say that tea "belongs to" old men. Men plant tea which is duly registered in their names. And men receive monthly payments and year-end bonuses from the K.T.D.A. for their green leaf.

But this does not deter wives and children from claiming a share of the income generated from the old man's tea. Nearly all Ndarawetans will tell you that tea has "educated their children." Along with school fees, people expect that tea will pay for new clothing, books, batteries, sugar and other household commodities. It is downright shameful not to have the cash on hand to pay for the family's morning pot of tea, now a staple made with copious amounts of milk and sugar. Indeed, for many farmers such "domestic consumption" devours a good share of their earnings. In this regard, the management of tea, like that of cattle, is a measure of a man's skills as a social manager.

Here is where the analogy ends. While cattle permit a fluid and mobile extension of relationships through circulation and exchange, tea rewards intensification and an inward, place-bound orientation. Seen in this light, Kegore's intuitions about tea and cattle as different forms of value ring true. Tea production and the kinds of consumption it permits are at the heart of new forms of domesticity in Ndaraweta, new spatial orientations and fantasies, new forms of family life.

#### THE CHOREOGRAPHY OF WORK

As might be expected, not all Ndarawetans are equally able or willing to devote the unrelenting labor required to attain near-optimal yields from their tea. Farmers such as Kegore who regularly achieve high yields are said to be "tough in keeping tea," an apt expression given the labor discipline that such yields require. Like farmers everywhere who keep an eye on their neighbors' operations, Ndarawetans make invidious comparisons between this fellow's "bushy" tea and the next fellow's neat, level plucking table.<sup>19</sup> Such allusions extend beyond the straggly appearance of a poorly kept tea *shamba*, (plot in Swahili), to invoke a time when Ndaraweta itself was "just a bush."

Not all Ndarawetans are equally committed to maximizing tea production, particularly at the expense of other farming activities, nor do people see the middling yields attained by most farmers as a simple index of their industry or managerial skills. In fact, many Ndarawetans express a good deal of antipathy about working in the "old man's tea." This is chiefly explained in terms of scheduling conflicts, but more nuanced concerns about the choreography of work and consumption also come into play.

Nearly all farmers in Ndaraweta with more than one acre of tea employ Jaluo pluckers. These Jaluo—single men, women and sometimes young families—come from nearby Siaya and Kisumu Districts, where land pressure is terrific. They constitute the lion's share of "migrant" labor on the tea estates and are almost exclusively employed as pluckers throughout the Reserve. Kipsigis farmers have built housing for their pluckers, generally barracks-like dwellings just a few steps from the tea *shamba* and always segregated from their own family compounds. This layout mirrors the industrial design of the tea estates and further accentuates the symbolic and technical differences between plucking tea and other kinds of farm work.

Pluckers are employed under contract, earning a percentage (somewhere between thirty-five and forty percent) of the daily price for the green leaf they pluck. Yet even a meager subsistence wage requires a great deal of dexterity and stamina. Skilled pluckers are highly regarded, since labor is by far the most important factor influencing yield. Large tea growers, especially those who are "tough in keeping tea," often work closely with their pluckers in a quasi-supervisory fashion, careful not to be too harsh—"like the Colonials," as one particularly successful grower explained. Many will allow their pluckers to

grow a small vegetable patch and keep a few chickens. Some even provide a daily supply of milk.

Such gestures and accommodations, far different from what people experience on the estates, aim to create what Kipsigis call "good understanding," a kind of neighborly bonhomie or something approaching the furthest orbit of kinship. But as experience often shows, such relationships tend to be rather brittle. Kegore is certainly not alone in his lament about Jaluo pluckers who are "running away every now and then." In fact, this seems more the rule than the exception. Kegore's response to this quandary has been to turn his family into pluckers. With equal ambition, some of his neighbors are trying to turn their pluckers into family.<sup>20</sup>

While kinship serves as a powerful means for organizing labor it can also be evoked to resist demands for certain kinds of work. It is simply not feasible to work in the tea every day without forfeiting other responsibilities. Many women steer clear of their husbands' tea shambas by evoking their "customary" work as wives and mothers. Even children avoid being regularly drafted as pluckers. They have their studies, or, as I was told on one occasion, suffer a range of maladies—"malaria," headaches and nausea—from the "harsh work" in the old man's tea. Taking a page straight out of Marx, the tedious, repetitive and unremitting task of plucking tea simply does not jibe with people's deepest cultural understandings of who they are. Still, things are not as clear-cut as they first appear. Old men will call on their wives and children to lend a hand when their tea is unusually flush. Like every other family endeavor, success in tea cultivation depends on "good understanding," and on an emerging sense of the shared fortune that is a part of living together on a family farm.

#### *A Woman's Place*

Of course all farms are gendered spaces, albeit more or less so for different activities, at different times in the agricultural calendar and at different moments in the domestic cycle. Far from being static these spaces are constantly reconfigured to meet the practical and conceptual challenges of working together in a rapidly expanding market economy. Furthermore, one can observe startling differences in farming strategies across Ndaraweta. Generally, the smaller the farm, the more thoroughly it is devoted to commercial enterprises. It is not uncommon on small farms to see husband and wife working together to chop fodder for their dairy cows or to weed a cabbage crop earmarked for sale, or spraying orange trees, or even plucking tea. Such inwardly-directed, cost-conscious farming strategies blur the boundaries between men's and women's work and the gendered spaces they inhabit.

Nonetheless, habit and custom support certain patterns of feeling and distinctive place-bound identities for men and women on every family farm. Most married women grow a small amount of *beek* (finger millet and sorghum) for home consumption. Once a task for men and women, growing *beek* has become

exclusively women's work in recent years. Beek is mixed with maize flour to make a rich brown *kimnyet*, the stiff porridge that is the mainstay of every meal, generally served with a side dish of vegetables or occasionally meat.<sup>21</sup>

A woman's beek field (*mbaret ap beek*) is a clear demonstration that she has established a separate place for herself, with her own kitchen house and loft to store previous year's harvests and the prerogative to clear a piece of land for future crops. In no small measure, it is a sign of her autonomy and strength. Far from isolating women, beek production brings them together in cooperative work groups called *moriik* (literally, "a circle").<sup>22</sup>

Moriik for growing beek generally consist of no more than four or five women who have roughly equivalent areas under cultivation. The work proceeds in rounds, with each stage of production accomplished in concert, moving from one woman's field to the next. Once everyone's crop is thinned it is time to start weeding, and then harvesting the early-ripening varieties, and so on until all the grain is harvested and the circle is completed. In such a fashion, women with larger fields of beek (.2 to .3 acres) will be occupied six to eight hours a day nearly every day of the entire growing season.

These groups often form the core of larger cooperative work groups, also called *moriik*, for weeding maize. Here each woman does precisely equal amounts of weeding for all the members of her group in exchange for their collective effort in her maize field.<sup>23</sup> Any additional weeding that remains is done with family labor, or, if maize is being grown on a commercial scale, with contract labor, for which Kipsigis use the Kiswahili term *kibarua*, literally, "a letter."

Women from cash-poor farms mobilize their *moriik* mainly for such contract labor. Kipsigis say these women are "selling" their *moriik*. When a woman makes a contract with a farmer to do a specific amount of weeding she is actually selling her round in the circle, the *moriik* she "owns" by dint of the work she has already done for fellow members, or the promise to reciprocate in equal measure for such work in the immediate future.<sup>24</sup> Without this emerging labor market, commercial maize production, which provides a substantial source of income for many families, would not be feasible.

The commercial dimensions of work groups can hardly be overstated. After tea, maize is the largest source of cash in Ndaraweta.<sup>25</sup> And men, who control most commercial production, depend on women's labor to achieve the yields that make this enterprise profitable. At the same time, selling *moriik* gives women access to cash and ultimately the opportunity to direct their earnings in channels outside their husbands' control.

This hybrid form of production that combines "customary" and "market" elements belies any simple contrasts between men's and women's work, market and subsistence-based production, the public and domestic spheres. There are, however, differences between men's and women's visions of the cash econo-

my, and, returning to our theme, the spatial forms which make these visions real to people.

### *New Spaces, New Identities*

Growing beek insulates women from the labor demands of their husbands and fathers-in-law. However, it would be shortsighted to view these fields simply as a preserve for women's "collective" roles and "customary" prerogatives. These same collectives provide a platform for women's dynamic engagement in the cash economy—a means for saving as well as earning and spending.

Kipsigis call these savings groups *moriik ap robonik*, literally "moriik for money." Building on the cooperative ties forged for growing beek and weeding maize, and employing the same principle of balanced reciprocity, savings groups can be a powerful method for accumulating cash.<sup>26</sup> In this regard beek and tea are complimentary, not simply because one is the quintessential food and the other the cash crop, but more importantly because each provides the space to articulate separate visions of development.<sup>27</sup>

Women spend the money they accumulate in these groups in a variety of ways: clothing, travel, cash gifts to their mothers or siblings, durable goods such as cupboards, serving dishes, large cooking pots, and, in the grandest expenditure I observed, a large water tank. Much of this spending falls within the "domestic sphere," a diversely-imagined space that is taking shape in tandem with the development of family farms (see Ryan 1981). Along with beek seeds, women are exchanging bulbs and cuttings for flower beds in their family compounds and crochet patterns to decorate the store-bought furniture in their family sitting rooms. Such things certainly communicate a nascent class consciousness—poor families do not have flower gardens or easy chairs decorated with doilies—but they also manifest women's views of what it means to be "moving ahead" (McCracken 1990:71–89, 130–137, Cambell 1983).

Perhaps the most innovative, and from the perspective of many Kipsigis men, radical deployment of *moriik* is the recent formation of travel groups called *ru-toita* in Kipsigis (from the verb *koruto*, to travel). Women can assemble their travel groups to visit anywhere, but most frequently they take friends and relatives from their current community to "greet" those they have left at marriage—their parents, siblings, old friends and neighbors. These greetings begin with a bevy of songs composed for the occasion, followed by a rather formal presentation of gifts, including sugar, tea and cash for the hosts, and finally a feast. These trips, which often take months in planning and involve quite substantial material investments, are a very powerful and dramatic way for married women to demonstrate their connections to their natal homes.

This sort of consumption contrasts with the kinds of "productive" investments typically reserved for men—in cattle, land, tea, other farm improvements and, among the most prosperous, in tractors and pickup trucks. However, our

familiar distinctions between women's domestic investments and men's public engagement in a cash-based economy begin to dissolve when closely examined. In a bluntly transactional sense a growing number of women are making substantial investments in their natal homes and identities. At a rudimentary level this gives them greater leverage in dealings with their husband's people, and more pointedly, in developing a separate place for themselves on the family farm.

Women become instrumental in the project of moving ahead by imagining and creating new identities and futures for themselves and their families. This project is accomplished partly in association with other women. But women are also approaching the project of development in partnership with their husbands by reshaping "customary" notions of respect, complementarity and difference. Kegore's farming strategy is so radical because it subverts these modern forms of female productivity. By undercutting the autonomy of his daughters-in-law, by disavowing—in Kipsigis terms, "disrespecting"—the very qualities that make women different from men, he is undercutting the autonomy of his sons as well.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Not surprisingly, there is no simple consensual vision of development in Ndaraweta. As people "move ahead" into the modern discursive and geographic space widely known as the developing world there is room for a good deal of experimentation and historical revision. This is reflected in the separate and often divergent stories people tell about how they and their countryside have changed (see Donovan 1996). More prosaically, it is also reflected in the diverse farming strategies taken up by Ndaraweta's farmers. Indeed the family farm is where competing visions of progress and development receive their sharpest critiques and find their sharpest expressions.

Running his farm "like those people in the African Highlands," Kegore Cheruyot's bold experiment in farming shakes many of the "customary" structures of family life to their foundations. By prematurely, if only partially, subdividing his tea, and by turning it into his family's "food" crop as well as their cash crop, Kegore has managed to restructure production relations and stymie conventional expectations that his daughters-in-law, in concert with their husbands, will gradually develop separate places for themselves on the family farm.

Kegore's strategy is contingent on his ability to micromanage the labor of his wives and his sons' wives. Such considerations clearly influenced Kegore's choice of a new wife for his son. In the end, Paul's bid for greater independence from his father—consonant with his recently acquired "born again" identity and his plan to marry an A.G.C. girl—was frustrated by his father's bid to consolidate his innovative farming strategy. It is unclear whether Kegore's experiment will endure, though my own sense is that the insular extended family he

has forged will rapidly disintegrate without his strong leadership. Kegore's neighbors are watching these developments with interest, but no one seems ready to make the radical realignments of family and farm—by reshaping production relations based on age, gender and affiliation—which Kegore has made.

Kegore's farm design makes what Paul Willis calls a "basic compact with the future" (1977:2). In essence he has become a choreographer of identities and possibilities for himself and his family. Likewise, women who come together to form cooperative groups for work, travel, savings and business have made a similar compact. Modulating the most basic elements of their identities— notions of clan, of self, of female productivity—women have created new forms of mobility, consumption and accumulation. The new identities and futures envisioned by these women are now taking shape. These identities and futures conform to new geographic realities associated with development and have played a part in creating them (see Pigg 1992).

It is crucial to remember that family farms present *every* Ndarawetan with a practical and existential measure of what it means to be moving ahead. In this regard, women's visions of development are broadly the same as their husbands'. Both are working to make separate places for themselves within a modernizing landscape composed of an ever-expanding number of private holdings.

Development as spatial form and social fantasy is perhaps most vividly expressed within the precincts of their family compounds—in brightly decorated sitting rooms and flower gardens that "beautify" (people use the English term) their homesteads. More fundamentally it is reflected in the choreography of work, channels of investment, and the flow of cash and other commodities that realign people's connections with kin, neighbors, more distantly other rural Kenyans, and most distantly the rest of us. These spatial reconfigurations provide every Ndarawetan with a lived and felt experience of what it means to be modern.

In the broadest comparative vein, living and working on family farms serves (however fitfully and imperfectly) to "naturalize" new forms and relations of production. This cosmological sleight of hand, so central to all forms of family life, is accomplished by channeling basic drives and appetites—sexuality, alimentionation, and reproduction (see Beidelman 1986:49–66). As we have seen, Kegore has done this with a vengeance. Inspired, so far as I wish to speculate, by the harsh symmetries of commercial tea estates, he has turned his tea into food and redirected his "children's" drives for sexual and social autonomy in order to muster a compliant work force, at least during this interim stage in his family's domestic cycle.

In counterpoint many other Ndarawetans are developing equally radical visions of the future. Faced with what are basically the same material constraints, Ndarawetans are imagining and effecting a rather diverse range of possibilities for family and farm. Kegore presents us with what is perhaps one of the dark-

est visions. But it is hardly an inevitable course. In fact, I offer the slightly heterodox view that the spatial forms and fantasies that many Kipsigis women have created in their efforts to move ahead afford them a greater degree of autonomy than they ever experienced under the previous regime, viz., prior to Ndaraweta's thorough integration within a world-based market economy. (cf. Carney and Watts 1990). Hegemony, to play with John Comaroff's pleasingly alliterative phrase, is homemade, and so subject to nearly endless variations on the recipe.

Looking at transformations through the lens of gender, as I have done here, can be instructive and rhetorically compelling. But its true value stems from our ability to tease out the complexities, contradictions and complicities that underlie people's everyday experience of change. Kipsigis men and women participate in one another's "gendered" imagination and experiences of rural development. These shared intimacies are a part of life together on family farms. And if we choose to frame these experiences in paradigmatic fashion, perhaps by juxtaposing hierarchy and cooperation, or patriarchal and "women-centered" outlooks, we are likely to lose our grip on the particularities of landscape and social system that make change historically meaningful, and on a more basic level, human.

Throughout this essay, my aim has been to ground our abstract, often opaque concerns about the workings of hegemony and the overarching processes of commodification, globalization and capitalist restructuring within the ethnographically familiar terrain of everyday life. Kegore's admittedly eccentric farming strategy highlights some of the more pervasive existential challenges facing all Ndarawetans. As their farms grow smaller and are worked more intensively, people are exposed (perhaps more bluntly than before) to the tensions, contradictions and fragile assumptions that are at the very center of family life. As they "move ahead," Ndarawetans must rechart the emotional signposts and well-worn pathways by which they navigate within emotionally charged and potentially dangerous social terrain. This intimate geography is at the heart of their often ambiguous and discordant experiences of development. Ethnography gives us privileged access to these spaces. Given our own fractured and often narrowly-conceived debates about gender and family, such ethnography can be quite instructive.

#### ENDNOTES

1. Of course the same applies to family farms everywhere. Quite distinctive forms of "the family farm" exist in different regions of France, the United States, and other places in the "developed" world. Despite the presumed leveling effects of modernization, such regional differences show few signs of disappearing (see Rogers 1991).

2. Anyone familiar with the dominant discourse on development in Kenya from the early colonial period onward will recognize the rhetorical and bluntly political connections drawn between images of a transformed landscape and the transformation of persons (see Swynnerton 1954, Cooper 1989, Berman and Lonsdale 1992). For Kipsigis

however, the metonymic connections between person, history and place so central to neoliberal concepts of progress continue to be vexing and politically fractious (see Donovan 1996).

3. Green leaf is the common term for freshly plucked tea leaves. Processing green leaf into “made tea” involves a complex industrial process of withering, fermentation, drying and grading.

4. The development of smallholder tea provides a particularly appropriate story, a kind of *pars pro toto* account, of Ndarawetans’ experiences of development in the broad terms I have just outlined. One could develop equally revealing accounts of the transformation of values attached to other farm products: pasture, livestock, milk, maize, the finger millet and sorghum that are still grown in small patches for home consumption, even remaining sections of “the bush” which are all now in private hands. Likewise one could describe the changing values of work. A history of all these commodities, an account of what Appadurai (1986) calls their “social life,” would present a more rounded picture of Ndaraweta’s development path. Nonetheless, the development of smallholder tea brings these changes into sharp relief.

5. “Arap” is the common form of address for Kipsigis men. Its literal translation is “son of . . .”

6. Kamabiriri is the community where I resided during my stay in Ndaraweta. A *kokwet* (pl. *kokwotinwek*) is a congeries of households historically united through ties of cooperation. Since the late colonial period *kokwotinwek* have also served as the smallest unit within the state’s administrative apparatus. This, coupled with the disappearance of fresh agricultural land for herding and gardening, have made *kokwotinwek* much more rigid geographic and political entities than they were a few generations ago.

7. Prior to marriage Kipsigis men live in a *singiroina*, commonly translated as bachelor’s hut. Burning down Paul’s *singiroina* would effectively make him *persona non grata* on the family farm; as if this were not enough, Kegore also threatened to curse his son. Kipsigis believe, and have a good deal of anecdotal evidence to show, that a father’s curse is lethal.

8. Men like arap Cheruyot are wary of accepting an A.G.C. girl since the church takes such a hostile stand towards many aspects of custom. Farms simply will not run smoothly without basic sympathies between family members. Since non-A.G.C. households are in the majority, A.G.C. girls have a small pool of potential spouses. This is a source of consternation among A.G.C. members and seems to have been one reason why the A.G.C. women of Kamabiriri took such an active interest in Paul’s marriage.

9. The rest of Kegore’s agricultural land is devoted to pasture, where he grazes five dairy cows. He says that he keeps these animals to “feed his children,” a category that includes everyone in his extended family.

10. Kegore has built a large storehouse where he stocks bags of fertilizer that he has purchased well in advance of planting season. He trades this fertilizer to local farmers who do not have cash on hand at planting time in exchange for shelled maize, on terms that are slightly lower than the official market price. Some farmers find this arrangement agreeable because they can avoid the hassles and delays often incurred when dealing with the Kenya Cereals and Produce Board.

11. This section is inspired by Paul Carter’s *The Road to Botany Bay*, which is broadly concerned with “the spatial forms and fantasies through which a culture declares its presence” (1988:xxii).

12. Medick and Sabean coax us to reconsider the ways that we imagine family life among peasant farmers and other “traditional” families (1984:9–27). What we are likely to interpret as a blunt expression of “interests” (talk of human relations in the idiom of property rights) is often a truncated but highly condensed language of “emotions”—

sentiments of attachment, filial love and obligation, rivalry, and the like. Our bourgeois sensibilities often cause us to have a tin ear for such expressions. For an influential Africa-based perspective in which the language of "interests" reigns, see Goody 1976 (cf. Beidelman 1986).

13. A great deal has been written about the transformation of domestic economies in Africa, particularly the impact of capitalist development and commercial farming upon a gendered division of labor, and its ramifications for women's lives. Much of this work is programmatic—the "needs" or "logic" of capital largely determine life outcomes (Meillassoux 1984, Etienne and Leacock 1980). Other authors have given greater shrift to human agency and the resilience of indigenous institutions (Parkin 1990, Guyer 1981, 1984, Carney and Watts 1990).

14. Following Kipsigis vernacular, a married woman is said to "belong to" her husband's clan. While this does not bear close logical scrutiny (in this exogamous society women do not share the same clan identity as their children), in lived, felt and even jural terms the identification with a husband's clan strengthens over time.

15. My sense of the semantic variations in these words is as follows: *olin* literally translates as "that place," and is generally used to refer to a home stand, as in "that place of yours[or hers, or theirs]," and so forth. *Gaa* also translates as "home," but has a more explicit social meaning, referring to the people and resources that cohere around a hearth. So, for instance, half-brothers within a polygynous family will refer to the people and things connected to their mothers' hearths as *gaanyun*, "our home." This is also the expression married women use to refer to people that belong to their natal clan. *Koret* has a definite geographic, and these days, legal sense. It refers to a specific piece of land, a farm, that "belongs to" (*Kips. nebo*) the head of household who holds a title deed.

16. Kipsigis do not have an autochthonous myth. Their origin stories begin at some vague northern location called Bergei ("hot") or Tto, and are dominated by themes and motifs of mobility, migration and assimilation. With the exception of Tulap Sipsigis, the mountain staging point for the occupation of their current territory, there are few features of the contemporary landscape that have any deep cultural significance (see Orchardson 1961). There are no clan territories, and in fact the majority of Kipsigis belong to clans of Kissi, Maasai, or Okiek origin. Kipsigis see no connection between land and the dead. Their landscape is not peopled with ancestors. Prior to the advent of farms Kipsigis did not bury their dead, but simply placed dead bodies in the bush. Family burial on the farm surely has an influence on people's notions of memory, history and place. But precisely how this will play out remains an open and intriguing question.

17. I use the term "domestic challenges" here as a shorthand for the moral and conceptual challenges of family life. How, for instance, should a father treat the sons of an unmarried daughter who is living at home? Following custom, these children are members of the old man's clan, and entitled, along with their mother's brothers, to an equal share of his livestock. Yet few would support such a fluid extension of identity, so characteristic of the previous regime, when the time comes to divide their land.

18. Of course, generational conflicts are nothing new for Kipsigis. In the past, or so popular legend has it, fathers were notorious for withholding bridewealth cattle from their sons. However, the leverage they wielded was limited, since an enterprising youth could obtain his own cattle through raiding or, by the 1930s, with cash earned by working in the tea estates or European farms.

19. Tea bushes are spaced to create a nearly seamless block of green leaf about waist high, which is called a plucking table. A level plucking table provides optimal conditions for photosynthesis and the constant growth of new leaves and buds. Plucking proceeds in rounds, with the plucker(s) moving from one section of the tea *shamba* to the next on a daily basis, so that "today's" section is again flush and ready to harvest by the

time the pluckers return to it. Such a well-managed acre of mature tea will yield between six and eight hundred kilos of green leaf a month under local conditions.

20. Anyone familiar with American family farms a few generations ago will recognize this tendency to blur distinctions between worker and family member. Dorothy's uncles from *The Wizard of Oz* are one well-known example.

21. All other foods are insubstantial in comparison. In fact, there is a specific verb (*kesus*, "to eat") that replaces the regular form *keame* in Kipsigis when kimnyet is eaten by itself. In contrast, *ugali* (Kiswahili), a dish similar to kimnyet but made exclusively with maize meal, is white, somewhat gritty and far less substantial. *Ugali* is the standard fare in *hotelis* and tea rooms, along with sausages, chips, fried eggs, *chepatis* and fried chicken if one has the money. These are road foods, town foods, foods for bachelors and other men living away from home.

22. *Moriik* is a difficult word to translate. One participates in *moriik*; it is a particular kind of collective action that proceeds in a circle. But *moriik* also refers to the circle itself, and to the people who compose the circle. Individual members of a *moriik* group are called *moriat*. Furthermore, one can "own" *moriik*, and, as we shall see shortly, one can also "sell" *moriik* (Kip. *keale moriik*). A woman may ask a fellow group member who has not attended her round in the circle: "Moriat, where is my *moriik*?"

23. The standard unit of measurement for weeding maize is a "rope" (in Kipsigis *rogosiet*). Agreement about the total area each member will weed in a round can vary in different groups. For the two groups I watched closely a single rope measured fifteen feet. Each woman weeded three lines of maize for a length of ten ropes, an area of roughly six thousand square feet.

24. Women keep precise accounts, often written records, of the balance of work among individual members. The only money that changes hands in these transactions is between the farmer and the contractor who is selling her *moriik*.

25. Kipsigis have a long history of growing maize for the market, dating back to the 1930s (see Manners 1967, Orchardson 1961).

26. The owner of this *moriik* hosts a special meal for fellow members that usually includes sweet tea, bread, jam, margarine and rice, all store-bought foods otherwise reserved for important ceremonies: initiation feasts, weddings, or "greeting" a new born child. Once this feast is over, each guest presents her host with a predetermined amount of cash, generally between thirty and two hundred Kenya shillings. As a rule, these gatherings are quite subdued, partly in an effort to downplay the exchange of what can be substantial amounts of cash. Some women will host their *moriik* at the home of a daughter or close friend because, as I was told, "It is difficult for their husbands to know when the money is coming or where it is going."

27. Likewise, many women in Ndaraweta have expanded their savings groups to start a cooperative business, typically a shop or diesel-driven mill for grinding maize flour. Anyone familiar with Kenya's Mandeleo ya Wanawake, or Women's Self Help Movement, which often provides startup capital for these enterprises, can attest to the political capital that is vested in women's cooperative work. These cooperatives provide a public face to Kipsigis women's visions of what it means to be moving ahead. More broadly, they also jibe with the images and messages about the role of rural African women in development that circulate throughout the region.

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