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# Athens Journal of History

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# The Athens Journal of History

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Gregory T. Papanikos  
President  
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## Development of Sericulture in the Eastern Adriatic during the Austrian Administration

By Marija Gjurašić\* & Tea Đurović<sup>±1</sup>

*The production of silk, the queen of natural fibres, began in ancient China and was a well-kept secret for millennia. As silk was used for a variety of purposes, not only in making luxury clothes, wallpapers, and other expensive textile items, but also in papermaking and the production of musical instruments and fishing gear, it became a much desired commodity, which the Chinese exported along the Silk Road routes all the way to the Mediterranean. When seedlings of mulberry trees, silkworm eggs, and the knowledge of silk craftsmanship arrived in Constantinople in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, the tradition of sericulture and silk craftsmanship spread to numerous Mediterranean areas, including Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, and the Eastern Adriatic. Based on relevant literature and some previously unexplored archival sources, this paper presents the development of sericulture (cocoon or pupa production) and silk craftsmanship (making silk products) in the Eastern Adriatic region during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Our research focuses on Croatia, at that time under the domination of the Habsburg Monarchy and divided into two parts – the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia (with the capital in Zagreb) and the Kingdom of Dalmatia (with the capital in Zadar).*

### Introduction

Silk is often identified with luxury and classy style, which is well justified and not related only to fashion. The fact is that silk, compared to other natural materials, is very durable, not easily torn,<sup>2</sup> and highly resistant to heat, yet also

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1. Tea Đurović dealt with this topic in her BA thesis. This paper addresses the topic more broadly and is an introduction to a more elaborate study of sericulture in the Eastern Adriatic region we are planning to do in future.

2. The Islamic scholar Ibn Hisham (833 AD) wrote that the Prophet owned a silk shirt that he only wore in battles, as arrows could hardly pass through it. It was something like a bulletproof vest. Cf. Emil Heršak and Nenad Vidaković, "Euroazijske povijesne teme i 'putovi svile'," *Radovi – Zavod za hrvatsku povijest* 51/2 (2019): 294-295 (note 26). However, all natural fibres, including silk fibres, are very delicate, and poor storing conditions such as high humidity, bright light (which changes their colour), grease, dirt, and dust (the particles act as abrasives and can cause thread fracture) lead to their rapid decay. If it is stored in cluttered closets and drawers, the fabric can become deformed, with dry folds that can also cause thread fracture. Besides, moths, other insects, and microorganisms pose a great danger as they feed on animal fibres. Cf. Ariana Mesek, "O liturgijskom ruhu u fundusu Gradskog muzeja Varaždin," *Radovi Zavoda za znanstveni rad HAZU Varaždin* 23 (2012): 421-422.

extremely delicate and soft. The beauty and delicacy of silk fabrics could not be replaced by any other fabric, as it allows the skin to “breathe”, keeping it warm in winter and cool in summer. All these exceptional properties of silk contribute to its exceptional value, which was recognized in the past equally as today. It is claimed to be the *queen of fibres*. Based on relevant literature and some previously unexplored archival sources, this paper presents the development of sericulture (cocoon or pupa production) and silk craftsmanship (making silk products) in the Eastern Adriatic region during the domination of the Habsburg dynasty in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. It focuses on the influence of the Austrian authorities on the development of these two activities in the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia and the Kingdom of Dalmatia,<sup>3</sup> especially in the Dubrovnik area, where this tradition still exists, although on a lesser scale than at the time of its flourishing in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The paper consists of three parts. The first presents the homeland of silk and the spread of silk production throughout Europe, while the second and third parts are about the beginnings of silk production in Croatia, Slavonia, and Dalmatia and its development in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### The Silk Road and the Spread of Silk in Europe

The homeland of silk is China. Silk production started there based on the white mulberry tree (*Morus alba*), the leaves of which are the main source of food to silkworm (*Bombyx mori*). Mulberry trees grew mainly in northeastern China (in the Seriki province,<sup>4</sup> after which silk got its Latin name *sericum*) and possibly in Japan, which is why it was not possible to develop the technique of silk manufacturing elsewhere.<sup>5</sup> There is a legend saying that while the Chinese empress Leizu (also known as Si-Ling-Chi), wife of the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi, ca. 2697-2597 BC) was having tea under a mulberry tree, a silkworm cocoon fell into her cup.<sup>6</sup> When the cocoon softened in the hot tea, the silk thread started to unroll, which brought the Empress to the idea of making different goods by using

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3. The Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia included the eastern part of Syrmia up to Zemun, which is today in Vojvodina (Serbia), and the Kingdom of Dalmatia included the Bay of Kotor, which is today part of Montenegro.

4. Ruža Ćuk, “Izvoz svile iz Dubrovnika u Veneciju u XIV veku,” *Istorijski časopis* 28 (1981): 17-25.

5. Heršak and Vidaković, “Euroazijske povijesne teme i ‘putovi svile’,” 2019, 280.

6. According to another Chinese legend, tea was likewise discovered accidentally several decades earlier. Boiled water was brought to Emperor Shennong (ca. 2727 or 2750 BC) by his servant. A tea leaf fell into it unexpectedly and the servant was punished because of that. However, the Emperor realized that the tea was good and moreover eliminated the fatigue he was suffering from. Heršak and Vidaković, “Euroazijske povijesne teme i ‘putovi svile’,” 2019, 282.

silk threads. Having obtained the Emperor's approval, the Empress ordered her subjects to start breeding silkworm on mulberry farms in order to produce silk.<sup>7</sup>

Numerous possibilities of using silk made this material a valuable resource that gave China a significant advantage over other civilizations of that time. Silk became very precious and the technique of silk production remained a well-kept secret for three millennia. Those who dared to export silkworms illegally risked a death sentence.<sup>8</sup> Both silkworms and silk were used not only in making clothes, shoes, bags, wallpapers, and other fabric items, but also as papermaking materials (as paper was initially made of peeled and ground silkworm cocoons)<sup>9</sup> and in the production of musical instruments and fishing gear. Silk became a coveted commodity. With the development of Chinese trade routes, silk found its way to the rest of the world. In Antiquity and the Middle Ages, it was transported to Europe both by land and by sea. "Silk Road" was a common term for the trade route that connected two ancient empires, the Roman and the Chinese.<sup>10</sup> It was a winding route, six thousand kilometres long, which spanned from north-western China to the Mediterranean, and it is considered as one of the first routes that connected China with the West.<sup>11</sup> The Han dynasty<sup>12</sup> in ancient China paved the way for the Silk Road to protect and maintain the caravans and the trade as such. Silk culture spread rapidly to the West and the Mediterranean, where its popularity suddenly rose. It was highly appreciated among all, from priests to magnates, and coveted by everybody. When Christianity became the official

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7. Ibid, 282; Mira Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj: Od 18. stoljeća do 1945. godine* (Zagreb, 2007), 19.

8. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 19.

9. The oldest Chinese paper was not only made of raw silk, but also of weaved silk. See more in: Ana Bešlić and Andreja Dragojević, "Ručno rađeni papir: povijest, izrada, svojstva i vodeni znakovi," *Arhivski vjesnik (Bulletin d'archives)* 64 (2021): 90.

10. Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen was the first to use the term "Silk Road" or "Silk Route". See more in: Marcus Hernig, *Ferdinand von Richthofen. Der Erfinder der Seidenstraße* (Berlin, 2022).

11. The route was slightly modified in the 15th century, when sea routes were discovered as a better and more convenient trade alternative. Cf. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 7-8. The Western Silk Road Tourism Development initiative should also be mentioned, which is a joint project by UNWTO and the European Union (2014-2020). The destinations that are part of the initiative are provided with the opportunity to connect the East and the West, ensuring conditions for peace, prosperity, and long-term sustainability. Cf. *Western Silk Road Roadmap*. Co-funded by the COSME programme of the European Union. Publication prepared in the framework of the cooperation between UNWTO and the Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) of the European Commission (Grant Agreement SI2.729496) with the funding from the European Union's COSME Programme (2014-2020). See more in: Bao Jiang, Jian Li, and Chunxia Gong, "Maritime Shipping and Export Trade on 'Maritime Silk Road'," *The Asian Journal of Shipping and Logistics* 34/2 (June 2018): 83-90.

12. Heršak and Vidaković, "Euroazijske povijesne teme i 'putovi svile'," 2019, 313.

religion (the Edict of Thessalonica of 380 AD), Mass vestments were increasingly made of luxurious silk fabrics to indicate positions in the clerical hierarchy and accentuate the difference between the clergy and the believers. The Church very soon established that chasubles were to be made of silk.<sup>13</sup> Because of great demand for this precious fabric in Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, it was paid in gold.<sup>14</sup> In Rome, where silk was unusually popular, its price even led to an economic crisis, because too much gold leaked to the East. Because of this, Emperor Tiberius banned the wearing of silk, especially by men, and it was proclaimed to be "unsuitable" for them to wear silk clothes.<sup>15</sup>

The craft of silkworm breeding spread gradually to Japan, Persia, Asia Minor, Greece, and the Roman Empire. A turning point was the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD, when two monks from Serindia managed to smuggle silkworm eggs (the size of poppy seeds) hidden within their canes into the Byzantine Empire and imparted their knowledge of the silk production technique.<sup>16</sup> Soon afterwards, Emperor Justinian (r. 527-565 AD) initiated silk production in Constantinople and thus China lost its monopoly. The Byzantine Empire very quickly became a new power regarding silk production and it managed to supply Europe with silk. The Byzantine tradition of sericulture and silk craftsmanship spread to various

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13. Mesek, "O liturgijskom ruhu u fundusu Gradskog muzeja Varaždin," 2012, 420.

14. Around 174 AD, the weight of silk equalled the weight of gold (that is, 1 pound of silk = 1 pound of gold). Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 8 and 19.

15. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 8; Michael Bach, "Die Insektenwelt. Der unmittelbare Nutzen der Insekten," in *Natur und Offenbarung: Organ zur Vermittlung zwischen Naturforschung und Glauben für Gebildete aller Stände*, vol. 3 (Münster, 1857), 297.

16. According to Kolar, the monks arrived in the Byzantine Empire around 522 (p. 9), or rather ca. 551 (p. 19). Taking into account the records of the Byzantine writer Procopius (ca. 500-570), Heršak and Vidaković claim that it happened between 550 and 553/554, while A.V.G., a newspaper correspondent writing for *Gospodarske novine*, wrote in 1853 that it was in 555. It is possible that they could not agree on the year because, according to the information provided by A.V.G., the aforementioned monks visited Justinian's court on several occasions. When they first came to the court, they brought the mulberry seeds. Later on, the Emperor persuaded them to go back to China and bring the silkworm eggs. Cf. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 9 and 19; Heršak and Vidaković. "Euroazijske povijesne teme i 'putovi svile'," 2019, 316-317; A.V.G., "Buba (kukac svileni, gusenica svilena)," *Gospodarske Novine: Izdaje jih na svetlo druztvo gospodarsko za za Hrvatsku i Slavoniju* 1/23 (June 4, 1853): 105-106. It should be noted that in No. 52 of the same paper, published on December 24, 1853, all journalists and correspondents writing for the paper in the current year (1853) were listed on page 247. There are some authors' initials, while others had their full name included. The list, however, does not include the initials A.V.G. The name that matches (to some extent) the initials is that of Ambroz Vranicani-Dobrinović, a knight, who is also listed. So, the initials of the author in No. 23 may not be correct, as perhaps they should have been A.V.D. (instead of A.V.G.). However, this research could not determine it.

Mediterranean lands – Greece, Italy, France, Spain,<sup>17</sup> Portugal, the Eastern Adriatic (Albania, Dalmatia), and all other areas with adequate climate for silkworm breeding.<sup>18</sup> The territory surrounding the Maritsa River (Evros) was the first area in Europe found to be suitable for silk production. Mulberry forests were planted on riverbanks and silk was produced in a number of towns, including Svilengrad<sup>19</sup> (Bulgaria) and Soufli (Greece). Greece held the monopoly on silk production in Europe until the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>20</sup> Having conquered numerous Greek and Italian towns, among which there were two centers of silk production, Corinth and Thebes, Roger II, the Norman king of Sicily, transferred the mulberry seedlings and had all their silk craftsmen deported to Sicily (Palermo) in 1146. Later on, he launched silk production in Calabria and Naples, which would become significant silk production centers.<sup>21</sup> With reference to archival sources, Mesek claims that there were silk-weaving mills in the town of Lucca (Tuscany) in the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries. Silk craftsmanship soon spread to Florence, Genoa, and Bologna, while Venice became a silk production centre in

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17. The Arabs introduced the technique of silk production in Spain, where numerous silk mills were soon opened across the country (e.g. in Valencia, Requena, Talavera, Jaén, Granada, and Toledo) and the technique of silk manufacturing was further developed and perfected. Cf. B. Rubens, "Der Seidenbau," *Oekonomische Neuigkeiten und Verhandlungen. Zeitschrift für alle Zweige der Land- und Hauswirthschaft, des Forst- und Jagdwesens im Österreichischen Kaiserthume und dem ganzen Teutschland* 67 (Prague, 1849), Blatt No. 24: 185-188; Mesek, "O liturgijskom ruhu u fundusu Gradskog muzeja Varaždina," 2012, 423. See more in: Eloy Martín Corrales, "The Silk Trade between Spain and the Islamic Mediterranean Area (16th-18th Centuries)," in *Spain and Portugal in the Silk Routes: Ten Centuries of Production and Trade between East and West: Comisión Española de la ruta de la seda* (Barcelona, 1st ed. 1998), 89-100.

18. Juraj Zelić, "Uloga dudovog svilaca (*Bombyx mori*) i bijelog duda (*Morus alba*) u svilogojstvu," *Šumarski list* 7-8, CXXV (2001): 414.

19. Etym. "silk city."

20. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 20. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, silk production was revived in the town of Soufli. Almost all its inhabitants earned their living with silk production. There are two silk mills in the town even today (one belongs to the family of Yiorgos Tsiakiris and the other to the family of Kostas Mouhtarides). Cf. Iliana Mier, "Tradition der Seidenherstellung blüht in Griechenland wieder auf" (October 6, 2019).

21. Catheryn Cheal, "Silk," in *Encyclopedia of Greece and the Hellenic Tradition*, vol. 2: L – Z, ed. Graham Speake (London and New York, 2019), 1544; Ahmed Sayeed, *You Could Be the Winner, vol. II: The Winning Effort Begins with Preparation* (Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh), 2019), 18. It should be mentioned that A.V.G., Rubens, Bach, and Kolar state that it happened during the reign of Roger I (d. 1101): A.V.G., "Buba (kukac svileni, gusenica svilena)," 1853, 106; Rubens, "Der Seidenbau," 1849, 187-188; Bach, "Die Insektenwelt. Der unmittelbare Nutzen der Insekten," 1857, 298; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 20, whereas Mesek claims that Sicily was an important centre of silk production in the second half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century: Mesek, "O liturgijskom ruhu u fundusu Gradskog muzeja Varaždina," 2012, 422.

the 12<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> In northern Italy, silk production started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when mulberry trees were planted in the region of Piedmont.<sup>23</sup>

The reputation of master weavers from Catanzaro (the capital of Calabria) spread to France.<sup>24</sup> The significance of silk production as an important industry was recognized by the French king Louis XI (1423-1483), who launched a national silk industry in 1466, gathering a number of Italian silk craftsmen, mainly from Calabria, who were supposed to teach the French the techniques of silkworm breeding and silk weaving.<sup>25</sup> The weaving loom, created by a weaver from Calabria, Jean Le Calabrais, who also gave it its name (*métier à tisser*), was brought to Tours in 1470, and later to Lyon.<sup>26</sup> By the 15<sup>th</sup> century, France had become a strong rival to Italy concerning silk production. Great demand for luxurious silk goods had a positive effect on silk production as well as on silk trade. Both activities prospered, especially when King Francis I granted a court licence for promoting silk trade to a couple of local merchants in 1535, and a monopoly on silk production to Lyon in 1540.<sup>27</sup> In the first half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Lyon became the centre of silk trade in Europe. The development of sericulture in Lyon, that is, breeding mulberry silkworm and obtaining raw silk thread for fibre production was encouraged by King Henry IV (1553-1610).<sup>28</sup> According to Sayeed, in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, there were more than 14 thousand weaving looms in Lyon and thousands of silk craftsmen (known as *canuti*) working at them, meaning that a third of the town population was sustained by silk industry.<sup>29</sup> Silk production in France suddenly stagnated at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, particularly after the Edict of Fontainebleau, issued by Louis XIV in 1685 (also known as the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes from 1598), when thousands of silk craftsmen and other artisans, mostly Protestants, left France and moved to the neighbouring Netherlands, England, and Germany.<sup>30</sup> The religious refugees were wholeheartedly welcomed by the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm I, who recognized their value as the workforce necessary to start silk production in Prussia. This meant the reduction of court expenses on import duties<sup>31</sup> paid for

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22. Mesek, "O liturgijskom ruhu u fundusu Gradskog muzeja Varaždin," 2012, 422-423.

23. A.V.G., "Buba (kukac svileni, gusenica svilena)," 1853, 106.

24. Cesare Rossi and Flavio Russo, *Ancient Engineers' Inventions: Precursors of the Present* (Cham, 2016), 328.

25. Ibidem.

26. Ibidem.

27. Sayeed, *You Could Be the Winner*, 2019, 21.

28. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 21.

29. Sayeed, *You Could Be the Winner*, 2019, 21-22.

30. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 21; Melinda Watt, "Textile Production in Europe: Silk, 1600-1800," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York, 2003).

31. At the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Prussian court paid around 16,000 thaler annually for the import of silk. In 1731, Friedrich Wilhelm I issued an order prohibiting



this expensive, but extremely popular and desirable fabric, mostly brought from France and Italy. His son Friedrich II continued his father's policy so in 1740s, he issued an order to plant mulberry trees wherever it was possible (especially in public and private yards, and in cemeteries).<sup>32</sup> He granted special subsidies for the planting of mulberry trees and silkworm eggs were distributed free of charge, while those who exported eggs or damaged mulberry trees were severely punished. The situation was very similar in other countries, including Croatia.<sup>33</sup>

An important centre of silk production in the Lower Rhine region was Krefeld (known as the "Samt -und Seidenstadt"), a port on the Rhine. The town turned to silk trade in the 17<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>34</sup> and thanks to the Prussian court subsidies (it came under the Prussian administration in 1702), silk production boomed there in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, Krefeld became one of the richest towns in Germany. In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century (1849), almost every household in the town owned a weaving loom.<sup>35</sup> The development of silk production in England was supported by King James I, who, in 1608, encouraged his subjects to plant as many mulberry trees as they could with the aim to increase silk production.<sup>36</sup> In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, religious refugees settled in Spitalfield near London, where they continued producing silk. Spitalfield became renowned for a special floral pattern (*sete fiorite*).<sup>37</sup> The Industrial Revolution led to a boom in textile industry.<sup>38</sup>

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royal servants to wear silk garments. Cf. Caroline Ring, "Berliner Maulbeerbaum zeugt von preußischen Ambitionen," *Der Tagesspiegel* (December 20, 2020); A.V.G., "Buba (kukac svileni, gusenica svilena)," 1853, 106.

32. In 1782, there were around three million mulberries planted in Prussia. Cf. Bach, "Die Insektenwelt. Der unmittelbare Nutzen der Insekten," 1857, 298.

33. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 223.

34. Raw silk was processed, and the final products, expensive fabrics, were sold to wealthy noblemen and the clergy. The Mennonite refugee family von der Leyen held a monopoly on silk production.

35. Rolf Eckers, "Damals, als Krefeld Düsseldorf überragte," *Westdeutsche Zeitung* (December 18, 2017).

36. A number of inhabitants were willing to plant the trees. However, many of them planted the black mulberry instead of the white mulberry, which provides leaves for the silkworm. See more in: Gerald B. Hertz, "The English Silk Industry in the Eighteenth Century," *English Historical Review* 24 (1909), 710-727.

37. Mesek, "O liturgijskom ruhu u fundusu Gradskog muzeja Varaždin," 2012, 426; A.A. "Industries: Silk-Weaving," in *A History of the County of Middlesex, vol. 2: General; Ashford, East Bedfont With Hatton, Feltham, Hampton With Hampton Wick, Hanworth, Laleham, Littleton*, ed. William Page (London, 1911): 132-137.

38. See more in: Sayeed, *You Could Be the Winner*, 2019, 22-23; James Cundall, *The Everyday Book of Natural History: Comprising a Note for Every Day on the Flowers, Flowers, Insects, Birds, Animals etc. Most Commonly Observed On Rambles Into the Country Throughout the Year* (London and Bristol, 1866), 353-354.

## The Arrival of Silkworm in Continental Croatia

Starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, silk production spread throughout the Croatian lands. The court in Vienna encouraged this industry because it was in accordance with its mercantilist and cameralist politics.<sup>39</sup> Empress Maria Theresa supported the introduction of silk production and a number of other Enlightenment ideas. Obsessed with the lavish beauty of silk, she wanted the nobles of Vienna and its rich citizens to be dressed as luxuriously as the nobles of Paris or Berlin, and at the same time to reduce the court's costs of importing silk. In addition, she recognized silkmaking as a lucrative sideline activity that was not subject to adverse weather conditions and that even the lowest strata of society (especially women, the elderly, and the unemployed) would be able to engage in without much investment, thus avoiding beggary. Similarly to other European rulers of that time, Empress Maria Theresa encouraged the development of both sericulture and silk craftsmanship in the Habsburg Monarchy, including Croatia, by issuing special grants.<sup>40</sup>

The first steps in the development of silk production in the Croatian lands during the Austrian administration are documented in Rijeka, a free royal port at that time. In 1750, the authorities granted permission to P.G. Sacotti to plant 4,000 mulberry trees on land plots intended to be used as mulberry farms.<sup>41</sup> As mulberry silkworms feed only on mulberry leaves (at an early stage 6-8 times and later 3-4 times a day), 1,500 kg of mulberry leaves are needed in order to breed 100 kg of cocoons,<sup>42</sup> and it took about seven years for the mulberry trees to grow sufficiently to ensure enough leaves.

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39. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 27.

40. Especially in Bohemia. Cf. *Ibid*, 11-12 and 25-27.

41. *Ibid*, 27.

42. F. Putinja, "Dudov svilac," in *Istrapedia. Istarska internetska enciklopedija*.



**Figure 1.** *Cocoons*

Note: Photo taken in 2016 at the Konavle Regional Museum – Zavičajni muzej Konavala.

It should be mentioned that the mulberry is an economically valuable tree exploited for its wood, leaves, and fruit, which is why it was grown in this area for centuries near settlements and cattle stables. Its fruit was used as human and animal food, and people also made brandy from it, while its wood, due to its small weight, was particularly valued in shipbuilding.<sup>43</sup> The main reason for

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43. Marija Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," *Anali Zavoda za povijesne znanosti HAZU u Dubrovniku* 55/2 (2017): 534.

planting mulberries was, however, its leaves, which were used to feed domestic animals and were necessary for the cultivation of silkworm.<sup>44</sup>

When the mulberry trees had grown enough, silk-spinning and silk-weaving mills were opened. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, there were seven silk mills in Rijeka and the largest of them was owned by J.M. Marienni, with 12 looms and 40 workers at them.<sup>45</sup> However, the most suitable place for silkworm breeding was the Military Frontier, a developed and militarily regulated part of the Monarchy. In this area, members of numerous households as well as trained border guards were engaged in silk production. The population of the Slavonian frontier (1761) was instructed both in sericulture and silk craftsmanship. By Maria Theresa's edict issued in August 16, 1763, all inhabitants were ordered to plant white mulberries.<sup>46</sup> The Chamber of Commerce in Gorizia (Slov. *Gorica*, Germ. *Görz*) was proclaimed to be the main institution in the Monarchy (1763) in charge of maintaining and encouraging the development of silk craftsmanship as well as the cultivation of white mulberries. Thus, Gorizia became a significant silk production centre where a number of silk mills were opened.<sup>47</sup> Silk production then spread to the Varaždin Generalate (1764) and to Ban's Frontier (1772), and much later to the Karlovac Regiment, in Kordun (1787).<sup>48</sup>

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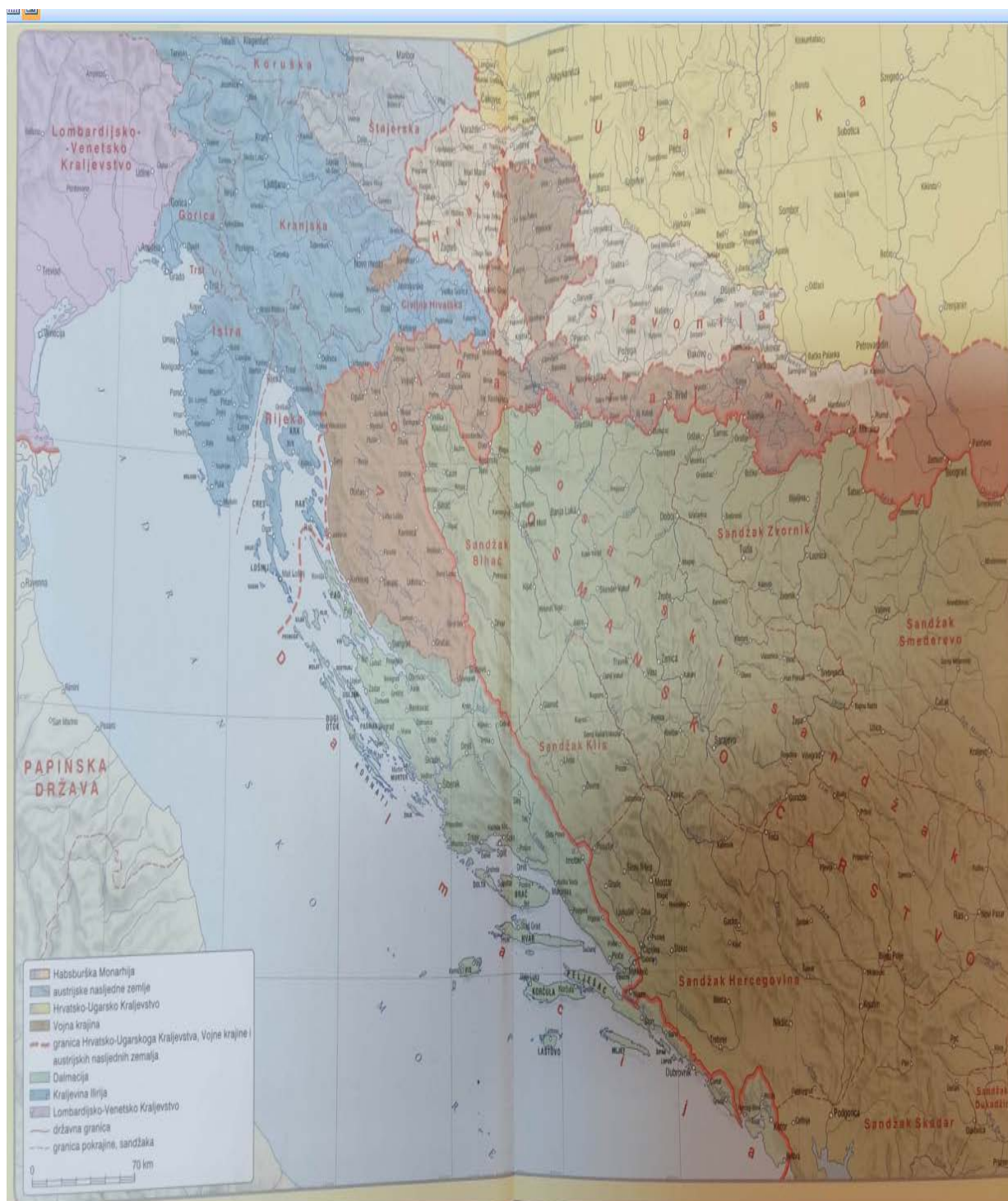
44. Ibid.

45. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 27.

46. Rudolf Bičanić, *Hrvatska ekonomika na prijelazu iz feudalizma u kapitalizam: Doba manufakture u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji* (Zagreb, 1951), 146.

47. A.A. "Razne gospodarske vijesti," *Gospodarski list* 33/13 (1885): 104; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 22. Well-known silk craftsmen in Gorizia included: "Luiggi de Zorzini; Giuseppe Moise Luzzato; Giacomo Casarsa; Moise Marpurgo / Marpurgi, welcher hierzu vom Landesherren ein Privilegium erhalten hat (Privilegierter Fabrikant); Giuseppe Spazzalli; Francesco Casarsa; Gentile Gentilli; Franco. Locci; Giuseppe Riccian." Johann Christian Schebel, "Neueste detaillirte Uebersicht der Fabriken und Manufakturen in Oesterreich," *Journal für Fabrik, Manufaktur, Handlung und Mode* 28 (Leipzig, March, 1796): 202. More about Luzzato, brothers Marpurgo, and Spazzalli in: Helene Deutsch, *Die Entwicklung der Seidenindustrie in Oesterreich 1660-1840*, ed. Karl Grünberg (Vienna, 1909), 145-154. See also: Vlatka Leskovec, "Hrvatski krajevi u djelu Martina Schwartnera. Prilog istraživanju Staatskunde," *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 43/1 (2011): 207-220; Johann Andreas Demian, *Statistik des Oesterreichischen Kaiserthums* (Leipzig, 1820), 111.

1. 48. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 10; R. Bičanić, *Hrvatska ekonomika na prijelazu iz feudalizma u kapitalizam: Doba manufakture u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*, 1951, 146.



**Figure 2.** Map of the Croatian Lands (Including the Military Frontier) during the Domination of the Habsburg Monarchy

Source: Božena Vranješ-Šoljan, *Dalmacija. Stoljeće povijesnih i demografskih mijena 1815-1918*. Zagreb (2021), at the beginning of the book, inside the book cover.



Although sericulture was a typical industry of the Age of Manufactures, which took place in rural households, further stages in raw silk processing anticipated the industrial production in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Silk production of the time can be divided into three stages – first, silkworms were bred in a farmhouse, in airy and clean rooms, where cocoons were obtained in about 40 days<sup>49</sup> (the first stage). Then they were boiled in hot water, in silk-reeling mills, and raw silk filaments were drawn (the second stage). Finally, in filatures (larger silk manufactures), raw silk was twisted into threads that were strong enough to be woven (the third stage).<sup>50</sup> The process of production was described in detail and distributed to the population in a number of published manuals and booklets on silk production, which was not the case with other industrial activities in the Croatian lands.<sup>51</sup> As the Austrian authorities held the monopoly on raw silk processing from 1750 to 1827, they built numerous silk manufactories (mostly silk mills, but also filatures) all over Croatia.<sup>52</sup> Varaždin, the capital of Croatia at the time (1756-1776), became the most important center of silk manufacturing, and in 1784, a silk-reeling mill was opened there (*Defilatorium, Warasdiner Seiden Fabrik / Fabrica sericea varasdiensis*).<sup>53</sup>

During the Napoleonic Wars (1797-1815), silk production in the continental part of Croatia rapidly stagnated as the Court in Vienna, burdened with the military campaigns, stopped encouraging the development of silk production.<sup>54</sup> Almost all silk mills in north-western Croatia were closed (except for those in Zagreb, in Svilaraska Street,<sup>55</sup> and those in Varaždin and Prelog). The frustration of wagedworkers in Varaždin's silk mill led to the tariff movement and the first strike of women (1803). The source of their frustration were miserable earnings that

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49. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 320.

50. Ružica Čunko, Željko Knezić, Tanja Pušić, and Ivo Soljačić, "Povijest izrade i proizvodnje tekstila u Hrvatskoj," *Annual of the Croatian Academy of Engineering* 1 (2019): 85. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 326.

51. Leskovec, "Hrvatski krajevi u djelu Martina Schwartnera," 2011, 207-220. The first manual on silkworm breeding was published in 1768 under the title *Brief Instructions on How to Plant Mulberry Trees (Kratki navuk kak murve sejati)*. Cf. Maja Andrassy, "Svila," in *The Croatian Encyclopedia of Technology* (Zagreb, 2021, updated 2022).

52. *Filatorium*, silk-spinning mill. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 36, 38, and 40.

53. Mirko Androić, "Prilozi poznavanju društvenih i gospodarskih prilika grada Varaždina u 18. stoljeću," in *Varaždin u XVIII stoljeću – Političko-kameralni studij 1769-1969* (Zagreb and Varaždin, 1972), 47.

54. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 51-54.

55. In 1878, the name of the street changed and it has been Preradovićeva Street ever since. Cf. Mira Kolar-Dimitrijević, "Zagrebačke tvornice svile s osvrtom na klasnu i oslobodilačku borbu radništva do nacionalizacije," *Povijesni prilozi* 7/7 (1988): 79.

could not even cover the cost of food (experienced workers received 30 and apprentices 18 coins).<sup>56</sup>

From 1827, silk production was under the lease of the trade families of Isaac Hofmann (with his sons) and Lazarus Goldschmidt, who were registered as *K. u. k. privilegierte Grosshändler*. They held the monopoly on silk production during the next nineteen years.<sup>57</sup> In 1833, Isaac's son Emanuel (Manojlo) Hofmann (he was given credit for success in silk production and granted a noble title, thus becoming Hofmann von Hofmannsthal) had a modern manual of silk production published in Vienna (*Anleitung zur Seidenzucht*). It was translated into five languages, including Croatian (*Naredbe od izvoda Svile za Seljancze Slavonske i Harvatske*).<sup>58</sup> In 1848, he published a manual entitled *Instructions on How to Grow White Mulberries and Breed Silkworms* (*Nauk kako se imaju gojiti bele murve i svilene bube*).<sup>59</sup>

Hofmann's engagement was of great importance for encouraging and relaunching sericulture and silk craftsmanship. In 1841, there were 46 silk mills (*filande*) in Croatia and as many as 13,000 households engaged in sericulture.<sup>60</sup> In Civil Croatia, there were 26 silk mills: Osijek had seven,<sup>61</sup> Križevci had three, Đakovo, Virovitica, Požega, Vukovar, Varaždin, and Koprivnica had two mills each, and Cernik, Irig, Trpinj, and Zagreb had one each. The remaining 20 silk

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56. Mirko Androić, "Ludbreg – gnijezdo republikanizma i boljševizma," *Podravski zbornik* 4 (1978): 45. Cf. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 34.

57. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 64.

58. It was published in Vienna in 1833, and the publications were produced not only in the Roman script, but also in Cyrillic. The author gave 30 copies of the manual to the Croatian-Slavonian Economic Society (*List mesečni horvatsko-slavonskoga Gospodarskog Društva*) No. 9 (September, 1844): 129, 159. The second edition was published in 1858 (Emanuel Hofmann, Edlen von Hofmannsthal, *Anleitung zur Seidenzucht für den Landmann Ungarns*. Zweite verbesserte Auflage. (Neusatz [Novi Sad], 1858). See also: W.G. Dunder (Václav Jiří Dunder), *Ausführliche Geschichte der Seidenkultur, ihrer Einführung, Verbreitung, Fortschritte, Nützlichkeit und Wichtigkeit in China, Indien, Persien, überhaupt in Asien, in Griechenland, Italien, Spanien, Frankreich, Deutschland (Bayern, Württemberg, Sachsen, Baden ec.), in den Kaiserl. Oesterreichischen, Königl. Preussischen, Kaiserl. Russischen, Königl. Schwedischen, Königl. Britischen ec. Staaten, in Afrika, Amerika und Australien, von der ältesten bis auf die neueste Zeit, und begründete Anregung, Ermunterung und Anleitung zur praktischen, beschleunigten und gewinnreichen Seidenzucht*. In *histor., bibliograph., topograph., statist., merkantil., industrieller, technisch., ökonom., staatsökonom., legislativer, administrat., naturhistor., klimat., analyt., chemischer, dynam., patholog., pharmaceutischer ec. Hinsicht. Geschichtlicher Theil. Mit 40 Tafeln, Abbildungen und vollständigem Namen- und Sach-Register* (Vienna, 1855), 1116.

59. Emanuel (Manojlo) Hofmann, "Nauk kako se imaju gojiti bele murve (dudovi) i svilene bube (to jest gusine iliti kukci, koji čine svilu)." *List mesečni hrvatsko-slavonskoga gospodarskoga društva* 5 (1848): 65-71; 6 (1848): 84-89.

60. Bičanić, *Hrvatska ekonomika na prijelazu iz feudalizma u kapitalizam: Doba manufakture u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*, 1951, 152-153.

61. See more in: Kamilo Firingir, "Jedno stoljeće osječkog svilarstva (1761-1861)," *Arhivski vjesnik* 4-5, no. 1 (1962): 295-321.

mills were located in the Military Frontier. There was one in Nova Gradiška, Oriovac, Podvinje, Morović, Golubinac, Stara Pazova, Zemun, Glina, Petrinja, Kostajnica, Đurđevac, Virje, Čazma and Garešnica, and two in Vinkovci, Mitrovica, and Bjelovar. However, the monopoly of the Hofmann family and their manipulations with the purchase prices soon destabilized the industry. Decrease in the Croatian cocoon prices, which were almost by 70% lower than the Italian ones,<sup>62</sup> caused a decline in the local silk production, therefore the number of silk mills (*filande*) was significantly reduced.

In Italy, for example, the lowest price of one libra (24 lots) of cocoons in 1846 was 50 kr. (karantan), while in Croatia, the price of one pound of cocoons (32 lots) was 30 kr.<sup>63</sup> In other words, one lot would be worth 2.08 kr in Italy and 0.94 kr in Croatia.

Juraj Haulik, Bishop of Zagreb (b. 1788 in Trnava – d. 1869),<sup>64</sup> was very interested in silk production, so together with some notables from Croatia (three bishops, some canons, ministers, lawyers, notaries, judges, court and ban's advisors, and other nobles) he established the Croatian-Slavonian Economic Society (*Horvatsko-slavonsko Gospodarsko Društvo*) in February 1841.<sup>65</sup>

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62. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 76 and 77.

63. Ibid, 77.

64. Goran Arčabić, "The Travel of Land-Surveyor Šimrak to 'Upper Italy' – A Contribution to the History of the Croatian-Slavonian Economic Society in the Middle of the 19th Century," *Povijesni prilozi* 26 (2004): 169-180; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 92-93. See more in: Franjo Emanuel Hoško, "HAULIK, Juraj (Georgius)," in *The Croatian Biographical Lexicon* (Zagreb, 2002).

65. See also: *Pravila horvatsko-slavonskoga Gospodarskoga Društva* (Zagreb, 1841).





**Figure 3.** Portrait of Juraj Haulik, Archbishop of Zagreb and Cardinal

Source: A.A. "Haulik, Juraj de Várallya," in *Hrvatska enciklopedija, mrežno izdanje*. Zagreb, 2021.

The aim of the Society was to improve agriculture, therefore its branches were founded in a number of larger towns. The first president was Haulik himself, who was committed to the development of silk production. Owing to his origins, he was aware of the benefits of silk production, which encouraged him to re-establish silk industry in Slavonia.<sup>66</sup> With the establishment of the Economic Society, silk production was gradually revived.

Following the example of the German journal of agriculture and rural development *Landwirtschaftliches Wochenblatt* (which started to be published in 1834) and the French journal *Agriculture pratique* (from 1836), the Society launched the *List mesečni hrvatsko-slavonskoga gospodarskoga društva* (in 1842),<sup>67</sup> which soon became the most important newspaper on economic issues, among which sericulture and silk craftsmanship were prominent for years. The first issue included an article on *Morus multicaulis* and its characteristics.<sup>68</sup>

66. Silk industry was highly developed in Slovakia and Haulik's father was also engaged in silkworm breeding. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 68.

67. The first issue of the newspaper was published on January 26, 1842. From 1842 until the end of 1849, the name of the newspaper was *List mesečni hrvatsko-slavonskoga gospodarskoga društva*, but from January 1850 until December 1852, the name of the newspaper changed into *List Društva gospodarskoga hrvatsko-slavonskoga*; from January 1853 until April 1855, it was called *Gospodarske novine*, and since April 1855 it has been published as *Gospodarski list*.

68. A.A. "Dud filipinski (*Morus multicaulis*)," *List mesečni hrvatsko-slavonskoga gospodarskoga društva* (1842): 68-70.

In 1845, the Society founded the Economic Institute at Ksaver in Zagreb, where young men from the countryside were trained in gardening, fruit farming, beekeeping, and sericulture. That same year, considering it necessary to engage educated persons in training inexperienced young men, the Society sent Vasil Šimrak, a land-surveyor who was proficient in Italian, to Lombardy (part of the Habsburg Monarchy at that time) to learn about farming and sericulture.<sup>69</sup> Upon returning to Croatia, Šimrak regularly wrote informative articles on silkworm breeding, published in *Gospodarske novine*. However, the interest of population in the newly gathered information was less than satisfactory and the bad situation in silk production was attributed to the low purchase price of silkworm cocoons.<sup>70</sup>

The Revolution of 1848 affected the further development of silk production,<sup>71</sup> so from 1848 to 1860 it was under the protection of the Croatian-Slavonian Economic Society.<sup>72</sup> The plan of the Economic Society was not equally accepted in all territories where it had influence.<sup>73</sup> There was a noticeable progress in Slavonia, especially in the Đakovo and Virovitica counties, where a special supervisor was appointed to take care of planting mulberries and distributing seeds. Croatia Proper stagnated at that time, but Haulik, wishing to launch silk production there, continued actively encouraging it when he became the archbishop of Zagreb.<sup>74</sup>

Although the major part of silk production took place in Croatia, 90% of its processing was carried out in Lombardy (Milan), where it was marketed as Hungarian silk. Among the wholesalers in Milan were brothers Emanuel and August Hofmann, sons of Isaac Hofmann. August Hofmann also owned a silk mill in the Nova Gradiška County (from 1848) and presented his products on the First Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian Exhibition in Zagreb, 1864.<sup>75</sup> The Habsburg loss of Lombardy (1859) contributed greatly to the devastation of silk production in Croatia.<sup>76</sup> In spite of all determination to recover silk production, the industry faced another obstacle. There was only a small number of people interested in silk

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69. Arčabić, "The Travel of Land-Surveyor Šimrak to 'Upper Italy'," 2004, 169-180.

70. Ibid, 171.

71. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 84.

72. Ibid, 128.

73. At the end of 1912, the Croatian-Slavonian Economic Society had 110 branches: in the Modruš-Rijeka County, the Lika-Krbava County, the Varaždin County, the Bjelovar-Križevci County, the Zagreb County, and the Požega County. Cf. [http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/details.aspx?%20ItemId=3\\_8345](http://arhinet.arhiv.hr/details.aspx?%20ItemId=3_8345). [Accessed 15 March 15, 2022.]

74. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 92-93. Juraj Haulik was appointed the first archbishop and metropolitan of Zagreb on December 11, 1852 (by a bull issued by Pope Pio IX) and his inauguration was on May 7, 1853 in the Cathedral. Three years later, he became a cardinal (April 1856).

75. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 174-177; G. Arčabić, "The Travel of Land-Surveyor Šimrak to 'Upper Italy'," 2004, 170.

76. Bičanić, *Hrvatska ekonomika na prijelazu iz feudalizma u kapitalizam: Doba manufakture u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji*, 1951, 154.

production because of the high taxes imposed during the period of Bach's absolutism (1852-1859),<sup>77</sup> the low purchase price of silkworm cocoons, the complex system of cocoon classification, and the establishment of a tobacco monopoly, which caused resistance among the population.<sup>78</sup> Numerous articles on the benefits of silkworm breeding were published in *Gospodarske novine* with the aim of encouraging the population to continue producing silk. The fact that anybody could engage in this activity was especially highlighted in the articles. One of the most interesting was the article "On Silk Industry" ("O svilarstvu"), published on May 14, 1853 (by K.S.), which ended by stating that, "not a single agricultural industry is as lucrative as the silk industry and other uses of mulberry trees."<sup>79</sup>

Ban Josip Jelačić was appointed to head the organization, which led to a range of changes.<sup>80</sup> A great number of members of the Croatian-Slavonian Society took part in the attempts to revive the silk production. Among them was Jelisava Prasnička (née Bertić), the first woman to write about silk production. Together with her two nieces, she bred silkworms on a leased demonstrational property in Biškupac near Varaždin and presented her goods at the Exhibition in 1853.<sup>81</sup> One of the ideas was that literate individuals who could understand regulations and instructions should be employed on communal mulberry farms. They considered setting up a shareholding company under state protection, which was to focus on silk production.<sup>82</sup> Lovro Ošterc suggested that the final products should be produced in Croatia and sold at a better price, and for this purpose, it would be necessary to build a large silk mill as a joint-stock company (with 1000 shares worth 20 forints each), which should be related to the establishment of a home for the poor. This would help Croatia solve the problem of beggars, as both they and the unemployed could work at the silk mill.<sup>83</sup>

Reviving silk production in north-western Croatia was enthusiastically advocated, but nevertheless failed because of a new propulsive agricultural industry, fruit farming. Many mulberry farms were converted into fruit farms. A survey carried out in 1854 showed that there were a great number of people

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77. See more about the state of the country at the time in: Mirko (Emerich) Bogović, *Politische Rückblicke in Bezug auf Kroatien* (Zagreb, 1861).

78. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 98-99.

79. K.S., "O svilarstvu," *Gospodarske Novine: Izdaje jih na svetlo društvo gospodarsko za Hrvatsku i Slavoniju* 1, no. 20 (1853): 93-94. Note: In No. 52 of the same paper (December 24, 1853), on page 247, all co-authors and correspondents of that year were listed. There were only some initials listed, while most authors' names were given in full. The initials K.S. are not mentioned and none of the names included in the list matches them. Kolar assumes that the initials refer to Ivan Kukuljević Sakcinski (Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 100).

80. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 106.

81. *Gospodarske Novine* 2, no. 51 (1854): 90; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 99-100.

82. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 107-109.

83. *Ibid*, 109.

interested in continuing silk production, but foreigners in the Bach administration were not interested in the economic growth of Croatia.<sup>84</sup> In spite of this unfavourable situation, certain measures were taken to enhance silk production, as evident from numerous articles in *Gospodarske novine*, such as the one "On Silk Production, Agriculture, and Viticulture" ("O svilarstvu, poljodstvu i vinodstvu," 1854) by Franjo Ž. Wunsch, a retired mayor. He pointed out that silk production made it possible for women, children, and the elderly to earn money, adding that this industry was more stable than wheat-growing as the latter was threatened by unfavourable weather conditions.<sup>85</sup> From the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, silk production developed in many European countries. Due to a silkworm epidemic in 1885, a crisis ensued in most European industries, first in Italy and then in France.<sup>86</sup> Silkworms in Croatia remained healthy for a certain period, which was a mark of silk quality in Croatia. Croatia was swarmed by Italian traders, as they concluded that silk produced in Zagreb was a quality silk and could be compared with the best Italian silk.<sup>87</sup> As a result of this, Austria tried to take advantage of the situation and launch a more intensive development of the industry.<sup>88</sup> Unfortunately, silkworm disease soon spread in Croatia as well.

Notwithstanding, certain measures were taken to improve silk production. The best example is the undertaking of Antun Vukasinović, a postal clerk from Rijeka. He invented better silkworm rearing beds (*ljese*) and improved the silkworm breeding kit, presenting them at the branch office of the Economic Society in Zagreb (Agram). In 1857, he published the instructions on silkworm breeding in German and Croatian.<sup>89</sup> The instructions were, as the very title of the

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84. Ibid, 106-109.

85. *Gospodarske Novine* 2, no. 35-46 (1854): 159-160, 165-166, 168-169, 173-174, 179-180, 181, 184, and 187-188. See also: Mathias Stopfer, *Lehrbuch über die Militär-Gränz-Verwaltung des österreichischen Kaiserthums* (Graz, 1841), 291.

86. The French government supported Louis Pasteur to conduct a research into the causes of the epidemic on silkworm rearing farms in southern France (1865-1870), where he managed to isolate the disease agent. See more in: Hans Baumann, *Geschichte der Heilkunde: Medizin vom Mittelalter bis zum 1. Weltkrieg und ihr Zusammenhang mit der wissenschaftlichen, technischen und sozialen Entwicklung* (Gütersloh, 2004), 262-264.

87. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 132.

88. Elvis Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine. // Sericulture in the Zadar Area between 1852 and 1860," *Historijski zbornik* 63/2 (2010): 421-422.

89. Antun Vukasinović, *Nauk o dudarstvu, bubarstvu i svilarstvu, kojim naši seljaci, siromašni zanatci, žene im i djeca za kratko vrieme veliki dobitak steži mogu. Po mnogolietnom vlastitom iskustvu i s obzirom na štednju vremena, posla i troška izdao o svom trošku Antun Vukasinović* (Zagreb, 1857). Later on, he became the person in charge of sericulture in the Virovitica County and an improved edition of his book was published in Osijek, 1867. Anton Wukasinović, *Praktische Regeln zur Maulbeerbaum und Seidenzucht mit besonderer Rücksicht auf Vereinfachung und Zeitersparniß. Für mindervermögende Landleute, deren Weiber und Kinder verfaßt und durch vieljährige praktische Erfahrung erprobt. Zweite verbesserte und*

manual said, intended for less than well-off farmers and craftsmen, their wives and children. There were attempts to downplay the spread of silkworm disease in Croatia, but at the same time the Society was looking for ways to overcome the crisis.<sup>90</sup>

Therefore, the Economic Society decided to stimulate (1858) the most efficient silk craftsman with 120 golden ducats as a reward each year.<sup>91</sup> Ferdo Rusan, a retired military officer and poet from Virje, described the crisis in silk industry in 1859: "The silk mill in Virje used to produce 800 pounds of pure silk, and this summer it hardly produced 12 pounds (...) And where there is no seed, how can there be any crops?"<sup>92</sup> A solution to the problem was breeding Pajasen silkworms instead of mulberry silkworms,<sup>93</sup> favourable loans approved by Ban Josip Šokčević (1863), and the guaranteed minimum purchase prices for cocoons, which were pretty high at that time. Thus, old silk mills were re-opened during his rule.<sup>94</sup> However, silk production could not be revived,<sup>95</sup> mostly because of the contaminated mulberries and infected silkworms and the low purchase prices, which demotivated the farmers. After the Austro-Hungarian Settlement of 1867, numerous changes took place in Croatia. Croatia and Slavonia became part of the Hungarian and Dalmatia of the Austrian part of the Monarchy. The new political entity, the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, led to some new developments. When Ban Khuen Héderváry came to power in Croatia (1883-1903), a number of stations for cocoon purchase were opened and silk production was encouraged again.<sup>96</sup> In 1887, the Sericulture Act (*Zakon ob osiguranju svilogojstva*) was passed, together with a range of regulations, with the aim to improve silk production.<sup>97</sup>

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vermehrte Auflage (Essek [Osijek], 1867). See more in: Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 121-122.

90. See more in: Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 131-134.

91. A.A. "Važnost godine 1857. za naše gospodarstvo," *Gospodarski list* 6/5 (1858): 21-22.

92. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 114-120 and 140.

93. Pajasen is a silkworm whose larva could feed on the leaves of oak and beech trees, and which thrive in the territory of Croatia. It is resistant to drought and can be bred easily. At that time, it was widespread in France, Italy, and Hungary. Cf. Oskar Piškorić, "Pogled u šumarstvo Hrvatske pred 100 godina (Bogoslav Šulek: Korist i gajenje šumah, Zagreb 1866)," *Šumarski list* 9-10 (1966): 464. Between 1864 and 1867, there were many types of silkworms. Thus, the French farmer Guérin Meneville bred 11 types of silkworms feeding on different types of leaves. Cf. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 164-168 and 181.

94. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 168.

95. Ibid, 173-174.

96. Ibid, 203-204.

97. The law was passed on February 14, 1887. Cf. *ibid*, 183, 204, 217-220, and 244.

The Hungarians wanted to launch silk production primarily in Slavonia, so they re-opened the mills in the counties of Virovitica, Syrmia,<sup>98</sup> and Požega, while in the central part of Croatia there was no interest in carrying out the Act provisions.<sup>99</sup> The Hungarian minister of agriculture, Pavao Beszerédy, held a monopoly on silk production in Croatia from 1892 to 1907, with a lease agreement of 15 years.<sup>100</sup> Later on, this industry was controlled by the Croatian Agricultural Bank, owned by the Church and the Alliance of Serbian Agricultural Cooperatives, which controlled silk industry in Croatia from 1908 to 1919. The central purchasing station in Slavonia, managed by the Alliance of Serbian Agricultural Cooperatives, was in Vinkovci, while all other stations in Croatia belonged to the Zagreb Silk Mill and were managed by the Croatian Agricultural Bank.<sup>101</sup> Although silk produced in Croatia was not as fine and shiny as silk produced in France and Italy, it was of superior quality as it was stronger, heavier, and more durable.<sup>102</sup> However, due to strong competition, political turbulence in 1910, the Balkan wars (1912, 1913), World War I, epidemics, and the invention of artificial silk, silk production in Croatia eventually subsided.<sup>103</sup>

### The Arrival of Silkworm in Dalmatia

It is not known exactly when the mulberry silkworm began to be bred in the area of present-day Croatia for the purpose of obtaining silk. However, the Dalmatian towns (Rab, Pag),<sup>104</sup> where the silkworm was already bred during the reign of Emperor Justinian, when Dalmatia was under Byzantine rule, take precedence.<sup>105</sup> A record from 1018 confirms that silk was produced on the island of Rab (*Arba*) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. This record states that 10 pounds of silk a year were used as a means of paying taxes to the Doge of Venice, Otto Orseolo

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98. The Syrmian County was a historical county that belonged to the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia. Today, parts of it are in eastern Croatia and south-western Vojvodina (Serbia).

99. See more in: Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 196-197, 201, 203-205, and 218-220; Pavao Beszerédy, "Proizvodnja svile u Hrvatskoj i Slavoniji," *Gospodarski list* 36/11 (1888): 87.

100. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 237-250.

101. Ibid, 293-309.

102. Alexander Buczynski, "The Development of Sericulture and the Production of Silk in Croatia // Razvoj svilarstva i proizvodnja svile u Hrvatskoj," *Povijesni prilozi* 21 (2001): 175 and 181.

103. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 200, 203, 204, 219, 299, and 313.

104. Čunko, Knezić, Pušić, and Soljačić, "Povijest izrade i proizvodnje tekstila u Hrvatskoj," 2019, 80.

105. Ida von Düringsfeld, *Reise Skizzen, Vierter Band: Aus Dalmatien: Mit Anmerkungen von Otto Freiherr von Rheinsberg-Düringsfeld* (Prague, 1857), 257.

(Urseolo), if five pounds of pure gold could not be paid instead.<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, Benedictine nuns from the monastery of St Andrew on Rab made and wove silk in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>107</sup> Both the cultivation of mulberry trees and the breeding of the mulberry silkworm in medieval Dalmatia are confirmed in the writings of Alberto Fortis, who mentioned that the people of Brač and Rab had been involved in the production of silk “since ancient times.”<sup>108</sup>

It has not been precisely established when silk production began in the Dubrovnik area. However, many documents testifying to the Dubrovnik silk trade in the 14<sup>th</sup> century have been preserved in the State Archives in Dubrovnik. The silk mostly originated from Kosovo (from Prizren) and Albania (from Valona, today's Vlorë), and partly from “Romania” (from Kostur).<sup>109</sup> At that time, Prizren was an important centre of production of that coveted and expensive fabric, which was placed on the Venetian market via Dubrovnik. Its final destination was mainly Venice, from where the people of Dubrovnik sometimes procured it – either for their own needs or for further sale.<sup>110</sup> In addition, silk was imported from Turkey and from Western European manufactories (at the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> and during the 16<sup>th</sup> century), and, according to De Diversis, from Alexandria as well.<sup>111</sup>

Roller believes that the Dubrovnik craftsmen of the 15<sup>th</sup> century had not mastered the art of silk production, which is why they invited Italian master craftsmen, mainly from Genoa and Lucca, to Dubrovnik.<sup>112</sup> Kolar assumes that, in the Dubrovnik area, the silkworm began to be bred in Konavle.<sup>113</sup> This might be further suggested by the data provided by Roller, who mentions an Ivan from

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106. Ibidem; *Manuale del Regno di Dalmazia per l'anno*, vol. II (1872), 81; vol. III (1873), 323-324; Andrassy, “Svila,” 2021; Nataša Bajić-Žarko, *Split kao trgovačko i tranzitno središte na razmeđu istoka zapada u 18. stoljeću* (Split, 2004), 124 and 132-133; Šime Peričić, “Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću,” *Radovi Zavoda za hrvatsku povijest Filozofskoga fakulteta Sveučilišta u Zagrebu* 15/1 (1982): 107-129.

107. Andrassy, “Svila,” 2021; Katarina Horvat-Levaj, “Benedictine Monastery of St. Andrew in Rab. Contribution to the History of Construction,” *Prostor* 27/2 (58) (2019): 195.

108. “feeding on black mulberry leaves” (!). Alberto Fortis, *Put po Dalmaciji // Viaggio in Dalmazia* (Split, 2004), 260.

109. Ćuk, “Izvoz svile iz Dubrovnika u Veneciju u XIV veku,” 17-25; Danijela Jemo and Đurđica Parac-Osterman, “Production, Technology, Dyeing and Textile Trading in the Context of Maritime-Trade Routes of Dubrovnik,” *Naše more* 63/1, Supplement (2016): 37.

110. Ćuk, “Izvoz svile iz Dubrovnika u Veneciju u XIV veku,” 1981, 17-25; Jemo and Parac-Osterman, “Production, Technology, Dyeing and Textile Trading in the Context of Maritime-Trade Routes of Dubrovnik,” 2016, 37.

111. Jemo and Parac-Osterman, “Production, Technology, Dyeing and Textile Trading in the Context of Maritime-Trade Routes of Dubrovnik,” 2016, 37-38.

112. Dragan Roller, *Dubrovački zanati u 15. i 16. stoljeću. Građa za gospodarsku povijest Hrvatske*, vol 2 (Zagreb, 1951), 82-83.

113. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 20.

Konavle who, in 1485, was made apprentice to a silk craftsman invited to Dubrovnik from Tuscany.<sup>114</sup> However, according to the data provided by Andrassy, silk was produced in Konavle and on Mljet from the 14<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, Dubrovnik traded in spun silk and silk thread, which it exported to Milan and Lyon.<sup>115</sup>

The “silk fever” that spread across Europe during the 16<sup>th</sup> century had an impact on the renewal of this industry in Dalmatia as well. However, at that time most of Dalmatia was governed by the Republic of Venice, which cut down Dalmatian forests on a mass scale for the purpose of building ships. This also included mulberry trees, which were quite suitable for shipbuilding. In this way, the Venetians protected their silk industry from the competition, because without mulberry leaves, silk production inevitably collapsed. As Dubrovnik was not under Venetian rule at the time, the Dubrovnik authorities advocated and encouraged the development of domestic silk production. Thus, as early as the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (in May 1517), the Republic concluded a ten-year contract with Ugo Cigalle, a silk craftsman from Genoa, who undertook to launch the *ars sete* (silk production) in Dubrovnik. In this contract, he promised to produce silk fabrics worth 2,000 ducats during the first year, and every following year the worth would increase by 1,000 ducats until it would reach the value of 10,000 ducats in the tenth and final year.<sup>116</sup> In June of the same year (1517), the Dubrovnik government signed a contract with Matteo Magiolini, a silk craftsman from Lucca, who undertook to produce 3,000 cubits of silk damask each year, for which he was granted a loan of 1,300 ducats. In January 1518, the Senate chose three *oficiales artis sete*, whose task was to oversee the fulfilment of the contracts.<sup>117</sup> For unknown reasons, however, this production soon dwindled and turned into a cottage industry, that is, into individual and sporadic production.<sup>118</sup> There was no major silk production in Dubrovnik until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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114. Roller, *Dubrovački zanati u 15. i 16. stoljeću. Građa za gospodarsku povijest Hrvatske*, 1951, 82-83.

115. Andrassy, “Svila,” 2021; Jemo and Parac-Osterman, “Production, Technology, Dyeing and Textile Trading in the Context of Maritime-Trade Routes of Dubrovnik,” 2016, 39.

116. Roller, *Dubrovački zanati u 15. i 16. stoljeću. Građa za gospodarsku povijest Hrvatske*, 1951, 83.

117. Ibidem; *Lib. Con. Rog.* (January 28, 1518).

118. Roller, *Dubrovački zanati u 15. i 16. stoljeću. Građa za gospodarsku povijest Hrvatske*, 1951, 83.





**Figure 4.** Map of Dalmatia

Source: Maude M. Holbach, *Dalmatien – Das Land, wo Ost und West sich begegnen. Mit 56 Abbildungen und einer Karte*, trans. Marie Seifert. Vienna and Leipzig, 1909 (at the end of the book, inside the book cover).

Systematic planting of mulberry trees in Dalmatia began during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, when this activity was encouraged.<sup>119</sup> At that time, Ivan Luka Garanjin (1722-1783) wrote about the breeding of silkworm in Dalmatia. He was one of the most prominent agronomists and physiocrats in Dalmatia, and a member of the Dalmatian Academy of Economics. He advocated the improvement of economy in the province, especially of beekeeping and silkworm breeding.<sup>120</sup> His family was involved in trade activities, part of which included exporting silk to Italy.<sup>121</sup> Vincenzo Dandolo (1759-1819), who was the provincial civil governor (*Provveditore Generale in Dalmazia*) at the time and a pharmacist by profession, pointed out the benefits of silk production by his own example, by planting

119. Mašo Čekić, "Godine kada je Boka Kotorska bila u zagrljaju svile" (October 20, 2018). Mulberry silkworm breeding in Istria began in the mid-16th century. Cf. Andrassy, "Svila," 2021.

120. One of his significant works is *Riflessioni economico-politiche sopra la Dalmazia* (Zadar, 1806), where he mentions silk and the favourable conditions for its production in Dalmatia on pages 45-46. See translation in: Ivan Luka Garanjin, *Reforma Dalmacije: ekonomsko-politička razmišljanja* (Zagreb, 2004), 81.

121. Bajić-Žarko, *Split kao trgovačko i tranzitno središte na razmeđu istoka zapada u 18. stoljeću*, 2004, 124 and 132-133.

mulberry trees in his garden. The records of Alberto Fortis confirm that many Dalmatian families were engaged in silk production at the time, including those in the Lower Neretva.<sup>122</sup> However, silk production in Dalmatia at that time was still not sufficiently developed and was fostered exclusively as a cottage industry.

Having taken over Dalmatia with the Congress of Vienna in 1815, Austria immediately launched a major campaign for planting mulberry trees as the first prerequisite for silk production. Seedlings were acquired from Lombardy and distributed free of charge to those who wanted to plant them. The areas of the counties (*circoli*) of Zadar and the Bay of Kotor (which at that time was a part of the Kingdom of Dalmatia) were at the forefront in terms of cultivating mulberry trees and breeding mulberry silkworm in Dalmatia during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>123</sup> In the middle of 1828, Horacije Pinelli, a physician and entrepreneur from Zadar who was a member of the Provincial Agrarian Commission, requested a subsidy in the amount of 1,500 forints from the Dalmatian government to establish some kind of school on his Smiljevac estate. His request was approved, and the first silk-spinning mill in the province started operating as early as 1829 – at first with one and then with five filatories for silk spinning and twisting, all procured in Italy.<sup>124</sup> Practical training for girls from Dubrovnik, the Bay of Kotor, and other Dalmatian towns lasted two to three months, at the expense of the provincial government. The first large mulberry farm in the province was founded in 1834 by Pinelli on his Smiljevac estate, where by 1840 as many as 44,000 seedlings were planted. The government would buy them and either distribute them or sell them at a low price to farmers throughout Dalmatia.<sup>125</sup> Due to favourable geographical and climatic conditions, such plant nurseries were later also established in Zemunik near Zadar and in other parts of the province.<sup>126</sup> Towards the end of his life, Pinelli, however, fell into great financial difficulties, which led to the closure of his silk mill immediately after his death in 1845.<sup>127</sup>

Silk production was quite developed in the Zadar area at that time. According to the data from 1846, about 4,000 mulberry trees were planted in the Zadar County.<sup>128</sup> In 1848, lawyer Domeniko Papafava opened a state-of-the-art silk mill in Zadar, which continued to produce the best silk in Dalmatia well into

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122. "[...] the mulberries here grow to a surprising height in just a few years, and the silkworms that feed on them create beautiful silk." Fortis, *Put po Dalmaciji // Viaggio in Dalmazia*, 2004, 241, 257. Š. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 107.

123. Stijepo Obad, "Boka kotorska za neoapsolutizma // The Bay of Kotor during Neoabsolutism," *Časopis za suvremenu povijest* 41/3 (2009): 805-826.

124. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 117-119.

125. Ibid, 88, 109, 113, and 117.

126. Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine," 2010, 422.

127. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 118-119.

128. Ibid, 109.

the mid-1880s.<sup>129</sup> Courses on silkworm breeding were also occasionally held at the Teachers' College for men, the Illyrian Preparatory-Boarding School (*Ilirska preparandija-konvikt*) founded in 1866 in Arbanasi (a district in Zadar), and they were conducted by Professor Nimira.<sup>130</sup> The institution featured a demonstrational garden, where future teachers were instructed in agronomy and sericulture. The provincial government of Dalmatia set up several silkworm-breeding farms (*bubara*) as well.<sup>131</sup>

At the turn of the century, Stanko Ožanić, an official of the Department of National Economy of the Provincial Government in Zadar, was employed as the provincial agricultural supervisor in Zadar from 1917 to 1919. His task was to promote economic development of the province, especially of viticulture, aquaculture, and sericulture.<sup>132</sup> At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an exemplary plant for cocoon extraction (*bigattiere, bigatorij*) was founded in Zadar. It was owned by the Grünwalds, a Jewish family.<sup>133</sup> The population in the rest of Dalmatia was also engaged in silk production, for instance in Obrovac, Šibenik, Trogir, Split, Sinj, Skradin, and even in the climatically unfavourable Knin (where, for example, Ivan Krsto Nardini produced as much as 287 pounds of silk in 1850),<sup>134</sup> as well on the islands of Ugljan, Pašman, Rab, and Pag.<sup>135</sup> According to the data from 1885, the highest quality cocoons were produced on the island of Rab and in Skradin, which, thanks to the enterprising family of Antonio and Pietro Rossi (Antun and Petar Rosa), became the largest Dalmatian silk market of that time.<sup>136</sup> In 1852, their silk mill was visited by Ida von Düringsfeld, a Prussian baroness and writer, and her husband. She mentions in her travelogue that between 1831

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129. Ibid, 119-120; *Manuale del Regno di Dalmazia per l'anno*, vol. III (1873), 324, vol. IV (1874), 307, vol. V (1874), 291.

130. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 290.

131. Ante Bralić, "Zadarske srednje škole na hrvatskom jeziku i talijanska vlast 1918.-1921. // Secondary Schools in Zadar with Croatian as the Language of Instruction and Italian Rule between 1918-1921," *Miscellanea Hadriatica et Mediterranea* 6 (2019): 205-244; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 290.

132. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 289.

133. We have not been able to determine whether these were descendants of the Zadar noble family Grünwald-Bellafusa or perhaps of the Grünwald family, who, together with the family of the industrialist Schwarz, became co-owners of the company *Čakovečki paromlin i munjara* in 1900, which engaged in the production of flour and electricity, used to power the first street lights in Čakovec. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 290; Lovorka Čoralić and Serdo Dokoza Nikpalj, "Grünwald-Bellafusa, plemićka obitelj u Zadru," in *The Croatian Biographical Lexicon*, ed. Trpimir Macan (Zagreb, 2002); A.A. "Čakovečki mlinovi d. d.," in *The Croatian Encyclopedia of Technology*.

134. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 113.

135. Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine," 2010, 425 and 428-430; Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću," 1982, 114-115.

136. Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine," 2010, 423; Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 109-120.

and 1844, silk production in the Zadar County increased from 1,332 pounds to 4,920 pounds of cocoons and that Mr Rossi was awarded a gold medal in 1845 for special merits in promoting silk production.<sup>137</sup> Well equipped, the Rosa Silk Mill was considered to be an exemplary silk manufactory in Dalmatia.<sup>138</sup>

According to the protostatistical data provided by Demian (1820), many silk products were manufactured in silk mills in the Kingdom of Dalmatia, especially in Dubrovnik and Split.<sup>139</sup> It has not been determined how many silk mills there were in Dubrovnik in 1820. We know for a fact that there was one silk mill (*Stabilimento della filanda*) in Dubrovnik at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, located in Ploče and owned by the lawyer Antun Kaznačić. It was a small plant with one boiler and six primitive machines, procured in 1832 thanks to the teacher F.M. Appendini, in which silk was extracted by hand.<sup>140</sup> Two years later, more than 500 libras of cocoons were produced.<sup>141</sup> In 1840, 53 silkworm breeders were recorded in the Dubrovnik County (*circolo*), and within just four years (1844) the number rose to as many as 98 breeders, that is, by about 85%.<sup>142</sup>

According to the cadastral data from 1836/37, silk was produced in nearly all villages in Konavle, but almost entirely for family needs.<sup>143</sup> The tradition was passed down through the female line from one generation to another. Everything

137. von Düringsfeld, *Reise Skizzen. Aus Dalmatien: Mit Anmerkungen von Otto Freiherr von Rheinsberg-Düringsfeld*, 1857, 256-257; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 150-151.

138. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 422-423, 426, and 431.

139. "(...) im Königreiche Dalmatien werden besonders zu Ragusa viele Seidenzeuge gefertigt; doch hat auch Spalato mehrere Seidenmanufakturen." Demian, *Statistik des Oesterreichischen Kaiserthums*, 1820, 111.

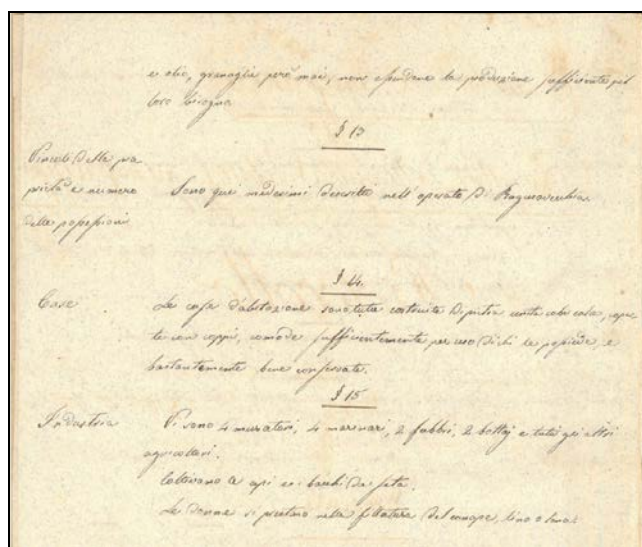
140. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 120-121.

141. Ibidem. Units of measure for silk: 1 libra = 24 lots; 1 pound = 32 lots. Cf. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 77 and 326.

142. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 113.

143. HR – DAST – 152, *Archive of Maps for Istria and Dalmatia (AMID)*, box 72, *Operato di comune Brotnice*; box 82, *Operato di comune Cavtat sa Zvekovicom*; box 99, *Operato di comune Čilipi*; box 134, *Operato di comune Drogenik*; box 138, *Operato di comune Duba Konavoska*; box 149, *Operato di comune Dunave*; box 157, *Operato di comune Durinići*; box 163, *Operato di comune Gabrili*; box 191, *Operato di comune Gruda*; box 211, *Operato di comune Jasenice*; box 255, *Operato di comune Komaji*; box 299, *Operato di comune Kuna Konavoska*; box 319, *Operato di comune Lovorno*; box 332, *Operato di comune Ljuta*; box 349, *Operato di comune Mihanići s Drogenikom*; box 357, *Operato di comune Močići*; box 370, *Operato di comune Mrcine, danas Dubravka*; box 429, *Operato di comune Palje Brdo*; box 449, *Operato di comune Pločice*; box 474, *Operato di comune Poljice*; box 477, *Operato di comune Popovići*; box 496, *Operato di comune Pridvorje*; box 523, *Operato di comune Radovčići*; box 561, *Operato di comune Siljeski*; box 603, *Operato di comune Stravča*; box 675, *Operato di comune Uskoplje*; box 703, *Operato di comune Vitaljina*; box 705, *Operato di comune Vodovada*; box 735, *Operato di comune Zastolje*.

involving silk production was done exclusively by women, who did not have to know how “to read or write, but they had to know how to embroider.”<sup>144</sup>



**Figure 5.** Excerpt from the *Operato catastale di comune Čilipi*

Source: HR – DAST – 152, Archive of Maps for Istria and Dalmatia (AMID), box 99, *Operato di comune Čilipi*.

Girls produced their own silk and used it to sew, embroider, and weave their traditional costumes – a vital part of Konavle’s identity. They would prepare various garments for all life situations, especially the decorative *poprsnica*, but they did so only until they were married. They dyed silk with natural dyes.<sup>145</sup> Based on the description provided by Režić Tolj, the rearing of silkworms lasts all year round. It begins with several months of ensuring the right conditions for their tiny eggs, which are stored in a white linen bag throughout the year (once in a cooler room in the house, and nowadays even in the freezer) in order to prevent unwanted and premature hatching of the larvae.<sup>146</sup> The rearing process usually begins around Easter, that is, at the time when young leaves begin to sprout on

144. Zrinka Režić Tolj, “Svilarstvo u Konavlima: oživljavanje jedne tradicije // Sericulture in Konavle: A Tradition’s Revival,” *Etnološka tribina* 30/37 (2007): 110. This was confirmed by Mare Drobac in an interview conducted at her home in Grušići, Konavle, in September 2016 (during the research for the presentation on the Mediterranean Island Conference, September 21-24, 2016, on the island of Vis. More in: Marija Gjurašić and Anja Vlašić, “The Tradition of Sericulture on the Territory of Croatia through the Ages, on the Example of Konavle // Tradicija svilarstva na hrvatskim prostorima kroz prošlost: Primjer Konavala,” in *Mediterranean Island Conference*, ed. Ljiljana Kaliterna Lipovčan, Rino Medić, and Ozana Ramljak (Zagreb: Institut društvenih znanosti Ivo Pilar, 2016), 48-49.

145. Benić Penava, “Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932):” 534.

146. Režić Tolj, “Svilarstvo u Konavlima: oživljavanje jedne tradicije // Sericulture in Konavle: A Tradition’s Revival,” 2007, 101. This was confirmed by Mare Drobac in an interview conducted in September 2016 at her home in Grušići, Konavle.



mulberry trees, which the silkworm feeds on. The long-stored eggs are then taken to the church to be blessed (on Good Friday or on Easter Sunday), along with chicken eggs and other food products.<sup>147</sup> After the blessing, the women from Konavle (both in the past and today) heat the eggs in the traditional way: they put some of them in a small white canvas bag, which they store close to the heart – in their bosom, which serves as a natural incubator.<sup>148</sup>

Due to such an intimate rapport between the silkwoman and the silkworm, the girls no longer produced silk after marriage, but they passed on their prowess to the next generations – to their daughters and granddaughters. Even so, silk threads accompanied the men and women of Konavle from birth to death, and not only as a part of their costumes. In fact, the umbilical cord of a newborn used to be tied with silk, as well as the hands and feet of the deceased “so that they would not return to this world”.<sup>149</sup>

Some of the women from Dubrovnik, who in the 1830s and 1840s were involved in silk manufacturing, attended a course in Zadar, in the silk mill owned by Horacije Pinelli.<sup>150</sup>

At the beginning of 1851, Nikola Amerling from Dubrovnik submitted a request for the establishment of a silk mill on the island of Mljet, but, for undetermined reasons, he quickly gave up on his plan.<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, silkmaking did take hold on the island of Mljet as a domestic craft.

The eminent Jewish family of David-Elia Morpurgo (1809-1882), the father of Vid Morpurgo, was engaged in silk production in Split. David-Elia Morpurgo was the founder and the first owner of the oldest bookstore in Split. He initially sold books, especially textbooks, which he printed in Venice, but he eventually

147. Režić Tolj, “Svilarstvo u Konavlima: oživljavanje jedne tradicije // Sericulture in Konavle: A Tradition’s Revival,” 2007, 101. This was confirmed by Mare Drobac in an interview conducted in September 2016 at her home in Grušići, Konavle. See also: A.A. “Blagoslov svilenih buba,” in *Rimski Obrednik izdan po naredbi pape Pavla V. i pregledan brižljivošću drugih papa a oblašću Svetoga G. N. pape Pija XI., udešen prema Zborniku Kanonskog prava. Po tipskom izdanju rimskom.* (Zagreb, 1929), 509 (Blessing No. 63).

148. At an average body temperature of about 36.5°C, the larvae usually develop from eggs in two (Hansal) to three (Slovak) days, or according to Benc-Bošković, in 4-5 days at most, while in the conditions of industrial production, the larvae develop in 10-15 days at a temperature of 15-20°C. Cf. Režić Tolj, “Svilarstvo u Konavlima: oživljavanje jedne tradicije // Sericulture in Konavle: A Tradition’s Revival,” 2007, 101-102 (according to a testimony of the silkwoman Mare Slovak); Jany Hansal, “Priča o svili. Bi li ti sinko meni mogla dobiti bubicu?” Deša Pamphlet – Dubrovnik, available on: <https://desa-dubrovnik.hr/projekti/razvojni-projekti/put-do-svile-bi-li-ti-sinko-meni-mogla-dobiti-bubicu/>. [Accessed 8 July 2022]; Katica Benc-Bošković, *Konavle – tekstilno rukotvorstvo i narodna nošnja* (Zagreb, 1983): 30-31.

149. Mare Drobac, in an interview conducted in September 2016 at her home in Grušići, Konavle.

150. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 186.

151. Ibid, 121 (according to: HAZd, *Protokol Registrature za 1851.*, No. 565).

switched to silk production and the sale of textile.<sup>152</sup> He took part in the great Dalmatian-Croatian-Slavonian Economic Exhibition held in Zagreb in 1864, where he received an award for his products.<sup>153</sup>

The largest number of silk mills in Dalmatia were located in the Bay of Kotor (which at the time was one of its constituents). In 1834, there were seven silk-spinning mills in Kotor and six in Herceg Novi. According to Zdenčaj's description of the Bay of Kotor from 1838, "Silk works well, and this product could multiply far more if lower-ranking women, now preoccupied with men's affairs, spent more time on this useful and natural duty of theirs."<sup>154</sup> Silk production experienced a significant surge in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. At that time, the Chairmanship of the Agricultural Society in Zadar was in charge of promoting and supplying mulberry trees to the local population.<sup>155</sup> Two more mills were opened in Prčanj in 1840/41 (one owned by the Sbutega brothers, and the other owned by the Milin brothers);<sup>156</sup> therefore, the Bay produced almost half of the total Dalmatian silk in 1844.<sup>157</sup>

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152. Damir Pilić, "Posljednji dani najstarije knjižare na svijetu. Stvar je prokletno tužna i bizarna, kako je moguće da se gasi knjižara koja je dobila knjigu o sebi!?" *Jutarnji list* on June 12, 2017).

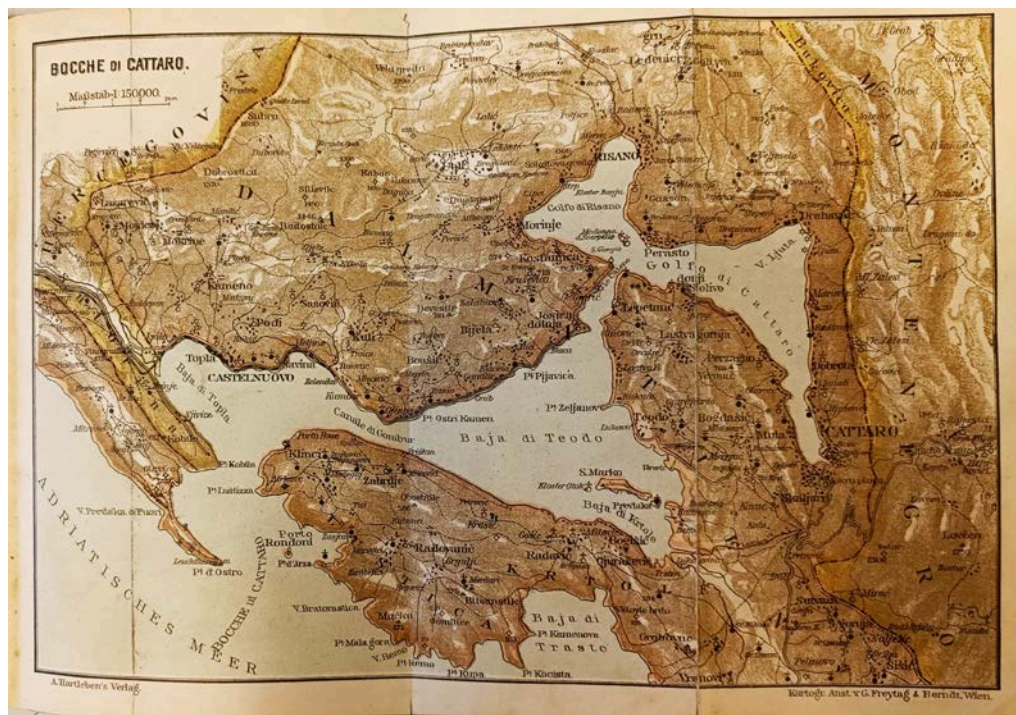
153. Ibid, 174.

154. Alexander Zdenčaj, "Kratko opisanje Boke Kotorske. (Iz Gerlice Cernogorske)," *Danica Ilirska* 4/37, ed. Ljudevit Gaj (1838): 145-147.

155. Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine," 2010, 424.

156. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću," 1982, 119-120. According to Kolar, the latter two (in Prčanj) were opened in 1860. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 186.

157. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću," 111 and 115. The name of Dobroslava, a silk spinner from Kotor, was recorded in the *Knjiga Uprave grada Kotora* on 17 October 1333. Cf. Aleksandra Mirković, "Pravni i ekonomski položaj žena u srednjeevropskim gradovima na Primorju, sa akcentom na Kotoru i Dubrovniku, iz ugla istorije porodice," note 43, according to: Risto Kovijanić, *Kotorski medaljoni* (Belgrade, 1980), 117. Available on the website of Montenegrina: Digital Library of Montenegrin Culture – Anthropology, [http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/antropologija/položaj\\_zena\\_u\\_srednjeevropskom\\_kotoru\\_i\\_dubrovniku\\_a\\_mirkovic.html](http://www.montenegrina.net/pages/pages1/antropologija/položaj_zena_u_srednjeevropskom_kotoru_i_dubrovniku_a_mirkovic.html). [Accessed 18 March 2022.]



**Figure 6.** Map of The Bay of Kotor (Bocche di Cattaro)

Source: *Illustrierter Führer durch Dalmatien (Abbazia – Lussinpiccolo) längs der Küste von Albanien bis KORFU und nach den Ionischen Inseln*. Fünfte Auflage. Vienna and Leipzig, 1902, between pp. 124-125.

Since the Catholic Church owned large amounts of land, it also encouraged the planting of mulberry trees.<sup>158</sup> There was a sudden surge of interest in this activity in 1855. The fact that in the same year eleven families (their residence is not recorded) ordered a total of 1,590 seedlings at a price of 159 forints confirms as much.<sup>159</sup> Due to the expressed interest, investments were made to train manufacturers who were intensively involved in silkworm breeding. The Agricultural Society proposed the purchase of twenty professional books on silk production, which were then distributed in the villages of the Zadar County.<sup>160</sup> Because of the investments in this industry, the state started to keep precise records on the number and category of the ordered seedlings in 1857. According to these data, all seedlings were imported from Lombardy.<sup>161</sup> The number of trees in Dalmatia grew from 800,000 trees in 1838 to almost three million trees by the beginning of World War I.<sup>162</sup>

158. Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine," 2010, 424.

159. Ibid, 425.

160. Ibid, 426.

161. Ibid, 425 and 427.

162. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u XIX. stoljeću," 1982, 110.



The mulberry silkworm disease, which ravaged Lombardy in 1855 and spread throughout Europe, gave an impetus to Dalmatia to plant more trees. In fact, most mulberry trees in Dalmatia were planted between 1854 and 1864, when silkworm breeding in Italy and Western Europe was affected by the disease.<sup>163</sup> The crisis increased the earnings of Dalmatian silk craftsmen, especially in the Zadar area and in Skradin.<sup>164</sup> The production reached its peak in 1860, after which it began to decrease drastically. The reason for this lies in the spread of the disease among Dalmatian mulberry trees as well, which, fortunately, did not last long, but the production never came even close to the quantities obtained around 1860. With the recovery of the Italian silk production, silk production in Dalmatia began to rapidly decline after 1865, as strong Italian competition led to a significant drop in the price of cocoons. An additional negative factor that contributed to the fall of silk production in Dalmatia, and which can be compared to the situation in northern Croatia, was the purchase price of cocoons. The local silk-processing monopoly holders in both provinces continuously manipulated the prices of cocoons, which ultimately led to the breeders losing confidence in them. After that, silk stations (*stazioni sericole* / *stazioni bacologiche*) were established in all the cities. They were equipped with a thermometer, a microscope, and other tools, and their task was to control the production process (especially the quality of eggs and cocoons). As a result, silk production briefly recovered.<sup>165</sup> The manager of the Split station was Petar Tartaglia, while the Dubrovnik station, which was founded in 1871 (the same year as the Rab, Hvar, Skradin, and Kotor stations), was run by the nobleman Frano Gučetić Gondola (1833-1899).<sup>166</sup> The Dubrovnik station was probably located in Gruž (*Gravosa*), near the Gučetić-Gondolin palace. The Agricultural School (*Poljodjelski zavod* / *Poljodjelska učiona*) was founded at the same location at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (1887), and it introduced silkmaking as one of its subjects.<sup>167</sup>

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163. Ibid, 109.

164. Čavić, "Svilarstvo Zadarskog okružja u razdoblju od 1852. do 1860. godine," 2010, 431.

165. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću," 1982, 125-126.

166. *Manuale del Regno di Dalmazia per l'anno*, vol. III (1873), 324; vol. IV (1874), 307; vol. V (1875), 291; Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 174; Š. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću," 1982, 125.

167. According to the data from the *First Annual Report on the Agricultural Institute*, the work of the school was supervised by a supervisory board (*skrbništvo*), whose president was Baron Frano Gondola, while its members included Dr Ljudevit Marotti, lawyer and secretary of the municipality of Dubrovnik, representative of the state; Manojlo Nikolić, high-school teacher, representative of the Provincial School Council; Dr Pero Čingrija, lawyer, member of the Provincial Diet, and representative of the Provincial Committee; Dr Marin pl. Gjorgji, lawyer and representative of the Provincial Committee; Dr Ivo Rubricius, medical doctor and representative of the Agricultural Society in Dubrovnik, and Baldo Bassegli-Gozze, landlord and representative of the Agricultural Society in Dubrovnik. The headmaster was Fran Jergović, who taught chemistry as well as

As part of it, the following was studied: "Silkworm breeding. Preparation and nutrition of seeds. Boiling of larvae. Silkwork diseases."<sup>168</sup> A room (silk house)<sup>169</sup> was designated for the cultivation of silkworms, which could be heated and ventilated, and which contained one cabinet for the laying of silkworm seeds and another for growing silkworms in the earliest age.<sup>170</sup> In the first school year (1887), the students received 15 g of seeds for cultivation, which, as the Report points out, was "even too much for these circumstances, because there are not enough mulberries," and the value at the end of the year was 97 florin and 63 small coins.<sup>171</sup> According to the data from the *Annual Report on the Agricultural Institute* from 1888, a small amount of silkworms was grown that spring, with which the students could practice breeding bugs, boiling the cocoons, and rational handling in obtaining silkworm seeds.<sup>172</sup>

In 1906, the Society for Domestic Crafts established the Committee for the Renewal of Silk Production, and the Rosa family placed at their disposal the old machines of their already closed silk mill.<sup>173</sup> However, all this was not enough to sustain silk production in Dalmatia. It was, in fact, struck by a fate similar to that of silk production in the continental part of Croatia, where almost all silk mills were discontinued. As a result, the silk stations too lost their purpose at the beginning of World War I.<sup>174</sup>

The increased interest in silkworm breeding in the Dubrovnik district during the 1920s is evident from the amount of eggs distributed free of charge by the Central Sericulture Administration, which was located in Novi Sad during the

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the structure and cultivation of the soil, and there were two more members of the teaching staff: Dragutin pl. Hreljanović, bailiff and teacher who taught metrology, reading and writing, natural sciences, botany, sericulture, and mechanical engineering, and Stjepan Bulić, a practical teacher who taught arithmetics, fruit growing, and olive growing, and also managed the workshops in the institute's garden. The Report does not specify who taught the rest of the school subjects (viticulture; agricultural crafts; cattle breeding; animal husbandry; beekeeping and fishing; breeding of poultry and rabbits; planning and administration of small estates; simple bookkeeping, and forestry). One of the students and participants in the training was Frano Supilo from Cavtat, who received an annual grant of 180 florins for two years in a row and graduated with excellent grades and a distinction. *Prvo godišnje izvješće o Poljodjelskom zavodu u Gružu za školsku godinu 1887* (Dubrovnik: Naklada Poljodjelskoga zavoda u Gružu. Tipografija D. Pretnera, 1887), 25 and 35; *Godišnje izvješće o Poljodjelskom zavodu u Gružu za školsku godinu 1888* (Dubrovnik: Naklada Poljodjelskoga zavoda u Gružu. Tipografija D. Pretnera, 1888), 38.

168. *Prvo godišnje izvješće o Poljodjelskom zavodu u Gružu za školsku godinu 1887*, 22.

169. *Godišnje izvješće o Poljodjelskom zavodu u Gružu za školsku godinu 1888*, 36.

170. *Prvo godišnje izvješće o Poljodjelskom zavodu u Gružu za školsku godinu 1887*, 32.

171. *Ibid*, 32-33.

172. *Godišnje izvješće o Poljodjelskom zavodu u Gružu za školsku godinu 1888*, 36.

173. Peričić, "Svilarstvo Dalmacije u 19. stoljeću," 1982, 116.

174. *Ibid*, 123-126.

Kingdom of SHS.<sup>175</sup> Thus, 70 g of eggs were distributed in 1920, 360 g in 1924, 450 g in 1926, and as much as 5,500 g of eggs in 1929.<sup>176</sup> However, it should be mentioned that things did not always go smoothly, so that in 1919, for example, five ounces of seeds were delivered too late and nothing could be saved (the butterflies hatched during transport).<sup>177</sup>

The great interest in silkworm breeding in the area of Dubrovnik is also evident from the number of breeders: in 1923, a total of 195 were recorded,<sup>178</sup> and in 1924, there were 101, of which as many as 97 lived in Konavle.<sup>179</sup> It should be mentioned that in 1924, the Municipality of Metković requested that, for the purpose of sericulture, the Grand Prefect of the Dubrovnik District allocate 1,000 mulberry trees from the state nursery in Čibača for free, to be planted along public roads.<sup>180</sup> At the same time, there was no such initiative in other parts of

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175. Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," 2017, 534-535.

176. Ibid, 534.

177. This information is mention in reports for 1923. See State Archive in Dubrovnik, collection *Grand Prefect of the Dubrovnik District (Veliki župan Dubrovačke Oblasti, hereafter: DO)*, box 54, docs. 1924, Agriculture, no. 11-20 (folder no. 13 – *Silkwork and Mulberries*). Report of the Grand Prefect (no. 2147 / 171 Agriculture). Data on silkworm breeding in 1923. Dubrovnik, February 24, 1923; Report of the Grand Prefect (no. 1247 / Agriculture). Data on silkworm breeding in 1923, Dubrovnik, March 18, 1924 (dispatched on March 19, 1923). Note: referring to the same source from 1923, Benić Penava presumed that this, too, happened in 1923. Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," 2017, 535.

178. According to the aforementioned Report from March 1923, 1,985 kg of raw silk cocoons were produced that year (DO, box 54, Report of the Grand Prefect (no. 1247 / Agriculture). Data on silkworm breeding in 1923, Dubrovnik, March 18, 1924). In an earlier report, dated February 24, 1923, it is stated that there were 185 breeders at the time and that 1875 kg of raw silk cocoons had been produced (DO, box 54, Report of the Great Prefect (no. 2147 / 171 Agriculture). The latter document is also cited in Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," 2017, 535.

179. For the purpose of easier distribution, seeds for 26 breeders (72 g) were handed over to the head of the village of Mrcin (Konavle); for 21 breeders (72 g) to the parish office of Pridvorje (Konavle); for 19 breeders (72 g) to the parish office of Čilipi (Konavle); for 18 breeders (50 g) to the parish office of Stravča (Konavle); for 13 breeders (72 g) to the school administration of Močići (Konavle); to Mara Kostenica on the island of Lopud (10 g); to widow Ana Tengjer from Dubrovnik (4 g); to Jela Hoffmann-Dorotka from Dubrovnik (4 g) and to Jozica Nonveiller from Dubrovnik (4 g). (DO, box 54, folder no. 13, Statement of the District Office in Dubrovnik on the distribution of silkworm seeds (no. 5902/438). Dubrovnik, May 31, 1924). The State Silk Industry Administration demanded that the grown cocoons obtained from the distributed seeds be offered for purchase to the State Silk Industry Supervision in Imotski, and those breeders who failed to respond to the call were forced to pay the value of the obtained seeds and the underlying paper. Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," 2017, 535.

180. DO, box 54, folder no. 13, Letter to the Grand Prefect (no. 3170/24), request of the Municipal Administration of Metković on the distribution of mulberries free of charge. Metković, November 28, 1924.

Croatia.<sup>181</sup> In the 1930s, sericulture in the Dubrovnik area was confined mainly to the Konavle area.<sup>182</sup> The production in Konavle persisted until the 1960s, when tourism, as a possibility to earn money much faster and easier, completely suppressed it.



**Figure 7.** Postcard *Konavoska narodna nošnja. Costumes nationaux de Canale*  
Publisher: Jovan Tošović, Dubrovnik, around 1924.

We are nowadays more or less reminded of the intensive silk industry in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Croatia only through toponyms (as well as through several anthroponyms and patronymics) associated with silk, mulberry trees, or mulberries.<sup>183</sup> However, after a period when it was merely a cottage industry, practiced in the homes of farm girls of Slavonia, Petrinja, and Konavle, who used the silk threads produced in their households to embroider their costumes, silk production is making its comeback. After the Croatian War of Independence, silk production in Konavle

181. Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," 2017, 536.

182. Sericulture on the island of Lopud was discontinued in the late 1920s due to a disease that killed all silkworms there. Benić Penava, "Rasadnik Čibača (1911-1932)," 2017, 534-535.

183. For example, Svilno near Grobnik, Svilaj near Brod, Svilna near Pleternica, Sviloš near Ilok, Svilaja, Svioke, Murvenica, Murvinjak, and the like (toponyms); Svilan, Svilanka (anthroponyms); Svilan, Svilanović, Svilar, Svilarić, Sviličić, and the like (patronymics). Cf. Kolar, *Svilarstvo u Hrvatskoj*, 2007, 17; Martina Bašić, "The Toponymy of Crikvenica," *Folia onomastica croatica* 18 (2009): 36; Domagoj Vidović, "Pregled toponimije jugozapadnoga dijela Popova. // An Overview of the Toponymy of Southwestern Popovo," *Folia onomastica croatica* 19 (2010): 318; Nikola Vuletić, "Bilješke iz rapske povijesne toponimije: toponimi bez suvremenih potvrda," *Folia onomastica croatica* 29 (2020): 250.

was revitalized as a cottage industry, primarily thanks to the activities of the NGO “DEŠA” – Regional Centre for Community Building and Civil Society Development.<sup>184</sup> What is more, silk production has been introduced as an elective subject at the Gruda Elementary School, and both boys and girls are free to attend it. It should be mentioned that DEŠA’s activities also included the restoration of the folk costume of the island of Mljet, which also uses silk threads.<sup>185</sup>



**Figure 8.** Mare Drobac, a silkwoman from the village of Grušići, by Čilipi in Konavle

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184. The revitalization began in 1994 through the aforementioned organization, whereby the silk cooperative SERICA from Cevennes in France sent a donation of mulberry silk eggs (11 grams) to Konavle, which were then distributed to the interested families. As part of the project *Obnova svilarstva u Konavlima (Renewal of Silk Production in Konavle)*, in 1996 DEŠA secured the funds needed to purchase 2,000 seedlings of the dwarf mulberry tree *Kokuso* thanks to the editorial board of *Kolo sreće – The Wheel of Fortune* (an entertainment show on Croatian Radio and Television – HRT) and several other sponsors. In cooperation with the Croatian Radio and Television’s Editorial Board of Folk Music and Traditions (*Redakcija narodne glazbe i običaja*), in 1997 DEŠA participated in filming a documentary about the mulberry silkworm and the production of silk in Konavle (“Kad list murve bude poput mišjeg uha”) in order to promote and revitalize the silk industry. By the decision of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Croatia, the Konavle embroidery became a part of the Croatian Intangible Cultural Heritage in July 2015.

185. Hansal, “Priča o svili. Bi li ti sinko meni mogla dobiti bubicu?”.

Note: Photo taken in her family house, in 2016, during the research for the presentation M. Gjurašić and A. Vlašić, "The Tradition of Sericulture on the Territory of Croatia through the Ages, on the Example of Konavle," on the Mediterranean Island Conference, September 21-24, 2016, on the island of Vis.

## Conclusion

This paper summarizes the history of silk craftsmanship and sericulture, with a special emphasis on the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia and the Kingdom of Dalmatia during the long 19<sup>th</sup> century. The research focused on the influence that the local and state authorities had on the development of this industry in both provinces.

The impetus for the development of sericulture came from Empress Maria Theresa, who wanted the nobility at the Viennese court to be dressed as lavishly as those in France and Germany, and at the same time to reduce the costs of importing this expensive fabric. In addition, silkmaking was recognized as a lucrative sideline activity, which was not subject to adverse weather conditions like many other economy branches and could be practiced even by the lowest strata of society, which would resolve the problem of vagabondry and begardry in the Monarchy.

In the area of present-day Croatia, sericulture was first encouraged in the free port of Rijeka (1750), and then in the Military Frontier, where numerous household cooperatives, especially frontiersmen's families, got involved with it. Sericulture soon spread to the Slavonian (1761), Varaždin (1764), and Banat Frontiers (1772) as well as to Kordun (1787), and eventually it reached Dalmatia, which came under Austrian rule only after the fall of the Venetian Republic.

It has been determined that the rulers, from the time of Empress Maria Theresa until the end of the Austrian administration in the Croatian lands (in both provinces), encouraged sericulture and silk craftsmanship more than any other industry. This was manifested through the free distribution of mulberry seedlings and mulberry silkworm eggs, production control done by supervisors employed in silk stations, distribution of manuals in Croatian on silkworm breeding, organization of free courses for the locals who wanted to engage in this activity, organized purchase of cocoons, and so on. Apart from the state, sericulture was also supported by the Catholic Church, which owned great estates, especially in Dalmatia, where it encouraged the planting of mulberries.

However, due to the undercutting of purchase prices by the monopoly holders (in both provinces), the strong competition – primarily from Italy and France – the political circumstances (the turmoil in 1910, the Balkan Wars, World War I), and especially the invention of artificial silk, this industry started to dwindle in Croatia by the end of the Austrian administration. Today, only a few toponyms, anthroponyms, and patronymics that contain references to silk,



mulberry trees, or mulberries remind us of its “golden age.” As a cottage industry, silk production has persisted only in the vicinity of Petrinja, in some Slavonian villages, and in Konavle, where farm girls still make traditional costumes out of silk that they produce themselves. Silk production was revitalized in Konavle after the Croatian War of Independence, thanks to the NGO “DEŠA”, and it has been introduced as an elective subject at the Gruda Elementary School (in Konavle), which further encourages the development of silk production in the region.

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## William Warren Scranton and the United Nations 1976-1977

By Sean Brennan\*

*During his year of service as the American ambassador to the United Nations, William Scranton, who had a distinguished career in domestic and foreign service before his appointment to the position in February 1976, faced a number of challenges during this time period. His first task was to improve the standing of the American delegation with other representatives following the tumultuous tenure of his predecessor, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, especially when it came to delegates from the Third World. Scranton attempted to find a balance in the Middle Eastern disputes between Israel and much of the Arab world. Following this, Scranton dealt with the end of European imperialism in Africa through welcoming new member-states into the organization. The Cold War, even during the era of détente, was never far from the agenda, and Scranton helped pioneer the efforts to attack on the Soviet record on human rights, a tactic later used by representatives from the Carter and Reagan Administrations.*

### Introduction

Representative for Pennsylvania's 10<sup>th</sup> District during the Kennedy Years, widely regarded as one of the Keystone State's most successful 20<sup>th</sup> century governors from 1963 to 1967, later a special advisor and presidential envoy for Richard Nixon and the leader of Gerald Ford's transition team following the Watergate scandal, William Warren Scranton was one of the best examples of the moderate, internationalist wing of the Republican party during the Cold War era, along with Senators such as Arthur Vandenberg, Warren Austin, and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. Like the later two, Scranton also served as an ambassador to the United Nations, in his case during the Presidency of Gerald Ford, taking over from Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan. While his time in this position was brief, lasting from March 1976 to January 1977, it was certainly tumultuous, as Scranton was forced to reorganize the American mission to the UN following the condition it had been left in by Moynihan. Scranton was also dealt with many of the iconic international issues of the decade, from the last remnants of the end of European imperialism, to controversy of America's relations with Israel, the problem of international terrorism, and the emphasis human rights as a weapon to use against the Soviet Union and its allies in the aftermath of the Helsinki Accords at the height of détente.

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## Political and Personal Background

Born on July 19, 1917, in Madison, Connecticut, Scranton's parents, Worthington Scranton and Marion Warren, both prominent figures in the Pennsylvania Republican party, soon took him back to the city founded by his ancestors, where he attended elementary school in Scranton, Pennsylvania, before attending the elite Hotchkiss School in Lakeville Connecticut, then attending Yale College, graduating in 1939. He then enrolled in law school at Yale, but, like his law school classmate and lifelong friend Gerald Ford, he took a formal leave of absence to enlist in the armed forces during the Second World War, Scranton served as a pilot for the Air Transport command from 1941 to 1945 and would spend 1946 to 1963 in the Air Force reserve, ultimately retiring with the rank of Colonel. Upon his return to civilian life, Scranton finished law school at Yale, graduating in late 1946. Before his enlistment into military service in 1942, he married Mary Lowe Chamberlain, a Scranton native who was working as an intelligence analyst for the Army Air Force in Washington DC. The marriage would last until Scranton's death in 2013 and produce four children, their oldest son, William Worthington Scranton, would serve as Pennsylvania's Lieutenant Governor from 1979 to 1987.<sup>1</sup>

Despite his reputation in public life, Scranton would spend the next decade and a half in law and business in northeastern Pennsylvania. He joined the law firm of O'Malley, Harris, Warren, and Hill in 1947. In addition to his legal career, Scranton also worked as a salesman for the International Textbook Company, rising to the position of Vice-President until he left in 1952 to become the director of the Scranton-Lackawanna Trust Company the same year. He would rise to the position of President in 1954. By the end of the 1950s, Scranton was also chairman of the Board of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Broadcasting Company and for the Northeastern Bank after the Scranton-Lackawanna Trust Company merged with it in 1956. Ultimately, throughout his life he served on the board of directors of eight local companies in northeastern Pennsylvania and twenty-one in the United States.

Like his parents, Scranton was active in local and state Republican politics, which brought him to the attention of President Dwight Eisenhower, who had established a private presidential retreat in Gettysburg where the First Couple frequently visited. In 1959, Eisenhower and the terminally ill John Foster Dulles appointed Scranton to serve as a Special Assistant to newly appointed Secretary of State, former governor of Massachusetts Christian Herter. Scranton's tasks involved doing public relations work for Herter and later worked as the manager

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1. George Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman* (State College, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1981), 31. Much like Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, Scranton was from the unofficial American aristocracy, he could trace some of his ancestors back to the passengers on the *Mayflower*.



of Secretary of State's office. The job raised his profile nationally, and at the end of the Eisenhower Administration, Scranton decided to run for election to the US House of Representatives in November 1960 to represent Pennsylvania's 10<sup>th</sup> Congressional District, which at the time represented the northeastern part of the state, including Lackawanna, Luzerne, and Wayne counties. Scranton won an easy victory over the Democratic incumbent Stanley Prokop.<sup>2</sup>

Despite serving only one term as a Congressmen, Scranton gained a reputation as one of the most visible of the moderate Republicans in the House, vocally supporting several President John Kennedy's policies, including the Peace Corps and Civil Rights legislation, eventually the Washington DC press corps labeled him as a "Kennedy Republican." Although he planned to run for reelection to Congress in 1962, a race opinion polls showed him as a clear favorite to win, Scranton was persuaded by the Pennsylvania GOP to run for governor instead. After having the lost the previous two gubernatorial elections in a favorable political environment in the Eisenhower years and having seen Kennedy win the state by a close margin over Nixon two years before, the Keystone state leaders were convinced a moderate figure like Scranton would stand an excellent chance of winning the state. It turned out to be a wise decision, as Scranton won a resounding victory in November 1962 over the Democratic challenger Richard Dilworth, the former mayor of Philadelphia.<sup>3</sup>

During his four years as governor, Scranton continued his moderate policies that had characterized his two years as a congressman. Benefitting from the economic prosperity of the mid to late-1960s and the sharp drop in unemployment, Scranton increased state spending considerably in Harrisburg, partially paid for with an increase in the state income tax. Spending was directed especially towards improving the state's education system, including establishing the Keystone state's community college network. He also spent a considerable amount on promoting industrial development in the state, including obtaining aid from investors abroad, especially in Western Europe. A supporter of the civil rights movement, Scranton also worked to integrate school districts across the state.<sup>4</sup>

Scranton soon became so popular in some GOP circles that he was mentioned in late 1963 as a possible Republican candidate to challenge Democrat President Lyndon Johnson. Whereas the right wing of the GOP in the 1964 primary strongly backed "Mr. Republican", Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater, candidates for the moderate Republicans were divided between former Vice-President Richard Nixon, his former running mate and UN ambassador Henry Cabot

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2. Historical Background Material on William Warren Scranton, January 3 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

3. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 64. At the time, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's constitution allowed for governors to serve for only one term.

4. *Ibid*, 71.

Lodge Jr, New York governor Nelson Rockefeller, Michigan governor George Romney, and William Scranton. For a time, it appeared that Scranton was the most likely rival to Goldwater, although Scranton's mixed messages over whether former president Dwight Eisenhower had endorsed him or not following the California primaries in June of that year helped sink his campaign. Ultimately, Goldwater won the Republican nomination and went on to lose a landslide election to Lyndon Johnson in November.<sup>5</sup>

Term-limited out of the governor's mansion in Harrisburg, Scranton showed little interest in attempting to win the GOP nomination again in 1968. Following Richard Nixon's Presidential victory over Minnesota's Democratic governor Hubert Humphrey, Scranton worked in a variety of functions for the Nixon Administration, concerning both domestic and foreign policy. In between Nixon's election in November 1968 and his inauguration in January 1969, Scranton served as his special envoy to Western Europe and the Middle East, meeting with several leaders to discuss everything from the recent Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia to crush the Prague Spring to the Sixth-Day war between America's close ally Israel and several of then Arab states. In terms of domestic relations, Scranton chaired Nixon's special commission on campus unrest following the shootings at Kent State University on May 4, 1970, and later his Commission on Wage and Price Controls.<sup>6</sup>

The Nixon administration ultimately came to a messy end as President Richard Nixon resigned on August 8, 1974, to avoid certain impeachment due to his involvement in the Watergate scandal. The new President Gerald Ford, who came to power in unprecedented circumstances, as he only became Vice-President due to Spiro Agnew's resignation for a separate scandal from Watergate involving real estate speculation, needed to find a figure with a bipartisan reputation to handle this transition. He turned to his former Yale Law school classmate Scranton, who pulled off the difficult assignment with success. Ford and his Secretary of State Henry Kissinger had bigger things in mind for Scranton, but he turned down their offers of various diplomatic posts and for the next eighteen months Scranton returned to the business world, although his decision to serve as Chair of the Council of Foreign Relations hinted at a continued interest in diplomatic affairs. In 1975, Scranton acquiesced to serve on Ford's Committee on Arms Control, and in early 1976, Scranton finally accepted a formal position in the Ford Administration, to serve as America's thirteenth ambassador to the United Nations.<sup>7</sup>

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5. *Ibid*, 106.

6. Historical Background Material on William Warren Scranton, January 3 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Lyndon Johnson having decided not to seek another term for the presidency in early 1968

7. Wolf, 148.

## Service at the United Nations

Given the unprecedented circumstances in which he became president, and the limitations placed on his foreign policy by the sweeping Democratic victories in both houses of Congress in the midterm elections of November 1974 in the aftermath of Watergate, Ford was determined not to make waves with the Soviets and to continue Nixon's policies of détente. Broadly defined, détente refers to a period in the Cold War from the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 when leaders on both sides of the Iron Curtain worked to reduce tension between both sides, at least in Europe, although proxy wars and coups continued in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Although their long-term success continues to be debated by historians and political scientists, during his first two years in office Ford achieved what were viewed at the time as significant diplomatic breakthroughs in the era of détente. The first was his meeting with Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at the Far Eastern Soviet city of Vladivostok in November 23-24, 1974, where the two struck up a friendly rapport and signed an agreement where both sides would agree to limit the size of their nuclear arsenals, with limits, to be agreed to later, on both intercontinental and submarine-based ballistic missiles. The second was the summit at the Finnish capital of Helsinki of July and August of the following year, where Ford, accompanied by the various heads of state from the NATO countries, once again met with Brezhnev, as well as the various leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries, and signed what became known as the Helsinki Accords, wherein the NATO countries promised not to alter the post WWII borders of eastern Europe, nor attempt to bring an end to Communism by force. In return, the Soviet Union and the eastern bloc states promised to respect Western definitions of human rights, including freedoms of speech, assemble and religion. As tensions returned on both sides of the Iron Curtain in the late 1970s, the meeting at Helsinki was widely viewed as the highwater mark of détente.<sup>8</sup>

Conflicts remained regarding America's relations with the Third World, especially on the floors of the United Nations. Idi Amin, the brutal dictator of Uganda, gave a speech on the floor of the United Nations denouncing, among other things, Zionism, Western colonialism, attacks on Uganda's human rights policies, and the work of organizations such as Amnesty International in October 1975. UN Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Harvard-trained sociologist who had served as Nixon's advisor on Urban Affairs and later served two years as ambassador to India, attacked Amin at the annual AFL-CIO dinner as a "racist murderer" and argued many of the postcolonial states which had emerged since the Second World War held next to no respect for individual liberties. Although his remarks were widely praised in the United States, Moynihan was rebuked by

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8. Daniel J Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 220.

the Organization for African Unity, and the following month, Uganda, Cuba, the Soviet Union, and several other states in Africa and the Middle East passed a resolution in the UN General Assembly declaring Zionism to be a form of racism. Supported by Soviet dissident Andrei Sakharov, Moynihan introduced a UN resolution of his own demanding the release of political prisoners held by many of the dictatorial regimes which sponsored the resolution equating Zionism and racism. He was not supported by Kissinger in these efforts, and soon was criticized by some American allies for wielding the issue of human rights like a sledgehammer, such as singling out South Africa for its apartheid policies. There was also the issue that Moynihan had neglected administrative matters regarding the American mission at the UN, leaving many staff members adrift in knowing what their duties and responsibilities were. Eventually the relationship between Kissinger and Moynihan deteriorated so badly that the UN ambassador resigned on February 15, 1976, in his own words to avoid being fired.<sup>9</sup>

On February 25, 1976, Scranton and his wife met with President Ford, Secretary of State Kissinger, outgoing Ambassador Moynihan and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft. After Ford expressed the usual pleasantries praising Moynihan for his dedicated service to the United States and the United Nations and discussing Scranton's personal friendship and qualifications for the position as the new American ambassador, he made a statement about his view of the importance of the United Nations. Ford informed Scranton he had a "big job" ahead of him regarding representing the American government at the UN and offered a more positive spin on Moynihan's service than Kissinger would have offered, stating the American mission had done an excellent job in reaching out to underdeveloped countries and protecting it from unfair attacks, efforts he wanted Scranton to continue. Scranton noted it would be a difficult job, especially given the attacks against the United States and its allies, but he was confident of success, admitting it was a tall order to follow Moynihan, of whom Scranton said he was a "big fan." Kissinger concluded the meeting by also expressing his full support for the new ambassador, especially given his previous success in so many other previous endeavors.<sup>10</sup>

Ford also ensured a statement was released to the press concerning his views on the UN. The statement said: "America's commitment to the United Nations is firm. The world needs the United Nations for the cause of peace. Because we value that institution, we work to strengthen it. At the same time, we will not hesitate to speak out clearly against actions that threaten its viability. Nor will we hesitate to speak out forcefully in defense of our interests and our principles."

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9. *Ibid*, 199-200. Moynihan did not have similarly hostile relationship with Ford and would later represent New York in the Senate from 1977 to 2001.

10. Memorandum of the exchange between Ambassador Elect Scranton, President Ford, and Secretary of State Kissinger, February 25 1976 Kendall Files Box 10, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Scranton was formally sworn in as the UN Ambassador a few weeks later, at a public ceremony in the Oval Office on March 15, 1976.<sup>11</sup>

Scranton's chief aid during his foreign service career was Admiral John Faigle of the US Coast Guard. In between his meeting with Ford in late February and his swearing-in ceremony in mid-March, Scranton and Faigle spent much of the next few weeks cleaning up the messes that, in his view, had been left for him by Moynihan. He scheduled a series of meetings with the staff members of the American mission at the United Nations, which numbered about 125 in total and with officials in the US State Department who dealt regularly with UN Affairs. He maintained this practice throughout his ten months as the American ambassador, and consequently became very popular with much of the staff, as his cordial manner gained him the nickname, "Mr. Nice Guy." He also contacted many of the delegations to the UN from numerous Third World countries and promised he would be willing to meet with them and discuss any concerns or issues they had. While Scranton made no promises to any of them about an immediate change in American foreign policy, he felt it was necessary to reach out to the emissaries of these governments, following his philosophy in both domestic and foreign arenas that "You can only get what you want by giving others a piece of the action."<sup>12</sup>

These policies continued following the formal beginning of Scranton's term as ambassador. Scranton divided his work time between two locations in New York. The first was at the American mission headquarters across the street from the UN facility in Turtle Bay, the second was the ambassadorial suite on the 42<sup>nd</sup> floor of the Waldorf-Astoria hotel in Manhattan, which during the era of Warren Austin and Henry Cabot Lodge Jr housed the American delegation. Scranton and his wife hosted numerous dinners and parties on regular basis, often accommodating as many as twenty-six diplomats and their spouses at the same time, which gradually helped to improve the atmosphere for the American delegation at the UN. They also hosted occasional social functions in their home in Dalton, Pennsylvania, the highlight of which was a large party in October, attended by representatives of over sixty countries.<sup>13</sup> Scranton had his first formal meeting at the White House as ambassador on May 18, meeting with the NSA Brent Scowcroft. The main issue of the agenda, one that was dominant throughout Scranton's time in office, was Israel and its relationship, or lack thereof, to nearly all the Arab world. After emerging victorious in both the Six-Day War in June 1967 over Jordan, Syria, and Egypt and the Yom Kippur War in

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11. Memo for meeting with the new UN Ambassador at the Oval Office, February 25 1976. Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives. This statement was certainly true in many senses, Moynihan later said his lowest moment as UN ambassador was ensuring the United Nations did not probe too deeply into the invasion of East Timor by America's ally Indonesia.

12. Interview with Admiral John Faigle, January 21 2021.

13. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 149-150.

October 1973 over the latter two, Israel found now occupied several territories with a significant Arab population, in particular the Golan Heights, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and the Sinai Peninsula. In addition, there was the intractable problem of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian Arab refugees living in camps in the former war zones. While relations between Israel and Egypt were starting to improve, the other Arab states and many Third World countries regularly denounced Israel on the floors of the United Nations, including advocating the expulsion of the country from the organization.<sup>14</sup>

Scranton outlined four pressing issues he had to deal with at Turtle Bay to Scowcroft. The first were negotiations between the American and Egyptian delegations regarding a proposal Cairo wished to make regarding Israel's occupation the various Arab territories in the aftermath of the 1967 and 1973 wars, especially the Sinai Peninsula, as well as more broadly the discussion of the Palestinians within these territories. The second were negotiations with the Syrian delegation concerning Syrian support for the renewal of UNDOF, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force, currently about two thousand soldiers strong, and with contingents of men from Iran, Finland, Yugoslavia, Japan, India, and the Philippines. The third was the continued American refusal to recognize the Palestinian Liberation Organization until it recognized "Israel's right to exist." The fourth and arguably the most important was how the United States should prevent a vote by many of the African and Arab states to expel Israel from the United Nations, or at least suspend its membership, a possibility the delegation of South Africa had recently spoken with Scranton about. The meeting concluded with a discussion of Scranton's upcoming trip throughout Africa, which would conclude with Scranton serving as the official American representative at the independence ceremonies for the Seychelles, an archipelago of islands in the Indian Ocean which had recently been granted its independence by the United Kingdom, part of Scranton's efforts to win over many of the Third World countries to at least neutrality towards the United States.<sup>15</sup> Scranton's African trip, where he visited Sierra Leon, Upper Volta, the Ivory Coast, Camron, the Central Africa Republic, Gabon, Tanzania, Zambia, Mozambique, Swaziland, and finally the Seychelles, was viewed by many in the Ford Administration as a success, especially given the rough feelings caused by Moynihan's time in office. In addition to attending the Seychelles Independence Day ceremonies, a few months later, on September 21, Scranton announced the United States was formally sponsoring the Seychelles' application for membership in the United Nations, as:

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14. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*, 2015, 132-135.

15. Meeting between William Scranton and Brent Scowcroft, May 18, 1976, Conor Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives. The Egyptian government, under the leadership of Anwar Al-Sadat, was beginning to move away from being a Soviet ally to an American one. Syria ultimately supported the renewal of the UNDOF in the Golan Heights, and it continues its work up to the present day.

"The dedication of the people of the Seychelles to the goals which we all share of peace and freedom and the welfare of mankind with surely facilitate our join task."<sup>16</sup>

The Middle East, or more specifically, Israel, was once again on the agenda of the next meeting between Scranton and Scowcroft. The specific issue was Operation Thunderbolt, the successful effort by the Israeli military on July 4, 1976, to rescue over 100 Israeli passengers and the crew of an Air France flight from Tel Aviv to Paris which had been hijacked on June 27 by Arab and German terrorists and flown to the Entebbe Airport in Uganda, whose dictator, Idi Amin, had supported the hijacking and invited the terrorists refuge in his country. On the early morning hours of July 4, over 100 commandoes from the Israeli army attacked the airport, having received intelligence and assistance from the Kenyan government. Three hostages were killed, another, Dora Bloch, who had been taken to a nearby hospital, was subsequently murdered by Ugandan soldiers on Idi Amin's orders. Israel lost one commando, and they succeeded in killing all the hijackers as well as forty-five Ugandan soldiers. While the United States had not been informed of Operation Thunderbolt until shortly before its commencement, the Ford Administration voiced its support for the operation, which captured the attention of the world. Scranton later shared Ford's sentiments in a July 12 letter to Rabbi Bennett Hermann and Ms. Renee Morgenstern, members of the Cleveland Regional Branch of the Zionist Organization of America. Quoting the President's statement, Scranton wrote: "The American people join me in expressing our great satisfaction that the passengers of the Air France flight seized earlier this week have been saved and a senseless act of terror has been averted."<sup>17</sup>

Scranton realized he would have to describe American support for the Israeli raid on Entebbe to less receptive audiences. At this next meeting with Scowcroft on July 8 at the White House, after discussing other possible issues that might come up at the UN including a possible summit between the North and South Korean governments, the status of the Panama Canal zone, and Cuban attempts to raise the issue of Puerto Rican independence, Scranton and Scowcroft moved to the issue of Israeli's Operation Thunderbolt. Both agreed Scranton should promote a resolution at the United Nations condemning all forms of terrorism that targeted air travel as well as all countries which supported these efforts. They also agreed Israel's actions might lead to another attempt to expel it from

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16. Statement by William Scranton on membership in the Seychelles in the United Nations, September 21, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

17. William Scranton to Ms. Renee Morgenstern and Rabbi Benett Hermann July 12, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 168, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

the United Nations, or at least a condemnation of its actions in Uganda, and the American delegation should be prepared to thwart those efforts.<sup>18</sup>

The American ambassador was, as he expected, forced to address these concerns at the UN on July 12. After making his initial remarks of condolences involving the passing of several prominent government officials who had worked at the UN, Scranton noted the Ugandan delegation to the United Nations had accused the Israeli government of violating its territorial integrity through Operation Thunderbolt, which led to the deaths of 45 Uganda soldiers at the Entebbe Airport. The American ambassador admitted this was a violation of Uganda territory and normally "such a breach would be impermissible under the charter of the United Nations." However, given the fact it was a clear and imminent danger to the hostages due to the behavior of the terrorists, and Israel had a right to defend their nationals based on the long-standing international principle of every nation having the right to self-defense. More to this, not only had the Ugandan government not taken any steps to save the hostages, but "there is substantial evidence that the Ugandan government cooperated and aided the terrorists." Thus, the American government saw the charges of the Ugandan government as baseless, and would oppose any resolution condemning Israel for them.<sup>19</sup> Scranton had already, a few months before, on April 28, had a forceful statement on the floor of the United Nations attacking the idea that Zionism was inherently racist, or that it was similar to the white minority rule in Rhodesia and South Africa which has recently been condemned in a recent UN resolution, which the Soviet bloc and Arab states had attempted to link to it. Scranton argued: "Zionism is not racism," and the United States would never accept a linkage between the two. Instead, Zionism was "a justifiable and understandable manifestation of national feeling on the part of a people entitled to a homeland, whose claim to a homeland was recognized by the United Nations almost 30 years ago."<sup>20</sup>

Scranton did feel, however, the United States should act as an honest broker between Israel and the various Arab states, as there was little chance of a lasting peace between them if the American government only supported one side, a view he regularly expressed to Ford, Kissinger, and Scowcroft, views he had also expressed to President-elect Nixon after his tour of the Middle East in 1968.<sup>21</sup> The most notable example of Scranton's efforts to appear even-handed were his frequent attacks at the UN on Israel for establishing settlements in a number of

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18. Record of a meeting between William Scranton and Brent Scowcroft July 8, 1976, Conon Files Box 3, Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library Archives.

19. Statement by William Scranton regarding the Israeli Raid at Entebbe Airport, July 12, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 168, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries.

20. Paul Hoffmann, "U.S. Warns at UN about Zionism Issue," *The New York Times* April 29, 1976.

21. Interview with Admiral John Faigle, January 21, 2021.



the territories in had occupied since 1967, especially the West Bank. While he accepted Israel's occupation of this territory as a temporary measure until a peace settlement could be worked out between it and its Arab neighbors, none of whom had yet granted diplomatic recognition to Israel, the settlements were a strong barrier to resolving the standoff: "The thought we could get a peace and military and economic security for Israel by making enemies of everybody on the Arab side was an absurdity." Scranton also attempted to involve the Palestinian Liberation Organization in discussions at the UN, as he did not take many of its leader Yasir Arafat's public statements of "destroying Israel," very seriously. Both actions earned him as much animosity from some elements of the Jewish population in America as his actions regarding the definition of Zionism or defending Israel's actions at Entebbe earned him support.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the racial debate over two American allies, Rhodesia and South Africa, Scranton addressed racial discrimination practiced by both, and what the American delegation's response at the UN should be. Regarding Rhodesia, the former British colony, named after an icon of the British Empire, Sir Cecil Rhodes, succeeded from the British Empire in 1965 following a disagreement between the white minority provisional government in the capital of Salisbury and London over voting rights for the African minority. Under the rule of Prime Minister Ian Smith, a former fighter pilot in the Royal Air Force, the government was not recognized by many countries outside of Portugal and South Africa. Smith's government, presenting itself as a bulwark against Communism in Africa, fought a guerrilla war known as the Rhodesian Bush War, against two groups, the Zimbabwe African People's Union, and the Zimbabwe African National Union, while negotiating with Bishop Abel Muzorewa, a more moderate face of the African majority, for a power-sharing arrangement between the white minority and the black majority. As part of a shift in American foreign policy, Ford and Kissinger came out in early 1976 against white-minority rule in former European colonies, if only, in Kissinger's view, to prevent the Soviets from being viewed as the only supporter of African nationalism. South Africa, under Apartheid rule since 1948, considerably larger with more resources than Rhodesia, continued to use its military might to fight against communist insurgents in Africa, and against African countries supporting the ANC against its white-minority government.<sup>23</sup>

On April 6, very early into his tenure as ambassador, Scranton announced the American government would not only continue the use of sanctions on the Rhodesian government but to strengthen them as well. He then went on to say: "This offers an opportunity to affirm our strong opposition to the illegal Smith regime in Rhodesia and express the Security Council's full support for the urgent transfer of power in Rhodesia to the majority of Rhodesia's citizens." Eventually Smith's government worked out a power-sharing agreement with Muzorewa in

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22. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 155-159.

23. *Ibid*, 225.

1978 under pressure from UN sanctions, before giving way entirely by 1980 to the radical Robert Mugabe. Renaming the country Zimbabwe and its capital Harare, Mugabe's brutal 37-year rule victimized the country's black and white citizens alike.<sup>24</sup> Regarding South Africa, Scranton also made a strong statement which again marked a shift in policy by Ford and Kissinger, specifically regarding the territorial incursions of the South African military into its neighbors of Namibia and Zambia on July 30: "Let me say first and foremost that my government forcefully condemns this incursion into Zambian territory. We oppose unequivocally the violation of Zambia's territorial sovereignty and integrity. We deeply deplore this loss of life and destruction of property." Regarding Namibia, Scranton said that South African military's presence was an "illegal occupation" and demanded they withdraw immediately.<sup>25</sup>

Regarding the Soviet Union and its satellites, Scranton did take steps to reduce tensions with America's chief adversary when he could. One of the main examples during his tenure was Scranton's statement following a shooting at the Soviet UN mission headquarters in Riverdale, NY. The incident occurred on February 27, wherein a black car drove up to the building and a male individual stepped out and fired a number of shots with a pistol at some members of the delegation as they stepped out of the building. No one was hurt, and only a window in the lobby was shattered, but the incident was the third shooting which had occurred at the Soviet missions since 1971, and the Soviet government angrily accused by the American government and the New York Police Department of failing to do anything to find and arrest the guilty parties.<sup>26</sup> On April 2 1976 had a personal meeting with Mikhail Averkiyevich Kharlamov, the Deputy Soviet ambassador to the United Nations to inform him that the American ambassador viewed the shooting incident as an "absolute outrage" and to express his condolences. He also promised Kharlamov the US federal government would make all possible efforts to identify the shooters and bring them to justice. He would describe the incident on the floor of the United Nations as "the latest in a series of uncivilized acts carried out by extremist groups acting in a spirit totally contrary to the American tradition. The people of this nation are repelled by terrorism and demand that it end."<sup>27</sup> At the same time, Scranton also

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24. Statement by William Scranton on the expansion of Rhodesian sanctions April 6, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Scranton received several angry letters from American citizens for the support of this policy.

25. William Scranton statement on Zambia's complaint regarding South Africa July 30, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. South Africa's military incursions continued into the late 1970s and 1980s.

26. "Soviet Diplomats as Targets" *The New York Times* March 7, 1976.

27. Press Release by William Scranton regarding the shooting at the Soviet Mission April 7, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 147, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Scranton also had to deal with many angry letters from émigré groups from the

forcibly attacked the Soviet government at the Appeals to Conscience Dinner in late October for the beating of Jewish demonstrators in Moscow by plainclothes policemen for demanding the right to immigrate to Israel. He also, under pressure from Ford and Kissinger, spoke out against Democratic People's Republic of Vietnam's entry into the United Nations following the conquest of South Vietnam by the communists in late 1975, and used America's Security Council veto to deny its entry. It was a controversial decision and one criticized by many political commentators on both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>28</sup>

Easily the most memorable speech Scranton during his brief tenure as American ambassador to the UN was to its General Assembly on November 24, 1976, entitled "Human Rights: Let's Mean What We Say," where in Scranton laid a new method of incorporating the promotion of human rights as a vital component of American Foreign Policy. Following Ford's defeat by Democratic challenger Jimmy Carter in the American presidential election earlier in the month, Scranton desired to go out on memorable note, and the speech served as excellent summation of his foreign policy views. Scranton had already raised the issue of human rights before, on memorable example, in response to a letter from a Ms. Shirley Pierson on March 24, regarding the status of Pastor Georgi Vins, a Baptist preacher and Soviet citizen of both American and Russian lineage who had been imprisoned in a Soviet labor camp in Siberia for attempting to establish a number of Baptist churches without permission of the Soviet government. Scranton promised Pierson the Ford Administration was working to secure a release for Vins and other Soviet dissidents, and he promised to bring the issue to the attention of the UN Human Rights Commission as soon as possible.<sup>29</sup>

Scranton began his speech by stating: "Human rights is as vital and generic of an interest of the United Nations as peacekeeping itself." Going to say the record of the United Nations on both had been mixed at best: "The rhetoric on human rights has been superb. The record of accomplishment has been sadly deficient." Discussions about human rights remained mired in political contexts, and the United Nations had been "long on declarations and short on implementation." Nor did the United States' government believed human rights were only for certain people at certain times, but were the rights for every person, across the world. Scranton also rejected the argument popular among many Third World leaders that economic development was more important than

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Soviet bloc and from the USSR itself regarding what, in their view, was his refusal to press the Soviet government more strongly on its failure to honor the promises it made in Helsinki the year before. A group known as the Jewish Armed Resistance claimed responsibility for the shootings

28. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 1981, 155-157.

29. William Scranton to Shirley Pierson March 24, 1976, William Warren Scranton Papers, Box 169, the Pennsylvania State University Libraries. Vins eventually was along with a few other dissidents released in a deal made between Carter and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in 1979 in exchange for two Soviet spies captured by the FBI.

human rights: "promoting and cherishing freedom is both a moral necessity and a precondition to better living." The Communist states, in particularly the Soviet Union had, since the founding of the United Nations, cynically used language concerning human rights they had no interest in following, as the Marxist dogma these states were founded on remained diametrically opposed to political and economic freedom. One solution Scranton proposed was to end the secrecy surrounding the discussions of the UN Human Rights Committee, and to ensure it conducted its work openly during every session at the United Nations. At the conclusion of his speech, Scranton recommended a UN Court of Human Rights, as well as the creation of regional human rights organizations that could then report on a regular basis to the UN. Ultimately: "The conscience of mankind can ignore injustice in the dark. When the lights are on, few men of conscience can be quiet. This body must choose between darkness and decency, between protecting the violators of human dignity and protecting human dignity itself with the light of world opinion, the clear light of truth."<sup>30</sup>

Two months later, Scranton formally stepped down as ambassador to the United Nations with the beginning of the Carter Administration, to be replaced by Andrew Young, a former pastor, civil rights activist and a Democrat congressman from Georgia, who was the first African American ambassador to the UN, and who occupied the post until August 1979. It was Scranton's last diplomatic position in the American government, although he was not done with the United Nations yet, taking the position as President of the United Nations Association, a civic organization designed to promote American support for the UN, in early 1977. Its outgoing President, James Leonard, praised his replacement for his skillful work during the 31<sup>st</sup> General Assembly, especially compared to its chaotic environment of the previous few years. Leonard specifically praised Scranton for his role promoting détente, ably addressing the controversies over the Panama Canal and Vietnamese entry into the UN, and for his promotion of human rights.<sup>31</sup>

## Conclusion

Scranton's period as UN ambassador, although brief, was a successful one. He had promoted a new approach for the American government regarding

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30. William Scranton, "Human Rights: Let's Mean What We Say" November 24, 1976, in *The Department of State Bulletin*, Volume 75 (Washington DC: US Department of State Press, 1977), 746-748

31. Wolf, *William Warren Scranton: Pennsylvania Statesman*, 163. The American and Panamanian governments were in the process of contentious negotiations securing the transfer of control over the canal from Washington to Panama City, Scranton worked with the Panamanian delegation to keep the issue from spilling over into angry debates at the UN. The treaty was eventually completed in early 1977 during the Carter Administration.

human rights, one continued by the Carter Administration. Despite some domestic criticism, he had ably followed a balanced approach regarding controversies in the Middle East, America's allies in Africa, and regarding relations with the USSR. He had improved the working environment for the American delegation at the UN and had helped to ease the tensions between the United States and many of the countries of the third world. It was a course that predecessors such as Warren Austin, Henry Cabot Lodge Jr, and Adlai Stevenson would have approved.

### Acknowledgments

I had the fortune of using material from the William Scranton papers, located in the Special Collections Library of the Pennsylvania State University. This contained all of Scranton's correspondence during his period as American ambassador to the United Nations. I also had the opportunity to view materials from the Ford Administration, especially President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, from the Gerald Ford Presidential Library at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I also utilized several the volumes of the US State Department's *Foreign Relations of the United States* series, specifically concerning the Ford Administration's relations to the United Nations. Finally, I interviewed Scranton's former chief aid during his time at the UN, US Coast Guard Admiral John Faigle, on January 21, 2021.

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## The Socio-cultural and Political Practices of the People of the Auchi Kingdom Before the Arrival of the Nupe in Nigeria

By Suleiman Yakubu\*

*Ancient African civilizations flourished for centuries in large expanse of land stretching from the Nile Valley to West Africa. In what is known as the Nigeran nation today was formerly made up of kingdoms and empires. One of such kingdoms was the Auchi Kingdom which was invaded by the Nupe in 1860 and they introduced some of their socio-cultural practices but the British dislodged the Nupe in 1897 by establishing British colonial rule which brought about socio-economic exploitation and also further innovations in the Auchi kingdom. Many socio-cultural and political practices of the Auchi Kingdom was abolished and the Nupe people introduced their own cultural and traditional practices after they established their imperial rule over the Auchi Kingdom. It must be said that many indigenous African traditions and socio-cultural practices dwindled away while some remained after European colonialism. Drawing from oral sources and ethnographic research in the region, the article argues that Auchi Kingdom in Nigeria had well-organized socio-cultural and political practices that was the binding force of the people before the Kingdom was overrun by the Nupe people that altered their indigenous practices in 1860 prior to the arrival of the British colonialist in 1897.*

### Introduction

One of the greatest challenges faced by any open-minded historian concerned with traditional and cultural practices of the Auchi Kingdom is getting or locating concrete evidence on the existence of indigenous activities and practices of the people of the Auchi Kingdom before they had contact with people from a different ethnic group or background and the white colonialist.<sup>1</sup> At the time of its earliest unfolding, there were only few written records and no precise authoritative source that could point to the most authentic facts concerning the Auchi people. In those parts of the world inhabited by peoples without the art of writing, oral tradition forms the main available source for the reconstruction of the past, and even among peoples who have writing, many historical sources, including the most ancient ones, are based on oral traditions.<sup>2</sup> This makes the

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1. Egbefo Omolumen Dawood, "The Nupe Invasion of Esanland: An Assessment of its Socio-Political impact on the People- 1885-1897," in *Haskenmu*, volume 1, 2007-2008 (Faculty of Education and Arts Seminar Series, IBB University Lapai, Niger State, Nigeria, 2008), 75-76.

2. The reconstruction of African history is impossible without oral sources. The bulk of sources of African history is heavily indebted to oral tradition. This is so because the art of writing at the time was absent. Words of the mouth was handed down from generation

researcher to ask 'if the Auchi Kingdom actually had indigenous socio-cultural and political practices?' This invariably implies that oral sources are the greatest means of reconstructing African History.

Most of the bits and pieces of historical information about the origin, culture and tradition of the Auchi people as we have them today are derived from what was passed across orally through the centuries. One cannot deny the fact that in such a long period of oral transmission of information spanning through generations, much has been lost and individual accounts differ. This brings up the question 'to what extent or degree was the indigenous socio-cultural and political practices of the people altered?' The history varies from one oral source to another, and each history/story teller provides a version that gives primacy or premiership to his own distant ancestry, clan and village. Consequently, there are divergent views about the origin of the Auchi people and its indigenous socio-cultural and political practices. The account of this article will be limited to the origin, socio-cultural and political situation of the people of the Auchi kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

In assessing the nature of the indigenous ideas, political and socio-cultural practices of the people of the Auchi Kingdom before the incursion by the Nupe in 1860, it is important to note that the people of the Kingdom were very satisfied and contented with their way of life before their internal system was disrupted, annexed, exploited and their culture and way of life altered. The political and socio-cultural practices was the binding force of the people and this made the people to continue to live in peace and harmony before the kingdom was taken over by the Nupe people.<sup>4</sup> This also raises the question "how did the indigenous socio-cultural and political practices impact on the lives of the people?" The article proves that the Auchi Kingdom had indigenous political and socio-cultural practices, which impacted greatly on the lives of the people, before the conquest by the Nupe in 1860.

### Research Methodology

This article is anchored within the disciplines of history and cultural anthropology. Other scholars and writers have written on kingship issues, religion, Nupe hegemony and a host of other issues concerning the Auchi Kingdom but this article is exclusively about the evidence and impact of the socio-cultural and political practices of the Auchi Kingdom before the annexation by the Nupe people. The history of the Auchi Kingdom is heavily built on oral

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to generation. Without oral tradition there is no African history. See Jan Vansina, *Oral Tradition, A Study in Historical Methodology* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), 2.

3. Wajeed Obomeghie (55), Journalist and writer, interviewed at his office at Abuja in Nigeria. 3/4/2021.

4. Zakariyyah Idrees-Oboh Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021.



history kept alive through immemorial customs and traditions, transmitted from generation to generation because the Auchi people kept very little written records. The fieldwork for this article was carried out in Nigeria. Although it was difficult to reach out to people to conduct interviews due to the COVID-19 pandemic but it was successful eventually due to the willingness of some people that were interviewed when they realized the great importance of the research. Moreover, historical and socio-cultural parameters enhance the construction of knowledge and reconstruction of history.

The research combines ethnographic and historical designs by using different research technics such as structured and unstructured interviews. All the respondents, apart from the two professors, were selected based on referral due to the roles their parents and grandparents placed in Kingdom. They further claimed that the information that was transmitted to me was transmitted to them through their parents and grandparents directly. Moreover, all the participants participated willingly. Many questions were asked randomly while others were specific to achieve desirable results. Basic demographic information, including age, religion and marital status were collected from participants. During the research, we<sup>5</sup> carried out some interviews with different respondents including two politicians, a former member of the house of representative and a former federal minister,<sup>6</sup> two professors, one civil servant, one housewife and one journalist/writer. The oral interviews were conducted with the technique of asking questions and some of the interview sessions were recorded with a dictaphone and notes were also taken down. The two professors had carried out studies on Nupe imperialism in the past and they were able to provide some very vital information on the subject. The oral testimonies of these people were very helpful and contributed to a better understanding of the Auchi Kingdom and that it had well organized socio-cultural practices before 1860. During the course of the research, I decided to analyze not only personal narratives but also the attitude, behaviour, mindset and age of the participants in order to identify credible patterns in their narratives. Secondary sources were also consulted to enhance the quality of the research.

Furthermore, information was collected through review of relevant literature on the history of the Auchi Kingdom and surrounding communities. These literature accounts provide anthropological, sociological, economic, political, and historical accounts of the Auchi Kingdom before and after 1860.

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5. The interviews in Auchi were carried out with the assistance of a close friend of mine called Alex Edaghese. We attended the same University in Nigeria.

6. The former Federal Minister was by name Chief Tony Momoh, a royal prince of the Auchi Kingdom. It was his father, King D. H. Momoh, who introduced the Islamic religion in the Auchi kingdom in 1914 but died in 1944. Chief Tony Momoh was Federal Minister of Information during the military regime of General Ibrahim Babangida from 1985 to 1993. He passed on February 1, 2021.

## African Socio-cultural and Political Systems

The traditional African political system is described by the M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard's idea on how the African Political Systems dichotomized precolonial African state systems. According to them there were two groups, group A and B. Group A, they said, consisted of "those societies which have centralized authority, administrative machinery, and judicial institutions." Group B consisted of "those societies which lack centralized authority, administrative machinery, and constituted judicial institutions," and which were therefore characterized, by "the absence of explicit forms of government." This latter group, they also called "stateless societies." The political relevance of the lineage system provided Fortes and Evans-Pritchard with a major dividing line between the two groups. While acknowledging the importance of kinship ties in "the lives of individuals" in both state systems, Fortes and Evans-Pritchard emphasized that in Group-B states, the segmentary lineage system "primarily regulates political relations between territorial segments".<sup>7</sup>

There was significant heterogeneity in political centralization across African ethnicities before colonization.<sup>8</sup> At the one extreme, there were states with centralized administration and hierarchical organization such as the Shongai Empire in Western Africa, the Luba kingdom in Central Africa, and the kingdoms of Buganda and Ankole in Eastern Africa. At the other extreme, there were acephalous societies without political organization beyond the village level, such as the Nuer in Sudan or the Konkomba in Ghana and Togo. The middle of the spectrum occupied societies organized in large chiefdoms and loose alliances, such as the Ewe and the Wolof in Western Africa. While these societies lacked statehood, they tended to have conflict resolution mechanisms and a somewhat centralized decision-making process.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of this article, the Group B best describes the Auchi kingdom political system during the pre-colonial period. The segmentary system is understood to refer to the kind of indigenous political structure evolved by the Auchi people before 1860. Before the arrival of the Nupe imperialist, the Auchi Kingdom lacked a centralized authority before 1860. The real power in the Auchi Kingdom was in the hands of the oldest person in each family. The oldest man in each family had absolute power to take decisions in the family. He attended to all spiritual concerns of all members of his family and was, therefore, the spiritual head of the family. Hakeem explained the manner in which the various villages which constitute the Auchi Kingdom was being administered as semi-

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7. M. Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard (Eds.), *African Political Systems* (London: Oxford University Press, 1940), 5-6.

8. G. P. Murdock, *Africa: Its Peoples and Their Culture History* (New York; McGraw-Hill Book Company 1959), 15.

9. J. Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co 1997), 298-299.

autonomous portions each of which came under the headship of the oldest men who had duties and responsibilities to carry out. As it will be shown later, this system did not provide for a strong central administration. Hakeem also explained that it did not make provision for the monarchical form of political culture but the socio-cultural practices of the people kept them together, hence neither the component nor the entire Auchi Kingdom itself emerged as a Kingdom before 1860.<sup>10</sup>

### Background of the Auchi Kingdom

The Auchi Kingdom, as described by Boateng, is a city located in southern Nigeria.<sup>11</sup> It is bounded on the east by South Ibie, on the north-east by Jattu, on the north by Ayua, Iyuku and Imeke, on the northwest by Ikpeshi and Ihievbe-Ogben, on the south by Ivbiaro and Warrake and on the south-west by Era and Ayiele-Ugioli. The kingdom is located in Etsako West Local Government area of Edo State and currently serves as the Local Government headquarters.<sup>12</sup> Momodu described the location of the kingdom as hilly with pockets of valleys and flat plains. The Auchi Kingdom is described as a place having the root of the largest families in the world, the Momoh family.<sup>13</sup> Tony, also a member of the Momoh family, described the Momoh family a very large, united and organized family. The language spoken by the people is Afenmai language or Etsako Language. It is an Edoid language dialect although the language is commonly referred to by the same name as the people. The Auchi kingdom is divided into five grand quarters or villages which could also be referred to as districts.<sup>14</sup> Auchi has been a major

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10. Hakeem Billy Haruna, *The legacy of Nupe invasion on Etsako society, 1860–1897: A socio-political and cultural analysis* (Department of History, University of Lagos, 1990), 16.

11. Ernest Amano Boateng, *West African Secondary School Atlas New Edition* (Lagos: Thomas Nelson Nigeria Ltd, 1974), 22.

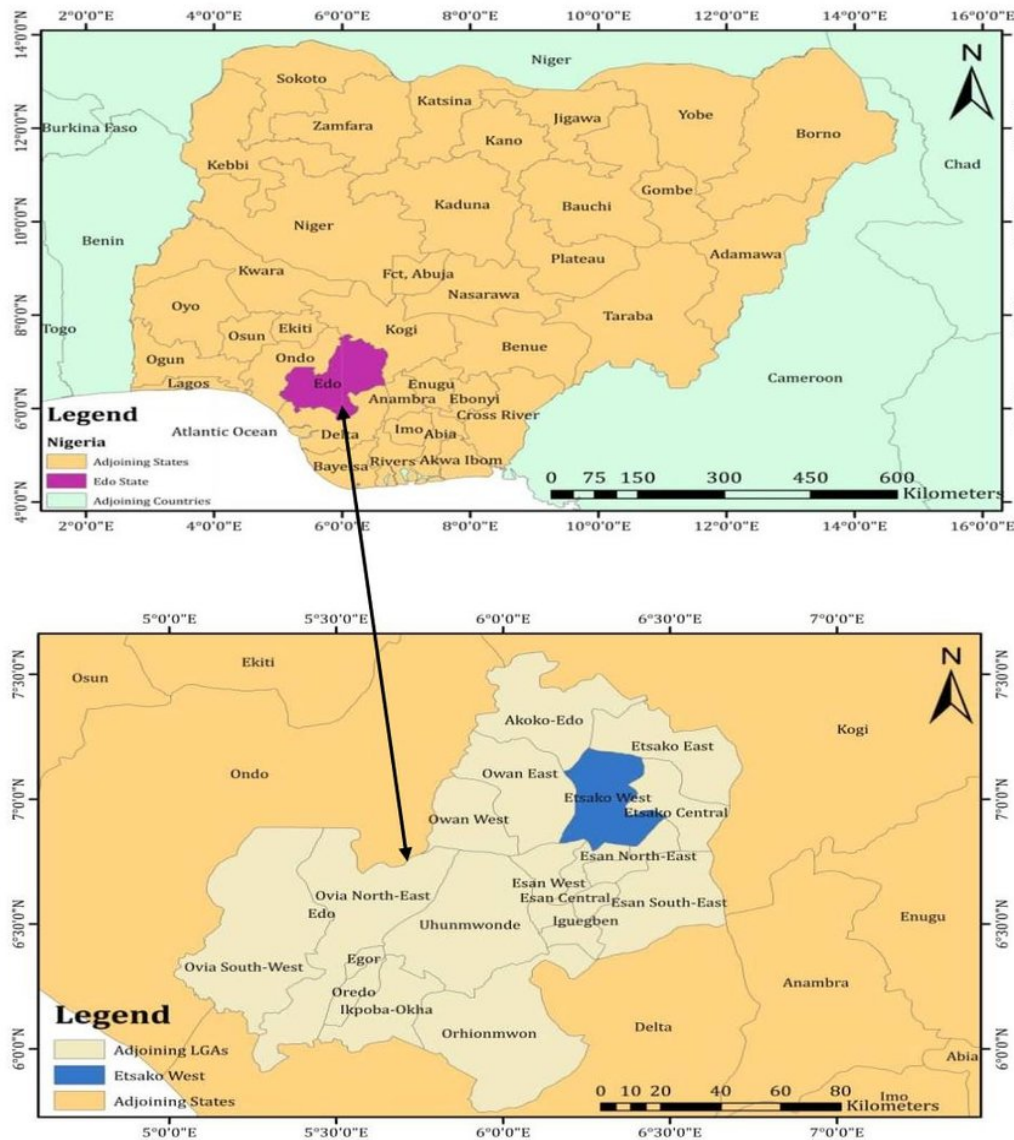
12. The Auchi kingdom is actually located in the South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria which also is the oil producing region in the country. See Kadiri Momoh Seghosime, *Origin and development of Auchi* (Auchi: Smilestel Global Digital, 2011), 1.

13. The Momoh family is the royal family (ruling family that produces the king) in the Auchi Kingdom is one of the largest family in the world. King D.H. Momoh had forty-seven wives and two hundred and fifty-seven children, making his family one of the largest in the world. I interviewed one of the surviving sons, Chief Tony Momoh via telephone conversation before he died last year, a former federal minister during the era of the military regime in Nigeria. The regime of King D, H, Momoh as king was from 1919 to 1944, a period of twenty-five years. Also see Obomeghie, *Auchi Kingdom: Twenty Decades of Ikelebe Dynasty 1945 and beyond* (Benincity: Wadorm Communication Nig. Ltd, 2019), 284.

14. More information on the villages and clans of the Auchi Kingdom. The five grand villages are Utsogu, Akpekpe, Aibotse, Igbhei and Iyekhei. Other neighbouring towns in Etsako West local government area close to the Auchi kingdom includes, Uzairue, South Ibie, Agbede and the Anwain Clan. During the British colonial rule, the Auchi Kingdom

Islamic town having the largest population of Muslim communities in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria. Irrespective of religion, the people live peacefully.

**Figure 1.** Map of Nigeria Showing the Location of Auchi in Etsako West LGA of Edo State

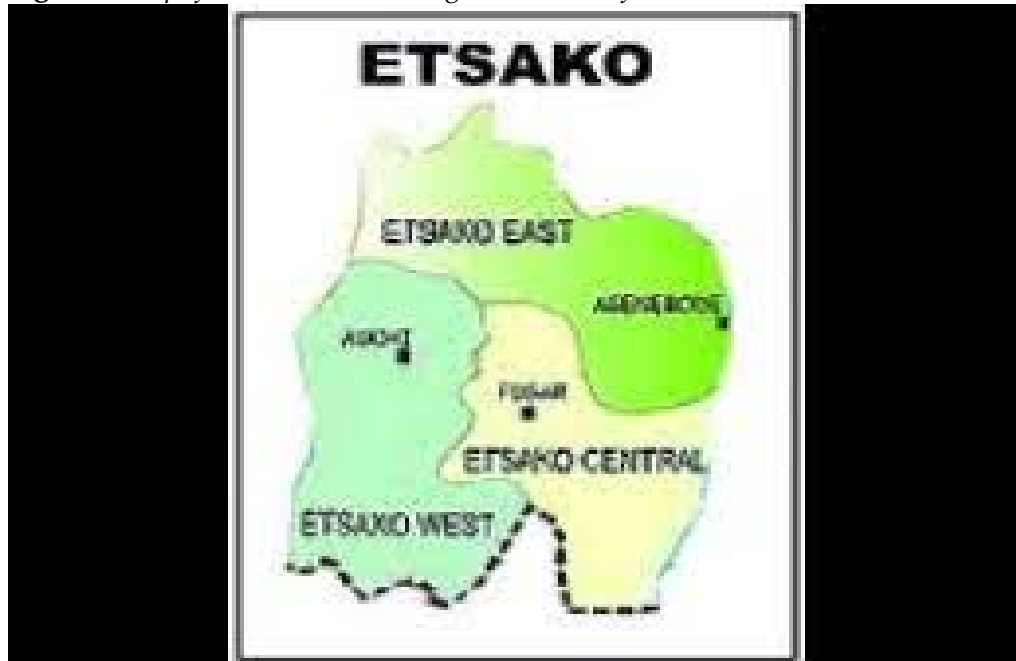


Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figure-2-Map-of-Nigeria-indicating-Etsako-west-local-govt-area-and-Auchi-Source\\_fig1\\_339928339](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Figure-2-Map-of-Nigeria-indicating-Etsako-west-local-govt-area-and-Auchi-Source_fig1_339928339).

was the headquarters of the Kukuru Division, which was the former name of Afenmai land. The settlement was a splendid choice for the initial settlers. The town is close to about twenty rivers, rivulets and springs such as Orle, Omemhe, Ofhotsele, Eda Ibariki, Ukphelegi, Eda Nokhua (Utsogu), Eda Nokhua (Aibotse), Amasomhe, Umhouku, Ayeda, Ayeda-Aminu, Eda Udo, Eda Oke, Eda Ayomhe, Oki, Arhebekpeghie, Edo Ofoli, Ikpaigba. and Eda-Egini. See Seghosime, 1-3.

The welcoming and hospitable nature of the people has, to a very large extent, contributed to the cultural and religious diversity of the kingdom. The kingdom is headed by a monarch and this traditional ruler is referred to as the Otaru. The current Otaru of Auchi Kingdom is HRH. Alhaji Aliru H. Momoh.<sup>15</sup> Figures 1 and 2 show the location of Auchi in Edo state, Nigeria and Etsako West Local Government Area in Edo State.

**Figure 2.** Map of Etsako Land Showing the Location of Auchi, Edo State



Source: <https://etsakolanguage.com/etsako.html>.

It is believed that the first descendant of the Auchi Kingdom migrated from the Benin Kingdom. Ikharo argued that the indigenous society of the Kingdom was founded between 1481 and 1500 by a man from the Benin Kingdom known as Uchi, the progenitor.<sup>16</sup> Uchi was a warrior prince and hunter who migrated from Udo in present day Ovia Local Government Area of Edo State. His migration was triggered by a dispute with his brother, the Oba of Benin, over the right to keep a leopard's skin. The leopard was then regarded a royal beast, sacred and political totem. It was customary at that time that anybody that killed a leopard was to surrender the skin of the animal to the Oba. Uchi killed a leopard and refused to surrender the skin to the Oba. He felt the law regarding the surrendering of leopard skins to the Oba did not apply to him because he was a prince and that the rule was meant for only commoners. The Oba, very angry,

15. Obomeghie (55), Journalist and writer, interviewed at his office at Abuja in Nigeria, 3/4/2021.

16. O. A. Ikharo, *The founding and origin of Auchi Clan* (Unpublished Manuscript, 1981), 1-11.

relieved Uchi of his command of the western defenses of the Benin Kingdom. Relieved of his duties, Uchi was recalled to Benincity where he stayed at Ogbe quarters with his family members. Uchi feared for his life because he felt the plot by the Oba against him had thickened. He decided to flee the Benin Kingdom for safety. Udo and his followers hatched a plan to flee from the Benin Kingdom. The secret code amongst the people that agreed to flee with him was "UNA EGBIA, UNA LE" meaning "EARLY MORNING, IT IS RUNNING". Whenever Uchi's emissary entered a compound on the appointed day and called out "Una Egbia" people in the compound who were faithful to the escape plan responded "Una le". Momoh further stated that this was how Auchi got its good morning greetings "UNA GBBIA, UNA LE" and this has remained the early morning greeting till date.<sup>17</sup>

According to Seghosime, the emigration from Benin, which took place in the fifteenth century, was a very difficult one. There was the fear that the Oba of Benin would send soldiers to chase and capture them. After a very long trek and search for a suitable place to settle, Uchi and his followers settle at a place about 130 kilometers away from the Benin Kingdom on the top a hill just behind the present-day Guarantee Trust Bank (GTB). A market developed in and around the location that Uchi and his followers settled. The market is known as "Aku-Uchi" (Uchi Market).<sup>18</sup> The market is still in existence and remains the biggest market in the Auchi Kingdom. Over the years after the demise of Uchi, he was deified and a shrine was built on his first place of settlement at Uchi Market. Worshippers of the Uchi deity go to the shrine with native chalk and salt and made requests believing strongly in the potency. The shrine, according to Momoh, was eventually destroyed and uprooted in an upsurge of the spread of the Islamic religion in 1914.<sup>19</sup>

Essentially, the prevalent traditions of origin among the people of present-day Auchi Kingdom is that of emigration from the Benin Kingdom. Although, their society was an offshoot of the Benin Kingdom but over time they developed distinctive cultural features that set them apart. These features are noticeable in their language, system of government, traditional religion, and the title system. The most outstanding of these features was the absence of rigid centralization of authority and allegiance to one venerated ruler, which was the hallmark of the Benin traditional polity. Some traditional features of the Auchi Kingdom underwent considerable alternations as a result of "foreign contact". Erhagbe is of the opinion that the main external impetus for change was the Nupe invasion in

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17. Robson Momoh, *New perspectives on the history and politics of Nigeria: The Etsako Experience* (Benincity: Afenmai Grafix, 2016), 3

18. Seghosime, *Origin and development of Auchi*, 1-46.

19. Momoh, *New perspectives on the history and politics of Nigeria: The Etsako Experience*, 3.

the late nineteenth century before the eventual imperialism of the British in 1897.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Auchi Kingdom Intergroup Relations with Neighbouring Communities**

Going by a brief description by Roderick, Intergroup relations involves the feelings, evaluations, beliefs, and behaviour that groups and their members have toward another group and its members. Whenever individuals belonging to one group interact collectively or individually, with another group or its members in terms of their group identification, we have an instance of inter-group relations. Olomola explained that the aspects of inter-group relations that concerns itself with political activities which could be referred to as political relations. Roderick further explained that it becomes clear that within organizational theory, the term inter-group relations refer to both individual interactions involving members from different groups and the collective behaviour of groups in interaction with other groups, at either the intra or inter-organizational level.<sup>21</sup>

Inter group relations, according to Haruna, between the Auchi Kingdom and neighbouring communities such as Ibie, Aviele, Agbede, Warrake, Ivbiaro etc. can be traced to the period before the coming of the Nupe in 1860.<sup>22</sup> From the description of the location and proximity, it is clear that the communities that the Auchi kingdom had relations with were from within the same local government area and beyond as stated by Dauda. Early European explorers and anthropologist pointed out that the relationship between the Auchi Kingdom and neighbouring communities was so strong that they became indivisible communities. Till date, the Auchi Kingdom have continued to live side by side with these communities, each retaining its own culture and social organization which is gradually becoming integrated into an acceptable mixture. Amadasun explained that the interaction between the duos in the pre-Nupe days further strengthened their contact and interactions which led to the formation of intergroup relations due to similarities in cultural practices, religion and language.<sup>23</sup>

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20. Edward O. Erhagbe, *Etsako land in Transition, 1860-1948: An Analysis of Change in an Indigenous Nigerian Society* (Department of History, University of Benin, Nigeria, 1982), 40.

21. Steven G. Rogelberg (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of Industrial and Organizational Psychology* (California: Sage Publications Ltd, 2007), 359; Isola, G. Olomola, *Patterns of Inter-Group Relations among the Yorubas in the Pre-colonial Period* (Department of History, University of Ife, Ile-Ife, 1977), 55.

22. Haruna, The Kingdom of Auchi, its founding and development, 1897–1997, *First Auchi day by the Otaru – in – Council*, 26; Saliu Garuba Dauda, *Otaru of Auchi Chieftancy Institution in Historical Perspective: 1860–1973* (Department of History, University of Ilorin, 1992), 54; Uwamose B. Amadasun, *Migrations and Trade in the Pre-colonial Economy of Benin Kingdom 1500–1900* (Department of History, Ambrose Alli University, 2001), 35.

23. Dauda, *Otaru of Auchi Chieftancy Institution in Historical Perspective: 1860 – 1973*, 54.

Ikharo stated that one of the activities that fostered intergroup relations between the Auchi Kingdom and other communities was trading activities.<sup>24</sup> Upon the arrival of Uchi to the area where he settled which later became known as Auchi, a market was created.<sup>25</sup> This market was situated at the top of the Ekhei hill, one of the highest points in the Auchi Kingdom. Uchi market holds in four days intervals. This market brought together traders from all over Etsako land and beyond. People from other ethnic groups with entirely different spoken languages met and traded in the market. People from communities like Ibie, Aviele, Ivbiaro, Warrake, Okpella, Agenebode, the clans of Uzairue etc. People from Uromi, Ewu, Irrua and other Esan towns and villages also came to Uchi market to carry out trading activities.<sup>26</sup> Hausa and even Nupe traders also came to the market to carry out trading activities.<sup>27</sup> It must also be noted that all these communities mentioned above had their own various market days. People from the Auchi Kingdom also went to their various markets to trade too. Articles of trade varying from food stuff to life stock were sold in the market. It is not really clear how the trade, exchange of goods, was carried out. Whether it was trade by barter or the use of cowries that was used to conduct the trade is still sketchy. Obomeghie is of the opinion that this interaction through trade continued for a very long time before the invasion of the Nupe in the late nineteenth century and this interaction continued till date.<sup>28</sup>

Also, another very important issue was intermarriages between the Auchi kingdom and other neighbouring communities. Obomeghie explained that this

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24. Ikharo, *The founding and origin of Auchi Clan*, 11.

25. Uchi market remains the largest market in the Auchi Kingdom till date. The market made the Kingdom to be a beehive of activities till the present day.

26. Esan is an ethnic group of southern Nigeria who speak the Esan language. The Esan are traditionally known to be agriculturalists, trade-medical practitioners, mercenary warriors and hunters. The modern Esan nation is believed to have been organized during the 15th century, when citizens, mostly nobles and princes, left the neighbouring Benin Empire for the northeast; there they formed communities and kingdoms called eguares among the aboriginal peoples whom they met there. The Esan Kingdoms often warred among each other. Despite the wars, the Esans kept a homogenous culture that was chiefly influenced by the Benin Empire. However, these kingdoms were colonized, along with the Benin Empire, by the British Empire during September 1897, only gaining independence 63 years later in 1960 when Nigeria became independent from British Colonial rule. Quite similar to the history of the Auchi Kingdom. The Esans primarily speak the Esan language, an Edoid language related to Edo, Urhobo, Owan language, Isoko, Anioma and Etsako. See R. E. Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South Western Nigeria* (London: International African Institute, 1996).

27. It is most probably through this trading contact that the Nupe people came to know about the viability and potentials of the Auchi Kingdom and this subsequently resulted to the invasion in 1860. See. Abdulrahman O. Arunah, *A History of Auchi Kingdom* (Ilorin: Haytee Press and Publishing Co. Ltd, 2010), 5.

28. Obomeghie, *Auchi Kingdom: Twenty Decades of Ikelebe Dynasty 1945 and beyond*, 210.



could be considered as one of the greatest unifying factors in any typical African community till date.<sup>29</sup> It cemented the relationship between the Auchi Kingdom and neighbouring communities and created relative peace and harmony between them. This was the case between the Auchi Kingdom and other neighbouring communities. Arunah stated that it was due to similarities in language, tradition and culture many Auchi people married wives from neighbouring communities such as the clans of Uzairue, Aviele, Okpella, Ivbiaro, South Ibie etc. It was also very evident that there was a lot of inter marriages especially from the south Ibie clans. The practice of marrying wives by Auchi men from Ibie continued till the present day. Even the current King of the Auchi Kingdom, His Royal Highness, Alhaji Aliru H. Momoh, married an Ibie woman as one of his wives. It is also on record that previous kings before the current one also married Ibie women.<sup>30</sup> It is also very interesting to note that the proximity between Auchi and Ibie is so close that it is just a walkable distance.

Another very important activity that brought the Auchi kingdom in contact with other neighbouring communities was the need for the consultation of the oracle.<sup>31</sup> Before the introduction of both Islam and Christianity in the Auchi Kingdom and other neighbouring communities everyone practiced the traditional religion, which was the worship of several deities such as orle, ogun, oritsa, orle etc. These local deities had shrines and were offered sacrifices from time to time. These local deities were consulted and appeased during the times of famine, drought, plague etc and offered sacrifices with sheep and goats to ensure a good harvest of crops.<sup>32</sup> Oroh explained that there were communities that were skilled in the act of oracle consultation. One of such communities was Abunekeh in Ivbiaro, a village very close to the Auchi Kingdom. People travelled far and wide to visit this community with their never-ending problems with the belief that they would get solutions. Many Auchi people also visited this community with their problems. Some of the issues and problems that made Auchi people go for divine consultation at that time was bad harvest, infertility of women, spiritual affliction etc.<sup>33</sup> Many women within and outside the Auchi Kingdom also came to seek for traditional means of solving the problem of infertility and other issues by offering

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29. Obomeghi (55), Journalist and writer, interviewed at his office at Abuja in Nigeria, 3/4/2021.

30. O. A. Momodu, *The role of Otaru Momoh in the Islamization of Auchi and its Environs* (Department of Religion, University of Ilorin, 1987), 5.

31. Oroh Audu (68), Politician and former Member of the House of Representatives, interviewed at his residence at Ivbiaro in Edo State, Nigeria, interview based on African traditional religion and Intergroup relations, 23/3/2021.

32. Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021.

33. Audu (68), Politician and former Member of the House of Representatives, interviewed at his residence at Ivbiaro in Edo State, Nigeria, interview based on African traditional religion and Intergroup relations.

sacrifices to orle, the river goddess of fertility in the Auchi Kingdom.<sup>34</sup> This practice of oracle consultation was abolished after the adoption of the Islamic religion as its official religion in the early twentieth century. Despite this, many people still continued with the practice. According to Aloysius, "there are also Christians and Muslims who still practice elements of traditional African religion alongside their professed beliefs. For many people, combining traditional religion with either Christianity or Islam is also a way of life. It is very difficult to totally discard the practice of the African traditional religion." Despite the introduction of Islam and Christianity many Africans, especially people residing in the rural areas and villages, still practiced the act of Oracle consultation and this was also the case with the Auchi Kingdom.<sup>35</sup>

### **The Socio-cultural and Political Practices of Pre-Nupe Auchi Kingdom**

Pre-colonial Nigeria, as explained by Ibenekwu, was characterized by fragmented ethnic nationalities each with its own unique system of government or institutions of governance. Such systems were traditional in nature and structured to suit the peculiarities of the ethnic groups involved. In stateless societies the lineage system possesses key features of political relations and other social relations. Middleton explained that political power and authority were exercised between groups and statuses. External political relations of local groups were often conceived in lineage terms when there is no centralized political authority.<sup>36</sup> It must also be noted that there were some political positions that were awarded to women because of their importance in the Kingdom. Nwando explained that the female principle was embodied in women's roles as over-seers and females of privilege, including women leaders of their people or wives of male leaders. These women exercised great power, authority, and influence

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34. One of the cultural practices of Africans is consulting the oracle for different purposes. Some of such purposes include for protecting and wading off evil spirits, for curing infertility in women, for procuring charms for good luck and prosperity, to end drought and a host of other reasons. This practice was very common among the Auchi people and neighbouring communities. See Arunah, 136.

35. Dawood (68), Professor of African History, interviewed at his office at Iyamho, Edo State in Nigeria, interview based on the socio-cultural practices of the Auchi people, 3/4/2021.

36. Ikpechukwuka E. Ibenekwu, "Igbo Traditional Political System and the crisis of Governance in Nigeria," *Ikoru Journal of the Institute of African Studies UNN* 9, no. 1-2; John Middleton, and Tait David (Eds.), *Tribes without Rulers* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), 6.

publicly, temporally, and in spiritual/religious spheres.<sup>37</sup> This was exactly the case with the Auchi Kingdom.

The administrative structure, according to Arunah, in the pre Nupe era in the Auchi Kingdom was one that was based on a gerontocracy system, which was a government based on the rule by old people. At the time, Africans had great respect for old people but Africans believed that age was synonymous with wisdom. There was the family unit, quarter council, village council and council of state. The head men, that is the oldest men in the family unit, quarter unit and village council and the chief, later renamed as Otaru by the Nupe, were the symbol of authority was in the Auchi Kingdom.<sup>38</sup> The basic unit of political and administrative interactions in the earliest times was the family unit. The family unit comprises of persons who are essentially of the same grandfather, a bilateral descent group. Within the family unit, a man's attainment to the position of head was usually predicated on his age.<sup>39</sup> The eldest man of this type of administrative unit was known as odafé and he was automatically charged with the responsibility of governing the family. Tony, a writer, explained that disputes ranging from fighting within the family and other issues that would likely dent the good image of the family were handled by the head of the family with some other appointed people who had been initiated into manhood through the age-grade system.<sup>40</sup> Segosimhe explained that it was also customary at that time was that family houses were built in a way and manner that the oldest man's apartment was always at the entrance of the compound. It was his duty to know the people and visitors that went into the compound. This done because of security reasons.<sup>41</sup>

During this period, religious sanctions provided much essential backing for the authority of the head of the family. He was taken as a representative of the ancestors on earth. Oseni stated that the family head retained headship authority as long as he discharged his obligations and treated all members of his family with equitable justice. The head of the family was duty bound to perform some religious rites expected of him on behalf of his household. For instance, he was supposed to alert his family members of the religious plans and rites of the Quarter council, Village Council and the Council of State. These included sacrifices during the times of wars, epidemic, years of low yield in harvest, before commencement of planting season, festivals and so on. It is worthy to note that

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37. Achebe Nwando, *Female Monarchs and Merchant Queens in Africa* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2020), 23.

38. Arunah, *A history of Auchi Kingdom*, 20.

39. It must be said that African place a lot of emphasis on age right from the earliest times till date. Old people were always placed in leadership positions because it is believed in the wisdom comes with age. See Arunah, 23.

40. Tony Momoh (83), writer and politician and former Federal Minister of Information, interviewed at his residence at Lagos State in Nigeria on 10/02/2020.

41. Seghosime, *Origin and development of Auchi*, 46.

the family unit was the first unit and point of contact for political, economic and socio-cultural interactions among the people before the incursion of the Nupe.<sup>42</sup>

In the economic sphere, the head of the family unit played special roles within his household. Tony, explained that agriculture was the live wire of the Auchi economy before the incursion of the Nupe. In most African societies of the primeval age, land and labour were vital ingredients for production through which people earned their livelihood and these were jointly owned by all members of the family. They were, however, administered by the family head. Farming was a group exercise in which all members of the family participated actively. Their available farmlands were shared among the male members of the family for cultivation under the trusteeship of the family head. He could, however, be represented when he became too old to go to farm by his Ukor (representative). For the purpose of bush fallowing, it was also mandatory on the family head to ensure his family members' acquisition of more than one farmland. Harvested crops were placed at his disposal to determine the harvest to be kept for consumption and those to be sold for monetary gain. This practice is still common in some families till the present day.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond agriculture, Oseni also explained that some men within the family unit were engaged in hunting activities. Hence, it formed another means of economic life where the family head again exerted much influence prior to the emergence of Nupe imperialism. The family head of each family unit was expected to do a lot to protect the life of hunters in his family, especially by providing them with mystical powers, talisman and charms. Upon the killing of a wild animal such as elephant or any other wild beast by a hunter, the family was automatically supposed, in conjunction with the quarter head, to share the meat among everyone in the community. Thereafter, the entire family of the accomplished hunter, especially the hunter himself and the family head, were held up in high esteem. The family head was accorded great respect that even during dry season when fishing activities in rivers Orle and Edio had started he was placed in a position of receiving the biggest fish from both individual and collective fishing exercises by member of his family. He also gave instructions on which to be consumed and that to be sold.<sup>44</sup>

Seogsimhe stated there was also the Quarter Council which was the next structure of administrative leadership in the Auchi Kingdom before the arrival of the Nupe in the second half of the 19th century. The Quarter unit was a conglomeration of two or more contiguous extended families or households who were descendants from a single ancestor. Just as the governance of the family unit

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42. Oseni, "The Islamization of Auchi Kingdom in South Central Nigeria," paper presented at *First Auchi Day celebration* (Lagos: Efua Media, 1998), 62.

43. Tony, "My father had 48 wives and they always took an oath every six months," in *Punch Newspaper online*, September 10, 2016.

44. Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021.

was in the hands of the most senior man, *odafe*, that of the Quarter unit was entrusted in the hands of the various family heads within each village under the leadership of the oldest man. This oldest man in the Quarters was referred to as “*Okpishia-eде*”. Oseni explained that the technique used in identifying the most senior man in the Quarter Council was reached through a careful study of the time of successive names of different age-groups. There and then, all family heads within each Quarter who were automatic members of the Quarter Council owned their responsibilities to the Quarter head. With the help of the various family heads, the Quarter Council deliberated on issues that generally affected the whole Quarter. The Council, under headship of the oldest man, settled inter-family disputes among the people. Other cases or matters which could not be resolved at family level were usually transferred to the Quarter Council for onward arbitration. As the Quarter representative at the Village Council, the *Okpishia-eде* (Quarter head) was expected to make the announcement and implementation of the decisions of the Village Council in his Quarter. Segosimhe stated that during every harvest season, he enjoyed tribute or royalty of farm produce from members of his quarter. He also ensures a proper and fair division of the dead’s property among the heirs. Much economic and socio-cultural functions were never exercised by the Quarter Council; probably because the family unit had taken much responsibility of these. Nevertheless, the Council effected the sacrificial rites of any guilty adulterer. The major sacrificial item of this offence was a matured she-goat.<sup>45</sup>

Obomeghie stated that just above the Quarter Council was the village council which comprised of all heads of Quarter Councils. The village was a conglomeration of quarters, wards or large kindred. Authority in the Village Council consisted of quarter heads or their representatives within the same village. The leadership of the Village Council was placed in hands of the oldest man among members of the council. Bradbury explained that the importance of the council head was also predicated on age-grades system, since it was the only way through which the oldest man could be known in the village. The village head was expected to live up to his age and experience in ruling over his people. He was only responsible to the Auchi Council of State headed by the *Okpishia-evbo*. Village meetings were presided over by him and were mostly held at the village market square or his house. Cross-quarters’ political, economic and socio-cultural matters as they generally affected the village were discussed by the Village Council.<sup>46</sup>

Oseni stated that appeal cases from Quarter Councils and other cases beyond the legal jurisdiction of both the family unit and quarter councils were brought forward to the village council for possible and final settlement. Decisions reached

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45. Seghosime, *Origin and development of Auchi*, 45-46.

46. Obomeghie, *Auchi Kingdom: Twenty Decades of Ikelebe Dynasty 1945 and beyond*, 210; Bradbury, *The Benin Kingdom and the Edo Speaking Peoples of South Western Nigeria*, 104.

at the Village Council were not difficult to be carried to the people which they were meant for because the composition of the council was always an even representation of the various quarters and all quarter heads were members. Thus, the only task was getting the various family heads under their areas of administrative influences informed of such decisions of the Village Council for effective implementation. Oroh stated that religiously, the Village Council was one of the places where priests performed very important functions. Through their mystical powers, they consulted and interpreted the utterances of the local gods and goddesses. The priest made sacrifices on behalf of the village to the gods and goddesses which were always efficacious. Bradbury also explained that the priests commanded significant political influence within their various villages as diviners and advisory members of the Village Council of Elders.<sup>47</sup>

Economically, the Village Council played a very significant role in the area of commercialization. Obomeghie stated that the increasing volume of trading activities, which was the culmination of the continuous growth in population and increase in agricultural products, precipitated the creation of more markets in the villages that conglomerate to form the Auchi Kingdom. Each village created its own local markets called Ughele, where goods were exchanged from morning till evening. Despite of the degree of autonomy exercised by various villages through the Village Councils in the pre Nupe era of the Auchi Kingdom, there were still some other functions that were beyond their jurisdiction or spheres of influences. Such issues were handled by the highest hierarchy of policy formulation and administrative body, the Council of State.<sup>48</sup>

The Council of State was the highest policy formulating and administrative body of the socio-cultural and political system that operated in the Auchi Kingdom prior to the arrival of the Nupe. Oroh stated that the Council of State was comprised of village heads. The co-ordination of opinions on matters of common interest like communal labour, inter-village disputes, ancestral worship and state security as they generally affected the Auchi Kingdom were deliberated upon by the Council of States under the chairmanship of the Utsogu village. Meetings of the Council of State depended on exigencies, but before such meetings were held, the *odio* of Utsogu would have to send the *ukabon 'evbo* (town crier) to notify the village heads of all the villages. Decisions reached were thus communicated to all Quarter Councils by the village heads that constituted the forum. They were in turn to communicate to family heads for onward transmission to their wards and other members of their household for

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47. Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021; Audu (68), Politician and former Member of the House of Representatives, interviewed at his residence at Ivbiaro in Edo State, Nigeria, interview based on African traditional religion and Intergroup relations, 23/3/2021.

48. Obomeghie (55), Journalist and writer, interviewed at his office at Abuja in Nigeria, 3/4/2021.

implementation. Decisions reached were never flouted by village, Quarter and family heads.<sup>49</sup>

In the event of war with enemies, the Council of State arranged for the Auchi military forces, Umaireghe and Umakpoqho,<sup>50</sup> to defend the state. The Umaireghe and Umakpoqho was always selected from a virile age grade. The Umairegbe was also responsible for the spearheading of the Omogbai festival. This festival was carried out when a new king was to be coronated. The Umairegbe conducted the ritual exercise of the Omogbai. Tony further stated that the selection of this age-grade is done by the eldest of the king makers. He appoints a certain age grade which has shown exemplary element of gallantry and toughness in socio-political activities in the kingdom. A much younger age grade is co-opted to assist in the strenuous sections of the rituals such as the killing of any domestic animal that would be used for the ritual.<sup>51</sup>

Also, Obomeghie explained that judicial issues that bothered on inter-village disputes and other issues, and cases of serious crimes which village councils could not solve, were usually brought to the Council of State for equitable arbitration. In the Council of State, the position of the Chief Priest was found to be most renowned as it was imperative for him to consult the oracle, gods, and goddesses whose verdicts were seen as final and indisputable. The Chief Priest, was expected, in conjunction with other local priests, to make sacrifices on behalf of the entire Kingdom to usher in a new planting season and/or in the event of low yield of crops, warfare and other pressing issues. In fact, it was through his oracular consultations that certain festival dates were fixed. In the economic sphere, the Council of State wielded much power on Uchi market. The market was a true symbol of immortalization of the founder of the Auchi Kingdom. The market which is located on the boundaries between Utsogu and Iyekhei is, till date, still well visited by traders on the stipulated market days. The Council of State was always represented at the market which was attended by Auchi people

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49. Audu (68), Politician and former Member of the House of Representatives, interviewed at his residence at Ivbiaro in Edo State, Nigeria, interview based on African traditional religion and Intergroup relations, 23/3/2021.

50. Umaireghe and Umakpoqho is the name of the local army that defended the Auchi Kingdom during the times of war before Nupe imperialism. Members of the army was made of young men that have been initiated into manhood. This army was fearless because they were given local charms and talisman to protect themselves from their attackers. The Auchi Kingdom army was defeated by the Nupe imperialist due to superior arms, horses and more potent charms. The Nupe imperialist then established firm control over the Auchi kingdom in 1860 but were subsequently dislodged by the British colonialist in 1897. See Tony, *Each man, his time: The biography of an era* (Lagos: Pumark Nigeria ltd, 1995), 94-95.

51. Obomeghie, *Auchi Kingdom: Twenty Decades of Ikelebe Dynasty 1945 and beyond*, 200; Tony, *Each man, his time: The biography of an era*, 117.

and their neighbours to ensure the maintenance of peace and the stabilisation of market prices against inflationary trends.<sup>52</sup>

Another socio-cultural practice of the people of the Auchi Kingdom before the imperialism by the Nupe was the age-grade system among its male population.<sup>53</sup> Obomeghie stated that the age grade system was a very significant socio-cultural practice which formed the super-structure for the effective operations of the political units in the Auchi Kingdom. Like all other Edo speaking societies, the Auchi Kingdom maintained the age grade system among its male population from the primeval age. The system, which still operates till date, was of different stratifications. The first aspect of these stages drew its membership from the youths or Igbama at about 18 to 20 years of age, membership was automatic for youths of this age range. The next strata is the Itseba age group. The age range was about 20 to 22 years. This group moved a step ahead into another stage called Isoiqbama (head of boys) in a year or two later. The various age groups had different functions and roles that they played even before they were initiated into manhood. Dawood explained that the primary duty of members of the above-named age-sets was to clear inter-village roads, farms and streams, paths and construct new ones where and when necessary. They also engaged themselves in the cleaning of markets, cleansing of water holes and erection and rehabilitation of public buildings.<sup>54</sup>

The above status, according to Dawood, was usually maintained by members of the Isoigbama age group for about a year or two before they are finally initiated into manhood (Urhuah) by Auchi Council of State during Ekhai festival. Members of this age group who became referred to as Ilarhua (newly initiated) usually ensured the effective execution of communal projects that required the use of much physical strength. They usually constituted the Umarheghe, the defense army of the Kingdom. It should be noted at this juncture that it was the belief that celebrants were virgins who must be pure and this natural bondage was what the manhood initiation was meant to loosen. Thus, in about ten days to the beginning of the celebration cannon and dane-guns were usually heard booming over the entire Kingdom to usher in the initiation ceremony. During the time of the celebration, celebrants would wear costly beads and would be carried shoulder high amidst the heavy venting of cannons, frenzy

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52. Obomeghie, *Manhood initiation festival in Auchi Kingdom* (Benincity: Wadorm Communication Nig. Ltd, 2014), 80.

53. The age grade celebration was one event that everyone in the Auchi kingdom was always looking forward to. It was a very colourful event that attracted visitors from far and wide. It was also a very significant cultural event that involved everybody in the Kingdom in one way or the other. Most parents had children that were celebrating the manhood initiation or had relatives or friends that had children that were celebrating too. See Obomeghie, 78.

54. Obomeghie, *Manhood initiation festival in Auchi Kingdom*, Benincity, 90.



beats of local talking drum (Okaga) and showering of praises.<sup>55</sup> The last and perhaps one of the most important aspects of the age grade initiation ceremony was the Onirhuah, which is a marathon race during which participants were made to run without pants but with Agbada (flowing gown) on, to cover them from complete nudity.<sup>56</sup> The race was made to a selected house of an aged woman who must have reached menopause. With her legs outstretched, the celebrants will cross over and run to their various homes upon the payment of some small amount of money. It should be noted that during this process participants are forbidden from looking behind them until they got to their respective homes. No participant was also expected to fall down or come last on the race or he may progressively lag behind his age mates all through his life. Having performed these rites, the celebrants would be automatically admitted into the circle of men and this usually brought pride to their parents who could then be buried among the ancestors. Also, the celebrant would also become entitled to a share of whatever was due to men in the community. Odjugo stated that the entire significance of the whole ceremony was that it was only through this means that seniority in the Family Unit, Quarter Council, Village Council and to some extent the Council of State was worked out or known.<sup>57</sup>

Marital institution, according to Yesufu, was an important feature of the culture of the Auchi people. From the primeval age, the family head exercises much power in addressing marital issues. After observing all the rites as contained in the manhood initiation ceremony, it was basically the duty of the family head to loosen the natural bondage of the celebrant's virginity by marrying for him a young lady. This was done by asking the young man to search for the young girl of his choice for marriage. He was often assisted by his parents and relatives. When a choice was finally made, it was mandatory for the head of the family to relate or negotiate on behalf of their son after which gifts like palm-wine and kolanuts were sent to the future in-laws even before the marriage arrangements had been concluded. Most of the time the family head advised the would-be husband to organize his age group to work on the farm of the girl's family and secretly presented her gifts during private meetings until the date had eventually been fixed for the bringing of the bride to the bridegroom. The family head was usually entrusted with the lavish feast and wining, provision of traditional music and dances that usually accompany marriage ceremonies. According to Yesufu,

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55. Dawood (68), Professor of African History, interviewed at his office at Iyamho, Edo State in Nigeria, interview based on the socio-cultural practices of the Auchi people, 3/4/2021.

56. This practice is age long. On the day of the race, many people are seen standing along the road side to cheer the participants as they race to their various houses. It is basically referred to as a happy day for the participants because this was the height of the celebration. See Arunah, 95.

57. I. K. Odjugo, *Commission of Inquiry into the Otaru of Auchi Chieftancy title* (Report, Official Document No. 1., 5., 1968), 1-20.

the family head exerted other socio-cultural responsibilities among which was the naming of the children born after a period of three months. By so doing, the head of the family usually ensured that the circumstances surrounding the birth of children and other natural phenomena in the family, quarter, village and the entire Kingdom were revealed or reflected in such names. When a child was born after the marriage, the child was given an indigenous name. All these changed after the invasion of the Nupe. The indigenous marriage practice was replaced by Islamic marriage. Children produced from the marriages were given Islamic names and naming ceremonies were conducted after seven days as against three months during the pre-Nupe era.<sup>58</sup>

Omoruan explained that before the incursion of the Nupe and the introduction of the Islamic religion in the Auchi Kingdom the people practiced the traditional religion. The people of the Auchi Kingdom were animist and polytheist. The people worshipped a number of deities which they trusted and reached out to for assistance. Such deities included Uchi (the spirit of the founder of Auchi), Orle (the river goddess) etc. These deities had shrines where they were worshipped by their devotees.<sup>59</sup> Oseni argued that the people of the Auchi Kingdom had a strong belief in a supreme God. In the local dialect of the people God was called names such as "Oghena" and "Ogie Okuli". The people recognized the uniqueness of a supreme God, as was recognized in their common prayers when his name was mentioned. Idowu stated that the people also had belief in the absoluteness of God's control of the universe and the universality of God. One major proof of the Auchi people's belief in the uniqueness of God was the fact they called on the superior God through the smaller gods to protect them from the hands of the evil doers. Moreover, the people had a strong belief in the absoluteness of God's control over the universe and his universality. The people were convinced that God was the creator of the universe and of whatever human or spiritual power that existed in any part of the universe. Hence, he was regarded as the only God of the entire universe.<sup>60</sup>

Dawood explained that there were divinities worshipped collectively by the people of the Kingdom and there were other divinities that were worshipped by individual members of various extended families of the Kingdom. However, many of these local divinities particularly the clan and village deities represented some of the early Auchi men and women that were deified by their respective families for their phenomenal contributions towards the early founding and contributions towards the growth and protection of the kingdom. Some of these local deities includes Orle, the River Goddess. This deity was known to be the

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58. M. A. Yesufu, *Bida Invasion and its impact on Auchi and its environs. 1860-1900* (Department of History, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 1993), 23.

59. J. O. B. Ornoruan, *The Planting of Islam in Afenmai Land: Ihievbe, A case Study* (Department of History, University of Ilorin, Nigeria, 1986), 45.

60. Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021.

goddess of fertility. Another one was Uchi, the progenitor of the Auchi kingdom. It was believed that Uchi migrated from the Benin Kingdom over five hundred years ago and settled in the present day Auchi.<sup>61</sup>

Dawood stated that the Auchi people did not offer human sacrifice to their local deities to appease them. They utilized local certain domestic animals such as goats, sheep, cocks and ducks. Also, they offer certain foods particularly pounded yam and egusi (melon) soup to such deities as sacrifice. Apart from ensuring the wellbeing of the people, it was also believed that the deities assisted in curing women of the problem of infertility of the womb. The deities were also used in performing some quasi-judicial functions. Among such were disputes concerning alleged theft, alleged sorcery, infidelity etc. Accused persons are made to swear to their innocence in the shrine of the local deity and the result is gotten within a very short period. However, despite all these processes and methods of deifying and veneration of the local divinities in the Auchi kingdom, the basic concept of religious beliefs and practices remain very similar within Africa.<sup>62</sup>

Again, the Auchi people believed in the existence of spirits and ancestors. Oseni explained that there was the general belief that the dead played a very significant role in the lives and activities of the living. They believed that spirits, in some cases, used material objects as temporal abodes to manifest their presence and actions. In most cases, for example, if a person's farm is destroyed by unseen forces, it was believed that the spirits were responsible. It usually resulted to the intervention of certain stronger spiritual forces such as potent native doctors and medicine men to control their activities. Hence, they also strongly believed in their ancestors. It was not every important man or woman that was deified as an ancestor.<sup>63</sup> Obomeghie opined that the ancestors in most communities in Africa were usually the founders and progenitors of their villages and communities and this was also the case of the Auchi Kingdom. After the deification of a person, such a person emerged as a central figure in the religious belief system of the people. Moreover, shrines and places of worship are built in their honour and memory because they are highly venerated. It is very important to note that all the ancestors in African communities are addressed in prayers, songs and epithet. In this way, such ancestral spirits helped to ensure peace, good harvest, fertility of women and peaceful coexistence of the people of the Kingdom before the Nupe invasion of 1860.<sup>64</sup>

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61. Dawood, "The Nupe Invasion of Esanland: An Assessment of its Socio-Political impact on the People- 1885-1897," 80.

62. Dawood (68), Professor of African History, interviewed at his office at Iyamho, Edo State in Nigeria, interview based on the socio-cultural practices of the Auchi people, 3/4/2021.

63. Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021.

64. Obomeghie (55), Journalist and writer, interviewed at his office at Abuja in Nigeria, 3/4/2021.

Additionally, Oseni stated that the Auchi people believed in reincarnation and life after death.<sup>65</sup> They believed in both the human and spiritual/invisible worlds. The non-human world is the world which we cannot see. These two worlds are not separated, but connected, and make up one continuous, complete world. This explains the West African belief in the never-ending cycle of life and reincarnation. They believe that when one is born, he grows old, dies, and then is reborn. The visible world is a world of human beings, natural forces and phenomena. The invisible world is a world of divine beings, of good and bad spirits, and departed ancestors. The visible and invisible worlds communicate and interact with each other. The Auchi people believed that there were spirits all around them. The Auchi people had diviners, priests, priestesses to help explain the universe. These were special human beings who were endowed with spiritual powers. They had the abilities to communicate with the dead. They served as the link between the dead and the living. Oseni further stated that if a man dies in a family and a male child is born in that same family during that same period, it was the general belief that the dead man had been reborn. This was also very common in most communities in Africa.<sup>66</sup> When the Nupe arrived and established their rule over Auchi Kingdom, the Islamic religion was introduced and from that point the belief system gradually changed. Many indigenes still practice the African Traditional Religion alongside Islamic religion. This practice is common in many African countries like Ghana, Cameroun, Togo etc.<sup>67</sup>

Lastly, Binta stated that women were allowed to participate in the running of the affairs of Auchi Kingdom during the pre-Nupe era.<sup>68</sup> Nwando stated that "it was this remarkable woman who had transformed herself into a man who would, from that point on, consume many of my waking thoughts,"<sup>69</sup> This was due to the fact that a woman, due to her high personality, was made king in her community. In the same vein, women in the Auchi Kingdom were given administrative and political roles to perform. There were some criteria used for the appointment of women to play some certain roles in the Kingdom and some

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65. The belief in reincarnation is common in most African communities. The Auchi people, before 1860, strongly believed in reincarnation, i.e., when a male child is born immediately after the child's father or grandfather dies in a family it is a general belief that the dead man had been reborn. This belief system is still part of the cultural and religious belief system of the Auchi people till the present day. See Seghosime, 28.

66. Oseni (72), Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, interviewed at his residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, 3/15/2021.

67. Obomeghie (55), Journalist and writer, interviewed at his office at Abuja in Nigeria, 3/4/2021.

68. Fatima Yakubu Binta (72), House wife and lived in the Kingdom for a very long time, interviewed at her residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, interview based on the role of women in Auchi politics, 24/3/ 2021.

69. Nwando, *The Female King of Colonial Nigeria* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2011), 2.

of these includes age, popularity, integrity, wealth etc. The most important positions, offices, roles, duties and functions were given to the oldest women in the Kingdom. The reason for this was that the people in the Auchi Kingdom at that time laid great emphasis on gerontocracy which permitted the oldest people and elders to dominate the socio-cultural and political affairs of the people. The two most important of the positions for women were the positions of the Ikpotoso-Ikpisha (oldest woman) and Ogbachi (woman leader).<sup>70</sup> It was the duty of these two women to protect the interest of women and mobilise them to achieve their individual, societal goals, destinies and aspirations. Though these women were not in attendance of the Village or Clan Councils meetings which had only men in attendance. Charity stated that these women had direct access to the Otaru (king) to discuss and find lasting solutions to issues and problems concerning women and their children. These women, basically, acted as intermediaries between the authorities and their fellow women. The positions of Ikpotoso-Ikpisha and Ogbachi were not hereditary in nature.<sup>71</sup> Binta stated that the demise of any of these women resulted to the appointment of other women from other families within the kingdom. All these were in place before the Nupe invaded the Auchi Kingdom in 1860 and introduced their system of administration which led to the alteration some of the indigenous socio-cultural and political system of the people.<sup>72</sup> This practice was, however, retained by the Nupe upon their arrival.

## Conclusion

The trend of socio-cultural imposition in Africa was very pervasive and prevalent before the twentieth century in Africa, such that activities of imperialists and colonialists had taken precedence over African values and culture. The impact of imperialism and colonialism on social values and cultural practices of the people in the various kingdoms and empires in Africa had occasioned a discontinuity or alteration in their socio-cultural and political

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70. The roles of both the Ikiposo-Ikpisha and Ogbachi were very important roles for women before 1860. It was more like giving the women a voice to speak out and be heard. All issues and disputes that concerned and affected women and their children were deliberated and lasting solutions were arrived at by women and they tried as much as possible not take sides with any of the parties in dispute. These positions/roles are still very much in existence in the Auchi Kingdom till date. See Arunah, 80-81.

71. Charity Momoh (48), Civil Servant, interviewed at her residence at Auchi in Edo State, Nigeria, interview based on the role of woman in the in Auchi politics, April 24/3/ 2021.

72. Binta (72), House wife and lived in the Kingdom for a very long time, interviewed at her residence at Auchi, Edo State in Nigeria, interview based on the role of women in Auchi politics, 24/3/ 2021.

system. It was a common trend in Africa that the fall of an empire or kingdom gives rise to another. As a result, kingdoms conquered kingdoms and imposed their own traditions and customs on the people. It led to a cultural dualism that often presented itself as a real dilemma in real-life situations. African kingdoms and empires had established indigenous socio-cultural and political practices that was the identity and binding force of the indigenous people before the coming of external forces and influence.

It must be said at this juncture that before the incursion by the Nupe people the Auchi Kingdom had established traditions, cultural values and a functional political and judicial system which were quite similar to that of many other communities in Africa but had distinct particularities. The Auchi people were farmers, hunters, blacksmith, traders etc. They also had an organized system of political administration which was so organized that it started from the family level up to the Council of State which was the highest level. All the five villages under the authority of the kingdom were administered independently under the odae (oldest man) system of governance. A man's aspiration to the headship of his village depended on being the most senior person in the last surviving age group. But sadly, many African values and cultural practices were totally abolished or modified as a result of foreign influence but some practices, such as the age grade system, participation of women in the running of the affairs of the Kingdom etc remained till the present day. The main aim of the Nupe invasion of the Auchi Kingdom was for exploitative purposes but some of their innovations were very beneficial to the people. These, to a very large extent, positively affected the super structure and the well-being of the people of the Auchi Kingdom because bad and obnoxious practices were abolished.

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## The Ecology and Economic Practices of the Isukha and Idakho Communities in Colonial Period 1895-1963

By Kizito Lusambili Muchanga\*

*The penetration of colonialism in Isukha and Idakho can best be understood within the general framework of the global imperialism of the nineteenth century, with Europe being the hub of global imperialism where the imperialists were motivated by economic, humanitarian and strategic factors. After the 1886 and 1890 Anglo-German treaties at Berlin's conference, East Africa was divided between the British and the Germans. British East Africa (Kenya and Uganda) was under the control of the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEACo). In 1894, Uganda was declared a protectorate and its sphere included the Baluyia. This same year, protectorate officials were sent to Mumias, which was by then a traders' entry-point on the road to Uganda. This paper analyses the ecology and economic environment of the Bisukha and Bidakho of the Luyia community during the colonial epoch. The paper took a qualitative approach to data collection, engaging participants in oral interviews and focused group discussions on understanding the two community practices. In what is termed an ethnographic approach, the author finds that the natives lost control of resources that were crucial in the proper management of their environments and the practice of various economic activities. This paper, therefore, finds that Land as a natural resource was alienated with forests being gazetted and animals confiscated to feed the soldiers of World Wars I and II.*

### Introduction

Strategically, Britain intended to use Kenya and Uganda as a base for controlling the rival powers in the Nile Valley, especially the French.<sup>1</sup> The European powers, therefore, partitioned Africa among themselves like players in a rough game.<sup>2</sup> Before the advent of colonialism, Kenya, in general, and Buluyia, in particular, had witnessed the incoming of foreign visitors. By 1850 the Swahili

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1. T. Tvedt, "About the importance of studying the modern history of the countries of the Nile Basin in a Nile perspective," in *The River Nile in the Post-Colonial Age* 1(11) (Uganda, Macmillan Press, 2010); M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Land Reform in the Kikuyu County: A Study Government Policy* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968); Emmanuel B. Kasimbazi, "The impact of colonial agreements on the regulation of the waters of the River Nile," *Water International* 35, no. 6 (2010): 718-732; Angelique Haugerud, "Land tenure and agrarian change in Kenya," *Africa* 59, no. 1 (1989): 61-90.

2. A. Atmore, and R. Oliver, *Africa Since 1800* (Cambridge, University Press, 1974), 103. And see also Saadia Touval. "Treaties, borders, and the partition of Africa." *The Journal of African History* 7, no. 2 (1966): 279-293.

and Arab merchants had already crossed the country on their way to Buganda.<sup>3</sup> Further inroads in Buluyia were witnessed in the 1880s and 1890s with caravan traders, including Asians.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, European adventurers and missionaries were pioneering the area. This made Joseph Thompson the first European to forge a direct link between Mombasa and Uganda in 1883.<sup>5</sup> Caravan traders, visitors, missionaries and adventurers had to pass through Mumias because "Chief Mumia had always been friendly to them and later to the protectorate administrators".<sup>6</sup>

The colonial administrators decided to use indirect rule where some local chiefs and headmen were to assist in the administration. According to Hobley (1970), selecting a representative chief from each tribe was a custom and conducting all negotiations through the selected individuals.<sup>7</sup> In times of resistance, the administrators employed the philosophy of force advocated by A.H. Handinge in 1897,<sup>8</sup> with the Eastern Province of Uganda being transferred to the East African protectorate (Kenya) in 1902. Thus, it became the Nyanza province or the Kavirondo.<sup>9</sup> This is where the area of study was placed in the colonial epoch.

This study aimed to examine how colonial penetration and its policies and practices affecting the socio-economic and ecological set-up of the Isukha and Idakho communities of Western Kenya from 1895-1963. This paper provides a brief literature review, methodological approach, discussion of the study's findings, and conclusion.

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3. C. W. Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony* (London, Frank Lass & Co. Ltd, 1970). And see M. A. J. Ndeda, "Population movement, settlement and the construction of society to the east of Lake Victoria in precolonial times: the western Kenyan case," *Les Cahiers d'Afrique de l'Est/The East African Review* 52 (2019): 83-108.

4. R. W. Ochieng, *A Pre-colonial History of the Gusii of Western Kenya. c.A.D. 1500-1914*. (Nairobi: EALB, 1974). The same idea is shared by S. B. Nyagosia, *Historical Study of Border Interactions and Militarism between the Abagusii of Southwestern Kenya and their Neighbouring Communities, 1850-2007* (Kisii University, 2017), 38.

5. M. E. Chamberlain, *The Scramble for Africa* (Routledge, 2014). And see J. Barnhart, "Status competition and territorial aggression: evidence from the scramble for Africa," *Security Studies* 25, no. 3 (2016): 385-419.

6. Hobley, *Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony*, 1970. The same idea is shared by, HRT, "Kenya: From Chartered Company to Crown Colony. Thirty Years of Exploration and Administration in British East Africa," (1930): 202-205.

7. Ibid.

8. G. H. Mungeam, *Kenya: Selected Historical Documents, 1884-1923* (Nairobi: EAPH, 1979). And see, Sana Aiyar, "Empire, race and the Indians in colonial Kenya's contested public political sphere, 1919-1923," *Africa* 81, no. 1 (2011): 132-154.

9. J. D. Ainsworth, *Pioneer Kenya Administrator 1864-1946* (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd., 1955). The same idea is shared by Goran Hyden, "Social Structure, Bureaucracy and Development Administration in Kenya," *The African Review: A Journal of African Politics, Development and International Affairs* (1972): 118-129.

## Literature Review

On 15th June 1895, a Protectorate, the East Africa Protectorate, was declared over the territory between Uganda and the coast (Kenya). By 30th June 1895, the area was under Protectorate authorities. However, it was not until 1905 that the administration of the East Africa protectorate was handed over to the colonial office.<sup>10</sup> It is ironic that in 1901 when the rail line from Mombasa to Port Florence (Kisumu) was completed, the initial strategic necessity had no relevance to resolving the Fashoda crisis and the British conquest of Sudan.<sup>11</sup> Thus, interwoven with the economic and humanitarian factors, the strategic reason motivated Britain to occupy East Africa, primarily the Uganda Protectorate, of which Bisukha and Bidakho were part.<sup>12</sup>

In the areas where Africans tried to resist the motives of the imperialist, punitive military expeditions were undertaken, and pacification of societies was applied.<sup>13</sup> Remote areas with resources highly cherished were opened up, and the "natives" were turned into a pool of cheap labour, alienated from their mode of traditional production through taxation, land alienation and passed laws.<sup>14</sup>

This was evident in all strategies of colonial administration: Assimilation, indirect rule, association and direct rule. The colonial powers needed an administrative structure that could adequately maintain law and order, collect taxes and service the economy. Furthermore, they devised ways of setting up political machinery capable of regulating conflicts within the African population and with regard to their relations with expatriate imperial administrators.<sup>15</sup>

Colonial penetration in Isukha and Idakho areas, however, proceeded at a slow pace. Although by 1895, the colonialists had arrived at Mumias, it was only in 1905 that the colonial strings had strongly tied the Bisukha and Bidakho to the general global capitalist system. The establishment of colonial rule was easily

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10. C. Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate* (London: Arnold, 1905). And see also, Thomas P. Ofcansky, "Kenya forestry under British colonial administration, 1895–1963," *Journal of Forest History* 28, no. 3 (1984): 136-143.

11. R. J. Ellis, *A Geography of Vertical Margins: Twentieth Century Mountaineering Narratives and the Landscapes of Neo-imperialism* (University of Colorado at Boulder, 1990). Cf. Kanogo, "Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya," 2008.

12. William Robert Ochieng, and Robert M. Maxon (Eds.), *An economic history of Kenya* (East African Publishers, 1992).

13. W. K. Storey, "Big cats and imperialism: Lion and tiger hunting in Kenya and Northern India, 1898-1930," *Journal of World History* 2, no. 2 (1991): 135-173.

14. C. Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The untold story of Britain's gulag in Kenya* (Macmillan, 2005).

15. J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial policy and practice* (Cambridge University Press, 2014). Cf. R. A. Zolberg, "The structure of political conflict in the new states of tropical Africa," *American Political Science Review* 62, no. 1 (1968): 70-87.

achieved through the Maxim gun.<sup>16</sup> In as much as Nabongo Mumia accepted to befriend the white man, some communities in Buluyia opted to rise in arms but with little success. This was because there was a military technological gap where the hand-made spears and arrows could not match the mighty gun.<sup>17</sup> Thus, forcibly, the Bisukha and Bidakho were entrenched in colonialism that affected their social, economic, ecological and political systems. Colonialism, therefore, fashioned the entire pre-capitalist institutions to the liking of the metropolis.<sup>18</sup>

Attempts to put Western Kenya under European rule began in 1894 when Buganda was declared a Protectorate encompassing Kisumu and Naivasha districts.<sup>19</sup> In 1900, these two districts became the Eastern Province of Uganda. In the same year, Valet Frederick Spire began the first attempts to subjugate the neighbouring groups from Mumias. This was made possible because the Wanga were ready to help Mr Spire as their leader. Mumia was already a friend of the white man.<sup>20</sup>

By 1896, Mumias had become the launching pad for establishing colonialism in the Western region of Kenya and the neighbouring areas occupied by the Nandi and Uasin Gishu Maasai.<sup>21</sup> Until 1902, before Eastern Province was transferred to East African Protectorate, Mumias was merely regarded as a supply zone to the traders en route to Uganda.<sup>22</sup> At Mumias, traders replenished their food supplies and rested before resuming their journey to the north in search of ivory and enslaved people. Later in 1903, C.W. Hobley opened Kakamega as a second control centre for Mumias.<sup>23</sup>

In 1895, Charles Hobley took over the administration of the District of North Kavirondo, of which Bisukha and Bidakho were part. Hobley had to employ his

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16. Mungeam, *Kenya: Selected Historical Documents, 1884–1923*, 1979. See also, B. Cooke, "A new continuity with colonial administration: participation in development management," *Third World Quarterly* 24, no. 1 (2003): 47-61; Hobley, *Op.Cit.*

17. Aliavikali Dongolo (Village elder and Herbalist), Oral Interview at his home Ilala on 7th July, 1995.

18. Parry, Benita, *Postcolonial studies: A materialist critique* (Routledge, 2004).

19. M. Wa Mutua, "Why Redraw the Map of Africa: A moral and legal inquiry," *Mich. J. Int'l L.* 16, no. 1113 (1994). Cf. Makau Mutua, "Human rights in Africa: the limited promise of liberalism," *African Studies Review* 51, no. 1 (2008): 17-39.

20. Hobley, *Op. Cit.*

21. A. K. Murgor, and B. Kipsang Rop, "Origin, Spread and Impact of Islam on Nandi Traditional Religion and Culture: A Case of Nandi County, Kenya," 2021.

22. J. R. Dealing, *Politics in Wanga, Kenya, c.1650-1914* (Northwestern University, 1974), 327. Cf. J. Lonsdale, "Politics in Kenya-Kenya: the Politics of Participation and Control. By Henry Bienen. Princeton University Press, 1974," *The Journal of African History* 16, no. 3 (1975): 476-477.

23. A. R. Tucker, and A. Tucker, *Eighteen Years in Uganda & East Africa* (Edward Arnold, 1911); M. Abu-Jamal, *All Things Censored* (Seven Stories Press, 2001). Cf. Ward Churchill, and Pierre Orelus, "Confronting Western Colonialism, American Racism, and White Supremacy," *Counterpoints* 430 (2012): 56-112.

maxim gun to organise a number of punitive expeditions to bring under control the resisting groups such as Kager, Samia, Bukusu, Banyala, Bisukha and Bidakho, and the Tiriki.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, Hobley, in 1900, had to send expeditions against the Nandi, who had raided the company and the telegraph and railway survey parties.

The completion of the railway had to some extent, entrenched colonialism in Buluyia, the entire Nyanza Province and the Protectorate of Uganda as African resistances were easily suppressed as transportation of soldiers became easier.<sup>25</sup> It also intensified trading activities making possible European settlement in the Western highlands after the encouragement of Sir Charles Elliot for many settlers to come for alienation of land and the eventual occupation. Charles Eliot argued that the completed Uganda railway was to pay for itself through settler farming.<sup>26</sup> By 1905, J. D. Ainsworth had identified potential farming lands in Trans-Nzoia and Kitale. He described this land as a 'wonderful' asset in the Kavirondo region.<sup>27</sup> Be that as it may, the creeping colonial capitalist system and the commoditisation of production changed the nature of land ownership, livestock keeping, labour promotion and the traditional ecological knowledge that had been preserved for a long.<sup>28</sup> This was done through the various land ordinances and labour laws instituted. For instance, herbal medicine and iron working experienced fundamental changes during colonial rule.<sup>29</sup> Introducing new medications for animals and people appeared more potent than herbs. In the same vein, the gazettelement of the forest also contributed to the limited utilization of the forest resources, especially herbs.

The beginning of the use of the ox-plough after World War I contributed to the decline in iron working activities which had been practised for a long.<sup>30</sup> Thus, it can be inferred that colonialism in Western Kenya was determined to change the society's way of life without paying attention to the complex relationship

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24. Hobley, *Op. Cit.*; E. M. Aseka, *The Colonial Economy During and After the Second World War and Political Activities in Buluyia*. Staff Seminar Paper No. 6 (History Department, K.U., 1989).

25. E. L. I. H. Wasike, *Alienation of Abashitaho's land rights, 1920-1963* (Kenyatta University, 2018).

26. Ainsworth, *Pioneer Kenya Administrator 1864-1946*, 1955. Cf. Hyden, "Social Structure, Bureaucracy and Development Administration in Kenya," 1972.

27. *Ibid.*

28. P. Rosset, "Re-thinking agrarian reform, land and territory in La Via Campesina," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 40, no. 4 (2013): 721-775.

29. D. F. Bryceson, "African rural labour, income diversification & livelihood approaches: a long-term development perspective," *Review of African Political Economy* 26, no. 80 (1999): 171-189.

30. P. J. Tanui, "A Gender Analysis of the Influence of Colonial Policies on Access to Land and Agricultural Technology among the Nandi in Kenya, 1895-1954," *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 5, no. 9 (2015).

between ecology, culture and economic factors.<sup>31</sup> This explains the major disarticulation in terms of harnessing resources. Before colonialism, Isukha and Idakho traditional culture had somewhat balanced the ecological and economic factors. However, these cultures were regarded as 'primitive' and barbaric. Traditional African wise men and women and the likes of Lukholo, who had the conventional rainmaking magic, were given no preference. Their place was taken by colonial officers who were the apostles of westernization.

Colonial infiltration and its effects were exacerbated by the changes evident in demography. Starting from 1905, due to suitable medication, the population of North Kavirondo societies began to witness an upsurge. According to E sese (1990),<sup>32</sup> the people of the entire Buluyia were expanding alarmingly, and resources, especially land, were threatened. Hardly could one find empty land by the 1930s as it had been alienated. The rising population spurred changes in the modes of production. Some of the changes were expansion in agricultural land and improved technology. A lot of food was required for consumption and sale.<sup>33</sup>

In this regard, demographic change, new ideas, new technology and resource exploitation led to the decline of old economic practices. The old socio-economic set-up could not support the increasing population.<sup>34</sup> New perceptions led to new ideas, consequently altering pre-colonial economic systems. This opinion is also shared by Ominde (1975),<sup>35</sup> who asserts that, as the population increases, the people's perception also changes to enable them to provide more food. For instance, the pre-colonial perception of forests changed, and people cleared part of the forests to get more virgin land to support the growing population.

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31. G. Austin, "Resources, techniques, and strategies south of the Sahara: revising the factor endowments perspective on African economic development, 1500–2000," *The Economic History Review* 61, no. 3 (2008): 587–624.

32. D. P. L. E sese, *Agriculture and Socio-Economic Change among the Wanga of Mumias Division, 1860–1945* (K. U, Nairobi, 1990), 206. See also, A. Fiona, and D. Mackenzie, "Contested ground: Colonial narratives and the Kenyan environment, 1920–1945," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, no. 4 (2000): 697–718.

33. Bryceson, "The scramble in Africa: reorienting rural livelihoods," 2002.

34. B. B. Bock, "Rural marginalisation and the role of social innovation; a turn towards nexogenous development and rural reconnection," *Sociologia Ruralis* 56, no. 4 (2016): 552–573.

35. S. H. Ominde, "Ecology and Man in East Africa," in *Hadith 7 Ecology and History in East Africa* (ed.) B. A. Ogot (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1975). Cf. K. D. Wright, "New perspectives on early regional interaction networks of East African trade: A view from Tsavo National Park, Kenya," *African Archaeological Review* 22, no. 3 (2005): 111–140.

## Methodology

From an ethnographic research design perspective, the author engages various scholars and elders from the two communities in conducting a survey to establish the Bisukha's and Bidakho's economic systems during the colonial period.<sup>36</sup> This research design was deemed appropriate for the study as the author was able to gain the native's point of view, carry out the study from the inside and experience both the culture and the economic environment<sup>37</sup> of the Bisukha and Bidakho. According to Fetterman (2010), in ethnographic research, the study is often conducted from the cultural environment's lens to understand the people's lives in a community.<sup>38</sup> To gain insight and relevant information, the authors could therefore live among the Bisukha and Bidakho inhabitants to understand the economic practices and culture shared by the two communities. The data was collected through a secondary review of literature, oral interviews with the elders and Focused Group Discussions that engaged the people in the discourse on their environment and economic activities.<sup>39</sup> The study findings are further presented thematically through examination of repeat patterns in the people's points of view with regard to the topic.<sup>40</sup>

## Discussion of Findings

### Colonial Land Tenure among the Bisukha and Bidakho between 1900-1963

The Europeans settled in Africa without considering the question of traditional land use, customs and beliefs. <sup>41</sup>Their perception of the African

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36. A. L. Cunliffe, and G. Karunanayake, "Working within hyphen-spaces in ethnographic research: Implications for research identities and practice," *Organizational Research Methods* 16, no. 3 (2013): 364-392.

37. J. K. S. Lee, and Kelvin Yu, "Corporate culture and organizational performance," *Journal of Managerial Psychology* (2004).

38. D. M. Fetterman, *Ethnography: Step-by-Step Guide* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2010).

39. Guadalupe X. Ayala, and John P. Elder, "Qualitative methods to ensure acceptability of behavioral and social interventions to the target population," *Journal of public health dentistry* 71 (2011): S69-S79.

40. V. Braun, and V. Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006): 77-101.

41. J. Hopwood, "An inherited animus to communal land: the mechanisms of coloniality in land reform agendas in Acholiland, Northern Uganda," *Critical African Studies* 14, no. 1 (2022): 38-54.

environment was Western-oriented.<sup>42</sup> According to Sindiga (1985), this perception did not concur with the traditional environmental perception.<sup>43</sup> Consequently, a conflict between traditional and Western perceptions emerged. Elders argued that European extension officers and the traditional agricultural practices failed to concur.<sup>44</sup>

Similarly, Deschlippe (1956) argued that most of the far-reaching agrarian reforms undertaken were based on Western scientific reality.<sup>45</sup> This shows that there was virtually no harmonisation of the Western changes in the context of the traditional ecological milieu. The Europeans lacked insights regarding the local environment while enforcing Western ideas.<sup>46</sup> Therefore, the inability to incorporate local perceptions marked the drastic change in ecological setup among all societies that experienced colonialism.<sup>47</sup>

Europeans did not consider the pre-colonial land tenure system and the underlying order of African land use. For example, the ideas of land control and conservation of the Bisukha and Bidakho were ignored, yet they were time-tested.<sup>48</sup> The pre-colonial land tenure was such that every household had automatic access to community and subsequent usufructuary rights. However, by 1912, communal ownership and usufructuary rights over land began to diminish as the colonial primitive accumulation that characterised land alienation and taxation became the order of the day. In the early years of the protectorate, it was assumed that Africans had no right to unoccupied land and that there was an undefined area of such waste land available for settlement.<sup>49</sup> Gazettement of the forests and the creation of the North Kavirondo reserve were rapidly inhibiting

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42. M. Mawere, *Culture, indigenous knowledge and development in Africa: Reviving interconnections for Sustainable development* (Langaa RPCIG, 2014). Cf. S. H. Bhola, "Reclaiming old heritage for proclaiming future history: The knowledge-for-development debate in African contexts," *Africa Today* (2002): 3-21.

43. I. Sindiga, "The Use of Geography in Recent Historical Research in East Africa," *Trans-African Journal of African History* 14 (1985): 124-138.

44. FGD, Isukha Elders, at Chiefs Camp, Khayega Market on 5th May, 1995.

45. P. Deschlippe, *Shifting Cultivation in Africa: The Zande system of agriculture* (Routledge, 1956). See also, D. Niemeijer, "The dynamics of African agricultural history: is it time for a new development paradigm?" *Development and Change* 27, no. 1 (1996): 87-110.

46. K. Anderson, "'The beast within': Race, humanity, and animality," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18, no. 3 (2000): 301-320.

47. L. A. Kosinski (Ed.), *Ecological Disorder and Amazonian* (Rio de Janeiro: International Social Science Council, 1991). Cf. A. López, "Population Movements, Environmental change and Social conflicts in the Brazilian Amazon," in *Environmental Change and its Implications for Population Migration* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2004), 145-163.

48. Cf. E. Mgaya, "Traditional institutions' management of sacred forests in Tanzania: history, narratives, and evidence from Njombe region, 1880s-2019," (2020).

49. E. Green, "Land concentration, institutional control and African agency: Growth," in *Agricultural Transformation in a Global History Perspective*, 247-270 (2013).



indigenous views. This was due to the fact that it was capitalistically fashioned to serve the interests of the invaders and to marginalise Africans.

### **Native Reserve, Taxation and Labour Recruitment**

Land alienation and the creation of the North Kavirondo reserve affected the pre-colonial land use pattern. Marginal lands, especially river valleys, swampy places and slopes, were increasingly used. Unlike in the precolonial period, the individual could own land among other clans for cultivation, residence or pasture. This change in land tenure affected the customary practice of promoting proper land usage and other resources, as was the case before colonialism.<sup>50</sup> Therefore, it was evident that the colonial policies on land did not concur with the pre-colonial land use as it ushered in the concept of individualization and individual ownership of land and abolished communal ownership.<sup>51</sup>

By 1915, no more empty land could be acquired and occupied freely. This was the genesis of land commoditisation in Isukha and Idakho. Its value was changed to produce commodities supplied to the new capitalist markets. As the demand for cereals increased, there was no room for shifting cultivation as African peasant farmers tilled their land throughout the year. This demand reduced the total area for crop rotation and fallow land.<sup>52</sup> By 1945, the fallow periods, empty land and village bushes had virtually disappeared.

Taxation and forced labour were hindrances to the old economic set-up. They were potent instruments that the colonial government wielded.<sup>53</sup> In 1901, a tax of two rupees was imposed to raise revenue, thereby making people work to raise the tax. These measures destroyed the 'traditional' family lineages and kinship ties. Gender roles also changed as women took on the roles performed by men.<sup>54</sup>

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50. E. D. Ault, and Gilbert L. Rutman, "The development of individual rights to property in tribal Africa," *The Journal of Law and Economics* 22, no. 1 (1979): 163-182.

51. Peter Ahindukha (Retired Education officer), Oral Interview, at his home in Machilifu- Khayega, on 10th May, 1995.

52. N. Humphrey, *The Liguru and the Land: Sociological Aspects of Some Agricultural Problems of North Kavirondo* (Nairobi: Government Printer, 1947), 37. Cf. L. E. Crowley, and E. C. Simon, "Agrarian change and the changing relationships between toil and soil in Maragoli, Western Kenya (1900–1994)," *Human Ecology* 28, no. 3 (2000): 383-414.

53. B. O'Laughlin, "Proletarianisation, agency and changing rural livelihoods: forced labour and resistance in colonial Mozambique," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28, no. 3 (2002): 511-530.

54. R. M. A. Van Zwanenberg, and A. King, *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda 1800-1970* (Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1975). Cf. Van Zwanenberg and King, "Nomadic pastoralism: The process of impoverishment," in *An Economic History of Kenya and Uganda 1800–1970* (Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1975), 79-109.

Likewise, the elders who used to decide who owned the land were subordinated and accommodated in the colonial economic system. The role of the chief and elders was transferred to the District Commissioner (DC), who knew very little about the traditional lineages and kinship related to the land.<sup>55</sup> Most of the DC's resolutions in land cases often caused problems. Sons or relatives of the same kinship could fight over land boundaries. The elders had no control of resources, accessibility and utility of land and livestock. Instead, the elders had to work hard to collect taxes, recruit the labour force and force people to attend catechumenal classes. Their traditional roles with regard to land tenure were systematically eroded.

The system was further watered down with the introduction of the native courts after World War I.<sup>56</sup> The native and tribunal courts took over the role of the elders in dispensing legal and juridical matters. Most of the members of the tribunal courts were 'collaborators' or friendly to the colonial administration. Their decision always had to favour the interests of the master. According to Esese (1990), the displacement of the *Liguru* and the elders as the supreme land authorities and their replacement by colonial-appointed chiefs and headmen was part of the subordination process where pre-colonial structures were preserved but modified to serve the new capitalist system.<sup>57</sup> After the inter-war period, other changes like land title deeds and land demarcation were affected to avoid wars or skirmishes over boundaries between Isukha and Idakho. This ushered in individual land ownership by 1930.

### Changes in Farming, Cropping and Technology

Before colonialism, Africans had relied on mixed subsistence farming. However, colonialists looked at mixed subsistence farming as a careless, muddled-up farming technique in the colonial epoch. Colonial demands, especially in the inter-war period, made Bisukha and Bidakho plant more maize to pay taxes.<sup>58</sup> Maize had to be planted in lines and as a mono-cultural crop. Most farms used no crop rotation and manuring because people had small land parcels, and it was hard to get manure as most of the animals were either taken as booty or killed by cattle diseases or droughts. The colonial regime attributed this

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55. Parker Shipton, "Lineage and locality as antithetical principles in East African systems of land tenure," *Ethnology* 23, no. 2 (1984): 117-132.

56. Samuel Mwisiayi (Retired Sub Chief of Shinyalu), Oral Interview at his home in Likhovero, on 4th April, 1995.

57. Esese, *Agriculture and Socio-Economic Change among the Wanga of Mumias Division, 1860-1945*, 1990. Cf. Esese, *The changing system of land ownership and its socio-economic effects in Lugari Division, western province of Kenya, c. 1880-2000* (Michigan State University, 2009), 28.

58. Hobley, *Op.Cit.*

situation to a lack of skills and consequently developed policies and coercive measures to enforce environmental management and soil conservation.

Shifting cultivation which had greatly dominated African societies, declined systematically because of colonial restrictions, land alienation and an increase in population.<sup>59</sup> Colonial land ordinances of 1902 and 1915, in a way, declared a death sentence on shifting cultivation. People were prohibited from adventuring into virgin lands that were already declared crown lands. Therefore, the decline of shifting cultivation meant a loss of soil fertility as the same land was utilised for a long time without rest. Another factor that contributed to the deterioration of shifting cultivation was the fact that the colonial government viewed shifting cultivation as wasteful and embarked on a process of re-organising both the system of agriculture and land tenure system that could be economically profiting as they needed food and raw materials.<sup>60</sup>

In some areas where shifting cultivation could be performed, the fallow periods became shorter due to the constant subdivision of land among the sons.<sup>61</sup> Food requirements for the gold miners and the growing maize and simsim for World Wars I and II soldiers could not allow the pre-colonial fallow period and shifting cultivation to continue. These crops were grown on a large scale since their demand was relatively high.

Crop rotation and inter-cropping, which had maintained soil fertility in pre-colonial periods, were no longer easily workable options. According to colonial extension officers, inter-cropping minimized the farm output of maize.<sup>62</sup> Thus, they preferred mono-cropping.<sup>63</sup> Inter-cropping's balancing effect on soil nutrients was obliterated with the abandonment of the practice. For instance, the cover crops used to prevent soil erosion and maintain soil moisture were not allowed to be grown on the same plot as maize or simsim. Population increases also meant the need for more land to produce enough food. As such, pressure on agricultural land reduced the total area for crop rotation and fallow land.<sup>64</sup> In this case, it was not only a change in colonial land tenure due to its policies but a combination of colonial strategies and demographic changes that exerted pressure on land. Alongside this pressure, a new mode of production evolved to accommodate the changing economic scenario.

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59. R. P. Neumann, "The postwar conservation boom in British colonial Africa. *Environmental History*," 7, no. 1 (2002): 22-47.

60. S. Sen, and M. C. Marcuzzo (Eds.), *The changing face of imperialism: colonialism to contemporary capitalism* (Taylor & Francis, 2018). Cf. S. Sen. "Could Britain Continue with the Gold Standard in Absence of Colonial India?," *Review of Political Economy* (2022): 1-14.

61. Humphrey, *Op. Cit.*

62. S. M. Omwoyo, *The Agricultural Changes in the Kipsigis Land, c. 1894-1963: An Historical Inquiry* (Kenyatta University, 2002).

63. Joseph M. Malusu (Lecturer at Kenyatta University), Oral Interview at his house in KU, Senegal street, on 6th August, 1995.

64. Humphrey, *Op.Cit.*

Individual land ownership also led to the disappearance of "Empty lands" that existed for the community to acquire or occupy freely. By 1935, it was very difficult to see empty tracts of land as most of them had become crown land or surveyed and registered as individual parcels. The disappearance of communal land meant resources for pastures, bushes, good soils, forests, and relief lands. The colonialists did not like communal resources, especially for the pasture and growing of sweet potatoes and cassava. They claimed overgrazing and soil erosion resulted in the ecological degradation of such land. Most of their areas were turned into self-sustenance and increased commodity production, particularly coffee. This accounted for the decline in the production of sweet potatoes and cassava in the colonial period as the interest shifted towards maize, simsim and other cash crops. This decline later contributed to food shortages and famines.

The creation of the North Kavirondo Reserves after World War I increased the use of marginal lands in Isukha and Idakho. More people began tilling the empty lands along the swamps, rivers and bushes to increase production for the family requirements.<sup>65</sup> The pre-colonial administration regulations over the ownership and use of the land had seen their last days as they were transferred to colonial land officers under the chairmanship of the DC.

Colonial land laws made Africans be denied their rights over land. The land and labour ordinances gave more attention to the demands of the colonialists than the indigenous people.<sup>66</sup> This concurs with other observations that, amidst increasing land shortages, peasant farmers were forced to plant maize on steep slopes. The cultivation of such fragile land portrayed women as land miners, insensitive to or unwilling to adopt improved methods of agriculture.<sup>67</sup>

Accompanying colonial land tenure changes were colonial agricultural technology. For the colonialists to obtain what they required in terms of food and raw materials, they had to alter the Bisukha-Bidakho pre-colonial farm implements and the farming technology as a whole. In this alteration, some pre-colonial farm implements were modified, and others were neglected or discarded. This is yet another way through which pre-colonial strategies and technology were integrated into the capitalist mode of production in Isukha and Idakho as was elsewhere.

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65. Peter Ahindukha (Retired Education officer), Oral Interview, at his home in Machilifu-Khayega, on 10th May, 1995.

66. Tuck, E., M. McKenzie, and K. McCoy, "Land education: Indigenous, post-colonial, and decolonizing perspectives on place and environmental education research," *Environmental Education Research* 20, no. 1 (2014): 1-23.

67. T. Kanogo, *Squatters and Roots of Mau, 1905-63* (Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987), 12. Cf. Benjamin Cashore, Fred Gale, Errol Meidinger, and Deanna Newsom, "Forest certification in developing and transitioning countries: part of a sustainable future?" *Environment: Science and Policy for Sustainable Development* 48, no. 9 (2006): 6-25.

Colonial agricultural technology improved food production, especially during the inter-war period and after for feeding and supporting the countries back at home and for the soldiers. Thus, there was a need for agricultural production tools, especially iron hoes, ox-ploughs and cut-lasses. It is argued that these tools proved to be very versatile in the farm products as they exhausted the soil to increase agricultural output.<sup>68</sup>

The colonialists stimulated the demand for their tools as their pieces of advice glorified them. This was done through colonial agricultural officers who advised the African cultivators to use iron hoes and ox-ploughs to increase production. It does not mean that the pre-colonial wooden hoe, amid digging sticks, disappeared from the scene completely. They were still used primarily in weeding but on a small scale. The requirements on the colonial market in terms of food were so high that digging sticks (*Biloho*) and wooden hoes could not cope.<sup>69</sup>

The most valued tool was the ox-plough for it could work or break a large piece of land compared to other tools. Ox-plough arrived in 1925.<sup>70</sup> However, even though it led to more food production, it had adverse ecological effects. For instance, in Idakho, among the Abamusaali and Abashimuli, more virgin lands were ploughed; hence a lot of vegetation was destroyed, leading to the environment's vulnerability.<sup>71</sup> Also, the ploughing did not remove all the grass as the hoe had been doing. Grass on farms increased, and that also lowered production.<sup>72</sup> It appears that the people had not mastered the use of the ox-plough. That is why grass could grow after a short time.

According to some respondents, particularly the provincial administrators, it was believed that higher yields of maize could be achieved on ploughed virgin land for a year or two.<sup>73</sup> However, wind or heavy rain could gradually take away the soil. Maize, too, would exhaust soil fertility.<sup>74</sup> The plough gained its roots in Isukha and Idakho due to population increase, and commercial demand for maize became a staple food. Other food crops were ignored or declined in demand, and the colonial administrator actively promoted the production of maize. The introduction of the plough meant forests were to be cleared and the

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68. Shiamala Liseche (peasant Farmer), Oral Interview at his home Mukumu Boys on 10th April, 1995.

69. FGD, Isukha Elders, at Chiefs Camp, Khayega Market on 5th May, 1995.

70. Aliavikali Dongolo (Village elder and Herbalist), Oral Interview at his home Ilala on 7th July, 1995.

71. Joseph Mabia (Elder among the Idakho/ Herbalist), Oral Interview at his home in Shirumba, on 8th July, 1995.

72. Shiamala Liseche (Peasant Farmer), Oral Interview at his home Mukumu Boys on 10th April, 1995.

73. Samuel Imbwaga, Samuel Mwisiayi and Hudson Shitambasi (Provincial administrators), Oral Interview at Shinyalu Market on 3rd August, 1995.

74. Donald Museti & Shiamala Liseche (Peasant Farmers), Oral Interview at Khayega on 4th June, 1995.

land brought under crops.<sup>75</sup> Thus, it is estimated that by 1943, Bisukha had 85 ploughs while Bidakho had 54 ploughs.<sup>76</sup> Although the number seems to be small by that time they were in high demand, one plough could serve an area under one *Liguru*, approximately 10 square kilometres.<sup>77</sup>

The preceding finding on the plough in Bisukha and Bidakho concurs with the results of Bowles (1976) that ploughing in North Nyanza crumbled the soil, exposed it to wind erosion, and encouraged the peasant to plough a large area than he could adequately plant and protect.<sup>78</sup> In addition, oxen for pulling the heavy ploughs needed large amounts of grazing, which merely added to the overgrazing problem in the area under attention. Thus, compared to the traditional tools like the digging sticks, iron hoe and mattock which tended to manipulate individual plants rather than the entire surface, the use of the plough contributed substantially to the high rate of soil erosion. Various soil layers were haphazardly mixed as the new tools ploughed deeper than the sticks and hoes.

It is believed that the Chui plough (popularly known as *Mshika-Kamba*) reached the area from the TransNzoia side, where the whites from South Africa had settled, following Sir Charles Eliot's invitation in 1902. Iron hoes gradually replaced wooden hoes and sticks. Most respondents agree that the plough was first introduced after World War I about 1925-1929.<sup>79</sup> Its influence in the area might have been popularized by migrant labourers and the colonial agricultural officers who glorified their technology. In a nutshell, the coming and use of the ox-plough began a revolution in land use and production patterns in Isukha and Idakho. The ploughs arrived at the chief's camp and then at the *Balugongo* homes (Assistant Chiefs). For instance, the first plough in the area reached Shivachi, Mwinamo and Makong'o who were then leaders of the Isukha and Idakho.<sup>80</sup>

## Gold Mining and Land Tenure

The land was alienated for the schools, mission stations, and public works, like roads, and in the 1930s, areas that seemed to have gold were also alienated. Wagner reported that 65,000 acres of native land had been required for mining

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75. Humphrey, *Op. Cit.*, 27.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Shiamala Liseche (peasant Farmer), Oral Interview at his home Mukumu Boys on 10th April, 1995.

78. B. D. Bowles, "Peasant Production and Underdevelopment: The Case of Colonial Kenya," *The African Review* 6, no. 2 (1976): 1-35.

79. Samuel Mwisiayi, Shiamala Liseche & Aliavikali Dongolo, Oral Interview on 3rd May, 1995.

80. Samuel Mwisiayi (Retired Sub Chief- Shinyalu sublocation), Oral Interview at his home in Likovero on 4th April, 1995

purposes, especially during the first few years after the gold-field discovery caused considerable anxiety among the native population.<sup>81</sup>

This land issue played a dominant role in the unfolding pattern of African political consciousness in North Kavirondo. The discovery of gold in the district in 1931 and the subsequent miniature gold rush stimulated the formation of the North Kavirondo Central Association, also known as the Abaluyia Central Association. In 1934, Jomo Kenyatta also complained to the colonial office in London about the alienation of the 'native' lands in Kakamega.<sup>82</sup> The alienation of the Kakamega land for gold prospecting completely changed the hitherto pre-capitalist land tenure system. Anxiety among family members that they would be evicted to the overcrowded reserves increased. Some of the gold fields were initially used as pasture land, which meant usufructuary rights in such places were no more. Many people dashed to the mines to seek wage labour to earn money for the family upkeep and to pay taxes.

There were some socio-economic, political and ecological effects due to gold mining. As various communities settled and intermarried, cultural fusion was evident. Political consciousness among the North Kavirondo people also rose as they championed the return of the alienated lands. There was frequent trouble between the white miners and Africans. In September 1933, the DC of Kakamega reported that:

The Bisukha and Bidakho have again been upset, apparently by irresponsible threats of subordinate Europeans that when leases are granted, they will have to clear out by losing their lands".<sup>83</sup>

Alienation of land among the Bisukha and Bidakho meant agricultural land shrunk, and agricultural production declined. By 1934, most of the cereal or foods for sale at Kakamega market were brought by Kabras, Batsotso, Marama and Tachoni. It appears that the Bisukha and Bidakho concentrated more on mining at the expense of subsistence farming. As energetic labour joined the mining companies, family or household labour was weakened, thus the families could not produce enough food for themselves. That is why the little earnings of the people from the mines were used to purchase food for the families from the Kabras and Batsotso people at the Kakamega market.

On the other hand, the environment suffered a big blow. Mining companies were given royalties to extract timber from the Kakamega forest, which was

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81. G. Wagner, *The Bantu of North Kavirondo* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), 10. Cf. J. J. de Wolf, "The diffusion of age-group organization in East Africa: a reconsideration," *Africa* 50, no. 3 (1980): 305-310.

82. B. Berman, "Ethnography as politics, politics as ethnography: Kenyatta, Malinowski, and the making of Facing Mount Kenya," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/ La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 30, no. 3 (1996): 313-344.

83. Personal communication, DC, 1933 September.

highly required in the mines as poles for pit props. Thus, the mining industry gave rise to many forest problems, which at the time damaged the conservation strategies of the colonial government. Trees were cut with less replacement. A large area occupied by the Bisukha and Bidakho suffered from land dereliction, destruction of the vegetation in mining areas, and interference with marine life, especially along rivers Yala and Isiukhu, due to water pollution. This meant that the mining area ceased to be agriculturally viable for a couple of years. The scars left by mining companies are still spread all over; to date, they are associated with deadly poisonous gases.

Another hazard caused by gold mining in the area was the prevalence of the malarial disease. Due to digging holes that kept stagnant pools of water, the breeding of mosquitoes increased. The Colonial Kakamega Medical Officer reported that:

Malaria is on the increase. It is impossible with the present staff to exercise adequate control against malaria in the vast goldfield area. It is impossible to control mosquitoes breeding correctly in and around the Kakamega Township.<sup>84</sup>

Mining also created conditions for breeding tsetse flies that affected both people and livestock. A number of people died due to collapsing mines or due to diseases related to mining activities. Diseases, like scurvy, diarrhea and asthma were rampant.<sup>85</sup> The Bisukha and Bidakho were advised to plant blue gum trees extensively for sale as pit props for the mines. This was yet another environmental problem. Most of the gum trees were grown near rivers and swampy areas. The potential of gum trees to exhaust the soil and water is excellent compared to the indigenous trees. Therefore, planting gum trees led to the swamps' shrinkage and a decline in soil quality. Also, as the gum trees grew faster, the indigenous trees in such areas could not compete with them.

The only survivors were creeping plants that could climb on the gum trees. Otherwise, the others faded away. Gum trees had little use compared to some mentioned indigenous trees like *Mukumu* or *Siala*. The gum tree had no medicinal value and could not be used for sacrifices. Thus, its role in the ecology of the Bisukha and Bidakho was limited only to timber, firewood and pit props.

Mining in this area also led to a flourishing business in Kakamega. Food was brought from all over Buluyia to be sold at Kakamega. The Indians benefitted quite a lot as they sold commodities ranging from matchboxes to super cigarettes. By 1936, Kakamega was bustling with life, which led to the expansion of

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84. KNA:PC/NZA/3/1/44/193.

85. Athanas Miheso (Former Councilor of Isukha Central), Oral Interview 6th June, 1995.



Kakamega town in the colonial period.<sup>86</sup> Although gold mining increased native wealth due to employment, at the end of the activity, the Bisukha and Bidakho remained in a state of poverty and alienation mainly because the little money earned from gold mines was channeled into the domestic purchase of food and personal subsistence and not for investment. Instead, the mining companies grew more affluent and prosperous, and the profits were repatriated back to the metropolis.<sup>87</sup>

### **Economy, Population and Ecology in Colonial Isukha and Idakho before 1963**

Closely related to colonial intrusion was the increasing population which systematically reduced the land carrying capacity. Population expansion has been considered essential for agricultural change under subsistence conditions.<sup>88</sup> According to her, an increasing population causes food shortages and forces man to intensify his efforts through technological innovations and longer work hours. The agricultural development that ensues is adopting new methods that make more intensive land use possible through soil conservation, irrigation system and fertilisation. For instance, with time, the Bisukha introduced perennial crops such as cassava and practised many devices that helped them maintain the fertility of the soil before the arrival of the colonialists.

Thus, demographic changes facilitated economic change. First, the rising population pressured ecology, where trees treated as sacred and traditionally preserved were now cut. More so, places hitherto respected, like those where people were buried (*Mwilindwa*), were no longer reserved as people wanted more land for settlement. Even the feared forests were penetrated for land, firewood or fruits.<sup>89</sup>

A lot of pressure was exerted on fallow and empty land. Gradually, the no-man's land between the two clans began to diminish. Even family lands are reduced in size.<sup>90</sup> This increase in population density might have been caused by

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86. Athanas Miheso (Former Councilor of Isukha Central), Oral Interview 6th June, 1995.

87. W. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Nairobi: East Africa Publishing House. Routledge, 1972). See also, C. M. Kusimba, "Archaeology of slavery in East Africa," *African Archaeological Review* 21, no. 2 (2004): 59-88.

88. E. Boserup, *Population and Technological Change: A Study of long-term Trends* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981). Cf. W. F. Ruddiman, and C. E. Ellis, "Effect of per-capita land use changes on Holocene forest clearance and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions," *Quaternary Science Reviews* 28, no. 27-28 (2009): 3011-3015.

89. Joseph M. Malusu (Lecturer at Kenyatta University), Oral Interview at his house in KU, Senegal street, on 6th August, 1995.

90. Aseka, *The Colonial Economy During and After the Second World War and Political Activities in Buluyia*, 1989.

individualization of land and polygamous life improved life through better medical attention. By 1930, the mortality rates had decreased following colonial medications to eradicate killer diseases that had hitherto claimed many children. Therefore, as much as we blame the capitalist mode of production, shifting cultivation was transformed into a highly destructive form of settled agriculture with an increase in population. The practice was possible when the population was relatively small, and the land was spacious and available for use. However, increasing population meant that public land was utilized and the eventual reduction of food production.

Furthermore, the Western influence intensified negative pressure on the complex relationship between cultural, ecological, and economic factors. The missionaries despised some aspects of culture, especially the belief system. The Christian values did not favor the respect hitherto accorded to burial sites, sacred trees, animals and taboos. As such traditional cultures were eroded, the economy became unstable, and the ecology became vulnerable because the link was broken.<sup>91</sup> This does not mean that colonial intrusion was the genesis of ecological imbalances or that those traditional practices were a panacea to ecological balance and maintenance. The fact is that ecological imbalance has been around because man has interacted with the environment since the early ages. However, the colonial intrusion was one of the significant factors that accelerated the processes of ecological destruction in the periphery.<sup>92</sup>

As elsewhere, the colonialists arrived in Africa and other peripheral states with heaven-storming plans and policies, which did not put the interests and the knowledge of the colonised at the centre.<sup>93</sup> They virtually ignored the knowledge the Africans had acquired over the years as they interacted with the environment. This formed the point of disarticulation in ecological maintenance in Isukha and Idakho. With the infiltration of the colonialists, the Isukha and Idakho people were no longer in command of their destiny or in control of what used to be shared resources. For this matter, the traditional authorities lost control over resource allocation, equity and ability to determine the future economy of their societies due to destructive conditions imposed by external powers.

The indigenous ecological knowledge did not disappear at once. It continued, albeit with frustrations from colonial masters. There was also political confusion and a struggle for independence. Christianity confused people in relation to

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91. Cf. Robert A. Voeks, *Sacred leaves of Candomblé: African magic, medicine, and religion in Brazil* (University of Texas Press, 2010).

92. Aseka, *Op.Cit.*

93. OSSREA, "Application of OSSREA," *Social Sciences Research Review*, 10, no. 2 (1994), 6. See also, W. M. K. Mwafongo, "Land use change and land degradation in West Malombe, Mangochi District, Malawi: a geographical study," *Malawi Journal of Science and Technology* 4 (1998): 13-36.

ecological knowledge, but it had to continue secretly. With time, colonial entrenchment led to the systematic erosion of this knowledge as indigenous thinking capacity was articulated in the new capitalist mode of production.

The conflict between indigenous ecological knowledge and the new Western knowledge was evident in 1931 when a renowned rainmaker from the Abatsunga clan called Lukholo "stopped" rain because a man from the Abakhaywa clan owed her a cow. Severe drought followed. Lukholo Shilisia was a renowned rainmaker. She inherited this knowledge from her parents, who were rainmakers. She attracted the rains by going to a sacred place where she waved her ritual "stick" (stuff) with the thicker end. In addition, she boiled herbal medicine in four large pots to which she added the ash (*Likoshe*) of burnt thatching grass. If the brew boiled over, then the rain would come. In case the rainmaker was annoyed by the people and wanted to stop the rain, she would dip her "stick" with its thin end in the pot and then turn this end to the sky. There would be no rain if the stick were kept in the position. When people wanted to appease an angry rainmaker and get rain, they would bring presents until she was conciliated and turned the staff around, which produced the desired results. The D.C., Mr Anderson, disputed that a person could stop the rain. To him, droughts were normal environmental occurrences. However, Chief Jeremiah Sechero advised the man from the Abakhaywa clan to pay the debt he owed to Lukholo. The Oral account explains that:

When the man failed to pay, the chief advised D.C. to intervene in Lukholo's case. As if to experiment, D.C. gave Lukholo one hundred shillings, and to his dismay, there was a heavy downpour in Kakamega town, just two hours after he had given the money. In this instance, Lukholo proved that African beliefs and practices had power. Henceforth, rainmakers gained respect, and it seems that Lukholo was the last knowledgeable rainmaker among the Bisukha. After her, rainmaking as an institution systematically diminished as people embraced the Western lifestyle and Christian values.<sup>94</sup>

Practices that persisted were, for example, the dependence on traditional medicinal plants for the treatment of both animals and humans. Indigenous ecological knowledge continued because the majority could not afford the colonial treatment method.<sup>95</sup> Traditional healing was hereditary and was part of appeasing the ancestors.<sup>96</sup> The Bisukha and Bidakho were deeply rooted in their culture and found it challenging to de-link from it. Again, ecological knowledge persisted because there was a lack of confidence in what the Europeans offered.

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94. Samuel Imbwaga, Samuel Mwisiayi and Hudson Shitambasi (Provincial administrators), Oral Interview at Shinyalu Market on 3rd August, 1995

95. Joseph M. Malusu (Lecturer at Kenyatta University), Oral Interview at his house in KU, Senegal street, on 6th August, 1995.

96. Ibid.

However, it persisted amidst strong opposition from the church. Elsewhere, some societies took it as a bone of contention to start independent churches for example among the Agikuyu.

### **European versus African Perception of Economy and the Breakdown of the Belief Systems between c. 1900-1963**

Human beings everywhere develop some views about the environment in which they live or visit. In Sindiga's (1985) opinion, these views influence their behaviour on the land and dictate how they use the resources.<sup>97</sup> Thus, in the back of the mind of the colonialists, the exploitation of African resources for home industries was a driving factor. This perception dictated the economic mechanisms that were put in place for such ends.<sup>98</sup>

The pre-colonial Bisukha and Bidakho perceptions of the environment and its resources were dictated by the abundance of resources in their ecological milieu. The population was less than the available resources, which is why it was easy to practise shifting cultivation or migratory farming as the land was in abundance. Such land parcels were given a minimum of four to six-years rest to recover or rejuvenate their fertility level. However, as the population rose, this perception or approach too began changing.

Before the arrival of the Europeans, there was the likelihood that farmland's resting period had reduced from six seasons of rest to three seasons maximum, a pointer to shrinking land. However, these changes went on slowly at a controlled pace. Again, it was not automatic that the shifting period was three seasons for all families. Some families continued to keep the five years pattern for a long time, while others, due to socio-economic and demographic changes, had to change from five to three or two years. Therefore, decisions and activities of any given moment can be interpreted by understanding the time's perceived resources.

Agricultural technology evolved gradually as the perception and conceptualization of the environment by Bisukha and Bidakho changed. The use of digging sticks appears to have dominated the Abisukha and Bidakho in the period before the arrival of the Arabs and the Swahili. Using digging sticks and fire-hardened hoes meant that small portions of land had to be tilled.

However, it is dubious that digging sticks could provide enough food for the household. By the 1870s, ironworking was not popular in the agricultural sector compared to its use in the military. Hunting and gathering animals, roots, leaves

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97. Sindiga, "The Use of Geography in Recent Historical Research in East Africa," 1985, 124-138.

98. Cf. Suisheng Zhao, "A neo-colonialist predator or development partner? China's engagement and rebalance in Africa," *Journal of Contemporary China* 23, no. 90 (2014): 1033-1052.

and fruits were an important economic mainstay activity.<sup>99</sup> With time the rising population dictated a change in the people's perceptions. They had to increase food, which meant a difference in farming technology.

On the eve of the Arab-Swahili arrival, Bisukha and Bidakho had acquired the iron hoe culture, which went side by side with the digging sticks. The respondents reckoned that iron hoes were good at breaking a large piece of land and mixing the soil.<sup>100</sup> On the other hand, the digging sticks (*Biloho*) were utilized in weeding finger millet, sorghum and other cereals. It, therefore, appears that the digging sticks disappeared gradually. Even during the colonial period, sticks were used in some areas until they were gradually phased out from the scene with the introduction of new agricultural implements.

The cultural background of the pioneer European settlers influenced them to use the land for purposes familiar to them. For instance, the colonialist administrator saw everything in an African setting through the European eye, hence, underestimating the skills and adaptability of the Africans to new concepts and practices.<sup>101</sup>

The reports taken back to the metropolis by David Livingstone, Sir Henry Johnstone, Joseph Thomson and a number of missionaries, travellers and explorers gave leading information about the wealth of Africa in terms of resources.<sup>102</sup> Given that these explorers-cum-missionaries had been nurtured in the industrializing Europe, they had a role of opening up a "siphoning pipe" between the periphery and the metropolis, mainly to supply raw materials and labour to the industries back at home.

Firstly, there was a conflict in land use between traditional Bisukha and Bidakho agricultural practices and the Europeans. Colonial agrarian reforms were undertaken - land privatization, cash crops, land title deeds, exotic animals and plant breeds. These reforms did not take off successfully because of a lack of knowledge of the environmental perceptions of the African cultivators and herders.

Secondly, European administrators, miners and missionaries began operations in Isukha and Idakho without considering the African environmental perceptions and strategies. Instead, African ethnography was undermined in articulating African modes of production. For example, the local perceptions of

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99. Ochieng and Maxon, *An economic history of Kenya*, 1992.

100. Paul Liyayi (Peasant Farmer), Oral Interview at his home in Ivagale on 16th June, 1995.

101. A. Kariro, and C. Juma (Eds.), *Gaining Ground: Institutional Innovations in Land use Management in Kenya* (Rev. Edn.) (Nairobi: ACTS Press, 1991), 23. Cf. P. Shipton, "Land and culture in tropical Africa: soils, symbols, and the metaphysics of the mundane," *Annual Review of Anthropology* (1994): 347-377.

102. C. Harvie, and C. Matthew, *Nineteenth-century Britain: a very short introduction* (OUP Oxford, 2000). And see also, D. M. Peers, "Britain and empire," *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (2004): 53-78.

the fauna and flora did not have meaning before the colonialists.<sup>103</sup> They imposed economic mechanisms to exploit the resources leading to the occurrence of famines.

Conflicting perceptions over land tenure were also witnessed. Before colonialism, each land formed a single, continuous territory and was held by individual clans for instance Abitsende, Abashimuli, and Abamilonje among others. The colonialists had a different perception that all along did not favour communal ownership. Following the land ordinances of 1915 and 1918, clan territories were dissolved, potential areas were alienated for crown projects, and others were given to the missionaries to set up churches and schools.<sup>104</sup>

Life in the North Kavirondo reserve was further altered with the discovery of gold.<sup>105</sup> By 1931, the crown alienated land for gold mines without regard for the African land tenure system. In the Bisukha and Bidakho land tenure system, the underlying order of land usage and the resources therein were capitalistically incorporated. Indirectly, the demand for taxes acted as a spur to push the people into the labour market.

Change in crop production also occurred, with the traditional crops like sorghum, millet, and finger-millet supplemented by other varieties of sweet potatoes, bananas and various vegetable types losing prominence as maize growing was emphasised at their expense. According to Rodney (1972), the colonialists emphasised maize production because it provided more kilo joules, thus more energy than any other cereal.<sup>106</sup> Maize also generated more income than other cereals in the colony.<sup>107</sup> Other economic changes were brought through the government policies, demographic changes and the enterprise of Asian middlemen in Kakamega town. These external factors and the changing Isukha-Idakho perception led to a diversified economy. However, this diversification had the purpose of serving the interests of the colonial master. These abrupt changes

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103. H. Englund, and J. Leach, "Ethnography and the meta-narratives of modernity," *Current anthropology* 41, no. 2 (2000): 225-248.

104. A. I. Fridah, *The Changing Patterns of Land-Use Among the Kabras of Kakamega County, Kenya C. 1963-2010* (Kenyatta University, 2021).

105. J. MacArthur, "When did the Luyia (or any other group) become a tribe?" *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue canadienne des études africaines* 47, no. 3 (2013): 351-363; Priscilla M. Shilaro, "Colonial land policies: the Kenya Land Commission and the Kakamega gold rush, 1932-4," in *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya: Essays in Memory of Professor Gideon S. Were* (Nairobi: East African Publishers, 2002), 110-128.

106. Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1972. Cf. G. Arrighi, and S. S. John, "Socialism and economic development in tropical Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 6, no. 2 (1968): 141-169.

107. Ainsworth, *Pioneer Kenya Administrator 1864-1946*, 1955. And see also, Ochieng, "Western Kenya," in *Historical Studies and Social Change in Western Kenya: Essays in Memory of Professor Gideon S. Were* (2002): 181-201.

took place steadily depending on the situation in the world market and the demands of the metropole industries.

The Abisukha-Abidakho perception of labour was different from the colonialists' perception. In traditional Isukha and Idakho, labour was mobilised for different types of work, such as clearing bushes, hut construction, threshing millet, corporate hunting and other communal activities. With the advent of colonialism, the African perception could not hold. Instead, labour was highly needed, a fact which caused its commoditization to serve the interests of the colonialists. People were regularly used as porters on crown projects, mines, or white farms. The movement of labour that was non-existent in the pre-colonial era became a reality. Recruitment agents for European farmers befriended or bribed African chiefs and some headmen to forcibly recruit their subjects into "wage labour" on white farms, particularly after World War I.<sup>108</sup>

The colonial perception of forests and trees, in general, was exploitative. They took over the responsibility of the African forests as crown property. They also enacted laws to control the forests with claims of protecting the catchment area. However, research has revealed that serious forest exploitation went on regarding timber provision for commercial purposes. The Asian companies invaded the forests and began cutting indigenous trees using heavy machines for export and use in the mines.<sup>109</sup>

The gazettement of Kakamega Forest in 1933 limited how people utilised forests, especially for food purposes. As the population increased, there was no more virgin land for expansion. Instead, overcrowding on inherited parcels of land increased. The gazettement, aimed at conserving wild biota, caused many problems. A total of 237,773 square kilometres of land, which both Abisukha and the neighbouring Tiriki depended on, was lost.<sup>110</sup> The gazettement ignored the traditional management of biodiversity and necessitated the eviction of the local people who resided in the forest then.

Despite the gazettement, people continued utilizing the resources illegally. This meant that as they exploited the forests, they did not put conservation at the core of their action. The Europeans also came up with exotic trees such as eucalyptus, pines and cypress, which were and have not been favorable to the water and the soil as these trees consume a lot of soil moisture and nutrients. Thus, colonialism did not aim to preserve the forests they claimed but to extract them as part of their imperialistic agenda.

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108. Shiamala Liseche (peasant Farmer), Oral Interview at his home Mukumu Boys on 10th April, 1995.

109. Joseph Mabilia (Elder among the Idakho/ Herbalist), Oral Interview at his home in Shirumba, on 8th July, 1995.

110. Z. A. Ogutu, and M. Khayesi, "Culture as the basis of Bio-diversity Conservation in Kakamega Forest," *Trans African Journal of History* 24 (1995): 195-204.

Through the "civilizing" mission, humanitarianism and philanthropism, the colonialists used Western Education and Christianity to prepare grounds for eliminating cultural practices inhibiting their operations in Africa. In this regard, the two were used as colonial tools to dismantle rigid beliefs. Taboos that acted as regulators of the socio-economic and political behaviour were tampered with. Bisukha and Bidakho believed in *Nyasaye* (God), who was seen in the form of fauna and flora. With the commoditization of the fauna and flora, this manifestation was not upheld. Instead, the people were to understand God through the Bible and not merely in plants and animals. The fear people had regarding the sacred trees and animals began to disappear. The wrath of the ancestors on the societal deviants was no longer applicable. Thus, gradually, the Bisukha-Bidakho traditional religious practices that ensured harmony in production in an ecological milieu were progressively sacrificed at the altar of the Western religion. The African catechists and the early converts began to abandon their beliefs and strove to live as western religion instructed them. As a result, some looked at traditional medicine and practices with less respect and suspicion.<sup>111</sup>

Beliefs, totems and taboos related to crops and plants were heavily criticized for casting aside. With the integration of the area into the capitalist market, women performed some roles which were not meant for them. This confusion in gender roles was accentuated when male folks left their household for wage labour and joined the Kings African Rifles. The female folk took over their role in cultural practices and belief systems.

The missionaries encouraged women to do away with beliefs and taboos related to chicken and eggs. Women and children were prevented from eating chicken and eggs in the pre-colonial era. According to the respondents, this was a strategy to economise domestic resources. Although, as mentioned before, the Arabs and Swahili traders had tried to tamper with this practice, its final crash was in the colonial era. In 1919 Chilson wrote that:

There is a custom among the natives which forbids a woman to eat chicken. Recently this has become a test of a woman's willingness to "Leave all" for her saviour (Jesus Christ) ... a sign that she has broken all customs.<sup>112</sup>

## Conclusion

The colonialists had external and 'bio spherical' perceptions, which did not consider the African ecological interests. In the process of articulation, the

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111. Peter Ahindukha (Retired Education officer), Oral Interview, at his home in Machilifu-Khayega, on 10th May, 1995.

112. KNA, EAYME 164/80, 1919.



external socio-economic interests were pinned on the Bisukha and Bidakho without due consideration to their ways of life in terms of harnessing resources and, at the same time, conserving their biodiversity. Thus, the external dominance and internal dependence created a situation that inevitably transformed the colonised's socio-economic fabric to the newcomers' advantage.<sup>113</sup> Europeans believed everything they did in terms of medicine, land alienation, destocking, religion, education, dressing, mining and extraction of forests was the best. They did not give room to the African perceptions unless it was to perpetuate their socioeconomic motives. The external perceptions caused societal distortion in terms of economic and belief systems.

The external forces dominated society at the expense of those familiar with it and had a long experience and mastery over their environment. The findings revealed that the pre-colonial economic and belief systems of Bisukha and Bidakho understood sustainability while the colonialists arrived with subtle economic strategies for exploitation. These two were incompatible. For instance, exploitation of the gold mines, forest resources, labour and land were only in favor of the white man. As seen from the preceding, however, the pre-colonial land authorities were not given any say as they remained on the periphery of decision-making.

Colonial perception imposed on the 'natives' made them lose control over their resources, which were vital to properly managing their environment. Land as a resource was alienated, forests were gazetted, and animals were crudely confiscated to feed the soldiers of World Wars I and II. Colonial policies such as merchant capital, taxation and land alienation which characterized colonialism, disrupted the continuity of the Luyia traditional resource utilization strategies, resulting in the prevalence of famines and diseases relating to such situations. However, not all the pre-capitalist modes and practices were dismantled. At least some were left for survival in the process of articulation. Based on the preceding information, the next chapter examines the theme of famines and food shortages in the area of study. Of interest is how the changing perception in the colonial setup affected pre-colonial food harnessing and storage strategies.

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113. Rodney, *Op. Cit.*

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