

Land Antecedent Discourses in Kenya's Ethnic Conflict in Njoro-Molo Area

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Abstract: In this paper, we discuss the relationship between the perennial land grievance, the attendant discourses and the ethnic conflicts that occurred in the Rift Valley region in the 1990s of the last century and also continue to occur intermittently now. Land is a very weighty issue that in fact the ethnic conflicts in Njoro-Molo area (a remarkable area of these clashes in the Rift Valley) have also been referred to as “land clashes”. The land grievance is very cryptic and multi-layered. It can be traced to the colonial era, where the colonial regime alienated land from the indigenous populations. As a result some of the victims of the alienation found their way in the Rift Valley. It has again been perpetuated in the post-independence period where the ruling elite (with ethnic masks) have not meaningfully addressed the problem. Analytically, using a Discourse-Historical Approach perspective, the land grievance antecedents the following broad discourse topics: land and the discursive construction of identity, indigenous and “foreigners” and historical injustices. These discourse topics are also linked to Discourse-Historical Approach discursive strategies. It is anticipated that this paper sheds sufficient light on the festering land question not only in Kenya but also in other sub-Saharan African nation-states that have similar situations.

Keywords: perennial land grievance, land clashes, ethnic conflicts, Njoro-Molo.

INTRODUCTION

“There are only two things that cannot be given away, a son and land.” An old Maasai saying.[10]

Land ownership has been at the centre of a number of grievances from the colonial period to present in Kenya. This paper discusses this issue in a Discourse-Historical Approach perspective. The first part of the paper addresses the discursive construction of land as an aspect of identity from the colonial period to now. Secondly the paper discusses how indigenous

and “foreigners” discourse in the Njoro-Molo area of the Rift Valley is tied to land grievance. Here the indigenous groups in Njoro-Molo area usually argue that the “foreigner” groups have infringed on their land and dispossessed them what they say was originally theirs. Lastly, this paper discusses the land grievance after independence where the indigenous groups argue that the “foreigner” groups formed land buying companies that bought land from colonial settlers at the expense of the indigenous groups and thus continuing to perpetuate the discourse of historical injustices.

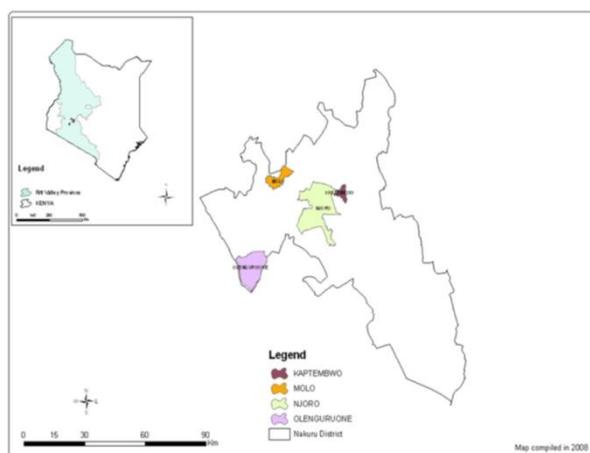


Fig-1: MAP of Njoro Molo Area. Source: Onyango[13]

DISCUSSION

The discussion of land antecedent discourses in Kenya in general and Njoro-Molo area of the Rift Valley in particular is done in the encompassing prism of Discourse-Historical Approach that was founded by Ruth Wodak [1]. Succinctly, the discussion is grounded in the following five discursive strategies[1]:

- Referential strategies that represents social actors, in-groups, out-groups, reference tropes, biological, naturalising depersonalising, metaphors, metonymies as well as synecdoches
- Predicational strategies. For example, the stereotypical, evaluative attributions of negative and positive traits in the linguistic form of implicit or explicit predicates. Predicational strategies are very close to referential strategies
- Argumentation strategies where we have the topoi through which positive and negative attributions are justified. These are actually aspects of rhetoric [2].
- Perspectivation/framing or discourse representation which are the means that speakers express their involvement in discourse and position their point of view in the reporting, description, narration or quotation of discriminating events or utterances
- Intensifying strategies on one hand and mitigation strategies on the other. Both of them help to qualify the epistemic status of a proposition by intensifying or mitigating the illocutionary force of racist, anti-semitic nationalist or ethnic utterances.

The Discursive Construction of Land as an important Aspect of Identity

Kenya has been an agricultural country and continues to be so to date. The history of agriculture has a milestone in the Swynnerton plan of 1954 in which Africans were given leeway to partake the growth of cash crops. Thus from that time farmers of highly arable land could immensely benefit from the proceeds of their agricultural endeavour from crops such as coffee, tea, pyrethrum, wheat, barley, and to some extent, maize, beans, Irish potatoes, and so on. Moreover, on arable land, dairy farming and sheep and goat rearing were/are remarkable agricultural undertakings. All the above agricultural activities are done in the Njoro-Molo area that actually bore the brunt of the ethnic clashes in the 90s.

It is important to note that apart from the use of land for economic activities, it is also associated with the identity of groups. In the common discourse of many Kenyans, there is something called ancestral land. This one is very important to the descendants of a particular area. When it comes to the question of ancestral land, seriously speaking, it is the Rift Valley and the Coast regions that have notable problems in Kenya, among Kenya's eight regions, due to historical reasons. In all the other regions of Kenya, for example,

the Luhya do not have a serious grievance against the outsiders since the Luhya hold most of their ancestral land in Western region, because the other indigenous inhabitants in the region, namely, the Teso and Sabaot reside also in their original ancestral areas. Similarly, the Kikuyu are the majority landowners in Central region. Although in Eastern region the ethnic composition is that of the Kamba, Meru, Embu and the Borana, none of these groups has seriously encroached on the ancestral areas of other groups. Although there have been conflicts in North Eastern region, however, they have not been seriously motivated by ancestral land grievance.

Similarly, in Nyanza region, that houses the Luo, the Gusii, the Kuria and the Suba the question of ancestral land ownership is not a point of dispute. All the above groups in Nyanza live in their ancestral land save for the Suba whom the Luo have assimilated. Nairobi region is highly cosmopolitan and urban, the question of ancestral land is not a remarkable issue, since even beyond the question of urbanisation; Nairobi experiences influences such as internationalisation of land tenure. The Nubi group in Kibera section of Nairobi have had some sentiments on ancestral land but it has not been a serious issue of conflict.

However, the question of encroachment on ancestral land has been a time bomb and remains so in both the Rift Valley and the Coast regions of Kenya. In the two regions, the land grievance that concerns the ancestral land has a long history right from the inception of the colonial period. The long land standing grievances have not been addressed fairly and meaningfully. With this background, we note that there were serious ethnic clashes that were dubbed land clashes in the 1990s in the Rift Valley and the Coast regions of Kenya. Furthermore, in the Rift Valley, there were tragic clashes that led to thousands of Internally Displaced Persons after the outcome of the flawed Presidential elections of December 2007. Most of the Internally Displaced Persons were those who are not indigenous to the Rift Valley.

The significance of land goes far much beyond the economic and the symbolic reasons; it has political significance as well. In Kenya this has been very evident during general elections. The so called "foreigner" (groups that are not in their ancestral lands) suffer evictions caused by indigenous groups if they are seen to be in the opposing political camp. This has been the case since the re-introduction of multi-party politics in 1991.

The importance of land continues to be part of a community's life as the old Maasai saying above shows (notwithstanding the regrettable hegemonic masculinities connotations about the son). Throughout the colonial history, there were numerous petitions

presented to the colonial administration concerning land. In 1929, the Hilton Young Commission [3] failed to address the land rights. The memoranda that was submitted to the Morris Carter Lands Commission of 1931 shows in great detail how the Kikuyu, the Luo, the Kamba, the Kalenjin and so on valued land as evidenced in the statements of their representatives. For instance, ex -Senior Chief Koinange had this to say concerning land alienation:

When someone steals your ox, it is killed and roasted and eaten. One can forget. When someone steals your land, especially if nearby, one can never forget. It is always there, its trees which were dear friends, its little streams. It is a bitter presence [4].

Chief Koinange's words above show the importance of land in the fashion of a premium cultural treasure and important point of identity. Therefore Chief Koinange was simply discursively constructing a community's identity based on land. His tone in the above utterance is very clear: land alienation is the worst thing that should happen to anyone.

Indeed, throughout colonial history as Ochieng [4] accurately notes, land was an important agenda in the nationalist politics of Kenya. Thus the initial nationalist organizations such as the Kikuyu Central Association, the Ukamba Members Association, the Taita Hills Association and the North Kavirondo Central Association, had land alienation as an important grievance for their nationalist agitation [5].

From the beginning of colonialism up to now, land has had important social, economic and political effects summarised in the statement that whoever controls land, also controls the fundamental means of production and existence [4]. In Kenya, the question of land ownership has led to a class of landlords and the converse class of the landless, or the squatters. In the parlance that is associated with land ownership in Kenya, we have a referential label of a trespasser. For instance, the Kikuyu who were re-settled in the Olenguruone scheme were considered as those who were trespassing on Maasai land [10, p- 107]. Land ownership led to forced labour during the colonial period and cheap labour during the post independent Kenya. During the colonial period, taxation was used as a means of coercing Africans to become cheap labourers in White Highlands. Land ownership was also closely associated with the lucrative cash crop economy that is still the case today. In a word therefore, there is a plausible reason why people feel that they are ready to die for the sake of land.

Land has also been the genesis of the compound problem of squatters in Kenya. At the Kenyan Coast the squatter problem has been very

remarkable because of the absent landlord factor. The squatter question has been an important point in election campaigns where, periodically, title deeds are given to former squatters. Up to date, landlessness, squatter issue, peasant labour on big farms and so on are aspects that have not been addressed with ingenuity by the Government of Kenya.

Genesis of the Land Problem in the Rift Valley and Indigenous and "Foreigners" Discourse

The present crises concerning land in the Rift valley can be placed correctly at the doorstep of colonialism. Unlike a bigger number of colonies in Africa, Kenya had a remarkable settler population that had negative ramifications on land ownership by the indigenous populations but on the other hand, positive impact on the colonial settlers who benefited from the land alienation policies of the colonial Government. Besides this, we note the difference between Kenya and her other East African neighbours, in that Kenya was a crown colony, Uganda was a protectorate and Tanganyika and Zanzibar (after the First World War) that were mandate or trust territories. This meant that Kenya was more under direct policies of colonialism than her other East African neighbours.

Land alienation in Kenya by the colonial administration was a very grave issue indeed. Although the colonial Government alienated land from almost every section of Kenya, some communities were harder hit. This seriously affected the following communities: the Kikuyu, the Maasai, the Taita, the Kamba, the Luo, Nandi, Gusii, Kipsigis, Mijikenda and the Abaluhya. Because the Kikuyu were on the immediate doorstep of colonialism, headquartered in the neighbouring Nairobi, they were hard hit. Kanogo [10, p-106] observes that alienation of Kikuyu land in Southern Kiambu was a savagery act: large numbers of Kikuyu families were left landless in the wake of the alienations and homeless too.

As a group, the Maasai also lost most of their arable land, because they were twice pushed into somewhat marginal reserves by the treaties in 1904 and 1911. Many of the aggrieved Maasai until today contend that the Maasai were tricked into the two treaties and indeed this was a persistent bone of contention; during the colonial period and after independence.

Therefore in relation to land as an antecedent of ethnic conflict and the discourse of indigenous versus "foreigners", the root is the alienation of land by the colonialists among the communities listed above, and the lackadaisical approach by the post-independence Government, that mainly benefited those who had political clout and their cronies. Here, those who had remarkable ethnic influence were those from the ruling ethnic group.

Although the question of land alienation really started with the so-called protection treaties that were signed for example between the agents of the Imperial British East African Company and the leaders of local communities, however after the inception of formal colonialism, the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1902 was an important happening. Sections 30 and 31 of this ordinance specified that any land which was unoccupied, whether temporarily or otherwise by Africans, was available for alienation to European settlers without reference to the Africans [6]. After the alienation of African lands as per the specifications of 1902 ordinance, Africans were recruited by European settlers to work as labourers. Overtime as the population of Africans increased in European farms, some lived on these farms as squatters. In areas such as the Rift Valley and Njoro-Molo area, the labourers who became squatters and then eventually became land owners after the departure of the settlers, is one of the reasons that explains the cosmopolitan nature of the Rift Valley region of Kenya. The result was the so called “foreigner populations”.

The colonial administration continued to use Crown Lands Ordinance as a way of legitimising alienation of land. It is important to observe that every new Ordinance seemed to have something stricter than the foregoing one. For example, the 1915 Crown lands Ordinance made all Africans tenants at the will of the Crown. Furthermore, it also led to the refusal of the Government to issue title deeds to Africans. Closer to the Crown land Ordinances was the Resident Native Labourers Ordinance, like that of 1937, that precipitated the Olenguruone crisis (in Njoro-Molo) that hatched enmity for the Kikuyu by the host population. The creation of Olenguruone that settled the Kikuyu next to some indigenous groups in the Rift Valley was not well received by the indigenous populations[10].

Because the Kikuyu territory was on the immediate doorstep of the colonial seat in Nairobi, they experienced some of the first effects of land alienation by the colonial regime and settlers. Similarly, since some parts of the Rift valley had good arable land and favourable climate to European settlement, notable white highlands were to be found in the Rift Valley. Thus it was the alienation of the Kikuyu land in Central province that in turn explains the settlement of the Kikuyu in settler parts of the Rift Valley. It has been argued [10, p-2] that the pioneer Kikuyu squatters in the Rift Valley viewed it as opportunity for economic gain. “Both the Kikuyu who had lost access to land in their Central Province homeland (the *ahoi*) and wealthy Kikuyu herders visualised the White highlands with its vast expanses of unutilised virgin territory as a land of opportunity where the enterprising could make their fortunes and establish permanent residence (*utuuro*)” [10].

With time, the bad land issue became worse. By 1923, the colonial Government in Kenya had appropriated thousands of acres to itself and also to the European settlers with no regard to the native interests. It is instructive to note that on petitions that were raised by Africans on land issue, the British were only willing to make concessions on matters of secondary interest but not on land [4]. By 1934, some 6,543,360 acres of the most arable land in Kenya was the property of some 2,027 settlers. The gulf is better envisaged by 1952, when one looks at the ownership in terms of percentages; less than 0.7 per cent of the whole Kenyan population, held what has been estimated to be a minimum of 20% of the colony’s best land (ibid:111).

During the colonial period, some of the Kikuyu of Central Kenya were detained and when they came back from detention, they found that their land had been taken by the loyalists. Some of these people who were rendered landless especially during the emergence period (1950s) moved to the Rift Valley region of Kenya.

A remarkable aspect of land grievance in Njoro-Molo area that can also be traced in the uneven colonial Government policies is the case of Olenguruone that indeed witnessed a very remarkable magnitude of the land clashes in the Rift Valley. Olenguruone was previously a forest reserve which was inhabited by the Dorobo (Ogiek), an indigenous group in the Rift Valley. In 1939, however, the Europeans settled over four thousand Kikuyu squatters in Olenguruone. The area where the Kikuyu squatters were settled, was originally part of Maasailand, but because of the rampant clashes between the Maasai and the Dorobo, the Maasai were pushed further South to ameliorate clashes.

Although at the onset of the state of emergency in 1952, most of the Kikuyu who had been settled in Olenguruone were rounded up and repatriated back to Central Kenya, the question of the original inhabitants was not seriously addressed. In 1955, Olenguruone was declared a settlement area for the landless squatters who comprised of the Kikuyu, the Kipsigis and the Kisii. These groups were given land ranging from five to twenty acres. Concerning the Maasai, it is not documented that they benefitted. On the side of the Dorobo, it is documented that a few of them were settled among the above groups. Therefore, the grievance of the original owners was not meaningfully addressed [5, p-124]. This is the reason why the land clashes discourse around Olenguruone remarkably concern the indigenous versus the “foreigner” inhabitants[7]. It is important to note that although the indigenous populations had weighted grievance against the colonialists, however, there has been an expression

of betrayal when the context concerns the African “foreigners” in the post- independence era.

Although the colonial Government had the aim of addressing the squatter problem by coming up with the Olenguruone Scheme, it created new problems. In the first instance as Kanogo [10, p-108] observes, most of the settlers in Olenguruone were the Kikuyu, who had been residents in the Maasai reserve and like other Kikuyu who had settled in other areas of the colony aroused suspicion and dislike among their hosts. The argumentation behind this was that the Kikuyu were encroaching. This point of argumentation was not only confined among the Maasai, but also among the Embu, Meru, Kisii and Kamba all of whom had Kikuyu patches in their areas of settlement.

Although the Kikuyu intermingled with other ethnic groups in the form of intermarriage, and sale of their labour to the Maasai, for example, however, their tenacity in the form of cultural maintenance in their areas of settlement was to become even a point of concern to the colonial Government. One Government report on Kikuyu infiltration observed thus:

The Kikuyu particularly has become notorious for such attempts [at infiltration]; Kikuyu immigrants have gained a footing in other tribes’ domain by ingratiating subtlety and specious promises too often reassert their tribal character as soon as they feel they have numerical strength to form an independent unit and to flank the chiefs and the internal native authorities of their hosts in the small areas where they congregate[10, p-108].

On a cursory glance, the colonial Government’s argument above looks convincing. However, in a critical stance, it is simply a case of victim-victimiser reversal. The Kikuyu never settled in Olenguruone as aggressors; it was logically a case of choosing between the hard rock (their original homeland) and the soft rock (that was Olenguruone). In fact, in the subsequent years they never felt comfortable in Olenguruone. They faced numerous obstacles and restriction to benefit from productive agriculture [10, p-107-124].

However, the Kikuyu were treated with suspicion by their hosts. The Kikuyu presence led to a heightened awareness to the importance of land “especially since the Kikuyu always transported their whole culture to their adopted homes” [10, p-109]. The important question to ask is whether the Kikuyu would have gone against the natural order that governs assimilation. Linguistic history attests to the fact that when assimilation and acculturation are forced, then we are no longer talking about assimilation or acculturation but rather about cultural repression, in which case it

becomes a human rights issue. Again in the prism of ethnolinguistic vitality, it is sociolinguistically congruent to observe that large groups do not easily get assimilated by the other groups because of the feeling that they are a significant other.

In sum therefore, whatever the other considerations, the Olenguruone crisis that is still a crisis up to today was engineered and caused by the colonial administration. Indeed some of the fiercest clashes in the Njoro- Molo area have been witnessed around Olenguruone.

The Land Grievances of the Indigenous Groups: the Discourse of Historical Injustices

Before the advent of formal colonialism, the Rift Valley was the home of mainly pastoralist communities: the Kalenjin, the Maasai, the Dorobo, the Samburu and the Turkana. However, the colonial administration changed this ethnic composition by first enacting the Land Ordinance of 1902 and the settler activities that introduced other ethnic farm labourers and squatters who later claimed ownership as discussed above. Because of colonial land policies, the original owners of land in the Rift Valley lost their original ancestral lands first to the colonialist settlers and then to the other groups after independence. The case of the Maasai more than any other indigenous group in the Rift Valley clearly explains this.

Before the advent of colonialism the Maasai, because of their nomadic lifestyle controlled huge tracts of land in the Rift Valley both in the highly arable and the pastoral patches as well. However, there were two treaties between the Maasai leader, Olaibon and the British administrators that remarkably changed the advantaged position of the Maasai in the Rift Valley region of Kenya; namely the 1904 and the 1911 that confined the Maasai in unproductive reserves at the expense of the British settlers and the colonial administration. The functioning interpretation of these treaties is that they are binding for 999 years. The argument from the enlightened Maasai has been that their Olaibon was simply tricked in both the 1904 and 1911 treaties.

According to Michael ole Tiampati, the question of the Maasai land alienation is a tragic dispossession:

Before the advent of colonialism, the Maasai were considered among the wealthiest community in the region. According to 1906 colonial reports, the Ilaikipiak boasted 64,000 heads of cattle and 1,700,000 sheep. And two years later, livestock numbers in the same district were estimated at 80,000 cattle and 2 million sheep. The Maasais successfully asserted themselves against slave traders and

took tribute from those who passed through their lands. In 1901, in course of a report, Sir Charles Eliot noted that he regarded the Maasai as the most important and dangerous of the communities with whom they had to deal in East Africa due to their arrogant attitude[11].

As a consequence of the 1904 and 1911 agreements, the Maasai lost 10,000 square miles of their prime land. The Maasai land case is graver especially when compared with that of the agreement between the Sultan and the British administrators. Under the agreement between the Sultan and the British administration, the Sultan of Zanzibar who was the nominal head of East Africa was entitled to 16,000 pounds annually from the British Government because of a mere 10 mile coastal strip, compared to the Maasai misfortune.

Throughout the colonial period, the Maasai felt cheated and had a persistent land grievance against the colonial government. In fact, their representatives refused to sign the independence Constitutional conferences because they felt that their land grievance was unsatisfactorily addressed (ibid).

Looking at the way the Maasai land grievance has been addressed after independence, generally speaking, it has been a question of *laissez-faire*. The words of one of the post-independence land ministers below clearly show the essence of leave things as they are:

We can moan and moan, but where will that take us? We learnt our lesson; let us make sure that the future generations do not have the same problem. Let's have an operational framework on how land will be managed and transacted. That is how I would like to look at it. Going back will never help anyone (Honourable Amos Kimunya, the former Land Minister in Kibaki's Government .

Evidently, the Minister for Lands above was treating the land issue as mere shadow, when in fact it is a perennial scar. Indeed as the Maasai and the other original owners of land in the Rift Valley have correctly argued, that there is need for political will, legal framework and commitment that aims at creating an avenue where stories of humiliation, loss and suffering can be told and addressed, where the truth and humanitarian rights can emerge and collective responsibilities restored concerning land.

It is not only the Maasai who lost land to the colonialists, but also the other indigenous groups such as the Kalenjin and the Samburu in the Rift Valley. Therefore, apart from the fact these groups were

originally pastoralist groups, they also had a common grievance on land as indigenous groups of the Rift Valley.

Land Issue after Independence: Injustice Discourse Continued

The bitter pill of land grievance in independent Kenya seems to have reached a recognised high on the attainment of independence. At the dawn of independence, of all the fruits that were to come, the most prized was land. There was fear of mass migration of the Kikuyu into the Rift Valley and this was one of the motivations for Kenya African Democratic Union's (KADU) federalist demands. "On this most critical issue, Kenyatta put Kikuyu interests first" [3]. The actions of the Ministry of Land and Resettlement were not in tandem with nationalist expectations. The deep-seated land grievances were not ameliorated by the post- independence Government of Kenya. After independence, the British Government committed 77 million pounds grant to the Government to finance the African resettlement process. This mainly affected the white highlands under the aegis of Resettlement and Land Transfer Programme.

Land buying companies that were formed after independence had ethnic undercurrents. Although all the ethnic groups that presently occupy the Rift Valley, had some land buying organisations of some form, however most of the land buying companies comprised mainly the farming communities of Central Kenya, from which President Kenyatta hailed. Muigai [3] argues that Kenyatta appointed Moi as a pointman in the Rift Valley to enhance his scheme of the resettlement of the Kikuyu in the Rift Valley. This scheme also saw Kenyatta throw his weight behind the Kalenjin in their acquisition of land in Trans Nzoia and in Uasin Gishu, as opposed to the Luhya (ibid).

One of the prominent land buying company during President Kenyatta's era was the Gikuyu Embu Meru Association(GEMA) holdings. GEMA was a dreaded mega ethnicity outfit that sent political and economic shivers along the spines of outgroups. GEMA holdings had notable acquisitions of land in Nakuru county of Rift Valley. GEMA holdings acquired sizeable tracts of land in Bahati and Molo areas of Nakuru Country.

Moreover, in the post-independence Government, political patronage played a very important role in the land question in Kenya (the Rift Valley included). For instance, one prominent land buying company by a prominent politician in the Kenyatta regime settled their kin on 51,539 acres of land in Laikipia, 21,050 acres in Njoro, in Nakuru, 1, 200 acres in Molo, 4,000 acres in Bahati area of Nakuru and 1,400 acres in Mau Narok that was originally part of the Maasai land [6]. This shows how Kenyatta's

regime did not consider the indigenous groups in the land question in the Rift Valley in general and Njoro-Molo area in particular.

Although the British Government's support of the land resettlement scheme was meant to benefit the landless, however, the actual practice never benefited the landless across the ethnic divide. Bildad Kaggia, one of the nationalists who were jailed with Kenyatta in Kapenguria, during the colonial era and who also was in Kenyatta's post-independence cabinet, resigned his cabinet position citing betrayal of the landless by the Government as one of his grounds [8]. By 1970, it has been observed that about 1.2 million hectares had been distributed to the landless, unemployed and the progressive African farmers however, the Maasai and the other original owners did not meaningfully benefit. Succinctly, the post-independence Government transferred the land that the Maasai and other indigenous communities lost to the colonial Government to the non-indigenous Kenyan populations and thus making the grievance to not only be perennial among the Maasai, but also among the other indigenous communities as well.

Accruing from the fact that Kenyatta's regime's million-acre settlement scheme did not benefit the landless, but that it was mainly beneficial to the power brokers in the Government then and his ethnic henchmen, the questions of land ownership and land transfer remain perennially explosive in the Rift valley and in Njoro-Molo area. The gravity of the matter is seen in acrimonious measures that are taken by groups to safeguard what they perceive as their land interests. For example, today, the aggrieved groups guard against the principle of willing buyer, willing seller in relation to the out-groups on the grounds that they will be dominated if they sale land to them.

During the reign of President Moi, power brokers from his ethnic group still benefitted from the regime. In Moi's regime land redistribution took a new dimension. For example, Agricultural Development Corporation farms, that were state farms, were distributed to power brokers in his regime.

In post-independence Kenya, land grievance in the Rift Valley in general and Njoro-Molo area in particular has continued to be related to power politics and ethnicity. The extended Kenyatta family alone owns an estimated 500,000 acres of land. Part of this land is in the Rift Valley and Coast Provinces. The Kibaki and Moi families also own large pieces of land in the Rift Valley. It is important to note that those who hold huge tracts of land in Kenya do so within the 17.2 per cent part of the country that is arable [12]. Accruing from the fact that those who are mainly involved in what is sometimes called land grabbing are connected

to corridors of power, the land crisis may be difficult to solve.

It is important to note that the question of sloppiness in land ownership in the Rift Valley is linked to ethno-linguistic vitality, where especially the Kikuyu and the Kalenjin come out visibly as the bigger players, because they are the groups with the bigger population in the Njoro-Molo area of the Rift Valley. However, whereas the Kalenjin are viewed in the indigenous prism, the Kikuyu are seen in the "foreigners" prism. Kalenjin leaders such as Towett and Seroney voiced objections against the re-settlement of the Kikuyu in the Rift Valley immediately after independence. This was the reason why Kenyatta helped Moi to eclipse them in Kalenjin leadership [3]. Apart from the Kalenjin, the Maasai have also been in visible opposition to the out-group resettlement on Maasai land. Currently, the resentment by the indigenous groups of the Rift Valley is not based on whether the current out-group owners acquired the land legitimately, but they see it more in what is now popularly called historical injustices that started during the colonial regime and continued after independence.

Furthermore, besides the land question, right from the colonial period, no meaningful attempts were made to make the diverse communities in the Rift Valley to have meaningful integration. The diverse communities in the Rift Valley live in specific zones. During the colonial period, the administrative practices did not enhance ethnic unity. For instance, appointments to leadership and administrative positions were governed and are still governed by ethnic considerations. Indeed in the evidence that was adduced in the commissions of inquiry in the ethnic clashes of the 90s attest to the fact that the administrators played a very big role in the escalation of the clashes [6]. Succinctly, the chiefs, sub-chiefs and other local leaders acted for the sake of their ethnic groups against what they considered were their erstwhile ethnic foes. There are cases where the police from a particular group connived as the members of the out-group were killed or maimed [6].

Although intermarriage between the various groups in the Rift Valley has gone on for a long time, however, it has not played a meaningful integrating role. Thus, many communities in the Rift Valley are inward looking and continue to perpetuate policies of inbreeding rather than intermarriage with their neighbours.

CONCLUSION

The land question is a hydra headed issue in Rift Valley region of Kenya and also in the Njoro-Molo area, because it is associated with understandable grievances concerning all the ethnic communities and there is no easy solution. The land issue in the Njoro-

Molo area is an enduring problem that has not been addressed with a noticeable mechanism of justice since the colonial era to the present day. During the colonial period, the settlers were on the advantageous side of the land question in the Rift Valley. After independence it is apparent that the ruling elite and their cronies have been on the advantageous side. The land in Njoro-Molo area is fertile and has got great agricultural potential. The Maasai proverb at the beginning of this paper cannot be overemphasised. Therefore, since, up to now the land grievance has not been meaningfully addressed as it concerns the indigenous and the “foreigner” populations in Njoro-Molo area, ethnic conflict emanating from this is likely to persist. Turning to discourse pertaining to land that is related to ethnic conflict we can draw the following conclusions. Firstly, the first wave of displacement led to discursive construction of displaced identity among the victim groups of the colonial government’s unfair land policies. Secondly, the labour needs in White Highlands of the Rift valley and Njoro-Molo area introduced the so called “foreigner” populations. Lastly, the fact that the post-colonial Governments have not meaningfully addressed the land issue in Rift valley and Njoro-Molo area has left the indigenous population aggrieved with what they call historical injustices.

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