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The Impact of Colonial Policies on the Waata People of Kilifi County, Kenya, 1895-1963.

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The Waata community is among the indigenous Kenyan communities whose social, political, and economic organization has not been adequately studied. The objective of the study was to examine the impact of colonial policies on the history of the Waata people of Kilifi County in the period 1895-1963. The study was guided by the cultural interaction and identity formation theory. The study was conducted using the descriptive research design which offered a chronology of events as they unfolded over time. A qualitative approach was significant because it allowed an in-depth collection of data to ascertain the attitudes, feelings, and opinions concerning the theme under study. The study site was Kilifi County. The study targeted both males and females above 18 years within Kilifi County who were knowledgeable about the existence of the Waata people. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. One hundred and twenty-two participants were interviewed. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was derived from the one-on-one interaction with participants using interview schedules and Key Informant Interviews, oral interviews, and focus group discussions. Question guides and questionnaires with open-ended responses were also used. Secondary data was obtained from critical analysis of books, articles, papers, thesis, and dissertations. Additionally, archival sources, particularly colonial documents, annual reports, correspondents, letters, diaries, and political record books related to the area under study were consulted. The findings of the study revealed that colonial policies impacted significantly on the history of the Waata forcing them to adapt to different lifestyles in order to survive cultural extinction. This adaptation was informed by the colonial labelling of traditional hunting communities like the Waata as poachers and the progressive government efforts to stop them from their traditional source of livelihood as well as their eviction from their indigenous habitats and creation of National Parks.

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INTRODUCTION

The Waata people of Kilifi County are one of the Kenyan hunter-gatherer communities whose socio-economic and political life has undergone a series of changes in response to the colonial policies. According to Kassam & Bashuna (2002), the Waata people specialized in elephant hunting which made them be referred to as the elephant people. Kassam & Magerssa (1994) further supports this by asserting that according to the Borana environmental laws, elephant hunting was a reserve of the Waata who were considered the rightful owners of wildlife.

According to Kelbessa (2011), the dispossession of many pastoralist and hunter-gatherer communities in Kenya began in the 1900s with the European settlers alienating large tracts of land formerly belonging to them. This dislocation, massive alienation of African land, and displacement of African communities from their land was necessitated by the colonial political economy. According to Western (1982) and Hughes (2007), during the earlier years of the colonial era, large tracts of land alienated from Africans was allocated to the European settlers by the colonial government. In the later years, more displacements and dislocations happened as the creation of National Parks and Reserves was enacted.

The earlier years of colonial rule experienced an ideological shift in colonial Kenya which affected

entirely the life of the foraging communities including the Waata. According to Steinhart (1994), the enactment of the wildlife conservation and protection and the ban of hunting affected the life of hunting communities. The creation of National parks and reserves as well as ethnic containment into tribal reserves led to the foraging communities in Kenya losing their place in the regional pre-colonial system of production because they were not allocated a separate reserve and their interaction with their dominant neighbours persisted.

Statement of the Problem

The pre-colonial African communities in Kenya had a very rich political, social, and economic history before the advent of colonialism. The occupation of Kenya by the British colonial government was made successful by designing a colonial political economy which was aimed at subjugating and disenfranchising the African communities politically, socially, and economically (Zezeza, 1985). The traditional foraging communities were the worst hit by the colonial system as it denied them access to their indigenous habitats as well as their primary source of livelihood. This study focused on examining the impacts of colonial policies on the political, economic, and social history of the Waata. The objective of the study was aimed at examining the impacts of colonial policies on the Waata people of Kilifi County, Kenya, 1895-1963.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was guided by Cultural interaction and identity formation theories. According to Lustig (2013), the cultural interaction and identity formation theories suggest a relationship between inter-cultural competencies and cultural identity. It focuses on how individuals use processes of communication to make and defend their shared cultural identities and relationships in particular situations. A person's sense and feeling of belonging to a particular culture or group is what is meant by cultural identity. It provides learning about and accepting ancestry, traditions, language, heritage, religion, aesthetics, thinking patterns, and social structures of the culture. People internalize the beliefs, values, norms, and social practices of their own culture and identify themselves with it (Phinney, 2000).

According to this theory, cultural identities are not static because they exist within a changing social context. It can also be described as the context of values as guiding principles to meaningful symbols and to lifestyles that individuals share with others though not necessarily within recognizable groups (Boski et al., 2004). He also describes it as a social identity that refers to the sense of "We-ness" or a strong connection to a group that one belongs to and by comparison to others.

One of the major features of the cultural and identity formation theory is the enduring and changing aspects of identity. This explains that cultural identity changes as a result of many factors which are social, political, economic, and contextual. This theory is more adequate in analysing the history of the Waata because it helped in explaining elements of the Waata history that have changed over the years in response to prevailing circumstances and those which have endured.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using the descriptive research design which offered a chronology of events as they unfolded over time. A qualitative approach was significant because it allowed an in-depth collection of data to ascertain the attitudes, feelings, and opinions concerning the theme under study. The study site was Kilifi County. The study

targeted both males and females above 18 years within Kilifi County who were knowledgeable about the existence of the Waata people. Purposive and snowballing sampling techniques were used to select the sample for the study. One hundred and twenty-two participants were interviewed. The study used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was derived from the one-on-one interaction with participants using interview schedules and Key Informant Interviews, oral interviews, and focus group discussions. Question guides and questionnaires with open-ended responses were also used. Secondary data was obtained from critical analysis of books, articles, papers, thesis, and dissertations. Additionally, archival sources, particularly colonial documents, annual reports, correspondents, letters, diaries, and political record books related to the area under study were consulted.

Analysis of data began in the field to avoid loss of important information as much of it was based on people's memory. Analysis of data began by creating themes of collected data. Tape recorded data was transcribed and typed. The collected data were further coded and analysed thematically and periodically according to the study objectives. Secondary data was subjected to textual analysis and interpretation to test the relevance and accuracy of the document. This was achieved by examining the expertise background of the authors, the correspondences of the content with other sources (both primary and secondary), and the context under which the text was written. Presentation of the analysed data was in form of narrations followed by first-hand quotations from primary respondents.

STUDY FINDINGS

Colonial Political Economy and its impact on the Waata History

The British colonial policy in Kenya was characterized by: Land alienation for European settlers (Sorrenson, 1968), African taxation (Tarus, 2004), African migrant/forced labour (Zezeza, 1992), development of settler dominated agricultural production and peasant commodity production, export production, rail and road transport and communication, education and health. As revealed by the findings of this study, like in

most African communities, these characteristics of the colonial political economy had a lasting impact on the history of the Waata

Construction of Kenya-Uganda Railway 1896-1901

In 1896, the British colonial government embarked on the construction of a railway that would link the landlocked Uganda territory to the East African Coast to facilitate the shipping of copper from Uganda and control the source of the River Nile. It was also aimed at transporting colonial troops to hotspot areas where African communities were resisting colonial rule as well as fastening the movement of Christian missionaries to the interior (Gunston, 2004). IBEAC built a railway through Tsavo between 1896-1901, not due to much interest in that area per se but to connect Lake Victoria to Mombasa and thereby secure control of the headwaters of the Nile River (Ngugi & Sluyter, 2018).

The Indian Land Acquisition Act of 1896 empowered the colonial government to take over land for the construction of railways, government buildings, and other public utilities. The immediate result of this policy was that the Waata lost part of their land to the colonial government. Additionally, they were recruited to provide cheap manual labor during the construction of the railway. They were forced to clear bushes, dig the rail trenches and act as porters for the railway construction materials (Ruchman, 2017). Moreover, the railway which passed across the Tsavo divided the habitat into two cutting elephant migration trails (Van Wijngaarden, 1985). A former Waata hunter revealed how the numbers of elephants in the Tsavo reduced significantly because of being cut off by the railway thus they could not migrate and cross breed freely between Tsavo East National Park and Tsavo West National Park. This undermined the Waata economic system in the region because they could no longer continue with hunting or trading activities (Waata former hunter, KII, 2020).

The Impact of Land Alienation and Establishment of Settler Farming on the Waata

After the establishment of an efficient political administration, the British colonial government

turned into establishing economic structures which would sustain their stay in the colony. According to Kenyanchui (1992), European settlement in Kenya was necessitated by the Uganda Railway whose construction and maintenance cost it could help pay for. Europeans regarded uninhabited land as “no man’s land” and therefore available for settlement and exploitation by European settler farmers. Lipscomb (1972) argues that since Kenya had no known valuable natural resources to exploit to recover the investment which had been made on the railway by 1901, settler farming was thus to be encouraged. Therefore, European settlers would farm the idle land along the railway to compensate for the investment (Elspeth, 1935).

Before the establishment of British rule in 1895, Kenyan communities occupied certain portions of land where they lived either as pastoralists, cultivators, or as hunters and gatherers, while some communities cultivated and fished. Their land laws were the customary laws. After the British rule was established, the Crown asserted it was the sole owner of all the land and defined the rights that were to be recognized on land use under the Crown Land Ordinance 1901 (KNA/EAP/Crown Land Ordinance, 1901). The primary objective of this was to empower the colonial government to carve out land for European settler farming. Through the enactment of a series of colonial ordinances, the colonial government legalized the alienation of African land for settler farming and forced Africans to provide labour in the settler farms.

These colonial policies included; Forest Act 1901, all the forests in the protectorate had become part of government land (KNA/EAP/Forest Act, 1901). The Waata are indigenous foragers who lived and had a special cultural attachment with the forests. The enactment of this policy, therefore, denied them access to their traditional habitats, especially in Arabuko Sokoke. The impacts of these colonial policies are that they further alienated the Kenyan communities from their indigenous lands and placed them under the mercies of the colonial government and the settler farmers. The Waata hunters who depended on the natural environment for their livelihood and survival were now deprived of their land rights.

The colonial government recognized African land claims only by agricultural and pastoral groups and completely disregarded the traditional land rights of hunters and gatherers (Van Wijngaarden, 1985). All lands outside of the native reserves established through those ordinances especially the forested areas formerly hunting grounds occupied by the Waata became government land or available for British settlers to establish sisal and sugarcane plantations and other types of private farms along the railway (Southall, 2005).

Recruitment of Labour

After alienating African land and establishing large plantations, the settlers faced one major challenge; shortage of labour. In an effort to solve this problem, the colonial government established the Native Affairs Department which was instituted specially, to deal with labour supply and meet the urgent needs for labour on the European farms. The Master and Servant Ordinance enacted in 1906 paved the way for the provision of labour by Africans in the European settler farms. Under the provisions of this ordinance, the Africans were required to supply their labour to the European settler farms and any African who refused to offer labour or deserted their workplace would be punished severely (KNA/EAP/Master & Servant Ordinances, 1906).

According to Kanogo (1987), the implication of the Master and Servant Ordinance together with the new system of labour required from the Africans is that it left the Africans at the mercy of the settlers. This study established that it is as a result of this policy that some Waata people offered themselves as squatters in the neighbouring sisal plantation at Vipingo while others migrated to nearby towns for migrant labour.

To empower the chiefs further in the recruitment of labour, the Native Authority Amendment Ordinance was enacted in 1920. This Ordinance empowered the chiefs and headmen to deploy compulsory labour for public utilities for up to 60 days a year on top of the existing compulsory unpaid 24 days a year labour (Berman & Lonsdale, 1980).

The Registration of the Natives Ordinance popularly known as the Kipande system was enacted in 1915 but became operational in 1920. This Kipande system required every male aged 15

years and above to register before an administrative officer. This was an identification tag containing personal details of the African which was to be hanged on the neck throughout. Each time the labourer was employed or left employment, he would be signed in or off by the employer and in case of desertion, he would be arrested by the colonial police. The Kipande system helped the settlers to control African labour by preventing desertion and keeping their wages at the lowest. This study established that the impact of these colonial policies on the Waata is that they served as a legal means to control their mobility and their labourer for European settlers.

Introduction of Taxation

African society in pre-colonial times can be termed as a communist/socialist society where almost all the properties were communally owned with all members sharing in community wealth. However, in most if not all communities generally, whatever production that took place required that a part of it be remitted to the house of the head of the community. This included part of any harvest whether it was agricultural produce, animal stock for the pastoralists, game meat for the foragers, and trading profits or gifts. Both foreign and local traders, especially in ivory and slaves were all required to pay tithes to be allowed passage through the territory of a particular community. Thus, there was generally no taxation in the form that we understand it today but there were remittances to the ruler in exchange for which peace was maintained and protection accorded (Waris, 2007).

A British Colonial tax policy was created on the grounds that Britain needed to support its own economy by creating foreign markets and sources of raw materials for its industries. It was a scheme of tax collection that would be steadily imposed, beginning along with the railway centres from Mombasa to Machakos (Tarus, 2004). The 1901 Hut Tax Regulation imposed a tax of one rupee, payable in kind or through labour, upon every native hut in British East Africa. A subsequent amendment to the law allowed the tax to be levied specifically upon the owner of the hut. As per the provisions of this tax law, every African man was supposed to pay tax of one Indian Rupee for every hut they owned (KNA/EAP/Ordinances/1901). Subsequently, in

1910, 1915, and 1920, the colonial government further amended the tax law requiring Africans to pay more tax.

The effects of these tax policies were first felt along with the coast before the railway became fully operational into the interior as Tarus (2004) notes that the scheme of tax collection was steadily imposed along the railway beginning from the Coast. As revealed by the findings of this study, this taxation policy caught the Kenyan communities by surprise because it was something new to them. Additionally, they were not used to wage labour so they did not have the money to pay for the tax. Moreover, foraging communities like the Waata only engaged in subsistence production through hunting, gathering, and some minimal barter trade. The primary reason for the application of this tax was to pull the African population into a capitalist labour market. The tax continued to play a major role in the labour system as a means of indirect coercion as well as a major source of state revenue. The tax weapon had the desired effect in forcing more Africans into wage employment (Berman & Lonsdale, 1980). As a result of this mandatory taxation, many Waata able-bodied men who were formerly productive hunters, abandoned their hunting for wage labour in the settler farms to enable them to pay the tax (KII, 2020).

Establishment of the Kenya Game Department and the Anti-Poaching Policies and their Effect on Waata People

Local communities in the 1800s and recent history used wildlife for food, with hardly any evidence of monetary factors influencing trading in wildlife resources. The emergence of British imperial rule in the 1890s came with the interest in the official protection of Kenya's wilderness and its resources. British authorities instituted measures to deal with local hunting practices (Sobania, 1979). In Kenya, these wildlife laws were enforced by the Game Department established in 1906 through the intermediary of District Commissioners (Parker & Amin, 1983).

Following the formal declaration of the British East Africa Protectorate in 1896, the colonial government issued a declaration to set up wildlife game reserves. Consequently, the colonial

government enacted several policies to enhance wildlife conservation. The East Africa Game Regulations of 1900 outlawed possession of ivory as well as hunting and killing of female elephants (KNA/EAP/Game Regulations, 1900). This followed the enactment of the East Africa (Lands) Order-in-Council in 1901 which empowered the Commissioner to declare any area in the Protectorate to be a Crown Forest (KNA/EAP/Ordinances, No. 18, 1901). Additionally, the enactment of the East Africa Game Ordinance in 1906 empowered the Commissioner to prohibit the use of any method of hunting, killing, or capturing animals in the Crown Forest which seemed destructive. By the provisions of this Ordinance, the Commissioner subsequently banned the use of pits to capture animals. Additionally, the Ordinance prohibited hunting, killing, or capturing games. Only authorized persons with a license issued by the commissioner could kill wild animals.

The colonial administrators particularly the District Officers had the powers to authorize indigenous subsistence hunting within the protected areas by discriminatively issuing the licenses. The indigenous hunters like the Waata who did not possess official licenses to kill the game were treated as illegal poachers. Their subsistence hunting activities in and around the parks became an offense punishable by law and they were treated as criminals (Holman, 1967).

The birth of Kenya's protected areas did not bode well for the local communities who were immediately faced with challenges of displacement and human-wildlife conflict (Honey, 1999). With this development, the Waata were displaced from their original habitats and were deprived of access to game products. They could no longer provide the Ivory, honey, bee wax, and other game products which they previously provided to the existing trade. The role of the Waata in the existing trading activities, therefore, declined significantly (Former Waata trader, KII, 2020). Their traditional role was reduced to that of being trackers and guides of the Wardens. As one Waata man recalled, hunters were gunned down in the parks or arrested after being tracked to their homes outside park boundaries (Waata man, OI, 2020). David Sheldrick, the First Warden in Tsavo East writing about the Waata

referring to them with their Giriama name the Waliangulu agrees with this respondent:

“We were usually accompanied by a captured Mliangulu poacher as our guide and a porter to carry our basic rations. We soon discovered that Tsavo East was the traditional hunting ground of the Waliangulu tribe who resided just beyond its Eastern boundary in Giriama country, for we came across the carcasses of numerous poached elephants, all with tusks missing. Elephants had long been entwined in Waliangulu culture” (Sheldrick, 2019).

In 1948 the Tsavo National Park, eventually to become Tsavo East National Park and Tsavo West National Park was established. At the same time under the recommendations of KLC, Arabuko Sokoke was proclaimed to be a Crown Forest and in 1948 gazetted as both a Crown Forest and a National Park (KNA/NPK/1934/16/7/Vol. 11). The establishment of the parks greatly impacted the ethnic groups that had previously inhabited the Tsavo area and the Arabuko Sokoke forest environs. Despite their differences, the colonial government treated all largely the same; as an unwelcome presence on the landscape and a threat to elephant populations (Ngugi & Sluyter, 2018). Findings of this study revealed that Tsavo had been and remained the homeland for Orma pastoralists and Waata hunter-gatherers until 1948 when it was gazetted as a National Park. At that time, the Orma with their livestock were driven off and the aboriginal population of the Waata people was forcefully relocated to Voi and Mtito Andei as well as other locations within Kilifi District.

Moreover, it was revealed that gazettelement of the boundaries of Tsavo had been a long process since claims from all its neighbouring communities had to be taken into account. The main communities whose interests were considered were the Maasai, the Wakamba, the Orma, the Taita, the Giriama and the Duruma. What was eventually set aside for wildlife in 1949 was only a sizeable chunk of “un-wanted” land that the colonial Government could set aside to accommodate a sizeable population of elephants and rhinos. Consequently, the Waata who were indigenous inhabitants of Tsavo lost their homeland and were deprived of access to the game (Ngugi & Sluyter, 2018).

In 1951, the Wild Animals Protection Ordinance was issued by the Game Department, reaffirming hunting without possession of a license as illegal. It also made the ownership of any part of a game animal illegal (KNA/EAP/Ordinance, 1951; Parker & Amin, 1983). This study established that even with the tough measures on wildlife protection, the problem of illegal poaching continued. For instance, Steinhart (1994) asserts that elephant poaching in Tsavo National Park by the Waata, Kamba, and Giriama hunters posed a challenge to colonial authorities. He notes that the persistent poaching had been caused by a rise in ivory demand and prices after the Second World War.

From 1956 what followed was a series of anti-poaching campaigns led by the then Tsavo East Warden David Sheldrick. They employed counter-insurgency methods similar to those used to quell Mau continued coupled with an elaborate network of informers to track down and arrest the poachers. By 1957, the campaign against the remaining elephant hunters had been completed and pronounced to be the most successful anti-poaching operation in all of Africa (Schauer, 2015).

The study findings indicated that the success of these anti-poaching campaigns had an adverse ecological and human impact. They had an ultimately negative effect on the very wildlife and habitat they sought to protect. By eliminating hunters from the natural chain, it altered the ecological balance which had been kept for many years. For instance, around the Tsavo-Galana area and surrounding ranges, the elephant population grew to an estimated over 40,000. This had previously been kept in check by the Waata hunters who were now declared illegal poachers. The result of this was the destruction of vegetation in the park leading to the starvation of other animals. In 1960-61, a drought struck which led to chronic elephant malnutrition. In response to this, the Galana Game Management Scheme was established in the 1960s as a means of controlling the growing elephant population (Park & Amin, 1983).

This study established that the scheme was created to provide the Waata with an alternative means of livelihood through employing them to cull elephants. However, as Park & Amin (1983) further note, due to interests in generating profit out of the

ivory sale, this objective was not achieved. Somewhere along the way, the Waata were forgotten. In this failed experiment, the Waata became scapegoats and sacrificial victims of forces beyond their control. They served as pawns in the economic shift that was taking place in the colony from the once-lucrative ivory trade towards the creation of nature reserves for the emerging tourist market. They had traditionally hunted for subsistence rather than profit. MacKenzie (1988) asserts that the use of bows and arrows on elephants by the Waata was minimal as compared to the large numbers that were killed by the European-American hunters and collectors using firearms.

Study findings established that as a result of these colonial game policies, the Waata lost their way of life and place in the regional system of production. Traditional hunting stopped to represent both a dietary supplement in normal times and an alternative form of food in times of need for pastoralists and agriculturalists (Mackenzie, 1988). The interdependency between the different producers could no longer exist, as systems of exchange linking them had been broken. Further, it was revealed that due to the stigma of being labelled as hunters, Waata began to conceal their identities for fear of persecution. In population censuses from then, including the pre-independence one of 1962, they identified themselves by the ethnic names of the particular pastoral groups with which they were interacting with. This rendered them socially and politically invisible and they, therefore, ceased to exist as a distinct cultural entity.

These anti-poaching policies and the creation of National Parks had significant impacts on the life of the Waata. The Waata suffered a loss of land, resettlement in fractious multicultural settings, impoverishment, and diminished ability to hunt, grow, and gather food and other resources, including their long-standing relationships with elephants. The Waata had also relied on landscape features those elephants were created, as one Waata woman recalled from her childhood that when it was so dry, and the river was not flowing, elephants dug holes in sandy riverbeds to collect water. After the elephants left the hole, they would go and fetch water for cooking” (Waata old woman, OI, 2021).

Additionally, this study revealed that the communities living within the areas inhabited by game particularly the Waata were expelled from their habitats (Schauer 2015). Although colonial records depict park evictions as having been peaceful ((KNA/NPK/16/1/4008), local narratives from elders during a focus group discussion suggested violence by government officials and strong resistance by Waata and other groups (Waata elders, FGD, 2020). One of the male Waata elders described the role of David Sheldrick, the first warden of TENP as follows:

“We had given Sheldrick the name saa nane [Swahili for two o'clock] because all his meetings with local people were held at 2:00 pm. He would come to Ndololo and tell our elders that the place we had settled belonged to the government. In response, our elders told the people to disobey him. He mobilized a team of security personnel and vehicles to drive us out. They forced us into the trucks and set all our huts on fire” (Male Waata elder, FGD, 2020).

With the establishment of National parks, the Waata were forced out of their homeland. This consequently led to the breakdown of the Waata social fabric as families and clans were disintegrated by the forced evictions (Clan elder, KII, 2020).

This study revealed that there existed crucial attachment between the Waata and game most specifically the elephants. Consequently, with the ban on hunting and forceful eviction of the Waata from their indigenous habitat, the Waata were cut off from access to elephants. This greatly undermined their cultural practices like initiation and dowry payment because they could no longer kill elephants to get the tusks or meat which was given as bride dowry gifts (Clan elder, KII, 2020).

Ethnic Containment and The Creation of Tribal Reserves

As the European settler population in Kenya increased and occupied more land, the British proclaimed in 1920 that the protectorate had become a colony (Annual Colonial Report No. 1122, 1920-21). In the same year, The Kenya Annexation Order in Council was passed which

declared that Africans were tenants of the Crown even in the reserves. This policy rendered African squatters in their own land. In order to remedy the situation of landlessness, the colonial government reserved official parcels of land for the Africans to live on.

In 1924, the colonial government enacted the Native Reserve Area Ordinance and in 1926, all land occupied by African groups was surveyed and the boundaries of the reserves registered thus gazetting 24 tribal to reserves (Ngugi & Sluyter, 2018). The result of these policies was that the British colonial government established African reserves designed to confine the natives within specific settlements. (Rutten & Ombongi, 2005). For instance, all land in the Coastal strip not registered as freehold was declared Crown Land and the establishment of the Northern and Southern Nyika Reserves beyond the Strip completed the negation of Mijikenda and Waata land claims and rights in the area. The creation of the tribal reserves was motivated by the need to separate the natives from the Europeans, to control their movement, and to take advantage of their labour (Zahir, 2014). This was popularly known as the “Ethnic Containment Policy” as noted by Spencer (1973).

Those who could no longer make a living through agriculture and pastoralism had to leave the reserves as migrant laborers or squatters on European settler farms. The state sought to ensure that they remained tribalized by requiring them to carry a registration certificate known as a *kipande*. (Zahir, 2014). The most secure people under this ethnic containment policy in the colonial era were those who were deeply ensconced within the safe folds of a state-recognized tribal community. The most vulnerable were wanderers/hunters like the Waata who strayed across physical and ethnic boundaries. Those who would not or could not define themselves as tribesmen within an appropriate tribal space faced marginalization and they were forced to settle in sparsely populated reserves if they were legally adopted into the tribe of their hosts (Parsons, 2011).

Along the Coast and more particularly in Kilifi county, only the dominant communities namely, Oromo, Borana, and some Bantu communities were allocated tribal reserves. In an interview by the then Malindi District Commissioner in 1932, he

confirmed that he had toured the region along the southern bank of the Sabaki River up to a place known as Shakahola. He further noted that in that region there lived the Waliangulo, a hunting community who lived beyond the Giriama on the southern bank (KNA/DC/Malindi, 1932).

The findings of this study revealed that the hunting people the DC referred to as Waliangulo were actually the Waata. However, despite the fact that the colonial government through the DC were aware of the existence of the Waata while setting up the Native Reserves they did not allocate them a separate reserve. They lumped them up with the Mijikenda, Oromo, and Borana in the Southern and Northern Nyika Reserves. This threatened the ethnic identity of the Waata because from then onwards, the Waata lived as part of either their neighbouring Oromo or Mijikenda (Clan elder, OI, 2020). This study established that the creation of reserves only considered the land rights of the pastoral and agricultural communities. It disregarded the rights of indigenous hunters like the Waata to have their own ethnic reserves. The ultimate result of these policies is that the Waata became squatters on their own homeland first to the settler farmers and also to the major ethnic communities who hosted them in their reserves (Ngugi & Sluyter, 2018).

However, this study established that even with those long interactions with their host communities, the Waata did not completely lose their cultural identity. Their persistence to retain their cultural identity agrees with the cultural interaction and identity formation theoretical framework which guides this study. According to the elements of this theory, communities strive to retain their cultural identity amidst changing dynamics and adopt certain core symbols to show their identity. The Waata have persistently used hunting and close attachment to wild animals as their core symbols of expressing their cultural identity. Despite the many changes that the Waata underwent in their social, political, and economic institutions during the colonial period, they still strived to retain their cultural identity which they have continued to affirm.

CONCLUSION

This study focused on investigating the impacts of colonial policies on the socio-economic and political institutions of the Waata people in the period 1895 – 1963. This study revealed that the establishment of colonial rule was followed by the setting up of a very exploitative colonial political economy which had an adverse effect on the livelihood of the Waata. The colonial political economy was characterized by the construction of the Kenya – Uganda railway, imposition of taxation, forced labour, creation of the Game Department, Ethnic containment /Tribal reserves, and settler farming which deprived the Waata of their traditional rights on their indigenous habitat. Additionally, the study further revealed that the creation of National Parks and the anti-poaching campaigns which banned hunting compounded the matter. According to the study findings, the colonial political economy and its policies left the Waata people landless and at the same time deprived them of their chief economic activity; hunting which was declared illegal.

The study further indicated that the colonial period and the colonial economy impacted the Waata in all spheres of life. The mandatory forced labour in the European settler plantations denied the Waata productive labour for their community which plunged the community into poverty and misery. The imposition of heavy taxes and restriction of movement also impacted negatively on the Waata. The banning of hunting made the Waata lose their cultural practice of killing elephants as an initiation rite and for bride dowry. The creation of national parks and the game department pushed them out of the forests thus making them lose their shelters.

The study revealed that the ethnic containment policy which led to the creation of tribal reserves only set aside tribal reserves for the major communities based on either pastoralism or agricultural mode of production. Relatedly, boundaries designed for the reserves made it impossible for people to acquire land rights elsewhere because they halted migrations into frontier lands, thereby adding pressure to the land-carrying capacity which the African customary tenure practice of out-migration easily addressed whenever there was a population increase or

shortage of land (Okoth-Ogendo, 1976 & 1979). The traditional foragers, like the Waata, were pushed into being assimilated by those major communities. Because of this situation, the Waata were left landless having been evicted from their indigenous forest habitats, on the verge of losing both their life due to starvation and also their ethnic identity as a result of having to conceal their identity for fear of being labelled as poachers. The study indicated that, as a result of this state of affairs, the Waata were forced to adapt to new ways of livelihood. Therefore, this study revealed that the colonial policies significantly impacted the Waata history.

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