Résumé
W. van Spengen—Caractéristiques structurelles du sous-développement dans l'archipel de Mafia : analyse historique.
Au XVIe siècle, l'archipel présentait une situation économique prospère, fondée sur une agriculture combinée à un commerce maritime des produits locaux. La domination portugaise bouleversa cette situation et, à partir de la reconquista omani et de la domination zanzibarite, on voit apparaître une économie de plantation, au bénéfice des latifundiaires esclavagistes d'origine arabe, eux-mêmes exploités par les Indiens. La colonisation allemande entraîne l'apparition de grands domaines européens, qui bénéficient de la suppression progressive de l'esclavage. La désagrégation de l'économie locale, manifeste sur le plan des cultures alimentaires, est liée à une structure sociale inégalitaire, très hiérarchisée, et dominée de l'extérieur.

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Structural Characteristics of Underdevelopment in the Mafia Archipelago: An Historical Analysis*

Micro-regional analysis has not always paid sufficient attention to a systematic discussion of relevant aspects of underdevelopment in its historical dimension. It is true, phenomena which are characteristic for 'situations of underdevelopment' have been dealt with for a long time already, but analysis often proceeded from a static point of view, without elucidating the relationship between a process of underdevelopment and aspects of societal inequality. It is the purpose of this paper to identify structural characteristics of a process of underdevelopment that lead to societal inequality within a micro-regional context. Our argument will be illustrated by the example of the Mafia Archipelago, a group of islands in the Indian Ocean belonging to Tanzania.**

Power Structure and Colonial Dominance

Fundamental for an understanding of the process of underdevelopment is an analysis of power structures as they manifest themselves in the economic and socio-political arenas at various scale levels (Cliffe, Coleman, Doornbos, eds., 1977). 'Process' in this context refers to the historical continuity of power structures (cf. Partridge 1963). By saying 'at various levels' we do emphasize the need for a more explicit attention to power positions at scale levels lower than the international one. At meso- and micro-level former power positions may continue indirectly through a specific mode of production or a stratified social order, created by an historical sequence in which colonial dominance formed more often than not an important catalyst, if not instigator.

Analysis of concrete rural micro-regions which are characterized by colonial or neo-colonial dependency should focus on the way in which colonial rule historically influenced the agricultural economy. This may

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** Permission to quote from the Mafia District Book was kindly granted by the National Archives of Tanzania by letter 1 AR/M 10/2/IV/80 of the 27th of December 1974.

Localization Maps

be done in terms of changes in the mode of production, evolving extra-territorial linkages in relation to export crops and its effect on local food production, as well as the influence of an advancing money economy in a previously self-supporting community and its consequences for the local labour situation and conditions of landownership. Further, there should be an awareness of hierarchical structures in both economic and socio-political organization, as they reveal themselves in status differences. Let us note here that socio-political status nowadays often acts as a means of acquiring higher economic status, which in turn can be politically translated into the disposal of actual means of power, in particular as they manifest themselves in the accessibility to resources. Also, the nature of colonial administration and the way it acted as a moulding instrument in the executive sphere should be analyzed. The main points here seem to be an investigation of the influence of taxes imposed on local society and the way in which the colonial administrative set up confirmed existing power positions in a traditional society.

Thus, it is the aim of this paper to provide insight along the above postulated lines of inquiry, with particular reference to the socio-economic predicament in the Mafia Archipelago.
The Mafia Setting

The Mafia Archipelago is a group of islands lying off the southern coast of Tanzania, near the Rufiji Delta. The main island is about 50 kilometres long (from North to South), and up to 20 kilometres in width. Like Zanzibar, Mafia is a raised portion of the continental shelf, not a coral island, although the smaller islands in the group—Chole, Juani and Jibondo—do form part of the extensive coral reef system along the East African Coast (see Maps). In spite of the popular conception that Mafia is made of pure sand and coconut roots, the soils are ranging widely, from rather sandy in the North to firm soil patches scattered all over the southern part of the island. Along the central ridge which, generally speaking, does not rise over 50 metres, cultivation of annual crops is possible, rice and cassava forming the mainstay of the diet, while coconut palms are planted in the more sandy areas as a commercial crop. Cashew nuts are gaining importance as an additional economic asset. Habitation is spread out all over the island except for the eastern shores where coral rock inhibits cultivation.

The Mafia Archipelago, as a seaborne part of the Swahili culture area, has a heterogeneous population, reflecting its chequered history. The islands have always been part of the Swahili oecumene, as it evolved since about the 10th century A.D., as a result of Arab penetration in a Bantu culture. The main island, Mafia, never seems to have produced an independent political status, a situation which has continued up till the present day. In mediaeval times it was known only as an appendage to Kilwa, and, hardly touched by the savage Portuguese intrusions of the 16th century, it increasingly came under the 18th- and 19th-century rule of the Busaidi Sultans, who made their ruling power effective by the final removal of the Court of Oman to Zanzibar in 1840. European colonial bargaining brought Mafia in 1890 under control of the German administration and it became part of German East Africa, i.e. Tanganyika. During World War I the Germans were ousted from the island by the British, and Mafia subsequently became a nominal part of the League of Nations Mandate Territory of Tanganyika, but actual administration from 1915 to 1922 was carried out by the Zanzibar Government. After that date the administrative responsibilities were formally assumed by the Government of Tanganyika Territory. Since 1964 it has constituted part of the United Republic of Tanzania, which was formed by the union of Tanganyika and Zanzibar after the revolution in the latter island.

Population History

The population of Mafia has been described as ‘cosmopolitan and detribalized’ (Hailey 1950: 239). This may be partially justified, but it

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1. The most important sources concerning Mafian history are: Baumann 1896 and 1957; King 1917; Boxberger 1910; Revington 1936; Piggott 1941; Oliver & Mathew, eds., 1963; MDB.
is not just as simple as that. It is true that the relatively open society
of Mafia gave rise to tribal and racial blending, but not to the extent that
a homogeneous population was produced. The intricate population
history of the island has left its marks in the present-day configuration
of socio-cultural groups. The oldest inhabitants of Mafia are the Mbwera,
who were settled on the island before the Omani Arabs came. They are
akin to the coastal Swahili of Tanganyika coast between Kisiju and the
delta of the Rufiji, and are to be found all over the island, but chiefly
centrated in the North (Baumann 1957: 9; Prins 1967: 19). According
to Caplan (1975: 2), the Mbwera identify themselves with the Shirazi
who are found all along the coast and claim to be descendents of Persian
immigrants, who came to the coast in the 10th century A.D. (Chittick
1965). This claim is probably justified, but the Bantu element in the
Mbwera is quite substantial and Shirazi influences only seem to stem
indirectly from Kilwa.

The growing influence of Oman along the East African coast in the
18th and 19th centuries brought unexpected changes for the early Swahili
population of the Mafia Archipelago. The notables and ruling family
of Mafia seem to have fared better than those of some other Swahili
towns under Omani authority. Indeed, Mafia became a kind of refuge
for the rich and influential families from other places, particularly Zanzi-
bar, who felt that their position was being eroded by the Omanis. If
Loarer, writing in the 1840’s, is correct, those events occurred in the time
of Saif Ibn Sultan, Imam of Oman from 1692 to 1711 (Loarer 1840;
quoted by Nicholls 1968: 37). This wave of Shatri immigrants (as they
called themselves) is probably responsible for a reinforcement of the
lighter skin element in the present-day category of long-established
Swahili. This is consistent with a tradition quoted by Revington (1936)
that in 1936 the Shatri of Mafia claimed their ancestors to have settled
there at least two centuries earlier.

Especially after the move of the Court of Oman to Zanzibar in 1840
(Nicholls 1968), Arabs from the Arabian Peninsula began to filter into
Mafian society, establishing large coconut plantations all over the islands,
which needed an ever increasing amount of labour. The Mbwera were
progressively driven further North by the Shatri and the newly arrived
Arab slave masters, so that slave labour from the mainland had to be
imported. The 1928 Census gives a partial insight in the composition and
place of origin of the slave population. Most of them came from the
Lake Malawi region where the Arab slave traders wrought havoc (Gray
1963: 227; Alpers 1967). Nowadays the Africans of slave descent are
mainly to be found in the southern half of the island. Very few will
admit to being of slave descent, as it entails their being inferior to the
‘free born’ Mbwera, although they sometimes refer to themselves as
members of inland tribes, e.g. Bisa, Kamanga and Nyasa, thereby
reflecting the approximate course of the main southern trade route to
Katanga via Lake Malawi (Caplan 1975: 2; MDB, Section of Population).
Yet another category among the mainland Africans may be distinguished. These are the 20th-century immigrants from inland areas, who are working on the large Indian- and European-owned plantations in the southern part of the island. The 1967 Census clearly reflects the heterogeneous tribal background of the plantation labourers who are now assimilated into the local Muslim culture. Further there are only small numbers of Africans from localities other than that region, including immigrants from Lamu, the Bajuni, locally known as Gunya, colonists from the Comoro Islands and Tumbatu from Zanzibar. In addition to the African and Arab population, there is a small minority of Indians, mainly from the Bombay area. Most of them live in the administrative capital of Kilindoni and run shops or are engaged in other business. In 1895 Baumann counted 22 Indian traders. The 1931 Census showed a total number of 181 Indians, while in the 1967 Census their number had dwindled to 92.

In contrast to this commercial Indian elite of rather recent origin, the Arabs have always constituted the traditional elite on the coast. They have been the wealthiest people, the most assiduous in orthodox Islamic observance, and have had the most political power. Since the culture of the coast has traditionally been ‘Arab-oriented’, it is a matter of prestige to be as much like an Arab as possible in dress, speech, and manners (Caplan 1978). However, changing circumstances since Independence have altered matters somewhat: according to the 1957 Census, prior to Independence, there were 663 people on Mafia claiming to be Arabs, out of a total population of about 12,300, but this number had dropped considerably in the 1967 Census.

Pre-Omani Mafia

From the earliest time the importance of Mafia had depended largely on its geographical location in relation to seaborne trade. As an island offering sheltered anchorage in all weathers and protected by a wide channel from land invasion, it became a useful link in the string of Islamic coastal settlements. However, lying off the Rufiji delta and having no direct connection with up-country trade routes it could never attain—apart from a short period in the beginning of the 13th century—the importance of Zanzibar and Kilwa, and many other coastal towns (Piggott 1941: 35).

Early mediaeval trade along the East African coast was based on gold and ivory. Kilwa, the main trading centre, first grew wealthy in the 12th century as an entrepot on the route that led south to Sofala, an

3. In the 1967 Census about 130 people professed themselves to be Arabs. Such an enormous drop in numbers from 663 persons of the 1957 Census is probably explained by such people now preferring to categorize themselves as ‘Africans’. Cf. CAPLAN 1975, ch. 1: n. 6.
outlet on the Mozambique coast for gold trade with Central Africa. Excavations in Mafia on the so-called Kisimani site by Chittick in 1957 (Chittick 1961) and the discovery of a large coin hoard in 1964 near the wall of a ruined mosque there suggest that by the beginning of the 13th century Mafia had grown as important as Kilwa. The Kilwa Chronicle states that the sons of the first Sultan of Kilwa settled on Mafia, and it is probable that, if the tradition is correct, they established themselves at Kisimani. Mafia remained subject to Kilwa for many centuries, but probably enjoyed periods of independence, notably at the end of the 15th century. The quite outstanding wealth of Kisimani may have been due to a catchment area behind the delta of the Rufiji. But directly or indirectly Kisimani and other towns along the coast must have been affected by the growing importance of the Sofala trade route (Mathew 1963: 119, 126). It is also possible that Mafian prosperity was largely of sea-borne nature and derived from the convergence of trade links with Indian Ocean ports as divergent as Sofala, Mogadishu and Diu (Sutton 1974) and indirectly, via India, with China. It should be emphasized anyway, that wealth came from trade, not from production. Yet the townspeople of Kisimani Mafia grew their own food, either with the help of the local Mbwera, or more likely, imported slaves from the Kilwa area. When the Portuguese arrived in the Indian Ocean waters at the end of the 15th century, the above painted scene was still largely correct. According to Duarte Barbosa, one of the first Portuguese to report on late mediaeval Islamic coastal life, the inhabitants grew several kinds of grains and cultivated coconuts, oranges and other fruit. Meat and fish were bought from neighbouring villages and urban material culture as a whole has been described as rich and luxurious (Duarte Barbosa 1918). But they produced little or nothing of what they sold abroad.

However, political instability and many short reigns prevailed along the coast. In the mid—and late—14th-century Kilwa and through her Mafia lost pre-eminence in favour of Mombasa. Kisimani and its less important sister town Kua on the small neighbouring island of Juani fell into decline and the formerly flourishing maritime culture received a further blow from the Portuguese invasions of the early 16th century, although Mafia never suffered directly from sacking. The prosperity of the coast as a whole was not immediately shattered. It slowly declined throughout the 16th century as a result of the patchy conquest. But there were more fundamental causes for the impoverishment of the coastal towns. Their failure to recover from the Portuguese calamities (Strandes 1961) was not merely due to the suppression of their Indian Ocean trade, but particularly to the loss of their land-based gold trade from the Zambezi region via Sofala (Sutton 1974: 22). Yet one gets the impression from Portuguese chronicles that Mafia, or ‘Monfia’ as the

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4. Direct contact with China seems to have been restricted to only a few Chinese expeditions touching on Somali and Kenya coasts, but indirectly a large quantity of porcelain found its way to East Africa. See Duyvendak 1949; Wheatley 1964.
Portuguese called it, displayed more or less wealthy rural economy. Table I gives an overview of accounts by Portuguese writers relating to trade and produce from the Mafia Archipelago during the 16th and 17th centuries. Rezende also refers to a small fort on the eastside of the island, where in time of war there were ten or twelve Portuguese soldiers from Mombasa. This lasted up till 1729 when most of the Portuguese in Pemba, Zanzibar and Mafia were killed (Jackson-Haight 1967: 28).

Broadly speaking, Portuguese ruling power was erratic and Muslim shipping between the Swahili coast, the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, as well as the Cambay region of India, though clearly much reduced, was never effectively suppressed by the Portuguese. The overall effect of the Portuguese on the East African coast, therefore, was negative, though not lasting (Strandes 1961: 278).

**Omani Overlordship and European Control**

Coastal history in East Africa has always been based on outside influences. The rise of Omani sea-power in the western Indian Ocean during the 17th century proved to be the next chapter in an externally induced Swahili history.

The capture of Fort Jesus by the Omani Arabs in 1698 meant the
eclipse of Portuguese power along the coast. The Omani Sultanate, operating from the southern Arabian shores quickly appointed representatives or governors and established small garrisons in several places along the coast. But, forming a tiny minority among the Swahili and their ruling Shirazi families, the Omani did not exercise direct rule or effective protection any more than the Portuguese had (Sutton 1974: 25). Although originally the Omani do not appear to have placed a garrison on Mafia, in the 1720’s the inhabitants became involved in the disturbances during which the Portuguese temporarily regained their position on the Swahili coast. This belated Portuguese struggle for political and economic overlordship and the increasing Omani influence in the beginning of the 18th century did not seriously affect the general pattern of coastal history. In fact, Kilwa and Mafia virtually enjoyed independence for most of the century (Nicholls 1968: 36-37). A revival in stone building took place along the coast, particularly significant being the new palaces at Pate, Kilwa and Kua. Especially Kua, on Juani, judging from its double-storyed palace and many mosques, must have been a place of considerable local importance. This building activity indicates some sort of commercial revival. The expulsion of the Portuguese from the Tanzania and Kenya coasts did not and could not entail a return to the trade patterns of the 15th century, but it did allow the East African ports to trade more freely with the Arab shores and north-western India (Sutton 1974: 26). However, the Mafian support for Kilwa, when the latter removed their Omani governor, cost the Mahians their independence because they were attacked by the Omani in the mid-1780’s when Kilwa was retaken (Prior 1819: 68; quoted by Nicholls 1968: 37). Kismani Mafia and Kua showed a subsequent decline, a process reinforced by the Sakalava raids from Madagascar (Velten 1907: 249-252, 253-261). After that date Chole town became the most important trading centre in the islands.

The increasing commercial attraction of East Africa since the beginning of the 19th century moved the rulers of Oman to press their claims and assert control over the coast. After a series of expeditions, Sultan Sayyid Said made Zanzibar his permanent residence in 1840. The coast was brought more nearly than ever before under a unified government. Soon the Omani started experimenting in plantation agriculture (Gray 1963: 217). For Mafia this agricultural drive meant a reinforcement of the long-established coconut cultivation, placing more emphasis on a single commercial export crop rather than the cattle husbandry, for which the island had always been known. These innovations in the agricultural economy led to a number of far-reaching changes in Mafian rural society. In the first place, crops such as cloves in Zanzibar and coconuts in Mafia, were grown for the purpose of export and called for

5. For Kua and 18th-century coastal culture, see Kirkman 1964; Mathew 1954: 65-68. For an oral history of Kua, see Freeman-Grenville 1962b: 211-215.

planting on an extensive scale, while alienating land and pushing the local inhabitants to the periphery of the islands. Furthermore, plantations had to rely on an increased labour supply, firstly for clearing the land for planting, and secondly, for keeping the plantations in a state of good husbandry. One of the reasons for the retreat of the local inhabitants from the southern part of Mafia island was to avoid being compelled by the new landlords to work under servile conditions on these plantations. Consequently plantation owners had to look to the mainland for their labour supply. The inevitable consequence was that the centuries-old institution of East African slavery received a fresh impetus in order to meet the demands of landowners in Mafia, Zanzibar and Pemba.

The Arabs thus established themselves not only as a trading and administrative class, but as a planter aristocracy, whose interests were vitally concerned with the maintenance of the slave trade, while Indian merchants and traders made the planter’s life easier by providing credit. The price to the Arabs was a mounting burden of indebtedness (Gray 1963: 217-218). The Omani political system based on Zanzibar never grew into a full scale empire such as the European powers would later impose on Africa. Its military control existed only in a few towns, and Sayyid Said and his successors had no wish or interest in extending it.

After the death of Said in 1856, Zanzibar gradually fell into the status of a British protectorate. Actually this meant the strangulation of the slave trade, especially after Sultan Sayyid Bargash in 1873 signed a treaty with the British against both the status of slavery and its traffic. Mafia, however, seems to have laid outside their direct sphere of influence and although a British officer named John Elton freed 27 slaves at Chole in 1874 (Elton 1879: 93-94), formal slavery in the Mafia Archipelago was not abolished until 1922.

British political and economic influence steadily grew into an all-embracing power. Already predominant in 1871, the tonnage of British shipping at Zanzibar increased sevenfold in the next eight years, whilst that of other nations declined or remained stationary (Coupland 1939: 225-231). At the Berlin Conference, 1884-85, the European powers decided that Zanzibar, Pemba and Mafia would fall under British jurisdiction, but subsequent colonial bargaining between Great Britain and Germany in 1890, brought Mafia under the German administration of the Kilwa region, a part of mainland Tanganyika. At that particular time the Geographical Society of Leipzig found Dr. Oskar Baumann prepared to make a survey of the newly acquired territory of Mafia. Baumann’s very thorough research was carried out in 1895. His account is still the most complete geographical study of the Mafia islands. The patriarchal life on the Arab plantations was untouched and the great German plantations, the coconut palms planted with geometrical precision, did

7. Mafia was given up by the British in exchange for the Stephenson Road Strip between Lake Malawi and Lake Tanganyika in 1890.
Slaves formed the mass of the population. There arises a picture of a rather obsolete agricultural economy based on subsistence agriculture and Arab/Shatri-owned coconut plantations, while the coastal inhabitants of Mafia and its neighbouring islands were largely occupied in fishing, as they are today (Stubbings 1945; Piggott 1954). The trade products of Mafia are a reflection of this quiet rural island life. Baumann (1957: 13) gives the import and export figures from Chole Customs for the period November 1894 to November 1895 (Table II). Thus exports exceeded imports by 22,000 rupees. From these lists it may be seen that the whole trade of Mafia was with Zanzibar, and that financially the island had no connection with German East Africa. The lion’s share of the money earned in trade was acquired by the Indians, who spent nothing in the island, but remitted their surplus funds to India, where they returned as soon as they had made sufficient money (ibid.: 14).

**Table II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exports from Chole to Zanzibar</th>
<th>Value in Rupees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coconuts about 4,000,000</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copra 45,000 lb.</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coir rope 150,000</td>
<td>8,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mats and Ukindu (matting material)</td>
<td>12,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother of Pearl 200,000 lb.</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tortoiseshell 200 lb.</td>
<td>2,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simsim 65,000 lb.</td>
<td>3,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copal (resin), beeswax, ivory</td>
<td>1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>133,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exports from Chole to German East Africa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Coconuts about 37,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coir rope 35,000 lb.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mats and Ukindu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dried fish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle 120 (exported by permit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports from Zanzibar to Chole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Various articles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice, sorghum, pulse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Imports from German East Africa</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source*: Baumann 1957.
In 1892 a German customs official was appointed at Chole, a native Arab being charged with the regular administration. In the general drive for commercial agricultural products, launched by the Germans after their acquisition of East Africa, it was made compulsory for every able-bodied male to plant at least 50 coconut trees (Caplan 1975). This pressure, combined with the growth of the copra trade and a need for cash to pay the three-rupee tax, forced even the Mbwera in northern Mafia—previously dependent upon rice and other annual crops, cattle and fishing—to begin to plant trees. In 1900 some 70,000 trees were planted on Mafia, bringing the total to 270,000. Yet, von Boxberger (1910: 26) states that by 1910 there was only one European planter in the island. The next four years, however, saw a sharp increase in agricultural investment and the accompanying alienation of land for the benefit of European planters. Thus, by 1914 there were about ten Germans living in Mafia, owning large coconut plantations. The planters extended their holdings as much as the landlaws did allow, and planted them as fast as they could under the prevailing labour conditions, which have been described at that time as serious (King 1917: 119). Increased German agricultural activity brought two more German officials to Mafia and the administrative headquarters were removed in 1913 from Chole to Kilindoni on the west side of the island, chiefly owing to difficulties of navigating the narrow entrance into Chole Bay.

The newly established German plantations became more prosperous than the Arab ones, which fell into decline, especially after the freeing of the slaves in 1922. Many Arabs mortgaged their land to Indians, who had come to the island later in the 19th century, or else sold it outright. Already in 1913 the German District Official called to the attention of the Governor the danger of land getting into the hands of the Indians in Mafia. Whereas in 1911 it was estimated that the Arabs owned over 60 per cent of all the trees in the island, by 1935 they owned only 30 per cent (MDB, Note on the Land Question). Yet the abolition of slavery cannot be considered the primary cause of the decline in Arab plantation industry. Since 1905 all persons born had been free and numbers were ransomed by the European planters after 1910, in order to provide themselves with contract labour for their newly established plantations. In 1917 it was stated that even if no steps were taken in the matter, domestic slavery would soon die a natural death in East Africa (King 1917: 121).

In 1915 Mafia was captured by the British and provisional administration was carried out under the responsibility of the Zanzibar Secretariat up till 1922. After that date a British officer assisted by a kadhi, two akida and ten jumbe, looked after the daily administration of the

9. According to the many German land records from the period 1911-1914: National Archives, Dar es Salaam, German Records Section.
10. Kadhi: in this context, an Arab subordinate staff member, whose duties
island, reflecting some sort of indirect rule (MDB, Section System of Government). Their main duties consisted of settling native disputes and the collection of taxes, which were of an extremely refined nature considering the given situation.

The revenue collected by the Germans in an ordinary year amounted to 60,000 rupees, approximately half of which was spent on administration. The British raised the tax to sh. 10 in 1925, but were never able to collect more than about three quarters of the intended amount (MDB, Section of Native Tax). The biggest grievance of the Mafians was that the government did not spend more money on Mafia than was required for the essential services, and that the remaining revenue was used elsewhere.

The British government, however, did welcome private investments in plantation agriculture, just as the Germans had done. In particular after the administrative shift from Zanzibar to Tanganyika, coconut planting was pursued with greater effort than ever before. Copra tonnage for export rose from 1,360 in 1923 to 2,456 in 1940 (Piggott, in MDB). The labour problems were solved by contract labour from the mainland, but after 1939 the labour force from the mainland declined and local supply started to exceed the demand. By that time the obsolete plantations as Baumann observed them in 1895, had been partly replaced by big commercial estates, mainly run by European managers.

Table III. — Estimates of the Distribution of Palms, 1935

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Holdings</th>
<th>Bearing</th>
<th>Young</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native smallholders</td>
<td>3,943</td>
<td>220,370</td>
<td>94,423</td>
<td>314,795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabs</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>181,239</td>
<td>30,000</td>
<td>211,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baluchi</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15,912</td>
<td>4,000</td>
<td>20,002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europeans</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>57,760</td>
<td>145,830</td>
<td>203,590</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians and Goans</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>28,845</td>
<td>11,175</td>
<td>40,070</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4,218</td>
<td>250,126</td>
<td>114,702</td>
<td>389,950</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: MDB.

As may be seen from the Table, the Arabs and Europeans were by no means the only producers of copra and large numbers of native smallholders entered the Kilindoni and Kirongwe copra markets as well.

consistent of holding a first-class native court. The function was considered as equivalent to that of Assistant District Officer.

Akida: official, having rural jurisdiction in a second-class native court, except for criminal cases; further duties of daily administration.

Jumbe: non-directly paid official, on which fell the main burden of tax collecting and promoting cultivation.
In the course of the post World War I years, more and more Mafians started to plant coconuts as a commercial crop, thereby neglecting their subsistence crops. As a result, the food situation in the island steadily deteriorated. In 1924 the value of food imports had attained a height of sh. 75,475, while in 1940 this figure had risen to sh. 137,011 (MDB, Section on Imports and Exports).

By 1941 the situation had become critical and a native foodstuffs order had to be issued to the effect that no cassava was to be removed from the island to the mainland without permission of the administrative officer concerned. The combined effects of an increasing island population since the beginning of the 1930’s and the islanders’ preoccupation with coconut cultivation at the expense of food production had already caused a shift from n’jama (sorghum) to muko go (cassava) as a staple crop. The attention paid by the population to annual food crops varied quite consistently with the height of the copra prices in the sense that in times of good revenues from copra, food production was at its lowest ebb. The almost exclusive dependence on sharply fluctuating world copra prices has always been a drawback for the Mafian rural economy, a situation which continued after World War II. Despite these facts British colonial administration always seems to have pressed hard for a higher copra production. The exclusive attention for one commercial export crop, even as late as the 1950’s, is a striking feature of the Mafian political economy. Still in 1955 the most pressing problem was considered to be putting the coconut plantations back on their feet, not only the older Arab ones, but also some of the European plantations neglected as a result of World War II (Tulloch 1955: 207). This one-sided attention for only one aspect of the agricultural economy and the yearly excess revenues over expenditures betrays an attitude which can only be qualified as exploitative.

**Structural Characteristics of Mafian Underdevelopment**

From the historical overview in the previous paragraphs the question arises whether it is possible to identify structural characteristics of underdevelopment in the Mafia Archipelago. The argument will centre here

12. The situation probably being the result of rising immigration figures from the Rufiji river and delta area, mainly caused by the severe food shortages in that area, as a push factor. See Brook 1967: 338. Another factor here might be the contract labour offered by plantation owners, as a pull factor.

**Population estimates for Mafia**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Census</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1931</th>
<th>1948</th>
<th>1957</th>
<th>1967</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>11,950</td>
<td>8,466</td>
<td>11,379**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>11,514</td>
<td>8,052</td>
<td>11,397**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>9,793*</td>
<td>10,060</td>
<td>16,748*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Census. **African population.

on the influence of foreign dominance and the way in which it increased societal inequality through its two most outstanding structural features: the existing socio-religious status hierarchy and the plantation system as a mode of agricultural production.

**Socio-Religious Hierarchy**

So far we have argued that there are a number of structural characteristics in the plantation economy impeding meaningful development, but our analysis up till now failed to take into account the sociological implications of the system, as well as the socio-religious status hierarchy, as it developed over the years in an Islam-oriented society. The often neglected or at least underestimated influence of social stratification in relation to cultural background, needs a further clarification in the Mafia context.

There is wide literature on the plural nature of plantation societies, which, despite differences in interpretation of the facts - possibly due to differing regional frames of reference - seems to agree to the point that values, beliefs and attitudes within plantation society have become established as a result of long periods of plantation influence and are, for the most part, inimical to development (Beckford 1972: 210).

How far this is true for the Mafia Archipelago and in what way do social and cultural affiliation translate themselves into differential accessibility to resources? Firstly, it remains to be seen how far the Mafia group can be characterized as a real plantation society. In the economic sphere this question is not as relevant since smallholder activities in the field of copra production are a function too of the mode of production and existing extra-territorial linkages. However, in the sociological sphere, it makes a difference indeed whether you belong to an estate as a person of ex-slave descent or manage to live on your own *shamba* as a free-born Mbwera or a light-skinned Shatri. The point is that, although Mafia may be characterized as a plantation economy in an economic sense, this qualification seems hardly tenable in a sociological one, because a substantial part of the population, especially in the North, was never integrated into the formal plantation life as it existed in the southern part of the island. From a sociological point of view, it does not seem very likely that the plantation system in the Mafia islands created a full-scale plantation society, characterized by a 'demoralized and dependent' population as was the case in Zanzibar and Pemba, where the clove plantations were organized in a much stricter and inflexible manner. Far more important seems to be the way in which social and racial relations refined the existing socio-religious hierarchy, in which ex-slaves now occupy the bottom place, while the Arabs are at the top, thereby reflecting the unfortunate heritage of plantation society (Table IV). This hierarchy was important in the past as well as it is in the present, for political power has been traditionally wielded by religious leaders, with
a combination of high social status and piety as the essential prerequisites for office. And, as the Arabs are the most assiduous in orthodox Islamic observance, they are at the top.

Secondly, then, in what way has the existing socio-religious hierarchy been related to positions of political power under the colonial regime as well as under the post-Independence administration? We have already seen that British colonial administration in the islands after 1922 was carried out mainly with the help of Arab natives, thereby continuing the existing situation as inherited from the Germans. The whole administrative set up confirmed and reinforced in fact the existing racial and socio-religious hierarchy by mainly appointing Arabs in the above mentioned administrative functions, in particular the top ones. The administrative philosophy of indirect rule as fostered by the newly appointed governor of the Tanganyika Mandate Territory, Sir Donald Cameron, at his arrival in 1925, did not effectively change the Mafian administrative predicament. As one Mafian District Commissioner wrote: ‘the difficulty lies in the theory underlying Indirect Rule. It is not difficult to design a practical working arrangement to govern Mafia, but whenever any mention is made of Authorities the questions of Native Authority and Indirect Rule immediately bog the whole question in quagmire of indecision. There can be no question of Indirect Rule through traditional tribal channels—there are none.’ (Piggott, in MDB, Section System of Government.) Thus, the British fell back on the traditional leaders of Omani plantation society: the former Arab slave masters and their helpers. The *kadhi*, although on the payroll of the colonial administration, did not meet with too much resistance, because his position was sanctioned by high religious status, but the position of the *jumbe*, as the main tax collectors, was much more vulnerable. Having no legal authority and funds of their own, they had to be content with a stipend, amounting to three per cent of the hut and poll taxes, as collected in their respective *jumbe* areas (Liebenow 1971: 91). Their real authority understandably varied from person to person and from area to area. On the whole, however, Arab subordinate staff functioned quite well from a British point of view, but the arrangement earlier described in this paper as modified Indirect Rule, confirmed at the same time the established social order, thereby
preventing a more active participation of the population in questions of social and economic development.

When, in 1954, Mafia emulated the experiment of the mainland Newala District of creating a multi-racial local council (*ibid.*: 204), it was hardly surprising that again the status hierarchy and continuity in the occupation of power positions played an important role in the recruitment of its members. Quite a few of the former office-holders returned on the new council, but the inclusion of the British District Commissioner, one of the European planters and a few Asians in the local council was received by the population with mixed feelings, not only because they hardly represented anybody, but also because they did not fit in the traditional status hierarchy. Moreover, the choice of candidates for the post of *jumbe* at village level had still to be ultimately approved by the District Commissioner, so that real popular participation at this level, even under the local council system, was not fully realized.

After Independence in 1961, Mafia became a separate district of the Coastal Region of Tanzania. The district was subdivided into seventeen administrative villages, each of which sent an elected representative to the Mafia Council, which guaranteed, in theory at least, popular participation at the lowest levels. However, most decisions regarding administrative and political matters at these lowest levels were not taken by the newly established Village Development Committees, but rather by the small number of office-holders who wielded effective political power in the village (Caplan 1975: 125-134). In a village in Northern Mafia for example, the two most important posts, that of village chairman and of *dīwan* (village representative to the Mafia District Council), were in the middle of the 1960's both occupied by people of high, if not highest socio-religious status. The point was that most villagers had to deal with the government through the village chairman, and that subsequently the *dīwan* was one of the first lines along which actual contact with the central island government had to be effected. The power positions inherent in the two posts mentioned above are obvious.

With regard to government loans for example, Caplan observed that these were made available only to those thought to be reliable, and this meant people who were fairly wealthy or else those holding official posts. Both the chairman and the *dīwan* managed to get a loan from the District Council, thereby improving their material situation substantially (*ibid.*: 127). In fact, the existing status hierarchy was mobilized again to support the necessary lines of information and communication with the central government, but at the expense of differential accessibility to scarce resources. Thus, the egalitarian goals of the government were sacrificed on the altar of micro-sociological reality.13

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13 The emphasis on socio-religious hierarchy obscures another inequality, not further worked out in this text. However, as Caplan observed: ‘. . . since men inherit twice as much as women under Islamic law, and also have greater opportunities for acquiring cash with which to buy trees, they generally own more trees
The Plantation System as a Mode of Production

Beckford's analysis suggests that structural factors in the plantation system retard the process of development and structural transformation, and induce a dynamic process of underdevelopment (Beckford 1972: 210). This paragraph will investigate some characteristics which are intimately interwoven with the Mafian plantation economy and become visible in the position of Mafian copra inasmuch as they refer to the generation of economic linkages, the dependency on world market prices, the land and land-use question, the labour situation and the local food production.

For any mode of production to play a significant role in the local economy a large actual or potential amount of linkages, forward as well as backward, should be part and parcel of the production process. Usually plantation agriculture only provides high income-generating forward linkages instead of high employment-generating backward linkages. What, then, is the position of Mafian copra as far as concerns linked activities, especially with regard to the rationality of location of processing units? To begin with, copra is the dried, broken kernel of the coconut, from which coconut oil is extracted by boiling and pressing. In Mafia, copra used to be the form in which the product was exported for the extra-territorial processing into soap, margarine and candle tracks. In 1971 a coconut oil plant was opened at Ngombeni estate, so as to assure employment opportunities for the local population. Further processing in the island, however, seems hardly likely in view of the wide range of other raw materials needed for the above-mentioned end products. Moreover, with processing nearer to the market, there is a greater flexibility in end use for the finished product. In terms of localization of processing plants it does not seem very likely that the Ngombeni plant will be supplemented by more elaborate installations in the near future. This goes to prove that copra production alone is not very likely to produce further forward, let alone major backward linkages. Seen in this light we may conclude that the linkage characteristics of copra production are not very favourable for the inducement of further development. Another drawback in this respect is the dependence on world copra prices, which produce a very uncertain situation concerning yearly revenues. A major slump in copra prices during the 1960's initiated a renewed attention for cashew nut growing as a major source of income; indeed, in 1967, it was given as the main agricultural activity by seventy-one farming households out of a total of 2,480. 14

Although diversification is advisable in respect to the Mafian economy, this kind of development carries again with it the danger of being too

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much a function of the world market, although possibilities for small-
holder development in this case may give rise to a more equal distribution
of income. Concerning land and land use, we should notice that the
right of freehold has been abolished in Tanzania since Independence and
all lands declared government property. Strictly speaking, freehold did
not exist under German or British rule either, but during the latter period
the courts tended to treat individual title acquired by 30 years' occupancy
as analogous to freehold (Bailey 1965: 113-116).

In fact, the land situation in Mafia has not changed very much, the
Tanzanian government now being responsible for the larger coconut
plantations, while smallholders tend to stick to their individual rights,
resisting the pressure of government officials to cultivate on a communal
basis. However, the planting of tree-crops, such as coconut, cashew nut
and mango trees, does give permanent rights, according to government
rules, which often conflict with traditional views on landownership
(Caplan 1975: 60). Apart from the low-lying and annually flooded gar-
dens, which are cultivated on a semi-permanent basis, Mafia cannot be
considered as having a shortage of land. According to government, there
should be enough room for expansion in the field of cassava cultivation.
Yet one wonders if some parts of the relatively wetter lands of the coconut
estates could not be used more intensively by cultivating crops like rice,
maize, millet and beans, as is presently the case in a few other localities.
This should provide an incentive for the rather unfavourable labour
situation, which is inherent in the cultivation of coconuts, while at the
same time diversifying a one-sided diet of cassava in the coconut areas
and reducing the danger of an excessive attention to cash-crops at the
expense of local subsistence crops. In this connection it should be
emphasized that, apart from a more diversified agriculture, cattle hus-
bandry—a long-established Mafian speciality—should offer good pros-
pects for adjustment in the product mixture of the plantation economy,15
to escape the present dependency situation on coconut production and to
avoid further distortion in resource use at the expense of food production.

The Mafian situation has been critical in this respect ever since the
introduction of plantation agriculture in the islands. When copra prices
slumped for example in the years 1932-1934, in 1938-1939, and again
after World War II, each time a critical situation developed with regard
to food. The export earnings of the Mafian plantation economy repeated-
edly failed to meet the food demand requirements. Nowadays, the imme-
diate threat of food deficiency has been reduced by the firm entrench-
ment of cassava as a staple crop in the agricultural economy, but this
situation is far removed from a more diversified and possible mixed
coconut/livestock economy, which, together with fishing, seems to pro-
vide a sound basis for future rural development in the Mafia Archipelago.

15. For an example of the problems related to the integration of livestock with
the coconut plantation economy on the East African Coast, see Groeneveld 1968.
Conclusion

In a way, Mafian society has always witnessed a kind of societal strain, largely derived from its plural character and the inherent power positions. From the very beginning of recorded Mafian history, there emerges a picture in which light-skinned townspeople, engaged in a flourishing maritime trade, act as the rulers of the Mafia Archipelago. The prosperity of the early urban dwellers was largely of sea-borne nature and did hardly rest on local produce procured in the islands, although a kind of small-scale inequality existed in the presence of a few domestic slaves from the mainland for the benefit of the ruling notables. However, the relatively wealthy rural economy to which Portuguese records refer, points in the direction of a rather egalitarian rural society in which the local agricultural and domestic craft products found an outlet on the mainland markets. The seafaring townspeople probably acted as transshipment intermediaries in exchange for wood, food and fuel from the original population in the main islands.

As we have seen, Portuguese influence in the western Indian Ocean hardly touched Mafian rural prosperity, but the arrival of the rich and influential Shatri refugees from Zanzibar and other places along the coast in the beginning of the 18th century, carried with it the first seeds of a larger scale societal inequality by a reinforcement of the plural character of Mafian society. However, up till the coming of the Omani Arabs in the beginning of the 19th century, rural society in Mafia may be correctly interpreted as relatively free of striking socio-economic inequalities.

Things became different when the Omani settlers appeared on the scene. Especially in the 1860’s and 1870’s the growing demand for labour in relation to the newly established coconut plantations, effectively changed the traditional agricultural set up of the main island. Structural characteristics of a process of underdevelopment became visible in a partial change towards a plantation mode of production and in the scores of slaves, combined with the more or less forced intra-island migration of the original inhabitants and an intensification of the social hierarchy.

The situation was considerably sharpened by the arrival of German settlers after 1900 who set up large and scientifically managed coconut plantations and introduced a native tax, while alienating land from the indigenous and Omani population. By this time a money economy had been firmly entrenched into local society and the late 19th-century arrivals of Indian merchants emphasized the increasing capitalist tendencies in the Mafian economy by the concentration of land and trees in the hands of a few. The tax system, introduced by the Germans and aggravated by the British, further tied the Mafian economy to an unstable world market for copra by its effect on the amount of trees planted by local smallholders. In addition, fresh British and German investments took place in the period after 1922.
A highly significant aspect of the agricultural economy in 1935, that arises from Table III, is the high degree of capitalization, which becomes visible in the number of young and bearing trees. While native smallholders, by their limited access to capital resources, display an unfavourable ratio of young to bearing trees (1:2), European investment had provided for an exceptional number of young trees planted on altogether seven holdings (ratio 3:1). The future exit of Arab-owned plantation industry is already foreshadowed in a ratio of 1:6. The ultimate socio-economic inequality had come into existence in the disguise of a plantation economy and society, based on the distinction between a small European planter class, backed by a powerful colonial government and a dependent group of plantation labourers. Moreover, the creation of a group of coconut smallholders producing for an unstable world market, emphasized the dependency situation, that had come into existence since the beginning of European dominance.

It goes without saying that colonial expansion—whether Arab or European—contributed to a dynamic process of underdevelopment, in the course of which socio-cultural inequalities were sharpened to the point where they started to translate themselves into economic inequalities. In addition, the plantation system as a relatively new mode of production to the East African coast proved to be a necessary structural condition in this respect.

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