

Angela Langenkamp

**Structural Changes of the Potter's Craft in Kenya.
Regional and genderbased disparities**

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Herausgegeben von

Jürgen Deiters, Gerhard Hard, Norbert de Lange,
Walter Lükenga, Hans-Claus Poeschel, Diether
Stonjek und Hans-Joachim Wenzel

Angela Langenkamp

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›*To understand the present one needs to study the past*‹

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ADoE	Assistant Director of Education
ADoET	Assistant Director of Education-Technical
AGKED	Arbeitsgemeinschaft kirchlicher Entwicklungsdienste
ATO	Alternative Trade Organisation
B.A.T.	British American Tobacco Company
BASE	British Aid to Small Enterprises
BIFA	Buru Buru Institute of Fine Art
CBI	Centre for the Promotion of Imports from developing countries
CCD	Commissioner for Community Development
CCD	Commissioner for Community Development
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIEA	Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd.
CIoS	Chief Inspector of Schools
CSW	Commissioner for Social Welfare
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DAT	Directorate for Applied Technology - Jua Kali Development Programmes
DATO	District Applied Technology Officer
DC	District Commissioner
DCO	District Cultural Officer
DED/GDS	Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst/German Development Service
DFRD	District Focus on Rural Development
DHEO	District Home Economic Officer
DIT	Directorate for Industrial Training - Formal Apprenticeship
DRD	Directorate for Research, Science and Technology Development
DSDO	District Social Development Officer
DTT	Directorate for Technical and Vocational Education/Training
DÜ	'Dienst in Übersee' / Service Overseas
EAIMB	East African Industrial Management Board
EATTA	East African Tourist Trade Association
EC	European Commission
ECC	Eastleigh Community Centre
EPC	Export Promotion Council
EU	European Union
FTC	Farmers' Training Centre
GEMINI	Growth and Equity through Micro-Enterprise Investments and Institutions (project of USAID)
GoK	Government of Kenya
GSP	Generalised System of Preferences
GTZ	German Agency for Technical Cooperation
IFAT	International Federation of Alternative Trade
ILO	International Labour Organisation

ITC	International Trade Centre
ITDG	Intermediate Technology Development Group
JCI	Jisaidie Cottage Industries
K-REP	Kenya Rural Enterprise Programme
K.C.S.E.	Kenya Certificate of Secondary School Education
K.I.E.	Kenya Institute of Education
KAM	Kenya Association of Manufacturers
KANU	Kenya African National Union
KCCU	Kenya Crafts Co-operative Union
KCJ	Kenya Ceramic Jiko
KENGO	Kenya Energy and Environment Organisation
KEPC	Kenya Export Promotion Council
KETA	Kenya External Trade Authority
KGT	Kenya Gatsby Trust
K.I.E.	Kenya Institute for Education
KIE	Kenya Industrial Estates
KIPO	Kenya Industrial Property Office
KIRDI	Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute
KITI	Kenya Industrial Training Institute
KNA	Kenya National Archives
KREDP	Kenya Renewable Energy Development Project
KShs.	Kenya Shilling
KU	Kenyatta University
KWPP	Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project
LBDA	Lake Basin Development Authority
LBDA	Lake Basin Development Authority
MCC	Mennonite Central Committee
MCSS	Ministry of Culture and Social Services
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MP	Member of Parliament
MRTT&T	Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology
MTTAT	Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology
MyW	Maendeleo ya Wanawake
NCKK	National Council of Churches of Kenya
KWAHO	Kenya Water and Health Organisation
NBI	Nairobi
NCST	National Council for Science and Technology
NCWK	National Council of Women in Kenya
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NITD	Native Industry Training Depot
NJKPE	New Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for International Development
NYS	National Youth Service
ODA	Overseas Development Administration (UK)

OPWG	Oriang' Pottery Women's Group
PCEA	Presbyterian Church of East Africa
PDDP	Product Development and Design Project
RIDC	Rural Industrial Development Centres
RIDP	Rural Industries Development Programme
RIO	Rural Industries Officer
RVIST	Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology
SDD	Social Dimensions of Development
SEP	Special Energy Programme
SEPIP	Small Enterprise Policy Implementation Programme
SIDA	Swedish International Development Assistance
SME	Small and Micro Enterprises
TGU	Training and Gender Unit
TTC	Teachers Training College
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCNRSE	United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environmental Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organisation
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VP	Village Polytechnic
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
W	Woman
WG	Women's group
WiD	Women in Development
YDP	Youth Development Programme
YMCA	Young Men Christian Association
YP	Youth Polytechnic

Frequently used Swahili words

<i>baraza</i>	public/community meeting chaired by the local chief
<i>duka</i>	shop, permanent market stall
<i>harambee</i>	let us pull together, self-help, community fund raising
<i>hoteli</i>	local restaurant
<i>jembe</i>	African hoe
<i>jiko</i>	cooking place, cooking stove
<i>Jua Kali</i>	Informal sector worker/artisan (literally 'hot sun')
<i>kiondo</i>	Kamba basket made of sisal fibre
<i>mabati</i>	corrugated iron sheets
<i>maendeleo</i>	progress
<i>Maendeleo ya Wanawake</i>	progress for women
<i>majimbo</i>	elected regional assemblies
<i>matatu</i>	local bus/taxi
<i>mzee</i>	respected elder, old man (<i>pl. wazee</i>)
<i>mzungu</i>	European, white person (<i>pl. wazungu</i>)
<i>panga</i>	African bush-knife
<i>shamba</i>	field, farm, small plantation
<i>ugali</i>	stiff maize porridge
<i>uhuru</i>	freedom, independence
<i>uji</i>	grain/maize/cassava porridge
<i>upesi</i>	literally 'quickly'

Introduction

Motivation and background of the study

Being a geographer, an artist and a potter at the same time fed the desire to develop an in-depth understanding of the potter's craft in Kenya, an African country in which I had decided to live for some time in 1989. While exploring pottery displays in galleries, shops and various national museums and gathering information on the potter's trade in Kenya it surfaced that there was no common knowledge and little public awareness of the sector. A fact that had stimulated other scholars and people interested in the craft to contribute to the book ›*Kenyan Pots and Potters*‹ in 1989. The book edited by Jane Barbour, an American geographer, and Simiyu Wandibba, a Kenyan anthropologist and head of the Ethnological Department of the National Museums of Kenya at the time, provided me with a reasonably good introduction to Kenya's past and present ›traditional pottery scene‹. It, however, did not embark on contemporary socio-cultural and economic aspects of the craft, on external impacts or development assistance granted to the sector nor did it reflect on the growing commercialisation and urban and international market demand which obviously had influenced the entire craft sector and led to adaptations and change. Keeping my ears and eyes open, inquiring about the origin of products and their producers I got to know about various pottery producer groups, workshops and training institutions involved in pottery and/or ceramic production. While calling on many of them my desire to get involved and conduct an in-depth research on the potter's craft in Kenya was taking shape¹. On the basis of being an experienced ceramist myself I was offered the position of project co-ordinator of the UN sponsored Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project in February 1990, shortly after my arrival in Kenya. Although this assignment was to delay the envisaged research, it offered me the chance to familiarise myself with the culture and the living and work environment of the potters and also with the key players in the craft's development. As such it was an ideal preparation for in-depth academic studies of the

¹ Among those visited were:

- the Ceramic Department of the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST) at Njoro/Nakuru District where I worked as a visiting lecturer for a short while in 1990
- the ceramic workshop of the Kapenguria Homecraft Centre/West Pokot District
- the Ceramic Section at the Kenyatta University (KU)/Nairobi
- the Jitegemea Pottery at the Eastleigh Community Centre (ECC)/Nairobi
- the ceramic workshop of the Young Men Christian Association (YMCA) at Shauri Moyo/Nairobi
- the Ilesi Women Pottery Group/Kakamega District
- a group of women potters in Wang'Chieng and a UNDP project targeting pottery production in Karachuonyo/South Nyanza District (which was later subdivided into Homa Bay District, Migori District and Kuria District).

structural changes and contemporary performance of the potter's craft in Kenya. While attached to the project between 1990 and the end of 1993 I was not only exposed to but had to respond to national and international development policies, to community life, division of work and responsibilities within the family and the community at large, to local politics, popular views and dominant gender roles. I interacted closely with government officials, bilateral and multilateral development organisations and NGOs, potters, craftsmen and traders of different nature, learned the local vernacular of the people I was working with, *Dholuo*², and was able to develop a sound understanding of the local culture and socio-economic set-up as well as the country's administrative structures. Nevertheless, while trying to provide valuable advice and guidance to the project I found myself confronted with a widespread discrepancy between desire and ability: between development policies and project objectives, namely to fight poverty and to uplift the standard of living by enhancing local craft production, on the one hand and the appropriateness of the planned intervention (to introduce new products, technologies and organisational structures related to the same) and the ability and willingness of the crafts-people in focus, women potters, to adapt to new production and marketing structures on the other. Despite the fact that I had a well founded theoretical and practical background in pottery production and adult education, had worked with potters in various countries and interacted with many of them in Kenya I still understood too little about the women potters I was asked to support and work with and about the behavioural logic guiding their activities and involvement with the craft. Influenced by the country's colonial history the potters were not free to disclose their deeply rooted beliefs and customs and to talk about taboos and restrictions related to pottery production, many of which had survived over time and even today hamper the economic growth and prosperity of the sector in many parts of Kenya. Meanwhile colonisation and decades of imposed development policies and programmes had created an undesirable state of dependency and inferiority with people believing that the foreign experts sent to train and assist them know what they are doing and how best to advise them. Information on and lessons learnt from successful and/or unsuccessful attempts to foster the development of the potter's craft in Kenya, which date back to the 1950s, travelled slowly or never spread at all. This led to a situation where the same mistakes were repeated over and over again. Numerous discarded pottery-wheels and kilns bear evidence of the many fruitless attempts to foster the development of the potter's craft, the uncoordinated manner by which governmental and non-governmental organisations have targeted the sector in the past and the profound lack of understanding of the dynamics and driving forces of the pottery/ceramic sector in Kenya. At the same time existing pottery studies, in the majority carried out by historians, archaeologists, anthropologists and ethnographers, have focused on the preservation of a slowly diminishing diverse cultural heritage and thereby contributed little to a sound understanding of Kenya's contemporary potter's craft or adequately designed development interventions.

Based on my own experience and insights into the behavioural logic guiding the potters in their craft activity I had grasped that to understand the present and provide

² *Dholuo* is the language spoken by the Luo, the third largest ethnic group in Kenya of which, according to the 1989 population census, 85,7 % live in Nyanza and Nairobi Province.

valuable support to the sector one needs to study the past. As a result my research was rooted in the desire to facilitate the link between academic studies and development theory and practice by embarking on a comprehensive review of the existing data and by further studying the diversification of the potter's craft, a traditional women's craft, in the modernisation process in order to make future support granted to the sector more efficient.

Scope and design of the research

My research was not based on a clearly defined theory but guided by an array of open questions. These questions were nurtured by the experienced disproportion between prevailing development theories and the actual developments taking place on the ground. Due to the diversity of the research subject ›the contemporary potter's craft in Kenya‹ it was necessary to remain open and flexible throughout the entire fieldwork in an effort to adjust research methodology and data collection to the particular research environment and subject or the individual and/or group being studied and/or interviewed. The informants were drawn from diverse sections of society and included among others government employees, members of national and international NGOs, lecturers and teachers, traditional community elders, traders and export dealers, development agents and the potters themselves. The research questions were centred around the following aspects of development: (1) gender related aspects, such as the diverse living and working environment of female and male potters with regard to their specific socio-cultural and economic socialisation, and (2) regional and rural-urban disparities, which are partly based on Kenya's multi-ethnic society and further influenced by externally driven development interventions and processes.

Since time and financial constraints would not allow me to study the contemporary set-up of the craft among all ethnic groups engaged in pottery production in Kenya I narrowed down the sampling universe by means of theoretical sampling. Based on existing data I developed a preliminary country profile and thereafter started my fieldwork with a broad-based descriptive observation of the potter's craft in rural and urban areas. This initial step was followed by a more focused observation of the diversified craft scene by studying the craft (1) where it shows signs of economic growth, adaptation and modernisation, namely in western Kenya and in Nairobi, in contrast to (2) a geographical location and ethnic community where the craft is declining and nearing extinction as is the case among the Meru community of Eastern Province. In the next step I embarked on comparing male and female potters in their respective socio-cultural and work environment. In this context I studied the setting of the female dominated pottery scene amongst the Luo and the male dominated pottery scene amongst the Isukha clan, which belongs to the larger Luyia community, and also the flourishing rural pottery industry in western Kenya in comparison with the male dominated urban pottery industry in Nairobi. While the research focused on the actual potter's craft other related areas such as the manufacturing of bricks and tiles and also large scale, fully industrialised production of glazed ceramics or the production of airport art like clay busts etc. have only briefly been touched upon.

During the entire research qualitative and quantitative data were linked in an effort to enable verification or corroboration of each other via triangulation. Quantitative

data were collected by means of mailed questionnaires and a secondary analysis of an existing database on women's groups activities in Kenya³ and later supplemented by some structural data extracted from 83 semi-structured interviews of potters representing the following four clusters:

1. rural (traditional) potters working on an individual basis at home
2. semi-commercial potters who have organised themselves into groups or started small and micro enterprises in the vicinity of their rural home
3. commercial pottery enterprises belonging to the urban informal sector.
4. institutional and private pottery/ceramic workshops and industries belonging to the urban formal sector.

Structural data such as information on the predominant gender, age and ethnic origin of the potters in the districts, the organisational set-up of the potters and existing development programmes targeting the potter's craft in the various districts have been analysed and visualised by means of tables, graphs and maps. These data were drawn and compiled in an attempt to built up a database which would allow the comparison of the various sub-sectors of the potter's craft in Kenya with other crafts such as tailoring and tinsmithing which have extensively been studied in an attempt to portray Kenya's informal sector industry. Embedded in an ethnographic approach I furthermore conducted open and semi-structured interviews of groups and individuals, visited markets, export dealers, workshops, production centres and potters at home, followed up on local, national and international trade networks and participated in seminars and conferences targeting Kenya's crafts scene and development among others. In order to guide and streamline the research, control the dataflow and narrow it down over time to focal points of interest an early writing and analysing process accompanied the fieldwork. However, the latter was a rather demanding and complex task since the thesis was to serve very diverse audiences, a cross-sectoral academic audience as well as development planners and implementers.

³ The database was compiled by the Women's Bureau of the MCSS in the early 1990s but unfortunately never updated or even used, it seemed.

Throughout the 20th Century women, handicrafts and the disadvantaged have been grouped together and as such it is not surprising to find that the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, namely the Women's Bureau, is charged with the responsibility to co-ordinate all activities, programmes and projects which target women, incl. their economic empowerment while the statistical unit created within the bureau is charged with collection, processing, analyses and dissemination of gender desegregated statistics. In its effort to establish a statistical data bank the Bureau established a census on women groups in Kenya. While a report on the exercise, which had been published in 1993, confirms the existence of a data bank containing information on women's groups activities and stressed that »the database is not only for Women's Bureau's use, but can be useful to other ministries, NGOs, other agencies and researchers that are interesting in working with and/or through women groups« (MCSS, 1993:2), this database has hardly been accessible. Either the computers were out of order or the database and/or a virus effected entire network, there was no free computer-space for me to use or there was no electricity due to a prevailing power shortage and consequent rationing of the electricity. Nevertheless, in numerous and very time-consuming attempts I was able to extract data on the activity profile of the groups and the regional whereabouts of groups attending to handicrafts as their major activity and to pottery in particular.

Structure and content of the thesis

The study is divided into three sections. *Section I* provides a general introduction to African pottery and ceramics between archaeological studies and development policies with special attention being paid to the craft's socio-economic environment and performance in Kenya since the turn of the 20th Century. *Section II* serves the reader with a detailed analysis and profile of the potter's craft in Kenya and outlines the methodological approach and also the findings of my fieldwork. *Section III* concludes the study with a brief review of the craft's evolution and diversification under various development impacts and provides some basic recommendations for future support granted to the sector.

Section I: Pottery and ceramic studies between archaeological studies and development policies

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the academic approaches and disciplines which have dominated pottery and ceramic studies in the Western World while *Chapter 2* portrays those studies focusing on African and Kenyan pottery in particular. As outlined in Chapter 1 and 2 historical, ethnographic, anthropological and archaeological interests in pottery have long dominated socio-economic and development studies focusing on external impacts and national and international development policies which influenced the status, environmental perception⁴ and contemporary performance of the potter's craft in Sub-Saharan Africa. Although the latter aspects have commonly been accepted as interesting phenomena in their own right and worthy of adequate documentation, scholars attending pottery studies in their majority stressed that these aspects were competing with their prime objective to investigate and preserve the knowledge of diminishing African cultures and crafts. Reviewing the academic coverage of African art and crafts HERBERT (1993) and BARLEY (1994) did raise an interesting point, namely that the poor overall coverage of African pottery does reflect the widespread neglect of female technologies in Africa. While HERBERT and BARLEY attributed the gender bias coverage of male and female crafts by academics, art collectors and historians to the circumstance that most scholars and researchers have been men, Kenya's contemporary craft history, largely designed and decided over by men, as well, mirrors a strong gender bias approach and set-up favouring boys and men over their female peers as shall be illustrated in the course of this study.

Under the headline ›Pottery between craft, handicraft and art‹ *Chapter 3* portrays the often disputed use of the terms ›Craft‹, ›Handicraft‹ and ›Art‹ and the many attempts to come up with unanimously agreeable definitions on the one hand and the ›tailor made‹ definitions, product and activity clusters on the other. In the same breath

⁴ I like to apply the term ›environmental perception‹ as defined by JOHNSTON (1992:135) in ›*The Dictionary of Human Geography*‹: »The subjective evaluation of the phenomenal environment which surrounds a human subject, revealing his or her consciousness of it and his or her intentionality towards the objects which constitute it. Such perception not only conditions attitudes towards everyday life but also underlines the active process of decision making: thus, perception is both a phenomenal experience and a directive for action.«

the reader is enlightened on the undifferentiated and as such often misleading use of the terms ›Pottery‹ and ›Ceramics‹ in connection with African pottery. Furthermore, an account is given of European and African art and craft traditions and the diverse perceptions of and attitudes towards African pots and potters deriving from them.

Chapter 4 provides an insight into the socio-cultural environment and organisational set-up of the potter's craft in Africa. After it briefly touches upon myths and taboos surrounding the craft, it highlights the impact of modernisation and the introduction of Western values and production standards on the craft's past and contemporary performance in Africa.

Chapter 5, thereafter, looks at the socio-economic and spatial environment of Kenya's crafts sector during the 20th Century. It provides a very brief insight into Kenya's economic landscape and also the formation and development of Kenya's labour force under the impact of a bias socio-economic and education system which subdivided the work-force into the learned elite and the so called unskilled mass to which the potters (predominantly women) and other traditional craft specialists were generally counted.

In *Chapter 6* the reader is introduced to sector policies influencing and directing the development of Kenya's crafts scene before and after *Uhuru*⁵. Development policies and objectives which stirred the craft's performance during the 20th Century have been reconstructed on the basis of historical sources, development reports, oral information from producers, consumers, representatives of governmental and non-governmental bodies and other sector activists alike. This chapter illustrates that general and technical education policies have led to regional and gender based socio-economic disparities in the country and elaborates on the fact that in the way a craft is introduced to the mind of the people it will be perceived and attended. A look at Kenya's contemporary history reveals that early educational efforts of the colonial administration and missions laid the foundation for a growing inequality separating the ›learned‹ from the illiterate and unskilled mass, the boys from the girls and the ›modern‹ craftsmen and entrepreneur from the ›traditional craft specialists‹. It further led to and nurtured a conceptual dichotomy with the ›rural crafts and industries‹, which were declared a responsibility of social and community development, on the one hand and the ›modern crafts and industries‹ on the other, which were subject to ›formal‹ education and technical training from the early colonial days until today. In consequence the traditional potter's craft, like other indigenous Kenyan crafts, were dishonoured in the face of Western standards and technologies imparted by the formal education system as the ›learned‹ look down upon the ones who acquired their skills on an informal basis like most potters in Kenya. In addition Chapter 6 critically reflects on the actuality that while pottery production is widely perceived as an informal sector activity Kenyan potters in their overwhelming majority are not integrated into mainstream sector support programmes targeting small and micro enterprises (SME) of the informal sector. Contrary to ›modern crafts and industries‹ – which for most of the century remained a male domain – pottery and handicrafts in general have often been addressed as an appropriate means for women to generate

⁵ *Uhuru* is the Kiswahili word for independence or freedom.

income. In consequence Chapter 6 takes a look at the background and major policy objectives guiding women's involvement in development in general and the women's group movement in particular which, unfortunately, has contributed little to the economic empowerment of Kenya's women folk.

Chapter 7 concludes Section I ›Pottery and ceramics between archaeological studies and development policies‹ and leads over to Section II ›The potter's craft in Kenya‹ with an introduction of Kenya's contemporary (handi-) craft scene and its key players, their involvement and development objectives in view of technical training and job creation programmes on the one hand and trade and export marketing promotion on the other.

Section II: The potter's craft in Kenya

As mentioned before Section II of this study focuses on the ›Potter's craft in Kenya‹ and illustrates the design and methodological approach as well as the findings of my fieldwork.

Chapter 8 first of all provides a general introduction to the research planning and ethnographic design which links practical experience with academic studies. The chapter illustrates how quantitative methods were integrated into an overall qualitative research approach in order to create a country profile which served as a basis for the outline of the actual case and field studies.

Chapter 9 reflects the study of already existing data sources such as the socio-economic profiles of 15 districts and a database on women's groups activities in Kenya⁶ and also on information made available by District Social Development Officers (DSDOs) of 36 districts in 1995. The latter had been queried by means of a mailed questionnaire with the view to identify the scope, regional whereabouts and public perception of the contemporary potter's craft in Kenya in contrast to other crafts carried out in the districts. Chapter 9 furthermore unveils how the development and profile of the potter's craft in Kenya is corresponding to the ethnic and socio-economic setting and geographical features of the rural and urban environments surrounding it. After portraying Kenya's traditional pottery scene Chapter 9 introduces the reader to the evolution of Kenya's ceramic industry and the impact of the *jiko*⁷ programmes of the 1980s on the diversification of Kenya's contemporary pottery scene and the emergence of an urban ›Jua Kali pottery enterprise culture‹. As we take a closer look at gender specific development approaches and developments with regard to the potter's craft in Kenya in Chapter 11, the latter will further be elaborated. Chapter 9, meanwhile, concludes on a note of the traditional and contemporary distribution of pottery ware in Kenya as it provides information on distribution networks and intertribal trade linkages in western Kenya, on the market value of pottery ware in various geographical locations all over Kenya, on dominant trading places and the

⁶ A database on women's group activities was compiled by the Women's Bureau, Ministry of Culture and Social Services, during the early 1990s but unfortunately never updated and hardly ever used as its access is severely hampered by the poor infrastructure of the bureau.

⁷ *Jiko* is a Kiswahili expression for a cooking place. In East Africa it is commonly used to describe a cooking stove.

nature of the people trading pots as reflected by other scholars and the DSDOs responding to my questionnaire in 1995.

Chapter 10 illustrated the actual fieldwork, which reflects a progressive ethnographic approach, which can roughly be broken down into the following main sessions:

1. Site observations and open interviews in western Kenya with the view to studying production and marketing set-ups among *Luo* and neighbouring *Maragoli* and *Bunyore* communities which are well known for their thriving potter's craft.
2. Case study (a holistic approach) of the potter's craft among the *Meru* of Kenya: A portrait of a diminishing indigenous craft.
3. Semi-structured interviews of *formal and informal sector employees of small and medium scale pottery and ceramic workshops* in Nairobi.
4. Case study of a female dominated craft scene – *Luo potters* in Homa Bay District.
5. Case study of a male dominated pottery scene – *Isukha potters*: Urban potters and their rural peers in Kakamega District.

Following an assessment of the trade dynamics, inter-regional linkages and organisational set-up of the potter's trade in western Kenya and of the diminishing craft tradition among the *Meru* potters of Kenya I narrowed down my sampling universe to formal sector employees of different ethnic origin working in Kenya's urban ceramic/pottery industry, to *Luo* potters in Karachuonyo and to *Isukha* potters working in western Kenya or Nairobi. Chapter 10 provides detailed information on those met and interviewed in the course of the fieldwork and the selection criteria used to identify them.

Chapter 11 once again highlights and critically reflects underlying gender specific development approaches and objectives applied in supporting women and men in their struggle to participate in development or the economy at large.

Chapter 12 thereafter provides the reader with the general findings of the fieldwork – a comparative analysis of Kenya's contemporary gender-bias rural-urban pottery scene. Special emphasis is laid on the demographic composition of the potters interviewed, on their educational background and professional career, on skill acquisition and access to the potter's craft, on the organisational status and the socio-economic environment of the potters, on their innovative and/or cautious behaviour and on linkages of the potter's craft to the rural subsistence economy on the one hand and the urban wage labour market on the other and an introduction to the environmental perception of the potter's craft in Kenya today. The chapter finally ends with a comparison of the different potter-clusters which highlights their specific advantages and disadvantages as well as their diverse needs and requirements.

Section III: Review, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 13 provides a review of the evolution and consequent diversification of Kenya's pottery trade during the 20th Century while *Chapter 14* concludes the study with some recommendation for future support and assistance granted to the sector.

Pottery and ceramics between archaeological studies and development policies

1 Pottery and ceramic studies. An introduction to dominant academic approaches

»Pottery is amongst the oldest arts of mankind« (BARLEY 1994:9). In Kenya pottery is documented as having existed since the upper Palaeolithic era and in Saharan sites has been dated to the eighth millennium BC. »Its first appearance predates the Neolithic Revolution, when the development of agriculture first allowed a settled way of life. Too fragile to travel yet too permanent to disappear even in a broken and abandoned state, as wood and gourd and leather do, pottery serves as an archaeological record of the span of human settlement. In its forms and decorations archaeologists can trace histories-changes over time echoing changing populations and changing ways of life« (SIEBER 1992:1). Over time scholars of different disciplines, studying pottery and ceramics from their specific point of view, realised that an interdisciplinary approach was required to cover the whole spectrum of issues regarding pottery and ceramic developments, in history and in the ›modern world«. In his introduction to the anthology of essays presented at an interdisciplinary symposium entitled ›*Töpfereiforschung zwischen Archäologie und Entwicklungspolitik*« VOSSEN (1988) outlined the contemporary poles between which pottery and ceramic studies are embedded: historical, archaeological and cultural anthropological / ethnographic studies on the one side and preliminary practical [anwendungsbezogene], socio-cultural and development studies on the other side. For the interested reader who is unfamiliar with the American and European academic set-up VOSSEN (1988) pointed out that American scholars greatly benefited from an interdisciplinary conglomeration of the following disciplines: archaeology, cultural anthropology, physical anthropology and linguistics under the Department of Anthropology while European scholars were often restricted in their approach by very stringent definitions of the individual discipline.

Looking at pottery and ceramic studies by and large, VOSSEN clearly differentiates between them: while pottery studies are said to focus on the pots and potters themselves, on the production process and on the socio-economic environment as well as the interactions and networks of the potters in a geographical context, VOSSEN portrays ceramic studies as those which concentrate on the raw materials used and on the final product, the fired clay body, in time and sphere.

As in most other countries, the academic discussion on Kenyan pots and potters is focusing on the past and on traditional dimensions of the potter's craft and is dominated by the following disciplines: ethnography, history, anthropology and archaeology. It therefore seems reasonable to introduce the prevailing academic

approaches to pottery studies in brief. While doing so I would like to draw on existing sources since it is far beyond the scope of my research to re-evaluate their findings.

1.1 The archaeological approach

Without embarking on single archaeological reports I would like to refer to ORTON who in 1993 focused on the history of pottery studies in archaeology. He evaluated previous attempts of SHEPARD (1956), WILLEY and SABLOFF (1974) and VAN DER LEEUW (1984) to describe and draw together the changing approaches of archaeological studies on which he based his model of three broad phases: (1) art-historical, (2) the typological and (3) the contextual phase. ORTON admitted that the contextual phase is characterised mainly by its diversity of approach, encompassing studies of technology, ethno-archaeology, questions of style and problems of change (or the lack of it) in ceramics, all of which are approached from widely different viewpoints.

1.1.1 The art-historical phase

»Written evidence of interest in excavated pottery goes back to at least the fifteenth century»(ORTON 1993:5) while the eighteenth century was the great age of the collector, with Etruscan, Greek and Roman ›vases‹ coming to the fore. This was a time, which emphasised the admiration of the artistry and techniques of the pottery and the interpretation of classical scenes. Only towards the end of the eighteenth century and more especially in the nineteenth century did a more general interest in pottery of various periods and sources develop. Although the emphasis remained still very much on the ›fine‹ wares rather than the ›coarse‹ wares, evidence accumulated through the nineteenth century reveals that attempts were made to draw development together and produce coherent histories and popular handbooks. The study of post-classical European domestic ceramics was nevertheless slower to develop. Until 1910 the domestic pottery of the period was thought to have little to offer, while decorated medieval floor tiles were thought worthy of attention as enlightening evidence that could tell us more about the capabilities of the early potter than any earthenware vessel of the same period. Outside Europe and the Mediterranean, attention was directed to the fine and high fired ›Oriental‹ wares, mainly of Chinese and Japanese origin (ORTON 1993). The prevailing admiration of the artistry and techniques of the pottery did by no means inspire any scholar or collector to take a closer look at African pottery wares at the time which was considered more primitive and ›coarse‹ than any European domestic ceramics.

1.1.2 The typological phase

The typological phase can be seen as a result of pressure for classification by ever-increasing amounts of pottery being excavated. According to ORTON (1993:9) it can really be said to have started in the 1880s, at the same time as Pitt-Rivers was developing his typological approach to other classes of artefacts. The following studies on pottery finding in Kenya can for example be attributed to this phase: LEAKEY (1948) »*Dimple based pottery from Central Kavirondo, Kenya Colony*»; POSNANSKY

(1961) »Pottery types from archaeological sites in East Africa«; SOPER (1972) »Early Iron Age pottery types from East Africa: comparative analysis«; WANDIBBA (1978) »A note on the cord rouletted pottery in western Kenya«; SOPER (1979) »Cord rouletted pottery«; SOPER (1980) »Iron Age Pottery assemblages from central Kenya« and COLLETT and ROBERTSHAW (1980) »Early Iron Age and Kansyore pottery: finds from Gogo Falls, South Nyanza«.

1.1.3 The contextual phase: An interdisciplinary approach

While NANGENDO in 1984, like many others before him, came to the conclusion that the exclusive aim of pottery studies was previously oriented towards a construction of time sequences and cultural phases by compiling typologies (NANGENDO 1984, 3), ORTON emphasised in 1993 that the early work of SHEPARD⁸ of 1956 could be seen as a nodal point in pottery studies as she drew together the strands – chronology, trade/distribution and technological development – and identified the aspects of excavated ceramics which should be studied in order to shed light on each of these areas (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:13). ORTON further outlined that after SHEPARD's formative work, pottery studies »rode off in all directions«, making it increasingly difficult to take an overview of a fast-expanding subject. »Attempts to maintain such a view were made by the holding of international conferences at Burg Wartenstein (Austria) in 1961⁹ and Lhee (Holland) in 1982. The first was held »to evaluate the contribution of pottery studies to archaeological and ethnological research« [Matson 1965:vii], but also partly »to convince many anthropologists that pottery studies extend beyond simple description and classification« [Rouse 1965:284]. The second, intended as a follow-up twenty years after the first, had the more difficult task of holding together a subject that was expanding so fast it was in danger of flying apart« (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:13/14). ORTON, however, did not reflect on the ongoing discussions on pottery and ceramic studies in Germany where the series of conferences was continued in 1985, 1987 and 1990. In 1985 the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde* hosted an interdisciplinary symposium entitled »Töpfereiforschung zwischen Archäologie und Entwicklungspolitik« in Lübeck, which was followed by an interdisciplinary colloquium of archaeologists, ethnologists and anthropologists at the *Archäologischen Landesmuseum* in Schleswig in 1987. The third interdisciplinary exchange of this kind, held in Hamburg in 1990, paid special attention to pottery traditions of the Mediterranean and Scandinavian countries, the development of the potter's wheel and on lead-glazes, which leads us to the ethnographic and technical approach. This third

⁸ SHEPARD summarised in 1956 that: »The archaeologist generally deals with design as a criterion for the classification of pottery types. He uses it along with various physical properties to establish time markers and is therefore concerned with the typical« contrary to the art historian, who looks upon ceramics decoration as one phase of the aesthetic expression of a people and studies it in relation to others. »We [the archaeologists] have been occupied with the task of ordering objects in time and space, arrangements which are essential to an adequate understanding of origins and relations. Although pottery has served as a handmaiden in this task, it is also an integral part of the cultural content.« (SHEPARD 1956:363)

⁹ For details see MATSON (1965)

colloquium was accompanied by the exhibition ›1001 Töpfe – Töpferei und Keramik in Marokko‹ and the proceedings compiled and published by VOSSEN in 1996.

Taking account of the contextual phase ORTON *et.al.* (1993) stated that the phase witnessed serious attempts to integrate ethnographic studies, scientific techniques and aspects of technology into mainstream pottery studies and that ethno-archaeology developed as a way of using ethnographic evidence to help archaeologists examine the processes that lay between their excavated finds and the societies that produced and used them (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:17).

1.2 The technical approach

»As well as the artistic side of ceramics, evidence for its manufacture created interest from the seventeenth century onwards. Early interests were concentrating on pottery kilns, while the interest in the technology of the pots themselves concentrated on the ›high-tech‹ questions of how certain very fine wares were made» (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:18). With reference to VOSSEN (1988) these studies belong to the category ›ceramic studies‹. »As technology was seen more and more in its social setting, the processes which bring about or hinder change came under focus [NICKLIN 1971; BLAKE 1980; ORTON 1985]» (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:18) causing the study of such technical approaches to develop in two directions:

1. »an interest in technology in its own right as an indicator of social progress (in which pottery played a relatively minor part), represented by Scott [1954], Richter [1956] and Jope [1956],
2. after a sporadic early interest [e.g. Greenwell 1877], a broadening out into the technology of all types of pottery, under the influence of ethnographic work, starting perhaps with Franchert [1911]. He studied the ›primitive‹ (that is pre-industrial) production processes from the selection of clay to the firing of pots, using both chemical and physical analyses to answer questions that had been a matter of speculation» (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:18).

1.3 The ethnographic approach

Ethnographic records on pottery date back to 1782 when LE GRAND D'AUSSY investigated the uses of pottery in historic times, chiefly as eating or drinking vessels. »Although not usually regarded as ethnographic evidence, the large amounts of contemporary written evidence for potting in historic periods has contributed to questions ranging from the organisation and methods of pottery production [Le Patrourel 1968; Peacock 1982] to the ultimate uses of the pots [Moorhouse 1978]» (ORTON *et.al.* 1993:17).

In 1959 the ›Current Anthropology‹ Symposium on ›Quantitative methods in archaeology‹ expressed the urgent need for fuller ethnographic descriptions of pottery making. ›Current Anthropology‹ took action and organised a conference in 1961 under the headline ›Ceramics and Man‹ that was held in America. Closer co-operation between archaeologists and ethnographers was the result and one characteristic of the contextual phase in archaeology according to ORTON *et.al.* (1993).

2 A portray of pottery studies focusing on Africa

Reports on African pottery can be divided into those which are studies in their own right, reports which focus on pottery and have been published in magazines, and, the majority, which are part of ethnographic monographs which pay attention to the material culture of the people in focus.

DROST outlined in 1967 that the ethnographic research in Africa in general had experienced an upswing/boom thereby sorely neglecting material culture and technology in comparison with socio-cultural and religious issues. In 1967, based on the, by then, existing and available literature, DROST compiled a comprehensive report on pottery technology in Africa, entitled ›*Töpferei in Afrika*‹. In this context, however, DROST stated that the number of publications on African pottery was, in comparison with the large number of potting groups, very limited and in terms of geographical coverage rather patchy¹⁰. In his 1967 publication DROST emphasised on the following subjects: Raw materials and their preparation; Pottery production techniques, including tools and working position of the *female potter*; decoration; drying and firing. DROST limited his work to pots and vessels without studying the production of clay pipes or other clay products, regionally he concentrated on ›Sub-Saharan Africa‹ excluding Madagascar and including material on North Africa only in individual chapters.

Not only DROST (1967) but other scholars before him, such as LHOPE (1948), and others after him, such as NICKLIN (1979), have addressed the pressing need to further research the diminishing African crafts, especially the potters' craft. Taking account of the existing literature, GILL stressed that ceramic studies in Kenya and Africa as a whole are surprisingly scarce: »with no more than ten studies of traditional pottery for the entire African continent« (GILL, 1981:1). However, the 1980s brought a change. In 1984 the Frobenius Institute (Frankfurt a. M., Germany) launched a ceramic program in West Africa with the prime aim of documenting and analysing the ceramic culture of the ethnic groups living in Burkina Faso and further investigating rules and regulations of pottery production, exchange and distribution. The relevance of the undertaking was underlined by the fact that museums in their majority did collect weapons and ›art‹, but had not paid much attention to tools and domestic ware, like pottery – unless these items were beautiful¹¹, even though they carry rich information of the ethnic groups in focus. That this does not reflect only on German anthropologic collections and ethnographic reports was made clear by BARLEY (1994:93) who

¹⁰ I describe it as ›rather‹ patchy as he doesn't provide any information on Luo and/or Luyia pottery of Kenya despite the fact that these ethnic groups dominate the contemporary pottery scene in Kenya, while Kikuyu and Kamba pottery play a comparatively minor role in Kenya's national crafts scene.

¹¹ Das Sammeln schöner und exotischer Objekte anstatt typischer Alltagsgegenstände ⇨ die Aufmerksamkeit europäischer Afrikafreunde wird so zu Ungunsten der eher zurückhaltenden Gebrauchsgegenstände beeinflusst.

charged that »Smiths constitute an ongoing obsession of social anthropology while potters appear only in footnotes«. Despite the growing attention being paid to pottery-studies scholars in the 1990s tirelessly emphasised the neglect of pottery in literature and science and the fact that »field studies of pottery are far less numerous than those of metalworking« (HERBERT, 1993:18). HERBERT (1993) agrees with BARLEY (1994:66) that in connection with pottery, researchers reflect on the neglect of female technologies in Africa. HERBERT, however, attributes this gender bias approach to the circumstance that most scholars and researchers have been men, who undoubtedly have concentrated on male activities and who probably would not have had access to women's activities, in any case (HERBERT 1993:217). The latter is partly true in respect to potting in particular as taboos and cultural restrictions prohibiting men to even come close to a female potter at work are a widespread feature in Africa. During my fieldwork in Kenya I came across some Luo women who didn't want to talk about any of these taboos and restriction in the presents of a Luo man.

The objective of the Frobenius Institute, however, was to investigate and preserve the knowledge about African cultures. The program started off with three researchers, namely: Klaus Schneider who studied the Lobi, Arnulf Stöbel studying the Kurumba and Eike Haberland looking at the pottery among the Gurma. While investigating *pottery traditions* the following aspects were in focus: (1) Geographic-ethnologic-historic introduction of each ethnic group; (2) Social position of the potter, skill acquisition and work organisation; (3) technology, production and typology of the pottery ware; (4) economic aspects of the craft – production and use, sales, trade networks and markets; (5) ritual and religious aspects – rituals and taboos, pottery and religion (HABERLAND, 1986). While only the three researchers Schneider, Stöbel and Haberland worked full-time for the Frobenius Institute, another nine researchers contributed more or less voluntarily¹² to the same programme. While the researchers of the Frobenius Institute like many others¹³ had set sail to preserve the knowledge about African cultures and pottery traditions in particular, their focus was still directed towards the historical and traditional dimensions of the craft and less on contemporary forces inflicting adaptation and change. Scholars hardly ever extended their studies into the development the craft has taken under the impact of colonial rule and postcolonial technical aid programmes. That's where I want to enter the academic discussion and extend the already existing approach of compiling a country profile of the traditional potter's craft¹⁴, as BARBOUR and WANDIBBA (1989) did for Kenya, beyond a single ethnic group and beyond the set-up of the traditional potter's craft.

¹² Also see E. HABERLAND, 1986:204

¹³ For example: QUARCOO and JOHNSON (1968), BARLEY (1984), STÖBEL (1985), STERNER (1989), BERNS (1989, 1990) and SPINDEL (1989)

¹⁴ The following scholars represent only few of those who have widened their studies over and above a single ethnic group into the country profile of the potter's craft: MERSHEN (1988) for Jordan, EGGERT (1988) for Zaire, VOSSEN (1986) for Marokko and ENGELBRECHT (1988) for West Mexico.

2.1 >African Pottery on display<

In her introduction to STÖBEL's exhibition >Afrikanische Keramik. Traditionelle Handwerkskunst südlich der Sahara< (1985) KECSKÉSI stressed that while ceramics from East Asia and Old-America, of Islamic or European people, have been studied intensely, have been written about and exhibited, the traditional pottery of sub-Saharan Africa has been widely neglected not only by scholars, but even more so by art-collectors (KECSKÉSI 1985:9). Due to the fact that the ethnographic research on African pottery is very limited, STÖBEL made it clear that his observations and pictures presented in the catalogue do not offer a fully comprehensive picture on African pottery and ceramics. While the exhibition is based on African Ceramics being found in a number of private and public collections in Middle and Western Europe, the book¹⁵ portrays the same. As its title indicates STÖBEL did once again concentrate on the traditional rather than the contemporary African ceramics with special emphasis being laid on ethnographic-ethnologic implications of the potter's craft¹⁶. STÖBEL (1985:93) further enlightens the reader in that throughout the catalogue he describes the African pottery scene as it was still found circa 50 years ago, around the 1930s and the beginning of >modern Africa<¹⁷.

In the book >Afrikanische Keramik. Traditionelle Handwerkskunst südlich der Sahara< (1985) GÜNTER SMOLLA gave an overview on prehistoric African ceramics, DANIEL MATO contributed a report on the Terracotta sculptures of Niger and FAGG on the Terracotten of the Nok-Culture in Nigeria followed by a paper on Ife potters and their neighbours before STÖBEL himself embarked on African ceramics south of the Sahara. STÖBEL first introduces the reader to some technical aspects of the craft such as raw-materials and the different production methods from clay preparation to moulding, decorating and firing. Thereafter he concentrates on the socio-cultural context of the potter's craft, the typology and symbolism of pottery ware before he offers the reader a small excursion into the future and reveals his own perception of the potter's craft under continuously changing living conditions and environments¹⁸. Afterwards he reaches out to various African regions and provides insights into their pottery tradition, production and trade of pottery ware as well as taboos and rituals connected to pots and potters. With West African pottery dominating the various collections, due to their curios or artistic features, they overshadow the few exhibits of East African origin. While embracing East African pottery, STÖBEL did not mention Kenyan potters at all, thereby leaving the reader of the catalogue and the visitor to the exhibition in complete darkness as to the existing pottery ware and traditions in Kenya. To further confuse the public the exhibition accommodated two Turkana dolls from Kenya, without enlightening the observer on the fact that the Turkana of Kenya generally do not produce any pottery ware.

¹⁵ *Buch zur Ausstellung* – Exhibition catalogue

¹⁶ MARIA KECSKÉSI (1985:9)

¹⁷ A phenomenon, which we shall find again in connection with records on Kenyan indigenous crafts, described by WANDIBBA in 1992.

¹⁸ While I do not wish to disclose his view at this stage I will portray it in the course of the study.

The latest comprehensive book on African pottery ›*Smashing pots*‹ has been compiled by BARLEY in 1994. Like STÖBEL's discourse of 1985 BARLEY'S publication is based on the collection of the Museum of Mankind¹⁹, London, and therefore coverage is necessarily very partial. Following the footsteps of DROST (1967) BARLEY offers an impressive ethnographic overview on African pots and potters and their role in society, informs the reader about the ethnographic present, about past and prevailing perceptions and the socio-cultural status of the traditional potter, while he excluded figurative terracotta sculptures on the basis that they raise questions which were outside of the concern of his book.

With reference to the previous overview on African pottery studies and exhibitions it has to be stressed that neither DROST (1967), nor STÖBEL (1985) or BARLEY (1994) had much to say about Kenyan pots and potters. Summarily it can be said that Kenyan pots have been almost entirely neglected in the presentation of African arts, having been hidden in the shadow of the well known East African woodcarvings and the West African pottery. In his 289-page documentation ›*Töpferei in Afrika*‹ (1967) embracing African pottery, DROST mentions Kenya only three times covering a total of less than half a page. Similarly the exhibition ›The Potter's Art in Africa‹ launched by the British Museum/Department of Ethnography in 1970 included only two exhibits from Kenya besides 200 hundred exhibits from other countries. Taking account in to the public recognition and presentation of Kenyan pots and potters throughout the 20th Century, it can be concluded that the general perception has changed little since F. STUHLMANN, who pointed out that »*Tonkunstwerke, wie sie bei vielen Kongovölkern hergestellt werden, sind in Ostafrika unbekannt*»²⁰ (1910:25), as reflected by STÖBEL (1985) and BARLEY (1994).

2.2 Kenyan crafts and pottery – highlighted

First notes on Kenya's traditional crafts were recorded by explorers, missionaries and early European administrators and settlers who described various aspects of the crafts in connection with their general observations on the indigenous African way of life. SCHURTZ (1900), STUHLMANN (1910), LINDBLOM (1920), WAGNER (1970), WEIB (1971)²¹, HOBLEY (1971) and BROWN (1972), for example, observed various ethnic groups and described Kenya's crafts as part of their material culture and as part of their social and economic life during the pre-colonial and colonial era. Often their descriptions of the potter's craft are as brief as HOBLEY's on the Kamba potters. HOBLEY made no further comment than »they make pots of clay, no wheel is used; for water pots they use large gourds. Women make the cooking pots; men only make earthen tuyères used in the forge« (1971).

¹⁹ The Museum of Mankind is the Ethnography Department of the British Museum

²⁰ Translation into English: ›Art pieces made of clay, as produced by many races of the Congo region, are unknown in East Africa‹.

²¹ WEIB (1971) excursions on the crafts in East Africa, like pottery, go only as far as describing the pure manufacturing process without providing any information on the use, design and distribution of the pottery ware.

As following studies mirror the dominant academic discussion on Kenyan pots and potters, which strongly emphasised the historical dimension of the trade. Reports such as this – BLACKBURN (1973) ›*Okiek ceramics: evidence for central Kenya prehistory*‹; BOWER (1973) ›*Early pottery and other finds from Kisii District, Western Kenya*‹; BOWER (1978) ›*Early pottery and pastoral cultures on the central Rift Valley, Kenya*‹; COLLETT and ROBERTSHAW (1980) ›*Early Iron Age and Kansyore pottery: finds from Gogo Falls, South Nyanza*‹; LEAKEY (1948) ›*Dimple based pottery from Central Kavirondo, Kenya Colony*‹; POSNANSKY (1961) ›*Pottery types from archaeological sites in East Africa*‹; SUTTON (1964) ›*A review of pottery in western Kenya*‹; SOPER (1972) ›*Early Iron Age pottery types from East Africa: comparative analysis*‹; SOPER (1979) ›*Cord rouletted pottery*‹; SOPER (1980) ›*Iron Age Pottery assemblages from central Kenya*‹; WANDIBBA (1978) ›*A note on the cord rouletted pottery in western Kenya*‹ – furnish us with a view of the attitude which until today dominated the academic approach to Kenya’s pottery. In line with the contextual phase²², scholars such as BROWN (1972) ›*Potting in Ukambani: Method and Tradition*‹; GILL (1981) ›*The potter’s mark: contemporary and archaeological pottery of the Kenyan south-eastern highlands*‹; HERBICH (1981) ›*Luo Pottery: Socio-cultural context and archaeological implications*‹; NANGENDO (1984) ›*The contemporary ceramic industry of Babukusu*‹; NANGENDO (1995) ›*Daughters of the clay*‹ and Wandibba (unpublished report) ›*A socio-economic investigation of the women potters of Murang’a District, Central Kenya*‹ laid emphasis on pottery as such, in order to explore various aspects related to the environment of the potters and pottery manufacturing in Kenya.

GILL (1981), for example, studied the contemporary female potter and the distribution and consumption of traditional pottery among the Kamba people of Kenya during the late 1970s. Like HERBICH who studied Luo potters in Siaya District during the early 1980s and NANGENDO who studied Bukusu potters in Bungoma District during the 1980s and early 1990s, GILL investigated the complex relationship of material culture of one particular ethnic community to its social context in living societies with an anthropological mind and interest. All of them produced geographically and ethnologically restricted case studies of the traditional pottery trade among the ethnic communities in focus. Their finding will be reflected in Chapter 9 and 12 of this study.

Following an intense period of pottery studies in Kenya, BARBOUR and WANDIBBA compiled the data available during the late 1980s to form the first countrywide profile ever made on ›*Kenyan pots and potters*‹ (1989). The book reflects on the late attempt to preserve the knowledge of a diminishing cultural heritage for future generations. Though it does not provide an exhaustive record on Kenya’s pottery scene throughout the 20th Century, it is the most comprehensive inventory of Kenya’s traditional pottery. The individual contributions, however, vary in their academic degree as they range from anthropological, archaeological, historical and ethnological essays and records taken by a Mennonite missionary during his stay in Kenya, to a self-portrait of a Somali potter working in Garissa, North Eastern Province.

²² See Chapter 1.1.3

Asked to contribute an essay on crafts and manufacturing industries in Kenya to the book ›*An economic history of Kenya*‹ edited by OCHIENG´ and MAXON in 1992, WANDIBBA stressed that the available data did not allow him to trace the historical developments of Kenya’s traditional crafts and manufacturing industries beyond the turn of the century²³. As a result he described these industries, namely: iron industry, clay work/pottery, salt industry, house building, woodworking, leather work and basketry as practised at about the time of colonisation. However, in-depth and interdisciplinary research would have led him to the following sources, data and information: (1) Kenya National Archives – detailed information on pottery promotion during the 1950s under the umbrella of the Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation; (2) Socio-Cultural Profiles of 15 Kenyan districts – information on the performance of various crafts and industries in the districts during the 1980s; (3) the Institute of African Studies – Discussion Paper No. 64 ›*Artistic Innovations among the Luyia*‹ presented by EUGENE BURT in 1975, which portrays an evolving new trend in pottery production in Kenya; (4) the evaluation report ›*Handicraft Export Marketing*‹ of 1977 which was commissioned by ITC/UNCTAD/GATT in co-operation with the Government of Kenya and carried out by M. Benjamin, who worked as a handicraft consultant for KETA, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, between 1977 and 1982; (5) the MA-thesis ›*Export marketing: A case study of handicrafts exported in Kenya*‹ which was submitted to the University of Nairobi in 1988 by S. ATIENO. By touching on existing support programmes and organisations tackling the development of handicrafts in Kenya ATIENO’s studies reached far beyond the export marketing issue as such as will be described in Chapter 7 of this study; (6) MASAI’s seminar paper ›*Training for Self-Employment: The case of handicrafts in Kenya*‹ which he presented during the National Seminar of Transitional Education in June 1988²⁴. Like ATIENO, MASAI tried to draw the attention of educators and government officials on the economic potential of Kenya’s handicrafts. However, while MASAI embarked on the following topics: skill acquisition and transfer in the handicraft sector and the role of handicrafts in generating self employment in Kenya in 1988, he was no longer familiar with the subject matter nor in a position to discuss his own statements in 1995 when I approached him²⁵. He blamed the latter on the fact that nobody had taken any academic interest in handicrafts since, resulting in his own loss of enthusiasm.

With scholars in the past confining themselves to ethnographic studies with a very limited regional focus and with the view to preserving the still existing knowledge on a fast diminishing material culture, it is apparent that the need for more specific investigations of the development of Kenya’s potters’ crafts and the driving forces behind this development have not been taken up. It is at this turning point that I wish to pick up the academic discussion on pottery. Rather than looking at the traditional background and set-up of the craft in an isolated manner, I have studied Kenya’s pottery scene with the view to investigating the potters scene as it responds to

²³ Reviewing Africa’s economy in the 1950s the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (1959) had already stressed that statistics on traditional African handicrafts, even on those which are commercialised, were inadequate or lacking at the time.

²⁴ The Friederich Ebert Foundation launched the seminar.

²⁵ Prof. Masai was by then head of the Department of Economy at the University of Nairobi.

changing socio-economic and environmental conditions, changing values and market forces and the intervention of development organisations who grant development aid to the sector.

Picture 1: Adaptation and change – with a foot added to it a Luo cooking pot has been turned into a pot-planter



Environmental perception and organisational set-up of the potter's craft in Africa

3 Mind share²⁶: Pottery between craft, handicraft and art

Phenomena like tradition, resistance, extinction, adaptation, innovation and change present in every aspect of life also occur in the production and distribution of pottery ware and influence the organisational set-up, environmental perception and status of the potter's craft. However, before we take a closer look at the environmental perception of and attributes associated with pottery ware and ceramics in the Kenyan context I would like to address the often disputed and until today vague term ›handicrafts‹ and also the contradicting use of the terms ›pottery‹ and ›ceramics‹.

As objects of material culture and history traditional crafts have been and still are of interest to scientists and researchers, who in their early days accomplished more descriptive than analytic reports on the subject. With the conversion of society during the colonial era the traditional crafts were subject to adaptation and change which is reflected in a long lasting discussion of the term ›craft‹ thereby differentiating between ›traditional crafts‹ and ›modern crafts‹, between ›utilitarian crafts‹ and ›decorative crafts‹. As early as 1910 STUHLMANN recorded significant differences thereby dividing the East African crafts into two categories:

- »1. ›The indigenous Crafts and Industries‹ and
2. ›The Crafts and Industries influenced by Foreigners‹.« (STUHLMANN 1910)

While traditional crafts like ironwork, hut building, pottery, basket making and leather work for example were described as integral elements of the social and economic life affecting the division of labour as well as the magical and medical practices among traditional societies, the new crafts, which WAGNER (1970) defined as ›modern crafts‹, such as carpentry, brick-laying, thatching and tailoring were introduced by the industrial and craft departments of mission or government schools and to a lesser extent, by apprenticeship with Indian craftsmen in European townships or at Indian trading centres. As a result of the ›*Economic survey on Africa since 1950*‹ THE UNITED NATIONS DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS (1959) made an attempt to distinguish the difference between traditional handicrafts on the one hand and the remaining non-traditional branches of manufacturing on the other, as stated below:

²⁶ Mind share in this context stands for the perception/image of something or somebody in a person's mind/opinion/conceptual understanding.

Traditional Handicrafts

- are the embodiment of African traditional skills
- products of the traditional handicrafts are normally intended for use by Africans²⁷ and reflect the traditional pattern of consumption
- specialised production with a view to sale is found on a significant scale only in urban areas, notably those of North Africa
- south of the Sahara traditional handicrafts are often primitive and largely undifferentiated from agriculture

Modern Handicrafts / Industrial Establishments

- heavy concentration of industrial establishments in and around one or a few urban centres
- industrial undertakings have been established eminently with Non-African capital, enterprise adventurousness and expertise
- the African population is largely involved as unskilled or semi-skilled labour
- in many countries Governments participate directly in manufacturing
- in nearly all countries machinery and transport equipment is chiefly or entirely imported

While pottery in Kenya clearly carries the attributes of a ›Traditional Handicraft‹ (as specified above), ceramic production, which was first introduced to Kenya's craft scene during the 1950s, appears better fitted to the second category ›Modern Handicrafts‹. However, as we will see later, even this classification is not as straightforward as it might seem.

The either ›rural‹ or artistic character of handicrafts was further emphasised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 1968 with its attempt to cluster handicrafts into three categories: (1) traditional village industries; (2) artistic crafts and (3) servicing/manufacturing enterprises located in rural areas.²⁸ Whether a craft is perceived as traditional village industry or artistic craft is largely dependent on the viewpoint of the observer and/or consumer. A craft, such as pottery might be perceived as an industrial activity by some people, while it may be regarded as a handicraft by others to whom the products do not represent articles of primarily utilitarian value and domestic use. A well finished and designed traditional water-pot will without doubt be perceived as utility ware by most Kenyans while for the eye of the overseas consumer, for example, the same pot more likely is perceived as a decorative piece of African nature which might suit the interior design in Europe or America during a certain fashion trend. With the introduction of the ›Generalised System of Preferences‹ (GSP) which partly, or totally, exempts handicrafts from developing countries from the payment of import duties in European or American countries, the term ›handicraft‹ gained new importance and asked for a generally accepted definition. In 1969, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) adopted the

²⁷ See Chapter 6.3 for details on perception and promotion of rural industries during the 1950s under the Ministry for Community Development.

²⁸ Also see PRODEC (1994:6)

following definition of handicrafts, which, in principle, commanded widespread acceptance for many years to come: »The term handicraft covers articles produced with simple tools or instruments in most cases peddle powered or handled by the craftsman himself or with no tools at all. The category includes items which often have additional characteristics such as traditional or artistic features typical of the country or region in which they are produced« (UNCTAD 1969:7).

Like many other countries the Government of Kenya adopted the UNCTAD definition to facilitate and ease export trade involving Kenyan handicrafts. After its inauguration in 1976 the Kenya External Trade Authority (KETA) was authorised to issue ›Certificates of Origin‹ against those handicraft exports for which preferential treatment is required. It is, however, surprising that neither Kenya nor any of the receiving/importing countries who all respond to the GSP have ever made any sincere attempt to specify in detail what exactly qualifies as a handicraft, in a national and international context and what does not. The weakness of the UNCTAD definition is highlighted by the fact that it allows products like fishing flies and T-shirts produced in Kenya to be categorised as handicrafts thus qualifying for international import tax exemption while T-shirts in the European context are hardly associated with handicrafts at all. However, first attempts to get an overview on export trade led KETA in 1981 to the introduction of the following clusters: Wood Carvings, Sisal Baskets, Soap Stone Carvings, Jewellery and Others²⁹. While these clusters provide useful information on the type of handicrafts dominating the export trade from Kenya they do by no means reflect a proper and comprehensive picture of the countries overall handicraft production.

The weakness of the definition is further portrayed by the numerous attempts to further specify the difference between craft and handicraft, to avoid or even replace these terms with other clusters and definitions. Born out of controversial and at times conflicting cultural values, needs and perceptions the discussion about the term ›craft‹ carried on for decades on international and national levels, becoming part of the ›informal sector debate‹, of educational programmes and development policies. In his treatise ›Die Völkerstämme im Norden Deutsch-Ostafrikas‹ (1971) WEIB, for example, provided a little excursion on the term ›Handwerk‹³⁰ from a German point of view. He reflected on the German terminology as applied by K. BÜCHER and H. SCHURTZ who defined pottery and wickerwork carried out by women in their spare time as homecraft while blacksmiths were categorised as wage workers. Because the women's production exceeded their own immediate needs and led to trading and the blacksmiths simultaneously carried out activities which met the categories of homecraft and wage work WEIB decided to generally apply the term ›Handwerk‹ to all: pottery, wicker work and blacksmiths. During the same year HOBLEY published an ›Ethnology of A-Kamba and other East African Tribes‹ (1971) containing information on the manufacture of baskets, traps, musical instruments, stools, metal items and pots as well as native beer production and bee-keeping under the heading ›Industries and Arts‹

²⁹ For further details see Chapter 7.2

³⁰ The German expression ›Handwerk‹ can be translated to ›craft‹.

without ever mentioning the term craft. In 1974 the World Crafts Council³¹ promoted the use of the following 4 clusters which are specified as follows:

1. Artist-Craftsman Creation:

Under this category one would find unique pieces of work with high creative content that embody superior hand skills and techniques like the Makonde wood carvings of Tanzania or the Magbetu pots from Zaire mentioned in Chapter 3.1

2. Popular (Folk) Art:

Baskets and pottery ware, practical expressions of local or national cultures and objects of decorative or utilitarian purpose would fall under this category. These items reflect a shared view of life as well as the embodiment of a high degree of hand skill and technique.

3. Pre-Industrial Crafts:

Workshop production of objects that draw on popular art traditions and skills but are produced in quantity by hand like the mass-produced ›Kamba carvings‹ and Kisii Stone Carvings would qualify as pre-industrial crafts. Even more so whenever the production process is pushed to extensive division of labour as can be observed among the Kisii Stone carvers.

4. Industrial Production:

Industrial handicraft production with traditional craft designs and objects reproduced mechanically in quantity is rarely found in African countries while it is very typical for the handicraft industry in many parts of Asia.

According to leading export promotion companies and organisation the term ›handicraft‹ has been superseded by market-lead definitions for the main product groups from developing countries. Correspondingly interior accessories, decorative and gift articles originating from the developing countries are classified as:

1. »Original hand-made art objects of high quality and price, according to traditional designs;
2. decorative items often based upon local designs: either articles which are partly industrially produced, and partly hand-made (e.g. hand-painted), or articles which are entirely industrially produced (items that are non-exclusive, fashionable, and produced in larger quantities);
3. utility items, functional products with decorative value, such as: spoons, trays, candle holders, lampshades and suchlike« (WALLAGE 1994:12)

and by means of tradition, of no essential function in a Western household. They largely enter the market as luxury items, for which the demand is strongly influenced by fashion trends, availability of competitive goods and high quality standards.

Unlike the commercial sector, which has abandoned the term handicrafts in favour of market-lead termini for the same, the alternative trade circuit is still using the terms handicrafts and cottage craft industries. However, while attending to sectors known to have export potential and to be of interest to Alternative Trading Organisations, they differentiate between the following clusters namely: (1) Handicrafts³² (including

³¹ For details see PRODEC (1994:6–7)

³² Comparing the clustering/grouping of KETA with these once we have to note that no uniform definition of handicrafts is used.

jewellery and leather goods); (2) Textiles; (3) Processed food products; and (4) Handmade paper³³.

The following examples will once again underline that whether or not a craft is termed/perceived as handicraft, craft, manufacturing or industrial activity depends largely on the perspective of the observer and the socio-economic value attached to it. During a women group survey conducted in 1990 by the Lake Basin Development Authority (LBDA), for example, the study team grouped pottery together with brick-making, tailoring, carpentry and shoe-making under the cluster ›manufacturing‹ while they looked upon basket weaving, mat-making, cotton weaving, crocheting, knitting and sisal rope production as handicraft activities. As illustrated above, responding to the lack of a uniform definition of crafts and handicrafts, sector activists come up with ›home baked‹ solutions and clusters suiting their own purpose at the time³⁴.

This small excursion was deemed necessary as craft and handicraft promotion often follow different routes, motives and objectives which will be further elaborated on in the course of this study.

However, just like the disputed term handicrafts the terms ›ceramics‹, ›ceramic industries‹ etc. is often used in a diverse and thereby misleading way as will be illustrated hereafter. Attending to the ›Socio-Cultural Profile of Machakos District‹ (Kenya) OSAGA ODAK (1987) described the industrial activities within the district with the intention of illustrating the direction to which industry and trade were moving during the late 1980s and how the future development in industry is related to others sectors of the district's development and social process. In the process, the research team selected and investigated the following sectors of industry: wood work including carpentry, fibre work including basketry and other types of weaving such as mat and rope making, metal work including both modern and traditional techniques and pot-making. The section on pot making, however, is headlined ›Ceramic Industries‹. While the term ›ceramic industry‹ in Kenya as in most African contexts is firmly associated with high fired and glazed pottery ware, the pot-making found and described by ODAK is of low fired, unglazed nature and generally recognised as pottery ware. However, ODAK stated, in a rather undifferentiated manner, that pot making is one of the main aspects of ceramic industries with which the Machakos Kamba are preoccupied³⁵.

Following the debate on unemployment, vocational training and the informal sector development in Kenya on the one hand and having been exposed to the South East Asian Handicraft Scene on the other MASAI raised the issue of ›Training for Self Employment: The Case of Handicrafts in Kenya‹ during the 1988 National Seminar of Transitional Education in Nairobi. MASAI's paper focused on stone and wood carving, leather work, weaving and basketry, pottery and ceramics, needlework, jewellery and ornaments which he classified as traditional crafts while crafts, such as carpentry, tailoring, metal work, masonry and cobblery, classified as non traditional, received little attention. Yet, MASAI's classification and description of the crafts is misleading, as it does not respond duly to Kenya's cultural heritage and contemporary craft scene. ›Pottery‹, for example covers traditional and non-traditional crafts activities with

³³ For more details see Traidcraft Exchange (1995:13)

³⁴ Also see WENZEL (1995:185)

³⁵ See Socio-Cultural Profile of Machakos District (1987:213)

›ceramics‹, as applied in Kenya for glazed pottery only, being alien to the material culture and craft traditions of Kenya's people.

Looking at the perception of African pots and potters we once again need to differentiate between the various view-points of the observers or commentators and their attachment, approach or affiliation to the craft. We are dealing with the views of archaeologists and ethnologists, of colonial administrators and educators, of government and development institutions, of art collectors as well as the potters themselves and the general public and their perception of the African crafts in a broad cultural and economic context.

While the academic approach and view of pottery has been described in Chapter 1 I would like to further elaborate on the discrepancy of internal and external viewpoints of observers, collectors and consumers of African crafts and pottery ware in particular.

3.1 The ›European view‹

The interest of collecting ceramics in Europe can be dated back to the beginning of the 1650s, and started with porcelain ware from the Far East. »At least since the eighteenth century European or Western taste has particularly admired certain elements in ceramics: high fired wares, fine textures, shiny glazed surfaces, elegant painted decoration. High points in ceramic art are Greek vases, decorated Oriental ceramics, or fine European porcelain« (VINCENTELLI, 1989). During the 19th Century Fayancen and Majoliken decorated the wealthy *Bürgerhäuser* during *Biedermeier* and *Gründerzeit* in Europe. During this period the lines were drawn up to differentiate craft from art objects since the elite's interests were directed towards the aesthetic appearance of the ceramic object (STÖBEL 1985:53). In the early decades of the 20th Century, and »parallel with the rise of Modernism, studio potters such as Bernard Leach proposed alternative values, favoring the simple elegance of earlier oriental wares, or the lively spontaneity of British slip-ware. African ceramics conform to none of these norms; they are hand built, generally fired in a bone-fire or open fired system, which produces a softer body; they are not glazed, and they are usually functional³⁶. In other words, they appear to have qualities that immediately designate them as of a lower order in relation to the ceramics respected in the West³⁷. They represent a very different aesthetic. This hierarchy of values is characteristic of the relationship of first and third world societies« (VINCENTELLI 1989).

»When artists and collectors began to acquire ›primitive art‹, at the turn of the century, they collected it for its aesthetic value, and they collected objects which had something in common with their definition of the art object – something that could be designated as sculpture, made out of materials that are recognized as precious – gold, bronze, ivory – or at very least durable, such as carved wood. Abstract formal qualities were most valued and an apparently ritual rather than a domestic function was preferred« (VINCENTELLI 1989). In line with Vincentelli, GRUNER (1988) stressed that little attention has been paid to Baule ceramics (DROST 1967) while their wood

³⁶ Unglazed terra cotta has associations with the humble flowerpot.

³⁷ An attitude that spread very fast among the ›learned‹ African people and found its reverberation in Kenya's formal education system as illustrated in Chapter 6.

carvings, gold and *Gelbguß* work are often mentioned while praising the artistic abilities of the Baule. BARLEY (1994:9) referred to the ancient cultures of Sao, Jenne and Igbo-Ukwu who all produced excellent pots, which have largely been overlooked in the western enthusiasm for bronze-castings and sculptural terracotta. The latter samples indicate that apart from the aesthetical values the low value of pottery answers to a hierarchy of materials, which influences the mind of Europeans and Africans alike. BARLEY (1994) provided us with a sample from »the West African kingdom of Benin (Nigeria) where each substance must be appropriate to its use. Thus, in Benin City, kings' heads are cast in brass, a royal material, for their memorial altars. Chiefs' heads are of wood but may be partly covered with hammered brass sheeting. Brass-casters' heads are made of terracotta, a humbler, less precious but durable material that is involved in their work since the creation of a brass image involves making a negative image in baked clay into which molten metal can be poured« (BARLEY 1994:81). In keeping with our own notions of Fine Art and the hierarchy of elements – metal, wood, terracotta – African pottery/ceramics did not achieve a corresponding recognition to African sculpture which became fashionable among the artists and collectors during the 20th Century (VINCENTELLI 1989). However, some potters, like Voanya – a Woyo potter from Zaire – were able to recognize and capture the trend-of-time and engaged in producing vessels with anthropomorphic or zoomorphic elements for the »European market«. Voanya's pots like the well-known Magbetu pots (with human-head-lid) from Zaire³⁸ have since flooded Western museums and collections. Over time, with the ongoing replacement of pottery ware by modern vessels of aluminum, enamelware and plastic or more informal containers pottery ware is »disappearing« and BARLEY (1994:9) assumes that »it is probably more than a coincidence that it is this »disappearing« pottery that is the latest African artifact to enter the Western art market. The beauty, elegance and ingenuity of African pottery are beginning to gain wider appreciation just as the sales catalogues announce its imminent extinction.«

3.2 The »African view«

Unlike »Western« scholars and art collectors local consumers and African communities attribute quite different qualities to pottery ware being offered for barter or sale. In the African context I would like to draw attention to the different perceptions of potters among settled agricultural and pastoral societies. While pottery activities tend to form an integral part of the subsistence economy of the first group, pastoralists are often reported to despise not only farming, but other activities typical for the agriculturists, like pottery as well. Though they can have a rather negative attitude towards potting, NICKLIN (1979) stressed that many pastoralists do not despise the use of pottery, such as the Boran of Kenya. Nicklin, however, tried to explain this bias approach to potting and pots as such: »Certain cultural factors – such as contempt for craftwork – rather than the limitations imposed by their way of life, may account largely for the absence of pottery-making among such groups« (NICKLIN 1979:453).

³⁸ For details on the same see BARLEY (1994:143ff.).

Signs of adaptation and Western acculturation have been reported from West Africa, as a result of European art and crafts education and newly defined standards, and further boosted by the increasing range of products on sale. As early as the 1920s, British educationalists observed a complete lack of belief in their indigenous art forms or traditional crafts among students attending schools under colonial administration in Algeria. The pottery, they knew, no longer fitted well with their new way of life so recently brought into focus (HARROD, 1989). About 60 years later VINCENNELLI (1989) came across young women among the Kabyle of Algeria despising pottery as a dirty occupation, a perception widely spread among Kenyan people today³⁹. Elsewhere, pottery is viewed as an activity carried out by the less advantaged; the poor members of the community. These could belong to a less privileged ethnic group or caste like the Twa of Rwanda⁴⁰, they could be women in general, who have limited access to employment, property and cash income, or they could be disadvantaged women like widows⁴¹. VINCENNELLI (1989) provided a sample for the latter from Algeria, where BALFET had recorded that in the 1950s selling pots for cash was a sign of poverty and therefore dishonorable but allowable for widows. Reflecting on his experiences BARLEY (1994:72–73) stated that he found a big difference in the appreciation of traditional pottery ware in Dowayoland, Nigeria, between the late 1970s /early 1980s and today. Around 1980 only the potters were rich enough to buy imported Nigerian enamelware. Therefore BARLEY’S attempt to buy their clay pots were interpreted as meanness and greeted with disbelief that his wife would tolerate the imposition of such shameful, old-fashioned pots. Some years later the use of enamelware had spread in the same village and marked formal occasions, while pottery was being used for everyday meals. On a visit to a smart Nigerian urban home during the early 1990s BARLEY found that, surprisingly, values had changed over the last decade and that traditional pottery was by then used both as high status table decoration and as serving dishes marking the formal nature of the event. In the city, it was then the imported glazed crockery, still not available in the village that was regarded as an everyday utensil. While concentrating on changing attitudes towards the use of clay vessels in the African context we should reflect and compare our own western habits and attitudes »our own eating and drinking vessels are used to categorise ourselves, their contents and the events at which they appear. The matching dinner service shows our wealth and the formality of the occasion, the status of host and guest ... «⁴² (BARLEY 1994:69). To underline the similarity in behaviour BARLEY quoted to the following occasion among the Southern Nigerian Kalabari: »After the death of a great trader, a feast was organised at which imported food and drink were offered to guests who had to wear imported dresses and eat of English china, while speaking only English; TALBOT (1932:237) records local explanations of this: »Now our dead father has

³⁹ In Malawi RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:XVIII) made the following observation: »Pottery, though economically viable, is regarded as hard and dirty work, and is consequently not very attractive for young women.«

⁴⁰ Also see DANISCH (1991) for a sample from Nepal

⁴¹ Also see Chapter 12 of this study.

⁴² Think of the German tradition to collect *Sammeltassen* or to keep and use *Sonntagsporcellan* in contrast to the crockery used on a daily basis.

become a very great man indeed; so great as even to dine with white men in the ghost world« (BARLEY 1994:73).

Picture 2: *Traditional Luo pipe*



4 Socio-cultural environment and organisational set-up of the potter's craft in Africa

While pottery is generally looked upon as a homecraft, an integral part of the domestic life of the African woman, STÖBEL (1985:147) reported of male potters working for the king of Buganda (Uganda) at his residence and of female potters of the Lilima and Humbe who were sent by their husbands to pay the tribute demanded by the king of Rozwi (Zimbabwe) by working for him for some time before returning back home. By taking a closer look at pottery, one will find quite a significant number of different production set-ups. While pottery has developed to a specialized craft among some communities, as among the Twa of Rwanda, it forms an integral part of the subsistence economy in other communities all over the continent⁴³. This, however, does not mean that the work environment of African potters is identical or even similar. At the same time as commercialisation takes place in some geographical locations, there are various reasons for the partial distinction of pottery in others, such as: death or illness of the experienced potter as among the Il Chamus potters of Kenya⁴⁴, exhaustion of the clay quarry or insufficient sources of other raw materials, economic competition with other activities such as plantation work⁴⁵ and last, but not least, a reduced demand of pots in the region. For Kenya BARBOUR and WANDIBBA (1989) illustrated that even different ethnic groups living in the same country often follow completely different rules and regulations when it comes to pottery. Just how different the traditional production environment can be is illustrated by the following examples: from South Africa it is reported that the Zulu potters build an extra house for potting next to the residential house to which entrance is strictly prohibited for everybody except the potter herself. Meanwhile Baule potters of the Ivory Coast and Luo potters, Kikuyu potters and Luyia potters of Kenya work on an individual basis in their homestead. Some of them, however, are known to team up with other potters to fire the pots just outside the village boundary. Yet others, such as the Kamba, Meru, Adavida and Pokot potters of Kenya used to team up and choose a sheltered place away from human habitation for moulding and firing their pots. Mostly one will find traditional potters clustering around clay sources while commercial pottery enterprises show the tendency to care less about the distance to the clay source while giving preference to easy access and close linkages to their markets and clientele. Thus, also an ethnic group is well known for its traditional pottery activities, one may find that the craft is only carried out in some villages, like among the Luo of Kenya where potting activities are booming in Oriang', Omboga and Oyugis, but no pots are being produced at Homa Bay, for example.

⁴³ Also see SCHOTT 1986; GRUNER 1988; STÖBEL 1985; VINCENTELLI 1989

⁴⁴ For more details see BROWN (1989) in: BARBOUR and WANDIBBA (1989:75–76)

⁴⁵ This was supported by a personal comment of Harriet P., a Meru potter living at Kunati (10.8.1995)

While NICKLIN (1979:449) pointed out that »despite the limitations and opportunities offered by the environment, cultural and economic factors are often paramount in the location of pottery manufacture« he did not elaborate on issues concerning the driving forces behind the decline of the potter's craft in some regions or among some ethnic groups and the tendency towards specialisation and commercialisation among others. These incorporate questions such as, 'did communities or regions where pottery was made not only for home use but also for trade, have access to superior clay⁴⁶ or rare decorative media, or was it the potter's skill or exposure and the excellence of their decoration that made their ware popular beyond the limits of their own village⁴⁷ and who explored and invested in the increased market potential of pottery ware?'

If anything has been studied it is the traditional vessel types, production methods, distribution systems and socio-cultural set-ups of African potters, particularly in West Africa, while the contemporary economic performance, linkages and implications of the craft and also its socio-cultural and professional status in a rapidly changing environment have often only been touched upon if at all.

Even today most scholars are preoccupied by trying to trace and highlight the inherent cultural and historical indications of the potter's trade while describing Africa's pottery scene. BARLEY (1994), for example, emphasised that »the degree to which pots are made for sale or use varies widely throughout the continent and the universal presence of pots in markets obscures the fact that they are not always just another market commodity« (BARLEY 1994:61). Other scholars repeatedly pointed out traditional ceremonies connected with marriage and the earth, for example, as mechanisms for distributing pots. In many African cultures clay-pots symbolise wealth and fertility. With this in mind pots are often presented as gifts to welcomed and honourable guests in order to show respect or appreciation of the visit, even nowadays. At the same time as pots are sold at the market they are still being supplied according to links of kinship without any, or with reduced payment⁴⁸. Nevertheless, the wealth that may be attributed to potters today depends no longer on his/her social standing, next to the smiths and other traditional specialists, but on trade. While scholars like SHEPARD (1956:352–353) thought that African pots were too fragile and bulky, neither a necessity nor of high market value and therefore inappropriate objects of trade especially among people with a simple system of transport, STÖBEL (1985:70 ff.) proved this wrong and BARLEY commented that »nothing could be further from the truth. Everyday pots are regularly found hundreds of miles from their place of production and few African markets have no potters' quarter⁴⁹« (BARLEY 1994:64–66).

⁴⁶ In Kenya people refer to pottery from western Kenya as better and stronger than pottery from other regions and origin, for example, Kikuyu pots.

⁴⁷ Also see SHEPARD (1956:356).

⁴⁸ 7 of 23 or 17,5 % of all Luo potters interviewed by means of questionnaire mentioned that their relatives like them to be potters as it enables them to satisfy their own demand on pottery ware free of charge.

⁴⁹ In 1996, for example, Kenyan handicraft dealers exported large consignments of clay pots from western Kenya to the USA and other overseas destinations.

While in most traditional societies pots would change hands in a direct interaction between the (female) potter and the consumer, there is evidence that extensive pottery trade networks within African countries and regions are not at all a contemporary development. STÖBEL (1985:146–147), for example, reported of Shona villages in Zimbabwe, which specialised in pottery during the 18th and 19th Century. Here apart from having an important role in paying tribute to the king, pots were important merchandise traded by Zuzuru traders who travelled over long distances. STÖBEL also reported of more elaborate cases of long distance trade especially among the Kisi of Tanzania, the Buvuma of Uganda and the Teke, Boma, Soko and Sango of Zaire. Here the women concentrated on the production of pottery while their husbands traded the pots over long distances by boat, across lakes and along rivers⁵⁰. Other samples of long distance trade, some of which can be traced back to the 19th Century, have been reported from Togo, Cameroon and Sudan. However, the commercialisation of the African pottery, as such, is a rather contemporary phenomenon. Apart from the above mentioned cases of long distance trade, stages of commercialisation have been observed among the Kabyle of Algeria (VINCENNELLI 1989), the Baule of the Ivory Coast (GRUNER 1988), the Shai of Ghana (QUARCOO and JOHNSON 1968), the Lyela of Burkina Faso (SCHOTT 1986) and by NICKLIN among Nigerian potters. In response to growing competition and other dominant market forces such as the partial replacement of the traditional clay pot with alternative vessels and containers potters have specialised and restricted their production to specific forms and designs. STÖBEL (1985:136) reported of cases of market geared specialisation among the Nuba of Sudan and among urban potters in northern parts of Africa. Like the Luo potters of Kenya who sell their products at Oyugis market, Nuba potters from different villages reportedly have specialised in different pot-types and designs. With the commercialisation of the potters trade the need for individual women to produce their own domestic pots at home has ceased. As a result, pottery has once again gained public recognition as a specialist craft activity (VINCENNELLI 1989) but, nevertheless, in Kenya at least, it has not achieved the status of a fully-fledged profession. Even where pottery centres developed and pottery became a choice and pots a valuable economic commodity, potting, in most African countries and rural communities, remained a seasonal activity, carried out on a part time basis during the agricultural off-seasons. Looking at pottery traditions all over Africa BARLEY (1994:66) outlined that African potting is generally associated with the dry season since it cannot normally be carried out at any other time for a mixture of practical and symbolic reasons. Practical reasons prevent traditional potters even today from attending to the craft during the rainy seasons. These reasons are either found in their increased farming activity or in the fact that clay pits next to rivers, for example, are flooded or that wet clay is too heavy to be carried home or that in the absence of a kiln the wet ground simply does not permit the firing of pots. Consequently, years of drought when farming activities are reduced to a minimum often boost the pottery activity in the region⁵¹ offering the potters a commodity to trade for food products. In contrast to the

⁵⁰ See STÖBEL (1985:71) for maps of trade routes.

⁵¹ Personal comments made by a Luo potter, Rispa A. – interviewed on 13.11.95. Also see STÖBEL (1985:142)

prevailing assumption by which the seasonality of the potter's craft in rural Africa is exclusively attributed to time constraints and cultural restrictions affecting the craft during agricultural peak seasons, my field studies in Kenya revealed that alternating monetary demands affecting the purchasing power of the people have gained importance and momentum over the years. With most people in the rural Kenya living on a rather limited and constrained budget consumption patterns are often adjusted to the most pressing demands which leaves many families almost without any money at their disposal at times when school fees have to be paid, farm inputs such as seeds and fertilisers have to be bought or at the end of the month when the salary has been depleted.

Generally speaking the potter's craft with its activists and products can only be understood if its position is considered within society as a whole. It would be foolish to discuss the craft performance of any given culture or individual without studying and attempting to understand the historical, cultural, political and economic context of the same which motivates, inspires or hampers certain developments. In Africa, in particular, pottery is deeply rooted in the micro-cosmos of society from which the traditional potter receives her/his social and ritual regulations, while it is also the potter who actively influences various aspects of the culture and daily life of the people (STÖBEL 1985:54). Looking at the history of crafts in a broader sense, SHEPARD pointed out that »different crafts and the knowledge and skills on which they depend do not necessarily develop at a uniform rate, since needs and interests from which they spring do not follow a simple course«⁵² (SHEPARD 1956:362).

With traditional beliefs restricting the potter's activities in numerous cases, to a specific clan or gender, to either certain periods of the year or of the month⁵³ or to certain production areas, the economic growth, specialisation and commercialisation of the traditional potter's craft has been very laborious.

4.1 Mythological beliefs hampering economic growth

In quoting STÖBEL (1985:54), HERBERT (1993:200) once again emphasised that potting has its roots deep in the microcosm of society, deriving its social and ritual prescriptions from the larger culture but also acting on it. In other words, myths are not mirror images of primeval times but reflect the mentality and attitudes of a community or ethnic group to various cultural aspects. As long as the myths are 'alive' they influence the world and social perception and order of the people. For example, the Konzo of Ethiopia link pots and graves through the notion of the female earth. »Pots, in particular, are closely associated with women. Pottery is specifically a female craft, and in some areas pots are placed on their graves. It seems that the pot is seen as symbolising fertility (a womb-like vessel), earth (the material from which it is made), women (who make and use it), and nourishment (what it contains)' [HALLPIKE 1972:289]« (BARLEY 1994:53). We once again are taken back to the gender aspect of the potters' craft, with gender not merely being a phenomenon of individual

⁵² This applies not only to different crafts but also to the same craft carried out by men and women who might serve different interests as they attend to the craft.

⁵³ Examples for this are found among the Meru and Kamba potters of Kenya.

psychology and experience but being a basic metaphysical category by which the whole universe is organised. This leads us closer to the fact that while social, religious and political changes do alter symbolic systems the degree to which myths have survived those changes has a major impact on the development of any activity, which once formed an integral part of the traditional culture. However, pottery ware which is produced in modern production centres which have no rooting in the traditional set-up and society, like the pottery produced in the potter's co-operative in Marocco (BARLEY 1994:47) or the pottery and ceramic workshops in Nairobi, for example, are not burdened by the ritual or symbolic value that many traditional pots still have. The ›modern potter‹ is therefore free to venture into commercial production and marketing while the ›traditional potter‹ might be restricted by still existing taboos.

These myths and taboos, where existent, affect not only the use and handling of the vessels but the entire production process from the clay excavation, throughout the moulding and decoration process to the firing and final finishing of the pots. BARLEY (1994:66), for example, pointed out that in many societies »the firing of pots must be carefully controlled in time and space to avoid supernatural sanctions such as the disturbance of the rain or the destruction of the pots« and that among the Baganda (ROSCOE 1911:402), for example, potting must be arranged according to the status of the moon; it being impossible to fire pots when the moon is waning (BARLEY 1994:156). These myths and taboos also effect the life (and fertility) of the potter by restricting potters from engaging in sexual intercourse, for example, or, preventing women from engaging in pottery while menstruating or pregnant. In Kenya prohibition of sexual intercourse in connection with pottery activities is reported among the Kikuyu, Kamba, Samburu Dorobo and Luo. Most taboos are related to ritual purity and the whole cycle of birth, life and death. WANDIBBA (1995) stated that among the Bukusu of Kenya, for example, it is taboo for grown-up girls and active women who have not reached menopause to enter a clay quarry since menstruation is considered a state of ritual impurity. The argument is that pots made from clay of a quarry, which had been penetrated by a ritual impure woman, would crack and break in the firing process (WANDIBBA 1989). WANDIBBA (1995:163) furthermore stressed that »the Kikuyu taboo is very emphatic about the acquisition and handling of clay. Traditionally, it is taboo for a Kikuyu man to even as much as touch potting clay«.

»Like smelting iron, pottery involves the transformation of inchoate masses of earth into objects indispensable to civilisation; like smelting, too, firing pots offers a serious risk of failure and even some danger to life and limb. One would therefore expect that the entire process would be intensely ritualised, ...« (HERBERT 1993:206 – also see DROST 1964:103). Numerous scholars did provide evidence of the same among them VIVIANNA PÂQUES who, based on her research among a Bamana subgroup living in Mali, stated that techniques and rituals are inseparable from the conceptualisation of pottery itself. »The actions of the potter, like those of other technologists, are regulated by a belief system that leaves nothing to chance. In this schema, as in other realms of Bamana thought, gender and age are dominant categories and have spatial and numerical correspondences« (HERBERT 1993:210). Elsewhere, potters and smith do form endogamous groups who are separated from the rest of the community, at times avoided or even feared. Consequently intermarriage between this artisan group and

‘normal’ people is often forbidden or discouraged. BARLEY (1994:64) reported that among the Dowayoes of Cameroon, the potters must live apart and may not enter huts of others, cannot share food or even draw their water from the same source and never eat from the same vessel. From Kenya WANDIBBA (1995) reported that pot-making among the Maragoli (WAGNER 1970), the Kipsigis (PERISTIANY 1939) and the Kamba (LINDBLOM 1920) is confined to particular clans. Among the Meru of Kenya, potters and smiths alike were perceived as specialists, though not forming an endogamous group as such, and they were feared because of their special knowledge of transformation processes and power⁵⁴. One can imagine the impact of diverse traditional beliefs and cultural values on the contemporary crafts by looking at yet another sample from Kenya. »Speaking about the Luyia of Kenya, WAGNER (1954:39) equates prestige and power with the possession of secret knowledge. In this society, rainmakers, diviners, and smiths all have prestige because of a long ancestry of secret knowledge. Basket makers, wood and leather workers, and potters do not because they are not ›owned‹ by particular families or clans; they do not, therefore, possess magic and arcane knowledge« (HERBERT 1993:217). Today pottery is threatened with distinction among the Meru people of Kenya meanwhile Luyia pots have gained national and international recognition during the late 20th Century.

4.2 Traditional and ‘modern’ pottery in Africa: A gender bias set-up

At the turn of the century scholars like SCHURTZ (1900) and STUHLMANN (1910) studied the culture and socio-economic set-up of traditional African societies and observed a strong division of work and manufacturing processes along gender lines. They noted that pottery seemed naturally to fit in the women's socio-cultural environment, since women were in charge of cooking, and therefore the main users of the pots, while men were only found producing clay-pipes and small magic pots.

While SCHURTZ held the influence of other cultures responsible for men involving themselves in pottery in Africa, he envisaged the task of culture in breaking up traditional work assignments to specific gender groups in order to facilitate new developments. Under the flag of ‘Western Culture’ boys were introduced to clay modelling, or inspired to copy the European crockery ware to which they were exposed at numerous mission centres⁵⁵. With the emerging formal education further separating the boys and the girls, a new line was drawn between the traditional craft activity and the newly introduced ›modern‹ crafts. As a result, modelling in clay and the production of tea pots etc. were widely perceived as a man’s job in contrast to traditional pot-making, and as such protected by the men in defence of male superiority over women. The ‘new products’ represented progress and change and were therefore valued much higher than domestic pottery ware.

Despite the fact that many scholars have observed rural-urban distinctions of pottery production and products during the 20th Century they did not investigate the

⁵⁴ Personal comment of Meru potters interviewed in August 1995. – For more details see Chapter 10.3

⁵⁵ Also see ENGELBERG *et.al.* (1988:103) for innovation agents during the colonial era in Zambia: ›Impulse für handwerkliche Entwicklung kamen hingegen von den Missionaren.‹

evolving urban based pottery scene which more often than not has little in common with the traditional rural based pottery of the country. In consideration of Africa's colonial history which favoured boys over girls education it does not seem surprising to find women associated with traditional rural based pottery and men dominating the urban based (modern) pottery scene. However, in the mid 1990s BARLEY made an effort to challenge this standard orthodoxy. For this purpose he quoted VOSSEN and EBERT (1986) who reported of women being involved in the decoration of modern urban pottery and male southern Berber potters in rural Marocco and Algeria⁵⁶. Even in Kenya women are commonly found in urban workshops decorating pottery and ceramic ware while male potters are found among the Luyia of western Kenya. As illustrated in Chapter 11, this, however, should not be mistaken as evidence that pottery production in Africa is no longer influenced and organised along gender lines. Even today male potters emphasis the difference between themselves and female potters on the other hand if given the chance, as they do not particularly like to work alongside women.

It can be summarised that work roles, whether traditional or implanted by the formal education system, still separate the work along gender lines, thereby making it difficult for the potter's craft to develop to its full potential.

4.3 External influence and internal change

At the beginning of the century the regional distribution of clay wares was attributed to the availability of raw materials and skilled potters. Reflecting his own cultural background STUHLMANN (1910) observed and stressed the lack of potter's wheels, kilns and glazes as he studied and described indigenous production techniques and designs applied by potters in East Africa. Exceptional product designs such as pots with handles or clay lamps were attributed to foreign influence. Years later, during the 1930s, WAGNER (1970:14) recorded that pottery had not been affected to any marked degree by European influences and that the traditional technique of shaping and firing pots was still employed without any innovations. Like STUHLMANN WAGNER pointed out that occasional changes, which did occur, could be attributed to isolated experiments carried out at mission centres⁵⁷.

Referring to Tschopik (1950) who investigated the influence of Inca dominance and of Spanish conquest in the pottery tradition of the Aymara in Peru SHEPARD stated that »too many variables are involved in the relation of conqueror and conquered and in the effect of contact and conquest on arts and crafts to allow simple generalisations« (SHEPARD 1956:350). He stressed that the fact that the people come under the domination of foreigners does not necessarily give cause for change in the shape of a cooking pot, although the introduction of new food habits could. In this context BARLEY highlighted an often neglected aspect of pottery, namely its ability to affect the taste of food by absorbing and retaining flavour. An aspect that was often pointed out to me in connection with the preparation of traditional dishes in Kenya but which

⁵⁶ Also see ROY (1987:51)

⁵⁷ STUHLMANN already stated in 1910 that German missionaries were introducing sculptural work with clay to their students.

finds its echo in England, for example, where the ceramic teapot is prized for the favourable and desired effect it lends to its contents. In other cultures it is not the tea but the traditional beer, among the Senufo for example, where the women (ROY 1987:60) say that beer brewed in metal containers is not saleable.

SHEPARD concluded that conquest may under certain circumstances have had little effect on the ceramic output of a people, while a new vessel shape may be accepted along with a different method of food preparation without modifying customary methods of finishing and firing⁵⁸. Potters in western Kenya, for example, have started to produce a flat bottomed clay *sufuria* which resemble the widely used aluminium *sufuria* which suits the charcoal *jikos* better than the round bottomed cooking pot which has been well adapted to the traditional three stone fireplace. In contrast to this 'inborn' innovations the conquerors could demand tribute in native wares or specify that pottery like their own be produced. Kilimesh K.⁵⁹ of Karachuonyo in western Kenya, for example, had been taught how to mould teapots, cups sugar dishes etc. by European missionaries. He later remembered that he traded his clay products against money or in replacement of the same as hut tax during the 1940s with the *bwana sekal mar Gendia*⁶⁰ being his first customer.

Reflecting on TALBOT'S observations of 1932 BARLEY (1994) pointed out that European visitors to West Africa in the nineteenth century were struck by the inroads made by imported crockery into the local pottery trade. Some decades later, during the 1950s, Cardew came across imitations of European forms done by Nigerian female potters and in 1988 GRUNER reported of highly decorated pottery ware from Katiola, of the Ivory Coast, which reflected European forms and designs, being traded widely alongside traditional pottery ware along the main traffic line ›Katiola-Abidjan‹. STÖBEL (1985), meanwhile quoted the story of a Nuba man in Sudan who spent part of his life in Omdurman, away from home, before he returned to his home-country where he then set himself up as a potter in a female dominated craft environment and produced pottery ware following Egyptian and European designs and examples. The same happened to some men in western Kenya, such as Silvanus Owiti and Musa Shamwama Vutakate⁶¹. HERBERT (1993:207) quoted QUARCOO and JOHNSON (1968) who came across a male potter working in Ghana in the same area as the Akan, who like the Meru of Kenya traditionally believed that any man who would approach a clay pit or potters in action would immediately loose his sexual potency. QUARCOO and JOHNSON (1968) however stressed that, since the potter was an outsider in every sense – belonged to a different ethnic group, was trained by the English, used a potter's wheel and a kiln – he was apparently tolerated by the Akan and did not fear for his sexual potency. Quite similar stories can be found in Kenya represented by male potters like Silvanus N., a Luo man who was trained by an Asian potter in Kisumu town during the 1960s and by Francis M. N.⁶², a Kamba man who was trained by a

⁵⁸ See SHEPARD (1956:350–351)

⁵⁹ Interviewed on 8.11.95

⁶⁰ *Dholuo* = the highest government representative in the area, – a white man, who was stationed at Gendia

⁶¹ For more details see Chapter 12

⁶² Interviewed on 1.9.95

British potter at the Jitegemea Pottery in Nairobi during the 1970s. With reference to the widely spread belief that men who attend to potting lose their fertility, Francis M. N. kept his profession a secret for some years before he took some glazed pots home to his wife and confessed that he was a potter working in a 'modern pottery workshop'. STÖBEL (1985:67) stated that sources dating back to the outgoing 17th Century provide evidence of the existence of male potters⁶³ in Zaire, where the Portuguese actively promoted the development of the craft. Today domed kilns and the rudimentary use of the wheel point to this European influence. STÖBEL emphasised that even during the first decades of the 20th Century pottery workshops were established by Belgian initiative to train men in 'modern' pottery following the European craft's tradition. STÖBEL came to the conclusion that the latter was pure handicraft production since the products were often made to please the 'external taste' at exhibitions and craft competitions but did not answer to the local taste and demand.

Alongside with the socio-economic environment products and production set-ups are changing continuously. The traditional repertoire of clay products consisting of cooking, storage, serving, medicine and ritual pots has been enriched by clay building products⁶⁴, sanitary ware and wall tiles, flower pots, crockery and decorative clay items. However, most of the newly introduced items even today predominantly serve an international and urban clientele rather than rural communities in Kenya.

To further investigate influence and change of craft traditions, it may be helpful to distinguish attempts to copy a foreign pottery type⁶⁵ from adaptations of elements of the foreign ceramic tradition⁶⁶.

4.4 Traditional African pottery – innovated

Aside from cooking, clay pots were made for serving, storing and for the preparation of traditional herbal medicines or local brews. However, with many African pottery studies having elaborated broadly and intensively on traditional pot forms, their usage and production such as those of STÖBEL (1985), BARBOUR & WANDIBBA (1989) and BARLEY (1994) this study is not intended to provide yet another report on traditional production methods, pot forms and designs, but rather to examine contemporary market forces, form and design standards influencing the present day pottery production in Africa.

While most traditional pots in Africa have a round bottom we should investigate the reason behind it. We will find that where pots are not required to stand on tables and other flat surfaces, round-bottomed pots have the advantage in that they can be set at any angle convenient to the user. In addition round bottoms considerably increase

⁶³ ›Männertöpferei‹

⁶⁴ For more details about the history and development of brick manufacture in Kenya see KAPLINSKI (1990, 74ff.)

⁶⁵ As can be observed while attending to pottery projects such as the Njoro and Kabete pottery of the 1950s or the contemporary workshop production at the YMCA pottery or the Jitegemea Pottery.

⁶⁶ Also see SHEPARD (1956)

strength and allow the heat to spread evenly when pots are used for cooking over the traditional three-stone African hearth (BARLEY 1994:33).

»Often the problem of aesthetics becomes confused with that of creativity. The West has long maintained a distinction between art – characterised by obsessive individual innovation – and craft – characterised by self-effacing constraint within a tradition. By such measures, African potters are eminently craftsmen/-women/-persons, being born to the task within a cultural tradition« (BARLEY 1994:115). It is a common phenomenon among African cultures that craft skills are passed down from generation to generation. Here, any deviation from convention is perceived as a ›mistake‹ and makes a pot ›wrong‹. Felgona A., an active member of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group, who has explored new products and designs, expressed her disapproval of the circumstance that even small changes, for example an alteration to the size of the mouth, do not seem to be acceptable to traditional female potters at Gem in Kenya, where she was born. BARLEY served us with another sample of a Dowayo potter who expressed the circumstance of uniformity in the following way: »You do not want your children to be unlike other people's children. They should be the same but better. So it is with pots« (BARLEY 1994:115). However, the above mentioned samples should not lead to the assumption that there are only two mutually exclusive positions for an African potter; that of slavishly following a craft tradition or indulging freewheeling artistic inspiration.

Different cultures vary enormously in the degree to which their potters have and/or do engage in surface decoration and product design. While some cultures do not permit their potters, especially women, to attach sculptural elements to their pots, others obtained their early recognition through their extensively rich decor. Reviewing Shona pottery of Zimbabwe STÖBEL (1985:147) reported on the production of ritual pots in form of a lion, for the so called *mhondoro* ritual, which, traditionally, served as an urn to contain the viscera of a late chieftain, while nowadays *mhondro* pots are produced in various zoomorphic shapes like birds, zebras and turtles and no longer restricted to ritual use. While female potters of a village in the Wedza mountains south of Marandellas have even specialised in these pots, STÖBEL stated that at the same time the production of domestic pots is still being continued in Shona townships. Trends like the one just described from Zimbabwe find the equivalents in Kenya: while male potters of the Luyia people in western Kenya have discovered and largely explored the high market value of animal shaped pots and other decorative items on the one hand, they still continue to produce water pots etc.

While African potters are often perceived and described as traditional and conservative, it is surprising to note, from a European perspective, the unconventional manner in which African potters adapt to new materials, products and environments. In Africa one can find pots carefully mended with wire, gum, beeswax or even with a patch of cement, or pots, which in absence of glazes, have been colourfully painted or coated with gloss paint which, unlike slip decoration or glazing, not only fails to conform to the tradition of the process from a European point of view but is furthermore unlikely to satisfy a Western aesthetic. The same pot, however, might respond positively to the love of bright colour widely spread among Africans or to purely practical considerations. »It is their taste against ours and this is their choice« as

VINCENTELLI (1989) commented while pointing out that the bright colours are more effective in the fairly dark interior of most African houses and that the use of gloss paint in connection with pottery is not unfamiliar in other parts of the world either. The use of gloss paint, shoe polish or varnish have been reported from Southern Africa (Barley 1994:41), Benin (SARGENT and FRIEDEL 1986:183), Algeria (VINCENTELLI 1989) and became increasingly common in Kenya during the 1990s⁶⁷. It is a rather recent development in response to new materials such as coloured plastic and enamel and the increasing availability of dyes and paints etc. which have not only effected pottery but basketry, wood and stone work alike. Without a strong craft tradition setting the norms for what is appropriate and acceptable and what is not, paint brushing clay pots has even found its lovers among the Asian community and Kenyan based interior designers. In absence of glazes plain white painted flower pots reflect a compromise and the merge of a traditional clay pot with a modern style planter that is meant to suit the overall set-up and interior decoration of the room.

However, to assume that potters have necessarily taken full advantage of the freedom of expression that clay affords, would indeed be somewhat naive⁶⁸. The fact that clay allows the potter to give rein to his originality may not have been an issue in the traditional context and might have influenced the shape of vessels' less than conventional patterns and customs that called for certain kinds of containers (SHEPARD 1956:349). Meanwhile commercially oriented potters nowadays produce a wide range of new pots, ashtrays and planters etc. invented for the westernised urban demand, the tourist and export trade (BARLEY 1994:116). However, innovations leading to increased demands surface not only through new designs and forms, but through alternative usage as well. STÖBEL, for example, stated that while the clay water pot still has a place in urban centres of Burkina Faso, as in Ouagadougou, where every market-trader has a water pot containing cool drinking water under his table, the same big pots do serve as beer-coolers in rural areas.

Evaluating previous pottery studies and prevailing developments in Africa, BARLEY (1994) summarised that the disappearance or complete re-invention of the African pot has been confidently predicted on numerous occasions. STÖBEL (1985), for example, drew attention to the flourishing pottery industry of the Sotho. He attributed the fact that Sotho pottery during the 1980s commanded a high demand not only in rural areas but also in townships, to the fact that Sotho pottery has developed a larger variety of forms and colourful designs than that of other Bantus living in south eastern African regions and thereby pleases the new design and fashion standards.

In Kenya one can observe that inborn product alterations or new innovative designs such as a flat bottomed clay-sufuria with handles which were invented in response to the availability and popularity of flat bottomed metal *sufurias* and/or the necessity to adjust traditional pot designs to fit new cooking devises, such as charcoal *jikos*, generally yield a good market response. Meanwhile external (pushed) attempts to

⁶⁷ During the 1990s the use of gloss paint and varnish became increasingly common in connection with pottery in Kenya.

⁶⁸ Creativity and individual expression is in itself very much a cultural value/attitude, which has a long history in Europe (e.g. Meissener Porcelain Industry) but is alien to most African societies.

foster innovative product developments, for example, by introducing glazes etc. often proved ill adapted to the rural environment and consequently did not produce the envisaged results.

4.5 The future and economic potential of the contemporary potter's craft in Africa

Elaborating on the future of African pottery, scholars have persistently pointed out that its production is declining with the availability of affordable products of metal or plastic. STÖBEL reported that the replacement of traditional pottery ware in coastal areas of Sierra Leone and Liberia by vessels made of iron or brass can be traced back to the 19th Century, while BARLEY (1994:9) reported on the partial destruction of domestic pottery production in Ghana following the British Empire Exhibition, in 1925, where Elmina Pottery was exhibited and immediately copied by British manufactures who flooded Ghana, with cheap enamel copies of the same. In most African countries, including Kenya, pottery ware has to withstand fierce competition from metal, enamel and locally manufactured plastic containers that have widely penetrated the markets. However, it is a common feature that pots do survive extinction as long as they have no direct functional competitor, for example, water storage pots and traditional medicine and brewing pots, which can serve the purpose in a better and more satisfactory manner. In Africa the belief that traditional/herbal medicines must always be made in a ceramic container or they will not obtain their full healing powers is widely spread and has persisted over time. STÖBEL (1985:94–95) and also SARGENT and FRIEDEL (1986:191) pointed out that even the cooking pot of clay, where once abandoned in favour of metal pots regained its popularity once people realised that the food cooked in a metal container did not cook to the same consistence and did not develop the preferred taste. Today the simultaneous use of analogous metal and clay cooking pots is widely found in rural Kenya with metal pots being used for frying and for fast cooking dishes like *ugali*, or tea, while clay pots are preferred for the preparation of fish, vegetables and meat or the traditional porridge *»uji«*. Apart from pleasing the tongue with the food cooked in them, the survival of the clay cooking pot in many African countries and communities can be attributed to its unbeatable low monetary value and market price.

Despite its low rural market price, pottery, like many other traditional crafts, still has a vital role to play in the rural subsistence economy and ensuring survival and livelihood in many homes. Pottery helps compensate for the low productivity of the agricultural land and provides a means to supplement subsistence activities between harvest and planting⁶⁹. The pottery products displayed and sold at local markets, therefore, reflect their popularity as well as the prevailing demand and purchasing power of the rural population.

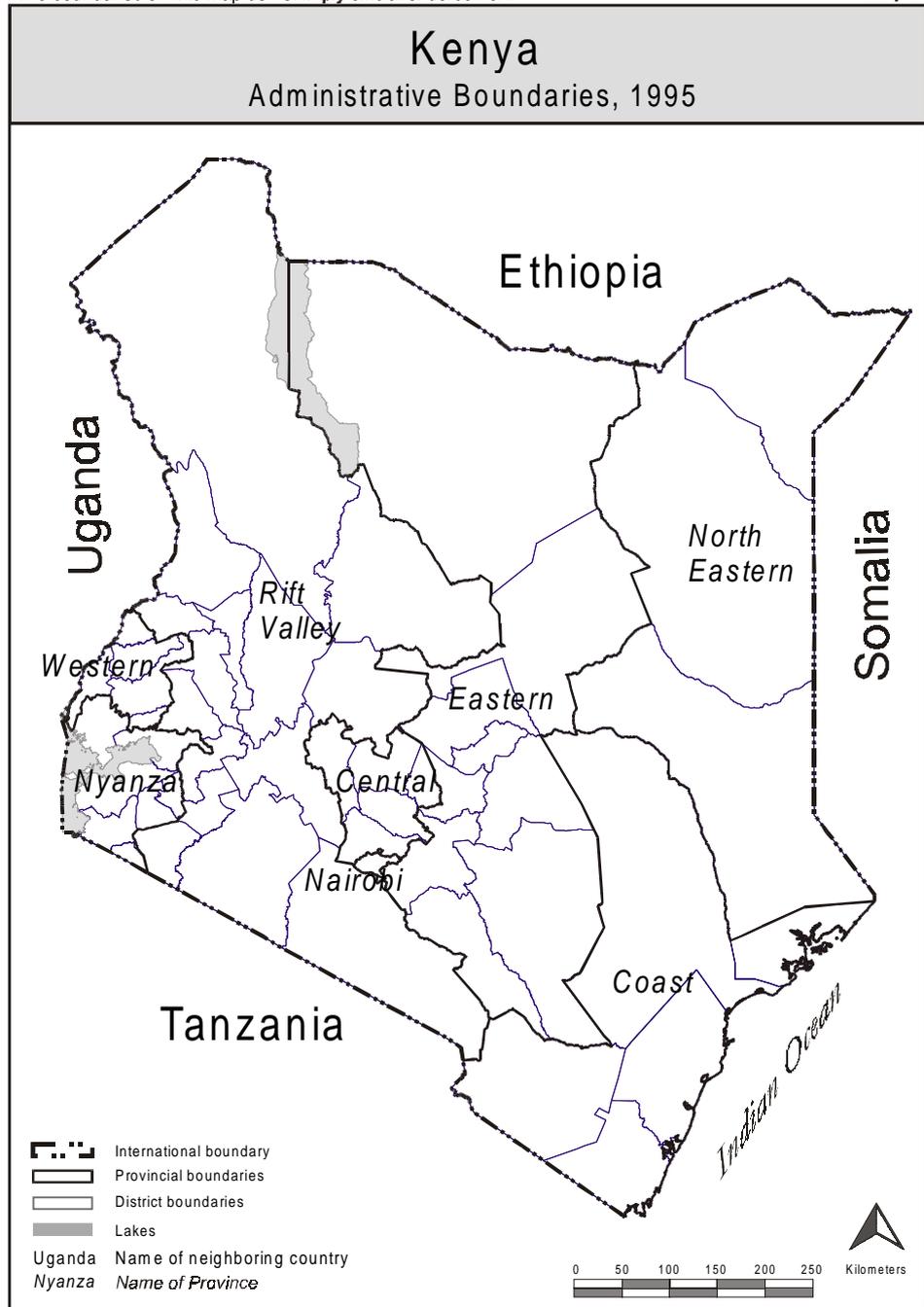
All over Africa scholars have witnessed that commercialisation and extended trade go hand in hand with potters abolishing the craft in favour of other activities or sources of income and a declining need to attend to the craft on a homecraft level to satisfy

⁶⁹ Also see BARBOUR and WANDIBBA (1989), Socio-economic profiles of various Kenyan districts, RAUCH *et.al.* (1990), WENZEL (1995)

their own immediate demand. It can, however, be summarised that the range of pottery ware being produced at any given time and location is influenced by the dominant market demand and spending power of the consumers targeted. Its marketability is further dependent on the availability of alternative goods and the special advantages or disadvantages attributed to each product. The fact that pastoralists in their majority preferred gourds, baskets, wooden and leather containers and limited their clay utensils to the ultimate minimum reflects that pottery ware did not meet the special requirement of a pastoral way of life, while domestic pottery vessels were very popular among settled communities and served their needs for water collection and storage, food preparation and storage, and for medicine and ritual ceremonies. This small excursion shall only increase our awareness that the perception and appreciation of pottery ware has many reasons and that preferences for specific vessels and containers have always been influenced by the standard and style of living, the location and the dominant fashion, if any. While demands and priorities change in response to changing environmental, communal and market forces, traders and labour-migrants facilitate the diffusion of information and new manufacturing techniques and products. They furthermore connect rural producers with urban and/or external markets or to development agencies supporting the sector.

Picture 3: *Traditional Luyia water storage pot*





5 The perception, socio economic and spatial environment of the crafts in Kenya

Kenya's crafts scene is a conglomeration of Kenya's material culture heritage and newly introduced manufacturing techniques and products. As such it differs in response to the acculturation and socio-economic environment of the people attending to it. The crafts environment and stages of mechanisation vary between rural and urban locations, traditional and non-traditional production units, formal and informal set-ups, seasonal, part time and full time attendance, etc.

It is, for example, a common observation that the socio-cultural set-up of the rural subsistence economy and its' stages of mechanisation correlate positively with the development of the pottery craft in rural Africa. As most subsistence farmers have not had the means to change and mechanise their farming systems as a whole, they still use a *jembe* (African hoe) and a *panga* (African bush-knife) to cultivate, their basic kitchen equipment too has remained the traditional three stone fireplace and the clay-cook-pot. With the subsistence society being constantly short of money, modern production techniques and products, like aluminium sufurias etc., could only spread gradually but even today have not eliminated the use of traditional crafts and its products, such as clay pots.

5.1 Regional economic disparities⁷⁰ – External influence and internal differentiation

Within less than two decades the colonial administration had caused major changes to the regional whereabouts of some ethnic groups residing in Kenya, as well as their culture and traditional economies, their relations to each other and the trade relations among them⁷¹. The impact of these forced changes, has sparked off growing regional and socio-economic disparities in Kenya which can still be felt today.

While the Kikuyu, who once resided in the central highlands along the railway line between Eldoret and Nairobi, had to give way to European settler communities and were forcefully resettled in 'Native Reserves', other ethnic groups residing in peripheral areas were less affected. Socio-economic differences between the various ethnic groups were no longer a mere result of their cultural heritage and traditional

⁷⁰ See Appendix I 'Kenya's provinces in brief'

⁷¹ According to the Crown Lands Ordinance of 1915 the status of land in Kenya changed from a commodity available to all in order to secure ones existence to an economic entity. Kenya was accordingly divided into 3 categories of land: the 'Crown land' – not inhabited low potential areas and forests as well as land preserved by the British Colony for future allocations; the 'Alienated land' – land that was leased out to European settlers on a 999 years lease; and 'African land units' – all native reserves which were regarded as communal property of the ethnic group living there.

way of life, but a result of the intensity and duration of their contact and interaction with European people. While Nairobi and the ›White Highlands‹⁷² emerged as Kenya's economic centre, ›peripheral areas‹ which were of no immediate interest to the Europeans were barred from participation in the new developments resulting in their increasing ›backwardness‹ over time. In this respect the Kikuyu, although driven away from their ancestral land and their traditional economic set up, had a clear advantage over other ethnic groups. As experienced agriculturists the Kikuyu formed a valuable labour-force on the Europeans plantations where they were exposed to new technologies and commercial agricultural production. Thus they were forced to adapt to new living and economic conditions and had to reorganise their own economy, unlike other ethnic groups who were in their majority less affected by the newly imparted commercial economic set up resulting in a lower level of acculturation. Meanwhile the Kikuyu were not only burdened with the loss of their ancestral land but had to fight the animosity of the neighbouring ethnic groups, mainly Luo and Maasai, on who's territory the British Colony had established ›Native Reserves‹ for the Kikuyu⁷³. The overall socio-economic structure was further influenced and subdivided by the gender bias degree of access to education, exposure to wage labour and the cash economy.

Generally speaking Kenya's contemporary economic disparities have their roots in the physical composition of the country on the one hand, the segregation on ethnic grounds and the penetration of the country by European settlements and industrial establishment and their market gearing as well as the established infrastructure on the other, resulting in a regionally confined and centre-oriented industrial agglomeration which is situated in the following provinces: Nairobi, the Coast, the Rift Valley and Central while the Eastern, North Eastern, Nyanza and Western Province miss out on larger industrial establishments. Production and trade of consumer goods always responds to dominant needs and demands, and thereby reflects the underlying cash economy. As a result the production of consumer goods concentrates where the money and the necessary infrastructure for their effective distribution exists. This consequently leads to a further growth of the regional socio-economic disparities between cities like Nairobi, Mombasa, Malindi, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kisumu and Thika, the centres of modernisation and industrialisation, and the peripheral rural areas in the country. That translates as well to the fact that, what meets a ready demand in the urban area, might not get even a small market-share in rural areas where consumer priorities are adjusted to the widespread subsistence economy as mentioned before.

Kenya's migrant worker as well as the contemporary agricultural subsistence economy can be attributed to colonial interference, labour, land allocation and settlement policies. With the introduction of industrial establishments, an export oriented cash crop production and the forced redistribution of the agricultural land

⁷² 1934 the »Kenya Land Commission Report legally closed the frontier between the European Highlands and the African Land Units. `African now joined Asians in being denied any rights in the White Highlands....´« (KENYA 97-98 FACTBOOK).

⁷³ To clear the Alienated Land Units from all Mau Mau freedom fighters thousands of Africans were moved by the authorities from their ordinary homes to the congested Kikuyu reserves or detained during the State of Emergency (1952-56).

under colonial rule, the once prosperous native agricultural production, which until the 1920 secured food supply even to areas with low agricultural productivity in the country, had been reduced to the extent that national distribution of food stuff could no longer be accomplished. The subsistence economy has since become a common feature in Kenya. It serves the nation in absence of a national labour market and employment strategy as a ›Auffangbecken‹ for the unskilled mass. However, the subsistence economy has long exhausted its capacity to cater for a growing number of individuals and more and more people are forced to look for employment elsewhere. Over the years a growing number of the job seekers have failed to secure employment in the formal wage labour market and have thereby joined Kenya's ›informal sector‹.

While Kenya as a whole has developed to an East African Sub Centre⁷⁴, Nairobi's economic strength and growth is further strengthened by the high spending power of Kenya's local elite, supplemented by the many expatriates living there and the many conferences and congresses organised by international organisations such as UNEP or HABITAT who have their head quarters in Nairobi. Despite the small number of those who command a high disposable cash income, their spending power nourished Nairobi's consumer good market. Therefore it is not surprising to find that Nairobi is successfully hosting new development trends in the pottery and ceramic sector while the numerous attempts to establish ceramic industries in rural areas must be counted as complete failures even though traditional crafts establishments were continued and/or even flourished in Nyanza, Western and parts of Eastern Province.

5.2 The formation and development of the Kenyan labour force

As the European settlers were unable to run their large plantations without recruiting African labourers on a large scale, they had to establish a system that would force Africans to take up employment away from their homes. Drawing on previous experiences obtained in other colonies, the British administration was able to establish a labour market by expropriation of land, accompanied by the introduction of a tax system⁷⁵ and the cash economy. Limitations in the size of the reserves, combined with extensive population growth, caused increasing land pressure within these ›African land units‹ and consequently exhausted their capacity to sustain the people living there. As a result, young men were forced to leave and seek employment outside the reserves to secure their survival and the economic well-being of their families. Despite all odds, the limitation of the land assigned to the ›African land units‹ was substantiated with the intention to foster the integration of the Africans in the cultural and technological

⁷⁴ Also see HERRMANN (1988:124)

⁷⁵ In 1909 the Legislative council had decided to impose a hut and poll tax which forced every owner of a hut, whether male or female, and every male African to pay tax. In the case of a person failing to produce the tax in cash he/she had to do a month unpaid labour assigned to him/her by the colonial administration. According to KRAUTER (1981:137), the total receipts from the native hut and poll tax between 1900 and 1925 did amount to 5.839.326 Kenya Pound while all taxes paid by non-African taxpayers (taxes on hunting rights, weapon, alcohol licences, motor vehicles and petrol, land, entertainment as well as the poll tax payable as from 1913 and the income tax of 1921) only added up to 326.596 Kenya Pound. In this respect one can say that the colonised people financed their own colonisation.

sphere of modern development, rather than to support their backwardness by enlarging the size of the reserves and thereby maintaining the separation of the Africans from the Europeans. The penetration of the country with educational facilities followed in direct response to the presence of white settlers and missionaries and the newly created need for an ›educated‹ and ›skilled‹ labour force (KRAUTER 1981:260). Alongside with the European settlements, missions established educational institutions offering formal education and training to prepare the students for employment at the European industrial and agricultural establishments or as civil servants. At the time of independence (1963), 30 % of all secondary schools were located in urban centres where only 3 % of the Kenyan population lived⁷⁶.

The regionally defined and unequal availability and the degree of formal education further subdivided the African population and fostered social differences between ethnic and gender groups according to their access to and active participation in the same. KRAUTER (1981:313) summarised that the socially disadvantaged groups, which are disadvantaged in terms of adequate access to educational facilities, face the biggest obstacles in participating in formal education and accessing the labour market. Because, with the availability of an ›educated workforce‹, the degree of formal education soon became a criteria for the selection of employees and the access to the labour market (KRAUTER 1981:258).

Formal education was instrumentalised and consequently perceived as a key to acculturation, economic prosperity and success leading to the widespread post colonial educational euphoria of the Government of Kenya (GoK) and donor countries who allocated huge amounts of money to formal education. In its' 8th National Development Plan (1997–2001) the GoK stressed that »one of the Government's guiding philosophies for education is the concern that every Kenyan has the inalienable right, no matter his or her socio-economic status, to basic education« (Republic of Kenya, 1997). Despite the determination to avail equal formal educational opportunities to all pupils in the country⁷⁷ in order to install national unity and enhance economic development in Kenya, the post-independence expansion of the educational set up was not capable of eradicating the heritage of the colonial era – the regional disparities in the educational set up which was centred around Nairobi and the former white settlements. The Welfare Monitoring Survey II of 1994⁷⁸ examined the distribution of household members who never attended school on a nation-wide scale. The survey revealed that 4,459,792 Kenyans living in rural areas never attended school as compared to 297,158 living in cities which means that roughly 94 % of those who

⁷⁶ The ›*Majimbo*‹ Constitution of 1963 officially abolished racial discrimination in all political, social and economic fields of life and therewith marked the end of educational disparities based on race and ethnic origin.

⁷⁷ »After independence, the once exclusive schools were opened to those who could afford them regardless of race or creed, and the curriculum was made uniform. The content of the curriculum was reorganised to exclude vocational training. Other practical subjects such as handicrafts, art and needlework were relegated to ›training for visual and manual coordination‹« (OIRO and WAITHAKA 1982, 8).

⁷⁸ Republic of Kenya, Central Bureau of Statistics (1996)

never attended school still reside in rural areas where roughly 80 % of Kenya's total population lives⁷⁹.

With the expansion of the educational system, formal education became a prerequisite though not a guarantor for gainful employment opportunities. One's origin, >connections<, as well as access to information proved crucial in order to secure access to the labour market. The formal education and skill training divided the workforce into the >learned ones<, those with certificates, and those without any proof of their qualifications and abilities. At the same time the formal education system failed to address and meet the skill requirements of the economy in the country's periphery, the former reserves, while employment opportunities in industrial and commercial agricultural establishments at the same time declined against the growing workforce. This is a situation that has hardly changed if at all.

While the local elite proved its' capability to secure participation in higher education and the upper segments of the labour market due to its economic wealth and social networks; formal education has remained an instrument to prove and secure its advanced socio-economic status⁸⁰ as the fast growing number of school leavers entering the labour market soon exceeded the absorption capacity of the same, leading to increased competition and the call for an alternative educational set up that would target the growing unemployment among school leavers⁸¹. This call was answered by the NCKC and other church related and/or non-governmental institutions with the establishment of Village Polytechnics and by the GoK with its educational reform in 1985 which led to the introduction of the 8-4-4 system, translating to 8 years primary school: 4 years of secondary school: 4 years university. However, calls for new reforms are growing strong once again in the late 1990s as the 8-4-4 system has failed to make any improvements to Kenya's overall employment situation.

According to KRAUTER (1981) and HERRMANN (1988), Kenya's labour-force can roughly be divided in three categories: (1) the local elite; (2) the skilled workforce and (3) the unskilled mass – a picture that, today, remains largely unaltered.

⁷⁹ In absence of an updated population census Kenya's total population was estimated to have reached 26,762,000 people in 1994 (Republic of Kenya, Central Bureau of Statistics). Also see Appendix II for Kenya's population growth rates.

⁸⁰ ANDERSON in: BROWN/HISKETT (1975:368) »At Independence, a new Ministry of Education, with much wider powers, took over from the old colonial department and expanded the opportunities in secondary school education for Africans as a top priority. In part, this was to meet political pressure, and in part it was to meet the critical shortage of middle – and high – level manpower, which undermined the reality of independence in the early days.« Also see KRAUTER (1981:348)

⁸¹ School leavers are the target – people who were barred from formal education due to their sex or socio-cultural background were further neglected and denied assistance to improve their socio-economic situation.

5.2.1 *The local elite*⁸²

The local elite – for example politicians, high administrative officers, management staff of parastatal or private companies, native businessmen, highly educated professionals, white Kenyans and Asians – have partly disassociated themselves from traditional social structures while adjusting their lifestyle to their ›western peers‹⁸³. Through their spending power and consumption patterns, responding to western role models and industrial innovations, the local elite can impart social pressure on standards of living, production and consumption⁸⁴.

5.2.2 *The skilled workforce*

Until the 1970s secondary school leavers could secure employment in the industry as civil servants or teachers with a relatively high income. With the increase of secondary school leavers and the saturation of the formal labour market this changed drastically during the 1980s and 1990s leading to a situation where many secondary school leavers fight side by side with illiterate job seekers for casual employment if any. While during the 1970s urban craftsmen and traders in their majority found themselves in a position to secure a relatively stable income, the number of craftsmen addressing the urban market increased drastically due to the ever growing unemployment rate in rural and urban areas. This has led to a situation where, apart from the many semi-skilled craftsmen who were trained on the job, too many skilled craftsmen have joined the urban ›informal sector‹ competing for jobs and orders. Burdened with the expectations of their families who invested in their education, this skilled workforce more often than not had and still has to support members of the extended family which causes economic exhaustion and prevents the accumulation of working and/or investment capital paramount to facilitate industrial/economic growth.

5.2.3 *The unskilled mass*

KRAUTER sub-divided the unskilled mass into unskilled industrial labourers, small holders, agricultural labourers, native craftsmen and traders and subsistence farmers.

Unskilled industrial labourers – originate from all ethnic groups residing in Kenya though people of European and Asian origin are extremely rare. Due to the nature of most industries established in Kenya, the demand for highly qualified labourers

⁸² »Der hohe Anteil nicht afrikanischer Angestellter ist im wesentlichen kolonialgeschichtlich und durch die Fremdheit industrieller Produktion bedingt. Viele Betriebe wurden während der Kolonialzeit als Tochterfirmen oder auch als Neugründungen britischer Siedler aufgebaut und die Leitung afrikanischen Beschäftigten vorenthalten. Hinzu kommt selbstverständlich als weiterer Faktor, daß die traditionellen Gesellschaften in Kenia keine geeigneten Fachkräfte für die Leitung von Industriebetrieben hervorbringen konnten, da sie sozio-ökonomisch auf völlig andere Produktionsverhältnisse ausgerichtet waren« (HERRMANN 1988:200).

⁸³ KRAUTER (1981), however, stated that ethnographic studies still need to prove the extent to which the local elite has disassociated themselves from traditional values and their extended families. – To my knowledge this is not the case as you find Kikuyu and Luo associations, for example, who care for their rural home areas, funerals etc.

⁸⁴ Also see HERMANN (1988:127)

remained limited, and divided the industrial labour-force in the qualified ›upper-class‹ and the unqualified ›lower-class‹. The latter often enjoy no job security or social security from within the industrial set up and are therefore dependent on their *shambas* and families in the rural areas. Most unskilled labourers perceive themselves as short-term migrant workers while looking forward to returning to their *shambas* and rural home where they often enjoy a higher social status than in their urban work environment.

Small holders – for most of the century, small holders in high potential agricultural areas were able to secure the family income through surplus production and, furthermore, were able to finance the education of their children. Meanwhile small holders in marginal regions more often than not struggled to survive from day to day without being able to raise enough money to pay for the education of their children. Close social and economic linkages characterise the living environment of small holders and subsistence farmers, which gives them an advantage over the migrant worker.

Agricultural labourers – the economic status of the agricultural labour-force is lower than the one of small holders and subsistence farmers and their socio-economic status resembles that of the migrant workers which is characterised by competition, frequent unemployment and a life along or below the poverty line. Many women and even women's groups can be found to engage themselves as agricultural labourers to earn some money.

Native craftsmen and traders – In contradiction to the Asian and/or urban craftsmen and traders native craftsmen and traders produce and trade, according to KRAUTER, in an economic niche or for and in, as the colonial administration had put it, a rural secondary economy which over the years spread to the urban centres and found their counterpart in the informal sector artisans.

Subsistence farmers – this group accommodates by far the largest number of people in Kenya. This group produces agricultural products for their own consumption and trades their surplus at local markets to facilitate their need for other products and services. The subsistence sector has been and still is the safe-haven for industrial labourers, migrant workers, small-scale craftsmen and traders, whose income does not exceed the poverty line.

The growing dependency on imported and industrially manufactured goods and also the exposure to a revenue and tax as well as formal education system calls for a minimal cash income while the agricultural production of most subsistence farmers no longer caters for their needs and requires an additional cash income to secure the living, the health and the education of their family members. As a result youth in large numbers migrate to urban and industrial centres in search of employment opportunities and more and more women are forced to engage in economic activities to supplement the minor cash income of their husbands and/or cater for the immediate needs of themselves and their children. At the same time a large percentage of Kenya's population is confronted with unemployment since the labour market is saturated and unable to cope with the ever-increasing workforce leading to tougher and tougher competition among the job seekers. Although the GoK claimed that 500.000 new jobs have been created in 1995, 90 % of them were attributed to the informal and

agricultural sector⁸⁵. As a result the investments in formal education no longer pay off and this has resulted in a worrying decline of enrolment figures at all levels⁸⁶.

Table 1 below shows the official employment figures for 1991, 1994 and 2001 (estimated) and the expected growth areas, which are clearly dominated by small-scale agricultural employment (41,6 %) and an increase of jobs in the urban (13,8 %) and rural informal sector (25,6 %). Formal sector employment, including the large scale agriculture sector, is expected to grow by only 19 % thereby creating only 480,000 new jobs over a period of 6 years (1994 to 2001)⁸⁷.

Table 1: Sources of Employment and Employment Growth, (in millions)

Sector	1991	1994	2001	Increase
Small scale agriculture	5,31	5,92	7,00	1,08
Large scale agriculture	0,42	0,47	0,55	0,08
Rural Informal	0,35	0,62	0,98	0,36
Rural formal, non	0,23	0,41	0,55	0,13
Urban informal	0,70	1,16	1,83	0,66
Urban formal	0,74	0,81	1,08	0,27
Total employment	7,77	9,40	12,00	2,61
Total labour force	10,10	11,50	13,70	2,23
Unemployed (%)	23,4	18,5	12,8	-

Source: Republic of Kenya, National Development Plan 1997–2001

Looking at Kenya's modern history, it can be summarised that the introduction of formal education and wage employment away from home paved the way for socio-economic disparities between the gender groups, between rural and urban, between the illiterate and the learned, between agricultural and industrial employees, not to mention the growing ›backwardness‹ of the pastoral peoples living in the semi-arid and arid regions of Kenya.

⁸⁵ According to HERRMANN (1988) 7 % of all agricultural units [in 1989 81 % of Kenya's population still lived in rural areas] did not produce any cash income during the late 1980s which is reflected in the fact that the subsistence production created only 5 % of the total gross national product (GNP).

⁸⁶ For further details see National Development Plan 1997–2001 (133 ff.); or Welfare Monitoring Survey II of 1994.

⁸⁷ See Appendix III for more details on the composition and distribution of informal sector employment in Kenya and Appendix IV for GDP sector shares 1995.

5.3 The perception and economic performance of traditional crafts and rural industries

In line with the subject of this study I would like to draw attention to the perception and performance of traditional crafts and rural based industries in Kenya during the 20th Century.

One of the first publications paying tribute to Kenya's material culture and contemporary economy in the 20th Century was STUHLMANN's (1910) report ›*Handwerk und Industrie in Ostafrika*‹. As mentioned in Chapter 2.2 STUHLMANN recorded significant differences dividing the East African crafts into ›The indigenous Crafts and Industries‹ and ›The Crafts and Industries influenced by Foreigners‹. Other records followed only decades later such as the ample report compiled by WAGNER (1970) during the 1930s on the contemporary traditional crafts of the Bantu in Western Kenya. Unlike STUHLMANN, WAGNER did not divide the crafts along traditional lines but strongly emphasised their overall economic performance. In his report he outlined the increasing diminution of house-building, iron and leather work, while describing pottery, basketry, wood-carving and the ›modern crafts‹ such as carpentry, brick-laying, thatching and tailoring as flourishing crafts. WAGNER, however, made it clear that there was minimal to no interaction between traditional and modern crafts and that young men who practised the modern crafts were generally recorded to prefer jobs as craftsmen in European or Indian employment rather than setting up a workshop in their home area. WAGNER recorded that »even where old and new techniques are as similar as in the case of old-time and modern-time thatching, the same people never practise both techniques« (WAGNER 1970:17). This is a phenomenon, which can still be found among potters in Kenya.

In general it can be observed that only few traditional crafts, which once formed an integral part of most ethnic societies, managed to evolve to a full-fledged profession. Having originated from the African reserves ›handicrafts‹ have for most of the century been perceived as predominantly rural based products. As such they were and still are closely linked to petty trade and subsistence agriculture and largely associated with members of the society who have been denied access to formal education and the modern wage labour market. Consequently, handicraft production is more often than not perceived as a supplementary income generating activities rather than a viable occupation by itself. Nevertheless, in line with the level of income traditional craft products still command high marketability among rural communities. This can be attributed to the fact that the prices for traditional craft products developed and have been agreed upon within the rural market setting and are therefore well adjusted to the local purchasing power and consumption pattern of the people, unlike the prices of industrial products which are priced according to commercial considerations and often demand a much higher market value. It is, therefore, not surprising to record high distribution rates of low cost traditional implements, such as clay cooking pots, especially among poor rural subsistence communities despite the availability of alternative, modern metal sufurias.

As a result of colonialism and the introduction of ›European crafts‹, Kenya's crafts scene and spectrum became subject to massive changes. While urban centres were penetrated by ›modern production methods‹ and elements paramount to a commercial

market economy, the rural areas accommodated simultaneously, various socio-economic units, partly related and partly not connected to one another. Among these were traditional economic formations, such as pastoral societies or traditional craft specialists forming integral parts of rural subsistence societies who cater for the basic production of domestic goods, alongside commercial establishments and communal and/or social work- and production units, such as women's and youth groups.

With independence Kenya like almost all African countries pursued an urban-biased economic policy, which further discriminated against the competitiveness of rural small-scale producers⁸⁸. Even the informal sector debate and policies of the early 1970s emphasised the economic potential of the urban informal sector and thereby favoured it over rural industries which were perceived as stagnant rather than growth oriented. The UN-conference ›Rural Industrialisation in Developing Countries‹ of 1973, which highlighted the growing economic dichotomy between rural and urban industries in developing countries, inspired researchers and international development agents to pay attention to the rural non-farm sector as opposed to the urban informal sector. In the absence of official statistics, estimates on the nature and magnitude of rural non-farm employment in Kenya and craft activities in particular differ strongly. While MBITHI (1974) in 1974 believed that only 7 % of Kenya's rural population⁸⁹ was engaged in commercial agriculture or non-agricultural enterprises, including small scale manufacturing and crafts units, only three years later the I.R.S. National Household Survey of Non-farm Activities in Kenya came to the conclusion that about 21 % of all rural households were involved in handicraft production alone, with even more people being actively engaged in repairing, collecting and preparing raw materials as well as in the marketing of the final product, etc. as shown in Table 2.

In the national household survey of 1977⁹⁰, pottery production was ranked at place 5, with 1,7 % of all rural households nation-wide engaging in the craft, while 3,4 % of these households produced reed and rush bags, baskets and mats; 3,1 % were engaged in weaving, spinning, knitting and dyeing; 2,7 % made calabashes and gourds and 2,3 % utilised sisal fibre for bags and mats. By comparing the figures compiled during the 1977 household survey of non-farm activities in Kenya with later research finding and figures of handicraft exports from Kenya compiled by KETA, it becomes clear that some crafts, though playing an active role in the rural economy, do not qualify for export. Meanwhile others, such as wood carving, are highly recognised for their export

⁸⁸ Also see RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:5)

⁸⁹ In 1974 MBITHI divided the rural sector, by then still accommodating ca. 92 % of Kenya's population, into five socio-economic groups:

1. Peasant farms: – ca. 70 % of the rural population
2. Pastoral and nomadic areas: – ca. 12 % of the rural population
3. Landless population: – ca. 11 % of the rural population
4. Non agricultural enterprises: – in 1974 Mbithi estimates its number at around 50.000 consisting of retailers and small scale enterprises such as crafts units, repair and service units, masons, wood carvers, etc.
5. Agricultural plantations and commercial farms

⁹⁰ As the table clearly indicates Nairobi Province was not included in the survey.

potential and command major market shares in handicraft export from Kenya, as outlined in Chapter 7.

Table 2: A detailed classification of handicrafts among the non-farm activities with comparative provincial frequencies in % of rural households (1977)

Handicraft category	Provinces of Kenya						National level
	Central	Coast	Eastern	Nyanza	Rift Valley	Western	
reed and rush bags, baskets and mats	1.1	15.8	8.6	1.6	0.2	1.2	3.4
weaving, spinning, knitting and dyeing	0.3	3.2	4.6	2.5	4.3	3.1	3.1
gourds and calabashes	0.3	--	3.0	5.8	1.6	2.8	2.7
sisal bags and mats	0.8	0.8	3.5	5.0	0.0	1.2	2.3
pottery, plates, bowls, pots	--	0.8	1.0	5.4	0.2	0.9	1.7
furniture	2.0	0.8	1.3	1.4	0.9	2.5	1.5
tannery	--	--	0.4	0.6	5.9	0.3	1.4
manufacture of clothing	1.7	0.8	1.7	1.7	0.7	0.3	1.2
wooden handles for tools, etc.	0.6	1.6	1.0	0.8	--	2.8	1.0
household utensils (<i>jikos</i> , pans, etc.)	1.1	--	0.8	1.0	0.7	0.6	0.8
wood carvings	--	1.6	1.3	--	--	--	0.4
blacksmith	0.6	0.8	--	0.4	--	0.3	0.3
beadwork, necklaces, jewellery, ornaments	--	--	0.2	--	1.1	--	0.3
leather work (belts, bags, harness)	--	0.8	--	0.2	0.9	0.3	0.3
shoes	0.3	--	0.4	0.2	--	0.3	0.2
other animal skin products	--	--	---	0.4	--	--	0.1
farm implements and tools	--	--	0.2	0.2	--	0.3	0.1
TOTAL	8.8	27.0	28.0	27.2	16.5	16.9	20.8

Source: I.R.S. National Household Survey of Non-Farm Activities, 1977

In line with the I.R.S. National Household Survey of Non-Farm Activities of 1977, and in the absence of accurate statistics on income earnings and employment arising from handicrafts, Masai reported in 1988 »that about 5 million Kenyans take part in various processes in the production and marketing of handicrafts with about one million producing crafts on a full time or a part time basis. Most of this participation is on self-employment basis« (MASAI 1988:10).

During the late 1980s, the discussion on the economic role and future prospects of manufacturing small-scale industries in developing countries occupied development

agents and scholars of various disciplines alike⁹¹. In 1988, for example, the Friederich Ebert Foundation in Kenya launched a ›National Seminar on Transitional Education‹, during which MASAI actively advocated for the recognition of the contemporary role of handicrafts in Kenya's national economy. He stated that over the last decade, there has been a renaissance of activities and interest in the sector in many countries of the world. He furthermore reported of an increasing consensus, even in Kenya, that the sector can facilitate economic, social and cultural development if properly planned and promoted.

Following considerations supports this position:

- To produce handicrafts, one does not need heavy capital investments or an elaborate infrastructure; they can be produced at home.⁹²
- Handicraft production is labour intensive and can help to reduce unemployment and under employment.
- Abundant local resources and skills can be put to productive use through handicraft promotion⁹³.
- Handicraft work is important particularly among the less privileged social groups in Kenya, including pastoralists, small scale subsistence farmers, poor jobless urban dwellers, landless rural dwellers, the handicapped, etc. For such people, it can be the only source of income or a major supplementary source of income.
- A majority of women who have limited employment openings within the economy and can spare time from domestic chores can earn revenue through handicraft production on a part time basis.
- Handicraft activities provide a variety of cheap goods corresponding to the needs of the low-income groups of the population for domestic and agricultural use, such as cooking pots and water storage containers.
- Handicrafts can find export and domestic based tourist markets more easily than manufactured products from developing countries, and could greatly help to earn foreign exchange if properly managed.
- Handicrafts facilitate the preservation and the strengthening of the cultural identity of a country and of its people. (MASAI 1988, 8–9)

In line with MASAI a thorough assessment of the export potential of Kenya's handicrafts sector in 1988 has led ATIENO (1988) to the conclusion that Kenyan handicrafts

- provide high potentialities of self-employment
- have the ability to penetrate foreign markets
- are efficient foreign exchange earners since no imported inputs are required⁹⁴
- generate foreign exchange through export and the tourist market trade

⁹¹ For example, in 1987 the ›7. Frankfurter Wirtschaftsgeographische Symposium‹ elaborated on the subject matter from a geographical point of view.

⁹² That refers predominantly to the traditional set up of Kenya's crafts, especially in the case of pottery: traditional pottery doesn't require high investment etc. whereby ceramic enterprises require money, a well-established infrastructure and a highly skilled work force.

⁹³ This thought is not new – compare with rural industry approach of the 1940s and 1950s.

⁹⁴ While this applies to most traditional crafts, Kenya's modern handicrafts such as Kenya's ceramic industry, for example, depend on imported raw materials and equipment.

Two years later, in 1990, ITC/UNCTAD/GATT commissioned the study ›Kenya: Development of Rural Products for Export through Co-operatives‹ that examined Kenya's export potential of horticultural products and handicrafts. The mission came to the conclusion that »apart from agriculture, handicraft provides by far the largest employment in rural areas. The manufacture of traditional handicrafts is typically a family industry, carried out in villages and rural towns providing employment to women, and others who cannot find jobs in other sectors« (ITC/UNCTAD/GATT 1990:18). The Women Group Census of 1990/91, which looked into the major activities undertaken by women's groups in Kenya, revealed that more than 1800 women's groups are actively involved in handicraft production⁹⁵.

Taking into account Kenya's craft history, it can be highlighted that apart from craft activities being subjected to the traditional division of labour between the gender and age groups within families, clan communities or within an economic unit, colonial education and labour policies further separated the labour force through their gender bias approach⁹⁶. While men have always been addressed as the Kenyan workforce of interest and were employed for industrial, clerical and domestic jobs, the African women remained in the rural reserves cultivating the land, bearing children and taking care of the old and sick. Being cut-off from the new developments, women continued life as taught by the elders, who, for most of the century kept tight control over their communities. While some people claim that African potters are more conservative in nature than other craftsmen, it might just be a coincidence that they are in their majority women, who are confined to their rural homes, and miss out on social and economic exposure, education, interaction and inspiring development inputs which favour and advocate change over continuity.

⁹⁵ See Chapter 6.3.2 for more details.

⁹⁶ Also see HERRMANN (1988:165)

Crafts promotion in Kenya during the 20th Century

During the 20th Century, the Kenyan crafts' scene, including the potter's craft, has been subject to tremendous changes, development and market adjustments. In the process it has witnessed the introduction of new technologies and products and the emergence of a multiple craft and industrial set-up.

While Kenya's informal or so called ›Jua Kali‹ sector has been studied extensively and much has been written about traditional African crafts, comprehensive information on the contemporary performance of the African crafts and their relation to the informal and the formally acknowledged craft sector are rare or non-existent. While some of the traditional crafts which, at the beginning of the century, still formed an integral part of the society and a mirror of its needs, have almost been outdated by developments and adaptations akin to the 20th Century, it is pertinent to ask at what stage in economic development does a change take place leading to new conceptions, as well as technical and organisational set-ups. It has to be noted that Kenya's present economic set-up is the result of diverse rural-urban, African-Asian-European, national and international interests, demands and requirements which are reflected in sector policies affecting the development of Kenya's craft scene throughout the 20th Century. With a foot in the material culture of Kenya's peoples and a foot in the culture of Asians and Europeans, who settled and imposed their craft traditions in Kenya, the potter's craft portrays a merge of these cultures and also the stage of acculturation, modernisation and economic evolution of its producers and users. At the same time attention has to be drawn to the fact that contemporary Kenyan pottery does not easily fit the criteria of Kenya's ›Jua Kali‹ or formal craft sector – a phenomenon that is often overlooked and ignored by development agents and politicians but explains itself through Kenya's contemporary history as illustrated hereafter.

6 Sector policies affecting the development of Kenya's craft scene during the 20th Century

To understand the present one needs to study the past – a brief introduction of the colonial administration shall enable us to understand the differentiated underlying intentions and approaches of the colonial policies influencing and directing the socio-economic development of Kenya since the Colonial Office has laid the foundation for Kenya's present administrative set-up, sector policies and ministerial responsibilities.

Following the declaration of the British East African Protectorate on 15th June 1895, the Secretary of State, Foreign Office in London, who was responsible for policy decisions in British colonies, fostered the integration of Kenya into the British sphere of influence and economic interests. Thereafter »Kenya began to play the classic role of a country at the periphery of the capitalistic system, exporting primary commodities and importing manufactures« (LEYS 1974:28).

While the Foreign Office, supported by the Colonial Office, had to secure law and order in the colonies as well as the integration of the same in the world market, the Local Legislative and Executive Councils in the colonies were responsible for the demands of the British settlers. The Colonial Office was charged with the responsibility to provide the British Government with the necessary feedback from the colonies. At last there was an institutional body responsible for the integration of the African population, for law and order among the Africans and their contacts and interactions with the settler community, the Native Councils and Chiefs. The colonial administration protected and advocated the interests of the white settlers and institutionalised differences between the different ethnic groups residing in Kenya. It followed a strict hierarchical system with the Governor (the representative of the Foreign Office in the colony) residing over a ›Secretariat‹ with different line departments headed by field officers. The different departments of the Secretariat had established their presence in the provinces and districts through British officers who appointed, supervised and interacted with the native village headmen, the Chiefs. Under the political banner of ›indirect rule‹ »... the first principal of native administration was that liberty and self development can [could] best be secured to the native population by leaving them free to manage their own affairs through their own rulers, proportionately to their degree of advancement, under the guidance of the British staff and subject to the law and policy of administration« (BRETT 1973:55)⁹⁷.

The Chiefs were provided with an independent source of finance and charged with the responsibility to ensure social discipline and the provision of local services – roads, health, education and so on. In the more developed areas, Native Councils were set up

⁹⁷ Also see KRAUTER (1981:144)

which advised the Chief, but in all cases the District Commissioner, despite his supposed advisory role, exercised the final authority« (BRETT 1973:67)⁹⁸.

During the early days of colonisation, Christianity, which to many Africans was regarded as the spiritual arm of the Colonial Government, and Western education were inseparable. Education during the early days of colonialism was not born out of the desire to avail ›general education‹ to all but to create a skilled labour-force. The efforts of the missionaries and colonial administrators were consequently centred on their own needs and immediate living environment while the education of the Africans in the reserves was handed over to the ›Local Native Councils‹⁹⁹. To fulfil this duty the ›Local Native Councils‹ were given the right to impose taxes in order to establish and finance so called ›elementary schools‹ in the reserves. Putting the responsibility for the establishment, maintenance and running of the ›elementary schools‹ in the hands of the ›Local Native Councils‹ allowed the colonial administrators to concentrate their efforts on higher education which until independence favoured students of European and Asian origin and disadvantaged native Kenyans. By doing so the colonial administration further expanded the gap between the ›Alienated land units‹ and the ›African land units‹¹⁰⁰, and fostered the growing regional disparities characterising Kenya's economy, the composition of the national labour market and educational system still evident today.

While being engaged in evangelistic, educational and industrial work both the missionaries and the educational systems laid emphasis on Western values while labelling the African political, moral and religious values as savage and immoral. Within the first decade of the 20th Century, missionaries had settled in most parts of Nyanza¹⁰¹ and »besides evangelising, the missionaries in Nyanza also built schools where reading, writing and some crafts were taught« (OCHIENG 1987:87). OCHIENG, however, pointed out that most of the missions catered mainly for boys' education and favoured the ›chiefly‹ and collaborative classes.

For the colonial administration formal education was a precondition to impose and establish ›Western‹, often referred to as ›modern‹, and ›civilised‹ social structures and to create a qualified labour force which had accomplished the basic knowledge and skills required to respond well to Western work values and to serve the needs of the European settler community and administration. At the same time the educational qualification obtained in mission and government supported schools alike did not respond well to the values and domestic requirements of the Africans in the reserves. ›External education‹ caused socio-cultural disparities and led to a situation of superiority and inferiority between the educated and uneducated, between the people interacting with and working for Europeans and those living and working in the reserves. Even today older Kenyans talk of the ›learned ones‹: those who had the privilege to go to school. BOSERUP (1990) examined the gender aspect of it and took a closer look at the socialisation and perception of women who in their majority grew up

⁹⁸ Also see KRAUTER (1981:153)

⁹⁹ In 1950 the ›African District Councils‹ replaced the ›Local Native Councils‹ which in 1960 gave way to the ›County Councils‹.

¹⁰⁰ ›African land units‹ was the official description of the reserves.

¹⁰¹ Large parts of the Western Province by then still belonged to Nyanza Province.

and acquired their skills on an informal basis at home or in the vicinity of their rural home. BOSERUP, thereafter, came to the conclusion that »in those income groups where more boys than girls go to school, the boys come to look down upon the girl who stays at home under the instruction of her illiterate mother, while the boy enjoys the prestige of being an ›educated‹ person« (BOSERUP 1990:158). For this and other reasons, most male potters in Kenya try to create an identity of their own and do not want to be associated with their female peers¹⁰².

6.1 Formal ›Art and Craft‹ training and educational messages

Before we take a closer look at community development, craft promotion and industrial policies I would like to examine the formal education system, its objectives and underlying messages with a view to ›Art‹ and ›Craft‹ and pottery in particular.

As schools impart not only knowledge and skills but influence the perception and mind-share of the people as well, a look at the educational set-up, and the educational messages accompanying it, throughout the century, is an essential precondition to understanding the environmental perception of the potter's craft in Kenya, its contemporary socio-economic status, its integration into technical and vocational training and the relevance of formal training opportunities for the formal and informal labour market, its overall acceptability and the often stressed lack of creativity which hampers the growth of the entire handicraft sector especially with a view to export. Reflecting on the latter a lecturer at the University of Nairobi stated: »In Kenya we do not develop skills, technology and creativity at the same time. The export market requires you to be continually innovative. We produce products over and over again¹⁰³. We will not take risks, as we do not know how to adapt. The educational system should train in creativity«¹⁰⁴ (CATHERINE MASINDE 1994).

Reviewing Kenya's craft education during the early 1980s OIRO and WAITHAKA rightly pointed out that »negative attitudes to vocational training, especially at the basic level, developed before independence, chiefly because of the manner in which it was introduced« (OIRO and WAITHAKA 1982:7). OIRO and WAITHAKA's statement only underlines the importance of evaluating not only the educational set-up but furthermore the syllabus and educational messages of the same. Messages transformed by governmental policies and/or the formal education system have a major impact on the ›mind share‹ of the population with regard to items, subjects, techniques etc. and the esteem of the different crafts and professions¹⁰⁵. Therefore, to understand why

¹⁰² This aspect will further be dealt with in Chapter 11 and 12.

¹⁰³ A view shared and expressed in the same way by Helen K. of Terra Ltd. – interviewed on the 30.10.1995

¹⁰⁴ In 1996 the GTZ launched a project to improve practical subjects at Primary School level, amongst them Art & Crafts.

¹⁰⁵ As arts and crafts do not command a high priority in the formal education system, occupations based on creativity and artistic talent are not always well perceived. The ›painter‹ who decorates the crafts items made of tin with gloss paint which are on display and marketed on a national and international scale by the Kisumu Innovation Centre-Kenya (KIC-K), for example, has some difficulty in identifying his work with a proper profession despite earning more than many other Jua Kali artisans.

formal art and crafts education and also handicraft promotion efforts do not seem to produce the expected results, one needs to examine the means by which the different crafts are introduced, as well as the time, money and importance allocated to them.

A short introduction into the art and crafts education under the British Colonial Office should help to explain the developments in Kenya in a broader geographical context of dependencies and external spheres of interest.

6.1.1 Art education and formal pottery training in Africa under British colonial rule

According to HARROD (1989), the progressive art education in British West Africa can be traced back to 1905 – the year that the French avant-garde ›discovered‹ Negro-Sculpture. Less than 20 years later, British educationalists reported that their African students had a complete lack of belief in their indigenous art forms. HARROD quoted that ›these students knew that wood sculpture was connected with primitive religion and what they called ›the worship of idols‹, and they turned their back on that when they left the bush. Pottery also smacked of bush. It was dirty, and women’s work anyway. Weaving? All right for villagers, but ›we are now civilised‹ and either wore European clothes or bought our cloths ready from Manchester ...‹ (HARROD 1989).

Confronted with the problems of a growing and inappropriate number of clerical workers being educated in the colonies, an advisory committee on education in the colonies was formed in 1923 (HARROD 1989). This committee was charged with the responsibility of altering the basis of primary and secondary school education in British Africa, moving it away from a purely academic training towards a more vocational education, along the lines of the Basel Mission School and the similarly practical education offered by the Belgian colonial powers. By the early 1930s the Colonial Office had established a subcommittee on art education in the colonies (HARROD 1989). However, some British educationalists like K.C. Murray and Margaret Trowell were highly critical of the ›futile pseudo crafts‹ being taught in African schools by English teachers; they did not always agree with the official educational policy. MURRAY, for example, noted that the syllabus of clay-modeling taught in Nigerian schools was ›ill-adapted to a people who are accustomed to handle clay, and who in many cases make their own clay pots, the very young child learning from her mother‹ (HARROD 1989). Meanwhile TROWELL advocated for a reproductive step by step apprenticeship system – ›We must tackle the problem as it was tackled in Europe and the Middle Ages when small groups of people were self-supporting‹ (TROWELL 1937).

Though H.V. Meyerowitz, with a background in the Berlin *Kunstgewerbeschule*, was far more interested in the craft-into-industry possibilities in West Africa than Murray and Trowell, he shared their critical opinion on the art education in the colonies. He was inspired in part by the French achievements in the French Sudan at the Maison Artisanat at Bamoko, a craft center which introduced low level Western technology such as broad looms and potter’s wheels to supplement native skills. Meyerowitz was, therefore, discussing the possibilities of an Institute independent of the Achimota College, Ghana, which would survey and record West African crafts,

laws, languages and customs and aim at upgrading these craft skills¹⁰⁶. »Meyerowitz planned that the production side of the Institute would be a ›marriage of the old aesthetic skills and power to modern technique‹¹⁰⁷ – what M. Cardew aptly described as the ›Bauhausing‹ of the crafts of west Africa« (HARROD 1989). Meyerowitz, who had worked at the Ashimota College as an art master since 1937, picked on pottery as the best suited craft to begin this transformation, and founded the West African Institute of Arts, Industries and Social Science at Alajo. While it took years until the Institute was formally recognized by the Colonial Office, in 1943, the financially unsuccessful pottery ceased operation soon after Meyerowitz had committed suicide in 1945 (HARROD 1989). M. Cardew, the most well known British potter who ever worked in the colonies, was recruited by the Colonial Office in 1942 to teach ceramics at the Ashimota College after Meyerowitz had directed all his energy and time to the Institute. Cardew spent 6 years at the Gold Coast/Ghana teaching at the college and, busily, but unsuccessfully trying to set-up his own production workshop. Picking up on the idea of Meyerowitz, »he began to develop ideas about a specifically African type of high fired pottery, which he envisaged as being adapted to the genius of the race – highly colored and highly decorated« (HARROD 1989). Before returning to Britain in 1948, »Cardew staged a little exhibition in Accra, at the British Council headquarters¹⁰⁸. He included examples of the native pottery, and observed that »this type of ›primitive‹ decoration can be effectively transferred to the decoration of glazed ware«¹⁰⁹ (HARROD 1989).

Being fascinated by the possibilities of pottery industries in Africa, Cardew returned to West Africa in 1950 to work as a pottery officer for the Department of Commerce and Industries in Nigeria. Decades later GRUNER (1988) reported from the Ivory Coast that mission schools had a major impact on the development of highly

¹⁰⁶ Years later, in 1951, the Rural Industries Officer of the Kenya Colony approached the Principal of the Ashimota College for information on the same in a letter with the following words: »As Rural Industries Officer, it is my duty to foster many of the traditional arts carried on by the various tribes in the Kenya Colony. A number of avenues have been explored in an endeavour to find the most satisfactory way to place various small industries on a sound economic footing. Certain of them have had to be discarded as impracticable, either because of the expense involved or for some other reason. I should be most grateful for any information obtainable regarding the Institute of Arts and Crafts in the Gold Coast, ... « (KNA: AB/19/4/161).

¹⁰⁷ An approach which is still advocated by many Western advisors attending to handicraft production in developing countries, in order to secure the marketability of the crafts products on the one hand and their authenticity on the other.

¹⁰⁸ The British Council has a long history in promoting the potters' trade and ceramic production in former British colonies. In 1981 the British Council in Kenya sponsored the ceramic training of Waithira Chege, a talented Kikuyu woman, in London, and in 1984 it hosted an exhibition of pottery, from western Kenya, in Nairobi. In January 1997, the British Council in collaboration with the ODA hired a British consultant to provide technical assistance to a small number of Nairobi based ceramic workshops. In Nigeria, in 1996, the British Council launched an exhibition of Nigerian ceramics and published a newsletter to accommodate it.

¹⁰⁹ The same design principle has found its imprint in the contemporary Nigerian pottery.

decorated pottery ware in Katiola that is nowadays sold alongside rather plain traditional domestic ware. Education in pottery has taken place in many colonies, not just in West Africa, as it may seem, but also in East Africa. Between 1955 and 1958 Ms. Belcher, a British ceramist, worked as a homecraft officer for the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. Under the Department of Community Development and Rehabilitation she was given the objective to foster ceramic production in Kenya. During her time Ms. Belcher established two small-scale pottery industries in close reach of Nairobi and provided advice to various pottery schemes in and around detention camps of Mau Mau freedom fighters in other parts of the country and also to the Teachers Training College at Thika. However, while Cardew's impact under the auspices of the Department of Commerce and Industries in Nigeria can still be seen today, the work of Ms. Belcher has left no traceable impression on the craft. The latter can partly be blamed on the fact that Ms. Belcher was paid from Emergency Funds which implies that her duration of duty was determined by the state of Emergency in Kenya and should not last long enough to evoke a lasting change to Kenya's pottery/ceramic scene and also to the fact that her service was part of community development policies rather than technical training or commercial considerations. Not even past achievements such as the technical manuals on clay and glaze preparation and kiln building written by Ms. Belcher in cooperation with the East African Industrial Research Board should be honored and conserved for the industries future use.

6.1.2 *Post independence educational set-ups and messages, Government of Kenya*¹¹⁰

In 1966, three years after independence, the Government of Kenya established the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.). The K.I.E. was charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating and supervising efforts to develop, evaluate and monitor syllabi and educational materials for the Pre-Primary School Education, Primary School, Secondary School, Post-School and Technical Education, Adult Education and Special Education for the Handicapped.

6.1.2.1 Art and crafts in Primary Schools

In his capacity as National Inspector for Art and Crafts and as Chairman of the Artists Association in Kenya, G.G.N. KAMAU pointed out that Art & Crafts are not new or foreign to Africa but have always been there. He made the statement that »usually when we talk of Art we also include Crafts; in other words, the word ›Art‹ is very often used as a general term for the two subjects« (KAMAU 1979:3). Kamau thereby expressed a rather ›African‹ perception of Art & Crafts, which would lend itself to much criticism in a European context.

KAMAU stressed that while the society's approach and concept of Art & Crafts changed, »pupils should be proud of using clay as a medium of self-expression. They

¹¹⁰ See Appendix V for KRAUTER'S (1981) reflection on Kenya's education system before the introduction of the 8-4-4 system in 1985.

should not be allowed to develop the misleading idea that clay is a dirty material, which is degrading to use« (KAMAU 1979:85). Yet, clay, understood as a medium of self expression reflects a western approach as first imparted to Kenya at mission schools, while African pottery traditions in general are rather static and refer to a common and clearly defined repertoire of functional objects which do not favour individual self expression¹¹¹.

In line with KAMAU's recommendations of 1979 for the Art & Crafts Syllabus for Primary Schools the 8-4-4 curriculum, which was launched in 1985, following another review and restructuring of Kenya's education system aims at: »awakening pupils potentialities to develop muscle control, creative talent and physical skills; offering training towards inquiry into the immediate environment¹¹², acquainting pupils with the solid world of materials; enabling them to appreciate good craftsmanship, etc.« (MASAI 1988:14).

A look at the 8-4-4 Primary School Syllabus for Art and Crafts, as portrayed in Table 3, reveals that pottery plays a rather minor role in comparison with crafts like woodwork and metal work, for example.

It was not the creative activity, such as pottery/ceramics, in its own right that was deemed important but its inherent potential to translate the educational objectives mentioned above into action¹¹³. Besides other national goals, the Government of Kenya emphasised that the 8-4-4 system of education as a whole should produce citizens with skills, knowledge, expertise and personal qualities and enable children to blend the best of the traditional values with the changed requirements that follow a rapidly developing economy in order to build a stable and modern Kenyan society.

Bearing in mind that most Art & Crafts subjects lead to rather time-consuming activities if properly taught, and that only limited amounts of time and resources are available, it seems very unlikely that all subjects as stated above can be tackled accordingly. Potters with whom I have spoken during my fieldwork, however, reported of having received primary school classes visiting them at their place of work¹¹⁴.

¹¹¹ A Dwayo potter of West Africa, for example, made the following analogy: »You do not want your children to be unlike other people's children. They should be the same but better. So it is with pots« (BARLEY 1994:115).

¹¹² its nature and usefulness

¹¹³ In 1997 the call to reform the current 8-4-4 is strengthening with the World Bank as one of its strongest supporters. The argument is that the students sit too many exams and that some of the subjects, such as music and art and crafts, do not count for further education and employment (*Daily Nation* – 03.11.97) – an argument which needs to be critically reviewed since Kenya's industry and economy at large is clearly suffering from a lack of creative and innovative energy.

¹¹⁴ As so happened during my fieldwork among the Meru of Kenya in August 1995.

Table 3: Art and Crafts subjects in Primary Schools in Kenya under the 8–4–4 system

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Standard</i>					
	<i>1–3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>
Drawing	X	X	X	X	X	X
Painting	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pattern Making	X	X	X	X		
Print Making	X	X	X	X	X	X
Paper Craft	X	X				
Mosaic and Collage	X	X			X	
Modelling	X	X	X	X	X	X
Decoration Shapes			X			
Construction		X				X
Carving					x	X
Containers	X	X				
Weaving and Basketry	X	x	X	X		
Puppetry	X	x	x			
Ornaments		X		X		
Fabric Decoration		X	X	X	X	X
Pottery/Ceramics		X	X	X		
Graphic Design		X	X	X	X	X
Etching		X				
Leather Work		X	X	X		
Wood Work		X	X	X	X	X
Metal Work			X	X	X	X
Basic Building Construction				X	X	X
Body Covers						X

Source: Republic of Kenya, 8–4–4 Art & Crafts Syllabus

6.1.2.2 Art and crafts in secondary schools

Following a post independence review of the educational set-up in Kenya in the 1960s, the secondary school curriculum stressed Art & Crafts as optional while according to KULUNDU-BITONYA (1988) an attempt was made at the same time to upgrade and expand technical education at secondary school level.

While the need for advanced knowledge in science and technology grew alongside the modernisation of the society, the formal labour market had proved incapable of absorbing the huge number of school leavers. This in turn led to the educational reform in 1985 when, with the 8–4–4 system, practical subjects were reintroduced not only to primary schools but to secondary school curricula as well. This 'vocalisation of basic education' – as KING (1996:162) phrased it – was done with the view to provide

basic knowledge and skills for self-employment to all those who could not secure any higher education or technical training for themselves.

While the 8–4–4 secondary school curriculum addresses crafts such as carpentry and tailoring, for example, as subjects in their own right, crafts like weaving, basketry, leather-work, ceramics etc. are only touched upon during ›Art and Design‹ classes. This differentiation was further contributing to the clustering of the crafts into those with a vocational perspective and those deemed to be without economic value and prospective. The latter were to serve other objectives as outlined by DIGOLO and ORCHARDSON-MAZURI (1995:iv): »The 8–4–4 Art and Design syllabus for Secondary Schools aims at developing students’ creative talents and potentials through exposure to a wide variety of artistic activities, materials, tools and techniques. This exposure is intended to equip them with knowledge and skills, which will enable them to be self-reliant and to contribute to national development. In addition the subject will promote awareness of the socio-cultural values of the material culture of the peoples of Kenya and the rest of the world, and of the natural environment with its many valuable resources for art and design«. The schoolbooks, however, do not correspond well to these objectives. Whilst giving a brief introduction of the history of ceramics, pottery traditions from Nigeria, Egypt and Ethiopia are highlighted next to those of China, Japan and Europe while Kenyan pots as such find no mention¹¹⁵. At the same time, in the Form 1 and Form 2 schoolbook, Kenyan pottery is portrayed as a traditional women’s craft with little economic potential (DIGOLO and ORCHARDSON-MAZURI 1995). The authors go further in underlying the backwardness of traditional Kenyan pottery with attributes such as simple and cheap etc. Expressions such as »the traditional techniques are still in use, but contemporary ones are also becoming increasingly popular« (DIGOLO and ORCHARDSON-MAZURI 1995:116) or »Professional potters experiment with various mixtures of clay to arrive at a clay that is suitable for their type of work. The clay is lumpy when dug and cannot be used in this state (however, some traditional potters sometimes find clay that they can use straightaway)« (DIGOLO and ORCHARDSON-MAZURI 1995:118) ... »The simplest type of kiln is the bonfire kiln. ... These types of kilns are used by traditional potters who usually fire their wares at a low temperature. ... The traditional type of kiln is the cheapest to use. It can be used by schools, which cannot afford to build gas kilns, or to buy electric kilns«¹¹⁶ (DIGOLO and ORCHARDSON-MAZURI 1995:119) are all further examples. In the Form 3 and Form 4 edition, Kenya’s pottery traditions are not even mentioned, while Western production techniques and their potentials are further emphasised¹¹⁷ and described.

¹¹⁵ Barely half a page of a total of 22 pages tackles Kenyan pottery tradition.

¹¹⁶ The issue of availability is not addressed or critically reflected.

¹¹⁷ An example is given by this quote: »In Kenya, the ceramic section at the Kenya Industrial Research and Development Institute (KIRDI) is experimenting with local clays and glazes. More and more experiments of this nature will most likely lead to a thriving ceramics industry, both as craft ware and as industrial ware« (DIGOLO 1995:109).

6.1.2.3 Teachers Training Colleges

Despite the fact that Teachers Training Colleges have taken an early interest in modern studio pottery¹¹⁸, the technical training in ceramics provided at these institutions remains rather rudimentary. As in the case of primary and secondary schools this can be attributed to the limited amount of time and importance allocated to it¹¹⁹. Despite these limiting factors the poor expertise in ceramics among the lecturers is another point of concern. Glancing at Kenya's overall educational set-up, it is almost certain that all Art and Crafts lecturers at Teachers Training Colleges have graduated with a BA or MA in Fine arts or a B.Ed. from Kenyatta University where ceramic education has reached a disappointingly low level.

6.1.2.4 Universities

The Kenyatta University (KU) looks back at a 31-year-old history¹²⁰ and currently hosts five faculties: Arts, Commerce, Education, Science and Environmental studies.

Until 1995, the Fine Art Department of the Faculty of Arts was the only institutions of its kind to cater for students opting for a Bachelor or Master degree in Fine Art or Education, with most graduates qualifying for the teaching profession. At the Kenyatta University, the following topics form part of the Fine Art curriculum: art and design appreciation, drawing, painting, graphic design, printmaking, fabric design, weaving, sculpture, ceramics and multimedia craft. This composition, which incorporates craft related subjects like weaving, fabric making and ceramics, differs strongly from the European understanding of Fine Arts, which lays emphasis on the difference between Fine Arts and Crafts, for example, between sculpture and ceramic classes.

Although the Fine Art Syllabus at KU, just like the school syllabi, calls for the exploration of the traditional techniques of forming, decoration, finishing and firing in ceramics a much higher value is attributed to the introduction of Western traditions and ›modern production methods‹ like wheel throwing, mould making and slip casting, for example. According to my observations the common knowledge of Kenya's pot-making traditions among the lecturers and students at the University is extremely low¹²¹. While the head of the ceramic section remembered vaguely having visited and availed her expertise to potters in Kisumu, West Kenya, on request of KENGO in 1988, neither the head of the Fine Art Department nor the section head for ceramics

¹¹⁸ As early as 1955, the Principal of the Teachers Training College at Thika in December 1955 had applied for the permission to send their handwork instructor to the Karura Pottery Co-operative for training (KNA: AB/19/2/41) and in July 1956 Ms. Belcher, a trained ceramist who was by then employed by the Kenya Colony to establish and boost ceramic production in Kenya, advised the Teacher Training College in Thika on the construction of a kiln and on pottery production in general.

¹¹⁹ During a two-year programme, students at Teachers Training Colleges are exposed to 16 courses, Art & Crafts being only one of them.

¹²⁰ See Appendix VI for a brief outline of the same.

¹²¹ It is a common feature in Kenya that members of the well educated, high income class disassociate themselves from their ethnic traditions, especially indigenous crafts related to their own profession.

knew of the 1989 publication ›Kenyan Pots and Potters‹. Low budget allocations, reflecting the small importance attached to the ceramic section, have led to desolate teaching conditions. With most of the machines and equipment broken down, the kilns not functioning, students have, for years, had to graduate without having gained practical experience in glazing and firing their clay/ceramic products. Due to the extremely poor state of the ceramic workshop¹²² and strong limitations on the side of qualified lecturers¹²³ the present standard of education in ceramics leaves a lot to be desired. This is reflected in the public perception of the degree holders by the private sector and especially the commercial ceramic industries, neither of which appreciate a BA or MA in Ceramics obtained at Kenyatta University. As a result, most graduates eventually join the teaching profession. According to student records kept at the Department of Fine Art, $\frac{2}{3}$ of all students graduate with a BA in Education and join the teaching profession while $\frac{1}{3}$ obtain a BA in Fine Art. These records further reveal that in total, more than 252 students¹²⁴ enrolled with the Department between 1985 and 1995 of which about 80 graduated in Fine Art.

According to discussions held with the following lecturers: Antony N.¹²⁵, Maura N.¹²⁶ and Margret M.¹²⁷ 50 % of all students who enrol in Fine Art show an interest in ceramics while the department can only cater for about 40 % due to limited workshop space. An even closer look at the 1985–1995 student figures discloses that only 15 students of all BA graduates had chosen ceramics as their major subject¹²⁸.

However, with one enrolment requirement for a degree course in Fine Art at KU being a ›B-‹¹²⁹ in Art and Design at K.C.S.E. level, Fine Art has become a privilege for

¹²² The only kiln in use is a 12 year old German Riedhammer kiln which no longer reaches temperatures above 1050°C as the University can not, does not, avail the necessary funds to replace the electric elements of the kiln.

¹²³ The section head, Margret M., started her career as a ceramist at the Kenyatta University College in 1979, obtained her BA and MA at the same institution and thereafter was recruited as a lecturer. The same applies to the other lecturers of the section who were trained by Margret M.

¹²⁴ Data for BEd. 92 and enrolment figures for 1994 were not available. However, according to the secretary of the department, there was no student intake in 1994 as the university had been closed due to the long lasting strike of the lecturers.

¹²⁵ graduated with a MA in Fine Art/Ceramics from KU in 1993 and has been lecturing ever since (2–3 years).

¹²⁶ received his BA in Fine Art/Ceramics in 1987 and his MA from KU in 1991 and has been teaching at KU since 1992 – one of his class mates, from KU, became the head of the ceramic department at RVIST

¹²⁷ enrolled as one out of 7 Fine Art students at KU in 1979 of whom 4 selected ceramics as their main subject. She obtained her BA and MA from KU and stayed on as a lecturer after graduation, becoming the head of the ceramic department. The other two lecturers have been trained by her. Margret was able to state what her former class mates were doing today: one is a fashion designer, one became a primary school teacher, one is teaching at Kianda College, two teach at TTCs and one is engaged in the computer business.

¹²⁸ According to the BA syllabus, the students ensue the following scheme: 1.Year – general introduction to Fine Art; 2.Year – tackle every area of Fine Art; 3.Year – choose BA of Education or BA of Fine Art and specialise.

¹²⁹ According to the Kenyan marking system a ›B-‹ is equivalent to ›2-‹ in Germany.

Kenya's wealthy upper class. Only the ›High Cost Secondary Schools‹ in and around Nairobi are able to offer adequate teaching facilities and the services of trained teachers in the field of Art and Crafts¹³⁰. By contrast most rural based schools which have to finance themselves through school fees and *harambee* contributions experience constant budget constraints which lead to the fact that the generally scarce teaching materials are distributed according to the priorities given to the various subjects with science subjects and ›modern crafts‹ ranking much higher than Art & Crafts. The latter causes the often stressed lack of artistic inspiration and creativity, which hampers the development and competitiveness of Kenya's (rural based) handicraft industry. While reviewing the potential of the handicraft sector in 1988, MASAI, himself a university lecturer in economics, stressed the relevance and importance of higher education in Fine Arts and Design for the prosperity and further commercialisation of the sector with the words: »Knowledge of product design and development which is taught in this programme¹³¹ is useful for the handicrafts sector. In some way as industrial product design methods were crucial in facilitating mass production of goods which earlier had been handicrafts« (MASAI 1988:17). By doing so MASAI, however, did not pay any attention to the fact that many ›learned‹ Kenyans disassociate themselves from traditional crafts which form the basis of most handicrafts and focus on modern arts and crafts, like ceramics, instead.

While the Kenyatta University looks back at more than 30 years of educational programmes in Fine Art, the University of Nairobi concentrated on programmes tackling design and architecture until very recently, when they introduced Fine Arts to the faculty of architecture and design in 1995. However, in the absence of qualified lecturers, the University of Nairobi started borrowing¹³² lecturers of the Fine Art Department at KU on a part time contract basis. While workshop facilities at the University of Nairobi are still scarce, students who demonstrated a specific interest in ceramics in the past have been invited to join ceramic classes at KU. A truly cumbersome arrangement as a distance of circa 15 km is separating the two universities. Nevertheless, two students reportedly undertook the exercise during the early 1990s; one of them has since become the head of the ceramic section at the Buru Buru Institute of Fine Art, which began operating in 1993.

6.1.2.5 Buru Buru Institute of Fine Art

As the YMCA workshops, which were established under German supervision during the 1960s, the Buru Buru Institute of Fine Art (BIFA) has a strong church background. The Catholic Parish of Buru Buru founded BIFA¹³³ in 1993. BIFA caters for those secondary school leavers who have artistic talents but do not meet the enrolment requirements at the KU.

¹³⁰ Mwaura N. and Margret M., personal statements – 3.12.1996.

¹³¹ MASAI refers to the diploma and degree programme in Fine Art at the Kenyatta University and the degree programme in design at the University of Nairobi.

¹³² as Chevas A., the chairman of the Department of Fine Arts at KU, had put it.

¹³³ Buru Buru is an estate in Nairobi

Once the decision was made to create an Institute of Fine Art, assistance was sought from the Department of Fine Art, Kenyatta University, in designing the workshop facilities and drafting the syllabi. Due to the fact that the Fine Art Department at KU was established in old barracks, and most of the lecturers had never been exposed to any other workshop or training institution, they openly confessed that they had no notion of how to design proper workshop facilities. As a result, large sums of money were invested in ordinary classroom buildings, which, in the end, proved inappropriate. To keep further investments down, simple iron-sheet-sheds were erected to accommodate the ceramic and sculpture classes.

Between 1993 and 1996, BIFA followed an internal college syllabus which allowed students to choose ceramics as one of their major subjects as at KU. This came to an end following the recommendations of the Kenya Institute of Education (K.I.E.) and the consequent approval of four draft syllabi for the following nationally recognised diploma courses: ›Painting‹, ›Clothing technology‹, ›Graphic Design‹ and ›Sculpture‹. This approval was given in November 1996, and these were to replace the college internal syllabi and diploma in Fine Arts. All classes at BIFA had to be restructured accordingly, thereby making it impossible for future student generations to come to graduate in ceramics. K.I.E. had advised BIFA to eliminate ceramics from the programme and treat it as an integral part of the newly introduced sculpture classes.¹³⁴

The K.I.E. made it clear that they were neither inclined, nor felt it necessary to train students in ceramic production, product development and design at a diploma level other than the training in ›Ceramic technology‹ offered at RVIST¹³⁵. The strong preference given to technical subjects over art subjects is further reflected in the allocation of scholarships for advanced professional training in ceramics which are generally passed on to KIRDI or RVIST instead of KU lecturers¹³⁶.

6.1.2.6 Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST)

By now we have learned that pottery/ceramics is a rare feature at public building institutions, being taught only at Certificate and Diploma Level at the Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology and forms an integral part of the BA and MA and BEd. curricular at the Fine Arts Department at Kenyatta University. However, with ceramics being an unfamiliar subject to most school leavers and parents alike,

¹³⁴ I visited the BIFA on the 24.1.97 together with Mike C., a British ceramic consultant and Ailsa B., a Kenya based product design consultant, both of whom worked for the British Council at the time

¹³⁵ While serving the Jitegemea Pottery as a technical advisor between 1990 and the end of 1995, Douve H. developed detailed training manuals and added to the training the employees had already received prior to his arrival. Concerned about the low professional status of the potter's craft in Kenya, Harder approached the Government of Kenya to establish an officially recognised training syllabus for potters/ceramists in Kenya apart from the Diploma in Ceramic Technology being taught at the RVIST. Frustrated by the poor response and little interest shown by the Government of Kenya (MRTT&T and K.I.E.) as well as professionals who had secured employment for themselves Douve H. dropped the idea again in 1993.

¹³⁶ personal statement of Chevas A.

enrolment figures in ceramics at Harambee Institutes of Technology are extremely low¹³⁷.

Despite the low number of students graduating in ceramic technology each year only few of them can secure employment in the formal sector since Kenya's ceramic sector is small and the formal qualifications obtained at RVIST do not conform with the skill requirements of the sector. Since the training is ill adapted to the labour market, it has already become difficult for the students to secure their field attachments during the course of their studies.

6.2 Technical training and the emergence of the ›informal sector‹

Craft education, in general, is much older than any formal education. One therefore needs to look at past and contemporary forms of skill acquisition and traditional, informal and formal education and training set-ups.

6.2.1 Traditional skill acquisition – the ›household model‹

In Kenya it can be observed that vocational socialisation during the late 20th Century still follows, at least in part, a traditional pattern¹³⁸ as described by KENYATTA »... people grow up to know what is expected of them and what are the limits of their obligations. For such a life a careful training is required, and the Gikuyu educational system supplies it. On its technical side, it is practical from the earliest years. The Gikuyu child does not need Montessori exercises or class-room lessons in manual dexterity, for which plenty of space to tumble about in, and with older people around him doing interesting manual jobs, he will naturally learn by real experiments. There is work for him to do as soon as he has acquired the skill to do it properly, and he hardly distinguishes work from play« (KENYATTA 1991:312–313).

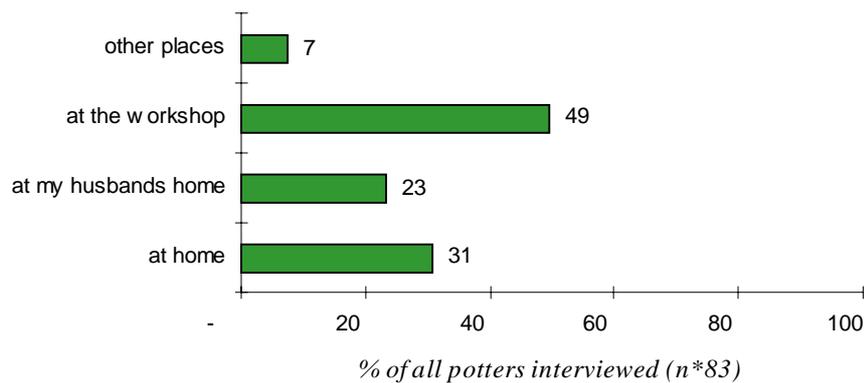
Prior to colonial days, art and craft skills were passed on from generation to generation through on-the-job-training with the traditional craft-specialist imparting his/her knowledge and skills to apprentices or relatives through on-the-job-experience¹³⁹. MASAI (1988) later named this method of learning the ›household model‹. In absence of a formal craft training programme for pottery and ceramics it is of no surprise that the vast majority of potters (n* 83) working in the traditional, informal and formal sector who have been interviewed during 1995 and 1996 even today acquire their pottery skills on the job. More than 50 % said to have learned the craft at home or in the home of their family-in-law while about 50 % learned it on an informal basis at their place of work.

¹³⁷ See Appendix VII for more details.

¹³⁸ Also see HERRMANN (1988)

¹³⁹ A training model shared and adopted by the informal sector

Graph 1: Place of pottery skill acquisition of 83 potters interviewed¹⁴⁰



The ›household model‹, though widely spread and essential to the more than 250.000 school leavers annually¹⁴¹, who finish their primary school and can not secure any further education, apprenticeship or employment in the formal sector, is often belittled and looked down upon and with it are the crafts relying on it.

6.2.2 The ›modern‹ education system

Under British colonial rule it was generally agreed among the missions, the settlers and the government, at least until the 1930s, that practical training was preferred to an academic literary education for the native Kenyans in order to generate a steady supply of labour for the European economy. Meanwhile the Kenya Colony operated schools for Europeans and Asians that allowed for maximum academic training. During the 1930s the government policy on education for the Africans was ambivalent: On the one hand, as a result of the Phelps-Stokes Commission to Kenya (1924), government and missions¹⁴² became much more aware of the need for training for the direct benefit of African communities in the reserves. In policy terms this meant the promotion of an ethos of rural self-sufficiency, training teachers who would work on an itinerant basis in rural communities, teaching rural skills and particularly agriculture (GOULD 1989:255). On the other hand, it was announced in 1924 »that a multiplicity of official existing training centres were to be centralised into the Native Industry Training Depot (NITD) at Kabete, near Nairobi. It would be specially geared, in an urban setting, to train artisans for the settler economy and to create competition for the Asian artisans« (GOULD 1989:258).

A line was drawn between the ›rural industries‹ geared to serve the Africans and the ›modern industries‹ which required advanced technical training and provided goods and services to the settler community. This early separation was never revoked, but

¹⁴⁰ The total adds up to more than 100 % since multiple answers were permitted.

¹⁴¹ See *Sunday Nation*, July 6, 1997

¹⁴² Supported by grants-in-aid from the colonial authorities, the missions were providing training and education in the Kenyan reserves (GOULD 1989:255).

instead further strengthened throughout the colonial era with the Colonial Office charging the Ministry of Social Welfare and later the Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation with the responsibility of addressing and fostering rural industries under the umbrella of mass education and community development. At the same time, technical training was limited to some few ›modern crafts‹ and fell under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education. As we will see in the course of this chapter, low level technical training would remain a social and communal responsibility for most of the century, even after ›Uhuru‹. This chapter is separated in two parts with the first looking at the emergence of a formal technical training system, and the second highlighting the development of the rural industries as an aspect of social and community development.

6.2.2.1 Formal craft education

As mentioned before, in the light of the ›modern economy‹, traditional educational set-ups imparting skills and values which had been handed down from generation to generation and reflected the cultural identity of the particular ethnic group were disregarded by the learned members of the society. According to KRAUTER (1981:269), first attempts to establish vocational training geared towards the skill requirements in the rural areas rather than towards the ›labour market‹, were heavily opposed by students in 1928 who were not at all interested in a future career in the reserves but wanted to qualify for the well honoured commercial labour market¹⁴³. During the 1930s WAGNER made the observation that there was minimal if any interaction between traditional and modern crafts. He stated that »even where old and new techniques are as similar as in the case of old-time and modern-time thatching, the same people never practise both techniques« (WAGNER 1970:17).

Young men, who were trained in and/or practised the modern crafts were generally recorded to prefer jobs as craftsmen outside the African reserves in European or Asian employment rather than setting up a workshop in their home area. This tendency reflects the attitude of the people by which urban employment precedes employment or work in the rural area – a phenomenon that has survived the colonial era, and is echoed even in development programmes of the 1990s¹⁴⁴.

As a result of colonial politics, »most people ... look at vocational training as second best¹⁴⁵. In Kenya, this fact is reflected in the attitudes of parents, trainees, as well as policy makers. Most parents prefer to see their children in secondary schools rather than vocational training institutions. The amount of funds allocated to

¹⁴³ Also see WAGNER (1970)

¹⁴⁴ See Chapter 6.2 for World Bank and EC programmes in support of the Micro- and Small Enterprise Sector

¹⁴⁵ For decades vocational trainees, though attending training institutions like the Native Industry Training Depot at Kabete, were not issued with any certificates to verify their achievements. First attempts to regulate and formalise vocational training in Kenya are based on ILO Trade Test Concepts and can be traced back to the 1950s.

vocational training by the government is much smaller than that allocated to academic education«(OIRO and WAITHAKA 1982:7)¹⁴⁶.

6.2.2.2 The evolution and transformation of a non-formal education system

The ›handyman‹ or Jua Kali/Informal Sector Artisan is by no means a phenomenon of the late 20th Century. However, its history and origin, which can be traced back to the Kenya Colony, has largely been ignored but shall be further explained in the chapters to come.

6.2.2.2.1 Kenya Colony

With the colonial era crafts techniques of Asian and European origin were introduced to serve the colonial mode of production. Informal training through the missions in the reserves was used to impart skills to the predominantly African artisan. In 1952, long before the first Village Polytechnic was established, the plan of a Kamba Training Centre at Machakos was discussed among the Commissioner for Community Development (CCD), the Assistant Director of Education (ADoE), the Chief Inspector of Schools (CIoS), the District Commissioner for Machakos (DC Machakos), the Rural Industries Officer (RIO), the Officer in charge of Trade Testing & Apprenticeships and the Assistant Director of Education-Technical (ADoET). During the meeting the idea of an approved apprenticeship scheme emerged. With regard to the proposed scheme, the ADoET asked the participants to consider that »as from 1955 there will be an output of over 200 four year trained carpenters and masons each year and it is estimated that in a few years the demand will be satisfied and that saturation may be reached« (KNA: AB/19/4/328). Meanwhile the ADoE and the Labour Commissioner stated that »a number of organisations are proposing to train low grade carpenters and masons on the assumption that there is a demand for this class of man« (KNA: AB/19/4/328). Taking the wage labour market into consideration, the latter raised their concern about this proposition expecting hundreds of men with low standard technical education to drift towards town where they would fail to compete with the well trained craftsmen and therefore fail to obtain employment. The Commissioner for Community Development, Mr. Askwith, opened the discussion on whether or not the proposed Machakos Centre should train artisans. While pointing out that » ...everyone was advocating technical training for the Africans as the solution to all problems« (KNA: AB/19/4/328), the ADoE urged the participants not to consider the demand for trade training as something new as he reminded them how, in 1938/39, Machakos was flooded with men who had completed a five year course at the Native Industry Training Depot (N.I.T.D.) but could not find employment thereafter. This subsequently left them roaming the urban areas, as there was not enough cash in the reserves to pay the men the wages they wanted. In agreement with the DC of Machakos, the CCD considered that the Centre could offer training to Standard VI

¹⁴⁶ The vocational education and training share in total central Government expenditure represents only about 2 % of the educational budget in 1992 and 2,4 % in 1993 respectively with its bulk being assigned to high level training institutions like the National Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology.

school leavers and assist in the development of the reserves by imparting skills, which could lead to the production of cheaper products and affordable services for the native consumer. The RIO supported the idea of CCD and the DC of Machakos, and »estimated that the output of the Centre could be absorbed in the reserves and on farms and the products would not drift to the towns. The goal of the training was to produce »handymen« (KNA: AB/19/4/328).

In the absence of sufficient funds and commitments to train a large number of highly qualified artisans who could no longer be absorbed by the wage labour market and who would feel uneasy in going back to the reserves to serve the African community after having successfully completed their training, the idea of a »handyman« or »rough artisan« was elaborated on in detail. While the Chief Inspector of Schools, Mr. Ottaway, suggested that a good handyman could be turned out if the training was limited to the handling of a minimum number of tools completely, the RIO favoured the idea of »on the job training« by instructors who run their own business as they train »rough artisans«¹⁴⁷. The RIO showed himself confident that a rough artisan could be usefully employed on African District Council building schemes. Although the expected standard would be low, he considered that a man trained as a rough carpenter was worth more than a labourer. Holding account on the discussion the CCD described the object of the scheme as an example of community development as it was to train in self-help to meet local needs (KNA: AB/19/4/328). Underlining the latter, it was pointed out that not only the North Nyanza African District Council was prepared to put up 25,000 pounds to finance a similar scheme, but that clan associations were prepared to find funds for equipping training centres and paying instructors who would follow an approved training programme¹⁴⁸.

Although the participating officers came to an agreement over the nature and design of the proposed training scheme at Machakos, the scheme could meet neither the conditions of the Educational Department nor of the Labour Office. It was therefore decided that it should be run as a private school and that no other schemes should be started unless this one had proved itself useful (KNA: AB/19/4/328).

It happened that, before independence, 15 non-governmental technical schools, which offered educational facilities to those who did not qualify for the admission in secondary schools, had been established across the country to train skills in basic mechanics, electrical and automobile mechanics, agricultural mechanics and welding, basic carpentry, joinery, masonry, bricklaying and plumbing. After independence in 1963, these schools were turned into official training institutions for technical training aiming at the industrial middle management level without providing the possibility to advance their formal qualification any further than that (KULUNDU-BITONYA 1988: 27–28).

¹⁴⁷ According to these discussions and considerations the Jua Kali artisan did not develop »naturally« but was intentionally created to serve Kenya's dual economy.

¹⁴⁸ Compare with Harambee efforts leading to the establishment of the Village Polytechnics after independence, see Chapter 6.2

6.2.2.2.2 Government of Kenya

With over 60 % of Kenya's population being under the age of 25 education, vocational training and employment have constantly challenged the Government of Kenya since independence.

While the first elected Government of Kenya, like the present one, laid strong emphasis on the development of an industrial nation and the Educational Commission Report of 1964 emphasised the need to train technicians and skilled craftsmen for industrial development¹⁴⁹, church organisations continued and further strengthened their technical and financial support to the rural industries sector. With independence in 1963, they had formed a working party, composed of church representatives and academics, to study the problem of an increasing number of children leaving primary school with little chances of further education or employment. During an international conference on education, employment and rural development, held in Kericho/Kenya in 1966, the National Council of Churches of Kenya (NCCCK) launched the study ›*After School What?*‹. As in 1952, when colonial administrators were discussing the Kamba Training Centre at Machakos, the NCCCK study once again urged the need for institutions to train young people in practical skills, which could enable them to settle gainfully in rural areas. In 1967, the NCCCK launched the initiative to establish Village Polytechnics (VPs) in Kenya and accepted the role of mentor and guide fostering the establishment of VPs countrywide. Based on the long-standing tradition of the educational activities carried out by missions/churches these VPs enjoyed a broad acceptance among the people. VPs were designed to cater for primary school leavers who were unable to continue their formal education at secondary school and could not secure any employment for themselves. The VPs training programmes were geared to serve the demand of the local labour market and consequently offered training in craft skills, home economics and management, health education and agricultural subjects to boys and girls over the age of 16 years. KRAUTER (1981:331) further specified the training subjects as follows: carpentry and joinery, tailoring, car mechanics, baking, metal work, secretarial and accountancy courses, home economics and small stock breeding as well as small scale agriculture. Initially the VPs were launched and financed by local initiatives of parents, village elders and representatives who not only raised the money to construct and facilitate the training but also decided on which subjects to teach, were responsible for identifying qualified craftsmen and recruiting them as trainers for the VPs¹⁵⁰. The set-up of the VPs and the composition of the training programmes consequently differed according to the socio-economic structure

¹⁴⁹ According to the Permanent Secretary of the MRTT&T this is an issue which has maintained its validity more than 30 years later. On the occasion of the failure of the GoK to announce new salary schemes for technical teachers jointly with the new schemes and announced salary increases for other teachers, a leading newspaper commented »...if Kenya has to have a strong industrial base, indeed if its stated intention of industrialisation by the year 2020 is to make sense, the crucial role of technical teachers, especially those deployed in the polytechnics, can neither be gainsaid nor neglected.« (*Daily Nation*, 5.3.97)

¹⁵⁰ A spirit that had led to the recruitment of Silvanus Owiti in 1950 and inspired the MP of Karachuonyo in 1989 to persuade a weaver to teach women of Kanyaluo at the Multipurpose Centre in 1989.

of the respective region in which they were established. The relatively low number of established VPs, however, reduced their importance for the country's economic growth and prosperity – between 1968 and 1974 75 VPs had been established offering training facilities to only 5.000 of the 100.000 primary school leavers in the country seeking employment or further education (KRAUTER 1981:332). The overall low impact of the VPs is further reflected in the following figures: only 36 % of the male students and 19 % of the female students who completed their training in 1972¹⁵¹ could secure paid employment for themselves. The idea, however, was that the students at the VPs should form/establish ›work groups‹¹⁵² or agricultural co-operatives in the region and by doing so act as development agents in the area¹⁵³.

While the VPs were imparting ›modern craft skills‹, the YMCA Crafts Training Centre¹⁵⁴, which was launched and started operation in Shauri Moyo/Nairobi in 1966, was the only institution offering training in various handicrafts, namely: batiks, enamel work, leather work, ceramics and wood work on furniture and toys.

While the NCKK and other church and non-governmental organisations focused on the establishment of appropriate training schemes for the growing number of unemployed youth, the GoK passed the Vagrancy Act to stop the flight from the rural areas to the towns in 1968. Following the Vagrancy Act the Vice President's Office gave orders to clean the towns of all unemployed job seekers, beggars and prostitutes, who should return to their rural home. However, complementary to the ongoing efforts of the church to establish VPs on a community self-help basis the GoK launched its 1st Youth Development Programme (1971–1974) and the ›Rural Industrial Development Programme‹ in 1971, which received wide international support¹⁵⁵. All these efforts followed a familiar catalogue of objectives: Employment opportunities were to be increased and diversified, income and living standards were to be raised and regional economic imbalances were to be reduced in order to stem the rural exodus to big towns.

The Rural Industries Development Programme (RIDP) »as a whole started with the notion that rural artisans and industries lacked technical and managerial skills. It was assumed that once this problem was overcome, rural industrial development and regional welfare increases would follow« (BURISCH 1991:322). Under the RIDP, 4 Rural Industrial Development Centres (RIDC) were established during the early 1970s – one in Kakamega, one in Embu, one in Machakos and one in Nyeri¹⁵⁶. The

¹⁵¹ Total numbers: 381 boys and 108 girls

¹⁵² An idea that increased its followers over the years and was widely promoted and supported by international development organisations during the late 1980s and early 1990s.

¹⁵³ On 26th April 1973 the NCKK handed over the role of the national co-ordination of the VP movement to the Ministry of Co-operatives (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

¹⁵⁴ The YMCA Crafts Training Centre at Shauri Moyo/Nairobi was sponsored by the German and Canadian YMCA, the Christophel Blinden Mission, the Nairobi Rotary Club and other donors.

¹⁵⁵ » .. the ›Rural Industries Development Programme‹ has been financially and technically supported by DANIDA, Norwegian, Swedish and German aid agencies, as well as by the EEC and the World Bank« (BURISCH 1991:320).

¹⁵⁶ For more details on the RIDP also see LIVINGSTONE (1975).

Kakamega RIDC is of particular interest to this study as it had paid special attention to ceramics. After the Kakamega RIDC had laid emphasis on modern-client enterprises and inappropriate facilities in its early days, it had failed to serve the largest pool of small entrepreneurs and local craftsmen and was thereafter strongly advised to adjust its approach to the regional requirements by emphasising on modern small industries with a local raw material base. »As clay and sugar cane were the only readily available raw materials in Western Province, industries processing these commodities were to receive special attention« (BURISCH 1984:223). In 1974 two Danish ceramic experts were assigned to the Kakamega RIDC. As instructed they established a ceramic workshop within the KIE-premises in Kakamega town that unfortunately ended in a complete failure¹⁵⁷. BURISCH, who has evaluated the Kakamega RIDC in the early 1980s, made it very clear that after 10 years the RIDC had failed to live up to its objectives as the practical implementation was ill adapted to the needs of the craftsmen, small industries and residents of the region.

The 1st Youth Development Programme (YDP) did not bring much change. The GoK handled the matter more in the manner of a social obligation than as an economical chore. Following the footsteps of the colonial administration, the GoK manifested the desire to develop VPs, basically as peoples projects. The GoK, however, instructed the then Ministry of Housing and Social Services to assist where necessary without turning the VPs into a government responsibility.

The GoK's reluctant and rather diverse attitude towards technical training only changed gradually in response to the ILO-Report ›Employment, Incomes and Equality: A Strategy for increasing productive employment in Kenya‹ (1972) and considerable international support for programmes to promote small rural industries and employment. The ILO ›Kenya Report‹, however, formed part of a number of country-studies commissioned by the ILO after which they launched their ›World Employment Programme‹ in 1969. The latter was an answer to the re-evaluation process of prevailing development policies of the 1st Development Decade. After the economic performance of developing countries such as Kenya had proved that these economies were unable to catch up with the industrial economies of the north, development policies had to be adjusted and restructured. As a result the ILO, for example, exchanged their former motive ›*Arbeitsbeschaffung durch Entwicklung*‹ to the contrary ›*Entwicklung durch Arbeitsbeschaffung*‹. Developing countries were generally advised to make use of their own resources like the massive labour force and local raw materials¹⁵⁸ and to restrict capital intensive technology and production methods to high potential industries. The ILO report further emphasised the important role rural industries, crafts and handicrafts could play in Kenya's economic development if addressed and properly promoted.

Although the GoK accepted the recommendations and proposals of the 1972 ILO-Report in principal, and made a commitment to increase employment opportunities in the then called ›informal sector‹ by about 7,5 % per annum¹⁵⁹, the governments policy and implementation of the sector in its capital city was half-hearted, preferring instead

¹⁵⁷ For further details see Chapter 9.2

¹⁵⁸ Also see KONGSTAD *et.al* (1972) for more details on Kakamega RIDC

¹⁵⁹ Republic of Kenya, 1974–78 Development Plan

policies relating to town planning, hygiene, public health, raising revenue and maintaining industrial standards (KULUNDU-BITONYE *et.al.* 1988:5).

The 2nd Youth Development Plan (1975–1980) was, however, outlined by a wider concept of youth development programming and tried to explore new service areas for implementation, namely:

1. »A Community Service Programme by University and Secondary School Graduates.
2. Crash Programmes of Functional Literacy, Health Education and Minor Works.
3. The Development of a Handicraft/Home Industries Programme.
4. The expansion of the National Youth Service using primarily labour intensive methods.
5. The re-alignment of the 4K Programme to cater for co-operative groups of school leavers.
6. The encouragement of Voluntary Agencies and Churches to experiment with small settlement schemes, small scale rural work projects, group employment contract schemes and small scale rural industries programmes – possibly with staffing from the community service programme.«

(REPUBLIC OF KENYA, YOUTH DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME 1975–80, 1975:6–7)

In response to the above mentioned plan UNICEF, for example, embarked on a training programme for women and girls related to income-earning opportunities in agriculture, food service and food processing, tailoring, dressmaking, knitting and embroidery, and reached out to professional work training and business training where and when deemed applicable. Meanwhile vocational training in carpentry, building, metal work, mechanics, tailoring/dressmaking and leatherwork (incl. tanning) was widely organised by the use of Overseas Volunteers. The vocational training programmes, however, hardly avoided the inherited preference being given to boys education. In line with the 2nd Youth Development Programme, which advocated for the development of handicraft programmes as well as the increased involvement of voluntary agencies and churches, a number of handicraft projects were launched. Among them the spinning and weaving workshop and the Jitegemea Pottery in Nairobi and the Kaimosi Pottery in Kakamega District. While the Kaimosi pottery, which had been financially and technically supported by the German Development Service (DED) between 1975 and 1980, shared the fate of the Kakamega ceramic workshop at the RIDC and ceased operation soon after the expatriates had handed over the operations to their Kenyan counterparts, the Nairobi based Jitegemea Pottery is still operational¹⁶⁰.

In 1976 the National Committee on Education, Objectives and Policies drew attention to the persistent need for more post school systems to provide specific skills for occupational activities. Comprising the data available, CHILD (1976) summarised that in 1976 less than 30 % of the total number of craftsmen were formally trained with the Kenya Industrial Training Institute (KITI) or held Village Polytechnics certificates. Meanwhile 70 % of the craftsmen had acquired their skills through apprenticeships in the non-formal sector or through on-the-job-training. CHILD

¹⁶⁰ Chapter 9.2 provides a more elaborate look at the Jitegemea Pottery and the history of ceramic production in Kenya as a whole.

consequently called for the proliferation of institutions such as Village Polytechnics (renamed Youth Polytechnics in 1985), Industrial Training Centres, Craft Trade and Training Centres, Institutes of Technology, etc. Despite the growing number of teaching institution, only 2 % of the primary school leavers were able to get access to vocational training at one of the 300 existing VPs in 1981 while another 3 % were absorbed into training institutions established by YMCA¹⁶¹, YWCA, Army, Police, National Youth Service (NYS)¹⁶² and Institutes of Technology thereby increasing the total percentage of those who managed to secure technical training of some kind to 5 % of all 1981 primary school leavers. With about 500.000 primary school leavers annually, the situation worsened over the years until 1989 when only 17.000 or 3 % of the primary school leavers or 2,3 % of all 15/16 year old Kenyans were able to secure some kind of vocational training at a YP or with the NYS while only 8.000 or 5 % of all secondary school leavers were able to enrol at a technical training institution (LEMKE *et.al.* 1990:46).

Taking into account the educational potential of village polytechnics in the early 1980s, OIRO and WAITHAKA (1982) came to the conclusion that Kenya's post colonial educational system was strengthening the society's low opinion of vocational training as vocational subjects were excluded from the school curriculum to give way to academic and scientific subjects while other practical subjects such as handicrafts, art and needlework were relegated to ›training for visual and manual coordination‹¹⁶³, as outlined under Chapter 6.

Ever growing unemployment figures finally forced the GoK to revise the nations economic development and educational approach and put more emphasis on practical skill training. As a result the Presidential Working Party recommended in 1981 the following steps: (1) to turn the Kenyatta University College into a fully-fledged University with a technical approach and to restructure the country's education system with emphasis being placed on imparting scientific and practical knowledge so as to reduce the mismatch between demand and supply of manpower¹⁶⁴ (MASAI 1988:13); (2) to revise all syllabi as it was deemed necessary to offer a minimum of pre-vocational education already at Primary School Level, as the majority of pupils do

¹⁶¹ the YMCA is running craft training courses not only in Shauri Moyo, Nairobi, but as well in other parts of Kenya, see Chapter 5.4.1.2

¹⁶² The National Youth Service, a paramilitary training institution, was launched in 1964 with the objective to provide vocational training to unemployed youth with low or non-formal educational background in Kenya. Apart from work discipline etc. skill training is offered in carpentry, car mechanics and masonry. The NYS, however, is directly supported and controlled by the governing political party KANU and was made compulsory for all university students before enrolling at University until August 1990.

¹⁶³ »Also excluded from the primary school curriculum, as a result of a recommendation from the Education Commission of 1964, was agriculture. Instead, `general science'¹⁶³ was introduced. Agriculture was made a voluntary subject under ›4 K Clubs‹ in primary schools. The secondary school curriculum stressed art and crafts as optional, while agriculture was taken care of by voluntary, extra curricular Young Farmers Clubs... The absence of agriculture in the curriculum influences the children's attitude. They tend not to regard agriculture as a possible career« (OIRO and WAITHAKA 1982:8).

¹⁶⁴ The University failed in this attempt with its Ceramic Department.

not have the chance to advance their formal education beyond that and are forced/expected to enter the labour market¹⁶⁵. With the educational reform of 1985 the GoK implemented the above mentioned recommendations and launched the Kenyatta University, adopted and integrated the VPs into Kenya's formal technical training and education system. In consequence the Government of Kenya assumed sole responsibility for the then renamed Youth Polytechnics and reintroduced agriculture and vocationally oriented technical subjects to Kenya's new 8-4-4 education system¹⁶⁶. The YPs, however, once part of a community driven development effort, remained under the scope of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services until 1988, when the Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology (MTTAT) was created in order to co-ordinate and streamline post-school vocational training¹⁶⁷. The former individual curricular of the VPs were consequently replaced by a uniform nation wide syllabus for the YPs which was no longer adjusted to the particular needs and skill requirements of the local economic set-up of the community hosting the YP. In response the parents and local business community withdrew their direct support and expected the GoK to cater for the financial and technical training needs of the YPs¹⁶⁸.

By January 1997 the efforts of the by then 632 YPs were supplemented and expanded upon by 9 Christian Industrial Training Centres, 4 National Industrial and Vocational Training Centres, 17 Institutes of Technology, 19 Technical Training Institutes, 1 National Youth Service Engineering Institute and 3 National Polytechnics, 5 public Universities and 11 private Universities in Kenya.

Although the Government of Kenya committed itself to a much more active role in facilitating vocational training as demonstrated by the above mentioned figures, the formal education system never managed to absorb the bulk of the school leavers leaving most of them on the road searching for alternative ways to uplift their knowledge and acquire some vocational expertise. According to the actual figures¹⁶⁹, about 15,5 million people or 60 % of Kenya's population are young people below twenty-five years of age: circa 5 million younger than 6 years, more than 5 million are in primary schools, circa 600,000 in secondary schools, circa 50,000 are attending local or overseas universities and well over 4 million youth are outside the school system, either as unemployed or undertaking small-scale income generating activities on an informal or semi-formal basis.

¹⁶⁵ The pre-vocational training at Primary School Level is meant to provide the pupils with basic knowledge of various crafts. A look at the limited range of vocations addressed during this time reveal no doubt that the vocational orientation offered is very limited and could even lead to an over-population of certain craftsmen.

¹⁶⁶ 8-4-4 translates to 8 years of Primary School + 4 years of Secondary School + 4 years of University Education

¹⁶⁷ Republic of Kenya, Presidential Circular No. 1 from March 24, 1988.

¹⁶⁸ Also see KRAUTER (1981:388)

¹⁶⁹ Policy Framework Paper of the GoK ›Economic reforms for 1996-1998‹

With reference to COOMBS, PROSSER and AHMED (1973:110–113), KRAUTER (1981:320) and MASAI (1988) the following clusters of non-formal educational activities¹⁷⁰ can be identified:

1. Agricultural Programmes which target farmers, agricultural labourers and women working in the agricultural sector in order to prevent their migration to the urban conglomerations¹⁷¹.
2. Pre-vocational or Vocational Programmes implemented by churches, the NYS, the YMCA and a wide range of non-governmental organisations. The programmes generally aim at imparting crafts skills and/or qualifying their participants for self-employment in the so called ›informal sector‹ or for employment as office workers, messengers and secretaries or other low profile jobs in the formal sector. Non-formal education was meant to impart skills which qualified the trainees to secure gainful employment in the rural areas, foster the economic development in regions by and large ignored by the mainstream formal educational and economic development and prevent the youth from migrating to the urban centres in search for jobs and income opportunities. The latter would thereby follow the tradition of the mass education and community development guidelines of the colonial administration.
3. General Education and Multipurpose Training Programmes which focused on community development and social welfare issues such as adult education, basic healthcare and the, in Kenya, widely spread ›Harambee Movement‹.

The non-formal educational set up was designed to reduce the regional socio-economic disparities in the country, to provide the floor for Nation Building and Unity and to enhance the vocational and social skills of the people in correspondence with the articulated demands of the individual community. As such non-formal education is yet

¹⁷⁰ »Nonformal education refers to organised out-of-school educational programmes designed to provide specific learning experiences for specific target populations. Normally associated with so-called ›under-developed‹ countries, such educational efforts include agricultural extension, community development, consciousness raising, technical/vocational training, literacy and basic education, family planning and so on. The programmes are generally designed to improve participant's power and status by either adding to his or her stock of skills and knowledge or by altering basic attitudes and values toward work and life« (La Belle (1975:20) quoted by KRAUTER (1981:314)).

¹⁷¹ Following in the foot steps of the ›Jeannes School‹ which started as early as in 1934 to impart agricultural training programmes for farmers and their wives, the Farmers' Training Centres (FTCs) were founded by agricultural officers to enhance and foster the knowledge of the rural farm population on a countrywide scale during the early 1960s. However, the regional distribution of the newly established FTCs followed a pattern of dependent development as they were established in regions which had already experienced socio-economic advancement due to intense and early interaction with ›modernisation‹. In 1967 a total number of 33 FTCs had been established, 27 by the GoK and 6 by the NCKK. The low educational standard of the FTC-staff and their poor motivation, which might be related to their poor terms of payment, undermined the acceptability and impact of the FTCs to the extent that 40 % of the available training opportunities were under utilised in 1971 leading to a further decline in available financial resources to facilitate the training thus forcing some FTCs to close and freeze operations for up to 6 month annually.

another station of the hierarchical education system, initially addressing the socially and economically disadvantaged members of the population who were denied access to formal education and/or employment. When the GoK realised that the establishment of non-formal educational institutions was no threat to its authority and control, but instead released the political pressure to provide adequate education for all, its resistance towards the sector turned into tolerance and later into active support of the same, as portrayed hereafter:

- 1984: During the mid eighties the Government of Kenya's attitude towards the so-called informal sector took a positive turn. In the 1984–1988 Development Plan the Kenyan government viewed the role of the informal sector as crucial in mobilising domestic resources for equitable development.
- 1986: The government isolates the informal sector as a central component in achieving the posited goal of a rural-urban development balance by creating the majority of non-farm job opportunities in small scale manufacturing, marketing, repairs and other service activities located mostly in market centres and moderate-sized towns¹⁷².
 Ensuing the ›Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1986: Economic Management for Renewed Growth‹, the government paid special attention to the improvement of the informal sector. Subsequently a *Small Scale Enterprise Unit* within the Ministry of Planning and National Development, and a *Special Task Force* under the Ministry of Industry were established. The Small Scale Enterprise Unit was designed to take care of the following sections: data inventory, research and analysis, training and man-power development, credit and finance, production and marketing, land and infrastructure issues, while the Special Task Force should cater for the technical needs of the sector.
- 1988 The Ministry of Technical Training and Applied Technology (MTTAT) was created and charged with the responsibility of post-school technical and vocational training and the responsibility for a ›Jua Kali Development Programme‹. ›The creation of the MTTAT and the explicit inclusion of the Jua Kali¹⁷³ or productive informal sector in its portfolio must be recognised as a major step in increasing the relevance of formal training‹ (WORLD BANK 1994:11). This formal commitment of the GoK, however, wasn't honoured with adequate budget allocation to vocational education and training (VET). The VET training share in total central government expenditure represented only about 2 % of the education budget in 1992 and 2,4 % in 1993 respectively. Furthermore its bulk is assigned to high level training institutions such as the National Polytechnics and Institutes of Technology leaving marginal financial assistance to the Youth Polytechnics: the lower level training institutions.

¹⁷² Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1986: Economic Management for Renewed Growth, Government Printer, Nairobi

¹⁷³ *Jua Kali* is a Swahili term and means ›under the hot sun‹ – this terminus reflects the working conditions of its operators – craftsmen, traders and small merchants who operate in the open under the hot sun and is commonly used in Kenya to address the ›informal sector artisans‹.

1989–1990s The informal sector¹⁷⁴ has gained more and more importance for Kenya's economy. During the late 1980s and early 1990s an increasing number of governmental and non-governmental organisations addressed the sector, offering upgrading technical and management training programmes. In 1989 the Permanent Secretary of the MTTAT and chairman of the National Steering Committee opened the first Jua Kali Exhibition. Since then the exhibition has been held annually with its sole objective to promote and enhance the Jua Kali sector. However, as most potters do not fit the unspoken description of an entrepreneurial Jua Kali artisan they are sidelined, suffer neglect and miss out on support and development oriented training and credit programmes promoted during the Jua Kali Exhibitions, for example¹⁷⁵.

1990 In 1990 a German expert, LEMKE, who evaluated Kenya's vocational training set-up came to the conclusion that the institutions in this sector were short of workshop and classroom facilities, equipment, tools, machinery and teaching aid on the one hand and experienced under-utilisation of acceptable to well equipped training institutions on the other. This to him does reflect the poor management, financial support and environmental perception of the sector.

1993 In early 1993, the MTTAT was merged with the Ministry of Research, Science and Technology and was reorganised and united under the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology (MRTT&T) with an expanded mandate¹⁷⁶.

The responsibilities of the newly created MRTT&T were taken care of by the following six directorates:

1. Technical and Vocational Education/Training (DTT)
2. Industrial Training – Formal Apprenticeship (DIT)
3. Applied Technology – Jua Kali Development Programmes (DAT)
4. Research, Science and Technology Development (DRD)
5. Kenya Industrial Property Office (KIPO)
6. National Council for Science and Technology (NCST)

The Directorate of Applied Technology was established within the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology to enhance the development of

¹⁷⁴ The fact that the widely used term informal sector does not fully comply with the present situation in Kenya has already been pointed out in a GTZ project document of 1990 ›Berufsbildung in außerschulischen Ausbildungseinrichtungen in Kenia‹. The study emphasised that the term ›informal sector‹ hides the fact that informal sector operators in their majority are registered in one way or another and many of them have formed and joined Jua Kali Associations.

¹⁷⁵ Members of the Odago WG and the Oriang' WG, for example, confirmed that they had been unaware of the pure existence of these shows until the mid 1990s. Participation records of the shows reveal that where potters were among the participants they were either male or sponsored by an international development organisation.

¹⁷⁶ Before the creation of MRTT&T, YPs like the ›women group movement‹ belonged to the portfolio of the Ministry of Culture and Social Services while Institutes of Technology, Technical Training Institutes and National Polytechnics came under the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and formal apprenticeship as well as technical industrial training had been a responsibility of the Ministry of Labour (see World Bank, 1994:90).

the ›*Jua Kali*‹ sector. In answer to the increasing need to allocate appropriate resources to gender equality, its Training and Gender Unit (TGU) was charged with the responsibility of enhancing informal sector training development as well as establishing a sensitisation programme aimed at bringing young women into technical fields of study and productive work (WORLD BANK 1994:91).

1994 In 1994 the World Bank announced a large scale ›Micro and Small Enterprise Training and Technology Project‹ in co-operation with the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology and the Jua Kali Federation and Associations in Kenya, which for various reasons should have entered its implementation stage only in 1996¹⁷⁷.

In the project document it reads: »The long term aims of the project are to enhance entrepreneurial development in the private sector and, more specifically, reduce constraints to employment promotion and income enhancement in the micro- and small enterprise (informal) sector in Kenya. The project would target manufacturing enterprises with 1–50 workers and make provision for increasing women’s representation in this non-traditional sector, principally in major urban and peri-urban areas of Kenya« (WORLD BANK 1994:23).

»The project would accomplish the above objectives through a set of policies for enabling the entrepreneurial environment and developing a national training strategy to improve quality, access, and the sustainable financing of relevant skill upgrading and technology for the informal sector, and a related investment programme. The investment programme includes: (a) micro- and small enterprise training fund; (b) a technology information, innovation and research programme and pilot infrastructure development; and (c) institutional development« (WORLD BANK 1994:ii).

Glancing below at the eligibility and award criteria for enterprises / entrepreneurs and trainees/employees to participate and benefit from the micro- and small enterprise training fund, it becomes apparent that craftspeople, such as potters, are carved out and denied access to and participation in the scheme.

Enterprises/Entrepreneurs eligible for the training would have to meet the following requirements: »fill in a registration form for voucher programme, which is distributed by the Training and Gender Unit (TGU); be a micro- or small enterprise registered with MRTT&T (1–49 employees); have a specific product line with growth potential; have been in the same business for 2 to 3 years; agree to pay opportunity costs.

Trainees/Employees eligible for the vouchers would have to meet the following requirements: fill in a registration form for voucher programme, which is distributed by the TGU; present trade test (III) or equivalent experience in trade; have been employed for 2 to 3 years in the same trade; have been on the payroll for six month before and remain thereon after

¹⁷⁷ For informations on activities of other major donors targeting the sector see World Bank (1994:18ff.)

training, provided that, in the case of women, new entrants would be allowed direct entry into the training programme« (WORLD BANK 1994: 107–108).

Since pottery carries the stigma of a traditional craft and, more over, of a woman's part time activity, technical and vocational training programmes have hardly targeted the craft. No formal education is available which would lead to an officially acknowledged trade test or equivalent certificates that could allow potters like other craftspeople to benefit from the ›micro- and small enterprise training and technology project«.

During the 1993 National Baseline Survey of Micro-and Small Scale Enterprises in Kenya, pottery was defined as mineral production and as such almost completely excluded by definition from the survey: »For the purpose of this survey, an ›enterprise« is an income-earning activity that is not in primary agricultural or mineral production« (PARKER and TORRES 1993 – GEMINI Report No. 75). Annex F of the survey report provides a list of activities included in each subsector with pottery/earthenware production being, nevertheless, listed under the non-construction mineral subsector with only one entry of a total of 18.280 households and business sites visited.

1996 Parallel to the above-mentioned World Bank Programme, the European Commission launched a ›Micro-Enterprise Support Programme« in co-operation with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Republic of Kenya, in 1996. However, taking a closer look at the design of the two programmes and their targeted beneficiaries, it once again becomes clear that rural craftsmen still find themselves in a disadvantaged position in comparison to their urban peers, not to mention the rural based traditional crafts-women producing pottery ware etc. In addition to differentiating between the ›modern crafts sector«, which is addressed by the MRTT&T, and the traditional crafts and handicrafts, which belong to the portfolio of the Ministry for Culture and Social Services or the Ministry of Commerce and Industries, when it comes to export marketing of handicraft products, the World Bank as well as the EC differentiates between the rural non-farm sector and the urban micro-and small enterprise (informal) sector with their programmes and project activities directed towards urban and peri-urban growth oriented micro- and small enterprises.

As the spectrum for promising future careers is as yet defined by the formal education system, any activities not covered by the same are looked upon as second or third choice. Since the potter's craft has received little attention by those in charge of technical training in Kenya and has only been introduced to formal educational as an integral part of the Art & Craft Syllabi, its overall professional status is extremely low. The latter applies especially to the traditional section of the potter's craft, which even today is widely dominated by and associated with illiterate, rural women.

It can be summarised that growth oriented strategies for micro-enterprise development more often than not neglect not only the potters, but also the large numbers of female entrepreneurs at the survival level¹⁷⁸.

¹⁷⁸ Also see DOWNING (1991:4)

6.3 Crafts promotion under the umbrella of Community Development Policies

Prior to the formation of the Ministry for Community Development in 1955 the Ministry of African Affairs was charged with the responsibility of keeping a constant watch on trends and policies concerning the economic, political and social affairs of the native Kenyans and the Chief Native Commissioner was chairman of the Community Development Advisory Committee. The committee consisted of the Directors of Agriculture, Veterinary Services, Medical Services and Education and representatives of the Protestant and Catholic Churches (KNA: AB/2/13).

Following the conference ›Mass Education in African Societies‹ of 1944, during which the importance of securing the co-operation and participation of the people in their own development was stressed (KNA: AB/2/13/38), an in-depth discussion on community development was initiated. Four years later, in 1948, policies on social welfare and community development were formulated by the Colonial Office during the Cambridge Conference on ›Social Welfare in the Colonies‹. The definition ›Community Development‹, as stated below, arose from the earlier definition of ›Mass Education‹:

»Community Development is a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and if possible on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement« (KNA: AB/2/13/38).¹⁷⁹

»Community Development is concerned with the education of the people as the agents of their own betterment, not with the improvement of living conditions by direct interaction from outside. We do not accept the view that better conditions must create better citizens; we wish to see better citizens working for better conditions« (KNA: AB/2/13/38).¹⁸⁰

After the term ›Community Development‹ had found widespread acceptance in Britain, India and many other countries throughout the world the Colonial Office once again called on officers from a variety of territories and departments, namely: Administrators of Education, of Community Development and Social Welfare, to participate in the Ashridge Conference on Social Development in 1954. During the conference Mr. Bourdillon stated that the principles of community development

¹⁷⁹ It is interesting to note that the participatory rural development approach, highly praised and emphasised in current development policies and programmes targeting rural and regional development in developing countries, is seemingly not as revolutionary and new as people might believe, though the methods have certainly been changed and improved.

¹⁸⁰ A thought, which hasn't lost its actuality over the years as the following quote reveals:
»*Entwicklung im sozialwissenschaftlichen Kontext immer Selbstentwicklung. Entwicklung kann nicht durch ein Subjekt zugunsten eines Objektes erfolgen, sie kann nur durch und für das Subjekt selbst erfolgen. Das soll nicht ausschließen, daß Entwicklung in einzelnen Gesellschaften gefördert, unterstützt oder angeregt wird; sie muß aber aus der betroffenen Gesellschaft heraus selbst unter Einwirkungen der vorhandenen Widersprüche in Produktion und Konsumtion erfolgen*« (HERRMANN 1988:30). – However, it reflects development principals and a fundamental idea, which became to play a minor almost negligible role during the first two development decades. – Also see RAUCH (1996:255)

respond to a conscious need of the time and have already been actively propagated by a number of organisations, including the United Nations and its specialised agencies (KNA: AB/2/13/38). The conference's goal was to specify the objectives of Social and Community Development and identify »specific measures which will enable both the individual and the community to adjust their way of life to changing conditions and to play an active and intelligent part in their own development« (KNA: AB/2/13/38). While the principal objective of a policy on social development was expressed as »Better people in a better society« (KNA: AB/2/13/38) the term Community Development was further specified as »... a movement to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community« (KNA: AB/2/13/38).

After the conference was held in London, the proceedings of the conference were circulated by the Secretary of State to all British Colonies, Protectorates and Regional Authorities, except Gibraltar, for comments. Responding to its recommendations, the Kenya Colony administration established the Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation in 1955. In line with the policies on community development, social development and social welfare the function of Community Development Officers was to encourage Africans to participate in plans for improving their standards of living, social education and the organisation of recreation.

Under colonial administration one particular aspect of Community Development was the improvement of the standard of living of the African community by development of their earning power, industries and trade.

In line with the policies formulated during the Cambridge Conference, the Department for Social Welfare, Kenya Colony, organised the first ›African Industries Show‹ in October 1948. The objective of the show was to combat the negative perception and low profile of the ›African Industries‹ in comparison with the industries established, promoted and managed by Asians or Europeans and to prove to the public that African craftsmen were able to produce goods not only for themselves but for the general demand.

While mission centres, the NITD, African Schools and the Salvation Army actively introduced, propagated and fostered technical training in the then so called ›modern crafts‹ such as carpentry and masonry, the position of a Rural Industries Officer (RIO) was created under the Department of Community Development in 1949. The RIO was charged with the responsibility of assessing the local indigenous crafts' scene and identifying areas for promotion in order to enhance the economy in the reserves. While indigenous crafts were on display during the 1950 Agricultural Show at Nairobi »it was to be noticed that the Africans showed great interest in the fact that articles in every day use, and, considered most ordinary, were placed on show.Africans asked on a number of occasions why examples of carpentry, sewing etc. were not exhibited on this stall. It was pointed out that Rural Industries were essentially indigenous crafts, or crafts introduced into the reserves or centres without necessarily any real ›Technical School‹ training. The advantages of these crafts were explained, and it was pointed out that in a large number of cases they were of direct benefit to the people in as much as the goods produced were consumed locally, or they were perhaps articles with little

appeal to the Africans but interesting to other races and finding a ready market, thereby providing craftsmen with a reasonable living« (KNA: AB/19/4/78)¹⁸¹.

The difference between the ›modern crafts‹ and the indigenous crafts was pointed out and made clear, with the craftsman of the former being subjected to formal technical training as outlined in Chapter 6 while the latter was to serve the needs of the Africans or to be marketed as curio or ›African Handicraft‹ to non-Africans. In response to a letter from the RIO requesting assistance, the Principal of the Kabete Technical & Trade School emphasised that the school did not touch this sort of work, referring to indigenous crafts. The training and promotion of indigenous crafts, or rural industries as they were generally called, was to take place in newly created handicraft centres at District Headquarters and Community Centres for which funds were disbursed in 1950. During the same year Mr. Ivan Hook, Community Development Officer in Nyeri compiled the following notes on the economic potential of the rural industries sector: »Money can be brought into the Reserves by manufacturing these articles for ›export‹, possibly but not necessarily to points outside the Colony. Money can also be kept and accumulated in the Reserves, or in African hands, by manufacturing these articles which would otherwise to be brought in from outside. This involves the stimulation of existing rural industries and the promotion of new ones. Examples include¹⁸²:

1. *Bee-keeping*. The honey and wax refinery at Makueni, Machakos District, is an example of what can be done.
2. *Basket-Making* – Specialised items include special baskets for the Tea and Coffee Co-operatives, and decorative items for the tourist trade.
3. *Wood-Carving* and other crafts. There are considerable overseas markets for the Wakamba products.
4. *Poultry keeping*, to a higher standard.
5. *Rabbit breeding*, both for immediate consumption and for sale.
6. *Tanning*.
7. *Shoemaking*.
8. *Brick- and Tile-making*, where suitable materials exist, for better class African housing, shops etc., Co-operatives' Tea and Coffee factories, pig-sties etc.
9. *Carpentry, joinery and cabinet making*, to a standard competitive with the Asian product, and particularly for African industries, e.g. coffee trays, pyrethrum trays and dryers.

10. Potteries.

11. *Spinning and Weaving*.

¹⁸¹ What was started by the Kenya Colony was manifested by the Government of Kenya. While the education in technical subjects is nowadays a shared responsibility of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry for Research, Technical Training and Technology traditional crafts and their activists remained under the auspices of the Ministry for Culture and Social Services. Nevertheless, the Ministry for Co-operatives and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry took interest and action in those cases where the crafts have proved their potential for export. – Also see Appendix VIII for information on the ministerial responsibilities.

¹⁸² To avoid further confusions and misinterpretations it has to be emphasised that most of the rural industries listed hereafter are however not indigenous.

Other rural industries would emerge from surveys of local raw materials and resources¹⁸³. Market research would be necessary to find outlets for some products; others would satisfy local demands and stem the outward flow of money. Another important line of approach lies in a thorough overhaul and modernisation of African business methods.On the industrial side lies co-operation with the Department of Commerce and Industries in the selection of suitable enterprises for financial aid, and provision of the necessary technical and financial advice for the expansion of such enterprises on a sound basis« (KNA: AB/19/2/13).

Apart from promoting indigenous crafts the RIO was fostering product diversification, product development and design by introducing new techniques and diversifying existing skills¹⁸⁴. A report of the Commissioner for Social Welfare (CSW) of 1950 provides evidence on the same. In his report the CSW stated that leather making had been introduced at Kericho, the making of basket chairs, bicycle baskets and fishing creels had begun in Central Nyanza and a number of expiring crafts like the making of Arab doors, Lamu chests, jewellery and sandals had been revived at the Coast. Examining the activities undertaken by the RIO to uplift the economic potential of the so called rural industries, one will find that the Eurocentric view of the crafts' potential was dominant while little attention was paid to the domestic demand of the native Africans and their purchasing power.

While WAGNER (1970) had already pointed out the increasing decline of house-building, iron and leather work in the 1930s, he portrayed pottery, basketry and woodcarving as flourishing crafts among the Bantu in Western Kenya. On a nation wide scale the following crafts and rural industries should be found worth while to assist and consequently to enjoy support under the supervision of the RIO: pottery, brick & tile production, wood carving, wood work, soapstone carving, spinning & weaving, candle production, silver smithing, basketry, sisal cottage industry, bead work and the leather industry¹⁸⁵.

In September 1952, after almost 3 years in office, the RIO took account of his work and summarised that »no formal instruction is provided at any definite Centre. Craftsmen of different types are to be found throughout the Colony and efforts are

¹⁸³ More than 20 years later the ILO report of 1972 should once again lay emphasis on the importance of establishing industries with a local raw material base.

¹⁸⁴ In the mid 1990s, the Overseas Development Organisation (ODA) financed the ›Product Development and Design Project‹ (PDDP) in Kenya which once again followed similar objectives.

¹⁸⁵ For more detailed information on pottery see KNA: AB/19/4/77; KNA: AB/19/3/85; KNA: AB/19/4/303; KNA: AB/19/4/308; KNA: AB/19/4/318; KNA: AB/19/4/319; KNA: AB/19/2/87; KNA: AB/19/2/74 – on brick and tile making see KNA: AB/19/3/85; KNA: AB/19/4/191; KNA: AB/19/4/323 – on carvings see KNA: AB/19/4/86; KNA: AB/19/3/85; KNA: AB/19/4/314, 323 and 333 – on wood work see KNA: AB/19/4/12, 24, 76B, 122, 144, 148 and 203 – on soap stone see KNA: AB/19/4/11, 70 and 85 – on spinning and weaving see KNA: AB/19/4/76B, 78, 307, 311 and 354 – on candles see KNA/AB:19/2/87 – on silver smithing see KNA: AB/19/4/77; KNA: AB/19/3/85 – on basketry see KNA: AB/19/4/77 and 154; KNA: AB/19/3/85 – on sisal cottage industry see KNA: AB/19/3/85; KNA: AB/19/4/373 – on bead work see KNA: AB/19/3/85 – on model dhows see KNA: AB/19/3/85 – on leather industry see KNA: AB/19/3/85.

made to improve production and, in certain cases, modify the design so that a greater demand be created« (KNA: AB/19/4/366).

While it was agreed among the colonial administration that the development of rural industries was of greatest importance to provide a source of income for Africans in areas which were becoming less and less able to support the population from agricultural products and to furnish a source of dollars through export trade with African handicrafts (KNA: AB/19/3/21) the position of the RIO had to be abolished because of strained colonial budget conditions in 1953. Thereafter the encouragement of the rural industries remained a responsibility of the Community Development Departments in the various Districts, in particular of the Community Development Officers and the Homecraft Officers – a situation which has unfortunately never been revised.

6.3.1 *»Women in Development«: The »WiD approach« being defined and formalised*

In pre-colonial societies, Kenyan women of different ethnic backgrounds and from different geographical regions reportedly organised themselves in working teams on the basis of such ascriptive criteria as age, clan or territorial unit¹⁸⁶. Contemporary scholars and politicians have been busy looking at historical roots for women's co-operation and solidarity to justify and further promote the women's group approach, which, unfortunately, dominated development policies focusing on women and thereby hampered their integration into mainstream economic development for decades. Meanwhile efforts to compare pre colonial women's working groups with male forms of co-operation and solidarity as known among the Maasai warriors in Kenya, for example, are more than rare. A brief look at Kenya's political history will reveal that the often praised women's group movement in Kenya (NASIMIYU 1993:87; STAUDT 1986:199) did not evolve naturally among Kenya's women folk but was introduced as a development instrument under colonial rule and the umbrella of community development.

With the formulation of its post World War II Social Welfare Policies for the colonies and protectorates, the British Government gave clear directions to how and on which level women should be addressed and their abilities tapped and fostered to best serve the colonies. At the Cambridge Conference of 1948, Women's participation in development was defined as an integral part of social welfare and community development policies. In response to the Cambridge Conference the Secretary of State for the colonies facilitated the formation of a sub-committee on work among women, which was given the mandate »to keep under review the special needs of women and girls¹⁸⁷ and the contribution they make in the field of social development in the

¹⁸⁶ MCSS/WOMEN'S BUREAU (1993:3) Report on the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya

¹⁸⁷ During the colonial era it was mutually recognised by the Kenya Colony in 1950 that »the unattached women is practically unknown in tribal life, and all women are fully occupied in their reserves, as they are still the agricultural labourers, hewers of wood and drawers of water. Thus it follows that the demand for girl's education has lagged far behind that of education for the boys. It is, however, gradually being recognised by African opinion that it is a mistake to educate men

colonial territories. The sub-committee was further to recommend ways in which contact with and between voluntary organisations and other relevant resources in the United Kingdom and overseas could be established and sustained to stimulate progress in work among women in the colonial territories« (CO 859/578, Social Development in Colonial Territories – quoted by NASIMIYU 1993:96).

While colonial governments were encouraged to experiment freely with the new community development approach the Colonial Office, the Women's Corona Society¹⁸⁸ and voluntary organisations in the United Kingdom were increasingly being asked to arrange short training courses for both European and colonial women, predominantly wives of prominent local officials and merchants. In line with the colonial policies on community development the Commissioner of Social Welfare, Kenya Colony, proposed to engage European ladies to supervise and foster training of African women in domestic science, agriculture and child welfare. The fact that women's contribution to social and economic development has been largely neglected by the colonial administration was highlighted by the Commissioner of Social Welfare in 1950 on the occasion of introducing the 1951 plans for the development of rural industries to the Chief Native Commissioner (KNA: AB/2/193/21). Generally ignoring women's economic problems (NASIMIYU 1993:99) and discouraged by previous attempts of fostering spinning and weaving activities among African women, which had proved increasingly uneconomical over time (KNA: AB/2/193/21), colonial officials in Kenya were reluctant to put further emphasis on the training of women in crafts activities.

Though »both African and European women in colonial territories, such as Kenya, had a long history on concern with improving the quality of African women's standard of living...« (NASIMIYU 1993:96) their efforts were only formalised in 1952 with the formation of Maendeleo ya Wanawake . Maendeleo ya Wanawake which should develop into Kenya's largest women's voluntary organisation was originally set up by a small number of European women, wives of colonial administrators, missionaries and settlers, who provided assistance to rural women's clubs in welfare matters¹⁸⁹. In 1990 BLUM reviewed that »Up to now Maendeleo ya Wanawake is primarily staffed by local volunteers who perform welfare activities [Buvinic 1986] and *Harambee*¹⁹⁰ has become the backbone of the organisation's operational strategy« (BLUM 1990:38). During the colonial era the co-ordination of Maendeleo ya Wanawake activities fell directly under the Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation. »The Annual Report for the Federation of Social Services stated that ›this movement, which

too far in advance of their women, and a big new Teacher Training Centre for African girls has been started with a view to helping to cope with this problem« (KNA: AB/19/3/10).

¹⁸⁸ »The Women's Corona Society was an association for the colonial officials' wives« (NASIMIYU 1993:108).

¹⁸⁹ Under the supervision of the women officers the ›Maendeleo ya Wanawake (Progress of Women) Movement« African women were encouraged to aim for higher standards in the home and to develop a sense of responsibility to the community (KNA: AB/2/13/56).

¹⁹⁰ *Harambee* is a Swahili expression and means ›to join forces«. At the same time *harambee* symbolises a political ideal of mutual assistance and togetherness.

is for the progress of African women, is under the direction of Nancy Shephard, Assistant Commissioner for women and girls, Department of Community Development« (CO 822/1139, Extract from the Federation of Social Services, Annual Report 1954 – quoted by NASIMIYU 1993:98). Under the motto ›Women support Women‹ women’s clubs were initiated and became a political instrument, which was first applied and used by the Colonial administration and with independence inherited by the Government of Kenya¹⁹¹.

The growth of the Women’s Group Movement during the 1950s was quite remarkable: By 1954, the year of the Ashridge Conference, Nancy Shephard observed that tremendous expansion has taken place since the establishment of Maendeleo ya Wanawake in 1952 and that the number of African women’s clubs had risen to 508 with a membership of 36,970 (NASIMIYU 1993:99) turning into an almost incapable workload for the twelve European and two African homecraft officers in charge of the clubs. While the Ashridge Conference compiled strategies on social welfare, social development and community development in general, special attention was paid to women. In the proceedings of the conference it says »we wish to give the training of women a separate section¹⁹² in our report because of the importance we attach to it« (KNA: AB/2/13/38). The conference further advised the colonies to engage or train specialist women officers who should join forces with the work of voluntary organisations, particularly with those providing training in home economics or technical and professional services (KNA: AB/2/13/38)¹⁹³. Taking into account almost 50 years of the official women’s group agenda and evaluating the status of Kenya’s women’s groups and their activity profiles during the early 1990s, the Report on the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya (1993) revealed that »the social/family/welfare orientation has persisted over the years in terms of activities undertaken, as well as in terms of the ultimate objective or purpose of the groups. However, with the cash economy rapidly penetrating the country, women’s needs for cash income have increased, and has compelled women’s groups to embark upon so-called income generating activities, having their roots in women’s traditional tasks within the household like farming, food production, trading and handicraft« (›Report on the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya‹ 1993:4).

Before we take a closer look at the activity profile of the women’s groups, NGOs and government bodies in support of women’s groups during the 1980s and early 1990s, I would like to reflect on the development of the political agenda on ›Women in Development‹ after ›Uhuru‹ in Kenya.

Despite the fact that the National Council of Women in Kenya (NCWK) was launched in 1964 and charged with the responsibility of co-ordinating all other women’s organisations in the country, incl. Maendeleo ya Wanawake, NZOMO (1993:135–136), a well known Kenyan women’s rights activist underlined that the women’s movement expanded relatively slowly during the first decade of

¹⁹¹ Thirteen years into independence in 1976 the Women’s Bureau was to be formally re-instituted under the then Ministry of Housing and Social Services, Government of Kenya.

¹⁹² For further details see Report of Ashridge Conference, Section IV, 46 ›Training for social development work‹.

¹⁹³ Also see KNA: AB/2/13/56 and NASIMIYU (1993:99)

independence with the Government of Kenya behaving as if the gender question did not exist. Nevertheless, the number of women's groups rose from 508 in 1954 to 1,200 in 1964 and to 2,805 in 1973¹⁹⁴. With the expectations and aspirations of Kenyans centred among others on better access to economic assets, such as land and capital, better services in education and health, and an equal opportunity to participate in the social and cultural process¹⁹⁵, the women's groups which emerged after 1963 were primarily concerned with income-generation activities, as NYASIMIYU (1993:103) phrased it »the only way women could achieve some economic independence«. To support the women in building up their economic independence, Maendeleo ya Wanawake started marketing handicrafts produced by women's self-help groups in 1963. Unfortunately Maendeleo ya Wanawake's marketing efforts have proved ineffective over the years as the organisation's overall attention had been deviated towards political rather than economic issues. In response to the first United Nations Women's Conference in 1975, the Government of Kenya strengthened and revitalised Maendeleo ya Wanawake and established a national machinery for women – the Women's Bureau as a division within the Ministry of Culture and Social Services. The Women's Bureau was officially mandated to carry out the following tasks:

1. Policy formulation, implementation and evaluation of policies and projects for women
2. Co-ordination of all government initiatives and programmes for women
3. Collection, analysis and dissemination of data and information required for the design, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects for women
4. Support to and liaison with NGO projects and women's organisations/groups

With the Women's Bureau in place formal registration of women's groups began in 1976. In the World Bank country study »Kenya: The Role of Women in Economic Development« it is noted that »in 1976 Kenya had some 4,300 women's groups registered with Government and eligible for assistance« (WORLD BANK 1989:xx) while their total number had increased to 23,614 by the year 1991¹⁹⁶. Although the Women's Bureau was charged with the responsibility to collect and analyse data and information on women and women's groups, it can be said that this exercise has not been taken seriously with statistics on Women's Groups being inconsistent from report to report and even within the same report as the 1993 published »Report of the National Census of Women's Groups in Kenya« reveals¹⁹⁷. However, the major growth rate of women's

¹⁹⁴ Republic of Kenya, »Development Plan 1974–1978«, 482–483

¹⁹⁵ Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No. 1 (1994:11)

¹⁹⁶ Republic of Kenya, »Report of the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya« (1993:16)

¹⁹⁷ Census report of 1993 – Table 5.1(a), for example, counts 23,614 women's groups in 1991 compared to Table 5.8 in which the total number of women's groups is stated with 23,046; – Contrary to the 1978 Women's Groups Survey compiled by MONSTED who stated that out of a total number of 8,225 Kenyan women's groups, excluding those in NBI, 5,740 were located in Central and Eastern Province alone, the 1993 published census on women's groups reflects a very different picture. According to Table 5.1(a) »Growth of Women Groups 1951–1991« of the census report there were only 4,264 women's groups registered in the whole of the Republic until 1980 which were diffused over the provinces as follows: Nairobi 99, Central 1,198, Coast 255, Eastern 885 (instead of 2,840), North Eastern 19, Nyanza 566, Rift Valley 849 and Western 393.

groups was registered in the 1980s following the second UN Conference on Women in 1980. According to the 1993 report, a total number of only 4,264 groups registered between 1951 and 1980 while another 6,979 registered between 1981 and 1985 followed by an even bigger number of 10,435 newly registered groups between 1986 and 1990¹⁹⁸. The latest increase can be attributed to the third UN Conference on Women, marking the end of the Women's Decade, being held in Nairobi in 1985 during which the national ›Forward Looking Strategies‹ for Kenya were formulated. However, NZOMO pointed out that »despite this expansion, the Government apparently never found it necessary to allocate adequate financial and technical inputs to boost the income generating and social welfare activities of these groups« (NZOMO 1993:138). NZOMO further highlighted the fact that between 1978 and 1982 the Government of Kenya allocated to the Women's Programme as little as the equivalent of 0,1 % of total Government expenditure with a declining tendency. Government grants to women's groups dropped significantly from KShs. 3,3 million in 1986, to KShs. 2,6 million in 1987 and to KShs. 1,7 million in 1989 (Republic of Kenya, Economic Survey 1990:181). Having evaluated the set-up and performance of the Women's Bureau in 1989, the WORLD BANK (1989:xxi) reflected critically on the financial and technical inability of the Bureau, which has very limited resources and is meant to rely on line ministries to carry out basic service programmes. While the Women's Bureau, according to FELDMAN (1983), justified its focus on women's groups both on the grounds of strategy and because of limited resources, the latter figures reveal that the Women's Bureau by itself has very little assistance to offer to the many women's groups registered with them¹⁹⁹ and depend on the co-operation of other departments, line ministries and NGOs to reach out to their ›clients‹. In line with FELDMAN (1983), NZOMO (1993:138) stressed that the women's groups movement as administered under the Government of Kenya does not provide a means for challenging the subordination of women in Kenya and reflects critically on Government policies. For example, the Community Group Promotion Policy Guidelines of 1991, which was positively portrayed by the 1993 census on Women's Groups Activities in Kenya, where it reads: »According to the Community Group Promotion Policy Guidelines (1991), the Government supports group promotion and development, through the District Focus on Rural Development (DFRD) strategy for ensuring self-reliance and mobilisation of community efforts to meet collective needs such as water, health care, rural access roads, etc.²⁰⁰ The Department of Social Services, which has the general mandate to promote community involvement in the development process, therefore, encourages and motivates self-help development through the mobilisation of groups, including women's groups, and providing them with technical, financial and moral support« (›Report on the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya‹ 1993:6).

¹⁹⁸ Also see NZOMO (1993:138)

¹⁹⁹ While analysing any data on WGs, it is important to remember that women of the poorest families, the landless labourers, the single mothers and the young women are often under-represented among the members.

²⁰⁰ Compare with colonial administration of native self-rule and community development, Chapter 6.

Without considering the roots of the women's group movement in Kenya – the colonial policies on women in development – NZOMO wrongly concluded in 1993 that »the mobilisation and registration of women into groups was given priority when the Government and the international donor countries and institutions realised that women's groups and programmes could be used as an inexpensive source of well organised labour for implementing local community (women) projects especially in the rural areas. The women's groups were also to serve as cheap, readily available and well organised sources of entertainment for local and foreign dignitaries during official Government ceremonial occasions« (NZOMO 1993:138). As a look at Chapter 6.3 reveals, this approach has a long history and it is about time that these policies are critically evaluated and revised before the Government's commitments, as spelled out in Section 2.2 of Sessional Paper No. 1 of 1994, can be taken seriously.

While in section 2.2.9²⁰¹ of Sessional Paper No.1 of 1994 the Government of Kenya underlined that women's issues should not remain or be determined as women's issues, that they should not be treated in an isolated manner, a huge question mark arises when reading *loc. cit.* that »the important role women play in national development has been fully appreciated in Kenya. Women have been recognised as playing a significant role in producing the nation's food and wealth, as keepers of family health, the first teachers of children, and the guardians of the nation's morals«²⁰² and under section 2.2.10²⁰³ that women's extension staff shall be recruited

²⁰¹ Under section 2.2.9 ff. of the paper it reads:

2.2.9 »The Government has, and will continue to give a high priority to the involvement of women in national development. Many development projects implemented after the Women's Decade (1974–84) under the banner of ›women in development‹ have not resulted in real improvements in the lives of Kenyan women. Consequently, an approach has been adopted called ›gender and development‹ to avoid the treatment of women's issues in a discrete and isolated manner. This approach is based on the principle that development will occur only when dynamics of differential power and privilege between men and women are addressed. This in turn implies that both access to, and control of, economic and social resources and benefits must be equitable. In particular, women's access to land and control of other production resources, as enshrined in the current succession laws, will be enhanced.« (Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No.1 of 1994)

²⁰² While women are continually blinded by praise for their achievements in the regions of family care, health and moral commitments, no steps are taken or instrumentalised towards the economic empowerment of women, towards their social and economic equality, towards their independence. Instead their self esteem and standing is directly dependent on their performance and contribution to communal responsibilities.

²⁰³ **2.2.10** »The Government will continue its efforts to ensure that women participate and benefit equally from the development process. Efforts to improve opportunities for women have focused on improving their human capital through increasing their access to education and health care. Further, given the important role played by women in the rural sector, improvements will be made to agricultural extension support to women farmers. This last concern will include re-designing the agricultural extension service to provide information that is directly relevant and accessible to rural women. The recruitment of women's extension staff, the use of women's groups to disseminate technical information, will be enhanced to improve productivity (*footnote will be continued on next page*).

to attend to women's needs. With the latter policy recommendation not differing much from those policies formulated and spelled out during the Ashridge Conference of 1954, it nurtures disbelief in the commitment of the Government of Kenya to change. The question of whether or not anything has changed due to the redefinition of the development approach from ›women in development‹ to ›gender and development‹, which is supposed to reflect on a new national and international consciousness and approach, has yet to be critically reviewed.

While the ›Gender and Development Approach‹ advocates for gender equality and the Seasonal Paper No.1 of 1994 places strong emphasis on the achievement of equality for all Kenyans, it remains questionable whether or not women are on the way to feeling the impact of these policy papers and being treated accordingly, particularly when they find themselves continuously singled out and often in a cluster with other so-called vulnerable groups as stated under section 6.3.2. of Sessional Paper No.1 of 1994, where it reads: »The Government will promote employment creation centres for vulnerable groups such as youth, women, disabled persons, street children, and retrenched workers.«²⁰⁴

Despite repeated commitments from the Government of Kenya to enhance the economic empowerment of women, women remain the target of social welfare, social development and community development programmes as a look at the 1995 launched policy paper »Social Dimensions of Development: An approach to human-centred development and alleviation of poverty« (SDD), Republic of Kenya, once again confirms. By targeting women, children, the aged, the disabled and school leavers, the Government of Kenya proclaims rightly that »the problem of poverty has its essential origin in a lack of income or command over the market which, in turn, is linked to the general economic and social situation of the country« (Draft-SDD 1994:6). Meanwhile the GoK is not coming up with any reasonable proposition on how to change the current socio-economic framework into an enabling environment which allows gender equality and the equal participation of women in all main streams of development to materialise. Instead the Government of Kenya specifies that »care will be taken in both the design and implementation of programmes to encourage and enhance the self-sufficiency and self-reliance of the vulnerable groups themselves« (Draft-SDD 1994:vi).

The government's deficiency in implementing and enhancing changes as envisaged in their policy papers cannot be overlooked when comparing the government's commitments to development and change, as spelled out in the policy framework paper ›Kenya – Economic reforms for 1996–1998‹, prepared by the GoK in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank (1996), with previous papers such as the Seasonal Paper No.1 of 1994, and even with policy

2.2.11 The Government will also initiate ways to improve women's access to productive resources such as agricultural inputs, water, fuel wood and credit.« (Republic of Kenya, Sessional Paper No.1 of 1994)

²⁰⁴ In order to finance those programmes President Moi announced two national *harambees*, one towards the National Youth Development Fund during which KShs. 578 million were raised in 1996 and one towards the National Women's Development Fund during which KShs. 845 million were raised in 1997. For more details on the latter see Chapter 11.

guidelines formulated under the Colonial Office during the 1950s. Under Section 65 of the paper it reads: »Efforts to improve opportunities for women will continue to focus on increasing their access to education and health. Given the increasingly important role played by women in the rural sector, the Government will also step up its efforts to redesign agricultural extension services to provide information directly relevant and accessible to rural women. The budget-neutral recruitment of women as extension staff, use of women's groups to disseminate technical information, and integration of home economic messages and information on appropriate labour-saving technologies are important components of the latter. The Government will initiate ways and means to improve access of women to productive resources such as agricultural inputs, water, fuel wood, credit and skills. Towards this goal the Government will support rural water supply systems that feature community participation and NGO involvement, and that can significantly improve the quality of life of women and the community as a whole. In addition, the Government will ensure that women in the small and medium scale enterprise sectors have access to existing skills upgrading training of the Jua Kali (Informal Sector) programme so as to address their specific needs« (1996:38/39)²⁰⁵.

With their steady repetition over time statements such as: »the Government will continue its efforts to ensure that women participate and benefit equally from the development process through their integration into mainstream activities« (REPUBLIC OF KENYA, 'Economic reforms for 1996–1998' 1996:38) must appear purely as a lip service and a method by the Government of Kenya to please the international donor community and to secure their goodwill. While the Kenyan Governments admits that little has been achieved under the banner of »Women in Development«, the general approach remains the same – WGs shall provide the floor to disseminate technical information and improve the women's productivity – but how? As long as women and WGs are primarily attended by officers of the MCSS – people who have been trained in social and community development issues but in their majority lack technical and business skills and are, therefore, unable to provide career, vocational and entrepreneurial guidance and business counselling services, the economic qualifications of (rural) women will hardly be enhanced through official development policies and inputs.

6.3.2 *Women's groups and their involvement with (handi-)crafts activities*

While the historical background of Kenya's vigorous women's groups movement has been elaborated on, this chapter concentrates on women's groups, some particular projects and their supporters with a special focus on economic activities and performance of the women's groups.

Since the women's group movement was formalised in 1976, only groups registered with the Women's Bureau are eligible for government assistance, while numerous church and non-governmental organisation try to fill the gap and assist even those who have not officially registered themselves. While the Women's Bureau in theory is

²⁰⁵ According to the conditions spelled out in Chapter 6 women and women headed enterprises often fail to qualify for assistance under the a.m. programmes as they are not registered with the MRTT&T but with the MCSS instead.

represented down to district level it has no field staff of its own. As in colonial times it is the Community Development Assistant (CDA) on divisional and locational level who is charged with the responsibility of providing for the assistance of women's groups, organising technical assistance from other ministries and registering the groups²⁰⁶. The CDAs, however, are neither equipped nor trained to assist women's groups which engage in manufacturing or any other income generating activity with feasibility studies, technical expertise or business advise and counselling²⁰⁷.

In preparation for the third UN World Conference on Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, the Mazingira Institute compiled and published a guide to women's organisations and agencies serving women in Kenya. It furthermore drew up a profile of the services provided by Non-Governmental Women's Organisations and Agencies that is compiled in Table 4.

Table 4: Services provided by NGOs to women during the early 1980

<i>Expertise and services provided</i>	<i>by no. of NGOs</i>
Handicraft production and marketing	15
Monthly meetings and information circles	11
Health training	8
Educational projects	6
Agriculture production	5
Agriculture and livestock production	5
Literacy classes	5
Nursery schools	5
Water project	3
Environmental Programmes	3
Loan schemes	3
Vocational training	2
Home economics	2
Posho milling	2
Charity projects	2
Leadership training for women	1
Adult education	1

Source: Mazingira Institute, 1985

According to the findings of the Mazingira Institute handicraft production and marketing was a focal point of expertise and services offered by NGOs in 1985. Contrary to this, the database on women's groups activities in Kenya of 1991 indicates that groups involved in handicrafts reported that they had received very little

²⁰⁶ Compare with findings made by RAUCH *et.al.* (1990) while evaluating rural small-scale industries in Malawi.

²⁰⁷ Also see BLUM (1990:38)

assistance – of a total of 157 WG in Kisumu District, for example, which received some kind of assistance only 17 were involved in handicraft activities, in Siaya District they were only 6 out of 264 and in South Nyanza District they were 20 out of 378 groups. The type of assistance provided to those groups engaging in handicraft production was either supplies, equipment or cash, while technical training and advice was not mentioned even once!²⁰⁸

The ›Report on the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya‹ further highlighted that socio-economic changes have weakened the spirit of mutual assistance in recent times and fostered the orientation towards income generating which has led to rapid growth of small scale businesses run and managed by women. It was, nevertheless, made clear in the report that welfare and business orientation are still interwoven, albeit loosely²⁰⁹. This fully supports FELDMAN's findings of 1984, which pointed out that ›the objectives of women's groups are primarily two-fold: (a) to achieve social welfare functions and (b) to implement commercial projects. Most groups are actually multi purpose, generally combining mutual assistance in the form of a kind of rotating credit association with cultural handicraft, social, educational and economic (income-generating) activities‹ (FELDMAN 1984).

²⁰⁸ The assistance (43 cases) was provided through the MCSS (15), KWAHO (1), CARE Kenya (4), CIDA (1), NORAD (2), SIDA (1), DANIDA (1), UNICEF (3), UNDP (1), Anglican Churches (3), MoA (1), Ministry of Planning and National Development (2), others and not stated (7). No assistance by the MRTT&T had been reported. It is however not clear whether training was considered as assistance during the interviews held.

²⁰⁹ ›Report on the National Census of Women Groups in Kenya‹ (1993:5)

Table 5: Women Groups by major Activity and Province in total Numbers, not including NBI

Activity	Province							Kenya
	Central	Coast	Eastern	North Eastern	Nyanza	Rift Valley	Western	
Farming-Agriculture	471	240	1098	28	3000	1086	1170	7093
Livestock	539	216	828	38	533	466	315	2935
Finance	883	93	231	2	158	240	251	1858
Sales and Services	448	294	520	111	505	520	542	2940
Construction/Labour	410	81	-	2	150	397	70	1110
Real Estate	312	122	1503	1	131	315	32	2416
Handicraft	187	118	311	28	288	340	213	1485
Welfare	137	33	119	-	48	14	62	413
Education	84	30	-	-	30	30	10	184
Manufacturing	63	62	-	1	177	368	112	783
Transport	2	3	-	1	3	18	2	29
Others and not stated	247	65	467	13	97	774	137	1800
Total	3783	1357	5077	225	5120	4568	2916	23046

Source: Report on the National Census of Women's Groups in Kenya, Republic of Kenya, 1993

With reference to my own analysis of the database carried out between April and December 1995 the figures on handicraft in Table 5 have to be corrected and amended as follows in Table 5a:

Table 5a

Activity	Nairobi	Central	Coast	Eastern	North Eastern	Nyanza	Rift Valley	Western	Kenya
Handicraft	218	198	121	309	28	328	348	270	1,820
Total	568	3794	1360	5075	225	5160	4576	2973	23731

Another look at the 1993 Women's Groups Report shall reveal whether the findings of FELDMAN (1984) and the service profile of the NGOs, as compiled by the Mazingira

Institute in 1985, correlate positively with the activity profile of the women's groups registered in Kenya in 1991. According to the findings of the Women's Groups Census, a total of 1,820 women's groups countrywide, or 7,7 % of all women's groups registered and surveyed during the 1990/91 census²¹⁰, engage in various handicraft activities, and an additional 783 groups nation-wide, excl. Nairobi, are involved in manufacturing other goods. These data confirm that handicraft production and marketing still do play a vital role, though not a leading role among the economic activities carried out by women's groups in Kenya at the beginning of the 1990s.

Table 6: Handicraft Activities carried out by WGs by Activity and Province in total Numbers

Province	Handicraft Activities														Total No.
	Table Cloth Making	Handicrafts	Knitting	Sewing/Tailoring	Spinning	Tie & Dye	Leather Work	Basketry/Weaving	Wood Work	Pottery/Ceramics	Bead Work/Jewellery	Manufacturing General	Making Kiondos	Saloon/Hairdressing	
Nyanza	9	80	28	58	3	5	0	96	8	39	1	0	0	1	323
Western	3	52	29	99	1	6	1	19	7	52	0	0	0	1	270
Nairobi	0	202	14	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	218
Eastern	15	68	13	55	0	7	3	104	3	37	2	1	1	0	309
Central	10	56	54	28	0	6	2	28	4	5	0	1	4	0	198
Coast	8	45	3	21	0	3	0	36	1	3	0	0	0	1	121
S. Rift Valley	13	97	29	41	0	1	3	17	3	2	11	0	3	1	221
N. Rift Valley	5	32	18	26	0	1	1	18	2	9	15	0	0	0	127
North Eastern	2	13	1	3	0	2	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	0	28
Kenya	65	645	189	331	5	31	12	323	28	148	29	2	8	4	1.820

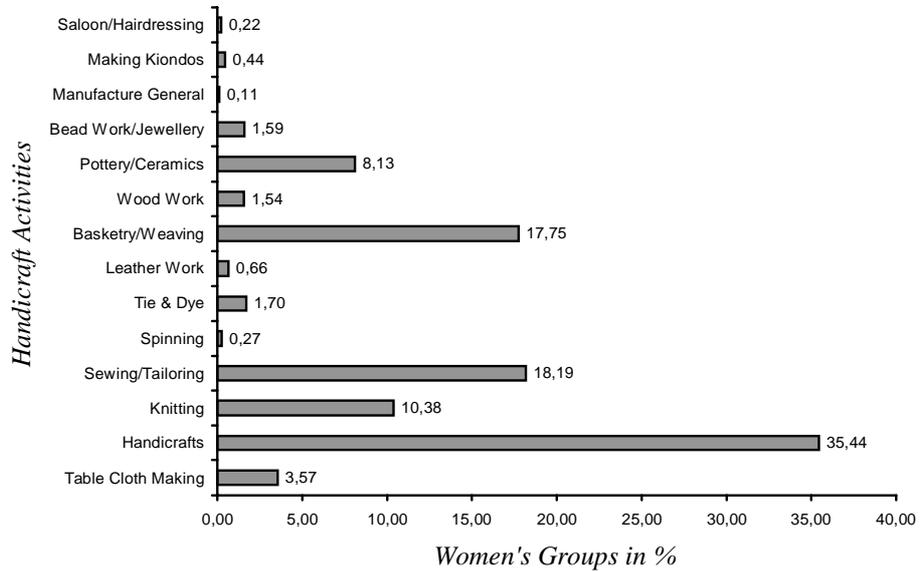
Source: Database ›Development on the Status of Women‹, Republic of Kenya (1990/91)

Not considering the general category ›handicraft‹, which could represent any of the other handicrafts specified hereafter, Graph 2 shows that ›Sewing/Tailoring‹ with 331 cases or 18,19 % is the leading handicraft activity among Kenyan women's groups which address handicrafts as their major activity. It is closely followed by

²¹⁰ The 1991 census which did not include Nairobi Province

›Basketry/Weaving‹ with 323 cases or 17,75 %, ›Knitting‹ with 189 cases or 10,38 % and ›Pottery/Ceramics‹ with 148 cases 8,13 %²¹¹.

Graph 2: Kenyan Women’s Groups attending to various Handicraft Activities in %



Source: Database ›Development on the Status of Women‹, Republic of Kenya

Taking a look at Kenya’s colonial history²¹², we will find that spinning and weaving as well as sewing and knitting were deemed the most appropriate crafts to be introduced to African women with the view to diffusing Western values of civilisation. It is therefore not surprising to find that the textile sector plays a central role in women’s involvement in the handicraft sector even today.

²¹¹ This profile of the women’s groups involvement in handicrafts activities should not be mistaken as a comprehensive portrayal of the handicrafts activities carried out by women and the economic importance attached to it. Kiondo weaving, for example, features poorly among the handicrafts carried out by women on a group basis while Kiondo weaving is the dominant handicraft among Kamba women of Eastern Province and commands a high market share among handicraft exports from Kenya. This can be attributed to the fact that Kiondos can be made anywhere at any time, while walking along the road, selling vegetables at the market or while waiting for the bus to come. It is an activity which is done on an individual basis to utilise time spent more efficiently.

²¹² Also see WAGNER (1970:18)

Table 7: Business Profile of Women Entrepreneurs interviewed in 31 Kenyan towns, 1997

Type of Business	Kenyan Towns visited during the Survey										Total No. of Entrepreneurs
	<i>Mombasa, Kilifi, Voi</i>	<i>Embu, Meru, Maua</i>	<i>Ol-Kalau, Nyeri, Nanyuki, Karatina</i>	<i>Thick, Githunguri, Muranga/Maragua,</i>	<i>Machakos, Kitui, Kajiado</i>	<i>Webuye, Bungoma, Kakamega, Majengo/Vihiga</i>	<i>Eldoret, Nakuru, Kapsabet, Kericho</i>	<i>Keroka, Kisii</i>	<i>Homa Bay, Migori, Kisumu</i>	<i>Nairobi</i>	
<i>Restaurant</i>	3	4	4	2	2	3	1	3	3	13	38
<i>Knitting & Tailoring</i>	16	16	15	12	9	11	19	14	16	18	146
<i>Embroidery</i>	4	3	1	1	3	3	3	2	1	8	29
<i>Weaving</i>	3	1	1	3		3		1	2	6	20
<i>Laundry & Dry-cleaning</i>							2				2
<i>Hair Saloon</i>	4	10	9	6	7	10	11	4	4	18	83
<i>Laboratory Services</i>		1							1		2
<i>Upholstering</i>			2								2
<i>Food Processing</i>	5		3	1	4		1	1	2	4	21
<i>Secretarial Services</i>	1		1							1	3
<i>Photo Studio</i>							1		1	1	3
<i>Saw Milling</i>			1								1
<i>Fish Processing</i>									2		2
<i>Pottery</i>			1			6					7
<i>Masonry</i>											0
<i>Others not specified</i>	4	2	4	12	3	4	9		4	10	52
<i>Total</i>	40	37	42	37	28	40	47	25	36	79	411

Source: FES (1997)

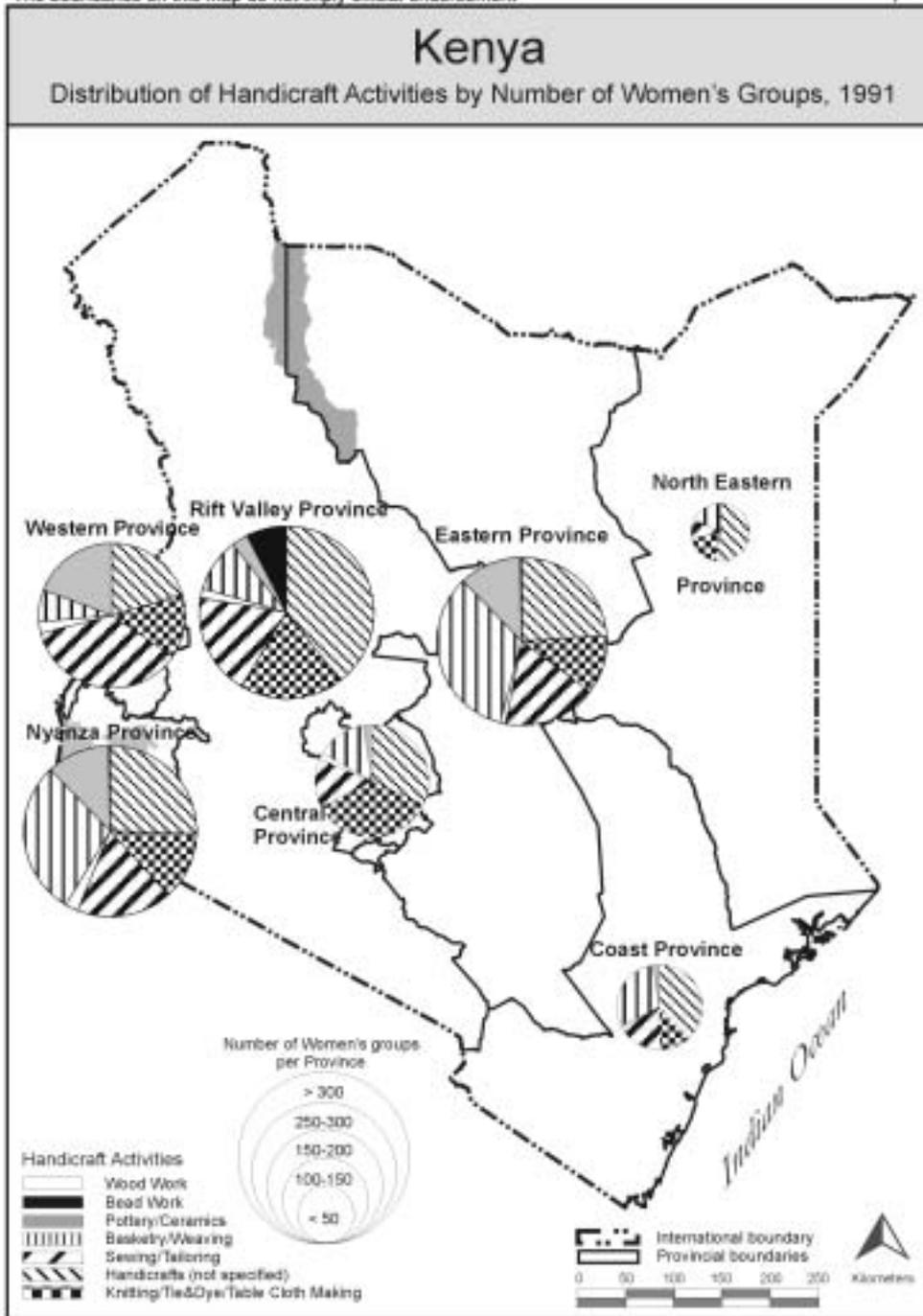
While carrying out an ›Analysis of the Social Situation of Women Entrepreneurs in Kenya‹ in 1997 the Friederich Ebert Foundation (FES) contacted and interviewed a total of 411 women entrepreneurs in 31 towns, of which 58,4 % were involved in women's groups activities of some kind and 17,8 % were members of Jua Kali associations. The business profile compiled by the FES and presented in the Table below, however, leaves no doubt about their strong gender based involvement in the economy with 195 women or 47,4 % of all respondents being involved in the textile sector.

During the introduction to the seminar ›Handicrafts, Fashion and Fabrics for Women‹, which was organised by ›Dienst in Übersee‹ (DÜ) in March 1995, great emphasis was laid on the sectors potential to foster the economic empowerment of women on the one hand and the revival of cultural traditions on the other. During the seminar SCHÄFER, however, voiced her concern over whether handicraft projects really help women gain an income. Meanwhile she stressed that »in many traditions women's groups sailing under the flag of ›handicraft projects‹ are one of the rare occasions where women can move and meet among themselves, i.e. without the supervision of men« (DÜ 1995), develop self confidence and the courage to go new ways. While this is partly true, women's groups in Kenya are unfortunately often interfered with or even initiated, by men who have more often than not better access to information and better connections and who are in control of the financial resources and the land. Women's groups in Kenya are often formed in order to be eligible for governmental or donor driven support and development programmes: to qualify for financial and technical assistance provided to women. However, it has to be emphasised that women's groups are often mislead in their attempt to enhance their own betterment through ›handicraft production‹ or other income generating projects, as they are being used as vehicles for community development policies rather than economic empowerment of the individual woman. This aspect of external development support targeting women shall be further elaborated on while addressing the gender specific approach of the energy saving cooking stoves programmes under Chapter 9.2.

For Kenya it can be summarised that despite the declared goal of the GoK to integrate women into mainstream politics and economics, women's socialisation was more often than not systematically excluded from mainstream developments. As the long praised group approach revealed its limitations, international development agencies started to focus more and more on private sector activists rather than groups when it came to manufacturing, income generation and economic developments in general²¹³. Meanwhile the GoK tirelessly utilises the group approach for their own interest as they emphasise the important role WGs are expected to play in the development of the country by launching a nation-wide *harambee* in support of WGs activities in Kenya prior to the envisaged elections in 1997²¹⁴.

²¹³ Also see ITC/UNCTAD/GATT (1991:2); ODA (1996); FES (1997)

²¹⁴ Similar activities took place during the early 1960s when Kenya's political parties were campaigning for voters. The 1997 nation-wide *harambees* in favour of the youth and women groups respectively have to be seen as a pre-election move of the ruling party (KANU) to attract voters among the youth and the women. – For more details see Chapter 11.



Data Source: GoK, Women's Group Census 1991

Angela Langenkamp 11/1997

7 Kenya's contemporary (handi-)craft scene, its key players and their objectives

Of interest are those organisations and individuals that target (handi-)crafts and especially the potter's craft. Their aims and objectives, the level, ratio and reason for their involvement, their area of activity, their interventions and methodological approach.

In 1988 MASAI examined the by then existing (handi-) craft promotion set-up in Kenya. Among the non church related organisations actively supporting training in the field of handicrafts, he mentioned the following ministries and institutions: Ministry of Culture and Social Services, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Ministry of Planning and Development, Ministry of Local Government and Non Government Organisation like Rural Training Centres, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides, Red Cross, Maendeleo ya Wanawake as well as community and ethnic associations and private programmes such as Creative Art Centres and the Kenya School of Arts, etc.²¹⁵. Despite the long list provided the list of NGOs actively involved in handicraft promotion is by no means complete let alone the international bi- and multilateral organisations and NGOs, alternative trade organisation and commercial curio and craft dealers. According to my own observations I would like to extend MASAI's list with the following names and institutions just to give an ample insight of the large international interest in the handicraft sector: ITC/UNCTAD/GATT in co-operation with Kenya External Trade Authority (KETA), the ILO in co-operation with the Ministry of Co-operative Movements, UNDP, UNIDO & UNIFEM, GTZ/PROTRADE in close co-operation with the Export Promotion Council (EPC), the GDS, NORAD, VSO, SIDA and many other international volunteer organisations, ODA/BASE in co-operation with the British Council and Kenya Gatsby Trust, Traidcraft Exchange, Fairtrade, 10 Thousand Villages and GEPA just to mention a few alternative trade organisations.

7.1 Craft promotion with a view to technical training and job creation

In close co-operation with each other, representatives of the churches and colonial administration laid the foundation for the conceptual dichotomy that should separate the rural industries from the ›modern industries‹. A strong community development and social welfare orientation governing economic objectives hampered the growth of the rural industries sector, which was addressed as secondary economy, for most of the century. Meanwhile the ›modern industries‹ were the main focus of technical training, economic development and prosperity as outlined in Chapter 6. While examining Kenya's contemporary crafts scene of the 1990s, one comes across a number of

²¹⁵ For further details see MASAI (1988:17ff.)

national and international development agents who address rural based indigenous crafts and handicrafts independently of the mainstream craft promotion policies. This is reflected in the formal vocational education and training system. The efforts of those agents are devoted to poverty alleviation, community development, integration of women in development and linking rural manufacturers and handicraft producers to the main national and international markets in order to increase their economic potential²¹⁶. While many church related organisations are caught and their efforts hampered by a mismatch of their charitable approach and the commercial and economic necessities of the sector, they nowadays team up with private, governmental and non-governmental efforts in addressing the areas hampering growth and economic sustainability of the sector such as: low productivity, access and availability of raw materials, technology applied, process of quality control, marketing, design and product development, training and skill acquisition and the organisational set-up of the sector.

Following the footsteps of early missionaries, >church organisations< are still involved in the promotion of community based handicraft production. In Kenya alone one can find a number of community based projects which received substantial support from various national and international church and charity organisations during their existence. The projects mentioned hereafters are only some of the projects operational today, which do host a ceramic workshop or have a history of training potters: Eastleigh Community Centre/Nairobi, the YMCA workshops at Shauri Moyo/Nairobi, Jacaranda Workshops/Nairobi, the Kapenguria Home Craft Centre/Kapenguria.

Since missionaries first imparted Western technologies and introduced art and craft training to the Africans, churches and/or church related organisations have continuously played a major role in community development, handicraft promotion and vocational training throughout the 20th Century in Kenya. Their involvement with the traditional crafts and/or Kenya's contemporary handicraft scene shall therefore be highlighted at this particular point.

Among others, the following churches and church organisations have played a significant role in the development of Kenya's (handi-)craft scene in the past: the Catholic and the Protestant Church, the Anglican Church and the Pentecostal Church of East Africa (PCEA), the National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCCK), Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and the German based >Arbeitsgemeinschaft kirchlicher Entwicklungsdienste< (AGKED) among others. However, the increasing scarcity of development aid forced governmental, non-governmental and church organisation alike to secure and prove the sustainability of their undertakings in developing countries. As a result even the churches can no longer afford to run community development and income generating projects or to engage in vocational training and small enterprise development programmes with the prime objective of poverty alleviation and human capital building without proving its sustainability and economic viability. With the report »Promotion of Cottage Craft Industries in Kenya and Uganda through Bread for the World, Germany« (1995), AGKED looked critically at the fact that after decades of

²¹⁶ For details see TRADCRAFT EXCHANGE (1995), FACT (1995), AGKED (1995)

support and development assistance, church institutions and other funding agencies are still receiving proposals from different institutions to start and expand their involvement in the cottage craft industries sector. The above mentioned study formed an integral part of a dialogue between the Protestant Churches in Germany and their partners in the South, trying to re-evaluate their objectives, concepts and approach to assistance in vocational training, crafts and small and micro enterprise promotion²¹⁷. The aim was to identify ways and conceptual perspectives for sustainable activities in the sector, and therewith eliminate and prevent long lasting dependencies. While emphasising the importance of production, proper marketing strategies, design, product development and training and the organisational set-up the above mentioned report, called for the creation of a conducive environment and integrated approach to the support of the sectors activities, or strictly professional and commercial orientation in the sector. In 1996 the findings of the various consultations, workshops and studies were summarised and elaborated upon in guidelines for AGKED programmes and projects targeting vocational training, craft and small enterprise promotion in developing countries. It was agreed upon and recommended that assistance to the sector shall in future be streamlined under the following objectives: re-organisation of the projects from a social-charity driven approach to a sound development oriented economic approach; strengthening of self-reliance instead of welfare, no cutbacks on programmes targeting and benefiting the poor in favour of the economic middle-class, strengthening participation and empowerment of the sector activists in the sector's politics and developments and advocating for fair trade relations and a fundamental change in the prevailing national and international economic framework of the sector.

While AGKED like other church organisation devote themselves to support the poor and disadvantaged members of the community²¹⁸, bilateral and multilateral development programmes addressing the small enterprise sector like those of the World Bank or the EC in Kenya (see Chapter 6) target the able ones: those who have already proved their ability to progress and advance their technical and business skills,

²¹⁷ Among other deliberations and consultations the following overseas meetings, workshops and studies have contributed to the process:

1994: ›All Africa Consultation on Vocational Training and Small Enterprise Promotion‹ organised by Service Overseas (DÜ) in Limbe, Cameroon

1995: A workshop on ›Handicrafts, Fashion and Fabrics‹ organised by Service Overseas (DÜ) in Cape Town, South Africa

1995: Bread for the World had commissioned the study ›Promotion of Cottage Craft Industries in Kenya and Uganda‹ in order to assess the current status and performance of cottage craft industries in the two countries after more than two decades of continuous support geared to increase income and create job opportunities in rural and urban areas based on traditional and existing craft skills.

²¹⁸ Their target group can be divided into the following clusters: (1) unemployed youth – regardless of their educational background, who qualify themselves through their own commitment and stated interest/talent; (2) disadvantaged and handicapped individuals, migrants and war veterans, women and girls; (3) male and female craftspeople, micro- and small scale entrepreneurs who contribute to employment creation and economic growth in the sector.

the growth oriented micro- and small scale entrepreneurs preferably of the private sector.

In line with the subject of this research I would like to introduce some of the church organisations which actively contributed to the development of the potter's craft in Kenya under a common goal: to create job and income opportunities and offer vocational training mainly to disadvantaged members of society whether they be the young, women or the handicapped. These training and job-creation programmes, however, were not co-ordinated or linked to each other. As a result expertise and knowledge was neither accumulated nor shared nor fully exploited. As mentioned before, with the GoK having no real interest in crafts, such as pottery/ceramics, it never considered developing a uniform training syllabus and officially acknowledged trade tests as so done for crafts, such as carpentry, for example, which therefore enjoy a higher recognition and status.

NCKK, Cottage Craft Industries

While the NCKK facilitated the establishment of the first Village Polytechnics in Kenya in 1968 availing technical training in ›modern crafts‹, such as carpentry, masonry, tailoring, etc. on the one hand they also launched an alternative support programme, in favour of traditional potters and other handicraft producers, on the other, named ›Cottage Craft Industries‹. ›Cottage Craft Industries‹ was actively promoting handicraft production and offered marketing services for the many rural based handicraft producers. They organised handicraft workshops for groups, co-operatives and individuals all over Kenya, encouraged production and provided advice on quality and design management, where necessary. Two ›Cottage Craft Shops‹ were opened in Nairobi and Kisumu offering basketry, jewellery, pottery, garments, cloth, woodcrafts, lampshades, leather crafts, sisal work, chairs, toys, banana fibre work and books by African authors for sale.

This brief portrayal of the NCKK activities which date back to the 1960s once again reveals that development assistance availed to modern and traditional crafts differ in nature and objectives. However, as the years passed by the VPs were adopted by the GoK and ›Cottage Craft Industries‹, which had been renamed ›Jisaidie Cottage Industries‹ (JCI), broke off as an independent Kenyan-based ATO in the early 1990s. Having experienced a lot of ups and downs JCI has remained one of the leading handicraft exporters in Kenya. In 1996 alone, they exported, for example, container loads of pottery from Western Kenya.

Young Men Christian Association (YMCA)

In 1987 the YMCA consisted of 23 branches in Kenya of which 13 run Job Creation and Training Programmes – with 8 of them offering carpentry; 11 tailoring & knitting; 2 masonry; 1 ›women's handicraft‹ ; 1 metal work; 1 art and design; 1 leather work and 1 pottery/ceramics. As mentioned before the YMCA Crafts Training Centre at Shauri Moyo in Nairobi, which started operation in 1966, had specialised in handicraft training courses. Youth, mainly primary school leavers and disabled people, who expressed their interest and showed some artistic talent were able to enrol for one of

the handicraft courses at the centre. While the workshops had received massive financial and technical assistance²¹⁹ during their initial stages, the donor support was gradually scaled down over the years and left the centre in a rather desperate state. ATIENO, who visited the YMCA training centre at Shauri Moyo in 1988, portrayed the centre and its performance as such: »The YMCA has a large Crafts Training Centre at Shauri Moyo in Nairobi where it provides a three year course in ceramics, jewellery, graphic design and leather work. The course is, however, under-subscribed either because people are not aware of the course's employment potentialities or because the training charges are considered too high. Currently the institution trains a handful of students in handicrafts all of whom are sponsored by the YMCA« (ATIENO 1988:29). In March 1988 when ATIENO visited the centre, no new students had enrolled in any of the Handicraft Departments and the facilities were rented out to former lecturers and students who used them on a rental base.

According to Edward W.²²⁰, who was trained at the YMCA pottery workshop by a German ceramist and worked at the YMCA-pottery between 1972 and 1982, the YMCA officially closed down the ceramic department due to financial constraints in 1982. Facing unemployment Edward W. teamed up with Francis, a physically disabled man and the first potter ever trained at the YMCA, and rented the workshop facilities of the YMCA for a 10 % share of all sales. Edward W. and Francis managed to successfully run the workshop as an informal private enterprise for the next 10 years. The YMCA, however, had not informed their sponsors that they were no longer in charge of activities at the pottery workshop and continuously applied and accepted funds for the same. »Money that hardly ever reached the workshop« according to Edward W.; nevertheless, when the donors finally discovered the fraud they did not withdraw their assistance, as one would have imagined, but insisted on providing material inputs to the pottery workshop instead of money as they approved of the fact that Edward W. and Francis were still training and employing up to 8 potters. This, however, angered and animated the YMCA management to insist on a higher lease that together with the death of Francis in 1992 should result in the closure of the workshop and the end of the YMCA pottery²²¹.

Kapenguria Home Craft Centre

The Kapenguria Home Craft Centre was founded by Finnish missionaries during the 1980s with the objective being to provide meaningful vocational training to the young, in one of Kenya's disadvantaged rural areas. The centre accommodated the following units: spinning and weaving, ceramics, carpentry and home economics. The ceramic department was started by a Finnish ceramist in 1982 who managed the workshop until 1989. Although she established a well-respected training institution the centre failed to establish appropriate trade and market linkages which could sustain the activities at the

²¹⁹ from the German and Canadian YMCA, the Nairobi Rotary Club, the German Christophel Blinden Mission and other donors

²²⁰ interviewed on 13.10.1995

²²¹ Being a well-trained and experienced potter Edward W. was able to secure employment with Kazuri Ltd. soon after leaving the YMCA in June 1992.

centre through the sales of its products beyond the time of external donor support. After the departure of the Finnish ceramist, the running of the pottery workshop was handed over to a former student, who unfortunately had to flee the area during the ethnic clashes preceding the 1992 national elections and is unlikely ever to return. Without him the pottery workshop ceased operation for some years until in 1996/97 new plans got underway to reactivate the workshop and the centre as a whole with the support of the Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology.

Eastleigh Community Centre – Jitegemea Pottery

The Eastleigh Community Centre (ECC) is a non-profit making community based institution whose mission is ›to bring hope to those without hope‹ living in Eastleigh and the Mathare Valley Slum of Nairobi. Initially the ECC was established in 1959 by the United Church of Northern India to cater for Asians but on the departure of many Asians following Kenya's independence, the centre was handed over to the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in 1968²²². Today the ECC is financed by donations²²³, the sale of goods produced at the centre and fees charged to those who can afford them while the less fortunate get sponsorship or remission. Facilities available in the centre include a nursery school, primary school education and a social work program as well as vocational training in dressmaking, tailoring, embroidery and knitting, in ceramics and in spinning and weaving.

The Jitegemea Pottery workshop at the ECC came into being through personal contacts and determination. Its existence can be attributed to Hugh A., a British volunteer, who had worked in Nyeri prior to his attachment to the ECC in 1975 and the resident director of the ECC, Mr. Njenga, a man who had developed a fable for pottery and was modelling small clay sculptures himself. According to one of the first trainees, Daniel K., Hugh A.'s plan to set up a huge pottery industry organised on a co-operative basis, was objected to by the management of the ECC that opted for a training centre with a small-scale production unit instead. In 1977, after only two years, the volunteer thereafter resigned from his official commitment to the ECC although he was to return again and again to give further advice to the potters whom he had trained and left behind for about a year before he left Kenya for good. Paul K., one of the first potters being trained by Hugh A. between 1975 and 1977 was to run and oversee the production and training at the Jitegemea Pottery until 1990 when the ECC once again succeeded to secure the services of a volunteer, Douwe H. – a skilled ceramist from the Netherlands. Until that time the Jitegemea Pottery was still trying to combine two rather conflicting goals: training and production – a fate they shared with the YMCA Pottery and the pottery workshop at the Kapenguria Home Craft Centre. After a short while Douwe H. realised and made it clear that it was impossible to run a commercially viable ceramic workshop on the grounds of a training institution and

²²² See ECC introductory leaflet

²²³ On 5.12.1989 I was told by John M., the residing director of the ECC at the time, that the weaving workshop was sponsored by ›Brot für die Welt‹ and that the electric kilns used in the pottery workshop originated from Germany and were financed by German sponsors as well.

urged the management of the ECC to make a decision in favour of the production unit since there was no considerable demand for trained ceramists in Kenya at the time, leaving the potters who had been trained at the centre without meaningful employment if they were asked to leave²²⁴. Douwe H. argued that while focusing on production one wants to keep well trained potters at the workshop to facilitate the production, and while focusing on training one wants the trainees to leave after the completion of their training to give way to a new generation of trainees. With the agreement of the ECC management, the policy of the Jitegemea Pottery was then changed from being a training & production centre into being a production centre, only. Despite a change of policy the Jitegemea Pottery did not turn its back on training and accepted new trainees to join on an individual basis and, moreover, accepted students of the RVIST and the Buru Buru Institute of Fine Art for industrial attachment as of 1995. Despite the fact that the Jitegemea Pottery employs 10 well trained potters, eight men and two women, the performance and economic prosperity of the workshop is hampered by its operational set-up which separates the financial and overall management of the pottery enterprise from the workshop and production management and therewith undermines the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit and performance of the workshop.

The Buru Buru Institute of Fine Arts

The Buru Buru Institute of Fine Arts (BIFA) which has already been portrayed in Chapter 6.1, is yet another institution which was initiated by church representatives and thereafter grew with the consolidated community efforts of the Buru Buru Catholic Parish.

7.2 Craft promotion with a view to trade and export marketing

This chapter will focus on the influences of external interests and export oriented trade promotion of Kenyan handicrafts.

Tracing Kenya's handicraft trade record back to its early days, the partial alienation of the rural craft from its original environment and use discloses its historical roots. While trade organisations today tirelessly stress the need to run a market/demand driven production rather than a product driven trade, this is by no means a new concept, as the following exposition will show. As early as in the late 1940s the East African Tourist Trade Association (EATTA) advocated for the market driven production of rural industries with its call for the development of a Kenyan Souvenir, anticipated pleasing the overseas tourist market. Commercial curio dealers had no interest in rural industries per se, but were looking for goods that could appeal to and catch the interest of the >buying public<. Apart from items which qualified as African curios they were interested in products that would blend into the living environment of the overseas customers; items such as table mats or the sugar bowls made by a male Luo potter of Karachuonyo, for example. Trade records of the late 1940s prove that overseas curio and handicraft dealers often furnished their market inquiries and orders with detailed specifications on product design, size and materials to be used. It is

²²⁴ The labour market situation, however, changed during the 1990s with more and more commercially run ceramic workshops being established.

therefore not without interest and importance to take a closer look at the development and obstacles facing Kenya's curio and handicraft trade over time.

7.2.1 *Handicraft export promotion in Kenya – a historical retrospective*

Taking into account the years of experience in the field of export promotion in various developing countries, >protrade< (1995) pointed out that for the first half of the century the commercial world was totally governed by ideas centring on production while marketing was only born in the second half of the century. This is, however, only partly true for the commercialisation of the rural industries sector in the Kenya Colony as illustrated above. >The Country comes to Town< exhibition planned and organised by the Chief Native Commissioner, Mr. P.W. Harris, in co-operation with the East African Industrial Management Board (EAIMB) in 1947 was already a first step in this direction. The objective of the exhibition was to exhibit and promote Native industrial work from up-country. For this cause all district commissioners were asked to select and send craft items deemed appropriate to Nairobi with some native craftsmen accompanying the exhibits to demonstrate their craft during the exhibition²²⁵. In the context of a broad discussion focusing on Mass Education, Social Welfare and Community Development in the colonies, the Colonial Office in London had organised an exhibition focusing on >Youth at Work and Play<²²⁶ to be an appendage to the >International Youth Conference< held in London in May 1948. Kenya's participation in the exhibition was organised by the Education Department in close co-operation with the office of the Commissioner for Social Welfare (CSW) which arranged for a selection of exhibits to be forwarded to London. Among them were spinning and weaving products from South Nyanza, Kisii soap stone ware, Nubian raffia work and pottery products of Silvanus Owiti²²⁷. A few months later in, October 1948, the CSW organised the >African Industries Show< in Nairobi where African craftsmen, such as carpenters, basket makers, curio makers, tailors, painters, shoe makers, tinsmiths, masons, mechanics, bakers etc.²²⁸ as well as the NITD., African Schools, and the Salvation Army were invited for participation. The object of the show was to demonstrate to the public the ability of African craftsmen to produce goods in general demand and to introduce the manufacturer to the buyer (KNA: DC/KSM/1/32/4).

While emphasis was laid on the originality / authenticity of the exhibits during the London exhibition – which addressed an overseas public – the latter exhibition was to portray and introduce a broader range of products and skills of the African craftsmen

²²⁵ The same exhibition concept should govern the national craft exhibition organised by KETA in 1977 – thirty years later.

²²⁶ According to the colonial records everybody between the age of 18 and 30 years qualified as >Youth< in this context.

²²⁷ According to the administrative files of 1948 the following items from South Nyanza were found fit to be forwarded to London: » spinning and weaving exhibits, Kisii ware, raffia work from the Nubian village Kisii and fine China Ware such as is produced by a native craftsman in, I think, Karachuonyo« (KNA: DC/KSM/1/32/4).

²²⁸ While baskets and curio makers were perceived as craftsmen who had something to contribute, potters seemingly did not meet the criteria – perhaps because they were predominantly women attending to it as a homecraft.

to the Kenyan public just like the annual Jua Kali Shows, jointly organised by the MRTT&T and B.A.T. since 1989, are meant to do in contemporary Kenya. These initial attempts, however, raised the awareness of existing native industries and harvested widespread interest and commitments to the sector.

As Kenya had developed into a recognised tourist destination, the General Manager of East African Tourist Travel Association (EATTA), M.W. Dunford contacted the CSW in December 1948 to follow up on previous discussions regarding the development of local African handicrafts and in particular Kamba carvings for the tourist and export market. EATTA had requested the assistance of the CSW in identifying potential crafts. Dunford's initiative was built on the assumption that tourists have a natural desire to acquire some permanent representation of local ›colour‹ – a momento, curio, a souvenir. He therefore recommended stimulating the development of suitable products (however artificially), if none could be identified (KNA: DC/KSM/1/32/4). Remembering some of the wood carvings exhibited in 1947, Dunford said »... I believe we have a good foundation in some of the Mkamba work. What seems to be required now is an organisation to watch over production and to ensure the maintenance of a high standard of workmanship and above all an effective marketing organisation. Handled properly, I am sure this could be built up into a business worth many tens of thousands of pounds a year« (KNA: DC/KSM/1/32/4)²²⁹.

Dunford, however, was not only asking for assistance on the above mentioned matter but ready to commit himself as General Manager of EATTA to fully support any efforts made in this direction within the limitations of the association with the words: »I am prepared to do all in my limited power to assist in this work though it must be understood that our association is not a business of production and marketing. What we can do though is to assist in the promotion of the sale of such carvings. It was for this reason that I volunteered to display some of the better examples of Mkamba work in our head office and in our Visitors Information Bureaux that we are to establish soon in the principal centres in East Africa..... I would like to assure you that our association is most anxious to see the further development of this wood carving industry on the right lines and I believe we would do much to publicise this industry in our publicity overseas and possibly by the arrangement of exhibitions here and abroad« (KNA: DC/KSM/1/32/4).

²²⁹ While some contemporary Kenyan handicrafts were introduced and/or invented by foreigners, such as the ›Turkana Baskets‹, spinning and weaving, knitting and embroidery and others can be attributed to the innovative and entrepreneurial spirit of young men who came into close contact with and were inspired by other cultures or lifestyles they were exposed to. The story of the Kamba wood carving industry, for example, started with a returning Kenyan soldier who had served in Tanzania during World War I where he came in contact with Makonde carvers who gave him the chance to learn the craft and venture into it after his return to Kenya. Another well-known Kenyan handicraft industry is Kisii stone carving which developed from the tradition of carving just pipes. Again it was a single entrepreneurial man who took the initiative to apply his carving skills to copy a bowl resembling another bowl he had seen on display in a shop at Kisii. Satisfied with the result he showed his product to the shopkeeper who encouraged him to make more of the same kind – soon a new industry was born out of an almost negligible craft activity.

In line with the social welfare policies of the Colonial Office²³⁰, funds were made available in 1949 for the promotion of rural industries and the position of a Rural Industries Officer (RIO) under the CSW. The RIO was asked to assess, stimulate and enhance the sector activities where possible. In answer to the request of EATTA and in line with the mainstream of the Colony's economy, which targeted overseas markets, the RIO launched the first nation-wide²³¹ handicraft promotion campaign (KNA: AB/15/32) in 1950 on the occasion of the landing of the ›famous American tourist ship CARONIA‹ at Mombasa with around 500 tourists expected on board. While money was provided by the CSW to purchase, forward and exhibit items which were found fit to attract the interest of the tourists, the CSW made it clear that the exercise should be a paying proposition or should at least recover the expenses. While the response of the national and overseas market seemed promising, in 1951 the Commissioner for Community Development (CCD) was concerned that »repercussion will soon be felt if production is stimulated without ensuring that satisfactory marketing conditions exist« (KNA: AB/19/3/87). He therefore proposed the establishment of a Rural Industries Board which could play a vital role in establishing a lucrative trade with hard currency areas and thereby assist in developing a local secondary industry in African areas particularly those where pressure of population is greatest. However, little was actually done and the CCD's proposal finds its echo only decades later in 1994, when the GoK was advised to incorporate ›Small and Micro Enterprises‹ (SME) into their export promotion concept and establish an SME Promotion Board (GACHUGI 1994). Three years later *Jua Kali* products were among those items being promoted by the Export Promotion Council (EPC) and introduced at trade fairs in Africa while other products which qualify as handicrafts were to be presented at international trade fairs in Europe and Japan²³².

With the increase of export orders and enquiries originating from the United States of America and Canada, South Africa and the United Kingdom and the abolition of the post of the RIO, the Commissioner for Community Development (CCD) passed a resolution in 1953 that any trading with Kenyan handicrafts and curios should be handled on commercial grounds. Looking at the past experiences and achievements, the CCD concluded that: »African handicraft articles of various kinds are made in all districts and purchasable at the innumerable markets in the African reserves or in the townships. These include basketwork, bags of various kinds and designs, wicker-

²³⁰ See Chapter 6.3 for more details

²³¹ In this context it should probably read ›Colony wide‹ instead

²³² In 1997 *Jua Kali* products were among those products taken to international fairs namely: ›Dar es Salaam International Trade Fair, Tanzania‹ (July); ›Mozambique International Trade Fair‹ (August/September); ›5th Uganda International Trade Fair‹ (October); ›Addis International Trade Fair, Ethiopia‹ (November). All of these events are organised jointly by the EPC, the Kenya National Chamber of Commerce & Industry and the Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM). It is, however, most obvious that those items which qualify as handicrafts and those regarded as *Jua Kali* products do serve different markets and can by no means be grouped together in one cluster. – Also see ODA/SEPIP report of 1996.

chairs, stools, trays, Kisii soapstone ware, Kamba carvings, glazed pottery²³³ and silverware on the Coast. All of the above industries have been worked upon and encouraged, and examples of them are seen in considerable numbers in the streets of Nairobi or Mombasa, in some cases collected into shops such as Richmond & Co. ... Arab and Swahili silverware, model *dhow*s²³⁴ and baskets are procurable in the shops of the coastal towns. Another major industry is the carving of the Kamba tribe, Africans are, however, so slow in turning out these articles that production on a mass basis is at present out of question. Kisii soapstone work is displayed widely in the streets of the big towns: but in this respect again there is no guarantee of quality because production is so slow and haphazard. The possibilities of purchase and export of African and Arab handicraft articles are fair, provided a firm is prepared to send a representative to explore the market and to achieve meagre results for a time, until confidence and trust have been established between the buyer and the African. But the element of risk is there, and must continue until a marketing organisation has been established, and the urge for a regular and continuous supply has been inspired in the Africans« (KNA: AB/19/4). The CCD proclaimed the withdrawal of the government from the sector support and proposed that in addition to commercial exporters a Non Government Agency should tackle the destiny of African handicrafts (KNA: AB/19/4/325).

Re-evaluating the mandate of the Ministry of Community Development, the CCD finally approached the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in 1956 with regard to which ministry should be responsible for promoting rural industries in future (KNA: AB/19/2/77).

Although the, in 1963, launched Kenya Export Promotion Council (KEPC) was to facilitate and enhance Kenya's external trade, no attention was paid nor adequate allocations made to foster the national or even international trade with handicrafts. In the light of modernisation and industrialisation, traditional crafts and rural industries in general had become symbols of backwardness and the oppressed lifestyle of African labourers under the colonial rule. However, being confronted with alarming unemployment rates, growing economic pressure and a strong rural-urban labour migration, the Government of Kenya, in the mid 1970s, had to revise their development policies which laid emphasis on industrialisation, just as the Colonial Office had done in the late 1940s, and was forced to look for ways and means to foster employment and economic growth in the rural areas. Banking on past experiences, the GoK invested in the development of (handi-) crafts with the potential for export and launched the Kenya External Trade Authority (KETA) in 1976. KETA, instituted within the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, was charged with the responsibility of promoting handicraft exports besides other goods and products. In favour of the GoK's efforts, ITC/UNCTAD/GATT commissioned the following survey ›Handicrafts Export Marketing‹ during the same year which, soon after, in 1977, led to the employment of Mr. Benjamin. During his 5 years of service Benjamin successfully managed to

²³³ To the best of my knowledge no glazed pottery was produced in Kenya at the time. However, a person to whom the characteristics of ceramic glazes are unfamiliar could mistake the shiny surface of some polished clay pots made by potters like, S. Owiti, as glaze.

²³⁴ *Dhow* – Swahili word for small sailing ship/boot

enhance Kenya's overall handicraft production. Handicraft exports increased by 121 % from KShs. 10 million in 1977 to KShs. 22,1 Mio in 1982. In 1983 another consultant, Tuff Milway²³⁵, was hired to evaluate and foster handicraft production in Western Kenya with a specific view to encouraging the export potential of pottery ware being produced in the area. At the end of Milway's contract the British Council launched an exhibition of handicrafts from Western Kenya, thereby exhibiting a large number of pottery items which yielded high public appreciation and interest²³⁶, but did not lead to any further action²³⁷ in support of the potter's craft.

Due to the fact that KETA's efforts to address and advance the sectors economic potential proved half-hearted and increasingly inefficient over the years²³⁸, the Export Promotion Council (EPC) was established by President D.A. Moi in 1992. Since its inauguration the EPC has acted as a catalyst in export promotion and development in Kenya. The primary objective of the EPC is to assist producers and exporters of export goods and services alike to overcome bottlenecks facing them as they try to enhance their performance. The annual ›Kenya Export Market Development Programmes‹ provide an insight into EPC's activities and external market focus. For example, in 1996 the EPC targeted 24 events among them international trade fairs and shows, market surveys, studies and trade missions. Those listed below feature only those events aiming at handicraft exports, namely:

1. Import Fair, Berlin/Germany
2. Exhibition in Novgorod/Russia
3. International Housewares Show, Japan
4. 1996 World Showcase & Festival, Atlanta/Georgia, USA
5. International Frankfurt Fair, Germany²³⁹
6. India International Trade Fair
7. Heim & Handwerk Fair, Munich/Germany

Unlike in 1996, when special attention was being paid to basketry, woodcarvings, jewellery, gift items, soap stone carvings, leather products and textiles only, claywork should be featured at the following 1997 events²⁴⁰, namely:

1. ›International Spring Fair Birmingham²⁴¹, UK‹
2. ›International Frankfurt Fair, Germany‹
3. ›MIC Fair, Paris/France‹
4. ›Heim & Handwerk Fair, Munich/Germany‹

²³⁵ A skilled potter from the UK

²³⁶ Personal comment of Beatrice M. (31.01.1997), a development officers with the British Council in Nairobi

²³⁷ Personal statement of Tuff Milway – whom I was able to talk to on July 29, 1996.

²³⁸ In 1996 KETA was unable to trace either Benjamin's reports or as Milway's report and could barely remember them.

²³⁹ ILO/INTERCOOP was for the first time organising the participation of Kenyan handicraft co-operatives at the fair in 1996

²⁴⁰ According to the ›1997 National Export Market Development Programme‹ published in the *Daily Nation* of February 4, 1997

²⁴¹ At the Birmingham show Terra Ltd. exhibiting a range of earthenware planter and some small glazed earthenware items represented Kenya's pottery scene.

For those familiar with the new trends in home decoration in Europe, for example, the new popularity of pottery ware should come as no surprise²⁴². Meanwhile it took the Kenyan pottery scene by surprise.

7.2.2 *The industries/crafts in focus*

Based on a short review of the initial days of Kenya's curio and handicraft trade, I will try to portray the spectrum and nature of crafts that dominate the tourist and export market today.

With the first American tourist ship being expected to land at Mombasa's shore in 1950, the search for a typical Kenyan souvenir had begun. Anticipating that tourists would want to take something home from Kenya, the CSW had urged his officers to take great care while selecting craft products for display at Mombasa. Selection should be done according to quality and the anticipated preferences of the awaited American tourists. Luo pottery ware²⁴³ was among those items that were deemed appropriate and of interest by the Colonial administration who supervised the whole exercise²⁴⁴.

Taking into account two intensive years of promotion, the CCD informed the Minister for Commerce & Industry (KNA: AB/19/3/85) that with the full co-operation of the government, missions' and individuals' rural industries have been brought into the limelight. In his report the CCD highlighted the fact that apart from pottery, basketry, tanning, stone ware, carvings and silver ware »there are of course numerous other crafts in Kenya of lesser economic importance, but which, with encouragement and applied skill, could in future be classed as productive rural industries« (KNA: AB/19/3/85)²⁴⁵. However, he was careful to predict the marketable value of the above-mentioned village industries, but stressed that with proper organisation and the establishment of regular internal and overseas markets, the combined export value of all handicrafts and curios could have an advantageous effect on the economic structure of Kenya²⁴⁶. A few years later, a flourishing trade with basket work, bags of various kinds and designs, wicker-chairs, stools, trays, Kisii soapstone ware, Kamba carvings, pottery and silverware of the Coast should prove him right. In the 1950s examples of the latter had started to flood the streets of Nairobi and Mombasa and could be seen on display in shops such as Richmond & Co. By the mid 1970s the number of commercial retailers had increased to about 60 souvenir/curio shops and 5 galleries in Nairobi

²⁴² See WALLAGE (1994) for more details on the subject.

²⁴³ The Luo pottery consignment consisted of 10 traditional water jars (*agulu*) as well as 6 sugar bowls, 6 butter dishes and 6 bowls made by S. Owiti. The District Social Welfare Officer underlined that the articles made by Owiti are bound to attract the tourists as they could be used as powder bowls etc. (KNA: AB/15/32).

²⁴⁴ Other exhibits were Kamba wood-carvings, Kisii stools, Kisii soapstone ware (flower rings, masks and wall ornaments, bookends, candlesticks, crocodiles, rabbits and tortoises), Suba spears and Luo pipes (KNA: AB/15/32).

²⁴⁵ Also see KNA: AB/19/3/87.

Everybody interested in the commercialisation of indigenous handicrafts should study the paper COHEN published in 1989 on the subject matter.

²⁴⁶ An assumption that was to be repeatedly highlighted in Kenya's contemporary history. See, for example, MASAI (1988), ATIENO (1988) and ITC/UNCTAD/GATT (1990).

alone. All of these shared a common goal to serve the tourist market and to facilitate the trade with Kenyan handicrafts and art objects on a national and international level. By 1990 the ITC/UNCTAD/GATT mission looking at the development of rural products for export through co-operatives in Kenya once again underlined that Nairobi and Mombasa are the major thriving commercial centres for handicrafts. According to their findings an estimated 50 per cent of all shops and *dukas* (small stalls) did sell hand made crafts of all descriptions with fifty per cent of handicraft production in Kenya being bought by tourists (ITC/UNCTAD/GATT, 1990:18). The mission report reckoned that the number of handicraft exporters in Kenya had swollen to more than 300. Of these, less than 30 per cent control almost 75 per cent of the market, with most of them having their offices in Nairobi and Mombasa.

Table 8: Classification of Kenyan Handicraft Export by Products, 1981–1995
(KShs. Mio.)

Year	Product										
	Wood Carvings		Sisal Baskets		Soap Stone Carvings		Jewellery		All other handicrafts		Total
	in Mio KShs	in %	in Mio KShs	in %	in Mio KShs	in %	in Mio KShs	in %	in Mio KShs	in %	in Mio. KShs
1981	10.58	63,2	2.74	16,4	1.04	6,2	0.29	1,7	2.72	16,2	16.75
1982	11.33	51,3	5.86	26,5	1.27	5,7	0.46	2,1	3.17	14,3	22.10
1983	12.45	44,8	11.36	40,9	1.51	5,4	0.55	2,0	1.89	6,8	27.77
1984	21.84	33,3	35.42	54,0	1.87	2,9	1.20	1,8	3.26	5,0	65.60
1985	21.42	17,3	91.35	73,6	3.60	2,9	4.50	3,6	3.27	2,6	124.14
1986	19.06	19,5	50.23	51,4	2.10	2,2	2.27	2,3	23.97	24,5	97.66
1987	37.42	26,7	54.56	38,9	9.49	6,8	6.32	4,5	32.62	23,2	140.41
1988											
1989	32.33	27,2	38.84	32,7	7.72	6,5	15.33	12,9	24.50*	20,6	118.74
1990	38.91	27,6	34.12	24,2	17.71	12,6	17.83	12,7	32.72*	23,2	140.96
1991	64.77	33,7	58.65	30,6	16.25	8,6	20.46	10,7	31.85*	16,6	191.98
1992	62.47	23,1	92.96	34,4	21.70	8,0	48.94	18,1	42.93*	15,9	270.00
1993	109.45	34,5	69.65	22,0	51.09	16,1	39.07	12,3	47.78*	15,1	317.07
1994	100.25	22,3	111.32	24,7	62.88	14,0	41.21	9,2	134.37	29,9	450.05
1995	69.43	30,9	25.60	11,4	55.60	24,7	15.12	6,7	59.29	26,3	225.04

Source: Certificates of Origin maintained by Kenya External Trade Authority (KETA)

As the market developed over the years, preferences for and market shares of the various handicraft items changed as specified in Table 8. While Wood Carvings, Sisal Baskets (Kiondos), Soap Stone Carvings and Jewellery have been dominating Kenya's handicraft export for years, other handicrafts – among them batiks, ceramics and pottery, hand-woven and hand screened textiles, leaf products, ethnographs (traditional

cultural artefacts) and of late fish flies – managed to gain importance and to command growing market shares only in the late 1980s²⁴⁷.

Table 9: Handicraft exports as per KETA records for 1994 and 1995:

Product as per KETA-file records for 1994 and 1995	Value in KShs.	
	1994	1995
<i>Ceramic Jewelry (Kazuri Ltd.)</i>	1.333.860,50	973.564,65
<i>Musical Instruments</i>	910.659,22	448.081,00
<i>Others</i>	21.549.064,45	6.777.568,61
<i>Others (Antiques)</i>	–	237.651,00
<i>Others (artifacts)</i>	200.434,00	91.320,00
<i>Others (bamboo)</i>	197.562,00	197.562,00
<i>Others (Banana Fiber)</i>	152.509,00	217.747,00
<i>Others (Baskets & others)</i>	–	273.569,00
<i>Others (Belts)</i>	32.250,00	10.600,00
<i>Others (bracelets)</i>	3.200,00	–
<i>Others (Copper plates)</i>	–	70.960,00
<i>Others (Dolls)</i>	50.700,00	47.308,00
<i>Others (Gourds)</i>	60.720,00	155.334,00
<i>Others (leather work)</i>	27.000,00	110.837,00
<i>Others (leather)</i>	1.269.984,75	50.513,00
<i>Others (mats & toys)</i>	174.199,68	–
<i>Others (mats)</i>	15.296,00	–
<i>Others (pottery + others)</i>	155.431,00	155.431,00
<i>Others (pottery)</i>	1.284.964,00	657.107,00
<i>Others (Spears)</i>	–	29.750,00
<i>Others (textiles)</i>	80.189.898,46	18.471.667,19
<i>Paintings</i>	5.400,00	–
<i>X-mass cards & calendars</i>	72.459,00	82.910,00
<i>Grand Total of ›Others‹ - incl. Ceramic Jewellery</i>	107.685.593,06	29.101.385,45
<i>Total of ›Others‹ (excl. Ceramic Jewellery)</i>	106.351.732,56	28.127.820,80

Source: KETA annual record-file for export shipment of handicrafts 1994/95

²⁴⁷ Since 1989 fishing flies were recorded as a separate/individual entry since their export had reached high total values on their own: 1989 : 21.19 Mio. = 17,85 %; 1990 : 27.00 Mio. = 19,15 %; 1991 : 21.40 Mio. = 11,15 %; 1992 : 22.04 Mio. = 8,16 %; 1993 : 18.86 Mio. = 5,95 %; 1994 : 31.47 Mio. = 6,99 %. – Note: Mio. is used as an abbreviation for million.

..... Category ›Others‹

% of ›Others‹		% of ›total handicraft exports‹	
1994	1995	1994	1995
–	–	0,30	
0,86	1,59	0,20	0,20
20,26	24,24	4,79	3,03
	0,84		0,11
0,19	0,32	0,04	0,04
0,19	0,70	0,04	0,09
0,14	0,77	0,03	0,10
	0,30		0,04
0,03	0,04	0,01	0,00
0,00	–	0,00	–
	0,25		0,03
0,05	0,17	0,01	0,02
0,06	0,55	0,01	0,07
0,03	0,39	0,01	0,05
1,19	0,18	0,28	0,02
0,16		0,04	–
0,01		0,00	–
0,15	0,55	0,03	0,07
1,21	2,34	0,29	0,29
	0,11		0,01
75,40	65,67	17,82	8,21
0,01		0,00	–
0,07	0,29	0,02	0,04
101,25	103,46	23,93	12,93
100,00	100,00	23,63	12,50

TABLE 8 and TABLE 10 show that exports of handicraft products have generally increased and have reached their overall peak in 1994 with a recognisable turnover of KShs. 450.052.491,60. While in 1981 woodcarvings clearly headed the list, with about 63 %, followed by sisal baskets, which earned circa 16 % of the annual handicraft

export, this ratio has experienced dramatic changes over the years. In 1994 woodcarvings only accounted for 22 % of all handicraft exports registered by KETA while sisal baskets could increase their share to 24 %. At the same time other categories, such as T-shirts and textiles (17 %), fishing flies (7 %), which until 1987 were not even specified in the records as a single entity but subsumed with other goods under the category ›others‹, greatly gained importance. However, as it can be seen in Table 10, Kenyan pottery did earn just a little more than 1% of the total annual handicraft exports registered by KETA in 1994 while Kazuri Ltd. alone produced and exported ceramic beads and jewellery from Kenya to total about the same amount.

Table 10: Handicrafts exports in % of 100 %

<i>Year</i>	<i>Wood carvings/Kiondos/Soap Stone/Jewellery</i>	<i>All other Handicrafts</i>	
1981	83,77 %	16,23 %	
1982	85,66 %	14,34 %	
1983	93,20 %	6,80 %	
1984	95,04 %	4,96 %	
1985	97,37 %	2,63 %	
1986	75,46 %	24,54 %	
1987	76,77 %	23,23 %	
		<i>Fishing Flies</i>	<i>All other Handicrafts</i>
1989	79,37 %	17,85 %	2,78 %
1990	76,79 %	19,15 %	4,06 %
1991	83,41 %	11,15 %	5,44 %
1992	84,10 %	8,16 %	7,74 %
1993	84,93 %	5,95 %	9,12 %
1994	70,14 %	6,99 %	22,87 %
1995	73,66 %	13,41 %	12,93 %

Source: KETA, *Certificates of Origin*

While total revenues from handicraft exports increased over the years from KShs. 118 Million in 1989 to KShs. 450 Million in 1994 Kenya experienced a major draw back of exports in 1995 which can largely be blamed on the artificially inflated strength of the Kenyan Shilling in 1994. Not anticipating such a strong value increase of the Kenyan Shilling, handicraft exporters/importers had ordered handicrafts in large quantities in 1993/94 for which they suddenly found themselves paying extraordinarily high prices which caused extreme difficulties in selling them (TRAIDCRAFT EXCHANGE 1995:3).

Facing large unsold stocks of ›overpriced‹ and therefore not competitive handicrafts from Kenya the overseas business partners were handicapped and could only place

small or in the worst case, no new orders in 1994/95. This led to an overall decline in handicraft exports from Kenya.

Assessing the export potential of handicraft products in 1990 the ITC/UNCTAD/GATT mission associated the reasons for the general drop in sales of some handicraft products from Kenya with a number of factors including saturation of the market, price under-cutting and competition from the Far East as well as the lack of innovation and creativity in the Kenyan products²⁴⁸. Though the problems were identified and a new institution, the Export Promotion Council (EPC), launched and charged with the responsibility of promoting the sector, the situation and with it the marketability and competitiveness of Kenyan handicrafts on the World Market has not improved. According to a ›protrade‹ consultant²⁴⁹, the situation only worsened and everybody involved seems to agree that despite a growing acceptance of African motifs in Western fashion, producers in Kenya may face a further loss of traditional overseas markets due to a constant lack of product development and innovation.²⁵⁰

7.2.3 *Sector activists and their objectives*

Having studied the export marketing potential of Kenyan handicrafts in the late 1980s, ATIENO summarised that »the artisans often lack a direct link with the major consumers so that there are many middlemen engaged in the handicraft trade in Kenya. These middlemen may be categorised into four groups, viz. private traders, church organisations and non-governmental organisations, producer co-operatives and lastly governmental agencies«(ATIENO 1988:24). According to my own observations made between 1990 and 1997, the set-up is more complex than described by ATIENO in 1988. While the GoK's involvement in the sector has already been illustrated I would like to add some details on the private sector, on alternative trade organisations and the co-operative movement.

7.2.3.1 Co-operatives

What was started by the colonial administration was further encouraged by national and international development policies under the auspices of the Government of Kenya. While the wood carvers had been encouraged to organise themselves into co-operatives for ease of sales management of their wares as early as in the 1950s, KETA further streamlined the approach and initiated the Nairobi based Kenya Crafts Co-operative Union (KCCU) in 1981. With the strong Women's Groups Movement on the one hand and the co-operative movement on the other, a gender bias picture emerged and was strengthened over the years with most male handicraft producers, such as

²⁴⁸ According to a market survey commissioned by ILO/Intercoop in 1995 covering three European countries, African Handicrafts stand for only 5–15 % of all crafts imported from developing countries in Germany and Great Britain, while handicrafts in general represented between 50 % and 90 % of all products being imported from developing countries worldwide by France, Germany and Great Britain.

²⁴⁹ Victor L. whom I met and talked to on 20.02.97

²⁵⁰ Also see TRADCRAFT EXCHANGE (1995); ITC/UNCTAD/GATT (1990); FACT/BREAD FOR THE WORLD (1995)

carvers, wood carvers and Kisii stone carvers alike, organising themselves in co-ops, while Kenyan women attending to handicrafts were generally advised to form groups and register themselves with the MCSS. There are, however, some exceptions to be found like the Turkana Basket Weavers Co-operative and the Oriang' Pottery Co-operative²⁵¹, both of which were initiated and supervised by expatriates or local politicians, as in the case of Oriang'. The female handicraft producers, many of whom are illiterate, lack exposure and are unfamiliar with international market forces, thus proved unable to manage their affairs according to the Co-operative Act without the active involvement of expatriates, local politicians or other learned members of the community, like men. However, while ITC/UNCTAD/GATT (1990:21) came to the conclusion that the co-operatives are the only mass producers in Kenya's handicraft industry with the potential and the infrastructure required to attempt meeting big orders and contracts, Kenya's potters in conjunction with the private sector and ATOs provided evidence to the contrary. Despite a growing popularity of private sector support programmes on the development agenda, the co-operative movement still finds its supporters on national and international floors. Following up on the ITC/UNCTAD/GATT findings and recommendations of 1990 ILO/INTERCOOP engaged itself in the promotion of the handicraft co-operative movement in East Africa and, currently, tries to create a direct link between ›Craft Producer Groups‹ from three different countries namely Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, with their potential customers overseas in order to cut out the middlemen. Noble as their objectives are, it is questionable whether they will succeed where so many others have failed.

7.2.3.2 Private sector activists

Private sector activists often accused of exploiting handicraft producers in developing countries have largely contributed to the growth of the handicraft sector and its overall economic prosperity.

Private sector activists comprise of collecting agents/suppliers, wholesalers, gallerists and curio dealers such as Richmond & Co. and B.S. Mohindra²⁵² and African Heritage²⁵³, sales agents and forwarders, department stores, mail-order firms, retailers, the many tourists and expatriates who come to Kenya annually and the myriad of individual buyers who sell to private clients in the North or who personally sell their goods around the markets in Europe. According to contemporary assessments²⁵⁴ of Kenya's handicraft sector the involvement of the private sector in the export marketing of Kenyan handicrafts, textiles and garments is very high and proved crucial in

²⁵¹ In the mid 1980s the women potters at Oriang' had been advised and convinced by the Member of Parliament for Karachuonyo to register themselves with the Ministry of Co-operatives in order to be able to participate in mainstream handicraft export promotion programmes. Despite the registration of the Oriang' Pottery Co-operative the women potters, however, never operated according to the Co-operatives Act but continued to meet and operate as a group as outlined in Chapter 12.1

²⁵² B.S. Mohindra Enterprises was founded in the 1940s

²⁵³ African Heritage started operation in the 1970s and has become one of Kenya's leading handicraft galleries.

²⁵⁴ See INTERCOOP (1996) and ITC/UNCTAD/GATT (1990)

contrast to the poor performance of governmental export promotion campaigns and services. In a feasibility study of community based businesses in Kenya focusing on handicrafts, textiles, processed food products and handmade paper TRADCRAFT EXCHANGE (1995) highlighted the important role the private sector has played for the development of the handicraft sector as a whole. In the same breath with which TRADCRAFT EXCHANGE pointed out the fact that large private sector retailers, and particularly ›African Heritage‹, have been introducing new designs in a wide variety of crafts it emphasised that these new designs have filtered through to small producers throughout the country with many of them exporting designs pioneered by the larger handicraft and fashion houses. Today most sector activists review the varying degrees of market saturation as a result of too many producers copying the various designs already in common use instead of innovating new designs²⁵⁵. While copying, however, seems almost natural to the African craftsmen, as traditional crafts and designs for material culture objects have been handed down from generation to generation without experiencing significant alterations, they do not easily relate to the idea and necessity of new designs and fashionable products. Despite the fact that the discussion on product design and development is as old as the sector itself, the issue has always been of concern but never been solved.

Since colonial days it has been the private and commercial sector – especially the overseas customers who furnished their inquiries and orders with detailed specification of the items wanted – which has been instrumental to the growth of the sector and the development of new designs and products while the African craftsmen were often not more than the mere producers, copying the designs of other races. The latter became clear when talking to potters targeting the urban upper class consumer market and looking at the fashionable Mediterranean style clay planters flooding Nairobi's streets since the 1990s. The new designs, which yield a rich market response, are based on customer specifications and pictures from European magazines but hardly ever invented by the potters themselves. It can be summarised that the handicraft sector is highly competitive and as such always in need of professional designers, private sector activists with a commercial approach and/or people who have been exposed to the environment of the envisaged customers, people who are able to design something that will fit the tourist and overseas market.

7.2.3.3 Alternative Trade Organisations (ATOs)

Apart from the commercial trade circuit there is a retail structure of the alternative circuit. The involvement of the private sector has always been market driven and geared to serve a highly competitive commercial tourist and overseas market, which

²⁵⁵ While the RIO already in 1950 highlighted that »the African does and will copy the designs of other races, but, if these alien designs are not thrust upon him he will only copy such things as catch his eyes...«(KNA: AB/19/4/11) FAKT/BREAD FOR THE WORLD (1995:10) emphasised decades later in 1995 that »with the external orientation on taste and design the products became alienated from the potential local customers«. Looking at Fashion and Design in Africa DÜ made the observation that »... product development was generally seen as an expense which cannot easily be recovered, if products are copied by others« (DIENST IN ÜBERSEE 1995).

today, as in the past, calls for uniquely African styles and designs on the one hand and articles that fit the contemporary taste of interior design on the other²⁵⁶. The ATOs, however, many of whom have a strong church affiliation, have had a very different agenda in the past. However, as the need for sustainability and increased efficiency increases just as it has for other development and church run programmes ATOs are facing growing competition from the private sector.

In response to this growing economic pressure, ATOs and producer groups worldwide, which devote themselves to fair trade relations and practises, formed the International Federation of Alternative Trade (IFAT) in 1989²⁵⁷. IFAT's objectives are to strengthen the capacity of their members, to improve access to markets for Southern ATOs like Jisaidie Cottage Industries and the Undugu Society of Kenya and provide more marketing opportunities for all members, to facilitate the exchange of information, to engage in education, campaigning and lobbying activities, to provide technical and business support and to increase members business efficiency. As Northern ATOs²⁵⁸ aim at the poorest of developing countries and buy directly from co-operatives and producer groups, they try to ensure that manufacturers and co-operatives receive a fair share of the profits. Their overall aim is to make an active contribution to the improvement of the socio-economic situation within those countries and to facilitate the wakening of consciousness in the Western World.

Unlike commercial traders most ATOs started off by selling traditional (handi-)craft products from developing countries and were promoting the ethnic identity of their products without interfering with design, product development etc. Unfortunately it is still a common practice to bewail the debasement of ethnic arts and crafts (COHEN 1989) for which SCHÄFER from Service Overseas (DÜ) gave a good example during the opening session of a workshop held in Cape Town in 1995 with her following remarks: »It is an old tradition in Thailand that women produce silk materials – starting from the spinning of the silk, the dyeing and finally the weaving in traditional patterns. When they tried to sell the material that was not needed for their own use to tourists, they found out that the traditional colours and patterns were not very popular. They changed the production to fit the ›other‹ taste and they did realise income, – but the traditional techniques of dyeing and weaving got lost instead. Is this the price we

²⁵⁶ This selection criteria has not changed over the years if we just compare them with those spelled out in 1950 by the Kenya Colony while arranging Kenya's first handicraft display in Mombasa – see Chapter 6.3

²⁵⁷ According to market research carried out by ILO/Intercoop in 1996, the concept of ATOs is rather new to the French market and therefore still growing, while ATOs in Germany and UK have been the driving force in introducing products from developing countries to the European market for the last 20 years. Although consumer concern, especially in UK and France, about fair trade conditions for products of all kinds is increasing the traditional ATOs have faced considerable financial problems in recent years for the following reasons: (1) their funding sources become scarce; (2) customers are less interested in ethnic, non-adaptable crafts; and (3) with more commercial importers entering the scene competition is increasing.

²⁵⁸ 10 Thousand Villages/North America, 10 Thousand Villages/Canada, Oxfam/UK, Traidcraft/UK, Fairtrade/NL and Gepa/FRG all of whom operate in Kenya are only six of a total of 78 IFAT members.

want to pay or do we find ways and means in order to safeguard traditional crafts and to market them in such a way that an appropriate wage can be earned by the producers?» (DIENST IN ÜBERSEE, 1995). Meanwhile COHEN (1989) advocated for ›craft policies‹ on a national and international scale which, while helping to preserve the skills, styles and aesthetic values of the past, will enable the contemporary craftsmen to make creative use of the materials and techniques of the modern age, and to manufacture innovative products which will attract contemporary customers. However, the question has to be addressed: Why do members of the industrialised countries want to safeguard traditional crafts in developing countries? – Do they wean for the worlds cultural heritage and their own craft traditions which in most cases can only be witnessed in museums and ›museum villages‹ today? – Does anybody ask a carpenter in Germany why he is not using traditional hand-tools instead of modern machines? – While craftspeople have to work hard and constantly have to improve their production to meet the market and the quality levels required, it becomes inappropriate and almost offensive to advise handicrafts producers in developing countries to hold on to their traditional production methods as they, too, have to stand competition on national and international levels.

The 1990 market trends in home decoration have paved the way for a growing commercialisation of the trade with handicrafts from developing countries and consequently forced the ATOs to re-evaluate their above mentioned approach, particularly as the market in the North is showing signs of saturation with traditional, not adapted goods which have lost their ›exoticism‹ due to decades of ›Third World Trade‹ and at the same time do not match with the interior design trends in the developed countries.

7.2.4 International market trends with regard to ceramic and pottery ware

Victor L., a ›protrade‹ consultant, was not very enthusiastic about the current handicraft production and its future in Kenya when I sought his opinion on it in February 1997. He blamed inefficiency and corruption, the long lasting involvement of ›do-gooders‹ such as church organisations and ATOs, ›protrade‹ not excluded, as well as the lack of private sector involvement and commercialisation for the same. However, he still believes that Kenya could improve its market shares as potential buyers from overseas are increasingly getting tired of Asian handicrafts and look for alternative sources on the condition that they are able to keep up with their orders and manage to bridge the gap between the culture of the producers and those of the potential buyers by creating products that fit the market.

Whether we look at traditional societies or modern markets the prevailing demand structure always reflects the economic status quo, the seasons, fashion and design trends of the respective ›buying public‹. The ITC/UNCTAD/GATT report had stressed that

» ...handicrafts have potential not simply in terms of ethnic/cultural items but in terms of market adopted products catering to utilitarian needs« (ITC/UNCTAD/GATT 1990:17). PROTRADE (1995) and WALLAGE (1994) further emphasised that handicrafts are not traded as ›handicrafts‹ as such, but as objects of interior design, home

accessories, decorative or gift items which are generally purchased to brighten up the home.

A look at WALLAGE's (1994:18) portrayal of the dominant European trends for home decoration over the last three decades, as quoted below, highlights the ephemeral character of those trends that call for a maximum of updated market information and flexibility to stay in competition.

1970s: »The decade of ›flower power‹ attracted interest in non-western societies and, probably because of this, a taste for natural materials emerged. Furthermore, a development towards creating personal environments was discernible.«²⁵⁹

1980s (early): »The early eighties were predominated by business-like tones such as white, grey and black. Designs were modern and sober.«²⁶⁰

1990s: »Concluding with the late eighties and the very beginning of the nineties, homeliness became the key-word. The former popular ›high-tech style‹ was abandoned and romanticism started to make headway. Quite suddenly, designs that conveyed a nature look, warmth, and timelessness were sought after. Sales of decorative items went up.«²⁶¹

In 1997 Kees B.²⁶², a ›Fair Trade‹ business consultant, from the Netherlands confirmed the trends outlined by WALLAGE (1994) and expressed the serious interest of ›Fair Trade‹ in importing not only ceramics but also traditional pottery ware from Kenya, if reliable sources could be identified²⁶³. With regard to the ceramic ware being produced at the Jitegemea Pottery, their Kenyan supplier, he expressed his disappointment. Kees B. pointed out that the Jitegemea Pottery was not competitive in the European market owing to high production costs and the fact that they were not flexible enough to respond to changing market demands and fashions.

While WALLACE (1994) provided a global review and outlook of European trends in home decoration, he, like PROTRADE (1995), underlined that export markets are not uniform but consist of several sub-markets, which have developed independently²⁶⁴.

²⁵⁹ During the 1970s Germany and other European countries experienced a ceramic boom with pottery workshops appearing all over the country. This trend should influence the craft-scene on national and international level as it reflected the prevailing fashion and market demand even for handicraft imports from developing countries. Craft- and handicraft concepts were exported to developing countries where they have led to the establishment of ceramic workshops like the Jitegemea Pottery and others of its kind.

²⁶⁰ During the 1980s porcelain was the ultimate ceramic material to work with in central Europe. Porcelain products were increasingly getting popular while earthenware products on the other hand lost popularity.

²⁶¹ The 1990s should once again provide a market demand for utilitarian and decorative pottery and ceramic ware for the interior and the garden. It was during the late 1980s and early 1990s that terracotta planters penetrated the European shops, garden centres etc. in large quantities.

²⁶² Met and talked to on 01.02.97 in Nairobi.

²⁶³ In 1996 Fair Trade imported ceramic and pottery ware from Asia, Latin America, Cameroon (traditional pottery), Tanzania (small decorative figurines and clay pots via Nyumba ya Sanaa in Dar es Salaam), Zimbabwe and just very little from Kenya.

²⁶⁴ See Appendix IX for more details.

With regard to ceramics PROTRADE underlined that »a marketing operation plan based on information that was gathered, say, in the French ceramics market, therefore cannot necessarily be employed in the German ceramics market owing to different demand structures« (PROTRADE 1995:9). This makes it increasingly hazardous for the pottery/ceramic producer in countries like Kenya to aim at overseas markets and adjust their production accordingly.

While the overseas market often appears to be the ultimate target for most handicraft promotion programmes, one has to treat this tendency with caution as export sales are by no means reliable or predictable over a longer period of time. One of the leading handicraft exporters in Kenya, for example, told me that they did not export any ceramics or pottery ware in 1995 and the years before while they had furnished a large order from the USA in 1996/97. At the same time JCI, one of the leading ATOs in Kenya, exported pottery ware from western Kenya by container to New Zealand and other destinations. However, all exporters I talked to, confirmed that they were buying their pots from potters at Ilesi or their urban peers. In the same breath they complained about the difficulties they encountered while ordering and purchasing their pottery from women or WGs in the past. They attributed the difficulties to the lack of reliability in quality supplies and timely delivery accompanied by the lack of a proper communication infrastructure as most groups did not maintain an office or even a telephone. Although these problems reportedly affect and restrain Kenya's entire handicraft export sector, the exporters and middlemen stressed that they were particularly bad when dealing with women. With men, unlike most women, being in a position to withdraw from agricultural and domestic duties and devote all their working day to the craft, they naturally seem to be the more appropriate business partners for any large-scale commercial dealer.

Picture 4: *European design merged with tradition African pottery skills*



The potter's craft in Kenya

8 Research planning and design: An ethnographic approach

As portrayed in the introduction, I review the years I served as a project co-ordinator for the ›Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project‹ as an exploration phase. During this time (1990 to 1993) my work not only brought me in close contact with Kenyan potters and relevant development agents and stakeholders but sharpened my awareness of the obstacles and difficulties researchers could face while undertaking their field work as well as of the importance of a carefully chosen context sensitive research methodology.

First of all knowing about Kenya's administrative set-up and obeying the rules and regulations imposed on foreign researchers, such as seeking affiliation with a Kenyan research institution and obtaining an official research permit from the Office of the President, Republic of Kenya, proved to be essential for conducting research in Kenya. On approval of the research permit the Office of the President disseminated a note on the same to all relevant district and province officers who would expect a courtesy call from me before embarking on any field research in their area. How important this would become for the success or failure of any research carried out in Kenya shall be demonstrated with a brief excursion to a market survey I conducted in 1993. In the course of this survey I attended the Mombasa Show in search of any pottery ware being exhibited with the intention of gaining information on the local pottery industry in the region. At the exhibition stand of the MCSS, Department of Social Services, I discovered some locally produced clay pots and was told that they came from Jomvu Kuu, Miritini Sublocation, Mombasa District. Following up this information I drove to Miritini where, while asking for directions, I fortunately met a man who had nothing to do at the time and was happy to come along, guide me and assist with translation. As the political situation was still tense in the area in the aftermath of the active support of the pro-democracy movement in Kenya by foreigners before and during the multiparty elections in 1992, the women potters I met at Jomvu Kuu were officially not allowed to talk to any foreigner unless authorised to do so by the government. In conformity with this order an older community member interrupted my visit, after some of the potters had already shown me around and briefed me on their work, and advised me to go and see the area chief to ask for permission. While the chief had no objections he, nevertheless, asked me to go a step further and seek official permission from the DSDO Mombasa before returning to the village. Talking to the DSDO took up another day of my time and ended with the reassurance, that I was welcome to study the potters in the district on the condition that I share my knowledge and expertise and provide advice were possible. Unfortunately time was running short for me and did not allow me to return to the group thereafter. The brief visit of 1993 should, however, help me to complete the picture of the Giriya potters at Jomvu Kuu after my second delayed

visit in 1996. This time I was well prepared, I had paid a courtesy call to the DSDO and was accompanied by a field officer of Tototo Home Industries, a local NGO which assists handicraft producers and women's groups in and around Mombasa, and was therefore well known by the ›women potters‹ and the local administration. As a result the women did not hesitate to answer my questions²⁶⁵.

Another obstacle to the conducting of meaningful research in a developing country has to be faced in the numerous feasibility studies and sector assessments, which have become a prerequisite to almost every new development project. Over time Kenyan people have either grown tired of availing their time and answering questions or on the contrary they have started to associate a researcher with the potentiality of future help and assistance. During my time working as project co-ordinator in Nyanza Province, between 1990 and 1993, I witnessed not less than four research teams visiting the Oriang' Pottery Women Group, conducting interviews and studying the composition and performance of the group. Not discernible for an outsider, during all these visits the women answered questions and presented themselves differently depending on the kind of help they were anticipating from the researcher and/or upcoming project. Later, while conducting my own field work, I experienced that potters and traders alike often opted not to expose existing marketing and trade networks to an outsider for various reasons. On the one hand they would want to protect their own business, and on the other hand they would hope for external support if they only stressed the need for additional market outlets, channels and linkages strongly enough. Based on these observations, the thought that the validity of my research would depend on my own introduction to the potters and other sector activists not only appealed to me but inspired me to seek affiliation to persons linked to the respondents by tribe, family or business before approaching the latter. However, having lived and worked in Kenya and being able to speak *Dholuo*, one of the local vernaculars, proved to be a valuable advantage as it turned out to be a ›door-opener‹. It instilled trust and confidence in the people I interviewed and approached. Many of them were further delighted by the fact that I did not leave the country after completing my work assignment, for which I was paid, but instead further committed myself and my research to the development of the potter's craft in Kenya. In appreciation of the latter Kathurima A., the officer in charge of the Kisumu Archives, for example, generously assisted me. On realising that according to the guides and catalogues there was nothing viable [as he phrased it] on pottery production in the Kisumu Archives, he initiated a brief study on pottery production in Nyanza Province in June 1996. In the course of this exercise, two officers of the Kisumu-Records-Centre visited and interviewed some potters of the Katuola clan at Oriang' Kogweno West Sublocation of East Karachuonyo Location/Homa Bay District. Kathurima A. thereafter compiled their findings and sent me his report in August 1996. Although the report did not reveal any new information, it confirmed some of my own findings and reflects the interest taken in my research and also the level of support granted towards it by Kenyan nationals.

In the course of the research I was further generously assisted by people, like: (1) Joseph A., a male Luyia trader whom I met at Mbale market and who introduced

²⁶⁵ The group interview was largely translated by the officer of Tototo Home Industries and recorded for the preparation of a summary protocol.

me to potters and traders attending Mbale market and offered me an insight into inter-regional trade relations between potters at Mbale and traders at Eldoret; (2) Lynn T., a fellow researcher, who assisted with arrangements for the field work among the Meru community of Kenya. She availed contacts and information which proved extremely valuable to my research; (3) Fabian L., an Isukha potter, who received his initial training in pottery production at Ilesi/Kakamega District and who is today running the most successful Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise in Nairobi; (4) Rose A., a female Luo pot-trader at Kisumu who has inherited the business from her late father and who kindly availed herself to introduce me to some of her suppliers, a group of female potters from Nyamasaria/Kisumu District and a male potter at Kibos/Kisumu District; and (5) the members of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group (OPWG) whom I had worked with between 1990 and 1993 and who willingly contributed their knowledge and experiences to the study. They were people who in their majority not only spoke the local vernacular but also were trusted by the respondents and well versed with local standards of communication, habits and cultural regulations, which if not given serious consideration, could thwart any meaningful research.

Due to the scarcity of existing data on the contemporary potter's craft in Kenya, I was not in a position to draw up a strict research plan governing my field work from beginning to end, but had to explore the field step by step in a progressive ethnographic manner. Shortly after being issued with a temporary research permit I embarked on field studies in western Kenya with a view to assessing the production and marketing set-up of the potters in the region. During this period, in March 1995, I attended 6 local markets and paid follow up/home visits to a group of Bunyore potters and a number of Maragoli potters, whom I had met at Mbale market. Since I had worked with Luo potters over a period of 3½ years I did not feel a pressing need to visit and interview any more Luo potters at the time. Instead, I handed out some exercise books and pencils to women belonging to the OPWG requesting them to write down their own personal stories as potters. The idea behind this was to capture their personal views and experiences without any interference, selection or guidance on my part. In order to respond adequately to the nature of the sector activist addressed, the environmental condition in which the observation or interview took place and the data to be obtained, it proved necessary to draw on and combine a range of different research methods. Between March 1995 and January 1997 I conducted a series of site-observations and open interviews with a set of themes to be tackled in mind while attending to markets and visiting potters at their place of work in the following districts Vihiga, Kakamega, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Migori, Meru, Nairobi, Machakos and Mombasa. Furthermore I conducted a total of 80 semi-structured interviews with potters in western Kenya and Nairobi (see lowest level of Figure 1 and Figure 2) and 3 with potters of the Kamba and Giriya community, participated in seminars and workshops on handicraft promotion and export marketing of handicrafts from developing countries, spoke to experts and government officials working in this field and teamed up with Mike C., a British ceramic expert, who had worked for Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd. in the 1980s and was commissioned by the British Council/ODA to avail his expertise to a selected number of ceramic workshops in Nairobi in 1997.

During the entire research qualitative and quantitative data were linked in an effort to enable verification or corroboration of each other via triangulation. Quantitative data were for example collected by means of mailed questionnaires, which were addressed to all Kenyan District Social Development Officers (DSDOs)²⁶⁶. The questionnaires were designed to gain an insight into the regional distribution and socio-economic structure of the potter's craft as perceived by GoK representatives.

The questionnaire tackled the following areas of interest:

- regional distribution of various traditional crafts
- activity profile of the crafts on a district level as perceived by the DSDOs
- predominant gender and age-group of the person attending to the various crafts and to pottery in particular
- diffusion and ethnic origin of the active potters in the district
- organisational structure of the potters as perceived by the DSDOs
- marketing and distribution of pottery ware
- background and driving force of potter's craft in the district
- nature and configuration of institutions and organisations actively supporting craft projects and the potter's craft in particular in the district
- perception of the economic performance and prospects of the potter's craft by Government representatives on a country wide scale
- recognisable changes and contemporary developments within the potter's craft as perceived by the DSDOs
- regional distribution of stove projects in Kenya
- personal comments and suggestions of the officers responding to the questionnaire with regard to the contemporary performance and development potential of the potter's craft in the district

The answers and information obtained from the DSDOs were complemented by data extracted from an existing database on women's group's activities in Kenya compiled in 1993. Based on this material and the already existing data extracted from previous pottery studies and reports I was able to come up with a preliminary country profile of the potter's craft in Kenya as portrayed in Chapter 9 and narrow down my research to focal points of interest by means of theoretical sampling. While Kenyan potters are not registered in their capacity as potters and their total number (*Grundgesamtheit*) could therefore not be established, their majority can, according to the newly developed <country profile>, roughly be grouped into the following four clusters:

1. rural (traditional) potters working on an individual basis at home

²⁶⁶ The decision to address the questionnaire to the DSDOs, who represent the MCSS in the districts, rather than any other line ministry was based on my own experiences and observations made while working for the Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project and prior investigations and discussions held with various government officials and sector activists which revealed that the potter's craft has hardly been recognised and paid attention to by other line ministries. This is a fact which is closely related to the prevailing gender of the active potter – women.

2. semi-commercial potters who have organised themselves into groups or started small and micro enterprises in the vicinity of their rural home
3. commercial pottery enterprises belonging to the urban informal sector.
4. institutional and private pottery/ceramic workshops and industries belonging to the urban formal sector.

Figure 1: Theoretical sampling of the research levels, groups and individual cases/informants – part one: rural Kenya

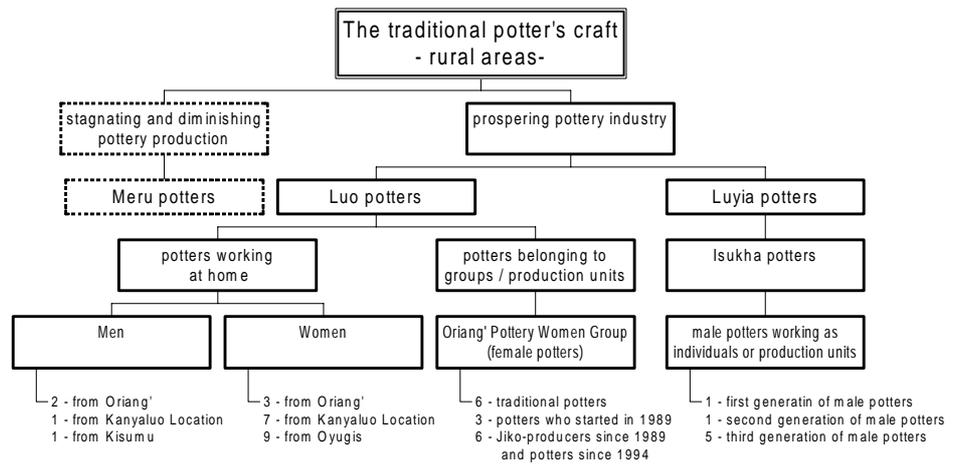
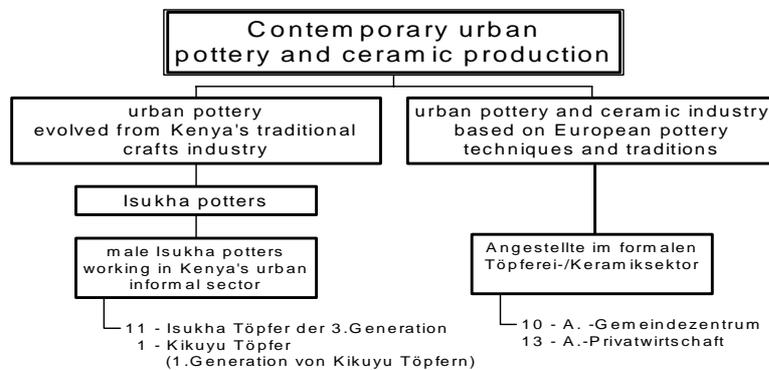


Figure 2: Theoretical sampling of the research levels, groups and individual cases/informants – part two: Nairobi/urban area



Detailed and in-depth field studies were focusing on geographical locations where high pottery production has been recorded over time, particularly among the Luo and Luyia community in western (rural) Kenya (see Figure 1), which belong to the clusters 1 and 2 mentioned above and the urban pottery and ceramic scene in Kenya's capital, Nairobi (see Figure 2) – Cluster 3 and 4. These findings were contrasted with findings from areas, such as the Meru District of Eastern Province, where the craft experiences a declining tendency (see Figure 1). More details on the exercise and its findings are captured in Chapter 10.

Not only the subject of my research but also the fact that I was working part time contributed to a progressive research design. The field work had to be broken up into short, well prepared and concentrated sessions.

Main field work sessions:

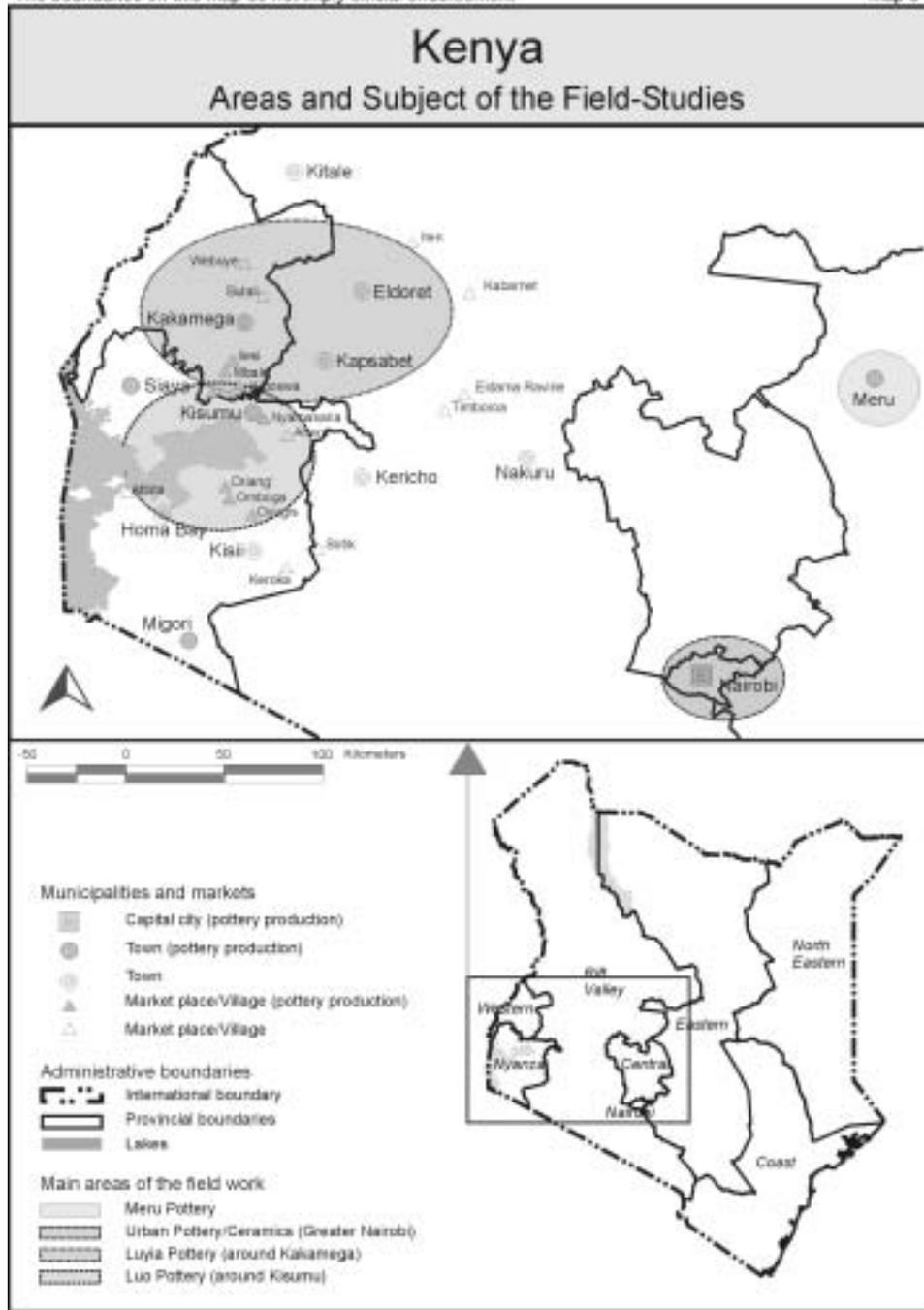
- March 95 – site observations and open interviews in western Kenya with a view to studying production and marketing set-ups among *Luo* and neighbouring *Maragoli* and *Bunyore* communities which are well known for their thriving potter's craft
- August 95 – intensive case study (a holistic approach) of the potter's craft among the *Meru* of Kenya: A portrait of a diminishing indigenous craft.
- Sep. – Nov.95 – semi-structured interviews of *formal and informal sector employees of small and medium scale pottery and ceramic workshops* in Nairobi
- November 95 – intensive case study of *Luo potters*, Homa Bay District
- February 96 – intensive case study of *Isukha potters*, Kakamega District

To study the socio-economic interactions and local networks, of which the potters are a part, I tried to access and make use of the same. Consequently the field work was always building up around a central place whether it be a market centre, as in the case of Mbale and Oyugis, a village or a town like in the case of Ilesi Village and Meru Town²⁶⁷, a project site like at Oriang' or a ceramic workshop like the Jitegemea Pottery in Nairobi. The entire approach required a high level of flexibility and commitment from each party involved.

During the market and home visits I recorded parts of the conversation when and where possible or deemed the most appropriate form of securing the data and information gathered. In cases where it was not possible to record the actual conversation/interview, I took notes and recorded memos, which formed the basis for summary protocols on the exercise.

The empirical work was accompanied and guided by an early analysing and writing process which allowed me to regularly review my findings and concentrate more and more on questions and queries focusing on regional and gender-based disparities of Kenya's contemporary potter's craft as outlined in Chapter 11 and 12.

²⁶⁷ See Figure 5 on page 222



9 Creating a country profile of the potter's craft in Kenya

While awaiting the approval of my research application, which took the Kenyan Government more than 8 months, I approached the Ministry of Culture and Social Services seeking support in pursuing the matter²⁶⁸. Due to the active intervention and assistance of the Women's Bureau I was issued with a temporary research permit on February 14, 1995. This permit, not only authorised me to officially start my research, but also led to further assistance granted by the Women's Bureau. Mrs. Ambuka, the head of the bureau, provided me with an updated mailing list of all DSDO offices in Kenya²⁶⁹ and with an official covering letter requesting the active support of the officers in the field. As I was aware of the lack of money for stationary and stamps in most government offices, I prepared ›small packages‹ containing the questionnaire with my own plus the official covering letter and a fully addressed and stamped envelope to ensure that the DSDOs could not fail to return the questionnaire. After pre-testing and discussing the design of the questionnaire with the District Commissioner and the DSDO of Vihiga District, the DHEO of Homa Bay District, Mrs. Ambuka, Prof. Wandibba and Dr. Nangendo of the Institute of African Studies, an improved version of the same was posted to all other districts on February 17, 1995. As only 15 of them were returned within the first 5 weeks²⁷⁰, I mailed a reminder to 33 districts which resulted in an additional 10 questionnaires being returned during the month of April increasing the total number to 25 or 52 % while two DSDOs responded to my reminder with a request to send them a new copy of the questionnaire as the first one had never reached them. Eager to obtain information from as many districts as possible I started to pay personal visits, when and wherever the opportunity arose, to some DSDOs who had not responded to my request while I called others on the phone to inquire whether or not they had received the questionnaire to start with and to further motivate them to attend to the same.

Taking account of the DSDOs who responded and those who did not and of the available data on Kenyan pots and potters it became apparent that pottery production is deemed very low or non-existent in 65 % of the districts where the DSDOs failed to return the questionnaire. In other cases, like the one of the DSDO Mombasa²⁷¹, whom I visited in December 1996, I was told that he did not respond as he felt ill-equipped to

²⁶⁸ Since a nation-wide strike of the university lecturers hampered, not only the smooth running of the universities, but prevented new student intakes in 1994 and caused the committee who would give approval of my research applications not to meet.

²⁶⁹ Which numbered 48 in February 1995 while the total number has since increased due to the creation of new districts.

²⁷⁰ In this context one must be aware of that the ›Kenya Post and Telecommunication‹ services are neither very reliable nor fast. While I lived in Homa Bay it often happened that letters from Nairobi never reached me, or took more than 2 weeks to cover a distance of 430 km.

²⁷¹ In December 1996 he still had the questionnaire in his drawer and was able to produce it immediately despite having no prior warning of my visit.

comment on the subject matter as his office, which covers the second largest urban community in Kenya, hardly ever deals with handicraft producers directly²⁷². The DSDO Nyeri, a graduate of the University of Nairobi, Institute of African Studies, whom I had talked to on the phone and visited in person never managed to return the questionnaire due to lack of commitment [personal view of the author]. However, over time a total of 36 or 75 % of all questionnaires had been attended to and returned. In 34 cases the questionnaire was filled in by officers of the MCSS to whom it was addressed and in 2 cases it had been passed on to and answered by officers of the MRTT&T. While analysing these questionnaires one has to bear in mind that the perception of the officers attending to the questionnaire is based on their own knowledge of the region as well as the scope of activities carried out by their office on district level. Wherever there was a concentration of pottery activities in the vicinity of the district capital it could be observed that the officers registered a high to very high activity level which does not necessarily reflect on the overall profile of the craft within the district. For example, in Meru District, pottery activities are relatively high in Meru town itself while the craft as such is rapidly diminishing at district level as field studies conducted in August 1995 revealed. Before I further elaborate on the information provided by the DSDOs I would like to take you on a short excursion into Kenya's traditional pottery scene as reflected and portrayed by other scholars.

9.1 Distribution of the traditional potter's craft

The location and distribution of the traditional potter's craft in Kenya is related to geographical features such as the geological composition of the soil and the climate. Availability of raw materials like suitable clay and temper combined with a widely settled society were preconditions for vigorous pot-making activities. The reason behind it can be attributed to the nature of pottery ware: being heavy as well as fragile it is better suited to permanent settlements than to the mobile set-up of pastoral and nomadic societies which in the past preferred gourds and wooden containers. In general, the containers used by a society reflect its lifestyle and diet, as well. While agricultural societies, for example, have a great need of cooking pots necessary for the preparation of their agricultural products, pastoralists often do not eat vegetables and demand fewer cooking vessels as their meals, composed mainly of meat, can be prepared entirely without the use of pots.

However, Kenya's latest population census of 1989 recognises more than 50 tribes, incl. Europeans, Asians, Arabs etc., living in Kenya with its majority originating from three different language families: the Cushites, the Bantus and the Nilotes²⁷³.

²⁷² His statement, however, contradicts the statements made by his female predecessor whom I met and talked to in 1993 after visiting the Mombasa Show where pots made by members of a WG in Jomvu Kuu were exhibited by the MCSS. Like other incidents this reflects gender based interests and priorities – while the female officer in charge paid attention to the female craftspeople in the district her male successor thought it less important and chose not to.

²⁷³ SOUTHALL (1976:276) pointed out that »In Kenya, the Luyia came into existence in the 1940s, the Kalenjin in the early fifties, and the Mijikenda in the late fifties. Yet most people seem to regard them as primeval tribes.« – Also see Appendix X for detailed figures on the

The Cushites, namely the Somali²⁷⁴, Rendile, Orma, Boran, Sakuye and Gabbra are nomadic pastoralists who live in the northern arid parts of the country and do not carry out any pottery activities.

The Nilotes, who immigrated from the north, were customary hunters and pastoralists. They can be split into three groups: The Highland Nilotes (= *Kalenjin* of Cushitic-Nilotic origin) – namely the *Kipsigis*, *Nandi*, *Sabaot*, *Tugen*, *Elgeyo*, *Marakwet* and *Pokot*; the Plains Nilotes – namely the *Turkana*, *Teso*, *Maasai*, *Samburu* (incl. *Dorobo*) and *Njemps* and the River-Lake Nilotes, the *Luo*.

The Bantu, who immigrated from the East during the 16th Century, were predominantly agriculturists. Kenya's Bantu population is composed of the Western Bantu – namely the *Luyia*, *Kuria* and *Kisii*; the Central Bantu – namely the *Kamba*, *Kikuyu*, *Embu*, *Mbere*, *Tharaka* and *Meru*; and the Coastal-Hinterland Bantu – namely the *Pokomo*, *Mijikenda*, *Taita/Adavida*, *Taveta*, *Swahili/Shirazi* and *Bajuni*.

People of Non-African origin: Arabs have settled along Kenya's coast since the 14th Century and were later joined by *Asians* and *Europeans* who imparted their culture on the coastal settlements, major towns and mainly central parts of Kenya.

According to records and written information available, the tribes highlighted above reportedly have a history of pottery production in Kenya.

With people of more than 50 different ethnic communities calling Kenya their home, it is understood that Kenya's potter's trade never produced a homogeneous picture but instead performed and developed differently according to the material culture of each particular group, their regional whereabouts and their overall socio-economic performance over time. In Kenya traditional *Meru*, *Tharaka*, *Adavida*, *Pokot*, *Il Chamus*, *Dorobo*, *Endo* and *Ogiek* societies, for example, have always accommodated some women specialists who served their more or less immediate communities while their production varied with the agricultural seasons and ranged roughly between 0 to 30 pots per potter per month. At the same time other ethnic groups, such as the *Luo*, have been known for their excessive pottery production and trade since the 19th Century²⁷⁵. Structural changes of the potter's craft in Kenya inevitably arose in response to changing living standards and market forces and a higher mobility in alliance with the availability of alternative products which could replace the traditional clay pot. It is therefore not surprising that the potter's craft is declining and facing extinction among some ethnic groups while others on the contrary, have explored its commercial potentiality and adjusted their production accordingly.

Based on the information and data available BARBOUR and WANDIBBA (1989) concluded that the traditional potter's craft could roughly be divided into three categories: the flourishing, the surviving and the diminishing craft. They pointed out

composition of Kenya's population according to the latest census of 1989 and the regional distribution of ethnic groups of 100.000+ registered people.

²⁷⁴ While the Somalis in general are not known to produce any pottery ware, there are individual cases of entrepreneurial men who do attend to the craft on a commercial basis, as reported by BARBOUR and WANDIBBA (1989).

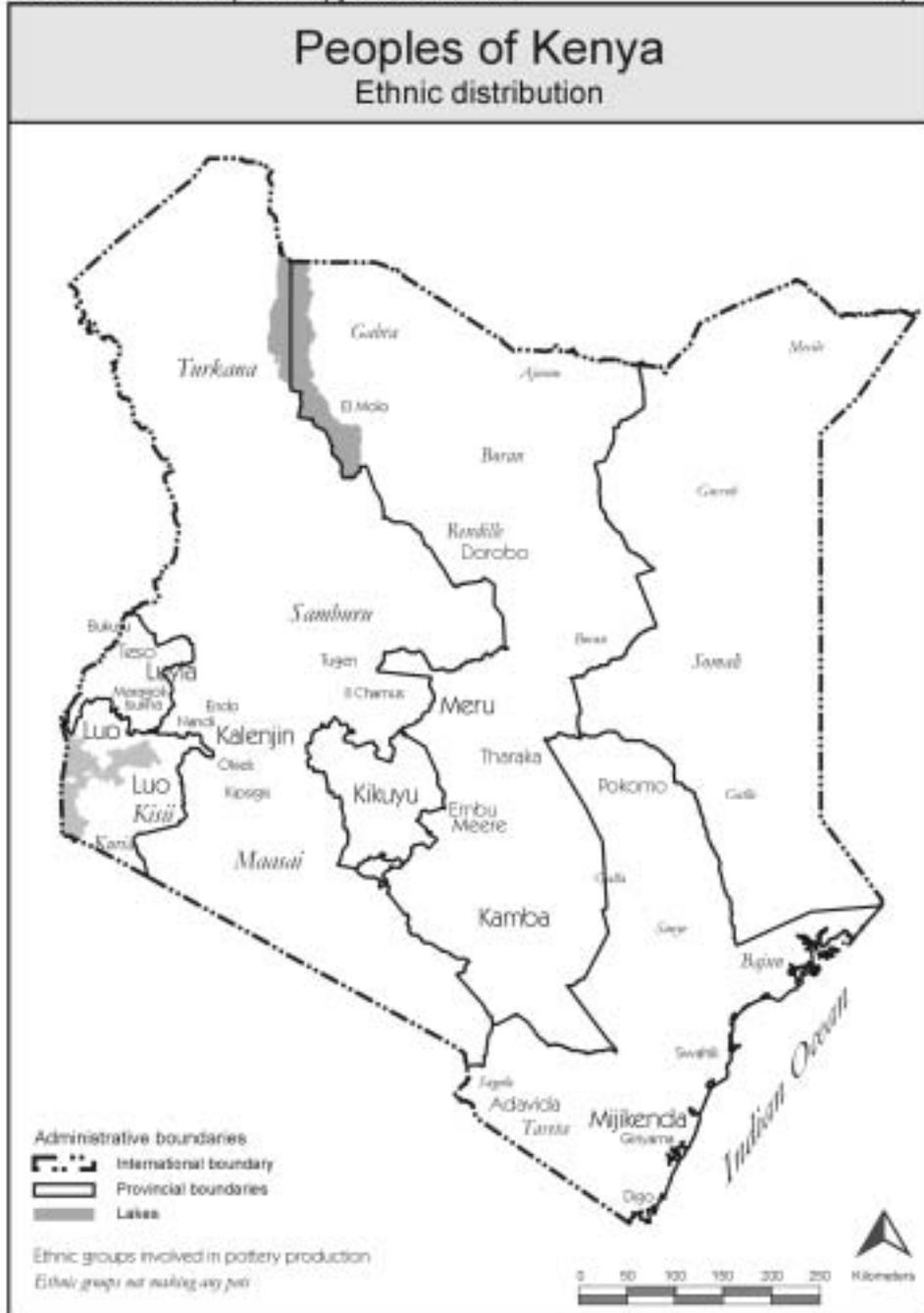
²⁷⁵ See, for example, OCHIENG (1987)

that pottery production is flourishing in western Kenya²⁷⁶, particularly among the Luo²⁷⁷ and Luyia communities while they described the status of the craft among the Kikuyu, Kamba, Meru, Adavida and Swahili in central, eastern and coastal parts of the country as surviving as opposed to the declining tendencies which characterise the current craft profile among the Embu, Dorobo, Okiek, Endo, Il Chamus, Pokot and Somali. BARBOUR and WANDIBBA attributed this difference in performance to the different market gearing and extent to which the products have gained national and international market recognition. They highlighted the fact that Luo and Luyia pottery ware has procured markets in many distant parts of the country, is sold on period markets in rural areas, on the streets, in urban working class markets, tourist markets, crafts-shops and galleries and has become subject to external trade. Meanwhile Kikuyu, Kamba, Meru, Adavida and Swahili pottery is subject to a rather narrow production and market set-up targeting the local rather than national or overseas demands.

While it seems permissible to talk of Luo, Kikuyu and Kamba pottery, as these ethnic groups respond to rather homogeneous material cultures, there is no such thing as ›Luyia pottery‹, because the Luyia community is comprised of 17 Bantu speaking groups, among them the Bukusu, Maragoli, Bunyore, Isukha, Sabaot and others. These Luyia sub-groups differ from each other in inherited beliefs and superstitions, material culture, customary division of labour and craft traditions. The latter becomes apparent as we take a closer look at the potter's craft, prevailing vessel types, the craft-lineage and nature of the active potter. While some groups permit men and women to attend to the potter's craft, for example, the Maragoli (WAGNER 1970) and Bukusu (NANGENDO 1995), others allow only women to make pots, for example, the Bunyore. While the Maragoli, like the Luo and Kikuyu, have a history in trading pots to neighbouring tribes (WAGNER 1970:11), the Isukha, for example, were still known for buying pots from their Maragoli neighbours rather than making pots or even trading with the same, during the 1930s whereas nowadays those are the ones who have made a name for themselves in long distance, urban and export trade with pottery from Western Kenya. The history behind this development will further be elaborated on in Chapter 11.

²⁷⁶ See Table 11

²⁷⁷ Based on two years research during the early 1980's HERBICH and DIETLER (1989:27) described Luo pottery as a thriving indigenous craft industry and as an ubiquitous and fundamental aspect of daily life in Luo society. However, they estimated that only 1 % or less of the Luo population was involved in the crafts movement in the early 1980s, which leads to the assumption that those who nowadays do attend to the craft are more productive and commercially oriented.



Data Source: Kenya Factbook 1993

Angela Langenkamp 11/1997

Having studied the Kamba potters, GILL (1981) and ODAK (1987) emphasised the importance of pottery in Kamba communities:

»Pottery making is an important industry and women continue to be actively involved in the manufacturing process from young adulthood through old age« (GILL 1981:96).

»Present day Kamba potters, especially those organised into large co-operatives are recognised as an important economic and political force in Ukambani« (GILL 1981:111).

Kamba potters interviewed years later, in 1995, unanimously stressed that pottery had become a second or third choice among women and was only done by old women and those who had no alternative sources of income. According to them the perception of pot-making has changed over time leaving pottery work to be looked upon as a tiresome task and often associated with low profit margins, backwardness and poorly educated women. Nowadays Kamba women, in their majority, prefer to engage in horticultural production and trade or choose to make Kiondos a craft, which can be carried out while simultaneously attending local markets, for example. However, while less and less women actively engage in pottery production, those who do, seem to realise a good profit²⁷⁸. An old Kamba potter²⁷⁹ pointed out that only 8 of a total of 80 women who know how to mould pots in Mukoyoni, Kangundo Division, were still practising the craft in 1995. This reflects that with the growth of alternative income-earning activities in an area, like export oriented horticultural production in Kangundo, potters tend to abandon their craft in favour of a more prestigious and lucrative activity.

Picture 5: *Kamba cooking pot*



The data and information compiled by BARBOUR and WANDIBBA, as summarised in Table 11, shall serve as a first step towards the creation of a country profile of the potter's craft in Kenya.

²⁷⁸ Personal statement of Josephine M. of Kangundo (16.9.95)

²⁷⁹ Louis N. of Kangundo (16.9.95)

Table 11: Profile of the traditional potter's craft in Kenya, an ethnic selection

Ethnic group		Luo	Maragoli	Bukusu	Kamba	Kikuyu	Meru	Swahili	Adavida	Embu	Dorobo	Endo	Il Chamus	Pokot	Okiek	Somali
Language family	Bantus		X	X	X	X	X		X	X						
	Nilotes	X									X	X	X	X	X	
	Cushites															X
	Others							X								
Economic profile	Subsistence Agriculture	X			X	X			X		X	X	X	X	X	
	Cash Crop Production	X			X	X			X							
	Small Livestock Holding	X			X	X					X	X			X	
	Semi Pastoralists												X			
	Pastoralists													X		
	Fisher	X						X								
	traditional Hunters and Gathers				X						X					
	Traders				X	X										
Gender of the active potter	women	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	
	men															X
	predominantly women & few men		X	X								X				
Craft lineage	matrilinear	X	X		X	X		X	X		X		X	X		
	patrilinear	X														X
Profile of the potter's craft	flourishing	X	X	X												
	surviving				X	X	X	X	X							
	facing extinction									X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Production output of the potters	very high	X	X	X												
	high				X	X		X								
	low						X		X	X						X
	very low										X	X	X	X	X	
Organisational status of the potters	individuals	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	groups	X	X					X								
	families		X	X					X							

Table 11: Profile of the traditional potter's craft continued

Ethnic group		Luo	Maragoli	Bukusu	Kamba	Kikuyu	Meru	Swahili	Adavida	Embu	Dorobo	Endo	Il Chamus	Pokot	Okiek	Somali
Pottery items being produced	cooking pots	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	storage containers	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	pots used for fetching water	X	X	X		X					X					
	honey pots										X	X			X	
	brewing pots	X	X	X					X		X	X		X	X	
	serving and eating dishes	X	X					X			X				X	
	grinding pots / mortars							X			X				X	
	medicine pots				X						X	X		X	X	X
	ritual & religious pots	X		X							X	X		X		
	dolls and little sculptures													X		
	blacksmith's tuyeres	X				X								X		
	pipes	X									X				X	
	others	X	X	X				X			X			X		X
	Production place	home	X	X	X	X	X					X	X	X		X
shady place within or just outside the homestead		X	X		X	X					X	X			X	
Rock shelter / Cave									X					X		
Hidden place away from human habitation							X		X							
Market outlets and trading places	local markets	X	X	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X		X
	at home	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	by advanced order	X	X	X					X			X				X
	to wholes sale trading	X	X	X				X								
	at urban centres	X	X	X		X		X			X			X		X
	all over Kenya	X	X	X												

Source: BARBOUR & WANDIBBA (1989) ›Kenyan Pots and Potters‹

It provides data with regard to the nature of the traditional society which the potters were part of, the dominant gender among the potters, the current performance of the craft as portrayed by BARBOUR and WANDIBBA and the level of production by ethnic

groups, the craft lineage, product range and nature of pots being made as well as the place of production and distribution of the same.

According to the records compiled by BARBOUR and WANDIBBA, in 1989, pottery has traditionally been carried out by women all over Kenya with only a few exceptions among some Luyia and Endo groups where individual men attend to pottery alongside women. While traditionally men were often barred from any involvement in the craft by customary beliefs Jemima A., an old Luo potter, attributed the fact that men did not engage in pottery to the perception that pottery production was neither financially nor socially rewarding²⁸⁰. However, those Luo men who did engage in the craft like Silvanus Owiti, Silvanus N. or Kilimesh K., made it clear that they did not belong to the same peer group as their female counterparts, as they were applying other techniques and producing items suited to ›modern tastes‹. According to Kilimesh K., only 14 men of the Katuola Clan residing at Karachuonyo in Nyanza Province know how to mould but have either grown old or given up the craft in favour of another occupation, while all female members of the clan are considered to be knowledgeable in pot-making. Kilimesh K., proud of his work, stressed that he even knows how to mould the traditional pots and that he has taught not only men but also many women – under the umbrella of the Maendeleo Movement. When asked what type of techniques and designs he taught the women, one of his wives answered for him and said that they were taught how to mould water pots, cooking pots, serving dishes etc. while he added that he had taught the men how to make pipes, tea pots, cups and saucers etc. As mentioned before, Kilimesh K. emphasised that there is a distinct difference between the work of women and men »*Tich machuo otiyo mon ok ti – tich marmon otiyo chuo ok ti!*«²⁸¹ In Kenya it is a quite common feature to find male potters emphasising that the work they do is too difficult for a female potter. According to his own perception, Kilimesh K., for example, stressed that higher technical skills are required to mould tea pots, cups and saucers than those applied while moulding traditional pots. He further emphasised that moulding teapots etc. was a very time consuming task and therefore inadequate for women to attend to since they are too heavily burdened with domestic duties. Similar attitudes have been recorded in the course of my fieldwork among young male Luyia potters who think of themselves as superior to their female peers.

As demonstrated in Table 12, the DSDO inquiry portrays a gender specific craft division in 1995 with pottery, Kiondo weaving, basketry and weaving being perceived as predominantly women's crafts, while black smithing, wood carving and stone carving are clearly dominated by men.

²⁸⁰ In the 1990s, however, Jemima, said that she would not prevent her son from becoming a potter because she has discovered that pottery ware can generate as much income as many other jobs conducted outside the home area.

²⁸¹ Personal statement of Kilimesh K. (8.11.95) that can be translated to: ›The work carried out by a man can not be done by a women and the work of women can not be done by men.‹

Table 12: Prevailing sex of the active craftsperson by 48 districts, 1995

<i>Craft</i>	<i>Prevailing sex of the active craftsperson by no. of districts</i>				
	female	male	female and male	not stated	no entries
Pottery	24	1	7	5	11
Basketry	19	2	6	10	11
Sisal ropes	5	9	9	14	11
Black smithing	0	23	2	13	11
Weaving	17	1	8	11	11
Wood carving	1	23	1	12	11
Stone carving	1	11	1	24	11
Kiondo weaving	23	0	0	14	11
Other handicrafts	7	1	6	23	11
<i>Sum</i>	<i>97</i>	<i>71</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>126</i>	<i>11</i>

Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

In the 1960s and 1970s, FOSTER (1978) studied the relationship of traditional societies and technological change. He in fact has correlated innovative tendencies with occupation and geographic mobility and argued that compared to other workers, such as farmers, fishermen and labourers, potters are the least political, travelled, literate and least well-housed²⁸². The first impression of Kenya's pottery scene seems to support FOSTER's observations: traditional potters often belong to the disadvantaged members of Kenya's society such as women without other employment options, widows and women who are left behind by their husbands who migrated from their rural homes to look for more rewarding employment opportunities in the cities or industrialised establishments of the country. While FOSTER's description fits most traditional potters in Kenya, new innovations have been and continuously are introduced and boosted by migrants and immigrants, those who have lived a urban life for some time before settling in the rural area, or by traders, wholesalers and their suppliers who mediate the demand of their customers. These innovation agents disclose new designs, techniques and demands on the society and order, for example, *jikos*, flower pots, ashtrays, vases and candlesticks. With the extension of their market gearing, some potters too started moving to town and explored new work conditions and environments. Today, Kenya's potter's craft accommodates various types of craftspeople, women and men, and therein reflects the multi-cultural set-up of Kenya's society.

²⁸² Also see NANGENDO (1984:56)



Data Source: DSDO inquiry and own research findings, 1995/96

Angela Langenkamp 11/1997

9.1.1 *Migration, diffusion and contemporary set-up of the craft*

Migration movements are the result of social and economic changes within a region or society of which the forced labour migration during the colonial era is only one example. The migration of potters from their rural homes to the villages or urban centres and the emerging new type of craftsman who's involvement in the craft is not necessarily rooted in his own family or clan customs, indicates new developments, new structural and regional compositions of the potter's trade, which in turn reflect changing socio-cultural and economic values attached to the craft.

Studying Kenya's material culture one comes across a rich collection of pottery items. Their regional dissemination reflects socio-cultural interactions and migration patterns not only of ancient societies but also of present day movements and population structures.

By comparing the ethnic distribution in Kenya before the colonial land-reform and the emerging ›industrialisation‹ of Kenya's economy, as portrayed in Map 3, with the data obtained from the DSDOs in 1995, Map 5, we gain an idea of the diffusion of the potter's craft over time and how to amend the prevailing understanding of the regional distribution and intensity of the potter's craft in Kenya as portrayed by scholars in the late 1980s.

While the Luo of Kenya originate from the Lake Basin region in western Kenya, Luo potters have spread out to the North and the East and were reported to work in 11 districts spread over the following four provinces: Nyanza, Central, Rift Valley and Eastern, in 1995. Similarly, potters of Luyia origin reportedly diffused shifting slightly from their home in Western Province to the North and East into neighbouring parts of Central and Rift Valley Province, thereby being present in a total of 7 districts.

While the Kamba potters are to be found in 6 districts in central and eastern parts of the country, namely in Eastern, Coast and Rift Valley Province, the presence of Kikuyu potters was only reported in 4 districts in central parts of Rift Valley and Central Province. Potters of other ethnic origin, as stated in Table 13, operate in an even smaller geographical radius.

Table 13 provides detailed information on the ethnic composition and distribution of Kenya's contemporary potter's trade in correlation with the activity profile of the craft as perceived by the DSDOs in 1995.

Taking a look at the ethnic origin of the active potters in the districts and the activity profile of the craft as per DSDO inquiry, we will find that the Luo potters are extremely successful, followed by the performance of Kamba and Luyia potters while the craft among the Kikuyu, who once traded their pots with neighbouring communities²⁸³, shows little signs of prosperity.

²⁸³ During the late 1980's Kikuyus reportedly traded their pots with Kikuyu, Kamba, Meru and Maasai people. According to BROWN (1989:88) »A potter is said to produce, on average, forty to sixty pots a month and potting produces a better source of cash income for women than the sale of farm produce. Potters are notorious for selling all their good pots and using only cracked and discarded pots in their own households.« – Also see HERRMANN (1988)

Table 13: Prevailing ethnic origin of the active potters in relation to the intensity and development of the craft in the districts as perceived by the DSDOs in 1995

<i>Ethnic origin of the potter in the district</i>		<i>Potters of stated ethnic origin in no. of</i>		<i>Activity profile of the potter's craft by no. of districts</i>						
<i>Ethnic group</i>	<i>Ethnic family</i>	<i>Districts</i>	<i>Provinces</i>	<i>Intensity of the craft</i>				<i>Development of the craft</i>		
				<i>very high</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>very low</i>	<i>flourishing</i>	<i>stable</i>	<i>diminishing</i>
Luo	River Lake Nilotes	11	4	3	3	4	1	4	2	3
Luyia	Western Bantu	8	3	3	1	3	1	1	2	4
Kalenjin	Highland Nilotes	7	1		2	2	3	2		2
Kamba	Central Bantu	6	3	1	4	1		3	3	
Kikuyu	Central Bantu	4	2		2	1	1	2	1	1
Teso	Plains Nilotes	2	1	1	1		1			2
Mbere	Central Bantu	2	1		1	1			2	
Meru	Central Bantu	2	1	1		1			1	1
Embu	Central Bantu	1	1		1				1	
Tharaka	Central Bantu	1	1			1			1	
Digo	Coastal Hinterland Bantu	1	1			1				1
Duruma	Coastal Hinterland Bantu	1	1			1				1
Mijikenda	Coastal Hinterland Bantu	1	1		1				1	
Pokomo	Coastal Hinterland Bantu	1	1			1			1	
Arab	Arab	1	1				1	1		

Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

This is most easily attributed to the colonial history of the Kikuyu and their vigorous involvement in other more rewarding economic activities. In the seven districts where Kalenjin are among the active potters the intensity of the potter's craft is low to very low and further declining in 5 districts, whereas it is high and flourishing in those two districts where potters of different ethnic origin attend to the craft. For example, in Nandi District the DSDO reported of Kalenjin and Luo people being involved in pot-making, and in Laikipia District, Kalenjin, Kamba and Kikuyu potters supply the local demand. So, the conclusion that the Kalenjin are not the thriving force among the potters in the latter two districts is inevitable. A similar picture emerges for the Teso

pottery in western Kenya. Where Teso work alongside with Luyia potters in the same district, the activity profile of the craft is said to be high but on the decline. The same applies to the potter's craft of the Meru people while pottery activities among the Mbere, Embu and Mijikenda are said to be stable with a low turnover. The performance of the potter's craft among the remaining ethnic groups, namely the Nandi, Tharaka, Digo, Duruma, Pokomo and Arab people from Lamu is deemed to be poor, with low intensity and with an overall declining tendency evident in 1995.

A look at the Kamba customs provides us with an idea as to why the potter's craft among the Kamba apparently could not achieve the same growth rates as the Luo and Luyia pottery. Traditionally the manufacture of pots among the Kamba and Meru of Kenya²⁸⁴ was considered and believed to be a rather remarkable power, while the excavation of clay and pot-making itself was believed to have a devastating effect on agriculture. Therefore, no pot was to be made during the months of December to March since it was believed that making pots from the soil in which cow-peas, gourds and pumpkin were growing would cause the ripening fruits to rot on their stalks. Even the pot as such was heavily burdened with taboos connected with the production and function of pottery in Kamba society. No one could dare steal pots from the potter for fear of being destroyed by her magic (LINDBLOM 1920:540). Unlike scholars who observed and reported the existence of a number of taboos connected to Kamba pottery, such as LINDBLOM (1920), GILL (1981) and BROWN (1989), NANGENDO (1984:6) went a step further in describing these taboos as the major governing factors behind the moderate development of the potter's craft among the Kamba people of Kenya. However, another determining factor might be that pottery, especially during the 1980s, has proved economically less rewarding than cash crop production or Kiondo weaving, a handicraft activity widely spread among Kamba women with Kiondos commanding a rather high market share among the exported Kenya handicrafts (see Table 8 and 10).

Like pottery most of the other craft activities are not equally distributed over Kenya but experience regional concentrations. Table 14 and 16 reflects the intensity and the economic potential of various crafts in the districts²⁸⁵ as perceived by the DSDOs in 1995. Besides a number of handicrafts I added two ›modern‹ crafts, namely carpentry and tailoring, to the inquiry with a view to comparing their economic potentialities as perceived by the DSDOs. The table shows that the economic potential of carpentry and tailoring country wide is seen as very high, while the economic potential of the handicrafts deviates tremendously from district to district. Table 20, furthermore, shows that a high intensity of the activity does not necessarily result in high economic esteem of the craft and vice versa.

²⁸⁴ For more details on Meru pottery see Chapter 10.3

²⁸⁵ The tables reflect only those districts of which detailed information was made available, those of which the DSDOs did not fill and return the questionnaire are therefore not mentioned.

Table 14: Intensity of the craft activities in no. and % of districts

Craft	Intensity of the craft activity in the district by no. and % of districts										
	Very high		High		low		Very low		No entry		Q. not returned
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Pottery	7	15	10	21	8	17	8	17	4	8	11
Basketry	9	19	12	25	8	17	0	0	8	17	11
Sisal rope production	6	13	10	21	5	10	5	10	11	23	11
Black smithing	3	6	10	21	11	23	7	15	6	13	11
Weaving	5	10	11	23	7	15	4	8	10	21	11
Wood Carving	4	8	12	25	7	15	6	13	8	17	11
Gourds	4	8	15	30	8	17	7	15	3	6	11
Leather work	2	4	13	27	11	23	6	13	5	10	11
Stone carving	1	2	3	6	6	13	8	17	19	40	11
Kiondo weaving	3	6	12	25	7	15	7	15	8	17	11
Stools	5	8	12	25	11	23	5	10	5	10	11
Others	5	8	3	6	3	6	1	2	25	52	11

Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

The entries of Table 16 (see page 176) are sorted according to the intensity of the potter's craft at district level – descending from very high to very low (activity profile), followed by the economic potential of the craft and its development as perceived by the DSDOs in 1995.

The symbols used in Table 15, Table 16 and Table 17 are explained below.

<i>Sex of the potter</i>	<i>Intensity of the craft / Activity profile</i>	<i>Economic potential</i>	<i>Development</i>
f female	● very high	↑ very high	✿ flourishing
m male	◐ high	↑ high	✓ stable
f/m female and male	○ low	△ fair	↘ diminishing
	very low	↓ low	† dying
		↓ very low	

Table 15: Profile of the potter's craft according to the perception of the DSDOs

Regional Location		Potter's Craft Profile			
Province	Districts	Sex of potter	Activity profile	Economic potential	Development
Nyanza	Kisumu	f	●	↑	☼
Nyanza	Homa Bay	f	●	↑	☼
Western	Kakamega	f	●	↑	☼
Eastern	Makueni	f	●	↑	✓
Western	Vihiga	f	●	↑	✓
Western	Bungoma	f/m	●	↑	☼
Eastern	Meru	f/m	●	↑	☼
Coast	Kilifi	f/m	◐	↑	✓
Eastern	Mwingi	f	◐	↑	☼
Rift Valley	Nandi	f	◐	↑	☼
Rift Valley	Laikipia		◐	↑	☼
Nyanza	Migori	f	◐	↑	☼
Nyanza	Siaya	f	◐	↗	☼
Central	Muranga	f/m	◐	↑	✓
Western	Busia	f	◐	↑	☼
Eastern	Kitui	f	◐	↗	☼
Eastern	Embu	f	◐	↗	✓
Central	Nyandarua	f	○	↑	
Eastern	Tharaka Nithi	f	○	↑	✓
Rift Valley	Uasin Gishu		○	↑	☼
Rift Valley	Trans Nzoia	f	○	↗	✓
Rift Valley	Bomet	f	○	↗	☼
Coast	Kwale	f	○	↗	☼
Coast	Tana River	f	○	↓	✓
Rift Valley	Kericho	f/m	○	↓	☼
Central	Kirinyaga	f			☼
Coast	Lamu				☼
Rift Valley	Baringo	f			
Rift Valley	Samburu	m		↑	☼
Rift Valley	West Pokot	f		↓	
Western	Mt. Elgon	f		↓	☼
Rift Valley	Nakuru	f		↓	☼
North Eastern	Wajir	f/m		↓	†
Rift Valley	Kajiado				
Rift Valley	Narok			↓	✓
Rift Valley	Turkana				

Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

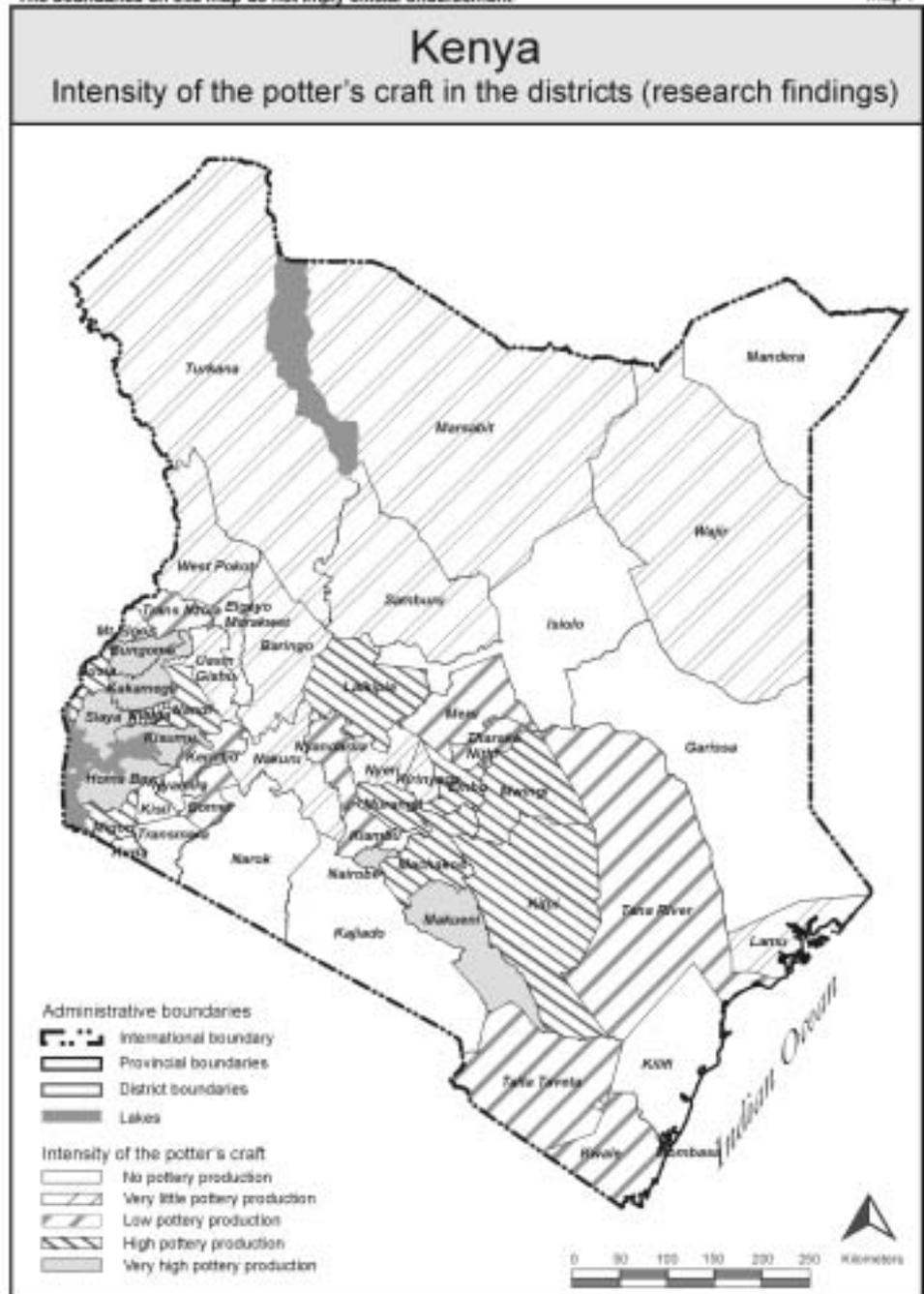
Table 16: Intensity and economic potential of the crafts as perceived by the DSDOs

Province	District	Pottery		Basketry		Sisal rope product.		Black smithing		Weaving		Wood carving	
		▮	↑	▮	↑	○	↓	▮	↓	○	↑	▮	↓
Central	Muranga	▮	↑	▮	↑	○	↓		↓				↓
Central	Nyandarua	○	↑						↑	○	↑		
Central	Kirinyaga												
Rift Valley	Nakuru		↓	○	↓	○	↓	▮	↑	○	▮	○	↓
Rift Valley	Baringo			○	↓	●	↑	●				▮	↑
Rift Valley	Narok		↓		↓		↓	▮	↓		↓		↓
Rift Valley	Bomet	○	▮	○	▮		↓		↓		↓	○	↑
Rift Valley	Kericho	○	↓	▮	▮	●	↑	▮	↑				
Rift Valley	Nandi	▮	↑	○	▮	▮		▮	↑	▮		▮	
Rift Valley	Uasin Gishu	○	↑	○	↑		↑		↓		↓	○	↓
Rift Valley	Trans Nzoia	○	▮	○	▮		↓	▮	↑		↓		
Rift Valley	West Pokot		↓					●	↑			●	↑
Rift Valley	Kajiado							○	▮				
Rift Valley	Samburu		↑					▮	↑			▮	↑
Rift Valley	Laikipia	▮	↑					▮	↑	▮	↑	▮	↑
Rift Valley	Turkana			●	↑			○	▮	○		▮	↑
Nyanza	Kisumu	●	↑	●	↑	▮	↑		↓	▮	↑	▮	↓
Nyanza	Siaya	▮	▮	▮	▮	●	↑	○	↓	▮	▮	○	↓
Nyanza	Kisii			○	↓								
Nyanza	Migori	▮	↑	▮	↑	○	▮	○	▮	▮	↑		↓
Nyanza	Homa Bay	●	↑	▮	↑	●	↑		↑	▮	↑		▮
Western	Kakamega	●	↑	●	↑	●	↑		▮	○	↓		↓
Western	Vihiga	●	↑	●	↑	▮	▮						↓
Western	Busia	▮	↑	●	▮		↓	○	↓	▮	↑		↑
Western	Bungoma	●	↑	▮	↑	▮	↑	▮	▮	○	↑	○	▮
Western	Mt. Elgon		↓	○	▮	○	↓	○	↓			▮	▮
North Eastern	Wajir		↓	▮	▮		↓	○	↓	●	↑	▮	▮
Eastern	Embu	▮	▮	▮	▮	○	↑		↓	○	▮		↓
Eastern	Tharaka Nithi	○	↑	▮	↑	▮	↑	○	▮	○	▮	○	▮
Eastern	Meru	●	↑	▮	▮	▮	↑		↓	●	↑	○	↓
Eastern	Kitui	▮	▮	▮	▮	▮	↓	●	▮	▮	▮	▮	▮
Eastern	Mwingi	▮	↑	●	↑	▮	↑	○	↓	●	↑	▮	↑
Eastern	Machakos												
Eastern	Makueni	●	↑	●	↑	●	↑	○	↓	▮	↑	●	↑
Coast	Kwale	○	▮	●	↑	▮	↓	▮	↓	●		▮	↑
Coast	Kilifi	▮	↑	▮	↑	▮	▮	▮	↑	▮	↑	●	▮
Coast	Tana River	○	↓	●	↑		↓	○	▮	●	↑	▮	▮
Coast	Lamu									▮	↑	●	↑

Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

Table 16: Intensity and economic potential of the crafts continued

Province	District	Gourds		Leather work		Stone carving		Kiondo weaving		Stools		Carpentry	Tailoring
		○	◐	◑	◒	◓	◔	◕	◖	◗	◘		
Central	Muranga	○		◑	◒			◕	◖	○	◘	◒	◒
Central	Nyandarua				◒			○	◒			◒	◒
Central	Kirinyaga							◑	◒				
Rift Valley	Nakuru		◘	◑	◒		◘	○	◒	◑	◒	◒	
Rift Valley	Baringo	◕	◒	◑	◒		◘	◑	◒	◒	◒	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Narok		◘	○	◘		◘		◘		◘	◘	◘
Rift Valley	Bomet	◑	◒	◑	◒					◑	◒	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Kericho	◑	◒	◑	◒	○			◘	○		◒	◒
Rift Valley	Nandi	◕	◒	◑		◑		◑		◑	◒	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Uasin Gishu	◑	◘		◒	○	◘	○	◒		◘	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Trans Nzoia	◑	◒	○	◒			○	◒	◕		◒	◒
Rift Valley	West Pokot	◕	◒	◑	◒					◕	◒	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Kajiado	◑		○							◒	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Samburu	◑	◒									◒	◒
Rift Valley	Laikipia	◑	◒	◑	◒			◑	◒	◑	◒	◒	◒
Rift Valley	Turkana	◑	◒		◒			◒	◒	◑	◒	◒	◒
Nyanza	Kisumu	◑	◘		◒	○	◘	◑	◒	○		◒	◒
Nyanza	Siaya			◑	◒					◑	◒	◒	◒
Nyanza	Kisii					◕	◒			○	◘		
Nyanza	Migori	○	◘	◑	◒		◘	◑	◒	◑	◒	◒	◒
Nyanza	Homa Bay	○	◒		◒		◒	◒	◒	◕	◒		◒
Western	Kakamega	○	◘	○	◒	○	◘		◘	○	◒	◒	◒
Western	Vihiga	○	◒	○	◒		◘		◘	◕	◒	◒	◒
Western	Busia		◒					○	◒	○	◒	◒	◘
Western	Bungoma	◑	◒	○	◒	○	◒	◑	◒	◑	◒	◒	◒
Western	Mt. Elgon	◑	◒		◘				◘	◑	◘	◒	◒
North Eastern	Wajir	○	◘	○	◘		◘		◘	○		◒	◒
Eastern	Embu		◘	◑			◘	◑	◒		◘	◒	◒
Eastern	Tharaka Nithi	○	◒	○	◒		◘	◑	◒	○	◒	◒	◒
Eastern	Meru	◑	◒	◕	◒		◘	◑	◒	○	◘	◒	◒
Eastern	Kitui	◑	◒	○	◒			◑	◒	○	◒	◒	◒
Eastern	Mwingi	○	◘	◑	◒	○	◘	◕	◒	◑	◒	◒	◒
Eastern	Makueni	◕	◒	◕	◒	◑	◒	◕	◒	◕	◒	◒	◒
Coast	Kwale	◑	◒	○	◒	◑	◒	◑	◒	○	◘	◒	◒
Coast	Kilifi	◑	◘	◑	◒		◒	○	◒	◑		◒	◒
Coast	Tana River		◘	○	◘			○	◒			◘	◒
Coast	Lamu												



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9.2 Diversification and economic growth of the potter's craft in Kenya

Since the 1950's women have been advised to team up and form groups in order to gain public recognition, to contribute to the overall development and to be eligible for financial and technical assistance. Thus the first publicly recognised pottery women's groups were founded and supported by homecraft officers and members of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Clubs during colonial times.

In a letter (Oct. 1956) to the Community Development Officer (CDO) in Maseno, the District Commissioner for Central Nyanza expressed his interest in setting up a small pottery as a pilot scheme on the same lines as the Kangemi pottery. To this the CDO Maseno replied »during my tour of North Nyanza I was shown many examples of pottery made by women of the Maendeleo ya Wanawake Clubs. I was given a present of a flower bowl. From my enquiring I gathered that pottery making is essentially a woman's concern and the men are not interested. There is a fair amount of pottery made by women in Central Nyanza but it is not of a high standard. With regard to your suggestion that it would be a good thing to get a European woman to take interest I agree and I think the woman should be a Community Development Officer (W). One of our CDOs (W), Ms. Belcher, is engaged full time in supervising two pottery co-operatives in Kiambu and could possibly be made available to give advise on pottery making or, alternatively a Maendeleo Club leader and two or three chosen women could possibly be given a course at Kabete on attachment. A fair amount of capital is required for buildings and equipment and if a scheme of this sort was started here it would have to be subsidised. In the case of the Kiambu African District Council, for example, a loan of 500 pounds was produced. The African District Council here has a soft spot for the Maendeleo Clubs and is responsible for them financially so I am sure the right way to tackle this is through the Maendeleo Clubs. If you agree with me than the best chance of success is by classifying this as a Maendeleo Club activity and to work up to commercial standards by gradually introducing Kangemi techniques and for the work to be supervised by the CDO (W) then I can suggest that one of the new CDOs (W) be given an opportunity of studying the Kangemi project before she comes here« (KNA: DC/KSM/1/32/7).

Though no remains can be found and no impact traced of the early attempts to foster pottery production during the 1950s the work of the Maendeleo Clubs has prospered and pottery has remained a popular activity among women's groups in Kenya. With a total of 148 registered women's groups attending to pottery production as their main activity in 1991, pottery still ranks No. 5 out of 16 defined handicraft activities assessed during the census on women's groups activities in Kenya as shown earlier in Graph 2.

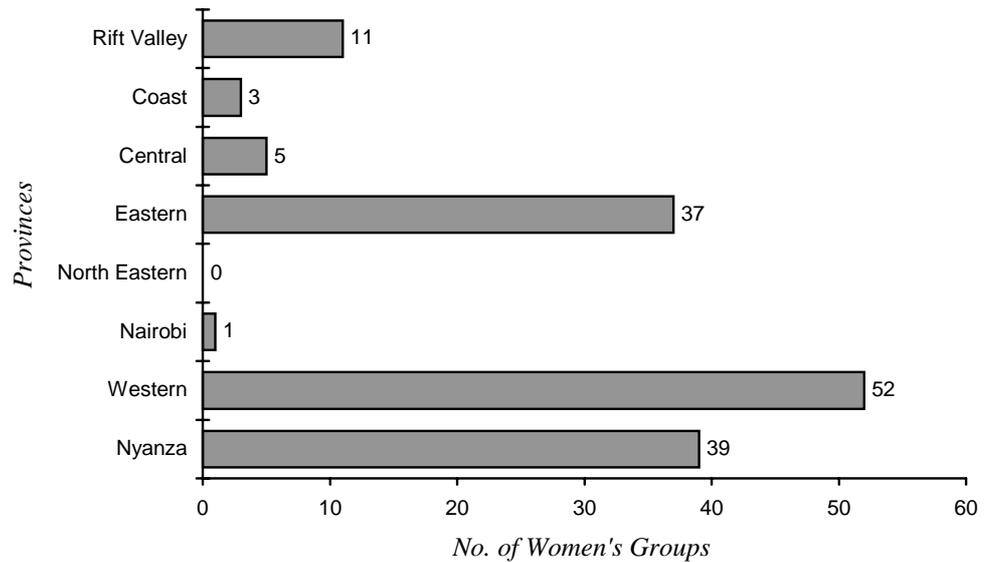
Table 17 and Graph 3 reflect the regional distribution of the above mentioned 148 women's groups with their majority being recorded in Western, Nyanza and Eastern Province where Luyia, Luo and Kamba people dominate the craft respectively.

Table 17: ›Ceramics‹ stated as major activity by women's groups in Kenya by Province and No. of groups

Activity	Province							
	Nyanza	Western	Nairobi	North Eastern	Eastern	Central	Coast	Rift Valley
Ceramics	39	52	1	0	37	5	3	11

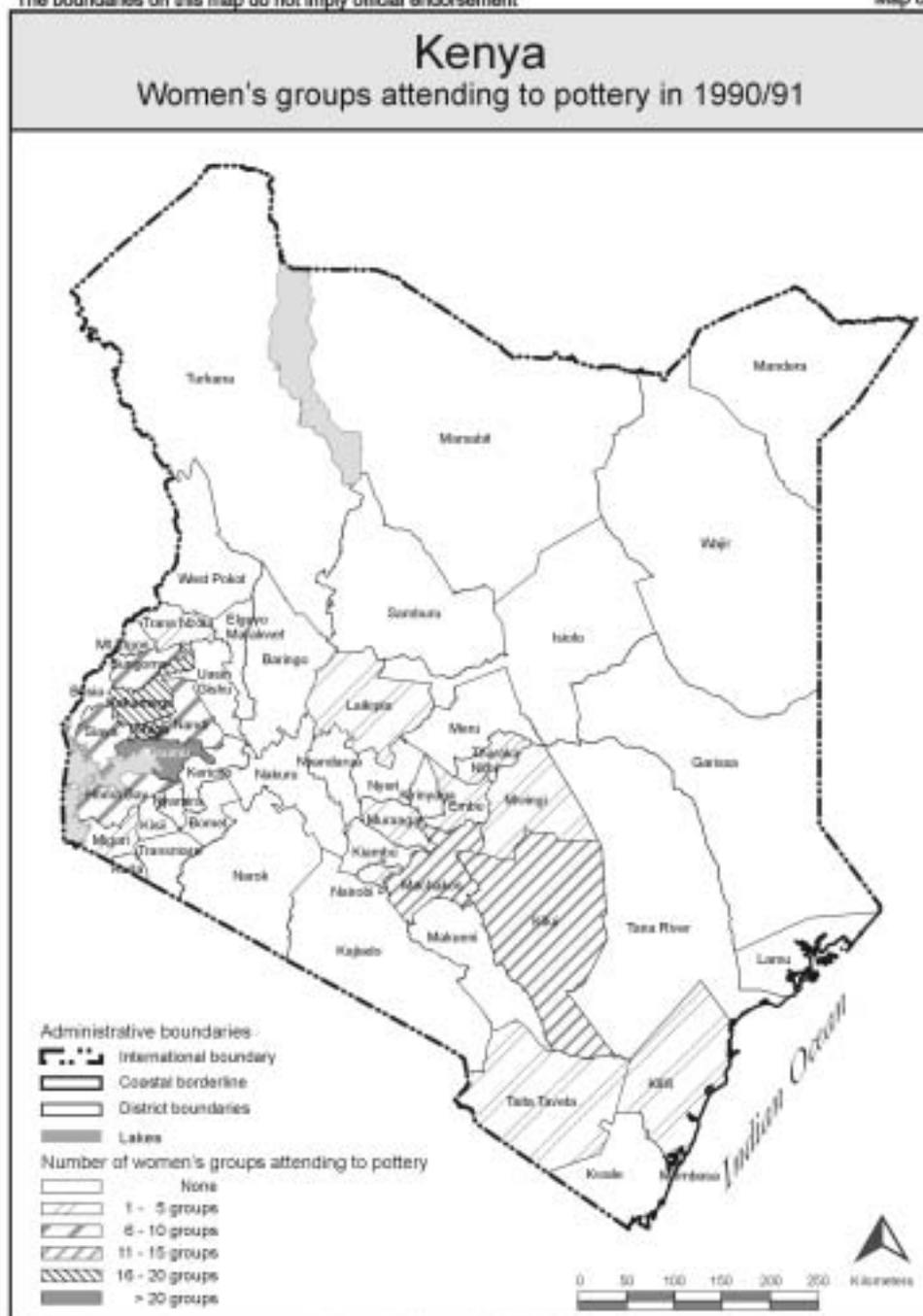
Source: Women's Bureau, ›Development on the Status of Women‹, 1990/91

Graph 3: No. of Women's Groups stating ›Ceramics‹ as their major Activity, by Province



Since the group approach did not emerge from a commonly felt need as outlined in Chapter 6.3 but was introduced as an instrument of development; it is not surprising that a women's group often was not, or even today is not, more than an artificial umbrella for a number of individuals who would only come together where ministry extension officers or development workers would intervene and address them on regular basis, or where a collective display of their products would accomplish a favourable market performance and sale.

The women's group approach will further be studied and critically reflected as we take a closer look at the development of the potter's craft among the Luo of Kenya and particularly the history of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group in Chapter 11.

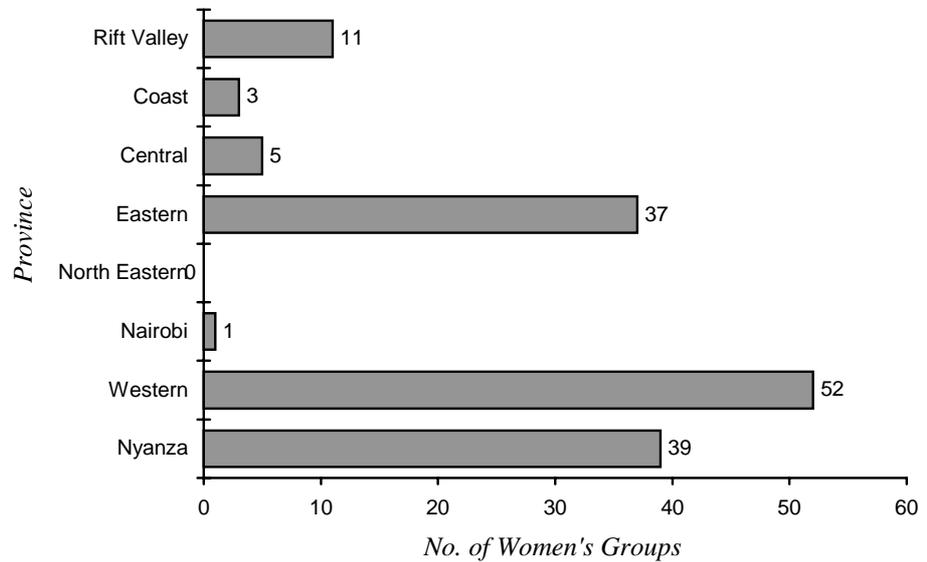


Data Source: 'Development on the Status of Women', GcK, 1990/91

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According to the perception of the DSDOs, representing 36 districts, potters mainly work on an individual basis or attend to the craft in a group setting²⁸⁶. As seen in the graph below, potters rarely advanced their organisational status to the extent of seeking registration as a co-operative, a commercial company or as a society/association.

Graph 4: Predominant organisational status of the potters in the districts as perceived by the DSDOs



Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

Despite all early attempts to foster the potter’s craft in Kenya, the sector did not experience any major growth until the late 1980s / early 1990s when more and more potters started to migrate to Nairobi. Nairobi’s urban market, however, mirrors an international community with multiple demands arising. More flexibility is required in order to meet the trend of town, the fashion styles: flower pots, decorative articles and souvenirs for the tourists. Traditional pottery is >pepped up< to look more attractive; the round-bottomed traditional pot design is consequently been altered to fit the >modern home<. However, these changes to the demand structure materialise far away from the rural community, which is the sphere of socialisation for most female potters. Instead, young entrepreneurial men, who got involved with jiko production or were just >tarmac-ing<²⁸⁷ and searching for job opportunities in the urban centres,

²⁸⁶ In Malawi RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:73) discovered that potters working on an individual basis seem to be prevailing while it was a widespread practise to work together within informal groups.

²⁸⁷ >tarmac-ing< is a widely used expression in Kenya and describes people on the move walking down the tarmac road in search of a job.

explored and discovered the contemporary urban pottery demand and established informal pottery enterprises in Nairobi's suburban areas. Their big advantage was and still is the ease of direct interactions with urban and overseas customers or those who supply them or support the sector in terms of export promotion. Being able to respond quickly to changing styles and demands they managed to establish viable businesses, it seems.

In the absence of small scale potteries which could satisfy the urban demand for flower pots and planters until the early 1990s, Clayworks Ltd., a brick and tile factory, established a pottery production unit in 1970 under the management of Westomat, a Swiss based company, who had started ›Uganda Clay‹ in Kampala in 1955. The foundation for Clayworks Ltd., first known as Kentiles Ltd., was laid in 1945 by Mr. Suckermann, a Jewish businessman who migrated to Kenya from South Africa at the end of World War II, after which the company changed ownership a number of times. However, in Uganda pottery production had formed an integral part of the initial factory concept and was established under the instruction and with the help of experienced Italian potters who trained African men. Among those trained were some Luo from Kenya who had gone to Uganda in the absence of appropriate income opportunities in their home region. In response to Idi Amin's hostile foreign policies not only Asians fled the country but most Kenyans left as well. In 1970 Westomat reacted to the threats and moved part of their business activities to Kenya. The transfer of some Luo potters from Uganda Clay in Kampala to Clayworks Ltd. in Kenya consequently led to the establishment of a small pottery workshop on site²⁸⁸. Despite the fact that the pottery workshop never accounted for any recognisable profits, it was sustained for public relation purposes. Mrs. Gunella²⁸⁹ emphasised that, especially during shows such as the Nairobi International Show, the display and live demonstration of pottery production at the wheel drew a lot of attention to their exhibition stand. It was only after the emergence of urban based small scale pottery industries that Clayworks Ltd. was considering seriously reducing the number of potters or even closing down the pottery production. While the rural based traditional potter's scene is dominated by women; men have always dominated the urban pottery scene. Before Westomat took over the desolate Kentiles Ltd. in 1970, a few Asian potters had supplied the urban market with earthenware products such as planters and water coolers. Today, K.G. Varia is running a small family based pottery enterprise in Mombasa from where he supplies shops in Mombasa, Malindi and even Nairobi. He inherited the business from his father in 1988 and today is still the only pottery enterprise in Mombasa. Meanwhile Asian potters are no longer found anywhere else in the country while some entrepreneurial Kikuyu (men) have explored the field of earthenware production. One of the firsts was Richard K., who started a pottery workshop at Wilson Airport in Nairobi during the late 1970s. After his overseas customers had persistently voiced their demands for earthenware-planters to accompany the macramé plant-hangers he supplied them with, Richard K. invested in a

²⁸⁸ While the brick and tile production provided work for 369 employees (men only) in 1993, the pottery unit only accommodated five potters (men) with their number being further reduced to three in 1995.

²⁸⁹ The wife of Mr. Gunella the main shareholder of Westomat – interviewed on 23.02.97.

pottery workshop, bought potter's wheels, a pugmill and an electric kiln and hired some experienced potters to start with. During the late 1980s and early 1990s Richard K.'s pottery, like Clayworks Ltd., felt the growing competition and was forced to specialise. He separated his former workshop into a jiko production unit and a pottery/ceramic unit, Terra Ltd.. Unlike most Jua Kali pottery entrepreneurs Richard K. was well-established in Nairobi's business community and was soon able to offer a broad range of thrown and hand moulded planters and garden accessories.

Whether at Clayworks Ltd., Terra Ltd. or K.G. Varia, one will find male potters only. Over time it becomes clear that, while a new era in Kenya's pottery history has emerged, more and more men do enter the scene and successfully dominate their women peers in the rural areas, whose living and working environment for the most part has not changed much.

9.2.1 The introduction of ceramic production with the view to creating employment and fostering industries with a local raw material base

The manufacture of crockery was introduced at four different moments in Kenya's history. In the 1950s the Kenya Colony employed a British ceramist to establish training schemes and introduce studio-craft pottery techniques in order to advance rural industries in Kenya. In the 1960s the Ceramic Industry of East Africa Ltd. was established under the banner of fostering industries which are based on locally available raw-materials, such as clay. In the 1970s the GoK, and more so international donor agencies, invested in the establishment of small scale ceramic industries which they hoped would help to ease the ever growing unemployment among Kenya's youth. In the 1990s the private sector discovered the economic potential of ceramics and for the first time invested in small scale ceramic production to satisfy the Kenyan demand for hand made crockery.

First records which prove for certain the introduction of the western style potter's wheel, glaze firing and the use of a kiln, date back to 1953 when Ms. Belcher, a British potter, confronted the African Affairs Officer at Nakuru, the Nakuru County Council and the Commissioner for Community Development with her proposal to establish a pottery training scheme in Njoro. While the proposal was perceived as favourable, no financial assistance could be granted by the colonial administration due to severe budget constraints of the Kenya Colony which had already caused the abolition of the post of RIO. However, the idea flourished in the mind of the people and led to the recruitment of Ms. Belcher under the Welfare and Rehabilitation Programme of the Kenya Colony, Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation, between 1955 and 1958.

While Ms. Belcher's own efforts did not leave a lasting impression on Kenya's craft scene, as the ceramic industries established and supervised by her ceased operation soon after the government's support to the sector was frozen in 1958, the 1960s witnessed a revival of ceramic manufacturing in the country. Answering to the then dominant development policies – ›modernisation and industrialisation‹ – the establishment and promotion of industries with a local raw material base was enhanced. As a result Italian businessmen established ›Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd.‹ the first large scale ceramic manufactory in Nairobi. The production of

ceramic dinner and table ware was limited to ›Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd.‹ for some years before any donor-aided small scale ceramic workshop and training centre opened its doors. The driving force behind the establishment of those training and production workshops was the diversification of the local crafts production towards a broader use of local raw materials, such as clay, and the fight against growing unemployment rates. Established in 1966 with the financial support of the German Christophel Blinden Mission and the technical assistance of a German ceramist, the YMCA Pottery was the first one to offer vocational training to disabled people and unemployed youth who grew up in Nairobi's slums. The next one was to be established with Danish aid and technical expertise at the Kakamega RIDC in 1974. The Kakamega pottery at the KIE compound formed an integral part of the Rural Industries Development Programme, which was launched by the GoK in 1971. »Some areas of Western Province have a long tradition in artisan pottery. In the beginning, the KIE management was of the opinion that these artisans could and should be assisted in order to improve the quality of their products« (BURISCH 1984:223). On assessing the situation the two Danish ceramic experts – a production specialist and a designer – however, found out that the approach was ill-adapted to the needs of the local community as there was no conceivable demand for technically upgraded, better quality pottery in the Western Province households. To reconcile the conflict would take about a year and last until 1975. »Towards the end of 1975, the ceramic team began to establish a small modern pottery in one of the empty factory sheds at the RIDC²⁹⁰. Its products were designed to combine traditional African and Danish patterns catering to the developing tourist market in Western Kenya« (BURISCH, 1984:223). During the same year two more ceramic workshops should be established: one at Kaimosi within close reach of Kakamega and another at the Eastleigh Community Centre in Nairobi. The craft workshops accommodated within the Eastleigh Community Centre, such as the Jitegemea Pottery, were designed to serve as training facilities for the unemployed youth of the Mathare Valley Slum. Between 1975 and 1980 the German Volunteer Service addressed female potters at Kaimosi in Western Kenya with the objective of diversifying the range of production, upgrading their technical and business skills and to actively contributing to the development agenda of the integration of ›women in development‹. Unfortunately this attempt died a swift death after the term of duty of the German ceramic expert came to an end. Pit B., the last volunteer assigned to the Kaimosi pottery, was not very enthusiastic about the performance of the project as he was aware of the difficulties he had left behind: fragile business and management structures, female potters who had nothing in common with the market they supplied and who had a completely different perception of quality and production standards. I shall always remember the story of the tea-set he told me in 1989. While Pit B. emphasised the need to produce 6 identical tea cups for a tea or coffee set ordered – a standard norm in our culture – the women could not understand why a set should comprise of 6 identical sized and shaped cups. According to their own perception and rationality the cups were meant to serve a family in which the father would have big hands, the mother slightly smaller ones and the children

²⁹⁰ According to potters interviewed, who had worked at the KIE-pottery, it ceased operation in the early 1980s.

would need a cup that could comfortably fit their small hands rather than a big cup that would suit their father.

A few years later around 1982/83 a Finnish mission established the ›Kapenguria Home Craft Centre‹ in the disadvantaged north of the Rift Valley where unemployment rates were high. The centre, which offered vocational training in ceramics, tailoring, weaving and spinning, was entirely financed, managed and run by the Finnish mission. By the end of the 1980s the Kapenguria Pottery had gained recognition for its high level of professionalism which would enable even one of their first trainees to become an instructor at the Ceramic Department of the RVIST in 1988²⁹¹. After the departure of the Finnish ceramist in 1990 the Kapenguria Pottery managed to survive for some years until the head of the ceramic department, a Kikuyu, had to flee the area due to ethnic clashes marking the 1992 multiparty election campaign. Following these events the Kapenguria Pottery was to cease operation. However, in 1997 rumours spread that the GoK was willing to become involved in and revive the activities at the centre. In 1996, yet another Rural Training Centre was started by the Nanyuki Diocese. A 26 year old potter, who was trained and had worked at the Jitegemea Pottery between 1990 and 1996, was hired and charged with the responsibility of setting-up and managing the pottery workshop and facilitating vocational training at the newly established centre.

9.2.1.1 Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd. – A large scale industry

Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd. (CIEA) was the first industrial establishment to emphasise large-scale production of ceramic dinner and table ware in Kenya. It was founded by Mr. Maggi (90 % shareholder) and Mr. Gunella (10 % shareholder) during the early 1960s. Due to internal disagreements Gunella, however, withdrew his interest and money and the company was taken over by Maggi. At the time the products of CIEA were highly competitive as they were cheaper than imported China Ware and therefore yielded a good response from the Kenyan market, especially hoteliers etc. In line with the Africanisation Movement of Kenya's industries Maggi would sell the company to the National Investment Corporation during the 1970s. Having been turned into a parastatal the CIEA concentrated on the production of crockery and tiles alone until 1982 when a new production line, sanitary ware, was introduced under the professional guidance of Mike C., a British ceramic engineer. Like most parastatals the CIEA had to live with a corrupt management that was more interested in its own betterment than in the successful running of the company. In the early 1980s the managing director of CIEA, for example, reportedly utilised his connection and the containers coming in from the UK for CIEA to slowly establish his own manufacturing plant ›Porcelain Products‹ which, however, never really took off²⁹². As a result, the once successful CIEA was undergoing receivership during the late 1980s and finally

²⁹¹ This circumstance reflects the severe lack of a skilled and well-qualified teaching force in the field of ceramics. – Also see Chapter 6.

²⁹² Atlantis Ceramics Ltd. manager, Aziz, stated on 24.01.1997 that he bought some equipment from Porcelain Products when the company ceased operation but was not able to purchase much as it was in very poor condition.

privatised and sold to an Indian Business Consortium ›Sulmac‹ that has its Kenya base in Nakuru. ›Sulmac‹, free of any government interventions, managed to re-establish CIEA under a new name ›Ceramic Manufacturers‹ on the market during the 1990s²⁹³.

9.2.1.2 Small and medium scale ceramic manufacturers

By the time Ms. Belcher had closed her own small pottery at Njoro in the late 1950s, private sector activists in Kenya had restrained themselves from any further involvement in the ceramic sector until the 1980s. It was in 1981 that Waithira C., a Kikuyu, was able to secure a scholarship of the British Council to study ceramics in Great Britain. After she had finished college in 1985 Waithira returned to Kenya to team up with Sarah W. at her studio in the close vicinity of Green Acres School. Waithira had been introduced to ceramics during her schooling time at Green Acres School, a British school, where ceramics was taught by Sarah W. until Waithira took over from her. It was, however, to take another five years or so before private entrepreneurs explored the field of ceramics. It was during the early 1990s when Nairobi based workshops such as Kazuri Ltd., Bosmere Ltd., Kinanda Ltd., Terra Ltd. and Atlantis Ceramics Ltd. and the Malindi Pottery at the Coast opted for ceramic production. Apart from Terra Ltd. all the above mentioned workshops were founded by Europeans or ›White Kenyans‹ of European origin, or by Kenyans of Asian origin who had no expertise in ceramic production but as business people had discovered the growing market value of glazed pottery ware in Kenya. Not surprisingly, their best customers are ›White Kenyans‹, expatriates, Asians, hotels and restaurants.

9.2.1.3 Retrospective of almost 50 years of ceramic production in Kenya

Taking into account the numerous attempts to establish ceramic production in rural areas under the umbrella of community development or church based vocational training institutions, it can be said that the project designs were neither tailored to the needs, priorities and abilities of the target group or the labour market, and ill-adapted to the local markets. High transportation costs moreover jeopardised their competitiveness at urban and external markets, which further diminished with the emergence of an urban based private sector ceramic scene. The success of the latter can be attributed to their comparative advantages of being capable of benefiting from an industrial infrastructure in place and from being close to the predominantly commercial and urban based customers, such as hotels etc.

9.2.2 *The jiko liner production and emergence of an urban Jua Kali pottery enterprise culture – a gender bias set-up*

To understand the contemporary set-up of the potter's craft in Kenya one has to take a close look at the history and development of the Kenya Ceramic Jiko (KCJ) and the

²⁹³ Apart from ›Ceramic Manufactories Ltd.‹ only two other companies, namely ›Sai Enterprises Ltd.‹ and ›Doshi Ceramics Ltd.‹, have started to produce wall and floor tiles on a large scale in Nairobi.

Maendeleo Jiko or renamed UPESI Jiko which were developed and introduced during the 1980s.

The development and production of improved cooking stoves in Kenya was a result of the growing international awareness that the energy demand was on the increase globally while the conventional resources were either becoming scarce or hazardous for the environment. The oil crises of the 1970s instigated the search for alternatives to petroleum products on the one hand and methods to reduce the overall energy consumption on a global base. During the 1970s and early 1980s it was assumed that the use of biomass fuels was the main cause of the deforestation that threatened large areas of Africa, Asia and South America. As a result, many governments and development agencies started to develop and introduce improved cooking stoves that burn fuel more efficiently. And so did Kenya: rural fuel surveys and research on the design of improved stoves started at the then Kenyatta College under the Department of Physics as early as 1976. Some years later, in August 1981, Kenya was to host the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy (UNCNRSE). In order to co-ordinate the participation and input of over 60 organisations working on renewable energy in Kenya, the Kenya Energy and Environment Organisation (KENGO) was created. The felt need to establish an umbrella organisation which could ensure a meaningful and co-ordinated approach of the many NGOs and government agencies to the sector led to the consolidation of KENGO and its official registration in 1982. In response to the conference the Kenya Renewable Energy Development Project (KREDP), a bilateral project between the USA and the Government of Kenya/Ministry of Energy and Regional Development, was launched during the same year. While the project commanded a total budget of US \$ 6.5 million, the improved cooking stove activity only formed a modest component of the project with a budget allocation of US \$ 160,000 over a period of 4 years or 3 % of the total budget. A year later another bilateral project, the Special Energy Programme (SEP), was initiated by the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of Kenya, Ministry of Energy and Regional Development, with a special ›Women and Energy‹ component. Since KREDP was already concentrating on the development of an energy efficient charcoal stove, the SEP explored the field of appropriate wood-fuel stoves for the rural area. In both cases clay seemed to be the appropriate medium as it could be formed according to the specifications required and had excellent heat storing and insulating abilities once fired.

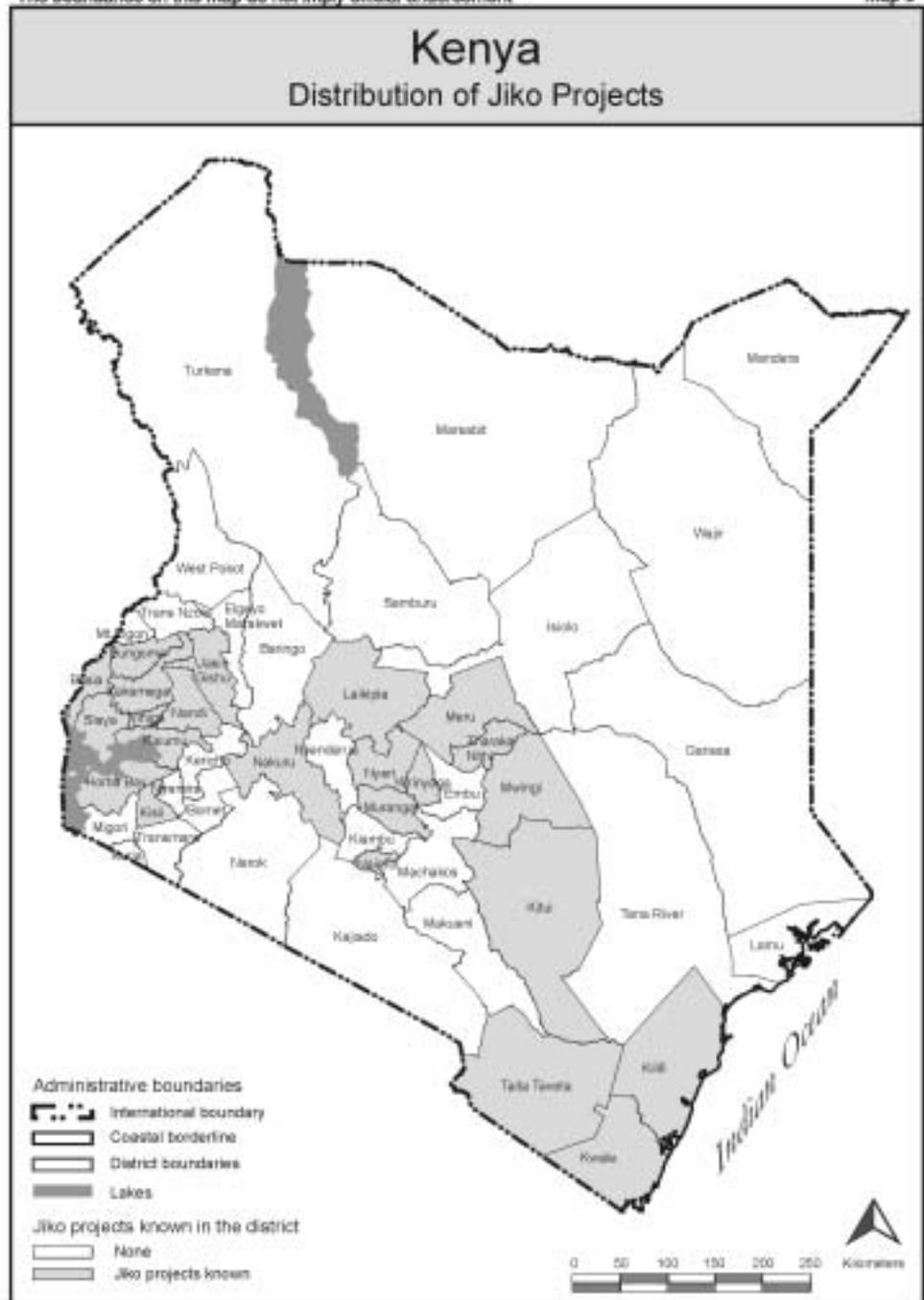
While the charcoal burning KCJ was to replace an already existent inefficient and dangerous all metal stove, which was produced by ›informal sector artisans‹, the wood burning Maendeleo Jiko was developed, launched and disseminated under the ›Women and Energy Project‹ with the intention of improving both the living and working standard of Kenya's rural population and in particular that of the women and children who attend to cooking fires and the collection of firewood. Household energy in general has to be looked upon as a framework of different gender positions in society and their relationships in the access and control over resources. While women, for example, are responsible for wood-fuel collection, trees are owned by men and not supposed to be cut down by women as the men sell them, use them for construction purposes or turn them into charcoal, a commercial fuel.

Table 18: Regional distribution and production profile of jiko producers, 1995

Regional Location		Jiko producers in the district					
Province	Districts	known			Producing other clay products		
		yes	No	I am not aware	yes	no	I don't know
Nyanza	Kisumu	X			Aa, Ab, Ac		
Nyanza	Homa Bay	X			Aa, Ab		
Western	Kakamega	X			Aa, Ab		
Eastern	Makueni	X			Aa, Ab		
Western	Vihiga	X			Aa, Ab, Ac		
Western	Bungoma	X			Aa, Ab		
Eastern	Meru	X			Aa, Ab, Ac		
Coast	Kilifi	X			Ab, Ac		
Eastern	Mwingi	X				X	
Rift Valley	Nandi	X			Aa, Ab, Ac		
Rift Valley	Laikipia	X			Ab, Ac		
Nyanza	Migori	X			Aa, Ab		
Nyanza	Siaya	X			Aa, Ab		
Central	Muranga	X			Aa		
Western	Busia	X			Aa, Ab		
Eastern	Kitui	X				X	
Eastern	Embu			X			
Central	Nyandarua		X				
Eastern	Tharaka Nithi	X			Ab		
Rift Valley	Uasin Gishu	X			Aa, Ab		
Rift Valley	Trans Nzoia	X			Aa, Ab		
Rift Valley	Bomet	X					X
Coast	Kwale	X			Ab		
Coast	Tana River	X				X	
Rift Valley	Kericho	X			Aa		
Central	Kirinyaga	X				X	
Coast	Lamu		X				
Rift Valley	Baringo		X				
Rift Valley	Samburu			X			
Rift Valley	West Pokot	X			Aa, Ab, Ac		
Western	Mt. Elgon			X			
Rift Valley	Nakuru		X				
North Eastern	Wajir	X				X	
Rift Valley	Kajiado			X			
Rift Valley	Narok		X				
Rift Valley	Turkana			X			

Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

Aa Jikos & flower pots
 Ab Jikos & trad. pots
 Ac Jikos & other clay products



Data Source: BEP/GTZ, ITDO West Kenya Stove Programme, DSDD Inquiry 1995/96

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At this stage it becomes important to highlight the diverse character of the two approaches, one highly commercial and the other a community development and welfare oriented approach.

Table 19 is providing information on the regional distribution of jiko production in Kenya as well as on the entire production range manufactured by jiko producers. The table reveals that in the following districts: Mwingi, Kitui, Tana River, Kirinyaga and Wajir, one can find people producing *jikos* alone without attending to pot making. The DSDOs of 11 districts, which are not listed in Table 19, did not return the questionnaire.

9.2.2.1 Kenya Renewable Energy Development Project (KREDP)

The rationale of KREDP stove component was to replace an inefficient but already existing commercial cooking device – charcoal stoves; to use the local jiko makers – tinsmith who produced metal *jikos* at the time – and connect them with local potters who produce the clay liner for the KCJ. The idea was to build on already existing skills to keep the technical training needs at a minimum. With charcoal being a commercial fuel and charcoal *jikos* a market-led product, the KCJs too were introduced as a commercial good to and through established market dealers. The market acceptability of the *jikos* was tested with displays in urban supermarkets and retail shops, for example. After the KCJ, a metal stove with a clay lining was designed; the project had to identify appropriate producers for the various parts of the KCJ, the metal cladding and the clay liner. Initially two medium sized industries, Mabati Ltd.²⁹⁴ and Clayworks Ltd., were identified and found willing to co-operate until government officials advised the stove promoters to connect with the small scale enterprise sector in order to create urgently needed new employment and income earning opportunities. As a result, the project team was to identify the appropriate craftsmen. Although metal smiths are widely spread all over the country, the pinnacle of jiko metal smithery in Kenya is found in Shauri Moyo, Nairobi. According to the project supervisor M. Kinyanjui entrepreneurial pottery skills were found in Nairobi with a company called Jerry International, which was owned by Richard K.. The potters working at Jerry International were consequently to be trained by Karanja, the potter who attended a special training on clay liner production in Thailand in 1982²⁹⁵. The technical rationale of the project was to base the KCJ production on manual work rather than introducing any power driven machinery in order to enable the new technology and product to spread to the rural areas without any draw backs or resentment. It was not by accident or due to the brilliant performance of the Ilesi Women Pottery Group, alias Ilesi Pottery that the study team went to western Kenya and approached Charles M. at Ilesi. This connection was brought about by nobody less important than the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Regional Development who referred to Ilesi as his home. Even before the project teamed up with Jerri International in Nairobi,

²⁹⁴ *Mabati* is a Swahili expression for corrugated iron sheets.

²⁹⁵ In 1982 Karanja, an employee of Clayworks Ltd. at the time, together with another potter and M. Kinyanjui travelled to Thailand for a intensive study tour to enhance the knowledge on clay liners and stoves and be trained on the job how to mould a ceramic stove-liner.

Charles M. and some of his male relatives became the first potters in Kenya to be introduced to clay liner production. In order to spread the idea and establish production centres all over the country the ministry decided on introducing workshops at 5 public institutes from where the technology was supposed to diffuse, namely: Bukura Institute of Technology/Western Province, Wambogo Farmers Training Centre in Nyeri District/Central Province, Kitui FTC/Eastern Province, Mtuuhapa in Mombasa/Coast Province and one, the SEP, in Jamhuri/Nairobi. Under KENGO's umbrella they were urged to include women in the project, as most potters in the country were and still are women. Kinyanjui, however, stressed that all attempts to link male tinsmiths with female potters on the KCJ production failed due to the gender bias work ethics, priorities, time allocations and production levels. While female potters in the rural areas more often than not attend to pottery only after completion of their manifold domestic duties at home, the male metal smiths were/are able to treat their part of the production as a full time activity which leaves them in constant short supply of clay liners if they rely on women potters. While KENGO was hiring pottery experts from overseas to train women's groups and equip them with entrepreneurial skills, Kinyanjui advocated the belief not to interfere with the gender roles within the community and family in particular but to train women like men on an individual basis on how to adapt to the new technology and product instead of trying to revolutionise the whole economic set-up. By 1989 KAREKEZI summarised that there were over 100 artisans manufacturing and marketing the KCJ in Shauri Moyo/Nairobi alone, while a number of small scale enterprises, among them Jerri International and Waka Ceramics Ltd., had established a higher level of mechanisation over the years and with it a rather high production output. KAREKEZI therefore differentiated between two types of producers: the mechanised and semi-mechanised ones. The mechanised manufacturers reportedly used labour saving machinery such as pug mills for mixing the clay, jigger jollies for moulding clay liners and temperature controlled electric kilns for firing the liners. They produced up to 3200 clay liners a month while the total production of the semi-mechanised producers, among them Sunrise, Clayworks Ltd., Jiko Bora, Miaki Jikos²⁹⁶ and rural enterprises, was reaching an estimated 10,600 liner per month²⁹⁷. While the KCJ was enjoying a growing popularity, more and more people ventured into jiko production causing high market competition and a dramatical depreciation of the clay liner from KShs. 40/= initially to KShs. 15/= per piece. This forced many producers to either give up or diversify their production in search for alternative and more lucrative products to sell. Those who knew how to make use of the potter's wheel or how to mould pots by hand would soon discover and explore the urban market for pottery ware and start to produce flower pots, planters and other garden accessories. While Richard K., an experienced businessman and the owner of Jerri International, split his production into two sections, a jiko production unit and a combined pottery and ceramic workshop, named Terra Ltd, Fabian L., a very skilled potter from Ileshi who had worked and overseen the production at Miaki Jikos, left Kinyanjui and established his own pottery enterprise in the outskirts of Nairobi in 1989, as he

²⁹⁶ Miaki Jikos was established and run by M. Kinyanjui

²⁹⁷ During the early 1990s the New Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise would produce an average of 5000 liner a month and sell them to the metal artisans at Shauri Moyo.

couldn't afford a place any closer to the city centre. Richard K., however, moved his jiko production from Wilson Airport to Kibera²⁹⁸ where workshop facilities are rather cheap and, where in absence of any electricity or gas supply, the demand for charcoal stoves has remained high for years. Meanwhile his wife, Helen K., took control over Terra Ltd. which was to be established in a more expensive environment on the Ngong Road where it is easily accessible to the wealthier public who could afford to spend money on flower pots, planters and ceramic ware.

9.2.2.2 The wood stove programme

The Women and Energy Project was launched in 1983 as a part of the Special Energy Programme (SEP) under the Ministry of Energy and Regional Development. The specific goal of the Women and Energy Project was the alleviation of the wood-fuel shortage in rural areas by striving to reduce the demand by introducing fuel-efficient stoves and by increasing tree planting efforts for the production of wood-fuel. With regard to the latter the success of the project was hampered by the ignorance of gender bias ownership rights on trees in many parts of Kenya as described earlier. The Maendeleo Jiko itself was developed by the SEP/GTZ in collaboration with Maendeleo ya Wanawake and the Ministry of Energy during a three-year research period between 1983–1986. Besides the development of the stove and continuous testing of the same project activities included the training of women and men in the production and dissemination of wood-stoves. Looking back at a ten year old history the SEP-progress report of 1992 stated that the project had worked with 5.000 women's groups in six districts in its stove dissemination efforts, namely: Meru, Muranga, Kiambu, Kisii, South Nyanza and Bungoma while the number of women's groups engaged in the production of the Maendeleo Jiko was considerably smaller as a project evaluation report of 1995 reveals. According to the latter the SEP claimed to have worked successfully with 13 women's groups, 1 youth group and 5 private enterprises on the production of Maendeleo Jikos. According to the answers of the DSDOs of 1995, jiko projects were known in 13 districts countrywide, namely: Kisumu and Homa Bay of Nyanza Province, Kakamega and Busia of Western Province, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Kitui and Mwingi of Eastern Province, Nandi, Laikipia, Uasin Gishu of Rift Valley Province and Muranga of Central Province as indicated in Map 8, which shows the regional distribution of jiko production in Kenya.

As the SEP concentrated its efforts in central Kenya the Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG²⁹⁹) and its local partner KENGO trained groups of women potters in western parts of Kenya. Under the auspices of the SEP the Maendeleo Jiko was introduced and distributed by members of Maendeleo ya Wanawake, Home Economic Officers/Ministry of Agriculture and NGOs who engaged in fuel wood conservation and/or environmental management projects like CARE Kenya, for example. Having been introduced with a strong development agenda attached to it and not as merchandise in the first place, the Maendeleo Jiko never commanded a good market response when finally offered for sale under commercial conditions.

²⁹⁸ Kibera is one of Nairobi's slum areas.

²⁹⁹ A British based NGO.

Reviewing the objectives and achievements of the KCJ and the Maendeleo Jiko programmes in Kenya it can be concluded that the KCJ production is commanding a strong base in the urban private sector while production in rural areas has remained rather low. The reasons for this are twofold: (1) charcoal is a commercial fuel and predominantly used in urban and peri-urban areas, while firewood was for most of the century perceived as God given and as such a freely available commodity for everyone in rural areas; (2) due to the overall low rural demand, production of *jikos* in the rural areas was financially not very rewarding which resulted in the fact that many women potters who had been trained in the production of *jikos*, nevertheless, preferred to mould pots which met a steady demand in their close neighbourhood. The Odago WG of Nyamasaria, Kisumu District is a typical example for the latter. Already well known for its pottery activities and products, the Odago WG was addressed by KREDP during the early 1980s and during the late 1980s jointly by KENGO and ITDG with the aim of introducing them to clay liner production. As the group commanded a well established production and marketing set-up for their pots they never felt the need imparted on them to diversify their production and seriously engage in clay liner production. This example is important to note as women are often portrayed as failures or disappointments in connection with commercialisation and innovation when they respond poorly to development agendas which do not fit their own needs. It seems a lot easier to blame the women for not responding well to the freely offered development aid than to realise, accept and admit that the underlying development agenda was inappropriate.

In short, one can summarise that while the KCJ-project was based on strictly sustainable and commercial terms, the wood-stove project was heavily subsidised for over a decade with the Maendeleo Jiko being employed as yet another tool to get access to women in the rural area and train them in household and kitchen management and/or enlighten them on environmental issues.

9.3 Marketing of pottery ware in Kenya

In this chapter I would like to confine myself to a brief introduction to traditional and contemporary distribution of pottery and ceramic ware in Kenya without emphasising the sector activists and the nature of the trade as this will be done in Chapter 10.2.

9.3.1 A historical retrospective: Traditional distribution and marketing systems

Unlike the rest of East Africa, pottery trade along the coastline has been influenced by the Arabian culture and by traders who imported high-fired glazed ceramic items from Mesopotamia, Iran, southern Arabia, the Indian subcontinent, Thailand and China from the ninth century to the present day. Despite this presence the merchandise did not influence the pottery industry of Kenya's indigenous people as it was not traded inland. However, STUHMANN (1910), as well as WILDING (1989), connected the two by attributing the poor performance of the indigenous pottery industry in the area to the ready availability of ceramic and pottery ware from other centres of manufacture in commercially oriented potteries around the Indian Ocean littoral. Considering the overall limited cash resources of the indigenous peoples and the high market value of

imported pottery and ceramic ware, this thesis seems highly questionable to me. The scope of my research, however, did not allow me to investigate the latter.

In most pre-colonial African societies pottery production was largely determined by the domestic demand of the potter herself, her extended family or clan community. While surplus production and barter trade evolved in response to tribal specialisation and provoked the rise of intertribal trade, pottery spreading from hand to hand within a network of interpersonal relations was a typical phenomenon of the early indigenous pottery trade. WAGNER (1970:162) reported of so called *omuluti* (lit. messenger or spy) facilitating intertribal trade among the pot-making Maragoli and the Tiriki, who were known for the blacksmithing in pre-European days, for example. Nevertheless, some ethnic groups reportedly never engaged in regular monetary trade with regard to pottery, for example, the Okiek of Kenya³⁰⁰, while others would explore, discover and develop the trade value of their pots, for example, the Luo and Luyia of western Kenya, the Kisi of Tanzania and the Buganda of Uganda.

As mentioned before, pottery production was not equally distributed over the country with the intensity of the craft depending on the availability of raw materials and the prevailing lifestyle of the people. It was, however, common to find the most active pottery among settled agriculturist while pastoral societies would only cater for a few potters or no potters at all and obtain pots made by other ethnic groups instead. The latter applies, for example, to the trade relations between the settled Dorobo, who traded pots for small stock or other commodities with the pastoral Rendile and Areal, as well as for the Kikuyu and Meru who reportedly exchanged pots and other commodities against livestock with their Maasai neighbours (OCHIENG 1987:42). Reviewing the African trade with pots, BARLEY (1994:61) noted a widespread market convention, namely that the price of a pot is the grain that it can contain. While BARLEY came to the conclusion that African pots may well, for this reason, be excluded from the haggling that marks the purchase of other goods, my own market research should reveal that, for the most part, pottery has turned into a fully fledged market commodity. However, it has not overthrown the trade in kind completely, as I came across potters and traders exchanging pots for maize or grain at local markets in West Kenya³⁰¹.

While studying the history of the pot-trade in West Kenya I came across a report of OCHIENG (1987:57) who pointed out that the pre-colonial Nyanza economy was predominantly a subsistence economy with the bulk of local trade commodities consisting of foodstuffs, iron implements, pots and baskets, poisons, livestock and, much later in the second half of the nineteenth century, slaves. Contrary to OCHIENG (1987:66), who portrayed the intertribal trade with pots between the Luo and the Gusii as a common pre-colonial feature which was continued even during periods of hostilities, HAY (1972:28–39) portrayed markets as strictly a famine phenomenon until the early twentieth century when regular periodic markets developed in response to newly introduced monetary demands.

³⁰⁰ For further information on Okiek pottery see KRATZ (1989).

³⁰¹ Personal statement of a Kisii trader trading maize from Keroka against pots at the market in Oyugis (10.11.95).

While describing the dominant trade structures, scholars such as OCHIENG (1987) and WAGNER (1970) identified a widely spread gender specific approach to trading, with the pottery trade being dominated by women and children who accompany and assist their mothers. OCHIENG made it clear that the Kisii depended on their Luo neighbours from Karachuonyo, Nyakach, Kabondo, Gem, Kamagambo and Sakwa (OCHIENG 1987:66) for pots, and that pots continued to be the largest commodity which the Luo of Nyanza exported to Gusiiland, even during colonial days and after *Uhuru*. Taking account of the trade in the 1980s OCHIENG' concluded that »this trade with pots still flourishes in independent Kenya with Manga, Keroka, Nyakoe, Nyamira, Sunika, Rongo, Oyugis and Riana as the major centres« (OCHIENG 1987:64). Members of the Katuola clan and of Kerina N.'s family of Karachuonyo³⁰² were and still are among those women generating an income by making and trading pots with their Gusii neighbours. Over time only the scope and venue of the trade has changed. Today Luo potters are no longer hawking their products in Gusiiland but meet Gusii traders at the weekly market in Oyugis – a market I visited in November 1995 to follow up on this historical trade lines.

Apart from studying the trade relations between the Luo and Gusii OCHIENG (1987:67) took a closer look at the trade among the Northern Luo with their Luyia neighbours which he described as minimal during the nineteenth century³⁰³. However, he discovered that though pot industry tended to be widely spread in Luoland pots made by their Luyia neighbours at Samia and later the Goma of northern Yimbo were highly valued among the Luo. While OCHIENG' (1987:68) found evidence that »Goma pots were sold widely in Alego, Yimbo, Sakwa and Asembo« WAGNER (1970) in turn reported of Luo potters selling their ware to their Luyia neighbours at Mbale market³⁰⁴ during the 1930s – a phenomenon which no longer exists as the pot trade at Mbale market has been completely taken over by Luyia sub-groups, namely the Maragoli and Bunyore. WAGNER (1970:166), however, provided a very detailed account on the different items traded at Mbale market in 1937 indicating that only Luo and Maragoli of the Vigulu clan³⁰⁵ in the South took pots to the market for barter or sale, while Northern Maragoli, Nandi, Nyole, Tiriki, Kisa; Idaxo and Isukha would buy pots at Mbale market. While no pots are being made at Mbale itself the market should develop into one of the biggest pottery trading centres in western Kenya. Already in 1934

³⁰² Chapter 11 provides more details on Luo potters of Karachuonyo.

³⁰³ WAGNER (1970), for example, who studied the markets attended by the Bantu of western Kenya in 1937, stated that only about six of sixty-four regular markets known in the Western District at the time, of which all were open to all Africans, operated on an intertribal scale.

³⁰⁴ According to WAGNER (1970:165) the Mbale market was established in 1931 on the initiative of a local chief at a place where the Logoli of North and South Maragoli met, circa twenty three miles to the North of Kisumu, and where a lot of *dukas* (i.e. shops selling imported goods – see WAGNER 1970:165) could be found. According to WAGNER'S records Mbale Market was, however, not the first intertribal market known and organised on »African initiatives«.

³⁰⁵ According to WAGNER (1970:11) pot-making among the Maragoli was monopolised by the women of the Vigulu clan on whose territory the suitable clay deposits were found.

potters attending the Mbale market were so numerous that they were allocated their own distinguished site at the weekly markets on Saturdays.

Taking record of the flourishing trade developments in western Kenya WAGNER (1970:169) stressed that »it appears that the development of intertribal markets has stimulated the manufacture of pots for barter and sale and that even more pots are made at present than in pre-European days.«

9.3.2 *Contemporary distribution of pottery and ceramic ware in Kenya*

In most parts of rural Kenya pottery production and interregional sales have adapted to the weekly cycle of the markets³⁰⁶ and seasonal demands³⁰⁷, while urban and export markets do not respond to or follow the same market forces and seasons. This circumstance has often led to severe complaints and misunderstandings between producers in the rural areas and their urban based commercial market outlets and customers who are more often than not immersed in a completely different market environment.

9.3.2.1 The distribution and market value of traditional pottery ware

The distribution of pots made by potters in the rural area often starts at home where the potter makes and sells pots to members of the family or community or to individual customers or traders who collect on previous orders. While most female potters, socially tied to their rural homes, produce and sell their products mainly within the proximity of their home areas, other women have abandoned the craft as such and turned to trading pots and other commodities.

Due to the absence and/or inaccessibility of advanced transport means, most rural potters carry their products to nearby localities such as weekly markets, workshops with collective sales outlets, bus stations, shops (*dukas*) and market stalls in rural and urban centres, road-side shops and displays, etc. An informal distribution network evolves from those places where potters and traders meet on a regular basis to exchange pots and money, for example, at the following market places: Mbale, Luanda, Kakamega, Kisumu, Oyugis, Ahero and many others. Inter-market traders, well established road side merchants in Kisumu and Nairobi, retailers like Spinner's Web or those who have established permanent market stalls within Nairobi's

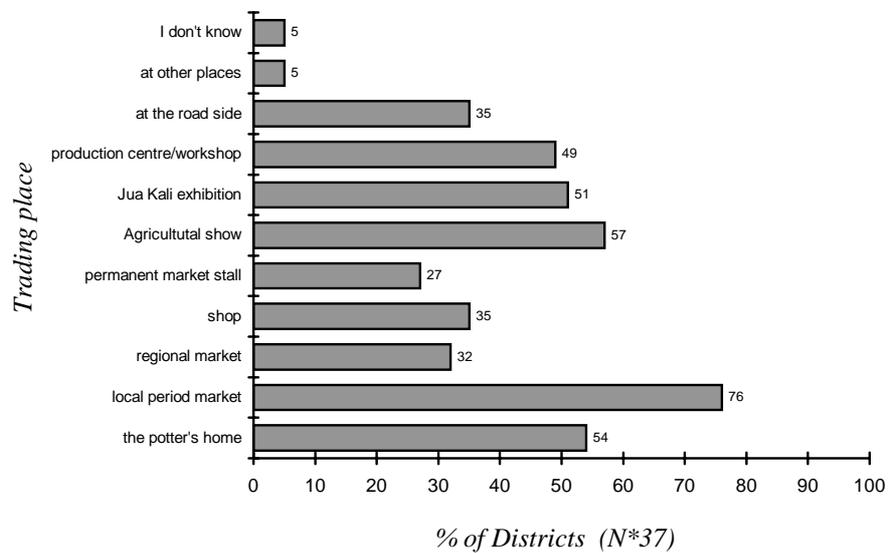
³⁰⁶ GRUNER (1986), for example, made similar observations during her fieldwork on the Ivory Coast in 1984.

³⁰⁷ Seasonal demands have guided the pot production among agrarian societies since the dawn of time. WAGNER (1970:169), for example, summarised his findings as such »pots and baskets are more in demand during and after the harvest than at other times of the year, and the quantities brought to the market vary accordingly. Thus in mid-October 1934 I counted about 120 pots at the potters' stand on the Mbale market, while late in March 1935 the number had fallen to less than fifty. Prices had gone down by 20 % or 30 %.« Joseph A., one of the inter-market traders attending to Mbale market on a regular basis, confirmed WAGNER'S findings almost 60 years later by stressing that the trade with pots experienced a peak season between September and March, when people were harvesting and had money to spend.

Citymarket, flower shops and nurseries like the Rosslyn River Garden Centre at Nairobi, Pepper's at Nakuru or Pabari Nurseries at Kisumu, galleries like African Heritage, hotels and restaurants and the large number of commercial and alternative trade organisations which export handicrafts from Kenya, form the framework of the marketing and distribution of traditional pottery today.

According to the knowledge and perception of the DSDOs, local markets (76 %) form the main trading place for pottery ware in Kenya. The chart below provides a general overview on places where trade with pottery ware has been observed although it does not provide any information on the qualitative or quantitative value of the particular trading place. While local and periodic markets, shops and market stalls, the production centre as well as road side merchants, for example, represent permanent market outlets, agricultural shows and Jua Kali exhibitions are held only annually or even less often. However, no sales records and statistics are available which could enlighten us as to the importance of the various market outlets.

Graph 5: Trading places of pottery in Kenya as observed by the DSDOs



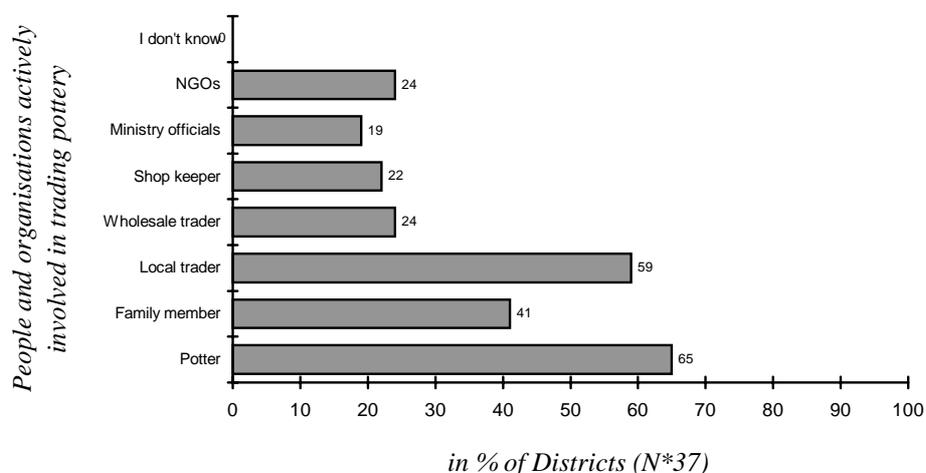
Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

Following the observations made by the DSDOs potters are the primary sellers of their wares at markets³⁰⁸. In 41 % of the cases they are, however, assisted by family members; in 59 % of the cases, or 14 districts, they do trade with or side by side or do co-operate with local traders and in 24 % or 8 districts they deal with wholesalers, namely in Muranga, Nandi, Laikipia, Kisumu, Homa Bay, Kakamega, Vihiga and Kilifi districts. As expected the latter are districts where pottery activities are

³⁰⁸ Also see HERBICH (1987:195)

reportedly high (4 cases), to very high (4 cases), and the craft's development was perceived as stable (3 cases), or even flourishing (5 cases). Wholesale trade reflects a larger market demand and a tentatively larger distribution area of the merchandise. A look at the ethnic origin of the active potters in these 8 districts which comprise of Luo (3 districts), Luyia and Kikuyu (2 districts), Kamba, Nandi and Mijikenda (1 district) gives us an idea of the origin and type of pottery being traded on a larger scale in Kenya. Ministry officials and/or NGOs are involved in the distribution and trade of pottery ware in 11 districts, of which 9 or 82 % reportedly accommodate Jiko projects. Since NGOs and ministries have been and still are actively involved in the distribution of energy saving cook stoves it is not clear whether, and if so how much of a role they actually play in the distribution of pots.

Graph 6: Nature of those trading with pottery ware in Kenya as perceived by the DSDOs



Source: DSDO inquiry, 1995

Most traditional potters carry their products tied together in manageable numbers to nearby markets or the nearest bus station if they aim for distant markets. While the women are seen carrying their pots as head-loads or on their back I have never seen a male potter carrying his pots in the same way. While children often support their mothers in carrying pots to the market, men do not generally offer any assistance unless potters make arrangements with local businessmen, for example, to transport them and their products to distant periodic markets by car.

While the potters themselves value their own work and take great care while transporting it to the market, local traders who purchase these pots cheaply from the potters rarely invest in proper packaging. As a result many pots being transported in bulk on the roof of buses, mini buses (*matatus*), etc. suffer severe damage on the way to their next and/or final destination and thereby strengthen the traders unwillingness

to pay a higher price for the pots as they purchase them. Nevertheless, even a broken pot can find a buyer among the rural poor as long as the pot can serve its purpose, cooking or storing. Since chipped and damaged pots sell cheaply they even attract customers who could afford to buy first quality products but look for cheap planters instead, for example.

Markets like the ones at Mbale and Oyugis developed a reputation as trading places for traditional pottery ware. It is at such places that traders link up with traditional potters to buy their products. The traders proceed with the pots to towns like Sotik, Kisii, Kisumu, Kakamega, Eldoret, Kirinyaga, Kericho and as far as Nairobi and Mombasa. No matter how far the traders have travelled, the bulk of traditional pottery will not leave the informal and local trade sector. A market survey conducted in 1993 confirmed that Luo and Luyia pottery ware dominates the urban sales while pottery ware of other ethnic origin is traded locally in predominantly rural areas or urban working class markets, such as Gikomba in Nairobi. While Kisumu pottery has been known for its flower planters since the 1980s, Kakamega potters are well known for decorative ware which is sold at Nairobi's Citymarket and in shops and galleries like >African Heritage<.

As reflected in Table 20 the market value of a traditional cooking pot produced in West Kenya ranged between KShs. 6/= and KShs. 40/= just within the regional area of its production, depending on where, by whom and to whom it was sold in 1993. While the potter in 1993 got between KShs. 6/= and KShs. 15/= selling it to a local consumer or trader, the same pot could fetch up to KShs. 40/= in Kisumu town and even up to KShs. 300/= in a craft gallery in Mombasa³⁰⁹.

Table 20 reflects prices recorded during the 1993 Market Survey and provides a first brief impression on the price-variations of a medium sized traditional Luo cooking pot³¹⁰ on sale at different sales outlets in Kenya.

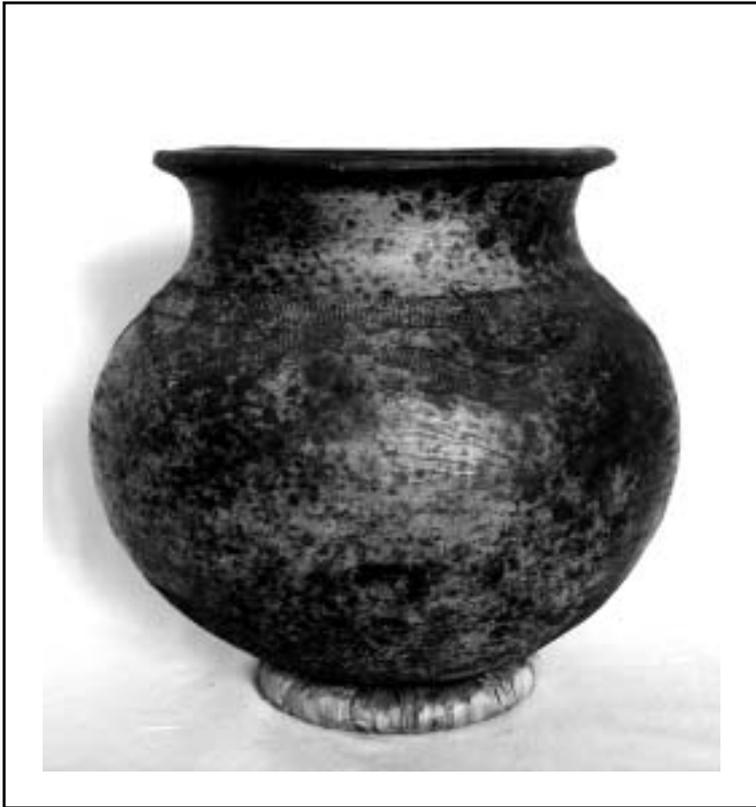
While rural potters are often trapped in a vicious circle of social and economic linkages which contribute to low sale prices for their pots, traders are able to break free and exploit the various market networks and set-ups, purchase cheaply and sell expensively. Price inquires conducted during my field studies between 1995 and 1997 confirmed the immense price fluctuations noted in 1993. At the same time they revealed that potters had grown poorer due to the fact that prices for sugar and other highly commercial market commodities had increased tremendously over the years, while price increases for traditional clay pots were negligible. I tend to believe that the extremely low market value of traditional crafts products at local markets can be attributed to their history of being integral parts of the material culture and economic life of the indigenous people producing and using them, attributes of solidarity and tradition. As a result their market price has been adjusted to the prevailing purchasing power of the consumers in the location. Moreover, individual potters who service the basic demands of the local, low income community are often in dire need of cash themselves which forces them to sell their ware for >give away prices< to generate cash

³⁰⁹ Having evaluated pottery sales in Malawi RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:113) came to the conclusion that »in general, the location and the knowledge about marketing channels seem to influence the prices for small pots as much as the products quality.«

³¹⁰ height and diameter ca. 16 to 20 cm

urgently needed to satisfy their own basic demands. In contrast there are potters who have organised themselves in production units like the OPWG, the many family based enterprises at Ilesi and the Jua Kali potters at Nairobi. As a recognised production unit the latter enjoy larger public attention and recognition and are furthermore able to create a name for themselves which allows them to attract orders from external customers and demand a fixed market price for the products³¹¹.

Picture 6: *Traditional Luo cooking pot*



³¹¹ In Malawi RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:112) made similar observations. He reported of a Home Craft Group that was able to achieve higher prices for their pots than average potters did.

Table 19: Market value of a traditional Luo cooking pot in KShs. in Kenya (1993)

<i>Market outlet</i>	<i>Sales person</i>	<i>Cost price KShs.</i>	<i>Retail price KShs.</i>
Mbale market / Vihiga District	Female potter	–	10 - 15
Oriang' market / Homa Bay District	Female potter	–	15 - 25
Kisumu market / Kisumu District	Female trader	6 - 15	25 - 40
Pabari Flower Nursery / Kisumu Town	Indian owner	15	30 - 40
Peppers Flower Nursery / Nakuru Suburb	White Kenyan	40	80
Gikomba market / Nairobi Town	Female trader	(?)	40 - 45
Citymarket / Nairobi Town	Native traders	20 - 35	50 - 75
Westlands Florist Shop / Nairobi Town	Indian owner	40 - 50	80 - 100
Homestead Gardens / Nairobi Town	Male trader	40	65 - 85
Lines Craft / Nairobi Town	English owner	40	100
Rostman / Mombasa Town	Native trader	(?)	60
Labeka Gallery / Mombasa Town	Indian owner	(?)	300

Source: Market survey 1993

In 1995 a small cooking pot was sold for as little as KShs. 8/= or even less in cases of slightly damaged pots at Kiboswa Market, while it would change hands for KShs. 12/= at the weekly markets in Luanda or Kakamega and fetch KShs. 15/= to 25/= at Oriang' and Homa Bay respectively. Further inquiries laid open that social relations as well as ethnicity have a major impact on the price structuring³¹². In Siaya, for example, a trader originating from Siaya would pay a lower price than his/her counterpart from Kisumu, despite the fact that they are both of Luo origin. At the same market a Luyia trader would make purchases at a lower rate than a trader of Kikuyu origin as the trade between the neighbouring Luo and Luyia has a historical dimension while Kikuyus are generally not well regarded by Luo and Luyia alike as they feel that they have been at a disadvantage by comparison to the Kikuyu since colonial days. If a foreigner expresses his interest in a pot he will most likely be asked to pay an even higher price than the Kikuyu. In general, prices for pots increase with the length of the distribution chain, the distance to its origin in regional as well as socio-economic and cultural terms. Pottery of rural origin is therefore more expensive in towns than in rural areas, at exclusive displays than at working class markets or at road side displays.

The segmentation of the market grows in relation to the accessibility to and availability of alternative goods, the innovative spirit and specialisation of the sector activists and the spending power and perception of the envisaged customers. Pottery items therefore change character and market value according to the place and environment in which they are traded. While traditional pots sell cheaply at local markets where they are perceived as basic household/kitchen utensils and stand

³¹² This price structuring based on degree of relationship and solidarity has reportedly a long history in Kenya. Studying the traditional system of exchange and trade among the Bantu of Western Kenya during the 1930s, WAGNER (1970:161), for example, observed that »even in purely economic transactions the prices charged by the various specialists differed according as the customer was a neighbour or clansman or a stranger.«

competition against metal sufurias and plastic containers for example, the same pots can fetch a much higher price when presented and sold as planters, interior design items or traditional artefacts to tourists or expatriates. On the other hand a thrown planter, for example, sells cheaply in Nairobi while it commands a much higher market value at Kisumu where it is still a rare feature and is perceived as modern and superior in comparison to the traditional handmoulded pots which flood the local markets and are looked upon as ordinary or even second class commodities. Small and medium sized thrown flower pots of the type which are sold for around KShs. 40/= in Nairobi can demand a market price of KShs. 120/= to 250/=, depending on their size, at Kisumu where a small handmoulded flower pot from Siaya would sell for KShs. 30/= and one from Kanu, which is considered even more ordinary by local customers, for only KShs. 25/=.

It can be summarised that while transportation costs inflated by high breakage rates affect distinct regional price differences, the location and nature of the market outlet as well as the perception of the pot on display by the buying public further influences the commercial market value of the pot.

9.3.2.2 The distribution of terracotta ware

The main production of unglazed red clay planters and terracotta ware takes place in Greater Nairobi and Mombasa town. It is sold side by side with flowers and decorative arrangements in gardens, homes, restaurants and hotels, offices, shows and exhibitions. Planters and Terracotta ware are displayed in flower nurseries and shops, in vegetable shops and supermarkets, at the Nairobi Citymarket and more and more along Nairobi's streets in the neighbourhood of upper class residential areas or main traffic routes used by those who can afford to invest in decorative items.

While the production of planters and terracotta ware has prospered progressively since the late 1980s, no detailed information has been recorded and no survey conducted on its development and success. In Chapter 11 I will take a closer look at the emergence and growth of the urban pottery sector in Kenya.

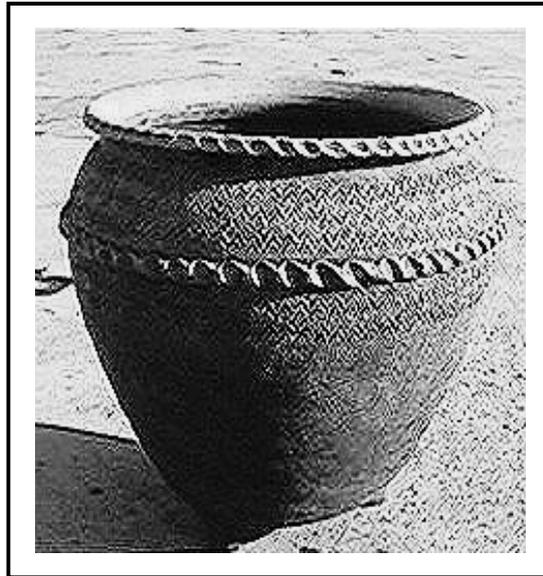
In the mean time I would like to take a look at the market value and distribution channels of terracotta ware within Kenya. Terracotta ware in this case means mainly planters and decorative garden ware like bird baths etc. which are predominantly urban products and their occurrence in rural areas can be attributed to hotels, restaurants and some ›Wazungu³¹³ homes‹. While planters and decorative garden ware services a growing demand among the higher income groups they do not, unlike cooking and water storage pots, service the rural poor in any way.

While ›Luo planters‹ originating from Kisumu dominated the market for clay planters during the 1980s, the production of planters is now more widely spread. Its growing marketability led to the emergence of a flourishing urban-based pottery industry. In response to customer specifications and overseas design inputs the appearance of the planters has been modified and/or changed completely. Today there are three different types of planters readily available on the market:

³¹³ *Wazungu* – Kiswahili word for Europeans or white people.

- Planters, based on traditional techniques and pot designs which were altered to suit the new purpose and environment;
- Terracotta planters which resemble planters of European origin and design = Mediterranean style planters; and
- Simple undecorated clay planters, quickly thrown earthenware pots – products of mass manufacturing.

Picture 7: *Altered ›traditional‹ pot planter*



In 1993 the price of a 40 cm to 50 cm height planter ranged between KShs. 70/= and KShs. 1,500/= depending on style, location and type of market outlet. While an altered traditional pot-planter of this size (which is considered rather ordinary in the Kenyan context) fetched between KShs. 70/= in Kisumu and KShs. 1,000/= in Mombasa, a Mediterranean style planter of the same size changed ownership for KShs. 500/= to KShs. 1,500/= in Nairobi itself. Table 20 gives a very brief impression of the availability³¹⁴ and market value of those planters in 1993.

³¹⁴ Mediterranean style planter, for example, were not on display and readily available in Kisumu, Nakuru, Mombasa or Nairobi's Citymarket.

Picture 8: *Mediterranean style planter*

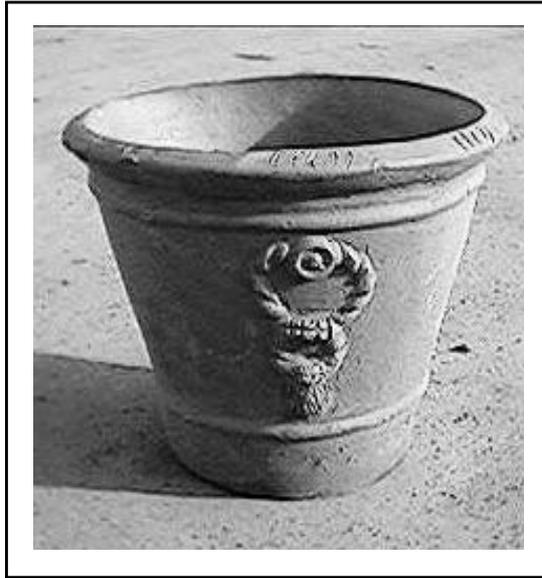


Table 20: Market value of a 40 cm – 50 cm tall clay-planter in Kenya (1993)

<i>Market Outlet</i>	<i>Altered Traditional Pot-Planter</i>		<i>Mediterranean Style Planter</i>	
	<i>Cost Price KShs.</i>	<i>Retail Price KShs.</i>	<i>Cost Price KShs.</i>	<i>Retail Price KShs.</i>
Kisumu Market / Kisumu Town	–	70 - 150	–	–
Peppers Nursery / Nakuru Suburb	–	250 - 300	–	–
New Jua Kali Pottery / Nairobi Suburb	–	–	–	500 - 800
Homestead Gardens / Nairobi Town	400	600 - 800	600 - 900	1000 - 1500
Nairobi Citymarket / Nairobi Town	90 - 150	200 - 300	–	–
Rosslyn River Garden Centre / Nairobi	–	400 - 600	–	1500 - 2000
Westlands Florist / Nairobi Town	–	–	500 - 800	1000 - 1500
Rostman / Mombasa Town	200	400 - 500	–	–
Labeka Crafts Gallery / Mombasa Town	–	1000 - 1500	–	–

Source: Market survey 1993

Not only in Nairobi but also in Kisumu one can witness that planters unlike traditional clay pots are no longer carried to their market destination as head-loads or packages on the back, neither are they sold at weekly markets. Planters being of decorative rather than utilitarian value can demand a higher market price, which caters for permanent market outlets and advanced transport means, such as private or hired vehicles or alternative public transport means.

9.3.2.3 The distribution of ceramic ware

Glazed pottery is hardly ever on display in rural Kenya. While some attempts to establish ceramic production centres in smaller cities or rural areas in general have failed as outlined in Chapter 9.2, the contemporary ceramic production as well as its distribution is centred around Kenya's large metropolis, Nairobi, and other cities like Malindi and Mombasa on Kenya's coast which are characterised by a large European (white) population and/or a progressive tourist industry. Ceramic items are sold directly at the production centre, at craft fairs and exhibitions or in rather exclusive market outlets such as craft shops and galleries in upper class hotels or within Nairobi's ›white shopping areas‹ or produced on order for individuals, hotels, shop keepers and retailers, galleries and a few overseas clients.

Producers of ceramic items are still few and find their clientele predominantly among high income groups since ceramic items are comparatively expensive. While in 1993 a traditional cooking pot could be purchased for as little as KShs. 6/= in Kisumu or a maximum of KShs. 100/= in Nairobi a ceramic mug could fetch between KShs. 150/= and KShs. 530/= in Nairobi and a glazed planter of about the same size as the cooking pot (approximately 16 cm in height) was priced between KShs. 340/= and KShs. 915/=. Unlike traditional pottery production ceramic production is capital intensive which makes ceramic items highly commercial market commodities which are not affordable for most Kenyans – not even to those producing them.

Picture 9: *Ceramic mugs manufactured by Jitegemea Pottery*



10 Studying the flourishing and the ebbing side of the craft

10.1 Introduction of the field work

As mentioned before not being able to study the potter's craft of all ethnic communities in Kenya I decided on theoretical sampling with the aim of studying the craft (1) where it shows signs of economic growth, adaptation and modernisation, namely in western Kenya and in Nairobi, in contrast to (2) a geographical location and ethnic community where the craft is declining and nearing extinction as is the case among the Meru community of Eastern Province.

During the entire fieldwork I visited 12 markets, numerous craft-shops, galleries, shows and exhibitions, talked to far more than 150 potters, traders and other resource persons and interviewed another 83 selected individual potters by means of a questionnaire which served as an interview guide.

Since the potters in their own capacity are not registered with any ministry or other official institutions, a lot of my field research depended on middlemen³¹⁵ who would accompany me, announce our visit before hand and introduce me to the field and the people. Before I was able to build up good connections to potters and traders who, as we got to know each other, were taking a keen interest in my research and proved willing to contribute some of their time to its success, I was not in a position to prearrange any home or workshop visits but had to physically explore the field in order to meet potters, to be able to talk to them or to arrange follow-up visits and intensive interviews. The most convenient/obvious places to meet potters in rural Kenya are the local and regional markets, where they usually come together and sell their products, whereas in urban areas they are most easily contacted in the workshop where they produce pottery and ceramic ware. With Luo and Luyia potters dominating Kenya's contemporary potter's trade it seemed the most obvious thing to do to start the field work in western Kenya.

Since Mbale has already played an important role in intertribal trade of pottery ware at the beginning of the century³¹⁶ and hosts at present one of the most vital regional markets for pottery in western Kenya, it was one of the first markets I chose to study. Although I had visited the Mbale market in 1993 together with two members of the OPWG I did not know anybody at Mbale who could introduce me to the potters on site. I therefore asked Martin O., an extension officer whom I had worked with in Karachuonyo, to meet me at Mbale market and assist with the translation. While Martin O.'s assistance at Mbale was of limited value since he, being a Luo and not a Luyia was received as a stranger just as I was, it happened that a local trader, Joseph A., who attends the market on a regular basis to buy pots for sale at Eldoret and other

³¹⁵ Also see Chapter 8 of this study.

³¹⁶ As outlined in Chapter 9.3

cities, showed a keen interest in the research and willingly agreed to introduce me to the potters on site and further assist with the translation. Although this arrangement confounded all ideals of utmost objectivity and control at this early stage of the research the fact that he not only spoke the local vernacular but furthermore knew and was apparently trusted by most of the potters at the market convinced me to accept his generous assistance. Soon after, as the potters started to realise that I was not a potential customer nor sent by any ministry or development organisation, they managed to overcome their reservation towards me, a foreigner taking notes and asking a lot of questions just like many others in the past who never returned to them, giving them the feeling of having wasted their time for nothing. Once the ice was broken the potters turned out to be not only willing but eager to be listened and attended to, making it easy to arrange a number of follow-up visits with Maragoli and Bunyore potters, during which they not only demonstrated their craft but willingly answered all outstanding questions. During the interviews conducted at Mbale Market I took notes and recorded parts of the conversation which proved difficult as potters, children and spectators gathered closely around us, commented, discussed and talked to us and to each other while we were standing right next to a main road where the noise of the traffic interrupted our conversation from time to time. The interest Joseph A. took in my research can be explained by looking at his own personal history. When Joseph A. first started to explore his trading abilities during the late 1980s he was working for a German merchant who used to come to Kenya himself to buy container-loads of pots for export. Having benefited from the exposure at the time, I believe Joseph A. was keen to enhance his knowledge of the potter's trade in Kenya and therefore willing to accompany and assist me during some home and market visits in Vihiga and Kisumu District, during which he carried on with his own business of buying and/or ordering pots and jiko liners³¹⁷. Later I would follow his invitation to visit him at Eldoret, where he lives and maintains his trading base.

While assessing the markets visited, a number of reasons contributed to the choice of the participatory observation method, among others the fact that I had been living in the area for some years so that people knew me; the fact that I could not hide my presence among the dominant black population around me; the fact that I depended on people's information and explanations in order to understand the not always obvious connections, interactions and movements I observed. In some cases, like at Homa Bay and Eldoret, where I was a familiar face to the potters and traders attending the market they immediately greeted and approached me on arrival. In other cases, like at Luanda market, I had been talking to and interacting with other market activists while waiting for the potters to arrive at the market respectively. This led to a situation where I was able to capture an outsider's view³¹⁸ of the potters in the region while creating an atmosphere of mutual respect and acceptance around me, which allowed me to move freely within the market. The same market activists would often connect and further introduce me to the potters on their arrival.

³¹⁷ *Jiko* liners are fired clay-inlays for the *jikos*.

³¹⁸ The environmental perception of the potters in their respective living and working environment.

10.2 Market assessments

As I was not so much interested in the individual potter who attends to pottery production as a home craft³¹⁹, producing just a few items for her own consumption or for close relatives, but in the more entrepreneurial sector activists who attend to the craft with a commercial attitude I found the local markets an ideal venue to study the contemporary potters craft and to meet potters and traders alike.

While visiting the markets, listed below, I was studying the organisational set-up, relations, interactions and existing networks characterising the potter's trade in the various regions. I was interested in the origin and nature of potters and traders attending the market to sell and/or buy pottery ware, the nature and market value of the pots being sold, the local infrastructure and means of transportation used by potters and traders, the market set-up and dynamics guiding any trade interaction between potters, traders, their helpers and the consumers (retail, wholesale, purchase on order etc.) and the trade destination and radius. In the course of the fieldwork I visited the following markets³²⁰:

Markets dominated by Luo potters

*Homa Bay Market (Homa Bay District – 1/3/95)

Oriang' Market (Rachuonyo District – numerous times over a period of 6 years)

Kiboswa Market (Kisumu District – 25.3.95)

*Kisumu Market (Kisumu District – 27/3/95 & 7/1/97)

*Migori Market (Migori District – 3.11.95)

Oyugis Market (Homa Bay District – 10/11/95)

Markets attended by Luo and Luyia potters

*Nairobi City Market (Nairobi District – numerous times)

Luanda Market (Kisumu District – 30/3/95)

³¹⁹ They have been well portrayed by former scholars, like by all those who have contributed to the book ›Kenyan Pots and Potters‹ (1989).

³²⁰ While smaller villages and markets places generally host a number of shops and permanent market stalls and largely depend on the weekly markets, the district and provincial capitals (which are marked with a *) have a rather differentiated market system with (1) a large number of permanent retail and wholesale stores, (2) a Municipal Market Hall where trade is taking place on a daily basis, (3) semi-permanent street hawkers and market stalls outside the municipal market, (4) whole sale markets for fruits and vegetables as well as cereals, (5) Jua Kali sheds where informal sector artisans offer their services and products for sale and (6) weekly markets which bring together local farmers, traders and craftspeople alike as well as mobile traders and hawkers who sell everything from second hand clothes to shoes, hardware and household goods etc., craft-ware, cereals and vegetables which are otherwise not available in the location.

Markets dominated by Luyia potters and/or pottery ware

- Mbale Market (Vihiga District – 4/3/95 & 25/3/95)
*Eldoret Market (Uasin Gishu District – 31/3/95)
*Kakamega Market (Kakamega District – 17/2/96 & 1/97)

Markets dominated by Kamba potters

- Tala Market (Machakos District – 16/9/95)

Apart from the markets at Homa Bay and Migori, which are pure retail markets with regard to pottery ware, all the other markets visited are trading points which are attended by traders who purchase pottery in bulk for resale to areas outside the normal catchment zone of the markets served by potters.

10.2.1 Trade dynamics and organisational set-up of the markets

Trade is inevitably influenced by conditions such as the relations between peoples and gender groups, the predominant demand and supply structures, the cash-flow and purchasing power of the people, the availability of complementary crafts, merchandise or resources, the infrastructure and the prevailing trade routes and set-ups.

While potters often complain about poor market infrastructure and transport facilities, the assessment of the pot-trade conducted between 1995 and 1997 laid open a very diversified distribution network facilitating inter-market trade and regional distribution of goods otherwise not available to the buying public, linking rural with urban economies and securing an income to those involved.

Potters selling their pots at Oyugis, Mbale, Kakamega, Kisumu and Luanda Market, for example, told me about wholesalers and retailers who attend the market on a regular basis to buy pots in smaller or large quantities for resale at other weekly markets and towns without a local pottery industry. Meanwhile other traders purchase large quantities of pots for inter-regional, long distance trade and transport them to cities like Nairobi and Mombasa for resale or export. These informal marketing networks, however, are not willingly disclosed by potters or traders alike who fear interference and competition on the one hand and loss of external marketing assistance where available on the other.

While potters are still the primary sellers of their wares, a growing specialisation has sparked off the expansion of inter-market, regional and long distance trade which has led to an increase of traders and so called suppliers. While the traders facilitate an inter-market trade, supply shops and other traders based in rural areas with pottery ware and even engage in retail trade, suppliers act as intermediaries who service the orders of urban market and export dealers without maintaining any retail facilities themselves. My studies, however, revealed that no clear line can be drawn separating the traders and the suppliers as traders happily furnish orders placed by commercial market dealers.

Figure 3: Distribution of pottery wares originating from rural Kenya

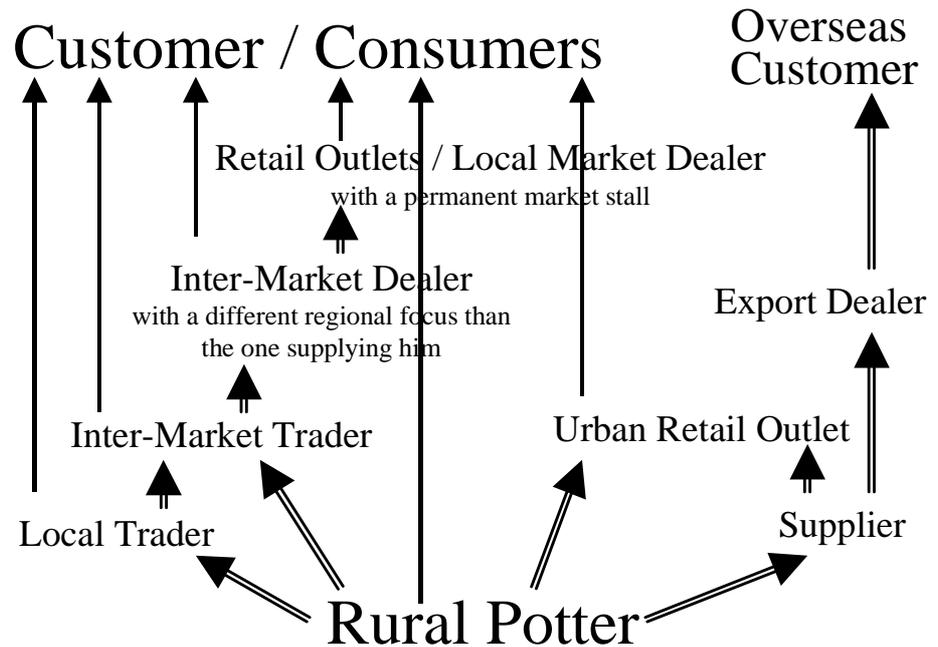


Figure 3 above shows a distribution network evolving from rural potters with the green arrows indicating bulk sales and the black ones retail transactions.

Joseph A., for example, who normally adheres to inter-market trade and maintains a permanent market stand at Eldoret where he and his wife sell pots, told me that he had assisted a German merchant in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While the just mentioned merchant used to come to Mbale twice a year and employ the services of Joseph A. to purchase a container-load of pots for shipment to Germany, the latter told me of another German merchant, he used to assist, who too used to buy pots for export to Germany at Nyakach. A Luo trader at Kisumu had a similar story to tell. While she obtains the bulk of her supply which she sells at Kisumu Town from potters living in her neighbourhood in Nyamasaria, she also acts as an intermediary between the potters who work at their rural home and wholesale customers from distant places. Once an order which is often accompanied by a cash-deposit has been received, both traders contact their own suppliers, potters they are well familiar with, to distribute the order and ensure the timely delivery of the same. Most export dealers, for example, do not even know the producers as they only do business with these so called suppliers.

With regard to the nature of the sector activists supplying the market with pottery the markets visited can be divided into three types³²¹:

³²¹ In this case a local trader is defined as somebody who buys pots from potters living in his immediate neighbourhood and sells them at the nearest markets while a wholesale trader is

1. *Traders' markets* – like the permanent urban markets at Eldoret, Kisumu town and Nairobi which are supplied by inter-market traders instead of potters;
2. *Mixed traders' and potters' markets* – like the markets at Oyugis, Homa Bay and Kakamega where both, potters and local traders, supply the market with pots for sale; and
3. *Potters' markets* – like the one at Mbale, Luanda, Kiboswa and Migori which are supplied solely by potters who sell their wares to individual customers, retail and wholesale traders alike.

While it is a common feature to find small numbers of pots on display within the municipal markets even in areas where no pottery is being produced, like at Eldoret, Kisii and Nakuru, for example, even large piles of pottery on display were a common feature at the municipal market in Eldoret and Kisumu until the early 1990s when the pot-traders were ordered to evacuate the main market area. While the pot-traders at Kisumu were told that pots and baskets would overcrowd the market and give it a dirty look³²², which reflects on the negative perception of indigenous crafts products by the market authorities at provincial headquarters, the pot-traders at Eldoret had to give way to an extension of the central bus-station and were allocated places neighbouring the Jua Kali sheds located at a little distance from the main shopping area which separates them from the occasional customers passing through the market. To avoid the latter, the Kisumu pot-traders, upon being asked to vacate the municipal market, secured themselves a display area opposite the market and next to the main road leading to Nairobi where they are easily accessible and visible to commercial and individual customers. However, once the pot-traders³²³ at Eldoret had established themselves in the neighbourhood of metal smiths they soon adapted their market gearing to the new environment and started to buy jiko liner and assemble and sell KCJs to compensate for the loss of occasional customers.

Many market places visited in western Kenya were subject to a differentiated market set-up, dividing the potters from different locations and ethnic origin, many of whom had specialised in just a few products. At Mbale I came across a very diversified and well established trading scene comprising of potters and their helpers, mainly women and children, traders and young men offering their services to those who required assistance in packing their wares as soon as they had finished purchasing. Wholesale and inter-market traders awaited the potters at the market place itself where they would pile up and mark their purchases for better control until they were packed and transported to other markets preferably the same day. While Bunyore potters attending the market at Mbale dominate the southern part of the pot-market, they do not mix with Maragoli potters who display their ware at the northern end; at Oyugis we

someone who buys pots at the market and/or in big quantities directly from the producer and conduct regional and long distance trade.

³²² Personal statement of Rose A. (7/1/97)

³²³ While between 11 and 13 people were actively trading pots at Eldoret in late 1994, their number had reduced by almost 50 % after a fierce fire destroyed their stocks in January 1995 leaving some without adequate trading capital to restock while other were lucky to have had financial reserves at their disposal or who could borrow money to slowly regain a sound economic footing.

found the potters from Kanyaluo, who have to use public means to reach the market, displaying and selling their wares right next to the bus stand, while potters who live in the close vicinity of Oguysis, and transport their pots as head loads to the market, were allocated a separate display area away from the bus stand and central market. At Luanda, Luo potters who dominate the market scene had specialised in cooking pots while potters of Luyia origin supplied the market with large sized water-pots.

Out of convenience, wholesale and bulk purchases at weekly market days often take place in the close vicinity of public transport facilities for easy handling and transportation while retail trade and individual purchase takes place at the market itself. When selling the pots outside the market the potters are able to compensate for any wholesale discount given to a trader by avoiding paying the otherwise applicable market fee imposed by the market authorities upon entering the market. At Luanda Market, for example, I found myself waiting for the potters for hours before spotting the first one arriving with just a few pots of rather poor quality. Investigating the cause for the late arrival and the poor quality of the pots offered for sale to the local community I found out that some traders had rented a store just outside the market in a strategic location next to the main road where many potters would stop before proceeding to the market. At the store the potters were awaited by traders who carefully selected the pots they had ordered and/or wanted before the potters took the remaining ones for sale at the market.

The specialisation and diversification of the potter's trade in Kenya has been nurtured by an increasing multiplicity of the buying public and a growing regional and national demand which facilitated an increase in production and sales in areas with high pottery activities and a favourable infrastructure and contributed to the rise of regional distribution centres such as the markets at Eldoret, Mbale³²⁴, Kakamega, Kisumu, Luanda³²⁵ and Oyugis. At other places where expatriates and tourists frequently attend markets looking for pottery items, one will find permanent market dealers who have specialised on the sales of decorative items to attract them. Within the municipal market hall at Kakamega, for example, market dealers sell a broad range of decorative and utilitarian items to a higher price than realised at the weekly market which takes place in the open. As a result inter-market traders and local consumers do not attend the municipal market for pots but buy from the many potters and traders who sell their wares, predominantly cooking and water pots, at the weekly market. At Kisumu, the provincial capital of Nyanza Province, the market scene is even more diversified and specialised in:

- small sized decorative items being sold at a craft shop in town which attracts tourists and a few expatriates; and
- permanent pot traders who have specialised in planters and the occasional sales of decorative items, water or cooking pots, total ten in all, with five displaying pots opposite the market hall, four along the main road and one right next to the market

³²⁴ On 3/3/95 I counted roughly 210 people carrying more than 700 pots to the market between 7.30 a.m. and 10.30 a.m. not including 150 to 200 pots which had already been bought in the early morning hours and the many that entered the market after 10.30 a.m.

³²⁵ On 30/3/95 the number of pots displayed at the market itself exceeded 300 excluding all those which had already been sold to traders before entering the market.

entrance³²⁶. Some of them have extended their sales to flowers and ornamental plants which they either grow themselves or buy from those who do, to attract more customers and to utilise both the space allocated to them by the Kisumu Municipality and their time spent attending to the sales more efficiently;

- weekly market at Kibuye/Kisumu is attended by potters, local consumers, low income groups and those traders who buy traditional cooking or water pots as well as clay liners for resale in small quantities.

While the weekly markets cater and respond to the needs and demands of the local community and provide a marketing opportunity even to those who attend to the craft only occasionally³²⁷, suppliers and commercial dealers generally try to establish permanent relations to a limited number of producers and/or suppliers in order to retain the same quality, effect innovation and change in designs if necessary and be ensured of a reliable supply. To them, the weekly market days however, provide a convenient environment to meet and do business with the producers.

10.2.2 Sector activists: Their economic and social networks

Among those trading with pottery ware in Kenya one can differentiate between:

1. *People*, who either attend to pot-making on an individual basis and/or employ other people to assist them. The latter was a typical phenomenon among Luyia potters that I met at Ilesi Village, Mbale and Kakamega market. Women and men, both potters and non-potters, who employ skilled potters and casuals to work for them in order to increase production and sales could be found.
2. *Potters*, who buy pots from fellow potters residing in their neighbourhood to supplement their own production and economise their trips to the market. Susan O.A., a Luo potter belonging to a homestead with 4 female potters at Karachuonyo, for example, buys pots from her two mothers-in-law and other potters living at Katuola for sale at Homa Bay Market. By doing so she follows a long tradition of pot-trading in the region. At Omboga I met another Luo potter, Perez O., who buys pots from her fellow potters at Kanyaluo, East Karachuonyo Location, for sale at Oyugis Market.
3. *Local traders*, who live in the vicinity of potters and have specialised in pot-trade. Local pot-traders are a common feature among the Luo and Luyia of Kenya. At Kakamega, for example, I met a number of Luyia traders who reside in pot-making communities and have specialised in the pot-trade, thereby enabling their fellow villagers to concentrate on the production of pots without having to bother about their marketing. A female trader from Temesi Village, for example, told me that she goes to the potters' homes and selects the pots she buys for resale at Mbale or

³²⁶ According to Rose A. (7/1/97) the latter was allowed to stay at the market because unlike the other nine traders he started selling pots at the Kisumu Municipal Market as early as in the mid 1970s.

³²⁷ At the Oyugis market (10/11/95), for example, I met a woman who was born and raised at Oyugis where she learned the craft from her mother before she got married to a man from Tanzania and abandoned the craft, as no potting clay could be found at her new place of residence. However, on the occasion of visiting her family at Oyugis she was able to generate money for her journey and stay by moulding and selling pots at the weekly market.

Kakamega. At Kisumu I talked to a number of local traders, among them Rose A. from Nyamasaria and another Luo woman trading pots from Siaya, her home area. Rose A., who grew up in Nyamasaria, had inherited the business from her father, Jaffeth R., after his death. After her husband was faced with unemployment, he joined his wife and now takes care of the sales when Rose A. follows up on or collects orders. The late Jaffeth R. had been one of the first three men who started to trade pottery on a commercial scale at Kisumu in the 1970s. While Jaffeth R. introduced his daughter to the trade when she was only a school girl, another one of them abandoned the business soon after and the last one is still selling pots at the Kisumu Municipal Market. This division of labour ties the potter to the trader as he/she is often mediating the customer demand and thereby acting, not only as a merchant, but also as an innovation agent who is facilitating the producer with necessary market information and access to a inter-regional marketing network.

4. *Inter-market traders*, like those at Eldoret, who have established a pot-trade between regions with high pottery production and those without any at all. Inter-market traders generally buy pots where they are plentiful, like at Luanda, Mbale, Kakamega and Oyugis, and sell them at markets and cities, such as Keroka, Eldoret, Kapsabet, Kisii, Kericho, Nakuru and Nairobi, where none, or not enough pots, to satisfy the demand are being produced locally. In line with the prevailing gender involvement in the craft I did not meet any Luo man trading or hawking pots between towns in western Kenya except the ones at Kisumu who maintain permanent ›market stalls‹ while Luyia men have no problems in identifying themselves with pot-trading. At Mbale Market I met two Luyia men trading pots in large quantities, among them Joseph A. from Eldoret. Investigating the underlying reason why more women than men engage in trading rather small quantities of pots I found money to be the prime limiting factor in the case of women, while the male traders I talked to had the advantage of having more working capital at their disposal, and therefore tended to concentrate on bulk sales to shops and other market dealers instead of hawking their purchases at weekly markets.
5. *Commodity traders*, like those from Luanda or Keroka, who trade goods in demand between ›A‹ and ›B‹ without specialising in pot-trade alone. Unlike inter-market traders who concentrate on pottery, commodity traders facilitate an inter-market or inter-regional trade with a broader variety of goods. At Oyugis, for example, I met a woman from Keroka who told me that she attends Kibuye Market on Sundays and the Oyugis Market on Fridays where she buys pots, baskets or other goods in exchange for maize, beans and finger millet she purchases at Keroka. As her main reason for engaging in trade was to earn some money, I asked her why she did not involve herself in trading second-hand clothes which is said to be a better ›money earner‹ than pots. She answered with a laugh and said that the determining reason was that she does not have a *shamba* of her own and was able to make use of an old tradition by trading pots against maize and other food stuffs. While most of those listed above tend to trading as their main economic activity and consequently their source of income, I met a number of women, among them Prisila A.³²⁸ and

³²⁸ Met and interviewed at Luanda market on 30/3/95

Damaris A.³²⁹, purchasing pots and other handicraft items on a limited scale which they would then forward to their daughters living in Nairobi for resale in the city.

6. *Suppliers*. While local and inter-market traders generally offer the potters a reliable and consistent trade connection, suppliers do work on orders received from merchants, shops and craft galleries or export dealers in Nairobi, Mombasa or Nakuru in irregular and often unpredictable succession. However, so called suppliers play an essential role in linking rural based producers whether they are scattered around a village, like at Ilesi, or loosely connected to a group like the Odago WG at Nyamasaria with the urban market. Like traders they act as innovation agents and communicate the urban demand. Direct trade with individual craftsmen and WGs residing in rural areas is often regarded as being too time consuming, unreliable and troublesome. As a result, exporters do prefer to deal with suppliers and leave the ordering and timely delivery of the order to them. Suppliers, like Rose A. from Kisumu or Mary from Ilesi, who live in the close vicinity of the potters utilise their familiarity with the local production environment and set-up and are therefore able to make optimal use of it and distribute the order accordingly. They further benefit from a close socio-economic network of people who not only know each other well but depend on each other for economic success and prosperity. In other cases where suppliers are not, or only loosely, connected to the producers, it is apparently a rather common occurrence that people place an order and never return to collect the pots; this has led to economic suffering among the potters as their capital is tied to the order. Where experienced, such behaviour undermined the willingness of rural potters to abandon local sales in favour of external orders.

While it is a widespread practise among commercial customers to reduce their own risks by agreeing on a fixed wholesale price for every pot delivered at their doorstep, the wholesale customer not only profits from the low wholesale price obtained by the local suppliers but furthermore leave the latter with the risk of breakage, untimely production and delivery which could result in the rejection of the order on delivery. Consequently many suppliers try to keep their own expenses down and bargain for the lowest purchasing price possible to make up for the risks taken and maximise their own profits.

7. *Market dealers, shopkeepers and gallerists*. Most urban market dealers do not invest their time in establishing direct links to rural producers but enjoy the services of those who are able to supply them with the goods at their doorstep. The latter could be suppliers as well as producers/producer groups like the urban based Jua Kali pottery enterprises, the Oriang' Pottery Women Group of Karachuonyo or potters from Ilesi who have organised themselves and are in a position to deliver their products to commercial market outlets which service the urban and tourist market.
8. *Export dealers, forwarders and ATOs etc.* The approach and interlinkage of exporters, forwarders and ATOs with the producers and market activists differ, as outlined under Chapter 7.2.3. While international ATOs generally establish a direct

³²⁹ Damaris A. was the chairlady of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group between 1979 and 1992.

link to the producers and/or ATOs on national level in order to cut the marketing chain short and secure a higher profit margin for the producer, commercial pottery and handicraft dealers often do not even know the producers themselves, with the exemption of those potters who are well organised and deliver their goods directly to them.

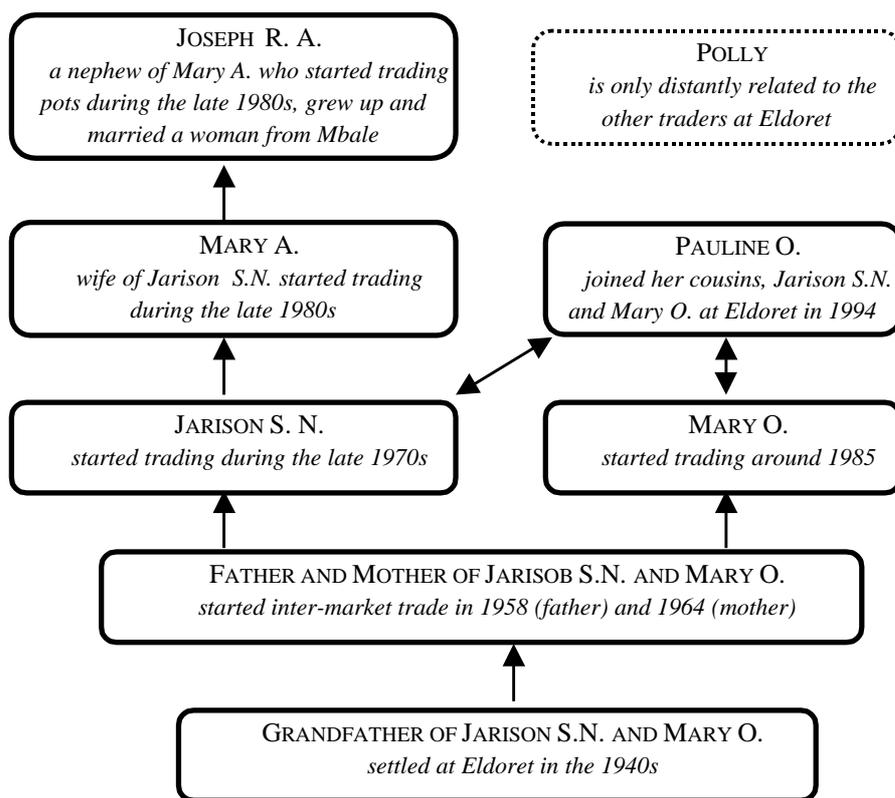
In order to follow the marketing chain from the producer, via the local market to distant market outlets and distribution centres, I followed an invitation of Joseph A. to visit him at Eldoret where he lives and trades the bulk of the pots he buys at Mbale and Luanda. On my arrival I was well received by all six traders present at Eldoret, most of whom I had seen but not spoken to at Mbale before. During my stay and the discussions held with the traders selling pots, it surfaced that they are all related to one another with their family roots going back to Vihiga District, Bunyore Division. While pot-making is widely spread in Vihiga District the traders at Eldoret follow a family tradition as they originate from an area where people concentrate on farming and trading to make a living³³⁰.

Jarison N.'s and Mary O.'s grandfather was a tailor who left his rural home and moved to Eldoret in the 1940s in search for a job and a decent income. In the early 1950s, when more and more tailors settled in Eldoret, he tried to supplement his declining income by trading papyrus mats which he bought at Bondo, his home. As transport was very cheap at the time he soon discovered that trading mats, baskets and other goods was financially more rewarding than the work as a tailor was. In his search for valuable merchandise he travelled as far as Uganda where he bought baskets for resale at Eldoret/Kenya. While he had lived the life of a migrant worker his family had remained at his rural home at Bondo until 1958/59 when he called on his eldest son to assist and join him at Eldoret after he had finished his primary school education. The son settled permanently in Eldoret and became an inter-market trader like his father. However, it was Jarison S.N.'s mother who established the regional trade with pottery from Mbale, Kakamega and Luanda in 1964 after joining her husband in Eldoret. In keeping with the family tradition they passed on their trade connections and experiences to their children (5 boys and 2 girls) once they were old enough. While Jarison S.N. grew up and went to school in an urban environment at Eldoret, his sister, Mary O., was raised at their rural home in Bondo.

Figure 4 illustrates the trade and family line of the above mentioned Luyia traders who have been conducting inter-market trade with pottery ware from Mbale, Kakamega and Luanda for three generations:

³³⁰ Personal statement of Mary O. (31/3/95)

Figure 4: Family line of Luyia pot-traders at Eldoret



While Mary O. got married to a man from Eldoret who now works in Nairobi as a casual and comes home on an irregular basis, Jarison S.N. married Mary A. from Kakamega in 1985 and settled with her at Eldoret. After giving birth to twins only one year later, Mary A. started trading with paraffin, *omena*³³¹ and *sukuma-wiki*³³² at the local market in 1986 until the twins had grown up a bit and she had generated enough money to engage herself in inter-market trading. Meeting the couple in 1995 I got the impression that they were very comfortable with their economic performance and able to raise and educate their four children. While she was concentrating on the sales of pots he was trading mats and together they had engaged in assembling and selling KCJs.

Pauline O. came to Eldoret in September 1994 after she got divorced from her husband. Remaining with two children she decided to join her cousins, Jarison N. and Mary O., at Eldoret. Asking her whether she had gathered any trading experience before, she told me that she had been running two *hotelis* at Nairobi and selling second hand clothes while being married. It was only after her divorce that she started

³³¹ *Omena* – Dholuo word for small sun dried fishes

³³² *Sukuma-wiki* – a local cabbage (literally *to push the week*)

to engage herself in trading pots like her cousin since the money she was left with was too little to buy second hand clothes but enough to get her started in the pot-trade.

Joseph A. was born and raised at Mbale. Since employment opportunities are scarce in Kenya he wasn't able to secure a job for himself and engaged in trading after *tarmacing* for some years in 1986. Unlike Mary O., who trades pots in large quantities like Joseph A., the latter has diversified his trade activities to include *jerricans*³³³, plastic and metal basins and frying pans besides pots. Having been raised at Mbale himself and having married a potter's daughter from Mbale Joseph A. is familiar and well connected to the potter's scene, with his mother actively supporting him, following up on orders, purchasing and packing pots during market days at Mbale and his wife taking care of the sales at Eldoret whenever he is away organising new stocks and orders.

The case studies described under Chapter 11 will show that close family ties and social networks as just described have also contributed to the growth of the urban based Jua Kali pottery sector.

10.3 Portrait of a diminishing craft tradition – Pottery activities among the Meru of Kenya: A case study in its own right

As already mentioned, apart from studying the growth and economic performance of the potter's craft in western Kenya and Nairobi, where it is experiencing its activity peaks, I was eager to investigate the development of the potter's craft in a region where the craft is facing slow extinction.

The following occasions contributed to the choice of the potter's craft among the Meru people in Eastern Province: (1) While interviewing Mr. Mwitari and Mr. Awimbo of KIRDI (17.03.95) I had learned about a place in Mitunguu, Tharaka Nithi District, where pots were being made. Mr. Mwitari, a Meru himself, enflamed my interest as he told me that, to his knowledge pottery production among the Meru not only customarily but even today was restricted to some few specialists who mould and fire their pots at a hidden place away from any human habitation; (2) During the 1990s I had witnessed³³⁴ that Luo and Luyia pots had penetrated the market at Meru and were being sold at the road side or near the bus stand alongside Meru pots being sold at local markets.

10.3.1 The field work

In preparation of the planned field work among the Meru of Kenya I had gathered and studied all information available on Meru pottery, had searched the database of the WG census for names and addresses of WGs in Meru and Tharaka Nithi District who practice pottery³³⁵, had studied the answers and information received from the DSDO

³³³ Jerrican = plastic water containers

³³⁴ I had been visiting Meru and passed through the town on a number of different occasions during my prolonged stay in Kenya.

³³⁵ Ashley, another American scholar, who was conducting a random survey among WGs in Meru District in 1995, informed me that she hadn't come across a single WG who attended to pottery.

of Tharaka Nithi District and had tried rather unsuccessfully to make an appointment with the DSDO in Meru prior to my departure from Nairobi, as he had not returned the questionnaire posted to him. What made the fieldwork among the Meru a success was the generous assistance received from an American researcher, Lynn T., whom I mentioned before. Lynn had stayed in Meru for some time in 1993 and 1995 and was able to connect me to people who knew the area and the Meru culture even better than herself. Lynn introduced me to her research assistance, Rosemary M., who willingly agreed to extend her services to me for an agreed period of time. Since I did not speak ›Kimeru‹, the local vernacular, I could not have done any meaningful research without a well-trained research assistance like Rosemary.

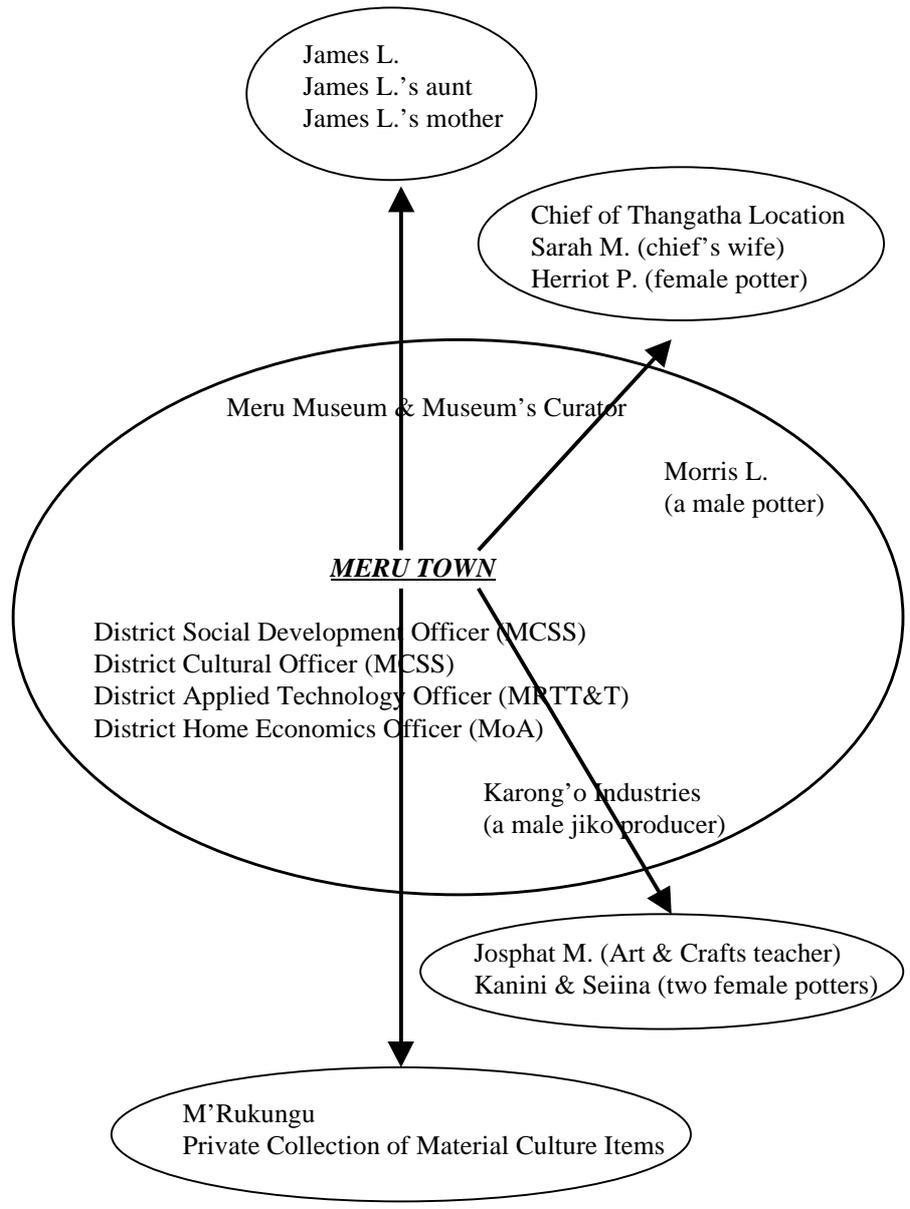
Prior to the field work in Meru I had met with Lynn a number of times to discuss my objectives and the type of information and data I was looking for which enabled her to identify, locate and alert people who would be worthwhile to talk to. Among others she introduced me (1) to Paul G., an American sociologist who has been conducting various surveys among the Meru of Kenya and has been living in Meru Town for many years; (2) to James L., a retired Secondary School headmaster, who was referred to me as a very knowledgeable man with regard to Meru customs and traditions by both Paul G. and Lynn T.. Lynn furthermore informed me about (3) the private collection of Meru material culture exhibits of M'Rukungu and introduced me (4) to the museum curator of the Meru Museum, the only permanent market outlet for pottery ware in Meru (WERE and WANDIBBA (eds.) 1988:153).

In line with the progressive design and nature of this field study the people met and interviewed in the Meru town and environs will be mentioned and introduced in timely succession. I started my field work in Meru with an official visit to the district administration where I met with the DATO and the DHEO; I failed to talk to the DSDO on the same day but managed to book an appointment with him for August 11, 1995.

<i>Mr. Njoroge</i>	District Applied Technology Officer (DATO) – being in charge of Jua Kali activities in the District, Ministry of Research Technical Training and Technology
<i>Beatrice K.</i>	acting District Home Economic Officer (DHEO), Ministry of Agriculture,
<i>Joseph M.</i>	District Cultural Officer (DCO), Ministry of Culture and Social Services

While the DATO told me that apart from having visited Karong'o Industries and a male potter of Luyia origin who had settled in Meru not long ago he had never had anything to do with potters, he advised me talk to the DHEO who to his knowledge had been working closely with potters in the area as they have been actively involved in the promotion and distribution of energy saving *jikos* on district level. While the acting DHEO confirmed the involvement of the Home Economics Department in the promotion campaign of improved stoves, she stressed that their department was not paying any attention to potters and the potter's craft in its own right.

Figure 5: Places and people visited during my fieldwork among the Meru of Kenya (08.08.95 – 13.08.95)



As the DSDO, whom I met on August 8, 1995, was not able to comment on the potter's trade in the district – not being a Meru himself – and had been posted to the district only recently, he instructed me to see the District Cultural Officer to whom he had forwarded my questionnaire. To my notion the DCO, however, had a very limited knowledge about the potter's craft in the district and was not of much help though he had answered my questionnaire prior to our conversation.

Festus K. a former teacher who ventured into jiko-liner production in the 1980s

Having been to Meru before, I knew of Karong'o Industries, the only pottery workshop in Meru Town. Since the workshop was known for its jiko production I had first visited it while familiarising myself with jiko projects in various parts of Kenya in 1990. While I had met and talked to a son of Festus K. in 1990 I met only the 68-year-old Festus K. on my return visit in August 1995. While talking to him I took notes which were later integrated in a compulsory protocol on my fieldwork among the Meru in August 1995.

Eager to follow up on the information provided by Mr. Mwitari of KIRDI, I left Meru Town on the afternoon of August 9, 1995 with the view to locating and, if possible, meeting and talking to potters at Mitunguu. Since I had only a rough idea of where to start with the search we (I was accompanied by Rosemary) stopped at Nkubu where the road leading to Mitunguu turns off the main road. While asking people at Nkubu about the whereabouts of active potters in the area we were lucky to meet Josphat M., a primary school teacher, who knew some potters at Gitie Sublocation whom he had visited with his pupils during ›Art and Craft‹ lessons. Since he was interested in my research and had nothing more exciting to do while enjoying his holidays (as he himself stated) he decided to accompany us and direct us to the potter's place of work. As we were told this place was completely hidden behind bushes and far away from any human habitation about 30 minutes walk from the nearest road where we had to park the car.

Josphat M. a primary school ›Art and Crafts‹ teacher at Muchia Boarding School³³⁶, Meru District

Kanini a 60 year old female Meru potter

Seiina a 45 year old female Meru potter

As we approached the bushes we made ourselves known and were thereafter welcomed by two female potters, Kanini and Seiina, who remembered the teacher from his previous visits. Penetrating the bush I was surprised to find a number of small round grass thatched shelters for pots to dry next to a riverbed from where the potters excavated the clay and collected the sand. Although they had welcomed us they were not willing to answer any of my questions before being assured that they would be given some money to buy sugar and tea at the end of the day. Thereafter they were very talkative and demonstrated and explained every working step. In accordance with the situation the interview was conducted in an unstructured open manner, allowing the

³³⁶ Muchia Boarding School is an old Missionary School and still managed by the Diocese.

potters to freely express themselves, their views and experiences while continuing with their work. The questionnaire which I had prepared and hoped to be able to test during this trip was, however, only used to countercheck, in the end, whether or not we had tackled all issues of interest. As the potters were illiterate and spoke only ›Kimeru‹ it was necessary to translate everything that was said. The translation was done mainly by Rosemary while the teacher interfered from time to time and started talking to the potters in *Kimeru* often leaving me without any translation or explanation. Nevertheless, comments made by the teacher, which were not translated at the time, were captured by the tape as I was recording the interview that was later transcribed by Rosemary. To be able to move around more freely and take some photos without having to concentrate on the recording I had handed over the cassette recorder to my research assistant after replacing the first cassette. For unknown reasons this, unfortunately, left me with an empty second tape. Since I realised the misfortune soon after we had left Gitie Sublocation I wrote a ›memory protocol‹ the same evening which I later confirmed with Rosemary. In the course of the interview the potters had told us about a development project which was funded by a Canadian organisation and located at the Gitie Multipurpose Hall. The project, which had apparently been operational between 1990 and 1993, aimed at introducing new production techniques in order to uplift the standard of pottery production in the area. Similar to many other places mentioned in this study, the only remains were a few poorly thrown and fired pots, a simple kick-wheel and a small wood fired pottery kiln which had been left to rot.

The following day, on August 10, 1995, Paul G. accompanied us (Lynn, Rosemary and myself) to Kunati a small village far in the interior of Tigania East Division, Tharaka Nithi District and hardly accessible with my small 4-wheel drive vehicle. On the way to Kunati we passed through Mitinduri Location where I knew of a WG which have been trained in the production of improved stoves in the late 1980s. We managed to locate the group and talk to one of its members but found that they were no longer producing *jikos*. The young woman we talked to informed us that the group had given up shortly after the project was phased out due to severe disagreements with the Diocese who had offered free workshop facilities to the project. While she knew some potters living in the neighbourhood she said that they were attending a funeral and therefore not available for comments or interviews. Heading for Kunati we thereafter continued our journey.

Chief of Thangatha Location, *Isaiah M.* and his wife, *Sarah M.*:
Harriet P. an approximately 40 year old female Meru potter

Having reached Tigania Division we called on the chief of Thangatha Location, Isaiah M., who was well known to Paul G.. Despite the fact that the chief was just on his way to chair a community meeting when we arrived, he welcomed us and listened to our brief introduction before he proceeded. Being in favour of the research he not only asked his wife to accompany us, but also sent a potter, whom he found at the meeting, to our assistance. The potter, Harriet P., invited us to her home where she usually attends to pot making as she collects her clay from a nearby source. Unlike potters at Gitie Sublocation, potters in Thangatha Location no longer operated at a remote and

hidden place away from human habitation. While Harriet P. was explaining every single working step as she demonstrated the craft to us, I was taking photos and asking her questions about her own career as a potter and the development the potter's craft had taken in Thangatha Location. While I noted down some of the observations made and some statements which seemed to be of greater importance the entire interview was recorded and later transcribed by Rosemary. During and after the interview Sarah M., a trained primary school teacher herself, provided valuable background information.

Before visiting Morris L., an Isukha potter who had established a workshop in Meru, I paid a visit to the Meru Museum to assess the pot display at the Museum Shop the following day.

*Morris L.*³³⁷ a male Isukha potter

While keeping my eyes open for any pots on display in Meru I spotted Morris L. as he was selling his pots to a trader running a permanent market stall at the main road. After introducing myself to Morris L., he invited me over to his workshop and we agreed on a particular day and time. With the visit and interview being prearranged I was now in a position to apply and test the questionnaire I had drafted in preparation of this field study. However, I soon realised that the questionnaire was too technically oriented and left important questions concerning the socio-economic background of the respondent unanswered. In consequence I amended the questionnaire for future use. Since Morris L. spoke English no translator was required. As my car was parked outside the workshop, where the interview was conducted, spectators came to see who was spending so much time within the small workshop. However, after greeting us they did not interfere with the interview. At the end of my visit Morris L. requested that I take some photos and I bought an all-clay jiko and some pots to show my appreciation and this turned the day into a success not only for myself but for Morris too. While filling in the questionnaire the interview was recorded to ensure that all information was captured.

James L. former Secondary School headmaster (12.08.95).

Jennifer C. James L.'s aunt (approximately 68 years old)

Elisabeth K. James L.'s mother (approximately 70 years old)

Since James L. could not be reached over the phone I just followed the directions given to me and approached his home. Luckily we (I was accompanied by Rosemary) found him at home. Since we had been sent by Paul G. and Lynn T. he welcomed us and expressed his willingness to assist. After talking to him for a short while he called upon his aunt, an old Meru women, to tell us more about the Meru customs with regard to pottery production and pottery ware as such. The aunt as well as Laiboni's mother

³³⁷ Morris L. grew up and received his initial pottery training at Ilesi, has worked in Nairobi and moved to Meru after having been hired by a Meru businessman who was setting up a stove production and pottery unit. When the business failed in 1993 Morris L. decided to stay at Meru and set-up a workshop of his own. He called on his younger brothers to come and join him while his own family, wife and children, live at Ilesi (11.8.95).

were more suspicious and restrained than James L. himself and it required his help and explanations to persuade them to talk to us about Meru pots and potters and the customs, traditional beliefs, restrictions and taboos attached to them. The interviews were recorded and translated by Rosemary.

M'Rukunga entertaining a private collection of Meru material cultural objects at his home, Meru District

As mentioned before Lynn T. had told me about the private museum of M'Rukunga in Meru District and gave me directions to find him. M'Rukunga is approximately 65–68 years old and inherited a collection of traditional Meru artefacts from his father. While searching for the way to M'Rukunga's home I met a nephew of M'Rukunga, Timothy K., who willingly accompanied me to his uncle's home and translated whenever necessary. The notes I took during the interview are reflected in a summary protocol of my findings on Meru pottery traditions.

10.3.2 *Meru pottery: Customs and contemporary performance of the craft*

The Meru people, who are divided into nine tribes, belong to Kenya's Highland Bantus who have inhabited the central highland east of Mt. Kenya since the 18th Century (BROWN 1977:8). According to SOMJEE³³⁸ and informants met during my field studies in August 1995 pots were being made by some specialised women, generally known as *asumbi* (pl.) and *mumbi* (sing.). In the past the *asumbi* just like black smiths and people who were burying the dead, were feared and respected. At the same time (JAMES L. – 12/8/95), they were avoided by ordinary Meru people and at times looked down upon (M'RUKUNGU – 11/8/95). Elisabeth K., a 70 year old Meru woman, and her 68 year old sister vividly remembered and stressed that potters were perceived as a cast of their own and that no ordinary Meru could allow his son to marry a woman from a potter's clan. Strong traditional beliefs and spiritual powers were even attributed to the pots themselves. It was, for example, believed that if a woman, carrying a new pot on her back, was to cross through a herd of livestock the animals would become disease-stricken or even die. As a product of mother earth, the pot was perceived as a symbol and source of life, cooking and/or storing the food needed to gain and maintain life-energy. According to JAMES L. (12/8/95), to intentionally destroy a pot was as bad as castrating a man or cutting a woman's breast. Nobody would even want to mention the incident. To break a pot intentionally would impose a strong curse on the one who did it which could only be lifted through a cleansing ceremony chosen by a respected witch doctor. If a married woman, for example, was to break a pot intentionally her husband would abandon her and nobody else would ever dare to remarry her (ELISABETH K. – 12/8/95). According to M'Rukungu these strong traditional beliefs were heavily opposed by Christianity and have caused the decline of the craft among Meru people as it was easier to adopt and adjust to alternative cooking vessels than to object to their own culture and taboos attached to Meru pottery. Despite the fact that nowadays active Meru potters have disassociated themselves from the traditional

³³⁸ See WERE and WANDIBBA (Eds.) (1988): Meru District. Socio-Cultural Profile

beliefs clay pots are still treated with a lot of respect for their inherent spiritual power. Out of fear for their own well being and livelihood Meru people store old pots in a safe place where nobody can harm and destroy them intentionally once they have stopped using them. While no elderly Meru would discard or throw away a pot this might have changed among younger people who no longer relate to traditional Meru customs.

The craft itself was traditionally practised at a hidden place away from any human habitation that was off limits for men and children and any non-potters³³⁹. As mentioned earlier, even in 1995, I found two female potters of Gitie Sublocation practising the craft at a place roughly 30 minutes walk away from the next rural access road, 500 m from the nearest homestead and well hidden behind a bush. Although the potters no longer believed that the presence of non-potters would be a threat to them, their work or the clay source itself they had left a bundle of firewood, which they had collected on their way to the potting site, in the middle of the small path leading to the same to inform everybody following the path that there were some potters at work. We, however, were informed and able to experience for ourselves that nowadays they welcome visitors at their place of work, whether they be school children who want to learn about the craft or visitors like ourselves.

We were to find out that the potters of Gitie Sublocation nowadays use the site out of convenience rather than as a customs as they find all raw materials and tools needed for the production of pots readily and freely available on site: clay, sand, water, leaves to cover the unfinished pots, flat stones for wedging the clay etc.. Instead of carrying the clay, sand and water over a long distance to their homes it was much more economical to produce the pots on site, sort out the good ones and leave the broken and damaged pots, which could neither be sold nor be of any use to themselves, behind.

Mitunguu and Gitie Sublocation were referred to as the main potting areas in Meru District. The two potters we met, tried to make us believe that their small potting site at Gankune, Gitie Sublocation, was frequented and used by about 100 women who are engaged in pot-making. Meanwhile the teacher who accompanied us said that he had never met more than 15 potters at any one day, and at Nkubu, their main market destination, the people told us that pots had become a rare feature over the years with fewer and fewer potters attending the market. It might, nevertheless, be true that about 100 women of Gitie Sublocation are knowledgeable in pottery production but the drying huts³⁴⁰ at the potting site, which did not exceed 10 in number and were said to belong to individual potters, would nurture the assumption that many potters have abandoned the craft more or less permanently.

At Kunati Sublocation, Tharaka Nithi District, we found a similar case. Harriet P., an approximately 40 year old Meru potter, whom we visited at Ikana Village, informed us that circa 30 years ago every woman of the village used to mould pots and sell them at nearby markets or from their home. Meanwhile the number of active potters had reduced to four: herself, her daughter and daughter-in-law and her sister-in-law. With

³³⁹ According to M'RUKUNGU (11/8/95) traditionally potters were untouchable while attending to clay. Whether they were excavating or preparing the clay, moulding or firing pots they had to undergo a cleansing ritual before interacting with other people.

³⁴⁰ small wooden and grass thatched drying shelters that could accommodate ca. 6 large sized pots at a time.

Kunati, like Mitunguu, being a very fertile area, cash crop production is high and has caused most other potters to abandon the craft in favour of paid work as agricultural labourers or of growing their own crops for sale if they have land to cultivate. Harriet P. and her sister, were both widowed and had too little land to cultivate to cater even for their own consumption which forced them to either work as casuals or to mould and sell pots. Since the number of potters supplying the local markets at Kunati, Mikinduri and Gacibine has reduced drastically, the few remaining potters, among them Harriet P., were able to realise an income that allowed them to send their children to school (primary school) and cater for the families needs. Harriet P. stressed that ›it is my livelihood and money I am looking for and I have no other option than to make pots to help myself!‹

In accordance with historical records all Meru potters met and interviewed in 1995 unanimously stated that pot-making was a seasonal activity, alternating with the agricultural peak seasons. While traditional beliefs once restricted pot-making to the agricultural off seasons Seiina, one of the potters met at Gitie Sublocation, made it clear that these taboos would no longer prevent a Meru potter from engaging herself in pot-making even during the agricultural peak seasons if she could find the time to and felt the need to do so. However, the fact that the dry spell between July and September is still referred to as the peak season for pot-making activities among Meru people leaves no doubt as to the decline of the craft in view of the poor productivity profile and market attendance of Meru potters during the month of August 1995.

The nature of the pottery ware produced by the central Bantu people, comprising of Meru, Embu, Kikuyu and Kamba, has contributed to the crafts poor economic performance among most central Bantu communities. All of them produce a similar type of purely utilitarian round-bottomed pottery, simple in shape, rough in fabric and texture, poorly fired and with little to no decoration (BROWN 1989:86) which never attracted a popular market recognition beyond its cultural boundaries, among foreigners or *Wazungus*. This is even true for Kamba pottery. Despite the fact that the craft is flourishing among some Kamba communities in Eastern Province, Kamba pottery is hardly ever to be seen at urban market displays in Nairobi or other cities outside the ›Kamba territory‹.

However, the decline of pottery production among the Meru themselves has allowed pottery ware from other regions and ethnic groups, pots which are not associated with Meru material culture and customs, to penetrate their markets. While HERRMANN (1988) reported of Kikuyu pots being sold to neighbouring Meru communities, Mr. Mwitari remembered that Kikuyu pots from Nyeri and Muranga were famous at Meru during the 1960s and 1970s. Due to increased trade activities and improved infrastructure and ways of transport, more and more pots from western Kenya finally found their way to the central highlands east of Mt. Kenya. Since the 1980s the Museum Shop at Meru reportedly offers Luyia pottery ware for sale³⁴¹. These pots and clay charcoal *jikos* originated, to my knowledge, from the museum at

³⁴¹ Also see SOMJEE (1988:153) in WERE and WANDIBBA (eds.) (1988): *Meru District. Socio-Cultural Profile*. Owing to the circumstance that the pots were being sold at the local museum at Meru, SOMJEE seemed to have mistaken Luyia water pots for traditional Meru pots.

Kitale³⁴². By 1995 Luyia pots had become a common feature in Meru and Maua town. These pots were at one time made by Morris L., an Isukha potter, who had been trained by his grandfather in Ilesi and had worked for M. Kinyanjui and Fabian L. in Nairobi, before he established his own little pottery enterprise in Kitale in the late 1980s. Unfortunately, Morris's stay in Kitale should not last long as he could not compete in price with pots offered for sale by inter-market traders who bought them cheaply at Mbale, Ilesi or Kakamega. Back at Ilesi Morris met a Meru businessman who toured the area during the early 1990s looking for a skilled potter who would be willing to work for him. Being without employment at the time Morris happily accepted and moved to Meru in 1993. Once in Meru where pots and potters had become a rare feature Morris L. decided to stay on and try his luck after his new employer had to close down his business operations. When I met Morris in 1995 he was running a small pottery enterprise at the Kaaga shopping centre just outside Meru's town-centre. The workshop comprised of not more than a wooden room of approximately 10 m². But, despite the fact that his enterprise was running at a rather humble pace and did not generate enough money to enable him to build a kiln or to invest in any other way, Morris L. stressed that pottery gave him the job satisfaction he was looking for. He said: »I like pottery so much. All I need, I use to get from this job« (Morris L. – 11/8/95). When asked whether he maintains any social or business contacts to Meru potters he said »No, not yet. I haven't met any so far.«

10.4 Flourishing pottery businesses: Comparative case studies

With the following clusters being identified in the course of the research:

1. rural (traditional) potters working on an individual basis at home
2. semi-commercial potters who have organised themselves into groups or started small and micro enterprises in the vicinity of their rural home
3. commercial pottery enterprises belonging to the urban informal sector
4. institutional and private ceramic workshops and industries belonging to the urban formal sector

I decided to intensify my studies around the gender participation and compare the rural and urban profile of the craft as well as the different stages of commercialisation and modernisation found. In consequence I narrowed down my sampling universe to three groups: (1) employees of small and medium scale formal sector pottery/ceramic enterprises in Nairobi; (2) Luo potters in Nyanza Province and (3) Isukha (Luyia) potters in Western Province and Nairobi. The underlying intention was to investigate and compare the socio-economic background of the different groups and clusters with each other. By doing so I not only embarked on the gender aspect involved in the development and structural changes of the potter's craft in Kenya, with Luo pottery being dominated by women and pottery production among the Isukha being dominated

³⁴² During the 1980s the curator of the Kitale Museum had employed a Luyia potter to lecture school classes and introduce visitors to Kenya's traditional crafts by producing pots on site which he thereafter distributed to other national museums in Kenya for sale in the museum shops (Personal statement of Ernest an Isukha potter I met and interviewed in Nairobi on 2/9/97).

by men, but also on the underlying socialisation, organisational and rural-urban differences.

Following the field trip to Meru and Tharaka Nithi District I realised that I had to decide on a common format to guide and narrow down the flow of information to those most relevant to my research or I would otherwise find myself overwhelmed by an unmanageable amount of information at the end. The questionnaire, which I had drafted prior to the trip to Meru and tested while interviewing Morris L. at Meru, was to be revised and adjusted accordingly. Questions regarding the raw-materials, tools and equipment in use, as well as those focusing on the type of products being made, could easily be tackled by mode of observation as most of the interviews would be conducted at the place of work while other issues such as professional career, change of working environment/employer and networking with other potters had to be integrated.

The amended questionnaire tackled the following topics:

- origin, family status and background of the potter
- educational status and professional career, exposure and work experience
- reason/motivation to engage in the potter's craft
- skill acquisition and type of training received
- felt short comings and training needs
- time allocated to pottery and money earned on a monthly average
- work allocation and organisational set-up within the various sectors/clusters
- traditional beliefs and restrictions connected to pottery and their impact on contemporary pottery production
- environmental perception of the potter's craft

The questionnaire, however, was not to be used in a formalised manner but was to be applied as an interview guideline to ensure that the information gathered would allow a qualitative comparison between respondents of the different clusters. In practise this meant that during the interviews I did not insist on following the questions in their proposed order but encouraged the potters to freely express their experience and knowledge on the various topics. This often led to haphazard progression through the questions to be answered.

Since my interest was directed towards the structural changes of the potter's craft in Kenya, a traditionally female dominated craft, I studied the development of the craft in the 20th Century with a strong gender perspective in mind. This became even more relevant as it surfaced that the female domination of the craft persisted in rural areas while it had been turned into a male dominated commercial activity in urban settings. With this in mind, I was able to further specify my area of research and focus on some selected groups, namely (1) potters living and working at and in the vicinity of Karachuonyo, predominantly female Luo potters who either work on an individual basis at home or form part of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group. The roots of active development assistance in Karachuonyo can be traced back to the late 1940s while the ongoing Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project was initiated in the early 1980s and reactivated after a dormant period in the 1990s with the objective being to raise the overall standard of living and foster the economic development and performance of the

pottery scene which emerged from Ileshi Village, Muchonye Sublocation in Kakamega District and managed to capture the urban informal pottery scene (Jua Kali potters) in the 1990s; and (3) the formal sector employees of different ethnic origin, who have been introduced to new technologies and products which are not rooted in Kenya's own culture but been introduced by foreign experts during the second half of the century.

Between August 1995 and February 1997, I interviewed 83 potters³⁴³, made up of 43 men and 40 women with 35 respondents³⁴⁴ working in Nairobi and 48³⁴⁵ living and working in rural areas.

	<i>No.</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Luo potters working at home	23	19 women and 4 men
Members of the Oriang Pottery WG	15	15 women
Isukha potters working at home	7	7 men
›Jua Kali Potters‹ working in Nairobi	12	12 men ³⁴⁶
Employees of pottery/ceramic workshops	23	3 women and 20 men
others ³⁴⁷	3	3 women

The following factors further contributed to the above mentioned selection: While Luos are busy moulding pots in 11 Kenyan districts I narrowed down my research to the Homa Bay District and Karachuonyo in particular – an area which prior to colonial days was already known for its fine pottery ware (OCHIENG 1987:64) and had also been recognised for its pottery ware during the colonial days under the rural industries promotion programme³⁴⁸. During the run-up to independence and the first free elections handicraft promotion had been identified as an appropriate tool to integrate the women of Karachuonyo, who attend to pottery in large numbers, into mainstream economic and political life under the motto ›Women in Development‹ during the early 1960s. Since then female potters have been promoted by well known Kenyan women leaders, such as Phoebe Asiyu the Karachuonyo Member of Parliament and first Kenyan Chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake as well as international development agencies. Despite the existence of a few male potters, Karachuonyo has remained an area where pottery production and trade is dominated by women and where, despite the availability of alternatives, traditional clay cooking and water pots still play a central role in the domestic life of the people.

³⁴³ 43 Luo, 20 Luyia, 12 Kikuyu, 6 Kamba, 1 Kalenjin and 1 Giriya pottery

³⁴⁴ 3 women and 32 men

³⁴⁵ 37 women and 11 men

³⁴⁶ 11 Luyia and 1 Kikuyu

³⁴⁷ These three potters comprise of two Kamba and one Giriya pottery whom I interviewed in order to amend my image of the craft among Kamba and Giriya communities. The information gathered during the interviews is not, however, reflected in the comparative analysis of the rural and urban pottery sector, Chapter 12.

³⁴⁸ See KNA:DC/KSM/1/32/4

In short, Karachuonyo is an area, which has hosted a number of development projects and programmes targeting pottery throughout the 20th Century. It is also home to numerous potters working on an individual basis at home, to potters who have been involved in jiko production and promotion programmes and to potters who reportedly have been chosen and invited to represent Kenya's rural craft scene at national festivals, exhibitions, handicraft promotion campaigns and other occasions.

While Karachuonyo had been known for its innovative male potters during the late 1940s and 1950s, potters who explored the floor of ›European crockery‹, these men had refused to team up with their female peers. In strong contrast to the male Luo potters of Karachuonyo who did not gain much socio-economic recognition during the second half of the century, men of Isukha origin explored the economic potential of the craft far beyond their local marketability. Unlike amongst the Luo and many other ethnic communities in Kenya, men's involvement in the potter's craft among the Isukha is not hampered by customary restrictions or a stringent gender division of work duties dividing the crafts into men's crafts and women's crafts. During the first half of the century, pottery production among the Isukha people was very low and they reportedly (WAGNER 1970) attended the Mbale market in order to purchase pots made by their Luo, Maragoli or Bunyore neighbours. Free of customary restrictions, the Isukha potters proved more innovative and entrepreneurial over the years.

The Isukha form one small sub-group of the Luyia ethnic community which has settled in Muchonye Sublocation, Shinyalu Location of Kakamega District, a few kilometre south of Kakamega Town. Like some Luo men at Karachuonyo Isukha men started to copy European crockery after having been exposed to the same. It was, however, Shamwama Vutakate Musa, who became known for successfully experimenting with new designs and pottery products during the 1930s. Unlike his Luo peers, he was very successful and turned pottery production into an acceptable profession among Isukha men. Following this initial breakthrough Isukha potters of Muchonye Sublocation have been addressed by and incorporated into development programmes targeting rural industries since the 1970s. As mentioned before the Ilesi Pottery, which is managed by Charles M., a son of Shamwama Vutakate Musa, was the first to be incorporated into the KCJ promotion programme during the early 1980s. As the public perception and economic status of the potter's craft experienced a major facelift and social upward migration, more and more young men ventured into the craft to make a living for themselves and their family. Since the 1990s Isukha potters have clearly played a dominant role in Kenya's urban pottery scene.

Studying the Luo potters on the one hand and the Isukha potters on the other, I was able to take a close look at popular development policies and programmes and to critically reflect on their gender imbalance and socio-economic impact over time as reflected in Kenya's contemporary pottery scene.

10.4.1 Ceramic & Pottery Industries in Nairobi – Formal Sector Employees

The 23 respondents of Kenya's formal pottery/ceramic sector were composed of 13 private sector employees and 10 employees of an urban-based community development project.

<i>a) Employees of Private Sector Enterprises</i>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Gender</u>
Kazuri Ltd.	6	5 men and 1 women
Clayworks Ltd.	3	3 men
Terra Ltd.	2	2 men
Bosmere Ltd.	2	2 men

<i>b) Employees of a Community Development Project</i>	<u>No.</u>	<u>Gender</u>
Jitegemea Pottery	10	8 men and 2 women

Before interviewing any of the employees at the various ceramic workshops I wanted to talk to the owner and/or manager of the workshop firstly with the intention of gathering information on the organisational set-up and history of the workshop and secondly of introducing myself and the scope of my research and asking for their permission to address and interview their employees. I found broad support for my research which once again could be attributed to the fact that I had been in the country for quite a long time and had been actively involved in the sector before beginning the research which added to my credibility. As Helen K. of Terra Ltd. put it 'if I would not know you, I would not agree to invest my time and resources in your research by answering your questions, showing you around and allowing my employees to be interviewed during their actual working time' (30.10.95). While interviewing all ten potters working at the Jitegemea Pottery, one of the oldest ceramic workshops in Kenya, I had to limit myself to a selected number of employees in the private sector.

On the following pages I will briefly introduce the workshops visited and the people interviewed as I explain the circumstances of the interviews.

10.4.1.1 Jitegemea Pottery

Mr. Kinyanjui Manager of the Eastleigh Community Centre, Jitegemea Pottery
Douwe H. Dutch ceramist – technical advisor to the pottery (1990–1994)
Ten potters all potters working at the Jitegemea Pottery in 1995

I first got to know about the Jitegemea Pottery at the Eastleigh Community Centre (ECC) in 1989 shortly after my arrival in Kenya. At the time their products were almost without competition dominating the sales-outlets in Nairobi. Between 1989 and 1997 I paid numerous visits to the ECC with the intention of meeting with Douwe H., a Dutch ceramic expert working at the Jitegemea Pottery between 1990 and 1994, for exchange of views, experiences and ideas, to buy ceramic ware and last but not least to interview the potters in the course of my field work. While visiting the pottery in 1993 I was surprised to find Grace A. working at the pottery, whom I had first met at Oriang' in 1989/90. Our good personal relationship was to be very instrumental in the

creation of an open and supportive atmosphere for my research. While I had interviewed the manager of the ECC and Douwe H. in 1993 on conducting the market survey for UNIDO, I just briefed them on my research before attending to the potters themselves in 1995. Unlike at Terra Ltd. or Kazuri Ltd., for example, the work at the Jitegemea Pottery is organised on a rotation basis which means that, despite the fact that every potter has his/her own place in the workshop, all of them can be found preparing clay, cleaning the workshop and attending to sales and packaging when the need arises. Since the Jitegemea Pottery was established in 1975 and represents one of the oldest ceramic workshops in Kenya, I did not want to limit my research to just a selected number of the potters but was eager to interview all of them in order to investigate the history of the workshop and its present structural set-up as well as the nature, educational background and composition of the employees. The 10 interviews were conducted on 5 different days between August and October 1995. The interview order was determined by the work schedule of the individual potter as I was eager not to interrupt the working process too much. In most cases the interview took place outside the workshop in the shade of a nearby tree which offered some privacy and enabled the respondents to express themselves freely.

In the course of 1995 and 1997, I honoured the invitations of 3 potters working at the centre, namely James O., Dismas O. and Anastasia M.: I visited them at their rural homes where they not only introduced me to their families but also to potters in the vicinity of their home or of their own family. This visits were fuelled with two objectives in mind: (1) I wanted to get a better view of the socio-economic background of these potters, migrant workers who's families live in the rural area far away from their place of work and (2) I wanted to study the level and type of interactions between rural and urban potters and find out how they relate to one another and whether or not there was an exchange of ideas and experience among them. The people that I met and talked to during these home visits are listed below under the names of the potters who invited me:

Anastazia M. – visited on September 16, 1995 at her parents' home in Kangundo, Machakos District

- Anna M., a Kamba woman selling the pots made by her mother at Tala market
- Grace N., a female Kamba potter living in Machakos District
- Loise N., a female Kamba potter living in Machakos District
- Josephine M., an old female Kamba potter and the mother of Grace N.

While Anna M. was a market trader at Tala, where we stopped briefly to assess the pots being sold at the market, the three other women listed above are Anastazia's relatives who, live about 20 minutes drive away from Kangundo.

James O. and Dismas O. – two step brothers whom I visited on two occasions, first in November 1995 and once again in January 1997 at their rural home in Migori District

- Sophia O., an approximately 65 year old female Luo potter living in Suba Division, Migori District
- Two old female Luo potters, two co-wives of *Mzee* Ogalo, who live at Rabuor Village in Suba Division, Migori District. While we met only two I was told that *Mzee* Ogalo is married to four wives, all of whom are potters.

10.4.1.2 Kazuri Ltd.

Lady S. Wood Founder and owner of Kazuri Ltd.

Five (male) potters working in the ceramic section of Kazuri Ltd.

One (female) potter supervising the ceramic beads production at Kazuri Ltd.

Following prior arrangements I met and interviewed Lady Wood, the founder of Kazuri Ltd., on October 14, 1995, in her office at Karen. While Kazuri Ltd. employs over 100 people in total I concentrated on the few trained potters working at the potter's wheel and did not interview the numerous women moulding, glazing and finishing ceramic beads and jewellery or those who were working in the clay preparation, casting or glazing section, most of whom had started as casuals and were trained on the job. In order not to interfere too much with the ongoing production process the interviews were conducted during lunch breaks. After introducing the scope and design of my research to the potters I started with the supervisor of the throwing section and thereafter interviewed the other three potters working at Kazuri Ltd. in October 1995. In order to find out more about the work in the beads department and the underlying reasons why the supervisor of the same, a trained female potter, had been transferred from the ceramic to the beads section I included her in my interviews. An additional interview was conducted after I had returned to the workshop to meet Mike C. in January 1997. The potter I interviewed in 1997 had studied ceramics at the RVIST and had joined Kazuri Ltd. only in 1996 since most of the potters interviewed in 1995 had left Kazuri Ltd. in the mean time. The decision to add another interview to the ones conducted in 1995 was fed by the desire to gain updated information on the performance of the ceramic department at the RVIST and on his experience in securing a job with a Diploma in Ceramic Technology. While attending to the questionnaire I encouraged the respondents to emphasise their own professional background and experience and tell me more about the various workshops they had worked for with the intention of amending my already existing knowledge of the same.

10.4.1.3 Clayworks Ltd.

I.K. Chege Production Manager at Clayworks Ltd.

Three potters working at the small pottery workshop at Clayworks Ltd.

After having visited Clayworks Ltd. on numerous occasions in 1993 I approached the production manager of the company at their exhibition stand during the 1995 Nairobi Show, introduced my present research project and expressed my interest in interviewing the potters working at the small pottery workshop of the company. He freely agreed and introduced me to three potters when I went to see him at Clayworks Ltd. on October 14, 1995. After explaining the reason for my interest and my visit to the potters on site, I carried out all three interviews the same day.

10.4.1.4 Terra Ltd.

<i>Helen K.</i>	Owner and manager of Terra Ltd.
<i>Richard K.</i>	Founder of Jerri International Ltd. and husband of H. Kimani
<i>Two male potters</i>	the supervisor of the pottery/terracotta section and the supervisor of the ceramic section

I first met and interviewed Helen K. in 1993 while conducting a market survey. Between 1993 and 1995 I observed the development and growth of Terra Ltd. with interest before the contact to Helen K. intensified after interviewing her for a second time on October 30, 1995. Whenever I spoke to her she was not only extremely open but proved very knowledgeable with regard to the urban development of the sector since the 1980s. Throughout 1996 and 1997 we kept on meeting each other on different occasions, which allowed us to further discuss our views and experiences. With Helen K. being the only non-White or Asian running a private sector ceramic workshop in Nairobi, her observations and experiences became even more important to me. We met during the following occasions: at a seminar marking the end of the Product Development and Design Programme (1996); during the short term consultancy of Mike C. (1997) and during my visits to the workshop. However, after completion of the interview in October 1995 she pointed out the key-players in her workshop and briefed me on their professional background, level of responsibility and work-duties, showed me around the workshop premises and introduced me to her employees as well as to three ceramic students of BIFA who were on industrial attachment. In limiting myself to interviewing only the head of the pottery and the head of the ceramic section I took advantage of the quiet place within the workshop premises which Helen K. had arranged for me so that the interviews could be conducted without any interference. However, as I had to concentrate on the key figures of the two workshops I did not restrict myself to the questionnaire but encouraged the respondents to tell me more about their own personal backgrounds as potters, their work mates and the workshop set-up at Terra Ltd. as a whole.

10.4.1.5 Bosmere Ltd.

<i>Mr. Steven M.</i>	Owner of Bosmere Ltd.
<i>Two potters</i>	do all the throwing at Bosmere Ltd.

I had come across Steven M. and his wife at a number of craft fairs in Nairobi where they displayed and sold their ceramic ware. When I first spent time talking to Mrs. M. in 1993 they had just taken over the ceramic workshop from some British friends who had started it but later decided to stop their operations in Kenya and return to the UK. Following prior arrangements I interviewed Steven M. at the workshop premises of Bosmere Ltd. in Karen on November 14, 1996 and with his permission made arrangements with the two potters working for him. Unlike at other workshops where, despite my interruption, the employees would retain their usual salary, the situation at Bosmere Ltd. was quite different since the potters were paid a rate per piece. The fact that I was a potter myself and was able to address one of them in his mother tongue,

Dholuo, however, once again attributed to a welcoming atmosphere. As the workshop was experiencing regular power cuts that stopped the potters from throwing it was easy to agree on a convenient date and time for the interviews. Although the electricity had not been rationed on the particular day of my return the potters asked me to carry on with the research under the condition that they did not have to interrupt their work which seemed reasonable to me.

10.4.2 *Luo potters of Nyanza Province: A female dominated scene*

During the field studies among Luo potters I was eager to examine the relationship and differences between those working on an individual basis at home and those who had participated in past and/or ongoing development projects. I therefore decided to interview members of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group (OPWG) and other Luo potters living in the same location who worked at home. In November 1995 I conducted a total of 37 semi- structured interviews while I spoke to many more Luo potters in the course of the fieldwork. Among those interviewed were 15 members of the OPWG plus 5 individual potters (2 men and 3 women) living in Oriang', 4 female potters representing two generations of one homestead in Katuola and 4 potters (3 women and 1 man) belonging to a female headed family in Kovuor and 9 potters living and working in Oyugis. Selection criteria leading to the individual interviews and the total number of 37 interviews being conducted at the time are specified hereafter.

10.4.2.1 The Oriang' Pottery Women Group

Having worked with Luo potters of Karachuonyo between 1990 and 1993 and having visited the area on a regular basis until 1996 enabled me to study the development of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group and its members as well as the development of the potter's craft in the region over a period of 7 years. Apart from visiting and talking to the potters themselves, I sometimes met with Carmen B., my successor on the job.

Carmen B. German ceramist and project co-ordinator of Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project between 1993 and 1997

On the occasion of a regional UNIFEM Conference at Harare/Zimbabwe in May 1993, Felgona A., who was representing the OPWG, was asked to present a brief history of the group. Remembering the story compiled by Felgona A. in 1993 it seemed to be a good idea to ask some other group members to write down their own personal views and stories of being a potter and a member of the OPWG. While the group consisted of 53 women at the time, I decided to restrict this exercise just to the 16 experienced potters. After handing out some exercise books on March 10, 1995, I was able to collect 10 personal stories a month later, on April 12, 1995. Except for one, all stories were written in ›*Dholuo*‹ either by the potter or by a literate family member, in case the potter was illiterate herself. It has to be emphasised that most of the women are illiterate or semi-literate which is reflected in the length of the written stories as the potters were by no means used to producing a written report. The stories covered between 1 and 5 pages and differed strongly in quality and content. While some women reflected on their career as potters, others only portrayed the good and bad

aspects of pottery production and/or the OPWG in particular. The short stories, however, threw a light on the concepts and issues they connect to pottery production, on their views and experiences. Among those who had written a story were some who had started potting during the 1940s when pots were still subject to barter trade and exchanged with sorghum instead of sold for money³⁴⁹, and another three who had actively participated in the 1960's WiD movement which was sparked off by Martha M., the wife of the late chief. Yet another two had first started potting in 1989 when the OPWG was reactivated. Although I speak *Dholuo* quite well I decided to ask Martin Ouko to translate the stories for me as I was not sure of my ability to capture every single detail. Unfortunately, he provided me with summaries rather than transcriptions of the stories at first and had to repeat the exercise a second time. The stories were very helpful in making a choice between the many members of the OPWG to be included in the November 1995 interview session.

Before commencing on an intensive interview session in November 1995 I assembled the OPWG and explained the background, scope and objectives of my research. As a result the group members made valuable comments and suggestions on whom to interview in the community and in the group itself.

The 15 members of the OPWG being interviewed were between 33 and 68 years of age. As already documented by the short personal stories, the women do not share a common background as potters. In order to cover the whole spectrum of members I had to be very particular in the selection of the women to be interviewed. In the end I interviewed 6 members who had a long standing experience in pottery production prior to joining the group and were between 37 and 68 years old, 3 who had learned the craft soon after the group was reactivated in 1989/90 aged between 43 and 58 years and 6 women, aged between 33 and 58 years, who had engaged themselves in jiko liner production and distribution between 1990 and 1994 before being trained by other group members how to mould pots and other related clay products.

Among the OPWG members interviewed were the former chairlady (1979–1992), the former secretary (1992–1994) who was elected chairlady in 1994 and a long standing vice-chairlady, whose daughter lives in Nairobi from where she actively supports the OPWG with their sales and promotion in Nairobi as well as overseas. During the interviews Martin O. assisted with the translations. Since Martin O. had been facilitating various training seminars and sessions at the project site between 1992 and 1994 he was not only well known to the OPWG but was trusted which was of particular importance when it came to issues such as taboos etc. Except for two, all the other interviews were conducted in the small kitchen house next to the workshop where we found privacy and were able to talk without any interference. The other two interviews were conducted at the home of the present chairlady, Felgona A., and at the home of the late Rispa O., who was very sick at the time and died some months later. Since I used the questionnaire only as a guideline while encouraging the women to elaborate on their own careers as potters and their experience with any development efforts targeting them as women and particularly as potters, the duration of the interviews varied between 1 and 3,5 hours.

³⁴⁹ For more details see story of Lona A.

During the whole interview session I was trying to enhance my knowledge on the history of the potter's craft in the area, the impact of mission schools on the development of the same, the women's perception of and involvement in as well as access to development oriented activities and projects conducted in the area. I found very good informants in the former chairlady of the OPWG and also in some older potters, group members and individual potters, who had been actively participating in the 1960s development agenda on 'Women in Development'. While I took notes and filled out the questionnaire, all interviews were recorded in order to capture all the details which might otherwise have been lost due to the high number of interviews conducted within a short period of time. After completion of the interview session among the Luo of Karachuonyo and Oyugis I addressed the members of the OPWG once again and introduced and discussed my preliminary findings with them. It turned out that the opinions within the group differed strongly on the subject of 'taboos' and their effect on the contemporary performance of Luo potters which sparked off a very lively group discussion.

On January 6, 1997 I once again paid a visit to the OPWG. This time I was accompanied by two craft representatives of the North American/Canadian ATO 10-Thousand Villages. We were able to observe the moulding and firing of pots and the assembling of portable Upesi Jikos. As the craft representatives were keen to evaluate the possibilities of a co-operation with the group with a view to exporting their products to Canada and North America, a short discussion was conducted. During this discussion the group members were able to ask questions about the agenda of the two craft representatives and the organisational set-up of 10-Thousand Villages while they, on the other hand, were answering questions concerning their own background, organisational structure, production capacity and product range. Before leaving, the craft representatives once again bought samples and took some photos to accompany their introduction of the group to 10-Thousand Villages.

10.4.2.2 Luo potters who do not belong to the Oriang' Pottery Women Group

The 23 potters who didn't belong to the OPWG were representatives of both sexes and three generations and were selected in the course of the ongoing research process by theoretical sampling³⁵⁰:

'Male potters and the gender specific development of the potter's craft among the Luo of Karachuonyo' – 5 individual potters of Oriang'

Among them were two old male potters (aged 62 and 85) of the Katuola clan and 3 women (aged between 56 and 83) who were referred to me as very knowledgeable with regard to pottery traditions and the development of the craft in Karachuonyo throughout the 20th Century.

To my surprise I met one of the male potters, Samuel O., working at the premises of the OPWG on my arrival in November 1995. Since I was eager to follow up the story of another male Luo potter, Silvanus Owiti, who had been known and promoted by the

³⁵⁰ The selection criteria and the composition of the respondents are highlighted in block letters.

colonial administration in the late 1940s, I was keen to talk to Samuel O. and find out more about his own career as a potter and whether or not he knew Silvanus Owiti. I seemed to be lucky since he told me that he did know him and expressed his willingness to introduce me to him. I, however, soon found out that it was not S. Owiti to whom he would introduce me but an 85 year old potter, called Kilimesh K.. To my delight, Kilimesh K. had known the late Silvanus Owiti of Rakwaro Village from his early childhood and had stayed in contact with him throughout his life as both men were attending to pot-making in a cultural environment where pottery was regarded as women's work. After I talked to and interviewed Samuel O. (aged 62) he made arrangements to take me to the home of Kilimesh K. two days later. On arrival at his home we found Kilimesh K. and his two wives as well as an approximately 30 year old man who expressed his deep appreciation for the craft and pot-making skills of the old *mzee*³⁵¹. Kilimesh K. welcomed us at his home and enjoyed the audience while talking about his own life and career as a potter. Like Samuel O. had done before, Kilimesh K. elaborated on the fact that men and women of the Katuola clan used different moulding techniques and produced different items. He showed us the tools used by male Luo potters in Karachuonyo for the production of polished cups & saucers, sugar dishes etc.; items which, in their early days were perceived as supreme and as symbols of change and development while the traditional pottery ware produced by women potters was associated with tradition and survival. Although some women, like Persi N. and Kerina N., who grew up with male potters in their homes had been exposed to the ›male potting techniques‹ and learned how to mould sugar dishes etc. during their childhood they did not practise it after they had grown up. Rispa O., who like Kilimesh K., was a founder member of the Migungu Group, underlined the fact that the potters of the Katuola Clan, like Kilimesh K. and Persi N., have always had a reputation for keeping their experience and knowledge to themselves. Only when the male potters of the Katuola Clan were growing old and their knowledge was threatened to die with them did they finally agree to share it with female potters. Following a request of the KWPP, Samuel O. agreed in 1995 to show some members of the OPWG how to mould and fire ›gik matindo tindo³⁵²‹ and achieve a nice smooth shiny surface that strongly contrasts surface and texture of the much bigger traditional pots.

The three old women to whom I was introduced by Margaret O., the former vice chairlady of the OPWG and a close relative to one of the women, had been very active potters in the past. While they had participated in the early WiD movement of the 1960s, they did not consider rejoining the OPWG during the late 1980s because of old age, as they said. The interviews were conducted simultaneously while sitting together around a table in the living room of one of the potters. While Margaret O. remained in the background, Martin O. translated whenever necessary. The three women willingly answered most of the questions tackling the potter's craft and its development at Karachuonyo but did not like to talk about any taboos connected to potters or the potter's craft as a whole in the presence of Martin O., a man they did not know. While all three women were widowed, two were co-wives with the younger one of them still

³⁵¹ *Mzee* is a widely used Kiswahili expression for a respected male elder.

³⁵² *Dholuo* expression which translates into ›very small things‹.

occasionally moulding some pots while the older women interviewed had retired from potting completely.

›A comparative study of Luo potters in a neighbouring division which, like Karachuonyo, is known for its thriving pottery trade‹ – *9 potters from Oyugis Division*

While visiting the Oyugis Market on November 10, 1995, I found Luo potters from different locations and divisions busy selling their pots. While some came from Oyugis Division, others originated from East Karachuonyo Division. After observing the market scene for about 2 hours without actively interacting with the people, they started talking about us – Martin O. and myself. At this stage I decided to introduce myself to the potters on site and the reason for my interest in the craft. The fact that I spoke *Dholuo* and that I had worked with the OPWG, which was well known to them, opened up the conversation. As expected the women inquired about the background of my research and were eager to find out whether I could assist them in a similar way as I assisted the potters at Oriang’ which of course I could not. They were, nevertheless, willing to respond to my questions and expressed an interest in being interviewed as I pulled out the questionnaire. The 5 women potters I interviewed on the spot were between 26 and 51 years old, came from one and the same sub-location but belonged to three different women’s groups. Since the time was too short to conduct more than 5 of those interviews we, M. Ouko and myself, willingly accepted an invitation of the Kapuoyo ›A‹ WG to visit them a few days later at their home and place of work. My interest in the group was sparked off by its chairlady who told us that the Kapuoyo ›A‹ WG not only produced traditional pots, like all the other potters attending the market, but produced tea pots etc., like the male potters at Karachuonyo, and had received orders from a *Mzungu*³⁵³ in the past. On the agreed day (13.11.95) the chairlady waited for us at Oyugis market from where she guided us to the house of the group’s treasurer; here we found 3 other group members busy moulding large water pots. After the treasurer and the chairlady had invited us into the house I decided to talk to and interview them simultaneously before calling on the other two group members present. I was of course keen to find out more about the group’s background, their present performance, and organisational set-up, outside connections and relationship to people like the *Mzungu*. We were informed that the man was living at Tabaka³⁵⁴, close to Kisii, and had come to order and buy pots off them a few times in the past.

›Fighting for survival under restrictive customary rule‹ – *2 widows and their children of Kovuor Village, Kanyaluo Location, East Karachuonyo Division*

While conducting the market survey at Oyugis I came across two boys selling pots, which in itself is a rather unusual picture among the Luo in western Kenya. Curious to discover the reason behind it, I approached and talked to them. As they convinced us that they were not only selling but also actively involved in the production process, I was keen to visit them and find out more about the circumstances under which two

³⁵³ *Mzungu* is a widely spread Kiswahili expression for a white person.

³⁵⁴ With only one exception all *Wazungu* (pl. of *Mzungu*) living at Tabaka work at the Italian mission hospital.

Luo boys had started to mould and sell cooking pots. Having been asked they agreed to meet us a few days later at the Omboga Multipurpose Centre where we were supposed to meet with some female potters of Kanyaluo Sublocation during the morning hours. On November 15, 1995, Jarret O., one of the boys, came as agreed and directed us to their home. At their home we, I was once again accompanied by Martin O., found Jarret's mother, Mary A. O., and her co-wife, Anna O. O., waiting for us. We soon found out that the two co-wives had lost their husband only recently and were according to Luo customs not allowed to dig clay or even enter the clay quarry or to leave the homestead in order to attend public gatherings, not even the market until a certain cleansing ceremonial had been conducted. In the rural environment of their home the women, both quite well educated, had no other option but to obey the customs. With pottery turning into a commercial business the neighbours were not willing to collect the clay for them as customarily done. This led to a situation whereby the two widows and their children collect the clay very early in the morning before anybody else can be found at the quarry. Not being allowed to leave the homestead to attend markets, the women had to ask for permission from the headmaster to excuse their sons from school on Fridays so that they could sell the pottery ware being produced by the entire family during the week. The two women who had specialised in the production of clay-sufurias³⁵⁵, had trained their children, girls and boys alike, in pot-making. With joint forces they were able to secure the living of the entire family and the education of the children. While sitting together surrounded by the smaller children we interviewed the two widowed co-wives, one daughter (aged 15) and one son (aged 16). The interview session was recorded.

›A profitable family tradition‹ – 4 women of two generations making a living at Katuola Village

After completion of the above mentioned interview Mary A.O. suggested that we meet and talk to some other potters who live in the neighbourhood and were known to be not only very active but economically successful potters. Following her suggestions Mary's daughter guided us to the home of Susan A. O. at Katuola Village, Central Karachuonyo Location, East Karachuonyo Division. In the homestead we found 4 women potters, two older widowed co-wives and sisters³⁵⁶ and two younger co-wives, their daughters-in-law. On our arrival the household head, husband of the two younger women and son of one of the older women, welcomed us and called for all the potters at his home to interrupt their work and meet us. It was the first time that we had interviewed female potters in the presence of their husband or son respectively. Since the money earned with pottery is customarily controlled by the women themselves and not accounted for to their husbands, we were rather sceptical of his presence but had

³⁵⁵ Clay *sufurias* do not represent traditional but strongly modified cooking pots, which do resemble the widely spread flat bottomed aluminium cook-pots.

³⁵⁶ To find two sisters being married to one man is quite a common feature among the Luo. If the older sister and first wife does not give birth to any children she often sends for her younger sister to become her co-wife in the hope that she will give birth to some children in her place.

no choice but to accept it. The interviews were conducted simultaneously which often inflicted lively comments on the given answers. The interview session was once again recorded.

›Following the foot-steps of an Asian potter‹ – *Silvanus N.*, an exception

The last Luo interviewed was Silvanus N. in Kisumu whom I had first met and interviewed in 1993. Although I had been searching for him ever since, I failed to locate him until January 1997 when Rose A., a pot-trader at Kisumu, accompanied and directed me to his home and place of work. Silvanus N. is the only potter in Kisumu or it is almost safe to say the only potter in the whole of Nyanza and Western Province who doesn't apply hand-moulding techniques but uses a simple Asian type potter's wheel. After having been introduced to the craft and trained by an Asian potter, known as P. Premji, during the late 1960s, Silvanus N. described himself as a ›Non-Luo-Potter‹ and therewith tried to disassociate himself from any Luo customs restricting men's involvement in the craft. To complement my knowledge on the history of the potter's craft and its activists in Kenya I was of course interested to investigate his professional background and career as well as his present work environment.

The information gathered through the 37 interviews outlined above were supplemented with two group interviews of women potters in Nyamasaria and Omboga and several unstructured interviews of traders, potters and other sector activists alike.

›Group dynamics and local production and marketing networks‹ – Potters living in the vicinity of the Omboga Multipurpose Centre and the Odago WG at Nyamasaria

While I was studying the OPWG in detail and had talked to members of the Kapuoyo ›A‹ WG at Oyugis, I was keen to investigate the group dynamics of and interactions between other Luo potters in Kenya. Following this objective I conducted one group interview with female potters living in the vicinity of the Omboga Multipurpose Centre³⁵⁷/Rachuonyo District³⁵⁸ in November 1995, and another one with members of the Odago WG at Nyamasaria/Kisumu District in January 1997.

³⁵⁷ The Omboga Multipurpose Centre was built on the initiative of Phoebe Asiyo (the Member of Parliament for Karachuonyo) and local leaders and meant to house an anticipated UN sponsored development project or any other development activities conducted in the location.

³⁵⁸ Until late 1996 Rachuonyo District was an integral part of Homa Bay District.

Potters talked to at Omboga, Kanyaluo Location, Rachuonyo District

1. Caren O.		potter
2. Maritha A.		potter
3. Elsa O.	potter	
4. Maren A.		potter
5. Belseba O.		an old retired potter
6. Peres O.		potter & pot-trader who buys pots from her neighbours for sale at Oyugis Market
7. Mary A.		pot-trader who buys pots from her potting neighbours for sale at Oyugis Market

My first encounter with potters of Kanyaluo Location dates back to December 1989 when Mishka P., an American ceramist, was constructing a kiln next to the Omboga Multipurpose Centre. The centre was meant to be turned into a combined pottery and weaving workshop, accommodate a tailor and serve the community as a social hall at the same time. As the potters of Kanyaluo Location formed an integral part of the Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project, it was part of my duty to assist them in improving their pottery activities. Unfortunately the work with the potters at Omboga never came off the ground as the women had been promised a ›heaven on earth‹ with somebody simply relieving them of the burden of development without demanding their own active participation. When this did not happen the potters said they preferred to mould at home where they were free to attend to the craft in their own time. Although the project was utilising the kiln at Omboga between 1991 and 1993, until a new kiln was constructed at the project site at Oriang' the potters of Kanyaluo hardly ever came to attend a firing or showed any further interest in the project. Years later, in November 1995, I met potters of Kanyaluo selling their products at the Oyugis Market. After talking to them at the market they happily agreed to meet up for a group interview at the Omboga Multipurpose Centre. On my arrival at Omboga I was met by 9 women among them 6 potters, 2 pot-traders³⁵⁹ and 2 basket weavers³⁶⁰. During the meeting and ongoing interview the women expressed a keen interest in the research. While Martin O. once again assisted with the translation, the session was recorded which allowed me to concentrate on the actual interview and listen to internal discussions.

After interviewing and talking to Rose A., a pot-trader at Kisumu, she agreed to introduce me to some potters in Nyamasaria from whom she buys pots. Rose herself grew up and is still living in Nyamasaria³⁶¹ and commuting from there to Kisumu every day. Before leaving for Nyamasaria Helen O.³⁶² had told me about a well known

³⁵⁹ one of the traders happened to be a potter at the same time

³⁶⁰ Serfina O. and Philista O.

³⁶¹ Nyamasaria is close to Rabuor, ca. 8 km from Kisumu Town following the road to Ahero Town.

³⁶² Helen O. is the project manager of the ITDG West Kenya Stove Programme.

women's group, called Odago WG, whose members produce pottery on a fairly large scale. Rose knew the group and agreed to introduce me to its members.

*Members of the Odago WG, Nyamasaria Sub-location, Kisumu District
– met and talked to on January 8, 1997*

1. Doris A.
2. Herin O. Chairlady of the Odago WG³⁶³
3. Hana O.
4. Dorina M.
5. Ester A.
6. Alice S. Treasurer of the Odago WG and first woman to practise the craft at Nyamasaria
7. Dorothy S. adult daughter of Alice S.

Accompanied by Rose I drove to the home of Herin O., the chairlady of the group on January 8, 1997. After introducing ourselves and the reason for our coming she called upon some other group members living in the neighbourhood to join us. With Rose translating when necessary I was able to talk to 5 members of the Odago WG. During our conversation it surfaced that the potter's craft had been introduced at Nyamasaria not too long ago by Alice S., the treasurer of the group, who was not present but whom we were able to visit and interview at her home soon after. At her home we found Alice S. and two of her adult daughters at work, moulding pots. At first Alice was not too happy about our coming but she opened up when we found out that I had been working with one of her daughters who was married at Oriang' and was an active member of the OPWG. Both interviews were recorded though I took notes at the same time to keep track of what had already been discussed and which issues of interest were still pending.

10.4.3 Isukha potters: Urban potters and their rural peers

Adaptation and change in response to a new market and an urban work environment

While male and female Luo potters have no history in working together, women and men of the Isukha Clan team up within their families to form an economic unit attending to the craft³⁶⁴. The work, however, is distributed along gender lines: leaving the men and household head in charge of the production, general marketing and overall management of the business while female family members are assigned duties, such as collecting clay and firewood, assisting in polishing, firing and packing the pots. Women, however, play a central role in the local marketing of the products as I discovered in the course of the field work.

The most well known family enterprise is the Ilesi Pottery in Kakamega District/Western Province. ›Semi-commercial pottery production‹ at Ilesi dates back to

³⁶³ The secretary of the group is called Peres A. and the treasurer is Alice S., Herin O. is at the same time the chairlady of Maendeleo ya Wanawake of the area.

³⁶⁴ NANGENDO (1984:51) made similar observations among the Bukusu of Western Kenya.

the 1930s when Shamwama Vutakate Musa recognised its economic potential beyond traditional boundaries. S.V. Musa was so successful at making pottery items such as teapots, cups and saucers, flower pots and vases, etc. for sale to Europeans that he abandoned his former job as a cook in Eldoret and went home to train his sons during the early 1940s (BURT 1975:11). Today Ileshi is home to a flourishing rural pottery industry, which has become a major source of income and employment in the location.

On visiting the Nairobi Show in 1993 I had come across pottery ware exhibited by the Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise which no longer carried the pattern of the traditional pottery of western Kenya but resembled Mediterranean terracotta ware. Since the early 1990s these pots have been increasingly seen for sale at roadside displays and garden centres in Nairobi. Inquiring about their origin among roadside merchants it emerged that the Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise was one of their main suppliers. This became even more interesting as I was told that the enterprise was owned and managed by Fabian L., a potter from Ileshi. On receipt of my temporary research permit I contacted Fabian L. over the phone and arranged for a meeting with him in April 1995. In Fabian L. I was to find a very knowledgeable informant and active supporter of my research. After we first met in April 1995 we developed a close working relationship whereby I advised him on his production and some improved marketing methods while he provided me with access to a social network of potters from Ileshi Village, Kakamega District. He showed me his workshop at Kingeero, explained its organisational set-up and the composition of his labourforce on site, allowed me to take photos and to interview his employees on the condition that they agreed with any action taken.

Some months later³⁶⁵ I interviewed all 9 potters working for Fabian L. and an additional two working at the Kingeero Pottery, all of whom were Isukha men. The Kingeero Pottery was juxtaposed with the New Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise and was owned by Njenga, a Kikuyu man and former business-partner of Fabian L. After being introduced by Fabian, Njenga willingly agreed to enlighten me on his professional career as a potter.

Although I had already interviewed Fabian L. in April 1995 I decided to interview him for a second time in September 1995 to cover some issues addressed in the questionnaire which we had not yet talked about.

Having got to know Fabian and the potters working for him, mostly relatives or men he more or less grew up with at Ileshi, I was eager to pay a visit to their home area to further investigate the socio-economic background, professional choice and career of the potters working at Nairobi and compare them with their rural peers at Ileshi. Although I had visited the Ileshi Pottery in October 1989, shortly after my arrival in Kenya, and had revisited it in 1993, I was looking forward to returning to Ileshi accompanied by Fabian L. or one of the other potters whom I had met at Nairobi. On expressing my desire to visit Ileshi and interview some potters living and working there, Fabian L., despite the fact that he had a business to run, happily agreed to accompany and introduce me to the potters at Ileshi. We left for Ileshi on February 14, 1996, and

³⁶⁵ The interviews took place on three different days – 30.09.95 & 06.10.95 & 25.11.95.

returned to Nairobi only 5 days later.³⁶⁶ While I stayed with a Luyia friend of mine at Kabras, Fabian used the occasion to stay with his wife and children who had moved back to Ilesi just before Christmas when Fabian L. had bought himself a piece of land and constructed a new two roomed semi-permanent house. As the news spread that Fabian had come with a *mzungu* from Nairobi, people were keen to get a glimpse of us and find out more about me. According to the local customs I had to have tea at Fabian's home and pay a visit to his old father before we could embark on the research the following day. As Fabian L. had grown well familiar with my research he was extremely helpful in selecting the potters to be interviewed and to assist with the translations. As we tried to cover the whole spectrum of different type of potters engaged in the craft, we paid extended visits to 7 homes where pottery was the main source of income while paying brief visits to some others where we just talked to the potters present and had a good look around but did not conduct any lengthy investigations. By conducting 7 personal interviews we covered three generations of Isukha potters with each generation looking back at a rather distinct socio-cultural background, level of exposure, education and professional experience. The potters interviewed, who were between 21 and 86 years of age, will be portrayed hereafter following the order of the fieldwork.

Mzee Paulo

We started our interview session with *mzee* Paulo, who, at 86 years old, is one of the oldest potters at Ilesi. Since *mzee* Paulo had trained Fabian when he was still a small boy the *mzee* welcomed us and agreed to talk to me about the potter's craft at Ilesi following Fabian's introduction. Once again I applied the questionnaire in an open manner while encouraging the *mzee* to freely talk and express his knowledge. As he revealed the history of the potter's craft at Ilesi, more and more people gathered around us, many of whom were potters themselves. Although they did not interfere with the actual interview they contributed whenever the *mzee* failed to remember all the details or asked for second opinions.

After leaving the *mzee*'s home we approached the workshop and home of Charles M. Since Charles M., an uncle of Fabian L. and one of the key players in Kenya's contemporary pottery scene, was not available the same day we left a message with his wife and agreed to return the next day.

Moses M. L.

Thereafter we proceeded to the home of Moses L., a 31 year old potter, who had been taught by his father, Andrea L., who had worked for Charles M. at Ilesi and been exposed to the urban market and production environment while working at the NJKPE³⁶⁷ and at Terra Ltd. in Nairobi before returning home to start his own pottery enterprise. He had employed two relatives to assist him with the moulding while his

³⁶⁶ Since I was working part time I had to arrange for holidays or accumulated overtime to leave the office for a week in order to carry on with my field research. These short periods of time required proper preparation to make the trip worthwhile.

³⁶⁷ In June 1997 I should find him once again working for Fabian L. at the NJKPE in Kingero.

wife helped with the collection of clay and firewood and the polishing of the pots. After a short introduction Moses agreed to be interviewed on the condition that he could continue with his work. As his English was not very well developed Fabian had to assist with the translations. In addition to the subjects tackled by the questionnaire I inquired details on the source of the raw materials, the number and nature of people employed, the work organisation and distribution among them as well as their scope of production and marketing. While we were busy interviewing Moses L., others, among them Moses' father, Andrea L., were gathering around us listening.

Andrea L.

After completing the interview with Moses L. we turned to his father and conducted another interview with him. The underlying intention was to capture the history of two generations of potters within one family, where the craft had been passed on from father to son and to compare their experiences and personal perception of being a potter. While Moses L. stands for the entrepreneurial young potters at Ilesi who are fully committed to the craft, his approximately 65 year old father belonged to the second generation of male potters who attended to pottery on a part-time, semi-commercial basis and attended to agricultural production at the same time. According to Andrea L. the first generation comprised of only three men: his father, S.V. Musa and *mzee* Paulo.

Charles M.

On Friday morning (16.02.96) we found Charles M. awaiting our return. While interviewing potters at Ilesi we almost always had people observing us or even actively contributing their knowledge, as in the case of Charles M. where one of his sons, a potter himself, his wife and his mother were present, while Fabian L. once again assisted with the translation whenever necessary. We were welcomed inside the house where we sat down around the dining table. Once again the questionnaire was only guiding us through the interview session. Being able to address three generations in one home we extended the interview beyond the scope of the questionnaire in order to capture the views and experiences of all people in the room. The presence of his mother was particularly valuable as Charles' late father, S.V. Musa, became known as the first Isukha potter to venture away from the traditional pottery repertoire while exploring new products and their marketability in the 1930s. During the interview I was able to countercheck and amend some of *mzee* Paulo's statements regarding the history of the potter's craft among the Isukha. Before I left Ilesi to proceed to Kakamega, where I was to meet with two Danish Volunteers who were working as small enterprise consultants³⁶⁸, we had lunch together at Charles' house.

³⁶⁸ My interest in the two Danish volunteers was sparked of by their request to secure some training in jiko production from ITDG, of which I had been informed by Helen O., and the fact that they had organised an educational tour for a group of interested women to visit the OPWG. However, I found that potters did not belong to their clientele after all.

Potters and traders at the Kakamega Market

Before continuing with the interviews on Saturday (17.02.96), Fabian and I travelled to Kakamega with the intention of visiting the Kakamega Market, which is well known for its thriving trade in pottery ware. At the market we met potters from Ilesi as well as other villages and locations offering their products for sale. While I had not met any female potter at Ilesi, we were to find women outnumbering the men selling and trading pots at Kakamega. Fabian informed me that many of them are sent to the market to sell the products made by their husbands as the latter remain at home to keep the production running.

Ernest I.

One our return from Kakamega we stopped at Muraga Village, a few kilometres before reaching Ilesi, where we visited Ernest I., who was running a small pottery workshop and producing building bricks at the same time. Despite the display of ready made products next to the road we found the actual workshop unattended but succeeded in meeting Ernest I. at his nearby home. Since Ernest I. and Fabian L. knew each other well we were once again given a warm welcome and offered some tea and bread while conducting the interview and before returning to the workshop to assess the range and nature of products made. In Ernest I. I found a man who unlike most other potters I had met at Ilesi had not inherited the craft from his father. His access to the craft proved to be of different nature. Before turning to pottery, he had been working as a plumber at a mission station and as a driver for the national chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake for many years. Only then did he realise that he could live a more comfortable life and generate a better income for himself by venturing into pottery and brick production at home. During his extensive journeys he had collected and developed a lot of ideas of what could be done in clay and where these things would find a ready market. To make his plan work he teamed up with Francis M., a brother of Fabian L. and a very talented potter. Together they soon came up with completely new designs and pottery products. For the brick production Ernest I. and his wife had employed some young men to do the manual labour for them under the supervision of his wife.

Mathrumayo A.

Before our departure on Sunday (18.02.96), Fabian took me to the home of Mathrumayo A., a 41 year old potter, whom we had met on our first day while interviewing *mzee* Paulo. Mathrumayo A. was of interest to the research as he did not run a workshop of his own like all the others we had interviewed, but looks back at a career as an employee and casual worker. After being trained by his father when he was only 12 years old he had been working in various environments: at his father's workshop and for other potters at Ilesi, at the KIE-Pottery in Kakamega in 1974, for Mr. Lichaya and the NJKPE at Nairobi. At present he was once again working on a

casual basis for people who either asked him to come to their home to mould or to produce pots at his own home which they would buy off him as ›green ware‹³⁶⁹.

Iliya L.

Though the KIE-Pottery in Kakamega had been mentioned to me by a number of different people, among them Grace A. of the Jitegemea Pottery, Rispa O. and Damaris A. from Oriang' as well as Mathrumayo A., I did not know much about it at the time and was eager to meet yet another potter who had worked there while it was still operational. After expressing this desire to Fabian L., he took me to the home of Iliya L.. At Iliya's home, which is a few kilometres away from Ilesi and quite some way from the next main road and not accessible by car, we found 4 men busy moulding pots while a young boy was preparing the clay. Iliya L., a 41 year old potter, had been trained under the supervision of his mother when he was still a small boy aged between 8 and 10 years. Since his father had died early his mother was head of the household, employed male potters to work for her and managed to raise the family with her earnings from pottery production and sales. In 1975, aged 20, Iliya L. was one of the first potters to be employed by the KIE-Pottery at Kakamega where he was trained as a ›modern studio potter‹, was introduced to the potter's wheel, to glazes and the use of a kiln. He stayed at Kakamega between 1975 and 1979 when the workshop was showing severe signs of collapse and the Kenyan owner who had taken over from the Danish ceramic experts was no longer able to meet his salary. Dissatisfied with the employment situation at the KIE-Pottery, Iliya L. did not try to explore other employment opportunities in Nairobi or elsewhere but returned to his home where he settled as a potter. It was surprising to find no difference in the pots made by him and those made by other potters who had never been exposed to ›Modern Studio Pottery‹ and European designs. Iliya L. proudly showed us some of the products he had made at Kakamega but stressed that there has never been a real demand for the goods at Kakamega and that most of the products had been sold in Nairobi or, as he remembered, exported to Denmark, the home country of the foreign experts.

On our return to Nairobi on February 18, 1996, I tried to show my appreciation to Fabian L. by giving a lift to a new employee of Fabian as well as transporting as much clay for him as we could carry.

John M.

Back in Nairobi Fabian L. introduced me to John M., the oldest son of Charles M.. John M., born in 1969, had been trained by his father at Ilesi before migrating to Nairobi after his father had used his connections to secure him a job at KENGO in 1992. With John M. being the son of one of the most well known potters at Ilesi and in Kenya as a whole, it was of course of interest to my research to see something of his professional career. Following prior arrangements I visited and interviewed him in June 1996 at his workshop, the Oriental Pottery, at Kangemi/Nairobi.

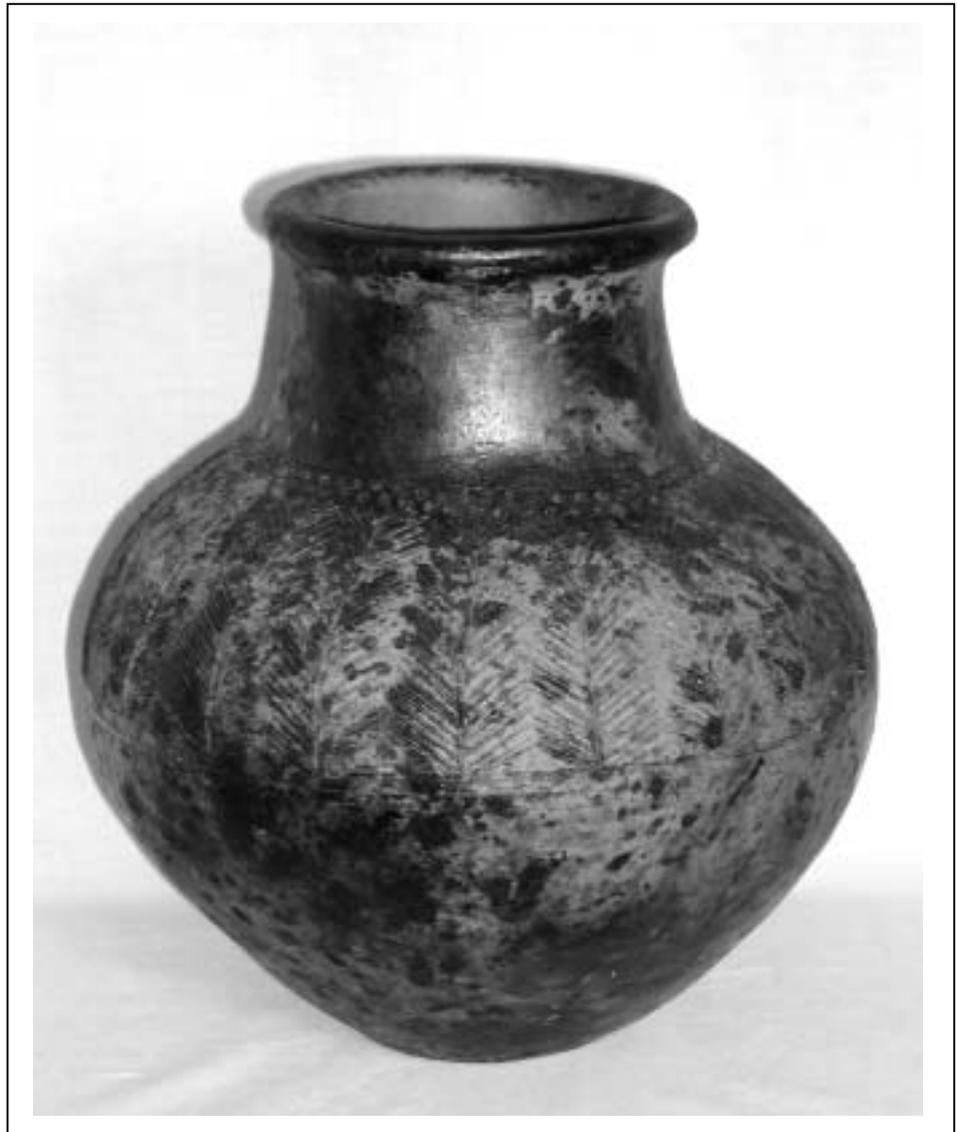
³⁶⁹ ›Green ware‹ is the expression for finished but still unfired pots.

Half a year later, in January 1997, I arranged for yet another trip to Ileshi. This time I was accompanied by the two craft representatives working for 10 Thousand Villages. This visit to Ileshi was part of a 10 day tour to western Kenya. From Ileshi we proceeded to Kisumu and Oriang', before the two crafts representatives had to return to Nairobi while I proceeded with my own research, interviewed traders and potters at Kisumu and visited two potters, employees of the Jitegemea Pottery, at their rural home in Migori. While we had often talked about this trip, in 1996 we planned it in agreement with Fabian L. whose presence I had learned to value during field studies in February 1996. Since he was planning to close down operations in Nairobi for two weeks over Christmas and New Year we had agreed that we would come and meet with him at Ileshi just before his planned return to the city. Unfortunately for us, he had secured a large export order, which forced him to cut his home leave short and return to Nairobi earlier than anticipated. In preparation for our visit, however, he had not only announced our coming but asked two of his employees, whom I knew quite well, to take care of us and show us around. On our arrival at Ileshi, on January 3, 1997, we were therefore awaited by Charles M., Patrick M., a cousin and employee of Fabian L., and Patrick A., who's father is a potter and direct neighbour to Charles M. Apart from spending much time at the Ileshi Pottery, where more and more potters gathered around us, we visited another 5 workshops at Ileshi and attended the market at Kakamega the next day. After the initial introduction I tried to remain in the background as I was interested to observe how the two crafts representatives would interact with the potters, how they would assess the situation and pottery ware being produced and judge its potential for export. They took photos and bought samples which were later to be forwarded to 10 Thousand Villages, inquired after details about the producers, their production capacity and ability to pack and forward orders to Nairobi, evaluated export prices and the socio-economic set-up of the potter's scene at Ileshi. Since we had spent all Friday and most of Saturday morning at Ileshi we reached the Kakamega Market quite late, at a time when most of the pots had already been sold, packed or even been loaded on to *matatus* and buses and gone. We saw numerous bundles of 2 to 3 large waterpots tied together for further distribution by intermarket traders. On our return to Ileshi we were invited by Charles M. for a late lunch before we paid a brief visit to the home and family of Patrick M. and continued our tour to another potter's home neighbouring Patrick's homestead. Here we found 3 men moulding large sized water pots while a woman, the wife of one of them, was pounding and preparing the clay for them. We talked to them and took some photos before we proceeded. While touring Ileshi Village we came across one particular type of pot being produced in large numbers at various homes. Inquiring about them and their destination we soon found out that they formed part of the same large export order which had forced Fabian L. to return to Nairobi. It was, however, interesting to note that it was not a man but a business woman who was collecting and forwarding the pots to B.S. Mohindra in Nairobi.

To complete my picture of the urban Jua Kali pottery scene in Nairobi, Fabian L. once again devoted some of his time to my research and introduced me to another 5 Jua Kali pottery enterprises in Nairobi: namely Pennga Pottery, Ziku Pottery, Junior Jua Kali Pottery and to Wanyonyi Pottery in February 1997. While he knew where to

locate Pennga Pottery and Ziku Pottery he had to ask for further assistance from John, a potter working at Ziku Pottery, to accompany and direct us to the other three workshops which are all located close to one another. Though I was able to have a good look around and talk briefly with the potters on site, I did not embark on any detailed enquiries.

Picture 10: *A traditional Luo water pot design has been altered into a flower vase*



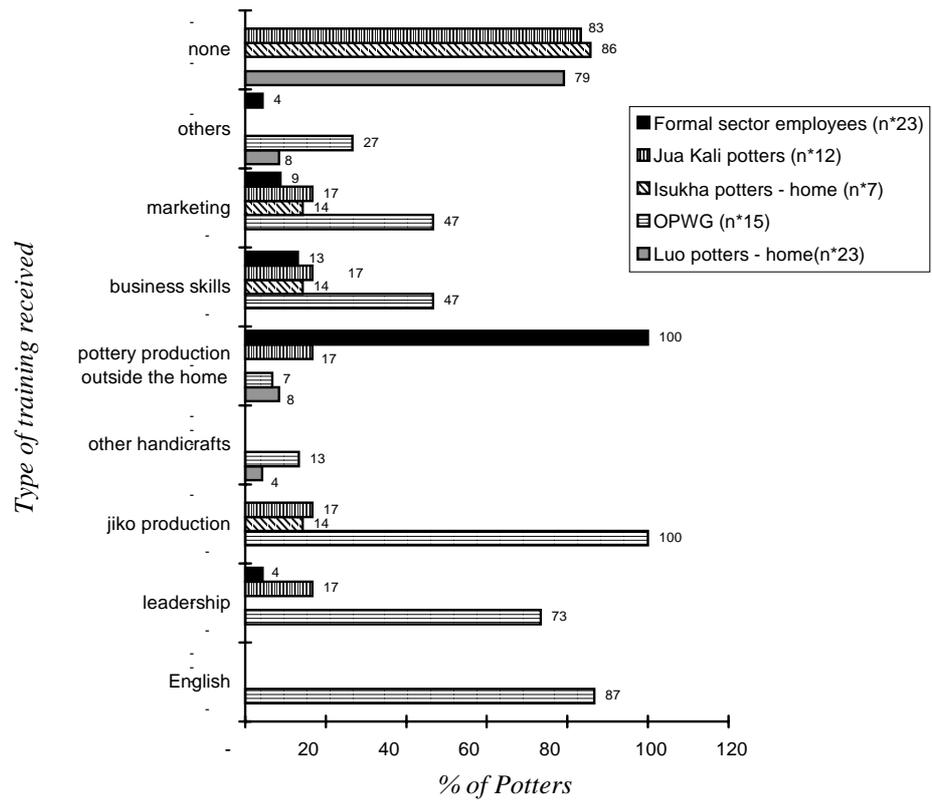
11 Excursion: Gender specific development approaches and developments

In this chapter I would like once again to highlight dominant gender specific approaches to development and their effects on the potter's craft in Kenya.

A closer look at the gender specific socialisation, networking, exposure and information flow among women and men actively involved in the potter's trade shall sharpen our awareness of the bias entrance positions to the craft and participation in new developments. As mentioned before most Kenyan women still grow up and live in a rather restricted socio-economic environment that limits their ›horizon‹, access to information and interaction with others while their male counterparts are free and indeed encouraged to move around and explore new living and working environments, thereby benefit from the exposure to different market spheres and enjoy access to information through their peers, other crafts- and businessmen on an informal basis. Due to their rich exposure men find innovation agents in their own lines while women depend more often on external inputs and sources of information, male innovation agents, politicians and learned Kenyan women leaders or foreign experts who pave the way and provide the resources for their exposure. The latter presents itself in the cases of the Odago WG, the OPWG and the women's group movement as such. The present women groups movements however, was not born out of a felt need among indigenous Kenyan women, but was initiated and propagated by the Colonial Administration, adopted by the GoK and nurtured by national and international development agents. Even today women's groups are perceived as ideal frames to launch educational programmes on community development, health and family planning to mention just a few. Having studied the Bukusu³⁷⁰ potters of western Kenya during the 1980s NANGENDO came to the conclusion that »as a group potters have become more than simple people who make pottery, but a co-operative unite participating in a whole range of socio-economic, political and ritual activities« (NANGENDO 1984:3). As much as this is true it also reflects once again the implanted contradiction of female solidarity, social and communal responsibilities and economic aspiration which accompany and unfortunately often hamper and frustrate the economic success and prosperity of group based income generating activities. However, group membership is looked upon and functions widely as a ticket to improved public perception, assistance and exposure which would mostly be out of reach for individual potters as the training records of the potters (n*80), reflected in Graph 7, prove, for example.

³⁷⁰ The Bukusu form another subgroup of the Luyia ethnic community.

Graph 7: Informal training received by the potters interviewed in 1995



However, it has to be emphasised that the outstanding training record of the Oriang' Pottery Women Group is by no means representative of the nature and amount of training received by WGs in general.

Wherever nourished by growing public attention and demand, pottery production in Kenya slowly changed in the minds of the Kenyan people and turned into an acceptable or even desirable activity. Pottery activities at Nyamasaria, for example, picked up during the late 1980s after the Odago WG had successfully participated and exhibited their products at the Agricultural Show in Kisumu in 1987, and during the Nyayo Celebrations held in Nairobi in 1988, after which they received more and more visitors and orders from Nairobi. Young women, who had learned to despise pottery as hard and dirty work with little economic potential, thereafter took an interest in the craft. To participate in the upward surge of the craft young women started to join groups like the Odago WG and the OPWG or just teamed up as in the case of the 10 young Maragoli women I met at Mbale Market who had not registered themselves as a group but worked together on a regular basis and were recognised as an 'informal producer group' by the inter-market traders attending Mbale Market.

A look at Graph 18 clearly shows that group membership by no means guarantees a higher financial profit for the individual potter as female and male potters alike who

work on an individual basis at home reportedly realise higher returns from the sales of their pots than many group members of the OPWG. However, non-monetary benefits seem to be added and highly valued advantages. Being asked how they have benefited from their group membership, OPWG members emphasised:

- that they have greatly benefited from each others' experience and personal expertise which allowed them to advance their pot-making skills and even offer training to women of other communities like they did in September 1995 when they introduced the craft to some women of Nyakwere Village during a two week training session at Oriang';
- that they have been introduced to new techniques, products and designs;
- that they have been able to penetrate external markets and attract orders which are out of bounds for most potters working on an individual basis at home;
- that they were able to draw towards and receive financial, technical and marketing assistance which had opened new horizons for them and made them proud to be an integral part of the ongoing development programmes and moves;
- that they were able to create a name for themselves, open up permanent market outlets in three towns, namely Rodi, Homa Bay and Pala and be invited to participate in training seminars, shows, sales exhibitions etc.;
- that they have gained greater control over their financial resources as they are in a position to utilise the group as a savings institution where they can keep and accumulate their money until they need it;
- that the project helped to overthrow and/or weaken traditional restrictions hampering the growth and development of the craft, as it brought together men and women engaged in pot-making and paved the way for them to share their knowledge freely without any gender based restrictions.

Some women gave a more personal response as they said that the OPWG had created an economic foundation for members who had lost their husbands and offered assistance to those who encounter any kind of hardship. While many were unsatisfied with their monthly returns from pottery they unanimously agreed that the group provides an opportunity to socialise with other women, receive and exchange news, information and support when needed. They further stressed that the overall living standard of the group members has improved which finds its expression in better clothing, access to clean drinking water, a balanced diet and better education for their children.

While talking to potters who had organised themselves in a group and others who preferred to work on an individual basis at home, all respondents were in agreement that groups had a marketing advantage over individual potters since they were in a better position to approach and explore new markets, attract and meet large orders and facilitate a diversified marketing network.

As much as the women's group movement has benefited the public perception of the potter's craft, ›African Pottery‹ has largely been neglected and overlooked by those responsible for Small and Micro Enterprise Promotion in Kenya. The District Applied Technology Officer of the MRTT&T in Meru, for example, first had to learn about a

male potter, Morris L. of Ileshi³⁷¹, who had opened a workshop in the close vicinity of Meru Town, before he paid any attention to pottery activities in the district. The fact that pottery carried out by women is widely perceived as subsidiary activity with little to no economic value and implications is, for example, reflected in the actuality that women potters are poorly represented at the annual Jua Kali Shows, organised by the MRTT&T in conjunction with B.A.T., and the fact that WGs registered with the MCSS are exempted from paying any taxes on their revenue which has encouraged some men to register their enterprise as a WG instead of a company, for example, to avoid paying income-tax. The Ileshi Women Pottery Group, alias Ileshi pottery, is a perfect example of the latter.

Karin O. a member of the OPWG, who grew up as the daughter of a very active potter at Nyamasaria³⁷² and has been exposed to working conditions at the NJKPE in Kingeero/Nairobi and visited a broad range of production environments and markets during the 1990s, reflected critically on the weaknesses of the group approach. According to her, many (handicraft) projects share the fate of starting of with a group of people of whom some master the craft while others have no prior knowledge of it; this results in the fact that it takes the groups much longer to establish themselves as serious and recognised production units than any private sector entrepreneur. To emphasise her point, she mentioned Fabian L. who only employs trained potters and men, whom he asks to utilise their spare time to advance their skills and train themselves on new designs, while he pays them for their productive work only. Impressed by the success and smooth running of the NJKPE, Karin O. highlighted the burden of most WGs, one of which is to bear with a committee whose members are not elected because of their outstanding technical or managerial performance but because of their high social rank and reputation within the community, and another is that WGs are often based on grounds of solidarity and mutual assistance. In consequence WGs are expected to actively contribute to development on a wider scale which contradicts a strict business orientation of the group.

11.1 Oriang' Pottery Women Group: A case study and critical reflection of the women's group approach

As mentioned before the roots of the OPWG can be traced back to colonial days. The group, therefore, offers an ideal object for a case study of the impact of community development and women's group policies with regard to handicraft, or more specifically pottery promotion in Kenya.

Unlike the situation in Nyamasaria where clay deposits were laying idle until Alice Seda got married at Nyamasaria in 1949 and started to mould pots and teach other women how to mould, Karachuonyo was known for its pottery ware long before the turn of the century. It was at Karachuonyo that pottery was granted special recognition under the Kenya Colony during the late 1940s when Silvanus Owiti managed to create a name for himself. According to colonial records he was able to attract the attention

³⁷¹ For more details see Chapter 10.3 of this study.

³⁷² Karin O. is a daughter of Alice S. who introduced pottery production at Nyamasaria during the 1950s.

of the Colonial administration by moulding tea pots, cups, sugar bowls and other items which resembled crockery ware of European origin. Fully in line with the social welfare and community development policies spelled out by the Colonial Office, Owiti was asked to avail his expertise to fellow craftsmen and all those interested in the production of teapots and the like while female homecraft officers were recruited and Maendeleo Clubs established for the purpose of attending to women potters. Some of the Luo potters interviewed in November 1995³⁷³ remember vividly that during the 1960s, government representatives, the chiefs, local headmen and church leaders were campaigning for women to form groups in order to participate in development and be able to attract the assistance offered by the government and the Maendeleo Clubs. While some women³⁷⁴ attribute the establishment of the first organised women potters group at Oriang' to the late chief's wife, Martha Mwangi, others³⁷⁵ stated that the group was initiated by men like Bernadicto Onyango, who was their headman at the time, and Masare Wandiga, a local church leader. Highly impressed and inspired by the achievements of the British women's movement, Martha Mwangi is remembered as having returned from the UK in 1960 and been determined to organise the women in Karachuonyo. Elsa O., however, remembered that during the voters' campaign of the early 1960s, the political parties encouraged the women to form groups in order to be able to address and guide them in being instrumental in the building of a new independent nation. As individuals the women were not allowed to participate in community development activities beyond immediate clan-related issues. Since the women in Kogweno Oriang' were known for their excellent pottery skills they were told to come together at a central place in Oriang' and mould pots, while the women from Kanyadhiang', a neighbouring community, being without any specific craft-skills to be improved, were advised to venture into business and entertainment.

Following the campaign and advice of local leaders, among them Phoebe Asiyo, who became the first African Kenyan chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake in 1959, some women potters started to meet under the big fig tree³⁷⁶ in Oriang' instead of working at home. Rispa O. remembered that some women were either denied participation by their husbands or simply did not like the idea of leaving their home, while others were unwilling to share their 'special secrets'. However, a total of 20 to 30 women potters were following the advice of the local leaders and gathered regularly in Oriang' to mould pots while others, who stayed too far away but liked the movement started paying their monthly group contribution in order to be part of the new development. By joining forces and contributing KShs. 6/= each, the equivalent of one iron sheet or one building pole, the women managed to construct their first workshop at Oriang'. Some years later, in 1963, the group which became known as the Kogweno Oriang' Group was visited by an American. The man came, took photos of the potters working under the tree and collected some clay samples, which he took to America for laboratory tests. When the test results revealed that the clay was suitable

³⁷³ Kerina N. (16.11.1995), Elsa O. (8.11.1995), Rispa O. (9.11.1995), Joyce A. O. (16.11.1995)

³⁷⁴ Rispa O. (9.11.1995)

³⁷⁵ Kerina N. (16.11.1995)

³⁷⁶ Fig trees are traditional communal meeting places among the Luo of Kenya.

for glaze firing and the production of table ware, the idea of establishing a ›modern ceramic workshop‹ was implanted in the heads of some local leaders. A financial grant to boost pottery activities at Oriang' which came along with the test results from America was utilised to construct better workshop facilities. This, however, did not have any influence on the performance and scope of production of the local potters who, at the time, concentrated on moulding traditional cooking and water pots while some other group members, non-potters, made table sets out of sisal and banana fibre and baskets out of special palm leaves. As pottery ware from Karachuonyo was long known for its good quality, people came from Rakwaro, Homa Bay and other places to buy pots at Oriang'. Inspired by the new developments, the added exposure and assistance received, the work of the potters further improved and continued well for a short period of time until 1964. Thereafter, as the time for political rallies was over and the new government elected, the political interest in women's groups had slowed down. Without external assistance, the groups' efforts no longer bore the expected fruits causing most potters to discontinue their active participation and return to the traditional and more convenient way of working at home.

The women once united under the Kogweno Oriang' Group split up into family/clan groups namely the Migingu Group comprised of male and female members³⁷⁷ of the Katuola Clan, the Manyanda Group and the Kogweno Oriang' Group leaving the workshop to be turned into a cotton store for some years to come. In line with the nation-wide handicraft promotion campaign launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry in 1976, the newly established Kenya Export Trade Authority had organised a handicraft fair and workshop at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in the heart of Nairobi in 1977. While Government officers³⁷⁸ were once again asked to assist in the selection of suitable participants, 3 women potters from Karachuonyo, among them Persi N. of the Katuola clan, Felgona O. and the late Nora O. were chosen to represent the ›potters of Karachuonyo‹. While the participating Kenyan craftsmen and -women were asked to practise and demonstrate their crafts, participants from overseas had been invited to assess the work and its potential for export. Encouraged by this exposure and through the exchange with Teso potters from Kawang'o and Kamba potters from Kitui, Persi N. introduced new patterns and designs to the potters of the Migingu Group, of which she was a member, after her return. Unfortunately the Katuola clan was eagerly protecting its knowledge and expertise and thereby preventing the spreading of new designs and ideas.

While the Katuola clan and with it the Migingu Group had benefited from public attention and exposure during the 1970s the Kogweno Oriang' Group had almost ceased to exist. It was only after Phoebe Asiyu had risen from the national chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake to become one of the first female Members of Parliament (MP) in Kenya's history that she tried to revive the pottery project at Oriang' in the late 1970s. By then Damaris A., the wife of a primary school headmaster, had been elected chairlady of the group and was to become the local chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake soon after. In 1979 the Kogweno Oriang' Group consisted of only eight

³⁷⁷ According to Elsa O. (interviewed on 8.11.1995) the Migingu group accommodated three male potters

³⁷⁸ mainly belonging to the MCSS by than the Ministry of Housing and Social Services

women and one young man. According to the late Rispa O. who had been an active supporter of the women's group movement, the group would have collapsed without the continuous efforts of Damaris A. and the active support of the MP for Karachuonyo who again and again managed to raise funds for the group and was instrumental in connecting the group with international development agencies and researchers. While talking to her, Rispa O. remembered a European woman, probably Ingrid Herbich, who stayed with Damaris A. and studied the potter's craft of the Luo during the early 1980s. In order to enlighten the potters of Karachuonyo as to what was happening elsewhere in the country and what should be their ultimate goal Phoebe Asiyo took three women, namely Damaris A., Persi N. and Rispa O. for a study tour visiting ›advanced workshops‹ located in Western Province, viz. the Kaimosi Pottery, the workshop of Charles Musa at Ilesi and the KIE-pottery at Kakamega. On their arrival at Kaimosi the women were told that workshop activities had collapsed over internal disagreements³⁷⁹. However, the women were getting an idea of what a ›Ceramic workshop‹ could look like as they were able to enter the deserted workshop and see the potter's wheels and the kiln which had been left behind. From Kaimosi the women continued their journey to Ilesi where they visited the home of Musa Shamwama Vutakate who was by then an old *mzee*. However, as he had trained his sons, Charles M. and Jacob M., in pottery production, the women from Oriang' found the sons moulding pots in a workshop which had been constructed next to the home. By that time the Musa family was already producing pottery ware for sale at Nairobi so that the women were not only exposed to new vessel forms and designs, but learned about new marketing options. Before the women returned to Oriang' they proceeded to Kakamega where they visited the ›ceramic workshop‹ established during the 1970s under the RIDP at the KIE. At the KIE-Pottery they found a number of Luyia men and one woman producing glazed table ware which was fired in a wood-fired kiln which, as Rispa O. vividly remembered, required the joint efforts of three people to operate it³⁸⁰. Fascinated by the products the women wished to buy a piece each to show it to their families and the other group members who were left behind. However, since the items were far too expensive for them, the owner of the workshop agreed to give them a bowl each at a reduced price³⁸¹. Not reflecting on the success or failure of the workshops visited Phoebe Asiyo went ahead and drafted and forwarded the ›Karachuonyo Pottery Project‹ proposal to UNIFEM requesting assistance to build a kiln at Oriang', repair the workshop buildings and grant technical assistance to establish a viable ceramic workshop in Karachuonyo, her constituency, in 1981. Her proposal came at a time when international donor organisations were strengthening their support for women in development as they were preparing themselves for the 3rd World Conference on Women to be held in Nairobi in 1985. The approval of the

³⁷⁹ See Chapter 9.2.1 for more details on the Kaimosi Pottery.

³⁸⁰ One person was just opening the door to the fire-chamber with a long metal bar while the second person was stocking the fire and the third person hurriedly removing the ash and organising the supply of firewood.

³⁸¹ The high market value of the locally produced crockery was to lead to the closure of the KIE-Pottery at Kakamega as the products were not competitive at the local market and the high transportation costs made them even too costly for the Nairobi market.

project proposal resulted in a grant of US \$ 20.000 in 1982 which was later increased by another US \$ 30.855 to form a total of US \$ 50.855. The money was used to build a kiln, purchase kick-wheels, cupboards, work benches and tables, shelves as well as tools and equipment for a ›Western style‹ ceramic workshop. A man remembered as Ouko by Rispa O. and as Owuor, a man from Kabondo, by Damaris A., was hired to build the first kiln at Oriang' while another Kenyan potter came to introduce the use of the potter's wheel and with it new production techniques. As the community was told that only learned people like Form IV leavers could master the skills to produce ceramic ware, the Assistant Chief of Kogweno Sub-location chaired a *baraza*³⁸² during which six young women and six young men from Otok were selected for training. Flora A. O. and Charles A. were among them. While Flora later left Oriang' to follow her husband to Kamagambo, Charles, whose grandmother was a well respected potter, stayed at Oriang' and worked at the workshop throughout the 1980s. However, numerous facts contributed to the failure of this attempt to establish a ceramic workshop at Oriang': (1) while the Kenyan instructor did not stay long enough to offer sufficient training to the still young and inexperienced potters he was replaced by an American volunteer who was not a ceramist by profession but a trained social worker; (2) while the potter's wheels were working satisfactorily the kiln turned out to be a complete disappointment as it never reached the required temperatures. Being left without any technical supervision and burdened with an inappropriate infrastructure and set of equipment, the ceramic production at Oriang' was unable to gain momentum causing most trainees to turn their back on it in 1983. In an attempt to rescue the ceramic workshop at Oriang', the chairlady of the Kogweno Oriang' Group approached a church leader, Bishop Okullo, in 1985 and asked him to sponsor two members of the community for a six month training at the KIE-Pottery in Kakamega. As he agreed, Grace A. O. and Charles A. were sent to Kakamega shortly after the Bishop had been touring South Nyanza District. While Grace ended up spending a total of 18 month at the KIE workshop it was not clearly articulated how long Charles stayed there before returning to Oriang' in 1986. With two trained potters on site the dream of a viable ceramic workshop persisted despite the fact that the Kaimosi Pottery and by then the KIE-Pottery, too, had failed to operate successfully. Following the 1985 World Conference on Women, where Phoebe Asiyo was among those representing and speaking out for Kenyan women, UNIFEM willingly agreed to send an American potter to Oriang' to train the members of the Kogweno Oriang' Group. While I could not obtain any written information on the length of time the American potter stayed with the group some potters, like Monica A.³⁸³, remembered a *mzungu* staying at Oriang' for a period of three months, only, during which he walked around with Charles busily trying to convince the women to resume work at the workshop site. Rispa O. remembered that despite the lack of a kiln that could serve its purpose, Charles and Grace, encouraged by the American potter, once again started to train some three women at the wheel during the late 1980s. Upon receiving reports that the project was not operational, 5 years after the first funds had been dispersed, UNIFEM

³⁸² A *baraza* is a community meeting where women were and still are more often than not denied the right to speak up.

³⁸³ interviewed on 8.11.1995

fielded a mission in December 1987 which outlined the problems and recommended that a study be carried out to determine the technical feasibility and economic viability of the project becoming a sustainable business enterprise. The feasibility study was carried out by Julius Koli³⁸⁴, Aggrey Awimbo³⁸⁵ and Maurice Heim³⁸⁶ and submitted in June 1988. It was recommended that the project should register as ›Karachuonyo Development Company Ltd.‹ and be executed by Kenya Industrial Estates (KIE). The underlying idea was that once the project was set up and transformed into a productive enterprise, the development company could play a larger role in both policy making and financial management, and investment of the revolving loan³⁸⁷ for expansion of the ceramic production or introduction of other related development activities. While it reads in the mission report – ›operating as a manufacturing company under K.I.E. guidelines and with an effective and competent Board of Directors, it is envisaged that many previous mistakes which lead to commercial failure will be avoided‹ (UNIFEM – KEN/81/W07, 1988:8) – nobody questioned KIE’s professional expertise on the subject matter and nobody ever mentioned the failed ceramic project at Kakamega. The study team further recommended that the traditional potters could be trained in ›stove production‹ and in how to improve their traditional pots while ›the youth‹ would be trained in ceramic production techniques. It was further envisaged that the women could obtain some basic skills in production management, sales and marketing. Based on the following assumptions: an abundant deposit of suitable earthenware clay which could be fired at 1.150°C was located along the river Sare; other secondary clays and stoneware clays from Kisii, Kakamega, Siaya and Nyeri Districts of Kenya could be incorporated should the need arise in the future (UNIFEM – KEN/81/W07 – 1988:14); and most glaze raw materials were readily available in Kenya, the study team advised UNIFEM to fund a second project phase. The projected production was based on six trained potters who would be supported by people preparing the clay, mixing the glazes, taking care of the marketing and overall business administration and was estimated to reach a monthly overall production of 3.000 to 9.000 pots generating between KShs. 250.000 and KShs. 400.000 per month³⁸⁸. It was realised, however, that Karachuonyo was located some way from where a market for those items might be found as they were too expensive to be sold to Kenyans at the nearby local market. It was therefore recommended that a good pick-up or small truck be provided for them to transport their goods either to the railway station in Kisumu for further transportation

³⁸⁴ A ceramist who by then worked for Ceramic Industries of East Africa Ltd.,

³⁸⁵ who had a very limited educational background in ceramics and has an even smaller knowledge on traditional pottery production and trade in Kenya, but still managed to become the chief technical engineer in the field of ceramics at KIRDI.

³⁸⁶ An Australian potter who has offered his services to almost all existing ceramic workshops and projects in Kenya during the 1980s: Most of his assignments are nowadays remembered as failures.

³⁸⁷ It was recommended the grant be disbursed as a revolving loan fund. The repaid fund should be utilised by the women to modernise the ceramic workshop or venture into new businesses.

³⁸⁸ It was only in 1995, after 5 years of intensive technical, managerial and financial support, that the OPWG realised an annual turn-over of more than KShs. 250.000/= while estimates for the ongoing business year of 1997 amount to KShs. 450.000/= (Baerens, 1997)

by rail, or for direct delivery to the respective market outlets. The study team was realistic enough to realise and point out that the main market would be expected to be in Nairobi. It therefore introduced the idea of opening a gallery style shop in Westlands, Lavington, Hurlingham or Nairobi's City Centre. It was anticipated that once people knew about the pots orders would be flowing in and the transport costs and overheads could easily be recovered. Upon receipt of the feasibility study UNIFEM launched another mission in Kenya and visited the project site together with representatives from UNIDO and UNDP. Thereafter UNIFEM and UNDP agreed in principal to fund the second phase of the project with a total of US \$ 241.714 while UNIDO agreed to implement the second project phase. Upon receipt of this decision, Phoebe Asiyu once again mobilised the women under the motto ›*Bi wagerou maendeleo!*³⁸⁹‹ She advised the women of Katuola, Manyuanda and Kogweno Oriang' to unite once again in order to jointly benefit from the forthcoming assistance. A total number of 81 women followed her advice and registered as members of the Kogweno Oriang' Women Group, selected their new committee and office bearers to be well prepared for any forthcoming support.

As the repair of the kiln seemed to be the most obvious thing to do first in order to enable the potters at Oriang' to fire and glaze their products properly, Maurice Heim was contracted to do the work. With Heim not being a kiln building specialist his mission failed and caused further disappointment to all participants. With a few exceptions local potters once again abandoned the project until UNIDO got on the way to field a six month preparatory phase in December 1989. It can surely be said that the presence of Mishka P., an American ceramist and friend of the then residing country director of UNIDO, who was accompanying his wife on a UNIDO project mission, sparked off this exercise. He was commissioned to assess the three production sites Oriang', Omboga and Wang'Chieng' and choose the most suitable location for the envisaged new workshop complex and to build and test-fire a new kiln. While the 1988 study did not give any clear recommendation on where the new workshop should be established, Mishka P. was forced to look into the logistics of a pottery enterprise such as the distance to the clay source, the availability of water and the already existing facilities. In consequence he was not able to assess the feasibility of potters from Oriang' teaming up with potters at Omboga which is approximately 8 km away. Due to the extremely short duration of his assignment, Mishka P. was not able to train the women on how to fire the kiln, neither was his term of service long enough to allow the newly constructed oil-drip kiln to dry out before attempting the first test-firing which ended up in large black clouds of smoke, far too little head building up inside the kiln and the kiln and firing chamber developing huge cracks which led to the collapse of the kiln some few years later. After the disappointing initial firing, the kiln was consequently not adopted by the local potters. Although UNIFEM and UNDP had committed themselves to finance a second phase they decided to seek a second opinion on the feasibility of the project. As a result, Kenya Rural Enterprise Programme (K-

³⁸⁹ ›*Bi wageru maendeleo!*‹ is a Luo expression in this case standing for ›come, we are bringing you development‹.

REP) was commissioned to carry out a socio-economic assessment in 1990³⁹⁰. The assessment report fuelled the doubts of UNDP on the viability of the project as outlined by the mission in 1988. The assessment revealed that the existing group and production management showed considerable weaknesses in areas of group leadership, organisation, business and financial management. Considering the low level of understanding of the members relating to their duties and responsibilities in their respective groups, K-REP disapproved of the idea of creating an intermediary organisation like the proposed ›Karachuonyo Pottery Company‹, finding it inappropriate at the time. K-REP instead recommended strengthening the individual groups and adjusting project activities to the technical and implementation level of the target group. Disillusioned by this rather negative assessment, UNDP withdrew any commitments for financing the second phase of the Karachuonyo Pottery Project beyond the ongoing preparatory phase. While the UNIDO country director felt embarrassed over the failed kiln building exercise, they commissioned Awimbo of KIRDI in October 1990 with the repair of the oil-drip kiln at Omboga. This latest move was inspired by a feeling of guilt rather than a meaningful implementation plan for the project. Despite UNDP's withdrawal UNIFEM did not want to give up on the project as yet and drafted a new project document in January 1991 which was fully in line with the GoK's goal to promote job creation in small-scale enterprises and income-generating activities with women.

While awaiting further action to be taken by the UN organisations involved, Phoebe Asiyo had successfully identified and mobilised alternative training and funding sources which were meant to foster the economic performance of the women potters in her constituency. As a result Persi N. had been chosen to attend a training in KCJ production at Kisii with the view to training her fellow craftswomen on her return. However, returning from the seminar fully equipped with the necessary moulds and knowledge, she ventured into jiko production on her own but was soon to abandon this idea as it surfaced that the rural demand for improved charcoal stoves was extremely low. Within the same period of time a small number of women from Oriang' had been introduced to the production of simple clay beads and the assembling of necklaces using these beads or natural and dyed seeds, which would never earn them much money but ›kept them in the game‹. In 1989 Phoebe Asiyo managed to link the Oriang' potters to KENGO and ITDG' in Kisumu who jointly run the West Kenya Stove Project, which had evolved out of the ›Women Pottery Project‹ and laid emphasis on the production and dissemination of Maendeleo Jikos in West Kenya. After visiting and assessing the Kogweno Oriang' WG in 1989³⁹¹, ITDG agreed to conduct a three day training in jiko liner production at Oriang' in April 1990. Having lost confidence in the long awaited establishment of a ceramic workshop in Karachuonyo, Grace and Charles were to leave the project soon after as the National Christian Children's

³⁹⁰ The K-REP team carrying out the feasibility study did not include a technical expert who could evaluate the technical side of the planned project.

³⁹¹ details are entailed in the unpublished ITDG report ›Social and economic aspects of pottery production by women's groups in Western Kenya‹. Kisumu, 1989

Fund³⁹² stopped providing them with a monthly salary. While Grace managed to secure employment at the Jitegemea pottery some years later, Charles basically abandoned the craft until late 1996 when he rejoined the OPWG for a few months. As stove production and distribution was a major objective of the second project phase funded by UNIFEM, ITDG was to remain a close and valuable partner in the promotion of the group between 1991 and 1997.

Not conversant with the second feasibility study, politicians and a number of prominent women leaders in Kendu Bay Division had founded the ›Rachuonyo Development Company Ltd.‹ in 1990 in preparation for the newly awaited second project phase³⁹³. It was anticipated that the company would be given the responsibility of managing and co-ordinating future project activities. Despite the existence of the company, UNIDO was to decide otherwise. Taking account of the political history and the poor performance of the project in the past, UNIDO approached the German Development Service (DED) with a request for long term technical assistance being granted to the project. After evaluating the request, the DED selected a skilled ceramist to work for the project in June 1990. As a result project activities intensified and started yielding success thereafter. However, progress was slow. While the German volunteer started her work in June 1990, hardly any funds were made available for the day to day running of the project since UNIDO and UNIFEM did not come to terms with the new project document until more than a year later in September 1991. In the mean time the group had worked out a constitution, opened a new bank account at Homa Bay and re-registered itself under the name Oriang' Pottery Women Group with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services, as the women were unable to fulfil the requirements of a co-operative society, association or company at the time. With the active support and co-operation of ITDG, stove making activities were progressing and within a year the group had consolidated its efforts and managed to participate in and introduce its products at the South Nyanza Agricultural Show in 1991.

As spelled out under the headline ›Medium-term goals‹, the second project phase was to take a much wider approach than just to boost pottery activities among women in the area. In the project document the medium-term goals were specified as such: ›To improve the status and standard of living, of women in Karachuonyo by assisting the women in alleviating their problems with water supply and by creating gainful employment through the establishment of a suitable and profit making pottery business at Oriang' and assistance in initiating income-generating activities at Omboga‹ (UNIDO – KEN/91/WO1). These goals reflect a dichotomy which characterised most project profiles targeting women, as portrayed in Chapter 6.3.

It is unfortunately a common phenomenon that women and women's groups in rural Kenya who have gained the reputation of being well organised and committed to their activities are addressed by almost any NGO and/or ministry focusing on Women in

³⁹² tracing back the connection of the NCCF to the Kogweno Oriang' Group revealed once again the involvement of Phoebe Asiyo, surely a very active and concerned community representative and politician.

³⁹³ Information on the new project, the ›Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project‹ was recorded by UNIDO under the project number KEN/91/WO1.

Development in the respective region, without any attention being paid to their own group specific development objectives.

Over time some of the OPWG members have accumulated an incredible training record over the years which I would like to illustrate in two examples: One woman interviewed in November 1995 remembered participating in the following training seminars³⁹⁴:

1967 (3 weeks)	Small scale agricultural production – Ministry of Agriculture
1980 (6,5 month)	Midwifery – Ministry of Health and Gendia Hospital;
1982 (3 month)	Family Planning – Ministry of Health;
1985 (1 year)	Adult Education – organised for the Misingo group; KCJ Production – GTZ / Ministry of Energy;
1990s	AIDS Awareness – at the Homa Hills Centre;
1990 (3 days)	Production of Maendeleo Jikos – ITDG
1990s (1 month)	Group leadership – Maendeleo ya Wanawake in Nairobi;
1992	Macramé – Ministry of Agriculture, Home Economic Department,
1990–1995	various trainings organised by the ›Karachuonyo Women’s Pottery Project‹ as mentioned below.

Another stated to have participated in the following seminars:

1958 (6 month)	Home Economics ³⁹⁵ – Maendeleo ya Wanawake in Kisii
1963 (1 week)	Agricultural production – Ministry of Agriculture in Homa Bay;
1979 (3 month)	Midwifery – Ministry of Health in Homa Bay;
1982 (1 week)	›Women in Development‹ – YWCA in Mombasa ³⁹⁶
1984	Co-operative management – Ministry of Co-operative Development in Nairobi ³⁹⁷
1990 (1 week)	Family planning – Ministry of Health in Homa Bay;
1990 (3 days)	Production of Maendeleo Jikos – ITDG
1993	Organic farming – ADRA, a Nairobi based NGO
(1990–1995)	various training courses organised by the ›Karachuonyo Women’s Pottery Project‹ as mentioned below.

With women being in the limelight of community development, their economic activities are often hampered as they get distracted by largely uncoordinated invitations to participate in training seminars and unconnected development approaches and activities. After having been denied active participation in public life

³⁹⁴ In both cases only those easily remembered by the women have been recorded which does not mean that the list is necessarily complete.

³⁹⁵ The respondents specified the activities they were instructed in as cooking, ironing, housekeeping, childcare and vegetable growing.

³⁹⁶ After the one-week seminar the YWCA opened a branch at Kisumu.

³⁹⁷ Following the advice of the local MP, the Oriang’ potters registered their group as a co-operative in 1985 which was nicknamed and known as ›Phoebe’s [Asiyo] co-operative‹ by officers of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and KETA officials, for example.

in the past³⁹⁸, being invited to a seminar was regarded as an honour, giving women a hard time in turning down an invitation; even more so as more often than not an allowance was paid which by far exceeded the daily income of most of the invited participants. Lured by these seminars women have been dragged away from their productive work which, for example, seriously affected the commitment of OPWG members to streamline their activities and concentrate on pottery production. In 1990 the Lake Basin Development Authority took account of the subject matter and stressed that »Women groups have become major players in rural development activities as a result, they have become vehicles for some influential personalities and pressure groups who use them for their own ends ignoring the needs and expectations of the group members« (LBDA 1990:43). In preparation of the 1997 elections, Kenyan women are once again courted by politicians as they campaign for voters as illustrated below:

In the *Daily Nation*, one of the leading newspapers, it reads for example »Vice President George Saitoti on Sunday presided over a funds drive for women's groups in Kericho District where more than KShs. 19 million was raised« (*Daily Nation* of 2. Sep. 1997); » The sales manager of Kisii Bottlers, Mr. Zacharia Motouri, helped to raise KShs. 230,000/= at Kebuko primary school in Kitutu Masaba Constituency in Nyamira District in aid of St. Mary's women's group. He gave KShs. 35,000/=. He told those entrusted with women's funds to utilise them properly in order to motivate them so that they could participate in development activities« (*Daily Nation* – September 2, 1997) or »The chairman of the Central Province Development Support Group, Mr. S.K. Macharia, has helped to raise KShs. 6 million for the Nyandarua women's development fund at Ol Kalou. During the *harambee*, he claimed the Kikuyu community would be politically eclipsed if President Moi lost in the forth-coming presidential elections« (*Daily Nation* – August 30, 1997). On Sunday September 7th, 1997 President Moi was portrayed in Kenya's newspapers as he presided over the collection of the National Women's Development Fund contributions of all provinces which amounted to a total of KShs. 845.7 million. During the *harambee* the President »criticised opposition MPs for boycotting the *harambee* which he noted was meant to assist women and uplift the living standards of Kenyan families« (*Sunday Standard* – September 7, 1997) while he praised the ruling party for its active part in the *harambee* and pointed out that the Government donated KShs. 200 million provided in this year's Development Estimates of Ministry of Culture and Social Services. The latter, leaves no doubt about the political agenda of the *harambee*, to win this years general elections as the *harambee* was once again a floor to campaign and praise President Moi for his achievements while condemning the opposition, who unlike the ruling party, has no

³⁹⁸ For most of the century the unattached woman, the woman as an individual and competent community member was not heard of. Women, subjects of dowry and inheritance, were not allowed to move around freely and explore their own abilities and potentials, speak out at public *barazas* or engage in any economic activity without the approval of their husbands or the male head of household.

direct access to or control over the money raised³⁹⁹. In the run-up for the General Elections to be held on 29th December 1997 the President himself and KANU delegates are made a feature of the National News on TV as they dish out cheques worth hundreds of thousands of shilling to WGs during their nation-wide campaign rallies.

The inability to challenge their political leaders and say ›*NO*‹ to a ›*development vehicle*‹ being proposed to them did have the result that the OPWG did not disclose the fact that most of its members were non-potters while every outsider approaching the group was made to believe the opposite suggesting that pot-making was ›the craft‹ being carried out by the women in focus and the activity to support and foster. As jiko production has little in common with traditional pot making, it was perceived as a welcome alternative and opportunity for non-potters to get involved and play an active part in the Karachuonyo Women's Pottery Project. However, as the old workshop facilities were too small to house a large jiko production line, more and more women asked their fellow group members to train them in pot-making, while others engaged themselves in farming once the newly acquired plot could be utilised; some others were continuously searching for alternative income generating activities. By 1995, activities at the workshop had been divided in accordance with the qualifications of the individual group members, reducing the number of women attending to jiko production to 14, while 30 women were busy moulding pots by hand, 3 women were being trained at the potter's wheel, 9 women were put in charge of clay collection and preparation and another 4 were taking care of the overall management of the group's affairs and the marketing of the products. Although the total membership of the OPWG has been reduced to around 60, the group still has to cope with approximately 30 inactive members who can not be expelled easily due to social obligations and family ties linking the group members to one another.

Between 1991 and 1997, project activities were manifold as were the problems hampering their smooth implementation as already indicated. Once the project money, US \$ 175.000, was made available and the OPWG offered a soft loan to purchase a one acre plot for themselves, the latter had to be identified which proved an obstacle in itself as rivalling family clans residing in the area were competing for the location of the project to secure their involvement/say in the project matters and future benefits, such as free access to water once a borehole was established. As a result the plot identification and purchase of the same developed into a lengthy process, slowed down envisaged project activities and delayed the start of the new workshop construction as well as the drilling and operation of the bore-hole and a water-kiosk on site until late 1992. Delayed payments combined with the poor performance of the construction company further slowed down the completion of the new workshop building until 1994 and confined the overall performance of the OPWG as they had to cope with the inappropriate and old workshop facilities which were much too small. This limited their economic activities and prevented the establishment of a viable enterprise for which the women were not to blame.

³⁹⁹ »The national chairperson of Maendeleo ya Wanawake organisation, Mrs. Zipporah Kittony, said President Moi had brought Kenyans together in the last 19 years of his rule« (*Sunday Nation*, September 7, 1997)

Over the years a succession of seminars, ranging from leadership training, participatory evaluation and planning sessions, intensive marketing and management training, training of trainers, language classes, instructions in new production technologies, product development and design as well as civic education seminars enlightening the women on their legal rights and position; were organised to strengthen the groups overall performance, managerial and entrepreneurial skills and the confidence of the group members in their own abilities. The economic performance of the group however, only started to flourish after they had moved into the new workshop, acquired an additional piece of land to secure their future supply of clay and started operating a newly constructed oil-drip kiln and an improved traditional fire-place/kiln, on site. Repeated exposure to new market and production environments (mentioned hereafter) which was made possible through the project, further enlightened the group on external markets and their competitors. While three women completed a training course in the manufacturing of metal-claddings for portable Maendeleo Jikos and KCJs held at KENGO in Nairobi, two skilled potters were given the opportunity to link up with Jua Kali potters at the NJKPE where they were introduced to new production methods, designs and organisational structures. Another three women attended a one week seminar which marked the end of the ›Product Development and Designs Project‹ which was funded by ODA and implemented by Jisaidie Cottage Industry between 1994 and 1995 and by Kenya Gatsby Trust (KGT) between 1995 and 1996, and the whole group visited a total of 6 different workshops in Nairobi during an extensive study tour in 1997. It was through the active support and improved links to development and marketing agents such as KGT and Spinner's Web, who are individual well-wishers and promoters of the group, that the OPWG managed to penetrate Kenya's urban and export market. However, their external marketing is still hampered by their remote location, their poor communication infrastructure on site, poor public relations and advertisement of their products. Having always had somebody to do the job for them, whether it be the local MP, the expatriate or, as at present, the newly employed Kenyan project advisor and Pamela, a trained marketing agent and the daughter of one of the group members who lives in Nairobi, the group members have not yet developed a sound understanding of the urban and external market forces and demands in terms of products and services which would enable them to take care of their own business affairs.

The behavioural logic of the OPWG is guided by the fact that after the departure of the expatriate project co-ordinator a Kenyan advisor has been employed by UNIDO/DED for another two years to facilitate the link of the project to its external customers, consolidate the project activities, lead the women into independence and turn the project into a self governed, viable and competitive enterprise. Up until today it is only within their residential locality, with which they are well conversant, that the women have successfully taken over control of their economic affairs and the marketing of their products. Between 1996 and 1997 they opened permanent market stalls in Homa Bay, Rodi and Pala, which have greatly increased their local sales. The women, however, seem to be trapped in a vicious circle of dependencies as their market gearing has grown out of their own capacities and control. With most of the women being illiterate and unable to communicate in English, it seems unlikely that

the OPWG like many other groups will be able to manage external sales without the active support of learned members of the community or extended family assisting them, communicating the customers demands and informing them of upcoming new marketing opportunities or shows etc. and linking them to marketing and development agents.

11.2 Jua Kali Pottery Enterprises: Urban potters and their rural peers

Unlike the female potters of Karachuonyo the male Isukha potters, who dominate Kenya's contemporary urban pottery scene, look back at and share a different history which is marked by some outstanding individuals who paved the way for the growth of Kenya's pottery industry during the second half of the 20th Century.

While WAGNER (1970) wrote that the Isukha were known for buying pots off their Maragoli and Luo neighbours at Mbale Market during the 1930s, BURT (1975:11) who studied artistic craft innovations among the Luyia during the mid 1970s, stated that the Isukha have had *Avalongi vi Zinyingu* (potters) for as long as they have lived in western Kenya. Nevertheless, he pointed out that until the 1960s the craft had been carried out by men of the Avasagala clan only, to whom Musa Shamwama Vutakate belongs. Talking to elders and clan members of the Avasagala in 1996, I was not able to establish the full and true history of the potter's craft among the Isukha of Muchonge Sublocation, Kakamega District. Some informants told me that the potter's craft was introduced to them by two women from Tiriki who joined their relatives at Ilesi around the turn of the century. Others said that the craft had been practised since time immemorial. Yet everybody seemed to agree that there were very few men attending to pottery during colonial days and until the late 1970s. It was then that the craft, benefiting from the entrepreneurial spirit of the Musa family, gained economic strength and developed into one of the main sources of income and employment in the area.

The story goes that as a youth, Musa Shamwama Vutakate was trained as a traditional potter; pottery was a craft, which at the time could not earn him the money to satisfy his demands. Consequently, like many other young men, he left his rural home in search of employment outside the reserves. While working as a cook for a European in Eldoret during the early 1930s, he started copying the crockery he had grown familiar with by utilising his pot-making skills in his spare time. Since Musa was able to catch the interest of the white people living in the area and create a market for his products, such as teapots, cups and saucers, creamers, flower pots, vases and ashtrays, he decided to return home and make pottery as a profession. Back at Ilesi he started selling his items almost exclusively to missionaries at Kaimosi Friends Mission, but as the word spread about his work other Europeans expressed their interest and bought pottery ware from him. Inspired by his success, which enabled him to send his two sons, Charles and Jacob, to school, Musa started to train and involve the latter in pottery production at an early age. However, Charles, the oldest son, who assisted his father between 1962 and 1964, turned his back on the craft and worked as a house and *shamba* boy between 1964 and 1966, when he then returned home and worked for his father for just 6 months. Not happy with the set-up and his own economic performance, he left Ilesi again to work as a cook in Kisii between 1966 and

1972. He finally returned home to settle and take over the pottery business from his father who had grown old by then. Like his father, Charles was to profit from his exposure to urban life and European kitchenware. Following his footsteps Charles concentrated on moulding pottery items that would suit the taste of the ›Whites‹ who had more money to spend than his fellow Kenyans living around him in the former reserves. As he was creating a name for himself, Alan Donovan the manager and lead designer of African Heritage, approached him and supplied him with some new designs accompanied by the request to reproduce samples of the same. The samples yielded a rich and positive response and were followed by larger orders from ›African Heritage‹. Soon after Musa's products were on display in Nairobi, he received visitors from the NCKK who by then had started to export handicrafts from Kenya and established a sales outlet for handicrafts in Nairobi. As the samples ordered by the latter afforded a good response from their overseas customers, the NCKK placed a large order for export which far exceeded Charles's production capacity and induced him to ask his fellow potters for support. Despite the fact that all potters involved benefited from the sales, the jealousy of his fellow community members increased with Charles's economic success. According to the African way of life this was a community concern and was brought to the attention of the local elders who advised Charles to share his success and incorporate as many as possible in his business. The constant flow of new orders thereafter enabled Charles to employ potters, mainly relatives, to work for him and/or to subcontract part of the orders to other potters in the community.

By then well connected to the urban handicraft scene, Charles, like Perez N. of Karachuonyo, was invited by KETA to participate in a national handicraft fair and workshop held at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre in 1977 which was meant to attract overseas customers and boost export sales⁴⁰⁰. Impressed by his craftsmanship the UNDUGU Society, thereafter, approached Charles with the request to instruct some of its members in pot-making over a period of two month in 1978. This, however, was not to remain the only occasion on which Charles was asked to reveal his expertise to the public. After having been trained in KCJ and Maendeleo Jiko production during the 1980s, Charles was to be asked by the Ministry of Energy in conjunction with the Special Energy Programme to teach women's groups and other potters in how to mould these *jikos*. As the potter's craft was gaining wider recognition and appreciation, the museum curators of the Kisumu, Kitale and Mombasa Museum hired Charles to hold training workshops and lecture primary school children. Over time Charles became the most well known and exposed potter in Kenya. As such he was able to benefit from KETA's efforts to enhance handicraft production in Kenya between 1977 and 1982, from Tuff Milways' stay in Kenya during the years 1983 and 1984 as well as from the services of two Swedish and German designers who were working for the NCKK and many others who have been involved in the promotion of handicraft production ever since. He was invited to participate in Agricultural Shows, Jua Kali shows and other national exhibitions and development programmes focusing on rural crafts and industries, such as the PDDP. By 1993 the Ilesi pottery was

⁴⁰⁰ For more details see Chapter 7.2

employing 15 people and most of its products were exported to countries such as Germany, Holland or Canada and/or sold to wholesalers and retailers who ran craft galleries in Kenya's major cities. Although the number of people working for Charles had reduced considerably in 1996, the Ileshi Pottery, managed and owned by Charles, became the only 'rural pottery enterprise' listed in the 1996 Directory of Kenyan Industries.

Between the years of 1975 and 1997 Charles had trained many of his neighbours and relatives in how to produce pottery items for the urban, tourist and overseas market. Many of them have started workshops of their own at Ileshi, Nairobi and other places. Among them is Fabian L, one of his nephews, who was the first Isukha to open a pottery workshop in Nairobi in 1989, which has matured to a well established and successful enterprise over the years.

Although Fabian's great uncles, members of the Avasagala clan (see Figure 6), were making pots, his own grandfather and father had refused to practise the craft as it was perceived as a hard and dirty job with small economic potential. This did not stop Fabian (whose parents were too poor to enable him to attend school) from engaging in pot-making after he had to abandon school in 1971. At the age of 10, he decided to work for a potter living in the neighbourhood, *Mzee* Paulo, who willingly took him on as an apprentice. Following the announcement of free primary school education for Standard I to IV by the President on the occasion of 10th Anniversary of *Uhuru* on 12th December 1974 Fabian L. resumed primary school education at the age of 13⁴⁰¹. In order to pay for his own school uniform, text books etc. and support his poor parents as best he could, Fabian made pots throughout his schooling time which were sold at the market in Kakamega by his mother and other family members. Being unable to earn enough money to cater for his secondary school education, Fabian permanently undertook the life of a potter in 1981. In the mean time he had become known for his dedication and good workmanship and was employed by his uncle, Charles, soon after completing his primary school education. Shortly after, in 1982, potters working at the Ileshi Pottery, among them Fabian L., were the first Kenyan potters to be trained in the production of KCJs.⁴⁰² Impressed by his outstanding performance, M. Kinyanjui, the technical advisor of the Kenya Renewable Energy Development Programme, asked Fabian in 1983 to join him at Nairobi where he was to set-up a production unit for KCJs. Eager to enhance his knowledge and economic performance, Fabian willingly agreed to work for and with Kinyanjui until 1989. Between 1983 and 1988 Fabian had received additional training in the production of Maendeleo Jikos by the late Simon M. at Muranga⁴⁰³ and had teamed up with Kinyanjui to train Tanzanian potters and other interested people in the production of energy-saving cooking stoves. Fuelled by the success of the KCJs, more and more people had engaged themselves in their production and flooded the Kenyan market with jiko liners. This inspired Kinyanjui to withdraw from the production of KCJs himself and concentrate on training others to do

⁴⁰¹ Five years later on 31st December 1979 President Moi extends free primary school education up to Standard VII.

⁴⁰² Also see Chapter 9.2.2.1

⁴⁰³ Simon M. himself had been the first potter to be trained in jiko production under the auspices of the Special Energy Programme.

it. In 1989 Kinyanjui decided to extend his stay in Tanzania while Fabian had no other option at the time but to return to Ileshi and work for Charles again. However, Fabian's stay at Ileshi did not last long. Realising that Nairobi was the market-centre for decorative pottery ware, flower pots, planters etc. he persuaded some fellow potters to team up with him and start a small pottery workshop in the outskirts of Nairobi. Throughout the 1980s pots from western Kenya had dominated the urban sales and it would take some time for the news to break that merchants and exporters no longer had to travel to Ileshi, Kakamega or Kisumu to purchase the pots they wanted, but were able to order them with Fabian in Nairobi. To make the public more aware of his workshop, the Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise, Fabian, who had grown well familiar with Kenya's handicraft and Jua Kali scene during the 1980s, approached the MRTT&T for assistance. Paying tribute to his entrepreneurial spirit and innovative product repertoire he was thereafter invited to exhibit his products free of charge at the stand of the MRTT&T at the Nairobi Show, and has done so ever since. Between 1989 and 1992 clay liners, of which they produced around 60.000 annually, dominated the production of the Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise until the market price for jiko liners had decreased to an extent which threatened to collapse the enterprise⁴⁰⁴. In answer to this they increased the production of planters which they could sell to the Rosslyn River Garden Centre⁴⁰⁵ and other retailers at Nairobi while Fabian L. himself accepted a job as a part-time teacher. Between 1992 and 1995 he gave pottery lessons at the Kabete Kindergarten and the Hillcrest School in Nairobi. However, jealousy and disagreements over the internal work distribution and payment structure undermined the joint efforts of the Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise and caused the group to split up, subsequently forming the Uthiru Pottery and the New Jua Kali Pottery Enterprise. The Uthiru Pottery was short-lived as it lacked the experience, expertise and business connections that Fabian had accumulated over his long stay in Nairobi, and thus Fabian approached his main customer, the Rosslyn River Garden Centre, for help and advice on how to start all over again. Happy with his products and past business performance, the owner of Rosslyn River Garden Centre offered Fabian basic workshop facilities and a loan which would enable him to pay his employees until he had regained economic strength and was able to meet his own expenses, repay his loan and realise a profit for himself. The loan, however, was not unconditional, it was based on the agreement that Fabian would produce primarily for the Rosslyn River Garden Centre and only sell the pots they had rejected to other customers. This arrangement worked out satisfactorily for both sides until Fabian's production began to exceed the requirements of the Rosslyn River Garden Centre. Searching for an alternative set-up, Fabian teamed up with Njenga, a Kikuyu from Kingeero. Having met and got to know each other while working for Kinyanjui during the 1980s, they agreed to start a workshop on a joint venture basis at Kingeero where Njenga owned a suitable plot for the exercise. Fabian meanwhile had the technical expertise and the market connections. Two years later internal disagreements were once again to undermine the

⁴⁰⁴ Also see Chapter 9.2.2.1

⁴⁰⁵ The Rosslyn River Garden Centre was the first one of its kind and for a long time the only place where people could buy flowers and ornamental plants, pots and other garden accessories for their homes.

smooth running of their joint operation and cause the two to split the business between them. Having separated in good faith, each of them remained with some of the employees and Njenga allowed Fabian to continue using the kiln they had built together until Fabian had constructed a new one for himself. Following this last experience, Fabian withdrew from any joint enterprise structures and decided to run the NJKPE as a private business of his own.

In April 1995, shortly after he had split the business with Njenga, Fabian was employing 20 Isukha men. By this time, pottery had proved its popularity and economic potential, which inspired potters and non-potters alike to venture into pottery production and sales. While more and more road-side merchants and nurseries expressed their interest and demand in flower pots etc., more and more young potters dreamed of a pottery workshop of their own and left Fabian L. to develop their own enterprises or to be employed by wealthy businessmen who just hired the necessary expertise to establish a pottery workshop in Nairobi, Nyeri, Meru and other locations. Fortunately enough, Fabian had paved the way for many young Isukha men to develop their potting skills and never cut the ties with his rural home which had earned him respect and popularity among the Isukha.

While Fabian started his own business career empty handed with little more than his technical expertise, dedication and entrepreneurial spirit he was able to create a name for himself and establish a profitable business which enabled him to purchase a piece of land at Ilesi where he has settled his wife and children. Hampered by a lack of business capital, however, he can only afford to slowly improve the current workshop facilities and employment structures. Paying his employees an average of KShs. 3,000/= per month in 1995 meant Fabian's work force was constantly on the alert for more lucrative employment opportunities and was easily tempted to leave the NJKPE to work for other employers who were in a position to offer them a higher salary. However, dissatisfied with the employers, many of them have returned to the NJKPE or started workshops of their own.

With agricultural land and employment opportunities being scarce in rural Kenya, more and more potters from western Kenya followed the foot steps of their relatives who had migrated to Nairobi and paved the way for a booming pottery industry. Kenya's urban pottery scene of the 1990s is dominated by men who work in the city while their families, wives and children, live in the rural areas. Strong family and social links with their rural home result in a high migration and fluctuation rate among the urban employees. Some of the potters I met at Muchonge Sublocation, Kakamega District, in 1996, have tried urban employment but prefer to work at home. Meanwhile, others were commuting between an urban and rural work environment; an example is Moses L.. After being trained by his father, Andrea L., Moses L. left for Nairobi to seek employment with Fabian L. As he was out to gather experience and earn money, he left the NJKPE to work at Terra Ltd., where he was offered a higher salary. However, unhappy with the employment situation at Terra Ltd. he decided to return home and start a pottery enterprise of his own at Muchonge Sublocation where I found him busy moulding large sized waterpots for sale at Kakamega in February 1996. In April 1997, when pottery sales at Kakamega had reached the annual low, Moses L. once again sought employment with Fabian L. in Nairobi. As the NJKPE had just

secured some large orders and was in dire need of skilled and experienced potters like Moses L., the latter was received with a warm welcome. Unfortunately Fabian's generosity was not always beneficial to himself, as former employees often left without notice and in doing so undermined the effective management of orders and the business by and large.

Figure 6 provides an insight into the evolution and rise of the Nairobi based pottery scene along with some details on potters originating from western Kenya, namely Muchonge Sublocation, and their involvement in the scene. Figure 6 also sheds a light on the roots of various Isukha potters (▬ frames) and pottery enterprises (those still operational: ▬ frames; those which have ceased operation: — frames). The ▬▬▬ arrows indicate who handed down the craft skills to whom; the ▬▬▬ arrows indicate who the individual potters have worked for; and the ——— arrows disclose the roots, separation and formation of the 12 Nairobi based pottery enterprises in focus (stand 1997). While those run by Isukha potters have a rounded frame, those managed by Kikuyus have been given a square frame.

Ethnicity and socio-cultural linkages play a determining role in the evolution and line-up of the contemporary urban pottery scene. While Luyia potters generally prefer to team up with other Luyias, they often complain about unfair and dissatisfying employment and payment conditions if working for a Kikuyu⁴⁰⁶. Likewise, potters of Kikuyu origin are found to prefer to work for or together with members of their own ethnic and cultural background. By taking a closer look at the personal history and professional career of the various potters and pottery enterprises, we find two evolution lines, one based on Luyia origin and the other on Kikuyu origin. The Luyia lineage can be traced back to the early 20th Century when some passionate Isukha potters with an entrepreneurial mind, such as S.V. Musa, first came into contact with European crockery and started to copy the same with the view to sell them to the ›Whites‹. The story of S.V. Musa and his oldest son, Charles M., who led the potter's craft at Ilesi to greater economic heights, has already been revealed. Having experienced the dual importance of extended exposure and of being well connected to the market and new and/or ongoing development movements such as the jiko programmes, which started off during the 1980s, Charles M. first trained his oldest son, John M., before he sent him to Nairobi to work for KENGO. As KENGO had to close its jiko production unit in 1995, John M. decided to stay at Nairobi and start his own workshop, the Oriental Pottery, just as his cousin Fabian L. did some years earlier.

While John M. has established his workshop at Kangemi all other workshops run by Luyia potters, namely the NJKPE, the Wanyonji Pottery, the Ziku Pottery and the Junior Jua Kali Pottery are located in close reach of one another. However, it is generally observed that Isukha potters socialised, assisted and co-operating closely with one another when the need arose.

⁴⁰⁶ Personal statement of Ernest (2/9/97), an Isukha potter working for Judy C. at Nairobi.

To cut a long story short, I would like to illustrate the workshops in brief:

Oriental Pottery

- As mentioned before John M., the oldest son of Charles M. of Ilesi founded the Oriental Pottery, in 1995. John M. employed 4 potters, all of whom are close relatives from Ilesi.

Wanyonji Pottery

- The pottery is named after its founder and current owner, Wanyonji, a Bukusu potter of western Kenya. In February 1997 Wanyonji employed two other Luyia potters, who are either of Maragoli or Bukusu but not of Isukha origin, and one casual, who prepares the clay, dries the pots, applies the red ochre slip and polishes the pots before firing.

Ziku Pottery

- The Ziku Pottery is owned and run by Silvester E., an Isukha potter and former employee of Fabian L.
- After having worked at the NJKPE for some time, Silvester E., a skilled potter and Fabian's right hand man, Bonifaz, a 'learned' Luyia from Kakamega who took care of the management of the NJKPE in Fabian's absence, teamed up and started a small workshop of their own at the Muthure Shopping Centre in 1995.
- However, Silvester E. and Bonifaz soon separated again over disagreements on the running and financial management of the workshop.
- While Silvester E. called on his brother, Patrick E., and a cousin named John, who were both working for Fabian L. at the NJKPE, to come and work with him at the Muthure Shopping Centre, Bonifaz started the Junior Jua Kali Pottery in the close vicinity of the above mentioned shopping centre.

Junior Jua Kali Pottery

- Bonifaz, who had worked for Fabian L. after completing secondary school, enrolled at the Kenyatta University for further studies in 1996, shortly after he and Silvester E. separated.
- While Bonifaz attended to his university studies he had rented some workshop facilities at Muthure and employed a cousin, a brother to John working at Ziku Pottery, another young Isukha man, an uncle and the uncle's son, who is approximately 12 years of age and had to leave school to support his father who could not raise the money required to meet the expenses of his primary school education.
- As his employees hardly spoke any English the management of orders and the marketing of the pots depended on Bonifaz.

While the above mentioned pottery enterprises are run and managed by Luyia the following, namely the Kingeero Pottery, the Pennga Pottery, the Kariuki Pottery, the Karanja Pottery, Terra Ltd., Miaki Jikos and the pottery of Ibrahim K.M. are run and managed by Kikuyus.

Kingeero Pottery

- The Kingeero Pottery is owned and managed by Njenga, a Kikuyu and former gardener of Kinyanjui.
- Njenga, initially trained by Fabian L. while working at Miaki Jikos during the 1980s, started a joint venture business with Fabian L. in the early 1990s. After they terminated their business partnership in 1995, Njenga remained with only three employees, while the majority of the Isukha potters preferred to stay with their relative, Fabian L., and work for him at the NJKPE.
- By 1996, the number of Njenga's employees had declined further and work at the Kingeero Pottery was very low while the NJKPE, which is located adjacent to it, was flourishing and attracting large orders for export and for hotels and restaurants.

Miaki Jikos

- Miaki Jikos was founded by Dr. M. Kinyanjui in the early 1980s and started off as a production unit of KCJs. With Kinyanjui being technical advisor to the Kenya Renewable Energy Development Programme, Miaki Jikos came to play a key role in the development and improvement of energy saving *jikos* designed and produced in Kenya. Not being a potter himself, he employed Fabian L. to manage and oversee the workshop activities and production of clay liners at Miaki Jikos at Nairobi.
- When the market showed signs of saturation leading to a dramatic decline in wholesale prices for clay liners and KCJs in general, Kinyanjui decided to concentrate on his advisory role and encouraged Fabian L. to engage in the production of planters etc. alongside the *jikos*. In order to do so Fabian L. called on fellow potters from Ilesi to join him at Miaki Jikos. Due to an extended stay in Tanzania, Kinyanjui decided to scale down and even close his pottery workshop for some time in 1989.
- However, in 1997 he reactivated his pottery enterprise and worked on the design of some appropriate versions of fuel-efficient wood-stoves.

Terra Ltd.

- The story of Terra Ltd. has been already been exposed in Chapter 9.2
- It is, nevertheless, incorporated in this listing as it has been a stepping stone for a number of Luyia and Kikuyu potters who worked for Terra Ltd. and/or received their initial pottery training at Terra Ltd.
- Terra Ltd. split from Jerri International in the early 1990s and established its workshop facilities on the Ngong Road in Nairobi.
- While Helen K., a Kikuyu herself, employed some trained Kikuyus to set-up the ceramic component of Terra Ltd. and manage the overall running of the workshop, she drew on the technical expertise and experience of Luyia potters to create large sized hand moulded pots and planters for sale at Nairobi.
- While looking for new design inputs she teamed up with Paula and Judy C., two interior designers of European origin, during the early 1990s.
- As this business co-operation was not to the satisfaction of all parties, Paula and Judy C. left Terra Ltd. in the company of two skilled and devoted potters from western Kenya, an Isukha of Ilesi called Ernest and a Maragoli of Mbale called Joseph. While the latter initially moved their production to the under-utilised

workshop premises of M. Kinyanjui, they later moved operations to Paula's home. Following a further disagreement between Paula and Judy C. in 1996 they moved their production once again, this time to the residence of Judy C. in Nairobi. Being without a kiln Paula and Judy C. entered into an agreement with Clayworks Ltd. to fire their products.

The pottery workshop of Ibrahim K.M.

- Ibrahim K.M. maintains a full-time employment with Terra Ltd. where he supervises all activities in the pottery workshop.
- It is only during his own spare time, in the evenings and during weekends, that he produces simple planters himself and trains young men who have expressed interest in the craft. Unlike the other pottery enterprises mentioned before, with the exception of Terra Ltd., Ibrahim K.M. does not produce any large sized hand moulded planters but concentrates on wheel thrown items instead.

Kariuki Pottery and Karanja Pottery

- Kariuki and Karanja are Kikuyus who learned and developed their pottery skills while working at Terra Ltd. before they started their own pottery enterprises.
- Although I was not able to visit their workshops I was told that neither Kariuki nor Karanja were employing any Isukha potters from western Kenya.
- Fabian L., who knew about their work but did not maintain any regular contact with them, said that they only produce V-shaped planters as they did not know any better, because of their poor pottery background and lack of experience and expertise in engaging in more difficult vessel forms or sophisticated designs.

Pennga Jua Kali Pottery

- P. Pennga, a Kikuyu, was introduced to clay and pottery production during the 1980s while working as a watchman for Kinyanjui. As Pennga expressed his interest, the latter willingly agreed to teach him how to make KJCs in Pennga's spare time.
- When Kinyanjui closed down Miaki Jikos during the late 1980s, Pennga changed employer and started to work for Richard K., a Kikuyu businessman who had established Jerry International during the late 1970s. Having been introduced to pot-making by Fabian L. at Miaki Jikos Pennga decided to work for Terra Ltd. after it split from Jerry International in 1990.
- After having worked at Terra Ltd. for some time, Pennga started his own pottery enterprise along the Kikuyu Road near to Muthure Shopping Centre in the outskirts of Nairobi.
- In 1996 he was running the second largest Jua Kali pottery enterprise in Nairobi and employed nine people, five Isukha and four Kikuyu.
- Except for Rachel, a Kikuyu saleswoman and marketing assistant who had been working for Kinyanjui before, all of his employees were male.

All workshops mentioned in Figure 6, following hereafter, use simple wood fired kilns. With the exception of the kiln at Terra Ltd., all kilns are built out of old broken pots and jiko liner joined together with a clay-sand-murram mixture. As with the NJKPE, all of the workshops experienced serious problems with the cracking of their pots, as

Figure 6: The evolution and rise of the Nairobi based Jua Kali pottery scene

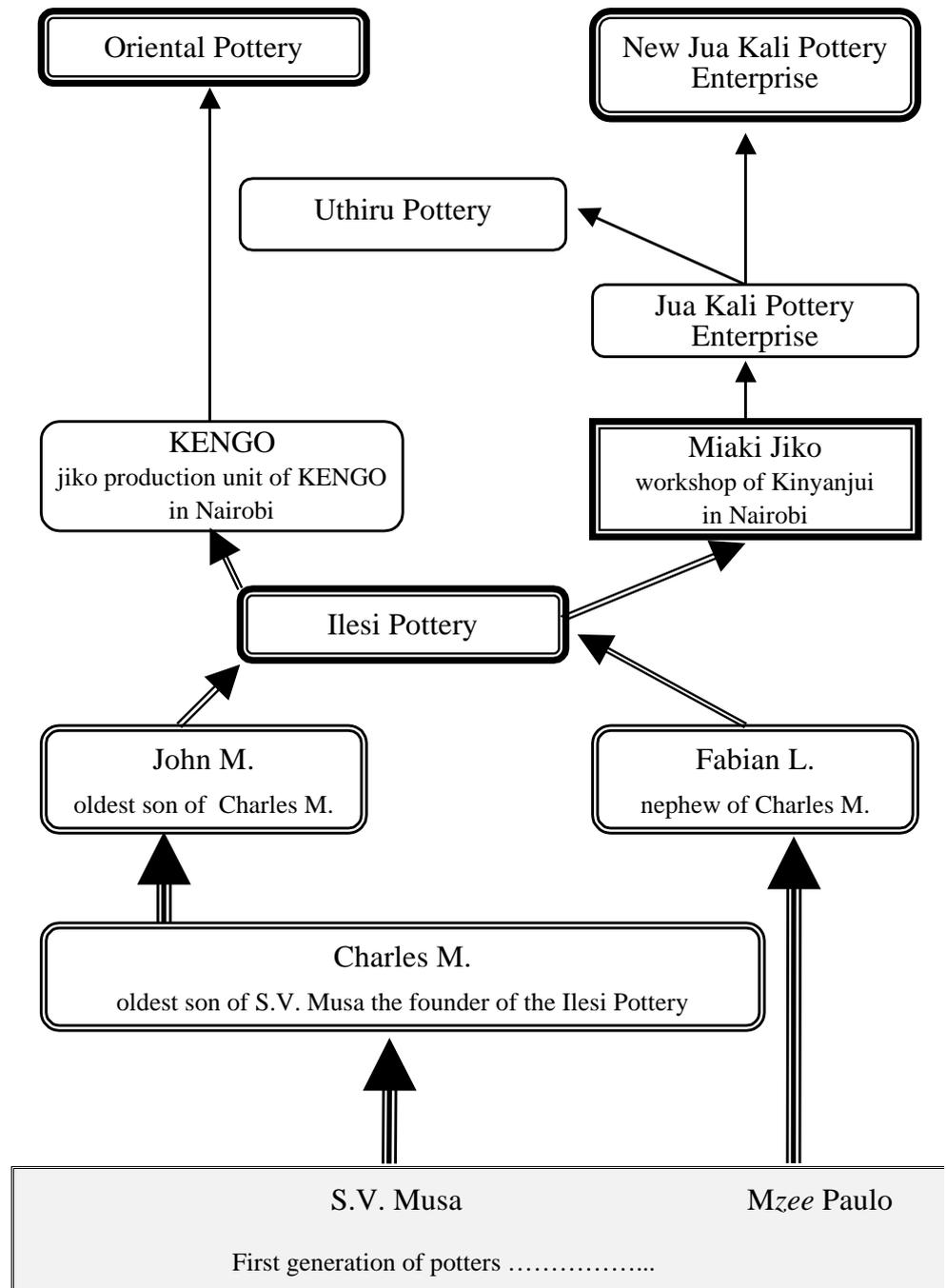
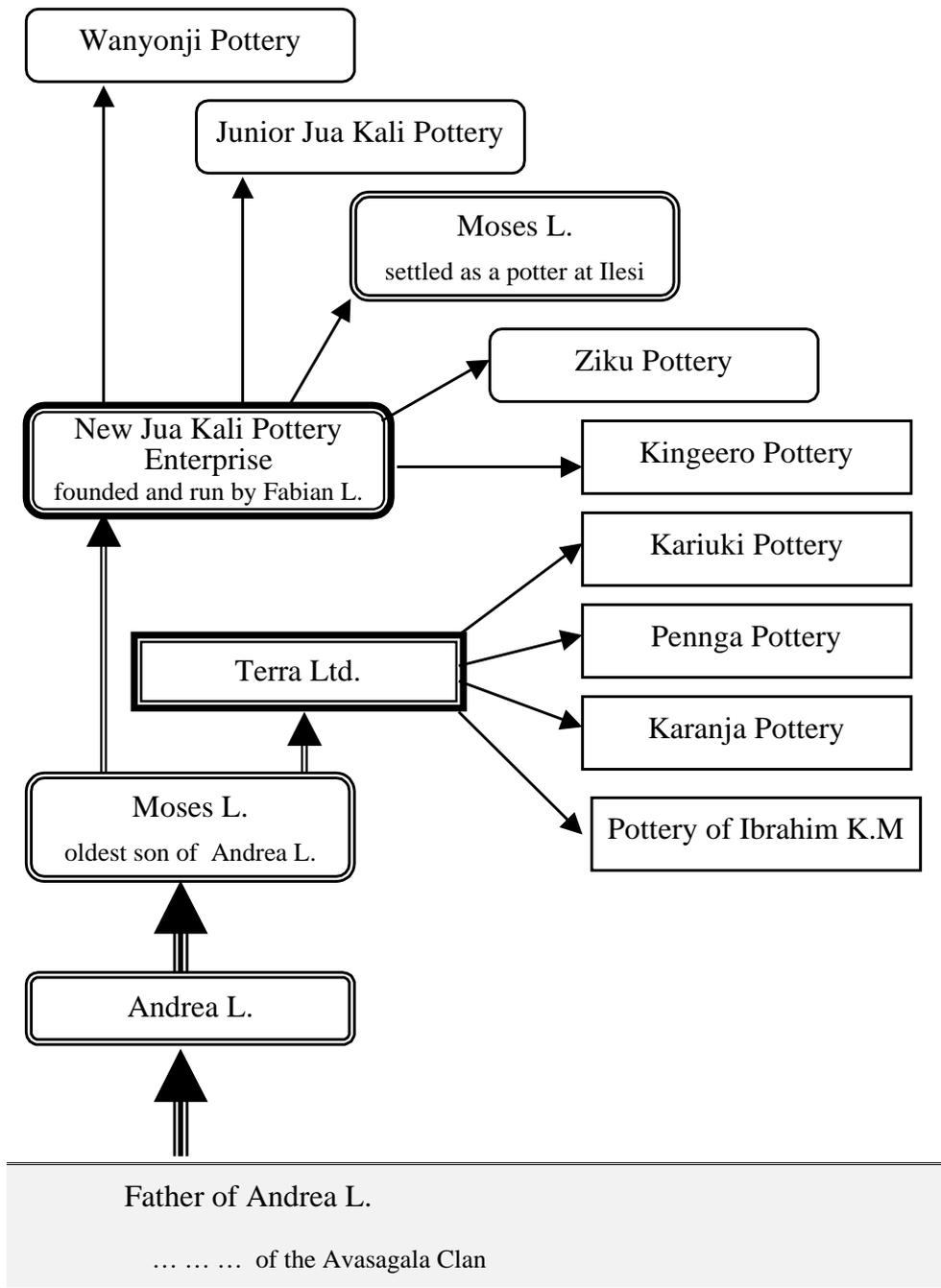


Figure 6: continued



they operate under very simple and often inadequate conditions: under iron-sheet roof shelters and/or houses which turn out to be very hot during the day and cold at night. As a result the drying of large sized pots becomes rather cumbersome. Due to the heat during the day the pots dry unevenly and can be completely dry at the top while their bottom might still be wet or even unfinished which causes extensive tension in the material as it shrinks up to 15 % in size during the drying process.

The potters originating from Ilesi co-operate closely even on a long distance, interregional basis, which gives them the potential to draw on a large work force and meet big orders in a short period of time. Meanwhile most of their Kikuyu peers operate on rather isolated and individual business terms. However, they join forces with other Kikuyu businessmen as in the case of Kariuki, who has teamed up with a number of Kikuyus running road side flower and tree nurseries in Greater Nairobi and purchase all their planters and garden accessories from him.

Apart from those potters and pottery enterprises mentioned above there are a number of Kenyan businessmen and potters alike who have established so-called Jua Kali Enterprises away from Nairobi. From amongst them I would like to draw attention to the late Simon M. at Muranga, Festus K. and Morris L. at Meru. Simon M., a Kikuyu businessman who was married to a potter, engaged himself in the production of KCJs and Maendeleo Jikos following a nation-wide campaign launched by KREDP and the Special Energy Programme during the 1980s. Once working in clay he ventured into the production of items such as water-coolers, toilet-bowls, pressure cookers and other items of the ›modern‹ household environment. Meanwhile his wife continued to produce traditional Kikuyu cooking-pots for local consumption and sales at Muranga. Festus K., a Meru and a retired schoolteacher, who was fascinated by an exhibition of energy saving cook stoves at the Nairobi Show, in 1983, sought information and technical assistance on the same. As he himself was growing old he decided to send his oldest son to attend a training in jiko production at Nairobi. On his return he trained his younger brother and together they established a jiko production workshop at Meru Town during the late 1980s. After a successful period boosted through the heavily subsidised dissemination of the *jikos* by the SEP, sales went down and caused the family enterprise to collapse after the SEP programme was phased out⁴⁰⁷. As the family business at Meru was experiencing serious constraints one of Festus's sons signed a contract with the Bellerive Foundation in Nairobi, where he received additional training in the production of institutional wood-stoves during the early 1990s. Equipped with additional expertise and a skilled work force of Isukha potters, the latter returned to Meru in 1993 with a view to establishing a production unit of his own. However, the institutional stoves did not yield the expected response causing the enterprise to crash soon after it was put into operation. One of the former employees, Morris L., an Isukha potter who already had a history of working as a potter at Ilesi, at Kitale and with Fabian L. and Kinyanjui in Nairobi, decided to establish himself at Meru where pots seemed to be in short supply.

⁴⁰⁷ While visiting Festus K. in August 1995, he showed me his kiln packed with KCJ and Maendeleo Jikos which hadn't been removed since their production in June 95 as Festus K. couldn't sell them and did not know where else he might store them.

Two years later in 1995, I visited Morris L. at his small workshop at the Kaaga shopping centre. By then he was enjoying the company of two younger brothers, aged 9 and 14 years, who had come to assist him as they were not in a position to attend school. Meanwhile Morris's own family, wife and children lived at Ilesi⁴⁰⁸. When asked about his future plans, Morris L. answered: »If God wishes, my business goes well and I stay in Meru.«

11.3 Resume

Throughout the century socio-cultural, educational and economic policies have been strengthening or even enacting a gender hierarchy and gender based divisions of work, economic spheres and responsibilities. Despite official commitments to seek and ensure gender equality, some women in Kenya are still subject to dowry and wife-inheritance, which boosts their subordination and dependency. Women are, even today, primarily perceived and addressed in their capacity as family and community members, as collective contributors to development rather than as individuals in their own right aiming at political and economic empowerment and individual pursuit. These gender based double standards have exhaustively hampered women's involvement in mainstream politics, economics and the crafts and are to blame for women's poor showing in the urban pottery and ceramic sector as they are expected to seek their husbands permission and to attend to and manage their domestic affairs well before even thinking of engaging in politics, business or employment⁴⁰⁹.

It can be summarised that albeit the fact that WGs have an important role to play in giving women a voice, serving women as a savings institution in absence of banking facilities or in the light of male dominance and control and allowing women to gain self-confidence in an environment which otherwise isolates them from mainstream developments, women's groups do not service economic growth well. Women entrepreneurs just like men need to be taken serious in their capacity as business-people if they are to succeed and realise income and profit. A mismatch of objectives, trying to combine social welfare and community development goals, environmental and health education with economic goals, for which the ›Women and Energy Project‹ is a good example, has to be carefully avoided if the economic empowerment of women is the ultimate goal. Accepting the latter as a precondition for economic prosperity and growth of women headed enterprises, there has to be a global rethinking and redefinition of the gender based division of responsibilities and civic roles to make gender equality a reality.

⁴⁰⁸ While attending to the market at Kakamega in February 1996 Fabian L. had told me that Morris's brother is a potter and works at Ilesi while his mother sells the pots for him at the market in Kakamega.

⁴⁰⁹ The following incident shows just how deep these double standards have penetrated Kenya's society: In defence and support of his wife's political aspirations the husband of presidential hopeful Charity Kaluki Ngilu felt compelled to stress that »I still eat my supper on time and take breakfast prepared by my wife« (*Sunday Standard* – October 26, 1997).

12 A comparative analysis of Kenya's gender-bias rural-urban pottery scene

During the analysis I was trying to emphasise the gender differences characterising the development of the potter's craft in rural and urban Kenya and where possible compare my findings with those of the 1995 GEMINI survey of micro and small enterprises in Kenya. During the latter 2,259 existing MSEs of a total of 708,386 MSEs countrywide were identified and incorporated in the survey. While the GEMINI survey included craftspeople and manufacturers adding value to the following materials: textile & garment, wood, grass & cane, metal and non-metal, it did not include potters, brick makers and all those involved in mineral production⁴¹⁰

While I interviewed a total 83 potters by means of questionnaire, the two Kamba potters and the one Giriama potter interviewed were not incorporated in the analysis as they do not fit the selected group criteria, such as female Luo potters versus male Isukha potters, rural versus urban craftswomen/-men and informal versus formal sector employees. The remaining respondents could be grouped into the following clusters: the Oriang' Pottery Women Group (n*15 – all women), Luo potters working on an individual basis at home (n*23 – 19 women and 4 men), Isukha potters working in a rural environment/at home (n*7 – all men), Jua Kali potters working in an urban environment in Nairobi (n*12 – all men) and the employees working in Kenya's formal pottery/ceramic sector (n*23 – 3 women and 20 men). Where purely the gender aspect of the development was to be emphasised these clusters were regrouped into female and male potters of the rural and Jua Kali sector' and formal sector employees.

12.1 Demographic composition of the respondents by cluster

Oriang' Pottery Women Group (n*15)

The 15 members of the OPWG interviewed are on average about 48 years old with the youngest being 33 years of age and the oldest 68 years. All of them are either married or widowed with 53 % of the husbands being already retired or dead. While about 70 % of the husbands are or have been practising a >modern craft< such as tailoring, carpentry, car mechanic or painting, around 40 % have been attending to work away from home (migrant worker) and only 6 % of all of them were making a living from farming. While the women have given birth to an average of 71 children, almost 50 % of them belong to a polygamous household with two or more wives and even more children to feed which means that the women have no choice but to contribute actively to the household economy in order to cater for the basic needs of their family and the education of their children.

⁴¹⁰ See Appendix XII for information on the sectoral breakdown of the MSEs incorporated in the 1995 GEMINI survey and report.

Luo potters working at home (n*23)

The 23 individual Luo potters interviewed were in their majority women (n*19). Like the potters belonging to the OPWG they were rather old with an average age of 45 years. While about 90 % of them are either married or widowed (30 %) the other respondents were still attending school and too young to be married. The number of migrant workers among the husbands amounts to 50 % while another 44 % were farmers. While one of the male respondents was still a pupil two of the adult male potters were married to women who were said to be subsistence farmers and potters while the wife of Silvanus N. is a housewife. With an average of about 5 children, the potters, of whom 74 % belong to a polygamous household, once again are heavily burdened with household and educational expenses and demand the active contribution of each parent to meet the basic needs of all family members.

Isukha potters working at home (n*7)

Despite the small sampling unit of 7, the Isukha potters interviewed at Ilesi represented three generations of potters with 85 % being married or widowed and having to support an average of 7 children. With 100 % of the spouses supporting their husbands on the job, pottery production among the Isukha is clearly organised as a family enterprise with gender specific work roles. While the men do the moulding of the pots the women are in charge of the *shamba* and of supporting their husbands with the collection of firewood, with polishing and drying the pots or even selling them at the local market.

Jua Kali potters working in Nairobi (n*12)

While the average age of the potters interviewed at Ilesi was quite high at 50 years, it has to be stressed that I concentrated on the head of the enterprises and the old and knowledgeable potters in order to investigate the history of the potter's craft among the Isukha during the 20th Century and did not interview all those who worked for them and were in general of a younger age group. However, those working in Nairobi seem to be a lot younger on average, with 50 % being under the age of 30 and only two, or 16 %, being older than 34 years of age. Those who are married (75 %) have on average 2 children and like their rural peers only one wife, with the exception of a 31 year old potter having two, one at home in Ilesi taking care of his *shamba* and one staying with him at Kingeero/Nairobi. On average about 40 % of the wives stay with their husbands in Kingeero/Nairobi while the remaining 60 % live at Ilesi where they take care of the family *shamba* on a subsistence basis. Only one of the women staying in Nairobi assists her husband at his pottery enterprise while the others stay home and take care of the children.

Formal sector employees (n*23)

The formal sector employees are like their peers in the Jua Kali sector on average much younger than their rural peers with about 50 % being under the age of 28 and only 22 % being older than 38 years of age. 57 % are married and of those 92 % live monogamously with an average of 2 to 3 children while the oldest potter (53 years of age) has two wives and 10 children to feed with the older wife taking care of the family *shamba* in the rural area and the younger one living with him in Nairobi where she contributes to the family income through casual labour. 62 % of the male potters working in formal sector enterprises in Nairobi are migrant workers with their wives and families residing in the rural area attending to subsistence agriculture or engaging themselves in handicraft production (15 %) or teaching (8 %). Only one of the wives staying with her husband in Nairobi is a >pottery assistant<. Her husband grew up in Nairobi and has purchased a plot in the outskirts of the city where he has established a small pottery of his own.

12.2 Educational background and professional career of the potters interviewed

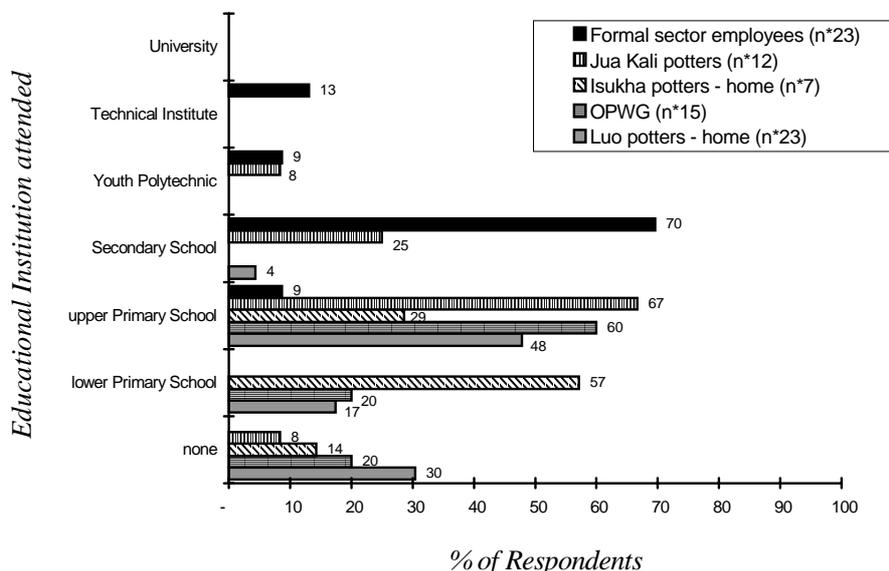
The educational background and professional career of the potters interviewed (n*80) differs quite strongly along gender and regional lines. The fact that none of the potters interviewed had attended university implies that the formal education in ceramics offered at the Fine Art Department of the Kenyatta University has little relevance for employment in Kenya's small and medium scale pottery/ceramic sector. The low number of RVIST graduates among the formal sector employees interviewed further mirrors the overall low appreciation of the formal qualification obtained at the Technical Institute. According to formal sector entrepreneurs, RVIST graduates do lack practical skills and experience required in the sector. It is sad but realistic to say that the formal education system as outlined in Chapter 6 is ill adapted to the needs of the sector.

A look at Graph 8, following hereafter, reveals that the prevailing educational level among rural potters is extremely low with only 4 % of the female potters and none of the male potters working in a rural set-up having attended secondary school while the vast majority of the formal sector employees have advanced their education to secondary school levels and/or attended a vocational training at Youth Polytechnics or a Technical Institute. A look at the urban Jua Kali potters and their rural peers leads to the assumption that the mobility of the potters increases with their educational standard. While only 29 % of the male rural potters advanced their school education beyond lower primary school level, over 90 % of their urban peers did attend upper primary school (67 %), secondary school (25 %) or a vocational training at a Youth Polytechnic (8 %).

A comparison of the level of formal education attained by potters interviewed by me and MSE activists during the 1995 GEMINI survey discloses that the educational level of potters working in urban areas is higher than that of other MSE activists: 54 % of all Jua Kali potters and formal sector employees (potters) have attained secondary education as compared to 31 % of those MSE activists included in the GEMINI

survey. At the same time 3 % of potters and 24 % of MSE activists working in urban environments have not acquired any formal education at all as compared to 25 % of the potters (Isukha potters and Luo potters working at home and members of the OPWG) and 19 % of MSE activists working in rural areas⁴¹¹.

Graph 8: Educational level of potters (n*80) interviewed



Unlike formal education, technical education and business training is expected to be more closely related to the performance of the enterprise. As compared to 19 % of the potters interviewed by me the data comprised during the 1995 GEMINI survey revealed that about 26 % of all MSE activists interviewed during the survey have received some form of technical education. Formal training at a vocational training institute, however, was attained by only about 14 % of the MSE activists and 9 % of the potters. Meanwhile 16,25 % of the potters⁴¹² interviewed stated to have received some form of business training as compared to only 9,2 % of the MSE activists enumerated in the 1995 GEMINI report.

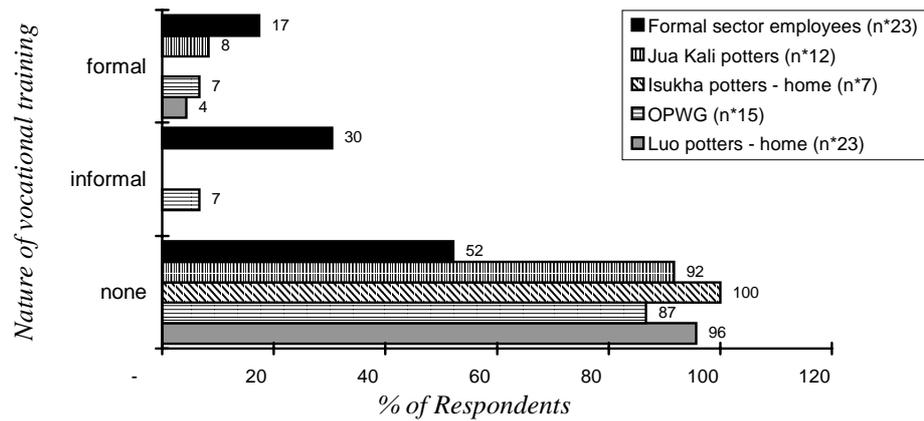
Graph 9 highlights the fact that the potter's craft in Kenya lacks a strong footing in formal or informal vocational training. While the majority of all potters interviewed

⁴¹¹ For further details see Appendix XIII

⁴¹² In this context it has to be noted and emphasised that business-training opportunities have not been equally shared by all sector activists/clusters identified. While Luo potters working at home reported not have received any business training, 14 % of the Isukha potters working at home, 17 % of those working in the urban Jua Kali sector and 13 % of those being employed in Kenya's urban based formal pottery/ceramic sector have attained business training of some sort. – Also see Graph 7.

(81 %) never attended any vocational training, only 30 % of the formal sector employees and 7 % of the OPWG members interviewed stated that they had received vocational training on an informal (apprenticeship) basis; only 17 % of the formal sector employees, 8 % of the Jua Kali potters, 7 % of the OPWG members and 4 % of the other Luo potters working in western Kenya or 7 % of all potters interviewed have attended formal vocational training of some sort, related or unrelated to pottery manufacturing.

Graph 9: Vocational training attended by potters (n*80) interviewed

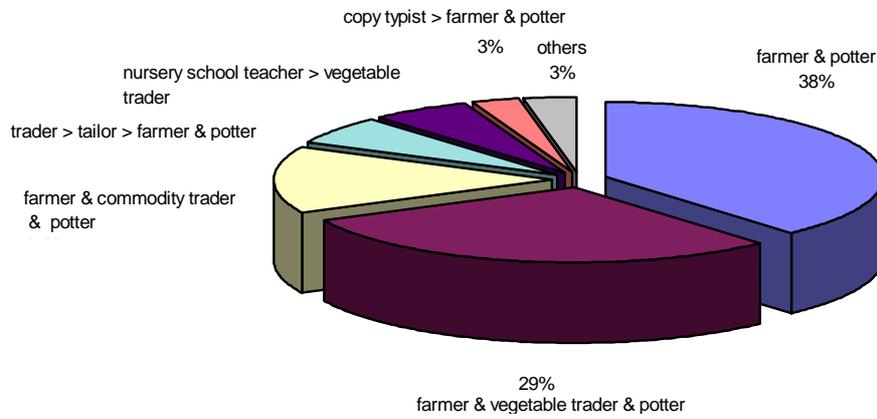


A look at the professional career and economic activities of all potters interviewed, as outlined in Graph 10, 11 and 12 reveals strong gender related as well as rural-urban disparities.

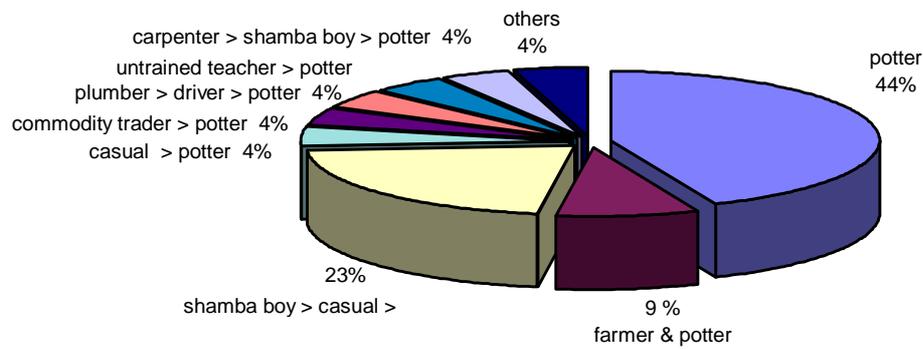
Graph 10 reflects that all female potters do attend to farming and/or petty trade simultaneously if living in a rural environment unlike their male peers in the rural or urban Jua Kali sector, of whom only 9 % are said to be potters and farmers at the same time. The latter reflects the gender specific division of productive and reproductive work roles and responsibilities within a family. As a result women attend to pottery whenever they have completed their agricultural and domestic duties at home, while the men are able to leave most of the agricultural work to their wives or agricultural labourers and concentrate on pottery only to generate a cash income.

In line with customary work-roles and their overall low educational standard the women's professional exposure has been very limited. While only one (3 %) was holding a formal qualification and had worked as a copy typist for some time until her newly married husband forced her to give up employment, two (6 %) had been working as nursery school teachers and another 2 had been working as tailors before settling for pottery production and subsistence agriculture.

Graph 10: Professional career of female potters in rural Kenya (n*34)



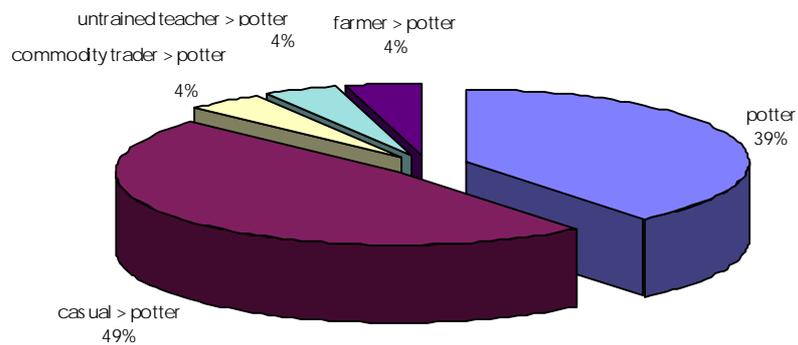
Graph 11: Professional career of male potters (n*23) – rural and urban Jua Kali sector



Unlike their female peers, only 9 % of the male potters working in a rural or urban informal set-up were engaged in farming activities while 44 % had no professional experience other than pottery and 43 % have been attending to another employment before settling for pottery.

The professional background of the predominantly male formal sector employees is similar to the one just described. For 39 % of the potters working in the formal sector, pottery has been their first and up to now only professional engagement, while 49 % stated that they had worked as untrained casuals before securing training and permanent employment as a potter.

Graph 12: Professional career of formal sector employees (n*23)



A look at Graph 12 reveals that the majority of all potters employed in the formal sector became potters out of opportunity while searching for any employment opening in Nairobi. While some of them worked as casuals before their talents were discovered by their employers and they were promoted to become potters, others learned about modern type potteries being set-up, or heard of new employees being sought after through male relatives or friends while socialising. This so happened to one of the first potters who joined the Eastleigh Community Centre in 1975, for example, he met Hugh A. in a bar where the latter talked about his plan to establish a pottery workshop at the centre and managed to awaken his interest in getting involved.

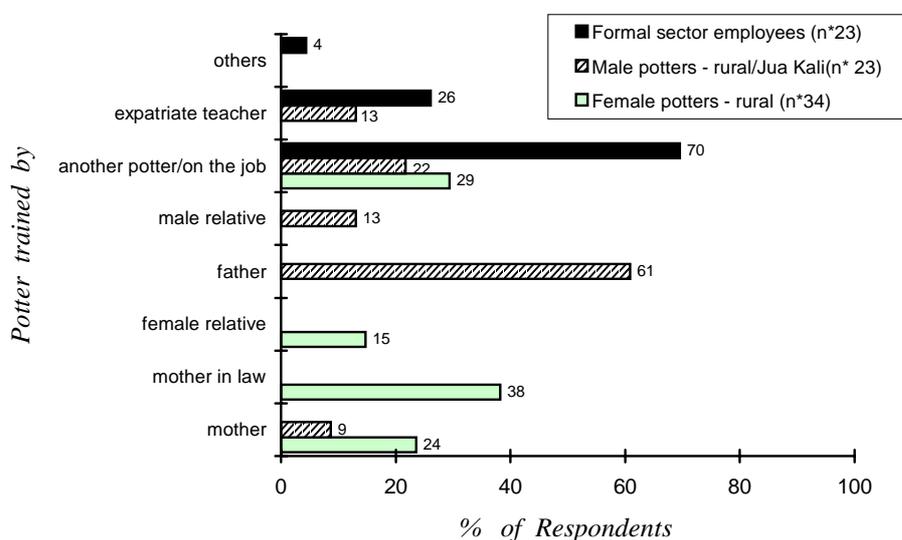
12.3 Skill acquisition and access to the potter's craft

Skill acquisition and access to the potter's craft in traditional societies is often an indicator of close family ties and social associations and strongly influenced by prevailing customs and the availability of suitable clay soils.

WAGNER (1970), NANGENDO (1984) and HERBICH (1987) all stressed that traditional potters are generally found to live in clusters in the vicinity of large clay deposits. My

own field studies could only add further proof to their findings as I met potters who counted between 8 and 40 potters in their family and/or neighbourhood. The late Rispa O., for example, stated that she knew approximately 40 women and some men of the Katuola clan making pottery in her immediate neighbourhood, all of whom either sell their products at the market in Oriang' or produce on order for traders from Oyugis, who come to collect the pots at their respective homes. Another potter and member of the Katuola clan stated that there were about 20 potters in her father's family and another 15 in her husband's/in-law's family. Some Luo potters, I spoke to at Luanda Market told me that they had all come from one location - from Karateng', which is close to Maseno. Asking them how many people of Karateng' were making pots and attending the market on a regular basis they said there were many, too many to count. A conglomeration of potters in the vicinity of a clay source is, however, a common feature all over rural Kenya where potters are to be found. At Kakamega I met some Luyia potters from a small village called Ilala close to Ilesi where, similar to Ilesi, almost every household is involved in pottery production or sales. Some potters estimated that Ilala hosts circa 50 potters in its community.

Graph 13: Pottery – Skill acquisition and craft lineage



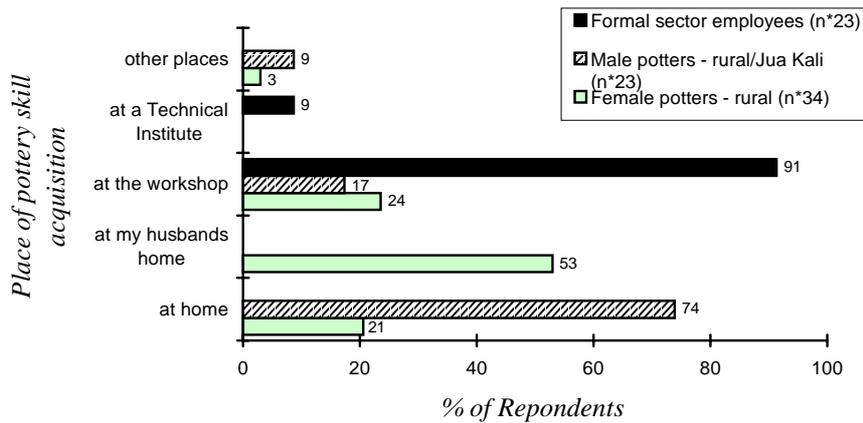
Graph 13, which reflects on the interviews carried out in 1995, discloses an overall strong gender based craft lineage with 77 % of the female potters in rural Kenya being trained by their mother, mother-in-law or another female relative while 74 % of their male peers in the rural and urban informal sector were taught by their father or another male relative.

Unlike among the Bukusu, for example, where pottery skills are not handed down in genealogical lines, either partilinear or matrimonially, and any person interested in the

craft can learn it only by watching a potter at work (NANGENDO 1984), HERBICH (1987) portrayed dominant partilinear craft lines among Luo potters. According to HERBICH's observations the vast majority of Luo potters learn to pot after marriage, thereby being trained by the mother-in-law or senior co-wives in the husband's homestead rather than by their own mothers. In this connection HERBICH pointed out that Luo potters find it more practical to have their daughters relieve them from taking care of young children and various other domestic tasks which compete for their time spent on pottery. With the Luo society in general being a strong partilinear society, in which the ideals of patrilocal post-marital residence and polygamy are quite rigorously followed, a new wife, who comes to live with her husband, will be under the close supervision of her mother-in-law, will be tested and expected to learn and conform: »If a woman marries into a homestead of potters, she may eventually be expected to join in this activity to demonstrate that she is willing to take up her responsibilities by working hard to provide for her family and to show that she does not consider herself too good to participate in such work« (HERBICH 1987:200). While it was not exceptional to find male Isukha or Maragoli potters who had been trained by their mothers or grandmothers, Luo women always laughed when I asked them whether they introduced the craft to their daughters and sons alike. Some said that pot-making was women's work, and others stressed that the boys did not like the craft or that their husbands would not allow their sons to team up with women and engage in pottery. The only Luo boys, I ever met actively taking part in the craft, belonged to a female headed household which lived off pottery in the absence of a male breadwinner.

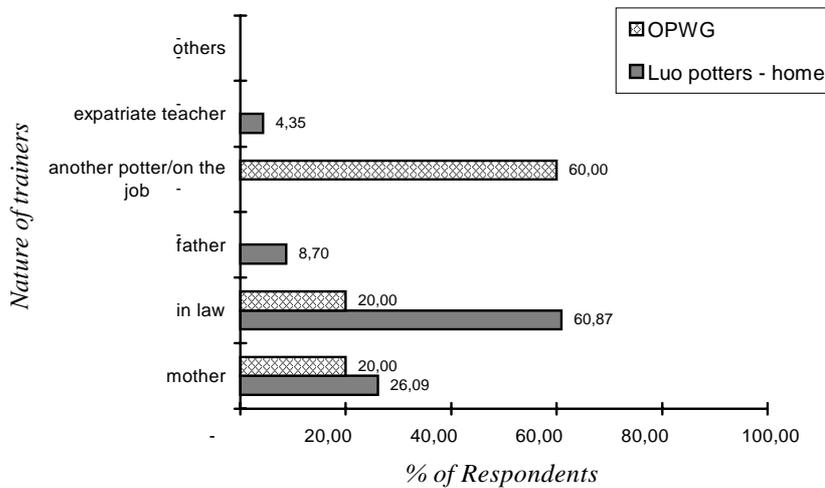
While Graph 13 portrays a strong gender based craft lineage, my conversation with Luyia potters at Mbale and Kakamega laid bare the fact that wherever pottery is treated and perceived as a family business, gender roles seem to weaken. Today one can find male and female potters who have been trained by their mothers before marriage, and others who were expected to learn the craft from their mothers-in-law or potting husbands in order to play an active role in the family enterprise. Children, of any ethnic background, often help their potting parents, whether male or female, to burnish pots, to gather and mix clay or to transport the pots to and sell them at the local market. These are duties often shared by the potter's wives among the Maragoli and Isukha of western Kenya. Nevertheless, I never came across a woman and man moulding side-by-side during any of my home and/or workshop visits while strong gender based work distribution separating the female tasks from the male was frequently observed. While some female Isukha potters whom I met at the market in Kakamega said that the women were making the small cooking pots while the men had specialised in moulding big water pots, I was to meet a number of male potters who had specialised on small and medium sized *sufurias*, *jikos* and alike.

Graph 14: Place of pottery skill acquisition



Graph 15 confirms HERBICH's findings regarding the gender and cluster specific learning patterns, with 53 % of the Luo women having learned the craft at their husband's home after marriage, while only 21 % learnt the craft from their mothers whom they had to assist in generating an income in times of economic hardship. Meanwhile another 24 % of the women potters interviewed had learned the craft from fellow group members at the workshop/project site. Graph 15 shows the different learning patterns observed among Luo potters working at home and those belonging to the OPWG.

Graph 15: Trainer of Luo potters interviewed in 1995

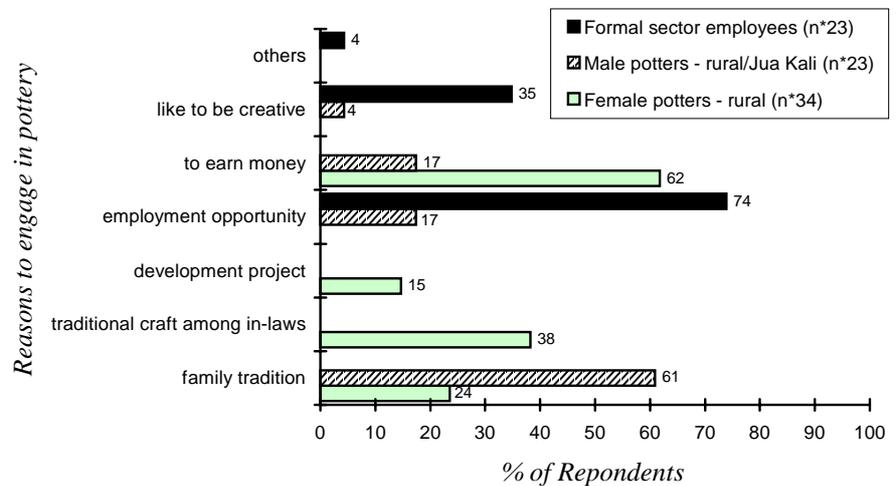


While almost 80 % of all Luo potters whom I found working in their homes on an individual basis had been trained by their mother (25 %), or fathers (8 %) in the case of male potters, or their mothers-in-law (63 %), only 40 % of the OPWG members interviewed had been trained by their mothers or mothers-in-law, while 60 % claimed to have learned the craft from fellow group members after they had joined and stayed with the group for some time. In the case of the Odago WG at Nyamasaria, the ratio of those having been trained by fellow group members was even higher, with only 3 out of 25 women having been trained by their mothers, while all others have been introduced to the craft by fellow women potters living in their neighbourhood. This kind of economic solidarity was typical among many female potters met and spoken to at Omboga, Nyamasaria, Mbale and Kakamega and in Jomvu Kuu/Mombasa during my extended field studies.

Unlike their peers in the rural and urban Jua Kali sector, the vast majority of the formal sector employees interviewed were introduced to the potter's craft at the employers workshop (91 %) or obtained some formal qualifications in ceramic technology before accessing the labour market. Consequently 96 % of them claimed to have learnt the craft on the job and/or from an expatriate potter attached to the workshop and none of them were fully conversant with traditional handmoulding and firing techniques.

With a strong footing in Kenya's material culture it comes with no surprise to find that pottery unlike ceramics and other >modern crafts< follows strong family traditions as the figures in Graph 16 disclose. While about 61 % of all potters working in the urban informal or in a rural environment (n*57 %) reported to have joined the craft following a family tradition as compared to 0 % of those being employed in the urban based formal sector of the trade, only 6 % of all (rural and urban) MSE activists interviewed during the 1995 GEMINI survey chose their particular type of business because their families had a history in working in the same line of business.

Graph 16: Reason to engage in pottery production



Graph 16 further confirms HERBICH's observations who described the reasons for becoming a potter among Luo women as twofold: family tradition and imposed post-marital re-socialisation on the one hand and on the other the need to generate an income to cater for the basic needs of herself and her children as every woman within a polygamous Luo homestead is held responsible for her own independent household. Graph 16 further reveals that most formal sector employees have engaged in the craft because it was the realisation of a long sought after employment opportunity, while only 35 % stated that the desire to be creative has played a role in turning to the potter's craft. This is an aspect which can be attributed to their higher level of education and exposure to >Art & Craft< lessons at school while it proved to be without any significance among male and female potters working in rural Kenya who chiefly aim at realising an income with their engagement in the craft. A 15 year old male potter whom I met at Mbale had no illusions or strong feelings about the craft. Like many others he was forced to engage in pot-making because his parents were too poor to enable him to attend a secondary school or any vocational training institution. Being without any alternatives at the time, many young male potters I spoke to expressed their desire to save some money in order to go back to school or learn another profession – something real.

During the interviews, however, I came across some few Luyia men who had given up their former profession and employment in order to return to their rural home and engage in pottery production. The driving force behind this decision were manifold: An approximately 50 year old Maragoli man said that he gave up his job as a painter and became a potter in 1986, adhering to an old family tradition, following the death of his parents and the therefore arising need to take over the running of the inherited family home and property. A trained motor vehicle mechanic and experienced welder, whose family owns a 4-acre-plot where good potting clay is found only 2" below the surface, turned his back on the wage labour market in 1989 when he realised that he could make a better profit for himself by taking over and further developing the family business: pot and brick making and the sales of clay. A trained plumber and long time professional driver gave up his formal employment after more than twenty years as he realised that he could earn at least as much money by venturing into pottery and further developing the brick production at home close to Ilesi.

12.4 Gender specific productive and entrepreneurial behaviour

For most of the century formal education in Kenya has favoured boys and empowered men to participate in the modern manufacturing process while women were categorically put in charge of reproductive rather than productive areas of society and community life. The rural home and *shamba* offered social security to all those who could not access or dropped out of the wage labour market. Since the missionaries first started to teach boys to mould sculptural items and to copy European crockery, men have tried to control this market segment, the modern/upper class market, while female potters chiefly serve the domestic demand at rural and urban working class markets. The range of products, the magnitude of the production volume as well as the prevailing reasons for engaging in pottery reflect on a gender specific productive and reproductive behaviour which develops in mutual dependence of the gender based

socialisation, professional exposure and economic spheres dominating the lives of women and men in Kenya.

In 1991 DOWNING explored the issue ›Gender and the growth of micro-enterprises‹ and explained the ›occupational multiplicity‹ of female entrepreneurs with the goal of women to feed and educate their children contrary to their male counterparts who tend to be drawn into the world of individual pursuit. Throughout her report DOWNING stressed the difference between male growth orientation and female security orientation and human capital investment which, in its present form, is not typically ›Kenyan‹ or ›African‹ but a phenomenon which was strongly promoted through colonial policies, as described in Chapter 5 and 6, and further utilised after *Uhuru*. DOWNING (1991:6) stressed that households tend to engage simultaneously in survival and income-mobility strategies on a gender basis with the women’s low but steady income allowing men to seek greater absolute returns at heightened risks. My own observations, as reflected in Graph 10, underline DOWNING’s findings. Most active women potters interviewed combine pot-making with subsistence agriculture and petty trade at the local market and thereby spread their risks instead of investing all their resources in just one activity like many of their male counterparts who, not only keep tight control over the family assets, but additionally engage their wives’ productive and reproductive resources to relieve the economic risks taken while producing in bulk for external markets or exploring new products and designs with a yet unknown marketability, for example.

Further investigating the gender aspect inherent in the dynamic of entrepreneurial behaviour, DOWNING presented the following model:

Figure 7: Model of the dynamic of entrepreneurial behaviour

Survival oriented ⇔	⇔	Security oriented ⇔	⇔	Growth oriented ⇔
⇔	Diversification	⇔	Specialisation	⇔
Includes both women and men who are very poor, mostly involved in agriculture, with limited non-farm diversification	⇔	This group includes women and men, though men from the previous group will move into this category first by means of non-farm investments. This group diversifies activities to spread risks. Individuals may farm as well as have more than one enterprise.	⇔	Men will move into this group category faster than women, who tend to spread the risks of men’s enterprises with their diversified portfolios and who assume responsibility for the children. Growth-oriented enterprises are larger and more specialised, use more hired labour and external sources of capital.

Source: DOWNING (1991:5)

Where pottery production and other non-farm activities form the heart of rural survival strategies, potters have adapted their productive behaviour to the seasonal demand,

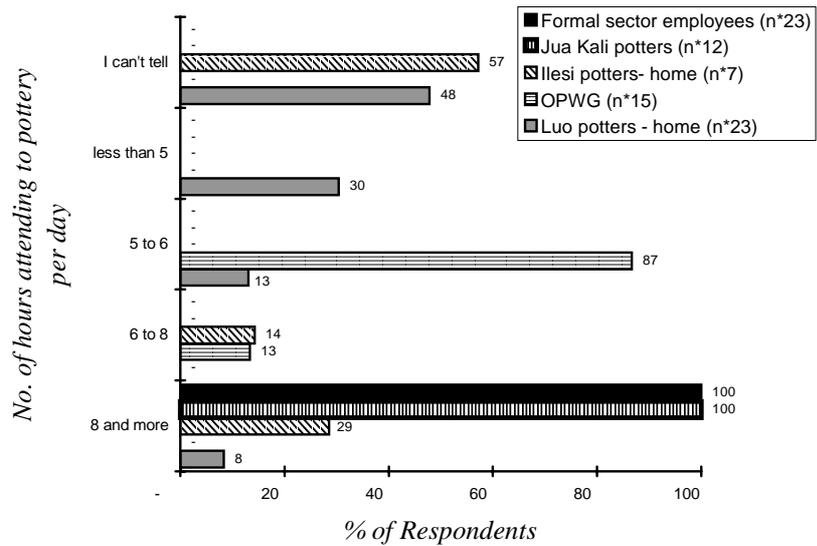
alternating between agricultural off and on seasons and competing cash demands like school fees which strangle the household budget. Pure homecraft is hardly to be found anymore as pots and/or alternative household goods are cheaply and readily available at local markets and thereby eradicate the need for women to engage in pottery production on a purely subsistence basis. Meanwhile the majority of the female potters residing in rural Kenya produce and sell pots primarily to secure their survival in times of economic hardship and to generate sufficient income for themselves and their children. Once they prove economically successful they are generally expected to cater for a larger share of the household expenses which results in little incentive in promoting their business beyond a certain level that allows them to keep control over their own earnings. Unlike men who can enjoy and build on their economic achievements, female potters tend to hide or play their own achievements down, to remain 'economically invisible'. The dominant gender bias control over family resources and property as a whole puts men in a favoured position over their female peers who rarely have a chance to accumulate money on an individual basis for investment or as working capital required to boost their economic activities. In this context women's groups have an important role to play by acting as a savings institution, enabling the women to accumulate working capital and productive resources and furthermore protect the money earned from being grabbed and taken advantage of by their husbands.

Although it may seem strange to an outsider, one has to realise that African women potters act extremely rationally when limiting their economic undertakings to a part time and seasonal involvement, as more work would not result in a better life and growing economic independence for themselves unless they are single or their husbands are too far away to keep track of their earnings. The latter was the case with a group of ten young Maragoli potters whom I met at Mbale Market. They attended to the potter's craft on a daily basis to secure a living for themselves while they were either still unmarried or left alone with their children while their husbands eke out an existence as a casual or migrant worker away from home.

Many female potters interviewed pointed out that they actively engaged in or increased their pot-making activities in situations of economic hardship, in situations where their husbands either died, retired or lost their job or earned too little to cater for the families' basic needs. On the contrary, women, whose husbands earn enough, frequently tend to abandon the craft and concentrate on childcare, subsistence agriculture and other domestic duties instead.

Graph 17 shows a rural-urban difference in time allocation with regard to pottery production. While those employed in the urban Jua Kali or formal sector spend eight or more hours daily on pottery production, many potters in the rural area who identified pottery as their main source of income could not tell how many hours of their working day they devote to pottery. However, it surfaced that men were in a position to spend a larger share of their productive energy on potting than their female peers. The time allocated to potting finds its mirror image in the income scale of the respondents.

Graph 17: Time allocated to pottery production/day

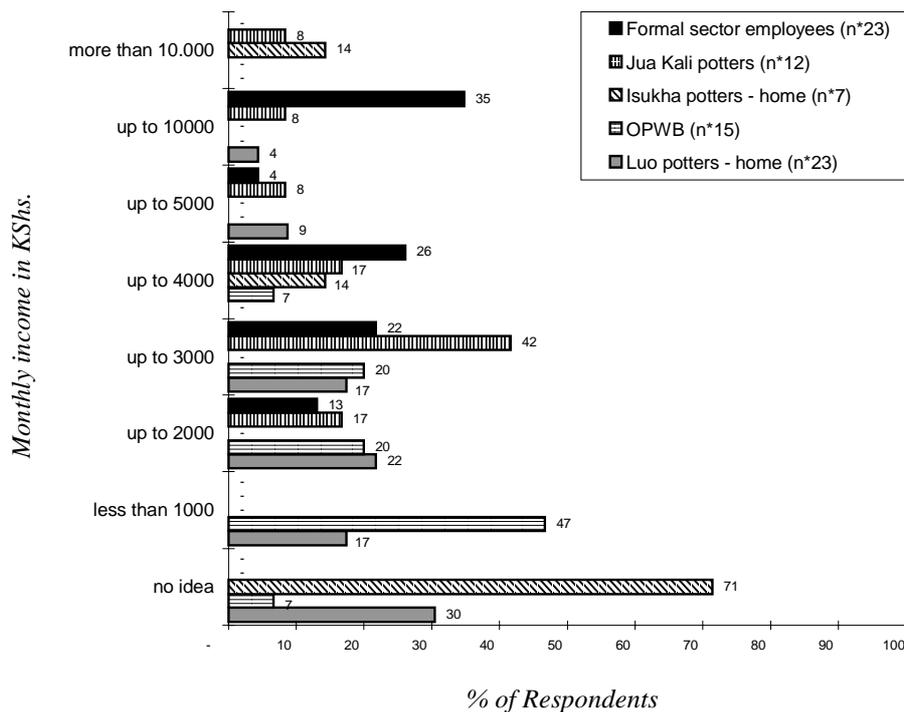


Graph 18 shows that the men who stand for 87% of the formal sector employees, 100 % of those described as Jua Kali potters and 100 % of all Isukha potters interviewed earn on average more money through their engagement in the craft than women belonging to the OPWG or working on an individual basis at home.

The high percentage of male potters working at home who claimed to have no idea of their monthly income reflects on their security rather than growth orientation which separates them from their urban peers who explore niche markets aiming at economic growth and prosperity and hire additional labourers to increase their production capacities.

A closer look at the income distribution among the formal sector employees reveals that women are disadvantaged and lower paid than their male colleagues. For example, the two women working at the Jitegemea Pottery earn KShs. 2.000/= and 2.600/= respectively while the average salary at the Jitegemea Pottery amounts to KShs. 3.200/=. and the woman supervising the production of the clay beads and jewellery at Kazuri Ltd. earns KShs. 5.100/= while her male counterparts at the pottery department earn 7.600/= and 8.500/= shilling respectively, despite the fact that she holds a >Diploma in Ceramic Technology< and the men do not. Apart from the few women interviewed in the formal sector, others were found to be employed in the bead and jewellery section at Kazuri Ltd. or engaged in glazing and decorating the products made by their male colleagues for which they receive a lower pay than the potters themselves.

Graph 18: Monthly income from pottery by cluster



While Graph 18 indicates that potters can and do realise a higher monthly income than KShs. 2.000/= most female potters I talked to at various markets visited between 1995 and 1997 regarded a monthly income of KShs. 1.500/= to 2.000/= as satisfactory or good. This once again reflects on their predominant survival and/or security oriented entrepreneurial behaviour and the overall low income level in rural areas and in Kenya's MSE sector as a whole⁴¹³. According to the data collected for the 1995 GEMINI report craftspeople manufacturing furniture and other wood products, making and repairing shoes and other leather products and those making textiles do on average earn between KShs. 1,000/= and 1,700/= per person per month.

Most potters I met in western Kenya, who attend to pot-making on a daily basis stated that pottery was financially more rewarding than agricultural production or petty trade and that the returns of pottery had enabled them to cater not only for their basic needs but enabled them to finance the education of their children, to build a semi-

⁴¹³ On September 24, 1997 Kenya's Labour Minister, Philip Masinde, announced a 12 % increase of the minimum general wage to KShs. 2.345/= and a 10 % rise of the minimum wage for agricultural labourers to KShs. 1.095/=. At the same time the minimum salary for the lowest paid teacher was fixed at KShs. 2.520/= incl. a house allowance of KShs. 640/= (*Daily Nation* – 30/9/97). – Also see Appendix XIV for more details on minimal wages for different job-groups in 1996 and Appendix XV for information on net profits per worker per year by MSE-sector in 1995.

permanent house, to employ farm labourers and to buy livestock etc.⁴¹⁴ For many, especially for many women, pottery was the only way to realise an income if they did not wish to work as farm labourers themselves. One female potter from Kwoyo Kotieno Kokech whom I met at Oyugis (10/11/95) expressed this feeling: »The pots are my husband! – They supply me with the money I need.«

12.5 Organisational status and socio-economic environment of the craft⁴¹⁵

While female potters in their majority are still found to work at or within close range of their husband's home and produce products to satisfy the local demand and market, many of their male peers among the Isukha and Maragoli, for example, are nowadays searching for employment or a financially rewarding income opportunity away from home as their potting fathers would rarely pay them a decent salary on which they could start a family or life of their own. Some of the male potters went as far as looking for other jobs, not related to pottery, in Nairobi and/or other larger cities, while others did seek employment as potters or established small pottery enterprises in close reach of Nairobi's thriving business metropolis.

The production units analysed during my fieldwork in Kenya can be subdivided according to the necessary investments in terms of time and money for starting and maintaining production and their predominant market orientation into the rural zero capital investment sector, the low capital investment sector and the high capital investment sector:

- The ›*rural zero capital investment sector*‹ which includes most potters working on individual levels at their respective homes where no rent has to be paid and little to no money has to be spent on raw materials and production. This keeps the risks involved at a minimum and allows the potter to attend to the craft on a part time and/or seasonal basis to supplement other economic activities undertaken by the potter herself/himself or other family members. Many of these potters, however, form part and parcel of the subsistence economy around them as they service the basic demands of a predominantly low income population which results in low sales prices on the one hand and low returns for their work on the other. This further contributes to a close symbiosis between subsistence agriculture and the craft.
- Potters of the ›*low capital investment sector*‹ who have advanced their organisational set-up, have employed people and attend to the craft with a commercial mind but in their majority have not started to explore and/or invest in new production technologies, equipment and workshop facilities. In this sector specialisation and increased production costs cause a higher entrance barrier and include the risk of losing money and/or wasting time spent on the construction of workshop facilities or on product development and design, for example. A certain regularity of involvement is required to establish and maintain business relations and make reasonable use of capital investments in terms of workshop facilities, hired labour, advanced skill-training, business counselling services where available,

⁴¹⁴ See Appendix XVI for net returns of workers (predominantly women) in enterprises owned by women.

⁴¹⁵ Also see Graph 4

raw materials and/or equipment. The risks are higher for those who establish their enterprise on ›foreign terrain‹ outside their home area where they do not command a secure land tenure, a precondition for putting up permanent and often more appropriate structures whether they be kilns, workshops, storage facilities, show rooms or signboards etc. In rural areas one will often find a dynamic transition between traditional and semi-commercial set-ups with potters producing for the local market in order to supplement their meagre family income and increase their personal spending power, next to others who attend to pottery with a commercial attitude, assess markets and income earning possibilities beyond the scope of their close neighbourhood and location and go as far as employing people to work for them. The latter practise is widely spread among male and female Luyia potters I met and talked to at Ilesi, Kakamega, Mbale and Nairobi to whom the craft has become the number one source of income and employment.

- Ceramic workshops represent the ›*high capital investment sector*‹ that is characterised by a rather high entrance barrier for obtaining raw materials and equipment, constructing and maintaining appropriate workshop facilities and paying for a skilled workforce. Inherent to this sector is a high risk, which requires a full-time professional attention to the business.

In between the low capital investment, the medium capital investment and the high capital investment sector are dynamic transitions, which reflect and directly respond to the underlying growth and market orientation and economic performance of the pottery enterprise.

Local trade networks which have evolved from periodic markets in western Kenya secure the potters a weekly income and permit them to plan the individual working steps, comprising of the collection and preparation of the clay, moulding, drying, firing and selling of the finished products, accordingly. Furthermore it enables them to hire the services of other potters living in the neighbourhood on a credit basis by which they receive their pay once the pots have been sold. At the same time the weekly market pattern assures the inter-market traders a reliable supply of pots as it allows them to attend various markets in succession.

The growing commercialisation of the potter's craft has not only sparked off a very differentiated marketing system but affected specialisation among the producers, too. Potters of different locations attending the markets at Oyugis, Luanda, Mbale and Kakamega, for example, had each specialised in different vessel types. While some were producing and supplying the market with large water pots, others had made small and/or medium size cooking pots, sufurias, huge beer brewing pots⁴¹⁶ or small tea pots

⁴¹⁶ Although the president has banned the brewing of local beer and alcohol, people still brew for home consumption or sale. The brewing pots, however, are hardly ever seen at markets since they are only produced on order. At Homa Bay I met potters who had hidden the ordered pot in a sack for the owner to collect it; at Kisumu I watched a trader turning a large water pot into a brewing pots by removing parts of its bottom while the customer was waiting; at Kakamega market I saw a brewing pot hidden under other large sized pots; at Oyugis I met a trader from Keroka purchasing 4 brewing pots which were delivered to her at the bus-stand. She immediately placed them in some huge baskets, to hide them as well, and to ensure their safe transportation on the roof of a bus where no policeman would be in a

etc. to their speciality. Yet others, like the Oriang' Pottery WG and the Odago WG as well as some potters from Ileshi have created a name for themselves by laying emphasis on new designs and products, decorative items and high quality standards which meet the approval of upper class, urban and external customers alike⁴¹⁷. The OPWG, for example, has established a rather diversified product portfolio that caters for all market segments: the domestic demand of rural and urban working class communities and the wealthy upper class and external market. The best pots are selected for export orders or sale at Nairobi where they can fetch a higher profit than at Homa Bay, Rodi or Pala where the group maintains permanent market stalls, or at the weekly market at Oriang' where their pots meet with fierce competition and realise the lowest profits for them.

As production methods and the technology applied does not significantly differ between urban Jua Kali and rural pottery producers in Kenya their divergent economic performance and prosperity can largely be attributed to the market gearing and the location of the enterprise which favours those who are able to focus on the demands of the high income population which provides a higher profit margin at increased risks.

Cultural rules, gender based work distribution and economic behaviour not only effect the performance of female and male potters in rural Kenya or the urban Jua Kali sector but even determine the work allocation in ceramic workshops such as Kazuri Ltd., Bosmere Ltd. and the Jitegemea Pottery where women and men attend to different production processes. While men dominate the actual moulding and throwing they do not approve of women working alongside them doing the same job. Where men are in control, women more often than not are assigned low skill level or decorative duties which, like ›Art & Craft‹ lessons at school, carry the stigma of being less important and less rewarding than the actual moulding process – the ›craft of pot-making‹.

12.6 Innovation and cautious behaviour

While men are generally regarded as the more active and innovative sector activists, this can be attributed to the gender specific socialisation, exposure and control over resources which have their roots in Kenya's material culture on the one hand and the countries colonial history and present law on the other.

With the evolution of a formal education system boys attending mission schools, for example, were inspired to experiment with the mediums around them, such as clay. Some were taught how to mould clay busts, figurines⁴¹⁸ and crockery, while others, like Silvanus Owiti of Karachuonyo and S.V. Musa of Ileshi, copied the table ware they saw being used by missionaries or their European employers such as tea pots, cups etc. While the traditional pottery ware produced by women potters did serve the local communities in the reserves, items like tea pots and cups etc. made by those who have been exposed to European crockery soon enjoyed wider recognition among the

position to spot them; at Luanda I found similarly huge pots being used for cooking *uji* (a traditional porridge) for sale during market days.

⁴¹⁷ In rural Malawi RAUCH et. al. (1990:XVIII) observed that most of the pottery demand is satisfied by local producers while there is some interregional trade of higher quality pots.

⁴¹⁸ Kilimesh K. (8/11/95)

Europeans as it responded well to their domestic set-up, demand and living environment. Comforted by the extended recognition of their products, male potters, unlike their female peers, were encouraged to continuously explore new product designs for the external⁴¹⁹ demand, and this linked them more closely to Kenya's modern conglomeration centres. It was, therefore, a man, Charles M. of Ilesi, who was the first potter to be visited and addressed by the head-designer of ›African Heritage‹ who provided him with some new designs and confirmed orders for the same for sale at Nairobi or for export.

Apparently many rural potters tend to avoid risks which is often perceived as obstruction to innovation and economic growth. Evaluating rural small scale enterprises in Malawi, RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:6) rightly pointed out that »adhering to a risk-avoiding behaviour does not mean that there is no scope for an expansion of these economic ventures, but that expansion must take place within the framework that this production logic allows.« The cases of Rispa O. of Oriang' and the Odago WG in Kisumu District offer good examples of the latter. Unlike most of her peers, Rispa O. had an outstanding entrepreneurial spirit but was somehow trapped in her rural environment as she married a widow with children while she herself was still rather young and thereafter never had a real chance to travel and gain exposure to new living environments, products etc. It was, however, of no surprise that people in pot trading turned to her when they placed an order for something new, something they had seen in a magazine or in the shops in Nairobi. Working on a confirmed order the new designs were barely of any risk to the potter who depended on her craft for her own livelihood and the welfare of her children. At Nyamasaria, the home of the Odago WG, innovation started with the introduction of the potter's craft itself, which had no history in the area. It was Alice S. who soon after she moved to her husband's home during the late 1940s first introduced pot-making at Nyamasaria where good potting clay was found which was not being used by anybody. Today, almost 50 years later, pottery has become a major source of income for the women at Nyamasaria. Alice S. herself, however, stressed that economic change was brought about by the entrepreneurial spirit of Jaffeth R., a man living in their immediate neighbourhood. Jaffeth R. aggressively explored the market potential of pottery ware during the 1970s and managed to link the female potters to new markets, customers and development organisations actively supporting rural industries and indigenous crafts in western Kenya. Living at Nyamasaria on the one hand and being exposed to an urban living environment and business community on the other, enabled him to identify and communicate the changing customer demands and translate them into new designs and products which were able to attract urban and overseas customers. With a definite set of socio-economic relations connecting the male trader to the female potters the latter were able and willing to allocate more time to pottery as the male trader ensured the sales of the same and thereby an increased income. Under these and similar conditions, female potters in rural Kenya were able to intensify and commercialise their overall involvement in the craft without exposing themselves to heightened risks endangering their livelihood. The same applies to the many projects where expatriates introduced

⁴¹⁹ In this case ›external‹ means outside the reserves rather than overseas.

new production techniques and designs for which they were consequently expected to guarantee a market. As in the case of the OPWG where the expatriate advisor introduced, among others, ›Black Ware‹, which can be found in other African countries like Ethiopia and Uganda but was largely unknown in Kenya, and therefore yielded a good market response at urban, upper class markets which always look for new products on display.

Having studied the socio-economic situation of Kamba potters, GILL (1981:111/112) argued that women potters are not conservative in nature or in their general approach to life, though they greatly adhere to traditional techniques and designs. According to GILL the latter is done to secure economic benefits as the local market does not articulate the demand for new clay products and because any experiment with new designs bears the risk of being rejected by the market resulting in the loss of the often dearly needed income; a risk which at times is neutralised by confirmed orders as mentioned before. Asking potters whom I met at markets in western Kenya why they cling to the traditional product repertoire, I was told that cooking and water pots not only command a steady demand at local and regional markets but that they even guarantee them higher returns as less time is needed to produce them than the fancy designs such as those on an ›animal pot‹. It is a general phenomenon that potters have adjusted their production and product repertoire to the predominant market environment and their own market gearing. This has led to a situation where some pots are made and offered for general sale at the market while others, for a number of reasons, may only be made to order, for example beer brewing pots or flower pots, ash trays, candle holders etc.

Despite the fact that innovation and the adoption of new products on the one hand and cautious behaviour on the other seem to be naturally linked to the market gearing of the people, this is still overlooked too often by ambitious development planners and agents targeting the handicraft sector. While sector advisors have laid immense emphasis on product design and development, on quality control, production management and an appropriate trade infrastructure, the marketing abilities of the producers are often treated with negligence. Before they are at all able to familiarise themselves with the new environment, craftsmen/-women often find themselves exposed to a ›modern‹, highly competitive market environment. While commercial sales attendants receive a proper training before they are asked to interact with and serve the buying public, traditional potters, for example, are expected to adjust automatically to new marketing conditions. The distinct difference between selling a basic commodity at a local market, where the customer automatically picks out the items he/she wants to buy, and the marketing of a commodity which does not target and/or serve any domestic requirement of the customers is hardly ever pointed out and properly addressed. This lack of marketing expertise more often than not leads to the following scenario: A rural craft producer sits behind or in between his poorly exhibited goods with a rather passive or shy look, with the latter easily being misinterpreted as disinterest. The inability to catch the eye of the passer-by, to detect and address the undecided and to advertise their own products often leads to a poor sales performance whereas they could have done much better if properly advised and assisted. One of the leading axioms of ›protrade‹, a German trade promotion

organisation, therefore is »Do not mistake marketing for selling – introducing your goods to a certain market means more than just exchanging products for payment« (PROTRADE 1995:7).

12.7 Linkages of the potter's craft to the rural subsistence and urban wage labour market

In Kenya, as in most African countries, the overwhelming majority of rural small-scale enterprises combine agricultural production and craft activities either on a part-time basis or [often] on a gender based work division within the family. By doing so, they safeguard the supply of stable food and relieve the enterprise of the need to secure the well being of the family, as this is partly covered by subsistence production⁴²⁰. On top of that some craft activities, such as pottery, offer a welcome opportunity to put free productive energies to use during agricultural off-seasons. Such rural industries and agricultural activities can create a perfect symbiosis as they supplement each other. This applies in particular to those who live below the poverty line and/or cannot afford to specialise.

Based on his assessment of rural industries in Uganda, FRIEDRICH (1988:142) did argue, that as long as developing countries are alternately battered by ethnic conflicts and natural and economic catastrophes, households which simultaneously have a foot in the market and the subsistence economy respond most sensibly and appropriately to the precept of risk minimisation. Rural industries therefore seem to be an indispensable element of rural subsistence and economic growth⁴²¹. By processing local raw materials, income is not only created for the craftspeople themselves, but also for the owners and providers of these raw materials, such as clay, sand, grass and firewood etc. in the case of pottery industries. This applies particularly in those areas where these raw materials are no longer freely available but have been turned into a market commodity. At Mbale and in other parts of Kenya one can observe that those who yield good profits from their involvement in the craft, hire agricultural labourers to do the farm work for them and support the local economy by encouraging people to supply them with clay and/or other raw materials and services, such as preparing the clay or transporting the final products to the market, while they concentrate on making pots even throughout the agricultural peak seasons. Through their specialisation potters and traders nurture backward linkages in the region and contribute to a local diversification of the labour market and an expanded cash-flow in the area. The

⁴²⁰ RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:6)

⁴²¹ To further support this argument I would like to quote FRIEDRICH (1988:141) who studied Uganda's rural industries/crafts and came to the following conclusion »Der Beitrag von Dorfindustrie zum selbsttragenden Wachstum eines ländlichen Gebietes ergibt sich aus ihrer Binnenorientierung. Der Begriff meint allgemein, daß die Unternehmen auf allen Ebenen eng mit ihrer geographischen Umgebung verflochten sind, so daß sich ihre individuelle Rentabilität auch positiv auf das örtliche Wirtschaftsgeschehen auswirkt. Sie beziehen ihre Impulse aus der Region [Ersparnisse, Vorprodukte, Arbeitskraft] und schaffen auf diese Weise Einkommen [Löhne und Profite, auch in vor- und nachgelagerten Betrieben], die wiederum in der folgenden Periode vor Ort verfügbar sind [als Gründungs- bzw. Betriebskapital oder Konsumgüternachfrage].«

increased economic esteem and potential of the potter's craft in western Kenya has even inspired non-potters, Luyia women and men alike, to engage in the craft by hiring a skilled labour-force of potters to work for them as they take care of the overall management of the business and the marketing of the products⁴²². Others, like an elderly woman whom I met selling pots at Kakamega told us that she first engaged in pot-making while watching the potters she had employed to work for her. She emphasised that nowadays she moulds small pots herself but still hires people to mould the big pots she sells.

While most women potters work at home, which enables them to take care of their children, the female pot-traders at Eldoret employ maids who do the job for them while they themselves attend to their businesses away from home. Through their trade they enhance inter-regional economic linkages as they employ the services of local metal smiths at Eldoret who supply them with metal claddings for the jiko liners bought from potters at distant markets in Kisumu, still more are employed to assemble the same and deliver the KCJs to shops and other market outlets if they can not do it themselves or are engaged with more important aspects of the trade.

The linkages and economic networks which not only keep hundreds and thousands occupied and in work but keep the potter's craft in rural Kenya alive and have contributed largely to its economic growth in parts of Nyanza and Western Province are not easily assessable in monetary terms. The latter has largely contributed to its poor perception by politicians and development agents alike. In the past efforts of development agencies, planners and technical experts have greatly been hampered by a severe lack of understanding of the pottery sector and its underlying trade dynamics.

The introduction of cash and monetary obligations has enhanced specialisation and a diversification of Kenya's economic culture with a gender bias approach. However, as the principles of a prospering market led economy: innovation, growth orientation and individual pursuit, are alien to most traditional societies in Africa, they first of all had to be implanted in the minds of the African people. The adaptation of these principles mirrors the stage of acculturation, which slowly spreads from the urban centres to the peripheral rural areas. Over time migrant workers have played an important role in spreading new innovations, products and economic standards while facilitating and maintaining a strong link between the rural subsistence and urban market economy⁴²³.

Close family ties and social reproductive networks have been instrumental to the progress of the potter's craft at Ilesi and its close links to the urban market segment. Since the late 1980s there has been a constant inter-regional link and exchange of labourers, trade-relations, market information and ideas through potters commuting

⁴²² While visiting the market at Kakamega I met an older female pot trader of Isukha origin who told me that she hires anybody from Kikumba Village, where she lives, who knows how to mould and is ready to work for others on a casual basis. While some others I talked to hire the potters for the day she pays them on a piece rate. For a water pot which sells for KShs. 100/= to 120/= at Kakamega she pays the potter Shs. 30/= to 35/= for the moulding, after which she is left with the sole risk of breakage as she finishes, dries and fires the pots and transports them to the market.

⁴²³ Also see VORLAUFER (1984:232 ff.)

between the urban wage labour market at Nairobi and their rural home at Ileshi. Many of those met and talked to at Ileshi have a history of working in an urban pottery enterprise. However, as wages are often too low to establish a home away from home, many of them had to leave their families behind or settle them at their rural home. The latter enhances gender defined inter-regional linkages between the rural subsistence and urban market economy, which as in colonial days strengthen male dominance and superiority in the country. While most female potters independent of ethnicity are unable to leave the home and pursue employment in an urban pottery enterprise, male potters are even forced to look for employment and income opportunities away from home as long as their fathers are still in control of the family assets and turn their sons into cheap family labourers if working for them at home. As the craft flourished male Isukha potters established an inter-regional reproductive network which links urban based potters to their rural home and vice versa, and secures work and economic prosperity even to those who have not had a chance to advance their formal education and/or their professional abilities beyond the traditional set of occupations in rural Kenya. The latter became apparent while visiting and interviewing Isukha potters working at the NJKPE, many of whom only knew a few words in Kiswahili and were unable to communicate in English or any other language except their mother tongue. As most Isukha potters working in Nairobi stay in close reach of one another, cultural and behavioural patterns do not change much as the need to adjust and adapt to new people, living standards and environments remains low.

As in the case of Charles M., who opened up his workshop even to non-family members as his economic success had reached a state which not only caused jealousy but isolated him from the other community members and thereby endangered his socio-economic well-being within the community Fabian L., the owner of the NJKPE, is nowadays well respected for his contribution to the economic development of his rural home area, Muchonge Sublocation, where he has settled his family and established his home while he maintains a pottery enterprise at Kingeero, Nairobi. Over the years he has introduced many young men from his home region to the urban Jua Kali enterprise sector and has facilitated a vigorous flow of information and innovations from the capital to his rural home where he enjoys the support of relatives and fellow potters. Fabian L. offers skilled potters in need of employment a chance to work for him even on a temporary basis. In particular during rural market off-seasons or to finance their stay in Nairobi, as they wait for a cheque to be cleared for goods from up-country being delivered to a commercial retailer in town. Meanwhile, his close linkage to the rural craft sector enables him to draw on an almost unlimited labourforce at short notice should the need arise; for example, to facilitate large orders received. The latter is a major advantage to the Isukha potters over their female peers, who attend to the craft on an individual or group basis.

Gender, language and communication abilities have proved to be major components in determining the development of pottery enterprises with a urban/external market orientation. Excellent potters who do not speak English have little chance of establishing a viable pottery enterprise in or around Nairobi, while those who have been exposed to the urban culture prior to their self-employment status have had the chance to acculturate themselves before penetrating foreign terrain. Female potters

with little to no access to the urban environment and wage labour market have had less chance to explore their business potentials beyond the local markets without external guidance and help. While projects have reportedly succeeded in initially linking rural producers to urban and overseas markets they have in their majority failed to familiarise the producers with the dominant market forces and trade dynamics to the extent necessary to ensure the sustainability of these business links. Only in cases where family or >community< members living in Nairobi actively support and enhance the linkages between the rural producers and their urban customers have female potters successfully penetrated urban terrain and external markets.

Unlike crafts and industries which rely on a local raw material base and on local expertise, businesses depending on external raw materials and imported technology, like Kenya's ceramic industries, do not initiate direct backward⁴²⁴ or inter-regional linkages and trade. A closer look, however, reveals that employees of urban ceramic workshops have often successfully linked relatives and friends to the workshop in the case of new/additional employment openings. In an effort to stabilise and enhance their socio-economic base at home, formal sector employees, like those working at ceramic workshops in Nairobi, transfer large amounts of their earnings to the rural areas. Formal sector employees such as James O. and Dismas O., for example, have hired an agricultural labourer to assist their wives and families who live upcountry. In addition they try to utilise their urban contacts to raise money or avail assistance for the development of their home area⁴²⁵.

Social reproduction networks with an inter-regional focus and the attachment to the rural home and subsistence economy mirror a survival and security strategy which evolved in response to labour migration, low wages and unfavourable employment conditions and were further enhanced by a failed and corrupted formal social security system which does not even provide for those who regularly pay their monthly contributions. Frustrated by the formal wage labour system, some potters I talked to welcomed the move of their employer as he abolished fixed wages and all social security benefits and introduced piecework in 1996. Those who were happy about the move stressed that it enabled them to double their income and to take control over their earnings and invest in a social security system they trust, for example, a *shamba* of their own. Potters with a high production output managed not only to double their own monthly income but were able to employ family members to come to their assistance and thereby increase the total family income. Similarly they were able to hire skilled and efficient labourers who assist the potter with the finishing of the pots and thereby improve his own overall productivity and pay.

⁴²⁴ Also see RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:6)

⁴²⁵ In 1995, for example, the two successfully secured a grant for the construction of a nursery school from the Embassy of the Netherlands.

12.8 Mind share and public perception of the potter's craft

As a result of new economic norms, demands and a growing Western acculturation over time, the status of traditional craft specialists, such as women who were once respected for their skills and knowledge in pot-making, declined in proportion to the penetration of new products and the rise of new standards of technical and professional expertise⁴²⁶.

Through the eyes of a Western observer, the prestige and socio-economic status of Kenya's people changed rapidly in response to the penetration of the country with European settlements, mission centres and newly introduced standards of living. WAGNER (1970:179–181) highlighted this change as early as in the 1930s after conducting a household survey in western Kenya. Based on his findings he divided the households (344 Luyia families) into three categories:

- (1) the economically advanced section (roughly 25 % of all households) which consisted almost exclusively of Christians or former church members:

Traders (cattle-traders, 7; <i>duka</i> -owners, 6; miscellaneous, 14)	27
Teachers	11
Thatchers, tailors, carpenters	14
Cooks and houseboys	15
Miscellaneous jobs for Europeans	7
Miscellaneous native traders	6
Clerks	4
Cash-crop farmers (employing labour)	4
No work	1
<i>Total</i>	<u>89</u>

- (2) the ›semi-advanced‹ section (47 % of the households) those people who still lived in a traditional type of native dwelling but earned money either by working for Europeans, by raising crops for sale or by pursuing modern crafts and trades.

Farm labourers (European Highlands)	54
Other labourers (mines, domestic servants, &c.)	38
Petty traders	35
Modern craftsmen, &c.	18
Miscellaneous jobs	10
Cash-crop farmers	4
<i>Total</i>	<u>159</u>

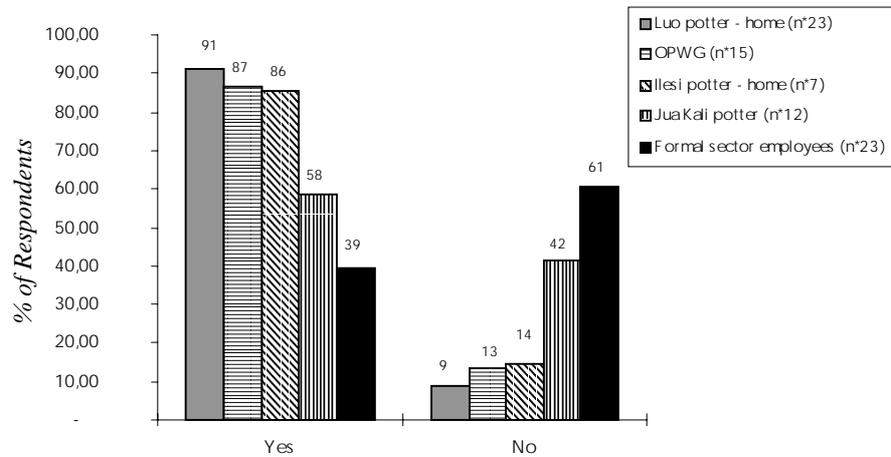
⁴²⁶ Also see RAUCH (1996:102)

(3) The >conservative< section (circa 28 % of all households) those people who did not pursue any regular activity with the primary intention of earning a money income. WAGNER labelled the activities, listed below, undertaken in order to earn money from time to time >hobbies< (WAGNER 1970:181) rather than professions.

Traditional crafts	15
Brewing beer for sale	17
Quail-keeping	12
No work	51
<i>Total</i>	<u>95</u>

While the overall economic spectrum has changed tremendously and many new employment opportunities have enriched the job market and influenced the rating of the various occupations and enterprises since the 1930s, the widely spread perception of the traditional crafts, like the potter's craft, as outlined by WAGNER, has hardly changed in the minds of the people. Based on their fieldstudies among the Luo of western Kenya, HERBICH and DIETLER (1989) stated that young women were discouraged from pursuing it by social influence, school attendance and the low profile of the potter's craft (pottery was perceived as hard and dirty work and financially not very rewarding). The latter reflects amongst other things, upon the poor presentation of the craft in Kenya's school syllabus, as outlined in Chapter 6.1. Graph 19 shows that the majority of the potters interviewed between 1995 and 1997 knew about various taboos customarily associated with pottery.

Graph 19: Taboos known by % of respondents (N*80)



Taboos known by the potters interviewed

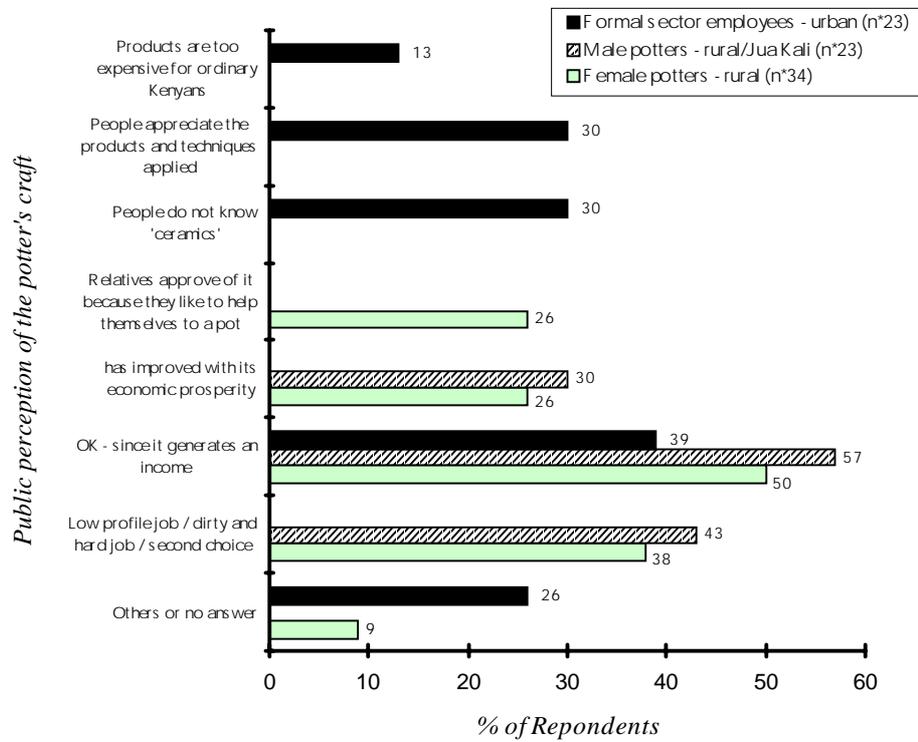
Although it might seem outdated to refer to taboos or even to link the economic development and contemporary performance of a craft to customary beliefs and taboos as we approach the 21st Century, my studies reveal the opposite. Despite the fact that most urban potters and those manufacturing products for urban and external tastes today distance themselves from those taboos and cultural restrictions and thereby from the customary beliefs which prevent men from involving themselves in pot-making, people are still aware of them.

Even in the mid 1990s, Kamba men who were employed in the formal pottery/ceramic sector in Nairobi, were met with disbelief and initial disrespect by their friends and peers when breaking the news that they engaged in pot-making. Only the fact that their method of production as well as the final products are not in any way related to the traditional potter's craft, as recognised by the Kamba, but reflect a modern method of production and lifestyle eradicates the constraints with which male potters are met by clan members and relatives. Due to the strong traditional disapproval of men attending to pot-making, Francis M., for example, who engaged in ceramic production as early as in 1976, did not enlighten anybody as to the type of work he was doing in Nairobi at the time. It was years before he presented some glazed pottery items to his wife and said that he had produced them. Another Kamba man who started his career as a studio-potter in 1988, when he was only 15 years old, said friends greeted him with disbelief while asking: "How come you have turned into a woman?" This leaves no doubt that pottery production is still widely perceived as women's work and unfit for men. Nevertheless, in areas where the craft has developed and proved its economic potential over the last decades, as in western Kenya, it is experiencing a face-lift making it into an acceptable and serious profession.

Graph 20 mirrors the environmental perception of the potter's craft as reflected and perceived by the Kenyan potters (n*80) interviewed in 1995. While 38 % of the female potters and 43 % of the male potters working in Kenya's rural or Jua Kali sector and 9 % of the formal sector employees said that the potter's craft was still perceived as a low profile job, 50 % of the female and 57 % of the male potters in the rural or Jua Kali sector and 39 % of the formal sector employees felt that pottery was nowadays all right as a job, because it generates a monthly income just like other crafts, such as carpentry or masonry. Others stressed that the public perception of the potter's craft has improved with its economic prosperity over the last years. Formal sector employees, who in their majority disassociated themselves from the traditional potter's craft, made a point of mentioning that ceramic production is alien to the people in rural Kenya who do not relate to modern studio pottery but approved of the new products and techniques applied once they come into contact with them. Asking Kamba potters working in the formal pottery/ceramic sector how they view the difference between a ›modern potter‹ and a traditional potter produced very diverse responses ranging from ›there is no difference provided the craft serves as a means to earn money in both cases‹, to ›there is a big difference with studio-potting being a profession in contrast to traditional potting which is perceived as a low grade income-generating activity carried out by women‹. Yet other potters rated the activities quite differently and related the difference to the distinct production environments, products and markets.

They stressed that ceramic products were too expensive for ordinary Kenyans to buy and therefore remained symbols of progress and a higher living standard.

Graph 20: Public perception of the potter's craft as reflected by the potters interviewed



Reflecting on his own professional career, Fabian L. pointed out that people at home [in rural Kenya] used to believe that pottery was only done by poor people, women or men without land to cultivate. Despite the fact that pottery had earned Fabian L. the money dearly needed to pay for his schooling, as a young man he was told that >as a potter you will never find a wife because you have nothing to offer.< Fabian L., however, managed to prove the opposite. Today he is one of the most well known and successful businessmen among the Isukha of Muchonge Sublocation, Kakamega District. Reflecting on the development of the potter's craft among the Isukha, Andrea L., a 65 year old potter, recapitulated that until the 1970s, when foreigners took an interest in the craft, pot-making was not liked or respected. Meanwhile, Charles M., who has become a well distinguished community leader, and other successful potters, who run their own enterprises, such as Fabian L. or Moses L., are met with respect and some jealousy at times. Today the potter's craft, among the Isukha and in other areas where it has experienced economic growth, is no longer perceived as a >hobby< in WAGNER'S terms but as a business. Fabian L., who like Charles M. is proud to be a

potter stressed, that >due to its international recognition and urban extension pottery is getting more and more famous and gaining recognition as a professional career.<

12.9 Comparative advantages and disadvantages of potters working under different working conditions in Kenya

With the view to make future support granted to the pottery/ceramic sector more efficient one needs to identify the profile of the particular producer and clusters in focus. A differentiated plural approach is required to answer to their comparative advantages and distinctive constraints. Without claims of giving a complete and impeccable overview the four clusters spelled out on page 229 have been simplified with the view to highlight the main differences.

1. rural (traditional) potters working on an individual basis at home
2. semi-commercial potters who have organised themselves into groups or started small and micro enterprises in the vicinity of their rural home
3. Jua Kali pottery enterprises belonging to the urban informal sector
4. Ceramic workshops and industries belonging to the urban based formal sector.

Tables 21 to 26 following hereafters are referring to the clusters specified above. They display in detail the diverse constraints and advantages of the different clusters and therewith their particular needs and support requirements. While the provision of counselling and training facilities in product development and design, marketing and effective communication is essential to all those who target the urban and export market which calls for trendy products and creativity and makes effective and aggressive marketing a must, it does not feature prominently among traditional potters who target the local markets where their pots meet a standing demand just like tomatoes and maize do, for example. To them the lack of proper workshop and firing facilities which exposes them and their work to unfavourable weather conditions which can cause severe damage to the unfinished products is much more essential. The increasing scarcity and market value of biomass fuel, however, is causing major problems not only to all potters who depend on it for firing their products but also to the ordinary Kenyan who requires firewood for his/her cooking fire and household-energy in general. Trying to find solutions to this problem, which can be felt all over Africa, RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:77), for example, proposed the following measures for the rural pottery trade in Malawi: (1) the promotion of communal firing, (2) the introduction of kilns and (3) tree plantations by potters. While RAUCH's recommendations seem to be straight forward and easy to adhere to they have to be carefully assessed as the following samples will show: The use of a kiln might change the appearance of the pots to an extent which could lead to them being rejected by the local market where the demand for the traditional cooking and water pot prevails, as has been experienced and reported by members of the OPWG, or the pots loosing their genuine >African look< which could disqualify them for export; Meanwhile the example of the treeplanting efforts of the Women and Energy Project in Kenya illustrates the urgent need to address the ownership rights of trees before embarking on tree plantations with the view to ensure that the trees planted do serve as a fuelwood reserve for the pottery industry can actually be utilised as such.

Table 21: Profile of different potters and pottery/ceramic entrepreneurs in Kenya
a. Producer Profile

<i>Rural (trad.) potters</i>	<i>Semi-commercial potters (rural)</i>
<p><i>Women</i> of different ethnic origin</p> <p><i>Luyia men</i></p>	<p><i>Women's groups</i></p> <p><i>Work groups of Luyia potters</i></p> <p><i>Entrepreneurs</i>, women and men of Luyia origin, who employ or gather a <i>workforce of skilled male potters</i> to work for and/or with them.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i></p> <p>Work and employment relations are built on trust and personal contact which leads to the fact that labourers and skilled potters can even be hired on >credit<, which means that they get paid after the products have been sold at the market.</p> <p>Large orders can be split among neighbouring producer groups and/or subcontracted to individual potters working in the neighbourhood.</p>

a. Producer Profile – *continued*

<i>Jua Kali potters (urban)</i>	<i>Ceramists (urban formal sector)</i>
<p><i>Entrepreneurial men</i>, who know how to make pots and/or jiko liner and who in addition have attained a certain level of acculturation while working in and being exposed to an urban environment.</p> <p>Educated people who are able to communicate effectively with their predominantly urban-based business partners and customers.</p> <p>Men of Kikuyu and Luyia origin who work as full-time employees for those who have established an urban-based pottery workshop.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Many male Luyia potters seek employment in an urban or peri-urban work environment to flee rural unemployment and maximise their earnings or to utilise the rural market off-seasons most effectively. As a result some of them attempt to start their own enterprise after having worked as an employee for some time while others change employer if lured away by higher wages. This profit and growth orientation has led to high fluctuation rates among the employees, which adversely affects production and the overall management of the enterprise.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> Isukha potters who have established a pottery enterprise away from home are able to draw on a large labour force back home to increase their production and replace former employees should the need arise.</p>	<p><i>Church run vocational training and production centres and businessmen and -women</i> who have realised the economic potential of ceramic production and discovered a niche market demanding individual table and dinner ware.</p> <p><i>Employees</i> – predominantly men and a few women: <i>Casuals</i>, who are trained on the job how to process the clay, how to make clay beads, how to finish, decorate and glaze clay items made by potters and at times even how to mould and <i>trained potters and ceramists</i>, who supervise and/or run the actual production.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Most of the men and women running small and micro-scale ceramic workshops in Kenya today have no professional background in ceramics and therefore depend on external advice and the expertise of their employees. Well aware of this circumstance experienced ceramists bargain with their expertise for higher salaries and choose their employer accordingly, therewith contributing to a high labour fluctuation within the sector.</p> <p>The lack of proper training syllabi and facilities which would respond to the needs of the industry is an impediment to its growth and the development and enhancement of professional expertise in the sector.</p>

Table 22: Profile of different potters and pottery/ceramic entrepreneurs in Kenya
 b. Production Environment

<i>Rural (trad.) potters</i>	<i>Semi-commercial potters (rural)</i>
<p><i>The rural homestead</i> moulding and firing of pots takes place within the homestead.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Production is often restricted by limited storage space and high dependency on favourable weather conditions as pot-making is generally an outdoor activity. The latter contributes to seasonal fluctuations in pot-making.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> The fact that pot-making takes place within the homestead allows flexible working hours and makes it possible for women to connect productive work and reproductive duties. This way pot-making can easily be combined with child care, subsistence agriculture and/or petty trade, for example.</p> <p>Family members are able to assist by collecting clay, sand or firewood and grass or by carrying the pots to the nearby market for sale.</p>	<p><i>Within the homestead or in the close vicinity of the rural home</i></p> <p>While some successful and determined rural producer groups or entrepreneurs have been able to construct (simple) workshop and storage facilities or utilise old buildings which can host a larger pot production, most potters still work at their home and utilise existing buildings and sheds which keeps the investment costs at a minimum.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> As proper kilns have remained rare in rural Kenya the traditional bonfiring methods which takes place in the open and is therefore restricted to good weather condition (no wind and rain which could interfere with the fire) is still dominant.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> In case of a family or group enterprise cheap family or group labour can be utilised. Group activities can be organised on a flexible basis which allows the individual potter and group member to respond to changing market and individual demands imposed on them. Where production expands additional labourers, skilled potters and workers who collect and prepare the clay alike, can be hired even on short notice without entering binding employment agreements which would inflate labour costs. Rural unemployment contributes to an abundant labour resource in areas where men (and women) are desperately looking for work.</p>

b. Production Environment – *continued*

<i>Jua Kali potters (urban)</i>	<i>Ceramists (urban formal sector)</i>
<p><i>A workshop environment</i></p> <p><i>Constraints</i></p> <p>Workshop, storage and improved firing facilities (kilns) have become a necessity and are no longer available free of rental payments with the rare exception in which the entrepreneur actually owns the premises on which those facilities are erected.</p> <p>The relatively low market value of unglazed pottery ware does not permit high capital investments and the procurement of high-tech machinery to mechanise and industrialise the production.</p> <p>Investments in improved workshop facilities or the construction of fuel efficient kilns are hampered by lack of secure land tenure that puts the entrepreneur at risk to have to vacate the premises even on short notice. As a result workshop, drying and storage facilities are often inadequate and cause extensive problems to the production and drying process.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i></p> <p>Workshop and storage facilities, however simple, and the use of a kiln provide a production environment which allows pot-making throughout the year as the impact of unfavourable weather conditions is greatly reduced though not eliminated.</p>	<p><i>A fully equipped ceramic workshop</i></p> <p><i>Constraints</i></p> <p>High investment costs to construct, set-up and equip the workshop as it requires fittings and machines, such as a pugmill, potter's wheels and/or casting moulds, well functioning and regulated kilns which so far have to be imported since the kiln building technology and expertise is not readily available in Kenya.</p>

Table 23: Profile of different potters and pottery/ceramic entrepreneurs in Kenya
c. Availability of raw materials and equipment

<i>Rural (trad.) potters</i>	<i>Semi-commercial potters (rural)</i>
<p><i>raw materials</i>, such as clay, sand and biomass fuel, are found in the close vicinity of the home</p> <p><i>tools and equipment</i> – are free of charge as they are drawn from nature or the immediate environment of the potters (For example: ribs are made of seed shells, wood or old plastic; roulettes are made of grass or plastic threads; broken pot shards serve as base support and ›swiveltable‹)</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Clay excavation can be cumbersome or even impossible during rainy seasons when clay quarries are flooded and the wet clay becomes too heavy to be carried home. Since most individual potters for a number of reasons do not establish large stocks of raw materials the scarcity of dry biomass fuel during rainy seasons is an added constraint.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> Since raw materials such as clay, sand, firewood and grass have been freely available commodities under customary law their purchasing price has remained low in areas with low pottery production. Wherever these raw materials are found on the potter’s own land no purchasing costs occur. Since the raw materials are found in the close vicinity of the home they can be collected in manageable quantities which can be carried home on foot.</p>	<p><i>raw materials</i>, such as clay, sand and biomass fuel, are found in the close vicinity of the production site and are therefore readily and cheaply available.</p> <p><i>Tools and equipment</i> – in use do not differ much from the ones used by potters working on an individual basis at home. However, one will find the occasional ›swiveltable‹ made of an old car-rim replacing the potsherd and also more stamps and roulettes in use to decorate the pots. Meanwhile kilns have remained a rare feature as they do require additional expertise to construct and do not suit the traditional Luo and Luyia way of curing the pots by splashing a specially prepared bark-liquid onto the pots while still very hot.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Most of the relevant fuel sources like firewood are already utilised to a high degree not only by the potters themselves but also by the rural population as such. Increased pottery production therefore carries the risk of overutilisation, environmental degradation and exhaustion of fuel sources and therewith putting the craft itself at risk if not properly addressed and taken care off. – Scarcity of or increasingly high costs of biomass fuels have already had an adverse effect on the craft as potters are found to take less care in firing their clay products properly, resulting in numerous complains and disappointed customers who turn their back on them after having bought a pot that breaks easily or crumbles and finally dissolves under the impact of water.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> Providing heavy rains do not interfere with the accessibility of the clay quarries and the availability of dry biomass fuel potters profit from the ready availability of the raw materials.</p>

c. Availability of raw materials and equipment – *continued*

<i>Jua Kali potters (urban)</i>	<i>Ceramists (urban formal sector)</i>
<p><i>raw materials</i> have to be purchased from distant sources and are no longer cheaply and readily available</p> <p><i>tools and equipment</i> – tools and equipment in use have gradually changed in compliance with the changed work environment: Ribs are made of wood or plastic, swiveltables are in common use, simple wood-fire kilns have been constructed out of jiko liner and/or broken pots and occasionally out of clay bricks.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Due to high purchasing and transportation costs concessions are made to the quality of the clay in use as nearby sources are preferred to far away clay sources to keep the production costs as low as possible since market and price competition is high.</p> <p>Fuelwood just like clay is available at high costs which means that those who operate on a small budget often face the problem of not being able to buy firewood in large quantities and allow it to dry to maximise firing results and reduce consumption.</p> <p>Due to the urban or peri-urban location of the enterprise kilns have become a must in order to reduce smoke emission.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> As urban based pottery enterprises often buy their raw materials in bulk, work at a sheltered place and use kilns to fire their goods they are less dependent on the weather than most of their rural peers and can produce all year around.</p>	<p><i>raw materials</i> – have to be of finer quality and therefore carefully selected, purified, processed and tested before use. As a result most Kenyan ceramic workshops depend heavily on imported raw materials, such as glazes, glaze raw materials, colour stains etc. Some even go as far as importing the clay itself and/or clay additives.</p> <p><i>tools and equipment</i> – differ strongly from the ones used by the other sector activists and are borrowed from a foreign craft tradition and technology.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Kenya shares the fate with other African countries that its ceramic manufacturing sector has proved too small to cater for a viable supply industry. In consequence production is hampered by the fact that raw materials and dearly need equipment such as pug mills, kilns, pyrometers and/or seger coils and spare parts for the same are not readily available in the country. As a result only those who command over adequate financial resources to facilitate the imports and good connections to overseas suppliers can afford to invest in ceramic production.</p>

Table 24: Profile of different potters and pottery/ceramic entrepreneurs in Kenya
d. Investment and production costs

<i>Rural (trad.) potters</i>	<i>Semi-commercial potters (rural)</i>
<p><i>none to very low</i> with an increasing tendency</p> <p>Where the craft has developed into a economically recognisable occupation and source of income land owners demand their share of the bargain and do no longer permit the potters to excavate the clay free of charge. This puts the more industrious once in a disadvantages position to those who produce pots on a very small scale therewith remain economically ›invisible‹ and free access to clay and sand.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Production costs have been adversely affected by the fact that raw materials and biomass fuel is no longer available free of charge. At rural markets its trade value is increasing with its demand and growing scarcity.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> Low investment and production costs allow people with extremely limited financial resources to attend to pot-making and realise an income from the sale of pots.</p> <p>Tools and equipment in use are free of charge since they are either made of discarded materials or drawn from nature.</p> <p>Since the craft is carried out within the homestead no rental costs occur.</p>	<p><i>Low</i> – but swelling</p> <p>Growing commercialisation of the craft has led to higher production costs as raw materials, such as clay, sand and biomass fuel, are no longer available free of charge.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Potters who in consequence of heightened demand/usage and increasing scarcity of raw materials have to cope with swelling costs of raw materials are threatens to loose their comparative marketing advantage, namely low production costs and low sales prices in comparison to their urban peers or to rural potters who work on a much smaller scale at home and therefore manage to procure raw materials cheaply or free of charge.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> Although money is needed to purchase raw materials, investment remains low since the raw materials in use are locally available and do not inflict high costs of transportation. Workshop and storage facilities where existent are generally owned and can gradually be extended should the need arise. Meanwhile labour costs for locally hired labourers are low or none existent where family members provide the necessary assistance and extra labour.</p>

d. Investment and production costs – *continued*

<i>Jua Kali potters (urban)</i>	<i>Ceramists (urban formal sector)</i>
<p><i>Medium to high</i></p> <p>Raw materials are no longer readily and cheaply available but have to be procured from distant sources which calls for a rather high capital investment due to the high procurement, transport and additional labour costs involved. Additional investment and working capital is required to rent and equip a workshop, to hire a multiple work-force and to transport the ready made products to the market if not collected.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i></p> <p>Pottery enterprises have to construct a kiln since the urban and/or peri-urban environment does not permit open bonfires that pollute the air with enormous amounts of smoke. As a result increased investments and entrepreneurial risks permit only those who command over the necessary resources and/or securities to embark on urban pottery production. Meanwhile management, marketing and proper communication skills become equally essential to capture good market shares and realise profit. Lack of the same is a major impediment and constrain those who are illiterate, speak only their own ethnic vernacular or are simply not well conversant with the urban environment and market demand from participation.</p> <p>Individual earnings and profits are compromised by the fact that most entrepreneurs and employees alike have to maintain double housekeeping, a rental place in town and a rural home.</p>	<p><i>High</i></p> <p>Investment and production costs are high since at least some of the equipment and raw materials have to be imported or thoughtfully maintained and/or processed before use.</p> <p>In addition a skilled work force and proper workshop and storage facilities have become essential preconditions for setting up a ceramic production.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i></p> <p>Employers have to meet high wage expenses due to benefits and additional labour costs being paid in the formal sector. As a result only wealthy, well connected and established (business) people or sponsored vocational training or community based institutions can afford to set-up a ceramic production due to the high investment, labour and production costs involved.</p>

Table 25: Profile of different potters and pottery/ceramic entrepreneurs in Kenya
e. Production range and market orientation

<i>Rural (trad.) potters</i>	<i>Semi-commercial potters (rural)</i>
<p><i>traditional cooking and (water)storage pots and other clay vessels such as salt strainers or brewing pots for the local and/or regional market</i></p> <p>While traditional shapes and designs have survived over time minor alterations are found in the form of the flat bottomed clay <i>sufurias</i> with lids which resemble the widely distributed and used but much more expensive aluminium <i>sufuria</i>. Meanwhile some traditional clay vessels have been superseded by other alternative products.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Retail prices for traditional pottery ware in rural areas are low and therewith restrain the economic benefits gained from them.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> As traditional vessel forms still find the approval of the people using them the need for innovative products, product adaptations and new designs has remained extremely minimal. Local customers in their majority look for domestic ware that suits their style of living and their purchasing power as well.</p> <p>These potters profit from well established rural marketing and trade networks and linkages which are based on trust and personal contact and responds well to the time commitments and disposable income of the Africans attending the markets.</p>	<p><i>traditional pots and jiko liner for the local and regional market and non-traditional pots for the external demand</i></p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Creativity, effective communication skills, exposure and access to market information become increasingly important if targeting external markets. Aiming at the >other taste< characterising the urban and overseas demand enforces the need for product development and innovative designs and calls for active marketing training and promotion which has to be addressed in a serious and professional manner if the producers are to succeed.</p> <p>Rural craft producers increasingly have to compete with urban based producers who benefit from their close link to the market in focus. Meanwhile their rural peers depend on the middlemen who mediates between the producer and the urban customers and their comparatively low production and sales prices for competition and a reasonable market share.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> With the diversification of their production and their plural market orientation – local and regional markets on the one hand and urban and overseas markets on the other – these potters are able to expand and maximise their profits while keeping their added risks at a minimum.</p>

e. Production range and market orientation – *continued*

<i>Jua Kali potters (urban)</i>	<i>Ceramists (urban formal sector)</i>
<p>Mainly <i>non-traditional pots</i>, such as vases, planters, bird baths, <i>innovative new cooking and serving dishes</i>, and <i>jiko liner</i> for the urban and export market</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> Effective product development and design has become essential as the potters have to respond to constantly changing market trends and fashions and requests for innovative new products which fit the ›modern urban home‹ and ornamental garden well.</p> <p>New and often unfamiliar design and quality standards have to be met which calls for a high level of acculturation or properly developed links to those who are willing and able to furnish them with the relevant information on new market trends and quality demands.</p> <p><i>Advantages</i> The close link between the potters, the urban customers and commercial handicraft merchants allows for effective design inputs by customers and professional designers and paves the way for easy and effective communication and marketing.</p>	<p><i>Glazed dinner and table ware and ceramic jewellery</i> for the wealthy who reside in Kenya and the ›White people‹ who feel romantic about a hand made coffee or tea set, for example; and the commercial customers who want to add a personal touch to their establishment.</p> <p><i>Constraints</i> With most products being too expensive for the ordinary Kenyan to buy ceramic producers target a rather small niche market which is constraint to touristic and ›white shopping areas‹ and sales environments.</p> <p>Innovative product development and design and high quality standards are essential as this sector has to compete with imported crockery, household and table ware and is often more or at least similarly expensive than the latter. Meanwhile poor product designs and quality standards easily remain undetected by Kenyan ceramists who do not have the chance to actually use the products they make as the latter are too expensive for them to buy.</p>

Table 26: Profile of different potters and pottery/ceramic entrepreneurs in Kenya
 f. Customer profile

<i>Rural (trad.) potters</i>	<i>Semi-commercial potters (rural)</i>
<p>Predominantly Africans belonging to Kenya's rural subsistence society or rural and urban working class.</p> <p>Some local and inter-market traders who purchase pots from a variety of individual potters directly at their home or at local markets for resale at other markets or cities.</p>	<p>Africans belonging to Kenya's rural subsistence society or rural and urban working class; inter-market traders and suppliers; way side merchants in larger towns, the occasional traveller and expatriate passing through or living in Kenya; rural and urban based flower and ornamental plant nurseries; commercial handicraft and curio dealers and exporters incl. ATOs.</p>

f. Customer profile – *continued*

<i>Jua Kali potters (urban)</i>	<i>Ceramists (urban formal sector)</i>
<p>Rural and urban based flower and ornamental plant nurseries; way side merchants; commercial handicraft and curio dealers; handicraft exporters; individuals and commercial customers who look for garden and interior design accessories or for innovative kitchen and table ware.</p>	<p>Restaurants and hotels; individual customers predominantly of ›foreign‹ origin who command a higher disposable income; commercial handicraft dealers who target the tourist market and the resident of foreign origin and the wealthy Kenyan.</p>

Table 27 and Graph 21 below illustrates the felt training needs of eighty potters interviewed in the course of this study.

It can be concluded that potters such as the OPWG members and the Jua Kali potters, who have diversified their production and market gearing and have therewith left the secure and well familiar playing field of the local markets in order to maximise their profits, felt and voiced a much stronger need for training than their peers the Luo and Isukha potters, who work on an individual basis at home.

Graph 21: Felt training needs

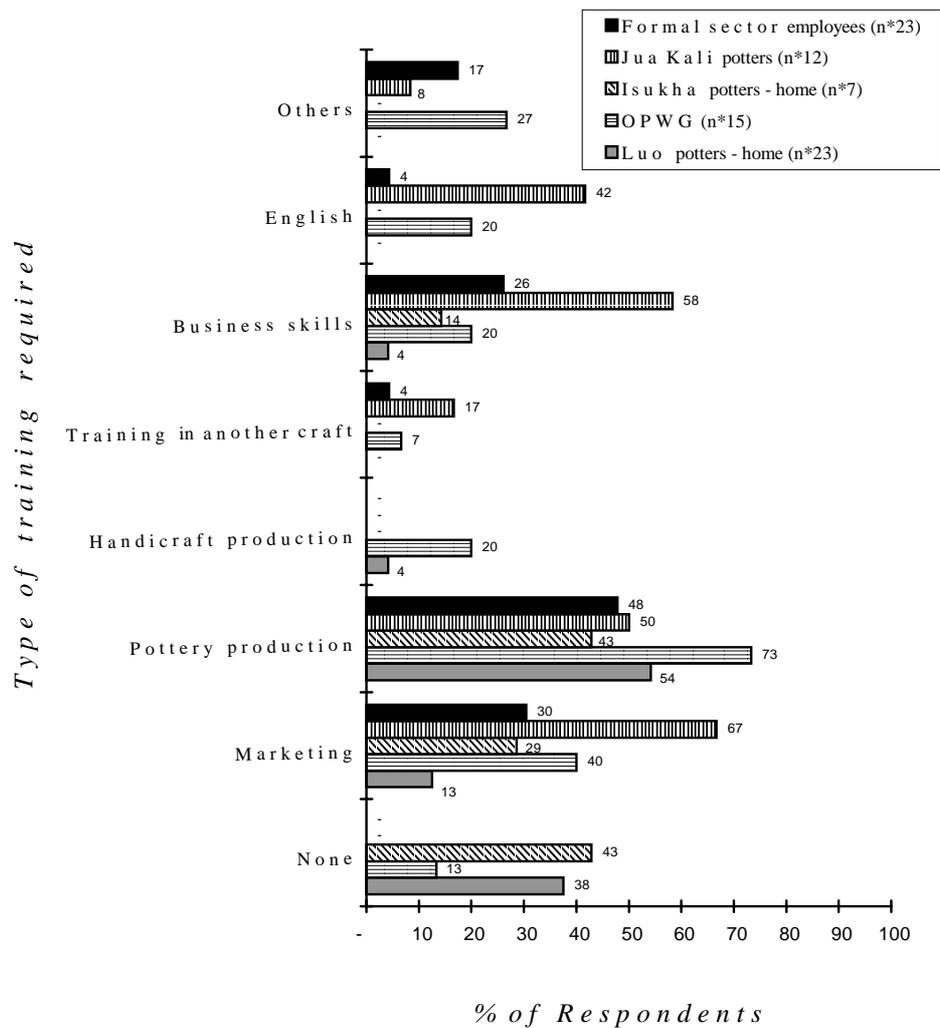


Table 27: Felt training needs

<i>Felt training needs</i>	<i>% of respondents (per cluster)</i>				
	<i>Luo potters working at home (n*23)</i>	<i>OPWG (n*15)</i>	<i>Isukha potters – home (n*7)</i>	<i>Jua Kali potters (n*12)</i>	<i>Formal sector employees (n*23)</i>
None		13	43	–	–
Marketing	13	40	29	67	30
Pottery production	54	73	43	50	48
Handicraft production	4	20	–	–	–
Training in another craft	–	7	–	17	4
Business skills	4	20	14	58	26
English	–	20	–	42	4
Others (not specified)	–	27	–	8	17

Source: Interviews of 80 Kenyan potters, 1995 – 1997

Comparing the felt training needs of the different producer groups in focus it appears that the Luo potters working on an individual basis at home felt the need to improve their pottery production skills but did not see any urgency in exalting their marketing and business skills. Their male peers among the Isukha gave a similar response although they voiced a slightly stronger desire to improve on their marketing and business skills. The latter can be attributed to their diverse market orientation, which exposes them to unfamiliar demands. The craving of improving marketing, business management and language/communication skills grew with the degree of the potter's urban and export market orientation and was consequently featured more strongly by the Jua Kali potters than by members of the rural based OPWG who serves the rural and urban/export market simultaneously. Meanwhile every second respondents of the formal sector expressed the desire to receive advanced technical training in pottery/ceramic production while only every third expressed the desire to be trained in marketing and business management. This, however, could be attributed to the fact that most of these employees realised that they would never be in a position to start their own pottery/ceramic enterprise due to the high investment and running costs involved.

It can be concluded that any assistant and support measures granted to the pottery/ceramic sector have to be tailored to the specific needs and abilities of the target group. The example of the KIE pottery and the many other failed attempts to introduce ceramic production in rural and medium large towns in Kenya only portrays too clearly that national and international aid and support measures granted to Kenya's pottery trade have often been ill-adapted to the prevalent market and economic forces and the needs of the people or their ability to accommodate and facilitate change.

Review, conclusions and recommendations

13 Review: Evolution and diversification of the potter's craft in Kenya

The contemporary set-up, performance and environmental perception of Kenya's craft and manufacturing small and micro enterprise sector is rooted in the country's cultural and colonial history which laid the foundation for regional rural-urban disparities and a conceptual dichotomy separating the ›modern crafts and industries‹ from the ›African rural crafts and industries‹. Furthermore Kenya's governing parties promoted and facilitated the evolution of a dual ›modern craft sector‹ with the rough artisan: the ›handyman‹ or Jua Kali artisan on the one hand, and the highly skilled formal sector employee on the other. While the rural industries were to serve the Africans living in Kenya's peripheral rural areas (former reserves) or the external customer looking for something authentically ›African‹, the ›handyman‹ or Jua Kali artisan was to serve all those residing in Kenya who admired but could not afford the services of a highly skilled craftsman. The latter was the product of ›formalised‹ education and technical training programmes which were established with the view to drill craftsmen to serve the needs and demands of the early colonialists and settlers, Kenya's upper class and the industrial development of the country before and after *Uhuru*. A look at Kenya's educational and economic history uncovers a system which not only promotes ›Western crafts and production standards‹ and nurtures disapproval of the traditional crafts but furthermore established and strengthened an occupational hierarchy which discriminates against all those earning a living in Kenya's rural subsistence and craft sector.

Withstanding the unfavourable conditions of being subject to inherited cultural taboos and restrictions, of being a traditional ›women's craft‹, of being ignored by mainstream craft and SME development programmes and being thought little of by the learned who look down upon all those who do not hold a certificate which attests the knowledge and skills of its holder, the potter's craft in Kenya has demonstrated particular resilience by expanding with little, inadequate, uncoordinated or inconsistent or no national and international support at all.

Kenya's pottery and ceramic sector, however, did not follow a linear development but developed in response to diverse regional and economic interests and market forces thereby producing a distinct plural craft profile ranging from the rural based female potter to the modern urban based studio potter and certified ceramist as portrayed in Figure 8 on page 328ff.

Answering to the local economy and predominant stage of Western acculturation and industrialisation the traditional, rural based potter's craft declined and even

diminished in some parts of the country while it started flourishing and accommodating new market demands in others. In addition to these regional disparities Kenya's craft history reveals gender based differences. It shows that technological change and product diversification was directly linked to external impact and interests and did not come about naturally. At mission centres, boys were introduced to clay modelling and encouraged to copy ›European crockery‹ not for their own use but mainly for sale to Europeans. As the new products neither reflected on nor met a local demand they were consequently not objects of barter trade at local and inter-tribal markets. Alien and detached from the local value system the new products: such as tea pots, sugar bowls, flower vases and planters – symbols of the new lifestyle and therewith of superiority, yielded a much higher market price which reflected on the higher purchasing power of their buyers. Whereas most women potters do follow a long standing craft tradition which is based on cultural identity and conformity, mutual respect, barter and locally constrained inter-tribal trade, male potters in their majority tried to break free from tradition and made an effort to distinguish themselves from their female peers. Responding to their exposure to Western living and production standards they started experimenting with clay thereby exploring new production methods, products and designs which could earn them higher revenue than traditional pots. The trade value of African pots, widely produced, used and traded by African women, developed in direct response to the disposable income of its consumers and consequently remained low or even decreased in comparison with other commodities. This contributed to the low overall perception and economic status of the craft. As a result, given a choice, nobody who had been exposed and receptive to higher education and Western values wanted to be associated with the traditional potter's craft. The latter, often perceived as dirty and hard work, was left to the less fortunate members of the community and those who had no other option to earn the money they dearly needed – elderly and poorly educated women, widows and the rural poor. Expelled from mainstream national and international economic developments traditional potters working on an individual basis at home, especially women, cling to local market and trade networks which answer to the tune of the agricultural seasons and the purchasing power and demands of the local population which fluctuates with the seasons and is further constrained by the steadily increasing costs of living, health and education.

The environmental perception and economic standing of the craft only changed slowly during the 1970s when rural craft production and handicraft exports were targeted with the view to combat rural unemployment and growing socio-economic disparities dividing the country. The growing impoverishment of Kenya's population in conjunction with improved infrastructure and transportation networks marked an increase in demand for cheap domestic ware, such as traditional clay cooking and water storage pots and the expansion of inter-regional pot-trade which developed independently of the urban and export demand. In consequence potters specialised and therewith contributed to a flourishing pottery industry in parts of Western, Nyanza and Eastern Province, where fine potting clay is found and male labour migration is high in response to scarce income and employment opportunities in the region.

Figure 8: Diversification of the potter's craft in Kenya – Characteristics of various sub-sector

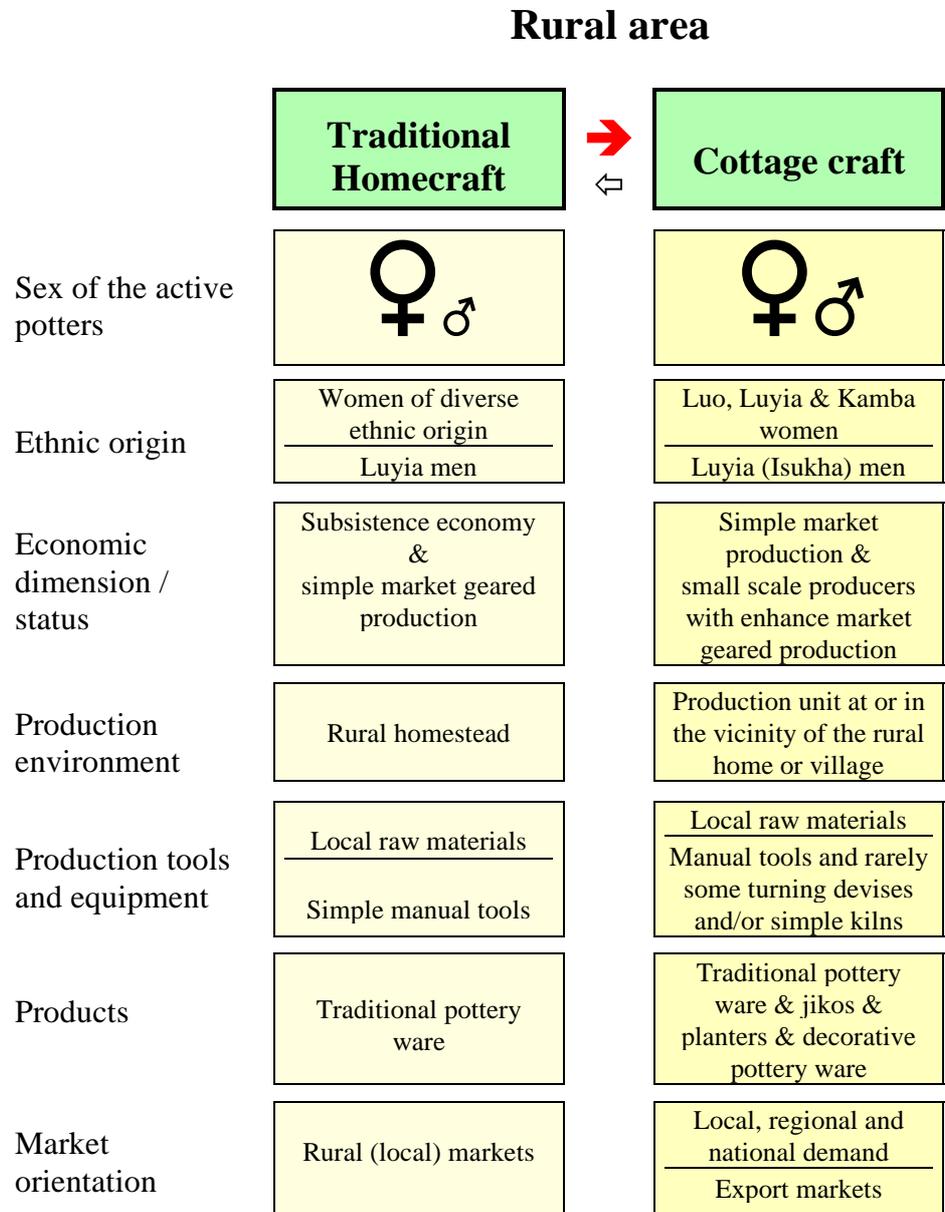
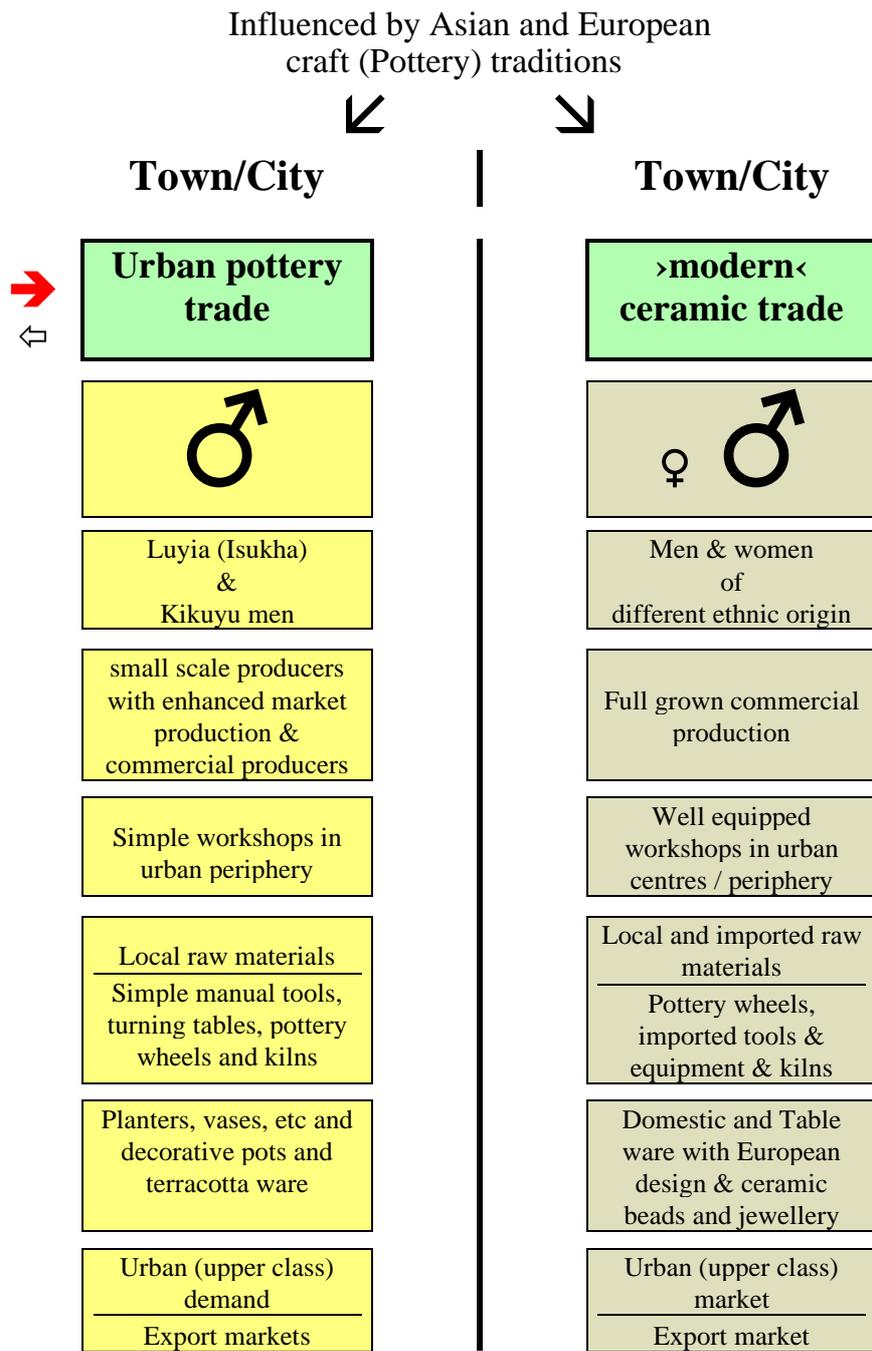


Figure 8:continued



With the aim to improve the popularity of pots and adjust their design to the ›external taste‹ development brokers, such as the RIO and Ms. Belcher, curio and handicraft dealers and European designers, such as Alan Donovan, intervened and started to search for potters who had proved their innovative and entrepreneurial abilities and deemed capable of copying new designs entrusted on them. Male potters, who had attained a certain level of Western acculturation and who unlike their female peers could devote themselves to pot-making on a full time scale, seemed to be the natural partner for the commercial customer who demanded new designs, high quality products and timely deliveries at any given time of the year. However, Kenya's economic history reveals that the diversification of Kenya's pottery scene reflects multiple impulses and demands. Alongside the tourist and export demand, asking for decorative and ›typical‹ African designs, also a new domestic demand evolved during the second half of the century. The latter is centred around the jiko, the flowerpot, planters and the garden at large. It, nevertheless, should take years before an urban based small-scale pottery industry evolved and caught momentum as illustrated in Chapter 9.

Entrepreneurial young male potters of the Isukha clan, such as Fabian L., who had enjoyed extended exposure and grown familiar with the urban environment and demand and who could afford to take the risks, moved to Nairobi and other city centres where they established small or micro scale pottery enterprises with the view of maximising their profits and improving their own professional and economic standing. Meanwhile women potters are rarely given the choice of where they want to work and establish their production, as they depend on their husband's approval and/or do not command over the necessary financial resources and securities to facilitate the move to an urban establishment. Confined to their rural homes, women potters therefore had to look for and explore other possibilities to maximise their profits while keeping investments and risks at a minimum. With the assistance of well-wishers, development agents and middlemen some well organised and/or connected women potters, such as members the OPWG and the Odago WG, have diversified their production in order to serve a plural demand. On the one hand the local and regional demand which centres around cooking, brewing and water pots etc. and on the other the urban and external market which is asking for planters, flower vases, candle holders, lamp stands etc. However, operating under rural conditions, they, just like other handicraft producers, rely heavily on the support and goodwill of middlemen who keep them up-dated on the urban and overseas demands and trends and are prepared to mediate between them and the commercial and/or overseas customer.

Unlike the male potters of Isukha origin whose involvement in the craft is rooted in traditional pot-making other men have learned the craft from potters of Asian origin or the ›passing through‹ overseas expert who imparted new production technologies to serve the ›modern‹ demand. While the latter supplied the urban market with simple and cheap wheel-thrown terracotta planters, objects of mass production, which are nowadays even sold at supermarkets and green-groceries, the potters of Isukha origin have captured the market with their more exclusive and expensive hand-moulded interior design and garden accessories.

With the development of an urban-based pottery industry in Nairobi, the homeland of the Kikuyu, Kikuyu men, driven by unemployment, have entered the trade. They learned the craft from Isukha potters who had migrated to the city or alternatively from potters of foreign origin or Kenyan potters who were trained by them. Technological developments and specialisation brought about further diversification and segmentation of the craft. Those who are well conversant with the work at the potter's wheel are more often than not unfamiliar with hand moulding techniques and vice versa. With the single exception of Terra Ltd., potters who mould pots by hand and those throwing pots at the wheel can not be found working under one roof.

As outlined in Chapter 9 the manufacture of crockery and glazed ceramic ware was introduced at four different moments in Kenya's history and developed independently from the traditional potter's craft. Bare of any African roots ceramic manufacturing was introduced to Kenya by people of European origin primarily to serve the demands of their own kind – a niche market and a rather elite group of people. Even today hand made ceramic ware is chiefly bought by Kenyans of foreign origin or those who have been in close contact with Western cultures and can share their passion for it while the ordinary Kenyan consumer feels less attracted to it and often prefers the enamel cup or factory made imported China ware. In consequence ceramic ware is produced to the taste and specifications of the predominantly white customers and those hotels and restaurants aiming at them.

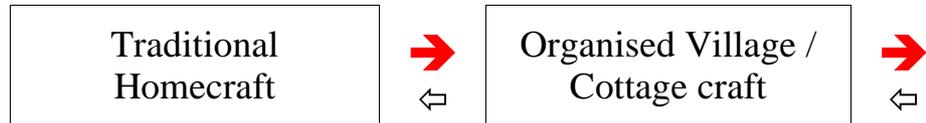
Carrying the signs of technological progress, change and superiority only ceramic manufacturing seemed to match the expectations trusted upon ›modern crafts and industries‹. In contrast to rural and urban pot-making, ceramic manufacturing was deemed suitable to contribute to the ultimate goal of Kenya's industrialisation, which is reflected in the attitude of the Kenya Institute of Education. Despite being urged by foreign advisors and technical experts who availed their expertise to the country for some time, Kenya's education and technical training system provides nothing else but a certificate or diploma in ceramic technology and a university degree in fine art – both of which are not answering to the industry's present needs. Meanwhile even the potter and ceramist who attends to the craft on a full time professional basis does not enjoy a recognised professional status.

Figure 9: Diversification of the potter's craft in Kenya – an overview.

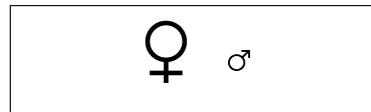
Diversification of the potter's ...

Homecraft 

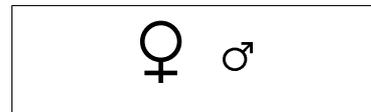
Rural area



Emerged and grew as a result of progressively growing trade networks within and over regions and also because of external development interventions which can be traced back into the 1950s



Subsistence production & simple market geared production



Simple market production & small scale producers with enhanced market production

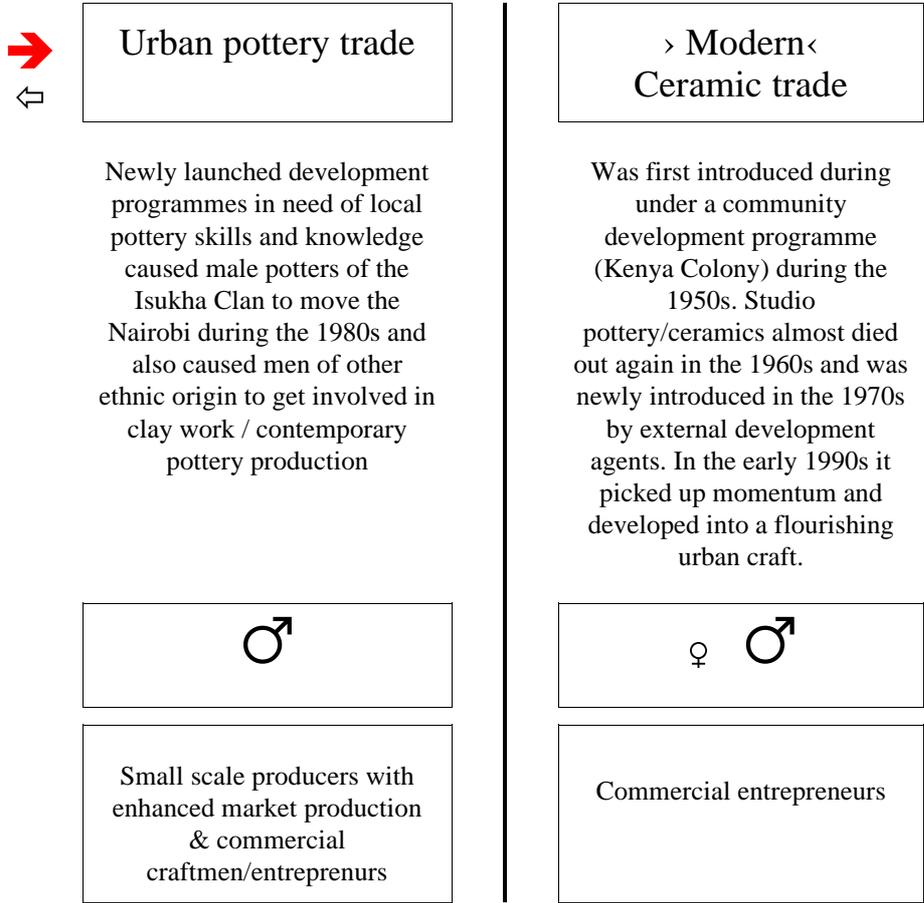
Increasing disassociation from traditional norms

Increasing modernisation, technological

... *craft in Kenya*

→ *Commercial enterprise*

Town / City



... and behavioural patterns

- Ceramic production
- ▶ imported technology
 - ▶ not subjected to traditional taboos and norms

... advancement and commercialisation.

14 Conclusions and recommendations

This study has illustrated that the potter's trade in Kenya did not follow a linear development. It has diminished and its development hampered by traditional beliefs and behavioural restrictions attached to the craft in some areas whereas in others it has evolved from a traditional women's craft to a diversified, specialised and full-grown commercial activity. The latter, however, has not been recognised and honoured by the Kenyan government which still discriminates against crafts which are rooted in Kenya's own material culture and history and therewith bars potters, for example, from benefiting from mainstream SME and technical training programmes. Policy reforms and firm commitments to the same are needed to create an enabling environment for potters and ceramists to develop their skills and enhance the trade's economic performance. Policy reforms are equally essential to combat gender discrimination and inequality and facilitate a diversified plural SME sector approach which can serve the requirements and demands of all sector activists and segments in an appropriate and effective manner. The latter has gained momentum as more people and countries started fighting for scarcer resources following the end of the cold war. This fuelled the call for sustainability and accountability and therewith urged governments, churches, voluntary organisations and NGOs alike to rethink and sharpen their development approach and measures to acquire maximal results. Governments and development organisations can no longer afford to run SME and craft projects on a loss. They have to do away with the conceptual dichotomy and contradiction of project objectives to create employment and boost the economy on the one hand and solve the domestic problems of the poor and disadvantaged on the other. Ineffective development measures can no longer be justified by charity. Women just like men can only raise their economic performance if they are given a fair chance and not lured by handouts and praises for their social and communal achievements. Prevalent gender based policy formulations and guidelines which discriminate against women have to be revised to empower, for example, women potters to participate in and gain from mainstream SME support programmes instead of being excluded on the ground of being registered as a women's group with the Ministry of Culture and Social Services⁴²⁷ and/or on the grounds of not fulfilling the criteria of a full time engagement in the craft.

Educational messages have to be revised to eliminate the poor perception of the potter's trade and improve its professional standing. Trade certificates and training syllabi and also the establishment of an enabling sector infrastructure has to be fostered to provide the means for economic growth and sustainability of the sector.

⁴²⁷ It appears that Kenya's current policies on women on the one hand and rural crafts/handicrafts are still based on the colonial sector and dual economic policies formulated during the 1950s.

To avoid duplication and maximise results national and international development efforts have to comply with a specified, co-ordinated and integrated plural approach. As necessity is the motor of innovation, technological solutions and also none technical assistance granted to the sector have to be born out and answer to the particular needs and requirements of the craftsmen/-women in focus, suit their abilities and respond to the predominant demands and market forces. Kenya's ceramic history, for example, has shown that the introduction of new technologies, such as the potter's wheel, kilns and glaze firings, is not inevitably an appropriate solution to the enhancement of the potter's craft in rural parts of Kenya. In order to unfold the sector's inherent productive capacities and avoid draw backs caused by ill designed assistance and support measures the latter have to be agreed upon through participatory ›problem-solving dialogues‹ with the various groups of producers engaged in pot-making and/or ceramic manufacture.

Scholars and development critics in the past have warned against the discrimination of part-time employment particularly under unstable economic conditions and in case of women⁴²⁸. I strongly support their advocacy of the adjustment of policy instruments with the view to accommodate assistance and support measures targeting the part-time sector activists and not only focus on the entrepreneurial, growth orientated and ›able bodied‹ sector activists. Leading SME support concepts like the one of the World Bank and the EC in Kenya consequently have to be reviewed to guarantee that these promotion programmes have an impact on a scale as broad as possible.

⁴²⁸ See RAUCH *et.al.* (1990:6) and also ENGELBERG *et.al.* (1988:111)

Appendices

Appendix I: Kenya's provinces in brief

Nairobi

- Centre of economic, administrative and political activities in Kenya

Central Province

- the high potential agricultural zone, with favourable climate and rainfall conditions and once favourite settlement area of the Europeans therefore rich in agro-industries, manufacturing industries, infrastructure, educational and administrative facilities.

Coast Province

- benefits from the natural beauty and attraction for the tourist-industry and is with Mombasa the second most important centre after Nairobi.

North Eastern Province

- an arid scarcely populated area, which has been completely neglected by the Kenya Colony, and the GoK resulting in poor infrastructure facilities like roads, water, communication networks, health and education facilities etc.

Eastern Province

- the Eastern province can be divided into three zones (1) its northern arid and scarcely populated area; (2) its central area where the climatically conditions allow cash crop production like tea and coffee; and (3) its southern steppe-savannah where the Maasai herd their cattle.

Rift Valley Province

- an area with high potential agricultural land and large plantations leaving the majority of its inhabitants in this densely populated zone without adequate agricultural land of their own.

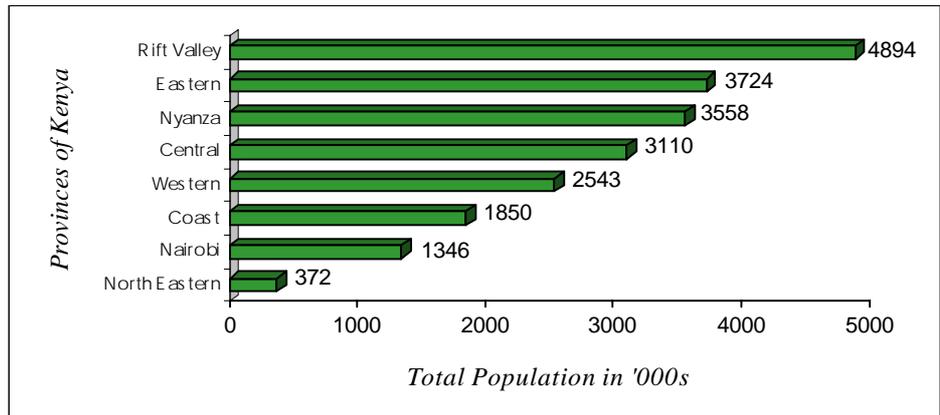
Nyanza Province

- the predominant economic activities are fishing and subsistence farming.

Western Province

- provides favourable agricultural conditions and allows the production of maize, wheat, sugar cane and coffee and has attracted many foreign investors who established large farms.

Graph 22: Kenya's population distribution by province, 1989

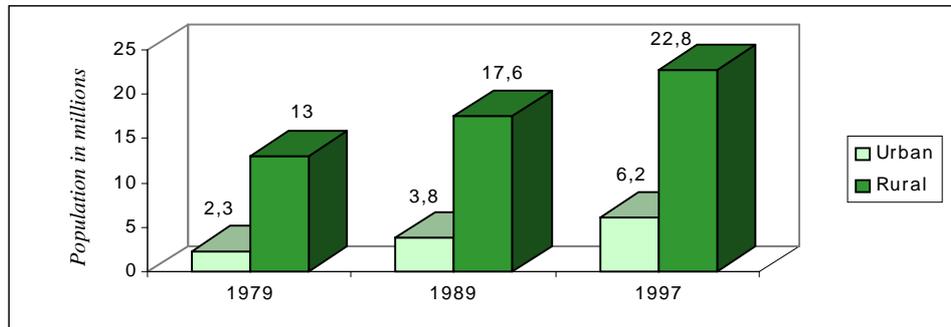


Source: GoK, Population Census 1989

Appendix II: Kenya's population growth

Between 1969 and 1989 Kenya's population almost doubled from 10,9 million in 1969 to 21,4 million in 1989. With about one million babies being born annually about half of Kenya's population (48,9 %) is under 15 and about 60 % under 20 years of age while the elderly, aged 65+ account for only 2,6 % of the total. With a rural-urban migration rate of 6,5 % per year, the population of urban areas has grown appreciably and centres with 10,000+ people grew from 25 in 1979 to 45 in 1989 with a further increasing tendency.

Graph 23: Urban/Rural Population in Kenya



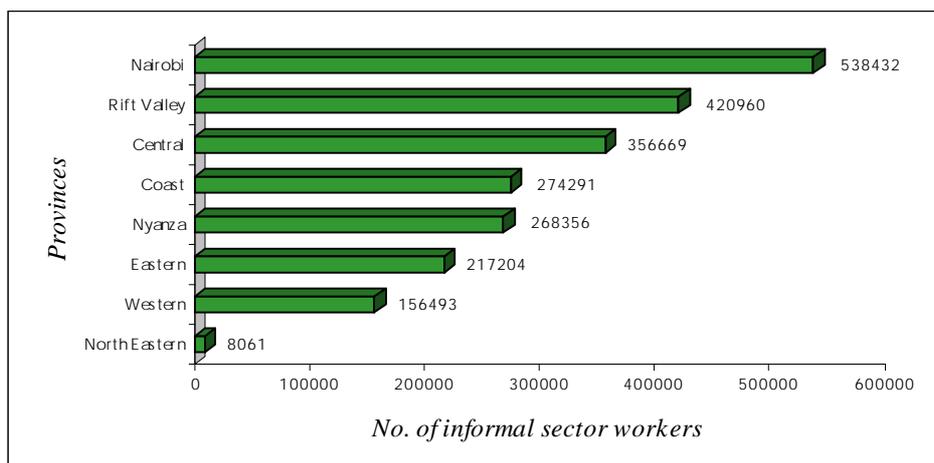
Source: GoK, Central Bureaux of Statistics, 1997

In 1996, 34 % of Kenya's total population was aged between 10 and 24 years. 8 % of the male teenagers and 11 % of their female peers, aged between 15-19 years, were illiterate. While 15 % of these female teenagers had already been married, a total of 52 % of them had given birth under 20 years of age (KENYA 97-98 FACTBOOK).

Appendix III: Growth, composition and distribution of informal sector employment in Kenya

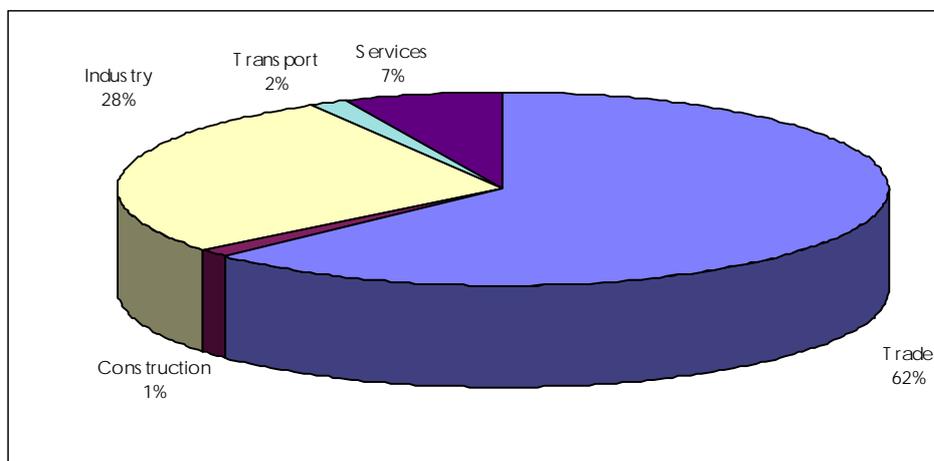
According to the Central Bureau of Statistics the number of informal sector workers almost doubled between 1992 (1.237.480 people) and 1995 when the sector was quoted to employ 2.240.466 people. In 1995 Nairobi absorbed 24 % of all informal sector workers followed by the Rift Valley Province at 19 %. »Informal sector units are mostly found in urban areas which account for two thirds of these jobs« (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

Graph 24: Distribution of informal sector workers by province in 1995



Source: GoK, Central Bureau of Statistics

Graph 25: Informal sector employment by sector in 1995

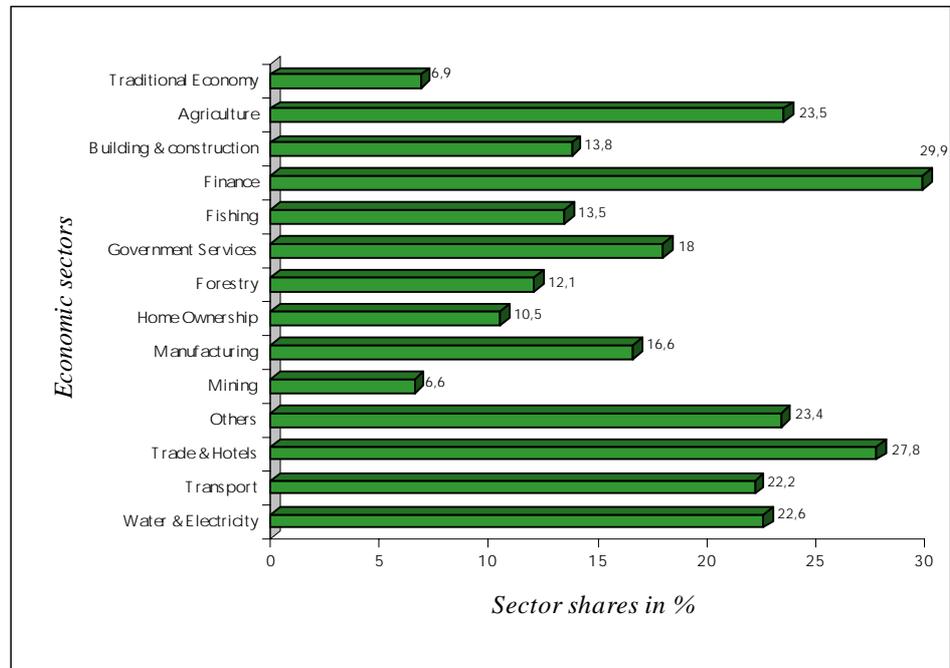


Source: Kenya 97–98 Factbook

Appendix IV: Kenya's GDP – Sector Shares 1995

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics » Agriculture accounts for about 60 % of the economy since most of the industries and services are related to this activity. Manufacturing and services have gradually increased their sector shares. The private sector contributes more than three-fourths of the national income. Traditional economy has been gradually declining« (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

Graph 26: Kenya-GDP Sector Shares in 1995



Source: Kenya 97–98 Factbook

Appendix V: A critical reflection of Kenya's education system

During the early 1980s KRAUTER (1981:302ff.) critically reviewed the development of Kenya's formal education system in relation to the main problem areas of dependent development, namely economical aspects, its relevance for the labour market, problems of social stratification, aspects of governmental administration and planning and curricular development which are briefly reflected hereafter.

Economic Aspects

Though the formal education has experienced its limitations to serve the nation and national economy, formal examination certificates maintain a high value in the perception of the people and in the employment praxis of the public and private sector as they nevertheless implicate a high level of social and formal qualifications. The government adds to the value scale by allocating more funds to the upper levels of the vertical educational system than to primary school education or vocational training institutions, which would probably serve the nation in a more efficient manner.

Aspects of the labour market

In Kenya like in most developing countries, the available labour force/no. of job seekers exceeds the absorption capacity of the labour market. This growing discrepancy between the educational set up and the labour market forces well educated people to compete even for low profile jobs. Social and economic tension and problems are the result of friction between the educational system, a growing number of secondary school leavers, limited employment opportunities and increasing limitations of the traditional economy, the agricultural subsistence and the crafts and small scale trade sectors to provide a living for those who are rejected by the formal labourmarket.

Problems of social stratification

The social dimension of the formal sector is reflected in the perception of the people who draw a causal connection between formal education, profession, income and social status.

Aspects of governmental administration and planning

With the establishment of specific Ministry of Education and high budget allocations the Government of Kenya gave formal education a high priority in the economic and social development of the country. Under colonial rule the introduction and establishment of formal educational facilities was directly geared to serve the modernisation process, by imparting western values of ›civilisation‹, ›Christianity‹ and work qualifications and ethics. After independence formal education was geared towards ›Nation Building‹ and ›Manpower Planning‹. During the 1960s and 1970s the Government of Kenya assumed that the envisaged industrialisation and nationalisation/Kenyanisation of the economy and national administration would cause a high demand of a highly qualified workforce. This perception strengthened by socio-political considerations and the aims to create equal opportunities led to the encountered expansion of the formal education sector

with emphasis being laid on higher education from secondary school to university level.

Curricular development

Due to the enormous influence of the missionaries, the former British colonial administration and the Western countries in post-independence Kenya, the curricular were not totally revised and adjusted to the real requirements of the people in terms of employment relevance and regional demands of skills and knowledge required to foster the development in the region, but was following British examples which emphasised the traditional objectives of an academic oriented education.

Appendix VI: The history of the Kenyatta University in brief

The history of the Kenyatta University started in the year 1965 when the British Government handed over the Templer Barracks to the Kenya Government, which converted the barracks into an institution of higher learning, the Kenyatta College. The College was providing Secondary Education, Form I to Form VI, and teacher training. With Kenya's industrialisation in mind educational priorities were revised. As a result the Forms I to Form IV as well as the Advanced level Art classes were phased out in 1969 to give way to Advanced level Science classes and, following an Act of Parliament of 1970, the Kenyatta College was turned into a constituent College of the University of Nairobi. Consequently the ongoing educational programmes were phased out and fully replaced by a Bachelor of Education degree programme and a two-year undergraduate Diploma in Education programme in 1975. The Diploma programme was implemented to alleviate an acute shortage of Science and special subjects (Kiswahili, Music, Fine Art etc.) teachers in the Secondary Schools. In 1985 with the introduction of the new 8-4-4 education system, the Kenyatta College was upgraded into a full-fledged university.

Appendix VII: Enrolment figures in pottery/ceramics at the RVIST

Although Table 28 does not present the latest enrolment figures⁴²⁹ available, it serves us with an overall impression of the distribution and importance of the subjects taught at some of Kenya's Harambee Institutes of Technology. I have highlighted the figures concerning Pottery/Ceramics to draw your attention to the minor role it plays in the overall set up and in comparison with other, more popular subjects.

Table 28: Enrolment figures at 5 Harambee Institutes of Technology in 1990

	<i>Name of the Institutions in short</i> ⁴³⁰									
	<i>Muranga</i>		<i>Ramogi</i>		RVIST		<i>Siaya</i>		<i>Western</i>	
	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>	<i>female</i>	<i>male</i>
Automotive / Motor Vehicle Mechanics	–	85	–	20	2	56	–	–	–	–
Agricultural Engineering	–	–	–	–	4	94	–	–	–	–
Building / Masonry	–	30	–	13	–	–	–	–	–	–
Business Education	20	29	42	126	133	364	–	12	14	49
Carpentry / Joinery	–	28	–	–	–	47	–	–	–	–
Catering	–	49	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Electrical Engineering	–	102	–	55	5	71	–	–	–	–
Fishing	–	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
General Agriculture	–	–	–	–	–	–	25	25	11	19
Plumbing	–	25	–	–	2	46	–	–	–	–
Pottery / Ceramics	–	–	–	–	1	16	–	–	–	–
Textile	36	–	12	–	200	18	–	–	–	–
Water Technology	1	18	–	–	1	16	–	–	7	49
Total No. of students per Institute	57	401	55	214	352	733	25	37	36	187
Total No. of all Institutes visited by GTZ mission	Female students = 525 (33,39 %) Male students = 1.572 (66,61 %)									

Source: LEMKE et al. (1990) ›Berufsbildung in außerschulischen Ausbildungseinrichtungen in Kenia‹

⁴²⁹ According to Patrick R., a diploma student who graduated in 1995, 12 students enrolled for the diploma course and 5 for the certificate course in 1993, and in 1994, 8 and 6 respectively. While I have no data on 1995, Caro and Lilian, whom I met during their industrial attachment at the Jitegemea Pottery in March 1997, and who are currently studying at the RVIST, informed me that in 1996 there were 9 students who had enrolled for a Diploma in Ceramic Technology and 9 who aimed at the certificate.

⁴³⁰ The names in full: Muranga College of Technology; Ramogi Institute of Advanced Technology, Rift Valley Institute of Science and Technology (RVIST), Siaya Institute of Technology, Western College of Arts and Applied Science.

Appendix VIII: A selection of Kenyan ministries and their areas of responsibilities

Ministry of Education

»All schools' administration and programmes; School inspectorate; School examination; School Equipment Scheme; Teachers training; University education; Career guidance and counselling; Pre-Primary education programmes; Curriculum development; Special education; Kenya Institute of Education; Teachers Service Commission, Kenya Education Staff Institute« (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

Ministry of Research, Technical Training and Technology

»National research development policy; National Council of Science and Technology; Liaison with research institutes and bodies; Application and transfer of appropriate technology; Research inventory and dissemination; Control of the use of research information; Patents policy; Technical training policy; Technical education; Institutes of Technology; National Polytechnics; Youth Polytechnics; National Industrial Training Council; Technical vocational training; Vocational training« (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

Ministry of Culture and Social Services

»Adult education; Social welfare and culture; Community development; Kenya National Council of Social Services; Sports; Kenya Cultural Centre; Kenya National Library Services; Vocational rehabilitation; Women's Bureaux; Kenya association of Youth Centres« (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

Ministry of Commerce and Industry

»Trade development policy; Trade and commerce, including import and export co-ordination; Export promotion policy; Weights and measures; Business Premises Rent Tribunal; Industrial development policy; Industrial standards; Development of large and small-scale industries; Industrial licensing; Kenya/Uganda Trade Transport Corridor Liaison Unit; Export Promotion Council; Export Processing Zone Authority« (KENYA 97–98 FACTBOOK).

Appendix IX: Market trends in 4 European countries (1994)

»The category *ceramic* decorative and gift items mainly contains a large variety of statuettes, bowls and vases.« (WALLAGE 1994:25)

Germany

- Quality seems to be the keynote
- »Germany is responsible for about 25 % of the total EU import of ceramic statuettes. Main suppliers are Taiwan (27 million ECU) and China (18 million ECU). African countries supply as well, but only a very small number of the statuettes. The market segment of ›other ceramic articles‹ (no statuettes) Japan, Thailand and, naturally, China are important suppliers« (WALLAGE 1994:47).
- »...the main trend emphasises all articles that are natural and authentic. This natural trend in combination with a certain amount of nostalgia and romanticism explains the popularity of flower prints on many articles and materials, old metal garden furniture and tables, decorative fruits made from coloured glass, wood and other materials, hand-painted table *ceramics in soft colours*, ...« (WALLAGE 1994:46–47).

Italy

- »The total value of Italy's market for ceramics or stone statuettes is about 63 million ECU. This market is dominated by China as well. The main supplier of the market segment ›other ceramic articles‹, however, are EU countries (some 80 %)« (WALLAGE 1994:48).

France

- »Stone and ceramic statuettes are in part imported from EU countries, but mainly imported from China (porcelain), Taiwan, Japan, Tunisia, Thailand and Vietnam« (WALLAGE 1994:50).
- Alongside the more classical interior design trend for indoor decorations there is a co-existing decoration trend, namely, the trend of the outdoors, of country life which favours items like *earthenware and clay pots*, which may be partly glazed. Additional articles which are currently popular, and fit in well with the ›back to nature‹ trend are among others *celadon bowls, all kind of ceramic fruits and animal-like figures such as frogs and elephants*. »There seems to be an increasing interest in the classic African arts and crafts. The ›authenticity‹ make of these objects makes them so desirable« (WALLAGE 1994:49).

United Kingdom

- »Half of the ceramic and stone statuettes is imported from countries outside the EU. The market is dominated by China (20 million ECU) and Taiwan (10 million ECU). In addition, there are a great many small suppliers« (WALLAGE 1994:51).
- »As a matter of fact the English interior design trends have never done without pots, vases and flowery decorations on all kinds of items and materials. *Decorated ceramics, preferably hand-painted*, are widely used to decorate the interior. In sharp contrast to the current Dutch trend, the ›Colonial‹ style is not particularly favoured. Quite remarkable is the combining of antique objects with modern articles. Not rarely, old objects appear to be remakes of classic vases or statuettes from European cultures« (WALLAGE 1994:50–51).

Appendix X: Ethnic composition and distribution of Kenya's population in 1989

The Table below shows the ethnic groups in total numbers, in % of Kenya's total population and the distribution of all groups with 100.000+ people as per the 1989 Population Census. All groups of whom pottery activities have been recorded are marked with a star.

Table 29: Ethnic composition of Kenya's population in 1989

	<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>% of total population</i>	<i>Main concentrations in provinces</i>
*	Kikuyu	4,455.865	20,78	65,53 % Central; 21,6 % Rift Valley; 9,62 % NBI
*	Luyia	3,083.273	14,38	71,1 % Western; 15,72 % Rift Valley; 7,07 % NBI
*	Luo	2,653.932	12,38	76,5 % Nyanza; 9,23 Nairobi
*	Kalenjin	2,458.123	11,46	93,96 % Rift Valley
*	Kamba	2,448.302	11,42	82,98 % Eastern; 7,3 Nairobi
	Kisii	1,318.409	6,15	86,25 % Nyanza
*	Meru	1,087.778	5,07	94,82 % Eastern
*	Mijikenda	1,007.371	4,7	98,68 % Coast
	Masai	377.089	1,76	96,8 % Rift Valley
	Turkana	283.750	1,32	91,74 % Rift Valley
*	Embu	256.623	1,2	89,09 % Eastern
*	Taita	203.389	0,95	80,99 % Coast
*	Teso	178.455	0,83	81,26 % Western
	Ogaden	139.597	0,65	95,66 % North Eastern
	Kuria	112.236	0,52	86,14 % Nyanza (South Nyanza District)
*	Basuba	107.819	0,5	94,77 % Nyanza (South Nyanza District)
	Samburu	106.897	0,5	76,04 % Rift Valley (Samburu District)
*	Mbere	101.007	0,47	87,21 % Eastern (Embu District)
	Degudia	100.400	0,47	89,35 % North Eastern
*	Tharaka	92.528	0,46	
	Boran	80.160	0,37	
	Gurren	80.004	0,37	
*	Pokomo	58.645	0,27	
	Bajun	55.187	0,26	
	Kenyan Asian	52.968	0,25	
	Orma	45.562	0,21	
	Somali	45.098	0,21	
	Gabra	35.726	0,17	
*	Kenyan Arabs	33.714	0,16	

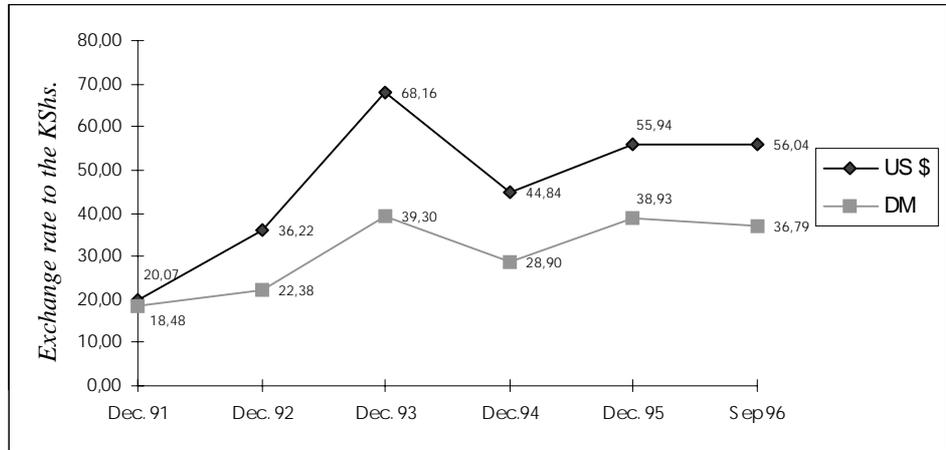
Table 29: Ethnic composition of Kenya's population in 1989 – *continued*

<i>Tribe</i>	<i>Total number</i>	<i>% of total population</i>	<i>Main concentrations in provinces</i>
Indians	29.091	0,14	
Other Kenyan	28.722	0,13	
Ugandans	27.267	0,13	
Hawiyah	27.244	0,13	
Ajuran	26.916	0,13	
Rendile	26.536	0,12	
*Dorobo	24.363	0,11	
Tanzanians	19.325	0,09	
NR	16.716	0,08	
Njemps	15.872	0,07	
Other Europeans	15.768	0,07	
British	15.608	0,07	
Other Africans	14.471	0,07	
Taveta	14.358	0,07	
*Swahili/Shirazi	13.920	0,06	
Boni-Sanye	10.891	0,05	
Sakuye	10.678	0,05	
Other Arabs	7.881	0,04	
Rest - NEC	6.308	0,03	
Bulji	5.975	0,03	
Other Asians	5.264	0,02	
*El Molo	3.600	0,02	
Kenyan European	3.184	0,01	
Tribe unknown	2.411	0,01	
Gosha	2.081	0,01	
Pakistanis	1.862	0,01	
Dasnachi-Shangil	418	0	
Total	21,443.636	100	

Source: *Population Census 1989, Republic of Kenya*

Appendix XI: Exchange rates of the KShs. against the US\$ and the DM

Graph 27: Exchange rates of the KShs. Against the US\$ and the DM



Source: Kenya 97-98 Factbook

Appendix XII: MSEs included in the 1995 GEMINI survey report

Under ›Section Two‹ of the report following *MSE definition* is provided:

»The definition of micro and small enterprises used was any income-earning activity that is not in primary agricultural or mineral production. ›Microenterprises‹ are those enterprises with 10 or fewer workers, while ›small enterprises‹ have from 11 to 50 workers. The distinction between informal and formal enterprises is not used in this report. ...« (GEMINI report 1995:3).

The 1995 survey results imply a MSE universe in Kenya of 708,386 enterprises of which about 75 % are located in rural areas and 25 % in urban areas where circa 20 % of the population lives.

Table 30: Sectoral breakdown of MSEs in %

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Urban areas</i>	<i>Rural areas</i>	<i>Total economy</i>
Food, beverages & tobacco	5,7 (36,7)	8,7 (22,9)	
Textiles & garments	4,2 (27,5)	7,1 (18,6)	
Wood, grass & cane	3,5 (22,5)	8,2 (21,4)	
Non-metals	0,1 (0,4)	14,2 (37,1)	
Metal products	1,6 (10,2)	0 (0)	
Other manufacturing	0,4 (2,4)	0 (0)	
<i>Manufacturing, total</i>	<i>15,5</i> <i>(100)</i>	<i>38,3</i> <i>(100)</i>	<i>32,4</i>
<i>Construction</i>	<i>0,4</i>	<i>0,5</i>	<i>0,5</i>
Wholesale trade	1,4 (2,1)	0 (0)	
Retail trade	63,4 (97,9)	51,4 (100)	
<i>Commerce, total</i>	<i>64,8</i> <i>(100)</i>	<i>56,3</i> <i>(100)</i>	<i>54,8</i>
<i>Hotels, restaurants & bars</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>4,9</i>	<i>6,2</i>
<i>Other services</i>	<i>9,4</i>	<i>4,9</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Note: the first figures in each cell reports the share of this category in all MSEs while the second figure, in parentheses, tells the share within particular subcategories: among all the manufacturing enterprises, or among those enterprises engaged in commerce.
Source: 1995 GEMINI report, Table 3.2

For the purpose of the survey the country was divided into four strata, based on population density and commercial activities. Stratum 1 included Nairobi and Mombasa where 195 enterprises were observed. Stratum 2 (757 enterprises observed) included all other large urban areas with populations of more than 10,000. Stratum 3 (1,124 enterprises observed) included towns with populations of 2,000 to 10,000. Finally, stratum 4, the rural stratum where as few as 183 enterprises were observed, included all areas with less than 2,000 people and all other areas not included in Strata 1 through 3 (GEMINI report 1995:5). The composition and location of the enterprises identified and included in the survey show a clear biased tendency giving preference to urban centres as compared to rural areas where only 8 % of all enterprises observed were situated.

Appendix XIII: Level of formal education among potters interviewed in 1995 and MSE activists approached during the 1995 GEMINI survey

Table 31: Level of formal education of potters interviewed in 1995 in %

<i>Potters working in</i>	<i>Level of formal education</i>		
	<i>none</i>	<i>primary school</i>	<i>secondary school</i>
urban areas	3 %	28 %	54 %
rural areas	25 %	73 %	2 %

Source: Pottery research 1995–97

Table 32: Level of formal education of MSE activists' incl. in the 1995 GEMINI survey in %

<i>MSE activists working in</i>	<i>Level of formal education</i>		
	<i>none</i>	<i>primary school</i>	<i>secondary school</i>
urban areas	24 %	44 %	31 %
rural areas	19 %	59 %	22 %

Source: GEMINI report, 1995

Appendix XIV: Minimum wages in Kenya, 1996

Table 33: Minimum wages announced by the Ministry of Labour on 29th May 1996
– in KShs.

<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Nairobi/Mombasa</i>		<i>Other Urban Areas</i>		<i>All Other Areas</i>	
	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Monthly</i>	<i>Daily</i>
Labourer, cleaner, sweeper, gardener, <i>Ayah</i> ⁴³¹ , house servant, day-watcher, messenger	2,094	100.65	1,931	92.60	955	56.65
Waiter, cook, stone-cutter, turn boy	2,261	108.70	2,005	96.10	1,291	63.80
Night watchman	2,336	112.10	2,166	104.35	1,333	64.30
Machine-attendant, machinist-assistant, tailor's assistant, bakery assistant, shoe-cutter	2,372	114.04	2,208	106.75	1,790	86.45
Junior clerk	1,858	89.45	1,602	74.80	1,252	60.00
Copy typist, machine operator, driver	2,825	135.90	2,608	125.30	2,157	103.60
Cook, Domestic	1,779	85.65	1,562	75.30	1,048	50.35

Source: Kenya 97-98 Factbook

⁴³¹ *Ayah* – Swahili word for a nanny.

Appendix XV: Net profits per worker by industrial/MSE sector, 1995

Table 34: Net profits per worker by industrial sector, 1995 (in KShs.)

	<i>Net profit per worker per year</i>	<i>Average net profit per worker per month</i>
Wholesale trade	2,523,025	210,252
Bars, hotels, other restaurants	517,761	43,147
Making wearing apparel	176,134	14,678
Retail, other	68,298	5,691
Other food, drink & tobacco manufacturing	54,939	4,578
Retail of hardware, building material, machines and tools	47,873	3,989
Repairs: all others	43,298	3,608
Barber shops, beauty salons	41,388	3,449
Retailing ready-made garments	41,286	3,442
Other services	35,560	2,963
Other manufacturing	32,754	2,730
Retailing second hand clothes	26,039	2,170
Selling processed foods, street restaurants	20,878	1,740
Manufacture of furniture and other wood products	20,098	1,675
Retailing agricultural produce	19,410	1,618
Kiosk, general grocery	11,826	986
Making shoes, other leather and textiles (excl. garments)	11,787	982
Repair of shoes	10,999	917
Beer brewing	7,781	648
Retailing of fuel & charcoal	7,306	609
Total, all sectors	33,200	2,767

Note: In an effort to ensure that each category has on average at least 20 observations the MSE activists have been grouped in different industrial categories. –

Source: 1995 GEMINI report

**Appendix XVI: Net returns per worker (in KShs.) and number of enterprises:
Enterprises owned by women**

Table 35: Net returns per worker (KShs.) and number of enterprises:
Enterprises owned by women

	<i>Returns per person per year</i>	<i>Returns per person per month</i>	<i>No. of enterprises owned by women</i>
Bar, hotel, other restaurants	180,014	15,001	3,700
Retail: hardware, building materials, machines and tools	91,393	7,616	465
Retail, others	82,908	6,909	5,905
Wearing apparel	38,439	3,203	5,842
Repairs: all others	29,883	2,490	150
Barber shop, beauty salon	26,063	2,172	1,413
Selling processed foods, street restaurants	21,674	1,806	21,947
Other services	21,041	1,753	3,850
Retail: second hand clothes	18,967	1,581	17,951
Retail: Agricultural produce	15,692	1,308	112,488
Other food, drink & tobacco	14,379	1,198	6,317
Retail: ready-made garments	11,798	983	7,175
Other textiles, leather & footwear	10,590	883	18,036
Wood products	10,077	840	14,687
Beer brewing	9,076	756	14,206
General kiosk, grocery	8,390	699	40,963
Retail: fuel & charcoal	4,470	373	15,051
Other manufacturing	483	40	11,686
Wholesale trade	N/A.	N/A	N/A.
Repairs: shoes	N/A.	N/A.	N/A.
<i>Total, all sectors</i>	<i>15,552</i>	<i>1,296</i>	<i>301,832⁴³²</i>

Source: 1995 GEMINI report

⁴³² These figures reflect that of a total of 708,386 existing MSE enterprises counted in 1995 of which women owned 301,832 (circa 43 %).

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