

‘ARE YOU PLANTING TREES OR ARE YOU PLANTING PEOPLE?’ SQUATTER RESISTANCE AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE MAKING OF A KENYAN POSTCOLONIAL POLITICAL ORDER (c. 1963–78)*

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Abstract

This article examines squatter resistance to a World Bank-funded forest and paper factory project. The article illustrates how diverse actors came together at the sites of rural development projects in early postcolonial Kenya. It focuses on the relationship between the rural squatters who resisted the project and the political elites who intervened, particularly President Kenyatta. Together, these two groups not only negotiated the reformulation of a major international development program, but they also worked out broader questions about political authority and political culture. In negotiating development, rural actors and political elites decided how resources would be distributed and they entered into new patronage-based relationships, processes integral to the making of the postcolonial political order.

Key Words

Kenya, development, postcolonial, politics.

Between 1963 and 1978, Nandi squatters resisting government attempts to start a paper factory brought into stark relief the connection between the politics of development and the making of postcolonial political culture. Squatters refused to move, they uprooted trees intended as raw materials for the factory, and they sent multiple delegations to President Kenyatta, demanding of him: ‘Are you planting trees or are you planting people?’¹ Squatters were asking Kenyatta whether he supported a forest and paper industry program, or a settlement program, since the two projects had been planned on the

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1 The meaning of ‘squatter’ has changed over time. The colonial state used ‘squatters’ to mean resident farm laborers. This remained the definition up until about 1965, when the independent state attempted to make a distinction between those living on property to which they had no title, and resident laborers. In this article, I use the term squatters broadly to mean Kenyans living on land in the designated Turbo forest

same land. These struggles involved a diverse set of state, nonstate, and transnational actors, and had greater implications than the fate of the Kenyan paper industry or squatter land access. They shaped how resources came to be controlled and distributed more broadly, and they shaped complex rural imaginaries of the postcolonial political order. Kenyans often made sense of their political world through their successes and failures in accessing development programs and resources. These newly formed postcolonial imaginaries, in turn, shaped how rural actors engaged with the postcolonial state, built new political relationships, and conceptualized authority.

Contending visions of development created a deadlock in Turbo, Kenya—the site planned for a 60,000-acre afforestation program. The Kenyan government initially purchased land in Turbo from European farmers and promised it to squatters under a land settlement program. In November 1964, however, Kenyatta's cabinet agreed on the 'Turbo Afforestation Scheme' to establish softwood plantations on the very same land in order to provide timber for the planned paper factory.² Once lauded by officials as 'the biggest single project ever undertaken', the paper factory symbolized some of the promises of independence.³ The factory characterized the new government's lofty development goals to generate economic growth and employment, and the World Bank's involvement demonstrated the growing importance of transnational development institutions.

For many rural Kenyans, however, the promises of independence included greater access to agricultural land, and Turbo squatters contested the project from its start.⁴ Turbo residents clashed with, and obstructed, local government bureaucrats, cabinet members, and World Bank officials trying to implement the program. By 1966, largely as a result of effective squatter resistance, the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development described the program as a 'political liability' and the progress as 'depressing'.⁵ After meeting multiple delegations of squatters, President Kenyatta intervened in 1968, ordering that a portion of the planned Turbo forest be moved, and that a crash settlement scheme be carried out.⁶ Kenyatta's directive did not resolve the crisis, as new squatters refused to leave new forest sites, government officials continued to argue over whether large-scale resettlement or industrial development was more important to the national interest, and the World Bank put pressure on the Kenyan government to meet project deadlines.

Squatters' relative success in this instance illustrates the ways in which a range of actors participated in state-making processes. Rural development sites often became spaces where

area, since it was impossible to distinguish between those who were former resident laborers and those who were not.

- 2 Kenya National Archives, Nairobi (KNA) BN/85/14, 'The cabinet, Kenya pulp and paper mill, proposed Turbo pulpwood afforestation scheme', 1964.
- 3 KNA BA/2/38, letter from J. H. O. Omino, permanent secretary to the minister, 'Your folio (107) refers', 24 Aug. 1973.
- 4 Similar to other parts of Africa, Kenya was, and is, a profoundly rural place. In 1960, 92.6 per cent of the Kenyan population lived in rural areas. The World Bank, 'World development indicators 2012', (<http://databank.worldbank.org>).
- 5 KNA AE/22/142, W. Wamalwa, permanent secretary, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, 'Pulp and paper project', 9 June 1966.
- 6 KNA BN/85/16, letter from J. K. arap Koitie to the permanent secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources, 14 Mar. 1969.

citizens, state representatives, and transnational actors negotiated questions about Kenya's economic and political path. In Turbo, squatters played a decisive role in deciding whether and where the state-sponsored and World Bank-funded forestry project would be implemented. They did so by physically contesting national government attempts to create new forests, by forming partnerships with politicians, and by pressuring Kenyatta to promise them land. In so doing, they helped work out how development programs and resources would be controlled and distributed. They played a role in negotiating new forms of political patronage, and in defining the extent of presidential authority.

This article addresses issues of the state, development, decolonization, and authority in early postcolonial Kenya. These issues have generated an important literature within African studies. Frederick Cooper has argued that independent states consolidated their power as gatekeepers, sitting 'astride the interface between a territory and the rest of the world, collecting and distributing resources that derived from the gate itself'.⁷ Cooper's emphasis on the concurrent emergence of international development and independent African states has been an important historiographical intervention.⁸ Recent historical work, however, has revealed a more complicated story of decolonization and state formation, inviting us to see the postcolonial state as more than a faceless institution with monopolistic control over the flow of resources. Daniel Branch has emphasized the importance of disputes among new African leaders for understanding Kenyan statecraft, and Elizabeth Schmidt has shown the central role that grassroots activists played in Guinean decolonization.⁹

Many actors played a role in reshaping postcolonial political culture, though our knowledge of how the rural poor participated is more limited. Nevertheless, a rich debate on this question has begun to emerge. James Giblin has argued that 'the excluded' retreated to spaces outside the state.¹⁰ More recently, Priya Lal has asserted, to the contrary, that the rural poor utilized and appropriated state discourses.¹¹ These works have complicated our understanding of African elites and expanded our notion of political actors, but none have explored specifically how the rural poor participated in molding political and economic institutions.¹²

7 F. Cooper, *Africa Since 1940: The Past of the Present* (Cambridge, 2002), 157.

8 In the emerging literature on independence and development, scholars have tended to focus more on national development programs. See, for example, A. Bowman, 'Mass production or production by the masses? tractors, cooperatives, and the politics of rural development in post-independence Zambia', *The Journal of African History*, 52:2 (2011), 201–21; P. Lal, 'Militants, mothers, and the national family: *ujamaa*, gender, and rural development in postcolonial Tanzania', *The Journal of African History*, 51:1 (2010), 1–20; and G. Macola, "'It means as if we are excluded from the good freedom": thwarted expectations of independence in the Luapula Province of Zambia, 1964–6', *The Journal of African History*, 47:1 (2006), 43–56.

9 D. Branch, *Kenya: Between Hope and Despair, 1963–2012* (New Haven, CT, 2011); E. Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonization in Guinea, 1946–58* (Athens, OH, 2007).

10 J. Giblin, *A History of the Excluded: Making Family a Refuge from State in Twentieth Century Tanzania* (Oxford, 2005). For a study of how Kenyan widows became increasingly marginalized during Kenyan decolonization, see K. Mutongi, *Worries of the Heart: Widows, Family, and Community in Kenya* (Chicago, 2007).

11 Lal, 'Militants, mothers', 1.

12 For some examples of the rich literature on rural resistance in African history, see W. Beinart, *Hidden Struggles in Rural South Africa: Politics and Popular Movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape, 1890–1930* (Berkeley, CA, 1987); F. Mackenzie, *Land, Ecology and Resistance in Kenya, 1880–1952*

This article's focus on rural political engagement emphasizes the connection between the creation of postcolonial relationships and the making of political authority. While Sara Berry and Jean-Francois Bayart have both furthered our understanding of authority in Africa by exploring the enduring importance of patronage networks, their analyses have tended to reaffirm a singular, central state.¹³ More recent literature on witchcraft has demonstrated the connections between political imagination and postcolonial authority, but has mostly elided discussion of how political imaginations shaped political action.¹⁴ Achille Mbembe's *On the Postcolony* brought attention to performance and relationships of power.¹⁵ However, Mbembe's notion of the 'mutual zombification' of the *commandement* (the state) and the *target* (the population), like Berry and Bayart, produces too neat an opposition. And, similar to the scholarship on witchcraft, it simultaneously disempowers these simplified groups from engaging in political action.¹⁶ The Turbo case study reveals, on the contrary, that rural Kenyans actively took advantage of the multiple nodes of power within the postcolonial state, by drawing on multi-tiered political relationships that extended all the way up to the Office of the President.

This article examines the planning and implementation of the Turbo afforestation program, focusing in particular on the fifteen years after independence (1963–78) when the turmoil surrounding the program peaked. It begins with a short historical background. The article then explores the context in which squatters—with support from political elites—overtly contested and undermined an international development program. The third section offers a narrative about how these issues were worked out on the ground with a particular focus on the role that President Kenyatta played, while the fourth section lays out the ambiguous outcomes. This article's focus on a locally-grounded episode provides insight into the complex ways in which the rural poor engaged as political actors in spaces that were simultaneously populated with local, national, and international agents and politics. Through negotiations over development in these interwoven spaces, these diverse actors refashioned political culture, political imaginaries, and political authority in the Kenyan postcolony.¹⁷

(Edinburgh, 1998); and J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1985).

- 13 J. F. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London, 1993); S. Berry, *No Condition Is Permanent: The Social Dynamics of Agrarian Change in Sub-Saharan Africa* (Madison, WI, 1993). For a more complex approach to state spatializations, see J. Ferguson and A. Gupta, 'Spatializing states: toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality', *American Ethnologist*, 29:4 (2002), 981–1002.
- 14 A. Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago, 2005); C. Crais, *The Politics of Evil: Magic, State Power, and the Political Imagination in South Africa* (Cambridge, 2002); P. Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa* (Charlottesville, VA, 1997); J. H. Smith, *Bewitching Development: Witchcraft and the Reinvention of Development in Neoliberal Kenya* (Chicago, 2008); H. West, *Kupilikula: Governance and the Invisible Realm in Mozambique* (Chicago, 2005).
- 15 A. Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley, CA, 2001).
- 16 *Ibid.* 104. I echo the critique made of Mbembe in A. Ivaska, *Cultured States: Youth, Gender, and Modern Style in 1960s Dar es Salaam* (Durham, NC, 2011), 21.
- 17 Kelly Askew's work is informative here for its examination of 'how some of the least privileged citizens of one emergent African nation hijacked and reconfigured the process of nationalism'. K. M. Askew, *Performing the Nation: Swahili Music and Cultural Politics in Tanzania* (Chicago, 2002), 12.

The article relies on archival sources and oral interviews conducted in Rift Valley and Western Provinces. From the pages of the archival records on land, forestry, and industry emerged a dramatic story of squatter resolve and resilience, and inter-ministerial fighting. Interviews primarily conducted in Tapsagoi and Sugoi villages of Uasin Gishu District – originally sites of afforestation, but converted to settlement – helped piece together squatter conceptualizations of development, decolonization, and political authority, and how these opinions shaped rural political actions.¹⁸

THE SHORT HISTORY OF A LONG BESET DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The history of the paper factory begins in the 1950s with the late colonial state, but longer histories of agrarian practice and colonial rule deeply shaped squatter resistance to the postcolonial Kenyan paper program. After conquest at the turn of the twentieth century, the colonial state forcibly moved the Nandi, a subgroup of what is now the Kalenjin ethnicity and one of the communities then residing on the Uasin Gishu plateau, to a ‘native reserve’.¹⁹ The reserve was less suitable for the agropastoral lifestyle of the Nandi and separated them from important grazing land and salt licks. Many Nandi migrated back to Uasin Gishu to become squatters on European farms, working in exchange for access to land often unavailable elsewhere.²⁰ In the 1920s, as the agricultural economy of Uasin Gishu further developed and the area became better connected through the railway extension, European settlers began soliciting the labor of other ethnic groups, particularly the Kikuyu of central Kenya and the Luhya of western Kenya.²¹

Uasin Gishu lies on the western side of the Rift Valley, and on the north-western edge of the once exclusive White Highlands. Rain falls reliably, the soils are arable, and the high altitude makes for temperate weather well suited for farming. Only 14 per cent of Kenyan land possesses these important qualities, and the Rift Valley highlands are exceptional for their immense agricultural potential.²² Uasin Gishu’s longer history as home to changing communities and its shorter history of diverse labor migration, set up this fertile district as a site of contestation and claims-making when land resettlement programs began during decolonization.²³ The Kalenjin as a whole made broad, autochthonous claims to the

18 Interview recordings are in the author’s possession. The article also uses interviews conducted with residents of neighboring villages physically unaffected by the afforestation program. The author conducted 115 interviews in total, and completed a year and a half of archival and oral research.

19 For more on the Kalenjin, see G. Lynch, *I Say To You: Ethnic Politics and the Kalenjin in Kenya* (Chicago, 2011).

20 D. Ellis, ‘The Nandi protest of 1923 in the context of African resistance to colonial rule in Kenya’, *The Journal of African History*, 17:4 (1976), 558.

21 R. Maxon, ‘The years of revolutionary advance, 1920–1929’, in W. R. Ochieng’ (ed.), *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895–1980: In Honour of B. A. Ogot* (Nairobi, 1989), 75.

22 J. Lonsdale, ‘The conquest state’, in Ochieng’ (ed.), *A Modern History of Kenya*, 11.

23 By independence, the ethnic composition of African squatters in Uasin Gishu had become more diverse than other regions. The ethnic division of Africans seeking work in Uasin Gishu district in 1960 was: Kalenjin 31.8 per cent, Kikuyu 38.7 per cent, Luo 13.0 per cent, and Luhya 16.5 per cent. R. O. Kisiara, ‘Labor contracts in a polyethnic agricultural resettlement in Western Kenya’ (unpublished PhD thesis, Washington University, 1998), 13.

Rift Valley. The Nandi made specific claims to Uasin Gishu and Turbo based on their historical inhabitation of the area, and on colonial injustices.

When the Kenyan colonial government first examined the prospect of a paper industry in the 1950s, a consulting firm selected Broderick Falls (later called Webuye) in Western Province as the ideal location for the factory. The firm chose the site for its proximity to water, fertile forest areas, and cheap transportation routes. No investment firms would finance the project, however, because of the Mau Mau Emergency and the increasing calls for self-government. When the independent Kenyan government returned to this development project, they built on the ‘inherited wisdom’ of the consulting reports and again planned for a factory in Broderick Falls. They also garnered World Bank funding in 1968.

The Turbo afforestation scheme was plagued by obstacles from the start – particularly, squatter resistance and inter-ministerial fighting about whether the program was vital enough to implement at the expense of land resettlement. Nevertheless, the government began the construction of the Turbo forest nursery in 1965 with the goal of planting three million seedlings by March 1966.²⁴ By the end of July 1965, however, an estimated 300 to 400 families were already residing in the planned forest area.²⁵ In early August 1965, a group of Nandi elders, led by Daniel arap Moi, approached the Minister for Lands and Settlement about Turbo.²⁶ Following this meeting, Minister Angaine wrote:

It would be worthwhile reviewing intended land purchase in this area and possibly excluding it altogether and allowing the tenants to take up these farms, for it must be appreciated that the Nandi will be foregoing a considerable acreage which they anticipated and indeed know was coming to them for settlement purposes.²⁷

Moi’s support of squatters and Angaine’s unease about the forest hinted at a latent official resistance to, and division over, the program. In February 1966, the divisional forest officer wrote that 552 families of an average size of five were living on the land demarcated for forest.²⁸ By August of the same year, government officials noted a new total of 639 families in the area – or, about 3,195 people.²⁹

Turbo squatters not only refused to leave the land, but they actively disrupted afforestation efforts. A. F. Achieng, permanent secretary for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, noted in 1966 that the squatters ‘were cutting down trees, building huts and in general making a mess of the whole scheme’.³⁰ Officials became increasingly concerned as they realized the challenges of settling squatters elsewhere, and as more people flooded

24 KNA AE/22/142, ‘Pulp and paper company of East Africa, limited: working committee meeting’, 20 Dec. 1965.

25 KNA BN/85/14, letter from J. S. Spears, conservator of forests, to the director of settlement, 29 July 1965.

26 Moi was minister for Home affairs at the time, but he became vice president in 1967 and went on to become Kenya’s second president from 1978 to 2002.

27 KNA BN/85/14, letter from Angaine, minister for Lands and Settlement, to S. O. Ayodo, minister for Natural Resources and Wildlife, 19 Aug. 1965.

28 KNA BN/85/15, ‘Turbo project afforestation scheme: notes on a meeting’, 11 Feb. 1966.

29 KNA BN/85/15, letter from provincial commissioner Western Province, ‘Squatters: Turbo afforestation scheme’, 30 Aug. 1966.

30 KNA BN/85/15, letter from P. Shiyukah, permanent secretary, to A. F. Achieng, Esq., permanent secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism, 26 Jan. 1966.

into Turbo to protest the seizure of Nandi land and to make land claims for their families. Kenyatta directed that a settlement scheme be carried out in Turbo in 1968, but that did little to sate widespread land hunger. Despite the settlement of families on 664 plots, by 1969 the government estimated that 1,000 families – about 5,000 people – were squatting on land in Turbo intended for forests.³¹

With World Bank funding, the Turbo problems only intensified, as loan conditions and strict deadlines created further hurdles.³² The World Bank required the Kenyan government to set aside 65,000 acres for afforestation, and that at least 50 per cent of the timber come from within a 25-mile radius of the factory. The Bank insisted on these stipulations with profitability in mind, as they were meant to ensure the production of an ideal amount of raw material and lower transportation costs. World Bank conditions gave Kenyan policymakers few options for where to establish softwood plantations. These options became further limited as squatters achieved greater victories through their resistance. The government converted more and more planned afforestation areas back into settlement schemes. The Ministry of Natural Resources continually sought new land for forest but encountered the same squatter problems everywhere. The permanent secretary to the ministry complained in a 1970 letter:

By losing 22,000 acres [to settlement] the land available has now been reduced to some 25,000 acres. We were asked to find alternative suitable land to be bought for the [forest] scheme, but each time we have met with difficulties. We lost two farms to squatters last year (1969) plus the National Farm ... The local people simply moved into the farms and refused to leave. The National Farm was invaded by armed men and we were forced out.³³

A sense of resignation following these repeated defeats is evident later in the same letter:

Now we are at the point of being confronted at another farm i.e. Cooper's Farm ... People have moved in illegally and started ploughing the land. The Provincial Commissioner, Rift Valley Province, was requested to remove the men out and he has ordered the DC [District Commissioner] Eldoret to take action. Court action has been initiated, but already representations are being made. Allegations of mistreating *wananchi* [citizens] are being made. If Cooper's farm is lost to the scheme then we might abandon the whole idea of the pulp mill. The World Bank is financing the Turbo Afforestation Scheme for the next 6 years, and we plan to plant some 3,000 acres per year, but there seems to be calculated resistance to what we are trying to do.³⁴

By April 1971, the World Bank forestry project manager noted that only 15,230 hectares of the required 30,300 hectares had been purchased. The manager added that Kenya's Ministry of Natural Resources continued trying to acquire additional land, 'but with

31 KNA BN/85/16, letter from Z. B. Shimechero, special commissioner – squatters, to the minister of Lands and Settlement, 'Re: Turbo – Kudler's Farm', 29 July 1969.

32 The program relied heavily on the World Bank funding. From 1970 to 1975, for example, the World Bank loan funded 65 per cent of the project cost. KNA BA/6/26, letter from T. A. M. Gardner, project manager, World Bank forestry project, Eldoret, to the chief statistician, agriculture section, 2 Apr. 1971.

33 KNA BA/6/26, letter from permanent secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources, 'Turbo afforestation scheme and Broderick Falls paper project', 14 May 1970.

34 *Ibid.*

very heavy pressures from other interests it is anticipated that great difficulty will be found in achieving the target'.³⁵

Despite all of these difficulties, the Pan African Paper Mills factory produced its first roll of paper in 1974. However, the factory opening did not mean an end to the problems in the forestry portion of the project. A year after the factory opened, the permanent secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources penned a letter to the permanent secretary of the Ministry of Lands and Settlement expressing concern over negotiations for a new World Bank loan, since the project had not met the original conditions. He wrote:

One of those conditions relates to the question of land for afforestation and it is obvious that if some of the land acquired for this purpose has squatters, the project can be deemed unsuccessful. Concomitantly therefore, my chances of securing a second loan and a much bigger one, if I may add, are remote.³⁶

The remainder of this article seeks to understand this sequence of events. It examines why the forest and paper project generated so much conflict, foregrounding especially the divisions that emerged and the issues diverse actors debated. The article explores, additionally, why the state could not, or would not, employ greater strength to remove squatters, particularly when a World Bank loan was at stake. The answers to these questions reveal how different actors leveraged political support, and how new political relationships and conceptions of authority emerged through negotiations over development.

LAND, DEVELOPMENT, AND INDEPENDENCE

Land overshadowed most other political issues in Kenya during decolonization, and continued to do so even after the transfer of over one million acres from Europeans to Africans in the late colonial and early postcolonial period. Most Kenyan policymakers were skeptical of the economic benefits of giving small plots of land to the large population of landless Kenyans. They believed in the importance of economies of scale, and that rural Kenyans had little agricultural knowledge and would make unproductive farmers.³⁷ Poor, landless Kenyans became the chief recipients of settlement land nonetheless, mostly out of concern that they 'constituted a security risk'.³⁸ The state redistributed land to the rural poor, in other words, as a preemptive strategy for defusing unrest, not as a means to achieving economic development.

Despite these programs, Kenyan policymakers recognized that there were 'more squatters than land on which to settle' them.³⁹ And the new Kenyan state was not just

35 KNA BA/6/26, letter from T. A. M. Gardner, project manager, World Bank forestry project, Eldoret, to the chief statistician, agriculture section, 2 Apr. 1971.

36 KNA BN/85/16, letter from J. H. O. Omino, permanent secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources to Mr. N. S. Kungo, permanent secretary, Ministry of Lands and Settlement, 31 May 1975.

37 The British colonial state and the World Bank first endorsed these ideas. The World Bank, in fact, refused to fund land resettlement programs for smallholdings owned by 'non-progressive farmers', because they were deemed 'liabilities'. P. D. Abrams, *Kenya's Land Resettlement Story: How 66,000 African Families Were Settled on 1325 Large Scale European Owned Farms* (Nairobi, 1979).

38 KNA BN/97/3, 'Minutes of a meeting of officials on squatters', 23 Apr. 1966.

39 KNA BN/81/41, letter from the Office of the President to the permanent secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, permanent secretary, Ministry of Lands and Settlement, and all provincial commissioners, 2 Mar. 1967.

beset by landlessness, but also by the related problem of unemployment. Job growth remained virtually stagnant from 1954 to 1970, despite a rapidly increasing population.⁴⁰ In the absence of adequate land, the state turned to employment creation. A 1968 report on rural development noted:

The critical problem is to provide these rural people an opportunity to make a livelihood, and a better livelihood. Unemployment . . . is the central problem of the Kenya economy, and one of growing urgency and scale. Unless this problem can be solved, land-holdings will be sub-divided into smaller and smaller pieces, unemployed will go in even greater numbers to towns which cannot employ them.⁴¹

Kenyan government bureaucrats and international financial institutions generally supported industrial development programs over squatter settlement, because these policy-makers saw industry as a more sustainable solution.

The Pan African Paper Mills factory represented one such solution. A Treasury memorandum on the forest and paper industry program forecast, '[i]n terms of employment alone 1,000 men would be employed permanently on the forestry operations with an additional 4,000 men employed as seasonal labour. This compares with 1,550 families (25 acres per settler) who would be provided for on the planned settlement schemes.'⁴² The government estimated that the establishment of the mill would create up to 15,000 jobs in total in forestry, logging, transport, factory operations, and industries connected to pulp and paper.⁴³

Rural imaginaries of the postcolonial order diverged from this vision of industrial development as panacea, however. P. K. Boit, provincial commissioner of Western Province, summed up the government's difficult position in a 1970 letter, noting that as long as there were squatters, 'the public just do not understand why certain portions of land should be afforested'.⁴⁴ As a provincial commissioner, Boit reported to the Office of the President but served a local, rural population, and he was well aware of the incongruous visions of development in Kenya. Boit wrote in the same letter: 'Economically of course provision of employment has to rank fairly high as well in our priorities but the prevalent sensitivity on land will always make any proposals to expand plantations of forests to be viewed with indignation.'⁴⁵ Squatter resistance to the implementation of the forestry program grew out of popular postcolonial imaginaries in which independence, land, citizenship, and development were intertwined. Land became a lens through which Kenyans gauged the successes and failures of decolonization, and some of those who did not receive land recounted that 'it was as if there was no independence' at all.⁴⁶ Not only did

40 KNA BN/81/158, 'Memorandum by the minister for Economic Planning and Development on government's unemployment policies', 1970.

41 KNA TR/3/58, 'Rural development: programme in representative areas', 29 Nov. 1968.

42 KNA BN/85/14, 'Memorandum to H. M. government on the Turbo afforestation scheme in relation to the expanded settlement scheme (draft)', 27 Oct. 1965.

43 KNA BN/85/15, From the Treasury, 'Memorandum to H. M. government on the Turbo afforestation scheme (second revision)', June 1966.

44 KNA BN/85/16, letter from P. K. Boit, provincial commissioner Western Province, to the permanent secretary, Office of the President, 'Land for squatters or the landless people', 18 Mar. 1970.

45 *Ibid.*

46 Interview with Daniel Kebeney Bitok, Leseru, 26 Nov. 2012.

informants conceptualize independence through access to land, but many connected citizenship and *maendeleo* (development) to land ownership and farming.⁴⁷

Rural aspirations were tied to land, but rural anxieties were tied to ethnic competition.⁴⁸ Attempts to implement the forest and paper program occurred in a setting already rife with feelings of regional antagonism, and Turbo afforestation magnified Kalenjin fears of ethnic marginalization.⁴⁹ Squatters did not believe the paper industry signified development for them, because the factory was located outside the Rift Valley. Kiptoo arap Maina, a Uasin Gishu settler, articulated this sentiment: ‘Something like Pan [African] Paper in Webuye benefits those people in Webuye alone, so how do I take it as a development if it’s not of direct benefit to me?’⁵⁰ Most Turbo residents believed the paper industry would benefit only the Luhya in Western Province. Both Nandi and Luhya worried, in addition, that land resettlement would favor the Kikuyu because of their political dominance.⁵¹ Simon Limo, a Nandi settler in Uasin Gishu illustrated these feelings: ‘We would say, “these are squatters”, and those who are in the government, they heard the cries. But those who are in the government, they brought their own people.’⁵² Others, like Christopher Lelelilan, were more explicit. Lelelilan, who remained landless after independence, said: ‘Leaders just brought Kikuyu.’⁵³ Both Limo and Lelelilan expressed a prevailing opinion that settlement disproportionately benefitted the Kikuyu at the expense of the already marginalized. The longstanding competition for land in the northwest Rift Valley highlands – between Kikuyu, Kalenjin, and Luhyas, and then later, between forest and settlement – created an atmosphere of anxiety and vulnerability which buttressed squatter mobilization against government attempts to seize land.

Landlessness, regional competition, and inequality represented major issues not just in Turbo, but throughout the new nation. Many Kenyans questioned the government’s commitment to addressing inequality. The ‘Citizens of Naivasha’ wrote to the KANU district chairman in 1967, for example: ‘How many types of policies has the Government? We want to know if there is policy for rich people Ministers and for poor citizens.’⁵⁴ Rhetoric about the visible presence of a rich and a poor class was common, and Kenyans tended to trace the creation of these polarized economic classes to the exclusion of the poor from land settlement programs. This type of public frustration created disquiet in government circles about the rural protests it might portend.

47 Numerous informants defined citizenship as owning land, and almost all informants connected development to farming. Jairo Murunga Libapu recalled, ‘[d]evelopment was cattle, milk. Being a good farmer. I used to produce 200 bags of maize.’ Interview with Jairo Murunga Libapu, Lumakanda, 3 Nov. 2012.

48 D. Anderson, ‘Yours in struggle for *majimbo*: nationalism and the party politics of decolonization in Kenya, 1955–64’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40:3 (2005), 547. Anderson traces the regional, or *majimboist*, aims of minority ethnic groups to party politics during independence negotiations, and a fear of Kikuyu domination.

49 ‘The main motivation for the construction and politicization of a Kalenjin alliance was (and continues to be) a nexus of fear of loss and potential for gain.’ Lynch, *I Say*, 6–7.

50 Interview with Kiptoo arap Maina, Leseru, 23 Nov. 2012.

51 KNA KA/6/19, letter from Senator GN Kalya, Kapsabet (Nandi) to President Kenyatta, 21 May 1966.

52 Interview with Simon Limo, Leseru, 27 Nov. 2012.

53 Interview with Christopher Lelelilan, Leseru, 26 Nov. 2012.

54 KNA KA/6/19, letter from citizens of Naivasha to the KANU district chairman, 1967. Naivasha is located in Kenya’s eastern Rift Valley.

Events in Turbo proved the government's fears were well-founded. Turbo squatters' discontent over landlessness and ethnic inequalities propelled a united resistance to the afforestation program. Squatters protested by sabotaging the tree planting, but also by seeking the support of local and national politicians. In resisting the physical planting of trees and in building partnerships with the political elite, the squatters spurred intense government debate on the programs. Not only did word of squatter resilience and resistance circulate among government officials, but politicians lobbied on behalf of squatters in Nairobi. Central government actors became intensely divided over the program. Kalenjin politicians and officials in the Ministry of Lands and Settlement supported the squatters in the name of a welfare-oriented, redistributive state, while the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Ministry of Natural Resources supported the forestry program, arguing that it was in the new nation's interest to develop growth-oriented industry.

Beginning to crack under the pressure from both Nandi squatters and their elite representatives, the ministers of Natural Resources and Lands and Settlement publicly stated on 11 February 1966 that alternative land would be found for squatters residing in the Turbo afforestation scheme. Pro-industry officials had come to realize that they lacked the political capital to drive the squatters off the Turbo afforestation land without promises of resettlement. After this announcement, however, V.E. M. Burke, the deputy director of settlement, noted that 'it is quite clear that we cannot guarantee to accommodate all the . . . squatters elsewhere in normal settlement'.⁵⁵

'WE JUST REFUSED': SQUATTER RESISTANCE AND POSTCOLONIAL AUTHORITY

Conflicting visions of Kenya's economic and political future often translated into conflict at the site of development projects.⁵⁶ Nandi squatters in Turbo contested national policy on land and resource distribution by undermining government attempts to create new forests. In response, the central state – vulnerable to public outrage over land inequality, and to fractures among government ministries – made savvy but largely superficial compromises. The promise for alternative settlement represented the first of these compromises. A longer series of negotiations with local, national, and international actors would follow. The state coupled these negotiations with efforts to police squatter sabotage. These encounters became integral to reaffirming and consolidating central political authority. The Turbo conflict, and other development conflicts like it, reordered political relationships among different rural groups, politicians, government bodies, and international institutions.

Concern over rural mobilization played a part in government willingness to negotiate with squatters. P. Shiyukah, a Ministry of Lands and Settlement official, illustrated this

55 KNA BN/85/15, V. E. M. Burke, deputy director of settlement, 'Turbo forest station scheme', 25 Mar. 1966.

56 For some of the historical and anthropological literature on local contestations of colonial and postcolonial development, particularly environmental and agricultural projects, see D.M. Anderson, *Eroding the Commons: The Politics of Ecology in Baringo, Kenya 1890–1963* (Athens, OH, 2002); T.M. Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham, NC, 2007); P.E. Peters, *Dividing the Commons: Politics, Policy, and Culture in Botswana* (Charlottesville, VA, 1994); and R.A. Schroeder, *Shady Practices: Agroforestry and Gender Politics in the Gambia* (Berkeley, CA, 1999).

government anxiety when he laid out the potential repercussions of promising the squatters land elsewhere: ‘The trouble makers might wish to attack the Government on the grounds that perhaps the land they have been offered is poor agriculturally and also is far away from area “B” of Turbo, and therefore would say NO! to the suggestion.’⁵⁷ Minister Angaine, of Lands and Settlement, expressed similar concern: ‘Squatters have also refused to move off the land; to attempt to clear these people from the land by force might well create a considerable security problem.’⁵⁸ The longstanding apprehension about landlessness fueling rural protest kept government actors from employing force, which they worried might incite greater rebellion.

Government plans to redress the situation instead depended on the compliance of squatters, an improbable policy presumption. The Turbo afforestation advisory committee noted as late as 1973 the total ineffectiveness of squatter evictions.⁵⁹ Squatters simply did not leave voluntarily after being evicted. Other government solutions to the squatter problem ranged from guarding the trees to raiding livestock in an attempt to compel squatters to move away from the area. Some officials suggested less aggressive solutions, such as holding *baraza* (public meetings) to explain the situation and gain squatters’ cooperation.⁶⁰ Eventually, the government decided on a mostly litigious strategy – fining, jailing, or serving court orders. This proved to be largely unsuccessful and required a great deal of time and money.⁶¹ Despite the difficulties and inefficiencies of this system, the government continued giving eviction notices to Turbo squatters all the way into 1977.⁶²

On occasion, government actors did hold *baraza* in an effort to gain squatter cooperation, but squatters also contested the government in these spaces. Daniel Kebeney Bitok remembered:

Baraza were called and we were asked why we were uprooting the trees, and we complained that it was another way of making the government realize that it wasn’t fair to plant trees and evict people who were squatting on the land. We thought that after the *wazungu* [Europeans, or whites] left, the land would be for us. And, the government was planting trees. Where were we going to live?⁶³

Bitok’s memories reveal how squatters articulated their opposition to the program, as well as the ineffectiveness of government responses.

57 KNA BN/85/15, letter from P. Shiyukah, ‘Re: your conf. 143/132’, 1 Apr. 1966.

58 KNA BN/85/15, memorandum from J.H. Angaine, ‘Turbo afforestation scheme area B: settlement of squatters’, 25 Oct. 1966.

59 KNA BA/6/29, ‘Turbo afforestation advisory committee minutes of the 9th meeting’, 2 Mar. 1973.

60 KNA DX/21/10/8, ‘Joint meeting of Nandi, Kakamega and Uasin Gishu district commissioners held at Osurungai’, 15 Sept. 1966.

61 KNA DX/21/10/9, letter from H. K. Ikenya, divisional forest officer, Turbo, to the superintendent of police, ‘Operational orders: Coopers Farm and Manzini Farm’, 15 Feb. 1972.

62 KNA DX/21/10/9, letter from J.M. Tiampati, district commissioner Kakamega, to the provincial commissioner, Western, ‘Squatters – E. A. Tanning Co.’, 9 Feb. 1977. The 1977 evictees were mostly former employees of East African Tanning and Extract Company, which sold its land to the government for afforestation in that year. The exact number of displaced employees was unknown, with estimates ranging between 152 and 600.

63 Interview with Daniel Kebeney Bitok.

Other squatters' memories support this narrative of government futility. Wilson Cheruyot Boit recalled:

I was planting maize, but when they [government officers] came, they started planting trees inside my maize by force. Some government officers spent days at my place supervising the tree planting. They had armed guards with them . . . I did not bother despite the armed guards being around. So, when they planted trees in one area, I shifted to another region and planted my maize there. They then would follow me and plant trees there, and I would in turn go to another area and plant my maize.⁶⁴

Boit added that after the government planted trees people would 'spoil them'.⁶⁵ Others recounted similar stories of evading government officers and disrupting the tree-planting program.

While land and ethnic competition were the broad fault lines along which squatter resistance ran, the particularities of the program also inspired squatter contestation. Most squatters recalled feeling disbelief that trees could ever be more important than people. Boit articulated a clear choice between the welfare of people versus trees: 'People continued to make noise by saying that they were dying of hunger and yet the government was busy planting trees instead of giving them land.'⁶⁶ Squatters tended to characterize the government as a sinister body for allowing its citizens to starve for the sake of planting trees. The presence of World Bank officials managing the project further galvanized squatter resistance. Some squatters believed that these officials represented a return to colonial rule. Boit remembered, '[w]e thought the *wazungu* were coming back.'⁶⁷

Squatters recounted, additionally, that they had no alternative but to contest the project, because its implementation would lead to their homelessness and landlessness. Simon Limo recalled that '[t]he residents of the land couldn't agree. If we give the whole land to plant trees, where will we live when we are squatters?'⁶⁸ Priscilla Murei gave a similar reasoning for squatter activism. 'People had courage, because they were many and they were in need of the *shamba* (farm).'⁶⁹ Christina Cherotich summed up this attitude when she pithily explained the communal reaction to the project: 'We just refused.'⁷⁰

Local and national leaders bolstered the Turbo resistance, supporting squatters directly on the ground. Politicians' involvement reveals how jockeying for power in a one-party state shaped the exercise of authority in local settings. Politicians built up popular support and political legitimacy not from their party associations, but from their personal – and visible – distribution of resources to citizens. When national figures entered into local development politics, it was often to the mutual benefit of the politicians and local groups. Politicians gained new clients by disbursing development aid; local communities gained access to resources. This was an arena characterized by a predominantly rural population, by intense ethnic competition for scarce resources, and by inter-ministerial disagreement

64 Interview with Wilson Cheruyot Boit, Sugoi, 10 Jan. 2013.

65 *Ibid.*

66 *Ibid.*

67 *Ibid.*

68 Interview with Simon Limo.

69 Interview with Priscilla Murei, Sugoi, 14 Jan. 2013.

70 Interview with Christina Cherotich, Tapsagoi, 12 Jan. 2013.

about development. In this context, different actors attempted to take advantage of the multiple nodes of power, most often by forming new political relationships. Turbo allows us to break down tired images of a central state opposed to a periphery and, instead, to focus on the complex and dense networks among Nairobi-based politicians, local officials, rural Kenyans, and transnational representatives.

Through these relationships—often forged at the site of development projects—these actors redefined political authority and political practice in the postcolony. Members of Parliament, for instance, easily took control from low-level officers on the ground, regardless of whether national policy supported the MPs' actions. A Turbo forest officer, C. B. Looman, recounted a visit by MP Burudi Nabwera to meet with fifty or sixty 'trespassers':

He [Nabwera] enquired about their [the trespassers'] welfare and was told that I am trying to remove them from this Estate and stop them cultivating *shambas*. He was also told that I am pulling down their houses. As a matter of fact, I had taken the majority of the men present to court charged with illegal cultivation in July, 1970. The Court Magistrate fined some of the men and ruled that all should leave the Estate as soon as they had finished harvesting their crops. Mr. Nabwera then visited a house, which had been pulled down by my headman, after the inhabitants ... had moved away to the Settlement Scheme.⁷¹

Looman's letter reveals how Nabwera attempted to assert his authority during their public encounter:

Mr. Nabwera instructed me to stop trying to move these people and allow them to cultivate on this estate. I told Mr. Nabwera that I was only carrying out my orders, but did not try to argue the point, as by this time a lot of people had collected ... and I was feeling rather embarrassed.⁷²

Nabwera reprimanded the officer to display his support, and concurrently, to signal the type of political contract he hoped to secure with the squatters.

Physical meetings of this sort—between political leaders and the rural poor—shaped rural notions of political authority. This was particularly true with regard to Jomo Kenyatta himself. In describing the story of their resistance, former Turbo squatters stressed the importance of traveling to see Kenyatta. In opposition to a sinister government, Kenyatta played a benevolent role in squatter imaginations for ultimately redressing government wrongs by creating a settlement scheme. Each informant recounted asking Kenyatta, 'Are you planting trees or are you planting people?' and a tenor of intimacy suffused almost all retellings of the story. Chepsiror arap Leleli remembered: 'We saw him [Kenyatta] and we sang with him.'⁷³ Michael Keter, like Leleli, imbued his version of the story with a sense of familiarity. Keter recounted overhearing a conversation between Kenyatta and the director of settlement, J. H. Angaine. As Keter retold it: 'Kenyatta said to him [Angaine], "These people who are coming here, where are the *shambas* they are complaining of?" Angaine replied, "The *shambas* are between Ndalat, Sergoit, and Sosiani." The president asked, "Are we going to plant trees or are we going to plant people?"

⁷¹ KNA BN/85/16, letter from C. B. Looman, forestal lands estate to the estates manager, Turbo, 'Re: Trespassers on forestal lands', 12 Jan. 1971.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Interview with Chepsiror arap Leleli, Tapsagoi, 12 Jan. 2013.

Angaine replied that it was better to plant people.⁷⁴ In these intimate retellings, squatters remembered the importance of Kenyatta's personal support.

Informants' emphasis on Kenyatta's role gives further insight into the imbrication of local, national, and international political spaces in the early postcolonial world.⁷⁵ The contestation of Turbo afforestation reveals how individuals and groups gained access to, conceptualized, and utilized power. Rural Kenyans imagined Kenyatta as the ultimate embodiment of the nation, known familiarly as *baba taifa* (father of the nation) and *mzee* (a respectful name for an elder). Many Kenyans credited Kenyatta both with bringing independence and giving out land.⁷⁶ David Tororei recounted, for example, that Kenyatta led Mau Mau, and fought for independence.⁷⁷ More commonly, Uasin Gishu residents emphasized Kenyatta's role in land resettlement. As Jamin Maneno Kihinga put it: 'The one who gave us land was the one who we saw to be the *serikali* (government). Kenyatta was the one who assisted us to get land.'⁷⁸ Simon Limo agreed: 'Mostly Kenyatta did not make any mistakes. The farms we are in now, we were helped by the late Kenyatta ... He gave us the farms.'⁷⁹ Turbo residents not only recounted their personal conversation with Kenyatta, but remembered that moment in particular as a turning point. As Ruth Jepng'eno Kipkurui said, 'Kenyatta agreed and we got settlement.'⁸⁰

Kenyans throughout the country believed in, and often experienced, the power of bringing a grievance directly to Kenyatta.⁸¹ The Kenya National Archives hold countless petitions penned to the president, such as the one Kericho township residents wrote in late 1972, pleading: 'We have written this letter to you for your assistance if possible as you are the eyes of our government.'⁸² These petitioners, like many others, had come to think of Kenyatta as a metaphorical and literal embodiment of the nation.

74 Interview with Michael Keter, Sugoi, 14 Jan. 2013.

75 Interviews were conducted in an uncertain political climate, ahead of the March 2013 elections. Rumors of a Kalenjin-Kikuyu political alliance began to emerge in November 2012, and the jubilee alliance—with Uhuru Kenyatta, a Kikuyu, as the presidential candidate and William Ruto, a Kalenjin, as the vice presidential candidate—was announced in December 2012. This contemporaneous political uncertainty, along with longer histories of post-election violence between Kikuyu and Kalenjin in the Rift Valley, might have shaped Kalenjin recollections of Kenyatta, the first Kikuyu president. The interviews illustrated, more clearly, though, a division between how those who remained landless and those who were resettled recounted Kenyatta. This will be discussed further below.

76 Kenyans often gave their president credit for the million-acre scheme, a program to transfer land from European settlers to Africans from 1962 to 1971. By the end of 1971, about 35,000 families had been settled at a cost of 30 million pounds, mostly financed through grants and loans from the United Kingdom and the World Bank. H. W. O. Okoth-Ogendo, *Tenants of the Crown: Evolution of Agrarian Law and Institutions in Kenya* (Nairobi, 1991), 158.

77 Interview with David Tororei, Sosiani, 3 Dec. 2012. This was a common conception, in spite of the complex relationship between both Mau Mau and independence, and between Kenyatta and Mau Mau.

78 Interview with Jamin Maneno Kihinga, Lumakanda, 8 Nov. 2012.

79 Interview with Simon Limo.

80 Interview with Ruth Jepng'eno Kipkurui, Tapsagoi, 12 Jan. 2013.

81 'Kenyatta's preferred highly personalized way of handling government business became the dominant model. Sitting in court in his private and official residences dotted around the country, the president hosted delegations from provinces and districts, listened to their grievances and issued decrees in response ... These visits steadily became highly regulated modes of interaction between citizens and their head of state.' Branch, *Kenya*, 72–3.

82 KNA KA/6/20, letter from Kericho township residents to Jomo Kenyatta, 13 Dec. 1972.

Even Kenyans from the once KADU-dominated areas of the Rift Valley came to imagine Kenyatta as the singular leader in the early independent years. Pauline Tum recounted that she did not vote for Kenyatta in the 1963 elections. She still came to believe that ‘Kenyatta was active. Whatever he was promising people they believed in.’⁸³ Her husband, Frederick Kemboi arap Tum Kiptulus, held similar ideas. ‘I liked Kenyatta . . . because I saw this person had a vision, so I had to follow him.’⁸⁴

Kenyatta’s emblematic role in the minds of the rural poor allowed him concrete presidential powers. In the Turbo case, he altered a World Bank-funded national development plan by making promises to Nandi squatter delegations. Kenyatta’s ability to pledge land to squatters without consulting the government illustrates his personalized authority. The president did not just support the squatters, though. He avidly backed the squatters and the paper mill, simultaneously. His actions there, too, illustrate the nature of his early presidency. A 1966 government memorandum on the paper factory noted that ‘years ago at Broderick Falls he [Kenyatta] pointed at the site and told the people that they would have the factory’.⁸⁵ Kenyatta’s power lay largely in his ability to make personal promises, to physically show a group of people where ‘their’ factory would be located, where their development would come from. It was this very mode of governance that further endowed Kenyatta with authority.

The events at Turbo tell us much about Kenyatta’s style of government but, simultaneously, they show the ways that citizens accessed the state directly through Kenyatta or through intermediaries that reached Kenyatta. The Turbo conflict illustrates how the rural poor created connections with the Office of the President, and – in doing so – how they shaped government decision-making and excluded the mid-level state bureaucrats obstructing their goals. Turbo reveals how local communities came together to reshape national development plans, very often through their resistance and their willingness to enter into patronage relationships with powerful political elites. Rural Kenyans proved themselves shrewd political actors, both in negotiating for development, and in their understanding of the workings of the postcolonial state.

Kenyatta’s pronouncements could change the course of policymaking, but these pronouncements did not always coincide with, or lead to, smooth and quick execution. After the president promised land to the Turbo squatters, the Kenyan government had difficulty instituting the proposed settlement, since it was unclear where to settle the Nandi and which squatters to choose.⁸⁶ The last-minute land settlement programs were not included in the development estimates, and no financial provisions were available to purchase land newly demarcated for settlement.⁸⁷ Kenyatta’s vague promises left officials and policymakers frantically trying to clean up the mess.

For Kenyatta, though, his promise to the squatters was more important than its execution. Kenyatta maintained his authority by inculcating an image of himself as the

83 Interview with Pauline Tum, Leseru, 22 Nov. 2012.

84 Interview with Frederick Kemboi arap Tum Kiptulus, Leseru, 22 Nov. 2012.

85 KNA AE/22/142, letter from K. S. N. Matiba, ‘The pulp and paper project’, 19 May 1966.

86 KNA BN/85/16, letter from J. K. arap Koitie, permanent secretary, Ministry of Lands and Settlement to J. N.

Michuki Esq., permanent secretary, the Treasury, ‘New settlement in the Turbo area’, 5 Jan. 1970.

87 *Ibid.*

‘giver of land’. So long as he could appease squatters by promising settlement and perpetuate his own cult of personality without wholly disrupting the forest and paper program, then he had achieved his goal. Kenyatta benefitted from the *ad hoc* governance he institutionalized.

‘WE NEVER FOUGHT THE GOVERNMENT LIKE THAT AGAIN’: TURBO’S RESOLUTION?

The earliest crash settlement scheme in Turbo comprised 20,572 acres, subdivided into 734 plots, each about 27 acres. Most of these plots were settled by the end of April 1969.⁸⁸ This was the first – and by far, the most quickly executed – of a series of settlement programs created after the president vowed land to squatter delegations.⁸⁹ As with his personal promises, Kenyatta used the official opening ceremonies of settlement schemes to impress upon Kenyans his centrality to land distribution. Settlement ceremonies represented an arena to augment the carefully curated image of Kenyatta as personal granter of land. The Minister of Lands and Settlement wrote a letter to Kenyatta after the establishment of the first Turbo settlement scheme, which illustrates this practice. ‘My officers and I, and indeed the settlers ... will be extremely grateful to see Your Excellency visit these schemes and personally present certificates to a few settlers. It will indicate to them the determination of your Government to press ahead with the urgent task of tackling landlessness.’⁹⁰

These schemes may have further confirmed Kenyatta’s individualized authority for new settlers, but they did not resolve the Turbo squatter problem. Nor, therefore, did they convert those who remained landless to Kenyatta’s personality cult. There had long been more squatters than land in Turbo, as was the case nationwide. While some Turbo squatters received land, many did not; many continue to squat up to this day. The effective consolidation of Kenyatta’s authority, then, also revealed potential vulnerabilities to his rule. One way the Kenyatta state attempted to protect itself from these vulnerabilities was by distributing resources to clients – both rural Kenyans and political elites – to maintain authority and silence dissent.⁹¹ Turbo Afforestation demonstrates the possibilities of the early post-colonial era, and the deeper meanings made of the fact that these possibilities only came to fruition for some Kenyans.⁹² The unequal distribution of resources and political voice had implications for how marginalized Kenyans understood independence and engaged, or

88 KNA BN/85/16, letter from Angaine to Kenyatta, 22 Apr. 1969.

89 Kenyatta’s *ad hoc* promises and the piecemeal acquisition of land for settlement and forest schemes – along with the ubiquitous confusion and contestation amongst the officials planning these programs – makes it difficult to estimate how many squatters in total were settled on Turbo land once planned for afforestation, or to estimate how many remained landless.

90 KNA BN/85/16, letter from Angaine to Kenyatta, 22 Apr. 1969.

91 In other instances, particularly with the leaders of the political opposition, the Kenyatta state used repression, intimidation, imprisonment, and violence.

92 F. Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge, 1996). Cooper illustrates the varied possibilities of independence, but emphasizes less the implications for so many of these possibilities remaining unfulfilled.

disengaged, as political actors in the future. It also had implications for the coalescing of a postcolonial political order revolving around patronage and clientelism.⁹³

Oral and archival evidence suggest that selection of settlers for squatter programs could be a corrupt business. Countless new families had moved into Turbo by the time settlement began, and it was impossible to discern ‘real’ squatters from those who had arrived later, or from the politically well-connected who had successfully jostled for handouts. Alfred Machayo, a former agriculture official, noted that ‘squatter’ settlement programs gave the government license to settle whomever they wanted. The government definition of a ‘squatter’ was vague, and it was difficult to prove whether alleged ‘squatters’ owned land elsewhere or how long they had lived in the area.⁹⁴ Squatter settlement provided an easy opening for disbursement to the clients of the Kenyatta state.

Turbo residents confirmed this in interviews. Wilson Cheruyot Boit asserted that settlement in Turbo ‘was done unfairly. Many people on the ground did not get land. But soon afterwards, the government brought people to take over the land. Those were *watu wakubwa* (big people), well connected to the government.’⁹⁵ Boit added that some of the ‘big people’ who came to Turbo for the squatter settlement schemes ‘sold their land and left. Yet others were farming and going back to Nairobi.’⁹⁶ These wealthy and absentee land owners settled as ‘squatters’ visibly epitomized the production of new inequality and injustice, and the workings of a patrimonial state.

Still, many former squatters did receive Turbo settlement plots, and their lives generally improved. But the new settlers, government officials, and politicians who had contested Turbo afforestation often quickly forgot those who were not so fortunate. The government had made a symbolic effort to conciliate the opposition to Turbo afforestation. Those who received land wanted little more. Jemosbei Kirwa Kili remembered, ‘[t]here were no other times we fought the government. We feared the government. There were men who were courageous enough to face the government, because they wanted to settle.’⁹⁷ Priscilla Murei echoed Kili saying, ‘We never fought the government like that again.’⁹⁸ The Turbo settlement schemes both deflated the momentum of the organized resistance and protected Kenyatta from culpability for residual landlessness.

Those who remained squatters formed a different relationship to the state than those settled. Squatters’ continued position of illegality fostered feelings of insecurity and fears of eviction. Because of these fears, many squatters – without the backing of an organized movement – felt they could not contest the state or make claims on the government for

93 This analysis departs from the literature on postcolonial patron-client relationships that has often drawn greater attention to the upper echelons of society, and has tended to focus on the precolonial and colonial foundations of patronage and the post-1970s period. See B. Berman, ‘Ethnicity, patronage and the African state: the politics of uncivil nationalism’, *African Affairs*, 97 (1998), 305–41; R. Joseph, *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria* (Cambridge, 1987); Lynch, *I Say*; and C. Young, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison, WI, 1985). Angelique Haugerud’s *The Culture of Politics in Modern Kenya* (Cambridge, 1995) is an exception to these trends.

94 Interview with Alfred Machayo, Chekalini, 1 Nov. 2012.

95 Interview with Wilson Cheruyot Boit.

96 *Ibid.*

97 Interview with Jemosbei Kirwa Kili, Tapsagoi, 12 Jan. 2013.

98 Interview with Priscilla Murei.

rights and resources. Squatter communities often lacked government services, such as schools and hospitals. Squatter livelihoods were continually at stake because they lacked property rights, nor did they have access to services that would give them greater security in the absence of land. Thus, squatters – similar to other marginalized groups – responded by forming alternative institutions to provide their own community safety nets. Because of their liminal and precarious position partially outside the state, squatters took up a much stronger rhetoric of early postcolonial disappointment than settlers, which they almost always connected to the injustices of unequal land distribution and development resources.

The Turbo case paralleled Kenyan postcolonial politics more broadly. In 1978, J.H.O. Omino, permanent secretary to the Ministry of Natural Resources, responded tellingly to a government survey:

Grabbing by a few individuals continues unabated with concomitant conspicuous consumption much to the frustration of the silent majority. Efforts must not only be made but must also be seen to be made by Government to make financial resources more easily and widely available as a necessary prerequisite for redressing the obvious imbalance that has been created.⁹⁹

The government disregarded Omino's advice. Rather, Turbo afforestation, and the consequent production of inequality and the purchasing of political loyalties, makes clear that the Kenyatta state preferred to make shallow concessions in an *ad hoc* manner. These concessions allowed the elite to continue to benefit disproportionately while still suppressing the rural unrest catalyzed by economic injustices.

CONCLUSION

By the time the contestation over the Turbo forestry program and the Pan African Paper Mills factory peaked, the politics of decolonization, development, and postcolonial state-making had long been entangled. The Turbo afforestation scheme vividly demonstrates this entanglement. Contestations over the planning and implementation of development projects – by the rural poor, by formal state actors, and by transnational representatives – influenced how new postcolonial citizens conceptualized their rights to state resources, how they imagined authority, and how they shaped policymaking.

The outcomes of these contestations over development were ambiguous. This was a paradoxical context in which squatter intransigence could force change to a World Bank-funded program, but also one in which it took the personal authority of the president to assent to this modification. The state's inability to deal with squatters, and its concern about the political implications of removing them, gave squatters – who might have been peripheral actors in other circumstances – the ability to force major alterations on an international development program. At the same time, state disunity helped empower Kenyatta as the face of the nation and allowed him to make personal promises to the public in the absence of broader state clarity. These state divisions, however, slowed the implementation

⁹⁹ KNA ACW/1/425, letter from J.H.O. Omino, permanent secretary Ministry of Natural Resources, to Mr. L.O. Kibinge, permanent secretary Ministry of Finance and Planning, 'African socialism and its application to planning in Kenya, some thoughts', 4 Apr. 1978.

of Kenyatta's promises. This *ad hoc* mode of governance simultaneously provided openings and incentives for patronage-based political practice.

Development encounters shaped rural ideas about postcolonial authority. Through their successes and failures in negotiating for development, the rural poor made decisions about how to engage as political actors. In the Turbo afforestation case, squatters saw both the extent and limitations of their power to resist a development program, and they formed new political relationships to access development resources. These experiences produced new political loyalties and conceptions of authority. By examining both the heated negotiations over this contested development program and the eventual outcomes, this article has brought to light one episode in a larger set of processes through which postcolonial political subjectivities and political imaginaries materialized.