Settlement patterns and rural development: a human geographical study of the Kaonde, Kasempa District, Zambia

Jaeger, D.

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INTRODUCTION

'A man who hunts for honey should not fear stings -
development means hard work' (Third National Development

It is the purpose of this study to analyse from a human
geographical viewpoint the way in which a loosely structured
society characterised by a fluid settlement pattern and
until recently living in a landscape little altered by human
occupation, has come to be permanently settled in a region
that manifests increasing spatial as well as economic
differentiation. The analysis aims moreover to contribute
to future rural development policy in the region concerned.

Much attention is generally given to the immense prob­lems of overpopulation, lack of employment opportunities,
and imbalanced distribution of resources in developing
countries. In extensive regions of Zambia, though, the
situation is one of a limited and dispersed population and
the presence of sufficient land resources of reasonable
potential. Development in these areas is characterised
therefore by its own brand of problems.

In an isolated area, like the Kasempa District where
an estimated 40,000 people live in a region of 40,000 km²,
the government faces a complicated task in introducing basic
services efficiently and in creating income opportunities.
Even more so, because the population has been acquainted for
centuries with hunting and shifting cultivation as a means
of subsistence and village sites were moved very frequently,
due to a complex set of factors.

Permanent settlement of villages and transition from
traditional modes of subsistence to modern farming systems
are seen as primary objectives for speeding up development
and attaining production for the market. To assess the validity and consequences of such a policy it is necessary that detailed research be done into the factors which determine the territorial mobility of the population as well as the relationship between settlement pattern and means of subsistence. Both concepts, territorial mobility and settlement pattern, belong typically to the field of human geography. Moreover, human geography in its applied form can fulfill an important synthesising function by illuminating processes of change in their regional context and by contributing to integrated regional planning approaches. In this respect the geographer must have half an eye to the past and a half to the future (Kay 1967a, 12).

In order to analyse the changes that have taken place over a longer period of time in the district and to contribute to the formulation of regional policy, the following research questions are central to this study:

1) Which factors have determined territorial mobility and settlement pattern in the past and continue to do so in the present?

2) What are the constraints or stimuli of these phenomena on the process of rural change?

3) In what way is rural development promoted by the government and what recommendations can be made for a regional planning policy?

In this study Kasempa District, with its administrative boundaries, is considered to be one region. In respect to both its fairly uniform physical environment and culturally homogeneous population the district forms a formal region.

The study consists of the following chapters:

Chapter 1, preceded by a short introduction on rural development in Zambia, gives a description of the district's physical environment followed by a discussion of traditional modes of subsistence and general aspects of the Kaonde society.

Chapter 2 deals with the pre-colonial migration of Kaonde clangroups and the factors influencing territorial mobility and organisation in the last centuries based on published oral traditions and on material I collected in the late
1960s and early 1970s. Special attention is given to the prominent role which clan structure and inter-clan relations played in the past and which it partly continues to play today.

Chapter 3 is a review of colonial history of the district and deals with changes in the settlement pattern up to the 1970s. Factors causing village relocations and individual mobility are assessed in more detail based on material collected in the Southeastern part of the District.

Chapter 4 evaluates government plans to regroup villages into resettlement areas; peoples' reactions to these plans are analysed on the basis of personal observation in the 1960s. From a more theoretical viewpoint possibilities for village concentration are assessed, taking ecological considerations into account.

Chapter 5 deals with the concentration of farmers into a number of farmers' settlement schemes in the 1970s as well as aspects of commercialisation. An enquiry, based on a structured list of questions and followed by an open interview was carried out among the farmers in 1978. Motives for settlement are evaluated as well as performance at the schemes in relation to a number of personal characteristics of the farmers. The chapter ends with recommendations for future policy at the schemes.

Chapter 6 analyses developments of a spontaneous character in a growth centre area near the Kasempa centre. Farmers were interviewed in this area in 1969 and in 1978. Changes over a period of ten years are discussed. In a separate appendix (XII) a number of short case studies are given on farmers and the developments at their farms.

The last chapter summarises spatial changes in the district with the help of geographical analyses and deals with an approach to regional planning, whereby the attainability of a basic needs policy is assessed.

Data collected which falls outside the scope of the various chapters are brought together in a number of appendices which can be useful for those interested in the history and geography of the population and district. An annotated bibliography has been added to facilitate further research.
Many recent studies on developing countries pay attention to the centre and periphery model and dependency theories. This approach is definitely applicable to a country like Zambia because of its geographical location and history as one of the world's largest producers of copper and because of the great internal imbalance between a central industrialised zone and extensive 'underdeveloped' rural areas. An approach stemming from these theories is certainly worthwhile, but it must be noted that relations of dependency and the rise of core and peripheral regions do not only exist on international or national levels but also at the regional level, as will be shown in this study. Studies deriving from the dependency theory devote much attention to exogenous factors leading to 'underdevelopment' and its perpetuation, while also emphasising the consequences of capitalist market mechanisms in the world economy. There is then a search for general solutions and worldwide strategies which might neutralise or alter dependency relations and alleviate situations of underdevelopment. Often it is not realised that just because of the interplay between exogenous and endogenous factors, there are no 'instant' solutions for development (Gilbert 1976, ix).

Particular attention will be given in this study to the endogenous factors, which under influence of external changes resulted in a continuous process of change in a region. Only through a detailed regional micro-analysis it is possible to delineate influential factors and to formulate modified strategies applicable to the specific circumstances in a region and the target population groups.

At present attention is being paid all over the world to rural development and to the situation of the poorest population groups. The World Bank (1975,3) describes rural development as 'a strategy designed to improve the economic and social life of the rural poor...it involves extending the benefits of development to small-scale farmers, tenants and the landless... Since rural development is intended to reduce poverty, it must be clearly designed to increase production and raise productivity ... It is concerned with the modernization and monetization of rural society and with
its transition from traditional isolation to integration with the national economy. The objectives of rural development, therefore, extend beyond any particular sector. They encompass improved productivity, increased employment and thus higher incomes for target groups ... as well as minimum acceptable levels of food, shelter, education, and health'.

Underlying this fairly comprehensive description there are still terms which raise questions as to what exactly one means by 'poor'; what are acceptable levels of 'basic needs' and what is meant by: 'development', and 'modernization'.

In the last chapter attention will be given to a strategy geared toward attaining basic needs norms. Here I would like to ask attention for terms such as development and modernization. These terms are used to refer to the present rapid process of change and are commonly placed as opposites to a term as 'traditional'.

Development then usually implies that it is 'good' for the society and its members. In this respect: 'better chances for survival, increase of income opportunities, creating possibilities for greater participation and self-development' are often mentioned as goals. In addition, attention is asked for development objectives such as 'a more equal distribution of income, power, and information' (Galjart 1978, 55). Modernization is a vague term hinting at 'the application of available scientific knowledge to all activities, all facets of life, in all aspects of the community' (Schoorl 1974, 18). It is clear that these concepts are relative and normative, whereby the objectives are often determined only by comparisons made with situations based on the intensive use of 'western' science and technology, as present in 'developed' regions.

The term 'traditional' is often used in the sense of little differentiated, static, isolated, technologically limited, etc. Nothing is less true. At the most, this is a matter of degree. So-called traditional societies often have very ingenious and ecologically balanced production and subsistence systems with a great variety of activities carried out within small social units, as well as complexly
organised kinship systems and religious structures. In the past the societies were also continuously subject to change and transformation through outside influences.

Use of the terms mentioned above therefore does not imply a value judgement.

Governmental policy of many African countries is directed at rapid modernization and, particularly with regard to rural areas, at increasing agricultural production. The attainability of this in the short term is often underestimated, and there is little thought given to dysfunctional side-effects. In some cases, even, the questionability of certain introduced innovations is immediately obvious.

On the other hand for national governments there is a considerable dilemma between the necessity of providing employment for and of feeding a fast growing population and the obvious slow process of transformation in rural areas. In striving to stimulate agricultural production and to provide an income for small farmers, a level of technology is often chosen which is not attainable in the short term and which is not in agreement with the social organisation of target groups. A too rapid transition to other production processes results in endangering opportunities that were existent in a more 'traditional' situation: such as a usually adequate and reasonably varied diet based on various subsistence activities and cultivation of foodcrops adapted to local conditions. The result is that neither an income nor an adequate diet is achieved; a problem confronting a growing number of African countries.

Also the consequences of a modernization policy directed at changes in the location of population, their settlement pattern and use of the natural environment need to be assessed when spatial planning interventions come to the fore.

Although processes of change in many respects seem to follow their own independent course, as is to a certain extent also visible in this study, and although the scope of government planning and interference is only limited, some direction may still be attempted. In that respect usually too little attention is given to framing development choices and weighing alternatives. Inhabitants are given little
opportunity to choose between development options through information and participation. Choices are usually not offered which do not coincide with what is generally understood under modernization and participation in the national economy. Options that are directed at continuing, adapting, and/or extending traditionally known systems and production processes are scarce and research aimed at this is practically non-existent. When it does occur it is a marginal phenomenon. In the final chapter I will deal with some development alternatives from the point of view of the geographer concerned with rural regional planning.