

**Peasants' Participation Under Kilimanjaro
Native Co-operative Union (KNCU) and Coffee Authority of Tanzania (CAT)**

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(1980)

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess the essence of popular participation by peasants and workers in decision-making in their areas of work. The chosen case study for analysis was the small holder coffee industry in Kilimanjaro region. Specifically, the study was on the extent of peasants' participation under the Kilimanjaro Native Co-operative Union (KNCU) and Coffee Authority of Tanzania (CAT). In particular, the concern was mainly on 'devolution' - the provision of participatory channels through which peasants could influence decisions affecting the small holder coffee industry.

The choice of the above study case and area was mainly prompted by the fact that coffee was then a prominent source of cash income for peasants in Kilimanjaro region. At the time when shortage of foreign exchange was creating severe economic hardship in Tanzania, it was evidently important to initiate a discussion on the future development of the major export crops.

Moreover, the then high rate of inflation meant that it was often the case that producer prices for the export crops had fallen in real terms, even though appearing to increase in money terms. This meant that real incomes to peasant earnings for certain cash crops had declined, thus, acting as a disincentive to productive effort when increased output was most needed.

The basic proposition behind this study was the hypothesis that most of the difficulties which had emerged in the production and marketing of export crops, coffee inclusive, could be attributed to the negative changes in the peasants' perception of their participation in the decisions affecting their production activities.

It was observed that the dissolution of the then co-operative marketing system and its replacement with CAT had resulted in a big decline in the institutional participation of small holder coffee producers in decisions affecting their welfare. This decline had, in turn, resulted

in the decline in the share of the producers in the proceeds for coffee sales. This would ultimately lead to a substantial decline in coffee production as peasants were now demoralized.

In spite of the problems of control with respect to unions (which were abolished in 1976) and societies, there seemed to be little doubt that from the viewpoint of peasants' participation, these institutions were a more effective instrument than the (then) contemporary institutional structures which had brought about the decline in popular participation.

The study, therefore, recommended that urgent consideration ought to be given to instituting channels which would ensure the peasants' popular participation in all matters concerned with the coffee industry within the existing structure of authority from village level upwards.