

One of the highlights of my trip was our time at Butiaba. During colonial times Butiaba was an important centre. Its port facilities served the lake's shipping trade and the town had one of the only road links between the lake and the plateau to the East. It was a stopover for the flying boats from Britain. In contrast regional trade along and across the lake is now minimal, the port and its buildings are in ruins and "Robert Coryndon", the steamer that served the lake communities, now lies a wreck at its moorings. Butiaba is now a fishing town populated by about ten thousand people, many of them refugees from Zaire across the lake. We camped three weeks there while we surveyed the lake shore and adjacent hinterland. The local people whom we employed live a harsh life. Apart from the lake, which in places is infested with bilharzia, their only source of water is a pump two kilometres outside the town. The climate is hot and dry and cannot support agriculture beyond a few sparse crops of cassava and cotton. Most food, apart from fish, must come from Biiso about 15 kilometres away. The women walk many kilometres to collect their wood fuel from a game reserve that runs along the base of the Rift escarpment. The most important transport for men is the bicycle, while women walk with loads on their heads and babies on their backs. Life in Butiaba is hard with little likelihood of attracting future development funds.

From Butiaba we travelled to Paraa on the banks of the Victoria Nile, the focal point of East African tourism during the colonial period and, after twenty years of stagnation, again attracting large numbers of foreigners. The river is home to hundreds of hippo and Murchison Falls National Park supports a wide range of African fauna.

I was surprised and pleased that I felt so comfortable in Africa. The people were friendly, though not oppressive. In Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe (we spent a week in Zimbabwe on our return trip to Australia) there is nearly always someone who can speak English, no matter where you go. There is often something familiar to an Australian in the landscape. The colour of the hills, the distance to the horizon and sometimes the recognition of an old friend in the shape of a gum tree. Perhaps there was also a feeling that I was in the heart of the motherland. I felt sure that this, my first trip to Africa, would not be not my last.

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TRACKING TSETSE (AND OTHER INSECT PESTS) WITH ICIPE IN KENYA

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Last year I made a journey back to the Lambwe Valley, in what used to be called the South Nyanza district in Western Kenya.* It is an area where tsetse fly has long been an obstacle to agricultural and livestock development, and the purpose of the visit was to see something of a tsetse eradication project established there by the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology, (ICIPE) whose headquarters are just outside Nairobi.*

Since the late nineteenth century the tsetse fly has been one of Africa's most destructive pests; a major vector for both human trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and the animal variety (nagana). Colonial governments from the turn of the century tried different strategies of tsetse control. In the early twentieth century in Uganda for example the colonial response was the mass evacuation of populations at risk. In the 1930s the colonial strategy shifted to clearing for permanent settlement, and from the 1940s chemical spraying took over; and it was this control strategy that the post-colonial state inherited. Neither bush clearing nor settlement nor chemical spraying "solved" the tsetse "problem" however, and the tsetse fly remains today one of the two major constraints on Africa's livestock industries (the other being ticks).¹ The costs of tsetse control moreover remain enormous. Chemical spraying besides often being ineffective in controlling the flies remains highly expensive and ecologically disastrous. These combined disadvantages, of cost and ecological impact, have constrained farmers and herders across Africa, and especially the poorest. ICIPE's tsetse project in Nyanza reflects two important challenges to the conventional mainstream approach to agricultural development that have emerged out of such problems: an increasing emphasis on the one hand on biological agents of pest control, and on the other on participatory and interdisciplinary research. It was to see something of their approach that I went back to the Lambwe Valley. To set the visit in context we need to know something about ICIPE itself.

ICIPE was founded in 1971 to carry out fundamental research in specific areas of insect science that would contribute to improved food security for small resource-poor farmers in Africa and elsewhere in the so-called "Third World". Kenyan entomologist Dr Thomas Odhiambo and the small group of African scientists with whom he initiated the proposal had no doubt of the need. They were dissatisfied with the dominant "transfer of technology paradigm" with its assumptions of the superiority of Western technologies and their appropriateness for Africa. Aware of the acute shortage of African scientists trained in Africa they wanted to strengthen African technological and scientific resources with an African-centred resource capacity located in Africa. They were primarily concerned with insect pests as a major constraint on African food production and as carriers of disease in

* The visit was made in April 1994. I am grateful to ICIPE for making it possible, especially to Mrs R A Odingo, Chief Planning Officer, Dr F Kiros and Dr J Ssenyonga and to Dr J V Reddy and the staff at Mbita Point Field Station who gave time to talk with me. This note was written soon after my visit but lack of space held it back until this issue.

¹ Colonial strategies suffered above all from a lack of understanding of the reasons for the spread of tsetse from the 1890s onwards. The story can be followed in John Ford's seminal study, *The Role of Trypanosomiasis in African Ecology*, Oxford: the Clarendon Press, 1971

a continent where the great majority of the population are small, resource-poor farmers, and where land and agriculture are essential for livelihoods and for survival. At that time Rachel Carson's controversial *Silent Spring* had already pushed the issue of chemical pesticides and environmental pollution to centre stage, and Odhiambo and his colleagues wanted to create the knowledge base for alternative biological control techniques that took the African environment into account. So ICIPE took on a "dual mandate" that related fundamental research to pest management technologies appropriate for small resource-poor African farmers; which means, as summed up by its staff today, techniques that are "socially acceptable, economically viable and environmentally sustainable for small resource-poor farmers".

Nearly twenty five years since it was established, the emphasis on biological agents of pest control remains the key to ICIPE's activities. Even more significant however has been the shift in research practice towards an interdisciplinary approach that has brought social scientists into the program. It is this emphasis on collaborative research between biological and social scientists that has given ICIPE its distinctive character in the international agricultural research community of which it is a part. Other research centres concerned with agricultural development also have sociologists on their staff but ICIPE has certainly gone furthest in institutionalising their role with the creation in 1988 of the Social Science Interface Research Unit (SSIRU).

As one of seven research support units, SSIRU is responsible for the provision first of social and economic data and second of a mechanism for interdisciplinary research and collaboration between social and biological scientists, extension agents, and farmers, working as a team in the "interface research" that has become a recognised characteristic of the "ICIPE approach". While fundamental research remains the essential basis for the search for biological agents of pest control, social scientists are recognised as an "essential component for the successful development and dissemination of appropriate IPM technologies". And one aspect of the ICIPE program of which ICIPE's scientists are justifiably proud is their search for successful collaborative research methodologies and dialogue between their natural and social scientists.

The sociological perspective was of course implicit in ICIPE's original definition of its public constituency (resource-poor, rural farming communities) which undoubtedly implied the need to focus on the social environment. Biologically-based pest management strategies moreover depend for their success on community acceptance far more than strategies using chemical agents of control. Thus if the strategies they developed were to be practicable and acceptable ICIPE's scientists had to understand the communities and households for whom they were intended, which meant a knowledge of social processes. Not surprisingly therefore the need to understand the farmers themselves and their "traditional knowledge base" became an issue as ICIPE began to produce technologies for pest control, for example the urine-bated tsetse trap. But ICIPE was also pushed by events and no doubt by donors concerned at the continuing food security crisis through the 1980s, the need to increase agricultural productivity, and growing criticism of the international agricultural research institutes for their failure to reverse these crises. The gap between "what science has to offer and the needs of typical West African small-scale farmers"² raised questions about the relationship between science and development; and

² Paul Richards, *Indigenous Agricultural Revolution*, London, 1985.

between natural science and social science; and about the transfer of technology paradigm which was insensitive to the complexity and diversity of the African environment and to its "risk-prone agriculture" on which the great majority of poor Africans depended. The development of ICIPE's interface research is thus best situated in the context of the larger challenge to the "technology transfer paradigm" and conventional agricultural research for their poor fit with "many of the conditions and needs of complex, diverse and risk-prone agriculture" that poor farmers faced. Thus as through the 1980s the "Farmer First" approach, which centred the process of agricultural research and technology innovation on the farmers themselves and on collaboration between farmers and scientists emerged, it was this "new world view in agriculture" to which ICIPE was trying essentially to respond.

Given the significance of the tsetse fly for agriculture and livestock development it is not surprising that tsetse was one of the main research areas that ICIPE took up at an early stage in the development of its program. In the early 1980s Mary Owagu, a Scientific Officer in the Centre's tsetse research program, demonstrated the advantages of using buffalo urine in the traps used as one method of capturing tsetse flies. From this there was developed a simple but highly effective trapping technology which was tried out - successfully - in the fly area in South Nyanza. The long term success of this "supertrap" depended however on its acceptance by the farmers and herders, beyond the experimental area where the traps had been set up. A trap strategy depends for its success ultimately on community participation: on the understanding of the technology amongst members of the community, and their willingness to use and maintain it. The biologists had developed the super trap with considerable herder participation, but now what was needed was the inclusion of the large local and agricultural community. In 1989 ICIPE employed a social scientist to work with Lambwe Valley researchers to achieve that participation: to provide an understanding of local, indigenous knowledge, and then to develop a community-based tsetse control program in which the local community would play the central role. Out of this emerged the Lambwe project which last year had been underway for three years, and which involved not only the social scientists but the tsetse ecologists, and cooperation with government veterinarians and agriculturalists; the aim being first the widespread dissemination of the trapping technology and second the establishment of an organisation for community management.

It was to see something of what this involved in practice that I went back to Nyanza. ICIPE's main field research station is at Mbita Point on the shores of Lake Victoria, and the tsetse project was coordinated by Dr Joseph Ssenyonga, one of the sociologists in SSIRU, from there. The major research work at Mbita Point is with the Crop Pests Research program, and the visit gave me the opportunity to talk with Dr Reddy, the Senior Officer in Charge, and other research and technical staff. The main purpose of the visit was however to travel down to Maguga, the Divisional Headquarters, where the Lambwe tsetse project was located and to talk with the people engaged in it.

By the time of my visit to Maguga much of the survey work for the project had been completed. Forty two farmers (selected by the local community) had been trained in the trap technology and this core group had then organised their own meetings, first to agree on a strategy to mobilise the local population in support of a trap program and then to carry it out. They had divided the tsetse control zone into fifteen blocks each with two to five villages, with whom they had then held meetings, to discuss the formation of local organisations to establish, manage, and fund, the necessary traps.

All this I learned from the thirty five members of the project (a third of them women) who met me at Maguga. The group included chairpersons and members of the block committees they have set up, but everyone participated in a lively, detailed discussion of the process whereby the project had developed and why. They had seen the success of the trap experiments. They remembered the failure of spraying in the early eighties when the fly had increased, and so they approached ICIPE for access to the traps; now they were mobilising community support.

They described in detail the new organisation; the division of the catchment area into its fifteen blocks, each with a committee; and their decision to require each homestead in the block to pay 150/- towards the costs (mainly of materials for the traps). And after a long and very lively discussion we adjourned to the bush area a couple of miles away where the fly collects, for a demonstration by two of the group of the making and setting up of a trap. The trap is simplicity itself, made from cotton cloth, with a minimum of equipment (a needle and thread, a stapler machine, and a pair of scissors). A technology over which these small farmers had control, and using local materials. No one listening to the discussion could fail to miss the enthusiasm, or the understanding of what was involved. And I understood why Joseph Ssenyonga and Dr Kiros (head of the SSIRU) and their colleagues see their work as related to empowerment.

It was too brief a visit to answer a whole lot of questions. There was no doubt of the participation of the people with whom I talked; nor of their understanding of the technology. I had a sense however that we were meeting with the "better off" farmers; and indeed the community survey carried out by the sociologists which remarked on the "community's reasonable economic capacity"³ had shown that the homesteads in the Lambwe Valley had relatively large herds. The SSIRU had not anticipated any difficulty in mobilising local resources for the program because it was a reasonably "rich" area. So the question of targeting the really poor still has to be tackled; not least in relation to empowerment. ICIPE probably has to add questions about inequality to its poverty focus. I wondered why there was no political scientist in the team. I also wondered about the "technology transfer", and how far the question of indigenous knowledge had been taken into account. The social scientists talked of interaction, but the entomologists and their colleagues had essentially taken the technology to the farmers. On the journey back to Mbita I found myself thinking as an historian, not least because of Jean Hay's excellent work on the economic history of Western Kenya. And back at Mbita Town, which is a thriving fish trade centre, with the fish traders coming from Kisumu and elsewhere to buy local fish, another paradox struck me. We had been visiting a project designed essentially to improve local livelihoods and food security. But there at Mbita Town two wonderful women fish traders from Kisumu were buying *omona*, highly nutritious, tiny little fish that form an important part of the local diet. To be sold to the manufacturers of chicken feed!

Nevertheless Lambwe reflects one successful outcome of ICIPE's approach: a very simple but highly effective technology for tsetse control that is sustainable, and has engaged the local community. The use of odour-baited NGU traps is now firmly established in tsetse control; and hopefully the philosophical underpinning that informs not just that project but ICIPE's larger "dual mandate".

³ *Annual Report, ICIPE, 1992, p.33*

WHAT IS MY NAME?

Ndiritu Muriithi

Increasingly, I find myself asking this question. Perhaps because for some, when I say Joseph they ask, 'is that your 'English' name or your real name?' Yet when I say 'Muriithi' to others, they demand 'What's your English name?' To some, an African has no business answering to a name like Joseph. Yet hate it as I may, it is my name. My birth certificate, my passport, my school certificate, my baptismal card - crucially my baptismal card, all say so. For others, they have no time to waste trying to roll their tongues to say Muriithi. To them, it is natural that I should make life easier for them by having a name they are familiar with.

I'm not exaggerating. Two months ago, intent on moving house, one of the people I phoned was a lady in Camperdown who was looking for someone to share house with. Our conversation ended thus:

'Well, do you think you want to come and have a look at the room? By the way I didn't quite get your name', she said.

'Muriithi', I replied.

'What is your English name?' she demanded.

'I don't have any!' I lied, annoyed that she made no effort whatsoever to come to terms with my Kikuyu name.

I was recently accused of using different names with different people. My accuser, a colleague of mine whose opinion I highly value, narrated how he, on several occasions, has met Kenyans in Sydney. On each occasion, he would ask them if they knew me - Joseph. When they looked baffled, he would add 'Joseph Muriithi, he's in UTS'.

'Ah', they would exclaim! you mean Ndiritu Muriithi. I didn't know his name was also Joseph'.

My accuser could not understand, he said, why I would introduce myself as Joseph to some, and as Ndiritu Muriithi to others. Cornered, I reminded him of a story he once told me. Working on a telemarketing job, his calls were met with indignation and anger. What? was the perennial response to his name until he started to introduce himself by an 'English' name adopted for the purpose of that job - Jacob.

These are not isolated incidents. To the contrary. I must know thirty or forty Africans in Sydney presently. Only two go by all African names. The rest of us have additives - Joseph, Lawrence, Peter, Patrick, Elkana, Eunice, Christine, Mona, Jackie, Catherine, Francis, James...

Recently a senior African manager on assignment in Sydney, took me and a friend for a drink at his golf club in North Sydney. Because my friend and I had been discussing this very issue for some time, we adamantly introduced ourselves by our family names. This