

ENGARUKA

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Dear Henry

Thankyou for both your letters of December (which arrived while I was in Zimbabwe) and all your kind comments and very useful observations.

I will pass on those concerning irrigation to Bill Adams in Cambridge (whose irrigation summary you read in the recent Azania). He was with me briefly in Sonjo in September and impressed by the continuity of the agricultural and irrigation system from the time of Gray's (not entirely clear or complete) description to the present (ujamaa impact notwithstanding). He is preparing an exploratory paper (for Africa?) with perhaps a little contribution from myself on the historical background to irrigation agriculture in the Rift Valley and from Tomasz Potkanski, a young anthropologist from Warsaw University, currently at Sussex, who spent some time at Samunge in 1985. We are hoping to do more there late this year and to attempt some more sophisticated measurements of the Engaruka channels, as the obvious follow-up to the recent Azania.

At Oldonyo Sambu (Kura) I think I can now see signs of older stone-constructed (Engaruka-type) irrigation canals and field divisions which, if confirmed, will close the gap, geographical as well as historical, between Engaruka and Sonjo. Following your observations, I suspect that the same holds at Sale.

I will pass also to Bill Adams the copy of the illustration (based on Thornton) from Kersten of the furrow and flume on Kilimanjaro. It looks not dissimilar to a recent 'improvement' built (with 'development' money) to cross back over the river at Kisangiro in Sonjo.

Bill will also appreciate your sketch and notes of the Kimwani lakeside cultivation. That, and the Botswana example, should fit somewhere into his classification system, subject though it is to constant adjustment and elaboration. I will photocopy your letter if I may.

I too have wondered about how to present Engaruka to the public and to tourists if that region is opened up further. For the more the number of people, the more the need for both education and conservation. The difficulty is that there is

nothing very spectacular at Engaruka to impress the passing visitor or tired tourist; it is, rather a place whose remains of ancient agriculture and settlement grow upon keen and intelligent visitors if they can afford a minimum or a three-day stop. But I agree that in time arrangements must be made for an established camp-ground and suitable antiquities officer who could show visitors and school groups to selected areas of fields and furrows and to one of the village sites on the escarpment.

The photograph of a fireplace in 1000 Years was lent by Hamo Sassoon, who excavated that particular site in 1964 or 66. (It had to be filled in. It is very difficult to leave excavations open for more than a year, after which both the baulks and the features spoil, as the Leakeys' experience at Hyrax Hill shows.) In 1982, when I was at Engaruka with Peter Robertshaw, we located another fireplace, but that example was less spectacular and poorly preserved.

Thanks also for your note of 1936 about the Engaruka-type remains below the Oljoto (Mto wa Simba) gorge north of Mto wa Mbu. I did see either that note or a digest of it some years ago. The remains I was able to observe at that site in 1971 were however somewhat reduced from those you have recorded. I imagine that increased agriculture and settlement have resulted in more destruction now, but I ought to visit the place again. (See Azania XIII, 1978, p.60-61.)

I have not come across anything I would call 'pit-dwellings', but I did spend a little time in 1963 looking at Iraqw homesteads and their varieties, being inspired by your papers and by the possibility (which Mary Leakey then supported) of a Sirikwa analogy. That last, we are all convinced now, is wrong, especially after the new excavation at Hyrax Hill (Site II) in 1985, which Mary came to see.

Yours sincerely

J.E.G. Sutton

Very best wishes for the year :
Hope to see you down next
in Amurka

