Unit 46

Kassen Hand-out 1:

Welcome to Kassen

*Disclaimer: the facts in this scenario are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance with actual facts is mere coincidence.*

#### THE FAN community in KASSEN

The Fan community, who speak a language called Fanese, includes about 300,000 people living in Kassen, a developing country with a population of about six million. Although Kassen was once rather poor, the economic situation in the country has improved somewhat due to the exploitation of oil and precious metal deposits in the south of the country. It has a democratic governance system with an elected president and a parliament. Kassen has four provinces, and some powers are devolved to the provincial level.

Although the Fan number about 5% of the population in the country as a whole, they are a substantial majority in the eastern province. The Fan community has always had a rather egalitarian traditional governance system with no specific leadership hierarchy. The president’s grandmother was from the Fan community, but only very few Fan hold high public office. Generally, they tend to see their community as rather separate from the rest of Kassen society, although younger people are more integrated.

Aside from a few small minority groups in the country, most of the rest of the Kassen population (about 80%) is a culturally rather homogenous group, called the Kassi. They speak the Kassen language, and migrated into the country well before the beginning of the colonial period. Discrimination on the basis of ethnic identity or other factors is prohibited in the Kassen constitution, except to redress past injustices.

Around 1950, most of the Fan community was still nomadic, taking their goats and camels across a wide range of territory in the region. Gradually members of the Fan community began to settle in small farming villages and to grow crops. When the borders of Kassen were drawn up at the end of the period of colonial occupation, the Kassen Fan community was separated from the remainder of the Fan, who currently number about 50,000 people, now living in a neighbouring state to the east of Kassen. Both these Fan groups still have similar cultural practices and retain some personal ties with each other (bolstered recently by the use of social media). Intermittent conflict between the countries in the border regions of the east has prevented regular contact between the two groups.

In the last twenty years, owing to prolonged drought, lack of work, conflict and the general trend towards urbanization in the country, many young and middle-aged people from the Kassen Fan community have migrated from the small farming villages in the rural hinterlands to the cities of southern Kassen, Kassini (the capital) and Amala (the main business centre). About one third of the Fan can now be found in peri-urban settlements on the outskirts of these cities. Their economic position is often precarious, and they are among the poorest migrants there. The peri-urban settlements have poor sanitation and drainage facilities.

#### the fanoko cheese makers of Kassen

There are many cheese makers among the Fan in Kassen, mainly in the eastern and southern provinces, who make what they call Fanoko cheese. In the neighbouring country, Fanoko making takes place in the rural western province only.

Fanoko cheeses are made using unpasteurized goat and camel milk strained through a cloth. The milk is mixed with a coagulating (thickening) ingredient and sesame seeds. More experienced cheese makers use a range of different seeds, dried fruit and nuts to add texture to the cheeses, but the flavour is achieved largely through the maturation process. City cheesemakers are less experienced and tend to use the traditional sesame seed mix for texture.

The cheese is matured for several months in cold to create a very strong taste. Although in nomadic groups, cool conditions were created for maturation by storing the cheese in ceramic pots wrapped in wet cloths, this was difficult when water was scarce. Since the Fan started settling in villages, some cheese makers started digging shallow holes to store the pots underground instead.

Camel milk does not coagulate easily. Making Fanoko cheese thus requires a special coagulating ingredient made from a plant. The plant, known as Goilama, can only be found to the east of Kassen and to the west of the neighbouring country (i.e. it is indigenous only to that area). The region where it can be found covers all the areas where Fan communities used to live, but not the city areas in the south of Kassen. Some people are concerned about increased demands that will be placed on the wild populations of the Goilama plant if production of Fanoko is stepped up.

The skill of Fanoko cheese making has been informally passed down from older cheese makers, mostly women, to those who assist them. Cheese making is a social activity among the women of the villages in the rural areas and among migrant groups (both men and women) in the peri-urban areas. Communal cheese making in the peri-urban areas allows Fan to reconnect with people from several nearby villages, and thus maintain their contacts with ‘home’. At present the cheese makers do not have any professional associations.

To most Fan today, eating the cheese (which traditionally only Fan people have enjoyed eating) provides a bond between Fan people in the rural areas and the cities, and in Kassen and the neighbouring country. They feel that it is an important part of their identity as a community, and it represents the bounty of the earth. The Fan believe in the health-giving properties of the cheese.

Fan particularly like to eat Fanoko cheese with flatbreads on their ‘Day of Bread’ (10 November each year) when they celebrate the mythical story of a Fan group who survived on bread and cheese for 60 days when the rains were late. Although not all Fan celebrate the ‘Day of Bread’ in the same way, people tend to make the time to join their extended families for the special holiday, even (and perhaps especially) in the informal peri-urban settlements where life is hard for most.

Although other people in Kassen have generally not eaten Fanoko cheese in the past, famously derided in the 1970s by a major Kassi literary figure as ‘the taste of goat dung rubbed on camel carcasses’, it has recently become a fashionable after-dinner snack in some smart cafés and restaurants of the cities. This has created significant demand for Fanoko cheese from wealthy young professionals in the city (‘yuppies’) who nowadays also like to nibble it at home and ask for new flavours (such as chili pepper).

Poor transport networks limit the supply of cheese from rural areas, so the demand has largely been met by the few Fan cheese makers in the peri-urban areas (numbering about 25 people) who mostly have to import their ingredients from the eastern region. As many young cheese makers who migrated to the south (many of whom are men who in the east had never thought of cheese making) now live far from the more experienced cheese makers, transmission of the skills to make the cheese is more at random than in the villages.

One of the problems facing Fan cheese makers in the peri-urban areas, aside from the availability of the Goilama plant, is the lack of good transport networks to access supplies of fresh goat and camel milk. Some have ended up using pasteurized cow’s milk, so the cheese is softer and tastes different. It does not have a strong taste after maturation, so some people add chili pepper instead.

One of the large cheese producers of the country, who already produces camembert, cheddar and gouda for local markets, is planning to set up a production line for Fanoko, using pasteurized cow’s milk and an artificial coagulating ingredient. Maturation will be done in a cooling room. In an interview with the local newspaper, the managing director of the company revealed that they had applied to register Fanoko as a trademark and would be using it to market the cheese.

#### Safeguarding fanoko cheese making as part of an inventorying process

A year ago, the Republic of Kassen ratified the Intangible Heritage Convention, and in government policies has promoted the idea that ICH safeguarding should contribute to sustainable development. The Ministry of Culture has been tasked with developing an inventory of ICH in the territory, and it has asked the University of Kassen to assist them in creating the inventory with community participation.

Through the inventorying consultations in the four provinces, the Fan community identified Fanoko making as part of their ICH; it also identified several threats and risks. The inventorying team has convened a meeting, including various community and group representatives, to discuss the inventorying of Fanoko cheese making, and to propose a draft safeguarding plan that can be taken back to the Fan community (including the cheese makers) for further reflection.

Other stakeholders have also been invited to the meeting, including business people and representatives from the Ministries of Trade and Industry, and Health. The Ministry of Health is, as one of its urgent priorities, improving the health situation and sanitary conditions for people living in the rapidly growing urban and peri-urban areas. Through its Ministry of Trade and Industry, the Kassen Government has also been promoting rural infrastructure development and support to small producers.

An official from the Trade and Industry Ministry responsible for advising municipalities and local communities on sustainable development options has been invited to the meeting. They have asked a Fan lawyer, who will be accompanied by a junior specialist in intellectual property matters, to attend as well.

At present, the intellectual property legislation in the country only covers conventional kinds of intellectual property protection, including patents, trademarks and geographical indications. No specific intellectual property protection is available for traditional knowledge or traditional cultural expressions.

At most USD 200,000 is available from government to support a safeguarding plan, apart from any infrastructural or diplomatic (peacebuilding) work that may be required.

#### Additional information for non-game version

The Fan community tends to eat Fanoko all year round, although it is also a special part of the Day of Bread menu. Some other people in Kassen want to include Fanoko on the inventory as a heritage of Kassen, which offends some Fan community members.

Fanoko cheese is currently made mainly in rural areas, but more city cheese makers want to set up production in peri-urban areas. It is easier to justify government projects in rural areas under the sustainable development budget, but one of the problems with putting infrastructure into the eastern provinces at the moment is that the area is experiencing some intermittent conflict on the border. Therefore some expenditure could be justified in peri-urban areas if channelled through a trade association of cheese makers.

Most Fan cheese makers are not happy about making the cheese with pasteurized milk or cow’s milk. Taste is important to Fan who make and eat Fanoko cheese; they prefer cheese makers to innovate using the subtle fruit, nut and seed combinations to add texture rather than adding strong flavours such as chili pepper that compete with the ripe maturation flavours.

The Ministry of Health is worried about the use of unpasteurized milk for making Fanoko, but they might be willing to allow it if the milk is transported using refrigerated trucks and inspected before use. Fanoko cheese makers are not opposed to establishing an association to protect their rights and lobby for more favourable conditions, but have not really thought much about it. They do not always use underground storage in the cheese maturation process, especially when the ground is marshy. The Ministry is concerned about the health implications of maturing Fanoko underground in the peri-urban settlements where the ground may be contaminated with sewerage.

A Fan cheese maker is making Fanoko with chili flavours from pasteurized cow’s milk and artificial coagulating agents, marketing the cheese as ‘rogue’ Fanoko for the yuppie market in the cities. A businessman in the city is planning to trademark Fanoko and establish a factory production line using the same methods. He has offered to help traditional Fanoko makers by sponsoring an annual fair in the city where they can come to sell their products and share recipes. He has some old refrigerated trucks that could be donated to the cheese makers, if they wish to collaborate on a trade fair.

Although anyone can learn to make Fanoko, Fanoko cheese makers are keen to explore ways of preventing people who are not making Fanoko cheese in the correct way from calling it ‘Fanoko’ and stealing their market. The facilitator can help your group discuss the implications of using different intellectual property protection strategies (certification mark, collective mark and/or indication of regional origin) to protect the use of the name Fanoko.