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Imperial Education and the Crisis of Political Leadership in Postcolonial Kenya.

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Abstract of the Dissertation

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This dissertation examines how imperial education contributed to the crisis of Kenya's postcolonial political leadership. It argues that the system of education inaugurated by the agents of European imperialism, having banished imaginative political leadership of pre-colonial African society and embedded itself as the superior alternative, fashioned African political elite who could not be relied upon to spearhead modernization of their societies. Instead, these elite became more adroit at preserving the same instruments of colonial state that had been used to subjugate Africans. The study reassesses our understanding of colonial education in the context of African colonialism, showing that the common perception that education occupied a binary role as a medium for both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects is untenable. The dissertation shows that colonial education was not divorced from the other apparatuses of the European imperialism.

Yet education was more than just a simple tool in the European imperial project. It was the central organ around which the embryonic modern state evolved. In this regard, education occupies several interrelated and dynamic locations throughout this study. One, it serves as the analytical prism through which the story of the broader political evolution of Kenya's modern state is told. The unfolding of this process, beginning from the eve of colonialism when the European missionaries set up their mission stations, the colonial state, to the eventual first postcolonial regime under the African elite, are all examined through this prism. In this narrative, education is also imagined as the arena where national consciousness was nurtured, ideological solidarities marshaled and racial domination constructed and challenged. On the one hand, it gave the colonized communities critical access to the trappings of the new modernity epitomized by the ability to read, write, and use western technology all which they used to assert themselves. On the other hand, the agents of European imperialism sought to legitimize their racial superiority and the very project of imperialism using education. The resultant struggles became negotiations for rights, privileges, and citizenship within a common space where both the colonized and the colonizer had the tools to legitimate their sectarian claims.

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List of Abbreviations

AASF—African-American Students Foundation

AIM—African Inland Mission

AWU—African Workers Union

CA—Colonialists' Association

CLO—Crown Land Ordinance

CMS—Church Missionary Society

CNC—Chief Native Commissioner

CO—Colonial Office

CSM—Church of Scotland Mission

DC—District Commissioner

EAA—East African Association

EAP—East Africa Protectorate

EATUC—East African Trade Union Congress

EDAR—Education Department Annual Report

KA—Kikuyu Association

KCA—Kikuyu Central Association

KADU—Kenya African Democratic Union

KANU—Kenya African National Union

KAU—Kenya African Union

KASU—Kenya African Study Union

KISA—Kikuyu Independent Schools Association

KLFA—Kenya Land and Freedom Army

KNG—Kenya New Group

KPU—Kenya Peoples' Union

LegCo—Legislative Council

LNC—Local Native Council(s)

NITD—Native Industrial Training Depot

PC—Provincial Commissioner

UCP—United Country Party

YKA—Young Kikuyu Association

Introduction.

“We have in this country an educational system geared to meet a colonial psychology under colonial atmosphere,” Thomas Joseph Mboya declared in the Legislative Council (LegCo) proceedings on July 21, 1961. This was at twilight of the colonial rule in Kenya. The new legislator, one of the first eight Africans elected after recent constitutional reforms had given Africans the right to elect their own representatives, continued, “That education has created a kind of educated person that, to a larger extent would fail to meet the new emotional, psychological and social problems that will arise after independence and nationhood.”¹ It was a bold confession, coming from a 30-year-old labor college graduate, himself a product of the same education system he was disparaging. Whether or not Mboya counted himself among the constituents of its inadequacy, his sentiments were relatable to thousands of Kenyans who were still being educated to reject their African heritage, venerate Europe, and strive to become ‘black Europeans’.² Mboya’s admission came as painful reminder to Africans that their education system was Eurocentric by design. With that reminder also came the opportunity that had eluded them for the seventy years they had lived under European colonial rule, to envision an educational system that served their own needs and aspirations.

The opportunity came at independence in 1963 when the Minister for Education, Mbiu Koinange, constituted the Kenya Education Commission with the directive “[t]o survey the

¹ *Kenya Colony and Protectorate, Legislative Council Reports*. July 21, 1961 par. 2693.

² This term was primarily used to caricature the educated elite who took up what was seen as European mannerism. See Jack R. Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya: a Political Study*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1970; Carol Sicherman, “Ngugi’s colonial education: “The subversionof the African Mind,” *African Studies Review*, 38 (1995): pp. 11-41; F. B. Welbourn, *East African Christian*, London: Oxford University Press, 1965.

existing educational resources of Kenya and to advise the Government of Kenya in the formulation and implementation of national policies for education.”³ More explicitly, the task force was charged with, among other responsibilities, designing an education system with the capacity to “appropriately express the aspirations and cultural values of an independent African country” as well as “contribute to the unity of Kenya.”⁴ In itself, the act of constituting such a commission was evocative. It repudiated the racist policies promoted by the colonial state, many which were formulated single-mindedly to undermine Africans’ political and economic welfare, socio-cultural institutions and their very sense of self. Indeed, the commission’s report released two years later presented itself as an antithesis of the colonial policies. Among other sweeping reforms, it called for expansion of academic institutions, integration of schools, centralization of educational resource management and distribution, and standardization of the national academic curricula. In principle, the report advocated the educational opportunities and potentials that had been suppressed under the European colonial rule. Embraced by both the commission and a euphoric nation, was the instinctive confidence in education to advance the country in all possible fronts.

Generations of graduates later, the anticipated historic turnaround had yet to materialize. The challenges that bedeviled the country at independence remained stubbornly etched in the institutions of state and society.⁵ Many of them had intensified to chronic degrees. A Majority of

³ *Kenya Education Commission, 1964*. p. (i).

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ Godwin R. Murunga, “A Critical Look at Kenya’s Non-Transition to Democracy,” *Journal of Third World Studies*, XIX (2002): pp. 89-111.

Kenyan's lived in progressively worsening political and economic conditions, as their hopes for a prosperous future all but petered out.⁶ There was no real progress on the ground for which education reforms could claim credit. Education had not succeeded in promoting the socio-cultural innovation Kenyan's had hoped for. Certainly, it had not fostered the 'aspirations and cultural values of an independent African country' in any meaningful sense. The degree to which it had succeeded to eliminate 'colonial psychology' remained open to question. And with the frequent political violence, which increasingly assumed an ethnic character, to entrust 'the unity of Kenya' on education seemed like an irresponsible gamble.⁷ Years after independence, Kenya teetered on the throes of what comparative political analysts believed was a crisis of political leadership.⁸

This dissertation examines the historical role of imperial education on the making of the crisis of Kenya's postcolonial political leadership. It argues that while there were unquestionably multiple factors, the most systematic and longest enduring culprit was the system of western education inaugurated by the agents of European imperialism.⁹ The colonial education system

⁶ Arthur Hazlewood, *The Economy of Kenya: the Kenyatta era*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979.

⁷ Angelique Haugerud, *The Culture of Politics in Modern Kenya*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; Norman Miller and Rodger Yeager, *Kenya: the quest for prosperity*, Boulder: Westview Press, Inc., 1984.

⁸ Comparative political theorists have used different concepts to capture the degrees of crises of postcolonial African state; "soft state", "authoritarian", "predatory state", "failed state", etc. See, Robert Fatton Jr. *Predatory Rule; State and Civil Society in Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992; Michael Bratton, "Beyond the State: Civil Society and Association Life in Africa," *World Politics* 41 (1989): pp. 407-430; John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild (Editors), *Africa in the World Politics: Reforming Political Order*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2009. This study contends, however, that these terms and the analysis from which they are derived from are problematic. They bear inherent assumption that either the colonial state was rational from the African point of view, or that the postcolonial state in Africa has failed to fit in neatly with the European system it is modeled after. For the argument against comparing the postcolonial African state with the colonial state, see Terence Ranger, "Postscript." In *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*. Edited by Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger. London: Zed Books Ltd., 1996.

intended to transform African political institutions to conform to the European imperial project. Guided by the principle that they were incompatible with their mission, the European empire builders sought to demolish these institutions and in their place, cultivate new ones that were beholden to European patrimony.¹⁰ A far cry from the loud protestations of Sir Charles Eliot¹¹ that his ilks were “not destroying any old or interesting system, but simply introducing order into blank, uninteresting, brutal barbarism,”¹² that process was meticulously executed to target the very fiber of the African society.¹³ Institutions which posed a challenge to European authority

⁹ Besides education, another critical factor that influenced how the political elite were produced was the proximity of African communities to the institutions of imperial rule in both geographical and relational sense. Communities who happened to live in areas of European interest and who therefore came into more significant contact with Europeans produced larger number of elite than communities found in the outlying districts. For instance, the Kikuyu who occupied the country’s central highlands coveted by European settler farmers were better positioned to benefit than the Borana and Turkana who lived in the north where the colonial state had only tangential economic and political interests. Similarly, families and individuals who showed open cordiality towards the agents of European imperialism were favored over those who did not. See Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974; Marshall S. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs and Politicians, 1918-1940*. Niwot: University of Colorado, 1990; David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: the Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

¹⁰ Benjamin N. Lawrence, et al. *Intermediaries, Interpreters, and Clerks: African Employees in the Making of Colonial Africa*, Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2006; Colin Reed, *Pastors, partners, and paternalists: African church leaders and western missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850-1900*. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1997; Robert Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*, London: Heinemann, 1970.

¹¹ Eliot considered himself the progenitor of the white settlement in Kenya. As the first commissioner of the East African Protectorate, as the country was then called, he went to great pain to personally advertize the colony for Europeans’ migration arguing that only with a significant white population could Kenya become a true ‘White Man’s Country.’ Sir Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*, (Third Impression), London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966.

¹² Quoted in Elspeth Huxley, *White Man’s Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*, London: Ghatto and Windus Ltd., 1935. p. 81.

¹³ I make no claim that the African societies were homogenous. Communities were governed by positively dynamic institutions which emerged and declined and that were refined and readily modified to reflect the changing societal needs, demands and aspirations. For the most part of this dissertation, I use the more homogenous term, ‘the African society’, for two reasons. One, it is in appreciation of the fundamental structures which were, to various degrees, replicated across communities, and two, it is my view that these communities went through fairly similar experiences in their respective contact with the European colonial powers. See for instance, Lucy Mair, *Primitive Government: a Study of Traditional Political Systems in Eastern Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press,

were ruthlessly dismantled. Those which were deemed to have potential for co-option were refashioned and incorporated into the ranks of the colonial state. And among decentralized communities, the colonial state sought to establish its own newfangled institutions. Having thus banished imaginative political leadership of pre-colonial African society and embedded itself as the superior alternative, the colonial education system facilitated production of a political class that was incapable of upholding, much less, advancing the basic aspirations of the African society. Instead, this class became more adroit at preserving the very instruments of colonial state that had been used to subjugate the Africans. Ultimately, the dissertation is an argument that the political elite nurtured through the colonial education lack the capacity to mediate political, economic and socio-cultural progress of the African society in postcolonial Kenya.

The dissertation demonstrates that the colonial system of education fashioned the educated African elite into a ham-fisted in-between class which, on the one hand was socialized to look down on the African society as backward, and therefore, came to assume the attitude and character similar to that of the European colonialists. And yet, on the other hand, this ‘middle class’ African graduates of colonial educational institutions could not, in all honesty, regard itself as ingenious a political class as its European counterpart.¹⁴ It was a middle-men (or comprador) class, comparable to the European middle class only in its habits of consumption and, undoubtedly, material accumulation.¹⁵ An ‘auxiliary bourgeoisie’ is the term political scientist,

1962; Terence Ranger, “The Invention of Tradition in Colonial Africa.” In *The Invention of Tradition*. Edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

¹⁴ Patrick Chabal, “The African Crisis: Context and Interpretation.” In *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*. Edited by Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger, London: Zed Books Ltd., 1996.

Colin Leys, coined for this class, both to distinguish it from the European national bourgeoisie, and to emphasize the fact that it was not an independently standing class but rather, was in firm alliance with foreign capital.¹⁶ As Fanon remarkably predicted on the eve of independence for most African countries,

The national bourgeoisie [in the postcolonial societies] will be quite content with the role of the Western bourgeoisie's business agent, and it will play its part without any complexes in a most dignified manner. But this same lucrative role, this cheap-jack's function, this meanness of outlook and this absence of ambition symbolise the incapability of the national middle-class to fulfill its historic role of bourgeoisie. Here, the dynamic pioneer aspect, the characteristic of the inventor and the discoverer of new worlds which are found in all national bourgeoisies are lamentably lacking.¹⁷

Indeed, this class lacked imagination to the degree that, upon coming to power at independence, it continued to look up to Europe for economic models, political paradigms and legitimacy, and social and cultural finesse. Thus, during the crucial formative years of the modern state in Kenya, colonial education presided over the transformation of the African political leadership from the vigilant accommodator of the pre-colonial era, to a gullible receptor of European ideological and material production.

Herein lay the foundation of the crisis of political leadership in postcolonial Kenya. A few short decades of colonialism had eroded the long-established personality of the African society, a personality that was embodied by lucidity, self-reliance, participatory democracy, and other astutely developed characters and attitudes, and in its place now stood a class-stratified,

¹⁵ Richard Sklar, "The Nature of Class Domination in Africa," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, 4 (1979): pp. 531-552.

¹⁶ Colin Leys, *Underdevelopment in Kenya: the political economy of neo-colonialism, 1964-1971*, London: Heinemann Ltd., 1975. p. 272.

¹⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963. p. 124.

authoritarian, corrupt and highly dependent postcolonial system.¹⁸ At independence, Kenya stood as a classic postcolonial paradox. The nation bolstered on the one hand, a small national political class, beneficiary of colonial education who, therefore, controlled political and economic power, and on the other hand, the masses which, resolutely believing education held the magical key to economic progress, modernity and social mobility, would stop at nothing to acquire it. There was no patience, desire, and much less, competence to examine the efficacy of this system of education to the realities of Kenya's postcolonial society.

Education occupies several interrelated and dynamic positions throughout the narrative. Firstly, as already mentioned, it is a concrete instrument in the production of the African political elite. Beginning from the early African intermediaries who played instrumental roles in the founding of the colonial state in Kenya, to the nationalists who inherited the postcolonial state, these elite possessed education as the basic credential against which they were judged as dependable political actors and governmental bureaucrats. The flipside of this system was its production of a cadre of African nationalists who, even as they were drawn into the embrace of Eurocentric world order, demonstrated real agency and ingenuity to exploit the system for their own ends. These nationalists engaged in creative resistance, alliance-building, and relentless and often fierce negotiations to secure a foothold in a racist and highly intractable colonial regime. Secondly, education serves as the analytical prism through which the story of the larger process of creating the African elite is told. The unfolding of that process, from the early years when the

¹⁸ I would like to acknowledge here the view espoused by some scholars that pre-colonial political institutions of the African society were static and incapable of coping with change. Otiende, in particular, characterizes these institutions as rigid, narrow, and monopolized by conservative elders. J. E. Otiende, "Education since Early Times." In *Themes in Kenyan History*, edited by William R. Ochieng', Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya Ltd., 1990. This view is common within the imperial historiography attempting to justify the European colonial rule.

European missionaries set up their mission stations, through the colonial state, and eventually, to the first postcolonial government under the African elite, are all examined through this prism. Finally, education is the arena where the slow and painful struggle for the modern state occurred. On the one hand, it provided the colonized communities with critical access to the trappings of the new globalizing modernity, a specific modernity epitomized by the ability to read, write, and employ the instruments of western technology. On the other hand, the agents of European imperialism sought to legitimize their racial superiority and the very project of imperialism using much of these same instruments. The resultant struggles were negotiations for rights, privileges, and citizenship within a common space where, to varying degrees, both the colonized and the colonizer had at their disposal the tools to legitimate their sectarian claims. In spite of its ever-shifting meanings, education was able to provide the space and the medium to carry out such contestations.

Western Education in the African context: epistemic and methodological questions.

In its basic sense, education entails the production and organization of knowledge, and its transmission through time and space. Different cultural systems evolved their epistemic forms based on their distinctive experiences and the African and European societies are not different in this regard. The fundamental question to address here therefore is how the European system of knowledge came to impose itself upon an African society that already had its own preexisting

systems.¹⁹ This is a complex question that clearly demands a multifaceted approach. Still, we may attempt to explore it from a narrower methodological and epistemic perspective beginning our analysis from the moment when the two societies came into serious intellectual contact. In the mid nineteenth century, when the African society began to attract important European scholarship, most communities were pre-literate.²⁰ Knowledge was transmitted through dynamic oral traditions and performance systems; dynamic in that, the means and language of delivery were continuously revised and modified to accommodate new materials as circumstances necessitated. Peoples' histories were stored in collective memory and specialized raconteurs of sages, story-tellers, court poets and professional bards.²¹ Whereas this system seemed congenial and uncomplicated to its insiders, it proved to be a major hurdle for the European colonial scholars and chroniclers who first ventured to document African history using the 'western' tools and methods.

Trained narrowly to extract peoples' histories only from the written archival documents, the Europeans construed absence of such depository in the African context to mean nonexistence

¹⁹ This study is cautious of the suggestion that European imperialism in Africa became hegemonic. In the classic Gramscian concept, consensus is an important component of hegemony. Consensus was never a part of the imperial strategy in the African context. Instead, both the colonial and immediate postcolonial state preferred to assert authority through violence.

²⁰ This view recognizes the copious writings about Africa which preceded the imperial scholarship. There were Muslim scholars, both African and non African, whose writings date as far back as the fourteenth century. Of these, the clerics, scribes, and religious teachers wrote a significant body of narratives in Arabic. Other cultures such as the Amhara of North-Central Ethiopia evolved writing systems long before English became a written language. Similarly, earlier European traders dating back from the sixteenth century had written interesting travelogues about the African communities they encountered. See E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "From African Historiographies to an African Philosophy of History." In *Africanizing Knowledge*, Edited by Toyin Falola and Christian Jennings, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002.

²¹ Sorobea N. Bogonko, *A History of Modern Education in Kenya, 1895-1991*, Nairobi: Evans Brothers (Kenya) Ltd., 1992.

of Africans' history altogether. And as the imperialist ideologues in their ranks began to construct their own versions of African history—narratives which invariably began at the moment of writing, and incorporated the writers as main actors—not even the most liberal scholars could muster the tools to challenge the distortions and racist interpretations that crept therein.²² During this period, writing of Africans' history became a free-for-all endeavor which any literate person armed with a diary, a pen, and a good deal of imagination could write. Travelogues of traders journeying through an African country and letters written home by nostalgic spouses of European Christian missionaries in Africa became as authoritative documents as the meticulous studies conducted by imperial anthropologists.²³ Explorers like David Livingstone and Joseph Thomson, missionaries like Ludwig Krapf and Johnna Rebmann, empire builders and colonial administrators like Frederick Lugard, Charles Eliot, Fredrick Jackson, McGregor Ross, Philip Mitchell, novelists like Joseph Conrad and even adventurist soldiers and fortune seekers like Richard Meinerzthagen and Francis Hall, all became respected historians of the African communities they came upon in their sojourns.

By the mid-twentieth century, a small but nonetheless influential group of liberal 'Africanist' scholars committed to African studies had emerged, and so had Oral History become an accepted method of enquiry. These developments were a welcome gesture in a field plagued

²² Philip D. Curtin, "The Emergence of African History." In *The Horizon History of Africa*. Edited by Alvin M. Joseph Jr., New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., 1971.

²³ Alan Lester has specifically pointed out to such sources in the mid nineteenth century Eastern Cape colony. Alan Lester, *Imperial Networks: Creating Identities in Nineteenth-Century South Africa and Britain*, New York: Routledge, 2001.

with acute distortions and general scarcity of serious research.²⁴ Accordingly, today we possess ever-expanding deposits of documented narratives on the African society, and new frontiers of enquiry are constantly being explored.²⁵ That success has, however, exposed more fundamental challenges. In this day and age, Africanist scholars still wear themselves out trying to prove that African society is a valid producer of knowledge. This problem is not confined to Africa alone. Many societies labeled in the European lexicon as ‘non-western’ encounter a similar challenge.²⁶ The ‘western’* knowledge system has shown great reluctance to recognize, even less, accommodate other epistemic forms. It has underhandedly sequestered aspects of these other systems, modified them, and reproduced them as its own. Ultimately, the product projected boldly, and defended fiercely as western is, in fact, a conglomeration of ideas borrowed from diverse systems of knowledge, sometimes, with only a tangential Western input. Naoki Sakai explains this as a case of the West “always associating itself with those regions, communities and peoples that appear politically or economically superior to other regions, communities and

²⁴ See Jan Vansina, *Oral Traditions as History*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985; Paul Irwin, *Liptako Speaks: History from Oral Tradition in Africa*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981. For argument on standardization of oral traditions as a methodology of historical enquiry, see Yves Person, “Chronology and Oral Tradition.” In *Perspectives on the African Past*. Edited by Martin A. Klein and G. Wesley Johnson, Boston: Little Brown and Co., 1972.

²⁵ Interestingly, the most developed institutions on Oral Traditions research are located in the same societies which originated the document-oriented research. That these institutions are based in the presumably literary communities in the UK, USA, Germany, and Australia rather than communities which need them most, bespeak of the forbidding resources needed to establish them. Rather than historical necessity, availability of resources is the determinant factor on what communities can afford them. In Africa, only South Africa has come close to developing any such institute.

²⁶ Jan Vansina, “Oral Traditions as History in Africa,” *The Historian and the World of the Twentieth Century*, 100 (1971): pp. 442-468.

* We will shortly problematize this concept.

people.”²⁷ In my view, Sakai’s perspective misses the important point. More appropriately, I think, it is Europe that has undeservedly claimed ‘the West’ for itself, patented it, and peddled it to other societies as a uniquely European invention. Time and again, Europe has ingeniously conflated itself with ‘the West’ to the degree that any ‘western’ innovation is intrinsically assumed to have a European derivation.²⁸ The problem, Mair points out, is that “people very commonly confuse the technical superiority of a nation with the moral and intellectual superiority of the population who make it up.”²⁹ Scholarship, even the liberal, continues to play a part in keeping this confusion alive.³⁰ Whether this is done by design or whether it is an innocent mistake, is an open question.

Having thus appropriated the West as its own unique production, Europe has then proceeded to assign other societies and cultures their assumed distances from it. The further away a society is deemed to be, the less credible it is seen as a source of knowledge. Africa occupies the furthest relative distance from this constructed epicenter, a patently unfortunate position for the prejudice and treatment the continent and its people continue to be subjected to.³¹ To put it boldly, in the European eyes, the African society is not a valid producer of knowledge,

²⁷ As quoted in Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000, p. 3.

²⁸ See for instance, Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: the Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization*, New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987; Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization: Myth or Reality*, (First Edition), New York: L. Hill, 1974.

²⁹ Mair, *Primitive Government*, 1962, pp. 10-11. Also see Michael Adas, *Machines as the measure of men: science, technology and ideologies of western dominance*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ It is not within the scope of this chapter to explore those reasons. Suffice it to say however that, for the last few hundred years, Europe and its Diaspora have used this logic to relentlessly exploit Africa beginning from slavery to colonialism, through the Cold War era and to the present-day of neo-liberal reforms.

but rather, only a receptor of knowledge produced elsewhere. Aptly summed up by Ngugi wa Thiong'o, "the Eurocentric basis of seeing the world has often meant marginalising (sic) into the periphery that which comes from the rest of the world."³² The nuance of wa Thiong'o's statement is that there is such a thing as 'Eurocentric western education' that is distinctive from the more general 'western education.'

The pre-colonial African society possessed both the mechanisms and aptitude to absorb 'western education'—whether brought from Europe, Asia or elsewhere—without experiencing disorientation to say nothing of disruption.³³ Adaptability was much a part of that society's character. After all, it is its capacity to adapt and adjust accordingly that helped it withstand many natural and human-caused cataclysms.³⁴ What however, brought the real disruption to this society during its colonization, was the Eurocentric component that encumbered this system of education. However, for the Eurocentric scholarship to acknowledge this fact would amount to depicting colonialism as an act of gratuitous aggression, and would consequently draw attention to academia's role in it. That colonial regime did flagrantly conscript academia as an ally in its imperial project is no secret.³⁵ Ranger blames academics for having "distorted colonial social

³² Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Moving the Centre: the Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*, London: James Currey, 1993. p. 25.

³³ Ali. A. Mazrui, "Africa and Other Civilizations: Conquest and Counter-Conquest." In *Africa in the World Politics: Reforming Political Order*. Edited by John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild, Boulder: Westview Press, 2009.

³⁴ John Iliffe, *Africans: the History of a Continent*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

³⁵ It might be noted that a great deal of research on pre-colonial African society in Kenya was conducted during this period, mainly, through government-sponsored grants. Generous amounts of research and writing were done by colonial officials on leave, or by scholars on short-term loan to government research projects. Much of ethnographic research was conducted in this fashion.

science rendering it incapable of doing more than reflecting colonial constructions.”³⁶ It is the Eurocentric adaptation of western education, riddled with distortions, cultural invalidation, and other bigoted machinations, that aimed to destroy the African system of knowledge and to replace it with one which served the European imperial purpose. To revisit our original question, therefore, ‘western education’ alone could not have dislocated the African systems of knowledge production. Rather, the ‘Eurocentric’ component of it did.³⁷ That is not to say this dislocation was entirely gratuitous.³⁸ As we will see below, from the perspective of the European imperial agents, it was a necessary endeavor.

The context of the colonial contact: a background.

In order to understand why and how the Eurocentric system of western education became a critical tool to disorganize (or restructure) African societies, it is important to situate the African indigenous systems of education in a more political context. We have already seen that for most societies, collective knowledge was stored in a complex network of depositories and transmitted through dynamic oral traditions and performance. Scholars of immediate pre-colonial African societies have documented that education was organically ingrained in the particular

³⁶ Ranger, “Postscript,” 1996. p. 273.

³⁷ Having displaced the African systems of education, the Eurocentric system of western education reserved for itself the title of ‘education’ meaning that, any other system had to be qualified. For consistence, therefore, this study will simply use the term ‘education’ to connote the Eurocentric version of western education in the period under study.

³⁸ My views agree with Wallerstein’s general premise, that of all the arguments and justifications, the most important was the expansion of capitalism. Immanuel M. Wallerstein, *European Universalism: the rhetoric of power*, New York: New Press, 2006.

societies.³⁹ General education was given as a means of preparing the individual for his or her rightful place in society. It was expected to turn one into a well-rounded and respectable adult, responsible parent and dependable carrier of the society's age-old knowledge. Philosophically speaking, instruction was a lifelong process that began "at the time of birth" and ended "with death."⁴⁰ Specialized education, on the other hand, secured and advanced the important skills. Through this education, societal wellbeing was preserved and new frontiers in political, socio-cultural and technological innovation, trade, and sometimes territorial expansion, realized.⁴¹ The African society was beset with complexity. It was a society that cherished democracy, collective responsibility and a system of property communalism which also valued and strongly safeguarded the individual property rights within it;⁴² a society where the individual identity was derived from, and defined in terms of, the larger community with which one's destiny was inescapably bound; a society where individual responsibilities, duties and relationships extended beyond the contemporary to the antecedent and descendant members; a society which interweaved its universe fluently with its experiences; consequently, a society in which it was

³⁹ Dickson A. Mungazi, *Gathering under the Mango Tree; values in Traditional Culture in Africa*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc., 1996; Bill Bravman, *Making Ethnic Ways; Communities and their Transformation in Taita, Kenya, 1800-1950*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1998; Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya: the tribal life of the Gikuyu*, New York: Vintage Book, 1965.

⁴⁰ Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, 1965. p. 96.

⁴¹ Professions in medicine, hunting, art of war, animal husbandry, weather forecast, fortune-telling, among others, were all critical in this respect.

⁴² Among the Kikuyu, for instance, grazing lands (or ithaka) were clan-owned while the animals were individually owned. The same went for cultivation lands which were communal within which the individuals tilled patches and owned the yields they harvested. In varying degrees, these characteristics defined communities across Africa.

impossible to delineate the religious from the secular, educational from recreational, or the physical world from the metaphysical world.⁴³

But more important for our study is that education played a critical role in grooming of political responsibility. It guided the processes of inducting leadership, defined the parameters and mandates by which leaders governed, and when the time came, dictated the process by which responsibility of the political office was passed down from one generation to the next; generation, because most communities deemphasized the individual in favor of the communal. To hold a particular political office was not a sanction for one to exercise unmitigated power vested upon that office. Execution of duties and responsibilities was subject to constant scrutiny by stake holders. Communities were equipped with the means to safeguard against abuse of power. Even among those with semblance of chieftain and monarchical authorities, the leaders were subjected to much the same rules that governed their subjects. Governing, as Ogot has aptly pointed out, was “based on natural, everlasting, and inexorable laws which it was the duty of every ruler to maintain. This delicate social equilibrium had to be preserved at all costs, even if that meant condoning tyrannicide.”⁴⁴ As such, “every political set-up [was] based on certain spiritual values which, because they emanate[d] from God, [were] beyond any fallible and ignorant ruler to question.”⁴⁵ These values aimed to preserve the right relationships between forces, and the leader who infringed upon them had to give way for the sake of the moral well-

⁴³ L. S. B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, London: Academic Press Inc., 1977; Terence Ranger, *Voices from the Rocks: Nature, Culture and History in the Matopos Hills of Zimbabwe*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999; Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya*, 1965; Basil Davidson, *The African Genius*, Oxford: James Currey, 2004.

⁴⁴ Bethwell, A. Ogot, “From Chief to President,” *Transition*, 10 (1963). p. 26.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

being of his society. Among the Luo, for instance, “Any [ruler], no matter how important, going against the established order was asked to ‘open the calabash’-that is, to commit suicide.”⁴⁶

One’s failure to take responsibility for one’s transgressions invited the society’s intervention.⁴⁷

Overall, these political systems rose out of the communities’ practiced realities. They were born of honed experience, changing necessities, and commonsense. Everything in this society was intertwined efficiently in systems of meanings not readily discernible to outsiders.

European imperialists were clearly outsiders to this system. And yet, in spite of their ignorance, they came cloaked in stubborn conviction that Africans were savages, backward, morally doomed, and in desperate need of their intervention.⁴⁸ Intervention was couched in the discourse of ‘civilization’ and projected as acts of benefaction towards Africa’s ‘benighted’. Less acknowledged, yet perhaps most critical, is how neatly the Europeans’ enterprise to ‘civilize’ the Africans dovetailed with Europe’s own political and socioeconomic pragmatism.⁴⁹ Nineteenth century Europe was brimming with potentially explosive crises thanks to political revolutions and industrial evolution spanning between eighteenth through to mid nineteenth-century. These developments had brought upon the European society unpredicted consequences. Replacement of human labor by machines had improved and increased production making it necessary to employ the displaced labor elsewhere, establish sources for raw materials to feed the ever-

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, the case of *Orkoiyot* Kimnyole arap Turukat of the Nandi in, Regina S. Oboler, *Women, Power, and Economic Change: The Nandi of Kenya*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985; G. W. B. Huntingford, *The Nandi of Kenya: Tribal Control in a Pastoral Society*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953.

⁴⁸ J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years’ Residence in Eastern Africa*, Abingdon: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968.

⁴⁹ Wallenstein, *European Universalism*, 2006.

efficient industries, seek markets for finished products and reinvest the surplus capital earned thereof.⁵⁰ At the same time, improved quality of life and superior medical technology had triggered off record population growth in Europe that, kept at its rate, threatened to outgrow the available resources. To add to this potentially explosive mix, the influence of the French Revolution had fostered steady growth of a republican democracy in much of Western Europe which triggered a political decline of monarchical influence. With that decline, the elite who had relied upon monarchical political patronage and social network to advance their economic interests found it increasingly difficult to afford the high lives they were accustomed to in Europe. By the mid-nineteenth century, many members of this previously secure class were being forced to prospect for new investments abroad to supplement their declining material wealth at home.⁵¹

Moderately put, the proportion of crisis that Europe was facing by the mid-nineteenth century could not be assuaged short of establishing overseas dominions.⁵² Europeans' advent in Africa, therefore, had more to do with saving Europe from the looming upheaval than saving

⁵⁰ While material interpretations of European imperialism have largely been labeled Marxist, Curtin thinks J. A. Hobson is more worthy of that credit. Hobson argues that European capitalism and industrialization produced more funds for investment than European economy could absorb. Philip D. Curtin, *The World and the West: the European Challenge and the Overseas Response in the Age of Empire*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

⁵¹ Several biographies support the supposition that many late nineteenth-century explorers to East Africa came from, or were well connected to, the British aristocratic class. Such men as Sir Fredrick Jackson, Lord Cranworth, Sir William Mackinnon, Sir John Kirk, Sir Charles Eliot, Lord Fredrick Lugard, among others, came from such background. Adventurers like Captain Richard Meinertzhagen and Francis Hall were either patronized by aristocratic families. Hall, for instance, was a nephew of Lord Goschen, the Chancellor of Exchequer in Lord Salisbury's government. See, Eliot, 1966; Sir Fredrick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa*, London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1930; Richard Meinertzhagen, *Diary of a Black Sheep*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1964; Francis Hall, *Kikuyu District; Francis Hall's Letters from East Africa to his Father, Lt. Colonel Edward Hall, 1892-1901*, Edited by Paul, Sullivan. Dar es Salaam: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2006.

⁵² Curtin, *The World and the West*, 2000; A. Adu, Boahen, *African Perspectives on Colonialism*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987; Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, 1974.

Africans from eternal damnation. With its temperate highlands, dependable rainfall, rich agricultural soil and access to Indian Ocean, the gateway to the vast East and Central African hinterland, the East Africa Protectorate, as Kenya was then called, earned its place as a settler colony. In Kenya, the British colonialists found a home away from home. For them, however, to maintain a political, economic and socio-cultural advantage over the local inhabitants, they had to reorganize the existing structures of the society. Of all the tools they deployed for that project, education proved to be the most efficient.

Education, modern state, and the rise of the African political class: a historiography.

Scholarly interest in the production of the African political class through colonial education has been well sustained over the years. There are, for instance, historical narratives on the debut of the Christian mission societies and of educational institutions. There are also biographical accounts of individual missionaries, white settlers, colonial administrators, and the African nationalists, products of this era. Some studies take a more social anthropological slant to examine the impact of the mission societies on the African communities, the racial and cultural interactions between European and Africans, the social and political functions of mission schools, or the relationships between the state and mission societies and the white colonial settlers. Yet still, other studies examine nationalism, imperialism and the postcolonial state, from a standpoint of comparative politics and theories. Individually, all these studies capture different and illuminating perspectives in the evolution of modern state and the rise of the African political class. This study is, in part, an attempt to bridge these interdisciplinary conversations. It

reinterprets some of them, debates with others and introduces new perspectives on yet others. A great deal of its thematic coherence, ideological orientation and chronological organization are derived from these studies. But the present study goes beyond merely dialoging with the existing scholarship. It recreates the narrative of the evolution of the modern state in Kenya through education. By positioning education as the central organ around which the embryonic modern state evolved, it complicates the process through which the African political elite were produced but also captures that process more completely.

The centrality of the European Christian missionaries in establishing education institutions in Kenya and the larger British colonial territory is clear. Yet a good deal of studies continue to place them in an ambiguous in-between position as neither willing agents of British imperialism nor as fully qualified advocates for the colonized communities. This study uses Allen Lester's *Imperial networks: creating identities in nineteenth-century South Africa and Britain* to define the place of the missionaries in the Kenyan colonial context. Lester has shown that for all other roles they played the missionaries were, first and foremost, an organic appendage of British imperialism. Their evangelism, education curriculum, and indeed their very way of life, were not independent of European narcissistic and imperialistic prejudice. Nor was Christianity disconnected from European capitalism. In the early years before it gained a foothold in the African society, the missionaries relocated their converts to their stations where they founded new Christian communities. Here, the African converts were expected to start new 'civilized' Christian lives which meant being furnished with new European names, starting literary and religious studies, acquiring 'European' modes of dressing, using 'European' products of healthcare and hygiene, and learning the modern technology of agriculture from the

missionaries. Christianity was defined as much by the degree its African adherent was removed from the African society as by material resources one expended on European products. In other words, a true Christian lived by a very particular European material lifestyle.

Strayer and Colin Reed have similarly demonstrated that Christian missionaries were not less racist than the other agents of the European imperialism. In *Pastors, partners, and paternalists: African church leaders and western missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850-1900*, Reed exposes the contempt with which the white missionaries treated their African brethren. At the onset of colonial rule in Kenya, the white missionaries felt the Africans, by virtue of their race, were beholden to their patrimony, while the few African missionaries, who had the same level of education and much similar religious background, refused to submit to their authority. Strayer argues in *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*, that, the missionaries were horrified by the prospect of having Africans as their equals, since such a prospect “ran counter to racial condescension and stereotyping which was becoming increasingly characteristic of the European thought about Africans in general and educated Africans in particular.”⁵³ White Christian missionaries’ paternalism therefore, though presented as benefaction towards Africans, was more about preserving their self-image as a ‘superior race.’

The struggle for the School: the interaction of missionary, colonial government and nationalist enterprise in the development of formal education in Kenya by John Anderson has played a tremendous role in helping this dissertation to establish and define the key players. Its

⁵³ Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*, London: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd., 1978, p. 17.

first two chapters are built on his work, although, with the relevant modifications. For instance, while Anderson does not give much prominence to the political activism of the Kenyan Indians, I deem such activism indispensable to the immediate post-World War I anti-colonial nationalism. Of greater interest, in this regard, is how the Indian nationalists created political alliances with principally the educated African class of the period. Neither does Anderson treat the white settlers as a significant element in the development of African education. I, on the other hand, show that the settlers' point of view, heavily prejudiced by their interest in land and labor, made decisive role in particular educational policies. I demonstrate that in the early 1920s, there were more convergences than differences of views held by the settlers, the colonial administrative officials and the Christian missionaries in regard to African education.

In my effort to unravel the educational development specific to Kenya from that of the larger British Empire, D.A. Low's *Lion Rampant: Essays in the Study of British Imperialism* is instrumental. Though he writes in a wide geographical swath covering both India and Africa in a period of about 150 years, Low nevertheless provides me with a useful conceptual frame. Of particular interest here is how the colonial policy was manifested in the institutions of education especially in the interwar period. Low theorizes that the rising number of schools in the British Empire beginning the 1930s, the period he characterizes as the phase of "the Development Fever," was influenced by the recognition that the laissez-faire attitude was not yielding the desired results. Africans were not getting westernized through the "undirected natural evolution" as fast as the colonial policy makers had projected.⁵⁴ And so, no longer willing to trust the

⁵⁴ D. A. Low, *Lion Rampant: Essays in the Study of British Imperialism*, London: Frank Cass, 1973, p. 70.

custodians of these institutions, namely, the traditional authorities, the colonial state established more direct control. Consequently, this policy saw the rise of schools, infrastructure and other modern accessories. Low's theory is both useful and relevant to areas that had not witnessed substantial European settlements. But in colonies like Kenya, my dissertation argues, the policies deviated significantly from his theory. Unlike the Northern Nigeria protectorate prior to the 1930s, Kenya did not experience Indirect Rule. Here, the presence of colonial administration was felt at a very early stage. As early as 1902, the Crown Land Ordinance had begun to dispossess Africans of their lands and the emergent administration had started making labor and tax demands on them for infrastructural development, administration, and other purposes. Similarly, the invading class of white settlers had begun conscripting them in forced labor. All these events required a more direct involvement of the colonial state.

I have shown therefore that the 'fever' of education development in Kenya began much earlier than in some of the other British colonial territories. By the mid-1920s, the colonial state was already developing its own education institutions, among these, the Alliance High School. Yet even these institutions were only struggling to catch up with Africans' own educational efforts. The movement for African independent schools had begun in 1921 and peaked towards the end of the decade when Africans decisively broke away from the mission schools in throngs. At this juncture, my study interrogates the inclination in much of the existing scholarship to credit the advent of African independent schools to the contentious ban on female circumcision introduced in some mission schools in 1929. Among other scholars engaged here are Theodore Natsoulas' *The Kenya Government and the Kikuyu Independent Schools: from Attempted Control to Suppression, 1929-1952* and Jocelyn Murray's *The Church Missionary Society and*

the 'Female Circumcision' issue in Kenya, 1929-1932 both arguing that the ban marked a watershed in the burgeoning of independent schools. Their argument is circumstantial rather than substantial. My study, by tracing the origin of African independent schools movements to an earlier period, and attributing them to very specific causes, shows that the controversial ban has been overstated at the expense of other more important triggers in the growth of these schools.

The central focus of last two chapters of the dissertation is the rise of the African national elite. In this endeavor, the works of Jack R. Roelker's *Mathu of Kenya: a Political Study* and Benjamin Kipkorir's dissertation, *The Alliance High School and the Origins of the Kenya African Elite, 1926-1962* are perhaps most instructive. The two have documented how the colonial state sought to groom post-World War II African political elite. Kipkorir studies the Alliance High School as the main training ground of these elite while Roelker uses the political biography of Eliud Mathu, the first African nominated to the LegCo. Both Roelker and Kipkorir delineate the conservative elite like Mathu who were groomed in the immediate post-war environment from the militant younger generation of nationalists thrust to the national political leadership during the Mau Mau uprising. As Kenya moved ever closer to independence, Roelker contends, the older elite who advocated gradual and constitutionalist approach to independence lost their appeal in the African society. They were increasingly seen as agents for the colonial paternalism. The new generation, with its more radical demands upon the colonial state, was embraced as more progressive and therefore worthy of leadership.

This study maintains that since the difference emphasized here is one of style rather than substance, a more realistic divide should emphasize education. The politics of the elite with

higher education tended to be less disruptive to the general principle of colonial policy than were the politics of the lesser educated Africans. Rather than seek to destroy the instruments of colonial rule, the former group, seeing itself as the rightful inheritor of political power, sought to preserve them intact.⁵⁵ The latter group, of the lesser educated nationalists, saw things quite differently. It was from this group, consisting of trade unionists, industrial artisans and workers, unskilled laborers, and uneducated peasants that the Land and Freedom Army, popularly called Mau Mau, emerged. Mau Mau's goal was to disrupt the colonial institutions. And while it did not succeed in this end, the movement forced Britain to grant Kenya independence ahead of its own policy. On Mau Mau, David Anderson's, *Histories of the Hanged: the Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* provided me with a critical transition. While Anderson dwells on one of the mechanisms the colonial state employed to crush the rebellion, he also envisions an end of the empire—at least the legal aspect of it. As the war against Mau Mau freedom fighters raged, the colonial state doubled its effort to cultivate the African elite who could be trusted to protect the British interests in the event of independence. Anderson stops short of visualizing a postcolonial Kenya with the freshly minted African elite in charge.

Some scholars argue that Africans ingeniously exploited the emblems of European imperialism for their own end. According to Comaroff and Comaroff, European symbols were “seized by the Africans and, sometimes refashioned, put to symbolic and practical ends previously unforeseen, certainly unintended.”⁵⁶ Education was one such tool. Specific to Kenya,

⁵⁵ Fredrick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Carol Sicherman's *Ngugi's Colonial Education: "The Subversion... of the African Mind* argues that, while the colonial state developed definite education policies with the aim of producing a postcolonial ruling class that would remain dependent upon European patronage, those policies inadvertently produced other graduates who, like Ngugi, saw the scheme for what it was.⁵⁷ In them, Sicherman sees rebels who demurred to fit neatly into the 'neocolonial' role designed for them. The fundamental point Sicherman makes is that education therefore possesses laissez-faire disposition to serve both as a hegemonic and counter-hegemonic instrument. If education in Kenya was intended to subvert the African mind, she posits, "this subversion was itself later subverted by Ngugi and some other victims."⁵⁸ She credits much the same educational centers that bred colonial mentality in the African elite for this transformative potential. "At Alliance High School," she states of the earliest and most prominent post-primary education institution in Kenya where most postcolonial political leaders were schooled, "the combination of flexible ethnic pluralism, rigid and proselytizing Christianity, and colonial doctrinalism—along with high intellectual demands... gave [Ngugi's ilk the] intellectual tools with which [they] later attacked the colonial mind-controls."⁵⁹

It is reasonable to perceive colonial education in this positive light. After all, like Ngugi, Kenya's foremost activists of democracy, human rights, political responsibility, and the like,

⁵⁶ Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa* (Vol. 1). Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. p. 18.

⁵⁷ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, a leading African scholar, is a longstanding critic of the authoritarian regimes of Kenyatta and Moi which earned him a stint in detention. After his release in 1979, the Kenya government refused to reinstate him to his faculty position at the University of Nairobi. He fled the country in 1981.

⁵⁸ Sicherman, "Ngugi's colonial education," 1995. p. 12.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

have been university students, professors, lawyers, clergy, and other well educated elements of the society, all of them, products of this system. Indeed, looking further back, one finds perfect comparison in colonial Kenya, where anti-colonial nationalism was spearheaded by educated African nationalists, graduates of Christian mission schools. Liberal scholarship of Independent African schools has equally hailed these schools as models for subverting Eurocentric system of education to Africans' benefit. Ranger describes them as the 'alternative to the dominant'.⁶⁰ Education may be seen as liberal and objective. But thus far, Kenya's postcolonial experience has only shown its ingenuity thriving in opposition to the ruling political authority. In other words, this ingenuity has largely remained in the margins of the political power. It has not translated into any progressive policies from the core of power. For instance, the resourceful anti-colonial nationalists of 1940s and 1950s came to power armed with blueprints pledging economic progress, political accountability and democratic reforms in short spurts of five-year development plans.⁶¹ But upon settling in, these manifestos were swiftly discarded and the regimes turned out to be just as oppressive, corrupt, and condescending as the authoritarian colonial rulers who preceded them. Likewise, many of the progressive opposition activists of the 1960s to 1990s have found their way to power today and they too have shown little willingness to stray from the well-trod trail of their predecessors. The greatest problem, this dissertation shows, is that all these elite, through the generations, have been nurtured by the same educational system that not only desperately lacks the capacity to encourage innovation

⁶⁰Terence O. Ranger, "African attempts to control education in East and Central Africa 1900-1939," *Past and Present* 32 (1965): pp. 57-85.

⁶¹ In the case of Kenya, these ideas were articulated in a document titled; *African Socialism and its Application to Planning in Kenya*, popularly called the Session Paper Number 10.

necessary to advance the postcolonial African society, but more critically, one which aims to uphold the class system initiated under the colonial state.

This study therefore adopts the point of view that independence did not disrupt the fundamental instruments of the European empire building project. Those instruments were co-opted to serve the postcolonial political regime. Decolonization left intact a range of relationships—political, economic and socio-cultural—between the imperial powers and their former colonies, which prevented any genuine disengagement of the newly independent states from the firm grip of their former colonizers.⁶² In this regard, the study agrees with the views of Siba N’Zatioula Grovogui’s *Sovereigns, quasi sovereigns, and Africans: race and self-determination in international law*, that decolonization was meant “to allow for a transition from territorial claims to new forms of control built upon past philosophical foundations including political, legal and cultural assimilation of the colonized into the structures of the global system.”⁶³ That transition involved transfer of particular rights, responsibilities and freedoms from the colonizer to the colonized, but without undermining the essence of imperialism. On the whole, decolonization was intended to reform not eliminate the empire. The official imperial policy was guided by the attitude that after independence, the former colonizer would continue to influence policies of the former colony. The failure of Kenya’s postcolonial education system

⁶² See, for instance, Ritchie Owendale, “Macmillan and the Wind of Change in Africa, 1957-1960,” *The Historical Journal*, 38 (1995): pp. 455-477; Robert Pearce, “The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonization in Africa,” *African Affairs*, 83 (1984): pp. 77-93; John Flint, “Planned Decolonization and its Failure in British Africa,” *African Affairs*, 82 (1983): pp. 389-411.

⁶³ Siba N’Zatioula Grovogui, *Sovereigns, quasi sovereigns, and Africans: race and self-determination in international law*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. p. 185; R. D. Pearce, *The Turning Point in Africa: British Colonial Policy 1938-48*, London: Frank Cass, 1982.

suggests this attitude was never confronted at independence. The present study reassesses our understanding of colonial education in the context of African colonialism, showing that the prevalent perception that education occupied a binary role as a medium for both the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic projects is untenable. Education was not divorced from the other apparatuses of the European imperialism.

Chapter One.

African Education and the Colonial Politics in Kenya, 1900-1920s.¹

Contemporary scholarship generally acknowledges that the early years of European colonial rule in Kenya were characterized by absence of a policy for African education.² This in no way suggested official disinterest in the subject. For all the challenges and ambiguities it portended, absence of a definite policy inadvertently allowed the colonial officials to articulate their individual views and to promote preferential policies in relative freedom of pressure from London. It also allowed other stake holders to interrogate those positions, modulate them, and bring their own initiatives to the conversation. This chapter examines the development of African education in Kenya in the first two decades of colonial rule. It harnesses the various political and ideological positions held by key actors, the policies formulated thereof, and the bearing of those policies on the African society. During the period under examination, critical decisions pertaining to African education were dominated by the agents of European imperialism, notably; the Christian missionaries, the colonial administrators and the white settler farmers, all who

¹ Kenya's name changed several times between the establishment of colonial rule and independence. From 1895, British East Africa was used interchangeably with East Africa Protectorate. In 1920, the country was transformed to British Crown Colony. It became simply Kenya Colony until independence in 1963. This chapter uses the country's current name, Kenya, in the analysis while limiting the former names only to the sources and instances where their use will enhance the narrative.

² John Anderson, *The struggle for the School: the interaction of missionary, colonial government and nationalist enterprise in the development of formal education in Kenya*, Nairobi: Longman Kenya Limited, 1970; Sorobea N. Bogonko, *A History of Modern Education in Kenya, 1895-1991*, Nairobi: Evans Brothers (Kenya) Limited, 1992; Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*. London, UK. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1978; Edward H. Berman, "African response to Christian mission education." *African Studies Review*, 17 (1974): pp. 527-540; Elis M. Harik and Donald G. Schilling, *The politics of education in colonial Algeria and Kenya* Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1984.

regarded themselves unquestionably as the preordained bearers of ‘civilization’ to the African world. Yet, their sectarian viewpoints and interests complicated any collaborative effort in this enterprise.

On the one hand the settler farmers, envisioning Kenya narrowly as a ‘White Man’s Country’³, demanded Africans to be singularly mobilized to their service. They argued that giving Africans any education undermined their efficacy as servants and laborers. The colonial administrators on the other hand, while not opposed to the settlers’ view in principle, recognized the need for an educated African class to serve in the intermediary ranks of the colonial bureaucracy. But without the necessary educational institutions, the state could only hope to enlist partnership of the Christian missionaries in its enterprise. The missionary societies controlled education. Many had already established schools, other were in the process. Indeed, a few of their schools preceded the colonial state by a few decades. However, mission schools were established to serve religious rather than secular function, and since most missionaries regarded education strongly as a necessary handmaiden to evangelization, their ideas on how it should be structured differed significantly from the vision of the colonial officials.

Yet, the biggest challenge to the advancement of imperial educational policies was the targeted African constituency. Africans were not passive spectators of the debates going on about them. They possessed real agency and ingenuity to exploit the system for their own end even as

³ Sir Charles Eliot, Kenya’s third commissioner coined this term around 1901. It was later popularized by the chroniclers of Kenya’s white settlers. Charles Eliot, *The East Africa Protectorate*. (Third Impression) London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1966; Elspeth Huxley, *White Man’s Country: Lord Delamere and the Making of Kenya*, London: Ghatto and Windus Ltd., 1935; Dane K. Kennedy, *Islands of White: Settlers Society and Culture in Kenya and Southern Rhodesia, 1890—1939*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1987.

they were drawn into the embrace of a colonial order.⁴ They demanded the type of education that advanced their own interests, which, in effect, conflicted fundamentally with those of the European imperialists. By so doing, Africans allied their quest for education with their wider demands for full involvement in the affairs shaping their lives. The narrative is, thus, marked by undercurrents of creative resistance, coalition-building, and relentless and often fierce negotiations, as Africans struggled to secure a foothold within a racist and highly intransigent colonial regime.

Education and the principle of ‘White man’s country.’

If the colonial officials preceding Sir Charles Norton Eliot ever held any particular views on African education, there was none before him whose public rhetoric deviated so dramatically from his policies on the ground. One such occasion was during the prize-giving ceremony at Church Missionary Society (CMS) High School, Mombasa, in November 28, 1902. As the commissioner⁵ of the British East Africa Protectorate, Eliot was the highest ranked colonial official invited to the historic occasion. CMS High School held a symbolic place in the history of the young colony. Started in 1875, it was two decades older than the colonial state. It was the oldest school in Kenya, and the best in academic excellence. It had graduated generations of

⁴ See, for instance Jean Comaroff and John Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol. 1, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

⁵ From 1895-1905, Commissioner was the highest administrative official. The title changed to Governor after 1905 when administration of Kenya was moved from the Foreign Office to the Colonial Office.

African students, a few who had proceeded for further studies in India.⁶ What was more, CMS High School hosted a racially mixed students' body, and paraded its culture of integration as a mark of progress. In the words of its principal, W.E. Parker, it "held a unique position, having Swahili and Gujarati, Khoja and Bahora, Banyana, freemen, slaves, merchants and servants, sitting in the same room, and studying from the same books."⁷ Many in the Society's ranks considered the school a material expression of the philosophy articulated by CMS's honorary Secretary, Henry Venn. Venn stated in the Society's annals in 1861: "The object of the Church Missionary Society's Mission, viewed in their ecclesiastical aspect, is the development of Native Churches with a view to their ultimate settlement upon a self-supporting, self-governing and self-extending system. When this settlement has been effected the mission will have attained its euthanasia and the missionary agency can be transported to the regions beyond."⁸ The school intended to supply the neighboring community with a range of skills and professions: This to a society that already had African clergymen, teachers, magistrates and medical practitioners; fully ordained clergymen like Rev. W. H. Jones and medical practitioners like John Ainsworth.⁹

⁶ Bagonko, *History of Modern Education*, 1992.

⁷ 'C.M.S. High School, Mombasa: Distribution of Prizes', *African Standard*, 29 November, 1902. P. 7.

⁸ Quoted in Eugene Stock, *The History of the Church Missionary Society; its environment, its men and its work*. London, UK. Church Missionary Society, 1899, p. 83.

⁹ Jones was referred to in the Church Missionary Society (CMS) records as the "Native Pastor" and Ainsworth as "Doctor." See Proceedings of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East, 1894-95. London, CMS House. It is important to note here that there were two important figures named John Ainsworth. The Ainsworth referred to in the CMS records was a missionary. He was one of the few Africans involved in the founding of the Freretown CMS community. He died in 1904. The other Ainsworth, who will feature prominently in this chapter, was European. He arrived in the country mid-1890s as an official of Imperial British East African Company. When the company went bankrupt, he was taken on board by the colonial administration as a sub-commissioner of Ukamba. A series of promotions saw him first become the Provincial Commissioner of Nyeri then Nyanza and eventually the Chief Native Commissioner.

Parker reminded the graduating class of their unique role, incidentally, echoing Dr. Ludwig Krapf's philosophy. He told them they were now equipped to go out and establish parallel institutions around the protectorate. This was the exact idea of Dr. Krapf when he laid the school's foundation six decades earlier, hoping to train African converts who would be "employed as aids in the conversion of the Inner-African tribes."¹⁰ Therefore, on this morning of November 28, 1902, Parker saw, in front of him, yet another production of graduates being sent off to make Krapf's dream a reality.

There was nothing in the attitude of assembled guests, least of all the Protectorate commissioner, to suggest CMS's program was contrary to the official colonial policy in any way. And when he rose to speak, Sir Eliot made the Society feel that he was an ally in its ambitious endeavor. He lauded CMS High School for offering its students higher education calling it important especially for the African students. His administration was willing to take them on board. He even had their work cut out for them. One of the greatest difficulties his government was facing throughout the protectorate, he intimated, was the "variety of languages and the liability to misunderstandings which often times might involve serious consequences."¹¹ He saw intermediaries in these African "boys getting a working knowledge of a good conversational English and also of writing the different languages involved in Roman character as far as possible."¹² Though perhaps not prepared to translate his laudatory speech into immediate policy,

¹⁰ J. Lewis Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours during an Eighteen Years' Residence in Eastern Africa*, Abingdon: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1968, p. 133.

¹¹ 'Distribution of Prizes,' *African Standard*, 1902, p. 7.

¹² *Ibid.*

Eliot did visualize an image of literate African squads, crisscrossing the country, bringing peace and order in erstwhile cacophonous African languages, and generally, organizing them for easier colonial penetration. Where CMS saw families of evangelists, teachers, and other professionals engaged in spreading Christian gospel, Eliot saw a middle class of educated, English-speaking Africans, playing adjunctive role in the spread of European imperialism. Not surprisingly too, none raised an eyebrow over the school's racial integration.

Eliot's pronouncements were either inspired by spur of the moment, or they were designed to appease his hosts. His speech made little sense outside of CMS High School. Nothing in his overall policy indicated the African 'boys' he was lauding would be accommodated in the colonial bureaucracy in any positions higher than menial laborers. His most discernible policy at the time was aimed at clearing way for comprehensive European colonization, in essence, making his dream of creating Kenya as a white man's country a reality.¹³ Ever since his appointment two years earlier, Eliot had presided over several critical programs towards that goal. One was the transfer of Eastern Uganda Province to Kenya, which kept the administration of railway under one administration.¹⁴ This transfer was intended to ease transportation and administration, and consequently, enhance the security of European settlers in Kenya. Then, only a few months before his speech at CMS High School, Eliot presided over the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902, the legislation that set in motion systematic displacement of Africans from their lands to clear way for European settlements that became known as the White

¹³ Eliot actually referred to East Africa Protectorate as "practically an estate belonging to His Majesty's Government." Report by H.M. Commissioner on the East African Protectorate, 2 April, 1902, C.O. 533/42.

¹⁴ C. W. Hobley, *Kenya from a Chartered Company to Crown Colony: thirty years of Exploration and Administration in British East Africa*, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1970.

Highlands.¹⁵ Taken together these policies in no way aimed to create an African middle class. Rather, they uniformly undermined Africans' welfare, confining them to the minor ranks of the laboring class. Eliot was himself on record saying: "Our experience of native labour since we have occupied the Protectorate is encouraging; for the natives have of late shown a docility and aptitude which was hardly anticipated, and have proved that they can and will work not only in the fields, but also at various mechanical crafts in the railway workshops."¹⁶ His earlier speech, thus, seemed well out of step with the programs he was helping to promote. The rhetoric empathized with the Christian missionaries while his actions squarely supported white settlers.

Predictably, as he was making the speech, a deliberate policy was in the works to segregate the school. As a matter of policy, the whole protectorate was being gradually turned to a 'white man's country', its native inhabitants being relegated to the status of unskilled laborers for the white gentry-class destined to rule over them. Hosting of integrated schools was clearly not viewed as a contribution to that end. So formidable was this campaign that, two years after Sir Eliot's speech, W.E. Parker, who had since left his position as the school's principal, was being forced to justify CMS's integration policy that until recently had seemed so commonsensical. CMS High School, Parker argued, had been proud to admit "about five or six boys"¹⁷ of European descent to the thirty-strong, mixed-race students' body—which was by any measure a generous ratio—and that "the question of English and native sitting together had never been touched on." He stated, drawing his justification from Europe, "I am aware [integration] is

¹⁵ *Crown Land Ordinance*, No. 21 of 1902, E.A.P., Gazette.

¹⁶ Eliot, *East Africa Protectorate*, 1966, p. 173.

¹⁷ W. E. Parker, "The Question of Education," *The African Standard*, July 29, 1905. p. 5.

a vexed question but natives of Asia mix together in our Universities, Schools and Colleges (I have myself taught such in England) why not in the dependencies and colonies?”¹⁸

Creating a ‘white man’s country’ came at a price. As a young colony struggling to establish basic infrastructure and social institutions, Kenya lacked the capacity to support segregated facilities. Education was no exception to the rule. Schools were few and far between. Most of these were established for the sole purpose of ‘civilizing’ Africans. In fact, the whole protectorate boasted only one school that catered to European population. Then again, the hostilities existing between the mission societies meant that, the school, run by the Catholic Church, did not admit Protestant children. As a consequence, settler-friendly *East African Standard* blamed protestant missions for being “singularly remiss, not to say callous in the matter of the education of Protestant children.” The paper went on, its perceptible sarcasm directed specifically against the CMS, “apparently the only object of the Church Missionary Society’s representatives here have is to educate and Christianise the heathen—about the advisability of which a good many people are sceptical—and to leave the children of Protestant European parents to become uneducated heathens.”¹⁹ The few settlers who could afford it brought governesses from Europe to home-school their children before sending them to England for higher education.²⁰ The majority could only wait and hope the state would finally listen to their numerous petitions for government schools.

¹⁸ Ibid. (parenthesis original).

¹⁹ *East African Standard*, 22 April, 1905.

It was not until the end of 1905 that the governor finally appointed a “Committee of gentlemen, to look into the question of education in East Africa and, as to the possibilities of establishing schools for the benefit of settlers’ children.”²¹ The committee reported back within a year that cost of starting schools for Europeans was prohibiting. White settlements were thinly spread over a large part of the country, and the government was in no economic shape to bring education to every inhabited district. Consequently, the committee presented the government with three prospects, stating rhetorically: “Should we establish a boarding school at a convenient and healthy center such as Nairobi Hill, should we meet the requirements of the settlers by locating small schools in certain fixed places in the white settlement area, or should we institute a system of perambulating teachers?”²² With the question of bringing education to the children already ruled unfeasible, the government was left to explore the other two options. In the end, a government boarding school opened in Nairobi in 1907, admitting in its first year 26 boys and 22 girls.²³

Whereas the ‘Committee of Gentlemen’ had failed to give Europeans their desired schools, it articulated for the first time, the segregationist policy that would dominate education in the next half century. It classified the protectorate’s inhabitants in ethnic/racial terms, and while it was mandated exclusively to investigate educational provisions for Europeans, the

²⁰ See, for instance autobiographical accounts by L. S. B. Leakey, *White African: An Early Autobiography*. Cambridge: Schenkman, 1966; Elspeth Huxley, *The Mottled Lizard*. London: Ghatto & Windus, 1962; Beryl Markham, *West with the Night*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1942.

²¹ Editorial “Education,” *East African Standard*, 19 August, 1905.

²² *East Africa Protectorate Report on Education*, 1906. p. 3; Also see Editorial “Education,” *East African Standard*, 8 September, 1906.

²³ *East African Protectorate Annual Report*, 1907-8. Colonial Report No. 592. (Hereafter EAP Annual Report).

committee still hazarded to offer recommendations for all other communities, based on their assumed place in the prevailing colonial order. The resultant groups were summarized as; (a) Europeans, (b) Eurasians and Goanese, (c) Indians and Arabs, and finally, (d) Natives. Eurasians and Goanese, the committee observed, already had enough resources for their education. Members of this community were employed primarily by the colonial administration. As such, the committee intoned, they had access to railway transport to convey their children to their one school in Mombasa and the other in Nairobi. How a train that ran twice a week along a single railway line thinly cutting through the middle of the country was expected to shuttle children to schools everyday was to anybody's guess. The committee confessed that it had not obtained information on the number of school-going age children for Indians and Arabs, but in the same breath, hastened to add "The Hindoo community, in particular, is thriving and well to do, and should be able to assist materially in any scheme formulated for its welfare."²⁴ The government's responsibility was also effectively removed from this community. Arabs were given similarly indifferent attention, the argument being that they preferred schools with strong Koranic curriculum. "They will certainly not wish to send their younger children to a school in which Mohammedan religious lore is not taught."²⁵ Since the state did not intend to sponsor any religion-oriented schools, the Arabs too were left to their own devices.

In itself, the contention that the state could not support an Arab education for its religious emphasis was a curious one. Religious teaching constituted the core curriculum of Christian mission schools for Africans. Furthermore, the committee gave unqualified support for African

²⁴ *Report on Education*, 1906. p. 13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

education precisely for its religious bias. It stated in part; “For some time to come, education of the natives of the Protectorate must be mainly left in hands of those Missionary Societies who are devoting themselves to the religious and secular teaching of the black races.”²⁶ The Commissioner of Education expressed similar views while endorsing the report. He appended a supplementary memorandum to it in which he adroitly proposed to channel African education towards Europeans’ imperial project. He state, in part;

Religious and secular teaching, useful and necessary as it is, will not in itself, so far as the general mass of the natives is concerned, serve the purpose its promoters desire. The native must be given something more. He requires the means of earning his livelihood, of becoming a useful member of society and contributing his share to the general advancement of the country. This industrial education will give him... Then again, it must be remembered that while there will no doubt be some demand for educated natives to fill the minor posts in the Administration, in a country in an early stage of industrial development like East Africa there will be far greater need for artificers and skilled workmen.²⁷

Spelling out the provisos for African education was an easy task; mobilizing the vital resources to fulfill them was the difficult part. The government was seriously pressed for funds and could not pretend otherwise. The report was shelved away.

It was not until 1909, three years after the education report was released, that the colonial state finally found a way of implementing the proposed industrial training program. It initiated a partnership with the mission societies through the grant-in-aid scheme. The grant-in-aid scheme

²⁶ Ibid, p. 13. Around the time the committee released its report, African students of CMS School, Maseno went on rampage protesting the ‘wrong kind of education’ the missionaries had tried to introduce in their curriculum. As the school principal, J.J. Willis would report later, “The school was all but wrecked at the outset, the boys very strongly resenting the attempt to combine physical with mental training.” J. J. Willis, “The Response of the Africans.” *The Church Missionary Review*, 63 (1912): p. 88.

²⁷ ‘Memorandum by the Commissioner of Education, “Report on Education.” 8 September, 1906. In G. H. Mungeam, *Kenya: Select Historical Documents, 1884-1923*, East African Publishing House, 1978.

involved the state offering subsidies to mission schools on the condition that they modify their curriculums to accommodate practical subjects to train African ‘artificers and skilled workmen.’ Schools that were willing to cooperate in this enterprise were required to register with the newly created Education Department. This department was charged with standardizing the education curriculum and overseeing its implementation. However, like the central government, Education Department was strapped for resources and remained so for a long time.²⁸ To ensure compliance with the grant-in-aid program, the Assisted Schools, as the schools benefitting from government subsidy were called, were required to avail themselves for government inspection. The state, on the other hand, pledged to provide them with instructors and practical tools. In addition, their sponsoring mission societies were paid a bonus of £5 for every African student who passed his exams in practical subjects.²⁹

Vocational/Industrial Education and Politics of Land and Labor.

Whereas vocational/industrial education was primarily advocated by the colonial state, there existed consensus among the agents of European imperialism of its utility for Africans. However, this consensus was arrived at from different viewpoints, all of them informed and shaped by sectarian interests. For their part, the colonial officials believed in developing the country for maximum exploitation of resources for Europeans’ benefit. The officials also

²⁸ Though formally created in 1909, Education Department did not have a working secretariat until 1911 when J. R. Orr was appointed its first director. *EAP Annual Report*, 1911-12. No 751. Also see Donald Schilling, “The Dynamics of Educational Formation in Kenya, 1928-1934”, *History of Education Quarterly*, 20 (1980): 51-76.

²⁹ *EAP Annual Report*, 1912-13. No 791.

recognized that an effective administration was necessary for such undertaking. Yet in the circumstances where the ruling elite were heavily outnumbered by the subjected class, such administration would have been difficult without some degree of cooperation between the two. Moreover, the colonial officials knew perfectly well that the exploitative nature of colonialism would hinder such cooperation. They therefore settled for a carefully chosen intermediary class from the Africans.³⁰ In this respect, the government, while opening its first industrial school in Ukamba, appended a “separate department for sons of Chiefs... with a view to train them for service under administrative officers.”³¹ Education Director, J.R. Orr stated that some of these boys were already being engaged in such tasks as counting huts for tax purposes. Principally, “The idea is that the boys shall return to their villages and keep in communication by letter with the District Commissioner, reporting events as they happen from time to time.”³² This was only a small vetted class. The main focus of African education was to remain vocational, and the government was committed to support it as long as it went to improve the mental capacity of its beneficiaries.

³⁰ There were often various and complex factors that influenced individuals and communities to cooperate with the colonial state. For deeper analysis on the rise of Africa’s comprador class during colonialism, see Ali Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978; Jürgen Osterhammel, *Colonialism: a Theoretical Overview*, Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1997; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; Apollo O Nwauwa, *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism: Britain and University Education for Africans 1860—1960*, Providence: Rhode Island College, 1996; Amilcar Cabral, “National Liberation and Culture” (Paper presented at the Edwardo Mondlane Memorial Lecture under the Auspices of The Program of Eastern African Studies, Syracuse University, February 1970); Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963.

³¹ *EAP Annual Report*, 1911-12. No. 751, p. 57; Elizabeth Richards, “Fifty Years in Nyanza, 1906—1956: The History of C.M.S. and the Anglican Church in Nyanza Province, Kenya”, Pamphlet published for the Nyanza Jubilee Committee, Maseno, Kenya, 1956.

³² J. R. Orr, “System of Education in East Africa Protectorate”, Imperial Education Conference Paper, December 1912, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 249.

Christian missionaries' perspectives were the most complex and for the most part paradoxical. Most of them considered vocational education as integral to creating self-governing and self-sustaining African communities. Initially, only CMS had articulated this principle. In time, and with the Society's zealous persuasion, ninety percent of Protestant mission groups operating in the country had embraced it within the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1909, the inter-denominational United Missionary Conference in Maseno concluded with a resolution echoing Henry Venn's philosophy nearly verbatim, stating; "That this Conference regards the establishment, organization, and development of a self-governing self-supporting and self-extending native church as the ideal of our missionary work."³³ Drawing their rationale from the tenets of Christian work ethics, the missionaries believed that one's spiritual wellbeing was manifestly connected with one's labor for material comfort. As such, they could not see better success in their missions than to equip their converts with both. Accordingly, whenever their students were not busy receiving religious instruction, they were being encouraged to find equal sanctity and dignity in working with their hands. For instance, the female missionaries of the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) at Kikuyu station saw the testimony of their Christian work: "in the clean well-dressed children attending our school from well-kept Christian homes where the mothers—our old laundry girls—do the washing and sewing for their families, and send their little daughters out at an early age ready to start their specialized training where they themselves left off."³⁴ Similar programs were carried out at CSM Tumu Tumu station. Here, the

³³ 'United Missionary Conference at Maseno, January 4-8, 1909,' Programme and Resolutions, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*. p. 154; Report of the United Missionaries Conference, Nairobi. Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 155.

³⁴ Watson, *History of Work Among Women and Girls at Kikuyu*, Circa 1920, KNA DC/KBU/1/7/13.

missionaries initiated several agricultural experiments where they grew coffee and horticulture.³⁵ To the missionaries, being offered grant-in-aid to fund industrial and agricultural training with which they were already in agreement was a welcome blessing.³⁶ Only two years after the grant-in-aid program was launched, the head of CSM, Dr. John Arthur, proudly announced success in training; ten carpenters, seven masons, seven gardeners, and four hospital attendants it was training in its Kikuyu School, and another one carpenter, six masons and two hospital attendants at the Tumu Tumu School.³⁷

Yet, while some missions welcomed the grant-in-aid program readily and made provision for it in their curricula, others, to the disappointment of colonial officials, considered it to be an encroachment on their sphere. The Church Missionary Society (CMS) viewed the government-imposed courses as a disruption of its otherwise smooth-running curricula. In its first progress report after the program was introduced, CMS went to great length to commend other areas of its curriculum improvement such as teaching of language, opening of “evangelic schools” and training of “native pupil-teachers” (apprentice teachers). In one of its high schools, the report stated: “The syllabuses go up to and include all higher arithmetic, with algebra, book-keeping, and typewriting, English and English subject being thoroughly taught.”³⁸ Of the government-sanctioned courses, the report stated without much enthusiasm, “at some of these stations

³⁵ ‘Precis of Meeting held at Kyambu Station 25th & 26th April’, 1912. Political Record Book. KNA DC/KBU/3/4.

³⁶ For deeper analysis that connects European capitalism to Christian faith, see Robert W. Strayer, “The Dynamics of Mission Expansion: A Case Study from Kenya, 1875—1914”, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 6 (1973): pp 229-248.

³⁷ ‘Report by the Church of Scotland Mission to the Director of Education’, *EAP Annual Report*, 1911-12. No 751.

³⁸ ‘Report by the Church Missionary Society to the Director of Education’, *EAP Annual Report*, 1911-12. No 751.

industrial education is attempted, such as building, cultivating, and training in medical work.”³⁹
The report did little to hide the fact that the program was only justified by the funding the mission was getting.

Not all CMS missionaries, however, espoused such a liberal viewpoint. The conservatives in its ranks questioned the utility of academic training for Africans altogether, arguing that such education was detrimental to the student’s character. Among its other disadvantages, it made the African beneficiary undisciplined and ‘uppish’.⁴⁰ Many of the missionaries who espoused this position were disillusioned with Africans who, soon after they had acquired some literary education, abandoned manual labor at the missions for better employment opportunities in towns. As such, these missionaries argued for curriculum with less literary and more practical emphasis. Their position was perhaps best articulated by Thomas Buxton’s opinion in the *Church Missionary Society Review* which stated, “purely intellectual education is of questionable benefit to African natives: of greater importance is it to show them the dignity of labour and instill habits of industry.”⁴¹

The European settlers could not agree more, especially with the labor aspect of African training. Unlike the Christian missionaries, the settlers presented a more cohesive, consistent and conservative front. They perceived the African society through subjective lens aimed at

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Elis M. Harik and Donald G. Schilling, *The politics of education*, 1984.

⁴¹ Thomas F. Buxton, “Industrial Work in East Africa”, *Church Missionary Society Review*, LX, (January 1909): p. 9.

conquering and subjecting it.⁴² Their point of view on African education was therefore heavily influenced by their interest in land and labor. Nowhere in their psyche did African education feature, and yet, it was their exertion that influenced it most.⁴³ Here, let us briefly examine the settlers' overall attitude and how it affected Africans in particular and the established colonial order in general.

Even before the settlers' debut, the colonial state, under Sir Charles Eliot, had put in place critical policies to make the colony conducive for them. One of these measures was the institution of the Crown Land Ordinance of 1902, through which over four million acres of land was alienated from Africans' heartland to be used for European farming. The ordinance, borrowing directly from the Canadian homestead principle, allowed the applicant to take 160 acres, and having shown some developmental progress on it, could take up more land until one reached grand total of 640 acres, or two square kilometers. For freehold land, the ordinance made allowance of up to one-thousand acres. The Ordinance provided for creation of 'Native Reserves' through its article 31 stating that "Commissioner may grant leases of areas of land containing native villages or settlements without specifically excluding such villages or settlements; but land in actual occupation of natives at the date of the lease shall, so long as it is actually occupied by them, be deemed to be excluded from the lease."⁴⁴ It is not clear whether

⁴² Sir Fredrick Jackson, *Early Days in East Africa*, London: Dawsons of Pall Mall, 1930; Margery Perham, (Ed.), *The Diaries of Lord Lugard: East Africa November 1889 to December 1890*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1959; 'White Man's place in Africa', Editorial, *East African Standard*, 12 July, 1903.

⁴³ Even the most liberal of the white settler farmers believed a simple contact between the African and the European was sufficient to lift the African from the state of 'savagery' into 'civilization'. M. P. K. Sorrenson, *Origins of European Settlement in Kenya*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1968.

⁴⁴ *Crown Land Ordinance*, 1902. p. 10.

the ordinance's failure to define *actual occupation* was deliberate. Many European settlers used it unscrupulously to acquire lands already occupied by Africans.⁴⁵ The displaced Africans were either forced to the overcrowded native reserves or they made a deal with their new landlord settlers to stay on the land as squatters in exchange for labor.⁴⁶ Either arrangement worked well for the settler. Because, after losing their lands, Africans had little in the way of alternative than to work for wages for sustenance. To make matters worse, the colonial regime had since 1901 instituted several forms of tax obligations for them.⁴⁷ By 1903, letters written by cheerful settler employers were already appearing in the press advising each other on how and where to find quality African labor. "It should be apparent to everyone that has engaged the Wakikuyu as a labourer that he is most amenable to European supervision and guidance"⁴⁸, stated one such letter authoritatively.

Eager to establish white dominance in Kenya, the settlers marshaled their political energies into forming the Colonialists' Association of British East Africa with explicit agenda of promoting European immigration.⁴⁹ Soon after its formation, the association began writing

⁴⁵ According to the evidence adduced by African victims, Europeans settler who coveted lands occupied by Africans could decide such lands had no evidence of *actual occupation* and encroach on them. Usually, such encroachment left the Africans hemmed in small islands of homesteads without access to the outside. And then, finally, the European brought the laws of trespass to bear on the African landholders. The Assistant District Commissioner of Dagoreti, M.W.H. Beech documented several cases in 1909 following a lengthy interview with fifty Kikuyu elders. "Kikuyu Point of View", Dagoreti Political Record Book, KNA DC/KBU/3/4, 12 December, 1912.

⁴⁶ Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-63*, Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987; Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau war in perspective*, London: James Currey, 1989.

⁴⁷ See, for instance, Hut Tax Ordinance No. 18 of 1901, *East Africa Protectorate Gazette*.

⁴⁸ "Kikuyu and Kaffir Skilled Labour" *African Standard*, 10 March, 1903, p. 4.

⁴⁹ Colonialists Association started off as the Farmers and Planters Association. "Formation of the Society to promote European Immigration", *African Standard*, 21 January, 1902.

perennial circulars to the colonial authorities demanding them to encourage and facilitate European immigration. At the same time, the settlers fought to stop, even reverse, migration of Indians. In its petition to the Secretary of State in 1905, the Colonialists' Association claimed that the 'Asiatics' migration was "entirely detrimental to the European settler in particular and to the native inhabitant generally, it being considered that such importation creates unfair competition to Europeans and natives, the latter being in every way superior in physic and morality, and more amenable to European supervision."⁵⁰ The petition did not specify what the exact nature of competition Indians posed for the 'natives', or what made them morally inferior to the Africans. What became clear as the settlers' concerns unfolded in the petition was that they feared an African uprising even more than they did Indian competition. Africans' anger, unlike the Indian problem, could not be handled with a simple piece of legislation. From the point of view of the settlers, the colonial officials were both unwilling, and completely inadequate in dealing with any such contingency. The document lamented:

The problem of how to deal with the native still living in a savage state in various parts of East Africa is a matter upon which the very existence of settlers depends. They are a few hundreds, while the blacks around them number hundreds of thousands, and are in absolutely savage state. Hitherto a policy of bluff, without any real or adequate force in reserve, has been sufficient to deal with these natives. But to anyone who has had experience of natives of Africa, and indeed anyone who can read intelligently the teaching of the history of our dealing with native races, it must be evident that the present condition of things cannot be expected to last. At present the black has hardly realized what the intrusion of the white man into his country means. As the country becomes more settled, as fences are erected and the savage finds himself shut out from the enjoyment of land, which before he could roam over and enjoy, so will his resentment grow. From being a smoldering fire, that resentment will after a time

⁵⁰ The Colonialists' Association, "Proposed Address to the Colonial Secretary: The Grievances of East African Colonists", *East African Standard*, 8 July, 1905, p. 4.

break into flame, and when it does, may even cause hereditary tribal enemies to unite in rebellion against the common foe of both—the white man. Moreover, another cause is tending also in a large degree to bring about black rebellion, and that is increased familiarity with white men. Until the British occupation of East Africa hardly any of the natives of the highlands had seen a white man. By degrees the fear of the native for the white men will wear off, and they will become insolent. There is no doubt that that time will arrive more speedily in East Africa than it otherwise would have done on account of the action of the Government in not maintaining white prestige.⁵¹

Unlike the missionaries, the settlers admittedly had not come to ‘civilize natives’; unlike the colonial administration they were not here to establish pax-Britannica or any other political order. They had come to appropriate Africans’ land forcibly and admittedly, make enmity with African people as necessary. It was an honest admission uncommon to, and frowned upon by the other agents of European imperialism. Even more remarkable, was their acknowledgement that as far as they were concerned, the whole idea of European superiority was a ‘bluff’ meant to purposely preserve ‘white prestige.’

Understandably, the colonial officials did not take the settlers’ attitude kindly. Two leading administrators, C.W. Hobley and J.D. Ainsworth, both veterans of the bloody pacification campaigns that had finally brought Africans under the colonial rule, stated in no uncertain terms that white privilege was unavoidably coupled with exercise of white accountability. One did not exist in exclusion of the other. Colonists’ Association’s viewpoint, both officials contested, did not represent the majority of settlers. Rather, it was a work of a few settler politicians who were “notorious for giving more of their time to agitation...than endeavour to make the country prosperous.”⁵² As for the settlers’ fear of a pan-African uprising

⁵¹ Ibid.

so well articulated in the Association's memorandum, Hopley answered curtly: "European and native interests are not really in opposition, the natives are not in overpowering numbers considering the size of the country, and there is space for both, moreover the various tribes have neither common ties nor fanaticism which would induce them to combine against the white men."⁵³ Yet Hopley made the settlers restive when he admitted that the relationship between them and their African neighbors was strained. Many of the settlers were suffering loss of stock through theft, but that was the price they had to pay for mistreating their African laborers. This was not the kind of lecture the settlers expected from civil servants.

The two government officials were, however, not alone in their open contempt of the settlers. It was a widely shared attitude among colonial officials that settlers, in their barefaced greed and presumptuous claim for 'white privilege', carried themselves in ways that endangered their own security and the general colonial order. Settlers on the other hand felt that they, as the farmers on the ground who were in everyday contact with Africans, knew African psychology much better than did the administrators. After all the administrators lived away in towns and only came around in abbreviated visits, routinely, to sort out crises which they always suspected to be of settlers' doing. The two parties remained quietly antagonistic, tolerating each other only because they shared an imperialist vision and were mutually dependent on each other to achieve it.⁵⁴ For instance, the number of white settlers convicted for minor infractions doubled from 64 in

⁵² "Views of two Government Officials, C.W. Hopley (Sub Commissioner, Naivasha) and J.D. Ainsworth (Sub Commissioner, Ukamba), on the Address of the Colonists' Association, October 1905". Papers Relating to East Africa Protectorate, CO 533/5.

⁵³ Ibid.

1909 to 151 by 1913. Many of these convictions described as “minor offences” were handed down to the settlers for conducting themselves in manners that undermined the authority of colonial officials or violating their African neighbors and laborers.⁵⁵ The relationship between the settlers and the administrators remained frosty through to the outbreak of World War I.

Post-war policies on African education: Convergence of imperial viewpoints.

The period immediately after World War I saw a notable, if brief, convergence of all the agents of European imperialism in their opinions regarding African’ affairs in general and their education in particular. This alliance was not unexpected. Experience from the war played a big part in it. War-time cooperation and whipped-up patriotism had provided a somber reminder that they were all British first and foremost. Similarly, they all realized that the economic pressure the war put upon the colony called for utmost cooperation in the heavy task of reconstruction. This solidarity influenced most of the immediate post-war policies. African education was one of them.

On July 8th, 1918, the acting governor, Charles Bowring, appointed a commission to examine post-war educational needs. The ten-person commission chaired by J.W. Barth was charged with examining the quality, dissemination, design and funding for education. It took

⁵⁴ Robert Maxon, *Struggle for Kenya: the Loss and Reassertion of Imperial Initiative, 1912-1923*, Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1993; Also see ‘Memorandum by A.C. Hollis, 8th April, 1908’, enclosure 3 in Sadler to Elgin, Confidential. CO 533/43.

⁵⁵ *EAP Annual Report*, No. 840, 1913-1914. Around the same time, the de facto leader of the white settlers, Lord Delamere, had been fired and hired several times to his position at the Legislative Council (LegCo), Huxley, *White Man’s Country*, 1935, pp. 227-235.

fifteen months of work for the committee to publish its recommendations. The *Report of the Education Commission of the East Africa Protectorate, 1919*, recorded its instant impression “by the evident desire for education among all sections of the community including the natives. Very little provision has hitherto been made to meet the urgent needs of the Protectorate.”⁵⁶ Such was the exigency for education across the board. But when it came to making recommendations, the most urgent, comprehensive and meticulous policy attention was paid to the Europeans. European children, the report suggested, should commence their schooling at the “kindergarten system under the control of trained and experienced teachers....in order that very young children should not be under the necessity to taking long journeys every day to the central school.”⁵⁷ The second category in order of importance was education for Indian, then Arab, and finally Swahili communities. As for the “natives,” the commission did not trouble itself to examine their particular needs. Instead, it expressly drew its recommendations directly from the South African Native Affairs Commission report produced two decades earlier that the committee assumed should be relevant to the “natives” of Kenya as well. Thus, the report stated, without even substituting the reference terms ‘South African Colonies’ with the ‘East Africa Protectorate,’ “In considering the relations between the European and the Native populations certain responsibilities on the part of the race which occupies the position of the governing and superior caste claim attention. Among such responsibilities there is a duty as to the moral and intellectual elevation of the subject and the commission recognizes that among the governments of the South

⁵⁶ *Report of the Education Commission of the East Africa Protectorate, 1919*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ Ibid

African Colonies this duty is laid.”⁵⁸ A clear ideological convergence between the agents of European imperialism, the commission chose to discount any misgivings Africans had registered over inadequacy of the mission education for any meaningful “intellectual elevation” and instead recommended the government to officially transfer the responsibilities of ‘native’ education to the church.⁵⁹ In so doing, the commission affirmed the ‘civilizing’ discourse that had historically informed the missionaries’ activities, that education was only appropriate for Africans insofar as it was offered for moral improvement. Its report even sought to offer policy guidance to this effect. It concluded, after laying emphasis in regular moral and religious instruction for all ‘native’ schools, “It must be accepted that we cannot have a general acceptance of moral and intellectual ideals without the same are influenced by religious thought [*sic*]. Civilisation will in time undoubtedly remove the natives from their own woes and restraints take their place the Black will be prone to imbibe the worst aspect of civilisation.”⁶⁰ Just what type of civilization was being sought was not clear. On the one hand, the commission appeared to suggest that the ‘natives’ were redeemable, and with proper guidance, malleable for the European civilization. Yet on the other hand, it seemed to contradict this judgment by implying that once they had been given the prescribed education, Africans might well refuse to fit into their assigned place within colonial order. It was therefore not obvious whether advanced academic training for the Africans worked for or against the colonial project. For lack of certainty, the commission

⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Africans had for a long period protest against any aspects of mission school curriculum they deemed as undeserving of their pursuit. See Willis, ‘Response of the Africans’, 1912.

⁶⁰ *Report of the Education Commission*, 1919, p. 6.

reckoned it was wiser to deny Africans academic education altogether rather than allow them to ‘imbibe the worst aspect of civilization.’ It argued:

The question whether or not education is a useful adjunct to a person who has to earn his living by manual labour has so often threshed out and the truth of an affirmative reply so often proved by experience that the Commission does not propose to waste time by dealing this subject in the case of natives... For education to have effect it is implied that the education must be the right sort. For natives education should be on technical lines, as many witnesses have recommended, but there appears to be a fear that if any literary education is given the child educated will be ruined and will look forward to clerkships and similar occupations rather than entry in the labour field.⁶¹

White settlers had thought so all along, and so did a good number of conservative missionaries. Now it was a mutual declaration that vocational training for manual labor was the way to go for African students.

Nevertheless, the commission did allude to the possibility of creating of African elite for the purpose of serving the colonial regime. Its report stated, “we are of the opinion, therefore, that instruction in English in the initial stages of the development of education facilities be restricted to those who, chosen for their intelligence, are being educated for clerical work either in Government service or in commercial life.”⁶² This proposition had appealed to the colonial administration for a long period of time. But the government had also been cash-strapped for equally long, and so the initiative had more or less remained a spasmodic dream. Even now, there was no any indication that the government planned to follow through with it. Just before the commission began its work, the Director of Education, J. R. Orr complained to his provincial

⁶¹ Ibid. p. 7.

⁶² Ibid. p. 9.

coordinators that “in respect of Government expenditure on Education the Protectorate stands almost at the bottom of the list of Crown Colonies.”⁶³ The devastation wrought by war made any prospects of finding the required resources grimmer.

Pragmatism called upon colonial officials to consider grant-in-aid partnership with mission institutions much like they had done a decade earlier. In this regard, correspondence between the provincial commissioner of Nyeri and the head of the Church of Scotland Mission in Tumu Tumu is of interest. Their correspondence from 1917 to 1918 discussed the possibility of such a partnership with conditions that had not existed in the previous arrangement. Assuming this correspondence had official consent, it shows the state was willing to concede to a longstanding and ambitious demand made by the Protestant missionaries. They wanted to have full custody of their ‘enlightened’ African converts. These converts, aptly referred to in the correspondence as the “protected class”, were to benefit from higher education. They were also to be exempted from performing unpaid labor that the state had instituted for Africans. They were to be distinguished from the masses by wearing western clothes instead of the commonly used calico garbs, blankets and other forms of dressings, which both the missionaries and colonial officials considered uncivilized. Anyone who failed; “to wear a clean cloth... or should they have paint on head or body”, or fail to “attend school regularly....” or failed to partake in the cleanliness of the school would forfeit that privilege.⁶⁴

⁶³ J.R. Orr to PC, Kenya Province, 11 June, 1918, KNA/PC/CP/6/5/1.

⁶⁴ H.R.A. Philp to McClure, Church of Scotland Mission, Tumu Tumu, Nyeri, 17 November, 1917, KNA/PC/CP/6/5/1; John Ainsworth to PC, Nyeri, 14 September, 1918, KNA/PC/CP/6/5/1.

It was the perfect proposal to beguile missionaries' maternal instincts. From the moment of their arrival in East Africa, Christian missionaries had made protecting their own a sacrosanct duty. This was particularly so for the mission groups such as CMS who had started off as a community of freed slaves, liberated from slave-markets and Afro-Arab farms at Kenya's coast.⁶⁵ Time and again the missionaries used their sway with the colonial officials to obtain justice on behalf of their African charges.⁶⁶ At times the missionaries fought for comprehensive removal of their converts from Native Reserves, arguing that living under government-appointed traditional authorities was inconsistent with their Christian beliefs and 'civilized existence.'⁶⁷ Thus, the missionaries had every reason to welcome the government's bid on this issue. Nothing in the correspondence indicates it was anything but a serious proposal. But a quick succession of post-war developments aborted the dialogue before its conclusion. In any event, Africans, especially the mission-educated, were already beginning to question missionaries' paternalistic attitude towards them.

⁶⁵ *The Church Missionary Intelligencer and Record: a Monthly Journal of Missionary Information*, 1, (January, 1876).

⁶⁶ "Précis of Meeting held at Kymbu Station", 25-26 April, 1912; KNA DC/KBU/3/4; Minutes of the Meetings of a Conference of Representatives of Native Churches in Southern Kikuyuland held at the Church of Scotland Mission, Kikuyu, July 5th-6th, 1916. Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978.

⁶⁷ "Memorandum by PC Nyanza on the question of the Position of Native Converts in Reserves", 22 April, 1912 KNA PC/NZA.

Africans' post-war grievances.

War experiences aside, there was a lot more in the post-war colonial policies to enrage Africans. The toll of reconstruction was yet to be felt. Its economic repercussions were not going to be kind. Long years of abandon had allowed nature to reclaim most lands. Soldiers and servicemen alike were coming back to farms that lay in waste. Not just the individual property: The landscape captured by Elspeth Huxley suggests infrastructure and institutions of administration were in utter state of chaos and disintegration.

The railway had been hopelessly neglected; the permanent way was almost crumbling and hundreds of thousands were wanted to restore it. Bridges were verging on the unsafe; roads had been rubbed out by rain, dust and rocks; the one little pier at Kilindini was chronically congested; stores and shed were inadequate and confusion reigned at the port. The civil service was understaffed, underpaid and discontented. A deficit for three years running had exhausted the surplus balances and disorganized the budget; the campaign had cost the country at least a million pounds over and above what had been paid by the Imperial Government; expenditure had risen by about 60 per cent since 1913.⁶⁸

This was the familiar landscape across the British Empire, much worse for regions such as the European metropolis, which had witnessed the bulk of the battle. Left without the resources for its own reconstruction, Britain had much less ability to recompense its demobilized soldiers. This is how the Soldiers Settlement Scheme came into being. It was introduced as a benefit program to award the white British soldiers with lands in its colonies and dependencies. Reputed to be a 'white man's country', Kenya was naturally drawn to the heart of this project. The scheme allowed any land less than 160 acres to be awarded at no cost. For anything above

⁶⁸ Huxley, *White Man's Country*, 1935, Vol. 2. p. 51.

that, one was required to show proof of £1000 capital, or a monthly salary of £200.⁶⁹ The maximum award was five-thousand acres. In all, this scheme saw annexation of over two-million acres of Africans' land to benefit over 1,300 demobilized European soldiers. Duder has noted that this was "the largest single allocation of land to white settlement in the Colony's existence."⁷⁰ It increased the area of white settlement by a third in one stroke. Banks were ready to provide white settlers with a soft landing in form of loans for those coming in without any means, and overdrafts dispensation for those already in debt. Returning European settler-soldiers came to start all over again with intense labor, hard capital and a great deal of patience, since their main cash crop, coffee, took at least four years to bring forth any returns.

Like the European soldiers, African servicemen returned home to difficulties. Only theirs was worse. For a start, the East African War Relief Fund had been set up purposely for rewarding the returning servicemen, compensating those who became debilitated by the war, and paying indemnity to families who lost their loved ones in active duty.⁷¹ But as one missionary living among Africans noted, Africans found out that the colonial authorities had no intention of fulfilling expectations of relief. "No serious attempt was made to distribute a bonus to those natives who had come through the campaign, or to secure war widows and aged parents from the

⁶⁹ *East African Protectorate Land Settlement Scheme for Ex-Servicemen*. No. 1071, June 1919.

⁷⁰ Duder, C. J. "Men of the Officer Class: The Participants in the 1919 Soldier Settlement Scheme in Kenya." *African Affairs*, 92 (January, 1993): p. 70.

⁷¹ 'Central Advisory Committee on African Education,' Proceedings of Meeting held on 18 November, 1925, KNA PC/NZA/3/10/1/1. It is important to note here that many of the African servicemen had been conscripted by force. They had never cared to partake in a war whose origin they did not know. Even those who actually volunteered, for instance, the Kikuyu Mission Volunteers, had to be convinced by missionaries. Marshall S. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs and Politicians, 1918-1940*. Niwot: University of Colorado, 1990.

destitution which the loss of their able-bodied relatives entailed.”⁷² Instead of appreciation, many of the returning African servicemen lost the little lands they had to the Solders’ Settlement Scheme. Most of them ended up in the Native Reserves.⁷³ Then there was the Spanish influenza and other diseases brought back by the returning servicemen; there was invasion of locusts, and famine, all which plagued the country between 1918 and 1920. Combined, these disasters caused heavy loss of life. Some communities were reduced by as much as ten percent.⁷⁴ The basic fact that the African society needed time to regain its wellbeing before it could be burdened with the heavy task of reconstruction was lost to the colonial policy makers.

For reconstruction, Kenya needed labor and funds. The state sought to obtain both from the local populations in the form of increased taxation, comprehensive wage cuts⁷⁵, and forced unpaid labor. Economic hardship called for a thirty per cent increase in taxes.⁷⁶ Labor was critical both for public work, and for the enlarged European population. As such, the state sought labor control by introducing the infamous Native Registration Ordinance of 1919.⁷⁷ The ordinance was structured much like the Pass Ordinance of Southern Rhodesia, where every male over the age of sixteen, carried a registration card, *Kipande*, encased in a metal box, suspended

⁷² Rev. Handley D. Hooper, “Memorandum: Development of Political Self Consciousness in the Kikuyu Native”, 22 March, 1922, Edinburg House, H. 3/II, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 516.

⁷³ ‘Kikuyu Central Association Petition to Secretary of State for Colonies’, 24 February, 1929, CO 533/384/9.

⁷⁴ Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs*, 1990.

⁷⁵ Lord Milner, ‘Despatch relating to Native Labour’, 1920.

⁷⁶ Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs*, 1990.

⁷⁷ “Native Labour for non-Native farms and other private undertakings.” Labor Circular No. 1. *East African Standard*, October 27, 1919; Lord Milner to the Governor of the EAP “Despatch relating to Native Labour and papers connected therewith”, Cmd. 873, (1920), Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978; *Native Registration Ordinance*. N0. 56, 31 December, 1921.

by a string from one's neck like a necklace. The registration card contained one's residence and labor history, including one's current employer. For travel, one was required to obtain a signature of authorization from his present employer. Even within the 'native reserve', the ordinance was enforced so rigorously "that a native who did not happen to carry his registration paper when he was going to work in his fields, or when visiting a neighbour, felt himself liable to a fine of F1 10."⁷⁸ Africans found this ordinance a good ground for rebellion, but to the colonial regime, it was having the best of both worlds: The state accumulated its coffer and the European settlers got their direly needed labor.

The new labor regulations were set out in a circular dispatched by the Chief Native Commissioner, John Ainsworth, to the provincial and district commissioners of all labor supplying districts. Released on October 23, 1919, the circular, after reminding the officials that the labor crisis was largely due to Africans' laziness, outlined the steps required to augment it.

- (1) All Government officials in charge of native areas must exercise every possible lawful influence to induce able-bodied male natives to go into labor field. Where farms are situated in the vicinity of a native area, women and children should be encouraged to go out for such labor as they can perform.
- (2) Native Chiefs and Elders must at all times render all possible lawful assistance on the foregoing lines. They should be repeatedly reminded that it is part of their duty to advise and encourage all unemployed young men in the areas under their jurisdiction to go out and work of plantations...
- (3) District Commissioners will keep record of names of those Chiefs and Headmen who are helpful and of those who are not helpful and will make reports to me from time to time for the information of His Excellency... In cases where there is evidence that any Government Headman is impervious to His Excellency's wishes the fact should be reported to me for His

⁷⁸ Hooper, 'Memorandum: Development of Political Self Consciousness', 1922, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 517.

Excellency's information together with any recommendations you may desire to make.⁷⁹

The veneered threat contained therein was not indiscernible. Africans; men, women and children, were required to offer themselves for work, failure of which chiefs and headmen—who were themselves under pressure of the colonial administration—were to compel them. In effect, forced labor practice is what the Chief Native Commissioner was implying without having to call it by name.

Living and working in their midst, Christian missionaries were privy to the depth of anger the new legislations aroused among the Africans. Many had come to the troubling conclusion that if nothing was done, such anger would sooner or later find a disastrous escape route. Consequently, some missionaries launched individual initiatives to deflect it, or at least steer it into creative protest. Men like Cannon Leakey of CMS Kabete, and Archdeacon Owen of CMS Maseno, began helping their converts to write petitions to the government.⁸⁰ Others, like A.R. Barlow, helped organize forums with the colonial administrators, to which Africans could bring their grievances.⁸¹ On their own, the missionaries applied pressure on the government to temper some of its more controversial policies. Forced labor took the center stage of their campaign. That was for a good reason. Labor interfered with their school and religious programs. They had made this view very clear as far back as 1913 when they protested against recruitment

⁷⁹ Chief Native Commissioner, "Native Labour for non-Native farms and other private undertakings." Labor Circular No. 1. *East African Standard*, October 27, 1919.

⁸⁰ H. R. Tate, "Circular letter to officials and missionaries". 8 February, 1922, KNA PC/NZA/3/12/7. Also see Nancy Uhlar Murray, "Archdeacon W.E. Owen: Missionary as Propagandist", *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 15 (1982): pp. 653-670.

⁸¹ W. McGregor Ross, *Kenya from within: a short Political History*, London: Frank Cass & Co., 1968, p. 224.

of boys under the age of puberty into labor, arguing that away from their control, such boys “learned much that was evil, and it was felt that family life was being broken and nothing in the way of Christian education was being put in its place.”⁸² The missionaries saw this as yet another good case of the state impinging upon their sphere.

In reaction to the labor circular by Chief Native Commissioner, the missionary groups issued a joint Bishops’ Memorandum on November 1, 1919. This was not a protest in the sense that it did not challenge the basis of the labor circular implying the government was resorting to forced labor in response to Africans’ own idleness. The bishops were in total agreement with that assumption. They stated in the opening paragraph; “the prevention of idleness, and the meeting, by all legitimate means, of the demand for necessary labour, we are in entire accord.”⁸³ What they objected to, was the ambiguity conveyed by some of its paragraphs, where, for instance, enthusiastic officials might translate “Government suggestions into specific instructions.” Child labor concerned the missionaries more genuinely. The bishops challenged whether it was the business of government officials to supply settlers with child labor. Their letter posed; “what would be the effect on native education of such action, and what steps would be taken by the District Officers or by the native authorities to secure the services of these children?”⁸⁴ It was an indirect threat to the colonial authorities to dare interfere with schools’ smooth running in their enterprise to secure labor. Here, the memorandum did something anomalous. It invoked the

⁸² “Report of the United Missionary Conference”, 13 June, 1913. Nairobi. Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 181.

⁸³ ‘The Bishops’ Memorandum on Native Labour’, *East African Standard*, 1 November, 1919.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

British law, which was in a way paradoxical, because the state was its chief custodian: “Certainly no British law will sanction this.”

If invoking of the British laws was meant to attract attention of the British public, it succeeded. The missionaries’ cause was taken up by their well seasoned, more influential compatriots in England who brought pressure to bear on the Colonial Office. Nairobi was pressed to clarify—not withdraw—the contentious paragraphs. In response, the Chief Native Commissioner issued a second circular on February 17, 1920. But rather than clear the ambiguity created by the first circular, the second one sought to repeat the same points in more circumvent way. For instance, it substituted “encourage” with “remind” and rationalized labor as ideal means for Africans to raise their poll taxes. This was peculiar reasoning since the main subjects of controversial labor, women and children, were already exempted from paying the said taxes.⁸⁵ Predictably, the controversy refused to die even as the Chief Native Commissioner released yet a third circular to clarify the second one.⁸⁶ In the end, the Secretary of State W.S. Churchill, wrote to him proposing a few minor amendments to issues which “may afford a ground for criticism against the Government.”⁸⁷ All along, the Colonial Office maintained desperate resolve to hold onto its legislations intact, an indication that they may have been necessitated by post-war challenges rather than raw ambition and cold calculations as the missionaries’ protest suggested.

⁸⁵ Chief Native Commissioner, “Native Labour for non-Native farms and other private undertakings.” Labor Circular No. 2. *East African Standard*, 17 February, 1920. For clarification on the poll tax during this period, see C. W. Hobley, *Kenya from a Chartered Company to Crown Colony*, 1970.

⁸⁶ Chief Native Commissioner, “Native Labour for non-Native farms and other private undertakings.” Labor Circular No. 3. *East African Standard*, 14 July, 1920.

⁸⁷ Winston S. Churchill, “Despatch to the Officer Administering the Government of the Kenya Colony and Protectorate relating to Native Labour”, September 5, 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 405.

It is doubtful, though, that either rationale would have found sympathy with the Africans. The issues being debated were far removed from Africans' everyday realities. As the colonial officials, the Christian missionaries, settler representative, and the British public were busily arguing over semantics and dissecting terminology of documents, Africans were being whipped into forced labor gangs by chiefs and headmen who had little knowledge and lesser care for the working of ordinances, labor circulars and protest letters shuttling between Nairobi and London.⁸⁸ Their only concerns were to meet their labor quotas, failure of which their white superiors forced them to perform the labor themselves.⁸⁹

The rise of African political associations in colonial context.

Left with no recourse, the Africans began to mobilize their ranks for political solutions. To be sure, such politics had been a part of their life even before the war. But pre-war political activities had been confined to ethno-regional localities, and many of them were triggered by local issues and concerns. After the war, however such activities became intense and spanned across ethnic and geographical landscapes. It soon came to the administration's notice that Africans, especially in Nairobi, were meeting in social halls and holding discussions in cafes. What worried the regime more was the new multiethnic dimension of these gathering, and the topicality of their subjects. As Furedi observes, "the reduction of wages [...] had the effect of

⁸⁸ Several accounts of colonial officials disregarding the ban on forced labor were documented in *Government of Kenya Official Gazette*, Notice No. 93, 1923.

⁸⁹ One of the issues brought to the first meeting between the Kikuyu Association (KA) and colonial officials was titled: "Indignities inflicted upon Chiefs and Headmen." Memorandum of Grievances, Important Discussions between Officials and Kikuyu Association, June 24, 1921. Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978.

breaking down traditional barriers. All the African workers in Nairobi, whether Kikuyu, Luo or Masai, were equally hurt by the cut in their wages, and the anti-wage reduction campaign brought members of many different ethnic groups together in a common fight.”⁹⁰

Worried by this sudden ‘native over-politicization’, the acting governor, Sir Edward Northey, enlisted his advisors to map out a “definite policy of encouraging strong and isolated tribal nationalism to counter any pan-Africanism ideologies”⁹¹ he assumed were taking root. The minutes from one of the several confidential meetings that the governor held during this time revealed a thoroughly worried administration. Rather than see it as a local initiative caused by real grievances, however, the state attributed African political activities to external ideological factors. “The participation of natives in British East Africa in the campaign in German East Africa”, the meeting observed, “whether as soldiers or as porters, has given them unprecedented opportunities of enlarging their ideas by contact with natives of other dependencies.”⁹² Consequently, it was to be anticipated that “certain of the men returning have become acquainted with the pan-African ideal of the Ethiopian Church, with Native politics from Abyssinia, and, for the first time in the history of this Protectorate, a conception may arise in the native mind of the possibilities of a black Africa.”⁹³

⁹⁰ Frank Furedi, “The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Elite Politics” *The Journal of African History*, 14 (1973): p. 278.

⁹¹ Private Secretary to Ag. Governor “Confidential: European fears of effect of 1914-18 War on Africans”, 28 October, 1918. KNA CN/51.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

It may well have been, that the ‘natives’ were experiencing a pan-African ideological awakening. But still, there were more important and immediate issues to galvanize them; the post-war colonial policies affecting them. They were losing their lands, being conscripted into forced labor and fleeced through taxation. Land topped the list of the policies being executed. This was made so by the preparations to settle the demobilized soldiers, beneficiaries of Soldiers’ Settlement Scheme, which had to be done even before the war ended. For the most part, African families had to be removed in order to free up the two million acres required. Land, therefore, became the first point of focus for the Africans’ political mobilization.

Among the earliest lands targeted for Soldiers’ Settlement Scheme was one which belonged to the *mbari*⁹⁴ of Mathew Njoroge wa Kabetu. Njoroge was Cannon Harry Leakey’s convert who, at the time, was also assisting Leakey to translate the English bible into Kikuyu. Njoroge approached Leakey to help him write a petition to the government. At Leakey’s intervention, the government dropped the idea of annexing his clan’s land. This was seen as a coup, and soon, other *mbari* were coming to Leakey with similar grievances. Some had already lost their lands. Even chiefs, the most loyal colonial servants, had not been spared. On Leakey’s suggestion, the affected people, chiefs among them, began to hold meetings at the home of Chief Kinyanjui.⁹⁵ It was from these meetings that the first African political association, the Kikuyu Association (KA) came into being. Its officials were drawn from the younger mission-educated

⁹⁴ Among the Kikuyu, *mbari* denoted a kinship as well as territorial relationship. As a kinship, its closest English translation is ‘sub-clan.’ Territorially, it implied ‘district’ in that, people related through lineage typically resided in a shared district. L. S. B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, London: Academic Press Inc., 1977; Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mt. Kenya: the tribal life of the Gikuyu*, New York: Vintage Books, 1965.

⁹⁵ The colonial administration appointed Kiknyajui the “Paramount Chief” sometime before 1900. He remained the senior-most chief among the Kikuyu until his death in 1929. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs*, 1990.

men, who could read and write petitions. Kinyanjui became the association's patron, but mostly left its running in the hands of the younger educated members.

On June 24, 1921, KA called its first mass rally at Dagoretti to which several colonial officials were invited. Among the officials were; the Chief Native Commissioner, the Senior Commissioner of Kiambu, and the Director of Public Works. Prior correspondence between the colonial officials and the Association's secretary, Alfred Kinuthia, had led them to believe it would be a pro-government meeting.⁹⁶ But the appointment by Chief Kinyanjui, of a young mission-educated Harry Thuku as the Africans' spokesperson, undermined that pledge. Although Philip Karanja was the official KA spokesman, Thuku spoke better English, and so was chosen over him.⁹⁷ Thuku was the classic case of young, disgruntled, educated African elite. As a government employee, he was one of those targeted for a thirty-percent tax raise and across-the-board wage cut, and expected to perform so many days of unpaid public labor.

Born in 1895 and raised in Kahuhia, Kiambu district, Thuku was educated at the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS) School. His education was remarkably similar to that available in most mission schools in the colony. It constituted religion, memorization of bible verses and

⁹⁶ In his correspondence with the government, Kinuthia had made the impression that the Association's objectives were; to help the government collect tax, to encourage the burying of the dead and generally improve the country. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs*, 1990.

⁹⁷ Ibid. Thuku however does not acknowledge his level of education played any role in his selection as the meeting secretary. He says, in his autobiography, that he and other younger men arrived at the meeting totally oblivious to what was being discussed. Upon the arrival of the European officials, Chief Kinyanjui rose and came over to his side, and with the black flywhisk he carried, touched Thuku's shoulder and said to the colonial officials; "This is the man we have chosen to be the secretary of the meeting. If you want to tell us anything, tell him." Harry Thuku, *An Autobiography*, Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1970. p. 21.

conversational English language.⁹⁸ In his school, political education was a taboo, encouraged by neither the school curriculum, nor the interaction with the missionary teachers. Missionaries simply did not discuss politics with their students, or any Africans for that matter, since Africans were not considered mature enough to engage in such sophisticated subjects. Rather, they were expected to remain quiet while missionaries spoke on their behalf.⁹⁹

During breaks and school holidays, Thuku and his classmates worked for the mission for little cash. Employing their students was one of missionaries' stratagem intended to keep the boys on apprentice before sending them off to found mission outposts.¹⁰⁰ Thuku says in his autobiography that he was one of the two boys being groomed to take over the Kahuhia mission after the European missionaries' retired. He, however, turned out to be a disappointment for them. He left the mission, becoming one of the boys missionaries called 'failures', one of those who at some point of their apprenticeship, usually after they had acquired an educational level that made them employable, abandoned the mission for better life in the towns and on colonial employment. Thuku wrote later that it was not his wish to be "stuck up in the mission for ever. My heart wanted to see the world, and I was fond of finding my own means to maintain myself."¹⁰¹ He ended up in Nairobi city. As a growing administrative center, and a hub of trade and industry, Nairobi readily absorbed the young educated Africans. It was here that Thuku and his ilk made their careers. First, Thuku worked as a sweeper and messenger for the Standard

⁹⁸ Thuku, *Autobiography*, 1970.

⁹⁹ See Parmenas G. Mockerie, *An African Speaks for His People*, London: Hogarth Press, 1934.

¹⁰⁰ Krapf, *Travels, Researches and Missionary Labours*, 1968; Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities*, 1978.

¹⁰¹ Thuku, *Autobiography*, 1970, p. 9.

Bank, and then as a compositor and machine man for the settler newspaper, *the Leader*. At the time of the Dagorreti meeting, he was a telephone operator at the government's Treasury department.¹⁰² He was one of the Africans who had been meeting in cafes to discuss their hard luck living under the post-war colonial regime.

Unknown to the older chiefs, Thuku was a part of younger mission-educated men who had come to the meeting at Dagoretti with a different agenda from theirs. These younger men had little regard for the government-paid chiefs. For a good measure, they saw the chiefs as a part of the colonial repressive machinery. They were, themselves, not viewed favorably either by the African chiefs, the settlers, the colonial officials, or even their former educators, the Christian missionaries. The Director of Public Works at the time, W. McGregor Ross, who had been invited to the meeting, thought they brought discomfort to the occasion.

The young men acted and spoke with a composure and self-confidence that grated upon the paid chiefs. These young men who were partially educated. They had attended mission schools (the only ones in existence) for the sake of getting some education. Under the glib classification of the average white immigrant, they were "mission boys." To the missionaries many of them were known "failures," who had responded little or not at all to mission influence, but had only snatched the coveted boon of education, which the missions offered free, and had then decamped with it. To the missionaries (as a body) they were an object of suspicion tinged with resentment. To the Government they were a probable embarrassment. To the paid chiefs they were anathema. Nobody wanted them or wanted to meet them. And here they were, forcing a hearing.¹⁰³

Yet these young men were not easily disposable. Much as the chiefs disliked them, they also needed their proficiency. The chiefs felt more assured with them than with the white

¹⁰² Audrey Wipper, "Kikuyu women and Harry Thuku disturbances: some uniformities of female militancy", *Africa*, 59, (1989): pp. 300-336.

¹⁰³ Ross, *Kenya from within*, 1968, p. 225.

missionaries.¹⁰⁴ The younger men were confident in dealing with the colonial officials. They were familiar with the agenda of the meeting, and comfortable with language of articulating it. While the agenda of the meeting, written with help of missionary Barlow, was mildly and humbly worded, these young men could give the issues therein the desired punch, or shift them flexibly, or add their own perspectives. They had the power to make the document theirs, and that is just what they did. Thuku read the grievances, expounding on them with full anecdotal illustrations that attacked government's policy on every point. He stated, by the way of resolution:

The mass meeting of Natives of Kenya puts on record that in its opinion the presence of Indians in the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya is not prejudicial to the advancement of Natives as has been often alleged by the Convention of Associations and some of the writers in the Press and it is of further opinion that next to missionaries the Indians are their best friends.

That this meeting strongly protests against the Registration of Natives Ordinance, against the practice of compulsory taking out girls and married women to plantations for work which has culminated into immoral practice, against the increased Hut and Poll tax, and most respectfully requests the Secretary of State for the Colonies to repeal them.

That this mass meeting views with great alarm and strongly condemns the movement started by the European settlers to cut down native wages and requests the Government not to countenance it at all.

That this meeting respectfully urges the Government to apply the revenue derived from the natives of Kenya to the benefit of the Natives and especially to their education.

That this meeting requests the Government to give franchise to all educated British subjects in the country, to return representatives to Legislative and Municipal councils of the country.

¹⁰⁴ Kikuyu's wary of whites in general was conveyed in the adage 'gũtirĩ mũthũngũ na mũbĩa' (the missionary is himself a white man). See Mockerie, *An African Speaks for His People*, 1934.

That this meeting requests the Indian delegation now on its way to England to represent their cause to the Secretary of State for the Colonies on the above lines and if necessary to the Prime Minister also.¹⁰⁵

McGregor called Thuku's tone a "genesis of a revolution." The fact that colonial subjects could put questions to colonial officials with such confidence, and at that level of clarity, both surprised and discomfited them. The officials fidgeted through Thuku's speech, and whenever an issue demanded their reply, they simply promised to look into it, a strategy that Ross called; a "government *slightly* resenting the challenge: unwilling to concede remedies *too* rapidly."¹⁰⁶ On their part, the African chiefs were utterly scandalized by the disrespect Thuku had shown their superiors. They immediately sought to distance themselves from his resolutions. Nonetheless, this meeting was important in several respects: It marked the beginning of break-up between the younger radical, more educated African elite, and the older less educated conservative lot; it broadly defined the issues that preoccupied African politics for the rest of inter-war period; and lastly, it introduced an interesting dimension into the African nationalist politics: the Indian factor. (We will examine the Indian role in greater detail in a separate section).

Judging from the meeting resolutions, it is unlikely that the older chiefs understood in any depth some of the issues raised. They would have sought clarification of the points which appeared set to undermine the basis of their authority. Calling upon the "Government to give franchise to all educated British subjects in the country," calling for the return of elected "representatives to Legislative and Municipal councils of the country", and demanding for elected, rather than appointed positions, to which education was a condition for electability,

¹⁰⁵ 'Memorandum of Grievances', 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 492-3.

¹⁰⁶ Ross, *Kenya from within*, 1968, p. 226. (Italics original).

clearly were tailored to the advantage of the younger educated elite, and to the detriment of the older, appointed and uneducated chiefs. Principally, these demands sought to invalidate the criteria devised by the colonial state for its own purposes. Unsurprisingly, the acting Chief Native Commissioner repudiated the memorandum.

Still smarting from his attendance of what turned out to be anti-government rally, the Chief Native Commissioner replied to the Africans' petitions by either defending the government's position over the complaints raised, blunting their edge, rebuffing them offhandedly, or redirecting them to junior administrative officials. "With regard to the forcing out of girls and young women to work on Plantation," his reply stated, a week after the meeting, "you were inferred that this was in no case supported by Government, though Government considered that it was desirable that women should become wage-earners on plantations so near to their homes that they were able to return to sleep at home at night."¹⁰⁷ On another point, he blatantly accused the petitioners of being outright ignorant and unable to distinguish between the African (in this case, Kikuyu) system of land tenure and the British "title deed" system. Yet still, on another hot-button issue regarding registration of natives, the official stated brusquely,

you were informed that in the opinion of the Government registration of the Native inflicted no hardship whatever on law-abiding natives, though it was undoubtedly unpopular with those who wish to break contracts... You were given clearly to understand, and I beg to confirm this, that the Government proposes to enforce the Ordinance regarding the registration of Natives and is not prepared to agree to any of the modifications proposed by the meeting.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷ Acting Chief Native Commissioner to the Secretary Kikuyu Association, 27 June, 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 493.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 493-4

The same went for African education. Government, KA was informed, was not willing to put up schools in close proximity to, and in competition with, the mission schools. If Africans wished for more schools, they had to build their own, at reasonable distance from the mission ones, and support such schools entirely from their own funds, separate from the taxes they paid. They must, however, first come to the government for approval.

The younger men took the Acting Chief Native Commissioner's reply to mean the colonial regime did not fully appreciate the bearing of its policies on the Africans' livelihood. The leaders entrusted to speak for the Africans, the government-paid chiefs, seemed helpless, if not in outright cahoots with the state. A week after the meeting at Dagoretti, majority of the younger educated men broke off from KA and launched their own Young Kikuyu Association (YKA). YKA was modeled after another more organized and sophisticated Young Baganda Association.¹⁰⁹ Thuku's justification of YKA, stating that "unless the young people of this country form an Association, the Native in Kenya will always remain voiceless,"¹¹⁰ seemed like a calculated jibe aimed at KA, which was formed by older men, seen as compromised by their service to the colonial authority.

Thuku believed KA was more damaging than beneficial to the Africans' cause. The association was patronized by colonial officials and white missionaries. Not only were its

¹⁰⁹ Among Thuku's educated colleagues at YKA directing committee were; Jesse Kariuki, Job Muchuchu, James Njoroge, Gideon Mugo, Abdullah Tairara and Mwalimu Hamisu. Anthony Clayton and Donald C. Savage, *Government and Labour in Kenya 1895-1963*, London: Frank Cass, 1974.

¹¹⁰ Harry Thuku, "Formation of the Young Kikuyu Association", Letter to the Editor, *East African Standard*, 10 June, 1921. It should be noted here that YKA first came to light as a proposition with Thuku as its proposed secretary. This was a week before the Dagoretti meeting.

illiterate Kikuyu chiefs employed the colonial regime; KA could not pass any resolutions without consulting colonial officials, notably, the Kiambu DC, Campbell. Moreover, the KA's agenda was decidedly parochial: It catered exclusively to the Kikuyu interests. YKA sought to undermine it by persuading any remaining younger educated members to decamp, a move aimed explicitly at denying the chiefs of their foot-soldiers. In their roles as letter writers, translators and meeting secretaries, the younger KA men were, in effect, the intermediaries between the chiefs and colonial regime. Thuku knew this all too well, as he wrote to KA secretary, inviting his and the other younger members to a reconciliatory meeting,

Please tell everyone at Kabete that I welcome them to our meeting which takes place at Thika on Sunday January 1st 1922. I very much want everyone to come because now I have seen that there is no real difference between us in the struggle for this our country... Moreover do not rely upon these Chiefs, for they too are Government... they are unable to send a single word until they have first shown the matter to the District Commissioner and it is the District Commissioner that we are struggling with.¹¹¹

YKA exhibited youngish, urbane energy. Its officials interlaced the cosmopolitan Nairobi city, holding spontaneous meetings, recruiting members, and writing torrents of letters to the press, which were always protesting against colonial policies. In an apparent strategy to attract multiethnic membership, it changed its name to East African Association (EAA). This proved to be a brilliant move. Within a short period of time, its officials were being invited to open EAA office branches and address meetings in non-Kikuyu areas. Thuku recorded in his *Tangazo* newsletter of having attended one EAA meeting held at Ng'enda "accompanied by the school teacher, Samuel Okoth, a Christian from Maseno, and two Moslems... I saw no difference

¹¹¹ H. Thuku to M. Njoroge, 23 December, 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 498. Note that the letter original letter was written in Swahili.

between the Kavirondo and the man from Kikuyu, or even between the Christian believer and the believer in Islam.”¹¹² The association’s popularity spread quickly. Not only was it imbued with youthful energy; its program of action bore decidedly pan-Africanist inspiration. Its membership, unlike that of KA, came to include people from Baganda, Nyasaland, Tanganyika and many parts of Kenya. Its noted leader, Thuku, also proved to be an indefatigable and gregarious leader, determined to bring its attention to any individual and organization he considered vital for political networking, ideological exchange and potential material help. Within two months of its inauguration, Thuku had written to the Secretary of Tuskegee, to Marcus Garvey of Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), and to Young Baganda Association secretary Joswa Kamulegeya on wide-ranging issues of EAA’s concern. In his letter to Tuskegee, for instance, he said he was “anxious to be informed if a Booker T. Washington or a Du Bois can be spared for founding a ‘Tuskegee’ in the African wild and for the holy Mission of up-lifting and emancipating the hopeless, struggling 3,000,000 nude Native souls from deep ignorance, object porvity [*sic*] and grinding oppression of the white settlers of this Colony of Kenya.”¹¹³ Yet, even as it sought like-minded organizations and individuals for political networking, EAA never tired of reminding the colonial state the purpose for its existence. It dispatched flurry of petitions to the metropolis government, most of them sent directly to the Secretary of Colonies in blatant disregard of the established channels of communication. Thuku argued that the issues contained

¹¹² “Majasusi wane wamepatikana. Nao ni Koinange wa Mbui na Josiah Njonjo na Philip Karanja na Waruhiyu. Wametahayari mbele ya Mkutano Siku ya February, 13”, *East African Chronicle*, 17 February, 1922; *East African Chronicle*, 8 March, 1922. Translation: “Four traitors have been discovered. They are Koinange son of Mbiu and Josiah Njonjo and Philip Karanja and Waruhiyu. They were shamed at the meeting on February 13.”

¹¹³ H. Thuku to the secretary of Tuskegee Institute, 8 September, 1921. Tuskegee Institute Archives. Quoted in Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism and Education: a Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971. Appendix II.

in the memoranda were far too important and urgent to be channeled through the wearisome bureaucratic chain. While his argument reflected his overall rebellious character, it also illuminated the important difficulties Africans encountered in their quest for justice through the regular colonial channels. Without missionaries' help, Africans were required to channel any petitions through the local District Commissioner, who then sent it to Provincial Commissioner, then from Provincial Commissioner to the Chief Native Commissioner, and from him, to the Chief Secretary of Government, who then sent it on to the Governor, and eventually the Governor might send it to the Colonial Office in England. It was hard for EAA to believe the colonial officials would pass its petitions criticizing them on, without adding their own comments. Nor did the colonial officials welcome petitions which—like most of EAA's petitions tended to be—underscored issues such as high taxation, forced labor, quality education and wage-cut. These were the issues that the state would rather everyone forget.

None of EAA's petitions were replied to. In time and with a good measure of impatience the association resorted to bolder tactics. Thuku took his campaign directly to the African people by the way of advocating for civil disobedience. To this, even the missionaries who thought themselves liberal and sympathetic to Africans' grievances felt he was overstepping his bounds. Hooper, the head of Church of Scotland Mission in his home area summoned him on several occasions to warn him of "the effect of his propaganda upon the imbalanced rank and file of half-educated natives."¹¹⁴ The missionary told his former student "that he was trying to make

¹¹⁴ Hooper, 'Memorandum: Development of Political Self Consciousness', 1922, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 519.

men of children in 24 hours, and that the rapidity of the method would be disastrous.”¹¹⁵ Not that Hooper considered Thuku himself a man: He was convinced Thuku was made taller by riding on Indians’ shoulder, and during one of their rendezvous, he asked Thuku “point blank if he was being subsidized by the Indians; I got very little out of him beyond general expression of gratitude and good-will.”¹¹⁶ At any rate, Thuku’s days in freedom were numbered.

Thuku’s entourage was on its way to northern Kikuyu, where the EAA officials planned to address a meeting, when it came upon a work-gang by the road. A large number of young girls and women were cutting reeds under supervision of tribal police. Thuku’s civil disobedience campaign was inspired by women and children labor.¹¹⁷ He stopped his car and enquired from the officer in charge why the women were doing forced labor. The officer answered that he was carrying out orders from a higher authority.

‘Well,’ I said, ‘whoever told you to force these women to do this forced labor is acting illegally. Don’t you know that forced labor of this sort has been stopped by the order of Winston Churchill in the Colonial Office?’ [In reference to the dispatch of 1921 that had ordered colonial officials to stop recruiting labor for private enterprise]. I therefore asked him to dismiss the women and said I would remain there until they had all gone back home. The policeman made no trouble because he himself was angry at this forced labour, seeing his sisters going out to work for no reward. But the administration in Nyeri was very annoyed. However, I did it, knowing that I would shortly be arrested.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Ibid. p. 519-20

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Thuku had already earned himself the title “the chief of women” in apparent contrast with the colonial chiefs. Wipper, ‘Kikuyu women and Harry Thuku disturbances’, 1989.

¹¹⁸ Thuku, *Autobiography*, 1970. p. 32.

He was soon arrested and deported to Kismayu, the remotest northeastern corner a prisoner could be taken without actually leaving the Protectorate.¹¹⁹

Short as it was, Thuku and EAA's stint in the political arena inaugurated a new epoch in African politics. It opened a real possibility of larger organization on the national stage. It demonstrated that local and sporadic political concerns and grievances could be marshaled to find national resonance, thus, opening doors to wider cross-ethnic and pan-African alliances. EAA's insistence on breaking unjust laws, breach inconvenient communication protocols, organizing unauthorized rallies, finding common ground in constituencies with diverse grievances, all played a vanguard role for future African political associations. Nonetheless, the most important and more immediate accomplishment of Thuku's short political career was his initiating of an alliance between the African and Indian nationalists.

Indian nationalists and the politics of Educated African Elite.

Africans' declaration at the Dagoretti meeting that "the presence of Indians in the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya is not prejudicial to the advancement of Natives [and that] next to missionaries the Indians are their best friends"¹²⁰, says something about the relationship budding between nationalists in both communities. Yet this relationship was not obvious. A great many

¹¹⁹ The specific details and significance have been focus of a huge body of literature. See: "Political Developments in Kenya Colony" J.W. Arthur to J.H. Oldham. 19th March, 1922. Edinburgh House, H. 3/II. In Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978; Wipper, 1970; Keith Kyle, "Gandhi, Harry Thuku and Early Kenya Nationalism", *Transition*, 27 (1966): pp. 16-32; John Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, London: Kegan Paul Inc., 1985.

¹²⁰ 'Memorandum of Grievances', 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978.

Africans reacted in understandable astonishment to the statement that the same Indian merchants who were fleecing them of their every penny, were supposedly their best friends.¹²¹ Some, like the African chiefs who attended the meeting, smelled mischief on the part of Thuku and his educated lot, and soon after the meeting, wrote a strong-worded letter to the governor distancing them from this resolution.¹²² In order for us to fully understand how Indians ended up in the thickest of African politics during this period, it is important to position them within the broader colonial experience.

Indians' presence in Kenya preceded the Europeans' by over two hundred years. They established themselves as major traders, mainly at Kenya's coastal cities and Zanzibar in the seventeenth century.¹²³ When the construction of railway began at the end of nineteenth century, the British government brought in nearly nine-thousand indentured laborers from India, augmenting their population in East Africa dramatically. The railway line gave them mobility to venture into Kenya's interior, and many settled in the burgeoning trading centers as *dukawalla* merchants.¹²⁴ In these early years, business competition between Indians and Europeans was mild. As the white population increased, however, Indian presence in the colony took on an ominous feature. Their trade acumen and industry was increasingly being seen as a conspiracy to

¹²¹ Colonial administration used this as propaganda to drive a wedge between Indians and Africans. Acting Chief Native Commissioner to the Secretary Indian Association, "Alleged Cheating of Natives", *East African Chronicle*, 11 June, 1921; Secretary Indian Association to the Acting Chief Native Commissioner "Defence to Allegation", *East African Chronicle*, 11 June, 1921.

¹²² Kinyanjui and other Chiefs to the Governor, 17 March, 1923, KNA DC/KBU 9/1/1/1.

¹²³ *Handbook of British East Africa; including Zanzibar, Uganda, and the Territory of the Imperial British East African Company*, the Intelligence Division, War Office, London, 1893.

¹²⁴ Vincent Cable, "The Asians of Kenya", *African Affairs*, 68 (1969): 218-231.

undercut Europeans' economic interests. Soon, the Europeans resorted to political maneuvering as a counter strategy. By mid 1900s, the white population championed by the Colonialists' Association, had effectively persuaded the Colonial Office to re-classify Eurasian groups such as Goans, who were recognized legally as Europeans, into 'Asiatics' race.¹²⁵ This was a crucial legislation, for it automatically denied them residence at White Highlands.

Then European settlers moved to restrict Indian immigration, with some of them calling for actual expulsion of the Indians already residing in Kenya. It was in this background that the Colonialists' Association wrote the memorandum claiming that the presence of Indians was "entirely detrimental to the European settler" in that it created unfair competition.¹²⁶ It is not clear whether the settlers expected the government to expel the Indians. Such move would have been neither easy nor wise. The Indian population outnumbered the Europeans by three to one.¹²⁷ Eighty per cent of trade and commerce was undertaken by them. They manned the middle rank colonial bureaucracy as railway station masters, steam engine drivers, postmasters, police officers, etc. Yet, even knowing their full importance for the young struggling colony did not stop settlers harassing Indians whenever they had the opportunity. When the first legislative council (LegCo)¹²⁸ was inaugurated in 1907, the lone Indian nominee, A.M. Jeevanjee, found himself in the company of some of the staunchest anti-Indian racists. In August of that year, one

¹²⁵ Colonists' Association of British East Africa, Pamphlet, 1908.

¹²⁶ The Colonialists' Association, 'Proposed Address to the Colonial Secretary. 'The Grievances', 1905.

¹²⁷ *EAP Annual Report*, No. 592, 1907-08.

¹²⁸ The Legislative Council (LegCo) was formed on pressure of European settlers. It was intended to offer the administration and the settlers a platform on which to discuss issues of mutual concern, namely the colonial policies affecting the settlers. When it was first formed, the Council consisted of six colonial officials and two unofficial members. Jeevanjee was one of these.

of Jeevanjee's colleagues at LegCo, Lord Delamere, wrote a long formal tirade against Indians' presence in the country, stating: "I know from personal observation and knowledge that every two or three Indians in the country means the loss of a white colonist."¹²⁹ It did not surprise Jeevanjee that he was not reappointed to LegCo upon expiry of his term in 1911, and no Indian was ever nominated to replace him.

The demands of economic reconstruction after the First World War—a task for which Indians resources came in handy—did not ease European hostilities towards them. In fact, the Europeans took just the opposite view of the situation: They saw it as a good opportunity to rid Kenya of Indians once and for all. A commission appointed to map Kenya's post-war economic path saw itself primarily as a commission against Indians and recommended their total removal. "On purely economic grounds," its report stated, "we submit that the admission of the Indian was a cardinal error... In our view, the error ought gradually, but without unnecessary delay, to be rectified."¹³⁰ The commission's recommendations were adapted right away to the dismay of the Indian resident population, especially the East African branch of the Indian National Congress. Consequently, in 1920, three Indian members of the congress, Jeevanjee among them, wrote to the Colonial Secretary protesting as "invidious, unjust and indefensible"¹³¹, the treatment of Indians by the colonial administration in East Africa. Specifically, the party pointed to several legislative measures directed against Indians over the years. Among these were; the Crown Land

¹²⁹ Quoted in Huxley, *White Man's Country*, 1935. p. 206.

¹³⁰ *Report of the Economic Commission*, Nairobi, (March 1919), p. 23.

¹³¹ Indian Petition to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Milner, circa May 1920, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 549.

Ordinance of 1915 which excluded them from residing in White Highlands, the Segregation of Races Act of 1918 and the Municipal Corporation Ordinance of 1919 which discriminated against them in urban public and residential areas, and the Electoral Representation and Nomination Ordinance of 1919 which denied them representation.

As the Indians were penning down their petition, white settlers were in the process of forming an anti-Indian campaign group, the European and African Traders' Organization (EATO).¹³² Obviously, the organization did not have African membership, or interests, for that matter. The 'African' part of its title was a political gimmick intended to create the impression that both the African and European inhabitants of the colony were united against Indians' presence in Africa in general, and Kenya in particular. It was the same impression conveyed by EATO's slogan: "Every European and Every African is an Asset to Africa, Everyone else is a Liability."¹³³ EATO posed perhaps the greatest threat to Indians' interests, more than the colonial state's actions and legislations. Calling itself "the movement towards the gradual elimination of undesirable aliens," EATO sought to do just that by undercutting Indians' niche in business and trade. It stated in the letter introducing itself to its obvious allies and potential clients, European businesses: "As you are aware, one of the main objects of our Organization is to encourage the introduction of European and African artizans, mechanic and clerks, and other employment

¹³² Huxley indicates that Lord Delamere was the main force behind this organization though Delamere never left any trail of evidence. All of EATO's statements and pamphlets were left unsigned. Huxley, *White Man's Country*, 1935, Vol. 2, p. 179.

¹³³ *European and African Traders' Organization*, Letter No. 1, circa, 1923.

wherever such is possible and to enable this object to be accomplished necessitates the importation of these people from England and other parts of the Empire.”¹³⁴

Within a week after its formation, EATO had managed to convince most European-owned commercial enterprises around the country to join its cause. Its second newsletter¹³⁵ claimed the organization was doing groundwork to ascertain the difficulties businesses would face should there be non-employment of Indians and how to combat such difficulties. Via a series of newsletters, EATO rose from a small campaign network to become a formidable movement in few short weeks. Some Christian missionary societies found sympathy for its cause. Dr. Arthur of the Church of Scotland Mission, for instance, promised to organize Kikuyu people in his parish to run shops under European supervision with hope of creating competition with the established Indian-run *dukas*. In due course, EATO set itself up as a job bank, reporting on its fourth newsletter the following Europeans looking for jobs: “Book-Keepers 4, Clerk 1, Caterer 1, Grocers’ Assistant 1, Hotel Manager 1, Handyman and overseers 5, Secretaries 2, Shorthand Typist 1, Saw Miller 1, Carpenter and Joiner 1, Taxi Driver 1.”¹³⁶ By the organization’s sixth newsletter, it claimed to have matched thirty job applicants with potential employers.¹³⁷ The subsequent newsletter reported more than sixty applicants.¹³⁸ What was even more worrying for Indians is that government departments such as the Railway joined the

¹³⁴ *European and African Traders’ Organization*, Letter No. 2, circa, 1923.

¹³⁵ Although it was not dated, the newsletter gave the impression that it was produced weekly. Each publication always referred to the immediate previous issue as ‘last week’s letter’.

¹³⁶ *European and African Traders’ Organization*, Letter No. 4, circa, 1923.

¹³⁷ *European and African Traders’ Organization*, Letter No. 6, circa, 1923.

¹³⁸ *European and African Traders’ Organization*, Letter No. 7, circa, 1923.

campaign. Indians employees were purged, and their businesses undermined whenever an opportunity arose. Nevertheless, their nationalists dug their heels in and continued to demand equality, desegregation, unrestricted immigration, and representation in the LegCo.

Seen from the point of view of the Europeans, their fears were real. The census of 1921 reported Kenya's population comprised of 9,651 Europeans, 22, 822 Indians, and over two and half million Africans.¹³⁹ If the Indians, as they demanded, were allowed to have political franchise on terms of equality¹⁴⁰ with the Europeans', they would outvote Europeans readily on any issue that called for voting on ethnic interest. If that political franchise was combined with their unrestricted migration, which they were also demanding, clearly, the Europeans would be at their mercy, politically and economically. Understandably, the confrontation between the two led to a stalemate. Consequently, early in 1921, two deputations set sails for London with the objective of presenting their respective cases before the Colonial Secretary. One deputation consisted of members of Indian National Congress, Kenya branch, armed with grievances of trampled rights and withheld privileges; the other deputation comprised white settlers, waving their justifications for why it was necessary to deny every one of Indian demands.¹⁴¹ Amidst the European deputation was a missionary, Dr. John Arthur, the head of Scottish mission, hurriedly appointed to represent Africans just in case their opinion was sought. It was during these

¹³⁹ *EAP Annual Report*, No 1122, 1920-21.

¹⁴⁰ Equal franchise was a one-man-one-vote arrangement. It contrasted with 'special franchise' or 'communal franchise' whereby the governor determined the number of seats that a particular special-interest community (ethnic included) could hold.

¹⁴¹ 'European Views on Indians', *Report of the Economic Commission*, 1919.

deputations to London that Africans held the critical meeting at Dagoretti where the Thuku declared Indians to be Africans' friends.

It is safe to assume the younger educated Africans were privy to what was going on in London, hence, the resolution requesting the "Indian delegation now on its way to England to represent their cause to the Secretary of State for the Colonies... and if necessary to the Prime Minister also."¹⁴² Some of the younger Africans had made acquaintance with Indian nationalists in their mutual fight against European influence. Thuku, for instance, counted among his allies, the editor of *East African Chronicles*, M.A. Desai, Mangal Dass, Shams-ud-deen, Suleiman Virjee and the veteran of Indian nationalism in Kenya, Jeevanjee himself. It was these nationalists, and particularly Desai, who Thuku's group often sought for advice and editorial help with their petitions and correspondences.¹⁴³

If separately the political actions of Indian nationalists and African literati worried the colonial officials, their combined effort utterly horrified even the most freethinking European in the colony. At first, their acquaintance had not caused fear beyond the occasional mild surprise. But after the meeting at Dagoretti, the colonial officials knew at once they had to scuttle this alliance. How and where the strategy was hatched is not clear, and one can only piece it together from the petitions, cable telegrams and other documents that emerged later. From these documents, it seems the government officials twisted Indians' petition for its greatest effect on

¹⁴² 'Memorandum of Grievances', 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 492-3.

¹⁴³ Thuku also sought Desai's help to abridge KA memorandum issued at the Dagoretti meeting in order to send to London via cable. See Thuku, *Autobiography*, 1970.

Africans. A cable from the Officer Administering the Government of East African Protectorate, Viscount Milner, is worthy examining in detail in this regard. It stated:

My telegram of 11th June Leading elders Kikuyu have also addressed the Government requesting permission to send a deputation to you on Indian question. Request withdrawn at meeting here at which Kinyanjui and Kioii present among others but the elders urged their following points be placed before you by cable. No. 1. They oppose recognition of equal rights of Indians if additional alienation of highlands at the expense of natives involved. No. 2. They oppose extension of Indian control over native affairs as—instancing railway—experience teaches them that Indian officials habituate bribery in contrast with Europeans...¹⁴⁴

It is improbable that the African elders had access to the Indian petition. Indians had not made some of the demands the elders were protesting. What seems possible is that the colonial officials, given that their deep interest in the issue, deliberately misled the elders, by creating the impression that concession to Indians' demands would lead to a direct affliction on Africans. For instance, Indians' demand of political representation was interpreted for the Kikuyu elders to mean political control of African affairs. Integration of residential areas, the elders were made to believe, meant annexation of Africans' lands to create residences for Indians in the highlands. In short the Kikuyu elders were led to believe that conceding to Indians' demands was equivalent to surrendering their whole welfare to them. Who did they want to govern them, the 'morally corrupt' Indians who took to bribery at every turn, or the honorable paternalistic Europeans? It was no wonder then, that the elders' letter to the governor bore remarkable similarity to the official cables. It said in part:

In regard to the matter of Indians in this country, we wish to state that we do not desire Indians to come here and do not look upon their presence as helpful

¹⁴⁴ Official Acting Governor to Colonial Secretary, Telegram No. 169, 11, June, 1923, CO 533/295; Official Acting Governor to Colonial Secretary. Despatch, "Delegation from East African Association, 25 June, 1923, CO 533/295.

to us. Our people have no fondness for them, and they on their part despise us and are lacking in sympathetic feeling toward us... As for Indians occupying positions of authority over us as District Commissioners, etc, we wish to state that we have no confidence in them in view of their ways as we know them. We could not agree to such thing, nor could we approve of their being given equal status with the Europeans in regard to anything affecting us and our affairs.¹⁴⁵

Trying to measure how much weight the elders' letter added to the anti-Indian campaign is not an easy task. Important to note, however, is the fact that this letter was the only anti-Indian document in the records bearing an African signature. Four months after it was sent, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, the Lord Devonshire, tabled an official gazette in the British parliament declaring Kenya a primarily African territory. "The interests of the African natives," declared the document "must be paramount and that if, and when those interests and the interests of migrant races should conflict, the former should prevail."¹⁴⁶ The document, famously called the Devonshire White Paper, purported to warn all "migrant races" residing in the Kenya colony. But it was not lost to any observer that this declaration really targeted Indians.

Christian missionaries were not any lesser worried by the coalition between their 'mission boys' and Indian 'agitators.' They considered themselves the legal guardians of the African affairs. Many of the petitions Africans had brought to the government bore their fingerprint. Even the memorandum read at Dagoretti had been put together by one of them before Thuku raced it to his Indian friends to meddle with it.¹⁴⁷ More recently, one of them had muscled his way into being appointed Africans' representative in deputation to London during

¹⁴⁵ Kinyanjui and other Chiefs to the Governor, 1923.

¹⁴⁶ Indians in Kenya: Memorandum Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty the King. *Official Gazette of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, 23 July 1923, p. 693.

¹⁴⁷ McGregor Ross, *Kenya from within*, 1968.

the confrontation between the Europeans and Indians. In every aspect then, missionaries saw themselves as the proper authority to which Africans had to come for advice and guidance. Indians could be nothing but spoilers.

The missionaries, therefore, blamed Africans' political restlessness on the Indians 'agitators.' Some of them noted with regret their failure to counteract it. Rev. Hadley D. Hooper, of Kahuhia reported how, when he came back from vacation, he found his parishioners in disorder, "having been misled by one, Hurry [*sic*] Thuku who was very much under Indian influence."¹⁴⁸ The missionary added remorsefully, "It makes one almost curse the day that took McGregor and myself out of the country for furloughs. It has been during the last six months that the mischief has been done..."¹⁴⁹ Hooper's dilemma was that in his absence, Thuku had come around to document people's grievances, which the missionary hoped to counter, by "getting some of our older boys to write an essay on their grievances and what they thought would best alleviate them."¹⁵⁰ A month later, Hooper wrote on a frantic tone saying there was so much 'native unrest' that in his district,

the future of mission work is trembling in the balance; Harry Thuku, the mouth-piece of a clever Indian Lawyer, is playing a very hazardous game... Unfortunately there is no definite proof of his direction by the Indian traders: but when you find him writing in two different kinds of English according as he is in Nairobi or out of it; when you find him touring the country in high-powered

¹⁴⁸ H.D. Hooper to J.H. Oldham, Edinburgh House, H. 3/II, 22 January, 1922, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 502.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

Indian cars; having his office in the building of the Indian Association, and printing his circulars at the Indian press: the deduction is fairly obvious.¹⁵¹

Hooper attributed Indian influence on Thuku's anti-missionary campaign saying, among the lies Thuku was spreading, was one that "the missionaries are thieves and that both missionaries and [government] officials are in the pay of the settlers." An African-Indian association was sure to poison "primitives folk like ours." Hooper was not the only one worried. In much of Kikuyu land, anxiety among the missionaries had reached fever pitch. Even the Africans' 'representative' to London, Dr. Arthur, had to admit he that did not know his charges all that well. In his correspondence with the Secretary of International Missionary Council (IMC), Oldham, Arthur confided his fear, saying that, although Africans had experienced such awakening as to be "almost able to safeguard themselves against oppression and exploitation", imprudence militated against their wisdom.

What is much more to be feared is native rising led by the young educated Christians and resulting in bloodshed and serious setbacks to their whole life. There are political movements being set agoing ostensibly by native of Africa under one head a young Kikuyu Christian and propaganda being carried on among all tribes especially in the semi-educated soil to be found among the young scholars at our schools; these movements we think however are secretly being worked by wiser heads than theirs, namely, the Indians of this country, who are using them for their own ends.¹⁵²

Much as they were opposed to it, the missionaries were gradually coming to the acknowledgement that there was more to the Africans' 'awakening' than Indians' "wiser heads." Africans did have real grievances. Thuku had said in not so many words when he wrote to Desai;

¹⁵¹ H.D. Hooper to J.H. Oldham, Edinburgh House, H. 3/II, 4 March, 1922, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 510.

¹⁵² Rev. Dr. J.W. Arthur to J.H. Oldham, 14 March, 1922, Edinburgh House, H. 3/II, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 512.

“I am quite sure that natives do not need to be told by the Indians that they are not masters in their houses, as they have learnt this from Europeans who are treating them very badly...”¹⁵³ The missionaries knew too, that if they did not help them find the proper means of articulating these grievances, Africans would do it the only way they knew. They were increasingly showing resolve to look elsewhere for what they had failed to get through the missionaries. This is where their partnership with Indians came in. Missionaries closer to Africans had observed—as had Hooper about Thuku—that Africans consulted Indians even on simple editorial of their petitions. To missionaries, such reliance could be alleviated if Africans had access to quality education.

Towards reforming African education.

Quality education had not been a part of missionaries’ program for Africans. Except for the short stint that CMS High School had enjoyed just before the colonial state gained traction, education had remained primarily religious. For one, missionaries were evangelists and not professional teachers. They possessed just enough teaching skills to convert their charges and help them with bible lessons. In any event, higher education for Africans did not have an important place in either the Christian doctrine or the colonial political economy.¹⁵⁴ Post-war years changed that. Africans became more assertive in making their demands and more determined to control their affairs. Rev. J. Britton observed worriedly of the “natives rapidly

¹⁵³ H. Thuku to M.A. Desai. Kismayu, 2 May, 1922. Thuku, *Autobiography*, 1970, Appendix Document X-c.

¹⁵⁴ Schilling observes that it was not until 1920 that Kenya got the first professional teacher. Schilling, ‘Dynamics of Educational Formation in Kenya’, 1980.

emerging from their primitive to a civilized state...forming political associations, desiring to articulate themselves.”¹⁵⁵ He portrayed their swift development as heralding potential danger, saying “this great mass is moving and moving rapidly. It cannot be stopped; it can only be directed. The missionary task is to do its share of the directing of this mighty mass movement.”¹⁵⁶ He saw the task of the colonial state as even more demanding in that it involved shifting of its general policy for Africans to a more progressive character. “The policy of today,” he warned, “must anticipate the policy of the future or there will inevitably be trouble.”¹⁵⁷

Conscious of the looming trouble, missionaries decided to take the lead in averting it. Alliance of Missionary Societies held their annual conference in February of 1922. During the proceedings, and in full presence of the invited government visitors who included; the Assistant Colonial Secretary, Mr. Northcote, Deputy Chief Native Commissioner, Col. Watkins, Chief Labour Inspector, Mr. Deck, and several prominent European settlers, the missionaries introduced the issue of African representation in the LegCo. Specifically, their spokesperson, Dr. Arthur, stated that since no missionary had a seat in the Council, “the native interests were not represented by those who had the most expert knowledge of the natives and were best qualified to represent them.”¹⁵⁸ The post-war political and ‘race-consciousness’ Africans had experienced, he stated, constituted a great danger unless the Government could “frame immediately a definite

¹⁵⁵ J. Britton, “The Missionary Task in Kenya” *International Review of Missions*, 12 (1923): p. 414.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ “Report of the Conference of the Alliance of Missionary Societies, January 23- 27, 1922”, *East African Standard*, 4 February, 1922.

native policy which should include their development and training for future self-government.”¹⁵⁹

As we will see in the subsequent chapter, the proponents of this policy perceived ‘development and training’ in clear terms of actual educational institutions, where African leadership could be groomed with the backdrop of broader reformed colonial regime. The missionaries—and it later turned out, the colonial administrators as well—had in mind institutions of specialized training, where Africans would be turned into serious-skilled workmen and prepared to take up professions hitherto dominated by Indians, thereby, bringing them a rung higher in the colonial hierarchy. In the same vein, select Africans were expected to acquire literary education, higher than presently available in the mission schools. This was in order that they could contribute in the local ‘native’ political conversations. In their new-found wisdom the missionaries saw Africans learning under tutelage of professional European teachers, grounded strong Christian morality that safeguarded them against bad influence, and especially, political agitation. In the meantime, Africans needed to have a credible forum through which they could articulate their grievances. At the end of the conference, the missionaries resolved to approach both the government and the settlers’ representative organ, the Convention of Associations, with the view of persuading them to establish a Native Affairs Board. Curiously, African membership to this board was not given a thought: Missionaries represented them sufficiently.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

Chapter Two.

Controlled Incorporation: Institutional Development of African Education in Kenya, 1920s-1930s.

In 1922, the Director of Education issued Departmental Instructions Governing Native Education in Assisted Schools, spelling out the new policy that mission schools needed to implement to justify continued government funding. The document covered a wide range of regulatory provisions, among them; re-classification of schools in terms of their location relative to urban development, the procedures by which they should be managed, specific subjects taught, and even the times allotted for each subject. The document made inspectorial visitations mandatory and regular, or rather, it required the affected schools to remain “open at all times to accredited representatives of the Education Department for purposes of inspection.”¹ It called for religious instructions to be given during times that did not interfere with the secular curriculum. Henceforth, such teachings were to be conducted, either at the beginning, or at the end, of the school day.

These instructions came as a response to three important problems that confronted the state during this period. One, there was growing concern among the colonial officials that mission schools were not equipping their African students properly for their designated role in the exigent post-World War I colonial economy. Mission education was seen as inferior, overly literary, and lacking any depth of skill. The aftermath of the war had also occasioned a greater

¹ “Departmental Instructions Governing Native Education in Assisted Schools.” *Education Department of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, Nairobi, 1922, p. 2.

need to open the colony up for fuller exploitation of resources. Coupled with the new wave of European immigration, the condition called for enhanced quality and quantity of African labor. Finally, a well planned education was regarded as the ultimate solution to the persistent Indian problem. Indians still occupied important artisan positions. It was becoming increasingly likely, from the perspective of the colonial officials, that they might employ their professional indispensability as a bargaining chip in pressing for their political demands. The state hoped to counteract them by nurturing an African class to take their place. These challenges could not be addressed unless the Education Department was willing to take the leading role in the defining of education objectives, formulating policies, and supervising their execution.

This chapter documents the evolution of African education heralded by the release of the Departmental Instructions Governing Native Education in Assisted Schools. It argues that the political and economic realities of inter-war period called for a concrete and skillfully managed institutional development of education. Informed by the ideology of controlled incorporation, the state set out to nurture an African educated class that could be relied upon to take on a greater role as skilled laborers and political leaders.² Accordingly, three critical educational institutions were unveiled: The Native Industrial Training Depot was inaugurated in 1924 to provide quality industrial training for African artisans; Jeanes School was started in 1925 for the broader aim of improving the general welfare of rural, mainly agricultural life; and in 1926, the Alliance High School was inaugurated as the training ground for teachers and future African leaders. In direct

² This ideology called for Africans to be more fully incorporated into the structures of the colonial state. Articulated by, among a few other imperial thinkers, G. C. Latham, this view held that, for successful colonial administration, education policy for Africans had to move away from “a slavish imitation of Europe,” that agriculture had to become dominant, and that Africans had to be involved in local education decisions. G. C. Latham, "Indirect Rule and Education in East Africa" *Africa*, 7 (October, 1934): pp. 423-30.

response to the political activities that had paralyzed the country in the early 1920s, the state inaugurated the Local Native Councils (LNCs) in 1924, to serve the purpose of channeling Africans' political expressions into more controlled and tolerable forum. Whereas LNCs were created more as political entities, they nevertheless did remarkably well in championing Africans' educational demands.

Yet the state's effort to avert political trouble with Africans was not amiably reciprocated. Africans distrusted any colonial initiatives so much so that, from mid-1920s, communities were opting out of the colonial educational system altogether, and forming their own independent schools. With their ambitions to create curricula separate from—and in some respects, parallel to—the guidelines issued by the Education Department, African independent schools offered more than a challenge to the colonial educational policy. They disorganized colonial control of education altogether. Inevitably, throughout their existence, their relationship with the state was marked by mutual suspicion. With regard to the African independent schools, this chapter questions the inclination in the existing literature to associate their advent with the contentious ban on female circumcision. To date, scholars continue to suggest that the ban, issued in 1929, was catalytic to the emergence of these schools. This study will demonstrate, however, that the role of the controversial ban has been overrated. Historical development of African education since the early 1920s, suggest their advent was inevitable long before the ban. Thus, rather than be seen as a contributory factor in the growth of the independent schools, the controversial ban should be seen as a parallel episode that became a welcome partner in the struggle against European imperialism.

The Phelps-Stokes Fund and the rise of Jeanes School and Native Industrial Training Depot.

When the Department of Education released the Departmental Instructions Governing Native Education in Assisted Schools in 1922, there was no policy framework at hand to guide their implementation. It was not for another two years, and with critical advisory input from the Phelps-Stokes Commission, that the department began to take steps towards fuller control of education. Having recently published a Negro education survey in the Southern United States, the Phelps-Stokes Fund was the leading authority in the educational problems of the under-developed peoples.³ Its commission visited Kenya in 1924, as a part of wider African mission aimed to “help the Natives in the various countries and Colonies visited through encouraging more and better education of the right type.”⁴ For this purpose, the Commission was keen to see more structured educational instructions as a way of conditioning the ‘natives’ to be content with their assigned place in the colonial order. It stated, thus:

In general, the members of the Commission are convinced that all education must be of character to draw out the powers of the Native African and to fit him to meet the specific problems and needs of his individual and community life. In this connection, they have been profoundly impressed by the ideals of education developed by General Armstrong at the Hampton Institute in Virginia immediately after the Civil War. He saw that book learning of the old type was entirely inadequate: that the plow, the anvil, the hammer, the broom, the frying pan and the needle must all be used to supplement the customary instruction. In other words, that education must be vitally related to the needs of the people as they took up their work as freemen on the plantations and in the towns of the South.⁵

³ Edward H. Berman, “American Influence on African Education: The Role of the Phelps-Stokes Fund's Education Commissions”, *Comparative Education Review*, 15 (June, 1971): pp. 132-145.

⁴ Thomas J. Jones, *Education in East Africa: Report of the Phelps-Stokes Fund Commission*, Edinburgh House Press, 1924, p. xiii.

True to its mission statement, the Commission proved more agile at regurgitating the existing colonial dynamics than engaging in actual empirical study. For one, it is not apparent from its report whether it recognized that the Africans in Kenya, and the ‘freemen’ of US South, existed under profoundly different political and socioeconomic realities. Whereas the Commission proposed an African education system that was grounded on agriculture, most of the arable land in Kenya was held by white settlers, meaning that African labor was expected to mainly benefit the Europeans. Also, what constituted “specific problems and needs” for Africans, both as individuals and as a community, could hardly be said to depend on Africans themselves. These issues were defined by Africans’ self-appointed guardians, the Christian missionaries, who professed to know Africans better. On the same token, the Commission’s adaptation of General Armstrong’s ideals, disregarded Africans’ views on how their life should be structured. Its criticism of the narrowly aimed “book learning of the old type” offered by the mission schools, and its recommendations for more advanced technical, agricultural and social training, was seen, from the white settlers’ perspective, as a milestone validation of their long-held belief that Africans were best restricted to physical labor. All in all, the Phelps-Stokes Commission underscored the importance of reforming the education system, a task that the state could not hope to achieve without taking its fuller control. The government took Phelps-Stokes Commission’s recommendations to heart, and through them, inaugurated the Jeanes School.

Jeanes School was a direct brainchild of the Commission, and indeed, its first principal, James W.C. Dougall, was the Phelps-Stokes Commission’s own secretary, recruited directly

⁵ Ibid, p. xvii.

from New York.⁶ Started in 1925, the Education Department's Annual Report of 1926 described Jeanes School as an institution "where Africans of high character and tactful disposition, but not of high intellectual attainments"⁷ were trained as supervisors of village schools. As the name suggests, Jeanes School in Kenya was created in the image of the Jeanes Fund (also known as the Negro Rural School Fund) in the Southern United States, whose graduates spent their time improving small schools for African-Americans in the rural districts. The Kenyan school borrowed from the US in more than one way. Like its US counterpart, its mission was to train field teachers to go out and "teach country folk to use the school as a convenient starting point for social and economic improvements."⁸ Both systems also shared a common benefactor, the New York based, Carnegie Foundation. The difference between the two is that America's Jeanes Fund teachers were trained in Hampton, Tuskegee and other historically black universities and colleges, while Kenya's Jeanes School teachers came out of mission's Central Schools and Junior High Schools. Their reading comprehension was therefore lower compare to their US counterparts: At best, it was comparable to sixth grade students in the US system. Kenya's Jeanes School also recruited male students where Jeanes Fund in the US recruited primarily female.

The Jeanes School offered training for rural schools inspectors, teachers' trainers, and mentors. Whereas it admitted primarily male students, they were required to attend the school

⁶ *Education Department Annual Report, 1925.* (Hereafter *EDAR*)

⁷ *EDAR, 1926*, p. 13.

⁸ Government of Kenya Colony and Protectorate, "Jeanes School; Kabete, and the work of The Village Guide." 1931, KNA MSS/61/275.

along with their wives. Upon graduation, the couples were expected to visit village schools, conducting classes for the teachers, and offering them hands-on experience in all aspects of village life.⁹ Christianity was at the core of their training at Jeanes School. They were taught “School Prayers and “Religious Instructions” daily. At the field, their supervisors were the Christian missionaries, and like missionaries, Jeanes School teachers were encouraged to perceive themselves as the shining example for the African communities in which they worked. The School endeavored to create an all-rounded graduate whose

influence in the African village arises largely from the fact that his own standards can be an example to others. His wife has been trained to act as teacher and helper to her neighbours. She knows how to keep a nice house and to take care of herself and her children. Her husband takes the lead in the adoption of improved housing and sanitation. He uses more intelligent and economical methods in agriculture. Many people come to see his village with its better home and kitchen, its vegetable garden, well, and latrine; its chicken-run, goat-house manure-pit, and grain store. His home, in short, serves as a model for the community where he is living, since a large part of his task is to supply those essential elements in education which are seen in satisfactory home conditions.¹⁰

Its philosophy called to mind the soft eugenics program.¹¹ For instance, the rationale to produce all-rounded role models, the Director of Education, J. R. Orr argued, had more to do with Africans’ mental development. African mind had reached an advanced sense perception, he said, where both imagination and emotions were highly developed, but its reasoning faculties were discouragingly low. “Just as handwork has been found useful in the training of the mentally defective children, so the most useful training which the African can receive in his present

⁹ James W. C. Dougall, “School Education and Native Life”, *Journal of the International African Institute*, 3 (January, 1930): pp. 49-58.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For deeper analysis on Eugenics project in Kenya, see Chloe D. Campbell, *Race and Empire: Eugenics in Colonial Kenya*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.

condition is continual contact with material processes.”¹² For this reason, he thought it was necessary to provide Africans with their own kind to emulate, those who were seen as “the leading spirits... those who are listened to, who have a knack of guiding without fuss or fury... to act as leaven which will leaven the whole lump.”¹³ Yet, despite such laudatory qualities, the colonial policy makers still worried that, if the Jeanes teachers did not go back to school every so often for refresher courses, they might degenerate and become unsuitable role models.

Orr also reminded the European residents of the colony that every one of them was, by default, bound to become a role model whose vices and virtues were mimicked indiscriminately by the half-developed Africans. Said the official in part, “If we of the superior race give way to alcohol excess or to sexual indulgence—especially with other races—to forgery, theft, assault or even bad manners, it is unfair to blame the schools if Africans follow suit.”¹⁴ Curiously, even as Orr was busy advising the Europeans to be on their best behavior lest they provide bad influence to Africans, the major concern was not that Africans were imitating them. It was the fact that Africans were adopting political militancy associated with Indian nationalists. As a deterrence to such influence, the educational report of 1926 argued; “Our first aim in training the African [is] to educate him in the manner safest to himself and, incidentally, to the world in general. We wish to lead him into citizenship by a more efficient way than seditious rebellion.”¹⁵ The report

¹² *EDAR*, 1926, p. 15.

¹³ T. G. Benson, “The Jeanes School and the Education of the East African Native”, *The Journal of Royal African Society*, 35 (October, 1936): p. 420. Also see, Principal Jeanes School to the Director of Education, 5 September 1929, KNA AV/12/336, p. 21.

¹⁴ *EDAR*, 1926, p. 17

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 25.

regarded History as the most valuable subject in this respect, arguing that it enabled the Jeanes School teachers to see their place in the world more realistically. In learning History, Africans were given “to realise the steps of progress taken by other people. It should show them how much they have to learn, how progress depends firstly on work and character, and it should point them to the best examples of individual and racial achievement for their admiration and emulation.”¹⁶

Jeanes School recruited its batch from among students at Junior High and Central Schools who had passion for teaching. On the other hand, students who showed potential for artisanship joined the Native Industrial Training Depot (NITD). Unlike Jeanes School, which was started as a training center, NITD was envisaged as an artisans’ depot where skill was amassed, polished up, and assembled into harmonious labor units that were eventually dispatched around the country to construct public institutions and infrastructure. The Education Department defined NITD object as supplying “the Colony with qualified African artizans to cope with the large building programme now under consideration [*sic*].”¹⁷ Its leading artisans were recruited directly from England. NITD’s original limit of three-hundred apprentices was quickly achieved. Inspired by such success, the government expanded that number to six-hundred, a capacity that was also attained quickly. Consequently, the apprentices were split into two shifts of three-hundred each. During each season, half of the team was in-training while the other half worked on projects around the country. Luck followed NITD beyond recruitment. In few years of existence, the work of its gangs had become outstanding such that when Orr held a

¹⁶ EDAR, 1925, p. 26.

¹⁷ Ibid.

convention with the provincial commissioners in 1928 to evaluate the quality of its projects around the country, the officials spent their time showering accolades to the Depot. At conclusion, they urged;

That the Native Industrial Training Depot should be considered the source of supply for fully trained artisans in the Colony and that the whole five-year training should as at present be given to some boys at the Native Industrial Training Depot, students being sent from the different districts of the country, who have passed the Elementary B examination. The present arrangement should continue by which boys who have done three years' technical work [...] are permitted to have two years at the Native Industrial Training Depot to finish their five years' artisan training.¹⁸

The officials no longer saw the need to import European technical staff from Europe. They considered African artisans sufficiently prepared to fill their vacancies, which, in the long run, aimed to substantially reduce government expenditure.

Nine years after its launch, annual educational reports were still recording 'remarkable improvements' in NITD's progress. In some of its projects, the annual report of 1933 observed, "it has been possible to compare the finished work with similar work carried out by Indian contractors."¹⁹ This was an exultant report by any means. NITD was launched precisely as a solution to the Indian problem. And although this picture is far from demonstrating how NITD benefited Africans, the fact that it successfully helped the colonial state to replace the Indian artisans with Africans, was seen as an incredible achievement. Furthermore, the Depot helped the government to speed up construction of important projects. In 1936 alone, its work-gangs

¹⁸ "Proposal with regard to African Education, discussed and amended at a meeting between Mr. Hussey, the Provincial Commissioners and the Acting Director of Education, Kenya Colony, 20th and 21st July, 1928", PC/NZA.3/10/1/7, p. 3.

¹⁹ *EDAR*, 1933, p. 21.

constructed; a hospital in Kapsabet, Local Native Council offices in Kisii, classrooms in Kapenguria and a school block in Loitokitok, all in addition to other minor jobs contracted by the veterinary laboratories. Its internal report of the same year boasted that NITD artisans were being booked months in advance. By then, it had trained over 1300 artisans, mainly as carpenters, smiths, tailors, masons and bricklayers, and painters and sign writers. On the whole, NITD was the magnum opus project of the colonial state, proudly paraded to the world for emulation. Its guest book bore signatures of such important visitors as the Governor, the Undersecretary of State for the Colonies, British members of parliament, and various commissions that came to learn from its organization for the benefit of similar institutions elsewhere.²⁰ Its prominence lasted through to its end in 1938 when, confronted by the World War II, the state took the Depot over as a military training institution.²¹

In contrast, Jeanes School did not enjoy similar success. Apart from the obvious functional differences between the two institutions, Jeanes' School was regarded as a failure where NITD had succeeded. Its report of 1936 painted a grim picture of an institution still struggling to get off the ground. "There is still much to be done to harness and direct energies of all Jeanes teachers in their social activities into channels which follow the flow of local plans of development"²², the report lamented despairingly. This late in time, the selection process of its students had yet to be streamlined. Supervision of teachers in the field remained poor. In fact,

²⁰ One of the visitors from the United State apparently confided to its principal that NITD was better known in the US than it was in Kenya. *Native Industrial Training Depot Annual Report, 1937*.

²¹ *EDAR*, 1946.

²² *EDAR*, 1936, p. 68.

right from the time of its launch, Jeanes School ran into one hurdle after another. For the most part, its problem had to do with the different, often conflicting, sets of expectations of the school by all involved. The Director of Education, Orr, hoped to recruit ‘competent’ and ‘resourceful’ students, by any measure of evaluation. That expectation was, however, quickly disappointed in the first lot selected to join the school in 1925. The Director described the students as inadequate, and naturally blamed the mission societies saying that, although the students had been “carefully selected by the Missions as boys of high character”, their level of education was defective to the extent that they were “incapable of thinking out problems for themselves.”²³ Evidently, the missionaries, with their vision of Jeanes School as a moral training ground, had made their selection with singular attention to the students’ Christian moral value. And when a frustrated Orr took charge of the selection criteria to replace the batch, the missionaries refused to cooperate, forcing Education Department to go out on the recruitment drive alone. By 1928, Orr complained that the missionaries were intentionally undermining the Department’s effort to recruit from their schools.²⁴ The missionaries felt that, sending their best teachers to Jeanes School for two years was, in essence, losing them.

On their part, the African students came to Jeanes School expecting to acquire higher teachers’ training education. Students admitted in 1925 boycotted the courses they regarded as everyday and commonsensical. Any instructions based on simplicities of home-life, health, agriculture, recreation and habit-formation were seen as “merely a pretext for keeping the native

²³ *EDAR*, 1925, p. 18.

²⁴ *EDAR*, 1928.

in a state of unintelligent inferiority.”²⁵ Four years after the school opened, the government was still experiencing curriculum boycotts by students were still coming in expecting the education to be “foreign and bookish, presenting abstract information rather than interpreting familiar fact and preparing for practical necessities.”²⁶ In the end, many students considered Jeanes Schools’ village-based curriculum unappealing and left the school altogether.

Put together, the disharmony wrought by different expectations interfered with Jeanes School’s effectiveness from early in its life. The education annual report of 1931, for instance, complained that its curriculum was overcrowded, which left the students with little room to absorb the lessons taught. As a solution, the report called for more preparatory courses before the main curriculum began. In itself, such call was paradoxical, given that, selection of Jeanes students was based on qualifications other than their academic strength. There was already great disparity in the academic standard of entry-level students. This was aggravated by the government’s directives to Jeanes School to admit farm-school teachers. Farm-school teachers were, ordinarily, regular farm workers who possessed varying degrees of literacy, and for that reason, conducted classes for the children of other workers in the white settlers’ farms. Their qualification to attend Jeanes School was determined by their employers’ acquiescence, and the fact that they could “read and write intelligently and [could] do the elementary processes of arithmetic with some facility and accuracy.”²⁷ By and large, admitting farm-school teachers to

²⁵ *EDAR*, 1925, p. 33.

²⁶ *EDAR*, 1929, p. 58.

²⁷ “Jeanes School, Kabete—Training of Farm School Teachers.” Education Department, Circular, No. 37, 6 June, 1930, KNA PC/NZA 3/10/1/4.

Jeanes School contributed to the prevailing difficulty in finding a common entry-level academic standard.

In time, the criticism of Jeanes School by the colonial educational policy makers assumed a systemic nature. The annual education report of 1928 claimed that its graduates did not embody the educational values of an “improved native village.”²⁸ The graduates were a far cry from the ‘leavened’ bunch that was envisioned by the policy makers only a few years earlier as taking the responsibility to ‘leaven the whole lump.’ Jeanes School’s all-rounded graduates were expected to perform a multitude of tasks, but that also involved taking orders from multiple authorities, all of which, in the end, took a great toll on their overall performance.²⁹ One evaluation report observed:

The discipline of the [Jeanes School graduates] at work has at times given grounds for dissatisfaction. Some fail to carry out routine instructions. They lack tact, and especially when they first begin their work, are apt to appear self-satisfied and conceited and try to use authority instead of persuasion, thus arousing resentment. They try to push through some project which they think will please the Government, and neglect the slow and steady work needed for the real betterment of the schools and villages.³⁰

Overall, the products of Jeanes School seen as having failed to “give proof of any more enlightened outlook on the development of their areas as a result of their training,”³¹ showing a lack of organizing power, and failing to improve the general standard of life in their communities. Their wives, their supposed companions in their agents-of-change mission,

²⁸ *EDAR*, 1928.

²⁹ The Director of Education calculated that the Jeanes Teachers were taking orders from six different authorities. *EDAR*, 1929.

³⁰ *EDAR*, 1930, pp. 63-4.

³¹ *Ibid*, p. 64.

dropped out of sight altogether over what the Director of Education described as “inability to assimilate the training received.”³² As well, their field supervisors did not come around as frequently as expected, and when they did, spent insufficient amount of time with the teachers to guarantee useful guidance or evaluation.

In conclusion, Jeanes School was conceived out of gross misconception of Africans by the agents of European imperialism. It was a social engineering project that aimed to change the African personality to reflect fantasies of the colonialists. Its teachers were expected to represent an invented African image that was unfamiliar to both the teachers themselves and the society supposed to emulate them. In the end, that image, rather than symbolize what was best in the African society, caricatured it. Remarkable, though, was the state’s persistence to achieve this invented image. In spite of its repeated failure to satisfy the colonial officials’ expectations, the school lasted throughout the colonial period, and in its later years, went on to offer training courses for the African colonial administrators.³³

Alliance High school; grooming of educated African elite.

As mentioned earlier, following the political upheavals of early 1920s, the inadequacy of mission education—particularly, in its substandard and dangerous aspects—elicited sharp scrutiny of the colonial officials. The failure of the African ‘mission boys’ to distinguish the

³² Ibid.

³³ Provincial Commissioner, Central Province to Colonial Secretary “Course of Instruction for Chiefs at the Jeanes School, Kabete”, 4 December, 1937, KNA GH/11/5.

European paternalistic ‘benevolence’ from the Indian agitators’ ‘malevolence’ was all blamed on missionaries educators. Equally blamed on the missionaries was the failure of its so-called ‘half-educated’ Africans elite to gain proper professional occupations that would pull them away from idle politics. Hence, the state took upon itself the task of finding a way to make them useful and by so doing, forestall future political disturbances. The policy makers considered cultivating a cadre of well educated Africans to protect the colonial regime from its increasingly restive subjects. First, however, these elite were to be conditioned to embrace the core principles of European supremacy.³⁴ This was how Alliance High School came into being.

There was another strong incentive to establish an institution for higher learning. The colonial officials feared that without one, Africans, whose demands for education had risen dramatically, were prepared to go abroad. There had been only two known cases of African students who had gained higher education, and both had obtained it abroad; one in 1909 and another in 1915.³⁵ The World War I broadened the horizons of many more Africans, and it was only a matter of time before they started leaving the colony in search of higher education. Of particular worry was the African-Indian association. To be sure, Kenya had enjoyed a long connection with India going over centuries. It might be remembered that the first missionary community was established by African freed slaves who had grown up in Nassik, India. Also,

³⁴ See, for instance, W. M. Macmillan, "The Importance of the Educated African." *Journal of the African Society*, 33 (April, 1934): pp. 137-42.

³⁵ Malonket Olokorinya ole Sempele went to the Negro Institute in Virginia in 1909 through the help of AIM missionary John Stauffacher. Kenneth King, "A Biography of Malonket Olokorinya ole Sempele". In *Kenya Historical Biographies*. Edited by Kenneth King and Ahmed Salim. Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1971. Jama attended Tuskegee in 1915 through help of former US President, Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was making true of his promise to Jama's father Juma Yohari who had acted as Roosevelt's guide during his shooting safari in Kenya in 1909. Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism and Education: a Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

late nineteenth century, the Church Missionary Society High School in Kenya had regularly sent its African graduates to India for higher education.³⁶ In more recent years, however, Indian nationalists had become particularly munificent towards their fellow African nationalists, and there was no telling where this relationship would lead. The colonial officials were aware of this connection and sought to discourage it in any way they could. Offering Africans quality education was seen as a crucial step towards eliminating their reliance on Indians. Alliance High School was therefore envisioned as playing a role similar to that of Native Industrial Training Depot; a role of rendering Indians inconsequential.

The Christian missionaries had envisioned an institution akin to Alliance back in 1913, when the four major Protestant missions operating in Kenya; the CMS, the United Methodists Mission (UMM), the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) and the African Inland Missions (AIM), hosted a conference to discuss the prospect of the missions merging to form a united African church. Their idea was that once the church was consummated, it would establish a college at Kikuyu. World War I, however, broke out before the plan was consummated. At the conclusion of the war, another conference was called, also at Kikuyu, and the negotiations revived. The missions failed to agree on a united church but settled, instead, for the Alliance of Protestant Missionary Societies.³⁷ The state therefore came into an already existing plan, and predictably, for some time, played the second fiddle to the missionaries on the major decisions pertaining to the school.

³⁶ Sorobe, N. Bogonko, *A History of Modern Education in Kenya, 1895-1991*. Nairobi: Evans Brothers (Kenya) Limited, 1992.

³⁷ "Report of the Conference of the Alliance of Missionary Societies, January 23- 27, 1922", *East African Standard*, 4 February, 1922.

Alliance High School was realized through a combination of factors, the most important of them being funds, land, and fierce negotiations. The state provided the funds through the East African War Relief Fund. This money was actually diverted from its original purpose, having been contributed by Africans to compensate servicemen and their families who were seriously impacted by the First World War.³⁸ Since the government, for whatever reason, never distributed the approximated at £6,000, in 1922, the Central Advisory Committee on African Education recommended it to be turned over to the Alliance of Protestant Missionary Societies. The Alliance' original idea was to build a medical college for the purpose of training African orderlies.³⁹ The Church of Scotland Mission donated some one-hundred acres for the project. The construction began in 1924.

Three months into the project, the man directing the construction, Mr. Hunt, was recalled by his host mission station in South Africa. In his absence, George Grieves of CSM began to conduct classes in the half-complete buildings, for African teachers from the Alliance member groups, and the Gospel Missions, a non-member.⁴⁰ In the interim, the government revised its thinking and decided a medical college was premature. Specifically, the state did not trust that the Alliance had the required resources, much less the expertise, to undertake such as momentous a task as training medical orderlies.⁴¹ This change of plan put all the involved parties in an

³⁸ This money had been contributed during the war by 'Africans for Africans.' *EDAR*, 1926.

³⁹ "Central Advisory Committee on African Education. Proceedings of Meeting held on November 18th, 1925", KNA PC/NZA/3/10/1/1.

⁴⁰ B.D. Gibson, "Memorandum. The Protestant Alliance Missionary College." 2 March, 1925, Edinburgh House, F.14. Quoted in Benjamin Kipkorir, *The Alliance High School and the Origins of the Kenya African Elite, 1926-1962*. PhD. Diss. Cambridge University, 1969.

awkward position. Land had been donated and buildings constructed with public funds, and so, the parties involved had to account for the stalled project. The state proposed to take the premise over, but the missionaries disagreed, saying they would rather turn it into a higher education center with future prospects of making it a university. Their proposal was promptly shot down. Apparently, the state had the same idea, and for the same exact place. In essence, this was a contest of control. Both parties believed whoever controlled the institution would ultimately control skilled labor.⁴² Their tug of war might have lasted much longer had the Secretary of International Missionary Council, Joseph H. Oldham not been called in to arbitrate. Oldham proposed a joint project of a high school with a teachers' training college appended to it. The Acting Governor, Edward Denham, embraced the idea readily.

With the government fully on board, the other vital constituency the Alliance missionaries needed to convince was the European settlers. Settlers were the majority in the Legislation Council (LegCo). Their opposition to missionary-controlled education was well known. They argued that religious and literary instructions took too much students' time at the expense of more useful industrial and agriculture education. To convince them that Africans needed a higher educational institution was certainly an uphill task. It was left up to Dr. John Arthur to do the persuading. As the unofficial African representative to the LegCo, Arthur was as

⁴¹ The government, however, used a more diplomatic language in presenting its case. The Colonial Secretary called Dr. Arthur and informed him that since the Medical Department received its revenue from taxation, it was the one, not missionaries, charged with providing medical training. Apparently, the Secretary did not see the irony of his statement since the same thing could be said of education. J. Stephen Smith, *The History of the Alliance High School*. Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books, 1973.

⁴² One of the Alliance negotiators, Bishop Arthur, accused the government of just this fear. J.W. Arthur. Notes of a discussion with the Colonial Secretary, 31 December, 1924, Edinburgh House F. 14. In Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969.

much a politician as he was a missionary. He was conversant with settler politics and knew their de facto leader, Lord Delamere, well. Somehow, the missionary convinced the settler leader that his community could earn praises and goodwill in Britain if it supported an institution for higher education for Africans in Kenya.⁴³ Arthur even promised Delamere two seats on the institution's governing body, one for himself, and another for a settler of his choice.⁴⁴ Delamere was not only won over by Arthur, he was soon boasting "that he was not one of those who believed that education for Africans should be divorced from religious teaching."⁴⁵

The formal proposal to establish Alliance High School was put to a vote on June 9, 1925, before the newly established Central Advisory Committee of Native Education. It was instigated by the Director of Education, J.R. Orr's report that African communities were preparing to send their sons to schools in Ceylon, India, America, and England. He reported that arrangements were at advanced stage to send two boys to the Achimota College.⁴⁶ A worried Orr argued that if the government did not consider providing higher education within the colony immediately, it would be difficult to influence African students were they to seek it elsewhere. Once out of the country, the students might become "contaminated" with "subversive" ideas and return as

⁴³ Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969, p. 79.

⁴⁴ In the end, the board came to consist of fourteen members; an ex officio chair, four members appointed by the Representative Council of the Alliance, two appointed by the Kenya Missionary Council of Protestant Missions, three appointed by the government, two from the Elected Representatives of the LegCo and two donors worthy of contributions upward of £50. *Original Constitution of the Alliance High School for the Higher Education of Africans in Kenya Colony*. KNA MSS/3/8.

⁴⁵ Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969, p. 80. Kipkorir argues that it is likely Delamere readily agreed to shift his position from genuine worry that Mohammedan faith would spread among the natives.

⁴⁶ "Minutes of the Sixth meeting of the Central Advisory Committee on Native Education, 1ST Day, 9 June, 1925. KNA PC/NZA/3/10/1/1.

political agitators.⁴⁷ If this statement was made with the aim of dramatizing the urgency of the situation, it achieved just the desired result. It brought Lord Delamere on the floor with the proposal urging that; “This Committee is of the opinion that higher education must be provided immediately for Africans, provided that literary education is regarded as a means to building up character and not as an end in itself.”⁴⁸ He was seconded by Dr. Arthur, who proposed a subsidiary clause; “that higher education shall be directed along practical lines through literary education towards definite vocation in life.”⁴⁹ Both proposals passed unanimously. The following day, June 10, the Central Advisory Committee on Native Education met formally and passed the resolution advising the government to establish a high school for Africans in Kenya “at the earliest possible moment.”⁵⁰ Further, the Committee urged the government to recognize it as an Assisted School, and make financial provision for it from the estimates of the following year.

Alliance High School was launched with the mandate to offer higher education to “students of African origin whose character and standard of education enable[d] them to profit

⁴⁷ Ibid. Schilling notes another case when the Colonial Office asked the Kenyan government for a 100-pound grant to assist a Kenyan African student in attending Cambridge for a term in 1936, the Colonial Secretary wrote back “There was some reason to fear that during his residence at Cambridge he would make contacts and become exposed to influences which might exercise most unsatisfactory effect on his social and political outlook.” Elis M. Harik and Donald G. Schilling, *The politics of education in colonial Algeria and Kenya* Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1984, p. 99. Also see, Murray-Brown on how the colonial authorities kept close watch of Kenyatta during his visit to London in the 1920s and again in the 1930s. Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*. 2nd ed, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1979.

⁴⁸ ‘Minutes of the Sixth meeting of the Central Advisory Committee’, 1925.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

by the training given.”⁵¹ As a leaders’ training ground, even the state officials agreed Alliance needed a strong Christian basis. Its constitution stated that anyone associated with the school had to accept its doctrine in; “absolute deity of the Lord Jesus Christ”, “His substitutional atonement”, and the “absolute authority and integrity of Holy Scripture.”⁵² In that respect, everyone in Alliance, from the headmaster, down to the lowest ranked staff, was expected to profess Christianity. To testify how important this canon was, the first five applicants for the headmaster position were rejected on the account of their religious faith. Another candidate named Davis J. Darlow, dropped out protesting that the search committee had attacked his faith. After appearing for the initial interview at Cape Town, Darlow penned his protest to one of the Alliance patrons, Dr. Arthur; “I wish you could have heard the questions asked at C.T. [Cape Town] by Mr. Daintree—Did I believe in the historicity of the Old Testament—that it was free from all legend... Did I believe in the full sacrificial theory... I, a missionary, was asked if I had ever done any spiritual work... It will be interesting to see the type of man chosen and what kind of university [*sic*] he will develop and what will happen to the students when they begin to think for themselves.”⁵³ In the end the right man to head Alliance High School was not found. Mr. Grieve, who had been conducting teachers’ courses on the premises, was asked to stay on interim basis.

In spite of the anticipation that had surrounded Alliance, the school opened on March 1, 1926 to a rocky start. For one, the first students found only half-complete buildings and only

⁵¹ *The Constitution of Alliance High School.*

⁵² Smith, *History of the Alliance High School*, 1973, p. 18.

⁵³ Davies J. Darlow to Arthur, 14 June, 1926. General Correspondence. Quoted in Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969, p. 135.

teacher, Mr. Grieve, who had been confirmed only that morning as the interim Principal.⁵⁴ Only twenty-seven of the thirty-eight admitted students reported, and of these, six left before finishing the first year.⁵⁵ It must have shocked the colonial state that one student, Mbiu Koinange, left for Hampton College in the United States. Alliance had been started precisely to forestall such an episode. Students continued to stream out for better schools abroad. At one point, Director of Education had to issue a circular declaring: “It is not the policy of the government that Africans should be encouraged to proceed Overseas for advanced education unless it is quite impossible to afford them the necessary facilities in East Africa.”⁵⁶ The authority used all the mechanisms at its disposal to confine the students to the colony, but still a few sneaked through the barriers.⁵⁷ In its early years, Alliance did not fare well economically either. In 1928, locusts invaded Kenya, causing a wide destruction of crop. Food exports fell as a result. The following year, the stock markets in the US and Britain collapsed, creating an economic depression across the world. Kenya’s burgeoning economy evaporated, leaving a crippling deficit on its fiscal budget. An Assisted School getting its money primarily from the government, the school had to make do with limited finances for the next many years.

Its troubled start notwithstanding, the government continued to celebrate the high school. It was hardly fully running when the colony’s annual reports began crooning to its pending

⁵⁴ Smith, *History of the Alliance High School*, 1973, p. 23.

⁵⁵ Minutes of the Conference in regard to the Alliance High School. 1 March, 1926. KNA MSS/3/619.

⁵⁶ “African Education”, 12 March, 1932, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/46, p. 2.

⁵⁷ A common method was simply to deny the Africans travel papers. There were, however situations when Africans traveled abroad for various other missions only for them to end up pursuing their studies. Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, 1979. Parmenas G. Mockerie, *An African Speaks for His People*, London: Hogarth Press, 1934.

success. The report of 1926 stated, “the demand of the State and of commerce for a more highly educated class of individuals who can take their place as leaders among the Africans or within the ranks of the community as thinkers and professional workers is met at the Alliance High School, Kikuyu, where an excellent course of education has been planned by the Headmaster, Mr. G.A. Grieve, M.A.”⁵⁸ The report hastened to add, however, that “the whole course while providing a sound general education is definitely vocational and aims at giving a bias to education which will enable a boy to study later for agriculture, medicine, commerce, etc.”⁵⁹ Emphasis on its vocational aspect was necessary to counterbalance Alliance’s seemingly literary curriculum. This statement was aimed to assure the settler community that, for African students, being at Alliance did not mean they were moving beyond their subservient roles. It was also meant as a warning to the students themselves not to exaggerate their importance. Far from the glossy picture the annual report painted of it, on the ground, Alliance High School was a struggling institution. The Education Department inspection report underscored the myriad challenges it was going through; lack of basic institutional preparation, difficulties in attracting decent students, and lack of amenities. Its edifice was described thus; “The houses of the Principal and of the first Master are advanced to wall-head. The African master’s house and workshop are only as far as the foundation. Makeshift arrangements for the housing of the Principal and his wife involve two chemical stores. The laying out of the grounds has begun but had been seriously hampered by overwork and lack of staff.”⁶⁰ If the inspector found the

⁵⁸ *EDAR*, 1926, p. 14.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p. 14-15.

facilities unready, the caliber of its students convinced him that the whole idea of a high school had come way ahead of its time. Their spoken English, the language supposed to be the medium of instruction, was at Junior Secondary level, which forced the inspector “to the conclusion that the establishment of the school is premature by about two years... The present boys were admitted before they were qualified for a Senior Secondary School.”⁶¹ Yet these were the best students available. Following the procedure recommended to him by the education board, Mr. Grieve had gone out looking for the highest qualified candidates among students who had taken the Junior Secondary School Certificate. To his dismay, there was not a single pass in the whole country, and in the end, he had to reduce the admission standard.

Ill-prepared students were in effect a reflection on the quality of teaching in mission schools. Missionaries were religious preachers and not professional teachers. Some missionary-teachers were themselves hardly educated, a problem the government had observed long before a high school had become a possibility. At one point, the Advisor of Native Affairs, John Ainsworth, recommended teaching certification examinations particularly for the missionary-teachers from non-English societies. While a few of them were “teachers of the highest caliber,” he observed, most were “unintellectual, uncultivated, and in the case of members of the Italian Mission, [could] speak neither the King’s English nor Swahili, the lingua franca.”⁶² These were the agents entrusted with preparing African students for Alliance High School. Understandably, the school’s performance over the next decade remained below the expectation. Funds remained

⁶⁰ E.E. Biss, the Acting Director of Education “Alliance High School: Official Inspection”. Quoted in Smith, *History of the Alliance High School*, 1973, p. 34.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² John Ainsworth, “Education of Natives,” 14 September, 1918, KNA PC/CP/6/5/1.

scarce, thanks to the tenacious economic depression, and students continued to desert for better education opportunities elsewhere. Of those who stayed, the percentage that passed the Elementary C Examination in Form Three was so small that it became pointless to start the advanced Form Four class.⁶³

Another of the school's important hallmarks, spiritual nourishment, did not fare any better. There was a strong feeling among the sponsoring mission societies that Mr. Grieve was not doing much to instill Christian ethics in the students. They reasoned that, while the Principal had accomplished his task of starting the school, injecting new blood could help the school to overcome religious slackness. By 1935, some of Alliance member societies were considering replacing Grieve with Carey Francis. Considerably younger and more energetic, the World War I veteran had taken up teaching career at Maseno School. He was also a known disciplinarian, a quality seen as lacking in Grieve.⁶⁴ A letter addressed to Hadley Hooper of the Scotland Mission, issued a veneered assault on Grieve's laissez-faire administration style saying Francis would be a welcome relief.

[Alliance] has been a good school from the teaching point of view. It lacks perhaps the spirit and life which Carey Francis should instil as head [*sic*]. We don't blame Grieve. He is a Scots dominie of the very best type. I don't know who could have done any better and few could have done nearly as well. But there's a strong case for the type of education for which the best kind of English Public School stands. Carey could bring that tradition balanced and purified by a particular Christian intensity and care for the individual boy.⁶⁵

⁶³ EDAR, 1935.

⁶⁴ Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969.

⁶⁵ Anonymous to Hooper, 24 April, 1935, KNA MSS/3/9.

This is not to say the school was a complete failure. It had made encouraging advances in several respects. By mid 1930s, students were getting admitted at a relatively younger age compared to the previous years. The earliest students had been between nineteen and twenty-two years of age, but by 1936, the average age had dropped to sixteen and a half years.⁶⁶ In close connection with this, the student body had expanded exponentially, in both numbers, and ethnic diversity. The first batch of twenty-seven students who reported in 1926 had been all Kikuyu, but by 1932, the number stood at a hundred students, from six ethnic communities.⁶⁷ By 1937, the school had 125 students from seven communities.⁶⁸

Ethnic diversity deserves more attention here, for its remarkable contribution to the anti-colonial resistance that ultimately ushered Kenya's independence. There had been elements of inter-ethnic solidarity in the anti-colonial African politics of early 1920s, but such had been random, and transitory, and difficult to sustain because it was built heavily around personality. In Alliance, however, the Africans students evolved in ways that the colonial state may not have prepared for, and certainly not have anticipated. It is unclear whether, by the time the school was inaugurated, the colonial thinkers had revised their viewpoint that deemed an African solidarity unlikely. Three decades earlier, John Ainsworth, then the Sub-Commissioner of Naivasha, scoffed at the white settlers when they claimed inter-ethnic African unity was a possibility, and if it did happen, the interests and security of the white population were likely to suffer. In reply, the

⁶⁶ EDAR, 1936.

⁶⁷ Of these, Kikuyu still accounted for the majority of 72 percent. Other communities were a mere 28 percent. With over a dozen distinct ethnic communities, the Coast Province was presented as a 'tribe'. Report to Director of Education, "Alliance High School", Kikuyu 12 November, 1935, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/46.

⁶⁸ See table in Smith, *History of the Alliance High School*, 1973, p. 97.

official stated that the Africans had “neither common ties nor fanaticism which would induce them to combine against the white men.”⁶⁹ The first Director of Education, J.R. Orr, revisited the issue a decade later. He insisted that “If a policy of detribalisation is pursued, the question of colour will come to the front at once, and there will be danger of uniting all tribes against the white population.”⁷⁰ By consenting to the Alliance High School project, the colonial authority had accidentally laid the ground for just the danger they had been trying to avoid.

Not that inter-ethnic alliance came easily. It evolved agonizingly from deep-seated suspicions and superficially acquired stereotypes. In Alliance, students from diverse, far-off, and often rural communities found themselves amongst each other, most of them armed with no acquaintance beyond the images fed to them by their former missionary teachers and other agents of European imperialism. In 1937, for instance a minor episode nearly brought the whole school to an ethnic confrontation between Luo and Kikuyu. It started at the soccer field. Here, I quote Kipkorir, who interviewed some witnesses for his 1968 dissertation research:

A certain Kimanthi Nzuki, a Kamba, is alleged to have started [the confrontation] after being kicked by a “huge” Luo. To the Kamba and their tribal cousins, the Kikuyu, to be kicked by a kehee an uncircumcised male—the Luo, unlike most of the other tribes of Kenya, do not practice circumcision—was a grave insult. That evening (29th June) a small fight ensued, dinner plates being used as missiles. On the following day, the Luo thought they would settle scores and advanced on the Kikuyu. But as in the David and Goliath story, after a bold

⁶⁹ “Views of two Government Officials, C.W. Hobley (Sub Commissioner, Naivasha) and J.D. Ainsworth (Sub Commissioner, Ukamba), on the Address of the Colonists’ Association, October 1905”. Papers Relating to East Africa Protectorate, CO 533/5.

⁷⁰ “Three Educational Systems of the Chief Colonies not possessing Responsible Government (H.M.S.O, 1915), In G. H. Mungeam, *Kenya: Select Historical Documents, 1884-1923*, East African Publishing House, 1978, p. 248.

Kikuyu boy knocked down the Luo giant who was leading the group, the fight was as good as over. 34 Luo left the school for Nairobi asking to be sent home.⁷¹

The Principal, Mr. Grieve, gave a different, but no less ethnic, interpretation of the episode. He claimed the source of the confrontation was academic rivalry. “Previously”, he said, “Kikuyu topped class lists and provided the prefects. With coming of the Luo [into the school], while the Kikuyu still provided the majority of the prefects, the Luo had begun to top the class lists.”⁷² The conflict was only calmed by intervention of Elliud Mathu, the only African teacher in the school.

By 1940, the “year of rebellion against authority,”⁷³ as it came to be called in the school annals, inter-ethnic alliance was firmer. In November of that year, Principal Carey Francis, Grieve’s successor, tried to enlist students’ support for World War II. Francis was a World War I veteran, a good cause for him to feel the patriotic need to contribute to the war effort.⁷⁴ He put up a notice suggesting to his students to raise vegetables in their spare time, which they could sell and give the proceeds to the war pool. The boys not only ignored the suggestion; someone removed the notice altogether. Francis took this act as a challenge to his authority and punished the whole students by denying them food. To his punishment, the students protested by walking out of the school en mass. Those of them whose homes were nearer took in their schoolmates from far-off areas. Most Luo students were from Nyanza, a good two days’ journey. They ended up as guests in the neighboring Kikuyu homes, the community with which they had had an

⁷¹ Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969, p. 165.

⁷² Smith, *History of the Alliance High School*, 1973, p. 94.

⁷³ Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969.

⁷⁴ L. B. Greaves, *Carey Francis of Kenya*. London: Red Collings Limited, 1969.

altercation only three years earlier. Minor though they may seem individually, these incidents became the building blocks for a cross-ethnic solidarity that was ultimately mobilized in the late 1940s and 1950s against common enemy, colonialism. For better or for worse, Alliance became the nursery where the African political elite that managed the post-colonial nation-building project was nurtured. Its graduates formed the largest group in the higher ranks of the first generation of independent Kenya's political class. In his study Kipkorir shows that ten out of seventeen members of the first government cabinet were Alliance alumni as were nine of the fourteen permanent secretaries in the government ministries, the attorney general and the chief justice.⁷⁵ Add into this lot, thousands of Alliance graduates who took up teaching as a career and went on to reproduce the doctrines, values, and discipline inculcated into them during their time at the school.

The Role of Local Native Councils (LNCs) on Education.

Whereas they were not constituted as educational enterprises per se, the Local Native Councils (LNCs) became the most influential promoters of African education within the colonial system. From mid-1920s, LNCs controlled funding for education, and in the later years, established their own District Education Board (DEB) schools. LNCs were formed as a political response to post-war African activism. Convinced, after the political unrest of the early 1920s, that the paid African chiefs had lost authority over their people, the colonial administration decided to reorganize the local politics with the view of recruiting personalities with better

⁷⁵ Kipkorir, *Alliance High School*, 1969.

prospects of gaining respect from Africans. The Native Authority Ordinance was amended in 1924, to allow establishment of LNCs. These reconstituted bodies included, in addition to the African chiefs, selected mission-educated Africans, Christian missionaries, and colonial administrators.

LNCs were not a completely new phenomenon in Kenya's political landscape. They had existed previously in a few districts. In 1915, for instance, the annual report of the then Kenya Province⁷⁶ recorded their activities under the heading 'Native Councils' saying; "The work of the councils has been satisfactory. Kiama meetings under the presidency of an officer has been extended to outlying divisions."⁷⁷ These earlier councils had been tapped directly from the traditional authority figures, mainly elders and the more recently constituted chieftaincy, and had maintained their pre-colonial title, *Kiama*. They had also been spontaneous, and restricted themselves to legal arbitration. The reconstituted LNCs of 1920s, however, enjoyed extended authority, duties and privileges. Envisioned as native assemblies, they served the purpose of channeling the rising African political expression into an acceptable forum.⁷⁸ It was for that reason that they consisted of both government-appointed and elected members, and were chaired by the area district commissioners.

⁷⁶ The area comprised the Sothern Mt. Kenya districts of Fort Hall, Nyeri and Embu to the East that became Central Province when Kenya attained independence.

⁷⁷ Annual Report on the Kenya Province for the year ended 31st March 1915, KNA PC/CP/4/1/1.

⁷⁸ Donald Schilling, "Local Native Councils and the Politics of Education in Kenya, 1925-1939" *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 9, (1976): pp. 218-247

If most LNCs' agendas appeared dubious in Africans' eyes, their redeeming quality was in their complete commitment to promoting African education. They tirelessly pressed for better schools, higher education, and less religious instruction. Justifiably, the earliest LNCs began their mandates by voting substantial monies to improve education. After only a few months of LNC existence in Machakos, the district was reported to be experiencing "rapid erection of permanent village schools."⁷⁹ Around the same time, the Chief Native Commissioner scolded the Acting District Commissioner of Central Kavirondo for allowing his LNC to vote huge amounts of money for education without clearance from the Director of Education. Of the said money, the Council had voted to spend ten-thousand shillings in repair and equipment for existing school buildings, and another thirty-thousand to establish a new school.⁸⁰ Similar level of enthusiasm typified LNCs in other districts. In their first year of life, LNCs around the country had voted to spend one-quarter of the total collected revenue purely on education. And although charged with various other equally demanding projects, this amount increased five-fold within twelve years.⁸¹

As a colonial initiative, Africans rightly viewed LNCs with suspicion. Nonetheless, they achieved remarkable progress. For one, they confronted the missionaries' monopolistic clutch on African education. Most of their meetings were dominated by unrelenting criticism against mission education. The Chief Native Commissioner, C.M. Dobbs, captured this spirit reflectively when he wrote: "Meetings have been held with Local Native Councils in Kavirondo and Kikuyu

⁷⁹ *EDAR*, 1926, p. 19.

⁸⁰ "Minutes of a meeting of the School Area Committee for Central Kavirondo and Kisumu-Londiani held at the Senior Commissioner's Office", Kisumu. 18 November, 1926, KNA PC/NZA/3/10/5/1.

⁸¹ In all, they spent £3,695 out of the total of £17,000 collected in taxes. Schilling, 'Local Native Councils', 1976.

from which it appears that the native has reached a point in his development when he feels that the missionaries under the present arrangements are unable to provide him with what he wants. He does not know what he wants, but he feels dimly that there is something above the mission school. He is not antagonistic but dissatisfied.”⁸² A report from Nyanza Provincial Commissioner to Director of Education recorded much similar impressions. He said that Africans “did not intend to convey the idea that they did not want mission education. They liked the missions and were grateful for their education work. After passing through the Mission schools they wanted higher education at a High School to which all denominations could go.”⁸³ More remarkable were educational developments recorded in areas regarded as backward, outside of Kikuyu and Luo (referred to in the colonial records as the Kavirondo), the two areas seen as more advanced and thus likely to forcefully pursue education. The Kipsigis of Kericho had, through the years, been described as backward and averse to education. After LNC was inaugurated in their area, however, the District Commissioner reported that “certain of the better educated folk [were] canvassing the District for a list of people willing to pay 5/- per head in order to approach the Government with a sum of money and a petition for better teaching.”⁸⁴ From these accounts, it is safe to assume that the colonial officials had been fallaciously describing some African communities as apathetic to education, while in actual fact, these communities only happened to dislike the missionaries who controlled it.

⁸² H.S. Scott, Director of Education to Senior Commissioners, “Memorandum in Regard to Education of Africans”, 26 February, 1929, KNA PC/NZA 3/10/1/4.

⁸³ Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza to Director of Education, January 18, 1931, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/46.

⁸⁴ District Commissioner, Kericho to Senior Commissioner, Kisumu, “Government Native Industrial School, Kericho”, 19 July, 1927, KNA PC/NZA.3/10/1/6.

LNCs also forced the government to hasten reforms in education in general, whether such reforms involved streamlining the policies, conducting frequent school inspection, organizing more council meetings, or simply approving dispensation of resources for education. Within two years of their existence, their exertion on the government was already beginning to show. In a report to the Chief Native Commissioner, the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner said that LNCs of Central and North Kavirondo were passing resolutions to tax themselves substantially in order to provide central schools for their districts. Consequently, he stated, “I am convinced that the Government will have to take a larger share in the education of natives in the Reserves than it has hitherto done though I am not sufficient of an educationist to know exactly what to do.”⁸⁵ To the provincial administration, LNCs presented mixed blessings. On the one hand, their effort had brought the province unprecedented amount of money for education, yet on the other hand, the province was not sufficiently prepared for the sudden and comprehensive educational reforms LNCs were demanding. Thus, he lamented; “It seems perfectly obvious that the methods adopted hitherto have not been successful... I can see that African educational efforts have in the past been to a large extent a failure and I can see what the results are that we wish to achieve but though I have given much thought to it I am not at all certain as to the proper way that this is brought about.”⁸⁶ Underscoring the need for better policies, informed implementers and efficient overseers, the official went on; “As I say we now have promises of money from the natives, we have a wish for education from the native and it should be possible for those who have studied

⁸⁵ Office of the Provincial Commissioner to Chief Native Commissioner, “Education of Natives”, 8 December, 1927, KNA PC/NZA.3/10/1/9.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

for years the question of native education in other countries to evolve some scheme by which we can educated the black man to be what we think he ought to be.”⁸⁷

In conclusion, the LNCs were, generally speaking, established on political grounds as a safe forum through which Africans could express themselves within controlled colonial setting, and for the most part, they fulfilled that purpose. Their championing of African education, however, defied such expectation. While their initiatives and enthusiasm forced the colonial state to pay closer attention to African demands, it also kept the Education Department on its toes. Many were times when the Department officials were forced to conduct school inspections against their wishes, examine bulks of school proposals, and spend long hours attending LNC meetings.⁸⁸ Besides the fact that they voted generous budgets for African education, these bodies also denied the Christian missionaries crucial control of education, especially in the latter years. It was upon their insistence that the government allowed establishment of more government-controlled secular schools.

The rise of African Independent Schools.

The rise of the African independent schools particularly in Central Kenya has commonly been associated with the controversy sparked by the ban against female circumcision in the Christian mission schools and churches. Two explanations have come to dominate the discourse.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Education Department was frequently criticized for failing to inspect schools. “Minutes of a meeting of the School Area Committee for Central Kavirondo and Kisumu-Londiani held at the Senior Commissioner’s Office, Kisumu”, 18 November, 1926, KNA PC/NZA/3/10/5/1.

The imperial historiography suggests that African independent schools were a direct result of the assault on an important Kikuyu custom. Had the Christian missionaries not banned female circumcision, this scholarship presupposes, independent schools would not have emerged. Espoused by missionary chroniclers, colonial administrators, imperial historiographers and Eurocentric social and cultural anthropologists, this explanation was more ideological than empirical.⁸⁹ For instance, it was clear that the struggle by various African communities to gain control of education from missionaries had started much earlier, in some areas, as early as 1906.⁹⁰ Consequently, the first independent African schools came into existence long before 1929, the year the ban was declared. Similarly, while the ban affected select Christian societies in only a few regions, the growth of independent schools was widely spread. The ban campaign was spearheaded by the CSM (Church of Scotland Mission) and AIM (African Inland Mission), and both societies, understandably, lost a significant mass of followers. But so did CMS, which had largely avoided the controversy, and the Catholics who had not only supported the practice, but had gone as far as establishing ‘healthy’ facilities in which the operation could be done ‘humanly’ “under the auspices of the Church.”⁹¹ More evocatively, mission schools operating in communities that did not practice female or male circumcision, for that matter, suffered similar

⁸⁹ Philip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts*. London: Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1954; Louis. S. B. Leakey, *Defeating Mau Mau*, London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1954; Leonard Beecher, *The Kikuyu*, London: Church Missionary Society, 1944; Edward Grigg, *Kenya's Opportunity*, London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1955.

⁹⁰ J. J. Willis, “The Response of the Africans,” *The Church Missionary Review*, 63 (1912): pp. 84-91.

⁹¹ Some CMS mission stations had done the same. Under W.J. Rampley, the Kabare Pastorate of Mt. Kenya East established a surgery team consisting of two males and two females to perform the operation a “Christian way”. Church of Scotland Mission, “Memorandum prepared by the Kikuyu Mission Council on Female Circumcision”, 1 December, 1931, The Leakey Family Archives (hereafter Leakey Archives); Strayer notes, using one case, that the independent school established at Githithi, an area that was largely unaffected by the controversy, might have been caused by internal factional disputes. Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*. London, UK. Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1978.

fate.⁹² Such obvious factors undermined the argument advanced by imperial historiographers, and predictably, it was eventually discarded in favor of the second, more complex explanation. The second set of historiography argues, by combining the historical development of African education, the role of the Christian missionaries, and the influence of colonial state policies, that Africans already had serious concerns with the missionary-controlled education system long before the controversial ban. Persistent failure of the colonial state to address these concerns, fed into their mounting discontent and in time, they took the initiatives to construct their own schools. This viewpoint, though liberal by most measures, still acknowledges that the controversial ban provided the impetus that Africans needed to abandon the mission-controlled institutions en masse.⁹³ It is best articulated by Natsoulas, who states:

Some private schools had already opened in the 1920s, but with little success. The opportunity to launch a full-scale assault on the mission-run education system occurred in 1929 when a controversy over female circumcision occurred. In their desire to rid the Kikuyu of “barbarous” activities, three mission societies, led by the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), issued a ban on the practice of female circumcision. Many Kikuyu considered this a direct attack on their traditions and therefore boycotted the mission schools and churches.⁹⁴

⁹² H.S. Scott, “Memorandum in Regard to Education of Africans”, 1929.

⁹³ Jocelyn Murray, “The Church Missionary Society and the ‘Female Circumcision’ issue in Kenya, 1929-1932”, *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 8 (1976): pp 92-104; Jidlaph G. Kamoche, *Imperial Trusteeship and Political Evolution in Kenya, 1923—1963*, Washington, DC: University Press of America, Inc., 1981; Michael H. Kovar, *The Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement: the Interaction of Politics and Education in Kenya, 1923-1953*. Diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 1970; James A. Wilson, *African Resistance and Cultural Nationalism: the Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement in Kenya*. Diss. Cornell University, Ithaca, 1994. Only Welbourn seems to think the ban did not influence the spread of African independent schools. F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels*, London: SCM Press, 1961.

⁹⁴ Theodore Natsoulas, “The Kenya Government and the Kikuyu Independent Schools: from Attempted Control to Suppression, 1929-1952. *The Historian*, 60 (Winter 1998), p. 291. Also see Lynn, M. Thomas, *Politics of the Womb: Women, Reproduction, and the State in Kenya*, Berkeley: University of California, 2003.

My effort here is to show that the controversial ban has been overstated in the prevailing literature at the expense of other more important triggers in the growth of African independent schools. To state the issue more directly; had there been no ban on female circumcision, would independent schools have mushroomed by the degree and ferocity they did after 1929? The existing literature suggests the answer to be negative. When we consider, however, that some of Christian missionary groups had already prohibited the practice among their adherents as early as 1921, without stirring any storm, this argument begins to falter.⁹⁵

It might be recalled that Africans had for a long period of time used every method available to them to protest against any aspects of education that did not advance their interests. These protests intensified after the World War I. Across the colony, students demonstrated their dissatisfaction by deserting mission schools, resorting to go-slow, and in some cases, rioting. In 1921, for instance, an estimated sixty to seventy apprentices walked out of CSM School in Kikuyu citing frustration with the school's curriculum.⁹⁶ It was clear, by the time the Africans presented their grievances during the meeting with colonial officials at Dagoretti on June 24, 1921, that they no longer wanted missionaries in charge of their education. Their plea said in part "We also wish the Government to educate our children that they may have knowledge. In many parts such as UKAMBA and MOMBASA there are Government schools, but here in our country there is only much work on coffee and on roads."⁹⁷ That Africans failed to acknowledge the

⁹⁵ AIM, Kijabe mission banned the practice in 1921 and this was instigated by the African members themselves after attending at Intermission Conference at Kambui in 1920. The same had been achieved in Ngennda in 1920. CSM 'Memorandum', 1931.

⁹⁶ *Kikuyu District Annual Report*, KNA, KBU/14, 1921.

educational work the missionaries had undertaken for nearly two decades is evocative. Also curious is their reference to ‘knowledge’, in the context, conveying their doubt with mission schools’ ability to impart it. The Luo of Nyanza Province offered even more pointed rejection of mission education. A meeting called to address the matter in February of 1922, issued a memorandum to the government stating: “The Government has let the Missions come and teach us. We want to teach ourselves. We don’t need to be taught by the missions alone; we want our own schools. The missions don’t teach us safi (pure) teaching. We want our own schools. Our own teachers are able to manage them.”⁹⁸ Again, suspicion of what constituted “pure teaching” was plain. Like the Kikuyu, the Luo were openly apprehensive about the type of education dispensed by missionaries. The colonial officials did not help the missionaries’ cause when they posted frequent critical reports about them. The 1927 report, for instance, stated “the [mission] teachers are for the most part unqualified and unable to teach anything more than the very elements of reading, writing and arithmetic.”⁹⁹ In the years running up to 1929, thus, the quest for ‘real’ education as opposed to what missions offered, had gained currency.

African independent schools began opening steadily from 1925.¹⁰⁰ What had started off as a slow growth was, however, given a critical boost by clumsy and often ill-advised interference by some colonial administrators. The case of South Nyeri’s District Commissioner,

⁹⁷ Memorandum of Grievances, Important Discussions between Officials and Kikuyu Association, 24 June, 1921, Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 492.

⁹⁸ H.T. Tate (Senior Commissioner, Nyanza), circular letter to officials and missionaries. 8 February, 1922, Owen Papers, C.M.S London. In Mungeam, *Select Historical Documents*, 1978, p. 499.

⁹⁹ *EDAR*, 1927, p. 25.

¹⁰⁰ John Anderson, *The struggle for the School: the interaction of missionary, colonial government and nationalist enterprise in the development of formal education in Kenya*, Nairobi: Longman Kenya Limited, 1970, p. 116. It is not possible to establish the exact year when such schools began, since many of the earlier schools did not register with the colonial administration for many years.

Arthur Champion, illustrates a behavior common to many. Champion had interested himself in 'native education' sufficiently enough to be invited to do a write-up for the education annual report of 1926. By his own account, he had been visiting mission schools in his district of northern Kikuyu Province for some two years. His visits were inspired by his skepticism of the overall figure of students attending especially the 'native-ran' 'bush schools.'¹⁰¹ These 'bush schools', he said, had been logging exaggerated numbers of daily returns. "The attendance registers are kept by native teachers, whom I have found inclined to be somewhat lax in posting them up to date etc. Native teachers, with their inherent desire to please, are inclined to show returns rather higher perhaps than facts warrant."¹⁰² He does not indicate how many such schools he visited to compute his own approximated average of students' daily attendance. From these impromptu visits, however, the administrator came with his own totals of 2,345 against the figure of 4,467 entered in the schools' records.

Having thus discovered that the schools had been 'manipulating' figures to overstate their importance, Champion recommended their reduction, from 114 schools in 1925, to 104 in 1926. "This, in my opinion, with the staff available for supervision, is a step in the right direction."¹⁰³ Africans construed this reduction as a deliberate move to curtail their access to education. The following year, Local Native Council meetings held in three out of the five districts that

¹⁰¹ See 'out-schools' above.

¹⁰² Senior Commissioner, Nyeri's Annual Report for 1926, KNA PC/CP/4/1/15. Note, however that the report contained in the East Africa Protectorate Annual Report (renamed Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Report) of 1926, while estimating the total number of school-going African students in the whole country to be about 82, 793, states that the estimates could not be determined with any precision. See CPKR, 1926, p. 52.

¹⁰³ Ibid, p. 45.

constituted Kikuyu Province, had the independent schools in their agenda. For instance, all the four meetings the Kiambu committee held discussed taxation for educational purposes, issuance of certificates for government examinations, applications for new schools, registration of independent school opening in the ‘native’ areas. Fort Hall committee discussed “application of new schools, policy with regard to opening of new schools,” and management of the unauthorized schools opening in the area.¹⁰⁴ South Nyeri committee discussed much the same issues.

Only months before the controversial ban, the Director of Education, H.S. Scott observed, with concern, that Africans’ clamor for education had reached fever pitch, and that, his work was made difficult by the fact that they were taxing themselves heavily to provide “high schools” and “technical schools”—words which, he said, conveyed little meaning to them. “It appears impossible to ascertain clearly whether the demand for new schools is due to; (a) Dissatisfaction with missionary control, (b) Dissatisfaction with existing missionary schools.”¹⁰⁵ That year’s education annual report suggested that Africans had all but abandoned mission schools with unequivocal “demand of the African himself for the provision of educational facilities through other than the missionary agencies. The native of Kenya, especially in Kavirondo districts and in the Kikuyu Province, has indicated in no uncertain tones his wish to be educated in institutions which are not under the care of missionaries. He has, in fact, indicated that the policy of the Advisory Committee in England is no longer a policy which

¹⁰⁴ *EDAR*, 1926, p. 50.

¹⁰⁵ “Memorandum in Regard to Education of Africans.” From H.S. Scott, Director of Education to Senior Commissioners, 26 February, 1929, KNA PC/NZA 3/10/1/4.

appeals to him.”¹⁰⁶ The crisis, the report indicated, was receiving attention from Secretary of State for the Colonies. But if Africans’ concerns were not speedily addressed, “there will be danger that we may not have to choose between mission schools and Government schools but between these two on the one hand and on the other hand native schools conducted by natives.”¹⁰⁷ Africans’ fortitude was depicted as an “[a]wakening of the native to the fact that what the missionary gives him is inadequate and his demand for something more, something different—he knows not what.”¹⁰⁸ All indications were that Africans were already pooling resources to open their own self-run schools when the Church of Scotland Mission declared the ban on female circumcision on December 29, 1929. Initially, the controversial ban pitted the young educated Africans, against the Christian missionaries and the government-paid African chiefs.

It happened that after Thuku exited the political scene in 1923, the following year, his colleagues who had formed East African Association (EAA) with him, formed another political association, the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA). KCA differed from its predecessor in important ways. Where EAA had enjoyed congenial relationship with the anti-colonial Indian National Congress, KCA started off on friendly terms with both the colonial state and the Christian missionaries. The Association was formed with government’s blessings, and in fact, it was the Chief Native Commissioner who had suggested the name Kikuyu Central Association to

¹⁰⁶ *EDAR*, 1929, p. 8. Naturally, several missions protested against the report by the Director of Education, for the obvious reason that it undermined their chances of receiving grant-in-aid assistance from the government. See, Principal Maseno Central School to Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza, 27, September, 1930, KNA PC/NZA 3/10/1/4.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *EDAR*, 1929, p. 7.

its members. The colonial official tactfully emphasized ‘Kikuyu Central’ to contrast it with the ‘East African Association’, to ensure it did not claimed the same pan-African agenda of EAA. With a nod from the colonial state, therefore, KCA settled on a parochial program of addressing issues exclusive to the central-most region of the Kikuyu, the Fort Hall district.¹⁰⁹

KCA’s conservative and visibly pro-government leaning inevitably alienated it from Africans. Because the Association did not command any vital political constituency, however, the state did not feel the need to pursue any long-lasting coalition with it. Besides, the state was already in more entrenched partnership with the African chiefs, who had remained faithful through the disturbances of the early 1920s, time when some of the KCA officials were the rabble-rousers. The fact that the state officials courted KCA in its initial months was tact aimed to stabilize the volatile Fort Hall district.¹¹⁰ Once that goal was achieved, KCA was left vacillating uncertainly between the monotonous political campaigns of Thuku-era, and political oblivion. The ban on female circumcision gave the association a shot in the arm.¹¹¹

When Dr. John Arthur, the head of the Church of Scotland Mission, declared the ban against female circumcision, KCA repudiated it swiftly, framing the ban as an assault on the Kikuyu culture. On the same breath, the Association demanded the seventy-four Kikuyu chiefs—knowing all too well that they were staunch Christians and civil servants—to declare their stand

¹⁰⁹ Its founding objective states that the association is exclusively “for the advancement of the interests of Kikuyu men, women and children in Kenya and adjacent territories in Africa.” *Rules and Regulations of the Kikuyu Central Association*, (undated), Leakey Archives.

¹¹⁰ John Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, London: Kegan Paul Inc., 1985.

¹¹¹ For more detail, see Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities*, 1978; Marshall S. Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs and Politicians, 1918-1940*. Niwot: University of Colorado, 1990.

on this serious issue publically.¹¹² KCA saw this as its chance to gain political supremacy over the chiefs. The chiefs were the only recognized African voice, and KCA knew all too well that its prospects of outwitting them depended upon destroying their integrity. In this respect, KCA hoped to expose the chiefs as collaborators of the European imperialism against African cultures and interests, and thus turn the masses against them. The chiefs knew this strategy too. After all, they had successfully staved off such previous attempts.¹¹³ But they were faced with a new dilemma. To support KCA would validate its claim as the champion of Kikuyu interests, a mandate the chiefs believed was justly theirs. Yet to agree with the missionaries on the ban was likely to send the signal that they were indeed anti-Kikuyu, just the blunder KCA was hoping they would make.

In the meantime, KCA launched a full-scale attack against Christian missionaries, alleging, in one letter to the press, that ever since their arrival: “Missionaries have tried on many occasions to interfere with the tribal customs, and the question is asked whether circumcision being the custom of the Kikuyu Christian, he is to be a heathen simply because he is a Kikuyu.”¹¹⁴ A little known political group calling itself the Progressive Kikuyu Party quickly came to Arthur’s defense. Taking a philosophical viewpoint, the party argued that female circumcision was coming to an end on its own anyway, much like many other customs that African people had abandoned without any European persuasion “such as to belittle women and

¹¹² This letter was, in part, a reply to one written by Dr. Arthur criticizing a High Court ruling that freed the six suspects accused of performing the operation on a Christian girl against her will. Kikuyu Central Association, “Lamentation on Abolition of female circumcision” *East African Standard*, 17 August, 1929.

¹¹³ Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs*, 1990.

¹¹⁴ Kikuyu Central Association, “Letter to Bishop Arthur.” *East African Standard*. 29th August, 1929.

make them do heavy work like animals; piercing ears; pulling out and filing the teeth...”¹¹⁵ Its case was quite warranted. Like any other societies of the world, the African society in Kenya was governed by positively dynamic cultures. Many cultural practices, both positive and adverse, were dying out, and others sprouting in their place as the society adjusted according to the constantly shifting political and socioeconomic realities. At the time the group was making its argument, for instance, among the Kikuyu, polygamy was already fading away as a status symbol, not necessarily because Christian missionaries discouraged it, though they were, but rather due to land alienation, excessive taxations and labor economy, all which had reduced Africans from the proud self-sustaining people of pre-colonial era, to a laboring class in a colonial economy. As a consequence of these same conditions, the previously frowned-upon practices such as prostitution and destitution were becoming an increasing fact of urban life.¹¹⁶

At length, the Kikuyu chiefs spoke on the controversial ban. They steered clear of KCA’s challenge, however, and chose instead to tread the safer middle-ground. First, they defended Arthur against KCA’s accusation, saying they were saddened by the insults directed at such a great friend of the Kikuyu. Dr. Arthur had done more for the community than any other person, including those attacking him. Taking a dig at the KCA’s younger, educated officials, the chiefs challenged; “Those people who possess little education learnt it at [Arthur’s] Mission School,

¹¹⁵ Progressive Kikuyu Party, “Kiambu Circumcision Case”, *East African Standard*. 11 September, 1929. Spencer argues that the party was formed with help from the CSM. Spencer, *Kenya African Union*, 1985.

¹¹⁶ KCA blamed the “white man” for prostitution which had become rampant in Nairobi, and asked the Missionaries to get rid of it first before raising furor over Kikuyu female circumcision. KCA, ‘Letter to Bishop Arthur’, 1929. For detailed analysis on the development of prostitution in Nairobi, see Luise White, *Comforts of Home: Prostitution in Colonial Nairobi*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 1991.

Canon Leakey's, and at other Missions that are at Kikuyu."¹¹⁷ When they addressed the controversial ban announced by Dr. Arthur, the chiefs shrewdly manipulated KCA's challenge to make it seem as if the Association was accusing the government, rather than the missionaries, for its imposition. "Isn't that a great lie?" they posed, "the Government have not prohibited the circumcision of girls, if one likes to circumcise his daughter, or if he fails to do so, it is no matter, it depends to what one desires to do with his own family [*sic*]."¹¹⁸ Such had clearly not been KCA's claim.

On its part, the government had avoided any issues with a potential to disrupt the existing political order. Viewing the ban as one such issue, it had made it clear to the missionaries that it did not support them. A few months before the declaration, the state had reprimanded Dr. Arthur for sponsoring a court case against seven people for performing the operation on a Christian girl against her will. Delivering its ruling, the High Court not only set the accused free: It warned the missionaries against interfering with a "pagan's cherished custom."¹¹⁹ The Governor had voiced similarly cautious views three years earlier at the conference for the leaders of the three East African colonies and dependencies, stating in part: "The practice of female circumcision, which [is] a very ancient origin, should not be interfered, but that the respective Governments concerned should endeavour to persuade such tribes as practiced the more brutal forms of it to

¹¹⁷ Letter to the Editor, *East African Standard*, 7 September, 1929.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ "The Crown, through Wanjiru wa Kubai Versus Nyorimi wa Longurutha and six others. Criminal Case NO. 119. Colony and Protectorate of Kenya. District Commissioner's Court, 17 April, 1929.

return to the more ancient and less brutal form.”¹²⁰ The government would possibly have kept its distance from the controversy had KCA not provoked it into an open confrontation. The KCA declared that its campaign for the upcoming 1930 LNCs elections would be based on the platform of retention of all Kikuyu customs, female circumcision being one. At this point the government had to admit what it had avoided all along; that KCA’s battle was not solely with the Christian missionaries and that it was concerned with issues larger than the ban on female circumcision. Shortly after KCA’s declaration, Governor Edward Grigg announced in the LegCo that the controversial ban had given him considerable anxiety as it had become a political question. There was considerable propaganda among some of the younger Kikuyu, he stated, to the effect that Dr. Arthur, the African representative in the LegCo, was representing Government views in ex-communicating members of his Mission who refused to renounce or denounce female circumcision. Accordingly, he advised Arthur to resign from office, but the resignation did not assuage the controversy.¹²¹ His subsequent cable to the Colonial Secretary conveyed his unending concern, thus; “views with anxiety possibilities of future developments of political activities among a certain section of the Kikuyu tribe and that the people’s confidence in Government is being undermined largely through the Kikuyu Central Assn...legislation under conson. to control financial operations of such Associations [sic].”¹²²

¹²⁰ Governor of Kenya, “Female Circumcision.” Paper circulated for the Conference of Governors of East African Dependencies (Kenya, Tanganyika, Uganda), 1930. CO 533/394/10.

¹²¹ Governor, ‘Female Circumcision’, 1930; “Communication from the Chair” Kenya Legislative Council Proceedings, In Church of Scotland ‘Memorandum’ 1931.

¹²² Governor of Kenya to Secretary of State, Confidential Correspondence, 12 October, 1929, CO 533/392/1. ‘Conson’ is possibly the code for ‘consideration’.

Around the same time, the movement towards African independent schools was separately gaining momentum. Both, the movement and controversial ban, incidentally, had their nuclei in Kikuyuland. They similarly had a common foe in the colonial state policies and the Christian missionaries. It is from this inadvertently shared arena that most analyses mix the two issues. In actual fact, their more suitable relationship was of partnership in their respective campaigns against European imperialism. The fact that the movement for independent schools was nebulous, and at the initial stage did not have a centralized leadership, made it easier for KCA to permeate it. This is how *mũthĩrĩgũ*, the KCA campaign songs found a place in these schools.

Mũthĩrĩgũ songs were composed to lionize KCA figures, while on the other hand, taunting the colonial authorities and any individuals deemed antagonistic to the welfare of the Kikuyu people. Government officials, Christian missionaries, and African chiefs were targeted for taunting. In one of the telegrams he sent to the Colonial Office, Governor Grigg included an extract of one such song showing how acerbic *mũthĩrĩgũ* could be, especially taunting His Majesty's honorable representative. "The governor is called a Big Man," the but when John Kenyatta* comes, he [the governor] will have his teeth extracted like a Kavirondo because of the lies he told in Europe. [...] Praise elders of Kikuyu Central Association for sending Kenyatta to Europe who is stronger than the Governor of Kenya.¹²³

Another tune targeted the Kikuyu chiefs, calling them traitors of the Kikuyu interests: "Koinange and Waruhui, when John Kenyatta comes, you will be given women loin cloths and have to cook

* Kenyatta eventually dropped 'Johnstone' in favor of 'Jomo.'

¹²³ Grigg to Secretary of State, Telegram, 20 January, 1930, CO 533/394/10.

him his food.”¹²⁴ Associating a man with women’s garb was taken as the ultimate attack on his manhood. In others songs, missionaries, like Arthur, were promised ‘uncircumcised’ girls for wives, while yet others aimed sarcasm on their religious teachings. One such song said in part; “I used to think Jesus was the son of God; I have now found out that he is European.”¹²⁵ Clearly, the KCA/African independent schools axis was inviting the wrath of colonial state upon itself, and the state was glad to assent.

While touring Kikuyuland, Governor Grigg banned collection of money without permit.¹²⁶ The ban aimed to undermine KCA’s financial operations, just as Grigg had indicated in his cable to the Colonial Secretary. Another ban was shortly slapped against singing *mũthĩrĩgũ*. With it came mass arrests and fines. KCA protested fiercely, both locally, and through its Secretary Johnstone Kenyatta, who, at the time, was in London to present a memorandum of KCA’s grievances directly to the Colonial Office. Kenyatta complained that anyone arrested for the offence of singing *mũthĩrĩgũ* was imprisoned and fined a “crippling £5.”¹²⁷ In just a few months, the government had rendered *mũthĩrĩgũ* too costly to sing publically, but at least it left the independent schools still standing.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ CSM ‘Memorandum’, 1931.

¹²⁶ Minutes of a meeting of District Commissioners of the Kikuyu Province, Nyeri, 15 November, 1929, Leakey Family Archives.

¹²⁷ Kenyatta to Secretary of State, 22 January, 1930, CO 533/394/10.

Official Response to the African independent schools.

At the peak of students' defections from mission schools, the two most affected mission groups, the Church of Scotland Mission at Kikuyu and African Inland Missions at Kijabe, lost nine-tenths of their students. Some schools sprouted where none had existed previously. Many others were mission schools which, crippled by defections, reopened as independent schools. At the height of their growth, the schools' managements agreed to form Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA).¹²⁸ Initially, the government sympathized with the Christian missionaries' predicament, and sought to discourage the growth of independent schools by routinely delaying the issuance of licenses or imposing other arduous bureaucratic requirements. In most cases, however, Africans opened schools without government knowledge, much less its approval.¹²⁹ All along, the colonial regime hoped that these schools would run into financial difficulties and fade away naturally.

When African independent schools failed to collapse on their own free will, the government enacted the Education Ordinance of 1931. By this ordinance, the provincial commissioners or deputies nominated by them became chairmen of all the school area committees.¹³⁰ This meant that committee meetings in all schools, including independent, could not be held without the administration sanctioning it. Their agendas and minutes were similarly

¹²⁸ Eventually, Kikuyu Karing'a Schools Authority (or simply Kikuyu Karing'a) splintered from KISA in 1934. *EDAR*, 1935.

¹²⁹ Natsoulas, 'Kenya Government and the Kikuyu Independent Schools', 1998; A. S. Adebola, "The London Connections: A Factor in the Survival of the Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement, 1929-1939", *Journal of African Studies*, 10 (1983): pp. 14-23.

¹³⁰ *Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, Education Ordinances enacted during the year 1931, Vol X, Nairobi, 1932.

vetted by the administration. On the same token, Local Native Councils (LNCs) were allowed to nominate three members to the school committees in their jurisdictions. LNCs were, by law, chaired by the District Commissioner, and were constituted by, among others, government-appointed chiefs and Christian missionaries. Thus, the ordinance brought the antagonists of African independent schools to their very boards. More disquieting for the African independent schools, was the function of the school area committees formed to advise the Director of Education in all matters relating to provision of schools within their areas. The committees were required “to make recommendations to the Director in regard to the opening, managements or closing of public schools for [...] Africans in their area.”¹³¹ Registering as private schools was not an option for the African independent schools either. Section 34(1)(c) demanded:

If, in the case of any private school for the education of Africans, it appears to the Director on the report of an inspector, or of any person specially authorized or from his own inspection either that the curriculum approved as required by section 33(1) (c) of this Ordinance is not being properly conducted, he may, after consulting the District Education Boards Ordinance, or if there is no such Board, after consulting the Advisory Council on African Education, order such school to be closed.¹³²

More restrictions applied to the independent schools. Their budgets, even though coming directly from Africans, were audited by the government, which also assumed the right to prevent African independent schools’ graduates from taking the standardized examinations for higher education. Their teachers had to be licensed by the Education Department, but only after graduating from teachers’ colleges. Mission teachers, on the other hand, were free from this condition, although some colonial and education officials regarded them as ‘unintellectual,’ ‘uncultivated,’ and for

¹³¹ Ibid, p. 44.

¹³² Ibid, p. 50.

some, unable to ‘speak neither the King’s English nor Swahili’. Every way one looked at it, one could not avoid the conclusion that the Education Ordinance of 1931 was tailored to get rid of the African independent schools.

In their early days, the Department of Education was not decided how to approach the African independent schools, but it soon settled for the usual patronizing attitude reserved for Africans. The annual education report of 1930 indicated a “definite demand for opening of private schools managed entirely by natives,” and on the same breath, expressed fear that if such schools were permitted, “there is no doubt that the loss of European influence and guidance will be disastrous to the native people.”¹³³ In time, however, the Department came to begrudgingly acknowledge that Africans had a legitimate perspective. The annual report of 1932 reflected this tempered attitude, stating:

The development of independent schools in Kikuyu Reserve and especially in the Fort Hall district, has become marked. These schools have sprung up in close proximity to mission schools or mission stations, and it is impossible to resist the conclusion that, though the promoters of the schools themselves may not be acting in direct opposition to mission influence, they are anxious to have schools which are not under the influence of the mission in the neighborhood of which the schools are opened.¹³⁴

Still, the Department was not prepared to accept that on their own, Africans were capable of running complex institutions. The report made clear its “serious objection” to the existence of African independent schools arguing “that without the control and supervision of Europeans it is impossible for them to become efficient in the present stage of native development.”¹³⁵ The

¹³³ *EDAR*, 1930, p. 16.

¹³⁴ *EDAR*, 1932, p. 18.

developments on the ground would, however, prove this concern to be baseless. Rather than slow down, the schools grew exponentially with help of generous financial contributions from the sponsoring communities and multitudes of eager students. The Education Department had to admit what it had resisted all along, that African independent schools had taken root. Its 1936 annual report remarked, with a tinge of admiration; “The movement is most interesting, as all the schools are financed by voluntary subscription, the buildings are quite up to mission standard, and the upkeep and care of the school gardens is usually quite credible.”¹³⁶ By then the schools had reached a population of 7,223 students and growing.

Interestingly, the Director of Education, H.S. Scott, admitted that the government had been making overtures for cooperation with the managements of African independent schools, but so far they were showing little “sign of wishing to co-operate.” Aware of its limitation in enforcing its ordinance of 1931, the government had prudently climbed down from its superior stance, and now sought to engage the independent schools on their own terms. Scott called a meeting with the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA). Also invited were the Christian mission representatives, LNCs Central Province, the Chief Native Commissioner, the Central Provincial Commissioner, and the District Commissioners of the affected area. The meeting was held at the Jeanes School on August 11, 1936. Of particular interest in its agenda, were complaints that independent schools were enticing teachers to leave the mission schools and work for them, opening more schools without government’s approval, and refusing to abide by the government-issued curriculum. It is not clear what transpired at the meeting, but it is

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 18.

¹³⁶ EDAR, 1936, p. 53. Also see the *Kenya Colony and Protectorate: Native Affairs Department Annual Report, 1934*, which only two years earlier had declared independent schools as having “fallen off in efficiency.”

likely that KISA promised to cooperate, for, in the next report, Scott complained of the association having broken the promise:

The present position is not satisfactory; the K.I.S.A. has not abided by the agreement; schools have been opened without reference to the Local Native Authorities, and no honest attempt has been made to reorganize the existing schools. Under the Education (Amendment) of 1934, steps can be taken through the District Education Boards to close these schools, but it is felt that this might be unwise, and that further efforts must be made to persuade the association to make their schools function in accordance with the accepted educational programme.¹³⁷

As it were, the authorities were faced with a *fait accompli*. Shutting the independent schools down was out of question. Any more decrees were pointless, since the government could not readily enforce them. The Director of Education had to admit that Africans had the upper hand on the matter: They could accept his invitation to co-operate, or ignore it with impunity.

The Director revealed an important dynamic in the relationship between the imperial state and the colonized, when he called for further effort in persuading African independent schools to “function in accordance with the accepted educational programme.” The said program was, in essence, a department-issued curriculum that sought to control teaching of English language at the lower classes. Usually, the government-controlled and the mission-run schools were required to wait until their students reached upper-primary level, before introducing English to them. In the meantime, instructions were carried in the local vernacular languages. During the meeting with KISA at Jeanes School, the government had demanded the African independent schools to adopt this curriculum. It seems, however, that the Africans did not take that demand seriously. Coming from the same meeting, KISA published its pamphlet stating its position that, “English

¹³⁷ Ibid, p. 55.

will be taught from III Standard; and from IV Standard onward the medium of instruction will be English. Learning of Swahili and other native languages will be optional for the students of the Association Schools.”¹³⁸ To a casual observer, privileging English language in African oriented schools, and that, at the expense of other African languages, might have seemed paradoxical. The education history of Kenya was complex. English came to the Africans as the language of power where one’s proximity to material accretion, political privilege, and social mobility were determined by how well one spoke the language. It was the language of racial exclusivity, spoken by Africans only on consent of Europeans. Some scholars have noted that Europeans resolutely avoided speaking to Africans in English for fear that Africans derived a sense of self-importance from such intercourse.¹³⁹

The first institution of education to be established in Kenya demonstrates the sheer racial power English wielded. Sometime in the mid 1880s, the CMS European administrator of Rabai and Freretown banned English as the medium of communication, arguing that Swahili was the more appropriate language for Africans. This was obviously not a commonsensical argument since most African members of these societies, the freed slaves, had grown up in CMS missions in India, speaking English as a first language. The point the European missionaries were making was that they held the exclusive rights to the English language, and in denying it to Africans, Reed states, the whites were being symptomatic, for;

The move away from English inevitably served to keep Africans out of higher echelons of church life where English was the normal language of debate

¹³⁸ “Kikuyu Independent Schools Association”, Undated pamphlet (may have been published from late 1936 to 1937). Beecher Papers, Kenya National Museum Archives.

¹³⁹ Robert B. Edgerton, *Mau Mau: an African crucible*. New York: The Free Press, 1989, p. 20.

and of thought. The elite who spoke English were always in a position of privilege and power. Not only was there the utilitarian aspect of interaction with missionaries, with the Society and with overseas visitors and there was also the fact that those who did not speak English were denied access to culture and its thought forms. They were therefore denied true opportunity of equality.¹⁴⁰

As the colonial state took root, Africans' access to the English language became even more restricted.

Africans were also aware that English was the only dependable language of direct communication with their colonizers. Only the few, in their ranks, who demonstrated its command found recognition—a begrudging honor, as it was—in the structures of the colonial political economy. Harry Thuku, for instance, had been chosen to present the Kikuyu Association (KA) memorandum to the government over KA's own secretary, owing to his command of English language.¹⁴¹ Jomo Kenyatta, the man KCA sent to England with their grievances, got his job because the association was looking for “someone who was fluent in English to represent KCA.”¹⁴² In essence, command of the English language determined one's career success, and ultimately, the amount of deference one earned. It seemed ironic, that Africans gained respect on account of how well they spoke it, yet, at the same time, the colonial state spent enormous amount of energy and resources in trying to control their access.

Throughout 1920s, the Central Committee for Native Education spent hours debating the age at

¹⁴⁰ Colin Reed, *Pastors, partners, and paternalists: African church leaders and western missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850-1900*. Leiden, Netherlands: E. J. Brill, 1997, p.143.

¹⁴¹ Clough, *Fighting Two Sides: Kenyan Chiefs*, 1990.

¹⁴² Spencer, *Kenya African Union*, 1985, p. 67.

which English should be introduced to Africans.¹⁴³ Their query framed more sincerely, may well have asked: at what point in their education could Africans be trusted to learn just enough English to communicate, and not much more to become self-important?¹⁴⁴ While Phelps-Stokes Commission, the most authoritative educational survey ever done during this period, had pointedly called for teaching advanced English to African students as a “means of uniting Africa with the great civilizations of the world,”¹⁴⁵ to the colonial policy makers, such an undertaking was as good as giving away the secret code to their privilege.¹⁴⁶

All along, Africans had remained painfully conscious of the raw power English language wielded, and the political and socioeconomic disadvantage it heralded for them. They anxiously looked forward to the time when they would have a say on the matter. African independent schools provided that opportunity. The Kikuyu Independent Schools Association officials refused to go along with the suggestions of the colonial Education Department. They felt they were finally in control of their own education, funding it with their own meager resources, and as such, had the right to determine the subjects their children learned. Since English had hovered just beyond their reach, they chose to pursue it, to surmount it. They were determined to

¹⁴³ Minutes of the Sixth meeting of the Central Advisory Committee on Native Education, 9 June, 1925. KNA PC/NZA/3/10/1/1;

¹⁴⁴ W.D. Down to Director of Education, 20 April, 1926, KNA PC/NZA/3/10/5/1.

¹⁴⁵ Jones, *Education in East Africa: Phelps-Stokes Commission*, 1924, p. 63.

¹⁴⁶ De Kock's states, from his study of South Africa during the nineteenth century that English language became the "...ultimate fount of civilised life from which lowly 'Kaffirs' were benignly invited to drink." Leon De Kock, *Civilising Barbarians: missionary narratives and African textual response in nineteenth-century South Africa*, Johannesburg, Wiyatersrand University Press, 1996, p. 3.

experience what Terence Ranger has called a “modernization under [their] control.”¹⁴⁷ In the years leading to the Second World War, African independent schools grew from strength to strength at the expense of the mission schools, at one point, even opening their own teachers training college.¹⁴⁸ It seemed nothing, short of brutal force, would stop them. We will see in the next chapter that brutal force is exactly what the state employed to stop them. At the height of the freedom struggle in 1950s, the colonial state declared African independent schools were in cohort with the Mau Mau freedom fighters and shut them down.

In conclusion, my thesis does not propose African independent schools to be an African solution to the problems caused by the colonial education system. Many of these schools engaged curricula similar to that of—if not drawn directly from—the mission schools. In terms of their education quality, many fell short of the standards in the mission schools, and their best teachers’ qualification could not match that of teachers in mission schools. These facts were well known to their founders, but they nevertheless, proceeded to establish them. It is therefore unreasonable to equate African independent schools to the mission schools. Rather, these schools should be seen as an attempt to problematize the prevailing colonial education system. These schools were an important statement that, in the existing colonial order, an education system controlled by the agents of European imperialism could not serve the aspirations of the colonized. Therefore, they rose as an articulation of this incongruity, as an endeavor to compel

¹⁴⁷ Ranger, Terence. “African attempts to control education in East and Central Africa 1900-1939.” *Past and Present*, 32 (1965), p. 32.

¹⁴⁸ The Kenya Teachers College, Githunguri was started by Mbiu Koinange in 1938 to supply the African independent schools with trained teachers. Leakey Archives.

the colonial state to reexamine the efficacy of the existing education regime, and for it to make the necessary structural adjustments.

Chapter Three.

Decolonization, Education, and the rise of the African Ruling Class, 1940s-1950s.

This chapter explores the function of education in Kenya's decolonization process. It shows that the discourse of 'education for self-reliance,' which dominated the colonial policy from late 1930s onwards, was not meant to make the African society self-reliant. Far from it, this system was expected to nurture an African ruling class that could be relied upon to safeguard and perpetuate the institutions of colonial state into the postcolonial society. The nuance of that education was to indoctrinate the African elite with values, disciplines and attitudes of the European colonial political class they were being groomed to succeed. Towards this end, Kenya witnessed inauguration of some of the most innovative educational policies. Curricula were comprehensively overhauled, African schools upgraded and others opened profusely. Higher education, previously dispensed to Africans in measured doses, was opened to them liberally. Since higher education was not well developed in the colony, selected students were sent off on scholarships to study in Europe.

The colonial state coupled educational reforms with 'political apprenticeship' programs which saw gradual introduction of Africans to what the colonial policy makers considered to be 'disciplined' political participation. The first African was nominated to the Legislative Council in 1944 as a political apprentice. This same mindset guided state sanctioning of the first African political party, the Kenya African Union (KAU). Indeed, to give the party 'an appearance of apprenticeship,' the Chief Native Commissioner persuaded its officials to revise its name to Kenya African Study Union (KASU). From the perspective of the colonial policy makers,

KAU/KASU, managed by an ensemble of a conservative, ‘detribalized,’ educated Africans, mostly government employees, and working under close supervision of paternalistic colonial officials, represented the idyllic African politics. Unsurprisingly, the African masses did not share this attitude. They felt disconnected from KAU/KASU, and generally viewed its intimacy to the colonial state with great suspicion. As a result, the party failed to gain any headway in its recruitment effort until 1950 when its Nairobi branch fell into the hands of younger and less educated trade unionists. Where the younger trade union leaders lacked in educational credentials, they made up for it with their deep connection with the African masses, youthful energy and burning fervor for self-rule. Under their leadership, Nairobi KAU branch was transformed into a nucleus of formidable nationalist activities. Where KAU’s conservatives advocated a gradual devolution with no clearly defined timetable for independence, the younger leaders demanded immediate independence on Africans’ own terms. Inevitably, the difference in perspectives and style of leadership brought the trade unionists into serious conflicts with KAU’s old guard, a consequence of which, the younger lot formed a secret action group, Mau Mau,¹ to carry out an armed struggle for Kenya’s independence.

The chapter shows that Mau Mau uprising all but disrupted the colonial project of grooming a reliable and friendly African political class. Coming at a time when Britain was still

¹ It should be noted here that the origin of the name Mau Mau has yet to be established. The movement that spearheaded the anti-colonial struggle in Kenya in the 1950s started off in 1948 as an amorphous and fragmented movement. In 1950, the radical African trade unionists formed *Muhimu* Committee to organize armed anti-colonial resistance. But with the mass arrest of African nationalists in 1952, some *Muhimu* members took to the forest where they reconstituted themselves into the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA). Mau Mau has been used unconsciously and indiscriminately both as the substitute for KLFA and to characterize the turbulent era of the uprising. The name, therefore, not only lacks analytical value, it is also a misrepresentation of a multifaceted anti-colonial struggle in Kenya. But over the years, the name has gained acceptance both among the freedom fighters and the scholarship of the Kenya’s freedom movement.

recovering from the devastation wrought by World War II, the uprising brought many of the state projects to a grinding halt as resources were directed to contain it. By the same token, Mau Mau's military superiority in the first two years of confrontation, and particularly its selective assassinations targeting Africans who collaborated with the colonial regime—which incidentally included some KAU conservatives—dissuaded Africans from co-operating with the colonial state. In this respect, education, like many other sectors suffered the consequences as Africans abandoned colonial schools in throngs for the African independent schools. Once the state gained an upper hand in the conflict, however, it sought to monopolize the channels of education production. African independent schools were accused of being training ground for Mau Mau rebels and shut down. The chapter demonstrates that closing down of independent schools had little to do with their being a hub of Mau Mau sympathizers. Rather, this measure was directly connected to the broader transition of Kenya from a colonial to postcolonial state. The colonial policy makers reckoned that gaining absolute control of Africans' access to education in general and higher education in particular, enabled the colonial state to determine who in the end would occupy the decisive bureaucratic and political positions in independent Kenya.

Educational policies towards 'self-dependence': The Critical Years.

The colonial policy to groom Africans for great political role in Kenya was influenced by a range of political and socioeconomic developments in the greater British Empire and the world at large. Chief among these factors were: the Bolsheviks' revolutions and its campaigns against European imperialism; the invasion of Ethiopia by Italy in 1935; the widespread anti-colonial

protests in the British West Indies in 1937 and 1938; the activities of anti-imperialism organizations in Europe such as the Fabian Society, the League against Imperialism, the British Center Against Imperialism; the rise of the Pan-African and the Negritude movements; the ascendance of younger more liberal imperialists in the political and administrative structures of British colonial government and the broader public sphere; and more importantly, the economic depression that ravaged the world from late 1920s through to mid-1930s.² Taken together, these factors forced the imperial metropolis to reevaluate their relationship with the colonies and dependencies. Specifically, the British imperial policy makers began to seriously consider giving the colonies a degree of autonomy. But to make the colonies self-dependent, the necessary skills and professions had to be developed from within the colonized communities.

It was with this mindset that the British Secretary of State for the Colonies, William Ormsby-Gore, in 1936, appointed a ten-member commission to assess the educational requirements of the British East African protectorates of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. The commission was chaired by the liberal-leaning Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Herbrand Sackville, the 9th Earl De La Warr. An avid unionist, De la Warr had played an instrumental role in the formation of the National Labor Organization in 1931. It took his team four months to gather evidence from more than sixty witnesses and depositions, and visits of educational institutions all over the East African region, to compile the report, *Higher Education in East Africa*. The Commission report was published in September of 1937.

² John Flint, "Planned Decolonization and its Failure in British Africa," *African Affairs*, 82 (1983): pp. 691-727.

This report reflected the shifting colonial attitude of Britain towards her colonies in general and those in Africa in particular. Its opening sentence affirmed of this new conviction; “It is no longer possible to segregate the African as a museum specimen, permitted to depart from his tribal surrounding only when his labor is required on the farms or in the mines of Europeans.”³ Assuming the tone of a maverick, the report called upon the European society to step off its imperial self-importance pedestal and acknowledge the fact that the communities it colonized were fellow humans, with needs, dreams and desires. Education was portrayed as one such basic human need, as important to the African society as to other human communities. The report stated eloquently:

The African demands education as a right. Neither coercion nor cajolery is required to induce him to attend school. There are those indeed who believe that steps should be taken to curb this passion for education and to dispel the African’s pathetic belief that learning is the panacea for all ills. Yet it is not by restrictive or reactionary measures that a saner sense of proportion can be induced; that sense of proportion can be acquired only through those habits of reason and comparison which are created by a sound educational system.

The education of the African is therefore inevitable. It is also right. The policy of Trusteeship has been proclaimed as the policy of His Majesty’s Governments. It is a policy which will have to confront inconvenient problems and which already inspires young energies and fresh ambitions. Yet the concept of Trusteeship [...] must assert that the African shall, in due course reach full maturity and take his place among the peoples of the world. That aim can only be achieved through education. The problem is thus not whether the African should be educated, but what type of education is best adapted to his past, his present and his future.⁴

This report marked an important departure from the old colonial attitude that perceived African education narrowly as an instrument for production of quality laborers. Education was given a

³ *Higher Education in East Africa: Report of the Commission appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, London, 1937, p. 7.

⁴ *Ibid.*

new agency of preparing Africans for self-rule within the British imperial hegemony. Similarly, ‘trusteeship’ acquired a new purpose. No longer used as a weapon to fend off Indian nationalists who had dared to challenge European privilege in the previous decades, it was now projected as an apparatus to aid Africans to mature for the eventual role of managing the affairs of their country. Toward this end, higher education was seen as a key ingredient.

Kenya, like many colonies that served primarily as sources of raw materials and cheap labor, did not boast educational facilities worthy of training the envisioned political class. Its highest institution, the Alliance High School, was considered mediocre even for an average high school. Makerere College, the East Africa’s premier institution, was still a technical training school not much more advanced than Alliance. The situation necessitated sending select African students to the European metropolis where higher education was readily available. At hand to help with this process was the British Council (originally, British Council for Relations with Other Countries). The British Council was established in 1934 by an initiative of the Foreign Office to conduct cultural propaganda overseas on behalf of the British government. By the late 1930s, its mandate included offering grants to carefully selected students in the colonies to study in Britain.⁵ It was hoped that in the metropolis, these students would interact with the ‘true’ British people, friendlier, altruistic and radically different from the settlers and bureaucrats oppressing them in the colonies. It was through such grant that the first government-sponsored Kenyan went to study in Britain. Eliud Wambu Mathu, to whom we shall return in detail later in

⁵ “The British Council; Kenya Bursaries” (undated pamphlet), KNA PC/NZA/3/6/74. The pamphlet, distributed through the colonial administrative offices, called for an applicant who had “already achieved some standing in his own calling and who has a definite post to which to return at the conclusion of the bursary.” Further it demanded that “the applicant must have a good knowledge of written and spoken English and have a sound education.”

the chapter, was selected to study at Oxford University beginning September of 1938.⁶ Six years later, he was nominated to Kenya's Legislative Council as a token gesture that, with higher educational training, Africans could be trusted to play a higher role in the political affairs of their country. With the outbreak of World War II, the British Council program was put on hold for nearly two decades.

After the war, and with a six-year backlog of stalled development weighing the colony down, Kenya's Governor, Sir Henry Moore, appointed a body called *the Development Committee* to assess the extent of the general colony development and map the way forward. Education was justifiably seen as an important ingredient of development. By this time, the general idea that Africans needed the highest available educational training was not in question. Nor was it debatable that they were being prepared for greater participation in the government of their country. What was still debatable was how much control Africans would be allowed to exercise in the government. Such politics were more prominent in Kenya and other colonies that hosted large European settler populations and where the few but influential resident Europeans lobbied vigorously for a white minority regime. Moreover, there was no consensus among the colonial policy makers on the timetable of the pace at which to incorporate Africans into the government. It was in this general milieu of confusion that the Development Committee started its work in 1945.

⁶ Before Mathu, the colonial administration in Kenya had been staunchly opposed to allowing African students to go for studies abroad. Only a few had managed to do so through their own effort. See Kenneth King, *Pan-Africanism and Education: a Study of Race Philanthropy and Education in the Southern States of America and East Africa*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971.

The Committee worked under particularly difficult conditions. On the one hand, the devastation wrought by the war made availability of fresh stocks of European administrators and investors difficult. This called for training of Africans to take up some of these tasks. On the other hand, the war had caused depletion of resources—human and material—that would have been mobilized for that endeavor. The Committee reflected this difficult position in its report saying: “We are aware of the insistent demand in this country and outside for the speeding up of the education for all races, but particularly of Africans. We realize and appreciate all the moral and philosophical arguments in favor of such a course...”⁷ In spite of such urgency, however, the Committee felt strongly that other economic needs came before African education. After agonizing over three different options of how to find resources for education, and still manage a dire national reconstruction project, the Committee came to a regrettable conclusion that it was of “little use spending large sums on African education if by so doing it means that money would not be available for the development of the natural resources of the Colony on which the people depend for their very existence.”⁸ With great reluctance, the Committee stated, it had arrived at the view that it was impossible for the state to formulate the ideal education “towards a fuller and better life for the African people.”⁹

Even so, the Development Committee ventured to recommend a universal four-year primary education for eighty percent of African students spread over twenty-year period, and additional two years for twenty percent who were expected to gain the higher professions. The

⁷ *Report of the Development Committee*, 1946, p. 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

cost of such education was to be met by the individuals benefitting from it, at an exorbitant fee of fifteen shillings per annum. Knowing well that this money was not readily available, the government found the Development Committee recommendations impractical and shelved the report altogether. The situation was however, dire, and inaction was not an option. To mobilize the necessary resources, the government did what it knew best. It surreptitiously raised taxes for Africans by repealing the Native Hut and Poll Tax of 1934, and replacing it with the Native Poll Tax of 1942. Under the new provision, the Native Poll Tax was increased from twelve to fourteen shillings.¹⁰ Besides increasing taxes, the state froze wages for African workers and cut budgetary provision for most non-essential expenditure.

In the meantime, the Local Native Councils were doing their best to complement the government effort. Afraid that African educational needs were being relegated to the lesser important of government priorities, they resorted to overtaxing themselves to make up for the deficit. So single-minded was their determination to raise a seeming unattainable amount of money that the Colony and Protectorate Report of 1948 observed with concern “the willingness of Local Native Councils to make heavy expenditure on primary education, sometimes to the detriment of their other responsibilities, and occasionally to an extent which can only be met by depleting reserve funds.”¹¹ The revenues derived from both the Native Poll Tax and the Africans’ voluntary taxes, provided the critical thrust for two remarkable educational initiatives: the *Ten-Year Plan for the Development of African Education* in 1948 followed by the *African Education Commission* of 1949.

¹⁰ *The Colony and Protectorate of Kenya Report*, 1946.

¹¹ *The Colony and Protectorate Report*, 1949, p. 6.

The Ten-Year Plan was, in effect, an amendment to the earlier recommendations by *the Development Committee*. Since the state had by now accumulated vital revenue, it hoped to direct more resources to the development of education. The Plan therefore sought to maximize the number of students to be educated within the projected period of ten years. In this respect, it recommended full primary course for 50 percent of children within this timeframe, cutting by half the twenty years projected the previous committee. And although the individual number of students set to benefit was smaller compared to the number favored by the earlier committee, the ultimate total was expected to be larger, and the quality of education better. The most radical recommendation the Ten-Year Plan made, was calling for production of post-secondary education graduates to meet the demand of the higher caliber workforce the colony direly needed. Stated the report:

To achieve this end, however, secondary education alone is not enough, and it is essential that there should be a very considerable and rapid increase in the number of students who proceed to Makerere after the completion of the School Certificate course. The requirement of education services alone will call for a permanent establishment of well over 100 Makerere teachers, i.e. four or five time the present number... For some of the higher posts, even a Makerere training will be inadequate and provision must consequently be made for the award of overseas bursaries on an extensive scale to enable selected men and women to proceed to the United Kingdom for degree courses and for specialist training.¹²

Makerere Technical School, which now featured prominently in the developments of education in Kenya, was upgraded to become an overseas constituent college of London University. The Asquith Commission of 1945 had created the Inter-University Council for Higher Education to harmonize educational provisions in the British territories with the institutions at home. This

¹² *Ten-Year Plan for the Development of African Education*, 1948, p. 12.

Council recommended both the upgrading of Makerere and the establishment of Royal Technical College in Nairobi that became the forerunner of the Nairobi University.¹³ At any rate, the Ten-Year Plan, having spelled out Kenya's educational requirements for the next decade, left it up to the African Education Commission of 1949 to work out the specifics.

Established in 1948 under the chairmanship of a leading missionary, the Archdeacon Leonard Beecher, the *African Education Commission* published its recommendations in 1949. Unlike the previous education reports—or perhaps given the different realities the colonial government was facing—the Beecher Report took the idea of upgrading Africans' education with new-found seriousness. It deplored the state of African education, as it was, calling it far too underdeveloped for any society. Only rapid reforms could make up for the prolonged neglect it had suffered. The report employed statistics generously to dramatize the profundity of that abandon. The country required at least eleven-thousand candidates for the Kenya African Preliminary Examination (KAPE) yearly, yet there were only about two-thousand students at the time the report was published. Some two-thousand aided primary schools were needed, yet there were less than a thousand. In all, only half of school-age children were enrolled in any kind of institution, and there were hardly any girls among them.¹⁴

In regard to the structural state of the schools, “most of these schools are poorly built, poorly staffed, and ill-equipped and for a backward community they call for a heavy financial

¹³ *Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies Report, 1946-47; Report of the Royal Technical College of East Africa, 1951-52.*

¹⁴ *African Education in Kenya, 1949* (Also called *The Beecher Report*). The report observed that girls' education was not encouraged. There were only 2,200 of them in the public-funded schools in 1949.

outlay for which there is a very inadequate educational return.”¹⁵ In addition, the curriculum desperately needed overhaul. “The language policy in schools is that English shall be adopted as soon as possible in the post-primary classes,”¹⁶ the report demanded, echoing the urgency—if not utter desperation—of the moment. Africans had for a long period fought to have English taught. The colonial authorities had ignored and even discouraged it, and now, this same regime was encouraging it with almost frenzied alacrity, as the report outlined: “every effort should be made to improve the quality of education given in the schools....the present six-year primary course [is] insufficient preparation for training for wage-earning employment and that it unfitted [*sic*] pupils for absorption into the life of the community from which they came [*sic*]...the Report has therefore recommended that as many as possible should be given eight-year course, but that primary course be reduced to four years.”¹⁷ A rigorous academic syllabus however did not mean abandonment of the colonial regime’s favorite ideology of moral improvement. The commission still desired “to see a morally sound education based on Christian principles.”¹⁸ This proposition was possibly made by a missionary member of the committee, for neither the colonial administrators nor the Africans seemed particularly keen to see a return of missionary monopoly of previous decades, a control which had eroded steadily since mid-1920s. When the African representatives to the Legislative Council led by Mathu hosted an open forum to gather their constituents’ input on the report before it was tabled in the LegCo, they were inundated by the

¹⁵ Ibid, p.1.

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 23.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 10.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 6.

voices rejecting any role of missionary on their education. Consequently, the forum made the resolution that: “The African desires and shall insist that a state system of education be introduced in Kenya. Missions cannot do two things properly; they cannot evangelise and at the same time devote their time efficiently to African education. African education must be the responsibility of the state and the only agencies we must recognise are the Local Government authorities.”¹⁹

Missionary control was only one of the many issues of concern. A majority of Africans who offered their views pointed out to several other clauses which undermined Africans’ interests. The main contention focused on recommendations 40 through to 49, which made provision for the Europeans to: control the curriculum development, occupy the higher ranks of education administration, and supervise African officials in almost every literary task.²⁰

Consequently, the contributors to the forum advised Mathu and his three African colleagues in the LegCo to vote against the scheduled motion to adopt the Beecher Report. The forum asserted at the close of its consultations: “Generally, the Africans hold the view that the report recommends a system of Europeanisation in the African education instead of Africanisation which is the wish of the African. The report recommends too many European posts and gives the African teacher very little real responsibility either in the school or in the administration of

¹⁹ “African Unofficial Members’ Organisation: Comments on report of Beecher Committee on African Education in Kenya, 1949”, 11 July, 1950, KNA, MSS/3/231.

²⁰ That Beecher’s was the first education commission to ever include an African representation was a notable sign of progress. But Eliud Mathu was not resolute advocate. He went along with all the discussions, and endorsed its recommendations. When however it became clear to him that Africans were vehemently opposed to the report, Mathu was forced to host a forum to discuss it.

African education in general.”²¹ Africans’ overall view was that the Beecher Report did not contain any indication that the colonial state was prepared to let them take full charge of their own affairs. What it did was to shift the Europeans’ control from the micromanagement to a more supervisory level. Otherwise the paternalistic attitude of the European superior towards his African charge was left intact. Their contributions in this forum demonstrated that Africans were quite conscious of the fact that whereas the Beecher Report employed the rhetoric of progress towards self-rule for Africans, such rule was envisioned, from the colonizer’s perspective, as a system of indirect rule.

Nurturing of an African Comprador class through scholarship.

The earliest indication that the colonial state was willing to allow Africans greater political participation came in the midst of the World War II. In 1942, the colonial authorities in Kenya amended the Native Authority Ordinance to allow establishment of a Standing Advisory Committee for Local Native Councils. To these councils, the Governor was empowered to nominate five Africans who, besides observing how the government functioned (for their own future benefit), informally advised the Governor on African affairs. Qualification for such position required a level of education higher than the available level in the local institutions. With the hope of garnering nominations for their own, Local Native Councils (LNCs) took it upon themselves to offer scholarships to students from their jurisdictions for education abroad. Their desire took such a monumental value that frequently, deliberations on scholarships

²¹ Ibid.

dominated entire sessions of LNC meetings. Several meetings were held in many districts when, according to the education officials, “[the Africans] learned that there were only a few young men who had sufficient good knowledge of the English language to qualify for consideration for nomination to Legislative Council.”²² After protracted consultations with the government representative, the LNC of North Kavirondo, for instance, made the resolution “That this Council affirms its readiness to support financially any qualified, deserving student who belongs to this District to complete their education at Universities outside East Africa in addition to, or in place of, Government Funds, as may be necessary.”²³

In this regard, promotion of higher education was manifestly viewed from the perspective of political positioning for power. Yet, how it was decided who should benefit from higher education is a critical issue here. It goes to the heart of the whole colonial rationale of grooming a subordinate political class. There were clearly divergent, at times conflicting, positions, between the African communities and the colonial officials. Whereas, as we have seen in the case of North Kavirondo District, Africans wanted as many opportunities as they could maintain for their students, and were willing to meet the expenses, the government officials wanted the right to influence who such beneficiaries should be. While the LNCs were concerned more with the intellectual capacity of the individual students, the colonial state privileged the individual’s political proclivity. A few cases below will illustrate how the colonial officials sought to influence this process.

²² “Higher Education of Africans,” 18 October, 1944, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

²³ Ibid.

The first case is that of Chief Mulama. Before mid-1930s, Mulama was a trusted government official in North Kavirondo. In 1931 gold was discovered in Kakamega area of his jurisdiction. European prospectors rushed to stake their claim. At the same time, the white settler community demanded that the government alienate the mineral-rich land from the resident Africans. Several African leaders, including Chief Mulama, opposed this encroachment fiercely. Consequently, the colonial authorities branded him a rebel and relieved him of his position in 1937.²⁴ A few years after his demotion, ex-chief Mulama's two sons applied to study at Adams College in South Africa. The procedure required Mulama to apply to the provincial administration for their clearance to leave the country. Mulama made this application. He even indicated that since his sons were not being supported through government scholarship, he would personally meet their tuition and expenses. Another bureaucratic process, the administration sought the advice of the Education Department on the matter, whereupon the Inspector of Schools replied with comments to the effect that students were too old "to benefit by a university Education"²⁵ although they had passed all the required examinations. Further exchange followed, between the local colonial authority and the Department of Education, in which Mulama was constantly referred to as the "rebel ex-chief." Ultimately, the state denied the students exit authorization. Once the verdict was conveyed to him, Mulama protested to Director of Education saying, "I fail to understand why the Inspector of Schools thinks that my sons are too old to benefit from an University Education. My mind having been made up to give my boys further

²⁴ John Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, London: Kegan Paul Inc., 1985.

²⁵ Inspector of School to Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza Province, "Sons of Ex-Chief Mulama", 11 December, 1944, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

education the views that the Inspector of Schools hold have no bearing on the case [*sic*].”²⁶ Subsequent correspondences indicate the file was either lost or discarded. The director of education could not trace it. In the end, the ex-chief’s sons were never given the crucial clearance.

J. William Wambani’s case was handled very differently from that of ex-Chief Mulama. Wambani was a son of Chief Rapondi, who was himself a son of the famed Nabongo Mumia of Wanga.²⁷ A testimonial by the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner to the Chief Secretary in support of a government scholarship for him confessed that the candidate was neither sufficiently prepared for admission of higher education nor qualified for a government scholarship, “but I ask that he should receive special consideration in view of his probable future as Chief of the Wanga. Despite that Wambani is not considered a very bright student, he seems to possess qualities which are desirable in the person of a Chief.”²⁸ It is not clear how badly he fared in his final exams, for, the education department refused to recommend him for advanced education. This upset the colonial officials who viewed the student’s political utility as far outweighing his academic handicap. In January of 1946, District Commissioner F. D. Hislop, after learning about Wambani’s rejection, lamented:

I am extremely disappointed to see this report, as Wambani is the direct heir to the Nabongoship of Wanga, the most honorific post in the native hierarchy

²⁶ J. G. Mulama to Director of Education, 6 February, 1945, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

²⁷ Loosely, ‘Nabongo’ translates into ‘monarch’, or ‘emperor’. For the story of Nabongo Mumia of Wanga, see John Osogo, “The Historical Traditions of the Wanga Kingdom,” In *Hadith 1*, edited by B. A. Ogot, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1968; John Lonsdale, “The Politics of Conquest: The British in Western Kenya, 1894-1948, *The Historical Journal*, 20 (Dec., 1977): pp. 841-870.

²⁸ Provincial Commissioner to Chief Secretary, J. William Wambani s/o Late Chief Rapondi, 10 November, 1944, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

here. It is true that inability to master education of the European type will not affect his status among his own people, but from the Government's point of view, it is desirable that this young man, who is destined to occupy a very influential position in due course, should receive as much education as possible.²⁹

Both the cases of ex-Chief Mulama's sons and Rapondi's son present interesting dynamics. In the case, of Mulama, the colonial officials were determined to frustrate all the efforts of capable students for the sheer fact that their independent-minded father was seen as a rebel. Either the colonial officials denied the students the opportunity to go to the university as a punishment to their father for his perceived insolence, or the regime feared the sons, once educated, might well go down the way of their father. On the other hand, the colonial officials tried hard to give an education to an ally even though he was not likely to benefit from it. Thus, the state desired to see educational scholarships awarded primarily to students who were considered to as politically useful.³⁰

The case of Charles Njonjo is, perhaps, the ultimate achievement in the colonial social engineering project to transform the old traditional collaborations into new modern alliances through education, in particular, as the colonial state prepared for devolution of political power. Njonjo had every advantage on his side. He was a capable student, and came from a loyalist family. His father, Chief Josiah Njonjo, had been one of the early converts of Church Missionary Society Canon Harry Leakey. A beneficiary of Leakey's mission school education at Kikuyu, the

²⁹ F. D. Hislop to Inspector of Schools, Nyanza Province 28 January, 1946, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

³⁰ From 1938 to 1945, most educational efforts were seriously hampered by the war. The Department of Education ceased publication of its reports leaving the state to articulate most educational policies through correspondences between officials and inter-departmental memoranda. When the Education Department Annual Report resumed publication in 1946, it indicated that there were three Kenya students studying in the UK and fifty more at Uganda's Makerere College. *Education Department Annual Report*, 1946.

senior Njonjo joined the colonial employment in 1914 where he worked as a compositor for the settler-owned *Leader* newspaper. Through Leakey's help, he became a colonial chief in the early 1920s and remained a staunch colonial supporter throughout the colonial rule.

Like many other sons of African colonial elite, the younger Njonjo attended Alliance High School from 1936 to 1940 after which he proceeded to Fort Hare, South Africa and eventually London. All his studies were funded by the government. Upon his return to the country in 1949, Njonjo found himself a rare item on the agenda of the African Affairs Committee. His case was argued by Chief Native Commissioner, who reminded all present, that the government had paid for Njonjo's scholarship and now it was time to offer him a position in its bureaucracy. The official implored the government department heads to find something for the younger Njonjo in their departments. In the end, the Registrar of Co-operative Societies promised to create a position with "some attractive title such as 'African Deputy Registrar' or the like."³¹ Njonjo began his work under the Registrar's direct supervision after which he was sent out to supervise the formation of co-operative societies in the Central Province. At the time of independence, Njonjo was well positioned to become Kenya's first African Attorney General.

African students who did not hail from loyalist families had to exhibit some other quality, up and beyond their academic prowess, for the government to recommend them for higher education. Invariably, such qualities included leadership ability, amenability to European supervision and demonstration of 'maturity.' Maturity was defined from the viewpoint of the colonial regime, such that, any character that deviated from the approved conduct was regarded

³¹ "Minutes of a Meeting of the Official Members of the African Affairs Committee," 10 February, 1949, KNA PC/NGO/1/1/40.

as ‘immature.’ Such character could range from students’ general indiscipline to their questioning of certain elements of the curriculum, for instance, the teaching of religion. In political terms, ‘immaturity’ was used interchangeably with ‘agitation,’ generally to describe the temperament of Africans who opposed colonialism. Beneah Apollo Ohanga was one of the few students who benefitted from government scholarship by merit of demonstrable leadership ability. A teacher at Maseno School, Ohanga was sponsored to study at the School of Oriental and African Studies in 1944. In endorsing him, the inspector of schools in Nyanza Province hailed him as a “public spirited man who is willing to give his time and his abilities to the service of his fellow Africans.”³² Upon his return, Ohanga became the second African nominated to the Legislative Council. Like Ohanga, Gilbert Odawa came from outside of the loyalist African families. When he applied to go for higher education in the United Kingdom, mid-1945, as was the procedure, his alma mater, the Maseno School forwarded his qualifications and supporting testimonial, which stated in part;

Two years ago, I would have said that he was too young—younger in manners and ways than his actual age... This year he has mended his manners... There is also in my opinion considerable development of character. He has been Hon. Sec. of Nyanza Boys Scouts Assn; the Inspector of Schools will be able to report on his activities in this sphere. He trained our athletic team without any European supervision—an arduous and thankless task in view of the general attitude of boys to athletics—and did it with keenness.³³

Whatever his shortcoming from the previous two years, it seems that, by the time Odawa came around to apply for the scholarship, the colonial authorities were happy with his department.

When vetting for another candidate, Joel Omino, the Central Nyanza District Commissioner, R.

³² Inspector of School to Provincial Commissioner, Nyanza Province, 21 July, 1944, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

³³ Principal CMS Maseno School to Director of Education “Overseas Bursaries for Africans: G. N. Odawa,” 14 November, 1945, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/130.

D. F. Ryland claimed to know the applicant “by repute as a loyal and staunch supporter of Government and an outstanding personality, in every way.”³⁴ Thus, Omino’s unwavering support for the colonial state conquered any shortcomings that may have stood on his way.

But perhaps the case that illustrates the ideal educated African elite the colonial endeavored to cultivate is of Moses Mudavadi. Mudavadi started as a teacher. He climbed through the school administration ranks and by 1955, was appointed the African District Education Officer in the Rift Valley Province. In a recommendation letter supporting his application for further studies in Britain, the Provincial Education Officer stated;

[Mudavadi] has acted as District Education Officer, Baringo, since August, 1955; in this capacity has shown that he has initiative and tact; is cheerful and is willing to work hard. He has displayed a sense of responsibility and a grasp of accounts and procedure which are unusual in an African and has taken a surprising amount of trouble to acquaint himself with regulations and administrative rulings; his knowledge of English is extensive and he writes a good letter.³⁵

What is fascinating about Mudavadi is that, besides having good command of English language, he was hailed primarily for his ability to follow the instructions spelled out for him by his European superiors. His initiative is thus portrayed in terms of knowing when and how to undertake a particular responsibility. This is not surprising. African political leaders and bureaucrats were expected to function within the readily established institutions, and were not—even in independent Kenya—to have the propensity to develop their own innovations. The

³⁴ R. D. F. Ryland, Acting Provincial Commissioner, “Bursary from the British Council: Mr. Joel Omino,” 23 March, 1953, KNA NZA/3/6/74.

³⁵ Provincial Education Officer to Provincial Commissioner, Rift Valley Province, “Advisory Council for African Education,” 4 December, 1956, KNA PC/NKU/2/10/16.

understanding of independence, as pertaining to Africans, was therefore seen as their aptitude to function in the prescribed roles perfectly free of European supervision.

Induction into Political elitism: Mathu, KAU and Africans' representation.

Friday, June 9, 1944, was the last day of the Kenya Legislative Council's 1938-1944 existence. The Governor, Sir Henry Moore, sat through the session dominated by an agenda related to the war: the rehabilitation of the soldiers being demobilized, revamping of labor and other issues relating to the reconstruction. Attending the session were also the two European representatives of African affairs. One was Archdeacon Leonard Beecher, a missionary, the other, H. R. Montgomery, a settler farmer. Procedurally, the Governor was given the honor to close the session before adjournment for the new elections scheduled to be held at the end of the year. These closing remarks marked the turning point for Africans' political engagement.

Governor Moore stated:

...much consideration has been given in many different quarters to the question whether the interests of the Africans community are adequately represented in this Council under the present system. Let me say at once that this connotes no reflection whatsoever either on those who now, or in the past, have given so freely of their time and experience in representing those interests. Their counsel and advice has been invaluable; but they themselves would be the first to admit that in advancing views they believe to be in the best interests of the African, they are handicapped by insufficient knowledge as to how far the African shares those views himself. This question is also, I know, very much in the thoughts of the more enlightened Africans themselves who feel that the time has

come when in some way they should be more closely associated with the formulation of policy that may vitally affect them.³⁶

Governor Moore praised the ‘enlightened Africans’ saying their concern was inspired by their desire to co-operate with the government in the task of African development. All along, he stated, government’s intention was to see that Africans had acquired the necessary qualifications to represent their own interests. His declaration was framed in terms of maturity, implying that, after years of European colonialists’ tutelage, Africans’ political conduct had finally come to an altitude that was adequate to give them a try-out. Thus, stated the Governor;

As a first step to familiarizing educated Africans with the procedure and machinery of Government this Council in 1942, by an amendment of the Native Authority Ordinance, set up a Standing Advisory Committee for Local Native Councils on which I was empowered to appoint five Africans to serve. In the short time available the African members of that Committee have shown their ability to take their full part in that work, while the part played by some African members in the activities of the more advanced Local Native Councils has further demonstrated that we have to-day Africans capable of taking a fuller share in the work of Government than they have done in the past. I therefore propose as a first step to nominate one African to sit on this Council side by side with his European colleague.³⁷

The Governor indicated that he was willing to work with the African communities for this appointment, stating that, in order to ensure Africans themselves were closely involved, he was instructing the Chief Native Commissioner, after consultations with Local Native Councils, to submit a panel of names for his consideration.

This proclamation sparked animated jostling among the Local Native Councils seeking to front their own for the appointment. Proposed names swamped the office of the Chief Native

³⁶*Kenya Legislative Council Debates*, 9 June 1944, p. 241.

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 242.

Commissioner. To ensure the ultimate leverage for itself, each major ethnic community produced a set of two alternatives candidates. The Luo community proposed Paul Mboya and Joel Omino; the Luhya, Solomon Adagala and Henry Kere; and the coastal communities, H. G. S. Harrison, Jimmy Jones, Jimmy Jeremiah and Harry Stephens. Central Kenya put forward Eliud Mathu and Mbiu Koinange, the latter having been proposed by his father, Koinange wa Mbiu who was at the time the most prominent Kikuyu chief. When the Chief Native Commissioner insisted that the nominee must be fluent in spoken English, the list narrowed to just a handful of candidates. In the end, only the two candidates from the Central Kenya were left in the field.

Both candidates possessed much of the qualities the state was looking for. They were well educated. Both had started their education in mission schools and were admitted to Alliance High School in 1926. Koinange left before finishing his first year to attend the Hampton College in the United States of America. While in the US, he also attended Wesleyan University and Columbia, where he obtained a Masters degree and became the first Kenyan African to ever attain such level of education. Since US education quality was not well regarded in either Britain or her colonies, Koinange relocated to Britain where he attended the London School of Economics.³⁸ He eventually returned to Kenya in 1938 and founded the Kenya Teachers' College to train teachers for African independent schools.³⁹ Koinange had begun campaigning for his own nomination to the LegCo even before the Governor's declaration. He had toured Nyanza and Central provinces asking chiefs and the local native councils to endorse a petition

³⁸ Gerald Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem? The U.S. and the Liberation of Kenya*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

³⁹ "Kenya Teachers College," Leakey Archives.

drafted by his father to the Secretary of State, Oliver Stanley, asking him to direct the governor to appoint Koinange.⁴⁰ In many ways, therefore, Koinange had displayed bold ambition for the job. Yet that did not guarantee his appointment when the time came. On October 5, 1944, Governor Moore chose Mathu as the first African unofficial member in the thirty-nine-member council.

Mathu embodied the ideal quality the colonial state wanted to cultivate in an African leader—the character of one who was completely removed from the African society. Born around 1910, in the Southern Kikuyu district of Kiambu, Mathu was distantly related to Chief Kinyanjui wa Gathirimu, who, during his own time, was the most powerful African colonial chief. Unlike Koinange, he had completed his Senior Secondary Teacher’s Certificate at Alliance. In 1930, the school board recruited him to teach there, making him the first African master in Alliance. After three years of teaching, Mathu was offered a Local Native Council scholarship to further his education at the African Native College, Fort Hare, South Africa. Coming at a time when Africans’ access to education was strictly controlled, his scholarship defied the tradition. Not every colonial official welcomed it. When the Chief Native Commissioner, F. D. Wade, complained that it might set a dangerous precedent for other Africans, Mathu’s loyal supporters were quick on his defense. The principal of Alliance High School, George Grieve, under whom he worked, gave the assurance to Wade that; “In Eliud’s case, I don’t think there is much danger of forming a precedent. His case is a special one, in that

⁴⁰ John Spencer, *James Beuttah: Freedom Fighter*, Nairobi: Stellascope, 1983.

it is very desirable that there should be a highly trained African on the staff of this school.”⁴¹

Grieve did not need to say that Mathu was a particularly loyal teacher, a staunch Christian who persistently encouraged his students “to build up the Kingdom of Christ on earth,”⁴² and a strong believer in Booker T. Washington’s theories on the role of education on the ‘Negro’.⁴³ Upon his return to the country, Mathu went back to Alliance and devoted his time to teaching, one of the few professions open to educated African elite.

Four years after his return from South Africa, Mathu sailed off yet again for further studies in the United Kingdom, on a scholarship facilitated by the British Council through Margery Perham. Perham had met him at Alliance, and was so impressed by his intellect, that she decided to approach the Council for the scholarship with neither Mathu’s initiative nor his input. According to Roelker, the scholarship was “the result of liberal colonialist effort”⁴⁴ to position people like Mathu for greater political participation. Perham admitted years later that she had hoped Mathu would eventually be invited to take up a legislative position. As Roelker perceptively states, “the scholars and administrators who encouraged [Mathu to further his studies] sought to groom an African elite to assume leadership roles in the colonies. Generally speaking, they were looking for a certain type of personality in their quest for candidates.”⁴⁵

⁴¹ G. A. Grieve to Acting Director of Education, 11 October, 1931, KNA 1/1023. The Director of Education, H. S. Scott, was not happy with the arrangement to send Mathu abroad. When he returned to the country to resume his duties from the acting director, Evan Bliss, he stated that he was “quite disturbed.” By then, Mathu was already on his way. H. S. Scott to G. A. Grieve, 2 January, 1932, KNA 1/1023.

⁴² Quoted in Jack R. Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya: a Political Study*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976, p. 31.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 52.

Perham herself predicted, with remarkable accuracy, that at the end of Mathu's studies in the UK, "he will find a great position waiting for him in the leadership of his own people."⁴⁶

Mathu had shown no political inclination beyond what was ordinary for a teacher. But he was still preferred over Koinange, who was academically more qualified and politically more ambitious. Even Mathu himself acknowledged the fact that his being closer to the colonial regime, rather than his educational qualifications, gained him the crucial advantage over Koinange. "I was on good terms with most of the chiefs, government officials, [white] farmers, teachers, clergymen—these were the men serving on the Council—and so when the time came, they came to me and said: 'What about you, wouldn't you like to be considered [for nomination]?' I said 'Alright, if you want to put forward my name, you can have it.'⁴⁷ His connection with Alliance High School played an equally important role, as he states, "I had been attached to this very important institution of higher learning, and these boys, having left there, were in every department, and they liked me."⁴⁸ On the other hand, Koinange's chief disadvantage, according to Throup, was the fact that he commanded an independent constituency whereas Mathu depended wholly on colonial patronage. "Without an independent power base," he argues, "Mathu's nomination fitted in with the Kenya administration's idea of controlled incorporation."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya*, 1976, p. 54.

⁴⁶ Margery Perham to Master Lindsey of Balliol. Quoted in Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya*, 1976, p. 53.

⁴⁷ Interview with Roelker. Quoted in Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya*, 1976, p. 72.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Mathu's European endorsers described him variably as 'a man of strong character' 'stable,' someone with 'restrained common sense,' and more peculiarly, as having 'superior intellect.' Lord Lothian, secretary to the Cecil Rhodes education trust, described an African of 'superior intellect' as one who could "stand an education at a high class white university without becoming spoiled, who can meet colour prejudice without becoming embittered and who can go back to his own country where he will have to take his place as part of the subordinate race without going "red."⁵⁰ Mathu impressed them as just that person. He had demonstrated a convincing dislike for African nationalist politics, which, up until the World War II changed the circumstances, had been a crucial indicator of Africans' maturity. He had also faithfully served the Local Native Council, the body set up by the state to address Africans' welfare issues. He was a trustworthy individual, someone who colonial regime could work with. Koinange, on the other hand, was believed to be 'spoilt.' His having attended US's Hampton College, a chiefly black university, made him suspect in the eyes of the colonial administration and the white community as a whole.⁵¹

To advise Mathu in his new role, the state encouraged a group of educated Africans living and working in Nairobi to form a political party. Its African founders called it the Kenya African Union (KAU). KAU was ethnically diverse: Every major ethnic community was represented in its leadership structures. Among its important leaders, were: Albert Awino, a Luo from Nyanza; John Kebaso, a Gusii from Western; H. L. Nangurai, a Maasai from the Rift

⁴⁹ Throup, David. "Moderates, Militants, and Mau Mau: African Politics in Kenya, 1944-52", Paper presented to at the Historical Society of Kenya, Annual Conference. 3rd-5th January, 1986.

⁵⁰ Quoted in Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya*, 1976, p. 54.

⁵¹ Horne, Gerald. *Mau Mau in Harlem*, 2009.

Valley; F. M. Ng'ang'a, and James Gichuru, both Kikuyu from Central; Simon Mulade, a Kamba from Eastern; and Francis Khamisi, a Swahili from the coast. Seven out of the twelve steering committee members had been schooled in Alliance, which formed the class and social bond, and only two were from outside of government employment. Nangurai was a businessman and Khamisi a journalist, while all the others were civil servants and teachers. Except for Nagurai, all other KAU founder-members resided in Nairobi. KAU's overly urban-centered activities and its educated elite—nearly all of them government employees—gave it airs of an exclusive club, and from the beginning, failed to attract the mass following. As a party founded by government employees, KAU could not convince its African constituency that it was free of government influence. The nomination of its poster-boy, Mathu, was evocative of its flaw, based, as it was, on a narrow support of the Local Native Councils (LNCs) that were viewed by Africans with much suspicion.

Despite KAU's stained credibility, the state still insisted on micromanaging the party. Two weeks after its formation, the Chief Native Commissioner, Colonel Marchant, summoned Mathu and the party treasurer, Francis Khamisi, into his office and informed them that he and Leonard Beecher had given the issue of KAU's name some deep thoughts. They had agreed that the party was too young and its name too political, and thus, could not be allowed to exist as it was. Marchant suggested a change of name to Kenya African Studies Union (KASU). He argued that this change was necessary to give KAU "the appearance of apprenticeship rather than full African participation in politics."⁵² KAU officials readily agreed to the change of name upon

⁵² Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, 1985, p. 129.

which Marchant offered to help them distribute the *Kenya African Study Union Rules and Regulations* through the government provincial and district structures. In return, KASU officials promised to co-operate with the government and keep the district administrations updated on all its activities.

KASU hoped to market itself to the African society through the LNCs, a plainly unwise strategy given their reputation as adjuncts to the colonial state. Mathu, usually accompanied by one other official, went to LNC meetings where he mainly “talked about the need for unity among Africans and about the importance of KASU, as an all-African party, in developing this unity.”⁵³ As a journalist working with the government-owned *Baraza* journal, KASU’s treasurer, Khamisi, always made sure these speeches received wide coverage. This was another ill-advised strategy. *Baraza* was a government propaganda newspaper, and as a rule, Africans distrusted its political commentary. Nor could KASU convince Africans, through its first self-published journal, the *Sauti ya Mwafrika* (the African Voice), that it was divorced from the state.⁵⁴ As it were, many Africans thought the party officials were “too educated, too removed” from Africans’ realities. Others regarded it as “‘the teachers’ party’ more concerned with Nairobi than the reserves.”⁵⁵ In areas outside Kikuyu, the party was seen as “too much a Kikuyu party” which made most communities to hesitate to join it. Spencer sums up its dilemma thus: “For KASU to reach the grass-root levels in districts like North Kavirondo would have required an organization

⁵³ Ibid, p. 131.

⁵⁴ Sauti ya Mwafrika was much in tune with KASU’s own Rules and Regulations which called for the party to publish a journal periodically.

⁵⁵ Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, 1985, p. 135.

it simply did not have.”⁵⁶ Its national leadership was part-time, and this led to weak branches, petty squabbles, and disorganization at many districts. In short, the party was deteriorating when Jomo Kenyatta⁵⁷ took its reins in 1947.

Ever since his entry into the political scene late 1920s, Kenyatta had remained enigmatic more for his absence than presence. He had lived through some of the most stimulating moments of nationalist politics, but he had somehow avoided being fully a part of it. When Harry Thuku led an anti-colonial political movement akin to an uprising in the early 1920s, Kenyatta then a civil servant, watched the unfolding from the sideline. He was out of the country when the battle provoked by the ban on female circumcision broke out at the beginning of 1930, the battle that pitted Kenyatta’s own Kikuyu Central Association (KCA) and the African independent schools on the one side, against the colonial axis of missionaries, the Kikuyu chiefs and the government officials, on the other. He was still absent when Thuku returned from exile mid-1930s as a government ally hell-bent on driving the KCA aground. Likewise, KCA was banned and KAU formed in 1940 and 1944 respectively, all without Kenyatta being at the scene. Yet, during this whole period, his image loomed large. To fully appreciate his greater role in Kenyan politics, and his leadership of KAU, it is important to provide a sketch of his political life in the preceding period. His experience in Europe is portrayed in this sketch as a mixed blessing for Kenyatta. On the one hand, Europe opened to him the broader world of pan-Africanism in ways Kenya could not do for him, and yet, on the other, it nurtured in him a sense of conservatism that made him

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 136.

⁵⁷ Kenyatta was born Kamau wa Ngengi. He went through a series of name change before finally settling for his nationalist connotative name, Jomo Kenyatta. Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1979.

acquiescent to the European colonial authorities in Kenya. As such, Kenyatta was one of the few African leaders groomed more by their experiences in the European metropolis.

Kenyatta's background is not any different from that of other African leaders of his generation. His exact date of birth remains unknown, but most accounts place it between 1892 and 1898. He attended the Church of Scotland Mission (CSM) between 1909 and 1912. His teachers included Dr. John Arthur and Arthur Ruffell Barlow, both who played important roles in African politics. Barlow was the man who helped the Kikuyu Association to draft the famous memorandum that Thuku read at Dagoretti in June of 1921. Dr. Arthur, among other roles, was the unofficial representative of African interests in the LegCo between 1924 and 1929, and was also instrumental in the establishing of the Alliance High School. Kenyatta was, thus, schooled by personalities who were fully engaged in African affairs. At school, Kenyatta "displayed no marked intelligence or aptitude for the new skills he was learning"⁵⁸ and without much academic hope, apprenticed himself in carpentry. His initiation into African nationalist politics came in the mid 1920s when James Beuttah, a founder member of the recently launched Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), invited him to attend a KCA meeting. Beuttah worked for the Kenya postal services. As the most educated member of the Association, he was entrusted with the secretary's responsibilities which involved mainly, drafting and translating KCA's correspondence. When Beuttah was transferred to Uganda in 1926, KCA entrusted Kenyatta with secretarial duties.

Towards the end of 1927, Kenya's white settlers led by Lord Delamere proposed to the Colonial Office to amalgamate East and Central African colonies into a federation. This proposal

⁵⁸ Murray-Brown, Kenyatta, 1979, p.49.

excited a great deal of interest both in Britain and Kenya necessitating the Hilton Young Commission to collate views from all interested parties. KCA saw this as an opportunity to present its views directly to London where the commission was sitting. The Association preferred to send Beuttah. The amount of preparation and time demanded by the task made it a full-time job, meaning that, to take it, Beuttah would have to resign from his job at the postal services to become a fulltime KCA secretary. After some reflection, Beuttah decided his commitment to his family was more important to him and turned the opportunity down. He however proposed Kenyatta for the position, at which Kenyatta resigned his post as a store clerk and meter reader for the Nairobi municipal council's water department, and became the first KCA secretary.⁵⁹

Upon Kenyatta taking up the post, KCA began raising money to send him to London. The Association wanted him to present its views on the amalgamation, to address other long-standing concerns about land, labor, native registration, and also to present a petition calling for release of Harry Thuku, the African nationalist who was still in exile.⁶⁰ His trip was vehemently opposed by the members of the European community in Kenya. Christian missionaries saw it as a waste of money. To them, Kenyatta could not articulate Africans' issues as competently as themselves. In the ranks of the colonial administrators, there was fear that Kenyatta would portray the colonial regime in a negative light. Of the few attempts the colonial administration made to discourage the trip, was a desperate note which the Governor's office sent to the KCA

⁵⁹ Spencer, *Beuttah*, 1983.

⁶⁰ CO 533/384/9.

stating; “I am now directed to inform you that in view of the fact that your Association is an unofficial body which cannot be regarded a representative of the whole Kikuyu tribe, the Secretary of State will be unable to grant interview to Mr. Johnstone Kenyatta should your Association decide to send him to England.”⁶¹ Far from dissuaded, Kenyatta set sail on February 17, 1929, determined to present the KCA’s petition signed by thirty members directly to the Secretary of State. Kenya’s Governor, Edward Grigg was on holiday in London. Grigg located Kenyatta and the two held a long discussion on the issues he had come to present. Kenyatta was unacquainted with the bureaucratic protocols and did not know that, while in England, Grigg was technically not the Governor of Kenya, and was therefore meeting him as a civilian.⁶² Nonetheless, at the end their meeting, Grigg offered to help Kenyatta present KCA’s petition. How easily the KCA representative was persuaded to trust the man whose administration he was in London to discredit is inconceivable. Kenyatta left the document in Grigg’s hands unaware that Grigg intended to redirect the petition back to Nairobi for attention of the Acting Governor.⁶³ With his offer to ‘help’ Kenyatta, Griggs had successfully frustrated KCA’s effort to commune directly with the Colonial Office and rendered Kenyatta’s trip pointless.⁶⁴

Meanwhile Kenyatta contacted several anti-colonial organizations suggested to him by his Indian intermediary, Isher Dass. The League Against Imperialism welcomed him readily and

⁶¹ CO 533/384, File no. 15540/29.

⁶² Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, 1979.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ It may be noted here that during this period, Africans in Kenya were required to channel any petitions through the Local Native Councils to which local District Commissioner was the chairman. The DC then sent the petition to the Provincial Commissioner, then from Provincial Commissioner to the Chief Native Commissioner, and from him, to the Chief Secretary of Government, who then sent it on to the Governor, and eventually the Governor might send it to the Colonial Office in England.

offered to take him under its wing during his stay in Britain. His association with the League, and especially since it was rumored to have communist sympathies, worried the Europeans who had taken upon themselves to be Kenyatta's minders while in Britain. One of these was Handley Hooper, the missionary from Kikuyu's Kahuhia station who had since moved to London to become the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society for Africa. Hooper was utterly scandalized when he found out that Kenyatta had visited Communist Russia with his associates from the League. More distressing for Hooper, Kenyatta was reportedly living with 'a prostitute' and spending money—suspected to be KCA's—recklessly. He wrote an outraged letter to a colleague back at Kahuhia:

It's a tragic story: he [Kenyatta] began fairly well, but his recent behaviour, if known, would discredit him with any British Government, and damn the Association he was supposed to represent. If they [KCA] can't recall him at once, I advise the Association to drop him and cut their losses. I don't think his case had been prepared with sufficient care, and it's throwing away money to send a man whose character is so unstable. Many of us, who realise better than the Association what an infinitesimal unit in the Empire their number are, would do our best to ensure that any reasonable statement should at least receive a hearing: but to send a boy like Kenyatta is worse than not sending anyone, and just makes the friends of Africa in this country sad.⁶⁵

Hooper ensured these concerns reached KCA officials in Kenya. In turn, KCA began an effort to recall their man. A two-thousand shilling Kenyatta had requested "to clear up some financial issues" was turned down. Along with the regret, KCA sent him a letter cautioning him, "Mũrĩo nĩ ũtigagwo" (a principled man leaves a party at its merriest).⁶⁶ Its meaning was not so subtle: Simply, Kenyatta was a party animal who did not know when to walk out of a party. He was

⁶⁵ Hooper to Miss Soles, 26 September, 1929. Hooper Papers, CMS Archives. Quoted in Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, 1979, p. 119.

⁶⁶ *Kikuyu Central Association*, 1932, Leakey Archives. (translation mine).

enjoying himself at expense of the wretched people who had sent him to England to seek redress on their behalf. It was Kenyatta's turn to take offence. He shot a hard-hitting letter to KCA: "ngũkĩmũria atĩrĩrĩ kĩama mũrĩ inyuothe, muonete mawĩra mau mothe ndutĩte ta arĩ MURIO NDIAGA GUKU? ... Kaĩ mũtamenyaga ũrĩa ndĩrarorwo manyira nĩ Comba ona arĩa metuaga atĩ nĩ Arata a andũ airũ nĩ kuona ũria ndĩramatarũrania maithoinĩ ma ndũrĩrĩ? Weciriei wega na mũmenya Comba ti tũrimũ."⁶⁷ Having discredited the Europeans who he suspected had muddied his name back home, one of whom he correctly identified as Hooper, Kenyatta reiterated his request for more money. It is difficult to establish an accurate picture of his rumored reckless life in England by relying solely on his word against that of the Christian missionaries who had, in the first place, opposed his trip. His more sympathetic associations, however, held views not much different from those of the missionaries. C. L. R. James, the Trinidadian intellectual who Kenyatta became acquainted with, knew "Kenyatta owed everyone money"⁶⁸ and that he earned his sustenance by Paul Robeson's generosity. Robeson, the famed American actor, Pan-Africanist and anti-colonial activist, had taken the Kenyan under his wing and even offered him a role as an extra in his movie, *Sanders of the River*.⁶⁹

On the brighter side, Kenyatta had luck in picking valuable contacts. In addition to having Robeson as a friend, he met, and gave Swahili lessons to, Ralph Bunche, the American

⁶⁷ (I beg to ask you all whether all the work I am doing here is nonsense. DOES IT SEEM TO YOU LIKE I HAVE BEEN ENJOYING MYSELF AT YOUR EXPENSE? Do you not know how many sneers I get from the Europeans everywhere, even those of them who pretend they are friends of the Black people, whom I have exposed to the world nations for who they really are? Surely you must be dexterous well enough to recognize that Europeans are no idiots). Kenyatta to the Kikuyu Central Association, 28 June, 1932, Leakey Archives. (translation mine).

⁶⁸ Quoted in Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem*, 2009, p. 58.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

scholar and diplomat. His second visit to Moscow was in company of George Padmore, a well-known Trinidadian Pan-Africanist. He also built a relationship with Ethiopia's Emperor Haile Selassie I who fled to Britain after he was disposed by the Italian troops in 1936.⁷⁰ Even C. L. R. James, though critical of Kenyatta in some ways, was a fixture in his circle of associates. As he acquired new, mainly anti-colonial associations, Kenyatta's older colonial paternalistic contacts dropped out of his life. It is possible that his inspiration to attend an anthropology seminar offered by Bronislaw Malinowski at the University of London came from some of the more academically-oriented acquaintances. *Facing Mount Kenya*, Kenyatta's canonical scholarly work, was a culmination of Malinowski's seminar. The book was published in 1938, the same year the World War II broke out. Two years later, the colonial government banned KCA, leaving Kenyatta without an organization.

Acting on rumors that KCA was undermining British war effort, the government hired Dr. L. S. B. Leakey, the famed archeologist son of Canon Harry Leakey, to infiltrate KCA. Leakey built a case against KCA mainly through a network of informers. He alleged that its leaders were visiting the Italian Consulate in Nairobi at night, collecting money to help Germany, and organizing prayers for the Allies to lose the war. An orchestrated raid to KCA headquarters "proved abortive in so far as no actual proof of treasonable activities was obtained,"⁷¹ but still, the government concluded there was much evidence of illicit and seditious operations going on in the office. Consequently, KCA was banned under wartime regulations,

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ CO 533/523.

and arrest warrants issued for its leaders. Kenyatta was left both without his valuable sponsorship and facing a possible arrest if he dared return to Kenya. Needless to say, his activities, independent of KAU's, were noxious enough for the colonial state to set its security machinery on his trail. Both his public opposition to the recruitment of Africans to the war, and his participation in the Fifth Pan-African Congress of 1945 in Manchester which called for independence of the colonized, could both be construed as acts undermining the colonial state.⁷²

In the end, it was Eliud Mathu who came to his rescue by negotiating a deal for Kenyatta's return to Kenya without risking arrest. It is unlikely that this initiative came from Mathu himself. As the senior most African in the colonial political machinery, Mathu knew he risked losing much spotlight to Kenyatta. It might therefore have been persuasion by KCA members were still active underground. In any event, Mathu approached the Chief Native Commissioner, Col. Merchant and requested authorization to lead African leaders to the celebration of Victory Parade held in London after the war.⁷³ For Mathu, attending the celebrations was only one side of the story.

The other part of the story... I wanted to go and get Kenyatta back. And I did. He couldn't return. There was a law against his return to Kenya... So I took that group to the colonial office to say how-do-you-do to Mr. Creech Jones, the Secretary of State then, and telling him that we have also come to get your permission to get Kenyatta back... and we got Creech Jones to telephone the Governor here [in Kenya] to lift the ban against Kenyatta. Governor Mitchell, he had to, and we came back the same time. We came back together.⁷⁴

⁷² Kenyatta to Ndegwa "Kuri Muthuri ti Ndegwa o hamwe na Athruri aria angi," 8 May, 1946, Leakey Archives.

⁷³ According to Mathu, the African delegation numbered a dozen or so, but Roelker's research yielded only seven. Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya*, 1976.

⁷⁴ Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya*, 1976, p. 84-85.

The party arrived in Kenya at the beginning of 1946. Kenyatta's first desire was to join the colonial political machinery. He visited Governor Philip Mitchell to discuss this possibility, to which Mitchell suggested that he should begin by seeking election to the Local Native Council of the area where he proposed to live. This advice did not appeal to him. As Mitchell observed later, "I think his own ideas ran to immediate nomination to the Colony's Legislative Council and, although it would not have been right or proper to start him that way, if he had sincerely devoted his undoubted talents and considerable influence to local government work there is little doubt that he would not have taken long to secure a seat in the Legislature, especially as he talks English as well as I do."⁷⁵ It is not clear how Kenyatta's future would have turned out had Mitchell nominated him to the LegCo. What is clear is that after he was rebuffed, Kenyatta dedicated himself to working for KASU, which had only recently reverted to its original name, KAU. He was elected its president mid-1947. With Kenyatta as the president, KAU was re-energized. Its subscriptions went up and multitudes turned up to KAU rallies to hear him speak.⁷⁶

Henry Muoria was an independent journalist and self-publisher of Kikuyu journal *Mũmenyereri* (the Guardian). He accompanied Kenyatta to most of his meetings, both as his spokesman and as KAU propagandist. Muoria portrays the KAU president as a remote leader who chose to stay above the political fray. Save for an occasionally nuanced attack, Kenyatta generally avoided direct discourse with the colonial state.⁷⁷ To Africans, however, he spoke endlessly but in abstract rather than concrete terms. He traveled the length and breadth of the

⁷⁵ Philip Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts*, London: Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd., 1954, p.259.

⁷⁶ Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, 1985

⁷⁷ Henry Muoria, "Kenyatta's Speech to the Nyeri District Council with some Europeans present at the Meeting," In Wangari Muoria-Sal, et al. *Writing for Kenya: the Life and Works of Henry Muoria*, Lieden: Brill, 2009, p. 367.

country urging people to unite, to work hard, to get educated, to remain honest and diligent, and such other abstractions, all the while avoiding issues that would have brought him in direct conflict with the state.⁷⁸ At times his speeches came across as patronizing as those of a colonialist.⁷⁹ For the most part, however, he spoke on the same issues that Africans had grappled with for decades without suggesting any tangible solution. Even as he was hailed as a hero returned home to lead Africans to freedom, Kenyatta demonstrated a worrying sense of disconnection from affairs closest to Africans' heart. Issues like 'colour-bar,' forced labor, and land annexation, to mention but a few, did not resonate with his speeches.

Within a year of Kenyatta's return to Kenya, his leadership was tested. This came in the wake of the mass general strike organized by the African Workers Union (AWU) in Mombasa at the beginning of 1947. On January 13, some fifteen thousand African laborers, members of the recently-formed AWU, went on strike protesting, among other issues:

(1) Indifference toward pay [African workers] equally with the other workers of other races who performed identical or same duties. (2) Partiality and disrespect shown to African workers wherever they are employed. (3) Deliberative devices to keep the African poor that he may keep at his time all the time...indirect slavery camouflaged by sweet words and such salaries as would be taken for tips. (4) Not giving wives and children allowances. (5) Taking no notice of the present high cost of living.⁸⁰

This strike had brought together a vast network of workers; the dock workers, light industry workers, government worker, utility workers, hotel workers and domestic workers. The strike

⁷⁸ Henry Muoria, "Kenyatta's word to the Parents Association at Nairobi," In Muoria-Sal, et al. *Writing for Kenya*, 2009, p. 357.

⁷⁹ Henry Muoria, "Kenyatta Speaks to the Kenya African Union," In Wangari Muoria-Sal, et al. *Writing for Kenya*, 2009, p. 337.

⁸⁰ *The East African Standard*, 21 January, 1947.

was a last resort after the workers had presented many petitions to the government authorities in vain. The government, pressed hard by post-war economic depression, could not afford to concede to most of their demands. Instead, it declared the strike illegal and when the strikers refused to disband, the state deployed security forces under the War Defence Regulations.⁸¹ That the state was willing to use wartime laws against the striking workers' was not only peculiar (given that the war had ended two years earlier), it also reflected desperation of state wanting to intimidate the workers.

Still unbowed, the workers dispatched two representatives to the leading African political leaders, specifically, to Kenyatta and Mathu, seeking their political support. With Kenyatta, they encountered tough love. He emphatically denounced their strike as illegal and counseled them to individually bring their grievances to their employers instead of going through the AWU.⁸² It was the same advice the colonial state had offered them. Dissatisfied, the strikers refused to budge until the state, ultimately, caved in to their demands. It was a rare triumph that energized AWU. In August, AWU officials announced, through their spokesman, Chege Kabachia, that they were planning another strike with the aim of pressuring the government to harmonize the pay for workers nationally. Aiming to cripple both the strike and AWU, the state security arrested the officials, among them, Kabachia. During this crisis, Kenyatta proved to be more out of step with the African politics when, on September 11, he led KAU top brass in denunciation

⁸¹ Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya Trade Union Movement, to 1952*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1969

⁸² Cooper argues that Kenyatta's denouncement of the strikers marked the parting of ways between Kenyatta and the constitutionalists on the one hand and the more militant wing of the African nationalists consisting of the youth and laborers. See Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

of the trade union activities. In the meeting, he called the labor unionists who were lobbying for the strike “enemies of the African people” and cautioned, “if anything silly is done, we will suffer.”⁸³ By then, Kenyatta’s image as the great liberator of the African people was on the wane, and with it, the short surge of popularity KAU had enjoyed since he became its president. By 1950, subscriptions to the party had fallen drastically leaving KAU cash-strapped.⁸⁴

Rocking the Elite politics: invasion of KAU by radical labor unionists.

Some younger nationalists believed they could achieve Kenya’s independence more rapidly than the KAU could with its moderate constitutionalist approach. Among these younger dreamers was Bildad Kaggia, a World War II veteran who had served the supplies division in Middle East and Europe. At twenty-five years of age, Kaggia joined KAU in euphoria when Kenyatta took over in 1947 “in the hope that under Kenyatta’s leadership, it would become more militant.”⁸⁵ His hopes were quickly frustrated by what he saw as KAU’s detachment from issues important to him, chief among which was Kenya’s independence under majority rule government. After several visits to its headquarters, Kaggia “became convinced that KAU, as it was, did not deserve my support.”⁸⁶ He was not the only one frustrated. Fred Kubai, also a war veteran, later described in the government reports as “the recognised leader of the Kikuyu thugs

⁸³ The *East African Standard*, 13 September, 1947.

⁸⁴ Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, 1985.

⁸⁵ Bildad Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom, 1921-1963: the autobiography of Bildad Kaggia*, Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1975, p. 78.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

[Mau Mau] in Nairobi,”⁸⁷ had a similar experience. In fact, most youthful war veterans, many influenced by philosophies of self-determination, perceived KAU’s unhurried approach to issues they considered too urgent and important to the African people, in essence, as bending to the colonizer’s whim. To them, Africans’ independence was an inalienable right and not a negotiable privilege.

Before we examine the unfolding African nationalist politics during this period, let us first highlight critical educational dynamic, the difference in levels of education between older, moderate KAU politicians and the younger labor unionists. The older members of KAU had received good academic education. As a matter of fact, some of them like Kenyatta, Koinange, and Mathu, had graduated from universities in Europe and the United States of America. They were, for the most part, no different from any English-speaking elite schooled in fastidious English mannerisms. Most others in these ranks had graduated from the highest local and regional educational institutions. These men had well-paying jobs in the colonial civil service and teaching profession. Their living standard was consequently higher compared to that of other Africans.⁸⁸ The trade unionists, on the other hand, came from the ranks of artisans, industrial workers and unskilled labor. They had much less formal education in comparison to KAU men, and even less secure careers. Fred Kubai who eventually became the president of the umbrella body, the East African Trade Union Congress, was a telegrapher with a Common Level education as was his colleague, Kaggia, an administrative clerk.⁸⁹ As lower skill laborers,

⁸⁷ Quoted in Brian Lapping, *End of Empire*, New York, St. Martin, 1985, p. 409.

⁸⁸ See David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: the Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

members of trade unions earned lower wages and yet were frequently targeted by higher taxation, wage-freeze, and such other measures that were generally unsympathetic to the African laborers. As such, they were quite sensitive to minor economic fluctuations and their reactions to such policies was equally fierce.

Having thus established that their agenda was at odds with KAU's, the younger men devoted their energies to the labor movements. Virtually no labor movements had existed in Kenya. With the exception of the short-lived AWU, the best known (and easily the only) movement was the Labor Trade Union of East Africa, formed by Makhan Singh in 1934.⁹⁰ By Makhan Singh's encouragement, Kaggia constituted Nairobi's clerks, accountants, dispensers, compounders etc, into a Clerks and Commercial Workers Union, while Kubai formed the Transport and Allied Workers Union, which brought together drivers, taxi operators and motor mechanics. On May Day of 1949, the unionists pooled their respective unions and formed the East African Trade Union Congress (EATUC), giving Kenya the first central organization of trade unions.⁹¹ Kubai became EATUC president and Makhan Singh its secretary-general.

Their experiences with KAU's leadership had left the younger trade unionists deeply suspicious of the party's commitment to fighting for the African cause. In course of championing the rights of African workers, they often attacked KAU for both its inability to articulate Africans' grievances and its warm relationship with the colonial regime. Kaggia recalls;

⁸⁹ Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 1975.

⁹⁰ Labour Trade Union of East Africa to Jomo Kenyatta, 19 August, 1939. Facsimile in Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya Trade Union Movement*, 1969, p. 176.

⁹¹ 'May Day' is variably called 'Labor Day' or 'International Workers' Day'. It is celebrated in Commonwealth countries on 1st May.

We had little respect for KAU, which we regarded as an instrument of the Governor through Mathu, his nominated member of the Legislative Council. In our meetings we attacked Mathu and Mbotela and Katithi, who seemed close to Mathu. This made KAU turn against trade unions, and [KAU] lost the little support it had. People in Nairobi looked to the trade unions for leadership, not to the 'political' leaders of KAU. Encouraged by this support, the trade unions decided to try and capture the political leadership as well.⁹²

Kaggia felt that with their lot in control of KAU, the trade unionists could finally promote their political programs in perfect accord with their labor activities. After all, they had the critical mass of African workers for their planned takeover. Within a year of forming EATUC, workers joined KAU in droves with the aim of dislocating the moderates. They chose to begin with the crucial Nairobi branch, at the heart of Kenya's political and economic activities. When the KAU Nairobi branch elections were held in June of 1950, the trade union leaders contested for the key positions, and with crucial backing of their members, won all but one seat. Kubai became the chairman and Kaggia the secretary general. No sooner had the labor unionists taken up their party positions than the relation between them and KAU's old guard began to deteriorate.

Things came to a head just before Nairobi celebrated its Charter Day in 1951, the day marking the upgrading of Nairobi from a municipality to a full city. The government wanted to portray the occasion as a mark of Kenya's economic and sociopolitical progress. The trade unionists rejected this theme, arguing that there was nothing in the occasion for the Africans to celebrate. The hailed 'progress' was restricted to Europeans. Hence, EATUC called upon its members to boycott the celebration, a move that KAU's younger trade unionists supported. But KAU moderates opposed the boycott, and, led by the national vice-president, Tom Mbotela,

⁹² Ibid, p.79.

released a press statement distancing KAU from the trade unionist members who had supported the boycott. In the end, the trade unionists won. A majority of Africans boycotted the event, but the spat between old moderates and the labor unionists left an irreparable dent in KAU's integrity.

Three weeks after the successful boycott of the Charter Day celebrations, officials of KAU and the East African Indian National Congress, of which Makhan Singh was a member, held a conference with the agenda of debating settlers' proposition calling for a white minority self-rule in Kenya. The settlers' scheme was stirred by the political developments in Tanganyika. The Committee on the Constitutional Development had recently recommended Africans in Tanganyika to be granted unofficial representation in the legislative, equal to that of all non-Africans combined. Kenya's settler community read this as sign of imminent independence. If that were to happen, they argued, European dominion in East Africa would be endangered. They proposed, as a means of protecting that dominion, to declare minority independence in Kenya. Thus, the meeting between KAU and East African Indian National Congress was meant to marshal a joint rejoinder against the settlers' racist scheme. During the meeting chaired by Mathu, Makhan Singh jolted the room when moved a motion requesting that; "(the meeting) further declares that the real solution of the problem is not this or that small reform, but the complete independence and sovereignty of the East African territories and establishment in all these territories of democratic government elected by the people and responsible to the people of these territories only, and that the solution should be implemented at an early date."⁹³ Many of

⁹³ Makhan Singh, *History of Kenya Trade Union Movement*, 1969, p. 261.

the people in attendance had possibly entertained thoughts of Kenya's majority rule at one point or another, but few had ever imagined it framed in such bold language. Makhan Singh made independence sound like a vicious revolution. Understandably, there was a delayed reaction to the motion before Kubai seconded it.⁹⁴ According to Spencer, one Indian National Congress official noticed a startled look on Kenyatta's face and his quick glances around the room to see how the audience would react to the motion. "It seemed clear that Kenyatta thought that Makhan Singh had gone too far, yet the immediate favourable response from the audience made Kenyatta realize that the meeting would turn against him if he opposed the motion."⁹⁵ The KAU president supported the motion only to be in good grace with the majority who he must have thought were perilously radical. Over the next few weeks, the trade unionists stepped up their anti-colonial activism. They promised to follow up the successful Charter Day boycott with a better organized and more militant strike on May Day. The government panicked, banned the scheduled May Day parade altogether, and arrested both Kubai and Makhan Singh for running an illegal society (the EATUC). The arrest was meant to nip the trade unionists' militancy on the bud, but instead it sparked off a nation-wide strike that lasted for eight days and paralyzed several towns. In Nairobi alone, some six-thousand workers of assorted trades and occupations downed their tools and took to the streets. Violence erupted in many areas of the city.⁹⁶

At the peak of the defiance, Mathu offered to persuade the workers to resume work. It was a small affair, tucked away from the street displays, and yet, this gesture was destined to

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, 1985, p. 215.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

reshape Kenya's political scene. Mathu considered himself a moderate. But from the perspective of the trade unionists, he was the face of the colonial regime. As such, he was seen, not as being in solidarity with the strikers, but as one in league with a colonial state out to break the workers' only effective weapon of bargaining. Mathu's offer confirmed the suspicion trade unionists had long held that the moderates were serving the colonial state. Out of this suspicion, the trade unionists' wing of KAU formed a secret action group named *Muhimu* to pursue its agenda separate from KAU's programs, such that, not even the party's leadership knew of this group's existence.⁹⁷ *Muhimu* became the nucleus of the Mau Mau movement.⁹⁸

The rise of Mau Mau and the push towards armed struggle.

Whereas it is commonly called Mau Mau, the freedom fighting movement that swept across Kenya from 1952 to 1960 called itself the Kenya Land and Freedom Army (KLFA). KLFA's 'Political Position' issued by one of its top leaders, Dedan Kimathi, in late 1953, opened with the statement: "The Europeans who govern Kenya and their government have killed many Africans and stolen their property... They have enacted anti-African laws, and they have justified the burning down of many African homes; they have illegally removed many of our compatriots from their lands."⁹⁹ Article-sixteen of its seventy-nine-article Charter, issued in October the same year, stated "Our real fight is not against the white colour but against the system carried on by

⁹⁷ Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 1975.

⁹⁸ Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005.

⁹⁹ "Proclamation of the KLFA's Political Position," Quoted in Maina Kinyatti (editor) *Kenya's Freedom Struggle: The Dedan Kimathi Papers*, London, Zed Books Ltd., 1987, p. 15.

the white ruler.”¹⁰⁰ These two statements about summed up KLFA’s grievances and mission. Most scholars argue that the seeds of Mau Mau were sown in the 1920s, when the post-World War I colonial government engaged a large-scale land alienation from the Africans, effected exorbitant tax legislations, and harnessed the forced labor practice.¹⁰¹ Philosophically, however, one might argue the seeds were sown much earlier, at the establishment of colonial rule itself. Considering the fraudulent ‘protectorate’ treaties African communities were tricked into signing; the violence that characterized the stage of pacification of those who refused to acquiesce to European authority; the comprehensive displacement of peoples from their indigenous lands; not to mention political disfranchisement and utter destruction of African indigenous economic systems, such an uprising was already in the making. Its explosion was a question of when not if. That Mau Mau finally emerged soon after World War II, at a time when Africans were burdened with rebuilding ruins of a war whose cause they had nothing to do with, was predictable.

Mau Mau first came to the attention of the British authorities in 1948 when police in the Rift Valley Province unearthed oath-administering activities among the Kikuyu laborers in a white-owned farm. At the time, over quarter-million squatters lived on the European settled areas

¹⁰⁰ “Kenya Land and Freedom Army Charter”, Quoted in Maina Kinyatti, *Kimathi Papers*, 1987, p. 17.

¹⁰¹ Marshall, S. Clough, *Mau Mau Memoirs: History, Memory, and Politics*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998; Robert B. Edgerton, *Mau Mau: an African crucible*. New York: The Free Press, 1989; Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, *The Myth of "Mau Mau": Nationalism in Kenya*, New York: Meridian, 1970; Frank Furedi, *The Mau Mau war in perspective*. London: James Currey, 1989; Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-63*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987; John Lonsdale, “Mau Mau of the Mind: Making Mau Mau and Remaking Kenya,” *Journal of African History*, 31 (1990): pp. 393-421; David Throup, *Economic and Social Origins of Mau Mau, 1945-53*. London: James Currey, 1988; E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo and John Lonsdale, (Editors), *Mau Mau and Nationhood: Arms, Authority and Narration*, Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 2003; Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: the untold story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005; Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005.

called the 'White Highlands.' A quarter of these squatter residents were Kikuyu people, half the farm labor force.¹⁰² Initially, the group comprised people who had taken an oath of solidarity against new oppressive labor contracts. In a sense, Mau Mau started as a covert labor union. By 1949, oath administering had spread to Central Province as far north as Nyeri and as far south as Kiambu. In Nairobi, the oathing took new dimension when politically-conscious groups such as the *Anake a foti*, or the Forty Group, became involved. The Forty Group was founded by a number of young, dissatisfied Nairobi Kikuyu, many of them unemployed, petty traders, thieves, prostitutes and others elements of the lumpen-proletariat class. In the movement's leadership ranks were the demobilized soldiers, veterans of the World War II, who felt that, while colonial system had left them little room for socioeconomic and political advancement, the most prominent African political organization, KAU, could hardly be relied upon to articulate their case adeptly. According to Furedi, who interviewed some of them, these generally younger folk "felt that K.A.U. was going too slow and that the only way to change things was through violence."¹⁰³ With its commitment to violent overthrow of the colonial order, Mau Mau thrived quickly among Nairobi's generally uneducated poor.

On August of 1950, Governor, Philip Mitchell declared Mau Mau unlawful on the account that it was destabilizing the city's order. But since Mau Mau was not a registered, much less legitimate association, and carried its activities generally on the fringes of the colonial legal system, banning it carried little significance. If anything, the ban only increased the movement's

¹⁰² John Lonsdale, "KAU's Cultures: Imagination of Communities and Construction of Leaderships in Kenya after the Second World War," *Journal of African Cultural Studies*, 13 (2000): pp.107-124.

¹⁰³ Frank Furedi, "The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Elite Politics," *The Journal of African History*, 14 (1973): p. 282.

activities, since its members knew it was only a matter of time before the state came after them. For the next two years, Mau Mau proved to be a major headache for Nairobi's security apparatuses. Its activists got busy with attacking security personnel for weapons, arranging the assassinations of Africans who were suspected of collaborating with the colonial state, stealing money and other supplies from affluent traders, and administering oath of solidarity.¹⁰⁴ By late 1952, when the state finally declared a State of Emergency, some parts of the country had all but become a "Mau Mau republic."¹⁰⁵

We have seen that there was already a chasm within KAU after the younger labor leaders joined the party. The younger generation believed the moderate constitutionalists were a real impediment to the attainment of Africans' independence to the degree that they formed a secret society, *Muhimu*, to pursue their agenda apart from, and sometimes in conflict with, those of KAU party. As the situation escalated into an open armed confrontation between the African nationalists and the colonial state, three distinctive factions emerged within KAU. First, there were the radical younger nationalists who embraced any means necessary to achieve independence, and true to form, they became the force behind *Muhimu*/Mau Mau Central Committee. Then there were the moderates who, while preferring to pursue the constitutional process, also sympathized with the younger the radical younger men's frustration and recognized their approach as equally legitimate. Finally, there were the conservatives who worked more closely with the colonial state than with the radicals in the party. This group viewed Mau Mau as

¹⁰⁴ See Lapping's interview with Kubai. Lapping, *End of Empire*, 1985.

¹⁰⁵ This term was first used by Michael Blundell, a member of the LegCo who also chaired the Mau Mau War Council. Michael Blundell, *So Rough a Wind: the Kenya Memoirs of Sir Michael Blundell*, London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1964, p. 132.

a threat to the gains Africans had already made, and did everything in their power to defend the status quo. Conservatives showed open hostility towards Mau Mau and it, in turn, viewed them as an appendage of the colonial state.

Several prominent KAU leaders who died in the hands of Mau Mau were members of the conservative group who actively campaigned against the movement. One of these was KAU's vice-president, Tom Mbotela. Mbotela, and Joseph Katithi, KAU's secretary general, were the two people behind the KAU statement that distanced the party from the Charter Day boycott called by the Transport and Allied Workers Union. Not only did Mbotela refuse to heed the call for boycott, he and another KAU official, Muchohi Gikonyo, presented the chief guest, Duke of Gloucester, with gifts to symbolize Africans' appreciation of his visit. Further to this evident defiance, Mbotela spoke strongly against Mau Mau, calling it an "evil and illegitimate movement"¹⁰⁶ that must be opposed. He was killed on November 26, 1952 as he walked home from a mayoral reception. Another conservative city councilor Ambrose Ofafa was killed much the same way. A member of the Nairobi African Advisory Council, Ofafa was one of the leaders who actively tried to check Mau Mau activities in the city by calling for increased police presence. During a heated exchange between him and Kaggia, a leading *Muhimu* founder, Ofafa had called Mau Mau "KAU thugs."¹⁰⁷

That Mau Mau operatives selected their targets with remarkable thoroughness was undeniable. Governor Baring himself admitted this, forgetting that his own propaganda machine

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005, p. 191.

¹⁰⁷ Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 1975, p. 105.

was busy painting the freedom fighters as some blood-thirsty atavists on orgy of killing.¹⁰⁸ The governor stated in communication with the Secretary of State for the Colonies, that Mau Mau; “attacks have been first on loyal Africans, headmen and informers, twenty six of them have been murdered, then on European farms, and finally on leading Africans and Europeans.”¹⁰⁹ One of the leading Africans whose killing sent shudders through the settler community and colonial administration and the alike, was Mau Mau’s senior-most antagonist, chief Waruhiu wa Kung’u. A staunch defender of colonialism, Waruhiu was militantly anti-Mau Mau. He organized ‘reverse-oathing ceremonies’ ostensibly to cleanse Africans who had taken the Mau Mau oath of solidarity. For his highly perilous duties, the state offered him round-the-clock security protection. Yet Mau Mau operatives penetrated his security and shot Waruhiu dead on broad daylight on October 7, 1952 as he was being driven home after attending a Native Tribunal hearing in Nairobi.¹¹⁰ Anderson has similarly shown that, even the infamous ‘Lari massacre,’ was not a sporadic or unprovoked act of violence perpetrated against innocent families.¹¹¹

Mau Mau’s own records that survived the British onslaught bear much the same account.

Published under the title; *The Dedan Kimathi Papers*, these documents contain the Mau Mau

¹⁰⁸ In the early years of the uprising, the colonial state had not mustered an effective method to mount a public relations war against Mau Mau. In time, the state realized it gained more public sympathies by painting Mau Mau fighters as some freakish creatures. Mitchell, the Governor under in whose watch the movement thrived responded to the British scholars and liberal thinkers who argued that Mau Mau was a genuine anti-colonial movement “That persons of some education, who could ascertain the facts from official sources should describe this monstrous, nauseating wickedness as a ‘resistance movement’ is intolerable—unless of course they mean resistance movement against God and decency and morality and indeed everything that distinguishes man from the carrion-eating reptile.” Mitchell, *African Afterthought*, 1954, p. xviii.

¹⁰⁹ Sir E. Baring to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, “Inward Telegram,” 10 October 1952, British National Archives CAB/129/55.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005.

leader's letters sent to several colonial chiefs, loyalists, moderates, and other individuals who impacted Mau Mau operations. In these letters, Kimathi implores those who had yet to take sides in the confrontation to stay neutral. He warns those who had since engaged activities antagonizing Mau Mau to desist, and threatens those who had openly declared war on Mau Mau. His letter to Chief Kibucho opens with just such a threat.

*Ndaguthaitha na nguo cia nyukwa** that you stop suppressing Mau Mau. If you continue, I will have you eliminated. Also tell chief Cichuhi, Gichiriri, Samuel Wamunduru...that if they continue supporting the British in killing our people and destroying their property, I will order their extermination. They have probably forgotten the lesson of Lari. I am sending this letter with the clear understanding that you will read it and take what I have said seriously. It really makes my blood boil to see our own people supporting the British who have occupied our country and reduced us to slavery.¹¹²

In another letter directed to a Kamba chief who had yet to take sides, Kimathi states; "This is to inform you that I have dispatched General Vido to that region with an army of 1500 strong. He is in Yatta area at the moment. If you want to save your life, you should be careful how you treat General Vido and his army. My advice is that you should take a neutral stand in this war as Chief Muhoya has done, otherwise General Vido will not hesitate to cut off your head."¹¹³

Yet even as he appealed to the chiefs to remain neutral, Kimathi never hesitated to remind them that, in a confrontation between the colonizer and the colonized, neutrality was far

* 'I beg you by your mother's apparel.' It is difficult to decipher the exact meaning of this phrase, but contextually, it falls between a warning and a curse.

¹¹² Dedan Kimathi to Chief Kabucho, 28 May, 1954. Quoted in Maina wa Kinyatti, *Kimathi Papers*, 1987, p. 61. The 'lesson of Lari' refers to the attack at Lari on March 26, 1953, where suspected Mau Mau troops attacked Chief Luka Wakahangare, a loyalist, along with families supporting him. In reprisal, the state troops attacked the families that had been spared in the first attacks accusing them of having been in conspiracy. Anderson *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005; Susan L. Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944-1960*, London: Lelsester University Press, 1995.

¹¹³ Marshall D. Kimathi to Chief Philip Kioko, 23 May, 1954. Quoted in Maina wa Kinyatti, *Kimathi Papers*, 1987, p. 63.

from admirable. Their real duty and honor lay in uniting with the African forces against the colonizers. For instance, in his letter to one chief in Arusha, Tanganyika, whom he accused of collaborating with the colonial authorities to repatriate suspected Mau Mau supporters who had fled Kenya, Kimathi warned “you are not such a fool as to ignore the fact that your people have been oppressed by settlers.”¹¹⁴ His message to one Sahele Kibwana of Tanga, also Tanganyika, was more reconciliatory: “I ask you not to be blinded by British lies, propaganda or money. I think you, and Mr. Mohamed Ali, and Mr. M. M. Kihere, are the patriotic leaders of the African people. You are the only leaders who can organize the people to fight for land and freedom in that region.”¹¹⁵ Most of Kimathi papers suggested that whereas Mau Mau was willing, grudgingly, to stop bothering those who did not support it—so long that they did not support the British, that is—the movement was determined to disrupt any cooperation between Africans and the colonial state. In this respect, the man the British authorities accused of managing Mau Mau, Kenyatta himself, was Mau Mau’s major headache.

Kenyatta’s role in the Mau Mau movement is still not well understood. Some of the movement’s founders maintain he had nothing to do with it and that he was falsely accused of managing it. Kenyatta has confirmed this assertion openly.¹¹⁶ Kaggia, for instance, insists that the KAU president was as ignorant of Mau Mau’s programs as any other outsider.¹¹⁷ In fact,

¹¹⁴ Marshal D. Kimathi to Sylvanus Kaaya, 23 May, 1954, Quoted in Maina wa Kinyatti, *Kimathi Papers*, 1987, p. 64.

¹¹⁵ Field Marshal Sir D. Kimathi to Mr. Salehe Kibwana, 23 May, 1954, Quoted in Maina wa Kinyatti, *Kimathi Papers*, 1987, p. 65.

¹¹⁶ Montagu Slater, *The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta*, London: Heinemann, 1975.

Kenyatta was troubled, just like the colonial administrators, of Mau Mau's seeming unmitigated influence among the urban poor and squatters in the White Highlands. He knew too that if nothing was done, Kenya was staring at a bloody revolution. What however convinced Kenyatta to work with the colonial regime against Mau Mau was his recognition that the movement was a threat to the conservative wing of KAU with which he identified himself. This made it easier for the state to conscript Kenyatta to hold rallies in denunciation of Mau Mau, a role into which he plunged with resolve. Between 1951 and August of 1952, Kenyatta held dozens of such rallies around the country. His largest was held in Nyeri on July 26, 1952. Attended by an audience of more than fifty thousand, this rally was symbolic. Nyeri was Mau Mau's stronghold. The district was, for all intents and purposes, the nerve center of what Michael Blundell described as the 'Mau Mau republic'. To this meeting, the state ferried forty buses of people from Nairobi to swell the crowd, but also, as an indication to Kenyatta that the government was committed to playing its part if he played his: It was ready to provide him with eager listeners if he made the denunciation speeches.

The last rally was held on August 24 in Kiambu town. Kiambu was Kenyatta's own political turf. In the Kikuyuland, Kiambu district also had the largest share of conservatives and pro-government loyalists. Here, the KAU president was flanked by other prominent Kikuyu leaders. Among them was the former firebrand anti-colonial nationalist, Harry Thuku, who had since gone through a transformation and now fully supported the colonial fight against the

¹¹⁷ Kaggia, *Roots of Freedom*, 1975. I found accounts at the Leakey Family Archives suggesting Kenyatta was much a part of Mau Mau. The affidavits sworn by three individuals, and witnessed by Louis Leakey, claim that Kenyatta was present at one or two Mau Mau oath-administering ceremonies. It is, however, difficult to establish the credibility of these statements given that Leakey was deeply involved in the anti-Mau Mau campaign. He also had philosophical differences with Kenyatta dating back to 1930s. See, Horne, *Mau Mau in Harlem*, 2009; Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, 1979.

African nationalists. There was also Eliud Mathu who, as the leading unofficial representative to the LegCo, was also the senior-most African in the colonial political machinery. A host of colonial chiefs were also in attendance, including Mau Mau's most outspoken opponent, Chief Waruhiu. As with the Nyeri meeting, the state was determined to make capital of the Kiambu rally. It brought in a filming crew to capture the occasion, undoubtedly for future propaganda. Kenyatta was at his best poetry. He attacked Mau Mau in the strongest language yet. "Mau Mau has spoilt our country," he said. "Let Mau Mau perish for ever. All people should search for Mau Mau and kill it."¹¹⁸ His denunciation was so convincing, it sent the Mau Mau Central Committee, *Muhimu*, into damage control effort.

Soon after the rally, *Muhimu* summoned Kenyatta to KAU headquarters. Its president, Kubai, recalled that Kenyatta was at first surprised, then alarmed, when the Committee warned him "We are Mau Mau and what you have said at this Kiambu meeting must not be said again."¹¹⁹ If before this day Kenyatta had imagined Mau Mau was a phantom created purposely by the colonial state, it surprised him to know that such association did exist. More startling was his discovery that the movement was run by some of his own acquaintances who would not hesitate to punish him if at all they got any inkling that he was working to derail their program. They meant every word they spoke to him, as Kubai relived the episode; "If Kenyatta had continued to denounce Mau Mau, we would have denounced him. He would have lost his life. It was too dangerous and he knew it. He was a bit shaken by the way we looked at him. He was not

¹¹⁸ *The East African Standard*, 25 August, 1952. According to Kubai, Kenyatta said that "Mau Mau should be banished to the roots of the 'Mikongoe' tree. This is a mythical tree but it meant that Mau Mau should be thrown into a very big hole from which it could never be recovered—into the abyss." Interview with Fred Kubai. Quoted in Lapping, *End of Empire*, 1985, p. 411.

¹¹⁹ Lapping, *End of Empire*, 1985, p. 411.

happy. We weren't the old men he was used to dealing with. We were young and we were serious."¹²⁰ Kenyatta tried to convince the younger nationalists that he did not have any options. Ochieng' Oneko, KAU's secretary who was eventually arrested and imprisoned with him, was in the office and he heard a part of the conversation: "Kenyatta tried to change his words to convince those people [the Mau Mau Central Committee] that he was not against them... Kenyatta used very convincing language. He said he was like a tongue between the molars and the lower teeth. So he stood between Mau Mau and the then Government."¹²¹ But Mau Mau's program was too important and Kenyatta too valuable to it to become a fence-sitter. The younger nationalists knew well that if they had him as Mau Mau's front-man, the larger Kenyan population would rally around its cause. To them, Kenyatta was more important as an ideology than a person. He was the symbolic "paternal figure around whom all should gather."¹²² For that reason, Kenyatta the person could not be allowed to go against Kenyatta the ideology. The whole purpose of Mau Mau men summoning him was, really, to inform him that he was a virtual captive of the ideology that had been created around him over time. To show him they meant business, Chief Waruhiu was assassinated. Kenyatta got the message.

In choosing to save his life, Kenyatta, inadvertently angered the colonial officials who had invested hope in him to help them defeat Mau Mau. A frustrated Governor Baring cabled London complaining that, "when he chooses, Kenyatta has induced Kikuyus to obey him... Yet his denunciation of Mau Mau crimes has been ineffective, and has often, I am told by Kikuyus,

¹²⁰ Interview with Fred Kubai. Quoted in Lapping, *End of Empire*, 1985, p. 411.

¹²¹ Interview with Ochieng' Oneko. Quoted in Lapping, *End of Empire*, 1985, p. 411.

¹²² Spencer, *The Kenya African Union*, 1985, p. 230.

been accompanied by sayings and gestures making clear to his audience that he did not mean what he said.”¹²³ The colonial intelligence had observed with concern that in each district Kenyatta held a Mau Mau denunciation rally, a swift attack followed. It seemed suspicious that his meetings harbingered the same violence they were meant to avert. Baring noted this distrust in a cable to London;

there has been a regular pattern of events at most places in the trouble areas (e.g. the Fort Hall and Nyeri reserves and Timau and Thompson’s Falls farms). First, speeches by Kenyatta and other Kenya African union leaders, next a shuttle services of emissaries from Nairobi and local men returning for instructions: then widespread Mau Mau oath-taking; finally murder, assault and boycott. All this has happened in areas which, before the speeches mentioned, were quite quiet (e.g. Thompson’s Falls farms), or were areas of mild oath taking ceremonies (e.g. in Fort Hall attendances at these ceremonies rose from an average of about twenty to several thousand after the speeches).¹²⁴

Despite his ineffectiveness, the colonial officials had continued to employ Kenyatta’s services. But his outright reluctance to co-operate after he was warned by Mau Mau Central Committee was taken as his admission of being a part of the illegal movement. The state officials decided he was its manager. Accordingly, the governor requested formal authorization to remove him along with “some of his henchmen” in order to forestall “indoctrination of other communities.” Baring wrote urgently to his superior in London: “I am most grateful for your telegram and realise that decision of this importance requires most careful consideration. Unfortunately the situation here continues to deteriorate and since my telegram No. 616 was sent there has been another serious attack.”¹²⁵ The authorization he required came shortly, and along with it, the security build-up to

¹²³ Baring to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 October 1952.

¹²⁴ Ibid. Parenthesis original.

quell any violence that might flare up. A list of Mau Mau leaders was drawn with Kenyatta's name on top.

On October 20, Governor Baring signed the State of Emergency proclamation. KAU was concurrently banned. Operation Jock Scot Pick Up swung into action, rounding up some two hundred African nationalists, among these, the leading trade union radicals, Kaggia and Kubai. Kenyatta was the most prominent moderate arrested. The state expectation that after the removal of its perceived leaders, Mau Mau would collapse naturally, turned out to be a miscalculation. Instead of die, the movement was transformed into a formidable guerrilla force. Within days of the arrests, Mau Mau fighters began series of coordinated assaults against all symbols of the colonial state. The movement's military prowess and its general organization confounded the colonial intelligence. Mau Mau was neither managed by professional soldiers nor by the educated elite. It was directed by preliterate, peasantry, rural folk, whose most essential credentials were the exasperation of living under colonial brutality. The movement saw one exhausted British military commander after another being replaced. Atieno-Odhiambo captures the magnitude of trouble the movement caused the colonial security machinery in his observation that, in the beginning, "Mau Mau was a security matter to the British, so it was initially a Kenya police problem, then a Colonial Office affair, then a military problem for the British Army."¹²⁶ When the third commander-in-chief of the British forces, General George Erskine, was enlisted

¹²⁵ Sir E. Baring to Lloyd, "Immediate top secret and personal" Telegram No 620, 13 October, 1952, British National Archives CAB/129/55.

¹²⁶ E. S. Atieno-Odhiambo, "The Production of History in Kenya: The Mau Mau Debate", *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 25 (1991): p. 303.

in May of 1953, he pledged to wipe the ‘Mau Mau menace’ out in few weeks.¹²⁷ That task took five years, at a huge human and material cost, and a great deal of damage to British moral image.

To completely defeat Mau Mau, the British authorities went to great lengths of incarcerating nearly the whole Kikuyu people in conditions that recent historians have likened to the Soviet Gulag.¹²⁸ Lonsdale calculates that, on official data, Mau Mau lost 12,590 in action or by judicial executions over the four most active years of war; 164 troops and police died in the same period, most of them Africans. Mau Mau killed about 1200 civilians, and over 600 state-recruited Kikuyu Home Guards.¹²⁹ From 1952 to 1960 when the state regained confidence to lift the Emergency laws, most critical decisions were made with the “Mau Mau crisis” in the background. One of these decisions was Kenya’s independence. Elkins points out that by the beginning of the war in 1952, “even the most liberal officials in the Colonial Office anticipated that an imperial retreat would be at least a generation away, and even then, would take the form of some kind of multiracial democracy in which the white settlers would maintain a strong foothold in Kenya’s political institutions.”¹³⁰ By the time the military was able to bring the last pocket of rebellion under control, the colonial policy makers were ready with the schedule for

¹²⁷ Edgerton, *Mau Mau*, 1989.

¹²⁸ Gulag comparison has been used by both Elkins and Anderson. Remarking on the scale the colonial state went to incarcerate people, Elkins states: “I’ve come to believe that during the Mau Mau war British forces wielded their authority with a savagery that betrayed a perverse colonial logic: only by detaining nearly the entire Kikuyu population of 1.5 million people and physically and psychologically atomizing its men, women and children could colonial authority be restored and the civilizing mission reinstated.” Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 2005. Pg xv.

¹²⁹ Lonsdale, ‘Mau Maus of the Mind’, 1990.

¹³⁰ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning*, 2005, p. 60.

independence with a timeframe of three years. Mau Mau, thus, played the critical role of hastening Kenya's independence.

Its most important victory was won away from the battleground. This came in the way of the reforms that the colonial state had to concede in order to deny the movement African mass support. Once the war broke out, the state was drawn more and more towards enacting the reforms it had resisted for a long time. Commissions were constituted hurriedly to study Africans' grievances in several sectors. Among these was the Swynnerton Plan which recommended opening of the White Highlands to African residence and even allowing them to grow hitherto restricted cash crops; the Lidbury Commission introduced racial integration in the Civil Service; the Carpenter Committee Report standardized labor remuneration that was previously racially stratified; and the Lyttelton Constitution allowed Africans' full participation in politics including, holding of ministerial portfolios. All these recommendations were made in 1954, unsurprisingly, the year the colonial state came closest to losing control of Kenya to Mau Mau. The recommendations were therefore made with the clear mindset of preparing Kenya for its independence.

Mau Mau movement: the connection with the African independent schools.

It is clear, from the account above, that Mau Mau forced an expensive war upon the colonial regime, a war that disrupted many sectors and programs and forced the Empire to implement reforms it had determinedly resisted. One area the state was determined to hold onto

by all costs was education. Education was especially critical for a regime that was anxious to undertake a smooth transition. Considering the colonial institutions Britain had created in Kenya over the time of its occupation, education was perhaps the most expedient way for the imperial power to prepare a successor African political class to ensure these institutions survived into the postcolonial state. Indeed, short of brutal force, education was the only hope Britain had of ensuring power remained in the hands of a friendly regime and out of reach for the Mau Mau radicals.

Two months after the war broke out, the state shut down African independent schools accusing them of being Mau Mau sympathizers. Its report of 1953 reported; “188 independent schools suspected of being centres for subversive propaganda were closed at the end of 1952.”¹³¹ The report did not venture to substantiate the nature of the said propaganda. Similarly, Philip Mitchell, who retired from governorship shortly before the war broke out, said a report had reached him from the African reserves claiming school children were singing “very seditious songs.”¹³² Some of these songs have been compiled and published by Maina wa Kinyatti under the title: *Thunder from the Mountains: Poems and Songs from the Mau Mau*. Kinyatti points out that these songs and poems were not confined to independent schools. They were recited in a wider public domain “at Kenya African Union (KAU) rallies... in homes of ordinary people, in

¹³¹ *Colonial Office Report on Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, 1953, p. 64.

¹³² Mitchell, *African Afterthoughts*, 1954, p. 260.

guerilla bases, in detention camps and in prisons.”¹³³ By themselves, these songs were therefore not sufficient to warrant such a drastic measure as shutting a whole schools system down.

Mitchell’s successor, Baring, brought an interesting logic for why the government had to take such a severe measure against the independent schools. He said these schools had turned against Christianity thanks to Kenyatta whom, the Governor alleged, “has allowed his name to be inserted blasphemously in hymns and prayers as a part of strongly anti-Christian movement which has gone a long way in some areas to empty the mission schools in favour of Kikuyu Independent Schools and churches in favour of Mau Mau religion.”¹³⁴ Beyond his melodramatic claim however, the governor did not offer any evidence to prove his case. Nor was he supported by the educational records. While it is true that there was a considerable desertion of colonial and mission schools in favor of the independent schools, the exodus had started much earlier and was caused, in part, by implementation of Beecher Report which Africans vehemently opposed.¹³⁵

Shutting of the Independent Schools system on the account that a few of them supported Mau Mau did not seem at all reasonable. Several mission schools were also suspected to support Mau Mau, yet the whole mission schools system was not consequently shut down. The Presbyterian Church of East African School at Ngong Township is only one such example. On December 3, 1953, the District Commissioner of Kajiado wrote to his superior, the Provincial

¹³³ Maina wa Kinyatti (editor), *Thunder from the Mountains: Poems and Songs from the Mau Mau*, Trenton: African World Press, 1990, preface ix.

¹³⁴ Baring to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 10 October 1952.

¹³⁵ *Education Department Annual Report, 1952*; “Minutes of a Meeting of Advisory Council on African Education,” 18 December, 1952, KNA PC/NKU/2/10/16.

Commissioner, saying; “I want to bring to your notice and other officers the shameful record of this school in connection with Mau Mau and the emergency.”¹³⁶ Both the teachers and the school committee were accused of being Mau Mau supporters. Of these, Ernest Njuguna was said to be a local “President of Mau Mau” while many were alleged to be Mau Mau “clerks” “treasures” and such like positions. Kinuthia Ngucie was documented as an ex-P.C (Provincial Commissioner) driver. “In addition, at least six of the ex-pupils are now with the terrorists.”¹³⁷ This school fell squarely under the management of a mission group. But of course the state did not have the courage to shut down all other schools sponsored by the Presbyterian Church.

Furthermore, one of the leading KAU leaders, Mbiu Koinange, refuted government’s claim that independent schools hosted the rebels. His letter published by the an anti-colonial lobby group in London, stated; “there is no truth in the allegation in 1953 that these schools were centres of Mau Mau and the Government [has] not been able to substantiate it.”¹³⁸ Koinange, who was the secretary to the African Education Council, wondered why the government never bothered to bring its complaint to the Council. Michael Blundell, a white settler and member of the LegCo representing one of the hotbeds on Mau Mau activities outside of the Central Province, the Nakuru area, expressed similar doubts. He remembers an occasion when he came upon a faux military drill staged by Kikuyu schoolboys of independent schools, but his enquiries on what the drill was about yielded nothing much. “When I asked the leader what he was doing, he replied ‘Independent Schools, sah’, and slapped the butt of his home-made imitation rifle as

¹³⁶ “The District Officer, Southern Province to the Provincial Commissioner, “ P.C.E.A Kikuyu School—Ngong Township,” 3 December, 1953.KNA PC/NKU/2/10/11.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ *Kenya Report*, Kenya Committee, London, 1953, p. 5.

smartly as a guardsman. My constituents could, however, give me no details or clues of this Mau Mau society which they mentioned to me. I asked them to provide me with something more definite and tangible with which I could confront the government, but they were unable to do so.”¹³⁹ It was therefore unimaginable that singing of ‘seditious’ songs in a few schools or even staging childish military drills could agitate the government to the extent of closing a whole education system down. After all, independent schools were well known for anti-colonial nationalism. Such a scenario had happened before, in the early 1930s, when independent schools students took to singing the defiantly impertinent *mũthĩrĩgũ* songs. The government had not shut them down then, but had simply criminalized the songs and imposed hefty fines against anyone charged with the offence.¹⁴⁰ Like the incident two decades earlier, the state could well have banned the ‘subversive’ songs and imposed fines.

The state had a more credible, if surreptitious, reason for shutting of independent schools down than their publically stated support of Mau Mau. That explanation had more to do with Kenya’s transition from a colony to a postcolonial state. In its aspiration to produce a successor regime through educational institutions, the colonial state, particularly faced with the anti-colonial uprising, was determined to ensure it had monopoly of education. Having such control allowed the empire to decide who benefitted from quality education and therefore who was better positioned to occupy the superior bureaucratic and political ranks in independent Kenya. This supposition is corroborated by other educational developments that followed the Mau Mau

¹³⁹ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 89.

¹⁴⁰ Grigg to Secretary of State, Telegram, 20 January, 1930, CO 533/394/10; Kenyatta to Secretary of State, 22 January, 1930, CO 533/394/10.

uprising. In March 1955, for instance, the government took full control of all bursaries for Kenyans studying at Makerere University.¹⁴¹ A constituent of the University of London, Makerere was the bastion of production of Kenya's postcolonial ruling class. The colonial obsession to control this production was not confined to higher education. It pervaded even the lower secondary-level education where, as Anderson has pointed out, "even bursaries paid to schoolboys attending the Alliance High School, Kenya's topmost African secondary school, were only awarded to the sons of Home Guards."¹⁴²

In conclusion, the colonial state in Kenya during the decolonization era put a lot of resources to develop educational institutions for Africans' advancement, with the goal of nurturing a narrow class that would ultimately inherit the structures of the colonial state. Most of the educational policies advanced since the end of World War II were geared towards devolving power to this class, expected to preserve the colonial state institutions, and by that logic, defend the British imperial interests after the empire retreated. Mau Mau uprising was a direct effort to disrupt that production. Whatever its limitations were, the movement did succeed in one important aspect: It exhausted the British Empire to the extent that it could no longer hold onto her Kenya colony under the old colonial order. Mau Mau brought Britain to the realization that the sooner Kenya gained autonomy, the sooner the imperial grace was preserved.

¹⁴¹ Commissioner for Local Government to the Presidents of all African District Councils, memorandum, "Bursaries for African Students at Makerere," 2 March, 1955, KNA PC/NZA/3/6/74.

¹⁴² Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged*, 2005, p. 271. Kipkorir's study of the Alliance has corroborated this assertion. Benjamin Kipkorir, *The Alliance High School and the Origins of the Kenya African Elite, 1926-1962*. PhD. Diss. Cambridge University, 1969.

Chapter Four.

Education and the consolidation of Kenya's postcolonial political class, 1960s-1970s.

On February 18, 1957, the British colonial authorities in Kenya executed Mau Mau's supreme leader, Dedan Kimathi, at the Kamiti Maximum Prison. Kimathi's death marked the final military defeat of the rebel movement and the ideology embodied by its official name, the Land and Freedom Army. The defeat ushered what Daniel Branch has called "accelerated class formation" which Britain considered the best way of protecting its strategic and economic interests in postcolonial Kenya.¹ Seen from the perspective of the colonial policy makers, independence was not the eventual disengagement of an imperial power from its colony, but rather, a reorganization of the relationships between the two. Britain hoped, in absence of direct control of Kenya, to hand political power over to an African leadership that could be trusted to safeguard its interests. As if to consummate this project, two weeks after Kimathi's execution, the Africans went to their first ever direct polls to elect eight representatives to the Legislative Council. Held under 'qualified franchise,' a qualitative voting criterion that determined the number of votes one could cast based on one's level of education, property holding, and direct loyalty to the colonial regime, the 1957 elections marked the first real indication that Britain was prepared to transfer the management of Kenya's affairs to Africans.

This chapter examines the role of education in Kenya's transition from a colonial entity to a self-governing state under an African leadership. It argues that the country's independence

¹ Daniel Branch, "Loyalists, Mau Mau, and Elections in Kenya: The First Triumph of the System, 1957-1958," *Africa Today*, 53 (Winter 2006): p. 28.

was attained with the anticipation of continued patronage relationship between Britain and the African ruling elite. In view of its various interests in Kenya, outlined by Ogot as, “the military bases, essential for British global strategy, the need to ensure that the country remained economically linked with the West (as opposed to Communist East) and the need to protect the interests of the immigrant communities (namely the British entrepreneurs and settlers),” Britain was keen on keeping the reins of government in friendly hands.² Education was seen as an important part of achieving that goal. In their making it a requirement for the African elections of 1957, the colonial policy makers were guided by the notion that an educated regime was disposed to preserve the British character in Kenya’s postcolonial regime. Other factors, however, intervened in the defining and shaping of this transition. The Cold War geopolitics and the expansionist ambitions of the United States of America were the most prominent factors at the international scene. At the domestic front, contestations between different sectors of the Kenyan society conspired to encumber the transition. For a start, the white settlers who chose to remain in the country after independence, fought, under the banner of multiracialism, to maintain their privileged life. Within the ranks of the African nationalists, there were individual ambitions, personality and ideological differences to surmount.

More prominently, the rise of student activism presented unanticipated challenges both to the colonial state in its waning days, and afterward, to the emergent postcolonial regime. To be sure, student activism had remained a crucial part of Kenya’s anti-colonial political terrain since the early years of western formal education. Kenya, however, did not witness sustained activism

² B. A. Ogot, “The Decisive Years, 1956-63,” In Bethwell A. Ogot and William. R. Ochieng’ (Editors.), *Decolonization & independence in Kenya, 1940-93*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995, p. 53. Emphasis mine.

at the college level until the last years of colonial rule. The chapter shows that at the initial stages, students' political involvement was seen as a welcome contribution to the anti-colonial struggle. They printed and distributed avant-garde literature, helped the nationalists to formulate manifestos, and even ran propaganda radio stations. By the time Kenya achieved independence in 1963, students' expectation of the state responsibilities and duties to its citizenry was already well formed and articulated. The chapter traces the trajectory of the students' unbridled hopes for a prosperous Kenya in the early years of independence, to their ultimate disillusionment as the country descended into Kenyatta's dictatorship. Their frustration was manifested through the frequent and intense confrontations with the state. By 1978, when Kenyatta left the political scene, the students had all but become the unofficial opposition.

Literacy and the consolidation of a friendly African political class.

The elections of 1957 were enshrined in the Lyttelton Constitution of 1954. During his visit to Kenya early that year, Secretary of State for Colonies, Oliver Lyttelton, proposed to co-opt non-European members into the government while ensuring 'European parity.' His proposal saw the appointment of one African and two Indians to ministerial positions while the other three were reserved for Europeans. The second aspect of the Littelton Plan pertained to the African participation in politics, and specifically, elections. Littelton contended that, while political realities forced the colonial state to give Africans direct representation in the Legislative Council, modalities of selecting their representatives needed to be worked out in ways that privileged those of them who could be trusted to make the 'appropriate' voting choices. The W. F. Coutts-

led commission was formed with this mindset in February of 1955. After yearlong of inquiry, the commission proposed ‘qualified franchise,’ spelling in part:

- a. All persons who have completed form III up to University education will get *four* votes each.
- b. All the recognized farmers who are certified by the Agricultural Department, Reverends, Prison, Army and Police sergeants up to the highest rank that an African can get, Labor Inspector, etc., will get *three* votes each.
- c. Any person who has been to school and has completed standard I up to form II education and has qualifications in paragraph 3* will get *two* votes each...³

All these specifications were tailored to weave perfectly into each other. Someone educated was also likely to have a job which allowed one to earn the amount of money, or accumulate the property, necessary to qualify as a voter. As Kanogo has abundantly demonstrated, Africans who worked for the government, or who accumulated property under the colonial regime and were therefore relatively well off under the status quo, were more likely to support the colonial regime than to oppose it.⁴

Of the candidates’ qualifications, the report recommended, in addition to the three requirements above, had to “be able to read, write and converse in fluent English and if he is not in possession of a university degree, a Makerere professional diploma, or was previously a Member of the Legislative Council, be tested for his proficiency in English and general education...”⁵ Likewise, one was required to “have property movable or immovable to the

* The paragraph spelt out the amount of property holding one was required to have as a condition to register as a voter.

³ *Kenya, Colony and Protectorate, Report of the Commissioner Appointed to Enquire into Methods for the Selection of African Representatives to the Legislative Council*, 1955, p. 14.

⁴ Tabitha Kanogo, *Squatters and the Roots of Mau Mau 1905-63*. Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1987.

⁵ *Report of the Commissioner for the Selection of African Representatives*, 1955, p. 23.

aggregate of £700 or an income of not less than £240 per annum.”⁶ Voters in Central Province, the area that was hardest hit by the Mau Mau uprising, were required to prove that they had remained loyal to the government through the turbulent period of the insurgency. Their loyalty was determined by the District Commissioner through localized committees formed for the purpose. Prospective voters were required to appear before these committees, consisting of the colonial chiefs and headmen, and only upon their recommendations did the DC award them the ‘loyalty certificate’ to be produced at the voting center.⁷ With the African elections of 1957 therefore, the state took every step to ensure the resultant winners were what B. A. Ogot, has called “a shared community of interests integrated into the colonial order.”⁸ Nonetheless, the African nationalists elected into the LegCo had their own ideas of how they preferred to be integrated into this ‘shared community of interests.’ Conscious that colonized societies elsewhere were gaining, or working towards, their independences, under majority rule, they demanded an African majority in the LegCo.

The newly elected representatives included: D. Moi (Rift Valley), J. Nzau (Ukambani), T. J. Mboya (Nairobi), A. O. Odinga (Central Nyanza), L. G. Oguda (South Nyanza), R. G. Ngala (Coast) and M. Muliro (North Nyanza). As candidates, these legislators had expressed diverse emotions of nationalism in their campaign manifestos. Many espoused moderate views, including multiculturalism in politics and government, and gradual progress towards self-rule. But it was those of them who advocated more radical campaign for immediate self-rule under

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 26-33.

⁸ Bethwell. A. Ogot, “The Decisive Years, 1956-63,” 1995, p. 51.

African majority rule, who gained prominence. Upon their election, these ‘radicals,’ as the colonial officials and European legislators labeled them, refused to participate in any LegCo proceedings, including taking up ministerial positions, until Africans were granted fifteen more seats to become a majority. In effect, they were demanding abrogation of the Lyttelton Constitution, the very document that created the platform upon which they were elected. The administration in Nairobi found their demand ungrateful and flatly refused to entertain it, upon which, the nationalists sent a delegation consisting of Mboya and Ngala to London, “to put pressure on the Colonial Office and to create more sympathy for [their] case among the British public.”⁹ London, anxious to win the nationalists over, consented to their demand, thus, paving way for election of fifteen more members the following year.

Curiously, for all the radicals’ struggles against the unjust electoral procedures and representation, none seemed at all concerned with fact that a great majority of African population was still disenfranchised. ‘Qualified franchise’ locked millions out of political participation. In Central Province, for instance only 35, 644 from the total population of 1,750, 000 inhabitants were allowed to register to vote.¹⁰ Countrywide, of Kenya’s total African population of more than 6,000,000, only 126, 508 voters were registered under the ‘qualified franchise’ system. Still, within this number, there were people with multiple votes, meaning that the actual number of voters was much lower. The real extent of disenfranchisement became clearer in the 1960

⁹ Tom Mboya, *Freedom and After*, London: Andre Deutsch Limited, 1963, p. 78.

¹⁰ *Kenya Weekly News*, 1 March, 1957.

elections when, under an amended constitution that allowed adults over forty-years to vote regardless of their education level, the number of registered voters shot up tenfold to 1,325,878.¹¹

Views and exertion of African nationalists on education.

Scoring an African majority in the LegCo was only one phase in a multifaceted struggle for self-rule. An effective African government required the backing of reliable bureaucratic machinery, if for no other reason, to challenge the popular colonial viewpoint that Africans lacked the necessary preparation to run a modern state. This is how the nationalists took the challenge. Accordingly, they integrated Africanization programs in their campaign for self-rule.¹² Since education was a critical ingredient in the administration of Kenya's modern state, an effective transition required African personnel with corresponding educational training. Accordingly, the African legislators focused their effort on promoting education. School enrollment rose at every level. Both the government-aided and unaided primary schools recorded a combined total enrollment of 530,335 for the 1958 enrollment compared with 440,947 in 1957. The intermediate level saw enrollment increase from 59,390 in 1957 to 71,075 in 1958, while number of secondary schools rose from 3,316 to 3,922 over the same period.¹³ At the same time, the number of trained teachers rose from 9,066 to 10,339. Although government expenditure on

¹¹ *Report on the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya*, 1960. (Hereafter *RCPK*)

¹² Africanization was the initiative of systematic replacement of the British administrative personnel with African. Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

¹³ *RCPK*, 1958, p. 53.

education rose from £2,479,281 for the 1957/58 year to £2,718,427 in the 1958/59, growing at the rate of thirty percent, the school enrollment outstripped its fiscal reserves, forcing the Minister for Education, Ronald Ngala, to seek alternative funding.¹⁴ Presenting the estimates in the Legislative Council, Ngala sought to increase the boys' tuition and boarding costs from Sh. 300 for the year 1960/61 to 400 in 1961/62 and girls' from Sh. 200 to Sh. 250 over the same period.

The African nationalists readily agreed on the expansion of education institutions to accommodate the rising students' population. But their views differed markedly on the character of education they envisioned for postcolonial Kenya. This difference came to the fore during the LegCo debates that followed Ngala's submission of the education estimates of July 21, 1961. Two positions stood out in this regard; one held by Ngala himself, and another by Tom Mboya. In Ngala's opinion, Kenya's education system was one of the best ever built by the colonial regime. As a former teacher, he claimed to have real personal knowledge of it. Said the minister, "[t]he fact, of course, is that we have one of the finest educational systems in Africa. It is far from perfect, and we all want to improve it; but we want to build on the foundations which have already been laid, and laid well."¹⁵ To Ngala, Kenya's education system reflected the various communities' needs. He even saw its racial organization as a normal, if not indispensable, character of that system. Thus, he contended, "the separate systems [of education] grew up naturally to meet the separate and different needs of communities which were and still are

¹⁴ *Education Department Triennial Survey, 1958-1960*, p. 23.

¹⁵ *Kenya Colony and Protectorate, Legislative Council Reports*, July 21, 1961 par. 2243.

different in many ways.”¹⁶ In his opinion, therefore, the template for Kenya’s postcolonial education was already well laid out. What Kenya’s government needed was to build on the existing institutions and curricula.

Ngala envisioned building more or less as augmenting or expanding on the existing system, rather than reexamining of the system’s efficacy to the emergent postcolonial society. As it were, he was satisfied with the existing colonial education curriculum and all he needed were the resources to expand on it. Mboya’s perception was radically different from that of Ngala.

Contributing to the budget proposed by Ngala, Mboya stated forcefully:

We have in this country an educational system geared to meet a colonial psychology under colonial atmosphere. That education has created a kind of educated person that, to a larger extent would fail to meet the new emotional, psychological and social problems that will arise after independence and nationhood. I believe that our educational system must undergo a revolution. Its thinking, its purpose, its direction must be completely revised so as to fit into the new purpose and the new conscience and concepts of our nation. It must prepare our children to appreciate and be proud of themselves and their nation. It trained them to think of a European, in this context Britain, as the master. Our new system must aim at eliminating [...] this Colonial psychology and creating a truly independent psychology aimed at instilling in the minds of our boys and girls, the pride that they are African, that they have a purpose in life... It must begin to move to give a greater appreciation of African culture, African history, and the African personality...¹⁷

It was a bold confession from a 30-year-old, himself a product of the very education system he was categorically denouncing. His statement was a slap on the face to his colleagues, who had gone through that system, and who now sat in the LegCo with sense of validation by their educational standard. Even more, Mboya’s statement grated the ears of his European colleagues

¹⁶ Ibid, par. 2244.

¹⁷ Ibid, par. 2693.

who had argued for hours, in prior legislative sessions, over the education standards Africans needed to qualify as members.¹⁸

One of these European legislators, who sat in the chamber as Mboya spoke, was Michael Blundell, a self-professed European liberal who supported allocation of African representation based on a criteria other than education. Blundell disliked Mboya intensely. He said his group of white legislators had nicknamed Mboya “the angry young man of Africa” for a good reason. “Month after month he would make a series of speeches emphasizing the flat, negative finality of nationalist thinking” many of them centered on the “bitterness and sense of inferiority which many Africans feel, as it is always they who perform the menial tasks in Africa.”¹⁹ This group agreed readily with Governor Evelyn Baring’s description of Mboya as “intensely arrogant, a relapsed [Roman Catholic] with the morals of a monkey.”²⁰ Listening to Mboya’s speech, Blundell and his fellow liberals possibly did not appreciate his refusal to acknowledge their efforts in fighting for African representation. Mboya’s position may well have been influenced by his background. At thirty years of age, he was the youngest member of the Council and also one of the least educated. He was a trade unionist, whose general worldview was more like that of the radical trade unionists of the late 1940s and early and the early 1950s, than that of his LegCo colleagues. His education level was—with the exception of his one-year residence at Ruskin College—much closer to that of his predecessor trade unionists than to that of many African members of the LegCo, who came principally from the teaching profession. A few of

¹⁸ Michael Blundell, *So Rough a Wind: the Kenya Memoirs of Sir Michael Blundell*, London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1964, p. 228.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Charles Douglas-Home, *Evelyn Baring: the Last Proconsul*, London: William Collins, 1978, p. 279.

these legislators also came from loyalist backgrounds, and some were educated up to the doctorate level. He was, in many respects, an outsider.

With the exception of the few nationalists who, like Mboya, had the academic ignorance to berate colonial education, most of the African legislators, and nationalists in general, had assimilated it to the degree that they regarded it as an imperative component of the postcolonial state. They regarded it as the panacea for all the problems that beleaguered the African society. So pressing they considered it to be, that the first party manifesto of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), stated urgently: “We firmly believe that it is better to educate all the children in huts than to waste huge sums on expensive buildings only for a part of the number of those who need education. War against ignorance is the only thing that will save Kenya from backwardness; and education must be treated as a national emergency.”²¹ Further to deploying it to combat ignorance, poverty, disease, and tribalism, the African nationalists saw education as a means for creating good citizenship. It was instilled in them, through decades of the colonial experience, that education intrinsically begat political maturity. More recently, they had seen the full display of its power in ‘qualified franchise.’ Determined to ensure the degree of disenfranchisement witnessed during the 1957 African elections did not recur in future, the nationalists campaigned ceaselessly for adult education. Centers opened around the country, where, after work, adults congregated for lessons on reading and writing.²²

²¹ *The KANU Manifesto for Independence, Social Democracy and Stability*, May, 1960.

²² *RCPK*, 1960.

To complement the adult literacy effort, the Ministry of Education generated literature geared specifically to education for citizenship. These included some two Swahili pamphlets; *Jifunze Uraia* (Teach Yourself Citizenship) and *Pamoja* (United/Together), which used simple language to explain, elaborate, and simplify various government policies, position papers, general developments, and duties and responsibilities of good citizenship.²³ The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC), having only recently finished the installation of its broadcasting signals around the country, joined the education effort. In 1963, representatives from KBC, the Ministry of Education and the Kenya National Union of Teachers, formed the Schools Broadcasting Liaison Group to streamline *Elimu kwa Radio* (Education by Radio), the broadcast program started the previous year.²⁴ Various segments of the program catered for different educational interests. Adult education ranked so prominently that its segment, which taught English, agriculture, civics and economic, gained “no fewer than 238 registered voluntary listening groups by December, 1962, and many more were in formation” in many parts of Kenya and Uganda.²⁵

As the mainstay of Kenya’s postcolonial state, formal education received more attention. This was evinced by the new Minister for Education, Mbiu Koinange, when, responding to public enthusiasm, constituted the Kenya Education Commission “[t]o survey the existing

²³ Definition of good citizenship varied through the years. For the most part, the education was meant to encourage Kenyans to initiate self-help co-operative projects, to obey government laws, to join the ruling political party and to reject the communist ideology. It also emphasized the values of the national belonging, along with its paraphernalia of the national identity card, the flag and the national anthem, the court of arms, etc. It taught issues concerning health, agriculture, family planning etc. *RCPK* 1962, p. 74; also see, *Jifunze Uraia*, No. 28, KNA DC/UG/2/2/12; *Ujamaa wa Kiafrika* (African Socialism), 27 April, 1965, KNA DC/UG/2/2/12.

²⁴ *RCPK*, 1962.

²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 103.

educational resources of Kenya and to advise the Government of Kenya in the formulation and implementation of national policies for education.”²⁶ The task force was expected to envision an education system with the capacity to “appropriately express the aspirations and cultural values of an independent African country” as well as “contribute to the unity of Kenya.”²⁷ In itself, the act of constituting such a commission was evocative. It repudiated the racist policies that the colonial state had promoted, many of which had been formulated single-mindedly to undermine Africans’ political and socioeconomic welfare. Indeed, the commission’s report, released two years later, was presented as an antithesis of the preceding colonial-era policies. Among its other sweeping reforms, the report called for expansion of academic institutions, integration of schools, centralization of school resource management and distribution, and standardization of the national academic curricula. In principle, it advocated for the educational opportunities and potentials that had been ignored or suppressed under the European colonial rule. Embraced by both the commission and a euphoric nation, was the instinctive confidence in education to advance the country in all possible fronts.

The report, oddly, did not evaluate the content of education that Mboya had proposed in the Legislative Council. Rather, it envisioned educational reforms along Ngala’s vision of building on the existing colonial institutions. Whether or not this was a conscious decision remains unclear. But years later, the anticipated historic turnaround envisioned by the Minister for Education had yet to materialize. Generations of graduates later, the challenges that bedeviled the country at independence remained stubbornly etched in the institutions of state and society.

²⁶ *Kenya Education Commission*, 1964, p. (i).

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Long after independence, the majority of Kenyans lived in worsening political and economic conditions, their hopes for a better future all but petered out. Neither had education succeeded in promoting socio-cultural innovation as Kenyans had hoped. Certainly it had not fostered the ‘aspirations and cultural values of an independent African country’ in any meaningful sense; the degree to which it had succeeded to eliminate ‘colonial psychology’ remained open to question; and with ever-increasing nepotism, tribalism and ethnic-tagged political violence, to entrust ‘the unity of Kenya’ on education sounded like an irresponsible gamble.²⁸

Higher education, Cold War and the neocolonial scramble for Kenya.

Of the projects African nationalists regarded as urgent, if their demand for quicker independence was to be taken seriously, that is, higher education ranked high up on the list. This was because higher education dovetailed more readily into the Africanization program. An efficient transition could not be guaranteed unless Kenya boasted a ready local bureaucratic team to replace the departing personnel. However, considering the ratio of the European bureaucrats to that of African class readily equipped to replace them, the country was likely to face a crisis of transition. Even though the state was doing its best to utilize the available qualified Africans, there was still a long way to go. As the annual report of 1962 indicated; “The number of Africans

²⁸ Comparative political theorists have used different concepts to describe the degrees of crises of postcolonial African state; “soft state”, “authoritarian”, “predatory state” and “failed state.” See, Robert Fatton Jr., *Predatory Rule; State and Civil Society in Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992; Michael Bratton, “Beyond the State: Civil Society and Association Life in Africa,” *World Politics* 41, (1989): pp. 407-430; John W. Harbeson and Donald Rothchild, (Editors.), *Africa in the World Politics: Reforming Political Order*, Boulder: Westview Press, 2009. The present study, however, considers these concepts problematic for their inherent assumption that the colonial state was rational from an African perspective, or that postcolonial state has failed to fit neatly with the European systems it is supposed to be modeled after. These assumptions do not account for the dynamics specific to the African society. See the critique in Terence Ranger, “Postscript,” In Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger, (Editors.), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, London: Zed Books Ltd., 1996.

appointed to senior posts on the general staff of the Provincial Administration was 178, an increase of over 60 per cent, since April last year. The total comprised 76 District Officers and Administrative Officers, 78 District Assistants and others in supernumerary posts, 7 District Registrars and 17 District Clerks and Cashiers.”²⁹ With less than a year to independence, there was still not a single African District Commissioner, to say nothing of the higher stratum Provincial Commissioners. Administration was only one of the various sectors that needed educated personnel. The country boasted only twenty-three Africans medical personnel holders of MB or LMS. Nor did the country have the necessary educational institutions to prepare them. Kenya’s highest institution of education, the Royal Technical College, had admitted its first batch of students in 1957 and by 1961 it had a total of only 422 students.³⁰ At this rate Kenya could not hope to achieve the desired bureaucratic labor force by independence.

It is important to note here that the colonial administration had not planned to give Kenya independence so soon. Before the Mau Mau uprising in 1952, the colonial policy makers were speaking of independence vaguely in terms of generations, and even then, it was not expected to take the form of a black majority rule, but rather, a multiracial government based on communal franchise.³¹ It was hoped that, under this system, the more experienced European bureaucrats would take the untutored Africans under their wing in apprenticeship kind of arrangement. As late as 1959, with heightened African nationalism vehemently rejecting any multicultural

²⁹ *RCPK*, 1962, p. 7.

³⁰ *RCPK*, 1962.

³¹ ‘Communal franchise’—as opposed to ‘equal franchise’ also known as one-man-one-vote—was a form of government based on communal representation whereby the governor determined the number of seats that a particular special-interest community (ethnic included) could hold.

arrangement, the Colonial Office was still assuring the administration in Kenya that self-rule under a majority government would not be considered for at least two decades. The Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, addressing the East African Colonial Governors meeting at Chequers, suggested tentative dates that had Tanganyika achieving independence in 1970, “with Uganda following her lead and Kenya much later, probably after 1975.”³² Such a schedule, in the colonial thinking, allowed ample time to prepare an African bureaucratic class to fully assume the management of the country. That plan, however, had to be revised to accommodate the unexpected developments on the ground. One important development involved the ‘radical’ African nationalists who not only advocated for independence sooner than later, but also took it upon themselves to make the bureaucratic preparations for it. The most critical of these activities were the historic ‘students’ airlift’ projects initiated by Mboya and Odinga, through which thousands of Kenyan students benefited from mass scholarships to study in universities abroad.

Fresh from his year-long trade union fellowship at Ruskin College, Mboya traveled to the United States at the end of 1956 at the invitation of his labor union colleague, George House. House introduced Mboya to William Scheinman. A manufacturer of airplane parts, Scheinman offered to help a few Kenyan students for university education in the US. He paid for seventeen students in 1957 and another thirty-six in 1958.³³ On the third year, the scholarships almost tripled, requiring Mboya to charter a plane to ferry the eighty-one scholars. Through this effort, the number of students studying in the US grew from sixty in 1956, to more than a thousand by 1962. By then, the small project had grown to a formidable organization named the African-

³² Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 262.

³³ Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 1963, p. 60.

American Students Foundation (AASF), with Mboya as its director. He recruited notable progressive personalities in the US to help AASF in various capacities: Jackie Robinson and Harry Belafonte became chief fundraisers, others including Scheinman and John F. Kennedy and the Kennedy Foundation became its leading donors, Peter and Cora Weiss offered to run the project, while Malcom X and Lorraine Hansberry, among a few others, volunteered to help the students acclimate.³⁴ The full splendor of the AASF was displayed on the evening of September 11, 1960, when 222 students left Kenya in three plane-loads after a snap fundraising realized some £11, 250.³⁵ Mboya's initiative was complemented by Oginga Odinga, a fellow nationalist who led a similar effort in countries members of the communist bloc.

Odinga's own career path was impressive. He had started off like many other nationalists who were schooled in Alliance and Makerere before becoming teachers. Odinga set himself apart from this lot when he quit his teaching job at Maseno to protest 'a punitive transfer.' Following his resignation in 1946, he turned to business. He states in his autobiography that he "was convinced that to start the battle against White domination we [Kenyan Africans] had to assert our economic independence."³⁶ It was with this conviction that he built the largest African communally-owned business empire of its time, the Luo Thrift. In 1952, Odinga joined KAU following his introduction to Jomo Kenyatta. Like Mboya, he was voted to the Legislative Council on the first African elections of 1957, and equally, established himself as a 'radical'

³⁴ Tom Shachtman, *Airlift to America*, New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009. Hansberry was a playwright. Her famous play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, was adapted to a film starring Sidney Poitier.

³⁵ This money came from the Kenyan public, the Aga Khan Foundation and the Visa Oshwal community. "Last-minute gifts get students away," *Sunday Nation*, 11 September, 1960, p. 3.

³⁶ Oginga Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru: the autobiography of Oginga Odinga*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1967, p. 76.

when he dared to call for Kenyatta's release from prison at a time when the mere mention of the name was a taboo. It did not help Odinga's image when in 1960 he led the African members in boycott of the legislative proceedings until Kenyatta and his colleagues were released. This campaign earned him summon from Governor Renison, who "advised that it would be fruitless to pursue the question of the release of Kenyatta. Britain had taken the firm decision that Kenyatta and his associates would be a danger to peace and good government in Kenya and he would not be release under any circumstances."³⁷ Odinga was far from convinced by the governor's justification, and when the national elections were held soon after his encounter with the governor, and his recently formed party, KANU, won handsomely, Odinga, as the vice-president, refused to form the government.

Odinga was, in the meantime, warming up to communism. His interest in this ideology began from pure curiosity. Under colonialism, Kenyans were not allowed any contact with the communist countries. While in London for the Lancaster House constitutional conference in 1960, he made a brief visit to East Germany. He had not made secret of it, but London's Daily Mail carried his picture with a headline 'Kenya Leader in Secret Trip to see Reds.' Was he a Communist? The paper wondered. "The general opinion, said the paper, was that I was not. But I had to be watched."³⁸ The British authorities did just that. Fearing that he might become communists' contact in Kenya, Odinga was put on watch list. But this did not deter him from making successive visits to several communist, socialist and non-aligned countries. It was during these trips that he sought student scholarship in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, North Korea,

³⁷ Ibid, p. 182.

³⁸ Ibid, p. 188.

Bulgarian, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic. The disquiet that his effort caused the colonial administration was best captured by Blundell observations:

More than 400 Kenya students have been sent under [Odinga's] aegis to universities and schools in communist countries. Many of them were selected from applicants who, by no stretch of imagination, could be considered fit for institutions of higher education. Often they have proceeded overland through Uganda and down the Nile to Egypt, whence they have reached their ultimate destinations. The students may well create a difficult situation for an independent country on their return to Kenya, with their communist indoctrinated background and their imperfect qualifications for the grant of higher education.³⁹

Blundell's attitude expressed two distinct, yet interrelated sets of fear that the British colonial administration was experiencing. The first and the most obvious stemmed from the global Cold War alignment. Kenya sat at a vantage geographical location as the gateway to Eastern and Central Africa. Western Capitalist world found the country a valuable bulwark against communist advances in the larger Eastern and Central African region. Odinga's ventures in the East were therefore viewed with apprehension. Indeed around the same time he was visiting East Germany, the British Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, was touring South Africa where he gave the symbolic 'Wind of Change' speech. Deeming the scramble for Cold War allies in the decolonizing countries as a "struggle for the minds of men," Macmillan said in his speech: "As I see it the great issue in this second half of the twentieth century is whether the uncommitted peoples of Asia and Africa will swing to the East or to the West. Will they be drawn into the Communist camp? Or will the great experiments in self-government that are now being made in Asia and Africa, especially within the Commonwealth, prove so successful, and by their example

³⁹ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 232.

so compelling, that the balance will come down in favour of freedom and order and justice?”⁴⁰

To the British colonial officials, indoctrinating the people being prepared to administer the country with communist ideology was not a good start for independence. Odinga’s activities in the East were not viewed, at least not from the perspective of the British Prime Minister, as a demonstration of self-government, and so, they had to be checked at the opportune moment.

Britain was also afraid the US’s ambitions were bound to compromise its influence of postcolonial Kenya. All along, Britain’s hopes were to maintain relationships that would safeguard its economic, political, military and socio-cultural interests in the region. As such, Britain envisioned itself as possessing exclusive rights as Kenya postcolonial patron to whom the country should always turn whenever there was the need. Education scholarships were seen in this context, such that, to seek scholarships for Kenyan students to study elsewhere without British consent was tantamount to undermining its incontestable authority in Kenya. From this perspective, Mboya’s larger and better organized ‘student airlifts’/AASF project disconcerted Britain most. It was seen, from the perspective of the British authorities, as a part of the larger US ambition to encroach on its sphere of influence with Mboya as a herald boy. Let us therefore examine the bearing of this historic project on British imperial policy.

The official British attitude towards AASF started off with ambivalence, before turning decidedly antagonistic. Little had been said of it before the first large-scale airlift of 1959, but a few months later, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA) sent an inquiry to the Colonial Office saying:

⁴⁰ “Macmillan Speaks of ‘Wind of Change’ in Africa,” *British Broadcasting Corporation*, 2 February, 1960.

At the meeting of Inter-University Council the other day there was an interesting discussion Mboya's scheme for diverting students from Kenya to American colleges. I do not think that the Council knew more about it, except so far as it influence the entrance to Makerere. I wonder whether any of your people have any information about it. Is the scheme developing, and is anything known of the number of the students who are moving that way and what is becoming of them? I find students movement difficult to check, and I regard them as a matter of great importance (sic).⁴¹

It turned out that the Colonial Office had compiled a dossier on, not just the project, but on the particulars of the students involved as well. The dossier detailed that, of the eighty-one students airlifted in 1959, six had already been accepted to study at Makerere and five at the Royal Technical College in Nairobi. Another four students had applied to universities in the United Kingdom but left for the US before the Kenya Bursary Selection Committee met to determine their fate. Another three were eligible for scholarship awards which they did not take.⁴²

That the African students could turn down the opportunity to study within the British education system worried colonial officials to the degree that the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Iain Macleod, proposed to hold an "Anglo-American Education Conference" with all the governors of the three East African protectorates. Specifically, the conference was expected to study the threat AASF airlifts posed to the British interests in the region. For expediency, he proposed to have a broader agenda of which the "Mboya Airlift," as he called it, was only one of the issues to be discussed. He feared that, drawing attention to it so directly could easily backfire on the colonial authorities. It also worried him that Britain was already being accused of having neglected to provide education opportunities for Kenyans at the same pace the country was

⁴¹ C. E. Carrington to O. H. Morris, 22 March, 1960, CO 859.

⁴² Colonial Office, "Advisory Conference on Education in the Colonies," February, 1960, CO 859.

progressing towards independence.⁴³ The governor of Uganda, Andrew Cohen, while agreeing readily that the issue needed caution, reported unsettlingly, that enthusiasm of ‘Mboya’s airlifts’ had spread to his territory and the African communities were well disposed to it. “Therefore I think that it would be very difficult to stop and dangerous for any indication to get around that we are trying to encourage stopping it.”⁴⁴ To counter AASF project, with its American support, was going to require great discretion.

Initially, the British officials had hoped to destabilize AASF airlifts using co-opted American educationists. Allan Pifer became one of their early sympathizers. An executive with the Carnegie Foundation, Pifer had recently made a tour of East Africa and claimed to be well versed with the education situation in Kenya. When he learned of Mboya’s project, through the British lobbyists, he became as concerned as “all responsible educationists in the United States [that] American education [might] come into disrepute by the placing of unsuitable people in unsuitable places without adequate arrangement for their support.”⁴⁵ Essentially, Pifer was articulating what became British Colonial Office’s argument against AASF, that ill-prepared students from Kenya were being placed in small and predominantly mediocre colleges in the US all in the name of education. But he soon appreciated the task he was up against and retreated, arguing that, the possibility of stopping a project that was supported by some of the most influential liberals in America was out of question. Besides, “from American point of view, any

⁴³ Secretary of State to Governors of Tanganyika, Kenya, Uganda, 24 March, 1960, CO 859.

⁴⁴ A. Cohen to Gorell Barnes, 24 March, 1960, CO 859.

⁴⁵ Corell Barnes to Sir George Mooring, 5 April, 1960, CO 859.

attempt to frustrate or even speak ill of a program designed to give East Africans the benefit of education in the United States would be self-defeating.”⁴⁶

The British officials must also have realized this folly as well. In their public attacks of the project, they stayed away from questioning its rationale, and chose, instead, to fuss over its technical aspects, such as who was qualified to select the students for scholarship; on what criteria was the selection done; how transparently was the money donated for the project being accounted; who were the students’ career advisors; and how qualified were their mentors. The criticism was nuanced to create doubt in the minds of its American supporters that the project was possibly being mismanaged; that there was nepotism in the selection of its beneficiaries which, as a result, compromised merit; that there was a good chance the donated money was being embezzled; that the students might not even be enrolled in professions beneficial to them or their country; in the end, that it was a thankless exercise to its otherwise altruist American supporters.

The Colonial Office added another component into the campaign against AASF. In June of 1960, London posted a student advisor to United States to act as the *in loco parenti* for the student beneficiaries of AASF scholarship. The posting was explained off as a necessary step “to avoid some of the worst effects” of this “unofficial airlift [that was] detrimental to East Africa both educationally and politically.”⁴⁷ Kenneth D. Luke ended up being more than just an adviser. Knowing the general attitude of his superiors towards AASF, he took up his appointment as a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Colonial Office, “Some problems arising under heads of the proposed conference agenda,” 22 April, 1960, CO 859.

task to torpedo the project. No sooner had he arrived in Washington than he compiled the “Report on the “81” Kenya Students who arrived in North America by “Airlift Africa” in September 1959.”⁴⁸ This was not a flattering report. It contained only a few cases where both the student and the institution were said to be agreeable. For the rest of cases, Luke’s comments oscillated purposely between showing the students as ill-prepared, or the institutions they were enrolled in as mediocre, but mostly both. Nearly half of the students, he decried, were attending institutions with enrollment of less than one-thousand students. This was not a good sign for the students because generally, educational quality of smaller institutions was dubious. On another point, Luke pointed out, “22 of the 77 students are at negro institutions. I do not think this is necessarily to be deplored. Much depends upon the individual student. If he can accept racial discrimination off campus as a challenge he may do well. On the other hand, some students are sensitive to this discrimination to an extent that their studies are seriously interfered with.”⁴⁹ Coming from someone who was unacquainted with Kenya, such observation could well sound innocent. But not from a colonial official who had lived through an era which pent-up bitterness from decades of racism exploded into a vicious Mau Mau uprising. Indeed it was difficult to think racism was Luke’s real problem.

At any rate, the adviser proceeded to give his impressions on some of the students with whom he had made contact. Of the five studying at Diablo Valley Community College, in Southern California, he stated, “these Diablo Valley College students commute from Berkeley

⁴⁸ K. D. Luke, “Report on the “81” Kenya Students who arrived in North America by “Airlift Africa” in September 1959,” June, 1960, CO 859.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

daily—45 minutes each way. They are having some trouble adjusting.”⁵⁰ He said about another student studying at Spelman College, Atlanta, “I think Dorcas is not very happy at Spelman, although she is charming; and has created a good impression there.”⁵¹ Jennifer Adhiambo Ragwa, also at Spelman, was said to have difficulties of academic nature: “Registrar expresses to me doubts as to her suitability for college work, seems unhappy, partially on account of trouble at home.”⁵² He reported that Geoffrey Ole Maloiy “finds it particularly difficult to adjust himself to his environment. He is trying to transfer to Canada with a view of entering the Ontario Vet. College at Guelph.”⁵³ The Adviser stated, in most cases—a charge he repeated in a letter to the *New York Times*—that, “some of the 1959 airliftees were indigene—some were even starving—and that many were doing poorly in their classes because they had been improperly prepared.”⁵⁴ It turned out that for him to learn of all these problems, Luke had sought students’ transcripts and recommendations directly from their academic advisers. Then he had written a letter to all the 81 Kenyan students asking from them, among other things, an honest assessment about their colleges and their financial situation. In the letter, he included a statement to the effect that if they cooperated to their fullest capacity, “something can be done to alleviate your position.” Thus, Shachtman, states, “[Luke’s] conclusion to the impoverished state of the Kenyans was based mostly on their letter responses, rather than on his visits to campuses, and was clearly

⁵⁰ Ibid, p. 2.

⁵¹ Ibid, p. 4.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 6.

⁵⁴ Shachtman, *Airlift to America*, 2009, p. 142.

colored by his original letter's last line: Since he said he might provide help if they cooperated , there was an incentive for students to say that they needed such assistance."⁵⁵

It is not clear whether any of Luke's harsh assessment of the AASF students ever reached Mboya first hand. By the time the report made it to London, Mboya had delegated much of the project's running to other co-directors, and immersed himself fully in the preparations of Kenya's independence. He was even unable to make a fund-raising trip to the US when AASF, running low on money, invited him. Instead, he sent back a note stating, "I feel it would not be wise for me to make such a trip."⁵⁶ He nonetheless demonstrated a good grasp of the machinations from the Colonial Office, and engaged them accordingly. With the problem of student selection, which alleged that Mboya favored Kenyans over other East African nationalities, he readily admitted that AASF had grown rather quickly and outstripped the prevailing means of recruitment. Unlike Kenya, many of the East and Central African countries which had sought to become a part of it did not have any organized selection mechanisms, which left Kenya to take up a majority of the scholarships. Mboya pointed out that he had tried to correct this imbalance by bringing Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Joshua Nkomo of Northern Rhodesia on board as directors.⁵⁷

Mboya similarly replied to the charge claiming AASF beneficiaries were likely to get mediocre education in the US compared to Britain. He understood this criticism as an attempt by

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Shachtman, *Airlift to America*, 2009, p. 147.

⁵⁷ Mboya, *Freedom and After*, 1963.

Britain to reassert its supremacy over Kenya, and his reply was, hence, couched in harsh anti-colonial undertone. Speaking in the Legislative Council on July 21, 1961, Mboya stated:

Too often, Mr. Speaker, people have tried to suggest that the only kind of education that is good for a person is the education in Britain or in British institutions and unless a child or a student is going to Britain he should be warned not to go. That, Mr. Speaker, is a negative approach. A country as young as ours, with needs such as ours, requires education from everywhere. It is true that British institutions have a history and have made a name. It is true that in academic and intellectual circles, a degree from Cambridge and Oxford is valued, perhaps, more so than from some unknown institutions. But we are not concerned so much with status.⁵⁸

In not so subtle way, Mboya labeled the critics of AASF as spoilers of Africans' independence. More purposely, his statement was a reproach to the British authorities that it was no longer their place to meddle in Kenya's affairs. Africans were capable of taking charge, and they were prepared to explore the shores away from British tutelage. He insisted that Kenya could not afford such a narrow-minded approach to education and international affairs, stating, "When this country becomes independent, she will maintain certain relationships with Britain, I hope, but what is more important, is that she will open up new relationships with new countries."⁵⁹ In response to Luke's charge that many Kenyan students in the United States were stuck in small wretched colleges, Mboya said: "So often we are told [the students in the US and Canada] have gone to some small little university that does not mean a thing. There are two questions involved here: One is, is the size of the university that determines the nature and content of education, or it is the education that itself that we are interested in. Does every child in Britain go to Cambridge

⁵⁸ *Legislative Council Reports*, 1961 par. 2682.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, par. 2683.

and Oxford?... The answer is No...”⁶⁰ The colonial officials had feared this rationale would be used to criticize their attitude towards AASF. But they had expected the criticism to come from the Americans, not Kenyans.⁶¹

Mboya was harping on what had by now become his popular theme, that the British, after having bungled African education to the degree of necessitating desperate projects such as the AASF airlifts, had lost the moral authority to counsel Africans on education. At length, the British criticism of AASF abated. At the same time, the British government augmented the scholarships for Kenya students to study in Britain. These were complemented by scholarships given through the private sector.⁶² By 1962, there were 1,652 students studying overseas. The number rose steadily to 3,604 in 1968.⁶³ Of these, 1,325 students were studying in Britain and 690 in the United States.⁶⁴ Judging from these statistics, one could argue that Britain was trying to reclaim Kenya as its sphere of influence.

White privilege and the co-optation of African ruling elite in postcolonial Kenya.

This section examines the politics of Kenya’s white settlers in the last years of colonial rule, showing that it laid essential groundwork for the postcolonial political conflicts from which student activism rose. Afraid of losing their political and economic privileges—privileges

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Corell Barnes to Sir George Mooring, 5 April, 1960, CO 859.

⁶² “Scholarship offers to Kenya Graduates,” *Daily Nation*, 6 January, 1961.

⁶³ *RCPK*, 1962, p. 71.

⁶⁴ *Ministry of Education Annual Report*, 1968, p. 22.

derived from, and sustained by, trampled welfare of the Africans—the settlers worked resolutely to co-opt the new African ruling elite into their ranks to form what Kenya historian, Ogot, has called ‘a shared community of interests.’ The coalition with the African elite was, in part, designed to cushion the settlers against any possible reprisal that independence might bring. It was also calculated to provide them with an ally who could be depended upon to scuttle any reforms they considered detrimental to their interests. In the long run, the incompatible interests of the white settler community and African elite on the one hand, with those of the larger African society on the other, created an atmosphere conducive to student activism.

Like the British colonial administration, the settler community was just as concerned that Kenya was gradually slipping from its grip. For the period of colonial rule, the three agencies of British imperialism, namely, the colonial administration, the Christian missionaries and the European settler farmers, had maintained distance from each other and projected their interests as separate from, and at times in conflict with, each other. The colonial administration had concerned itself with maintaining pax-Britannica for maximum exploitation of resources for Europeans’ benefit. The missionaries set out to groom Christian communities that would become self-governing and self-sustaining, and more importantly, that would submit readily to European patronage. On their part, the white settlers came to appropriate Africans’ land and labor, and develop Kenya as their home and the home of their progeny.

Upon their arrival, therefore, the settlers used their various connections with the Colonial Office to gain influence of the government. The Legislative Council (LegCo) was formed as an advisory board to the colonial administration, but in the end, it became a forum for the settlers and the administration to discuss issues of mutual concern. Through the years, the settlers

pursued ambitious projects, sometimes through the LegCo, sometimes through associations outside of it. Their projects were narrowly aimed to boost their political influence and economic wherewithal in exclusion of other communities. In the 1900s, for instance, they fought for access to cheap African labor. In 1920s, they campaigned unsuccessfully for amalgamation of East and Central African British protectorates. And by the end of World War II, they boldly demanded independence of Kenya under white minority rule, arguing that this was the only way to protect white dominion in the East African region. In all these events, the settlers acted as a cohesive unit.

But when the Mau Mau uprising broke out in 1952, for the first time, the settlers divided sharply between conservative and liberal opinions. The contention at hand was on how the state should deal with the rebel movement. Some conservatives demanded partitioning of Kenya into two states, one for the whites and the other for the black. Others wanted extermination of the Kikuyu people, from whom Mau Mau had risen. Blundell recalls one heated arguments during a meeting in his own constituency of Nakuru where, he says,

a demand was made for the immediate shooting of 50,000 Kikuyu [residents of Nakuru] until they were literally killed into submission. Throughout these days, we had an extraordinary situation in which the crowd would demand the most drastic action against the Kikuyu as an impersonal whole, and then immediately afterwards individual members of the crowd would go to the great lengths to protect Kikuyu whom they knew personally from violence and abuse. I remember this, and I replied sharply to the speaker ‘Yes, I know, kill all the Kikuyu but don’t kill mine.’⁶⁵

Amidst the panic that Mau Mau uprising wrought on the settler politics, a group of right-wing conservatives formed the Kenya Empire Party, also called the Independent Group, for adopting a

⁶⁵ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 137.

political platform that advocated Kenya's independence from London. Led by a former Royal Air Force Group-Captain L. R. Brigg, and A. T. Culwick, Independent Group drew its ideology from South Africa's apartheid rule. Its members held that the long-term solution to such crises as the Mau Mau was only through creation of 'Native Homelands' where Africa 'tribes' could be relocated. A considerable number of the white electorate supported this idea.

The more liberal quarters of the European community found the proposal impractical. One of these liberals, the retired Governor Philip Mitchell, who had settled in Kenya, wrote to a colleague accusing the Independent Group of lacking commonsense. Mitchell complained:

What then is the wise course for a European population of some 45,000 set among 100,000 Asians and 5,000,000 Africans? ... If [the Kenya Empire Party] insists on separation and special rights and refuses genuine co-operation with other races it will isolate itself stimulating African nationalism and almost certainly drive Asians into that camp. It cannot expect, except by successful armed rebellion, to be able continuously to maintain even its present privileges... It cannot even in the field of local government discover any political unit in which it is not hopelessly outnumbered. Even if it succeeds in 'annexing' Naivasha, Gilgil, Nakuru, Eldoret, Kitale, Molo and Nyeri to the 'White Highlands' that area would still present this sort of picture—Europeans about 10,000; Asians, say, 20,000; Africans about 500,000; that is about fifty non-Europeans to every European. In the Union of South Africa the ratio is about three to one, and even there the tension on account of Apartheid is acute and increasing.⁶⁶

Like other liberals, Mitchell thought the politics of Independent Group were detached from the reality on the ground. At the time when the group was advocating such policies as the killing off of the Kikuyu and dividing Kenya into ethnic enclaves, the colonial state could hardly be said to be in control of the country. Mau Mau forces had about run the imperial forces out of some

⁶⁶ Quoted in Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 216.

districts, creating what Blundell called “Mau Mau republic.”⁶⁷ The shaken colonial authorities were frantically removing white settlers into refugee camps in towns where it was easier to protect them. And for the way the war was playing out, the possibility of the Europeans being run out of the country altogether was not farfetched. To the frustration of the liberal Europeans, this simple fact seemed completely lost to the conservatives of the Independent Group.

If the liberal Europeans found the members of Independent Group irrational, the colonial administration was partly to blame. It had inadvertently stoked their confidence by assuring them that a European regime in Kenya was secure. As late as March of 1959, with the rage caused by the Hola Massacre* still searing, the Colonial Secretary, Lennox-Boyd, told the British parliament; “I am unable to envisage a time when it will be possible for any British Government to surrender their ultimate responsibilities for the destiny and wellbeing of Kenya.”⁶⁸ It was just what the right-wing thinking settlers wanted to hear. Indeed, not long after the Secretary’s speech, Kenya’s Governor, Baring, toured Kenya’s White Highlands and intimated to the settlers that, while Britain might grant independence to some of its African colonies, Kenya would not be in this lot. He assured them that, given the country’s importance to the British interests, it was designated to become a “fortress colony,” fully equipped with a British military base.⁶⁹ The

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 132.

* ‘Hola Massacre’ was the term used to describe the incident at the beginning of March of 1959 where the colonial guards under Commandant G. M. Sullivan clubbed some eleven Mau Mau detainees to death in the Hola detention facility. The liberal members of the British parliament used it to dramatize the horror the colonial regime, ultimately, galvanizing the British public to demand withdrawal of the colonial rule in Kenya. Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: the untold story of Britain’s Gulag in Kenya*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005.

⁶⁸ Quoted in Martin Meredith, *The First Dance of Freedom: Black Africa in the Post-War era*, New York: Harper and Row, 1984, p. 111.

⁶⁹ Robert B. Edgerton. *Mau Mau: an African crucible*. New York: The Free Press, 1989.

Independence Group was therefore hoping the creation of a British military state would help to keep the troublesome Africans on a tight leash.

The views of the liberals were frowned upon by the majority of settlers. The liberals argued that Europeans' fate was inescapably bound with that of the Africans. Since Mau Mau uprising had fundamentally challenged the old colonial order, the Europeans could only hope to maintain their privilege with the support of Africans. Blundell, the leader of this group, was "convinced that the European in Africa could not isolate himself from the African. Wherever he goes, he has the same problem—he is a minority and he can no more run away from the African if he wishes to remain in Africa than he can fly."⁷⁰ Foreseeing the possibility of Africans taking over the government, Blundell and his associates who "wished to avoid a situation whereby the European community had been trained merely to be a small vociferous racial minority in opposition," formed the United Country Party (UCP).⁷¹ UCP advocated for accommodation of likeminded Africans in the government. Its program was, however, "to make multi-racialism succeed on the basis of an association of the races together" but not "a more fully integrated non-racial society."⁷² That such ideas came so late in time confirmed just how removed settler politics in Kenya were from the policies generated by the Colonial Office. The shift towards multiracial politics had started early 1940s.⁷³ It had taken a decade and a vicious war to jolt a small segment of Kenyan settlers from imperial bliss.

⁷⁰ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 216.

⁷¹ UCP was formed in 1954. *Ibid*, p. 212.

⁷² *Ibid*, p. 180.

⁷³ See, Jack R. Roelker, *Mathu of Kenya: a Political Study*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

UCP started off as a minority and remained that way throughout its three-year existence. In its eagerness to achieve multiracialism, it failed to deal pragmatically with the issues important to the settlers. It could not demonstrate how multiracialism could guarantee their privileges of the 'White Highlands,' nor the racial reservation in schools, public services and residential areas, and more importantly, the political and economic opportunity accorded unduly to them. Even Blundell, it seems, did not sufficiently understand the concept of multiracialism. He acknowledged that his group was often caught flat-footed when confronted with these pertinent issues, and confessed; "We were still thinking in terms of an association of the races each with its own territorial or commercial base and historical background, rather than integration, towards our objectives as a nation."⁷⁴ His thinking was, thus, not drastically different from that of the conservative Independent Party. The UCP died quietly and was succeeded by the New Kenya Group (NKG).

The NKG was a natural corollary of UCP's failure, in that it was formed by the same group of liberal settlers to correct the things UCP had done wrong—though at the time of its formation in 1959, the conditions on the ground had considerably changed. Mau Mau uprising was no longer a burning issue, and neither was the campaign to bring Africans into the government. With some twenty-three of them in the LegCo, Africans were already a majority. One important achievement of NKG was, however, to bring Africans and Indians on board, an act that was unimaginable during the era of UCP. Its African members were an assortment of conservatives who still believed in the British Empire and moderates who feared that their more radical colleagues, with politics predicated upon slogans like "Africa for Africans," and "Scram

⁷⁴ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 218.

out of Africa,” could easily jeopardize the gains Africans had made over the years.⁷⁵ Thus, the African members of NKG saw themselves as a moderating force in an increasingly radicalizing politics. The European members of NKG were inspired by similar concerns. They worried that the regime’s continued resistance to Africans’ demands might radicalize them to a dangerous degree. Blundell expressed this fear in a letter to a fellow liberal saying,

Extreme racial African politicians will organize throughout the country by 1960 a party or group system of candidates. These candidates will have differing views and outlook due to their tribal origin and needs, but they will find one easy meeting point—the opening up and elimination of the concept of the European Highlands. We shall thus get a band of Africans returned by a racial electorate united on one easy platform—the elimination of the position which we hold in land matters. When that arises, the European will be forced to either resist strongly or give way. If he resists strongly, more tensions will be built up. If he gives way, he will have lost an immense amount of prestige.⁷⁶

Resisting was no longer a practical option: the colonial regime could not sustain another uprising. Yet, giving way to the anti-white African nationalists was tantamount to capitulating to a force which could well withdraw their privileges. The NKG was meant to safeguard against such adversity.

Expectedly, NKG articulated both the hopes and fears of the settler community. It sought a pact that would ensure the security of European interests in postcolonial Kenya. During in the first Lancaster House constitutional conference in 1960, the party demanded Britain to commit itself to this undertaking, and if not, to facilitate the settlers’ departure. In case of departure, the party sought commensurate compensation for the inconveniences the change of regime was bound to bring upon the settlers. Its letter to Lennox-Boyd’s successor, Iain Macleod, stated:

⁷⁵ See, Shachtman, *Airlift to America*, 2009.

⁷⁶ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, pp. 238-9.

[We] ought to warn you that a certain section of the European community will undoubtedly ask you to give an undertaking for compensation to European settlers who were induced to come here by successive policies of the Kenya Government and Her Majesty's Government to develop and farm. The thought behind this demand is that if Her Majesty's Government is not firm and does not retain control here, then the investments of these farmers will be arbitrarily expropriated by the African nationalist leaders. It is a moot point whether indeed this will happen, but nevertheless that is the fear with which we have to deal...A much larger body of European opinion in the farming areas will demand compensation if at the Constitution conference in London sweeping concessions are made to the African nationalists that indicate the future of the country is not going to be based on non-racial approach to its problems by Kenya citizens, but is to be dictated eventually by a purely African racial leadership intent upon an African State and African domination. In such circumstances, the demands from European farmers would be considerable, as they would consider their future to be very insecure indeed.⁷⁷

Their fear, it turned out, was unfounded. The African nationalists negotiating for the independence did not make any radical demands. Indeed, in the months following the conference, Kenya's National Coalition Government, which included the leading African parties, KANU and KADU (Kenya African Democratic Union), issued a heartening joint communiqué seeking to allay settlers' fear. The government said it was necessary "to remove the misapprehensions and uncertainties [believed] to be main cause of fears and mistrust" among communities in Kenya.⁷⁸ Speaking more specifically to land rights, the government reiterated its dedication to the "right of the individual, in accordance with the law, to live in whatever part of the country he chooses, to own property, including land..." Any individual, who, for whatever reason, chose to sell land, the transaction was to be on a "willing-buyer/willing-seller" basis.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 259.

⁷⁸ "Statement by Council of Ministers," Kenya News, 24 October, 1962, KNA PC/NGO/1/1/40.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

This assurance, while in short run was aimed at calming the settlers, was also intended to assure potential investors, many of whom were, incidentally, British, that independent Kenya would not deviate from the economic course established by the colonial state.⁸⁰

For the settlers, another important assurance came from the country's Prime Minister-elect, Jomo Kenyatta, when he met with three hundred of them on August 12, 1963. Until his recent release from prison, Kenyatta was easily their most hated African nationalist. During the last leg of his imprisonment, Blundell had visited him at Maralal. Kenyatta asked him, in their conversation, why the Europeans hate him so. Blundell answered that it was because they associated him "with the evil side of Mau Mau..."⁸¹ Kenyatta asked Blundell what he should do to show his lot that he was not all that bad. "I replied that I could not help him...only he could correct, by his speeches and action, the impressions which many Europeans sincerely held about him."⁸² Now as the prime minister-elect, Kenyatta possessed the power to demonstrate to the Europeans that he was not a bad person. For all the vitriol they had visited on him, he could still smile and banter with them, all while assuring them that they were indispensable contributors to Kenya's postcolonial nation-building endeavor.⁸³

The settlers probably appreciated Kenyatta more when, as the president, he preserved much of the colonial structure that protected them. Institutions like the police and military were inherited intact as were the colonial-era personnel who continued to operate in independent

⁸⁰ Jeremy Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1979.

⁸¹ Blundell, *So Rough a Wind*, 1964, p. 296.

⁸² *Ibid*, 1964, p. 296.

⁸³ Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, 1979.

Kenya as if the country was still under the colonial rule. “In the same way the judiciary, civil service and Parliament continued to function according to their British models and with white men still in senior posts.”⁸⁴ Some of the settlers were given important positions in Kenyatta’s cabinet. The Ministry of Agriculture Lands and Settlements, a crucial docket given the centrality of land in Kenyan politics, was offered to Bruce Mackenzie. Another settler, Humphrey Slade, became the speaker of the national assembly. Even Blundell continued his farming business much as he had done during colonialism. In the final analysis, the settlers who stayed on after independence continued to enjoy much the same privileged position they had during the colonial rule. The only inconvenience they had to endure was their having to make room for the newly minted class of African ruling elite.

Under colonial tutelage, the new African ruling elite had been taught to see no alternative to the colonial system of governance. It had been impressed on them that to run a modern state appropriately was to run it as the colonial political elite had. Whereas any innovative regime would reassess the institutions bequeathed to it to determine their efficacy for a sovereign state, Kenya’s African elite saw these institutions as a given.⁸⁵ Naturally, they craved to occupy the privileged world of their predecessors, the world plagued with raw political power and economic opulence.⁸⁶ Kenyatta and his political associates, family and friends, joined the settlers’ cadre in

⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 312.

⁸⁵ Some political theorists argue that, since postcolonial state in Africa was build upon the foundation laid by the colonial state, any attempt to transform it amounted to challenging the very concept of the nation-state. See, for instance, Patrick Chabal, *Power in Africa; an Essay in Political Interpretation*, New York: St. Martin Press, 1992; Naomi Chazan, et al., *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*, Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1992.

⁸⁶ See Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963; Ali Mazrui, *Political Values and the Educated Class in Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978. More recently, there has been

carving for themselves extensive land holdings. Farms were transferred whole from their previous white owners who had opted to take compensation and leave the country, to new African owners. The same went for suburban residential properties and retail businesses. Multinational companies who sought to do business in the country were coaxed into incorporating members of the ruling class as shareholders and personnel. This was also required of those already operating in Kenya, failure to do so would risk license withdrawal.⁸⁷ The frenzied greed with which the African ruling elite set to accumulate wealth was well articulated by Odinga, Kenyatta's first vice-president, when he stated, soon after leaving the government, that, the ruling elite's interpretation of "independence and 'African Socialism' is that they should move into the jobs and privileges previously held by the settlers... Ministers and top civil servants compete with one another to buy more farms, acquire more directorships and own bigger cars and grander houses."⁸⁸ Yet this rapid transformation of the colonial-era African nationalists into a corrupt ruling class of postcolonial state did not go unchallenged. University students took the vanguard in that effort.

deeper exploration of the ruling elite psychology in post-colonial Africa. Ali Mazrui, "Political Engineering in Africa" *International Social Science Journal*, 25 (1983); Siba N'Zatioula Grovogui, *Sovereigns, quasi sovereigns, and Africans: race and self-determination in international law*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, Nairobi: Heinemann Kenya, 1986; Jean-Francois Bayart, *The State in Africa: the politics of the belly*. New York: Longman Ltd., 1993.

⁸⁷ Gerard Loughran, *Birth of a Nation: the story of a newspaper in Kenya*, New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010; also see Branch, "Loyalists, Mau Mau, and Elections in Kenya, 2006.

⁸⁸ Odinga Oginga, *Not yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 302. The recently declassified papers and correspondences corroborate Odinga's claims. But these documents also claim he was one of the beneficiaries of nearly eight-hundred acres of irregularly allocated land. John Kamau, "How Independence Era Leaders Laid Their Hands on Quitting Whites," *Daily Nation*, 22 November, 2009.

Student activism during the early years of Kenyatta regime.

It is important to acknowledge beforehand that students' politics in Kenya are complex. Students are not a unified entity with a cohesive political agenda and a consistent approach. They come from diverse socioeconomic and political backgrounds critical to influencing their views.⁸⁹ At times, their politics split them into factions. It is not unusual for them also to dwell on parochial and petty issues of little concern to the public. On the whole, their politics can be unpredictable, and the period under this analysis is not an exception. The study, however, is concerned more with the dynamics which gave students' politics coherence rather than those which divided them. It focuses on the activities which set them apart from the larger society and gave their politics a distinct personality, in other words, issues which defied, rather than conformed to, state expectation. For instance, the state during this period expected students, as with all other sectors of the society, to approve and dutifully support its policies. As future members of Kenya's secure bureaucratic class, students were also widely seen as an appendage of the ruling elite.⁹⁰ Besides, they were beholden to state benefaction. Their education was free and they received stipend. Therefore were expected not to pursue any activities that antagonized the regime. What interests this study, therefore, is the fact that, despite this presumed indebtedness to the state, the students were not always inclined to conform.

In October of 1952, two Kenyan students, authors of a community education pamphlet titled *Afrika Mpya* (New Africa), were expelled from Makerere College. Makerere had only

⁸⁹ Philip G. Altbach, "Perspectives on Student Political Activism," *Comparative Education*, 25 (1989): p. 102.

⁹⁰ See, Roberta Mckown, "Kenya university students and politics," In William. J. Hanna, and Judith. L. Hanna (Editors.), *University students and African politics*, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1975.

recently become a constituent college of London University and its students from Kenya numbered just over a hundred. In their letter to the Kenya African Union (KAU), the students, J. N. Karanja and I. E. Omolo, said they were victimized following a recent strike “for the mere fact that we were considered “political” and thus incompatible with the long term welfare of the college.”⁹¹ The two were seeking KAU’s help to pursue their interrupted education abroad, either in the United Kingdom or the United States of America. KAU did not have the time to act on the letter, for, within three weeks, at the onset of the Mau Mau uprising, Operation Jock Scot swept its leadership off to detention. Karanja did find his way to the UK and finished his education. At independence, he was appointed Kenya’s high commissioner to Britain.

Since Kenya’s Royal Technical College, the forerunner of the University of Nairobi, did not admit its first batch of students until 1957, much of student activism during these years was pursued from outside the country. Odinga remembers that during his first visit to Egypt in 1960, the Kenya Office in Cairo, which organized radio programs to counter colonial propaganda against the Kenya’s freedom fighters, was run by three young Kenyan students who had taken up temporary residence in Egypt. These were Odhiambo Okello, Wera Ambitho and Abdala Karungo Kanyariro. According to Odinga,

Kanyariro was a Kikuyu freedom fighter from Lari in Kiambu who had escaped arrest. Okello and Ambitho had won scholarships to study in Europe but had their passports impounded by the Kenyan government the day they boarded the ship to leave... The three young men had made their way out of the country illegally, travelling through Uganda and taking three months to reach Khartoum where the students at the [University of Khartoum] helped them.⁹²

⁹¹ J. N. Karanja and I. E. Omolo to the President, Kenya African Union, 1 October, 1952, Leakey Archives.

⁹² Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 186.

These students, besides running the radio program ‘Voice of Kenya’ through the Cairo radio, were also charged with printing and disseminating literature in support of Kenya’s independence. The first publication of the Kenya African National Union (KANU), titled the ‘New Kenya,’ was initiated by the students at the Cairo office. It was also through these students that Kenya African nationalists made first contacts with other nationalists from around the continent. The students were more than just anti-colonial activists. They played an intermediary role within the intrigue-riddled arena of African nationalist politics.

It happened that as Kenya progressed towards self-rule, African politics became more polarized as the nationalists jostled for power. KANU, then most popular party, was at the verge of breaking up. Upon its founding in May of 1960, the party advocated noncooperation with the colonial state to press for release of the African nationalists held in prisons, in detentions and in other forms of restriction. Using Kenyatta, the most prominent prisoner as the poster boy for its campaign, the party insisted in its manifesto that his “denial of freedom [was] a mockery of justice and contravention of the United Nation’s declaration of human rights.”⁹³ It demonstrated its seriousness by electing him its president in absentia, with James Gichuru as the interim. Mboya was elected the secretary-general and Odinga, vice-president. Odinga explained Kenyatta’s towering presence in KANU’s campaign saying; “he was important not only because he was Kenya’s leader but also because he was symbolic of all the political leaders in still in the detention camps and under restriction ... Kenyatta was not only a leader, he was the symbol of people’s political aspirations; while he was not free the people could not freely express their

⁹³ *KANU Manifesto*, 1960, p. 27.

aspirations or hope to attain them.”⁹⁴ The party even coined the slogan *Uhuru na Kenyatta* (Independence with Kenyatta).⁹⁵ Up to this point, the party appeared to be well focused on its goal.

But then KANU’s governing council learned that, while on a visit to London, Mboya and Gichuru, the party’s secretary general and interim president respectively, had gone to see the Colonial Secretary, Iain Macleod. The duo did not reveal this visit, much less the subject of their discussion. At a time when the colonial regime was doing everything in its power to manipulate African politics to its own advantage, their secrecy made them suspect. Odinga, who was not in best of terms with Mboya, believed Macleod was sounding the duo to wreck KANU.⁹⁶ “British and United States strategy seemed to converge on the grooming of Mboya for leadership in the place of Kenyatta,” stated Odinga, a claim that may well have been influenced by his dislike of Mboya and hatred for both countries.⁹⁷ Mboya’s relationship with Britain was not as cordial as Odinga portrayed it. In fact, the British colonial officials harbored their own apprehensions that the US was grooming Mboya to front its interests in Kenya. At one point, the Colonial Office tried to persuade US migration office to deny the nationalist a visiting visa, and when this failed,

⁹⁴ Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, 1967, pp. 197-8

⁹⁵ Ogot, “The Decisive Years, 1956-63,” 1995.

⁹⁶ Although in later years the rivalry between Odinga and Mboya took an ideological form, it is not clear how it began. Some scholars have argued that it stemmed from their ambitions for political supremacy. Mboya was a trade unionist who derived his political support largely from urban, multiethnic base. Odinga, given his success in building the Luo Thrift, rallied the Luo community. Other scholars have argued that Mboya’s quick rise to national and international prominence, aroused envy in Odinga who, as the older statesman, felt the younger nationalist should defer important political decisions to him. See David Goldsworthy, *Tom Mboya: the man Kenya wanted to forget*, Nairobi: Heinemann, 1982; Cherry Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya 1963-8*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970.

⁹⁷ Odinga, *Not yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 200.

monitored Mboya's movements in the US.⁹⁸ Besides, Mboya's record of campaigning for Kenyatta's release was impeccable. It was through his relentless campaign that October 20 became a national fasting day as part of the larger crusade to press for release of the imprisoned leaders.⁹⁹ Besides, while traveling around the world, the nationalist held many press conferences, radio and television talks, to explain KANU's rationale for its noncooperation.¹⁰⁰ In a nutshell, Mboya was just as supportive of the party's policy as any other leader of his status. But this fact did not ease the rivalry between him and Odinga.

The duo's differences became public during the legislative elections of 1961. Mboya sponsored a candidate to oppose Odinga in Central Nyanza Legislative Council seat. Odinga paid him in kind by sponsoring an opposition candidate against Mboya for the Nairobi seat. At the height of their hostilities, Kenyan students at Makerere wrote an open letter, under the auspices of Kenya Students' Discussion Group, expressing concern with their behavior. The letter stated in part; "we Kenya students at Makerere are profoundly amazed at the tensions and quarrels going on among Kenya African leaders, especially the new faction fighting which have erupted within KANU. We must say that we are observing with great anxiety these events which, occurring just before the critical time of elections, may spell chaos and disorder for the country."¹⁰¹ The letter appealed to the wrangling leaders to rise beyond their petty differences.

⁹⁸ CO 822/799.

⁹⁹ "This Kenyatta Campaign," *The Nation*, 15 May, 1960. October 20 commemorated the day, in 1952, when some two hundred leading nationalists, Kenyatta among them, were arrested soon after the declaration of the State of Emergency.

¹⁰⁰ "Mboya Explains African Goals of U.S. Tour," *Africa Special Report*, 4 April, 1959, p. 2.

¹⁰¹ C. Ngara Kebuchi, "Students at Makerere fear chaos, disorder," *Daily Nation*, 31 January, 1961, p. 3.

“This is a time for constructive action and thought, for responsible and conscientious leadership,” the students wrote, making it clear that neither they, nor the larger Kenyan public, cared for the bickering. In a tone that could well have conveyed a threat, the students declared; “We state categorically that we shall not sit and watch impassively while some individuals destroy our country with misguided nationalism. We appeal to our leaders of all persuasions to put the interests of our country before those of individuals or party.”¹⁰² The elections results averted a showdown in the short term. Both proxy candidates lost, and Mboya and Odinga retained their respective seats. But their rivalry continued until Mboya’s assassination in 1969.

The first multiparty general elections were held on February 27 of 1961. As the most popular party, KANU easily dominated a crowded field of seven parties, taking sixteen of the thirty-three seats, and winning a forceful sixty-seven percent of the total votes.¹⁰³ As the winner, the constitution required KANU to form the government. But the party had pledged to abide by noncooperation with the government. Governor Renison, unwilling to yield to its demand, invited KANU’s main rival, KADU, to form the government in coalition with two other parties; Blundell’s NKG and the Indian Congress.¹⁰⁴ Still, the governor had to nominate eleven more members to give the coalition a majority. The fact that KADU agreed to take up the offer despite the ongoing campaign of noncooperation, did not go down well with the students. Their disapproval was registered most eloquently by the lot studying in India. In a press statement issued through their umbrella African Students’ Association’s, Secretary-General, K. N.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Karl G. Rosberg Jr., “Election Report from Kenya,” *Africa Report*, April 1961, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ KADU was formed by a group of nationalists who splintered from KANU. It advocated a federalist state as a way of protecting the smaller ethnic communities against domination by the larger ones.

Gichoya, the students stated; “we are greatly shocked to note that the African Elected Members have not, in unison, categorically told the Governor and the Colonial Office that no self-respecting African will participate in the Government until the Father of the Nation Jomo Kenyatta, is unconditionally released to lead the nation.”¹⁰⁵ Their colleagues at the Royal College, Nairobi expressed similar displeasure. When a KADU legislator visited the university to address them, some students refused to listen to him and heckled him, to which the university instituted a disciplinary action against them. What began as a simple disciplinary issue, escalated quickly into a major political confrontation when the rest of students staged a one-day strike. This was the first students’ strike at a Kenyan institution of higher learning.¹⁰⁶

Students’ activism, whatever the precise issue they were agitating, was acknowledged, within the larger context, as a struggle against colonialism and imperialism. As such, their issues found ready support among the African and Indian nationalists. Such was the case on February 12, 1963, when the students of the Nairobi College staged a demonstration. For some time, the students had demanded a foot-bridge on the busy Princess Elizabeth Way that separated their residence halls from their lecture halls, but their demands had fallen on deaf ears. On the material day, they staged a sit-in on the highway during the busy lunch hour, holding the traffic for miles. They defied police order to disperse, and instead, responded with chants of “we want a bridge!”¹⁰⁷ Scuffles ensued. Twenty eight students were arrested. In express of solidarity, the rest

¹⁰⁵ K. N. Gichoya, “Letter to the Editor,” *Daily Nation*, 16 March, 1961.

¹⁰⁶ Gichuhi M. M. Kirubi, “Turmoil in a university: an analytical study of the conflicts, confrontations and strikes in the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College in the Republic of Kenya 1960-1978.” Ph.D. diss, Ohio University, 1983.

¹⁰⁷ *East African Standard*, 14 February, 1963.

of students followed the arrested protestors to the police station, where again, they defied orders to disperse, forcing the police to use teargas and batons on them. The police action stirred anger among the Asian and African legislators. One such critic, Mr. F. R. S. de Souza, the elected Asian member, went as far as demanding inquiry into the police conduct. He complained; “the students were demonstrating in a proper and constitutional way against a grievance which many people believe ought to be attended to immediately.”¹⁰⁸ During their court hearing, members of the recently formed KANU youth wing turned up, some carrying placards stating “We Demand the Unconditional Release of the Students.”¹⁰⁹ The solidarity between the students and the larger anti-colonial political community was necessitated by the presence of a shared enemy, the colonial administration. Independence changed the dynamics.

At independence, Kenya was confronted by the heavy task of producing bureaucrats to attain its Africanization objective. Short of training them abroad—which was already happening on a large scale—the only local institution with the capacity to produce high-quality graduates was the University College of Nairobi, which had recently become a constituent college of the University of East Africa at Makerere. This was the institution expected to steer the country to economic independence and self-reliance. Kenya’s development and economic plans were drawn with the university in mind. Their implementation was hedged on the numbers being graduated. The state not only attached great importance to its everyday running, it was using the university, literally, as an industrial plant for quick production of graduates. As such, any disruption of its programs, however justified, was treated with the seriousness of a disruption in the production

¹⁰⁸ F. R. S. de Souza, “Letter to the Editor,” *East African Standard*, 13 February, 1963.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Kirubi, ‘Turmoil at a university,’ 1983, p. 84.

line of an industry working on overdrive to meet the demand. This was how the government viewed the students' protest of December 1965.

The students staged a three-day strike a week before their Christmas break to protest overcrowding in their halls of residence. Congestion was another byproduct of the Africanization project. In the effort to maximize production, the state had doubled the students' intake, stretching the facilities to a level that students found distressing. When the authorities ignored their complaint, the students went on strike. In the midst of the crisis, the Minister of National Planning, Tom Mboya, toured the university. In his speech to the University Students Association of East Africa on December 21, 1965, Mboya was quoted saying that "the East Africa's high-level manpower shortage was getting worse...the only hope rested on local institutions and the University of East Africa to produce the personnel needed in the realization of development programs."¹¹⁰ The minister laid out the challenges of nation-building as only manageable through sacrifice. He reminded the students that Kenyans everywhere were sacrificing for this effort. They had to see shared accommodation as a part of this larger sacrifice. Thus, he spelled out to them, in response to their petition: "What the governments of East Africa want to hear is not the number of resolutions passed by the students but the number of examinations passed. There are too many vacancies, and there is a hurry to make use of every successful student."¹¹¹ But Mboya touched a raw nerve when he used the label 'spoiled children' about the students. Ever since the beginning of the strike, Kenyan media had taken to using this label on the students, calling them 'elitist.' One newspaper editorial, for instance, reminded them

¹¹⁰ "Mboya's Address to Students," *East African Standard*, 21 December, 1965, p. 5.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

of their rare privilege of being at the university in a society with negligible literacy. The editorial counseled, “By all means let the students express their grievances when they are real, and be vocal in a constitutional manner. But they are not being kept at the University College at K£950 per head out of taxation to indulge in unbridled politics.”¹¹² Like the newspaper editorial, Mboya reminded the students to be grateful for the rare privilege they were enjoying.

When he was offered the chance to speak, the president of the students, Stephen P. Nagenda, agreed with Mboya that university students in Kenya, like those of the developing countries elsewhere, were beneficiaries of educational systems propped by masses of underprivileged citizens and for that, they had a duty to sacrifice for the society. Nagenda implored his colleagues to join the society in self-help schemes, work camps and other projects of manual labor engaged by the ‘struggling masses.’ Moreover, he said, students, as part of the enlightened members of the society, had the duty and responsibility to act as the watchdog of people’s freedoms and rights. Then he spoke directly to Mboya; “the leaders are expected to lead the way in nation-building and when they draw the attention of the students to the fact that East Africa spends K£950 per student every year, and that there is need for sacrifice, it is appropriate that the leaders themselves show the way by cutting down their salaries, some of which are 300 times the per capita income in East Africa.”¹¹³ It was an eloquent and brave speech by any means, but perhaps too brave for the students’ leader’s own good. Two weeks later, Nagenda was suspended from the university for reasons the university stated vaguely as “dissatisfied with

¹¹² Quoted in Kirubi, ‘Turmoil at a university,’ 1983, pp. 90-1.

¹¹³ “Mboya’s Address to Students,” 1965.

his general activities.”¹¹⁴ The Principal, Arthur Porter, refused to divulge the exact activities Nagenda had engaged to warrant his suspension, which only fueled the suspicion that the orders had emanated from elsewhere, and possibly, his speech had something to do with it. When the students returned after the Christmas holidays, they found new rules that required them to apply for readmission. They further had to sign a statement accepting overcrowding as a necessary sacrifice for nation building. Although they relented to the authorities and agreed to sign the declaration, the students maintained that their demands were right and just, and promised to continue pressing their case. From this point on, the relationship between the students and Kenyatta’s regime got worse.

Kenya’s path to one-party state: students as the unofficial opposition.

We have already seen that the relationship between KADU and KANU was frosty even before Kenya achieved self-rule. The former agreed to form the government while the latter, more popular party, acquired a noncooperation posture to press for the freedom of Kenya’s political prisoners. With its populist platform, KANU started off with higher moral authority. Its campaign of *Uhuru na Kenyatta* gave it a more anti-colonial disposition, while its manifesto, advocating for national unity under centralized government institutions, made it appear to be more committed to Africans’ unity than KADU, which advocated federalism. It did not come as a surprise that, upon his release, Kenyatta chose to join KANU. With him on board, KANU’s political supremacy was consummated. But the party still went for its rival’s jugular. It started a

¹¹⁴ “Leader sent down,” *Daily Nation*, 11 January, 1966, p. 1.

two-pronged campaign to destroy KADU. One strategy was to orchestrate defections. With all manners of promises, KANU operatives began a spirited campaign to convince KADU's junior members to cross over. In November of 1963, with the independence only a month away, two KADU members of Legislative Council, William Murgor and John Seroney, defected to KANU. They were shortly followed by Taita Towett. With independence only days away, Eric Khasakhala was received in KANU by the vice president, Odinga, at a rally in his Western Region. Odinga told Khasakhala's enthusiastic supporters that "one of the first fruits of Khasakhala's switch [to KANU] would be a journey to China at the head of a delegation of [his] Bunyore people."¹¹⁵ Other rewards included party positions. KANU's grand intention was to chip as much support away from KADU's top brass as was necessary for the party to implode, or for its top leaders to accept defection on KANU's terms.

In political rhetoric, KANU projected itself as the party of national unity, consequently, implying that KADU, with its federalist manifesto, was the party of disunity. KADU was painted as a colonial relic, a post-independence divide-and-rule strategy being used to keep Kenyan 'tribes' apart. Kenyatta himself called KADU's insistence on a dual-party system a "cowardly reaction to a bold approach to our country's post-independence need for political stability."¹¹⁶ He berated KADU leaders saying, "everyone knows that when some of us were tucked into detention and imprisonment, some of them were warming their bellies under imperialist wings."¹¹⁷ KADU did little to help its cause. Its show at the polls demonstrated lack of public

¹¹⁵ Ogot, "The Decisive Years," 1995, p.77.

¹¹⁶ Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness*, Nairobi, East African Publishing House, 1968, p. 228.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

support. Even worse, its acceptance to form a minority government when much of the African public was calling for noncooperation with the colonial state was seen as an egocentric move. The more KANU played this rhetoric on the public, the more KADU's popularity diminished. In the end, a defeated KADU agreed to go into 'voluntary liquidation.' On December 12, 1964, the day Kenya became a republic, the remaining KADU officials, Ronald Ngala, Martin Shikuku and Masinde Muliro, formally joined KANU, allowing Kenya to become a one-party state. But KADU's exit from the scene opened the space for the hitherto suppressed discord within KANU. A permutation in personal ambitions, Cold War geopolitics, and conflicting visions for Kenya's political and socioeconomic future conspired to subvert its unity.

The division in KANU saw, on the one hand, the emergence of a group of nationalists who became known as the Socialists, owing to their espousing ideals that were critical of the capitalist free market course in which Kenyatta sought to steer the country's economy. Unhappy with the conservative character of Kenyatta's policies, the members of this group wanted to see radical land reforms, resource redistribution, improved living standards, expansion of democracy and political freedoms, and other reforms to empower the citizenry. They protested the fact that the state was doing nothing to dismantle the colonial economic and political structures. Its principals were Odinga, the vice-president, and Bildad Kaggia, one of the leading trade unionists who had organized Mau Mau and been imprisoned with Kenyatta. Their nemesis comprised a loose coalition of conservatives who formed the core of Kenyatta's government. In this group were the white settlers, the African political class that had benefited from the trappings of the colonial regime and a great many co-opted colonial-era nationalists.¹¹⁸ This group was aware that

any attempts to reform the economic and political institutions established under the colonial regime were bound to undermine its interests. As such, its members desired to maintain the status quo.

While the issues that brought the socialists in conflict with the conservative Kenyatta government were abundant, land reforms dramatized their conflict best. Land had remained a central issue of conflict between the colonial settlers and the African society, so much that it became the lightning rod for Mau Mau uprising. More recently, substantial tracts of land had changed hands from the European settlers to the new African ruling class. Even the president had joined the scramble for land, which gave the socialists the basis for accusing him of having betrayed the Kenyan masses from whom these lands were originally alienated.¹¹⁹ That Kenyatta also appointed Bruce Mackenzie, a white settler, as the Minister for Agriculture, Lands and Settlements, vindicated socialists' belief that the president was not keen on initiating any land reforms. On September 5, 1963, Kaggia, then Junior Minister of Education, wrote to Mackenzie,

In my daily work in my constituency, I have encountered a very difficult problem—the confiscated land—which was formerly owned by the freedom fighters who were then known as ‘terrorists’ ... The problem is a bit difficult because the confiscated land was absorbed into the public purpose land and cannot be found now. But the whole question is very serious because our freedom fighters in the whole province expect a complete change of policy on the question. In my opinion, land must be found for these people somehow and somewhere.¹²⁰

¹¹⁸ It might be remembered that the colonial state recruited political and administrative personnel such as chiefs, headmen and police from the collaborator class. This class embraced Christianity and education quite early. With help from the colonial regime, its members educated their children well enough to gain careers under the colonial regime. As some of the best educated Kenyans at independence, members of this group were well positioned to take over the vital bureaucratic positions.

¹¹⁹ Loughran, *Birth of a Nation*, 2010.

¹²⁰ Kaggia to the Minister of Agriculture and the Ministry of Lands and Settlement, 5 September, 1963, Quoted in Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 262.

Kaggia was concerned with the lands seized through the *Forfeiture of Lands Ordinance* of 1953 from Africans suspected of being ‘Mau Mau,’ or its supporters, and the subsequent amendment of 1955, which extended the confiscation to lands own by families of Mau Mau supporters as a collective punishment.¹²¹

In reply, the minister told Kaggia that his request was a “contravention of the spirit of Harambee* whereby past differences are to be forgotten.”¹²² His request, he was reminded, went contrary to Kenyatta’s motto to ‘forgive and forget’ the wrongs committed during colonial rule, lost lands, and all. Kaggia found the answer inadequate, and subsequently, put his argument in a memorandum to the whole cabinet of ministers, saying:

Everyone in this country is very well aware of the land hunger that has existed among Africans as a result of the robbery of their land by the British Colonial Imperialists. The logical method to solve the problem passed by this robbery would have been to nationalize all big estates owned by Europeans and make them either state farms, so as to alleviate unemployment, or hand them over to cooperatives formed by landless Africans.¹²³

Rather than the minister, it was Kenyatta who responded, with a strong-worded letter that accused Kaggia of encouraging “illegal squatting on private property.” Kaggia, who had since been appointed a Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Education, was sternly advised by his boss, “If a Parliamentary Secretary is unwilling to support and accept collective responsibility

¹²¹ *RCPK*, 1953.

* ‘Harambee’ a Swahili term for ‘pull together,’ was Kenyatta’s rallying call to Kenyans to pool their meager resources and initiate self-help development projects.

¹²² Quoted in Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 263.

¹²³ Kaggia to All Cabinet Ministers, 20 April, 1964, Quoted in Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, 1967, pp. 263-4.

for any of the Government's acts of policies, the only course open to him is to resign."¹²⁴ Two weeks after receiving this reply, Kaggia tendered his resignation. "As a representative of the people," he pointed out to Kenyatta, "I found it very difficult to forget the people who elected me on the basis of definite pledges, or forget the freedom fighters who gave all they had, including their lands, for the independence we are enjoying."¹²⁵ Kaggia thus, became the first casualty in the showdown between the conservatives and the socialists.

Kenyatta's regime was, in the meantime, systematically frustrating Odinga's work as the vice president. It began with an allegation, in May of 1965, that Odinga was behind arms consignments being shipped from China through Kenya, and on to Congo to aid the Lumumbist rebels.¹²⁶ The real problem was not the weapons, but rather, the fact that Kenya had allowed a consignment from a communist country through its territory. And although the consignment had rightly been cleared by the Ministry of Defence and not his Home Affairs ministry, Odinga's offices and private residence were nonetheless searched just to disgrace him. Before long, junior cabinet ministers began usurping Odinga's authority. He was also deliberately excluded from any important decision-making, both in the cabinet and the party. But it was the event on March 1966 that pushed Odinga to the brink.

¹²⁴ Kenyatta to Kaggia, 22 May, 1964, Quoted in Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 266.

¹²⁵ Quoted in Odinga, *Not Yet Uhuru*, 1967, p. 266.

¹²⁶ The Lumumbist rebels originated from the Eastern Congo. They based their opposition to the military government of Mobutu Sese Seko on the philosophy of the country's first Prime Minister, Patrice Lumumba. Madeleine G. Calb, *The Congo cables: the Cold War in Africa—from Eisenhower to Kennedy*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1982.

After years of postponement, the KANU Parliamentary Group finally held the party convention. Mboya sponsored a proposition to do away with the position of party vice-president and replace it with seven vice-presidency positions drawn from all the seven provinces.¹²⁷ Not only was Odinga being technically demoted at the party structure, his position as vice-president of the country was also being effectively diluted. Rather than go through the humiliation he was being subjected to, he opted out of the party and the government. He complained, in his resignation letter to Kenyatta dated April 14, 1966, “I have done all I could to try and steady the ship from within. It has always been my conviction that the wealth of our nation should be fairly distributed to *wananchi* (citizens) and that Kenya should not continue to be an economic colony of any other country.”¹²⁸ His isolation, he believed, had been engineered within KANU as well as Kenya’s “underground masters,” possibly Britain and the United States. Odinga, Kaggia and some twenty eight allies with whom they had walked out of the government, formed an opposition party, the Kenya Peoples’ Union (KPU). Evocatively, manifesto stated, “KPU will pursue truly socialist policies to benefit the *wananchi*. It will share out the national wealth equitably among the people and extend national control over the means of production and break the foreigners’ grip on the economy.”¹²⁹

Upon the departure of Odinga’s group from KANU, the Parliamentary Group amended the constitution to require any legislator who left the party to seek fresh mandate through by-elections. By this amendment, all the thirty KPU members were deemed to have effectively lost

¹²⁷ Gertzel, *The Politics of Independent Kenya*, 1970.

¹²⁸ “Odinga’s Resignation Statement,” *Africa Report*, May, 1966, p. 9.

¹²⁹ *Manifesto of the Kenya People’s Union*, 1966, p. 3.

their legislative seats, hence, the 1966 by-elections. With much of the state machinery, including the country's sole broadcasting media dominated by Kenyatta, KANU won handily outside of Central Nyanza, KPU's stronghold.¹³⁰ Still, Kenyatta took the fact that Odinga's group had dared to walk out on him as a challenge to his leadership, an attack on his charismatic Father-of-the-Nation image, consequently, a personal insult. Long after the election campaigns were done away with, he sustained belligerent rhetoric against Odinga, on occasion issuing actual threats against him. Such was the case when, during the Kenyatta Day (October 20) celebrations of 1967, the president dedicated a good deal of his speech to condemning Odinga and threatening KPU with violence. He did not take kindly the fact that Odinga had accused him of having forgotten the Mau Mau fighters who had sacrificed so much for independence. To this, Kenyatta jeered; how had Odinga earned the right to advocate for the freedom fighters while he had never fought for the freedom himself? What had Odinga or KPU done for the freedom fighters? Here Kenyatta's speech turned to an open threat: "I want to tell you now—and I want you to listen attentively, as I don't talk nonsense—that if you see a KPU man, and some of them are here, know then that you have seen a snake hiding in the grass... What do you do when you see a snake...[to which the crowd answered] we kill it!.. I do not want to see these people spoiling our Uhuru. So, as from today, KPU are to be regarded as snakes, I repeat that as from today they are snakes."¹³¹ This is just what state security was doing to the opposition. Two months after the by-

¹³⁰ Some political observers have argued that KPU's poor performance was, in part, caused by the government's restriction of its officials, which made it difficult for them to market the party. David Koff, "Kenya's Little General Elections," *Africa Report*, October, 1966; George Bennett, "Kenya's Little General Elections," *World Today*, 22 (1966): pp. 336-343; Henry Bienen, *Kenya: the Politics of Participation and Control*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974.

¹³¹ Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness*, 1968, p. 343.

elections, the police staged two coordinated raids, one to KPU's headquarters, the other to homes of eight trade unionists allies of Odinga and Kaggia. The state accused the eight of "using trade union movement for political end, and of disseminating foreign ideologies."¹³² Odinga was not spared. His residence in the city was searched on several occasions.

The first major confrontation between the students and Kenyatta's regime occurred within the context of Kenya's increasingly polarized politics. Odinga featured prominently in it, but in actual fact, the conflict was a culmination of long-standing students' concern that the political leadership was not doing enough to address the challenges facing Kenya's postcolonial society. The students blamed the Kenyatta government for economic inequality, widespread corruption, tribalism and nepotism, exploitation of Kenya's poor masses and failure to open up democratic space, especially, academic freedom.¹³³ The drift of their argument was that these problems were deeply rooted in the institutions and traditions inherited from the colonial state. Yet, Kenyatta seemed keener to retain than to abolish them. The president himself said as much. During the graduation ceremony on March 26, 1965, Kenyatta remarked, in answer to students' charge that his government was taking too long to bring institutional change:

These institutions grew from compromises forced upon the Colonial authority, and they are not necessarily suited to our situation... But it would always be unwise to start by demolishing the whole structure created by the Colonial Government, in favour of some untried experiment. A careful appraisal of each institution and its relationships is necessary. We have found, for instance, that location Headmen or Chiefs cannot just be swept away. They fulfill necessary functions in serving the people.¹³⁴

¹³² "Six are Detained," *Daily nation Special Edition*, 5 August, 1966, p. 1.

¹³³ Kirubi, 'Turmoil at a university,' 1983, p. 95.

¹³⁴ Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness*, 1968, p. 269.

Many of the institutions the president referred to as necessary were, in fact, the same that the students regarded with suspicion. For instance, the colonial Provincial Administration, under which the chiefs and the headmen fell, was vehemently opposed not just by students, but by other pro-democracy forces of the society, who saw it as curtailing, rather than promoting, democracy. The students did not agree with Kenyatta's logic. And nor did KPU which prided itself as the party of the voiceless masses or the "have-nots."¹³⁵

The students had followed the political unfolding with interest. They had witnessed the intrigues preceding Odinga's resignation from KANU, the eventual formation of KPU and the obnoxious response it drew from the state. The fact alone that Odinga had dared to stand up to Kenyatta, endeared him to them. Since their own relationship with the state had deteriorated steadily, they saw him as an ally. It was in this comradely spirit that students in Political Science Club invited Odinga to speak at the university on January 10, 1969. Odinga arrived at the university to be greeted by an official excuse that his invitation had not been procedural. The university authorities insisted that the students had not complied with the university regulations in scheduling the speech, to which, Odinga left after promising the students to be back when the irregularities were corrected. The students deferred the talk for two weeks. This time around, they sought the proper approval from the Ministry of Education.¹³⁶ On the day of the scheduled speech, they were informed that the opposition leader would not be allowed to speak at the university after all. They boycotted classes in protest, and sought audience with the Minister of Education. But the minister refused to meet them, contending that their boycott constituted an

¹³⁵ Koff, "Kenya's Little General Elections," 1966, p. 58.

¹³⁶ *Africa Report*, March-April, 1969, p. 10.

“extremely serious breach of discipline.”¹³⁷ He warned them that they risked university closure if they did not resume classes. Unlike three years earlier when they had reluctantly acquiesced, this time the students stood their ground. The state made true of its threat and closed the university. When it reopened a few weeks later, five student leaders were suspended indefinitely. The rest were required to reapply for admission after signing “Good behaviour pledge.”¹³⁸

The crisis took a new turn when the faculty got involved. Ngugi wa Thiong’o resigned his position as the head of literature department in protest. He defended his action saying: “I feel that the issues involved are important enough to merit public concern and debate...The students’ case has been badly presented [by the government] to the public—they are very genuine in their fight for academic freedom.”¹³⁹ Another group of faculty similarly criticized the university’s handling of the students’ boycott, demanding, henceforth, to be involved in all matters affecting their students. Stated their joint letter to the Principal; “Throughout the crisis preceding and resulting from the closure of the college, members of the staff have been given no chance to express their views democratically, collectively and publically.”¹⁴⁰ They had every right to be concerned. Whenever the university experienced disruption, their capacity to instruct was affected. But they were mistaken to imagine the authorities would take their views seriously. As they found out in due course, any of them who questioned the state actions, met much the same

¹³⁷ “Students Back Today or else...” *Daily Nation*, 27 January, 1969, p. 1.

¹³⁸ This was a pre-written statement of apology. “Nairobi College Reopens Next Week,” *Daily Nation*, 6 February, 1969, p. 1; “Five Suspended at University College” *Daily Nation*, 25 February, 1969, p. 3.

¹³⁹ “My Decision was Personal—Ngugi,” *Daily Nation*, 4 March, 1969, p. 4.

¹⁴⁰ “Lecturers Angry at College,” *Daily Nation*, 4 March, 1969, p. 4.

fate as did the students. Ngugi was eventually detained.¹⁴¹ The state's stranglehold on academic freedom forced most other professors to seek employment abroad.¹⁴²

The confrontations of 1969 brought a new dimension to an already strained relationship between the students and the state. Previously, the state had seriously believed students' protests stemmed from their immature sense of entitlement. Accordingly, the state officials, whenever they had a chance, advised them not to let their privileged position spoil them. This had been the running theme in speeches the government officials and politicians made at the university. From the 1969 boycott, however, the state began to see the students, in a new light, as opposition sympathizers, specifically supporters of Odinga. Even though they insisted the boycott had nothing to do with Odinga as a person, that it was premised on their understanding that the university, as a marketplace of ideas, was open to anyone with ideas, the state refused to see it any other way. If Odinga was not the issue, "why would students want to hear [him] so badly unless they opposed the government?"¹⁴³ Soon, Odinga ceased to be an issue of contention when he was removed from public. His arrest, paradoxically, was instigated by the assassination of his archrival, Tom Mboya.

Mboya was shot dead as he left a pharmacy on the afternoon of July 5, 1969. At the time of his death, Mboya, given his popularity, was seen as a probable successor to Kenyatta. His assassination was therefore viewed in this context. In some quarters, it was interpreted as a Kikuyu plot, evidently sanctioned by Kenyatta, to keep the country's presidency within the

¹⁴¹ "Ngugi wa Thiong'o is Detained," *The Weekly Review*, 16 January, 1978, p. 5.

¹⁴² "University brain drain may get worse," *Daily Nation*, 11 January, 1975, p. 7.

¹⁴³ *Africa Report*, March-April, 1969, p. 12.

Kikuyu ruling clique.¹⁴⁴ Kenyatta added insult to an injury when he made a trip to Kisumu town two months after the killing. Kisumu lay at the Luo heartland, Mboya's ancestral home and Odinga's political stronghold. Upon his arrival to open the provincial hospital, paradoxically built by Odinga with aid from communist countries, the president was greeted with heckles, jeers and chants of 'Ndume!' the KPU slogan. He nevertheless presided over the tense occasion. As he was leaving the town, his motorcade was pelted it with rocks. His guard opened fire. The exact number of people killed in the shooting was never established, but at the end of the skirmishes, Odinga had been hurled off to detention and KPU banned. Kenya welcomed 1970 as a de facto single party state.

With the opposition silenced, students' activism gained higher visibility. Their conflicts with the state became frequent and passionate and their activism drew in issues that previously had not been their domain. Such was the case when in July of 1972 the students presented a memorandum to President Kenyatta demanding immediate retirement of Police Chief, Mr. Oswald. They alleged that under Oswald, the police continued to employ the same tactics in dealing with the opposition as they had employed to battle the African nationalists during the colonial regime.¹⁴⁵ Again on 6 February 1974, the students took to the streets to protest the visit of British Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas-Home to Kenya. In their protest statement, they accused Britain of supporting racist regimes in South Africa and Northern Rhodesia.¹⁴⁶ When the

¹⁴⁴ Ogot, "The Decisive Years, 1956-63," 1995; Murray-Brown, *Kenyatta*, 1979.

¹⁴⁵ *The University Platform*, 27 July, 1972.

¹⁴⁶ "Students Blast Racist Regimes," *Daily Nation*, 7 February, 1974, p. 1; "Demo 'monstrous' says Minister," *Daily Nation*, 9 February, 1974, p. 1; "University demonstration under fire," *Daily Nation*, 8 February, 1974, p. 1; H. P. Wamalwa and B. G. Kariuki, "Students were in support of Kenya," *Daily Nation*, 13 February, 1974, p. 7.

following year, Josiah Mwangi “JM” Kariuki, a Member of Parliament, and a leading government critic, was assassinated, the government anticipated a confrontation with the students and prepared accordingly. They did not disappoint. Indeed, they came out in force again a year later, during the first anniversary of JM’s killing, demanding the government to bring justice upon the killers. In the subsequent years, the university authorities gave the students a ‘spring break’ a week before the anniversary to avoid a repeat of confrontations.¹⁴⁷

Yet even as they pursued agendas of national and international significance, the students remained passionately attached to the issues in their immediate environment. On February 20, 1974, the architecture students stormed their department office, threw the staff out, and locked the building. Their assault came on the heels of a petition they had sent the university administration demanding thorough investigations of the department expatriate faculty. In the petition, they accused head of the department, Prof. Jorgensen, himself an expatriate, of orchestrating repeated mass failures. The students understood this as a scheme to stall the progress of Africanizing the architecture profession. Stated their complaint in part, “The fact that at the end of 1972/73 academic year only two Kenyan Africans qualified as architects and that now only two Kenyan Africans are in their fifth year, is a clear indication of a carefully worked out plan to control the entry of Black Kenyans into this vital profession.”¹⁴⁸ Such a slow progress, the students charged, guaranteed continued expatriates’ domination of the department and with them in charge, there was no telling how keen they were to train Africans successors.

¹⁴⁷ “Student Boycott to mourn ‘best friend,’” *Daily Nation*, 14 March, 1975, p. 2; “Students’ demo stopped as security risk,” *Daily Nation*, 24 March, 1976, p. 3; “University: Remembering J.M.,” *The Weekly Review*, 6 March, 1978, p. 9.

¹⁴⁸ “Students Demonstrate at the University of Nairobi,” *Daily Nation*, 21 February, 1974, p. 3.

Their claim was vindicated by the university's own records which showed that, between 1958 and 1973, only three black students had passed the exams to become fully qualified architects.¹⁴⁹ Still, the government sent a riot police squad to evict the protesting students from the university. Their suspension brought the wider university to their cause. With only two weeks to the exams, the students held a campus-wide meeting and resolved on a boycott. Public pressure prevailed on Prof. Jorgensen to resign, but still, the state closed the university for two months.

The protest triggered by the Architecture Department was not an isolated isolated. Nor were the expatriates the only lot frustrating Africanization. Kenya's judiciary, under the Attorney General (AG), Charles Njonjo, pursued programs in total disregard of making Kenya's legal profession self-reliant.¹⁵⁰ A decade into independence, Njonjo was still recruiting judges from Europe so that, Kenya's judiciary was still overwhelmingly stocked with European magistrates. Njonjo was put to task during an appearance at the faculty of Law on July 3, 1974. He explained, to his astonished audience, that the European personnel in his department were of course in full support of Africanizing the legal profession. A student pursued the issue further, leading to the following exchange:

Questioner: Why does the Kenya Government have to advertise first in the overseas papers and then later in the local Press the vacancies for resident magistrates?

Mr. Njonjo: Are you a magistrate yourself?

Questioner: No.

¹⁴⁹ "Students have a case," *Daily Nation*, 28 February, 1974, p. 7.

¹⁵⁰ It might be remembered, from the previous chapter, that Njonjo came from a loyalist pedigree. Educated by the colonial government on taxpayers' money, he was a part of the African class groomed to take over the management of Kenya to ensure security of British interests in postcolonial state. He started his career under colonial tutelage. At independence, he was appointed the Attorney General.

Mr. Njonjo: I am going to be frank with you. We are short of 18 magistrates... African lawyers have not shown keen interest in becoming resident magistrates. Most of them prefer to join politics, and others drop out and fall by the wayside.
Questioner: Why don't you like to find out why African lawyers don't want to become magistrates? Is it not true that it is frustration that forces them to leave?
Mr. Njonjo: What is frustration? Do you know what a magistrate is paid? You better find out first before you talk of frustration...¹⁵¹

Reading these questions through the lens of suspicion that characterized the relationship between the state and students, Njonjo saw clear mischief. His answers became defensive. He sought to intimidate the students rather than explain the policies of his department. The AG warned the students to stay out of politics or else their banned union would not be reinstated. The National Union of Kenya Students (NUKS) had been banned in 1972 on Njonjo's own advice, "for being dangerous to the good government of Kenya."¹⁵² Njonjo might have expected that, by reminding the students who exactly held power, they would tone down their activism.

The tactic did not work. Before the end of 1974, the students and state were locked in yet another of what had become recurrent confrontation. Previously, whenever they protested on any issue, rumors circulated that if they did not stop 'acting up,' the state would withdraw its funding and make them pay for their tuition and upkeep. This finally happened in July of 1974, when the parliament replaced students' grants system with government-issued loans. Whether or not the legislation was intended as a punishment to the students, there were other factors liable to influence this decision. Kenya had recently suffered economic setback from, among other episodes, the decline of the coffee price in the world market and the oil crises of 1973. Still, the

¹⁵¹ "Leave Politics to Politicians, law students told," *Daily Nation*, 4 July 1974, p. 4.

¹⁵² Also banned was the students' paper, *The University Platform*, for publishing "seditious" materials. Quoted in Kirubi, 'Turmoil at a university,' 1983, p. 137.

state, presented the new loans scheme as a punishment to the students, and they understood it as such. A violent confrontation led to the university closure for four months. When it reopened the following year, more severe conditions awaited the students. Their leaders were expelled while the rest were ordered to reapply for admission. Further, the government halted the plans announced earlier for expansion of residence halls, requiring the students, henceforth, to find their own accommodation. Those of them who disagreed with this decree were summarily expelled.¹⁵³

By 1974, when the government launched the student loan scheme, Kenya's national economy had progressively worsened. Employment opportunities that had seemed infinite only few years earlier were diminishing more rapidly than it was taking the students to graduate.¹⁵⁴ While for the most part the problem was inevitable, given that Kenya's economy was integral to the declining global economy, the statist economic policies Kenyatta instituted at independence did not help the situation. Statist policies were inaugurated with the hope of ensuring broader public access to basic goods, services and national resources. By having the state as the primary employer, distributor of resources and regulator of the market and prices of goods, the policy makers hoped, Kenyan s would perceive it a necessity rather than unwelcome imposition in their lives. But statist projects were almost always riddled with problems, chiefly, of ineffectiveness, mismanagement and corruption, all of which compromised performance.¹⁵⁵ Over the time, state

¹⁵³ "University is closed," *Daily Nation*, 15 August, 1974, p. 1; "No way to resolve University ills," Editorial, *Daily Nation*, 3 November, 1974, p. 8; "University spells out new rules," *Daily Nation*, 23 December, 1974, p. 1; "Student leaders will be locked out," *Daily Nation*, 24 December, 1974, p. 3; "University Council backs expulsions," *Daily Nation*, 5 February, 1975, p. 4.

¹⁵⁴ Hanna and Hanna, *University students and African politics*, 1975.

capacity to absorb the graduating students into the civil service declined. Students blamed the problem on government's incompetence and readily took their frustrations to the streets. The crisis was augmented by the conditions at the university where the desire to graduate too many students too quickly seriously affected their quality of living and stretched the facilities.¹⁵⁶ The crises were manifested in the dropping academic standards and, consequently, implacable students' anger.

In conclusion, students' politics during Kenyatta years were pursued with the backdrop of deepening political repression and a deteriorating economy. Kenyatta's unwillingness to abolish any colonial institutions he found helpful in his endeavor to consolidate power, meant the problems from colonial era persisted. The crisis was compounded by Cold War geopolitical calculations. Emboldened by the face-off between Capitalist West and Communist East, Kenyatta embarked on a ruthless campaign of silencing any political opposition. He justified his actions as the fight against Communism. With the opposition effectively scuttled, students were left as the only cohesive group capable of confronting the state's growing tyranny. Their activism acquired a new purpose as they came to occupy a position much like that of the unofficial opposition. At the time of Kenyatta's death in 1978, a good many outspoken student leaders had either been expelled or fled the country.

¹⁵⁵ For deeper analysis on the statist policies in Kenya, see David F. Gordon, *Decolonization and the State in Kenya*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986.

¹⁵⁶ "We are not getting enough food at the University," Letter to the Editor, *Daily Nation*, 1 March, 1977, p. 8.

Conclusion: a Postscript.

Before the summer of 2008, my dissertation research focused on the social history of students' movements in Kenya. I was fascinated by how university students had over the years maintained a steady tradition of challenging the legitimacy of Kenya's political leadership. While not outright hailing their activism, or their injudicious proclivity to frequent rioting for that case, my project nonetheless portrayed them as champions against state authoritarianism. This was my rebuttal to the occasional depiction of students in some scholarship as a privileged lot who had lost touch with the society.¹⁵⁷ I spent summer 2007 at home in Kenya going through the three boxes of primary source materials I had gathered for over four years. I cataloged them both thematically and chronologically and stacked the boxes carefully at a corner in my study. The sources told an excellent narrative. I could not wait to come back the following summer to begin the writing. Towards the end of the year, however, I had an epiphany—if one could think of the incident as such—that forced me to reconsider my thesis. Kenya held its general elections December 27 and soon after, the country plunged into a spell of political violence. In one short bloody month of January, 2008, 1,500 lives were lost, over half million rendered refugees, and destruction of property went well beyond comprehension. Our family, at the epicenter of the violence in the Rift Valley Province, lost everything to looting and fire. Up in smoke went my

¹⁵⁷ See, for instance, Roberta Mckown, "Kenya university students and politics." In *University students and African politics* edited by William. J. Hanna, and Judith. L. Hanna, New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1975; Maurice N. Amutabi, "Crisis and Student Protest in Universities in Kenya: Examining the Role of Students in National Leadership and the Democratization Process," *African Studies Review*, 45 (2002): pp. 157-178; Gichuhi M. M. Kirubi, "Turmoil in a university: an analytical study of the conflicts, confrontations and strikes in the University of Nairobi and Kenyatta University College in the Republic of Kenya 1960-1978." Ph.D. diss, Ohio University, 1983.

three boxes of research materials, and with that, the prospect of my spending a year locked in my room, writing an overdue adulation for Kenya's brave university students.

Over the next months, investigations yielded crucial insights on how—not why—the violence had started. It became clear from these investigations that the real culprits were not the angry unemployed youths who had taken to the streets, burned people's homes, looted, raped and killed. These were guilty, alright. But they were not the main architects of the violence. Reports compiled by two commissions of inquiry, another by the United Nations Special Rapporteur, and several more from independent investigations conducted by human rights groups, all laid the blame squarely on the Kenya's political elite. They unearthed evidence showing how the members of the ruling class had planned the attacks, mobilized resources, and supervised the killings, lootings, and arson with no fear of retribution.¹⁵⁸ One of the commission reports noted with concern that during one of its hearing sessions, "One Provincial Commissioner testified that he feared to order the arrest of senior politicians involved in the incitement of violence because his job would be at stake."¹⁵⁹

It occurred to me, as I was reading these reports, that the list of suspects included former university student leaders who I had either already interviewed as my oral sources, or who were in line to be interviewed.¹⁶⁰ These were people who had spent most of their university days

¹⁵⁸ *On the Brink of the Precipice: a human rights account of Kenya's post-2007 elections violence*, the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights report, 2008; *The Kenya National Dialogue and Reconciliation Report*, 2008; Cyrus Ombati, "UN report says Wako, Ali, should step aside over human rights," *East African Standard*, 28 May, 2009; *Report of the Independent Review Commission on the General Elections held 27 December 2007*.

¹⁵⁹ Waki Commission Report, 2008, p. 471.

¹⁶⁰ *On the Brink of the Precipice*, the report by the Kenya National Commission on Human Rights mentioned the names of some of the suspects who went to court in attempt to stop any further publication of their names. It is also

fighting against state authoritarianism, state-sanctioned corruption, tribalism and many other ills perpetrated by the ruling elite. These were, in a nutshell, the would-be heroes of my narrative. Up until the violence, the popular image of these former student leaders presented by the media and burned into the public consciousness, was that of impeccably progressive activists who willfully jeopardized their studies and life, to campaign for the economic rights and political freedoms of all Kenyans. It was the same image I had gathered in my recorded conversations with them and other sources. Now with the new revelations, this image was clearly complicated. This is not about just one generation of students. Kenya's post-colonial history is awash with generations of progressive student leaders and activists who, upon graduating, are quickly and hopelessly sucked into the ambit of the political machinery they had spent their student years fighting against.

As I came to terms with the loss of my research materials, I began to wonder whether my original study was conceptually grounded to explain potential transformation of student political activists into the political class. Had I perhaps, in my fixation to extol them, overlooked the multidimensionality of their character, the effect of time and post-student experience on them? How was I to account for their incongruous evolution into a scandalized national political class that would not think twice of sponsoring murderous gangs or looting the public treasury? Should I have taken more interest in the students at the university within the larger society whence they

notable that the International Criminal Court in The Hague has since taken up the case and as of summer 2011, the court was working to determine whether the cases against the suspects would qualify, under the Rome Statute as crimes against humanity; Eric Shimoli, "Ocampo links more MPs to Chaos militia," *Daily Nation*, 4 September, 2011. <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Ocampo+links+more+MPs+to+chaos+militia+/-/1056/1230372/-/bj7khfz/-/index.html>; "Ruto and Kosgei gave cash for attacks, Ocampo witness says," *Daily Nation* 2 September, 2011. <http://www.nation.co.ke/News/Ruto+and+Kosgey+gave+cash+for+attacks++Ocampo+witnesses+say/-/1056/1229236/-/12kkd5j/-/index.html>.

emerged? Better still; was the locus of my study more suited for the individual products of an education system or on the superstructure itself that produce those individuals? These were only some of the questions I was grappling with as I struggled to assemble another research project. My present study was conceived through, and shaped by, this thought process.

This dissertation has documented the formation of Kenya's postcolonial political class through the education system inaugurated by the agents of European imperialism. I have shown that it is not by coincidence that Kenya is ensnared with political elite who appear hell-bent on driving the country aground. These elite were conceived from particular colonial experiences. While there were unquestionably many factors involved in their production, education proved to be the most effective tool for this project. Education became critical both in dismantling of Africa's indigenous institutions of state and society, and in their place, nurturing alternative institutions that were beholden to European imperialism. Thus, colonial education policies were formulated not with intentions of grooming a competent and innovative African political leadership expected to eventually take the mantle of self-governing polities, but rather, on the premise that Africans would remain under European tutelage indefinitely.¹⁶¹ In this case, education was viewed as a tool by which to organize Africans into convenient administrative entities that would serve the interests of European imperialism.¹⁶² 'Control' was the principle

¹⁶¹ Mazrui suggests five concepts of self-government. "There is, first, self-government as an absence of colonial rule; secondly, self-government as sovereign independence, with all its ramifications in relations with other countries; thirdly, self-government as internal management of internal affairs, including the maintenance of law and order [...]; fourthly, self-government in the liberal democratic sense [...]; and fifthly, self-government as government by rulers manifestly belonging to the same race as the ruled. Ali A. Mazrui, *Towards a Pax Africana: a Study of Ideology and Ambition*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967. p. 21. I refer to these concepts collectively.

governing these policies. As Gladyce Bradley aptly observes, “the official attitude seems to have been that the natives were savages; barely human; unfit to govern themselves; intellectually inferior to Europeans, and incapable of acquiring European culture.”¹⁶³

The dissertation has shown that, in the early colonial period, education was a preserve of the Christian missionaries who regarded it strictly as a handmaiden for evangelization. As such, Africans were not allowed to benefit from education absent of religion.¹⁶⁴ The World War I persuaded the colonial state to play a more central role in the development of education with the clear intention of incorporating Africans more meaningfully into the colonial political economy. Three factors conspired to bring this shift about. For one, the economic destruction wrought by the war forced the colonial state to harness Kenya’s resources for reconstruction of the metropolis. There was also the need to make Kenya alluring to the thousands of European demobilized soldiers whom the Colonial Office was trying to persuade, under the Soldiers Settlement Scheme, to take up farming. Lastly, the state was desperate to find a lasting solution to the mounting irritation caused by Indian nationalism. In the years following the war, the Indian nationalists in Kenya had become increasingly vocal in their demands for the rights and privileges similar to those accorded to the white settlers.

¹⁶² See, for instance, Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the earth*, New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1963; Mazrui, *Towards a pax-Africana*, 1967.

¹⁶³ Gladyce H. Bradley, “Education in Africa—The Problem of the Twentieth Century,” *The Journal of Negro Education*, 23 (Winter, 1954): p. 31.

¹⁶⁴ Colin Reed, *Pastors, partners, and paternalists: African church leaders and western missionaries in the Anglican Church in Kenya, 1850-1900*. Leiden, Netherlands. E. J. Brill, 1997; Robert Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935*, London: Heinemann, 1970.

The colonial state engaged a two-pronged approach to the African education. It instructed the director of Education to harmonize the curriculum with the demands and objectives of the colonial state, while at the same time, systematically marshalling its energies and resources to construct its own secular educational institutions. In addition to taking a proactive interest, the government was also determined to finally address the long-standing concern of the European settler farmers that missionary-controlled education was doing more harm than good to their economy. The settlers had protested for almost a decade against giving Africans the literary education favored by the missionaries, arguing that such education undermined Africans' efficacy as servants and laborers.¹⁶⁵ Now with many more settlers trooping into the country under the Soldiers Settlement Scheme, the government was forced to confront this complaint once and for all. Thus, the government not only took the control of education from the missionaries, it also had to design a system that guaranteed steadier and more proficient labor output, both menial, and semi-skilled, from the Africans. However, the colonial state was under no illusion, especially given the growing anti-colonial nationalist movements in the immediate post-World War I, that Africans would be willing participants in any programs that did not benefit them directly. Accordingly, the colonial policy makers adopted a strategy of controlled incorporation, with the objective of nurturing a better educated class that could be relied upon to take on a greater role as skilled laborers and 'native' leaders.¹⁶⁶ Several of the government-

¹⁶⁵ Thomas F. Buxton, "Industrial Work in East Africa", *Church Missionary Society Review*, LX, (January 1909): pp. 7-15.

¹⁶⁶ The colonial state was guided by the ideology articulated by among a few other imperial thinkers, G. C. Latham, then Director of Education Northern Rhodesia, that for successful colonial administration, education policy for Africans had to move away from what he called "slavish imitation of Europe," that agriculture had to become

assisted education institutions founded in the 1920s to cater for literary education as well as agriculture and technical training, were all founded with this mindset.¹⁶⁷

This is not to imply that Africans submitted themselves to the colonial architects meekly to be molded into minions of a European enterprise. They proved to be adroit in navigating the colonial system. For one, they were no longer willing to entrust their education on the imperial agents. Their passionate campaigns, through the Local Native Councils and the subsequent African independent schools movement, were a clear testimony of their aspiration for African-controlled education institutions. Their true resilience, however, was demonstrated in the early 1930s when the colonial state, through the director of Education, began a concerted crusade to destroy the nascent independent schools. These schools held fast even after the state refused to recognize, much less, offer them the grant-in-aid subsidies traditionally assured of all other schools. On this note, my study has argued that it would be unreasonable for us to compare the African independent schools, in terms of their quality of education and resources, with the government-assisted schools. Rather, these schools should be seen as an African attempt to expose the paradox of the colonial education system. Their very conception was, in effect, an important statement that, in the existing colonial order in Kenya, an education system controlled by the agents of European imperialism could not serve the needs and aspirations of the colonized Africans. The rise of African independent schools was, therefore, an articulation of this incongruity.

dominant, and that Africans had to be involved in local education decisions. G. C. Latham, "Indirect Rule and Education in East Africa" *Africa*, 7 (October, 1934): pp. 423-30.

¹⁶⁷ The most notable institutions founded through this policy were; the Jeanes School, the Native Industrial Training Depot (NITD), and the Alliance High School.

Besides African-driven initiatives, Kenya's colonial education policies were shaped by a range of global political and socioeconomic conditions that arose in the 1930s and 1940s. The crises occasioned by the great depression, the rise of intensive anti-colonial nationalism across the colonies as well as in the metropolis, and the outbreak of World War II, among other factors, persuaded Britain to seriously consider giving some of her colonies independence, or more accurately, semi-autonomy, with significant participation of the local elite in the government affairs. As a way of preparing them for the eventual government responsibilities, it became necessary to give quality education to selected elite. During this period, education acquired new agency as an instrument for self-rule. In Kenya, the colonial policy made provision to both offer Africans higher education and appoint them to the Legislative Council, the highest political office in the colony.

The policy of controlled incorporation marked the beginning of an earnest effort to nurture an African comprador class that would inherit the government at the end of colonial occupation. Under colonial tutelage, the African elite were schooled and socialized to think and operate like the European colonial administrators whose positions they were being groomed to take over. It was impressed upon them that to run a modern state appropriately was to run it like the colonial political elite. To guarantee the supremacy of this comprador class, the colonial state used the resources at its disposal to defeat any imaginative African initiatives that threatened to challenge its production. In this effort, the state used bureaucratic red tape to frustrate the African independent schools, and when that failed, introduced legal and educational ordinances hostile to them. A similarly antagonistic treatment greeted the radical trade unions that sprung up in the 1930s and 1940s, culminating in their proscription and imprisonment of their leaders. But

there was perhaps no other independent African initiative that caused as much panic within the colonial state as did the Mau Mau movement. The remarkable degree of threat the movement portended for the colonial order was only rivaled by the mighty force the authorities employed to crush it. In addition the raw force used against it, the tactics used to combat Mau Mau were reprehensible, against the British own laws, and in sharp contrast with the civilized façade Britain had always presented about itself.¹⁶⁸ At the dawn of independence, innovative leadership in the African community had been effectively stifled and political power rested in the hands of the elite propped up by the colonial regime.

To bring reforms that advanced the interests of the broader African society at independence, would have entailed Kenya's postcolonial political class committing what Guinea-Bissau revolutionary leader, Amilcar Cabral, called "class suicide."¹⁶⁹ Thus, the elite had to sacrifice the material privileges, social position and political power they had acquired through their association with the colonial regime in favor of broad-based consensus. Kenya's ruling class, however, was not the ideal revolutionary model Cabral had in mind. Far from inaugurating reforms that portended its own annihilation, this class was determined to preserve and reproduce itself. The educational reforms attempted at independence were guided by this self-preservation attitude. Responding to the popular demand for educational reforms, the Minister for Education constituted the Kenya Education Commission to make the appropriate recommendations. After

¹⁶⁸ Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: the untold story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya*, New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2005; David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: the Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005.

¹⁶⁹ Patrick Chabal, *Amilcar Cabral: Revolutionary leadership and people's war*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983.

two years of collating views and studying the previous policies, the commission recommended only superficial reforms, in effect, leaving the existing structure intact. Its voluminous report stated, unblinkingly, “we do not think that, at this stage in our history as an independent nation, [comprehensive educational reforms] can override the pressing requirements of economic progress.”¹⁷⁰ With that declaration, this report gave the educational institutions the tacit nod they needed to continue their colonial-era undertaking of churning out graduates who were incapable of serious innovation. Peculiarly, the political elite had long identified the education system as an important obstacle to achieving nationhood. The foremost African political party, the Kenya African National Union (KANU), stated in its manifesto, a good two years before independence: “The children of Kenya must be taught to build their motherland and to love her rather than be allowed to develop a slavish mentality under a stilted education.”¹⁷¹ Somehow, at independence, this project was altogether shelved. Not only were ‘the children of Kenya’ neglected in this regard, successive political generations of elite themselves had decidedly adopted a slavish mentality. Decades after independence, they continued to bear their inadequacy as a badge of honor.

The crisis of postcolonial political leadership is not an exclusively Kenyan tragedy. Kenya’s story is replicated with unsettling accuracy across Africa’s political landscape. In the initial years of independence when countries and communities were inebriated with freedom and dreams of prosperous future, the glaring incongruence between the education systems and the very aspiration of the societies was explained as an issue of adaptability. The scholarly argument,

¹⁷⁰ *Kenya Education Commission Report*, Volume II, 1965. Paragraph 542.

¹⁷¹ *The KANU Manifesto for Independence, Social Democracy and Stability*, 1961.

fully dramatized with imagery of the ivory towers, held that all that was needed was steering the education systems away from their Eurocentric course and aligning it with the Africanization philosophy. Countries thought this essential adaptability could be achieved through such programs as replacing the colonial expatriates with local technocrats, and the upgrading local universities, colleges and professional schools and such other projects. In the name of Africanization, the education curricula were revised and loaded with more prominent African history, literature, language, philosophy, religion, culture, art and so on.¹⁷² Problem was, Africanization, or the assorted versions of it adopted by political regimes across the continent, was a superficial solution to a deep-rooted problem. In the end, Africanization did little to eliminate the problem.¹⁷³

Like most other institutions of state and society, the education systems across the newly independent African countries remained stubbornly etched in the colonial mentality whereas the ruling elite continued to perceive themselves, like the European colonial class before them, as a

¹⁷² Joel D. Barkan, *An African dilemma: university students, development and politics in Ghana, Tanzania and Uganda*, London: Oxford University Press, 1975; Martin Carnoy and Joel Samoff, *Education and social transition in the Third World*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990; Apollon O. Nwauwa, *Imperialism, Academe and Nationalism: Britain and University Education for Africans 1860—1960*, Providence: Rhode Island College, 1996; Ali A. Mazrui and C. Wodji, (Editors), *UNESCO General History of Africa VIII: Africa since 1935*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; George E. F. Urch, *The Africanization of the curriculum in Kenya*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1968; Ernest Stabler, *Education since Uhuru: The Schools of Kenya*, Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1969; Claudia Buchmann, "The State and Schooling in Kenya: Historical Development and Current Challenges," *Africa Today* 46 (1999): pp. 95-117; Michael Chege, "Academic Apparatchiks in the New Kenya," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 January 1998, B9; Kirubi, "Turmoil in a university," 1983; Donald C. Savage and Cameron Taylor, "Academic freedom in Kenya," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 25 (1991): pp. 308-321; Michael Schatzberg, "Two Faces of Kenya: The Researcher and the State," *African Studies Review* 29, (1986): pp. 1-15.

¹⁷³ See, for instance, Ali A. Mazrui, *Power, Politics, and the African Condition*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2004; Mahmood Mamdani, *Citizens and Subjects: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; Adebayo Adedeji (Editor), *Indigenization of African economies*, New York: African Publishing Company, 1981.

species separate from the African society. Not unlike their preceding colonial lot, these elite developed a sense of political and economic entitlement. For them, the political affairs of their countries were theirs to manage, or mismanage. The resources were theirs to exploit, but mostly, embezzle and repatriate to the climates that were safer for them to invest, most preferably, the West. In the aftermath of the 2007 general elections, the Kenya's ruling political class proved, much like the preceding colonial state did during the Mau Mau uprising, that it was willing to go to any length to reassert and protect its threatened political and economic dominance, even plunge the country into violence. While obviously its conduct was culpable, my dissertation has shown that such behavior was not entirely unexpected. It had a long evolutionary history dating back to the colonial conception of this class.

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